Analyzing Digital Discourse. New Insights and Future Directions: Review

Anastasia Lazareva

MGIMO University

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Anastasia Lazareva, English Language Department №4, School of International Business and Business Administration, MGIMO University, 76, Prospect Vernadskogo, Moscow, 119454, Russian Federation. E-mail: asyalazareva@gmail.com

Bou-Franch, P., & Garcés Conejos Blitvich, P. (2019). *Analyzing digital didscourse. New insights and future directions.* Palgrave.

Due to the increasing variety of digital messaging and texting in the contemporary digital discourse, proactively developing for over a quarter of a century, a great deal of writing researchers and educators in the sphere of discourse analysis have made their input into the study of the relevant changes and developments in online communication on the path from mere texting to imaging, including emoticons and emoji, photography usage, and video-support digital-based communication.

The monograph entitled Analyzing *Digital Discourse. New Insights and Future Directions, e*dited by Patricia Bou-Franch and Pilar Garcés Conejos Blitvich (2019) is the book aimed at investigating and accumulating the knowledge available at the present stage of digital technologies development concerning various types of digital communication and interactions and thus increases the awareness of academia in the field of digital discourse studies which in its turn has witnessed and experienced a tremendous booming development for the past 25 years. The galloping technologies of the new computer and gadget-based era could not but tell on the newly-generated discourse and are gaining pace further on.

Overall, the book is designed to come up with the precious data obtained upon thorough studies in the field of computer-related technologies discourse for the past two decades. The studies show the significance of analyzing online communication both at the micro and macro levels.

The book can also be useful for communicative digital practices and be certainly curious for people engaged in media sociolinguistics.

The authors employ a consciousness-raising approach as regards various aspects of digital discourse development and specifics of its usage on different purposes.

Review
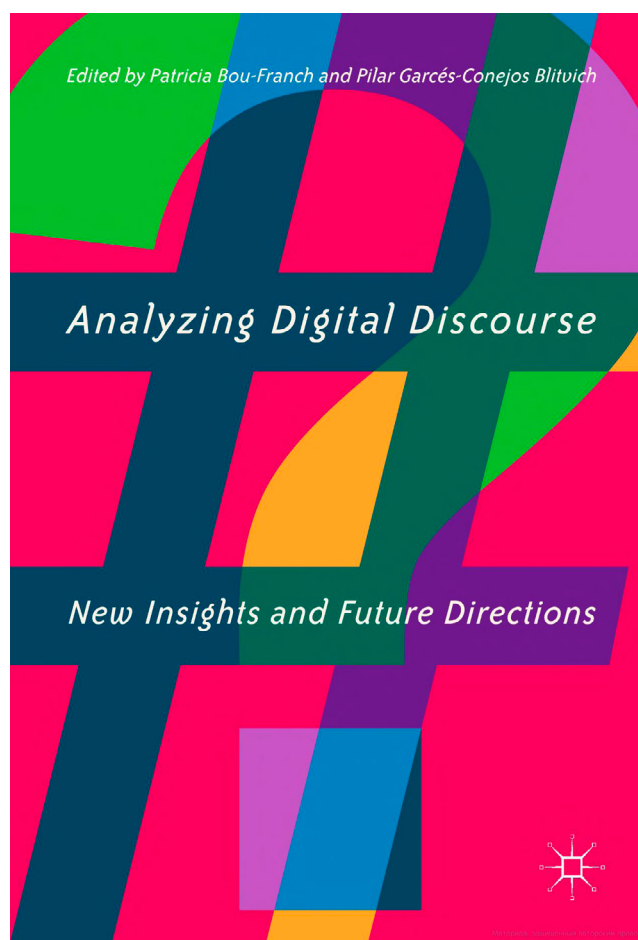
The book is an interesting and comprehensive read with 13 chapters forming 5 parts, progressing from the introduction to the digital discourse analysis and prospects of its future changes toward the computer–mediated communication and communication strategies and further to social media interdependence with the digital discourse.

Part I of the book focuses on the *Introduction to Digital Discourse: New Insights and Future Directions*, written by Pilar Garcés Conejos Blitvich and Patricia Bou-Franch . It comprises only 1 Chapter, speculating on digital discourse contemporary studies and various aspects. This chapter presents the notion of discourse as an intelligent mixture of language resources, social practices and technology base. At the same time the authors highlight, that with the time there has been a shift made from discourse as a language analysis to discourse as a reflection of society interactions.

Part II, in particular, *Past, Present and Future* covers also only 1 Chapter, though a substantial one, called *The Coevolution of Computer-Mediated Communication and Computer-Mediated Discourse Analysis* by Susan C. Herring methodically portrays digital discourse at early stages, its progressive development as well as future prospects, interdependence of computer-mediated interaction and computer-mediated discourse analysis. The author of this chapter considers how technological devices and advances of three different digital eras, namely, pre-Web, Web 1.0 and Web 2.0 influence textual presentation of its digital nature.

All in all, *Part I* and *Part II* lay the basement for the topic of the book, considering the possible themes and aspects for subsequent analysis and discussion.

Part III called *Multimodality* considers how people make use of the vast multimodal resources provided to them by modern digital technologies. In general, computer-mediated communication is highly multidisciplinary. This part of the research, comprising 4 absolutely subject-differentiated chapters appears to be the key one. In fact, *Part II* goes beyond discourse towards discourse pragmatics and multimodality of various forms of digital online communication. Here we consider 4 chapters, providing a close and research-based outlook on video-supported interaction patterns, multimodality in memes usage (*Chapter* 4 by Francisco Yus), comparison of digital and written quotations, forming a hybrid genre of political opinion review (*Chapter 5* by *Marjut Yohansson*) – which is quiet unpredictable a topic within the context of digital discourse, as well as gender-specific emoticons usage in relational social media practice (*Chapter 6*). Thus, from the chapters forming *Part III* we learn that multimodality and multisemioticity concepts are inherent for digital discourse and provide a number of directions for researches in this sphere.

Here as one of the chapters within the topic of digital discourse analysis (namely, *Chapter 3*) we get a curious presentation of a full transcription of a Skype video chat between a lecturer (the author herself) and one of her students concerning a research project. It's quite notable that the aim of the author is not just a mere analysis of the transcriptions but two-way decoding of both linguistic and non-linguistic components of the video chat, including pragmatics, modality, proxemics, kinesics, gaze patterns. All of which, in her opinion, should be incorporated into university studies as a multidisciplinary component.

Chapter 6 in this part called *Emoticons in Relational Writing Practices on WhatsApp: Some Reflections on Gender* authored by Carmen Pérez-Sabater   appears to be also remarkable enough as to draw the reader's attention to such a phenomenon as memes and with this purpose applicability of cognitive pragmatics theories as a means to study and decode them. Moreover, gender-differentiation in discourse is indeed a trendy and acute direction of modern studies which makes this Chapter quite valuable.

Part IV, in its turn, headlined *Face and Identity* concentrates on image creation phenomena in the digital discourse analysis and comprises 4 chapters.

The first one on the list in this part *Chapter 7* by *Camilla Vásquez* and *Addie Sayers China* focuses on the analysis of Amazon site customers' reviews on goods and the analysis of how gender stereotypes influence the discourse applied and applicable. It is arranged as a comparison of a parody review obviously gendering product marketing versus a neutral one. All this is performed to specify the patterns remarkable for different genders in providing reviews.

Chapter 8, called *Linguistic Expert Creation in Online Health Practices,* authored by Marie-Thérèse Rudolph von Rohr, Franziska Thurnherr and Miriam A. Loher presents a study concerning the importance of thorough language selection for medical online consultancy services to sound trustworthy and reliable for the patients receiving emails and messages on various healthcare issues.

Face and identity discourse analysis covers mostly social issues of self-presentation of a person while establishing communication online. All in all, for the time being there is a vast number of researches and studies on media interactions. Here digital technologies appear to be a mediator between the participants engaged into the process of personal, professional or business issues negotiating. In this aspect social media create new forms and modes for personal cosnstruction and identity dependent on the resources and multiple semiotic modes employed as well as individual strategies designed. Face and identity online could appear pretty much different from the offline ones through the adaptation of and adjustment to sometimes imagined networked groups, participants and audiences and utilization of various topics and language practices. It makes the users engage the discourse sometimes alien and quite unpredictable for each particular individual, keep the face or lose it, as it is highlighted in *Chapter 10*: *Losing Face on Facebook: Linguistic Strategies to Repair Face in a Spanish Common Interest Group* by Carmen Maíz Areválo.

In this aspect *Chapter 9* of this part, namely *How Social Media Shapes Identities and Discourses in Professional Digital Settings: Self-Communication or Self-Branding?* by Sandra Petroni is worthwhile. We can't but agree with the quote that "Social Media are a fertile ground for personal and professional identity construction" (p.257) as well as a multifocal path to global communication at large, that's where Web 2.0 is reigning. That's truthful indeed that participation in various messengers and social networks, whatever the name and purpose of those, makes the participants kind of transform and "recontextualize" their identity.

Sometimes one appears to be excessively influenced by the digital societal rules, trying to upgrade one's social status, self-perception and self-esteem on top, both extra and intra. Being taken in, social networking participants are very much likely to fall victims of self-promotion instincts instead of building valuable discourse practices. Such a narcissistic behavioral trend inevitably leads to self-branding, seeking likeness and recognition. Same as in professional and business discourse online people tend to market themselves, favor such practices that could shade their personality. They assume the air of being someone else or possessing such social or individual qualities that are out of reach offline for them.

In other words, online self-presentation is a "front stage actors" performance for them played with the purpose to boost their digital image which nowadays with the technologies an integral part of our livelihood is a part of a human overall reputation.

In *Part V Language and Media Ideologies, Chapter 11* authored by Antonio García-Gómez *Sexting and Hegemonic Masculinity: Interrogating Male Sexual Agency, Empowerment and Dominant Gendered Norms* proves a great topicality firstly for psychologists and sociologists and only secondly for linguists. It focuses on the free field for action mostly for teenagers to practice their sexuality in messaging (sexting) and interacting with peers. Meanwhile, as marked out by the author, this type of on-line communication "is gaining popularity among adults"(p.314). Thus, here the author is aiming at figuring out the essence of the discourse used on par with the risks and dangers such a type of social networking generates.

Chapter 12 by Maria Sifianou and Spiridoula Bella, called *Twitter, Politeness, Self-Presentation* overviews courtesy and impoliteness in Greek, figuring out as well if on-line and real-life communication may somehow alter the notions of it.

The last but not the least chapter of the part as well as of the monography itself is *Chapter 13* written by 3 authors – Rebecca Roeder, Elizabeth Miller and Pilar Garcés-Conejos Blitvich is presenting a relevant pilot study of students' awareness about the norms, standards, correctness and appropriate forms of the language used in messaging nowadays.

Adding up to its originality the book contains an array of numerous figures and tables illustrating the up-to-date researches in gender-related usage of Digital Discourse, self-presentation and imaging in social media,

usage of specific lexical units in digital-based communication, study of face-loss situations and face-repairing strategies and other.

The main and only drawback of the book is that some of the chapters use analysis of the data referring to the beginning of the Millenium years, while present-day reality could have provided more divergent research of the relevant issues accordingly. In this regard, a comparative analysis of various digital era data could be more persuasive, which is still just our humble opinion.

The book is a superb-quality, multi-faceted research that provides an impeccable analysis of digital discourse and worthwhile understanding of the past and modern trends in social digital forms and means of interaction as well as prospects for the near future.

What makes the book distinguishably valuable is the study of communication activity and corresponding discourse presented in different languages and digital platforms.

It appears novice that the authors view media platforms as not just social networking spaces but rather an integral part of life in society, creating new standards and norms of coexistence.

In sum, the book is a precious and irreplaceable for the time being research on digital discourse.