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BOOK OF ABSTRACTS BY AUTHOR
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“The subtle line between evaluation and emotion: broadsheet vs. tabloid headline discourse”

In this presentation I will first discuss the findings of a previous comparative study on the variables of the evaluative functional relationship (Alba-Juez, forthcoming) as manifested in the headlines of on-line British broadsheets and tabloids, in which only a few significant differences were found in the expression of evaluation. These results triggered a further research question which was the point of departure of the present study and which will thus guide its development: Could it be that the main difference between the evaluative discourse of broadsheets and tabloids lay in the expression of the emotion attached to (but not so easily distinguished from) the evaluation? In order to answer this question, and taking into account that one characteristic usually attributed to tabloids in contrast with broadsheets is that they focus more on the emotional side of stories (e.g. Fowler 1991), I will take a theoretical standpoint to try to draw the delicate line between the phenomena of evaluation and emotion, and I will do so by presenting part of the work emanating from the EMO-FunDETT research project (FFI2013-47792-C2-1-P - http://www.uned.es/proyectofundett/). Based on Alba-Juez & Thompson’s (2014) definition of evaluation, I will discuss Thompson’s (2015) proposal regarding the common ground shared by the three main subsystems of Appraisal (Martin & White 2005) and both emotion talk and emotional talk (Bednarek 2008), trying to distinguish between those cases in which the emotion is enacted and those in which it is expressed, or, in Foolen’s (2012) terms, between the conceptualization and the expression of emotion.

The corpus used consists of 200 articles taken from four different on-line British newspapers: two broadsheets, BBC Online and The Guardian, and two tabloids, The Mirror and The Daily Mail. The analysis will be multimodal, and will thus focus on the comparison of the evaluation/emotion found not only in the text of the headlines, but also in the images that accompany them in these two types of on-line press. The discussion will mainly be based on the observation that all newspaper articles (whether in tabloids or broadsheets) seem to contain a given evaluation and/or emotive tone that is generally condensed or made relevant in the headline space, where the main stance of the article is reflected, a stance that will most likely influence the reader’s decision to make the effort of reading the whole article, or on the contrary, to reject it in the first place.

In conclusion, the research presented in this paper has both an empirical and a theoretical nature, for it will not only show the results of the analysis made regarding the evaluative/emotive differences between the headlines of tabloids and broadsheets, but will also elucidate how the system of emotion interacts or intertwines with that of evaluation, going on to define the former as distinct from the latter, even though the boundaries between one and the other are commonly known to be fuzzy, and have consequently been very difficult to establish by researchers on the topic to date.

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“Are e-mails written by EFL learners polite? An experimental study on pragmatic performance and age”

The present study analyses possible pragmatic problems that English as a foreign language learners (EFL) with different ages may encounter when writing e-mails to interlocutors with a higher rank. Since e-mail writing is a ‘hybrid’ between oral and written communication, e-mails have been commonly used to see how learners produce the FL pragmatics. Some studies have, in fact, used real e-mails between native and non-native speakers to examine what learners actually produce in such contexts. However, some experimental studies have also been carried out in this line. From a pedagogical perspective, these studies can help us see what the learners’ weaknesses are when writing e-mails, which can later be applied to classroom contexts to overcome possible communicative breakdowns. Therefore, the present study aims at filling two existing gaps of research: first, age effects on e-mail writing; and second, the use of an experimental design for pedagogical purposes.

The participants are 40 Catalan/Spanish EFL learners with a B1 level divided into two age groups: 20 (age 18-20) and 20 (age 30-40). The former group is composed by undergraduates in the first year of their English Studies degree, and the latter consisted of professionals. They had to write an e-mail to a teacher in English, and a month later in their L1. A base-line data of English native speakers was also included (N=20). In order to examine pragmatic production, openings and closings, requests and apologies were analyzed. The e-mails were also given to a group of native judges, who rated them in terms of politeness and pragmatic appropriateness.

The results show differences in terms of age: while undergraduates use more direct requests, very poor openings and closings and no apologies, professionals tend to write more polite e-mails regarding these pragmatic features. Such findings were supported by the native speakers’ perception of politeness. It should be highlighted, though, that the low degree of formality and politeness could be found in both L1 and L2 productions. This suggests that there is a need to focus on e-mail writing in classroom contexts, so as to avoid problems in pragmatic exchanges.
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“Wall interaction practices in Facebook newspaper pages”

Newspaper migration into the internet has brought about many changes as regards news production and consumption. Recent discourse-analytic research has focused on the changing roles of journalists and readers, and examined the emerging interactional practices of public participation. Research has identified discursive processes of ideological (dis)affiliation and negotiation among participants, including positive/negative evaluations of the hosting newspaper and challenges of the journalists’ authority, credibility and trustworthiness (Bou-Franch 2013, Johansson 2014, Neurauter-Kessels 2011, among others).

However, while there is a growing body of research into public participation in online newspapers, little is known of how newspapers deliver news in the social media and how readers engage with newsmakers and other readers in these digital contexts. This paper aims to address this gap by investigating news delivery and participants’ comments in a social networking site, namely, Facebook (Bou-Franch & Garcés-Conejos Blitvich 2015, Ellison et al. 2007, Herring 2013, Page 2014). More specifically, we examine the genre of Facebook wall interactions (Androutsopoulos 2014, Bou-Franch 2015) hosted by newspaper pages. Our study looks into the status updates and comments of a corpus of newspaper wall events, which was analyzed drawing on previous (computer-mediated) discourse analysis research. Results suggest ways in which participation practices unfold and are negotiated therein.

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“Exploring the pragmatics of mediation in online dispute resolution”

Alternative dispute resolution (ADR) is increasingly being used in order to avoid expensive, time-consuming legal proceedings, particularly in areas such as consumer disputes, employment issues and family law. Within ADR, online dispute resolution (ODR) holds considerable potential. It is useful in disputes with an international dimension, since consensual processes avoid conflicts of laws, and it offers benefits in small-scale disputes, since it can be carried out with minimum cost and inconvenience.

Different ODR platforms are now being developed, which fall into two basic categories: negotiating platforms in which all the issues involved have to be reduced to objective categories; and video-based platforms which enable face-to-face communication between two or more parties and a mediator. One example of video-based ODR is the Virtual Mediation Lab (http://www.virtualmediationlab.com/), which allows mediation sessions to take place between parties and mediators across the globe. In addition to video contact connecting the participants, the lab also has a discussion board where the agenda and minutes can be written down, and where the final agreement will be drafted.

Traditional mediation has been the focus of some studies in the area of discourse and pragmatics. For example, Gotti (2014) showed how mediators establish themselves discursively as neutral, balanced, open, positive and non-positional. Regarding facework, Ng (1999) discussed strategies used to preserve positive and negative face in mediation. So far, however, little research exists on the way in which use of online platforms may influence mediation. In other contexts it has been suggested that mediatization (use of different multimedia affordances) may change the social experience of a particular event, or even amplify negative emotions (Madianou 2012), and bring out tensions between the technical and the affective (Wajcman...
However, mediatization effects are not deterministic - people evolve new ecologies of media use as affordances become available (Ito et al. 2010), and media use transforms communication at the same time as communication transforms media (Silverstone 2005). This paper explores the emerging phenomenon of ODR in terms of pragmatics and facework, analysing three online mediation simulations, and addressing the issue of how mediatization influences mediation practices.

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“The pragmatics of computer-mediated communication between South African and Mexican drug traffickers”

South Africa and Mexico are ripe with drug trafficking. The gangs and syndicates running the drug businesses in these two countries collaborate occasionally. Communication between these international drug business partners takes place on social media, being English their main language of communication, mixed with some limited use of Spanish and Afrikaans. The key purpose of these interactions between the South African and Mexican parties is the organisation of their business activities. This study aims at examining how the drug traffickers position each other and themselves regarding their common business interest and how their relationship evolves throughout their interactions. Moreover, it is of interest to look at how they make use of different social media and their affordances. For this, a qualitative analysis of the interaction between two drug traffickers (one South African and one Mexican) on Facebook, Threema and PlayStation 4 was performed.

Computer-mediated communication between these two main informants was studied at various stages of their relationship. Results show that at first the interaction between the South African and Mexican drug traffickers consists of interpersonal negotiations of power. The high risk of the drug business and gang/syndicate membership paired with intercultural frictions causes the two interlocutors to be extremely cautious and, at the same time, to mark their position. As their relationship develops and they gain trust in each other, a shift to interpersonal negotiations of solidarity takes place. In these discursive practices, diverse linguistic strategies are employed not only to create relational effects but also to position each other. The interactants’ discursive activities are also seen as identity practices, through which the two drug traffickers construct identities and their interpersonal relationship.
“Refusing complaints in CMC. A closer look at English, German and Dutch data”

Marketing studies have shown that customer satisfaction in complaint management not only depends on economic fairness (see, a.o. Hess, Ganesan, & Klein 2003, Orsingher et al. 2010), but also on interactional and procedural justice (Mattila and Patterson 2004), i.e. the way in which the complainee is treated and the message is framed and formulated. At the same time, studies like McFarlin and Sweeney (2001) show that the weight that is attached to ‘economic’ or ‘interpersonal’ fairness may be culture-specific, while literature on intercultural pragmatics (Geluykens and Kraft 2003, House 2006, Kraft and Geluykens 2002 and 2004, Tanck 2004 Meyer 2007, Felix-Brasdefer 2012) displays different patterns and different degrees of linguistic sophistication in L1 and L2 linguistic realization of interpersonal stance in cross-cultural and cross-linguistics contexts.

In this paper, we will investigate these aspects in the delicate communicative frame of complaint refusals in three different languages (English, German and Dutch). More specifically, we will focus on the balance between empathic/interpersonal (i.e. people-oriented) and professional/operational (i.e. problem-oriented) stance both on the micro-level of the linguistic realizations and on the macro-level of the different rhetorical components of the complaint refusal as a whole (i.e. the inclusion/exclusion of apologies, economic fairness, claiming responsibility, providing proof and context, etc.).

The analysis is based on a substantial and open source corpus of e-mail sequences from different Belgian multinational companies and involves multidisciplinary approaches, combining ethnographic fieldwork with corpus-based text inquiry, which allows for the contextual enrichment of the quantitative data with employee-, complaint- and customer profiles.

The results show a sharp contrast between theory and practice: while the importance of supportive language and interpersonal attention for customer satisfaction are widely accepted (see above), there is underwhelming evidence of this in the data with fairly little alignment with the customer through expression of regret, gratitude or empathy. In addition, the different sales/language teams also differ from one another in their overall handling of complaints and in levels of directness and distance.
“Superdiversity in multilingual service encounters: side effects of the use of a multilingual, mobile app to communicate with immigrant mothers”¹

This paper is part of a larger research project focused on the design, development and usability testing of a multilingual, mobile app to facilitate the communication between service providers of Kind & Gezin and foreign mothers with limited Dutch proficiency (lower than or equal to A1, CEFR). The app, available on Windows 10 tablets, groups various support tools, such as translation in 5 foreign languages, pictograms, icons, and webcam interpreting.

Next to the development, the aim of the research project is to measure the intrinsic impact of the mobile app on service quality and to gauge practitioner and client satisfaction. As part of the preliminary training for the service providers, we conducted a two-group between-subjects experiment, in which respondents (N =20) were randomly assigned to two conditions: A multilingual service encounter with app, or a multilingual service encounter without app. To simulate real-life multilingual service encounters, Spanish exchange students (with limited Dutch proficiency, CEFR level A1 or lower than A1) were asked to play the part of the immigrant parent and engage with a Dutch-speaking service provider of Kind & Gezin.

The recorded service encounters were analyzed from a micro-analytic perspective using CAQDAS Nvivo10 software. We examined turn-taking, conversational repair, phases of interactions, pauses or hesitations (Goodwin 2000, Sacks et al. 1977, Félix-Brasdefer 2015). Next to interactional features, we also investigated non-verbal communicative behaviour (facial expression, gestures, body positioning), as well as relevant kinesthetic factors (the distance of the participants influenced by the presence or absence of the app). The service quality and client/service providers’ satisfaction surveys were analyzed using independent-samples t-tests, which allowed us to compare the average service quality and client satisfaction levels between service encounters with and without app.

In this paper, we report on two of the observed side effects of this mobile-mediated conversation: modified interactional patterns and emotions (in particular, insecurity). For this part of the analysis, we relied on reflexive interviews with the two service providers involved during which videorecorded excerpts were discussed in detail in order to reconstruct sense-making resources used and emotions experienced.

References


¹ Research project funded by Impulsfonds voor Integratie & Migratie (Impulse Fund for Immigrants).

² Organization that monitors childcare for the Flemish authorities in Belgium.
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“Customer complaints on social media. A discourse-pragmatic analysis”

Discourse-pragmatic studies on complaints -- highly complex ‘face-threatening’ speech acts -- have focused on the discursive and functional features on the macro-level and on the linguistic realizations on the micro-level (e.g. Trosborg 1995, House 2006, Meyer 2007). However, few of these studies have examined written complaints in professional contexts, have worked with naturally occurring data, or have looked into languages other than English (exceptions: Hartford & Mahboob 2004, Geluykens & Kraft 2006, Geluykens 2007). Moreover, very few studies (Meinl 2010, Vasquez 2011, Decock & Spiessens 2016) have investigated complaint situations in computer-mediated communication (CMC). Their research results indicate that CMC complaint (responses) are different (i.e. more direct and more aggravating) from oral, face-to-face complaint (responses).

This paper, which builds on a corpus of customer complaint messages on the public social media pages of selected Northern European and East Asian airline companies, probes further into non-English and authentic CMC complaints. By adapting and complementing previous classifications in the CCSARP-tradition (House and Kasper 1981; Trosborg 1995; Chen et al. 2011), we discuss the strategies or realization patterns that are used to formulate this speech act (set). We attempt to identify the level of directness of these strategies – varying from neutral explanations and expressions of dissatisfaction to explicit performatives, accusations, threats and insults – and look at how directness levels are aggravated or mitigated through internal and external modification. Based on this descriptive analysis of the different (combined) strategies and drawing on (im)politeness theories (e.g. Locher 2010, Dynel 2015), we will discuss communicative trends and patterns in social media complaint messages, with special attention to the question of how customers negotiate transactional and interpersonal goals in formulating their complaint. This focus will be complemented with an intercultural perspective by investigating customer complaints from Northern European and East Asian customers, which will allow us to contribute to the debate on whether it makes sense to speak about an East-West divide (Leech 2005).

Customer complaints on companies’ public social media pages should be seen against the background of Web 2.0, PR 2.0, and a globalized internet community. Our study, last but not least, also allows us to take up this broader view and to discuss the impact of customer engagement and empowerment – customers who can share their complaints with both the company and other stakeholders in an international communicative environment – on the communicative strategies they choose.
Over the last decade, technology (telephone and the Internet) has changed the way people interact. The type of language used in the Internet, emails, chat, discussion forums, Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp is quite close to spoken discourse (Chejnove 2013). According to Locher (2001), online communication is as authentic as offline interaction because it is most of the time symmetric and informal. Even though, online interaction is quite natural and spontaneous, technology allows writers to plan, organize, and check their messages before sending them; thus, they have the opportunity to edit not only for grammar, but also pragmatic clarity and politeness. In the last two years, WhatsApp has become one of the most popular means of instant communication between individuals and the most preferred medium for contact among people who belong to a specific group (university class, parents at school, work). This tool provides the opportunity to send and receive text, audio, and visual messages. Guidelines for writing WhatsApp messages are not available, and people may often be unsure which politeness strategies and language are appropriate. This study addresses WhatsApp communication among native speakers of Spanish in Mexico. A total of 150 WhatsApp messages that contained requests sent by 100 native speakers of Spanish who are members of 5 different groups were analyzed. The researchers examined verbal means of expressing politeness in forms of address, opening and closing formulas, degree of directness and amount of syntactic, lexical/phrasal and external modification used in the WhatsApp requests of Mexican Spanish speakers. The focus was on the selection of a politeness strategy. The results showed that people use both direct and conventionally indirect strategies and a great deal of syntactic modification. Opening and closing sequences occurred in all of the analyzed interactions. Greetings were preferred over deferential forms of address that could indicate a way to show solidarity between interactants. The research study also found that people generally employ a wide variety of both positive and negative politeness strategies to mitigate their requests.
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“Verdad verdadera: Flouting Gricean maxims as telecommunications strategies in advertising”

The mobile market is well saturated with a myriad of devices and cell phone carriers that strive to offer customers the best plans. Cellular communication is a field that is rapidly increasing and demanding more creative and innovative advertising strategies to attract consumers’ attention and lure them away from the competition. The Spanish cell phone company Yoigo launched a series of radio and TV commercials under the general title of “Verdad verdadera” (“The Real Truth”) using children’s voices to utter general statements related to different aspects of life. In its initial campaigns, these statements were not linked to cell phone communications at all. They were simply universal truths about society, people, work, etc., such as “Las mujeres cobran menos” (Women are not paid as much) or “El piso no es tuyo. Es del banco” (Your house is not really yours. It is the bank’s) or some humorous ads such as “Las top model también hacen caca” (Top models also poop) “No ha sido el atasco. Es que te has dormido” (Don’t blame the traffic jam. You just overslept).

Since these campaigns are based on frank expressions of generally unspoken truths that are not directly related to cellular service, Yoigo provides an interesting context in which to apply Grice’s Cooperative Principle (CP) and Conversational Maxims (Grice 1975) in the light of some of the latest critical revisions (Davies 2007; Lindblom 2001). In particular, in this paper I will examine how the Quality and Relevance Maxims are used in order to attract consumers to Yoigo and how certain implicatures are inferred from respecting and violating those maxims. Preliminary results highlight the benefits of the CP for both advertising agencies and consumers alike (Ephratt 2012; Liu 2012) and some of the deceptive approaches and misuses of the CP (Dynel 2015) in the field of telecommunications advertising.

References


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(Un)liking, (un)friending and (un)following: What can small stories analysis tell us about (knowing) participation on social media?

Sociolinguistic and pragmatic studies have recently begun to document the complexity and multiplicity of participation frameworks (e.g. roles, statuses and relations of participants) on social media platforms and the ways in which they are shaped by media affordances (as both possibilities and constraints for action). This is an evolving line of inquiry with much scope for some kind of consensus on key-concepts and modes of analysis. There is also an ongoing discussion about the extent to which interactional and pragmatic modes of analysis, developed for face-to-face, small-party conversations, can be valid for the analysis of online contexts. With this talk, my aim is to contribute insights from my latest work on small stories methods for the analysis of social media participation. Small stories methods are necessary, I claim, for fine-tuning our view of users’ participation, in particular by tapping into the under-represented yet vital links between participation modes that go beyond default facilities (e.g. like, follow, comment) and productive practices of story-making. I will specifically show what working with small stories entails for the analysis of social media with the case of what I call knowing participation on Facebook and YouTube.

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“Written requests in German and Japanese emails”

The observation that email requests written by Japanese learners of German often fail to meet politeness requirements prompted me to conduct research on German and Japanese writing styles. The research questions underlying my study are: “In what ways do German and Japanese email requests differ in terms of their structure, content, and language use?” and “What difficulties do Japanese learners face when writing such emails in their L2 German?”.

In order to describe differences between German and Japanese writing styles, a database consisting of 200 L1 request emails, written by German and Japanese students, was created within an experimental framework. In relation to the second research question, 40 emails written by Japanese students in their L2 German were collected in order to investigate the characteristics of their interlanguage.

Based on findings in text linguistics and interlanguage pragmatics, the formal, structural, and linguistic properties of the L1 and L2 emails were analysed. The analysis aimed to uncover which individual text parts, such as greetings and reasons for the request, are commonly used in the languages under investigation and how they are realised linguistically. Of particular interest was the performance of the request sequence.

The results reveal that L1 German emails structurally adhere strictly to the writing styles of German letters, while Japanese emails are more flexible. At the content level German writers make extensive use of expressions of gratitude and promises of forbearance in order to support their request, while Japanese writers prefer apologies for the imposition and repetitions of the request. Also, German writers express themselves more individually by using creative forms of expression, while Japanese writers prefer using routine formulae.

The L2 German emails indicate transfer of structural and linguistic characteristics of the learners’ L1 Japanese as well as use of target language structures and linguistic forms, which are sometimes inadequately expressed. Given the sensitive nature of making a request, these results
may help to explain, why learners sometimes fail to meet politeness requirements in their L2, and may contribute to developing teaching materials that enable Japanese students to write German emails more appropriately.

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“Online complaint strategies: A contrastive pragmatic study of Malaysian and American customers’ complaints strategies on Facebook”

This paper reports online complaint strategies employed by Malaysian and American customers in expressing their dissatisfaction towards service of an airline company in their respective countries. Studies of customer complaints are associated with the identification and analysis of all aspects involved in the customer response to a product or a service failure which brings about the feeling of dissatisfaction. The act of complaining can be defined as the way to express feelings of discontentment about something. A complaint can be directed to some person, organization or the like. This study, conducted on Malaysian and American customers is a cross-cultural pragmatic study of the speech act of online complaints. Data for this study was gathered from the most visited social-networking site, Facebook. The study intends to look at the significant differences in the expression of online complaints as realized by Malaysian and American Facebook users (customers). Using the taxonomy of complaint strategies proposed by Olshtain and Weinbach (1987) and House and Kasper’s (1981) taxonomy of directness level, the complaint strategies and level of directness of the online customer complaints are examined in this study. Findings show that there are similarities and differences in the realizations of online complaints by Malaysians and Americans. Americans tend to produce complaints which are longer in words as compared to Malaysians. Apart from that, both Malaysian and American customers do not only use the modality markers to mitigate their complaints but they also use these linguistic markers to increase the impact of the complaint towards the complainee. The frequency of the modality markers used in the complaints determine the directness levels of the online complaints produced by Malaysian and American customers on Facebook.
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“Context and pragmatic meaning telephone interpreting”

Community interpreting in Spain is nowadays no longer a field just devoted to on-site interpreters thanks to the appearance of remote interpreters 12 years ago. It is needless to say that remote and telephone interpreting involve a number of new skills that must be acquired. For instance, telephone interpreters do not count on a first impression of the situation before starting to work, as briefing is rarely possible because of a bunch of practical reasons. Thus, building a context and so grasp the pragmatic meaning of the discourse they are interpreting is usually challenging. Professional telephone interpreters, mostly based on their own skills and experience, have developed a set of strategies to cope with this difficulty. We think it is desirable to compile these strategies to provide useful and up-to-date training for telephone interpreters both at initial and ongoing levels.

As part of a joint project that merges academia and enterprise, real telephone interpreter mediated conversations have been analysed in search of these strategies. We bring to this conference a set of examples from our discursive analysis of real telephone interpreter mediated conversations between users and public service providers (staff of hospitals, ambulances, local administration offices, tourism offices, police stations, and the like). Our aim is to isolate and describe the various reactions and solutions applied by interpreters when they work without a context, or when the context suddenly changes due to misunderstanding or contradictory information provided by users and professionals of the public services. The ultimate goal of our research is to elaborate a list of recommendations and training materials for future or novice telephone interpreters.

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“Mind your readers: participation framework and rapport in Airbnb reviews”

Online peer-to-peer marketplaces, that is, those in which individuals interact with other individuals through a website created by a third party, are growing at a rapid rate in various areas (e.g., car sharing, retail, taxi, restaurant and tour guide services, among others). Within this, the most prominent example of tourism-related sharing economy business is Airbnb, “a social website that connects people who have space to spare with those who are looking for a place to stay” (Airbnb website). Since its establishment in 2008, Airbnb has been growing exponentially, with one million guests every month at present. Despite its similarities with other travel websites, Airbnb is a new tourism concept that is not only changing consumption patterns, but also social, interpersonal and communication patterns when travelling, given that being immersed in the culture and keeping in touch with strangers seem to be an added value to the journey itself. However, there are not studies to date that explore neither the communication framework nor any other pragmatic issue that this new type of interaction between host, guest and readers involves.

With this in mind, this work aims to: a) explore the existing communication framework between host and guest through Airbnb website, as well as the similarities and differences with social networks and other travel websites (e.g., TripAdvisor); and b) examine the communicative structure, as well as relational work of online reviews. After examining online reviews and communication with 231 hosts in Brighton, this study reveals that the participation framework of this website is more similar to social media and online forums than to other travel websites, in that the relationship seems to be more important than travel experience. Also, online reviews are not necessarily addressed to other users but to the former host, while reviewers tend to avoid negative evaluations (92,5% of reviews had 4.5 or 5 stars). An in-depth look at 15 interactions
among British users also reveals a desire to enhance rapport through opinion empowerment, concern for self- and other’s face, complex identity construction through multiple users’ interaction, and off-record expression of criticism whenever it comes to recall negative experiences.

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“(Im)Politeness and the negotiation of leadership in student online collaboration”

In this study I look into the linguistic interaction of 64 undergraduate students engaged online collaboration aimed at the completion of a practical task in the field of discourse analysis, using an institutional e-forum at the Complutense University of Madrid, Spain. The students were divided into 17 small groups, and their interaction, recorded through the e-forum history log and consisting in a 42,563-word-long sample, is part of the Discourse Analysis E-Forums (DAEF) corpus (Martínez 2015; Martínez et al. 2015). The focus is on the ways in which (im)politeness intervenes in interactional alignment conductive to the acknowledgment or rejection of one or more individuals’ bids for group leadership. Given the relevance of successful leadership to a learning group’s growth into a multi-agent cognitive system (Dillenbourg et al. 1996), an exploration of the mechanisms whereby participant students negotiate and co-construct leadership in this computer-mediated communication environment can be expected to throw crucial insights into the pragmatics of online collaboration. The analysis is based on the assumption that interactional facework and (im)politeness phenomena are key to identity construction (Garcés-Conejos Blitvich 2013; Georgakopoulou 2013), and that participants in computer-mediated communication dynamically use and respond to the opportunities afforded by the system of language in order to prompt and portray self- and other-evaluation, stance-taking (Du Bois 2007), and intersubjective coordination (Langacker 2008; Verhagen 2005; Verhagen 2007). In my presentation I will briefly review the connections between (im)politeness and identity construction, as well as the basics of intersubjective coordination as a cognitive framework for the study of positioning and stance. Then I will analyse the participant students’ linguistic production, with the aim of exploring the pragmatics of the intersubjective construal of leadership. The analysis suggests that successful bids for the role of leader recurrently involve the use of speech acts such as compliments, while competing participants frequently resort to accusations and indirect disallowance.

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“Let’s see how many of you mother fuckers unfollow me for this”: Presentation of the self and the pragmatic function of the hashtag #sorrynotsorry in non-apologetic Instagram posts

Social media such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram can be seen as “stance-rich” environments (Barton & Lee 2013) whose affordances enable users to engage in constructing identities online. Thus far, research has indicated that self-presentation in media 2.0 exhibits a “positivity bias” (Reineke & Trepte 2014) arising from both social norms in online communities and the technical affordances thereof.

From a pragmatic perspective, positive self-presentation is potentially face-threatening, as the speaker (or microblogger) may suggest that they do not care about the addressee’s feelings (Brown & Levinson 1987: 39). Initial studies of the nature of self-presentation online have documented that it is a highly strategic activity involving a balancing act between attempts to encourage positive impression formation while simultaneously protecting the microblogger against social disapproval and maintaining face (Lee-Won et al. 2014).

The current project contributes to an understanding of the pragmatics of media 2.0 by examining the ways in which Instagram users do face work when posting potentially face-threatening textual and visual discourse. It focuses on images combining positive self-presentation with the hashtag #sorrynotsorry as a form of non-apology marker. It presents the results of a small-scale qualitative study (based on 250 posts from a convenience sample) of the (im-)politeness strategies used in Instagram posts labelled #sorrynotsorry, coupled with a multimodal analysis of the images accompanying them.

The study highlights a wide range of impoliteness strategies while providing evidence of a double-edged use of #sorrynotsorry as both a mitigation and aggravation of the face threat. Overall, the research suggests that the hashtag functions to set a different level of what could be termed “appropriate face threat” in positive self-presentation in media 2.0 through its meta-pragmatic reference to the illocution of the speech act. The results add to an understanding of the nature of self-presentation online and to the pragmatic functions of hashtags on social media, in addition to shedding some light on the new literacies that social media require.

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“Conditions of communication: new technology, old technology and no technology”

By now, there has been a fair amount of research focusing on interpersonal aspects of communication through new technologies. One example is the apparent tendency of CMC to involve acrimony and aggression, a phenomenon which has been investigated empirically (e.g. Avgerinakou 2003, Nishimura 2008) and for which explanatory features - most commonly lack of prosody or paralinguistic cues, indeterminate participation structure and relative anonymity - have been suggested (e.g. Graham 2008, Burgess & Green 2009, Garcés-Conejos Blitvich 2010, O’Driscoll 2013, Bou-Franch & Garcés-Conejos Blitvich 2014).

However, technologies and media do not themselves have agency. No matter what characteristics of communication through email, text messaging, voice messaging, Facebook, twitter and the like are observed, it remains to be determined which are intrinsic to the medium being used, which are encouraged and facilitated by the medium, and which are no more than matters of emerging convention within it.

This paper reports on an ongoing project to itemise all the differing circumstances and conditions of communication applying in different media which can have an influence on the language used, its interpretation and the nature of interaction. This project is inspired by the attempts made so far to itemise features of CMC (e.g. Herring 2007) but guided by Goffman’s (1981) architecture of interaction.

In one sense, then, the project is part of the old attempt (e.g. Hymes 1972) to circumscribe contextual factors. But the challenge of communication through new media is that they foreground and complicate some aspects of situation which, in more traditional media, are relatively straightforward. For example, Goffman’s notions of production format and participation framework need unpacking and elaborating as the new technologies have given us means of interaction in which the process of animation and the constraints of physical space take on a particular importance. Using Goffman’s categories, which were devised chiefly with face-to-face communication and traditional mass media in mind - i.e. without the many means of 2-way dislocated communication which new technologies afford - has the additional advantage of helping us to identify what is new about these new technologies.

References


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“Classical music as a topic of internet communication”

Various forms of Internet communication are perhaps not immediately associated with high culture. However, a number of classical music artists, institutions and events are becoming increasingly popular in social media, chat rooms and blogs, also exploiting their presence there for their own carefully designed purposes. The 17th Frederic Chopin Piano Competition held in was no exception in this respect, and as the organisers have admitted, their presence in the Internet played a major role in popularising the competition. In our study we analyse three forms of Internet communication related to the competition: posts on the official Facebook page, an online chat and a blog by a well-known music critic, with the aim of addressing the following questions:

- What communicative purposes users aim to achieve (sharing information, sharing attitudes, creating bonds, etc.);

- How users create their image (by trying to appear knowledgeable, witty, etc.)

- How much impoliteness or aggression is conveyed.

We set the forms of communication analysed against the characterisation offered in Yus (2011), combined with the application of some speech-act theoretic tools as well. We also confront our findings with a common conception of high culture as invariably accompanied by high standards of social conduct.
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**Gender differences in Computer-mediated communication: the case of controversial topics**

Computer-mediated communication (CMC) pertains to online communication through various people communicate with each other by means of a computer. There are various ways of using CMC, such as emailing, chatting, messaging, conferencing. It is undeniable that CMC constitutes an integral part of our lives through which those who are involved in this type of communication contribute to the creation of a special type of language. There are a number of similarities and differences between face-to-face communication (traditional conversation) and online communication and thus both the former and the latter can influence language use with its own features.

It is an irrefutable fact that there are a number of differences in the speech of men and women. The differences are reflected in many aspects of the language, for instance grammar, pronunciation, vocabulary and many other, such as backchannelling, turn-taking, interrupting, question tags, the use of hedging devices, the topics discussed, etc. In this study we have the intention of focusing on similarities and differences between the language used by both men and women. The language we intend to focus on will be based on the corpus encountered in miscellaneous discussion where both male and female participants express their views on different matters.

**Key words:** computer-mediated communication (CMC), gender differences, discussion forum, emotional language
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“Japanese comics and onomatopoeia: eyetracking study of digital reading behaviours”

The recent advances of new technology have made a significant impact on readers’ engagement, in particular on the reception of digitally published materials. Not only has it provided a new platform for same-language communication, it has also afforded the reduced timeframe and the growing accessibility of Japanese comics (manga) on digital mobile devices to English language countries. The translated target text is now published on the same day as the source text. This poses a particular challenge for the translation of certain objects in manga that are located within the realm of pragmatics, such as onomatopoeia from Japanese into the target language. This study is concerned with the reception of onomatopoeia in the English translation of digital manga (Japanese comics), which is presented as part of aesthetics. It has been argued that onomatopoeia is located on the continuum of showing and saying and as a result, it is notoriously difficult to successfully translate onomatopoeia. As we will demonstrate, interpreting onomatopoeia in manga necessarily involves the interpretation of inputs from the two distinct continuums: the continuum of verbal and non-verbal communication, and the showing and saying continuum. Moreover, the use of gesture controls on mobile reading devices to zoom into the manga page, a previously unavailable behaviour for both paper and computer versions, affords entirely new reading experience for readers of translated manga, allowing for the access for verbal annotation in the target language for the original onomatopoeia in manga, which is both verbal and non-verbal at the same time. That is, the advent of new technologies has changed the interpretation process of digital communicative stimuli.

Using eyetracking technology to determine the level of engagement which the reader of the manga has with onomatopoeia, the aim of this paper is to address an explanatory gap in the accounts of the relationship between digital technology and cognitive interpretation process.

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“Face-strategies in inquiries and price negotiations in Whatsapp and Facebook. Conversations of a Nairobian tattoo artist”

The tattoo as a medium of expressing art and personal preferences has become an “accessory” that many East Africans seek for these days. A Kenyan tattoo artist, who offers tattoos to clients in several East-African countries, receives most of his inquiries via Whatsapp and Facebook. Most of the inquiries include pictures of the tattoo design wanted, so that the artist can easily project the price, duration and modification of the tattoo, if necessary. Due to the areal width of services in four East African countries (Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Rwanda) the medium of communication is mainly English, although in some cases customers approach the artist in Swahili, the East African lingua franca, or Sheng, the Nairobi/ Kenyan youth language, based on Swahili.

How does the artist guarantee politeness towards his clients in the discussions and when offering alternatives to the tattoos they asked for? How do the clients and the artist keep face while negotiating the prices? Are there any requests and negotiation strategies among the clients from the particular East African countries? Using examples from the artist’s multifarious messages in Whatsapp and Facebook, this talk examines the pragmatic strategies used throughout the single conversations.
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“Beyond “emotion icons: an unbiased approach to emoticons on WhatsApp”

Since the beginning of research in computer-mediated communication (CMC), scholars became interested in one of the most peculiar structural features of online language, emoticons. Emoticons are sequences of punctuation marks that imitate facial expressions, actions or objects, such as :) , a schematic representation of a smiley face. Nowadays, instead of these typographic signs, several programs and platforms have adopted emoji, a large standardized set of little graphic images originally created in Japan, which have become very popular. More than 1200 emoji are currently available on WhatsApp, Twitter, and Gmail, among others, and the set is regularly updated.

Most of the studies on emoticons have been guided by the etymology of the word, a combination between emotion and icons, thus considering that emoticons aid to express emotions in CMC or that they generally compensate for the lack of non-verbal cues in an environment where communication is mainly conveyed by written texts. Even though several authors have proposed that emoticons may perform a pragmatic function in CMC, researchers still seem to have troubles to dissociate from the notion of emoticon as emotional markers.

Following a systematic analysis of a corpus of WhatsApp chats, the present paper will consider the multiple functions of two emoji that may be visually related to facial expression of emotions: the smiling face and the crying emoji. By means of a methodology grounded in interactional sociolinguistics (Gumperz, 1982) and informed by conversational analysis (Pomerantz, 1984; Sacks, Schegloff, & Jefferson, 1974), the study will show that emoticons may have a wide range of pragmatic, interactional and contextualizing functions in real WhatsApp interchanges. Results indicate that the pragmatic functions of emoticons prevail over the emotional ones, even for emoji that clearly mimic facial expressions. New direction for the research on these little pictographs are outlined.

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“Lecturer perceptions of im/politeness in student e-mails: a Norwegian perspective”

While it could well be argued that studies of e-mail communication have reached a saturation point (Dürscheid & Frehner 2013), and that e-mail as a genre is actually no longer that new (Barton & Lee 2013), e-mail still remains one of the few forms of communication consistently used in academia. Since a number of studies have shown that the conspicuous lack of clearly defined norms in e-mail communication often results in frustration (e.g. Lewin-Jones & Mason 2014), and that the norms are always locally negotiated (Herring, Stein & Virtanen 2013), an investigation into student-lecturer e-mail communication in a specific context, i.e. a Norwegian university, could still be relevant. Student-lecturer e-mails, especially e-mail requests, have become an important research focus in the past two decades, especially in English as a lingua franca contexts. Student e-mail requests addressed to university staff have been examined on various levels, including: the level of directness and request modification devices (Biesenbach-Lucas 2006; Economidou-Kogetsidis 2011; Hartford & Bardovi-Harlig 1996), forms of address and/or salutations (Bjørge 2007; Economidou-Kogetsidis 2011; Formentelli 2009) as well as different aspects of e-mail content (Chen 2006; Hartford & Bardovi-Harlig 1996) and student and lecturer attitudes to stylistic features of e-mails (Lewin-Jones & Mason 2014). This presentation focuses on a mixed method study to be conducted in winter 2015/16 at a university
in Norway. The aims are to examine university lecturers’ perceptions of the level of impoliteness and inappropriateness in student-lecturer e-mails and investigate the sociopragmatic and pragmalinguistic considerations which influence their evaluations. The study participants will include both native and non-native speakers of English, to reflect an increasingly international higher education environment in Norway. The data will be gathered by means of two data collection methods: rating scales and focus group interviews with faculty members. It is hoped that the findings will contribute to a better understanding of the factors already investigated in previous research and potentially shed light on certain new sociopragmatic and pragmalinguistic considerations influencing lecturers’ perceptions of student e-mails in the Norwegian context.

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Relevance theory, as a framework for studying utterance interpretation, deals with ostensive acts of communication. According to Sperber and Wilson (1986/95: 53-4), ‘[s]omeone who engages in any kind of ostensive behaviour intentionally draws some attention to himself’ and by doing so makes manifest the assumption that ‘he is trying to be relevant’. An addressee is entitled to assume that the communicator is aiming at optimal relevance, and this assumption plays a crucial role in the interpretation process. Online communication and social media have created new ways for us to interact and communicate, and this paper considers some of these in relation to the principles and assumptions of relevance theory. For example, users of social networking sites have the option to publically ‘like’ or ‘favourite’ somebody else’s post, and social media also makes it very easy to share or re-broadcast (for example, by retweeting) somebody else’s utterance. If we take these interactions to be acts of ostensive communication, then they raise expectations of relevance in the audience. However, they do so without necessarily encoding any additional conceptual content beyond the original post, and they function in a discourse context where the communicator may not know or have any control over who the audience will be. I draw on ideas related to the ‘imagined audience’ (Marwick & boyd, 2010) and ‘context collapse’ (Wesch, 2009), to explore how communicators tailor their online communicative behaviours to these unpredictable discourse contexts. Using Sperber and Wilson’s notion of ‘interpretive representation’ (Wilson & Sperber, 2012: 218), I consider how these new forms of interaction might achieve optimal relevance.

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“Comprehension of communicative multimodal content in Japanese TV programmes by language learners”

Recent research in pragmatics has shown an increased interest in the multimodal character of media. Similarly, Relevance Theory has been applied to multimodal media products (Clark 2013; Sasamoto 2014; Yus 2003). This paper aims to add to this existing body of knowledge by focusing on how the difference in language proficiency relates to the interpretation process of multimodal discourse. There has been research on the use of subtitles and language learning, but most of this has been directed to non-Asian languages. This study will therefore concentrate on Japanese and will take a further look at a particular type of intralingual text on screen in Japanese variety shows called telop or impact captions (Park 2009).

Japanese variety shows give language learners the opportunity to be exposed to natural meaningful communication in Japanese, but the telop that accompany the multimodal stimuli on screen are unusually colourful, dynamic and big. This means that its interaction with other stimuli and its effects on comprehension could very well prove to be different from what previous research has shown on non-Asian languages (O’Hagan 2013; Sasamoto 2014). Although teachers and researchers have increasingly taken interest in the possibilities for incorporating audiovisual material into the foreign language classroom, not much is known about how outlandish text on screen like telop may affect its reception by language learners of Japanese.

This paper will report on empirical data collected through eye tracking and questionnaires with language learners of Japanese. This will not only give insights into the gaze pattern of viewers who do not have Japanese as their mother tongue, but will also shed light on how they make sense of multimodal content in a foreign language without necessarily having a good command of that language.

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“Negotiation of professional identity in Polish medical weblogs”

The ecologies of social media environments have created challenging spaces for the construction and exchange of medical knowledge, and for negotiation of medical professionals’ identity. Similarly to other specialist weblogs, the medical weblog genre serves to realize the objectives of educating the non-specialist audience, of the popularization of medical knowledge, and also of self-expression. Following Bucholtz and Hall’s (2005) socio-cultural linguistic approach to identity construction, this paper aims to explore the patterns of relational work in blogs run by Polish medical professionals. The focus on the discursive patterns of relational work allows us to study how medical bloggers construct their professional identity, authority and responsibility in the hybrid institutional context of the digital medium, and how they negotiate their relations with patients. A pilot study has revealed that medical professionals position themselves as expert advice givers who are willing to share knowledge with their non-specialist audience. For instance, they authenticate their expertise through references to their own experience and medical practice. In this way, they also aim to minimise the distance between the patients through solidarity and empathy. In general, the study proves that medical bloggers treat their online identity, regardless of whether it is anonymous or not, as an extension of their offline professional self, crafted carefully in order to maintain their good reputation in the potentially threatening and malleable communicative context.

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“Yes We Scan and the Grass Mud Horse: puns as a weapon against censorship in cyberspace”

Internet surveillance and censorship are on the rise across the globe as undemocratic and democratic regimes alike increase their attempts to monitor and control what goes on in cyberspace. Chinese Golden Shield Project, described ironically as the Great Firewall of China, has been in operation for over a decade, while the American clandestine surveillance program called PRISM was launched in 2007. Powerless or merely indifferent, most web users tend to accept such measures, which are ostensibly established to protect them from cybercrime and terrorism. Some web users, however, find ways to express their outrage at what they see as excesses of power. Somewhat surprisingly, one of the means they resort to in their struggle against blocking the free flow of information is punning, the practice of using one linguistic
form to link two or more meanings. For instance, to vent their fury over the US government scanning the Internet, members of Germany’s Digital Society Association contrived the slogan Yes We Scan, a pun which ridicules the proud Yes We Can ‘battle cry’ of Barrack Obama’s presidential campaign of 2008. The mythical creature dubbed Mud Grass Horse, whose seemingly innocuous name is homophonic with a Chinese profanity, is another poignant example of pun-based subversion and a symbol of defiance against internet censorship.

Drawing on a handful of pragmatic theories, I will discuss these and other examples in order to demonstrate how punning can be used as an effective communicative strategy in the struggle for free speech in cyberspace. Applying the analytic tools of Sperber and Wilson’s Relevance Theory (1986/1995) I will show how it is possible to imbue a single string of words with diverse and sometimes conflicting meanings. Applying Culpeper’s (2005) model of intentional impoliteness I will show how punning can allow language users to align against a common foe. Finally, drawing on various theories of verbal humor I will demonstrate how key features of punning utterances make them an effective vehicle for what those in power are particularly fearful of: derision.

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“Constructing objects through mediation: The case of prenatal ultrasound visits”

Mediated communication research has traditionally had, as a first object of study, communication through ‘media’, such as television, the written press, advertising, etc. Nowadays, given fast-increasing technological developments entering the private as well as the professional life of individuals, the scope of communication research has expanded exponentially. The way humans communicate among each other in complex technological environments becomes an interesting object of study, both to understand how individuals adapt and respond to such environments, and to verify and improve technology itself.

This paper deals with ‘mediation’ in terms of how individuals construct an ‘object’ that is accessible only through the medium of others (objects and people). In particular, it analyses a corpus of prenatal ultrasound visits video-recorded in a French Hospital. In such visits, two kinds of mediation take place as far as the foetus is concerned: a ‘technological’ one (the screen in which the images of the foetus captured by the ultrasound scanner are visible and the midwife’s written transcript of that data), and a ‘human’ one (the pregnant woman’s description of her own feelings together with the midwife’s oral description of the ultrasound images and graphic data). The analysis aims to show how these different mediating activities are organised in interaction and how they contribute to the construction of the mediated ‘object’, i.e. the foetus. More precisely, it will show how participants orient towards the mediated object: as segmented body parts, as images, as a baby, and so on (on the perception of foetal images in ultrasound prenatal visits see also Nishizaka 2003, 2014). It also aims at showing how individuals adapt and shape their interaction in a technologically rich environment.

The data are analysed following the methodological approach of Conversation Analysis (Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson 1974), by taking into account both verbal and non-verbal communication (participants’ visual activity, such as gaze, gesture, body movement, and object manipulation).

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“The use of face-flattering politeness strategies on Facebook”


For this purpose, a corpus of posts of twenty users (ten men and ten women) selected in this social network has been qualitatively analyzed following the taxonomy described by Albelda (2005), which distinguishes between direct and indirect face-flattering politeness. As regards direct face flattering politeness, we focused on main speech acts and, particularly, on linguistic and paralinguistic code, while for indirect face-flattering politeness attention has been paid to other strategies like showing interest, agreement and using jokes.

As general conclusions it can be highlighted the relevance of face flattering politeness among private profiles in Facebook. This is revealed by the prevalence of ritualized face flattering speech acts, which don’t put receiver’s face at risk. Also, it has been observed the variety of resources of intensification (both linguistic and paralinguistic) in order to express this sort of politeness.

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“The role of ICT in the pragmatics of foreign language teaching/learning at technical schools of higher education”

The latest Federal State Educational Standard lays emphasis, among other incentives to make the process of teaching/learning a foreign language more effective, on the wide use of Interactive Computer Technologies (ICT), which is quite in line with the general trends and practices in all other spheres of social life.

This approach is believed to compensate for the reduced time allocated for classroom activities and the increased volume of students’ independent academic studies. As a result, of the main three aspects - pedagogic, cognitive and pragmatic - which form the complex strategy of teaching/learning a foreign language, the latter, i.e. pragmatic, comes to the forefront when training would-be engineers capable of adequate social interaction in situations of cross-cultural communication.

In theory pragmatic aspect in the context of teaching/learning a foreign language is supposed to provide students with the level of language knowledge, necessary to be used not only to get acquainted with ethnic, linguistic and cultural values of another country, but also to make practical use of the language skills when dealing with foreign partners on professional level in future. In practice, however, the acquired level of command of the language often results in failures on pragmatic level when mistakes made by foreign learners hamper the process of full-scale communication between representatives of different cultures.

The up-to-date level of development of the Internet and multimedia technologies offers a wide range of choices to facilitate the process of teaching future specialists the pragmatic rules of communication. The paper will consider some of the activities based on the Internet resources among which are the following: listening to authentic dialogues with pauses to anticipate the
following replies; watching and listening to authentic conversations with broken rules of etiquette and searching ways of correcting the pragmatic failures in communication; studying the peculiarities of communication between natives through watching video fragments and comparing them with the ones in the students’ own culture; using Skype technology the students interview the native speaker, recoding the process and further analyzing it from pragmatic point of view.

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“Online identity: A (non)propositional account”

In recent research, I have proposed an extension of the relevance-theoretic (and also cyberpragmatic) scope of research in order to account for elements of communication that do not have a direct link to the relevance of the information being transferred among Internet users, but are important to determine the eventual (ir)relevance of the act of communication as a whole. Using the relevance-theoretic terminology, ostensive acts of communication online would be covered by the communicative principle of relevance, whereas other effects and constraints, not directly linked to this information transfer, but which matter in the eventual (dis)satisfaction with the outcome of communication, would be covered by the more general cognitive principle of relevance. In this paper, I will show how this extension of research is challenging, since it entails incorporating into the analysis conclusions from other research areas such as sociology, anthropology, ethnography, etc. But, at the same time, this extension offers a nice potential for explaining one of the most slippery objects of research in Internet studies: online identity and its discursive shaping or management.
“Facebook vs. Student Zone: Two Learning Platforms in an EFL School”

The merits of Facebook in teaching/learning English as a foreign or second language have been explored in a considerable number of academic publications. The present paper reports the findings of a qualitative study which has three main aims. First, we consider whether the use of Facebook as a learning platform in an English language centre offering presessional English classes to prospective university students from overseas has the merits described in previous research. Second, we consider how the Facebook as a learning platform compares with the school’s in-house Student Zone. We investigate these questions by monitoring (through observation and assessed work) the performance and perceptions of two groups of students (15 students in each group) from the Middle East (all native speakers of Arabic) at the intermediate level of proficiency over a period of several weeks. Third, we interpret the merits and the shortcomings of each of the two platforms in terms of the pragmatic aspects of the interaction between the students, the teacher and each of the two learning platforms. This part of the study draw on the cognitive framework provided by Sperber and Wilson’s (1986/1995) Relevance Theory, which we argue provides the basis for a natural account of the relation between the social and the cognitive aspects of the interaction between learners, teachers and learning platforms.