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Constructing immediacy at a distance: the comments section of online blogs

This paper investigates the comments section of blogs with regard to their nature as a dialogical, involved, expressive and affective, but graphically coded, public and distal discourse type. This type of digital interaction between users and bloggers allows for immediacy at a distance. Hence, blogs and their comments sections represent a fine choice to discuss technologically mediated communication (TMC) from the perspective of orality and literacy.

This paper embraces the view that differences between ‘written’ and ‘spoken’ are non-binary and non-linear, but multi-dimensional. The non-binary nature of ‘spoken’ and ‘written’ has been noted since the late 1960s, also with the advent of genre descriptions. Biber’s seminal, emic *Variation across Speech and Writing* (1988) stresses the multidimensional nature of this textual variation. Biber proposes an analysis of 67 different features that group into six dimensions such as “informational versus involved” or “narrative vs non-narrative” (1988).

Blogs represent a mass phenomenon in TMC with a specific organization of its discourse (Frobenius / Gerhardt 2017). After having focused on the construction of veganism in food blogs (Gerhardt 2019, to appear a) and the use of ‘no-X’ (e.g. *gluten free*) references in their comments section (Gerhardt to appear b), I would like to analyse the comments section with regard to orality and literacy focusing on features such as tense or pronoun use (Biber 1988), but also TMC practices such as referencing across posts or the use of emojis.

References

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