

COMPTE RENDUS/REVIEWS

MAJID KHOSRAVINIK (ed.), *Social Media and Society: Integrating the Digital with the Social in Digital Discourse*, Amsterdam, John Benjamins, 2023, 210 p.

This volume, part of the *Discourse Approaches to Politics, Society, and Culture* book series, extends the evolving research framework of Social Media Critical Discourse Studies (SM-CDS) and proposes a fresh interdisciplinary approach that combines digital and discursive analysis. Moreover, it aligns with previous research (KhosraviNik and Unger 2016; KhosraviNik 2017; Esposito and KhosraviNik 2023) and applies the concepts of Critical Discourse Studies to the contemporary digital world. Social media is a many-to-many model in which users consume, create, and distribute discourse, unlike past models of one-way mass communication. The traditional view of discursive power is called into question, since social media can make it more dispersed. However, certain algorithms and social conventions that may be platform-specific also regulate discursive power in online communication.

Each of the ten chapters of the volume addresses different aspects of digital discourse. In Chapter 1, KhosraviNik sets the main argument and emphasizes the need to include digital affordances in social analysis to consider emerging communication patterns. The author first assesses traditional models of discourse and power, and then demonstrates how digital participatory environments have influenced these frameworks. KhosraviNik considers that the classical distinctions between mass and interpersonal communication are no longer adequate to explain the complex nature of social media discourse. Instead, he considers Social Media Communication (SMC) as a hybrid model that combines top-down (elite/media-driven) and bottom-up (user-generated) discursive practices. He also points out that digital discourse is both informative and deeply emotional. Social media platforms encourage public engagement through reactions, shares, and comments, which further generate emotional and polarized discourse. This also influences public opinion by prioritizing virality over deliberation.

After establishing the theoretical foundation, Chapter 2 by Esposito and KhosraviNik provides the methodological framework for SM-CDS, introducing the research tools for analyzing digital distribution processes. The authors review the relationship between discourse, social structures, and digital contexts, and introduce three methods to complement qualitative discourse analysis: Social Network Analysis, Sentiment Analysis, and Digital Ethnography. The chapter also highlights the importance of multimodal analysis since digital discourse includes visual and interactive elements in addition to text.

The following chapters expand on this methodological framework and demonstrate how SM-CDS takes into consideration the factors that shape digital discourse, including language, user interactions, and platform constraints. The authors contend that platform rules, monetization tactics, algorithmic design, and corporate interests have a significant impact on how meaning is created on digital platforms and frequently override user preferences. For example, Peng (Chapter 3) studies digital discriminatory discourse in Chinese news portals and unveils how locative IP-address functions amplify regional disparities. In Chapter 4, Sinatra discusses how social media platforms regulate discourse using algorithmic filtering to determine which stories are visible and which are suppressed. The author addresses the relationship between digital infrastructure and ideological spread based on a Kuwaiti YouTube ad. The findings suggest that platforms boost high-engagement content, which favors emotional or sensational discourse over logical argumentation.

Boukala and Serafis (Chapter 5) research nationalism on contemporary Greek social media platforms and argue for an ethnographic approach to digital political discourse. Their analysis of the dispute over the name “Macedonia” combines discourse studies, anthropology, and digital ethnography. Farkas and Xia (Chapter 6) consider three case studies of disinformation campaigns (the Russian Internet Research Agency, fake Muslim Facebook pages, and far-right conspiracy theories disguised as tabloid news), focusing on the performative and confrontational aspects of fake news discourses. The authors successfully show how platform architecture encourages the fast spread of misleading content through an advertising-driven business model that aims to generate reactions.

Borowski’s examination of Polish non-elite digital political discourse (Chapter 7) extends the SM-CDS framework and looks at linguistic creativity. His analysis reveals that platform-specific language structures enable narratives driven by ideology and thus certain messages are concealed. This characterizes the relationship between digital affordances and discursive power.

In Chapter 8, Smith analyzes anti-racist online activism in New Zealand. The author deals with user engagement in the comments section of YouTube videos and demonstrates how counterspeech strategies such as humor, factual rebuttals, and moral appeals offer ways to resist online hate speech.

Tokgöz Şahoğlu (Chapter 9) compares sexist discursive practices in the #MeToo and #SenDeAnlat (i.e., tell your story) movements and brings to light implicit gendered discrimination. The author presents linguistic choices (e.g., the use of overt sexist language) in each movement as either supporting or challenging patriarchal norms. This further illustrates how traditional gender roles are digitally reproduced. Moreover, she identifies patterns of victim-blaming and resistance, and shows how discursive framings form public perceptions of gender-based violence.

Finally, Pruden (Chapter 10) continues the feminist perspective and studies online fan discourses on gender representation in *Doctor Who*. She investigates how Twitter users created opposing narratives surrounding the casting of Jodie Whittaker as the first female Doctor. The study focuses on the engagement of fan communities in discursive battles that combine entertainment with ideological war, uncovering deeper societal tensions about diversity and inclusion in the media.

Methodologically, the chapters use both qualitative and computational approaches to reflect the complexity of digital discourse. While the book successfully integrates digital methodologies, some chapters (e.g., 5, 7, and 9) rely more on traditional discourse analysis, which limits their engagement with the advantages of technology.

Drawing on previous research – (in particular) Fairclough’s dialectical-relational approach, Wodak’s discourse-historical method, and van Dijk’s socio-cognitive framework in critical discourse analysis – the book firmly situates itself within critical discourse analysis while putting forward methodological innovations. A key innovation is Techno-Discursive Analysis, which looks into how algorithmic curation, engagement mechanisms, and platform governance affect discourse production and visibility. In addition, the book introduces the concept of digital contextualization, which takes into account the transition from one-to-many to many-to-many communication models, the fluidity of authorship, and the interdependence of online and offline discourse.

The book progresses from theoretical perspectives to empirical case studies that demonstrate the principles of SM-CDS. The studies in this volume extend previous research in digital discourse analysis by providing new insights into the role of digital affordances in meaning-making. While social media discourse has been the object of previous investigations (e.g., Androutsopoulos 2014 and Zappavigna 2022), but this volume concentrates on the connection between digital architecture and CDS. Additionally, it builds on Herring’s (2010) Web Content Analysis by including a discourse analysis approach to the political economy of platforms.

Social Media and Society is a significant contribution to the field of digital discourse studies. The book advances the integration of digital and social dimensions in CDS by proposing a framework for analyzing contemporary online communication. Despite minor inconsistencies in methodological

engagement, the volume is an important scholarly resource for researchers studying the dynamics of discourse in digital spaces.

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ERMIDA ISABEL (ed.), *Hate Speech in Social Media. Linguistic Approaches*, London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2023, 443 p.

Few research outputs give a definition of hate speech, even if the works in question make attempts to reveal its mechanisms and its relation to its counterpart – freedom of expression (Sellars 2016). UNESCO (2019: 1) defines hate speech as

any kind of communication in speech, writing or behaviour, that attacks or uses pejorative or discriminatory language with reference to a person or a group on the basis of who they are, in other words, based on their religion, ethnicity, nationality, race, colour, descent, gender or other identity factor.

Hate speech has been widely discussed in academic research across various disciplines – legal studies, social sciences, ethics, philosophy, computer science, linguistics – with each offering distinct approaches. The most recent research in linguistics highlights the need for terminological clarity (hate speech is not the substitute of offensive, aggressive, rude, impolite, abusive or insulting speech) and focuses on the linguistic and contextual features of hate speech (for example, Culpeper 2021; Guillén-Nieto 2023).

The volume *Hate Speech in Social Media. Linguistic Approaches* constitutes a product of dissemination of the NETLANG project; it is the result of the project’s final conference, of which it features contributions from both project members and participants. The main aim of the project was “to understand how user-generated content in social media expresses hate – i.e. prejudice and

discrimination – against groups that are disadvantaged, be it in social, political, economic, legal, historical, physical, or symbolic terms" (p. 15). The corpus contains 50.5 million words of hate speech in English (43 million words) and Portuguese (the remaining 7.5 million words) that are freely available online. The online corpus was selected from the comment boards of YouTube, along with news sites in both English – *The Metro*, *The Daily Express*, and *The Daily Mail* – and Portuguese – *O Público*, *Sol*, and *Observador*. A keyword-based tool, NetAC, was developed to automatically classify comments according to type of prejudice. Following data collection, essential pre-processing tasks (tokenization, part-of-speech tagging) were performed to enable further computational and linguistic analysis. Seven of the volume's chapters present analysis of the data collected during the above-mentioned project. As a consequence, a key aim of the book is to provide a valuable dataset for linguistic and social analysis.

Ermida (2023) reiterates the perspective of Carr & Hayes (2015: 8) on social media which is defined as “‘Internet-based channels of masspersonal communication’ which ‘derive value primarily from user-generated content’ and allow users to ‘opportunistically interact and selectively self-present’” (Ermida 2023: 4).

In general, online platforms have become a medium of propagation of hate speech, which (often) surfaces as chauvinism, discrimination, oppression, etc. It attracts followers and creates victims through attacks, insults, humiliation, dehumanization, marginalization, disparagement, prejudice, etc., on one hand, as well as through silence, and isolation, on the other. Bystanders (i.e., people who hear hate speech) are also affected, even if indirectly: they play an important role because they assimilate biased messaging – sometimes without even realizing it – and might later repeat it (Assimakopoulos 2020; O'Driscoll 2020). They ultimately receive the hate originally aimed at someone else, while also being influenced by it. Therefore, a “contamination effect” (p. 5) may arise, whereby hate speech is spread like an “epidemiological disease” (see also Sperber 1996).

The volume is organized in four major parts. The first part contains an introduction to hate speech (“Introduction: Online Hate Speech – Object, Approaches, Issues”), along with the first two chapters (all written by the editor, Isabel Ermida). The first chapter (“Building and Analysing an Online Hate Speech Corpus: The NETLANG Experience and Beyond”) presents a perspective on the evolution of the linguistic approach to the above-mentioned phenomenon; this includes the approaches of various subfields of linguistics, from semantics, pragmatics, critical discourse analysis, cognitive linguistics, morphosyntax, socio-cognitivism, to various domains influenced by social media critical discourse, such as impoliteness, argumentation, or humor studies. All these domains serve as tools in the analysis undertaken by the authors. Additionally, most chapters adopt a computational linguistic design and corpus-based methodology (p. 14). The second chapter (“Distinguishing Online Hate Speech from Aggressive Speech: A Five-Factor Annotation Model”) proposes a five-factor annotation model to identify hate speech based on classic communication theory and updated linguistic insights. The model is applied to examples from the NETLANG corpus (concerning sexism, racism, and ageism) and is accompanied by further linguistic analysis.

The following three parts focus on different linguistic phenomena: part II (chapters 3–6) explores structural and explicit features like syntactic and morphological structures, part III (chapters 7–10) focuses on lexical and stylistic aspects that often convey hate implicitly through word choice and rhetoric, and part IV (chapters 11–14) presents/offers interactional elements that illustrate the pragmatic dynamics of online exchanges.

Part II, “Structural Patterns in Hate Speech”, includes four chapters focused on recurring grammatical structures that act as hate markers in the corpus. These include regular expressions (see an example at page 96), verbs in the first person, demonstrative determiners, along with specific compounds and syntactic patterns. This section highlights the significance of form and grammar in hate speech detection. The authors – Idalete Dias and Filipa Pereira (chapter 3: “Improving NLP Techniques by Integrating Linguistic Input to Detect Hate Speech in CMC Corpora”), Ylva Biri, Laura Hekanaho, and Minna Palander-Collin (chapter 4: “First-Person Verbal Aggression in YouTube Comments”), Joana Aguiar and Pilar Barbosa (chapter 5: “Emotional Deixis in Online Hate

Speech”), Eckhard Bick (chapter 6: “Derogatory Linguistic Mechanisms in Danish Online Hate Speech”) – demonstrate how/show that functional elements like determiners and conjunctions, as well as recurrent syntactic structures, offer valuable cues for identifying potentially harmful sequences in text, and represent an underexplored yet promising area for future research.

In part III, “Lexical and Rhetorical Strategies in the Expression of Hate Speech”, Liisi Laineste and Władysław Chłopicki (chapter 7: “Humorous Use of Figurative Language in Religious Hate Speech”), Vahid Parvaresh and Gemma Harvey (chapter 8: “Rhetorical Questions as Conveyors of Hate Speech”), Matthew Bolton, Matthias J. Becker, Laura Ascone, and Karolina Placzynia (chapter 9: “Enabling Concepts in Hate Speech: The Function of the Apartheid Analogy in Antisemitic Online Discourse About Israel”), and Lucyna Harmon (chapter 10: “Hate Speech in Poland in the Context of the War in Ukraine”) explore how hate can be expressed covertly through specific vocabulary choices and stylistic strategies. The latter include metaphor, irony, presuppositions, mock politeness, rhetorical questions, and humor, which are often used to mask hateful intent and to avoid censorship.

In part IV, “The Interactional Dimension of Hate Speech: Negotiating, Stance-Taking, Countering”, the authors – Rita Faria (chapter 11: “Stance-Taking and Gender: Hateful Representations of Portuguese Women Public Figures in the NETLANG Corpus”), Jan Chovanec (chapter 12: Negotiating Hate and Conflict in Online Comments: Evidence from the NETLANG Corpus”), Kristina Pahor de Maiti, Jasmin Franza, and Darja Fišer (chapter 13: “Linguistic Markers of Affect and the Gender Dimension in Online Hate Speech”), and Jūratė Ruzaitė (chapter 14: “Counteracting Homophobic Discourse in Internet Comments: Fuelling or Mediating Conflict?”) – examine how hate speech meanings are shaped through online interactions (analysing misogynistic hate speech, anti-social discourse, conflict talk, gender-based hate speech, counterspeech). This section explores how users negotiate, take stances, and respond to others in social media conversations, highlighting the dynamic and reactive nature of hate speech in digital settings.

The volume is the result of a collaborative endeavor, born from the shared efforts of individuals with aligning research interests.

The scholars involved work across diverse but interconnected fields such as sociolinguistics, pragmatics, discourse analysis, corpus linguistics, digital humanities, computer-mediated communication, computational linguistics, and natural language processing; they are united by a shared interest in how language constructs, reflects, and perpetuates social ideologies, particularly in online and (other) media contents. Their interdisciplinary expertise and common focus on the linguistic mechanisms of hate speech provide the foundation for this collective volume, which examines discourse through a nuanced, linguistically-informed lens.

The volume reflects a “polymorphous character” (p. 18) through its multilingual and multicultural scope, analyzing hate speech in English, Portuguese, Danish, Lithuanian, Persian, Polish, and Slovenian. It addresses diverse geopolitical contexts, such as anti-immigrant discourse in Denmark, and tensions between neighboring countries like Poland and Ukraine, or Iran and Afghanistan. The analyses vary in themes (e.g., sexism, racism, nationalism, antisemitism) and methodologies, and employ different analytical approaches and theoretical frameworks.

Beyond the main objective – i.e., understanding the phenomenon of hate speech in social media – through the analysis proposed by the volume contributors, it becomes easier to detect, control, and regulate the phenomenon through antidiscrimination policies. Thus, the greatest value of the book lies in the description of the phenomenon of hate speech and of its linguistic realization, for example, evasive rhetoric and other stylistic choices. Furthermore, the bilingual corpus represents a valuable tool for further research, even beyond the scope of the original research project.

Another merit of this book lies in its linguistic perspective on authentic language use. All chapters analyze real, user-generated content openly posted online, without editing its original wording. This includes insults, slurs, swear words, and other linguistic peculiarities as they naturally occur. The book thus offers a genuine, unfiltered view of hate speech through the lens of rigorous linguistic analysis.

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VILLY TSAKONA, *Exploring the Sociopragmatics of Online Humor*,
Amsterdam/Philadelphia, John Benjamins, 2024, 263 p.

In the context of current research on humor from a sociopragmatic perspective, works such as *Metapragmatics of Humor* (Ruiz-Gurillo ed. 2016), *Conversational Humour and (Im)politeness* (Sinkeviciute 2019), and *The Linguistics of Humor* (Attardo 2020) provide essential theoretical and applicative foundations for understanding humor as a contextualized discursive act shaped by social norms, speaker intentionality, and (im)politeness strategies. These contributions support a relational and cognitive-pragmatic approach to humor, particularly in face-to-face and institutional interactions.

Within this research framework, the volume *Exploring the Sociopragmatics of Online Humor* distinguishes itself by expanding and refining this analytical approach in the field of digital communication. The work represents a significant contribution to sociopragmatic studies of humor by emphasizing the role of context in the production, interpretation, and communicative success of online humor. The complexity of Tsakona's approach lies in several key elements of her work: (i) the analysis of semiotic differences between serious and humorous representations of social events; (ii) the investigation of audience responses and the elaboration of criteria for the success or failure of humor; (iii) the highlighting of the intertextual dimension of humorous discourse; and (iv) the conceptualization of humor as a form of metapragmatic commentary, an evaluative discursive strategy, or even a rhetorical weapon with discriminatory potential. As such, the volume addresses a significant gap in the literature at a time when digital environments are fundamentally reshaping the forms, functions, and norms of humor.

At the same time, this book naturally integrates the lines of research already established in Villy Tsakona's earlier research – *Recontextualizing Humor* (2022), *The Dynamics of Interactional Humor* (2018, with Jan Chovanec), and *Studies in Political Humour* (2011, with Diana Elena Popa) –, offering a coherent continuation of her scholarly interest in humor as a contextualized discursive phenomenon with ideological, educational, and socio-political dimensions. Her most recent contribution not only reinforces but also updates a unified theoretical framework capable of representing the role of humor as a complex means of social negotiation, critical expression, and identity construction.

The work is divided into seven chapters, the first offering a theoretical point of view on the state of the art in humor research. The following five chapters articulate several analyses of various forms of humor, and the last chapter offers the author's concluding remarks. The volume also includes an introductory section, an impressive list of references, and a useful index of authors and subjects, which complete the rich scientific apparatus presented throughout the book.

The first chapter, *Humor and context within the (socio)pragmatic theories of humor* (p. 10–37), investigates the interplay between humor and context within pragmatic theories. In the first section, the author summarizes the main linguistic approaches to humor (Raskin 1985; Attardo 1994), then gradually introduces the most recent studies on the role of *context* in humor research (Filani 2017; Chovanec and Tsakona 2018; Attardo 2020), its *evaluation and reception* (Alba-Juez 2016; Ruiz-Gurillo 2016), and the *analytical dimensions* of humor (Tsakona 2019).

The second chapter, *Humorous and non-humorous interpretations of attempts at humor – or why humor may fail* (pp. 39–60), focuses on variation in how attempts at humor are interpreted, demonstrating that their success or failure is determined by sociopragmatic, cultural, and contextual factors. The analysis is grounded in the perspective of metapragmatic indicators (pp. 41–46) and the *Discourse Theory of Humor* (pp. 51–52). For instance, the case study on online reactions to an educational event featuring therapy dogs (pp. 55–65) highlights how humor is negotiated and challenged in the online public sphere. Some users deride the event through satirical posts and memes, emphasizing the perceived incongruity, while others defend it by referencing international studies and examples.

Chapter 3, *Humor as metapragmatic commentary on language use – or how people attempt to regulate language use through humor* (p. 66–102), examines how internet memes found on the internet function as a means of disseminating metapragmatic stereotypes of 'correct' or 'appropriate' language use. The author's analysis traces how Greek memes promote *inappropriate connotations* (p. 92–93), *uncommon and unusable translation equivalents* (p. 93–94), *lower or higher inappropriate style* (p. 94–96), *'bad' English* (p. 96–97) and *informal versus formal Greek expressions* (p. 97–98), thus highlighting the role of humor in sanctioning language and reinforcing dominant linguistic norms, as well as its ideological impact on linguistic purism.

The concept of 'liquid racism', as proposed by Weaver (2016), serves as the key concept in Chapter 4, entitled *Humorous ambiguity – or why humor may engender diverse and contradictory interpretations*. In this section, the ambiguity of humorous discourse is discussed, with a focus on how humor can lead to different and often contradictory interpretations. The corpus consists of a dataset of satirical news from Greek websites (63 texts published between September 2012 and September 2021), used to analyze how humor can blur the boundary between racism and anti-racism. The conclusion reached is that humor can disguise and normalize stereotypes and social inequalities, especially regarding migrants.

Chapter 5, *Evaluation and intertextuality in humorous discourse – or how speakers create social groups through humor*, explores one of the most discussed sociopragmatic functions of humor: its ability to foster social inclusion and exclusion through critical evaluation and intertextuality. The chapter also includes the study *Online humor and the Timișoara crisis* (pp. 135–147), which analyzes critical and humorous discourses related to the rerouting of a Ryanair flight to Timișoara, revealing how intertextuality is employed to reinforce group identities. It examines how humor not only critiques but also recontextualizes serious discourse, transforming it into a more engaging and memorable form of social critique.

The last chapter of the book, entitled *Humor and critical literacy – or what and how we can learn about humor from its sociopragmatic analysis* (p. 150–223), examines the relationship between humor and critical literacy, emphasizing how a sociopragmatic analysis of humor can contribute to the development of critical discourse consciousness. In the case study on COVID-19-related memes, the author analyzes Greek memes alongside items based on classical paintings, focusing on the use of intertextuality and stylistic incongruity to create humorous effects. The study reveals that these memes function both as entertainment and political commentary reflecting tensions between high and popular culture.

Humor is notable for being influenced by culture and context, and it can change rapidly as social events fade. Moreover, it is enjoyable, which is why people seek it and desire to experience it constantly. However, it is also important to understand that humor can be misunderstood or perceived as inappropriate by some individuals, and in certain cases, it can even be considered off-putting. Sociopragmatics examines how meaning is created and interpreted within specific cultural contexts, emphasizing the social and ideological factors that shape language use. Undoubtedly, Villy Tsakona's monograph opens new research directions on the pragmatics of humor, suggesting that the success or failure of a humorous act depends on multiple contextual variables, including social norms, ideological values, and the discursive conventions of various speaker communities. By evaluating these factors, the author contributes to the development of an analytical framework applicable not only to online humor, but also to other forms of digitally mediated communication.

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ANDREEA S. CALUDE. *The Linguistics of Social Media. An Introduction*, London/New York, Taylor and Francis Group, 2024, 230 p.

In an era where digital communication is pervasive, understanding the linguistic nuances of social media has become imperative. Andreea S. Calude's *The Linguistics of Social Media: An Introduction* offers a comprehensive exploration of this realm, bridging the gap between traditional linguistic theory and contemporary digital discourse. Building on the works of Herring (1996), Crystal (2001), and McCulloch (2019), the author attempts to "ponder the sheer variety of

language styles" (p. 14) that the internet presents us with, irrespective of the internet generational descriptions the readers might belong to. This accessible textbook addresses a readership with no prior knowledge of linguistics. It serves as both an academic resource and a practical guide for analyzing language use across twelve social media platforms: Facebook, Messenger, Instagram, LinkedIn, YouTube, personal blogs, Reddit, TikTok, Twitter (prior to the X rebrand), TripAdvisor, Weibo, and Wikipedia.

Each of the ten chapters are self-contained and include an abstract entitled *TLDR* (an acronym for *too long; didn't read*¹), a theoretical section (*Part 1*) introducing the key linguistic theories, a practical section dedicated to social media case studies (*Part 2*), a summary paragraph entitled *In a nutshell*, a list of references and notes, followed by suggestions for further reading (*What to read next*) and interactive exercises (*What next*). The learning experience is enhanced by the inclusion of supporting materials such as multiple-choice questions and an online glossary, facilitating both individual study and classroom instruction.

The introductory chapter (*Language and social media*, pp. 1–22) discusses the evolution of language in the digital age, emphasizing how social media platforms have become new arenas for linguistic innovation. The second chapter, *Using social media for your purpose* (pp. 23–36), explores genre, register, and style, illustrating how users tailor their language for specific communicative goals and target audiences. The continuum between spoken and written language is examined from both a functional and a technical perspective, where these inherently overlap in online texts, according to the author. The third chapter (*Using social media to speak to your tribe*, pp. 37–68) delves into audience design, language choice, and multilingualism, highlighting how individuals make linguistic choices in order to build identity and strengthen relationships within their communities. Chapter four (*Using social media to get things done*, pp. 69–92) analyses speech acts and politeness strategies, showcasing how users perform actions and maintain social harmony online. The core element of *Using social media to be yourself* (pp. 93–117) examines indexing, gender, and communities of practice, shedding light on how language constructs and reflects personal and group identities. The sixth chapter (*Using social media to save the world*, pp. 118–142) introduces metaphor theory, demonstrating how figurative language shapes perceptions and mobilizes communities towards action on social issues. The next chapter (*Using social media to influence public opinion*, pp. 143–164) makes use of move analysis² and corpus linguistics to dissect persuasive strategies and the dissemination of information. Chapter eight (*Using social media to amuse and entertain*, pp. 165–190) focuses on word-formation and grammatical constructions, exploring the creative aspects of digital communication, while Chapter 9 (*Using social media to rally for your language*, pp. 191–215) discusses linguistic vitality and language endangerment, with a focus on efforts to preserve and promote minority languages online. The chapter entitled *Epilogue: ethical considerations and language change* (pp. 216–224) reflects on the ethical implications of linguistic research in digital spaces and on the ongoing evolution of language.

Calude's book is grounded in a functionalist and descriptive approach to linguistics. Instead of prescribing how language *should* be used online, it emphasizes what people *actually* do with language in social media contexts. Theoretical influences include aspects of descriptive linguistics, sociolinguistics, pragmatics (speech act theory and politeness theory), discourse analysis, cognitive linguistics, and conceptual metaphor theory (Lakoff and Johnson 1980). Andreea S. Calude actively challenges prescriptivism, embracing non-standard grammar, slang, abbreviations, and emoji use as legitimate linguistic strategies. Concepts such as register, style, audience design, and

¹ The term originated in online forums and discussion boards in the early 2000s. Here it is intertextually used by Calude to mark the concise overview of each chapter.

² Move analysis considers the components of a text, which are termed moves, and how these are used to support the text's broader communicative function.

identity construction are borrowed from sociolinguistics. The author applies Labovian principles (e.g., prestige, variation, community norms, from Labov 1963, 2001) to show how linguistic variation emerges on digital platforms. In Chapter 4, the book draws on Austin's (1975) and Searle's (1969, 1975) speech act theory to explain how people perform actions – like apologizing, requesting, or asserting – via text-based communication. Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory is adapted to the constraints and features of social media interaction. Digital texts are analyzed through move analysis, a top-down approach originally developed for academic writing (Swales 1990), while corpus linguistics offers a bottom-up approach to analyzing digital texts. Calude also explores how new words like *textspeak* or *FOMO* (an acronym for *fear of missing out*³) emerge through compounding, blending, and clipping, as well as how internet language often violates formal rules (e.g., lack of punctuation, sentence fragments), while still maintaining internal coherence and communicative clarity. Humorous meaning is shown to be contextually determined, especially when users intend to employ pragmatic functions like suggesting, hinting, or being sarcastic. Brevity, multimodality, and audience awareness also aid and shape interpretations of online communication (e.g., reading irony in a tweet with no facial cues).

Calude uses linguistics to highlight several innovations arising from social media. Users prove their/the level of their *metalinguistic awareness* and communicative competence through the way they manipulate orthography, timing, emoji placement, and syntactic rhythm to signal (variations in) irony, tone, and affect. Social media discourse blends features of speech and writing (a concept sometimes called “written speech”) resulting in *various hybrid registers*. In her analysis, Calude expands on Biber's (1988) Speech–Writing Continuum, adapting it to show how TikTok captions or Facebook posts may be situated between oral and written modes. Another aspect is related to *language contact and code-switching*. In social media, multilingualism becomes a strategic linguistic tool. For instance, Chapter 3 discusses how users mix languages for humor, negotiation of identity, and prestige – concepts rooted in contact linguistics and audience design theory (Bell 1984).

Andreea S. Calude's book is not just a practical guide to analyzing tweets or memes – it is an academically grounded introduction to linguistics through the lens of social media. It weaves together core linguistic subfields, adopts a descriptive and functional perspective, and considers social media to be — instead of an aberration — a real-world site of linguistic innovation, identity construction, and cultural negotiation. Throughout the book, Calude's Romanian heritage and academic background subtly inform her analytical perspectives and provide cultural background for some humorous examples. The integrative methodology she uses combines empirical observation (e.g., case studies) and theoretical modelling (based on linguistic frameworks) with pedagogical application (exercises and prompts). This triangulation reflects a practice-based approach to linguistic inquiry, where students and readers are at once learners and researchers.

In the epilogue, Calude reflects on the ethics of collecting social media data (e.g., privacy, consent, representativity), on the implications of algorithmic filtering for linguistic research (though not deeply explored, this is flagged as an area for future study), and on the role of linguists as cultural documentarians, highlighting the fact that documenting digital language use is a crucial tool for social insight.

The Linguistics of Social Media succeeds admirably as an introductory text and is a valuable addition to undergraduate courses and general academic literature. Its strength lies in translating fundamental linguistic concepts into a contemporary, socially relevant context. Social media is proved to not destroy language, but to showcase it. It is a window into how people actually speak, think, connect, and create meaning in real time. While it is not diving into any single theory, the book is an excellent gateway text into contemporary linguistic inquiry. It is a valuable reminder that even in the fleeting, scrolling world of social media, language remains rich,

³ A social phenomenon often associated with social media where individuals feel anxiety about the possibility of missing out on rewarding experiences, information, or life decisions.

rule-governed, strategic, and deeply human. While the book covers a broad spectrum of topics, some areas could benefit from deeper exploration. For instance, the discussion on the impact of algorithms on language use and the role of visual elements in communication could be expanded. Additionally, while the book touches on multilingualism, a more in-depth analysis of code-switching practices across different cultural contexts would enrich the reading experience. Future editions could consider expanding theoretical depth, global perspectives, and digital infrastructure analysis to make it an even more robust resource.

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FRANCISCO YUS, *Emoji Pragmatics*, Cham, Palgrave MacMillan, 2025, 446 p.

The present volume is dedicated to the study of emojis, which are identified and analyzed mostly from the point of view of pragmatics, relevance theory, or online communication, and cyberpragmatics, as the author points out in the introduction of the book. Yus' approach to emojis has risen from constant preoccupation starting with early studies on cyberpragmatics (2011) and continuing with different books about relevance theory, humor (2016), irony, and emoticons (2014). *Emoji Pragmatics* is one of the most complex studies dedicated to these aspects and its main aim is to describe the functionality of emojis and the way they are interpreted, both when used in isolation and when accompanied by text. Previous works on emojis⁴ do not study them from a pragmatic point of view, nor do they address their interpretation and functionality.

⁴ Dickinson (2021), Duque (2018), Hurlburt (2018), to mention only a few. For a more complete list, see Yus (2025: 10).

The book stands out because it goes beyond the visual impact of emojis and studies them from a semiotic point of view, *inter alia*. It is a complex study because it considers emojis from the perspective of their significant role in decoding and interpreting text messages, social media posts, and additional comments. The book is useful and valuable because it presents graphics and visuals for all the described phenomena.

As the author mentions in the introduction, the study is new and original because it provides a “specific analysis of the pragmatic roles that emojis perform in online communication” (p. 1). Yus’ study analyzes the extra information emojis add to communication and the way in which context contributes to their interpretation, whether it is successful or not. Inferential strategies have also been taken into account in the volume.

A definition of emojis presents them as “graphical icons representing words, concepts or attitudes” (p. 2) and the history of emojis is seen as a natural evolution of emoticons, which have become less used since the appearance of emojis. Emoticons are defined as strings of keyboard characters that suggest expressions or emotions, when viewed sideways.

Regarding the functionality of emojis, apart from adding expressiveness via the non-propositional effects in the form of emotions and feelings, they also help communicate irony and humor in a nonverbal way. The functionality of emojis is particularly complex, as the author points out that they may shift from mere pictograms – e.g., an image of the sea, which can suggest calm or summer – into ideograms with associated meanings – e.g., “let’s go to the seaside” – which are extra content-dependent.

The main objective of the monograph is to provide “a first systematic study of emojis from a cognitive pragmatics point of view” (p. 4). The book is a study in which “typical pragmatic research is applied to the specificity of emojis” (p. 4) and which tries to clarify aspects such as the role of emojis, inferences, prototypical meaning vs. context interpretation, challenging interpretations or misunderstandings, demographic variables, interface designs, and communicative context that influences emoji production and interpretation.

The approach adopted is appropriate because it studies “the distinctive intentions, coding, context accessibility and subsequent interpretations of emojis in different communicative scenarios” (p. 5). Needless to say, the need for such an approach depicted usefully and wisely in a complete and vast study of current items that are part of our society’s everyday use in a period dominated by digital communication, both functional and eye-catching, is something to be greeted.

The corpus used for the analysis is extensive and consists of messaging conversations of anonymized Spanish users, which were collected through the WhatsApp function “export chat”. The conversations date back to the period between 2017 and 2023 and collectively of 971,000 words. The corpus also contains screenshots provided to the author by friends and students. All conversations were originally held in WhatsApp groups or in two-person chats, either between two males or between one female and one male. All interlocutors’ ages range between 40 and 60 years. The entire corpus was translated in English. For certain aspects requiring special analysis, the author created emoji-centered conversations that are plausible and closely resemble the ones collected in the corpus.

The book is divided into two distinct parts: Part 1 (*A proposal of emoji pragmatics*), and Part 2 (*Emojis and their contexts*), and each one contains four chapters. The two parts clearly separate a more theoretical approach from a contextualized one, indicating the way emojis function both individually and in context, respectively.

Although the book mainly addresses people who are interested in the study of pragmatics, Chapter 2 (*Pragmatics and cyberpragmatics*) gives a brief overview of the basic concepts of pragmatics, including of relevance theory and how it applies to internet communication; the underdeterminacy thesis; the role of context – reference assignment, disambiguation, context adjustment; the interpretation of explicatures vs. implicatures, especially visual ones; coded vs. intended meanings; inferential tasks – obtaining an implicature, deriving an implicature, accessing contextual information; inferential strategies (mutual parallel adjustment); and ostensive vs. non-ostensive information transfer.

Chapter 3 (*Pragmatic functions of emojis*) focuses on describing, extending, and exemplifying the three types of emoji functions analyzed in Yus' previous studies: *emojis within (the text)*, *emojis without (the text)* or *naked emojis*, and *emojis beyond (the text)*. The first type, the most common situation, comprises emojis which are accompanied by text, which are seen as support for contextualization. There are cases when the presence of emojis, e.g., "wink", reveals itself to be essential because it triggers a radical re-interpretation of the text as ironic. Most of the time, however, they signal the user's propositional attitude; intensify an already-coded propositional attitude; contradict explicit content by joking or expressing irony; add a feeling or emotion relative to the text attached; endow a coded feeling or emotion with additional intensity; replace verbal elements within a message; and add visual imagery to verbal context. The second type (*emojis without (the text)*) can communicate a single referent; an *ad hoc* visual referent; a whole position; a feeling or emotion; or it can convey meaning when placed in a sequence. The third type is the most complex; in particular, *emojis beyond (the text)* can add visual imagery without qualifying the accompanying text to a large extent; aid in conversational management; express a feeling, emotion, or attitude towards the whole communicative act; strengthen or mitigate the illocutionary force of a speech act; communicate the politeness involved in the act of communication; and engage in phatic interaction.

Chapter 4 (*Pragmatics of verbal content vs. pragmatics of emojis*) compares the two systems of coding, verbal and visual. The author begins the chapter with a legitimate question about whether or not emojis mirror verbal languages. He positions himself in favor of the existence of an emoji language and emoji pragmatics based on explicit vs. implicated communication, i.e., visual explicatures and implicatures. Thus, many initially iconic emojis called pictograms are said to gain abstract meanings, becoming ideograms. Yus describes the role of emojis as nonverbal communication from the same perspective. Nonverbal uses of emojis affect users in the sense that viewing smiling emojis induces positive feelings, while viewing sad or even angry emojis induces negative ones.

Chapter 5 (*Inferring from emoji: from propositions to feelings/emotions*) puts emphasis for the first time on *ad hoc* concept adjustment with reference to emojis, naming it *emoji referent adjustment*, starting from the assimilation effect. There are two main processes in the theory of concept adjustment: narrowing and broadening. Yus discusses the *hybrid writing mode* in which emojis replace some words, especially nouns, within the text. Apart from the interpretation of metaphors, approximations and hyperboles, the author adds metonymies to form a unified account of utterance interpretation. Particularly important and interesting is the proposal of five distinct types of scenarios in which non-propositional information, especially feelings, may be communicated by means of emojis. Several possible reasons are provided for the misunderstanding of emojis at times, including the fact that certain emojis are hard to decode and understand.

The second part of the book is dedicated to emoji use and to other factors that influence the way emojis communicate and how they are interpreted. Chapter 6 (*Emojis and their users: a review of demographic variables*) develops the notion of *user-centered contextual constraints*, a subset of *contextual constraints*, which implies that the attributes and personal features of the interlocutor determine the type of emoji used, the type of emoji that is considered suitable or (in)appropriate, the frequency of use of emojis, and the inferential outcomes. Yus explains how such a constraint functions better in online environments due to the fact that cues-filtered qualities are better shown in interactions lacking physical presence. In this chapter, the author demonstrates that the use of emojis differs across age, gender, culture, ethnicity, personality – in particular in relation to the traits of extroversion, introversion, agreeableness, openness, neuroticism and conscientiousness –, and specific relationships. Yus shows how the online environment adopts the same features as face-to-face interactions. The core meanings of emojis remain stable across cultures. However, specific emojis may acquire extended meanings inside a specific culture or community.

Chapter 7 (*Emojis on interfaces: emoji use across apps/sites and their affordances*) starts from the notion of *interface-related contextual constraints*, the second subset of *contextual constraints*, and discusses whether different types of emojis are adequately integrated into interface designs, whether they appear on screens according to their size and style, and whether similar emojis

are used across apps and sites. The way emojis are used across platforms can lead to different interpretations of their visual referent. Thus, several interfaces such as messaging apps – where emojis appear most frequently – social networking sites (e.g., on users' profile bios, within textual entries, as reactions, and in comments to entries), and Twitch, an app that uses *emotes*, are analyzed in this chapter. Each affordance and interface design contributes to usability, and therefore either favors or limits emoji use.

Chapter 8 (*Emojis and their topics: several areas of emoji use*) describes the areas of internet communication where emoji use is most frequent: humorous interactions on messaging apps, marketing and advertising, especially on social networking sites, and in the fields of law, politics, and health. In humorous interactions, emojis contribute to “the initiation of humour, the response to it and its maintenance” (p. 385). In marketing and advertising on smartphones, certain strategies must be applied: informativeness, contextual relatedness, personalization, involvement, interactivity, location, and engagement. This can be done with the help of emojis; apart from their other attributes, in most cases, they add emotional meaning. In legal contexts, emojis play a significant role because the courts still take them as evidence, and therefore interpreting them correctly can be a determining factor. In politics, emojis contribute to the emotional connection between candidates and their communities, while in health-related situations, they can reduce fear and lead to the correct informing of the population.

Chapter 9 (*Concluding remarks*) summarizes the book, presenting the main ideas from each chapter, and draws a set of conclusions.

The volume is extremely valuable also because it offers a large number of international bibliographical resources, along with an alphabetical index of authors and concepts. The author suggests that future areas of study include the use of emojis in computer software such as ChatGPT; he hopes that computer chatbots and conversational agents will be able to acquire emoji literacy and use. The book is very useful for future pragmatics studies, and even for media and computer science studies.

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