

BOOK REVIEW: *NARRATIVE REVISITED: TELLING A STORY IN THE AGE OF NEW MEDIA*

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Title: *Narrative revisited: Telling a story in the age of new media.*
Author: Christian R. Hoffmann (ed.)
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This volume contains eleven chapters with two separate indexes, namely a name and a subject register, respectively. Apart from the introduction, the ten papers were originally presented at an international conference held in 2007 in honor of Wolfram Bublitz on his 60th birthday at University of Ausburg, Germany.

In the introduction, Christian R. Hoffmann summarizes the different findings in the studies on narrative ranging from formal elements, grammar structures, types and functions of the narrative genre, as well as the level of interactivity and cognitive roles in approaching a particular narrative. Socio-medial scopes are summarized with a depiction of the narrative mode contained in a communication form that is further determined by the media choice. These three meta-narrative affordances are represented diagrammatically in rectangular forms.

A new media such as web log or blog, however, provides more than one type of narrative mode. By embedding video clips from *YouTube*, blogging may be an attractive pedagogical means to acquire the language. The responses from selected learners indicate that constant exposure to audio-visual stimulation while blogging motivates Malay language learning (Sew, 2012). In other words, it is possible to mix communication in synchronous mode with communication in asynchronous counterpart digitally in one new media form.

Carla Bazzanella divides interaction goals in the computer-mediated communication (CMC) into phatic and ludic goals. These goals are due to CMC becoming socially driven, i.e. human-human interaction. Notably, CMC has reversed the narrative impulse in conversation from *being together to talk about events* to *talk about events to be together* (p. 31). Occasional references of short message service (SMS) are invoked as comparisons in the discussion. The

reviewer points to the sharing of euphemistic SMS alluding to sexual references – a common practice among many techno-savvy young Chinese men who exploit sound symbolism as pun in Mandarin-Cantonese sexting – to illustrate that an overlap of ludic and phatic goals is possible. (For other functions of screen-based interaction involving language puns, refer to Sew, 2010).

Narrative may neither be written nor spoken because a narrative only requires two, either real or fictive, representations existing in a time sequence. Axel Hübler pushes the envelope with an analysis of live oral narration in a television broadcast with additional technical analysis in the form of WAV (waveform audio format) file. Running a pitch configuration of an utterance generates an analytical window for examining the levels of awareness in narration. The auditory threshold, generated with the technology of new media, tags spoken words with various pitch qualities, (mis)matching the performing styles that accompany live narrating on the fly. Such narrating analysis highlights the difference between a vision of human perception (semantic form) and a vision of human action (pragmatic form).

In contrast to William Labov's six elements of narrative (1972), Andreas H. Jucker introduces the different narrative structures in live text commentary. Live text commentary is real-time written narrative of sports events produced and published in Internet according to the unfolding of an event. The conventional narrative elements in Labov's model, known as *Diamond Schema*, seem inadequate to account for live text commentary that narrates an event in a strict chronological sequence. The narrator has no idea of his narrative ahead of time indicating further that the suspense created by the event on the fly is unpredictable, thus, it is also unaccountable for in advanced. In turn, the narration time is adjusted to the event time with the grammar structures underlined by a combination of present, present continuous tense and will-future.

Volker Eisenlauer and Christian R. Hoffmann offer a detailed explication of genre types and their functions identifiable in the weblogs. The features of new media have resulted in stereotypical characteristics of a typical blog entry. These features include multi-linearity, fragmentation, interactivity and multimodality. In applying the same *Diamond Scheme* to analyze the narrative, the researchers realize that the interactive perspective inherent in a blog entry requires new explanatory terms. As a resolution, the continuum of possible narratives based on Ochs and Capps (2001) conversational approach is incorporated into the analytical framework. Within the richer narrative continuum, the typical weblog entries, namely single, serial, collaborative and distributed narrative types are accounted for. A stylistic discrepancy is observed in the chapter, namely Masako Hiraga's work (1994) is excluded from the references despite its citation in footnote-11.

Christoph Schubert provides an interesting discussion by examining the narrative sequences of political discourse found in American and British governments' official websites. Among other things, the political discourses contain the *personalizing function* consisting of self-oriented narrative. The *integrating function*, on the other hand, is accentuated with narratives highlighting the achievements or the values of a nation, for which the politician is a representative of the group. At the same time, the action of an individual is deployed as an instance of the motion intended by the politician to achieve the *exemplifying function* in discourse.

The action of the *Other* is invoked as a contrast to justify the action of the politician to attain the *polarizing function* in political discourse (p. 147-152). In addition to the sequences, hypertext, websites and hypermedia narratives in the forms of biographies, historical surveys and photo essays become part of the digital political discourses in *Web 2.0*. The digital

narratives of the government emphasize on the importance of common history to reinforce self-marketing and mythmaking.

A host of narrating strategies with the application of new media presented in the volume offers interesting discussions relevant to a current understanding of digital or web-based narratives. Media tutors will find the book a useful addition to the reading list. More specifically, individual chapters in the book may be exploited as case studies in new media tutorials. In short, this book provides new information and fresh analytical insights to educators, media practitioners, researchers as well as undergraduates interested in digital media.

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