

Social reading in Spain: A discourse-pragmatic perspective¹

La lectura social en España: una perspectiva sociopragmática

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Abstract. This paper considers the possible differences between social reading practice in Spain and other forms of social media interaction. While previous research in social media has characterized the pragmatic and discursive features of social media interaction, the study of social reading as a new communicative practice is an emergent area of inquiry. Based on Stein's taxonomy of social reading and drawing both on appraisal theory and (im)politeness theory, a qualitative analysis of a small corpus of texts compiled from five Spanish SRS is conducted. The texts belong to different digital communicative genres. Only the second category of Stein's taxonomy (asynchronous informal online discussion) is analyzed. Results show that this category of social reading does not seem to be too different from other forms of social media interaction. What these virtual communities of social reading practice share is not so much their ideas and thoughts about books and reading, but their feelings and emotional reactions around those ideas.

Resumen. En este trabajo se analizan las posibles diferencias entre la práctica de la lectura social en España y otras formas de interacción en los medios sociales. Las investigaciones anteriores sobre los medios sociales se han enfocado sobre todo en la pragmática y los rasgos discursivos de la interacción, por lo que el estudio de la lectura social como una nueva práctica comunicativa es un área de investigación emergente. Con base en la taxonomía propuesta por Stein (2010) y en las teorías de la valoración y la (des)cortesía, se realiza un análisis cualitativo de un corpus pequeño de textos en español recopilados de sitios virtuales de lectura social. Los textos pertenecen a diferentes géneros comunicativos digitales. Solo se analiza la segunda categoría de la taxonomía de Stein (la conversación asincrónica e informal en línea). Los resultados sugieren que esta categoría de lectura social no parece ser muy diferente de otras formas de interacción en los medios sociales. Lo que estas comunidades virtuales de práctica de lectura social comparten no son tanto sus ideas y pensamientos respecto a los libros y la lectura, como sus sentimientos y reacciones emocionales en torno a esas ideas.

Keywords: *Social reading; appraisal theory; (im)politeness theory; social networks; Spain.*

Keywords: *Lectura social; teoría de la valoración; teoría de la cortesía-no cortesía.*

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1. Introduction

Social reading sites (SRS) online are a special type of communities of practice (Wenger, McDermott y Snyder, 2002), in which shared, collaborative reading has taken the place of solitary reading (Cordón-García, 2010).

Though several definitions of social reading have been proposed (Celaya, 2012; Cordón-García et al 2013; Esposito, 2010; Mennella, 2011; Johnson et al, 2011), the notion remains imprecise. Stein (2010) asserts that the “landscape” of social reading extends from face-to-face interaction to a bewildering array of Web-based sites and social media tools.

While previous research in linguistics and social media has characterized the pragmatic and discursive features of social media interaction, either in recent or older digital genres, the study of social reading as a new communicative practice is an emergent area of inquiry.

The objective of this study is to describe social reading, as it takes place in Spain, from a discourse-pragmatic point of view. It aims to find out whether the virtual interactions involved in social reading have distinctive discursive and pragmatic features that would differentiate them from other forms of social media interaction.

The perspective adopted is dialogic (Bakhtin, 1981). It focuses on the use of evaluative language (Martin and White, 2005; Bednarek, 2008), and the phenomena of linguistic (im)politeness (Kerbrat-Orecchioni, 2005), particularly in Spanish discourse (Bravo, 2005, 2008a, 2008b) as it relates to the notions of face, self-presentation and impression management (Goffman, 1959, 1967).

2. Growth of social reading sites in Spain

The production and demand of electronic books in Spain has been growing at a steady pace in the last few years (Cordón-García et al, 2010). This expansion of the e-book market, together with the growth of social media usage in Spain (New Media Trend Watch, 2013) has led to the development of several SRS in Spanish.

Some of the most popular in Spain are *Lecturalia*, *Librofilia*, *Entrelectores*, *Quelibroleo*, *Quedelibros*, *ebiblioteca.org*, as well as the Spanish versions of *Anobii*, *LibraryThing* and *Shelfari*, among others. Most of them are integrated into social media networks such as Facebook, where Spanish-speaking people interested in sharing views on books have also been creating their own groups.

In a recent study on how specific training in social reading software and the use of digital reading devices can influence the development of social reading competences (Cordón-García et al, 2014), specific Facebook discussion groups were set up to this effect.

3. Research on CMC and social media interaction

As Lomborg (2011, p.55) argues, the term “‘social media’ is confounded with the terms ‘social software’ and ‘Web 2.0’, to denote a new era of networked, interactive forms of communication”. Included in social media are blogs, microblogs, wikis, social bookmarking, social network sites, photo- and videosharing, and other recently emerged Internet-based phenomena. Even older digital genres, such as e-mail and online chat are sometimes considered as such.

Many recent studies in sociology of communication have focused on social media. From this perspective, social media practices are regarded as mostly phatic communion, i.e. communication that has no informational or dialogic purposes, but only social (networking) intentions. This ritualistic aspect of speech behavior first noted by Malinowski (1923), and studied by linguists interested in language as social action (Halliday, 1990; Leech, 1980), is revisited critically by Miller (2008, 2011), who argues that we are moving fast into what he calls “phatic media culture” (Miller, 2011, p. 388). This move is caused by the flattening of social bonds in our networked society and its related flattening of communication towards the non-dialogic and non-informational. This assertion might be argued, however, from the discourse analysis perspective, which regards all communication as dialogic (Martin & White, 2005).

The linguistic study of social media has been preceded by research on computer and Internet-mediated communication (CMC). The genre characteristics of Internet forms of interaction have been examined from a pragmatic-rhetoric perspective (Askehave & Nielsen, 2005; Giltrow & Stein, 2009; Herring et al., 2005; Lomborg, 2011; Peterson, 2011). Yus (2011) coined the term “cyberpragmatics” to refer to the cognitive pragmatics analysis of this kind of interaction that includes the study of self-presentation (in Goffman’s sense) and of politeness in social media settings. Noblia (2009, 2008) and Mariottini (2008) have analyzed the pragmatics of Internet interaction in Spanish focusing on face maintenance, politeness strategies and explicit negotiation of the communicative space in chats.

Linguistic studies with a socio-semiotic approach have analyzed the language of microblogging (Zappavigna, 2011, 2012), and of SNS (Santamaría-García, 2014). Zappavigna (2012) shows how communities constitute themselves through shared values “– where it’s not just interaction that matters but shared meaning and where what is being shared is feelings about ideas (not just the ideas themselves)” (Martin 2012, p. x). Santamaría-García (2014) also draws on politeness theory (Brown and Levinson, 1987), to show how attitudinal expression relates to the management of interpersonal rapport.

4. Defining “social reading”

The term “social reading” has become an increasingly used meme, as Stein (2010) claims. This author warns, however, that as it happens with any other newly coined phrase, this term can be used to express quite different things. That is why he proposes a taxonomy to make sense of the wide range of practices involved.

One of the most comprehensive definitions so far is found in Cerdón-García et al (2013, p.143):

Social reading is a special communicative practice that has emerged as a result of new technological developments, particularly developments in electronic publishing. Reader participation in text (post)production process (in the form of annotations, underlining, reviews, ratings, and so on) gives a whole new dimension to the act of reading when shared with likeminded readers. When shared reading becomes global, thanks to the Internet, specifically created programs and platforms, designed for the purpose of facilitating exchange among readers, enriches the experience of reading books and launches the experience well beyond the narrow circles of traditional reading clubs.

Johnson et al. (2011, p. 8) define social reading as a journey “through worlds real and imagined, undertaken not alone but in company with other readers”. For Esposito (2011) and Mennella (2011), though technology is the great enabler for this activity, the concept of social reading is not new, as people have always wanted to share what they have read. Celaya (2012) claims that social reading also affects the process of discovering and buying books and the way we read them on a screen. *Open Bookmarks* (2013) defines social reading in its glossary as “everything that surrounds the experience of reading e-books”, such as bookmarking, social cataloguing, annotating and sharing.

A common theme seems to be the “social” aspect of the phenomenon, in which readers’ visibility, user-added content, and willingness to share are crucial. The value of readers’ participation has, however, been questioned by a few authors. Wolfe and Newirth (2001, p. 352) argue that shared annotations can “clutter a text, interfere with comprehension, and invoke contempt for the intellectual abilities of previous readers”. Corriero & Cerdón-García (2011) doubt whether the expression of readers’ mood, acceptance or rejection has any real significance for other readers.

Stein’s taxonomy (2010) tries to categorize social reading in all its modalities (both off and online). This author proposes four categories, whose boundaries are necessarily arbitrary (See Table 1 below):

Category 1: Discussing a book in person with friends and acquaintances

Category 2: Discussing a book online

Category 3: Discussing a book in a classroom or living-room book group

Category 4: Engaging in a discussion in the margins

Of interest to this study of social reading is category 2. Stein explains that people started discussing books as soon as they went online. At the beginning, this was done in synchronous chat rooms but specialized sites such as *Goodreads* or *LibraryThing* and social bookmarking tools like *Reddit* or *Delicious* have been developed to enable readers to recommend, create and share annotated lists of what they have read. Generalized social networks such as *Facebook* can also work in the same way as dedicated-to-reader sites, and e-book readers themselves have incorporated many of these social functions.

Table 1. Taxonomy of social reading (in Kaplan, 2013, adapted from Stein, 2010)

Category	Modality	Mode of communication	Level of formality	Level of permanence
1. Informal face-to-face discussion	Offline	Synchronous	Informal	Ephemeral
2. Informal online discussion	Online	Synchronous or Asynchronous	Informal	Persistent
3. Formal face-to-face discussion	Offline	Synchronous	Formal	Ephemeral
4. Formal discussion in the margins	Online	Synchronous or Asynchronous	Formal	Persistent

5. Theoretical and methodological framework

For Martin and White (2005) one of the concerns for appraisal theory is “the construction by texts of communities of shared feelings and values, and (...) the linguistic mechanisms for the sharing of emotions, tastes and normative assessments” (2005: 1). This approach is located “in a tradition in which all utterances are seen as stanced or attitudinal” and “is informed by Bakhtin’s [...] notions of dialogism and heteroglossia under which all verbal communication, whether written or spoken, is ‘dialogic’” (Martin & White 2005, p. 92).

The discourse-semantic appraisal resources include attitude, engagement and graduation. Attitude resources are used to express positive or negative meanings of affect, judgement and appreciation. These domains of attitude are concerned respectively, with “our feelings, including emotional reactions, judgements of behaviour and evaluation of things” (Martin and White 2005, p. 35). In all these categories, several sub-categories can be identified. Affect can be classified into un/happiness, in/security, dis/satisfaction, fear, and desire, to which Bednarek (2008) adds the sub-category of surprise. A distinction can be made between judgement of social esteem (tenacity, capacity, normality) and of social sanction (propriety and veracity). Types of appreciation include reaction, further classified into impact and quality; composition, divided into balance and complexity; and valuation. An important feature of attitude is that it can be explicit or implicit, i.e., either directly inscribed in discourse through attitudinal lexis, or invoked by non-evaluative (ideational) meaning.

Engagement has to do with “sourcing attitudes and the play of voices around opinions in discourse” (Martin and White, 2005, p. 35) since it attends to the view that all verbal utterances are ultimately dialogic. Utterances, therefore, can be categorized into undialogized or “‘monoglossic’, when they make no reference to other voices or viewpoints, or ‘heteroglossic’, when they do invoke or allow for dialogistic alternatives” (Martin & White, 2005, p. 100). Heteroglossic resources, in turn, can be divided into two broad categories: ‘dialogically expansive’ and ‘dialogically contractive’, according to whether they allow for dialogically alternative positions and voices or, on the contrary, act to challenge or restrict their scope. Finally, graduation “attends to grading phenomena whereby feelings are amplified and categories blurred” (Martin & White, 2005, p. 35), and can thus be further sub-divided into ‘force’ and ‘focus’.

To explore how communities of shared feelings and values are constructed in the social reading interactions, appraisal resources were related to expressions of (im)politeness. According to Bravo (2005, pp. 33-34), politeness “is a communicative activity that fosters a positive interpersonal relation between interlocutors. This activity follows norms and social codes that, supposedly, are known by speakers and considers in all contexts a benefit for the interlocutor.” Impoliteness, on the other hand, is a communicative activity that aims at damaging the interlocutor’s face and whose effect in interaction is interpersonally negative (Bernal, 2008).

(Im)politeness is related to the psycho-social notion of face (Goffman, 1959, 1967). Individuals present in interaction an image of themselves (face) that reflects the way in which they see or perceive themselves and their relation with others. The widely influential model of politeness as a universal phenomenon proposed by Brown & Levinson (1987) is based on this notion as something that is managed during interaction through the use of politeness features. These authors suggest that face can be divided into two aspects: a negative face (the need to be independent and have freedom from imposition) and a positive face (the need to be connected and be part of a group). Kerbrat-Orecchio (2005) modifies this framework, introducing the concept of face-enhancing or face-flattering acts (FFA), which reinforce the other's face, in opposition to face-threatening acts (FTA), which require the use of politeness strategies to preserve social harmony and an undamaged face. A further adaptation is that of Bravo (2005, 2008a, 2008b). This author, adopting a socio-cultural perspective, proposes the categories of "autonomy" and "affiliation" face as more adequate notions to account for universal human needs. Autonomy includes all those behaviours related to how people wish to see themselves and be seen by others as individuals within the group. Affiliation "includes all those behaviours through which a person manifests how he/she wishes to see him/herself as regards those characteristics that identifies him/her with the group" (Bravo, 2008a, p. 565).

Instances in the data were identified in relation to the following categories:

- a. Appraisal categories, at the discourse-semantic level for attitude (affect, judgement, appreciation), engagement and graduation, and subcategories within them.
- b. (Im)politeness strategies, at the discourse-pragmatic level, for FFA and FTA, and for affiliation and autonomy face.

The instances identified were then interpreted in the light of the notions of "impression management" (or "self-presentation"), derived from Goffman's (1959, 1967) dramaturgical approach. Impression management behaviour concerns the "selective disclosure of personal details designed to present an idealized self" (Hogan, 2010, p. 379), and though originally studied in face-to-face social interaction, it became a focus of research in CMC and lately, in social networking (Becker & Stamp, 2005; Kuznekoff, 2013; Hogan, 2010).

5.1. The data

Data for this study is a small corpus of six texts, collected from four well known SRS in Spanish (*Lecturalia*, *Quelibroleo*, *Anobii* and *Bibliotheka*²) and a group in the

² Bibliotheka has been renamed ebiblioteca.org

social network *Facebook*³, created in Spain but with both Spanish and Latin American members. In the case of *Quelibroleo*, the data came from its book club discussion group in *Facebook*, and the one from *Bibliotheka* was collected from its *Yahoo* book discussion group in Spanish (hansi-libroz@gruposyadoo.com.ar). The criteria for the corpus selection were the date (all available online in 2012, though one discussion forum thread had started much earlier) and the topic being discussed.

The texts belong to two digital genres: the weblog and discussion forum. Blogs have been defined as “frequently modified web pages in which dated entries are listed in reverse chronological sequence” (Herring et al, 2005, p. 174). Discussion forums (DF), have been described as “a web-based application that has been used extensively to bring people together with shared interests and mind-set” (Saadé & Huang, 2009, p. 88).

The notion of textual patterns of Bolívar (2010) was adapted to identify two units of analysis in the texts. From larger to smaller, these units are: a) exchanges, made up of an initiation turn (I), one or more continuation turns (C) and a closure (Cl), not always present and b) utterances. Utterances are here understood as orthographic sentences, but emoticons were also considered as part of them. Table 2 below shows the corpus selected for the analysis.

³ “Libros que recomendarías a un amigo mientras tomas un café” (“Books you’d recommend to a friend while having a coffee”).

Table 2. Corpus selected for analysis

Text	Date	SRS Spanish	in Digital genre	Topic discussion	for Exchanges IT/CT/CLT	Utterances
1	2012 Aug. 13 -21	Lecturalia (2012)	Blog	The Spanish of the XXI Century (explicit topic)	great novel /0CL	26
2	2012 July 30 - Aug. 18	Quelibroleo Facebook group (2012)	DF	“The perfume” by Patrick Suskind (explicit topic)	1I/44C/0CL	105
3	2012 Jan. 1 - Sept. 9	Anobii (2012)	DF	The challenge (explicit topic)	1I /66C /1CL	129
4	2010 Nov. 9 - 2012 Aug. 4	Anobii (2012)	DF	Giving books as presents /Giving away books (explicit topic)	1I /11C /1CL	56
5	2012 June 23 - July 3	Facebook SR group (2012)	DF	Self-promotion (inferred topic)	Exch. (a) 1I/ 3C/1CL Exch. (b) 1I /10C/1 CL	48
6	2012 April 27 - July 3	Bibliotheka Yahoo group (2012)	DF	Updating of Bibliotheka (explicit topic)	1I / 1C/ 1CL	66

Findings are presented below, with examples of occurrences translated into English⁴.

6. Results and Discussion

At the discourse semantic level, in almost all the texts, evaluations of affect and of appreciation/reaction predominate over those of appreciation/valuation, which would be expected in discussions about books and reading in general. Reaction, particularly in its sub-category of impact, is a type of appreciation closely connected to affect, which seems to answer the question “did it grab me? Valuation, instead, is a sub-category of appreciation that answers the question “was it worthwhile?” and depends on our institutional focus and the social value of what is evaluated. Many tokens of judgement, either positive or negative, were also found in the texts. Both attitudinal resources were exploited for the relational work involved in the construction and maintenance of affiliation face or to mitigate FTA.

6.1 Text 1

In text 1, more than half the utterances identified correspond to the blog author (Álamo, 2012), who initiated the exchange. The more frequent expressions of attitude were those of appreciation/valuation (53%), followed by judgement/ social esteem (39%) and affect (8%).

The following example shows the intricacies of the relational work. In the initiation turn, the blog author values positively the literary work he wants his readers to suggest as the great Spanish novel of the recent years:

(1) I believe there are hundreds of books devoted to analyzing the novel that stands out from the rest, not just at a literary level but also in its ability to reflect the society in which it was written.

In the continuation turns, reaction, an appreciation category very close to affect, predominates. The following example shows the realization of impact and its relation to expressions of positive affect (satisfaction/interest):

(2) (...) but I've thought it'd be fun if Arturo Pérez-Reverte would try it (...) I feel curious about the kind of stories this gentleman would tell.

As to engagement, there is a balance between contraction and dialogic expansion in the initiation. This might be due to the more powerful stance of the blog author whose role would allow him more freedom to position his voice.

⁴ The texts have been translated as closely as possible to the original.

(3) But I do not want to focus on the past to talk about the Great Spanish Novel (...) this is not what I want to talk about today (...) I'd like us to focus on the last twelve years.

In the continuations, dialogic expansion is more frequent, using concession after a negative.

(4) I'm not Spanish, so it's more difficult for me. However, I've thought of a novel (...)

The initiation ends with two questions that open the dialogic space to the interlocutors:

(5) Which do you think is the Great Spanish Novel of the XXI century? Which author do you believe would be capable of writing it today?

To soften the imposition of the questions in (5), there is a FFA in the author's turn, achieved linguistically through the contrast between a positive social esteem judgement of his readers with a negative judgement of himself:

(6) That's why I believe that today's post is dedicated to you, readers, who follow with ease many more writers than I am able to.

This shows how positive evaluations and mitigating politeness strategies are related and used to claim common ground, convey cooperation and reinforce the affiliation face necessary for the success of the dialogic exchange.

In the continuations, the possible FTA against the author is mitigated with expressions of negative affect and judgement/social esteem.

(7) Unfortunately, I can't answer your question, at this moment no great Spanish writer comes to my mind (...)

To sum up, the author has the most powerful role and therefore, the longest turn, dominating the exchange with combined mitigating and enhancing politeness strategies as well as expressions of dialogic contraction and expansion. His frequent tokens of appreciation are probably used for impression management.

6.2 Text 2

In this text, almost all turns were evaluated with the "Like" button or similar emoticons. This makes affect the most frequent meaning of attitude (67% expressions). Appreciation of the novel under discussion is not frequent, as would be expected in a book club forum. Positive or negative feelings, grammatically construed as reactions to the

book discussed, predominate. Graduation, in the sub-category of force is frequent and realized linguistically by means of intensifiers (“very”) and lexis (“unbelievable”), but also with many instances of creative typography (¡!!!!).

Participants in this book club forum tend to preserve their affiliation face throughout the exchange. They appeal to face-enhancing politeness procedures, such as sharing jokes and evaluations of affect and reaction:

(8) I didn’t like the end of that book, it frustrateeeeeed me!!!!!!! it is sometimes getting a bit boring for me.

The willingness to “tell all” and the “virtually compulsive” need to self-disclose peculiar to late modernity and noticed by Miller (2008) is clear in some short narratives: (9) (...) and now when I get on the streetcar or the subway, I start reading and smelling people, hahaha

The interactions in this virtual book club seem then much more like the typical ones in the social network in which they take place than those of an offline book club.

6.3 Text 3

This DF has one initiation turn and 66 continuations, of which 61, as well as the closure, correspond to the user who started the thread. This exchange is totally devoted to impression management, with the initiating participant listing the 60 books he or she read throughout the year. The whole list of books was interpreted as invoked tokens of positive self-evaluation (judgement/ social esteem/tenacity), intensified by graduation resources of creative typography.

(10) 60º. The road – Cormac McCarthy¡¡¡CHALLENGE MET!!!

The other five continuation turns show tokens of enhancing politeness that reinforce the initiator’s face, who was the one to suggest “the challenge”. The appraisal resources that come into play are, once more, those of positive affect/surprise, judgement/ social esteem/tenacity and intensification, using creative typography.

(11) but you never stop? ha ha ha. that’s the way I like it. kss

(12) Congratulations X!!! =) To keep on reading then. ^_^

It seems obvious, from the favourable reactions of the other users (the audience, in Goffman’s terms), that the initiator of this thread successfully manages to convey the

idealized version of him/herself he or she wished to portray.

6.4 Text 4

The title of this DF (*Regalar libros*) is ambiguous as the Spanish word *regalar* may mean either “to give something as a present” or “to give away”. Actually, this DF was chosen because it was thought that participants would recommend books to give as presents, since recommending books is an important social reading function. However, it turned out that the exchange is a very long thread of stories in which users tell about their experiences donating books or leaving them in public places for other people to pick them up. Only an extract of this long exchange, made up of 56 utterances and which started in 2010 and ended in 2012, was analyzed.

As in text 3, this one is also mainly focused on positive self-presentation. By resorting to invoked evaluations of positive judgement /social sanction/propriety that can be inferred from ideational meanings, the participants portray an idealized version of themselves as generous and altruistic people.

(13) I give away to libraries those books I don't want to keep, and also to solidarity initiatives that collect used books for disadvantaged children and teenagers. Occasionally I have left a book on a public bench or in a park, like you.

Several instances of ritualistic politeness (e.g. expressions of gratitude) were identified and related to enhancing politeness strategies. Together with expressions of positive affect and intensification, they contribute to reinforce the co-construction of affiliation face.

(14) Well, then, I also take the opportunity to say that I am new in this group and that I am extremely thankful for the invitation. Regarding the subject raised here, I completely agree.

6.5 Text 5

The objective of this *Facebook* group is to recommend books. Most replies when someone suggests a book are of positive affect and appreciation/reaction (“I read it and also liked it” / emoticon of Like button). For this study, however, two exchanges of a different nature were selected. In one of them, a participant is scolded for having broken the rule, explicit in this DF, of avoiding self-promotion. In the other, the reprimanded participant defends herself, resorting to bitter irony as a way to maintain autonomy face. In both exchanges, different continuation turns are devoted either to advising the offender to read the moderator's suggestions on the subject or to assessing the situation.

In the following examples, we can see how the participant in the first exchange resorts to lexico-grammatical realizations that invoke appreciation/valuation to disclose selective information for impression management purposes.

(15) Dear friends, extremely happy to be part of this group ... I would like to present to you a novel written by me.

In the engagement domain, this same participant later uses a direct quotation- a resource of dialogic expansion- both to open the dialogic space and to distance herself from her transgression.

(16) Dear friends, I'm very pleased to share with you the impressions of a reader of my novel (...)

In both examples, linguistic expressions of affect and graduation/force are used to display enhancing politeness and maintain affiliation face.

As to the reactions to these two turns, they can be divided into FTA with very little mitigation, reprimanding the offender, and FFA addressed to the moderator.

(17) I recommend you read the post from XX a little bit below that starts with a SUGGESTION in which authors are encouraged not to use this group for self-promotion.

(18) Personally, I don't like self-marketing at all, and since there is no "I don't like it" button, there's no way of saying this "elegantly". Thanks for the suggestion XX. Let's hope they take the hint!

In both cases, the discourse-semantic resources exploited are those of inscribed affect, invoked negative judgement/social sanction/propriety, graduation/force (capitalization), and a combination of dialogic contraction ("I recommend") and expansion ("the post ... that starts with ..."). It is worth noticing the large number of Like emoticons (24) that assess the moderator's suggestion and contribute to reinforce affiliation ties. With their comments, all these participants also display an idealized self ("I do obey the rules") for impression management purposes.

Finally, the offender replies in a continuation turn, reproaching the other members for the threat to her autonomy face.

(19) Speechless after so many inappropriate and aggressive sermons. Relax guys ... mea culpa for not having differentiated the tenor of this group (I'm new in these prac-

tices). Rest assured that, given the “atmosphere”, I’ll make sure I’ll “have coffee” somewhere else...

At the discourse-semantic level, the utterances show invoked negative affect (surprise and dissatisfaction) and judgement/social sanction/propriety (“sermons”), as well as dialogic expansion through scare quotes (e.g. “atmosphere”). These produce an ironic effect, reinforced by expressions that imply negative judgement/social esteem/capacity (“I’m new in these practices”), with which the participant tries to save autonomy face and, in turn, criticize her critics (FTA).

In the month chosen for this study, these two exchanges are much longer than those devoted to recommending books.

6.6. Text 6

This exchange was selected with the expectation that members would recommend new books to be uploaded to the site, as the title of the DF was *Updating Bibliotheka*. However, it also focused on interpersonal relations and the reinforcement of affiliation face. An initiation and a closure were identified, but the continuation turns were so numerous, that only 11 of them were chosen for analysis. All the 66 utterances, except one, that make up this exchange are also characterized for showing a Rioplatense variety of Spanish, since this *Yahoo* group was created in Argentina (see footnote⁵ on the use of irony).

The initiation turn shows a FTA in which a member criticizes the fact that no new books have been uploaded in the last days. The first continuation turn corresponds to a DF administrator who answers with a series of ironic utterances. At the discourse-semantic level, attitudinal meanings of negative appreciation/reaction and negative/affect are displayed.

(20) This is the kind of questions that take me out of my state of natural grace. The other day someone got into the chat to say: To the personnel! what’s the matter? there are no news. That’s when I get so flaming red that it doesn’t suit my white hair at all.

In all the other continuation turns, as well as in the closure, enhancing politeness strategies that try to maintain affiliation face were identified. This relational work is achieved by means of inscribed positive judgement/social esteem/tenacity and social sanction/propriety as well as by evaluations of positive affect. Resources of graduation/force are also displayed.

⁵ This participant identifies herself as Argentinean. Politeness studies in Rioplatense variety of Spanish have shown that exchanging ironic utterances is a frequent and positively valued form of interaction (in Noblia, 2004)

(21) I firmly believe that we should thank you for the great effort you are making to keep this site running, and for free!!!

(22) For now, as I told you before, I still feel like I'm appropriating other people's work, but I know that at any moment I'll join you with the same passion with which you work, because it's so fabulous that it's catching. I love you.

7. Conclusions

The SRS in Spain analyzed in this paper are virtual communities of practice constructed through the values shared by their participants and the affiliation ties created through discourse. Users resort to enhancing and mitigating politeness strategies to restore harmony in case of conflict and interact successfully, but also to impoliteness strategies, usually through ironic remarks, to assert their autonomy face. At the discourse-semantic level, meanings of inscribed or invoked attitude, graduation and engagement are exploited for the relational work involved in the construction and maintenance of both affiliation and autonomy faces.

The predominance of evaluations of affect and appreciation/reaction over those of appreciation/valuation seems to show, as in Zappavigna (2012), that what these virtual communities of social reading practice share is not so much their ideas and thoughts about books and reading, but their feelings and emotional reactions around those ideas. However, this type of interaction goes beyond phatic communication, where there is little informational or dialogic intent (Miller, 2011). This is an emerging type of dialogic communication, where the participants give more priority to creating, cultivating and sustaining relationships than to assessing the aesthetic and functional value of literary works.

Results suggest, therefore, that Category 2 of Stein's taxonomy does not seem to be too different from other forms of Web 2.0 interaction. Future research should involve the study of category 4 - engaging in a discussion in the margins - as it is probably in these annotations and their exchanges that the "whole new dimension to the act of reading when shared with likeminded readers" will be found.

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