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What is ODAM?

Online Discourse Analytic Methods (ODAM)

I have developed methodology to enable meaningful exploration of chatroom talk. My method draws on conventions conversational analysis but adds the following new understandings.

Firstly, I have developed a new coding to help the researcher or interested person understand explore and make meaning of the exchanges that occur in chatrooms. These exchanges present in a very confused fashion, with threads of conversation occurring simultaneously, starting and stopping in a seemingly chaotic fashion.

For example in Case Study 2 on Instant Messenger I have used the following notations;

***** in front of the female utterances and ##### in front of the male's turn takings.

In the second transcript I 'captured' for this study the female turn-takings are identified with @ @ @ @ @ @ and the second speaker, myself, with T Neuage in front of the turn takings.

Another coding system is identifying types of speech act such as in the following table

| |
|--|
| TABLE ONE |
| A/ = greetings or salutations |
| B/ = statement- open no one in particular, ever who is in the chatroom |
| C/ = statement - to someone named or previous (earlier) speaker |
| D/ = answer - to someone named or previous (earlier) speaker |
| E/ = answer - open - to ever who is in the chatroom |
| F/ = question - open - to anyone - ever who is in the chatroom |
| G/ = question - to someone specific or previous (earlier) speaker |
| ?/ = undetermined or not classifiable by one of the criteria above |
| ** = uses abbreviations such as lol |
| *) = uses emoticons in places of words or identify |

Secondly, meaningful conversational analysis is impossible without the following assumptions being made.

1. That we can never be sure who the writer is in terms of gender, or age.
2. We can never know if the participants are simply many manifestations of one person, using 'multiple selves'

3. The reader is also the writer at the same time. It is necessary for a person to take on both role simultaneously .
4. In chatrooms, no editing can take place; there is a finality to pressing the enter key.
5. The assumed societal hierarchies of education do not apply. One is not assumed to be poorly educated if one types spelling mistakes. This is quite different in traditional letter writing.
6. The use of emoticons enables chatters to include some emotional content

As well as:

1. Random placement of utterance by clicking the enter button the chat 'lands' where ever it lands
2. Participants introduced by server
3. Long gaps between discourse with other turn-takings in between
4. Threads of conversation
5. Discontinuity, i.e. popup ads or ads amongst the turn-takings
6. Fleeting text)
7. Collaborated-Selves
8. Metaphysical-chat-linguistics, i.e. anticipating discourse, intuitive response
9. Repeated utterances with little other content i.e 'hello', 'anyone want to chat'
10. Lurking
11. Non-existent author, such as a bot

12. Chatroom graffiti

13. Non-traditional grammatical markings abbreviations and lack of punctuation

There are two reading processes involved in chatroom discourse which any participant in a chatroom must use to share in conversation. Firstly, there is the title of the chatroom; a person must decide from the title whether this chatroom is what they are seeking. Secondly, there is the actual chat-text; before one can respond to what is being 'said' in a chatroom he or she must first read the text of other chatters.

In a chatroom one can scroll back to what was said earlier and respond to that.

Thirdly I have listed some useful terms to label some of the phenomena peculiar to chatroom discourse.

New glossary word from this thesis devised by the researcher for this thesis

Casual Chatroom Chat (CCC) A conversation in a chatroom which is not serious or intended to discover details on a subject. Most casual chatroom chat, similar to non-formal pub casual chat, consists of conversation typical of, 'hi' 'hows everyone'.

Chat Events (CE) are all the individual turn-taking text of a particular participator in a chat room, including entering, leaving and lurking.

Chat Room Analytical Practices (CRAP)

Chat Utterance Sentence Structures (CUSS) The sentences of a chat turn-taking. Unlike sentences of with nouns and verbs to establish a complete thought, chat sentences are typically made up of two to five words or emoticons. I have averaged the amount of words in twelve chatrooms, consisting of 1357 lines (turn takings) and found the average word count, including abbreviations and emoticons to be 3.7 items.

Chatter's-Event-Response-Gaps (CERG) The pause between chatters who are 'speaking' with one another. There are often other voices which fill these gaps.

Event Pause (EP) The break between utterances of a user in a chatroom. The most usual incidence of this is when the sever places an ad in the chatroom and it appears between utterances. It also occurs when no one writes for a specific period of time.

Event Pause. (EP) The break between utterances of a user in a chatroom.

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before the completion of the utterance, either due to the writer-speaker hitting the 'enter' key on the keyboard or the chat server not allowing more than a couple of lines at a time to be shown on the screen, thus breaking the conversation before it is completed.

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Multiple Selves Chat (MSC) A feature of chatrooms. The author is able to have several different representatives of his or her self in conversation at one time. As only one person can log on a chatroom at a time the person wanting to have multiple representation in a chatroom would need to have several windows open of the one chatroom but be logged on as a different username in each window.

Multiple-Authorship Chats (MAC) First discussed in Case Study 2.

Online Discourse Analysis Method (ODAM) Online Discourse Analysis Method. The method I am developing to study the language of online communication using abbreviations, misspelled words and emoticons.

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Online Lingo (OL) Using all the parts of speech in a chatroom includes the emoticons, abbreviations, sounds (if available in a chatroom setting) and the words typed in.

Person2Person-offline (p2P-off)

Person2Person-online (P2P-on)

Speech Act Community Online (SACO) is where people come together to exchange. What is exchanged is dependent on the chatroom topics. The ability to share meaning and continuous conversations within the SACO is what makes it a community.

Tangent Topic Thread (TTN) For example, see appendix 6, CS-6.5 Table 5.

Text-Based-Chatrooms (TBC). Text-Based-Chatrooms are a blip in the history of human writing and only short time period of computer-mediated communication (CMC). As more and more chatrooms add multimedia attributes, writing may become a minor or even a non-existent form of online communication. With voice-boards and voice-forums such as available from Wimba (<http://www.wimba.com/>) and chatrooms being 3D with virtual worlds which use voice and keyboard commands to move around the screen and with the growing use of avatars, TBCs may fade into a past genre of electronic writing peculiar to the period from approximately 1993-2003. Virtual chat is available from several sources such as Traveler (<http://www.digitalspace.com/traveler/>), The Palace (<http://www.thepalace.com/>) Active Worlds (<http://www.activeworlds.com>)