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Online Discourse Analysis Methods (*n*ODAM) ABSTRACT

Beginning with an understanding of the following linguistic theories; Reading-response Theory, Computer Mediated Communication (CMC), Semiotic Analysis, Speech Act (SA), Discourse Analysis (DA), Conversational Analysis (CA), and several schools of linguistic theories this thesis discusses how conversation in the text-based chatroom milieu differs from every day 'casual' conversation in a number of respects and that despite the differences in 'chat' conducted online from that carried out face to face, online chat and 'natural conversation' share some features.

This is a study of how the process of exchanging meaning is functionally motivated within electronic 'talk'. My first endeavor has been to create a semiotic model for 'Natural Language' within the chatroom milieu. I have established a protocol to 'capture' chatroom 'talk' for analysis.

My research shows that not only is 'conversation' a misnomer in this

context, but also that dialogue in this electronic milieu is different, not only because of the absence of sight and sound cues, but also because of features caused by rapidly changing technologies.

I have proposed that chatroom discourse is in fact a new genre with characteristics in common with casual conversation, writing and other forms of electronic communication, but with new and unique features that demands its classification, as I will argue as a new genre of communicative exchange.

Chatroom conversation is becoming a phenomena which warrants historical study. It is showing signs, because of rapidly changing and evolving technologies, to be a short lived genre. Replication of this thesis and my research is difficult for reasons discussed in my thesis due to the changing technology of the Internet. This makes my thesis an important work, not only from a research point of view, but also from a historical point of view.

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