Weblog: A Communicative and Formative Setting

Michele Baldassarre, University “Aldo Moro” Bari, Italy

ABSTRACT

The internet and blogging has become the Agorà of the 21st century and, within such a context, regarded as a “recounting” technology with a double objective: “recounting about oneself to other people” and “recounting to oneself about oneself.” The “weblog” phenomenon accounts for the triumph of the principle of democracy in the Internet which is no longer considered as a “center” which provides information, but rather as a “many to many” branching system under which each user becomes at once the consumer and the producer of information, messages, and contents. This study demonstrates that weblogs are tools to account for an education opportunity since self-narration enables gives a form and a meaning to the continuity of one’s own life: an unrenounceable chance to uncover and make visible connections across the different “stances” of one’s soul. The authors present the case of an online diary with 224 posts (the blog of A.), analyzed with a set of linguistic and statistical software tools. Content analysis has been resorted to for assessing the narrative strategies used by A. to share his life experience with others through metaphors, punctuation marks, and syntactic structures. This demonstrates that the blog accounts for a training ground of the Self for people experiencing important and decisive times in their lives as it enhances the self-narrative skills of the internauts.

Keywords: Blog, Educational Research, Multimedia, Narrative Strategies, Personal Identity

THE BLOG AS A TOOL FOR IDENTITY BUILDING

The whole Computer Mediated Communication (CMC) galaxy is made up of a set of tools designed to promote interaction between users. Each one of these instruments affects the strategies that can be implemented to build one’s own image of him/herself, whereas the prominent role is played by the narrated word. Now, in this context, what can the blog offer to those users eager to create their second life on line? How can the dialogicity inherent to the construction of one’s own identity be translated in the blogosphere?

The authors (both men and women) of weblogs carry on socialized practices of self-presentation that figure out multiple identity positioning which emerge from internal dialogue as well as from the interaction with the social and cultural reality. Blogging [...] therefore offers a tangible representation of the dialogic self (Hevern & Pugliese, 2005, p. 66).

In addition to the asynchronous modality, which characterizes the repartee between the blogger and his/her readers, by its very nature of text and narration, the blog lends itself very well to constructing one’s own identity on line (Ligorio, 2002). The user who makes the choice

DOI: 10.4018/jdldc.2012070104
to open a blog has indeed a tangible possibility to recount him/herself to other people, in a way that somewhat recalls to our mind the “confessional situation” of reality shows (Ligorio & Hermans, 2005, p. 9) and to recount to him/herself about him/herself inasmuch as he/she succeeds in “setting in order” (by means of posts and post filing over time) his/her continuous positionings and re-positionings. The metaphor of the confessional becomes even more relevant if one considers that the reader of the “exhibitionist” blogger can somehow put him/herself in the shoes of the subject whose life experience is made “public” in a mechanism of self-disclosure and give his/her personal contribution through comments on what he/she reads. Therefore if, on the one hand, the will exists to recount about oneself, from the other hand it wouldn’t be wrong to emphasize the need of readers to recognize themselves in the life experience of other people “in a spirit encompassing empathy and complicity” (Mininni, 2004, p. 99).

Both blog’s structure and architecture serve as a visual translation of the dialogic identity (Ligorio & Hermans, 2005):

1. The headline (and hence the title and the tagline), the personal infos, the categories and the blogroll account for “what they are” as these sections account for elements that usually remain unchanged over time thus guaranteeing both the recognisability and the uniqueness of the blog in question compared to other blogs;

2. The set of the posts accounts for the blogger turning to his/her potential likes (Markus & Nurius, 2004, p. 99). Day after day, post after post, the user is able to describe the continuous play of his/her positioning and re-positioning. Thanks to the chronologic organization of the blog it is possible to go backwards and re-travel the succession of the various positionings the other way round. This is why the blog’s archives enshrine the evolution of the life experiences of the subject;

3. Comments and permalink guarantee the feedback required to know the idea the other users have got of the blogger. These other users account for the interface between the blogger and the external world. The external world is able: (a) To recognize the user validating the sense of his/her posts; (b) To cooperate by negotiating the meanings proposed; and (c) To reject what has been stated. The permalinks serve as bookmarks that signal similar experiences relevant to the experience proposed by the blogger thus creating a Net based on experience sharing.

All of these three components are at play in the general construction of the blogger’s on-line identity, as is the case in off-line life also the blog can register either the prominent role of one of the three components over the other two, or the occurrence of a more or less pronounced synergism among the three components.

At the very heart of each blog there occurs an immediate updating, which can take place even three times a day, of the latest blogs which, due to their chronologically reversed order of publication, turn out to be the first to be read/readable in accessing to the page of the online diary. The posts written by the blogger every now and then account for the electrocardiogram of the continuous positionings of the Self while the blog is open. But how could these “jumps” take shape? Hermans hypothesizes three possible answers (Ligorio & Hermans, 2005):

1. Introduction of a new position: “a new position can become part of the new repertoire to be included in the structuring of the various Selves, and this is potentially likely to occur every time people are exposed to new situations” (Ligorio & Hermans, 2005, p. 28);

2. Background and foreground positions: the “positions that make up deep layers of the Self are brought to surface. […] Positions already included in the system are made accessible thanks to the re-arrangement of the Self” (Ligorio & Hermans, 2005, p. 31);
Related Content

Technological Skills and Initial Teacher Training: An Exploratory Research on Attitudes of the Future Teachers Towards ICT
[www.igi-global.com/article/technological-skills-and-initial-teacher-training/199049?camid=4v1a](www.igi-global.com/article/technological-skills-and-initial-teacher-training/199049?camid=4v1a)
Good Teaching Practice and Quality Indicators for Virtual and Blended Learning: Project Matrix
www.igi-global.com/article/good-teaching-practice-quality-indicators/52759?camid=4v1a

Media Literacy in a Digital Age: Multimodal Social Semiotics and Reading Media
www.igi-global.com/chapter/media-literacy-in-a-digital-age/232047?camid=4v1a

The Future of Digital Society and the New Values of Media
www.igi-global.com/chapter/future-digital-society-new-values/8418?camid=4v1a