

RESEARCH NOTE

Ethics and social media: Implications for sociolinguistics in the networked public¹

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As a popular agora for writing identity into being, the networked public of social media sites presents exciting and unprecedented possibilities for sociolinguistic research. At the same time, these sites raise a wealth of unfamiliar methodological and ethical issues, and debate concerning appropriate ethical measures for research targeting online discourse communities is emergent. One of the most pressing debates concerns the visibility of online interaction (i.e. its locus between the public and private ends of the continuum). Although they exist freely online, networked publics are not public forums. They are governed by both personal and communal norms, and they are networked. This combination of factors gives rise to unique ethical challenges, particularly in the case of Facebook, an accessible and data-rich, yet problematic, research site. This paper reviews the ethical difficulties presented by Facebook, and presents a framework for ethnographic sociolinguistic research that uses this site as a source of data.

En tant qu'espace public privilégié pour la création de l'identité à travers l'écriture, le public «réseauté» (interconnecté) des sites des médias sociaux présente des possibilités prometteuses et sans précédent pour la recherche en sociolinguistique. Cependant, ces sites soulèvent de nombreuses questions méthodologiques et éthiques qui sont nouvelles, d'où l'émergence de discussions portant sur les mesures éthiques appropriées pour la recherche qui vise les communautés discursives en ligne. Un des débats concerne la visibilité de l'interaction en ligne (c.-à-d. sa place entre les extrémités privée et publique du continuum). Bien qu'ils existent de façon libre en ligne, les réseaux publics ne sont pas des forums publics. Ils sont gouvernés à la fois par des normes personnelles et communautaires, et ils sont interconnectés. Cette combinaison de facteurs donne naissance à des défis éthiques uniques, en particulier dans le cas de Facebook, un site de recherche accessible et riche en données, mais problématique. Cet article passe en revue les difficultés éthiques que Facebook présente, et offre un cadre de travail pour la recherche sociolinguistique ethnographique utilisant ce site comme source de données. [French]

KEYWORDS: CMC, ethics, ethnography, Facebook, networked public, social media

INTRODUCTION: ETHICS IN LINGUISTICS

Linguistics has always been concerned with the ethics of data collection. In the traditional model, consent, risk, anonymity, and confidentiality of participants are foregrounded. In sociolinguistics and related fields (e.g. documentation, revitalization, anthropology, education), the framework often expands to include advocacy, empowerment, and community-governance (e.g. Labov 1982; Cameron et al. 1992, 1993; Wolfram 1993, 1998; Rickford 1999; Czaykowska-Higgins 2009). But a new research paradigm is evolving, one which involves a very different conceptualization of community. No longer restricted in physical space to the *bush* or the *street* (cf. Labov 1972b: 99), the advent of computer-mediated communication (CMC) has resulted in *virtual communities*, peopled by interlocutors who may or may not have pre-existing offline relationships, engaged in electronic discourse (see Paolillo 2001).

Platforms such as Chat are one way in which virtual communities are articulated online, but social networking sites are increasingly popular agorae for mediated exchanges. These sites have quickly developed 'significant cultural resonance' (boyd 2007: 1), particularly among the key arbiters of language as an interactional and stylistic tool: youth. These sites are thus of growing import and interest within the field of sociolinguistics: how do individuals 'write themselves and their community into being'? (boyd 2007: 2).

Internet research as a whole, however, is problematic for the rarity with which methodological reflections are shared (Hall, Frederick and Johns 2004), resulting in obscurity around the problems, challenges, and even limitations faced in the conduct of research online. The ramifications of this are acutely realized when human research ethics meet online social media (e.g. Friendster, MySpace, Facebook). Social media are governed by both personal and communal norms, and in many cases they are networked. This combination of factors gives rise to unique ethical challenges (Johns, Chen and Hall 2004), especially in the case of Facebook (Zimmer 2010).

It is these challenges that we address here. Our aim is to present an ethical framework for sociolinguistic research that uses Facebook as a source of language data. Facebook is distinct from other online spaces (e.g. Twitter) in that its content is not aimed at the Net but rather is geared toward a constellation of known actors within the networks of individual users. The current discussion is thus intended to encompass sociolinguistic research that targets social portals resembling the Facebook model, regardless of whether or not this particular site maintains its hegemony within the realm of online social networking. The discussion hinges on the implications of this platform for the conduct of research, focusing on:

1. finding and recruiting participants;
2. securing informed and ongoing consent; and
3. including third party data.

First, however, we discuss the broader context of conducting sociolinguistic research online. In so doing, we attempt to bridge the gap between human subject research ethics on the one hand, and the kinds of questions which are asked by sociolinguists on the other.

SOCIOLINGUISTICS AND SOCIAL NETWORKS

There is an obvious link between sociolinguistics and traditional (i.e. non-virtual) social networks, and researchers have long been exploring the consequences of personal network structures for linguistic practice (Labov 1972a; Gal 1978; Cheshire 1982; Milroy and Milroy 1985, 1992; Milroy 1987; Eckert 1988). When this line of inquiry first moved online, the focus was Internet Relay Chat and Listserv discussions (e.g. Paolillo 2001; de Oliveira 2003; Durham 2003). With the exception of Paolillo (2001), this work did not explicitly foreground or problematize 'network' as a theoretical construct, but descriptions of relational patterns were taken as interesting and valuable in their own right. What ultimately unites this work is the question of shared norms: as articulated by Ferrara, Brunner and Whitemore (1991: 9–10), if shared norms cohere an online *discourse community*, then 'how are these conventions developed and acquired, what are they like, and are they differentially distributed throughout the community?' These questions remain relevant, speaking to issues fundamental to identity construction, projection, and interpretation. Within this sphere are also questions concerning standardization and/or ritualization of discourse norms (mono- and multilingual), as well as the ongoing and emergent norms of use within and across communities (however they be constituted).

Our purpose here is not to review the sociolinguistic literature on CMC (the special issue 10(4) of the *Journal of Sociolinguistics* serves this purpose well; see Androutsopoulos 2006 in particular), but to explicitly link social network sites to questions of a sociolinguistic nature. Facebook offers a virtual space for engagement in linguistic and identity practices, enabling the 'building of social and cultural communities' (Lam 2000: 469). Cultural constructs such as *Jock*, *Burnout*, *Nerd*, and *Homegirl* – which emerge from and are reinforced by personal network structures – have well-established and reified roles in sociolinguistic theorizing (e.g. Eckert 1989; Bucholtz 1999; Mendoza-Denton 2008). What online networks provide is free-range space in which users are able to manipulate resources for their own collaboration and self-presentation. These resources include personal walls ('public' messages), inboxes (private messages), photo albums (allowing for caption, comment, and discussion), videos, and various other ways to provide and retain information or project an avatar. In other words, these sites are distinct for the role played by technology in the discursive construction of identity, suggesting that ethnographic methods will feature prominently in sociolinguistic analyses of online social media.

Within sociolinguistics, online networks have a distinct advantage over traditional offline ethnographic observations of communities and cultures: Facebook and its ilk are 'uniquely placed to explore the synthesis between qualitative and quantitative approaches to data' (Georgakopoulou 2006: 550). These sites contain huge amounts of (digital) data, material which is lasting and embedded in context. They therefore provide an unprecedented opportunity for statistically-informed and ethnographically-informed perspectives to complement each other. In short, these sites enable sociolinguists of all stripes both to uncover generalizable claims and to achieve 'subtlety and richness of analysis' (Georgakopoulou 2006: 551; for other points, see Androutsopoulos 2008). As sociolinguists the motivation for using Facebook is not ease of data collection (as we outline below, data cannot be simply harvested), but the significance of the site for observing the emergence and deployment of discourse conventions, within and across readily constructed network structures, in a way that facilitates the bridging of quantitative and qualitative perspectives on linguistic practice.

THE NETWORKED PUBLIC AND IMPLICATIONS FOR RESEARCH

One of the most pressing debates in Internet research concerns the visibility of online interaction. If the content is considered public, then the ways in which context is constructed and maintained through participation (a facet of all mediated public spaces, not just virtual ones; see boyd 2007) must be considered. If the content is considered private, then the ways in which context is reflective of unobserved norms of meaning construal are primary.

In reality, visibility is a continuum, and any analytical apparatus must be shaped by the structure of a given site. The 'networked public' – the nonymous online environment of social network sites – is set apart from offline life by characteristics which simultaneously complicate and advocate research in virtual networks (boyd 2007): even the most mundane of communications is recorded (persistence), and search tools allow users to find records of past communications (searchability). These records are accessible and replicable (replicability), and invisible audience members move in and out of contact with online texts (invisibility). Additionally, Facebook operates under a tenet of identity disclosure (real names are used), and it is the 'network' rather than the individual user that determines visibility and discoverability (see Thom-Santelli and Millen 2010). These aspects all have consequences when posts are sought as textual evidence.

As sociolinguists, our interest in Facebook is the form of the message itself – this data simultaneously feeds our hypotheses and informs our interpretation of meaning (social and linguistic). From an ethics perspective, this entails that individuals targeted for research in online social media are human subjects (Hudson and Bruckman 2004: 128); their content incurs the same rights and obligations as does the content of offline engagement. Crucially, these rights

and obligations hold regardless of the perceptions that users have of their online interactions (Viégas 2005; boyd and Hargittai 2010; Bornoe and Barkhuus 2011). Choosing to reveal information and having it used for a different purpose are distinct issues (Galkin 1996); users do not respond well to the idea of their posts being used for research without either their knowledge or consent (Hudson and Bruckman 2004), and Facebook itself has been at the centre of a privacy controversy (see Zimmer 2010).

Privacy in networked publics 'is not about structural limitations to access [but] being able to limit access through social conventions' (boyd 2007: 15). Facebook policy allows the collection of information by third parties from its site, but users' consent must be obtained.² Users must also be told what is being collected and to what aim. This policy was likely designed with marketing research and product research in mind, but it applies equally to academic research. Users are thus afforded control over those aspects of their content which are not classified public information on the site (e.g. wall posts).

The now infamous Taste, Ties and Time Study (T3) presents a paramount example of the (false) assumption that because a profile can be accessed by another user, that profile is publically available. Research assistants for the T3 downloaded profile information from students at Harvard University without either their knowledge or their consent. However, these assistants had access to the information only because they were members of the same networks as the students in question, whether as 'Friends' or otherwise (e.g. Friends and Networks; Friends of Friends). As summarized by Zimmer (2010: 318), the T3 researchers did not recognize that 'a subject might have set her privacy settings to be viewable only to other users within her network, but to be inaccessible to those outside that sphere.' As a result, content – intended for dissemination within a confined context – was extracted and shared outside those explicit boundaries (Zimmer 2010: 318).

At the heart of the issue are fundamental misunderstandings concerning the contextual nature of privacy in online social media (Nissenbaum 1998, 2004, 2009). Facebook content is shared within a specific context, a context that carries certain norms and expectations of privacy. Because something is made available to 'Friends' does not render it 'fair game for capture and release' (Zimmer 2010: 323; also boyd 2008).³ How then do we take advantage of social media such as Facebook and remain within the boundaries of research ethics?

THE ROLE OF THE RESEARCHER ON SOCIAL MEDIA

One key to answering this question lay in defining the role of the researcher on social media. The details of how a researcher is situated *vis-à-vis* the population of interest depends on the analytical framework and methodology. In sociolinguistics, participant observation and other ethnographically-inspired protocols necessarily entail that the researcher take part in the community under observation, while the traditional Labovian mode of inquiry endorses a less

integrated approach. From a cross-disciplinary perspective, however, the issues driving investigation of social networks are behaviour-based (e.g. friendship patterns, political convictions, language practices). We therefore assume a protocol requiring (prolonged) observation of some group of individuals.

Because it articulates a range of participants, Audience Design (Bell 1984) is useful for framing the role of the researcher in the networked public. In Facebook, addressees are both specific (the individuals on whose walls, posts and pictures users comment) and general (the Friends who read wall posts and status updates). But intimately woven into the fabric of Facebook's extended addressee networks is the invisible audience, those individuals who move in and out of contact with online text (e.g. Friends of Friends, Networks, Everyone). In Bell's framework, these are the auditors, overhearers, and eavesdroppers.

Eavesdroppers are individuals of whom the speaker (i.e. online content producer) is unaware; they are not addressed and their non-ratification in the interaction is explicit. Eavesdroppers are an inescapable reality of the networked public, where they participate in cultural and interactional consumerism. In our estimation, however, appropriating an eavesdropper role for Facebook research is no different from surreptitiously recording conversations in non-virtual spaces (cf. the T3 project).

The most recent ethics statement of the Linguistic Society of America (2009: section 2) allows observations of public behavior which 'cannot involve consent'. In the case of Facebook, creating digital copies of online content, regardless of their status as public or not (and setting aside both their contextual embedding and the site's policies on third party data-mining), goes well beyond observing behavior. An individual user's presence is neither tenuous nor anonymous within the context of Facebook itself; consent can be obtained. And, as the T3 case resoundingly demonstrates, anonymity and confidentiality are extremely difficult to maintain (Zimmer 2010; Backstrom, Dwork and Kleinberg 2011), thereby excluding such data from a human subjects research waiver.

The remaining roles under the umbrella of Audience Design that a researcher can assume are those of auditor or overhearer. The difference ultimately comes down to how much online presence is desired. Speakers are aware of both auditors and overhearers, and neither is addressed, but they are not equally sanctioned to participate in the exchange: auditors are included, overhearers are not. The speaker is aware of their presence, but the conversation is in no way aimed at them and they are not ratified participants in ongoing exchanges.

Unless there is an empirically-motivated reason to seek ratification and interact with participants (e.g. as participant observer), we advocate the role of overhearer for social media research. Gathering data as an overhearer enables the analyst to sit outside of the action, a known but unobtrusive observer, while simultaneously addressing concerns about privacy, risk, and consent. Participants are aware of the researcher's identity, presence, and intent to collect data for research purposes.

A FRAMEWORK FOR ETHICAL RESEARCH ON FACEBOOK

How to begin research in a social network such as Facebook? How to find and recruit participants? How to secure informed and ongoing consent? And given how contextualized and dynamic Facebook networks are, what should be done with third party data? In this section we present a framework for conducting sociolinguistic research on Facebook (Young 2011: Appendix 4). This protocol was developed specifically for an ethnographic observation of gender identity construction within a group of teenage girls, and was crafted in consultation with the Human Research Ethics Board at The University of Victoria.⁴ We believe, however, that regardless of institutional requirements it represents a set of best practices that can serve to guide ethnographic investigations of social media behaviors (bearing in mind Facebook's privacy policy), in which access to full profile information (pictures, wall, comments) and extended social network participants is critical, particularly from an interactional sociolinguistics perspective. Though the solutions proposed here are not necessarily suitable for all projects, we believe they present a solid starting point for sociolinguistic research in the networked public.⁵ In this sense the framework is atheoretical: it provides a template rather than a theoretically-driven outline for sociolinguistic inquiries within a specific research paradigm.

The researcher profile and group

In all aspects of research, transparency is critical. For her Facebook profile, Young (2011) used her own name and account (the latter 'tidied up' for the project). Her identity was thus neither ambiguous nor fictional, and the young women who engaged in the study could interact with her as they would any other user. Facebook profiles can be tagged with a photograph, or the site's generic white-head-on-blue-background can be used. For the participant, the anonymous 'Facebook head' renders the researcher less concrete – more an idea than a reality. As such, we suggest an alternate route. Young (2011) opted for a photograph of herself in which she is crouched down, camera in hand, with her head turned away from the lens. The image lacks personal information yet her body position intimates accessibility, and the camera is iconic of her role as researcher.

We suggest creating a Facebook group for all projects. Because researchers act as representatives of their institution(s) when in the field (and to formalize the researcher's presence in the network), the image associated with the group should be the University's or Department's crest. Name the group transparently (e.g. *UVic Sociolinguistics Research*), and place a detailed introduction to the project on the group wall, along with a brief description in the information pane. The introduction should describe what the project is about and encourage participants to use the wall for questions and comments. This latter inclusion both fosters transparency and emphasizes the researcher's availability and willingness to accept feedback and to address questions and concerns.

Facebook groups can be set to 'open', 'closed', or 'secret'. Open status allows users to search and request membership. Closed status does not allow membership requests (i.e. an existent group member must add new members). Secret status prevents non-members from accessing or gleaning information about the group, its members, and its activities. For reasons pertaining to consent, open status is recommended until all participants have joined the group, when the status should be reset to secret.⁶ This last step protects the privacy and the confidentiality of the members once data collection has begun. However, given that user activity is announced on Facebook, both through the ticker function and through wall activity updates, that individuals have joined the group cannot be hidden from their extended networks (though individuals may change the privacy setting for an update, making it visible only to themselves).

In a fluid context like Facebook, researchers must negotiate the balance between emphasizing their institutional role for ethical reasons and maintaining the degree of unobtrusiveness required for academic purposes. The profile and group achieve this end: they establish a stable researcher presence. Moreover, although a researcher may only rarely interact with participants once a project is underway, if direct contact is needed (e.g. through the message function), participants are reminded of the academic's role by virtue of their profile picture/image; a tag to the group should also be included in these exchanges.

Recruitment and informed consent

In the networked public, recruitment tools are interactive. Search tools within platforms can facilitate the process if a specific and definable participant type is key to the research question (e.g. students at a particular institution, individuals with particular interests, fans of a particular television show, etc.). This approach also enables the researcher to screen or vet participants before an invitation to participate is sent (with the proviso that users who have closed profiles will be invisible in searches of this nature). At the same time, using online search criteria for recruitment purposes may also mean that participants are easier to identify (compromising anonymity and confidentiality), and possible candidates may be missed by the search criteria (Brooks and Churchill 2010).

If the project targets a pre-existing group, then individuals can be approached directly, similar to the door-to-door or telephone cold calling of many large-scale sociolinguistic investigations (e.g. Poplack 1989; Labov, Ash and Boberg 2006; Tagliamonte 2012). If the ethics board does not allow traditional snowball recruitment (e.g. friend of a friend sampling, Milroy 1987), then locating participants can be a challenge. One is forced either to rely on word of mouth and hope that participants can be drawn to the project (which in a networked online environment presents less of a challenge than in offline contexts), or to use a third party to approach potential participants in their own, pre-existing, network. This last method has two advantages. First, recruitment can be tailored to the needs of the project (the recruiter can selectively target specific kinds of

individuals). Second, it optimizes the opportunity to examine existent interactive norms among Friends, within and across networks.

Regardless of method, recruitment should direct participants to the group page, where they can read the project description and seek membership. Membership in Facebook groups can be acquired either by hitting the 'join' icon or via a request for permission to the group administrator. Deciding between these options depends on the need to constrain group membership. However, seeking group membership does not constitute informed consent. There are simply too many unknowns, and the notion of what constitutes 'consent' within social networking spaces is not yet well understood (Zimmer 2010: 323).

We stress here that – due to the numerous unknowns in which online research remains steeped and the highly contextualized nature of the medium itself – a formalized consent strategy is necessary. It is easy to underestimate the complexity of securing consent in a sphere in which content (i.e. data) is but a click away. More importantly, the notion that informed consent can be curtailed in virtual spaces undermines the ethical principles that underpin sociolinguistic research, which crucially acknowledges the subjectivity of social settings.

Consent can be sought through tools in Facebook or an outside platform can be used. In Facebook, the 'Create Doc' function allows letters of introduction, consent forms, and other relevant information to be posted directly to participants. This is a good option if the document is quite lengthy and/or detailed. The 'Question' function is viable when the documents are minimal. A third route is to move consent outside of the networked public, to an online survey or the like (e.g. SurveyMonkey, LimeSurvey, Zoomerang, etc.). This option has two benefits. First, as is standard practice with online surveys, the opening page can be used to detail participation in the study (most crucially, ongoing and extended observation); agreeing to the terms as stipulated on this page (by clicking 'Continue' or 'Agree') constitutes informed consent. Second, survey platforms enable the researcher to present questionnaires to participants on topics that may be relevant to the project (e.g. frequency of Facebook use, subjective beliefs about the primary function(s) of Facebook, 'Friend' counts, etc.). In sum, using an external site allows the researcher to simultaneously obtain background information and consent without imposing extra research paraphernalia on participants. If a questionnaire is not completed, the individual can be removed from the group, thereby removing potential questions about consent.

Data collection

It is the data collection phase that is most rife with potential ethical dilemmas: the analyst must access the walls and profile pages of participants. Setting up a group and being its administrator does not give the researcher this level of access. What is required is Friend status. In our experience, this is the largest challenge, particularly if the community of interest involves minors. The issue here concerns

power-over, and given the possible emotional connotation of 'friendship', some ethics bodies may feel uneasy with researchers requesting Friend status with participants. This understanding, however, is founded on a miscalculation of the norms governing Facebook networks, where Friends may never have actually met in real life and offline acquaintances regularly exchange information they may not share face to face (on *virtual friendship*, see Fröding and Peterson 2012).

There are bona fide consequences for participants if research is not conducted in Friend mode. Users can block 'non-Friends' from having access to some or all of their content. To see the posts of these participants, users must be asked to change their privacy settings. This may require a change from 'Friends only' to 'Friends of Friends' (if a pre-existing Friendship is involved), or it may require a change from 'Friends only' to 'Everyone'. In other words, to participate in the project, individuals must open themselves up to the invisible audience of the networked public. This is no minor point: it entails making personal content – otherwise protected within the confines of the site – 'public'.

In accessing individual profile pages, researchers are not limited to the exchanges of those individuals: they have access to the extended and nested networks of the participants (i.e. third party data). The fact is, little content does not include third party posts and/or comments. Not having access to this content will severely compromise the success of the project – indeed, in many cases (e.g. interactional sociolinguistics, discourse analysis, quantification of addressee effects) it completely mitigates the purpose of the study. It is paramount that the ability to request third party consent be part of the project design.

The options for contacting third parties will depend on the privacy settings of individual users, but, to protect confidentiality, the private 'Message' function (when enabled for non-Friends) is optimal. In the usual case, these are individuals whose content appears in some post, the full extent of which the researcher wishes to include in the analysis. A lengthy protocol is thus not necessary (indeed, it is generally an impediment in this context). In order to satisfy the criteria for informed consent, messages to third parties should include a description of the researcher, the project, and the exact passage or passages for which permission is being sought. The message should also include the precise details concerning how the data will be used, along with a discussion of anonymity and confidentiality, as well as a statement of what qualifies as consent (e.g. 'If you agree to share your above cited post(s) for this project, please reply to this message stating "I agree"').

Closing down the project

Once data collection is complete, close down the group by deleting each member; members must also be unfriended. Inform each member that the project has been completed and that their participation has ended, that the group has been deleted, and that their Friend status is to be deleted immediately. Thank each

individual for participating, and encourage them be in touch with any questions, comments, or concerns about the research.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Social networking sites have been described as 'a social scientist's wet dream' (Halavais, cited in Parry 2011), but they also present unique ethical challenges for researchers wishing to take advantage of the opportunities they present. As sociolinguists move online, the shift from physical to virtual spaces must accommodate to the 'contextual understanding of norms of information flow within specific spheres' (Zimmer 2010: 323). These norms are the backbone for any ethical protocol, and they must be understood, designed to, and subsequently explicated in detail, to ethics boards and participants alike. There is no unilateral model. It is therefore imperative to consider the medium's structure and its users' understandings of that structure. Ultimately, online content is both socially valuable and meaningful to those who create it and make it available, and yet this content is not necessarily ethically obtainable by researchers.

Open dialogue between researchers is critical in order to demystify the challenges around research in the networked public, as well as to challenge the notion that all online spaces of the networked public are *de facto* public spheres. Dialogue should also form part of the research itself. Internet research represents a key transformation in social research, linguistic or otherwise, folding virtual and real-world inquiries into 'the same set of interpretive practices' (Denzin 2004: 1). As this mode of enquiry develops and moves forward, it is important to incorporate the status quo of online interaction into our ethical model: 'those online are participants in cultures of their own making' (Jones 2004: 183). As such, the textual artifacts they create are not 'mere messages' to be harvested. Rather, they are contextually-embedded exchanges, subject to internally-determined norms for sharing – ideal material for sociolinguistic inquiry.

NOTES

1. An earlier version of this paper was presented at NWAV 40; we thank audience members for their comments and questions. We also acknowledge Allan Bell, Monica Heller, and two anonymous reviewers for their feedback in shaping this paper. Finally, we acknowledge the efforts of Mikael Jansson and the Human Research Ethics Board at the University of Victoria, who were instrumental in helping us wade through the complex ethics of online social media research.
2. Facebook's statement of rights and responsibilities is available at <http://www.facebook.com/terms.php>
3. Information sharing is Facebook's most important and most problematic feature: content is networked between actors with different privacy expectations. Access is the responsibility of the account owner and content is not 'public' (i.e. equivalent

- to website content; Bakardjieva and Feenberg 2000), but personal settings are subject to those of others (<http://www.facebook.com/policy.php>).
4. The suggestions we make here are largely in accord with the protocol adopted by Young (2011), however certain points differ from those followed in the original project through virtue of experience, and inevitably, hindsight.
 5. This framework may be less feasible if conducting large-scale quantitative research, (where, for example, the question may pertain to patterns of use in Facebook as a genre of CMC). As an alternative, users are able to download their full Facebook history; walls are archived and presented in chronological order, complete with date and time stamps. The 'cost' is loss of access to the extended friendship network and other metadata (e.g. *likes*), and as such, this approach is less desirable when interactional discourse is critical to the research question.
 6. It is possible to set the group to closed and have all data (i.e. interactions) occur within the confines of the group. Working in this environment may enable a more streamlined process but it would be an impediment, as participants would have little motivation to visit the group and its use would hamper the naturalistic and networked exchanges that are of the most interest to sociolinguists.

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