

Discursive Self in Microblogging

Speech acts, stories
and self-praise

Daria Dayter



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Discursive Self in Microblogging

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by Daria Dayter

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Introducing the pragmalinguistic approach to the study of Twitter

1.1 The object of the study

The book examines discursive identity construction on the example of an Anglo-phone Twitter community of ballet students and enthusiasts. It is best to open this discussion with one of the ballet tweets:

- (1) ROHman: Ain't got no date tonight – I shall be learning more #rothbart from the 1990 Kirov Swan Lake recording instead. 4:42 PM 14 Feb 2013

At first glance, this post is representative of two prejudices that lead popular press to condemn Twitter as pointless and narcissistic: sharing everyday minutiae with the world, and complaining about them. *ROHman* tweets on the afternoon of the Valentine's day that his love life is apparently a failure and in addition he has to spend his evening learning something from a 1990 recording, which, whatever it might be, does not sound too thrilling. If we were to judge *ROHman*'s identity, i.e. a sense of who he is, from this snippet of talk, we would conclude that he is not very popular with women, a yammerer, and some sort of geek who is into retro recordings. From a linguistic perspective, *ROHman* is sending mixed signals: the pro-drop, the colloquial contraction, a double negative and inconsistent capitalisation indicate informal register, while the auxiliary 'shall' expresses the preference for a formal British usage. This contrast hints at a playfulness; playfulness that becomes even more apparent when we look at the uptake by a follower which changes the perception of *ROHman*'s identity claims considerably:

- (2) Follower: @ROHman My date & I have a dress rehearsal that ends with a lot of fake blood & sacrificing a virgin #strangevday #riteofspring 5:58 PM 14 Feb 2013

On the basis of their shared cognitive background, the follower identifies the salient theme in the original tweet: ballet. This is done with the help of membership categorisation devices which can be overlooked individually but taken together unequivocally invoke the salient category: "rothbart" and "Swan Lake"

from *ROHman*'s tweet align with "dress rehearsal" and "riteofspring" in the uptake. Moreover, the follower establishes her stance towards *ROHman*'s contribution. A complaint pre-determines commiseration or offer of repair as a second turn. The follower's tweet, however, can function either as an acknowledgement, which is a second-pair part to informing, or a second story – a story episode with close parallels to the first story, usually matching the role taken by the tellers (Sacks 1992). A second story constitutes an assessment of the first story as appropriate and relevant (ibid.). Finally, both authors use hashtags. Hashtags create searchable talk, "a change in social relations whereby we mark our discourse so that it can be found by others, in effect so that we can bond around particular values" (Zappavigna 2012: 1). By adding # before the category-bound words, *ROHman* and his follower show their awareness of the larger community discourse into which these tweets should be embedded. Together, they work towards an identity of a ballet enthusiast, who is savvy about performances, does the actual dancing, and prefers ballet-related activities to any old boring wining and dining on the Valentine's Day.

By paying attention to these and related linguistic phenomena, I intend to investigate the pragmatolinguistic correlates of the network integration. The integration into the ballet students' network has two predicates: a (discursive) identity of a ballet student, and solidarity-building behaviour. I combine a quantitative and qualitative analysis of two speech acts, complaints and self-praise, with the analysis of collaborative storytelling, to show how self-presentation is linguistically managed on Twitter. The study is located on the intersection of pragmatics, discourse analysis and conversation analysis.¹ A discursive identity is understood here as an aggregate construct of self that is produced over time across multiple interactions, in this case, on Twitter.

Twitter is a social networking site that belongs to a subtype of microblogging: it allows users to contribute small posts up to 140 characters in length. It currently boasts more than 600 million registered users who generate 68 million tweets per day (Statistic Brain 2014). The persistence of transcript makes it possible for a researcher to observe a mass of discursive acts of positioning on the users' timelines as they function to engage with a community and to construct a virtual identity. The term 'positioning' is borrowed from Davies and Harré (1999: 37) and stands for "the discursive process whereby people are located in conversations as observably and subjectively coherent participants in jointly produced storylines."

1. Here, the latter two are understood as distinct fields. While conversation analysts study primarily the organisation of conversation, discourse analysis looks at language in context and examines how social structures affect communication, its material not necessarily organised in turns but also monological.

Twitter is a communication channel in which each communicative act is relatively decontextualised: there is no expectation of marked topic shifts or of coherence across ‘turns.’ At the same time, as the investigation will show, the talk is deeply embedded into the social context surrounding the interactants.

The present study is based on a sample of eleven Twitter users, five female and six male, from the USA and the UK, who all have first- or second-degree connections with each other and tweet largely on ballet-related topics. The users are assumed to represent a larger discourse community of ballet enthusiasts – a group whose members have common goals, intercommunication mechanisms, particular genres and specific lexis (Swales 1990, Watts 1999).² From their timelines in 2012–2013, I randomly selected 1,000 tweets that have been manually compiled and annotated to form the Twitter corpus (hereafter BaTwit). I will discuss the choice of Twitter as a site of investigation in the next sections; following that, I will turn to the objectives of this project and the research questions that guide the investigation; the chapter will conclude with the structural outline of the book.

1.2 Preliminary theoretical considerations

The rationale for choosing this language sample is twofold. On the one hand, it is driven by an interest in a pragmalinguistic description of a new and under-researched medium of communication. While in recent years linguists have emphasised the need to depart from computer determinism and to recognise the social/situational variability in computer-mediated communication (CMC) (Androustopoulos 2006), much of the existing research treats microblogs as a homogeneous entity in sampling methods as well as in its presentation of results (cf. Crystal 2011, Java et al. 2007, Krishnamurthy et al. 2008, Zappavigna 2012).

2. I made a conscious choice in favour of a discourse community over another popular conceptual device, a community of practice, although the latter has recently gained recognition for the studies of virtual environments (Graham 2007; Hössjer 2011; Paris et al. 2012; Perelmutter 2013). A community of practice, I believe, presupposes higher cohesion within the group of subjects; most importantly, the expectation is that they “come together around mutual engagement in some common endeavour” and have a shared repertoire of negotiable resources accumulated over time (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 1992:464). For many of my subjects, the mutual connection is two or three steps removed and they may be unaware of the other’s existence. The common endeavour, too, can be discerned only on the broadest level of common occupation and interests. The “shared repertoire of negotiable resources” resides primarily in the prerequisite cultural knowledge (French ballet terms, the names of ballet celebrities and famous companies) and not in the devices developed over the course of previous interaction.

I try to provide a more realistic account of the linguistic action on Twitter by basing my sample on a community of users rather than a technological mode. On the other hand, the pragmatic component of in-group language is brought into focus. The study of in-group language tends to restrict itself to structural domains: grammar, lexis and phonology, occasionally touching on cognitive linguistic aspects that form a basis for humour and wordplay. The aim of the present project is to investigate if a pragmatic repertoire may signal belonging to an in-group, not only in terms of *how* the illocutions are realised linguistically, but also *which* illocutions are selected in the first place. Earlier studies of CMC from a community-based perspective confirmed that communicative specificities exist on the pragmatic level (cf. Angouri and Tseliga 2010, Avgerinakou 2003, Graham 2007, Locher 2006, Perelmutter 2013). The present study differs from its precursors in its aim to encompass the whole range of speech acts contributing to the formation of a virtual identity, with the focus on self-disclosive acts (such as boasting and third party complaints) that have emerged as the key component of the community's repertoire.

A prominent feature of social media communication on the whole, and blogging in particular is the focus on the self. Although blogging involves a whole spectrum of genres, such as corporate blogs, filter blogs, newsblogs etc., a big slice of the blogging pie is author-oriented (Eisenlauer and Hoffmann 2010, Puschmann 2009, 2011). This focus is the reason for a frequent comparison of blogs with personal journals. Microblogging, as a form descendant from blogging and social networking statuses, also embraces personal narrative (Page 2012, Puschmann and Heyd 2012). A great number of microbloggers value Twitter for its interactional function; and yet it is an ever-present matter in the public debate that many Twitter accounts are monologual, sharing uninteresting minutiae of the author's day with a vast audience of strangers (Davenport et al. 2014). The interactional use of microblogging has attracted serious attention from social studies (boyd et al. 2010, Marwick and boyd 2011, Weller and Puschmann 2011 etc.), more in any case than the oft-criticised monologual use. I intend to explore how both these modes, monologual as well as interactive, figure into the process of self-presentation, impression management and identity construction in the virtual environment of Twitter.

Social media have opened up new horizons of personal storytelling. Short reports of personal experiences have risen to prominence in personal websites, social status updates, blogging posts, and finally the telegraphic microblogs whose explicit purpose is to provide immediate updates on "what's going on". Enjoying the unrestricted right to hold the floor, the users share their stories with abandon and often draw fire from critics who consider extensive self-disclosure a prerogative of intimate relationships. Eisenlauer and Hoffmann (2010:85) note that in blogs, posts usually deal with the recent experiences in the life of the author:

These narratives may either take the shape of short recapitulations of noteworthy events or longer, more reflected reports, usually including humorous or unforeseen changes in the daily routine of the blogger. They often allude to regular habits of the blogger and the way they play out in everyday life.

Why do people feel the need to blog their day-to-day experiences to a potentially vast audience who does not know them and, probably, does not care? One road on which the answer lies goes in the direction of personality psychology and social psychology. Puschmann (2011:87) warns against drawing extensive conclusions from a purely linguistic analysis: “The motivation to blog, the role blogging plays for a community, and the reflection of practitioners on their practice are all outside the scope of an exclusively linguistic description and call for the addition of ethnographic, sociological, and psychological research approaches”. Within these disciplines, the notion of self-disclosure (an information exchange that refers to the self, including personal states, dispositions, events in the past, and plans for the future) is evoked to explain what drives individuals to share their life stories with the world. A prominent function of self-disclosure is widely referred to in linguistic investigations: telling about self is a way to accomplish identity work, to construct identity through discursive self-presentation (Bamberg 1997, Bamberg et al. 2007, Bucholtz and Hall 2005, De Fina et al. 2006, De Fina 2011, Georgakopoulou 2007a, Page 2012). Steinfield et al. (2008) argue that intensive social network use is closely tied to the formation and maintenance of social capital, i.e. “the benefits one receives from one’s relationships with other people” (Lin 1999). However, I believe there is merit in interpreting the linguistic manifestations of the phenomenon not solely on the basis of a general premise such as ‘accomplishing identity work’, but in looking at the components of identity work and analysing self-disclosive speech against this detailed backdrop.

Since every verbal and non-verbal action may be interpreted as an instance of identity work, it was necessary to come up with a model of pragmalinguistic actions that would impose order on the diffuse data and delimit the enquiry. The result was a framework that captures self-presentation through a pragmatic classification of storytelling, complaints and self-praise. The conventional classification of speech acts has proven too general to be of use already in the earlier corpus linguistic projects developing pragmatic annotation (Leech and Weisser 2003, SPAAC Annotation Scheme). When I turned to the socio-psychological theory of ‘acts of positioning’ and its adaptation to linguistic analysis that was undertaken by Bolander and Locher (2015), their classification was so tailored to the Facebook sample as to be inapplicable to my data (although due to the similar analytical focus, my results owe a lot to Bolander and Locher’s (2015) work and Locher’s (2006) structural suggestions on classifying discourse moves). In the end, all of the above combined in the taxonomy of speech act groups that continued

to evolve during the two-year period of annotating the pilot and the full corpora. The reliability and usefulness of my taxonomy was later confirmed by the fact that many of its categories paralleled the model of rapport-building communication independently developed by Ädel (2011), which eventually also fed into the mix. The scheme described in Chapter 5, therefore, is a product of iterative work with the data and the literatures rather than a pre-processed stencil. Indeed, the taxonomy itself is one of the most significant results of the project which may be adapted for future studies of discursive identity construction. Inevitably, the data gathering process met with some difficulties: Twitter closing its API and one of the participants pulling out of the study months before conclusion are some examples. Nevertheless, an order may be imposed on this research journey to identify clearly the objectives, the research questions and the implications of the study. I will introduce these in the next section.

1.3 Aims and scope

The objective of the investigation is to find out how identity work is managed linguistically in the microblogging environment by the members of the ballet enthusiasts' community. The role of positive self-disclosure, realised through self-praise and complaints, is of particular interest, although it is embedded into a larger frame of the acts of positioning which are not necessarily evaluative. Self-praise is operationalised in the study as a subtype of self-disclosure, i.e. any utterance which discloses information about the speaker that raises his/her prestige, characterises him/her positively, or endows him/her with the social capital of a ballet hero. Before this objective can be addressed, it is necessary to lay the theoretical groundwork by establishing what the functional components of identity are, and which linguistic forms may correspond to them. Further, the setting-up for the study must include a discussion of key features of microblogging and the nature of the ballet community. The anchoring of the study to the notion of community entails interest in the community repertoire on the whole, primarily pragmatic but also lexical and grammatical. The community focus provides a springboard to discuss the contextual dependence of appropriateness on the example of the speech act of self-praise which so far has been judged in the literature as face-threatening (for the speaker as well as the hearer).

This array of problems is reflected in four sets of research questions:

1. a. What is discursive identity? How is it performed? What is the role of discourse community in identity construction?
- b. How is discursive identity performed in my material? What role does ballet take in the community?

2. a. Which linguistic features indicate belonging to a community?
- b. Do Twitter users who study ballet or dance professionally form a community? What is their pragmatic repertoire?
3. a. What is self-disclosure? Which functions does it serve? How does it manifest linguistically? How can the linguistic phenomena be clustered and adequately described?
- b. Which components of self-disclosure are relevant to my data sample? How do they manifest linguistically? Are there any particularities that can be explained with reference to CMC mode, to the community make-up, to other factors? Can any insight be gained into the motivations and mechanisms behind the production of self-disclosure in Twitter?
4. a. What is microblogging? Which linguistic features are characteristic for it?
- b. Does my material exhibit the features identified in the literature? What other linguistic features does it have?

I hope that the study may attract the attention of the research community for several reasons. First, it examines the new medium of microblogging from a pragmatic perspective, a turn of analysis which has not yet been undertaken on a larger scale.³ Second, it draws on the findings from two adjacent fields of social science, psychology and linguistics, and purports to bring new insight into the well-described speech activity of personal narration. Third, it offers a comprehensive and up-to-date account of the two possible manifestations of self-disclosure on the speech act level, the acts of complaint and self-praise. A descriptive model is proposed for these acts, based on the model of the pragmatic space developed by Jucker and Taavitsainen (2000) for insults. The speech act of self-praise, which has drawn surprisingly little attention to date, also receives linguistic description and is positioned within the pragmatic space of praise. Other categories of speech acts are considered in the context of identity building and community-specific norms of appropriateness. Finally, new methodological challenges are tackled which had inevitably arisen in sampling and analysing Twitter data.

1.4 The structure of the book

The book is divided into two parts and nine chapters. The first part lays out the theoretical and methodological foundations of the study. Following the Introduction,

3. The book-length study by Zappavigna (2011) is the first and an immensely significant contribution to the study of Twitter speech, however, it operates within a specific framework of Systemic Functional Linguistics and analyses Twitter communication on an entirely different level.

Chapter 2 summarises the findings of linguistic research on the nature of identity and identity construction. In this chapter, I underscore the fluid character of discursive identity and propose several claims that have been brought out by earlier studies. The observation that identity is constructed in and through talk goes back to variationist sociolinguistics with its notion of master identities. The role of affiliation and disaffiliation in talk is tethered to the work of conversation analysts, most significantly Sacks (1972), Sacks et al. (1974), who proposed the Membership Categorisation Analysis. Along with the concepts applicable to an ongoing conversation, I introduce the category of Second Stories which constitute one form of rapport-building uptake and explore the role of personal narrative in identity work. This is done with recourse to the two main frameworks of narrative: the structural model by Labov and Waletzky (1967) and the multidimensional model by Ochs and Capps (2001). Finally, I turn to the socio-psychological theory of identity construction through acts of positioning (Davies and Harré 1990). To bring the discussion back to the Twitter community, I review the findings of the CMC research that have explored identity on Facebook, Twitter and discussion fora through these analytical lenses. Discursive identity is tied inextricably to the audience in front of which it is performed. This angle is examined through the link to rapport-building language in a discourse community, and the structural features of in-group language that can be expected to mark the interaction within that community.

Chapter 3 sketches the pragmatic space of evaluation which includes self-praise and third party complaints, the two key self-disclosive moves in the data. After providing a comprehensive review of the research on compliments, I move on to the few existing linguistic studies of positive self-disclosure and attempt to synthesise a pragmatic model of self-praise performance. The next section deals with the participation structure and surface form of complaints as described in literature, with the focus on third party complaints, i.e. expressions of grievance or dissatisfaction which are addressed to an audience who is not immediately responsible for committing or remediating the complainable. To tie the discussion back to the present study of Twitter, positive and negative evaluative speech acts are addressed in the context of CMC. In conclusion, I bring together the findings on compliments and complaints in a description of a multidimensional pragmatic space, expanding on the model proposed by Jucker and Taavitsainen (2008).

In Chapter 4, I focus on Twitter as a medium, define microblogging and review the findings on Twitter communication. These cover such aspects as content classifications, the characteristics of communicative affordances of microblogging following Herring's (2007) framework, grammatical and lexical description, a short note on pragmatic and discursive practices, and a sociolinguistic perspective. I discuss whether Twitter can be treated as a conversational medium, akin to chat, or a broadcast communication mode more similar to corporate blogging.

This raises questions about the existing genre ecology and problematizes the oft-assumed overlap between ‘genre’ and ‘mode’ of CMC, as well as the notion of CMC as such (Jucker and Dürscheid 2012). Finally, I describe the known facts about the Twitter demographic and identify the groups of users that participate in microblogging. The popularity of the medium once again emphasises the danger of assuming that Twitter interaction is homogenous within this CMC output. At this stage, the community of ballet students presents itself as a sensible choice of data sample with clearly delineated boundaries.

The second part of the book opens with the chapter on methodology and data. To begin Chapter 5, I introduce the subjects who formed my sample, look at the friend-follower connections among them that warrant treating the group as a community, and describe the theoretical and practical considerations in the process of corpus construction. I then move on to the multilevel annotating scheme that reflects the speech act taxonomy discussed above and also marks up the features of structure and addressivity. A broadbrush description of the final BaTwit corpus lays out the key numbers. The chapter is rounded off with the discussion of the qualitative and quantitative methodology and the ethical guidelines.

The three subsequent chapters comprise the analysis of the corpus components containing speech acts and speech events that play a role in self-presentation: positive self-disclosure in Chapter 6, third party complaints in Chapter 7, and personal narratives in Chapter 8. The description builds on corpus linguistic methods as well as a qualitative analysis in accordance with the developed taxonomies.

Chapter 9 concludes the book with a summary and a discussion of the main findings. In the beginning, I discuss the structural features of in-group language in the entire corpus. I interpret all the findings in view of the focus on the community and propose to apply the descriptive framework of interpretive repertoires to make sense of the irregularities in the subjects’ choices. Outlining the limitations of the study related to the sample size, the specific interests of the subjects, and the speech act taxonomy provides an outlook to future research avenues charted by this exploratory investigation.

Finally, a few organisational remarks remain. First of all, I have chosen to use the gender-neutral form “s/he” as a generic pronoun in all cases apart from those where the referent is known to be male or female. Secondly, all examples of tweets are quoted as they appear on the users’ timeline. I have not made any changes to their spelling, punctuation, or spacing. The links to other social media accounts have been partly replaced with descriptive captions where they could lead to identifying the user. The links to public webpages or social media accounts of celebrities (e.g. San Francisco Ballet Company, the Royal Opera House, the Instagram account of Xander Parish) have been preserved. All subjects are identified by pseudonyms; any similarity to existing Twitter handles is coincidental.

CHAPTER 2

Discursive identity

Self and group

2.1 Introduction

The word ‘identity’ in the sense ‘condition or fact that a person or thing is itself and not something else’ appeared in British sources as early as 12th century (OED). However, our understanding of what identity is has undergone significant developments since that time. An idea that identity is a stable, non-changing quality of a person has been continually challenged in the recent years by social and psychological scholarship alike. It has been supplanted by the constructivist view of identity which considers it a fluid, dynamic, manifold concept, constantly rebuilt and renegotiated in the course of social life. In this study, I will focus on the ways in which Twitter discourse may purposefully or unintentionally present an identity to an outside world, and, conversely, the ways in which an assumed identity influences linguistic expression of individuals. One facet of identity that the linguistic enquiry has built on initially is ‘face’ – an image of self delineated in terms of approved social attributes, “the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact” (Goffman 1967: 5). This definition stresses that identity construction is firmly rooted in the social environment. To follow up on this aspect of discursive identity, I will turn to the concept of community and to rapport-building within a community as an instrument of identity work. In conclusion, I will underline the implications of the findings for my research and comment on the possible need for adaptation.

2.2 Claims about the discursive identity

2.2.1 Identity is constructed in and through talk

From the point of view of a linguist, identity functions in two ways. First, we may observe how a pre-discursive construct, e.g. social class, gender, or age, correlates to certain linguistic behaviours (or even causes them). Second, we may investigate

how identity emerges in verbal interaction, both in terms of what the speaker perceives as relevant at the moment, and how the speaker wishes to present him- or herself to the audience. The first approach was taken by early variationist sociolinguistics, while the second has become the domain of conversation analysis (CA), discourse analysis and narrative studies under the growing influence of the Social Constructionist movement.

Variationist sociolinguistics provided us with an indispensable apparatus for the investigation of ‘master identities’, i.e. “those aspects of personhood that are presumed to be relatively stable and unchanging: gender, ethnicity, age, national and regional origins” (Tracy 2002: 18). In this tradition, the researcher begins by identifying the independent variables that s/he wishes to correlate to linguistic behaviour, and then samples a particular population. Linguistic variables also need to be fixed in advance, either with the help of exploratory interviews or on the basis of theory. Trudgill (1974), for instance, correlated phonological variables to social class divisions. Similarly, Labov (1972a) took postvocalic [r] as the dependent variable and investigated its distribution among socioeconomic strata. A recent extension of the variationist tradition, variational pragmatics, aims to investigate pragmatic variation across geographical and social space (Schneider and Barron 2008), taking up such dependent variables as the distribution of discourse moves across a dialogue (Schneider 2008), or requesting strategies (Warga 2008).

The findings of variationist studies confirm the relevance of master identities to verbal behaviour. However, the hypothesis-testing format limits the exploratory potential of the approach. We always need to import a significant amount of background knowledge into the study in order to pre-set the identity categories we are going to explore. This goes against the notion that there is great variability in people’s understanding of self, rather than a smooth cognitive consistency previously assumed (Edwards and Stokoe 2004: 501). In an apt dramaturgical metaphor, Goffman (1959) referred to the conscious practices of interactional production of self as performance that is happening on the front stage, as opposed to back stage that is invisible to the audience. Performativity of identity entails that it is a discursive process dependent on the context and the interactants’ goals. If we accept that “identity is performed, constructed, enacted or produced, moment-to-moment, in everyday conversations” (Benwell and Stokoe 2006: 49), a linguistic study of identity needs to incorporate more than establishing links between predetermined variables.

2.2.2 Identity construction can be accomplished in dialogic talk through affiliation and disaffiliation with interlocutor(s)

Two main theoretical trends within the paradigm of Social Constructionism are the talk-in-interaction approach to discursive identity formation, and the

autobiographical approaches related to the 'narrative turn' in social sciences. The first of these proposes to investigate identity as a process that happens in ongoing interaction and social practices. The second investigates how people orient themselves to social identities by looking at personal narratives, which they construct to make sense of experiences. While dynamic co-construction of situated identities in conversation has been the topic in conversation analysis and ethnomethodology, autobiographic storytelling is the domain of narrative studies, discursive psychology and discourse analysis. Since social media, and Twitter in particular, exhibit both formats, I will look at both strands of research for insight.

CA advocates a bottom-to-top approach to construction of discursive identity. In his famous position paper, Schegloff (1997) emphasised the ability of CA to ground the application of identity categories to interactants in actual linguistic data, as opposed to importing the researcher's pre-existing ideas about what is relevant. By concentrating on smallest organisational aspects of talk, CA 'respecifies' (Button 1991:6) "issues of what is real and authentic, including what is 'true' about identity, as matters for 'members' themselves to deal with" (Benwell and Stokoe 2006:51).

The building blocks of CA are turns, turn design, and sequence organisation. Sacks et al. (1974) laid the foundation of the approach by observing that a unit of talk is a turn. The opportunities to participate in a conversation follow a turn-taking system, and each contribution is referred to as a turn-at-talk. In contrast to a syntactic analysis, it is not grammatical well-formedness of a string of words that indicates whether or not it is a complete turn-at-talk, but the sequential context in which a given utterance occurs (Sidnell 2010:41).

The fact that turns are connected to each other in a chain-like manner is referred to as 'sequence organisation of talk'. Much of the talk occurs in paired sequences, or adjacency pairs, where the first pair part creates an expectation of the second. It is clear, however, that one first pair part may create the expectation for several types of second pair parts; for example, a request most obviously invites a compliance or a refusal. A potential uptake of a personal narrative within talk is a 'second story' (Sacks 1992). A second-story is a story episode that follows a narrative that has been told immediately before or in close turn proximity to it. It establishes close parallels with the first story, usually by matching the role taken by the tellers in the two cases. A second story, according to Sacks, is prompted by the desire to establish common ground with the original teller and constitutes an assessment of the first story as appropriate and relevant. Page (2012:30) argues that second stories fulfil a face-enhancing function of generating involvement and social solidarity.

Features of talk accompanying different types of second (and in some cases, first) pair parts follow a preference organization. A dispreferred response (e.g. a

refusal in case of a request) might be marked by inter-turn gap, turn-initial delay, palliatives, accounts, or pro-forma agreement (Sidnell 2010: 78–79); a preferred response would be delivered without these. A break in the pattern is equally meaningful: if a preferred response is accompanied by features typical of a dispreferred one, it is interactionally marked and may point to an additional meaning. This creates opportunities for negotiating identity claims. For instance, in the following excerpt *FeistyGirl* introduces a risky topic: she harshly criticises one of her teachers. Even though she does not identify the teacher explicitly, challenging a teacher's authority is unacceptable in ballet context and constitutes a very serious face threat; moreover, *FeistyGirl* later discloses some information about the class which may point at the teacher in question. Through this tweet, *FeistyGirl* claims for herself an identity of an ambitious student who wants the best instruction and is competent enough to judge.

- (1) FeistyGirl: I'm amazed how a disinterested & uninspiring teacher can unhinge my whole day, but the reverse of the coin can stimulate me in seconds! 11:23 PM 14 Mar 2013

In the ensuing talk, *rothbert11* aligns with her by requesting more information and therefore orients to the identity of *FeistyGirl* that she had claimed. He then affiliates with her in turn 6 through explicit agreement boosted by a modifier "TOTALLY" and through an account of similar experiences and beliefs. Turn 6 also constitutes a claim for the same identity on the part of *rothbert11*. *FeistyGirl*, in her turn, affiliates with *rothbert11* in tweet 7 by accepting his claim and counting him in as a fellow ambitious student.

- (2) rothbert11: @FeistyGirl what happened? Do tell! 12:17 AM 15 Mar 2013
- (3) FeistyGirl: @rothbert11 Well quite simply, Wed nights class typified poor teaching, demoralising, uninspiring, no passion for the exercises or the music 11:53 AM 15 Mar 2013
- (4) FeistyGirl: @rothbert11 however in contrast last nights class with Miss [deleted] @BalletSchool was 75mins of inspiration & firing my desire to dance! 11:54 AM 15 Mar 2013
- (5) FeistyGirl: @rothbert11 the difference between to 2 classes was staggering, never under estimate the damage a poor teacher can inflict! #dancerproblems 11:54 AM 15 Mar 2013
- (6) rothbert11: @FeistyGirl been there, I TOTALLY agree- that's why I travel to the classes I do! 11:56 AM 15 Mar 2013
- (7) FeistyGirl: @rothbert11 too right rothbert, turn over every stone until you find that teacher who helps to bring out the best in you! 11:59 AM 15 Mar 2013

The application of conversation analytical categories to Twitter discourse brings forth an important question: what are the turn boundaries in tweets? The basis for turn division can be structural (one tweet – one turn), semantic (a string of tweets expressing one proposition), syntactic (a syntactic unit spanning several 140-character tweet units), interactional (a reply from another user marks the end of the turn). Complications arise when one considers specific interactional norms on Twitter. As I will show in Chapter 4, there is a low expectation of reciprocity, and a researcher cannot readily distinguish between monologual and interactive tweets. This is important since an absence of a reply to a tweet that was intended as an interactive unit, i.e. meaningful absence of a second pair-part, carries dramatically different communicative meaning than a monologual tweet without a reaction. Additionally, one needs to consider disrupted adjacency which is characteristic of quasi-synchronous CMC (Herring 1999). Recognising the difficulty of applying the traditional discourse units to Twitter, Jucker and Dürscheid (2012) proposed the terms ‘communicative act’ and ‘communicative act sequence’ in place of ‘text’ or ‘utterance’. Scholars have grappled with applying CA terminology to text-based interaction since the early days of the field (Anderson et al. 2010, Berglund 2009, Cherny 1999, McKinlay et al. 1993) but offered no final answer. One would do well to address all these problems if the Twitter material were to be treated as traditional CA data.

2.2.3 Identity construction is performed by invoking in talk the categories-in-use through the category-bound actions or reports of such actions

The blurred line between the monologual and the interactive on Twitter makes it difficult to work with the CA tools discussed above. Alternatively, there exists a slightly different trajectory of analysis which is nevertheless predicated on Schegloff’s claim that the identity work is grounded in the endogenous orientations of the speakers themselves. This form of analysis grew out of the writings by Sacks (1972) on membership categorisation (MCA) and, in contrast to CA that focuses on turn-by-turn sequencing, it focuses on members’ *categories-in-use*. In broad terms, MCA examines the situated use of categories in everyday and institutional talk. More specifically, MCA examines the words the speakers use to refer to themselves and other people, and how the use of specific words forms the understanding of talk by recipients. These words are construed as membership categorisation devices (MCD). In his classic example, Sacks (1972) provides the sequence “The baby cried. The mommy picked it up.” and claims that it is the MCD of ‘family’ inherent to our culture that collects the two nouns together into a single category and allows us to understand “mommy” as ‘the mommy of the baby’.

Thus, MCA is organised around resources and practices of their employment. A MCD consists of two parts: one or more collection(s) of categories, and some rules of application (Schegloff 2007: 467). Categories are understood here on a very broad level. They include labels such as ‘baby’ and ‘mommy’, but also blue collar workers, lefties, boys, soccer moms, coin collectors, Englishmen, etc. Categories of gender and related notions such as housewife, spouse, or gossip play an important role in MCA applied to gender studies, e.g. in Stokoe (2003a, 2003b).

These words for people, or members, who have roles in communication and social life, are organised into collections of categories. Moreover, categories often sit in ‘Standardised Relational Pairs’, such as mommy and baby, husband and wife (Sacks 1992). Categories are linked to particular actions (‘category-bound activities’) and characteristics (‘natural predicates’) which provide basis for conventional expectations about normative behaviour of members. Therefore, categories have consequentiality that makes them more than just nominal labels. Category-bound activities, for instance, are not only called to mind when a category is applied, but, reversely, can activate a category by reporting a particular action (e.g. ‘baby’, a member of a collection ‘stages of life’, is activated by reporting ‘crying’). So “one can allude to the category membership of a person by mentioning that person’s doing of an action that is category bound, and the doing of a category-bound action can introduce into a scene or an occasion the relevance of the category to which that action is bound” (Schegloff 2007: 470). Most importantly for the upcoming analysis of the Twitter data, binding a category to an action is not limited to explicit verbal description of the action. A non-verbal action or “an utterance analysable by recipient as doing some action” (Schegloff 2007: 470) also activate a category; in this manner, posting a status update “Peter has lived miami to the fullest” on Facebook invokes a category ‘traveller’ since having fun in Miami, Florida as a Swiss resident qualifies as travel (Bolander and Locher 2015). The situated identities that can be negotiated locally in separate interactions through MCDs build up to master identities by virtue of consequentiality in talk (De Fina et al. 2006; De Fina 2010).

Another key part of categories’ consequentiality is the inference richness of categories. According to Schegloff, categories are “the store house and the filing system” for knowledge about people:

Any attributed member of a category (that is, anyone taken to be a member of the category) is a presumptive representative of the category. That is, what is ‘known’ about the category is presumed to be so about them. I say ‘known’ rather than ‘believed,’ and refer to ‘(common-sense) knowledge’ rather than ‘stereotype’ or ‘prejudice’ because, for members, this has the working status of ‘knowledge,’ whatever its scientific status or moral/political character may be.

(Schegloff 2007: 469)

The implicit content of categories is reflected in the fact that the speaker may attempt to neutralise the inference invoked by the mention of a category by using modifiers.

In a word, MCDs are indexical resources that are associated with labels and sets of incumbent, typical features (Benwell and Stokoe 2006:66). These qualities lend categories the ability to be invoked implicationally in conversation.

2.2.4 Identity is constructed discursively through speech acts of positioning

Closely tied to the MCA is the socio-psychological work on positioning by Davies and Harré (1990, 2001). It has recently found application in pragmalinguistic studies of CMC (Bolander and Locher 2010, 2015). Davies and Harré see discursive construction of self as a ‘story’ that is co-constructed by participants in communication. Contrary to the traditional dramaturgical metaphor that views speakers as actors in a play who are handed out scripts with their words written for them and do not have much choice in how to act out their roles, Davies and Harré (2001) propose a different metaphor. They claim that speakers are also agents, producers, directors, as well as authors and actors in the play, and other participants also co-produce and co-author it. Bucholtz and Hall (2005) build on Davies and Harré’s work to develop a more detailed intersubjective theory of identity that views identity as “the social positioning of self and other”. According to Davies and Harré (1990), identity is constructed through performance of *acts of positioning*. Positioning “is a discursive process whereby selves are located in conversations as observably and subjectively coherent participants in jointly produced story lines” (Davies and Harré 1990:46). An individual, therefore, emerges as a product of ongoing interaction rather than an entity that has been fixed and is simply ‘expressed’ linguistically. As Bolander and Locher (2015) note, different identities, or facets of an identity, may be made salient through repeated underlining of a particular past experience.

The dynamic aspect of identity construction should not be taken to mean that an individual creates him- or herself from scratch in every instance of interaction. The actors are firmly embedded into their social world, and they “draw on expectations about identity claims and stereotypes derived from previous encounters in a process of analogy” (Bolander and Locher 2010:168). Positioning can be performed reflexively and interactively (Davies and Harré 1990:46), i.e. from the perspective of self and the other. For instance, in the Facebook status update “Sarah is engaged to [Name]! Yay!” Sarah positions reflectively by identifying herself as Name’s fiancée, but also interactively by identifying Name as her fiancée (Bolander and Locher 2015).

It is easy to see how the acts of positioning correspond to membership categorisation. As Schegloff pointed out, identity categories are invoked through

descriptions of actions, but also actions themselves or by utterances that can be construed by the hearer to refer to a category-bound activity. The latter, in effect, are the acts of positioning which may be performed with different degrees of implicitness: from visual (posting a photograph, which is highly defeasible as a category-bound activity), through indirect verbal devices, to explicit report of action. Bucholtz and Hall (2005) observed the same process in their Indexicality Principle of identity:

Identity relations emerge in interaction through several related indexical processes, including: (a) overt mention of identity categories and labels; (b) implicatures and presuppositions regarding one's own or others' identity position; (c) displayed evaluative and epistemic orientations to ongoing talk, as well as interactional footings and participant roles; and (d) the use of linguistic structures and systems that are ideologically associated with specific personas and groups. (Bucholtz and Hall 2005: 594)

The continuum of implicit-explicit identity claims in CMC has been examined by Bolander and Locher (2010). They observed how Facebook users place themselves in categories and position themselves within a category (e.g. as a 'man' in the 'gender' category) through a variety of acts of positioning. Self-labelling in Facebook profiles emerged as an explicit form of identity construction, since individuals have identified themselves unambiguously as members of particular categories. Enumeration practices, on the other hand, contributed to identity construction less explicitly, as hobbies and interests have a less straightforward connection with the identity claim. The researchers place narrative practices – verbal descriptions of the first person self – between the enumerative and the self-labelling points on the explicitness continuum. In sum, status updates in social networking services are construed as more or less explicit processes of identity construction, i.e. processes “which see more or less straightforward connection between the language used and the type of identity claim made” (Bolander and Locher 2010: 166).

2.2.5 In monological discourse, storytelling is a key device for identity construction

Davies and Harré (2001) point out repeatedly the importance of stories and story lines in identifying acts of positioning. Narrative construction of identity is another key theme in the socio-linguistic literatures. It is hardly surprising given that Denzin (2000) calls us a 'storytelling society': stories play a prevalent role in our social lives. Through narrative, actors reconstruct their past experiences and make their various facets salient for a local identity.

Although even the definition of a narrative is surrounded by significant debate, certain common places have emerged in narrative inquiry over the years.

Firstly, most scholars agree that the defining quality of a narrative is its temporality (Hoffmann 2010). Prince (1982), for instance, claims that a narrative is “a representation of at least two real or fictive events in a time sequence, neither of which presupposes nor entails the other.” Another classic approach by Labov and Waletzky (1967:20) defines narrative as “a method for recapitulating past experience by matching a verbal sequence of clauses to the sequence of events which actually occurred.” The sequence should consist of narrative clauses separated by *temporal junctures*. Labov (1982) recognises a temporal juncture when clauses occur in a certain order, and a change of that order would lead to the change in a semantic interpretation of the events.

Since stories take up a significant amount of social time and attention, they need to have value to the listeners. Whether the story is ‘worth telling’ is captured in Labov’s concept of reportability. The centre of narrative structure, the so-called *complicating action*, is generated by the most reportable event. The original claim has been refined in Johnstone (2001, qtd. in Fetzer 2010) to distinguish between *stories* – narratives with a point, and *narratives* – talk which represents events in the past.

In a quest to describe a narrative, researchers identify universal building blocks of a story. The influential Labovian model (Labov and Waletzky 1967) proposes abstract, orientation, complicating action, evaluation, resolution and coda as recurring components of spontaneous oral story-telling. Although not every component needs to occur in every story, and the components are not always distributed in the same order, these six blocks make up a prototypical narrative.

Table 2.1. Structure of narratives, summary based on Labov&Waletzky (1967)

1. Abstract	A brief summary statement of the substance of the narrative as viewed by the narrator. It is closely linked with the preceding utterance by the other interlocutor
2. Orientation	In the beginning of the narrative, most authors give orienting information on the time, the place, the participants in the action, and their general behaviour before or at the time of the first action
3. Complicating action	A sequence of objective events that move the story forward, with the exception of evaluative clauses, subjective events and instrumental events. Each event is separated from another by a temporal juncture.
4. Evaluation	It contains the main point or focus of the narrative, usually represented by evaluating clauses directly before a particular narrative clause
5. Resolution	A final action, conclusion, end of the narrative
6. Coda	The teller relates the narrative to the present moment and derives its wider meaning

The structuralist view is rather strict in respect to linguistic components of a narrative: only narrative clauses, i.e. independent clauses in indicative mood with verbs in preterit, historical present, or past progressive, can participate in a temporal juncture. Clearly, this narrative template dismisses the recipient's active role in story-telling (cf. Mandelbaum 1987) and restricts the genre of stories to few prototypical members.

While the Labovian view (and further structuralist work along with it, e.g. Prince 1982; Propp 1968) is often criticised as too formalistic, several open-ended approaches have sprung up in narrative studies. The new perspective posits that narratives are members of a fuzzy set and possess certain *qualities of narrativity*. A text may have these qualities to varying degrees and therefore be closer to or further from a prototypical narrative. Ochs and Capps (2001), for instance, propose five dimensions that prompt a recipient to recognise the narrative nature of a text: tellership, tellability, embeddedness, linearity, and moral stance.

Tellership captures the interactivity of story-telling that especially marks oral stories: telling may be performed by one teller or collaboratively. *Tellability* refers to the value of a story as relevant or newsworthy. Ochs and Capps (2001:38) remark that low tellable stories "are geared less to narrative as performance and more to narrative as a social forum for discovering what transpired." *Embeddedness* describes the degree to which a story is anchored in the immediate context or can be removed from it. Structural features of stories, such as whether it is a classical sequence of temporally ordered clauses or a more ad-hoc, open-ended, multilinear narrative, place it on the dimension of *linearity*. Finally, the speaker's attitude to the narrated events is labelled *moral stance*. In accordance with these dimensions, a story belongs to various points on a narrative continuum: from "default narratives [with] one active teller, highly tellable account, relatively detached from surrounding talk and activity, linear temporal and causal organisation, and certain, constant moral stance," to peripheral members featuring "multiple, active co-tellers, moderately tellable account, relatively embedded in surrounding discourse and activity, nonlinear temporal and causal organisation, and uncertain, fluid moral stance" (Ochs and Capps 2001:23). This scheme has gained recognition for its descriptive adequacy in application to the traditional narrative genres as well as the fragmentary everyday story-telling.¹

1. Alternative views exist on what properties a narrative should have. Toolan (1991, qtd. in Hoffmann 2010:4), for instance, identifies artificial fabrication, prefabrication, teleology, duality and displacement. Georgakopoulou and Goutsos (1997) propose six criteria to distinguish narrative from non-narrative genres: ordering (one or more timelines, presence or absence of logical sequence); particularity, normativeness, reference, perspective, and context.

Narrative studies is a quickly growing field that includes more and more data as 'text' suitable for analysis, and the scope of the present paper does not allow me to offer an exhaustive review of literatures. What the recent approaches have in common is the view of narrativity not as an absolute feature that a text either has or does not have, but as a matter of degree. Below, I will turn to two issues within the larger field: first, Georgakopoulou's (2007a) theory of 'small stories' – fragmentary everyday narratives that do not answer the criteria of traditional narratives but nevertheless play a crucial role in ordinary talk and linguistic identity construction; and second, the findings of narrative research on social networking services (SNS) data.

2.2.6 In everyday talk, identity is expressed through a succession of fragmentary, low-tellable stories

Traditional models of narrative describe texts that lie close to the literacy end of the orality-literacy continuum (cf. Ong 2002). They start with the premise that a narrative is a longer stretch of talk that is rarely interrupted. But that is seldom the case for everyday stories in ordinary talk. Similarly, social networks encourage short bursts of communication rich in co-participation and interactivity. For an analysis to be adequate, "the incompleteness or smallness of narrative instances, be it in the sense of possibilities for revision and reinterpretation (Hanks 1996: 244) or simply in the sense of narrative accounts in which nothing much happens, becomes firmly integrated into the scope of analysis as opposed to being an analytic nuisance" (Georgakopoulou 2007a: 8).

A revised narrative framework for an analysis of fragmentary everyday narrative has been suggested by Bamberg (1997, 2004) and elaborated by Georgakopoulou (2007a) on the basis of their work with conversational data. Their interest in the fleeting narratives of lived experience is closely tied to the role these narratives (labelled 'small stories') play in identity construction and positioning. The scope of the term is rather broad:

In general terms, small stories are seen as covering a whole range of underrepresented narrative activities ranging from literally small and fragmented tellings to refusals to tell and deferrals of telling. More specifically, the analysis of the conversations [...] brought to the fore two characteristics of small stories: (a) the events they report have some kind of immediacy, i.e. they are near future events, very recent or still unfolding events as the story is being constructed, (b) they establish and refer to links between the participants' previous and future interactions. (Georgakopoulou 2007a: 148)

On the basis of a combinatorial approach (emic and structural criteria) three types of small stories are identifiable: breaking news, shared stories and projections.

Breaking news are stories about very recent events ('this morning', 'last night') and arise out of the need to share with friends in a dynamic and ongoing manner. Breaking news were proven to be salient in CMC as well (Georgakopoulou 2004, 2013a, 2013b, 2014a, 2014b). Projections refer to the telling of near-future events, which has emerged as a very important type of stories both quantitatively and qualitatively (evidencing the high social significance placed on projections). Projected stories are imaginings of the future that become "rehearsals for future actions" (Georgakopoulou 2007b: 150). This type of story is intrinsically connected to the stories of past experiences previously shared in the community. The past shapes what is expected and believable, and intertextual links enhance the sense of community and contribute to the trajectory of shared social development that is especially important for adolescents. Finally, stories of shared events are the closest to the traditional narrative in that they relate past experiences and are typically coached in a past tense. However, in contrast to the Labovian narrative, shared stories often involve more than one teller and serve a solidarity-building function within a group rather than an informative function.

Although small stories are mostly collaborative, it is often possible to single out a main teller and co-tellers and therefore set down a participation framework. Georgakopoulou (2007a) and Bamberg (1997) suggest that three types of telling roles are important for participants' identities:

1. The roles that participants assume vis-à-vis a story's emergent structure.
2. The action performed with each of the contributions vis-à-vis prior story talk.
3. The shape of a participant's story turn, that is, the local linguistic choices and devices in operation.

The participants engage in positioning on three levels: positioning of characters in the story in relation to each other and in space and time; positioning of the narrator within the interactive situation; and positioning of the narrator's self or sense of identity in relation to master discourses (Bamberg and Georgakopoulou 2008:385). On the first level tellers may position themselves as agents in the developing events or as passive victims. Because the teller has control over the story – sequence of presentation, backgrounding and foregrounding of events – s/he may construct a desired interpretation of what transpired. On the second level, tellers pursue different conversational goals by telling the story: they may want to complain, to brag or to affiliate with the previous teller who had a similar story. On the third level the participants are seen as conveying information about their master identities that "may transcend the local context and construct" (De Fina 2010: 213). It is the third level that is most relevant to the study of identity construction in the ballet community.

In sum, the scholars emphasise the three-way connection between stories, identities and storytelling roles. This and further work on small stories (Bamberg 2008, Bamberg and Georgakopoulou 2008, Bamberg and Marchman 2009) sees narratives in interaction as sites of engagement where identities are tested out and talked into being, and strives for an analysis that would show how such narratives ultimately feed into a sense of self. By marrying conversation and discourse analysis to a more sociolinguistic approach to narrative, Bamberg and Georgakopoulou attempt to look at stories both as sequentially ordered activities that emerge during interaction, and as sites for formation of larger identities.

2.3 Discursive identity in social media

Up until now, the linguistic investigation of personal narrative on Twitter has been limited. When microblogs do get a look through the narratology lens, it is usually celebrity Twitters with many thousands of followers that attract attention (e.g. Page 2012). Needless to say, communicative purposes vary widely across microblogging genres. This heterogeneity makes the findings about celebrity Twitters all but inapplicable to other groups of users. In terms of theory, Puschmann and Heyd (2012) outline four directions that may serve to frame the phenomenon of narration in Twitter: Herring et al.'s (2009) convergent media CMC, Luders et al.'s (2010) personal media genres; the small stories approach; and simultaneous narration (e.g. Cohn 1999, Ryan 1993). They note that although personal narrative is a comparatively minor occurrence in tweeting, it is possible to distinguish its emergent features such as immediacy, lack of detailed structure and preplanning that is characteristic of longer narratives (as described by Labov and Waletzky 1967), and focus on self. Miller (2008) construes everyday narratives on Twitter as 'phatic communication' that ought to maintain the ever expanding social network of a user (thus Miller builds indirectly on the reciprocal function of self-disclosure). Puschmann and Heyd (2012), in contrast, see the function of Twitter narratives in identity construction. Twitter, in their view, is especially suited for everyday narratives due to a high experientiality factor (Fludernik 1996).

Ruth Page's (2012) work² confirmed that the status updates in the social media are best analysed through a reference to Ochs and Capps' narrative dimensions

2. Page's (2012) sample consisted of 60 Anglophone Twitter accounts: 30 randomly selected Twitter profiles and 30 celebrity Twitter users (singers, actors, politicians, athletes) who were frequently mentioned in British or American press and whose use of Twitter was discussed in mass media. The sample was balanced for gender. A thousand most recent tweets were pulled from each account in June 2010, which resulted in a corpus of 939,540 words.

and small stories. The results demonstrate that despite many structural and functional similarities among online modes such as blogs, Facebook and Twitter updates, and forum posts, the processes of narrative identity construction are variable. Facebook updates, Page finds, are mostly devoted to reporting day-to-day activities with low tellability. The main interactional function of these updates is to aggregate social capital by fostering interpersonal connections through self-disclosure: "the stories in status updates operate as tokens to be exchanged within the relational marketplaces constructed in Facebook" (Page 2012: 86). At the same time, the heterogeneous audience on Facebook (intimate friends, fleeting acquaintances, 'second-order' contacts who may be complete strangers) makes it difficult to achieve balance between appropriate self-disclosure and oversharing. For that reason the short narratives tend to focus on minutiae of everyday events and are low on evaluation or highly tellable subjects. Page has established that all three temporal types of small stories, breaking news, projections and shared stories, are prominent in Facebook. Shared stories, in particular, were different from those described by Georgakopoulou. While Georgakopoulou's teenage subjects narrated exclusively on the topic of past events experienced together by group members (e.g. asking a man out on a date, sitting in a café and people-watching), Facebook updates also concerned global events disseminated through mass media.

An affective dimension has emerged as highly important in Facebook updates, as well. Page (2012: 73) remarks that with adjustments for the text-based communication, all evaluative devices listed by Labov are readily found in status updates. Interestingly, longitudinal analysis showed that usage of affective discourse increased over time, growing from 67 updates in 2008 to 201 in 2010 (Page 2012: 78). According to Page, this suggests that the perception of Facebook is shifting from an informative to a relationship-fostering medium.

Twitter posts are structurally similar to Facebook updates, but the mode of storytelling on Twitter is quite different from Facebook (possibly due to the specifics of Page's celebrity dataset – accounts that belong to public figures and have a mean of 1,5 mio followers). Narratives are quite common on Twitter updates: 39% of celebrity Twitter posts reported events or told a story (Page 2012: 99, but see Zappavigna 2011 whose analysis of 100-million-word Twitter corpus highlighted primarily interactive and affiliative functions of tweets). However, these narratives deviate from the Labovian template in terms of linearity, embeddedness, tellability, and tellership.

The linearity of social media discourse relies on time stamp and automatic username linking to establish a coherent storyline and teller identity. In Twitter, the strict character limit causes users to truncate their sentences to verbal phrases and even non-finite verb forms, thus making it problematic to infer time from linguistic information. The resulting ambiguous tweets may describe past events or events in the present or future. Page (2012: 101) claims that ambiguity is in fact

intentional and constitutes an efficient strategy for “eliding the gap between narrative event, report, and reception.” Correct understanding is insured by indexical reference through temporal adverbs, conjunctions, and deictics. As corpus analysis demonstrated, temporal deictics such as *just*, *today*, *now*, *day*, *tonight*, *last*, *night*, *tomorrow*, *morning*, and *week* occurred three times more frequently in her Twitter dataset than in the BNC or COCA (Page 2012: 101). Based on the overwhelmingly high frequency of *tonight*, *today* and *tomorrow*, Page concludes that narratives in Twitter are “less retrospective (reporting what happened yesterday) and more grounded in the events of that particular day and the immediate future” (2012: 102). Although shared time was shown to create an illusion of relational proximity (Bennett 2000), Page (2012: 103) argues that in celebrity Twitters, narrative immediacy has less to do with building relationships and more with the promotion of mainstream celebrity performance.

Tellability of stories is also a function of the celebrity status. Since the users aim to present themselves as a consumable commodity, the tellability is centred on the teller’s professional activities (Page 2012: 106) (in contrast to the private life focus in ordinary Facebook updates). This confirms that celebrity Twitter accounts are conceptualised as a source of information for fans and not as relationship-building devices in a network of peers.

The dimension of embeddedness allows one to account for the stories that are dispersed among several tweets or even different social media. Real-time commentaries, for instance, of Stephen Fry watching a darts match, provide an evaluative perspective on events which are assumed to be shared with the audience. Page (2012: 109) draws parallels between such commentary and Georgakopoulou’s shared stories because both call attention to a narrative communality between the hearer and the narrator.

A rather different take on real-time commentary is offered by Jucker (2010) in his study of live text commentary on sports events. Since the purpose of the commentary is to provide an account of the game to people who are unable to watch it, this genre is more similar to a breaking news small story. Jucker (2010: 75) found that live text commentaries derive their structure directly from the event’s structure and therefore fit well into the Labovian narrative framework. However, there are several important differences between the commentary and canonical oral narratives. For one, in live commentary the narrator him- or herself does not know the outcome of the story. Besides, present tense and *will*-future are used almost exclusively, while traditional narratives typically make use of the past. This is consistent with the breaking news story and suggests once again that the less rigid narrative theories may be a better fit for the analysis of new media.

Another facet of embeddedness relates to hyperlinking in tweets. Linking to outside resources is an important identity practice for tweeters, as it allows them to

position themselves within global knowledge network and the internet. By linking to pictures or articles the user may show what her/his interests, areas of expertise and authority are related to (Page 2012: 109). Hyperlinks also act as amplifiers for tweet's content, providing a warrant, more details about the story, or confirming information authenticity (Page 2012: 111). Even the practices of social media annotation, i.e. providing a link to an interesting resource with a short personal commentary, may take on a narrative function when seen within a wider context of linked material: according to Page (2012: 110), the annotation is akin to a headline in a newspaper. The function of the annotation can be understood with reference to Labov's narrative structure. An Abstract caption compresses and restates the main events. An Orientation caption sets a link in space and time, especially to contextualise photographs. An Evaluation caption reports the tweeter's attitude to the linked material.

Co-tellership in Twitter is related to a specific structural affordance, retweeting. The contributions from both co-tellers are thus compressed into a single textual unit and separated by 'RT' or a similar formal marker. Although retweeting conventions are still in flux, Page observed a recurring practice of co-telling in Twitter. It involves retweeting a story with material added. Most frequently an addition is an evaluative comment.

Outraged. @Laurapalooa: Staff at the MEN aren't letting people into the arena with cans in their hair. So many sad Little Monsters :(Ladygaga: Wed, 02 Jun 2010 15:08 (Page 2012: 114)

Incidentally, Page's findings from another social media site – a bodybuilders' discussion forum – confirm the earlier intuitions about the role of self-disclosure in constructing an identity of a community member. Newbies' stories in Page's material set out the relevant identity attributes: physical measurements, where the member comes from, what her/his interests are. The typical elements of a newbie story are *self-description*, *experience of exercise*, *relationship to the forum*, and *goals for the future* (Page 2012: 33). These self-disclosures corroborate newbie's status as eligible to join the group and reinforce the commonality within it. New members also document their novice status by applying category labels, e.g. "couch-potato" or "junk-food junkie". This strategy emphasises the hierarchy between newbies and established members and awards face to the latter in accordance with Leech's (1983) *Approbation and Modesty Maxims*³ (Page 2012: 33).

3. In his 1983 book "Principles of Pragmatics", Leech posited a Politeness principle that subsumes six maxims: tact, generosity, approbation, modesty, agreement, and sympathy. Approbation and Modesty maxims form a pair, as they both concern the expression of praise and dispraise. The Approbation maxim states: "Minimize the expression of beliefs which

Despite its apparent usefulness, the narrative dimensions framework that Page uses extensively is not a one-size-fits-all solution. While social media appears more suitable for the analysis through the dimensional model, other online genres may benefit from the structural approach. Arendholz's (2010) study of a webpage (devoted to the Oprah's show), for example, yielded surprising results: despite the fact that Labov had conducted his work on elicited oral narratives, the message board data, consisting of spontaneous written narratives, complied perfectly with the narrative structure. The five key components (orientation, complication, evaluation, resolution and coda) have consistently made an appearance in each story, unaffected by online environment (Arendholz 2010: 139). The abstract was found only in a very reduced form, which, however, parallels the results of the original study by Labov. The results are replicated in Eisenlauer&Hoffmann's (2010) study of weblogs. The authors conclude that all components of Labov&Waletzky's narrative scheme are present in all weblog narratives, although their internal or external distribution (within the text or across websites) may vary. Weblog narratives are predominantly text-based, with multimodal parts inserted later for additional effect. Schubert (2010) confirms the persistence of Labovian narrative components in online discourse (on the example of political narratives on the official websites of the US government), but points out that an outstanding role is played by evaluation and coda. To conclude, in spite of its many deficiencies, the canonical narrative theory can be productively applied to online data. One should keep in mind, though, that Labov did not allow for such aspects of dynamic story telling as co-construction of narrative or embeddedness in larger online context, and therefore the narrative structure approach should not be taken as a sole mode of investigation.

From the vantage point of narrative dimensions, the hybrid nature of social media (spoken/written, synchronous/asynchronous; for a more detailed discussion of hybridity of Twitter see Section 4.3) can be seen to flow into the qualities of online narratives. Linearity is modified by the presence of a time stamp, the sequence of archived material (oldest message first in forums vs. latest first on Twitter), and nature of updating (continuous breaking news vs. rare updates). Narrative sequencing is also dependent on distribution of story across textual units. A story that is contained within one unit, such as a posting on the message board

express dispraise of other; maximize the expression of beliefs which express approval of other." The Modesty maxim states: "Minimize the expression of praise of self; maximize the expression of dispraise of self." In later work, Leech prefers to talk about pragmatic constraints within a single Grand Strategy of Politeness, because the term 'maxim' is easily misconstrued (2007: 12–13).

on the Oprah website, would exhibit a narrative structure markedly different from that of a story distributed across many units (as in Twitter), or a story told episodically but inside a single unit (such as a forum post with cascading comments and updates). One should not forget that open-endedness is not an exclusive feature of online contexts, but rather a consequence of its hybridity: multilinear, open-ended narratives are characteristic of everyday conversation as well. As daily interaction demonstrates, people are very skilled in interpreting fragmented stories within a larger context, and perhaps see online stories as not much different from other forms of communication.

Similarly, collaborative tellership is transplanted to social media from conversational contexts. The turn-taking practices, however, are reconfigured by the affordances of the medium. For instance, contributions from authors may be packaged into different textual units or compressed into one unit. Ownership of the text can also be equally distributed or ultimately belong to one teller. Combinations of these factors amount to a continuum that stretches from the familiar to emergent co-tellership practices (Page 2012: 198).

Tellability in social media can vary immensely depending on appropriateness judgements. Twitter and Facebook, the media that operate on the relational level, balance tellability between two simultaneous drives: (1) self-disclose to enable face-enhancing involvement between the teller and the audience; (2) avoid stories that might damage face.

Finally, the reviewed studies demonstrate that social media is by no means homogeneous diachronically or synchronically. There is a trajectory of development from more stable to more interpersonal outputs, roughly mapped as Web 1.0 vs. Web 2.0 services. There is also a trajectory of change within social networking, such as the shift towards affective discourse in Facebook. While some of these outputs are interpretable with help of post-structuralist theoretical approaches, others lend themselves better to traditional narratology. Narrators must continuously adapt their practices to reap the rewards and avoid censure in the changing landscape of social media.

2.4 Social interaction within the community

I have frequently invoked the fact that identity is intersubjective rather than subjective. The focus on a discourse community (Swales 1990) in the present study especially suggests the importance of identity as communally based. In psychology and sociology, collective identity has been theorised e.g. within the tenets of Social Identity Theory (Tajfel and Turner 1986), which posits that identities are constituted through the process of difference between an in-group and an

out-group. Members of a community continually work on two projects: maintaining the boundaries of the community, and asserting in-group solidarity. Seen through this lens, a system emerges from the chaos of disparate discursive activities. For instance, Brown and Levinson (1987) name contractions and ellipsis as in-group identity markers since they are readily understood by the insiders and require deciphering by the outsiders. Complaints about young people, family, and condescending remarks about age peers all combine in their orientation to solidarity by exclusivity among elderly women (Underwood 2011). The focus of the present investigation, positive self-disclosure, can similarly be construed as a solidarity-building device. To provide an interpretation of community markers that is closer to the linguistic focus of this study, I will review the findings on the structural linguistic features of in-group language and the pragmatic strategies of rapport-building.

2.4.1 Language of the in-group

Departing from the assumption that “it is the creation of [...] shared meaning – communication – that makes a collection of individuals into a community” (Tannen 1989: 29), *implicitness* in interaction is chosen as a key measure of in-groupness. One of the most comprehensive investigations of implicit language was carried out by Cutting (2000), who followed a group of linguistics students throughout a 12-month course as their relationship developed from complete strangers to a close-knit community (Table 2.2 at the end of the section summarises the relevant implicitness features). Her taxonomy of findings will be later adopted to measure the in-groupness of language of the Twitter ballet community, and I will explain it in detail below.

Cutting’s judgement of what indicates shared meaning grammatically is based on the work of Halliday and Hasan (1976) and Lyons (1977). The emphasis is on the level of noun phrase because it amounts to a mode of social interaction (Ochs et al. 1996). Halliday and Hasan (1976) posit that reference in a text can happen through endophora and exophora. Endophora is textual and cohesive, and the referent is retrievable from the preceding text (in which case we speak of anaphora) or from the text that follows (cataphora). Exophora requires an interpretation of referent based on situational context, general world knowledge, or a wider context of intertextuality. Clearly, the line between the endophoric and the exophoric is not always sharp (Halliday and Hasan 1976: 18). Intertextuality, for instance, can broadly refer to the knowledge gained in previous conversations. To avoid the difficulties associated with the definitional vagueness, Cutting (2000: 54) chooses to consider each dialogue a separate text, and refer to all grammatical reference that points at the ‘textually unknown’ as non-anaphoric.

Anaphoric reference, in turn, subsumes the expressions whose interpretation lies within the text. Cutting follows Lyons (1977:659) in defining anaphora as “both normal backward-looking anaphoric reference and the less normal forward-looking or anticipatory, anaphoric reference.” Similarly, Levinson (2009) makes only the distinction between anaphoric and non-anaphoric reference. Since the meaning of anaphora can be derived from the immediate surrounding text by any competent speaker of a language, it is the non-anaphoric reference that is of interest as a marker of in-groupness.

The next level of analysis concerns degrees of definiteness and explicitness. Definite reference is relevant because it demonstrates shared cognitive background of the interlocutors: “When speakers use definite references, they assume their addressees can immediately identify the individuals referred to” (Clark 1997:575). Definite noun phrases include proper nouns, NP with definite articles, NP with demonstrative determiners, demonstrative pronouns and adverbs, personal and possessive pronouns (Cutting 2000:55). Explicitness, on the other hand, has to do with lexical cues that actually enable the hearer to correctly identify the referent. Combining the findings of Schiffrin (2006) and Halliday and Hasan (1990), Cutting (2000:57) develops a model for degrees of explicitness. A *super-explicit reference* is a phrase in which the referent is identified in the noun head and additionally identified in a post-modifier, e.g. “my invitation to take the RAD Grade 6 exam” in Example 8:

- (8) FeistyGirl: Dreams, hopes & fears bought to ahead by one piece of paper!
My invitation to take the RAD Grade 6 exam... [picture] 2:19 PM 3 Mar 2013

A post-modifier may be expressed through a prepositional phrase, infinitival clause, relative clause, participial clause, adjectival phrase or noun phrase in apposition. *Explicit reference* involves identifying the referent in the noun head but without a post-modifier, e.g. “yesterday mornings ballet class” in Example 9:

- (9) FeistyGirl: Reflecting on yesterday mornings ballet class with a “very Russian” (i.e. shouty) stand-in teacher! Interesting seeing the varying reactions 12:47 PM 10 Mar 2013

Explicit reference occurs frequently in everyday talk and is an unmarked mode of referring to entities. The referent can thus be recognised by the hearer from knowing the text and/or context. Finally, *implicit reference* is taken to mean a vague referring expression that does not identify the referent. For instance, the meaning of “this train” in Example 10 cannot be derived from immediate co-text or a contextual referent outside of Twitter, e.g. a photograph of the train or a link to a railway timetable. Only *Gazelle’s* regular readers would know that she regularly

commutes from central London to her home south of London, and which train she takes.

- (10) Gazelle: Having the “Only New X?!” despair again. Howwhy is this train home so slow?! I can hear my bed calling me. And indeed the #balletkittens
11:36 PM 7 Nov 2012

Implicit referring expressions include general nouns, personal, indefinite, demonstrative pronouns, and ‘vague noun classes’ such as “thingamabob” (Cutting 2000:59). Implicit reference can be anaphoric as well as non-anaphoric: the former happens when there is cohesion in the text, but the referent is never identified explicitly (e.g. cohesion between “what-you-call-it” and anaphora “it” referring back to this vague noun).

Speaking of grammatical contextualisation cues of an in-group, Cutting (2000:75) finds them to include explicit non-anaphoric definite noun phrases, implicit non-anaphoric definite noun phrases with general nouns, demonstrative pronouns and adverbs, and personal pronouns. As her group of subjects grew closer and developed into a community, the frequency of implicit reference increased. That was especially the case with non-anaphoric definite reference. Overall, members of the in-group also used more general nouns with demonstrative determiners, demonstrative pronouns and adverbs, and personal pronouns.

Next, the level of lexis is brought into question. Earlier studies have often pointed out the importance of in-group codes – dialect, local terminology – for forging a group identity (Brown and Levinson 1987, Swales 1990). Lexis cannot be overlooked in ballet Twitters, for occupational and professional communities are prone to setting boundaries through professional jargon. Rejecting the approach that was taken in many similar studies, Cutting (2000) turns away from a simple listing of in-group vocabulary in favour of classifying lexis on an explicitness scale. The scale is developed on the basis of work by Ullmann (1962) and Channell (1994) and concerns vagueness of nouns on a cline from non-contentful to contentful words. In this manner, generic words (‘bird’) and dummy nouns (‘thing’) are most non-contentful because semantically they are on the border between a referring expression and a placeholder. Similarly, grades of contentfulness can be applied to the difference between general nouns and technical terms (Leckie-Tarry 1995).

To formalise the implicitness scale, Cutting divides all nouns into two macro-categories: *non-course nouns* and *course nouns*. The latter refer to things and activities related to the linguistics course. The former are general nouns easily identifiable by an outsider. The course nouns could be of two types: *special course nouns* and *course-by-context nouns*. The first category is further subdivided into common and proper nouns, with common nouns falling into one of four

types: technical, unique, limited range, and general. *Technical nouns* are specialised terms dependent on the content of the course (e.g. “morphology”, “X-bar” for linguistic courses). *Unique nouns* are generalised nouns with specific pragmatic meaning used to refer to the departmental organisation, appearing in textbooks etc. of which there is only one (e.g. “dissertation”). *Limited range nouns* are, similarly, generalised nouns with specific pragmatic meaning that refer to components of the course and have a limited range of meaning in the context. For example, the noun “the class” belongs to the limited range of “classes” and means “the semantics class”. *General nouns* are any nouns with relation to the course knowledge area but without specific pragmatic meaning (e.g. “semantics”).

Special proper nouns, predictably, include names and titles connected to the subject matter, e.g. “Chomsky”, “Descriptivism”. Sometimes these are used for metonymical extension in the context of the course, e.g. “It’s not like Brown and Miller”, “Brown and Miller” standing for the book by these authors.

Table 2.2. Linguistic markers of in-group implicitness, based on Cutting (2000)

Grammatical reference			
Non-anaphoric	super-explicit	noun head + postmodifier	Postmodifier: prepositional phrase, infinitival clause, relative clause, participial clause, adjectival clause, noun phrase in apposition
	explicit	common/proper noun + (post-head complement)	Post-head complement: prepositional phrase, content clause, infinitival clause
	implicit	general noun, personal, demonstrative, indefinite pronoun	
Lexis			
Non-course nouns		common nouns proper nouns	general nouns
Course nouns	special nouns	common nouns	technical unique limited range general
		proper nouns	actual metonymical
	course-by-context	common nouns	

Course-by-context nouns “are not intrinsically course related but become course-related by their use in course topics” (Cutting 2000:81). While the distinction is made to enable the separate study of special course nouns, since they make up the in-group vocabulary, both groups place close to the implicit end of the lexical cline.

The analysis has shown that the implicit language of the group includes all types of special course nouns (Cutting 2000:95). The limited range nouns appeared most frequently, closely followed by special proper nouns. This is in keeping with the expectation that the implicit end of the cline would be better represented in a close-knit discourse community. Learning the appropriate in-group vocabulary is often a part of the socialization process in a community (cf. Atkinson 1997); therefore the findings concerning course nouns (or, more generally, *knowledge area nouns*) can help us shed light on the processes of newcomer integration into an occupational community.

2.4.2 Pragmatics of the in-group and rapport-building

Certainly, belonging to a community – or the desire to belong – finds an expression on the level of pragmatics, as well. Here two lines of inquiry are of interest: once again, the implicitness of language as manifested in humour; and the rapport-building strategies used by members.

The first avenue of investigation was taken up by Cutting (2000). She considered humour an in-group marker when it was performed through flouting conversational maxims. *Private flouting humour*, on the one hand, consists of ambiguous allusions, banter, and irony about the interlocutor. It can only be used by familiars and therefore underlies in-group relations (cf. ‘mock-politeness’ in Leech 1983). *Public flouting humour*, on the other hand, includes ambiguity, irony and hyperbole about a third party or a situation, and can be used by strangers and familiars alike.

Rapport-building language has been the subject of much discussion in discourse- and conversation analysis (Clark et al. 2003, Pomerantz 1984, Sacks 1992, Schegloff 1984, Sharpley and Guidara 1993, Tannen 1990), sociolinguistics (Aston 1988, Coupland 2000a, 2000b, 2003, Placencia 2004) and the bulk of discursive politeness research (Ho 2011a, 2011b, Lorenzo-Dus 2005, Spencer-Oatey 2000a, 2002). In broad terms, rapport-building involves negotiating relationships, establishing connections, displaying similarities and shared experiences and is a prerequisite for forming social bonds. Consequently, it is realised through language that shows liking, friendliness and interest in the interlocutor. Historically, a very productive avenue of investigation of the language of rapport, i.e. how language is used to maintain and promote harmonious social relationships, has addressed the illocutionary domain (Beebe and Takahashi 1989a, Blum-Kulka et al. 1989,

Eisenstein and Bodman 1986, Kinjo 1987, Olshtain and Cohen 1983, Sifianou 1992, Trosborg 1995). Such work focussed on the wording of speech acts, the selection of speech act components, the degree of directness/indirectness, and the type and quantity of downgraders/upgraders (Spencer-Oatey 2000b: 21). The next chapter reviews the taxonomies yielded by the illocutionary approach to rapport management in complaints. Importance of rapport for in-group was confirmed by Cutting (2001) in her speech act oriented follow-up on the community formation study, in which she found that overt lexicalisations of positive attitude to interlocutor undergo a significant increase over time.

Apart from the control of directness and illocutionary force, rapport can be managed e.g. through affiliative or phatic talk (Pavlidou 1994, 2000), or turn-taking practices (Wieland 1991). One scheme which attempts to bring different domains of rapport management together with the purpose of analysing internet discourse is Ädel (2011). The scheme (see Table 2.3) was proposed on the basis of mixed quantitative and qualitative analysis.⁴ It is an operationalisable taxonomy of ‘discourse functions’, i.e. the rhetorical functions of utterances in a given context (Ädel 2006) that perform rapport in communication within groups of students.

Table 2.3. Rapport-building discourse functions, from Ädel (2011:2942)

Unit type	Discourse function
Discourse-structuring	Greeting
	Closing
	Excusing oneself
Intratextual	Referring to in-group discourse
Face-saving	Apologizing
	Mitigating criticism
Bonding	Agreeing
	Aligning with in-group
	Commiserating
	Complimenting
	Seeking agreement
	Offering encouragement
	Thanking
	Responding to thanks
	Chatting

4. Although there exist a great variety of studies of rapport-building language and strategies, I chose to cite Ädel’s taxonomy here because it is in many respects exemplary of other, similar, taxonomies, but also because it is based on a language sample that resembles my data: communication among a group of students who form a discourse community and whose shared interests lie offline, but the communication takes place online.

As research demonstrates, rapport-building language spans a wide range of speech events from phatic utterances to agreement and small talk. The use of such language makes salient the identity of a friendly, socially open person who strives to become a part of the group. To acquire meaning beyond formal politeness, the speech acts in the taxonomy would incorporate the previously discussed identity tools: membership categorisation devices (De Fina 2010, Sacks 1972, Schegloff 2007), acts of positioning (Davies and Harré 1990, 2001), self-disclosure (Derlega and Grzelak 1979, Snyder Ohta 2014). The relationship between them may be conceptualised with the overarching concept of positioning acts at the top of the model, and the various rapport-building ‘discourse functions’ at the lower level. The discourse functions, in turn, are anchored to the community repertoire and values through the use of MCDs and the in-group language within them. Although it is unlikely that the categories will be applicable to the Twitter data as is, given the context-specific nature of the pragmatic phenomena, this model may serve as a springboard for working out the annotation scheme.

2.5 Conclusion

In this chapter I have introduced the concept of discursive identity and reviewed some key findings of sociolinguistic and socio-psychological research. It is important to note that the discursive approach to identity construction is by no means uncontested. This approach, however, remains singularly suitable for the analysis of text-based CMC, for “the apparently disembodied nature of CMC and its potential for identity play through the use of anonymity, pseudonyms, or inauthentic personae would seem the environment par excellence for the enactment of identities through discourse” (Page 2012: 17). Section 2.2 drew on conversation analysis, membership categorisation analysis, and narrative studies to explain and support the following claims:

1. Identity is constructed in and through talk.
2. Identity construction can be accomplished in dialogic talk through affiliation and disaffiliation with interlocutor(s).
3. Identity construction is performed by invoking in talk categories-in-use through category-bound actions or reports of such actions.
4. Identity is constructed discursively through speech acts of positioning.
5. In monological discourse, storytelling is a key device for identity construction.
6. In everyday talk, identity is expressed through a succession of fragmentary, low-tellable stories.

Section 2.3 offered a recap of the existing studies of social media from a narrative viewpoint. I paid special attention to Page's (2012) investigation of Facebook and Twitter, for which she had used the narrative dimensions toolkit by Ochs and Capps (2001). The review demonstrated that although some aspects of social media stories are better understood in terms of a narrative continuum, the structuralist framework of Labov and Waletzky can offer valuable insight when applied with caution. In Section 2.4.1, I zoomed in on the linguistic markers of implicitness which make up a language of an in-group, such that my Twitter community represents. Finally, Section 2.4.2 brought in the pragmatic markers of a community and the linguistic tools for rapport-building.

On the whole, it appears that while many different opinions exist on what constitutes linguistic identity work or on which level of language one should be looking for it, it is invariably tied to the social context. The reference to the discourse community will accompany the analysis throughout the book. The next chapter will deal specifically with self-praise and third party complaining.

Disclosive speech acts

Self-praise and third party complaints

3.1 Introduction

The propensity to tell the world about the self, the driving force behind any personal narrative, is captured in the concept of self-disclosure. Relevant research into self-disclosure can be located within two distinct disciplinary frames: social-psychological and linguistic. There is also an online communication literature to be considered in relation to a microblogging focus. My research works in the linguistic tradition. I, therefore, first provide a brief review of what might be learned from psychological literature. The recap of relevant findings will make clear which linguistic phenomena can be considered in the discussion of self-disclosure. Next, I canvas the texts on the linguistics of self-disclosure, since this is where my research is situated and aims to make its contribution. Two branches of linguistic literatures are of interest: the study of speech acts, and computer-mediated communication, both of which take up the subject of speech events in CMC. I will turn to speech act studies of the respective phenomena, i.e. speech events of trouble-telling and self-praise, which will be located within the well-researched matters of complaining and compliments. At the end of the chapter, I propose the working definitions for the speech acts of self-praise and complaint. As the following discussion will demonstrate, both can be construed differently depending on the research tradition, the purpose of the investigation, and the context in which they occur (e.g. self-praise may subsume the statements claiming credit for something that is positively valued by the speaker and the audience, or, possibly, the speaker only). The proposed definitions, therefore, are simply operationalisations for the purposes of the present study and do not purport to describe every type of linguistic behaviour that could be reasonably argued to involve self-praise. Finally, throughout the chapter I will turn to CMC literatures to set the scene for my investigation and highlight the blank spots in the existing picture.

3.2 Self-disclosure in psychology

This section is devoted to sketching the research landscape of self-disclosure to a degree that would provide a base for later analysis of microblogging language. Many volumes have been written on the importance of self-presentation in speech (Anthaki and Widdicombe 1998, Carbaugh 1996, Gergen 1994, Goffman 1959, 1974, Malone 1997, Potter and Wetherall 1987). Here I would like to concentrate on one component of this global process which can be seen to reign our lives as social beings. Self-disclosure has mostly been studied by personality psychologists and has received almost as many definitions as there were publications on the subject. One of the most inclusive perspectives was taken by Jourard (1971) and his followers, e.g. Cozby (1973), who maintained that self-disclosure is simply a verbal presentation of self to other individuals. A number of more restrictive definitions were subsequently offered by Worthy et al. (1969), Culbert (1973) and Goodstein and Reinecker (1974). The first group of authors suggested that only information about the speaker which is not generally known and not otherwise available to the hearer may count as self-disclosure. The latter two studies further refined this view by applying the label only to verbal disclosures of private nature and selectively revealed under special circumstances. The notion of 'special circumstances' was somewhat clarified by Allen (1974: 198), who defined self-disclosure as "uncoerced exchanging of personal information in a positive relationship." In this mixed list, most definitions share a focus on the linguistic nature of self-disclosure as well as the idea that the disclosed information should relate to the speaker. For the present study, I will adopt a more recent definition by Derlega and Grzelak (1979: 152) which captures both these points:

Self-disclosure includes any information exchange that refers to the self, including personal states, dispositions, events in the past, and plans for the future. It can be objectively defined as any verbal message that formally begins with the word "I" (for instance, "I think," "I feel") or any other verbal message about the self.

Self-disclosure has been demonstrated to play a major role in the emergence and maintenance of close relationships. The depth and breadth of self-disclosure have been positively correlated with the length of relationships, friendly as well as romantic, and also the perceived quality of the relationships (Derlega et al. 1993). Jourard (1971), who did groundbreaking work on the topic, considered self-disclosure to be one of the constitutive elements of a healthy personality. The phenomenon, however, should be described in terms of norms and functions which converge to stipulate its contextual appropriateness as not every self-disclosure is deemed healthy or desirable.

To begin with, aspects such as social norms, but also informativeness, reward value and effectiveness need to be taken into account (Derlega and Grzelak 1979: 153). Social norms are culturally determined. Attempts have been made to posit non-specific rules of self-disclosure for the Western Anglo society, depending on the stage of relationship between the participants, for instance in the work by Berger and Bradac (1982: 86):

1. Do not disclose intimate information to new acquaintances;
2. Do not disclose negatively-valued information to new acquaintances;
3. Do not disclose excessively.

Such rules help regulate the communication by allowing social actors to predict when and how much disclosure may be reasonably expected from them. A person who discloses too much intimate information in an inappropriate situational or relational context risks serious loss of face, as s/he will likely be branded 'weird' or psychologically maladjusted (Goffman 1967). This normative aspect appears especially interesting in the context of the present study, since the output mode apparently legitimises the highly informative intimate self-disclosure to new acquaintances in microblogging posts (colloquially labelled 'oversharing'). However, a notable exception to cultural norms, which may explain the active disclosure online, is the so-called 'stranger on the train' phenomenon (Derlega and Chaikin 1977): it refers to the intimate disclosures to strangers as a function of anonymity. Besides, one should not forget that although general norms and individual 'disclosiveness' do play an important role, it is contextual variables, such as interactional pre-context, that ultimately influence the individual's decision to self-disclose (Archer 1979, Chelune 1979, Coupland et al. 1988, Taylor 1979).

Another factor in disclosure appropriateness is gender. Although expectations of self-disclosure in close relationships are the same cross-gender, same-sex interactions exhibit differences. Females place high value on the rapport-building function of self-disclosure and show more trust at an earlier stage, while males avoid revealing vulnerabilities, and therefore limit their interactions to positive self-disclosure even in close peer-relationships (Derlega et al. 1993: 63).¹ Quite

1. This conclusion by Derlega et al. (1993) is based on a review of a number of psychological studies with different design. E.g. Caldwell and Peplau (1982) worked with unmarried college students who were asked to fill out a questionnaire and to role-play a conversation; Aries and Johnson (1983) distributed a questionnaire to middle-aged informants; Wheeler et al. (1983) used the Rochester Interaction Record (a diary technique where participants take notes about interactions with their friends); other researchers focussed on men and women in a relationship (Rubin et al. 1980) or marriage (Gottlieb and Wagner 1991).

predictably, the content of disclosure is an important variable. Among the topics on which males (due to the influence of cultural norms in the American society) tend to be the least open Derlega and Grzelak (1979: 164) list personal concerns, weaknesses, and emotional difficulties. Women, in comparison, are forthcoming with more intimate information (*ibid.*).

Next, more insight into the processes of self-disclosure may be gleaned from contemplating its social functions (the nomenclature is based on Derlega and Grzelak 1979: 156–158, although some of the functions have been described in linguistic literature on rapport):

a. Expression.

Statements such as “I am sad” or “I feel terrible” exemplify this function. In such cases, self-disclosure provides a release for suppressed feelings. Studies have demonstrated positive effects of self-disclosure in coping with stress, and even its potential to reduce negative health consequences (Derlega et al. 1993: 90–91). The self-expressive function is the one that markedly comes to the fore in internet contexts. It is hypothesised that the internet creates an environment which is unusually conducive to expressing one’s true identity because it is possible to retain anonymity in interactions, and because there are no constraints placed on us by those who know us in ‘real life’ (Bargh et al. 2002: 35). Bargh et al. demonstrated experimentally that strangers recognise and remember the features of the ‘true self’ of their interlocutor better in online than in face-to-face interaction. Anonymity, however, also endorses selective self-presentation (e.g. allowing one to gloss over his/her flaws in an online dating profile). Surprisingly, participants in online communication choose to fight fire with fire and use extensive self-disclosure as an uncertainty reduction strategy. According to Gibbs et al. (2011: 90), users tend to “disclose more personal information in terms of revealing private thoughts and feelings, suggesting a process whereby online dating participants proactively engage in uncertainty reduction activities to confirm the private information of others, which then prompts their own disclosure.” This holds true even for very socially anxious individuals who are reluctant to self-disclose in face-to-face encounters, and thus experience difficulties in social life, but who readily provide extensive information about themselves in blogs (Tian 2011).

b. Self-clarification.

Contemplating one’s ideas or preparing a disclosure of personal information to an audience may increase focus and help clarify one’s own opinions. Talking through a topic of an academic presentation with a colleague may lead to a clearer understanding of one’s thesis. Similarly, writing a letter or a diary entry initiates a process of critical evaluation, increases objective self-awareness and consistency in thought.

c. Social validation.

This function of self-disclosure is similar to the previous one in that it positively affects self-awareness and cognitive consistency. However, in the process of social validation, people look for feedback outside themselves. An objective social reality personified by other individuals' opinions and comments may help to estimate appropriateness of behaviour and correctness of attitudes. This need has been conceptualised as 'quality face' (Spencer-Oatey 2000b) or 'positive face' (Brown and Levinson 1987) in linguistic literature² (the latter defined as "the want of every member that his wants be desirable to at least some others" (1987:62), which is then expressed in the positive verbal feedback). When an individual takes up the role of recipient in the process of self-disclosure, it can also validate his/her social worth, and thus have face-enhancing function.

d. Relationship development.

One of the key motivational theories in the field of self-disclosure attempts to account for disclosing behaviour on the basis of reciprocity. It has been shown that disclosing personal information to an individual tends to elicit a similar disclosure from that individual (Coupland et al. 1988; Jourard 1959). The finding has been confirmed for online environments (Tian 2011). Altman and Taylor's (1976) Social Penetration Theory claims that relationship development is contingent on dual self-disclosure which tends to expand with time, covering a wider variety of topics but also growing in depth (although there are exceptions such as the stranger-on-the-train phenomenon, when a deep self-disclosure is achieved over a very short acquaintance period). This type of self-presentational disclosure in speech is related to rapport-enhancement and rapport-maintenance orientation of discourse (Spencer-Oatey 2000b:29), or 'mutual support' orientation (Ting-Toomey and Crocroft 1994:323). Thus, volunteering information about self can be construed by an interlocutor as willingness to be friends, and is connected to liking.

e. Social control.

This function is manipulative and may be accomplished through disclosing selectively or bending the truth to achieve a particular social goal. For instance, personal disclosure may serve to elicit a reciprocal disclosure from the interlocutor and thus to learn some crucial piece of information about him.

To study self-disclosure in discourse, the functions need to be operationalised with reference to observable phenomena (in my case the linguistic ones).

2. For the in-depth discussion of the concept of face and its role in the key theories of linguistic politeness, see Watts (2003), Eelen (2001).

Such operationalisation can take place on different levels: particular lexical and syntactic choices, or interactional strategies, or genres, among other possibilities. It is clear that there are many possible ways to perform every functional facet of self-disclosure, and even to construe their precise nature. Certainly, the pragmatic level is not the only and indeed not the most readily available one for the operationalisation of self-disclosure, and a linguistic study of other levels would be a very interesting addition to scholarship on the subject. But the pragmatic focus of the present investigation brings me to offer an operationalisation of self-disclosure as a speech act of self-praise, a speech act of third party complaint, and a more extended speech event³ of personal storytelling. The connection between self-praise and self-disclosure was recognised by discursive psychologists in the language-centred studies of positive self-disclosure (Holtgraves and Srull 1989). Third party complaint, a type of trouble-telling (Jefferson and Lee 1981, Tannen 1990), involves narrating events from one's life and expressing emotional stance towards these events. Finally, personal storytelling is self-disclosure par excellence and an important component of identity work, as the previous chapter revealed.

While there exist other subclasses of speech acts that may perform one of the five functions of self-disclosure in interaction, the present study will focus on self-praise and third party complaints for methodological (they are easy to recognise, and occur in everyday communication) as well as theoretical reasons (their weightiness in relational work). The purpose of the following sections, therefore, is to shed light on the linguistic realizations of complaints and self-praise. This will be accomplished through detailed description of the existing research on the subject, and ensuing focus on application of the findings to online environments. The definitional differences will be tackled by devising a pragmatic space model of the respective speech acts. To place the findings concerning self-praise and complaints in a wider context, the range of other speech acts that occur in the interaction among the subjects will be reviewed in Chapter 5.

3.3 Disclosure through complaining

Imagine a telephone conversation between two good friends who have nothing in particular to discuss but rang simply to catch up with one another. After an

3. I am drawing a distinction between a speech situation (wider context of language such as ballet class, theatre performance, award ceremony), a speech event (a communicative rule-governed sequence, usually with multiple turns, that has a unified set of components – same topic, participants, purpose of communication; e.g. giving corrections in ballet class) and a speech act (an utterance with a single interactional purpose).

introductory “How are you?” the caller launches into a detailed story about a missed train, a long wait on a chilly platform, anxiety over upcoming appointments and ticket control and so on, which positively makes a victim out of him/her. His/her friend, instead of helpful advice about going into a ticket office to warm up and wait for the next train, or calling the secretary to postpone meetings, offers only back-channel noises and exclamations “Oh dear!”, “Poor you!” After a while the talk jumps onto a different topic, and then the caller hangs up and happily continues with his/her day feeling calmer and less stressed.

This is a prototypical instance of disclosure in troubles-talk and a demonstration of its positive effect. The label loosely refers to a discursive treatment of some ‘trouble’ between a speaker and a properly aligned recipient (Jefferson and Lee 1981:400), e.g. a friend telling another sympathetic friend about his/her misfortune with trains, or colleagues at the water cooler exchanging colourful stories about their terrible weekends. Proper hearer alignment is crucial, as Tannen (1990) demonstrated, a challenge or giving of advice constitutes misalignment in this speech event and will lead to conflict.

Trouble-talk is one member of a wider class of speech acts which D’Amico-Reisner (1985) labelled ‘disapproval exchanges’, as is complaining. The speech act of complaint plays a weighty role in regulating interpersonal relations. It is therefore not surprising that the phenomenon has received plenty of attention from linguists and social scientists.

The natural data for complaint studies can be loosely arranged into two groups, institutional setting and everyday conversation (see Table 3.1 for the overview of some of this research). Within these two categories, a number of research foci can be distinguished. In formal terms, a trouble-talk sequence may be either a direct or third party complaint (hereafter DC and TPC), i.e. it may be addressed to the person held responsible for the transgression, or to a third party. This analytical distinction has other important implications, among them the social connotations of complaints: while DCs tend to be normative acts aimed to regulate social order (Edwards 2005, Garner 1985), TPCs have expressive function. An additional wrinkle is presented by the fact that TPCs seem to be performed differently depending on whether the guilty party is present as a witness or absent during the exchange.

From the methodological point of view, studies again fall into one of two camps. Those who adhere to the tradition of ethnomethodology and interactional sociolinguistics see complaints as dynamically co-constructed by both interlocutors during an exchange, and therefore perform micro-linguistic analysis on conversational sequences where a complaint unfolds over many turns. The primary interest here lies in exchange as a whole and how it evolves within the fabric of social relationship. The methods are mostly those of Conversation Analysis. The research objects thus are turn-level items used to affiliate or disaffiliate with the

Table 3.1. Main complaint studies from ethnomethodological and production perspectives

Elicited data	Institutional setting	Everyday conversation	
	Heinemann 2009, Ruusuvaori & Lindfors 2009, Whalen & Zimmerman 1990	Dersley & Wootton 2000 (TV documentaries), Drew 1998, Drew & Walker 2009; Haakana 2007; Laforest 2002, 2009; Mandelbaum 1991, Nomura & Barnlund 1983; Traverso 2009	Ethnomethodological and interactional sociolinguistic perspective
Beebe & Takahashi 1989b, Chen et al. 2011, Cohen & Olshtain 1981; Du 1995, Geluykens & Kraft 2003, Kraft & Geluykens 2002, Murphy & Neu 1996, Olshtain & Weinbach 1987, 1993; Trosborg 1995	Drew & Holt 1988; Meini 2010; Monzoni 2009; Pomerantz 1986; Stokoe 2003b, Vasquez 2011	Boxer 1991, 1993a, 1993b, D'Amico-Reisner 1985; Kozlova 2004; Ouellette 2001; Pomerantz 1986	Production perspective

complainer, for instance repetitions, marks of approval, or prosodic features, and sequence structures marked by conversational cues.

The other camp may be roughly described as adhering to the pragmatic tradition and mostly conducts analyses against the backdrop of the Speech Act Theory. The research object is largely located within a single turn, or a discursive unit (in written data). This branch of research operates with the concept of a speech act set, or sequence, and its constitutive speech acts which are usually construed as 'pragmatic strategies'. Besides, much of discursive psychological work investigating the social situation and personal character traits that beget complaints falls into this category. Since this perspective focuses on the production side of complaints and limits its interest predominantly (though not exclusively) to the linguistic devices used by complainer, his/her production strategies, intentions and motivations, I will hereafter refer to it as production perspective. In the next section, I will look at how studies from both these camps describe and classify complaints in an offline environment.

3.3.1 Grammatical and lexical features of complaints

To outline the findings concerning linguistic realisation of complaints, two seminal studies merit attention: D'Amico-Reisner (1985) and Trosborg (1995). D'Amico-Reisner (1985) referred to this speech act as 'disapproval exchanges'. This terminological variant is but one manifestation of vagueness that makes formal definition of a complaint practically impossible (Edwards 2005). A body of research on complaining in English and other European languages offers a choice of slightly varying definitions which zoom in on minor context-related differences in the nature and performance. One of the most widely cited definitions is that by Trosborg (1995: 311–312):

A speech act in which the speaker (the complainer) expresses his/her disapproval, negative feelings etc. towards the state of affairs described in the proposition (the complainable) and for which he/she holds the hearer (the complaine) responsible, either directly or indirectly.

Thus, the speech event is constituted by three components: the propositional content (the Complainable), the speaker (the Complainer), and the accused (the Complaine). The possible types of complainables include bad customer service (Vasquez 2011) or an inconsiderate act of the complaine (Laforest 2002). Additionally, TPC may deal with features of the speaker him-/herself, or even situational aspects such as time, money, food, resources, weather, and illness (Boxer 1993b, 2010).

In view of the terminological vagueness, it is not surprising that D'Amico-Reisner (1985) chose a very broad working definition. She claimed to be interested in the continuum of spontaneous speech behaviour that can be described as the activity of negative evaluation. D'Amico-Reisner's syntactic analysis of data (gathered in informal interactions by taking notes or making audio recordings whenever possible) suggested a subdivision of complaints into DC and TPC. In DC, an initial move consists of a proposition in which the referent coincides with the addressee of the disapproval move, represented by a second-person singular or plural noun phrase. In TPC, the addressee occurs as a second-person singular or plural, and the referent – as a third-person singular or plural noun phrase (D'Amico-Reisner 1985: 117). To make matters more complicated, there are a number of strategies that allow one to express DC indirectly. The label 'indirect' in this case refers to verbal indirection, i.e. using a surface form which requires the hearer to follow a longer inferential path to interpreting the utterance as a complaint.⁴

4. This is confusing because in some sources 'indirect' refers to the participation structure of exchange, indicating that the addressee of the speech act is not the guilty party. I chose to label this type of complaint a 'third party complaint' to avoid ambiguity.

Although complaint does not have the same predictability of form as other, more ritualised speech acts (compliments or apologies), D'Amico-Reisner's findings indicate that some broader patterns of realisations do reoccur. To begin with, both DC and TPC may be realised through four syntactic structures: a declarative sentence (Dec), a response-expected question (REQ), an imperative (Imper), and a rhetorical question (Rh). The widest variety of stable clause structures crops up for the declarative. Among DCs, it manifests in ten relatively stable formulas and further eleven formulas which occurred only once in the data (see Table 3.2 for the overview of D'Amico-Reisner's syntactic findings). The remaining three syntactic patterns (REQ, Imper, Rh) occurred in the material much more seldom and with less variety, and normally comprised a multiple turn unit.

D'Amico-Reisner lists a great number of semantic formulas used to perform Dec and REQ. The other two categories (Imper, Rh) show significantly less formalisation, with only "What do you mean, S?" for rhetorical questions and "Don't VP" for imperatives in DC. D'Amico-Reisner hypothesises that these so-called 'semantic formulas' indirectly draw attention to unmet expectations the speaker had concerning the addressee's behaviour (*ibid.*: 58, 133).

Apart from semantic formulas, there exist recognisable lexical items and chunks that frequently accompany complaints. These can be subdivided into external (framing) devices and internal lexical devices (*ibid.*: 59–60). The internal devices most often comprise nouns and adjectives with negative semantic value ("hell", "bullshit", "fuck") in DC and TPC alike. The framing devices, on the other hand, allow for less directness and include attention-getters, terms of endearment, nicknames, interjections, and linking words. Indeed, some frames may even have a mitigating function, such as hedging "I mean" and "I think". A combination of lexical cues, semantic and syntactic formulas, and paralinguistic cues results in a communicative message ultimately transferred to the hearer. However, it is important to remember that if an utterance uses lexical aggravation, its potential interpretation is far less ambiguous than in the case of a syntactic formula. Therefore, the choice of linguistic devices depends on how negotiable the speaker wishes to be (D'Amico-Reisner 1985: 66).

Among the lexical cues, the adverbials "never", "always", "all the time" etc. have a special job. They serve to focus the addressee's attention on what is deplorable in the complainable situation by suggesting stark contrasts and extremes at strategic points of DC and TPC (*ibid.*: 61, 134). This usage, known as extreme case formulation, frequently appears as a means of legitimising complaining claims to a third party in order to secure his alignment (Edwards 2000, 2005; Günthner 1997, 2005; Pomerantz 1986). Such preparatory work is especially relevant when speakers anticipate disagreement, e.g. in adversarial situations such as court hearings (Pomerantz 1986: 222). Extreme case formulations not only display emotion,

Table 3.2. Syntactic patterns of DC and responses to complaints, based on D'Amico-Reisner (1985)

		Initial moves		Response moves
		Initiating/Single T-unit	Multiple T-units	
Direct C	Declarative (Dec)	1. I + VP + (neg) <i>I've been waiting here for 10 minutes.</i>	1. Dec (*) 4 <i>You look a mess. Look at you.</i>	Remediation/acceptance <i>Woman accidentally turns off the bathroom lights, her husband says from inside:</i> – 'Nickname' – Sorry about that. [remediation closes the exchange] Rejection/denial – <i>I can't use make-up.</i> – <i>Oh, that's out? I told you make-up was no good for ya anyway.</i> – <i>I haven't been using it for a year.</i> – <i>Well, you get that shit in your pores.</i> [4 more turns]
		2. You + should + neg <i>You should watch her, dear.</i>	<i>You can't go like that. You look like a pig.</i>	
		3. You + VP + (neg) <i>You're poking that umbrella in my face.</i>	2. Dec + Imper <i>It's too loud. Turn it down, huh.</i>	
		4. Those/these/that NP + VP + descriptive phrase <i>Hey, honey, those socks she's got on are filthy.</i>	3. Dec + Req <i>You should go around next time... What are you doing? (as a wife reaches over her husband in bed to grab a book)</i>	
		5. If S, then S <i>If you wanted to say something, you could've come into the other room.</i>	4. Dec + Neg Imper + Dec + Imper + Req <i>Look it, if you're not a member, just say so. Don't go trying to pull the wool over my eyes. If you didn't pay and want to use the pool, come right out and say so, but don't treat me like a fool.</i>	
		6. It + be + descriptive phrase <i>It's too loud.</i>	<i>Now, are you a member or not?</i>	
		7. Pro + can + (neg) + VP <i>You can cut them thicker.</i>		
		8. You + Do Past Neg + VP <i>You didn't iron the collar down.</i>		
		9. I told you + S <i>I told you coffee was not good for ya anyway.</i>		
		10. I can't believe + S <i>I can't believe you think these are the same thing as I had.</i>		
		11. 12 hapax forms		

(Continued)

Table 3.2. (Continued) Syntactic patterns of DC and responses to complaints, based on D'Amico-Reisner (1985)

Initial moves		Response moves
Initiating/Single T-unit	Multiple T-units	
Response-expected question (REQ) 1. Why + Do Past + (Neg) + Pro + VP <i>Why did you eat that cheese?</i> 2. Other forms that occurred only twice	1. Req + Dec(*) <i>Why did you give her watermelon? She had three pieces this morning. You tell me to give her breakfast and then you give her a second one.</i> 2. Req + Imper + Dec + Imper + Dec <i>Dad, why don't you lie on the bed? Go lie on the bed. That's ridiculous. Believe me, I lie on it all the time. (when the father starts putting his feet up on a new couch)</i> 3. Req + Dec + Req + Dec + Dec + Req + Imper <i>Are you going to listen to me and I'll tell you why, or are you gonna just keep "Why, why, why"? I can't believe this stupidity. Doesn't give me a chance to open my mouth, "Why, why, why". You wanna know why, shut up and listen.</i> 4. Req + Req <i>Who put the soap on my buff puff? Dad?</i>	Justification - <i>Where is the white-out?</i> - <i>I was gonna come home and unload this stuff and go get it...</i> Requested information - <i>Which way do you wanna go, huh? (driver to a pedestrian who tries to walk behind the car while he parks)</i> - <i>That way.</i> Request for clarification - <i>What the hell are you writing?</i> - <i>Is that a scold?</i> Rejection - <i>Why isn't the top on this?</i> - <i>Don't put it on. I can't get it off to take the basket out.</i> Remediation/acceptance - <i>You gonna eat that thing or what?</i> - <i>Yeah.</i>

Imperative (Imper)	1. (Neg) + VP <i>Wait a minute.</i>	1. Imper + Dec <i>Wait till you take that off. You're going to tear your stocking.</i> 2. Imper + Req <i>Wait a minute. What are you doing?</i> 3. Imper + Dec + Imper + Dec(*) <i>Bruce, stop please. Ow. It hurts. Stop it, please. I can't stand this anymore. Ow. Please, if you don't stop, I'll scream. What a jerk... (student being tickled by a friend)</i>	Remediation Rejection
Rhetorical question (Rh)	1. What do you mean + S <i>What do you mean, "That's not true?"</i> 2. How can you + VP <i>How can you argue over such petty things.</i> 3. What (the hell) (bullshit) is this you + be Pres + Ving <i>What the hell bullshit is this you are saying?</i>	1. Rh + Req + (Req(*)) <i>What do you mean, "That's not true?" Do you know what you just said? Do you know what you just said?</i> 2. Rh + Rh + Dec <i>What the hell bullshit is this you are saying about my house? What are you going nuts? You must be some kind of a nut.</i> 3. Rh + Dec + Imper + (Imper(*)) <i>I mean, how can you argue over such, over such petty things, they're so petty. Get on the phone and say, "We're not coming."</i>	Affirmation of position A: <i>What do you mean "I didn't wanna stick around"? I haven't been at...</i> B: <i>She (to a third party re A) didn't wanna stick around.</i> Request for information Acceptance

(Continued)

Table 3.2. (Continued) Syntactic patterns of DC and responses to complaints, based on D'Amico-Reisner (1985)

		Initial moves		Response moves
		Initiating/Single T-unit	Multiple T-units	
Third party C	Declarative	1. (3rd pers Subj/Pro) + be Pres + (NP/Adj) <i>She's a horrible teacher.</i> 2. I mean + S <i>My boyfriend didn't send me a Valentine present. He didn't even send me a card. I mean, how rotten can you get?</i>	1. Dec(*) 2. Dec(*) + Imper(*) + Dec(*) <i>I hate getting stopped by this light. Definitely this way uses more gas. Even if the other way is longer, it uses less gas. Look at this. There are so many lights, one after another. These are stupid lights. And there's no traffic anyway, but we're stopping all the time. We're just wasting gas.</i> 3. Dec* + (Rh(*)/Req(*)) + (Dec*) 4. Rh + Dec(*) + (Dec(*)/Rh) + (Dec(*)/Rh) 5. Imper + Dec/Rh + ((Rh) + (Dec)) 6. Req + (Dec) 7. NP + (Dec(*))	Support Non-committal (shift of topic) Challenge: – suggest a solution to complainable; – defend or explain the complainable; – request clarification Rejection
	Response-expected question	<i>Empty cells indicate that no detailed discussion of forms was given; however, the respective patterns did occur in the data</i>		
	Imperative			
	Rhetorical question	1. Can/could you + believe + (that) + S. <i>Can you believe he moved the exam up to 26th?</i>		

but also purport the justness of such emotions. As Pomerantz (1986: 221) explains regarding the usage of “all day Sunday” by a woman in the complaint about her husband’s inattention,

Part of how a complaint is formed is to provide for the recognisability of the offender’s wrongdoings. By describing the amount of time that he was with another woman as the maximum case of Mother’s Day, she claims this instance as a full and clear case of the wrongdoing that she described. In specifying ‘all day Sunday’, she seems to be orienting to a non-sympathetic audience, an audience who might hear, ‘he went away on Mother’s Day’ as a description of, for example, ‘at some point during Mother’s Day, he went away for a while.’

Certainly, extreme case formulations may also serve to legitimise counter-claims for the innocence of the perpetrator, for instance by portraying the complainable as a completely normal practice. In complaints, however, this device (which comprises quantifiers and indefinite pronouns such as “everyone” in addition to adverbials) has a more specific function of stating that the phenomenon is “objective rather than a product of the interaction or the circumstances” (Edwards 2000: 348). Extreme case formulations are more characteristic of TPC due to their ‘brittleness’ (Edwards 2000: 352). Since such formulations characterise the situation as one-of-a-kind and an ultimate example of a complainable, they can in most cases be easily refuted and are inherently unprovable. For instance, when a ballet student claims that s/he has “the tightest calves in the world”, the statement is subjective and can be defeated by another student’s counterclaim that her/his calves feel even tighter. Therefore it is often better to choose a moderate formulation of a complaint because it is more believable.

The main difference between DC and TPC, however, lies in the reaction of the hearer. Typical response moves such as acceptance or remediation that conclude the exchange in case of DC are not characteristic of TPC. Instead, interlocutors sometimes choose to disalign with the speaker by questioning the legitimacy of the complainable or suggesting means to remedy the unmet expectation that had sparked off the exchange. The most common response type in this context is an expression of support of some kind. Rejection of the initial move happens extremely rarely. These findings hint at an important difference in the social goals which DC and TPC accomplish in conversation. DC confronts the hearer with some transgression against social order that s/he allegedly committed, and thus strives to manipulate his/her behaviour towards remedying the offence. TPC, on the other hand, has a rapport-building function. It is performed for venting or for seeking agreement, and therefore constitutes a ‘hidden request’ for solidarity building (Boxer 1991, 2010). TPC and affiliative responses to it may be circumstantially considered face-flattering acts because they indicate that interlocutors

have the same wants. This potential comes from the effects of reciprocal self-disclosure, which has been shown by psychologists to be an indispensable component of building intimacy. Less face risk in TPC (evidenced in smaller amount of conventional indirectness in linguistic expressions) makes for a safe environment in which both parties may self-disclose, i.e. be honest and open about their true feelings. If in DC an addressee is under compulsion to supply remediation/acceptance so as to finish the exchange, notwithstanding his/her real opinion on the subject, in TPC a challenge represents a disclosure rather than disalignment and is not likely to lead to a conflict.

Importantly, the solidarity-building potential of TPC may be achieved only if no damage to complainer's or addressee's faces occurs. This is secured via two channels. First, the complainable matter is chosen with which no positive face wants of the addressee could be associated. TPC can be self-directed, situation-directed (e.g. "This bread is stale") or other-directed (Boxer 2010). Self-directed and situation-directed TPCs are the safest options, while in other-directed TPCs the complaineer should not belong to close social network of the addressee to avoid possible face association. Consequently, TPCs about strangers or chance acquaintances entail the least risk.

D'Amico-Reisner (1985) also finds that women participate in TPC more often than men. That a display of emotional reciprocity in complaint-related self-disclosure is common in female groups is in line with the findings of scholarship on troubles-talk. Günthner (1997), for instance, did not locate a single occurrence of male-to-male complaint stories in her data. She hypothesised that as negative self-disclosure puts the speaker into a vulnerable position, it goes against male identity (which is more inclined towards positive self-disclosure (DeCapua and Boxer 1999)). These sources, of course, take a simplified view of gender which cannot account for the whole complexity of linguistic choices the speakers make in natural conversation. Some problems relating to gender as a social construct will be discussed in application to the data in practical chapters.

3.3.2 Pragmatic aspects of complaining

A cornerstone of pragmatic inquiry into complaining is Trosborg's (1995) work on interlanguage pragmatics of expressive speech acts. Pragmatic literatures are on the whole more structured than the work by ethnomethodologists, which makes them, on the one hand, more manageable, but on the other hand means that they do less justice to the inherently 'messy' natural communication. Pragmatic (or production perspective) research relies on Brown and Levinson's Politeness Theory (1987) for theoretical grounding, which itself is based upon the Speech Act Theory (Austin 1978; Searle 1969) combined with Goffman's (1967) notion of face

and Grice's (1975) theory of implicature. The following attributes usually appear in the definitions of complaint from a pragmatic perspective:

- participation framework includes the complainable, the complainer, the complainee, and the hearer, who may or may not be identical with the complainee (the addressee);
- an act of moral censure in regard to the complainable;
- violation of hearer-supportive maxims or deduction from complainee's social image.

Since complaint, at least DC which is the object of Trosborg's study, is a conflictive speech event, the speakers are expected to try to soften the delivery. It is assumed that the illocutionary force of complaint can be modified through different performance strategies. In line with Brown and Levinson's concept of politeness strategies, the speaker has a range of options of different directness here.

Directness of linguistic expression should not be confused with the DC/TPC distinction introduced earlier in this chapter. According to Leech (1983), directness is relative to the length of the inferential path between the illocutionary acts and illocutionary goals (from speaker's point of view), and the length of inferential path by which force is derived from sense (from hearer's point of view). The longer inferential path affords the complainee a number of loopholes which s/he can use to mitigate the blame (Trosborg 1995: 315).

Trosborg (1995:317) proposes five criteria which amount to an increasing level of directness:

- a. Is complainable described directly in the proposition?
- b. Is complainant's negative attitude explicitly stated?
- c. Is agentive involvement of the complainee stated?
- d. Does the complainer evaluate complainee's action as bad? It is articulated?
- e. Is it stated that the complainant evaluates the complainee as a bad person?

Along with their special interest in the strategic performance of complaints, pragmatics appreciate the role of lexical modification. Table 3.3 summarises the lexical devices that Trosborg (1995) identified in her data. It demonstrates that modification of complaint works in two directions: on the one hand, modifiers render complaints less severe and minimise threat to the complainee's face; on the other, they present the complainer as a reasonable person who commits a face-threatening act (FTA) only when provoked, and even then tries to soften it. In this manner, modifiers endorse the complainer's positive face.

A related way of preserving comity is the objectification of a complaint. It is an important factor in distinguishing one's activity from such socially

censured speech acts as moaning, whinging or yammering. Complaining is essentially a discursive activity which sets some past event against what is perceived by the speaker to be social norms. Since both the event and the norms may be interpreted variably, complaint is inherently subjective. A confrontation may occur if the addressee does not view the complainable as a legitimate matter for complaint.

Table 3.3. Internal modifiers of complaints, based on Trosborg (1995)

Downgraders		Upgraders	
1. Downtoners:		1. Intensifiers:	
– adverbial sentence modifiers	<i>just, simply</i>	– adverbials or adjectives intensifying part of proposition	<i>such, so, very, quite, terribly, awfully, frightfully, absolutely</i>
– adverbials expressing tentativeness	<i>maybe, possibly</i>		
2. Understaters:		2. Commitment upgraders:	
– modifiers under-representing the transgression	<i>a little bit, a second, not very much</i>	– sentence modifiers expressing special commitment to proposition	<i>surely, certainly, positively, obviously, unfortunately</i>
3. Hedges	<i>kind of, sort of, somehow</i>	3. Lexical intensification:	
4. Subjectifiers	<i>I think, I suppose, I'm afraid, in my opinion</i>	– swear words	<i>hell, bullshit</i>
		– emphatic lexical choices	<i>ruined</i>
5. Cajolers			
– interpersonal gambits	<i>you know, you see, I mean</i>		
6. Appealers			
– response elicitation	<i>okay, right, don't you?</i>		

A competent speaker has a broad repertoire of objectification which s/he may use unconsciously. It has received various labels from researchers over the years: 'supportive moves' (comprising such disparate categories as 'providing evidence' and 'lexical preparators') (Trosborg 1995:331–334), 'semantic components' (including the head act itself, along with 'an explanation of purpose', 'justification' etc.) (Murphy & Neu 1996:199–201), 'objectification methods' (Edwards 2005). In essence, these are all ways of legitimising a claim (Pomerantz 1986) to restore social order. Objectification is especially prominent in IC, although a producer of DC often works to justify his/her challenge, too.

One way of endorsing the complainer's positive face and lending objectivity to a complaint is the construction of 'out-there-ness'. This tactic involves presenting the report as independent of the author and drawing the emphasis away from the identity of the complainer to put it on the complainable (Potter 1996: 152). Consider the following examples from Myers (1990), the second of which makes use of the out-there-ness repertoire characteristic for scientific writing, while the first conveys subjectivity:

1. Hornworms sure vary a lot in how well they grow.
2. Hornworm growth exhibits a significant amount of variation.

Linguistically, the desired attributes of impartiality and disinterestedness are embodied in the empiricist repertoire (Gilbert and Mulkay 1984). While preferring passive voice in the account of own actions or feelings, the producers of discourse use active verbs for actors in the reported situation (i.e. the complaineé). The existential 'to be' is employed to represent the state of affairs as pre-existing and independent of the complainer's presence at the scene. In order to pointedly disengage from the construction of blame, the complainer may refrain from explicitly passing moral judgement. Instead, s/he limits the discursive action to the statement of events and therefore leaves the decision on the legitimacy of complainable to the recipient. The covert author involvement in such cases resides in the version of events presented to the recipient. Our descriptions are constructions of events, and although the author does not invoke non-existent facts, s/he selects one of the relevant alternatives which is in line with his/her agenda (Edwards 2005). The story thus unambiguously invites the recipient to the reaction that corresponds with the author's implicit assessment. To appear neutral, the author models his/her discursive footing on that of a news presenter, who is treated as an 'animator' (Goffman 1992) merely reporting words and actions of others. The inclusion of direct quotations into the report is also a useful tool that lends veracity to the account, despite the fact that the accuracy of a verbatim quote can hardly be proven.

Defocalising can also be performed strategically. Another tactic of objectifying complaints involves constructing consensus by presenting corroborating evidence and accounts by independent witnesses (Edwards 2005; Potter 1996; Wooffitt 1992). Consensus and corroboration can be achieved in two ways: by drawing on resources external to the current account, and by including witnesses into the report.

The first type of corroboration involves a reference to an independently produced account of the same complainable, e.g. a witness's statement in court. The second type builds the corroborating account into the original report. By quoting other people as supposedly having the same experience, the author confirms the

factuality of his/her claim (Wooffitt 1992). Certainly, internal corroboration may be problematic since the witness is no longer independent, and therefore it is not quite as effective in objectifying complaint.

A prominent place in establishing one's entitlement as a witness is held by the package of linguistic strategies that are used to construct a complaint story (Günthner 1997, 2005; Haakana 2007; Holt 2000). They include affectively loaded narrative, reconstructed dialogue, the presentation of the thoughts of characters, graphic narrative detailing and typification of the complainees (Günthner 2000b: 224–244). Complaint stories, just like other types of TPC, are a perfect speech event for establishing in-group solidarity by allusion to common beliefs and values. The main purpose of complain-based storytelling is thus expressive (to vent emotions, to communicate the psychological state of a person) and solidarity-building (to attract hearer's attention to shared values).

The speech act of complaining comes at a high social price. As I mentioned above, the speaker feels entitled to act against the social values of comity and harmony (Leech 1983) only because s/he feels that the complainees had previously infringed upon these values by committing a transgression. To highlight this fact the speaker may resort to 'breach formulations' or 'script formulations' (Edwards 1994). The notion of scriptedness has been borrowed by discursive psychologists from cognitive linguistics to explain how participants in discourse impose their perceived routines, pre-organisations and constraints on reality and therefore construe it in different ways (Godfrey et al. 1986). In complaints, script formulations help to present the complainees' deplorable actions as one instance of antisocial behaviour typical for this person and thus function as a warning for the recipient: "It has happened to me and can happen to you, too, because he always behaves like this". The typicality script may be invoked by normalising adverbials such as "always", "all the time", "constantly", the use of present simple or progressive tense, or the habitual "would". The central tenet of this approach is that reality always underdetermines the reports, and the complainer performs active social work when framing the events in his/her account as having a certain status. Extreme case formulations, which I discussed above, constitute one type of scriptedness.

But what is considered normal in one place may not be normal in another. An appeal to a script requires a shared cognitive background between the complainer and the audience, and exploits in-group values. In CMC, the script of normality is tailored to suit the medium: for instance, a classic, although somewhat outdated fragment of the script ('a rule') dictates a sparing use of bandwidth (Graham 2007: 745). However, few communities have normality scripts that would differ so drastically from the context-free one as the ballet students' community does. Given that core values of this discourse community include obsession with ballet apparel, performances and class, hard physical training for many hours a day,

and sacrifices of anything else in your life to ballet, reference points for evaluative judgements are bound to differ from non-ballet public.

As we have seen, a precise definition of complaints and a list of obligatory features of this speech act is the point at which existing models come undone. Thus, a viable model should account for the following methodological problems: the vagueness of audience design, the fuzziness of the speech act, and the absence of illocutionary force indicating devices (IFID) that unambiguously identify a complaint. The only way to achieve descriptive adequacy in this matter is to treat complaints as placed along a continuum, and moreover, several continua which amount to a multidimensional pragmatic space. Jucker and Taavitsainen (2000) propose the concept of a pragmatic space as a prototype theory approach to speech acts: despite their fuzziness, each manifestation can be described by its measure of conformity to the prototype. In the end of this chapter, I attempt to describe both self-praise and complaints within such a multidimensional pragmatic space for evaluative speech acts.

3.3.3 Complaining online

In conclusion, it is appropriate to say a few words about complaints in online environments. A handful of pragmatic studies that turned their attention to complaining in CMC have demonstrated that application of existing taxonomies to this environment is even less straightforward than it was offline. Most importantly, the fundamental distinction between TPC and DC appears problematic in some online outputs. Lack of stable participation structure and addressivity results in hybrid contexts which, apart from the prototypical TPC and DC, include TPC with the complaineer potentially present as a witness, DC with third party(s) potentially present as witnesses, a blended complaint which switches between third party and complaineer as addressees, and even a self-addressed TPC with no audience. Vasquez (2011) found such hybridisation typical for online hotel reviews on the TripAdvisor website.

Besides, the relative anonymity of some online environments is considered a factor in the weightiness of a complaint as a face-threatening act. Both complainer and complaineer feel relatively secure when co-presence is limited to virtual reality. Therefore, online complaints are more direct and employ mitigation strategies to a lesser degree (as shown e.g. in the study of references on eBay by Meinel 2010).

To link back to the discussion of objectification strategies, one may say that a significant amount of discursive effort online is spent on depicting the seriousness of offence. In contrast to facework in offline contexts, which involves redress to avoid threatening complaineer's face, these preventive measures are oriented towards endorsing complainer's positive face.

3.4 Disclosure through self-praise

Self-praise, similarly to complaints, suffers from terminological confusion: various sources refer to it as boasting, bragging, self-enhancement, positive disclosure, self-elevation, bravado etc. It may be broadly defined as a speech act that aims to invoke a desired (positive) image of the speaker (Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk 1989: 87). The speech act is relatively under-researched: I have managed to locate only three linguistic studies addressing the topic of self-praise in mundane conversation, Speer (2012), Underwood (2011) and Wu (2011). Besides, self-praise typically occurs in certain self-promoting genres such as job interview, political debate or grant applications (e.g. Mboudjeke 2010). However, in everyday communication it is perceived as inappropriate in view of politeness guidelines of Western society, and has largely escaped the attention of linguists for being so rare.

In the absence of literature with an immediate focus on self-praise, compliment research constitutes a convenient starting point for analysis. Connections between the two speech acts have been recognised by researchers. Evoking the notion of a multidimensional pragmatic space, we may describe compliments and self-praise as belonging to the same evaluative space of flattering, praise, admiration, commendation, recommendation, accolade and words of appreciation (Archer 2010, Jucker and Taavitsainen 2000, 2008). Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk (1989: 79–80), for instance, identifies goal as a single illocutionary component that, all other components constant, causes a shift from complimenting to self-praise within the speech act space.

Moreover, in describing the pre-history (i.e. preceding context which predicts and enables a speech act) of a self-praising move, Edmondson notes an interesting parallel with complaining. The pre-history of a complaint may be expressed as “H(earer) did P, P is bad for S(peaker)” (Edmondson 1981: 278). Its reverse, an apology, has the structure “S did P, P is bad for H” (ibid.) The two communicative acts may co-occur as they are sequentially relevant to one another. In turn, self-praise (or boast, as Edmondson refers to it) implies the pre-history “S did P, P is good for H”. Thus, a boast arises from the same communicative context as an apology and a complaint: a past event plus an evaluation. The key difference is the reverse valence of the past event. This parallel suggests that the speech acts of complaining and self-praising may be more similar in their illocutionary structure than appears at a first glance.

In the following, I will shortly present the state of research on the speech act of complimenting. Then I will zoom in on the compliment responses – the move which is governed by the same conversational constraints as self-praise and therefore may provide special insight into the matter.

3.4.1 Compliments

A compliment involves uttering a positive statement about the hearer, and can thus be seen as an act of positive politeness endorsing the hearer's face. Such acts are alternatively labelled face-flattering (Kerbrat-Orecchioni 2005), face-enhancing (Sifianou 1995, 2001) or face-boosting (Bayraktaroğlu 1991). The classic analyses of compliments by Holmes, Manes and Wolfson (Holmes 1986, 1988, Manes and Wolfson 1981; Wolfson 1983 etc.) view them as solidarity-building speech acts. The definition by Holmes (1986: 485) has been adopted by most subsequent studies:

A compliment is a speech act which explicitly or implicitly attributes credit to someone other than the speaker, usually the person addressed, for some "good" (possession, characteristic, skill etc.) which is positively valued by the speaker and the hearer.

Similarly to complaints, compliments have been investigated from a pragmatic and a conversation analytic perspective. The first approach typically obtained data through an 'ethnographic method', i.e. researchers and their students taking notes of compliment exchanges they encountered in their everyday lives, together with demographic and socioeconomic characteristics of the participants (Cordella et al. 1995, Manes and Wolfson 1981; Wolfson 1983 etc.). Conversation analytic studies of compliments rely on audio or video recording of non-elicited natural conversation (Golato 2002, 2005). On the downside, transcription of such data is very time-consuming and yields comparatively few examples of specific speech phenomena (e.g. Golato's (2005) 62 compliment exchanges in 36 hours of recording).

In this methodological hassle, CMC researchers find themselves in a privileged position. Firstly, the data already exists in the written form and the onerous step of transcribing can be skipped (although of course preprocessing is required, such as downloading, cleaning up the metadata, anonymising, annotation etc.). Secondly, the language in CMC environments is certainly natural and non-elicited, since the researcher need not be present during the interaction or even be aware that it is happening, because the messages are preserved on servers and can be collected post factum. Although the findings of CMC studies should not be taken to apply indiscriminately to face-to-face communication, they are valuable in themselves and may provide a starting point for further investigation in other domains.

The first findings of compliment researchers have demonstrated that in American English, complimenting is a highly formulaic speech event (Manes 1983, Manes and Wolfson 1981, Wolfson 1983). Figure 1 presents the formulae found by

Manes and Wolfson (1981) in their study of 686 compliments gathered through observation of everyday interaction in 1977–78 in Virginia and Pennsylvania.

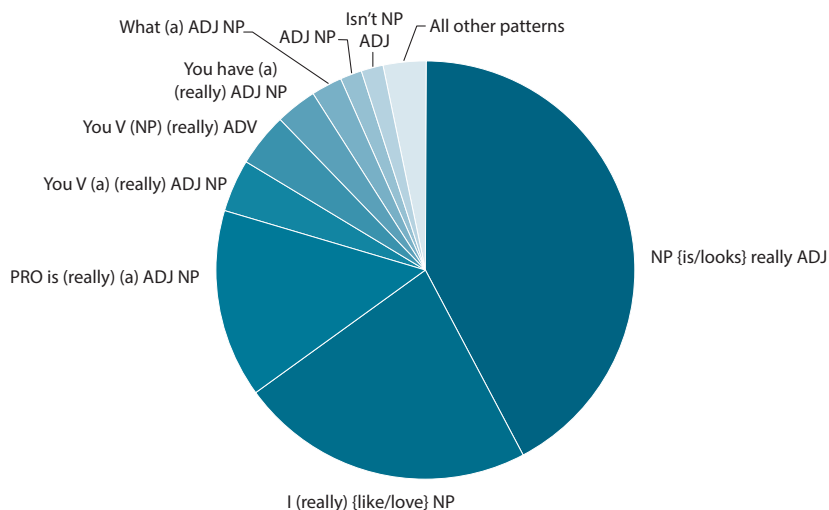


Figure 1. Compliment patterns, from Manes and Wolfson (1981)

These findings were confirmed by further studies of American English, and shown to hold with little deviation for South African English, New Zealand English and Australian English (see Herbert 1990 for AmE, Herbert 1989 for AmE and SAfrE, Holmes 1986, 1988, 1998 for NZE, Cordella et al. 1995 for AuE). Analysis of additional variables has shown that compliments are more likely to occur in interactions among females, and among status equals (Cordella et al. 1995, Holmes 1988, Knapp et al. 1984). In this regard, Holmes (1988) hypothesises that males and females foreground different functions of the speech act. While among males a compliment indicates status inequality and is perceived as patronizing (and therefore a face-threat), among females a compliment has a solidarity-building function and serves as a face-enhancing act. The hypothesis was supported by the fact that the type of assessable emerged as a significant variable in gender distribution of compliments: women tended to compliment each other on appearance, and men on skills and possessions.

This variation highlights another important finding in compliment research. For a compliment to express solidarity, it is crucial that both interlocutors believe the assessable to be significant and desirable. Shared values appear to vary across genders, but also, predictably, across cultures, discourse communities and communities of practice. Politeness theories agree that kinds of politeness have different weight in different cultures: some prefer positive, solidarity-building

politeness, and others – negative, deferential politeness (Brown and Levinson 1987, Lakoff 1975, Leech 1983). The correct choice of an assessable based on the shared community values forms an important element of the pragmatic competence of the speaker and determines the perlocutionary effect of the speech act.

It has been suggested that the speech act of complimenting may be implicit or explicit (Cordella et al. 1995), and may be performed directly or indirectly (Yuan 2001). Implicit compliments in Cordella et al.'s words require the addressee to infer the positive evaluation. The explicit compliments, in contrast, rely on grammatical and lexical features. Consequently, implicit compliments depend upon the shared understanding of what is positive or desirable much more than explicit compliments do. Implicit compliments do not conform to the syntactic and semantic formulas devised by Manes and Wolfson and were all but absent from their corpus.⁵ Implicit face-enhancing acts were investigated in more detail by Barbara Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk (1989) on the material of Polish. The study outlined eleven possible surface forms that, given correct situational, paralinguistic and suprasegmental markers, convey the complimenting illocution: complaining; quoting another source; supposition; expressing surprise; inquiry or statement including the assessable, but not identifying the owner of the assessable; asking opinion or advice of the addressee; contrasting the speaker with the addressee; contrasting the addressee with others; asking a question with a presupposition and entailment especially favourable for the addressee; contrasting with the past; reduction of verbal material. Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk invoked the notion of conventional indirectness in regard to compliments framed as some other speech act. The length of the inferential path from the surface form to the underlying intention may vary, placing utterances on a continuum of indirectness from conventional to idiosyncratic. Off-record performance of a compliment serves to mitigate the possible face-threat if the compliment is taken as patronising or too familiar. Besides, Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk speculated that less conventional compliments are likely to be perceived as sincere (in contrast to highly conventional ones such as "What a lovely party!" which may fall into the category of 'social lies'; cf. Coleman & Kay 1981).

The direct/indirect dichotomy was introduced by Yuan (2001) to describe different participation structures of complimenting. A direct compliment is one that positively evaluates some assessable of the addressee. An indirect compliment, in turn, positively evaluates some assessable of a person other than the addressee.

5. This limitation may be due to the fact that the data collectors were not always aware of the in-group values and did not recognise implicit compliments as examples of the speech act they were collecting.

The presence of the referent can be regarded as one of the features that distinguish praise (the referent is absent) from compliment (the referent is present).

Yuan drew on the understanding of compliment as a rapport-building act when she emphasised the interactional patterning of a third party compliment: the addressee typically aligns with the speaker and confirms or reinforces the compliment. The rapport-building perspective had been proposed in a series of classic studies (Holmes 1998, Wolfson and Manes 1980) and has earned wide acceptance since. However, recently this view has been criticised for being overly narrow. For instance, Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (2003) pointed out that it fails to account for playful or ironic compliments, which may serve as face-threatening rather than face-enhancing acts. Diachronic analysis of compliments also calls for expansion of the classic framework to account for language change (Jucker 2009, Taavitsainen and Jucker 2008).

These variations in directness and participation structure need to be taken into account when one approaches the construction of the pragmatic space of commendation. However, the issues especially pertinent to self-disclosure in microblogs include, first, the realisation that ‘compliment’, similarly to any other speech act category, is prone to changing scope and illocutionary structure with time; and second, that along with the solidarity-building function a compliment may work to manipulative ends: to enhance the speaker’s image, or to elicit offers.

3.4.2 Compliment responses

The element of the complimenting event which appears to be the most germane to this study is the discourse consequence of a compliment, or the compliment response. In self-praise the speaker’s need for truthfulness and self-disclosure conflicts with the same constraint as in compliment response: the Modesty Maxim (Leech 1983). This hypothesis was borne out in existing studies, which independently arrived at a set of self-praising strategies that overlaps considerably with taxonomies of compliment responses (Table 3.4 represents a summary of the compliment response patterns identified to date).

As one may see, all classifications invariably identify two overarching categories – freely labelled *Accept* and *Reject* – and one or more in-between categories which subsume moves such as questions, referent shifts, commenting, upgrading and downgrading the assessment, and reinterpreting the illocutionary intent (summarised in Table 3.5 with the respective authors’ examples). A theoretical basis for this distribution was offered by Pomerantz (1978) in her ground-breaking article on compliment responses. She observed that a compliment recipient is faced with two conflicting preferences. On the one hand, a preferred response in talk is agreement. On the other hand, there appears to exist

Table 3.4. Responses to compliments: summary

Pomerantz (1978)	Herbert (1989)	Herbert and Straight (1989)	Golato (2005)	Knapp et al. (1984)	Holmes (1986)	Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk (1989)
1. Acceptance 1.1 Acceptance (appreciation tokens) 1.2 Agreement	1. Agreements: 1.1 Appreciation token 1.2 Comment acceptance	1. Accepting 1.1 Appreciation token 1.2 Comment acceptance	1. Acceptances 1.1 Agreement/assessment of compliment 1.2 Agreements/confirmation	1. Acceptance 1.1 Ritualistic or acceptance 1.2 Pleased acceptance 1.3 Embarrassed	1. Accept 1.1 Appreciation or agreement token 1.2 Agreeing utterance 1.3 Downgrading or qualifying utterance 1.4 Return compliment	1. Non-acceptance , no acknowledgement, shift of topic 2. Non-acceptance , disagreement 3. Non-acceptance , disagreement, expansion 4. Downgrading 4.1 Non-acceptance, disagreement 4.2 Acceptance/ non-acceptance, agreement/ disagreement
2. Rejections 2.1 Disagreement 2.2 Qualification	1.3 Praise upgrade 1.4 Comment history 1.5 Reassignment 1.6 Return	2. Deflating, deflecting, rejecting 2.1 Reassignment 2.2 Return 2.3 Qualification (agreeing)	1.3 Assessment + agreement-pursuit 2. Rejections 2.1 Disagreements	2. Acceptance with amendment 2.1 Tempered acceptance 2.2 Return compliment 2.3 Magnified acceptance 2.4 Soliciting confirmation	2. Reject 2.1 Disagreeing utterance 2.2 Question accuracy 2.3 Challenge sincerity 2.4 Deflect/evade	5. Weak agreement, agreement, shift of topic 6. Acceptance , agreement, downgrading 6.1 Expansion (explanation) 6.2 Expansion (addition) 7. Acceptance , agreement (hesitation) 7.1 Confirmation 7.2 Expansion (contrast)
3. Solution 3.1 Scaled-down agreement 3.2 Diminish praise 3.3 Qualify praise 3.4 Shift credit away from self 3.5 Return compliment	2. Nonagreements: 2.1 Scale down 2.2 Disagreement 2.3 Qualification 2.4 Question 2.5 No acknowledgement 3. Request interpretation	2.4 Praise downgrade (disagreeing) 2.5 Disagreement 3. Questioning, ignoring, reinterpreting 3.1 Question (query or challenge) 3.2 Praise upgrade (often sarcastic) 3.3 Comment history 3.4 No acknowledgement 3.5 Referent interpretation	3. Solution 3.1 Question – neutral stance 3.2 Evaluation shift (downgrade) 3.3 Evaluation shift (qualification) 3.4 Referent shift (away from self) 3.5 Referent shift (return) 3.6 Comment history 3.7 Reinterpretation 3.8 Ignoring	3. Ignore 3.1 Not acknowledged 4. Deny 4.1 Denial	3. Deflect/evade 3.1 Shift credit 3.2 Informative comment 3.3 Ignore 3.4 Legitimate evasion 3.5 Request reassurance/ repetition	8. Acceptance , agreement, return 8.1 Expansion (explanation) 8.2 Downgrading return 9. Acceptance , agreement, intensification 10. Acceptance , upgrading (frequently joking) 11. Responses to presupposition and/or implications

* The three common response types are highlighted in bold.

Table 3.5. Compliment responses combining acceptance/appreciation and rejection/disagreement

Response type	Example	
I. Question sincerity	A: Nice ring. B: Are you being sarcastic?	(1)
II. Question – request reassurance/ repetition	A: Nice sweater. B: You like it? A: Yeah.	(2)
III. Praise downgrade	A: Your hair looks good today. B: Oh, it's just the same old thing.	(3)
IV. Qualification	A: Good shot. B: Not very solid, though.	(4)
V. Informative comment	A: I love that outfit. B: I got it for the trip to Arizona.	(5)
VI. Shift credit	A: Nice car. B: Thanks to Dad!	(6)
VII. Reinterpretation: – frequently as a request – but also other illocutions	A: I like your shirt. B: You want to borrow this one too? A: For your age, you really look excellent. B: It (i.e. my age) doesn't bother me at all when I look at you.	(7)
VIII. Joking/sarcasm	A: I like that shirt you're wearing. B: You're not the first and you're not the last.	(8)

a constraint against self-praise (which was later theorised by Leech 1983 in his weights-and-counterweights system of politeness maxims). It can be thematised by the speaker him- or herself, e.g. through a disclaimer such as “I don't want to brag, but...”, or the interlocutor, e.g. through critical assessment of the self-praiser. The two preferences which are “concurrently relevant but not concurrently satisfiable” (Pomerantz 1978: 81) explain the range of responses available to the speaker. She may accept the compliment, thus satisfying the Agreement Maxim; reject the compliment, thus satisfying the maxim against self-praise; and, finally, attempt to reconcile the two maxims in a third response type. Such in-between responses satisfy both Modesty and Agreement maxims by combining certain features of acceptances and appreciations with some features of rejections and agreements. Particular distribution of the features would vary in different languages because the relative strength of the maxims differs from one culture to another (cf. Holmes 1986: 496, 502, Golato 2005: 194–195, Schneider 1999).

Summarizing the findings so far, we may hypothesise that self-praising behaviours of Twitter users will fall into one of three groups identified by Pomerantz (1978):

1. Do not perform self-praise;
2. Perform self-praise bald-on record;
3. Perform self-praise with modification.

In the following section, I discuss characteristics of self-praise and the constraints and stimuli that govern its occurrence in interaction. After that, I turn to the existing empirical studies of self-praise to test whether they conform to the taxonomy below.

3.4.3 Self-praise

While politeness theories disagree on what constitutes polite behaviour and whether there are lexical items that are inherently (im)polite, most of them converge in considering self-praise a potentially problematic social activity. Brown and Levinson (1987: 67), for instance, list boasting as a face-threatening act which indicates that the speaker does not care about the hearer's feelings. Among his politeness maxims, Leech (1983) formulates a special Modesty Maxim that claims: "Minimise the expression of praise of self; maximise the expression of dispraise of self." In a study of compliment responses, Pomerantz (1978) styles out a constraint against self-praise which clashes with agreement as a preferred response and leads to rejection of compliments or shifting of credit. Speer (2012) notes that praising one's own qualities poses an epistemic problem, since self-praise is framed as an 'A-event' statement but is in fact a 'B-event' one.⁶

Psychological studies are equally suggestive of the undesirable nature of self-praise in interaction. They came to the conclusions that for European Americans any form of self-praise violates the rule prescribing modesty (Holtgraves 1990) and therefore leads an observer to make negative dispositional inferences about the bragger (Jones et al. 1961). Various self-assessment studies of perceptions of self-praise yielded similar results (Gilbert and Horenstein 1975, Godfrey et al. 1986, Holtgraves and Srull 1989; Jones and Pitman 1993).

Earlier sections have demonstrated the close connection between compliments and self-praise. Based on the definition of compliment by Holmes, I propose to define self-praise in the present study as a speech act which explicitly or implicitly attributes credit to the speaker for some 'good' (possession, accomplishment, skill etc.) which is positively valued by the speaker and the potential audience. As such, self-praise includes announcements of accomplishments as well as explicit positive evaluations of some aspect of the self.

6. Labov and Fanschel (1977) distinguished between A-events (known to A but not known to B) and B-events (known to B but not known to A)

In line with the findings of Miller et al. (1992), I differentiate between two types of self-praise: bragging and positive disclosure. Bragging is a more aggressive type of positive self-presentation that involves an element of competitiveness or 'one-upmanship' (DeCapua and Boxer 1999) and freely uses marked vocabulary choices such as comparative and superlative forms, or strong adjectives. As Miller et al. (1992) established, a bragger tends to exaggerate and elaborate, and employs dispositional statements ("I am wonderful"), comparison statements ("I am better than others") and low effort statements ("I didn't even try"). In contrast, positive self-disclosure incorporates high effort attributions ("I've worked hard"), 'others helping me' statements ("giving me a chance" and not wanting to "disappoint those who helped me") and honour/gratitude statements ("I am very thankful for this promotion"). That is to say, bragging is different from positive disclosure not only in the amount of self-praise but also in content and performance. Positive disclosure involves stating positive things about oneself which are tempered enough not to be perceived as bragging. The distinction is useful since it allows one to account for two distinct societal stances towards self-praise, one associated with healthy self-confidence and 'being positive', and the other with inflated ego and deceit. The notion of 'acts of positioning' introduced in the previous chapter is closely related to self-disclosure, positive as well as negative. As will become evident in the later discussion, these discursive activities in effect constitute a continuum of positioning acts which stretches from non-evaluative self-disclosure through self-praise to the more aggressive and marked forms such as ritualistic brags.

There is comparatively little research on self-praise done from a linguistic perspective. In the following I will recap the findings of Speer (2012), Underwood (2011) and Wu (2011). The last two studies focus on particular (sub)cultures rather than making claims about interaction in general: Underwood looks at the 'mini-culture' of Irish female elderly friends, and Wu's subjects are Chinese speakers of Mandarin, predominantly close intimates. The commonality highlights the importance of shared cognitive background for evaluative speech acts, and additionally legitimises the choice of a restricted 'mini-culture' of ballet pre-pros for the present study.

Underwood (2011) examined the audio recordings of dyadic conversations among three female friends aged 76, 84 and 85, who resided in a rural area of Ireland. Wu's (2011) dataset comprised 35 hours of audio and video taped conversation among family members, friends and acquaintances in Beijing and Hebei, China, conducted in Mandarin. Despite their vastly dissimilar subject groups, both Wu and Underwood arrived at the same major conclusion: self-praise frequently occurs in mundane communication. The conversation among elderly females, for instance, was found to revolve mostly around autobiographic narratives, which are a known vehicle of self-presentation (cf. Archakis and Tzanne 2005, Davies

and Harré 2001, Leary and Kowalsky 1990). Positive self-presentation in that case is performed by appealing to the shared “framework of the vernacular value systems” (Labov 1972b: 368). Such appeal does not only serve a self-aggrandizing function, but also legitimises the claim to the floor; in Underwood’s words,

For a narrative to communicate effectively or to have any ‘point’, the teller and the audience must agree on what they consider interesting, valuable, and so on. That is to say, it must reflect or conform to cultural ideals or standards. (2011:2218)

Speer (2012) makes no conclusions about the frequency of self-praise, which she examines through conversation analytic lens on the basis of several disjointed examples from TV shows, recollected conversations or interviews from a study on gender in discourse. Nevertheless, all three studies showed that the subjects recognise the face-threatening nature of self-praise and strive to remedy it. In Speer’s data, there was evidence that unmitigated self-praise may be censured by the audience through critical assessments, teasing and laughter. While Mandarin speakers mitigated ostensibly, by adding a modification or a retraction to the self-praising turn, the elderly women performed facework by negotiating narrative turns to preserve the quantitative balance in the exchange (see Table 3.6 for a summary). So, as Underwood points out, the women self-praise pro-actively and positively. Speer’s subjects resorted to yet another mitigating strategy, namely presenting the praise as a third-party compliment. Quoting someone else’s positive evaluation of the speaker’s persona allowed the speakers to overcome the epistemic problem outlined earlier.

Underwood’s study is especially relevant for the present investigation for its focus on pro-active performance, rather than the mitigation, of self-praise. Underwood views self-heroicisation as a manifestation of ongoing facework in interaction. Since self-heroicisation can only occur when the heroic content has been established, she additionally invokes a notion of ‘foundation work’ – the process whereby the group interactively negotiates and affirms their cultural values and norms (2011:2218). Incidentally, a crucial resource of foundation work is self-disclosure, positive (III. Competitive story topping, V. Generational role in Table 3.6) as well as neutral and negative.

Self-heroicisation involves identifying self with a member of an ‘idealised reference group’ (Porpora 1996) of the community, i.e. heroes. It is accomplished in two steps: first, foundation work is done to establish the common ground of heroism; and second, the speaker claims similarity to a hero. A narrative containing self-disclosure can accomplish both steps. It is primarily a solidarity-building move, but also a disclosure of one’s life history and age that construct the common ground of what it means to be a good elderly Irish woman. A claim to the role is then realised through competitive story topping and reference to one’s role as a

Table 3.6. Foundation work and self-praise (grey sections from Wu 2011, dark grey from Speer 2012, white from Underwood 2011, incl. examples)

Resource	Example	
I. Solidarity by inclusivity – <i>Orientation of narratives around shared memory</i> – <i>Topical alignment</i> – <i>In-group narratives</i> – <i>Gossip</i>	A: Well, I'd a very happy marriage, and ah was very happy through all through my whole weddin'. An' that's ten years past now just. [...] B: Well I was married – I'm sixty years married. Well Johnny's dead nearly two-. He's dead twenty six years... Mhm. (<i>narrative of widowhood</i>)	(9)
II. Solidarity by exclusivity – <i>Younger people (ill-mannered)</i> – <i>Chronological age peers</i>	A: They're no manners, no – No breedin'. No manner nor nothin'. Children aren't even reared now. B: In our day like – in my day when I was bein' reared you wouldn't even ask – you'd got a clout on the ear or clout on the a- backside.	(10)
III. Competitive story topping – <i>Achievements of relatives</i> – <i>Busy ethic</i>	A: Well Bridgeen [<i>daughter</i>] does the washing for me [...] An' Bridgeen has three children [...] Sara an' the two boys. An' em, Sara is twenty – Sara's engaged to get married. [...] Very clever. She's ah very clever and she's done her exams. Very high degrees in – maths. And this meteorologist – she calls it meteorologist. B: Aye. That's what I, I went in yesterday. An' there was a letter, for me, from [<i>niece</i>]. She's in Montevideo. But she bought herself a flat there. It's away in – nearly Spain. An' she does paintin'. So that's why she there away there, displayin' paintin's now. She's paintin's sold.	(11)
IV. Painful self-disclosure – <i>Bereavement and caring for loved ones through illness</i> – <i>Not bearing/raising children</i>	I looked after my moma. All the way through. In fact I would've been married to a draftsman livin' in Cambridge. But I gave him up to look after my mother.	(12)
– <i>Treating the matter ostensibly as a complainable</i>	A: Now when he [<i>7th grader son</i>] attends hh I mean goes there to attend classes he doesn't let me accompany him. B: He's pretty independent then. That's pretty good then.	(13)
V. Generational role – <i>Children's achievements</i> – <i>Raising a large family</i>	All [<i>my children</i>] done well for themself- In fact – there's two o' the boys retired partly millionaires.	(14)

VI. Disclosure of chronological age	A: I'll be eighty six on the twenty second of January. B: My God, you're older than me! I was eighty four last week.	(15)
VII. Self-deprecation	But ah think maybe ah was well spoiled so ah was a bad – a bad wee rip. My mother used to say ah was a self- a selfish... rascal.	(16)
VIII. Self-praise + modification		
– <i>follow-up retraction</i>	I sing that song especially well. + Not that I sing that song well, I mean I can sing that song better than other songs.	(17) (18)
– <i>ironic twist, humour</i>	I just always have a book in my hands. + Though I don't read much hhahaha And I also published many magazines. + But not anymore.	(19) (20)
– <i>lack of current relevance</i> – <i>qualification by highlighting problems</i>	[My daughter works in X] it seems to be may be the world's top one or top two public relations firm. + But it's really exhausting. The main thing is that it's too exhausting.	(21)
IX. Disclaiming an extreme situation	[Praising her mother as a hobby calligrapher] Of course you cannot become, say, like a calligrapher, right? But she can take part in an exhibition.	
X. Reporting a third-party compliment	She came up to me, gave me a hug and said, 'you look reallhy lovely'	(22)

parent and grandparent. The last resource, self-deprecation, may be construed as a mitigating move. However, it may also serve to elicit praise from the interlocutor and as such contributes to the repertoire of self-heroicisation.

Table 3.6 collates both steps of foundation work with an aspect of self-praise performance, linguistic mitigation strategies. This second point received more attention from Wu (2011), who investigated self-praising behaviour in a culture which has traditionally been known for the high value it places on modesty – among the Chinese. According to his findings, the speakers frequently employed a bipartite turn format (self-praise + modification) to adhere to the modesty constraint. Importantly, the modification was delivered directly after the praise, rather than being produced as repair. This detail demonstrates that the speaker anticipates the interactionally problematic nature of his/her speech act and pre-plans the retraction as a means to restore status inequality.

Another way to maintain humility while producing a positive self-statement was to disclaim an extreme case scenario: after invoking an extreme behaviour from the negative or positive end of the scale, speakers presented their own accomplishment as second-best (or second-worst). This strategy was also helpful in eliciting an aligning response from a resisting co-participant.

Finally, an intersection between Wu's and Underwood's findings is visible in category IV. Wu's subjects resorted to indirect self-praise by means of treating the accomplishment ostensibly as a complainable. Phrasing a turn as a complaint provides a means to deliver self-praise off-record, "for what is being conveyed as complainable can in fact be understood as something positive when appreciated in a different light" (Wu 2011:3170): e.g. a young child's desire to go to school unaccompanied seen as rejecting his/her mother vs. independence and courage. Third party complaint that is open to interpretation as a more speaker-enhancing speech act appears in Underwood's account of foundation work, and also in other accounts of rapport-building self-disclosure (Coupland et al. 1988). This strategy crucially relies on the preceding foundation work and shared community values.

Having talked repeatedly of the significance of cultural background, one cannot omit the discussion of cultural differences. As we saw above, members of a 'mini-culture' of Irish elderly female friends show little restraint in self-heroicisation. In terms of national cultures, Mandarin speakers exhibit great caution in introducing face-flattering acts and employ various means to modify their illocutionary force. Further away on the cultural spectrum lies the African-American discourse, in which bragging and boasting is not only acceptable, but is a means to gain prestige among peers by demonstrating one's verbal prowess. The practice of 'tall talk' has been documented by Abrahams (1970), Garner (1985), Kochman (1972) among inner city US African-American population. Indeed, white males also engage in

similar practices to establish their status and masculinity (DeCapua and Boxer 1999, Kuiper 1994). Such ritualistic boasting is performed within the game frame, in which interactional constraints on saving face are suspended as long as the rules of the game are adhered to (Labov 1972b). The underlying similarities among these speech events suggest the existence of a positioning continuum which ranges from self-disclosure to self-praise and bragging.

An effect of the internet as the medium, which is often invoked in the studies of online dating services, is the greater opportunity for enhancement of one's image. This aspect is best understood with a reference to mechanisms of self-presentation described by Goffman (1959). Writing about face-to-face interaction, Goffman introduced a distinction between information 'given' and 'given off'. The former concept refers to information about self that is intended and managed in some way to construct a persona in a communicative instance. The latter refers to the information which "leaks through", i.e. is communicated involuntarily.

The asynchronous (or quasi-synchronous) nature of CMC affords users greater control over what is 'given off'. Time lag, as well as the prevalence of verbal over non-verbal cues, allows for inconspicuous self-censorship (Walther 1996). Selective presentation and the construction of identity online have been documented, among other sites, in chats (Cornwell and Lundgren 2001), dating websites (Ellison et al. 2006), personal web pages (Dominick 1999), Facebook (Bolander and Locher 2010) and Couchsurfing (Dayter and Rüdiger 2014). The research confirms that individuals have greater opportunities for self-misrepresentation and self-enhancement online, although it is unclear whether they actually make use of these opportunities more than in face-to-face communication or if they may be outweighed by the communicative obstacles associated with online environments, such as lack of media competence, technological expertise, or knowledge of the emergent interactional norms.⁷

3.5 Conclusion

As this chapter has shown, a number of speech acts expressing evaluation contain information about the speaker's life events or personality, and thus are discursive realisations of self-disclosure. Most importantly, these include third party complaints, in which the speaker describes a situation, an object or a person in his/her life that can conceivably be seen as warranting a negative evaluation;

7. I am grateful to the anonymous reviewer for this suggestion.

and self-praise, in which the speaker describes his/her own action, possession or property. Besides, such speech acts as direct complaints, compliments and praise may also disclose previously unknown information about the speaker and serve self-presentation online. Although explicit evaluation may be withheld in case of off-record performance for reasons of facework, self-disclosure occurs in off- as well as on-record performance.

Despite the great variance in the topics, the performance options and the discourse consequences of complaints and (self-)praise, these speech events intersect in many points. The intersections are ascribed to the fact that both complaints and praise belong to the pragmatic space of evaluation: the former to the negative evaluative space, and the latter to the space of approbation. Direct and third party complaints, compliments and self-praise share a basic structure – an evaluative proposition about something or someone. This shared structure enables language users to coach one speech act in terms of another (e.g. self-praise in terms of third party complaint), or to reinterpret the illocution (e.g. take a compliment as an insult, which also belongs to the evaluative pragmatic space).

Jucker and Taavitsainen (2000, 2008) proposed to conceptualise a collection of related speech events as a multidimensional pragmatic space. This framework allows researcher to grasp many axes along which differences between related speech acts may lie. The original model included eight scales: ritual vs. creative, typified vs. ad-hoc, truth-conditional vs. performative, conventional vs. particular, ludic vs. aggressive, intentional vs. unintentional, irony vs. sincerity, reaction in kind vs. denial, violence, silence (Jucker and Taavitsainen 2000: 74). Each dimension does not need to be relevant, and necessarily mentioned, in the description of a particular speech act. Some dimensions may be seen as default, or unmarked (e.g. negative evaluation of complainable in a complaint), while others help to account for peripheral members of the field.

An early attempt at a multidimensional description of positive-evaluative acts was made by Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk (1989), who coached her framework in terms of ‘illocutionary components of a speech event’. The assessable is one component, which may vary in whether it is related to the addressee in some way. The evaluation may occur verbally or non-verbally, and in speech or in writing. The participation structure also plays a role in the organisation of speech event: appreciation may be expressed directly to the person whose property is being evaluated; expressed to a third person; or expressed in public. Lastly, goals – informative or affective – play a crucial role in distinguishing among types of positive evaluation. Affective goals vary from supportive (which may be solidarity-building or instrumental) to self-enhancing and patronising.

Collating Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk’s suggestions with the findings of this chapter and the original pragmatic space by Jucker&Taavitsainen, I propose a

number of dimensions for characterising evaluative speech acts (Figure 2). Given their relatedness, it is not surprising that a model suggested for commendation would satisfactorily describe complaints, too. For instance, the typified vs. ad hoc scale can be used to describe the difference between formulaic and idiosyncratic forms in complimenting as well as complaining. Monologual evaluative speech acts are performed by one primary speaker within one turn – these are, for instance, complaint stories. On the other end of this scale lie evaluations that are co-constructed in a multiturn sequence by several interlocutors, as for example shared stories in Georgakopoulou's (2007) account of identity-building 'small stories'.

On the level of semantics, the evaluation offered may have positive or negative valence (praise vs. complaint). The truth-conditional vs. performative scale grasps the distinction between sincere compliments and 'social lies', but also between explicit and surface-form complaints. In line with Jucker and Taavitsainen's (2000:75) explanation of this scale, truth-conditional complaints would be testable in a law-court, while performative ones do not predicate a testable description of the events.

The speaker attitude, i.e. whether an evaluative act is performed for entertainment purposes (phatic, or to show off one's verbal skills) or in bona fide mode, is described by the ludic-grave scale. The underlying aim of the evaluative speech act – enhancing or threatening the speaker's face – provides the tools to distinguish between different types of evaluation. Clearly, it is important to define the direction of the evaluation: the listener as well as the speaker him/herself may

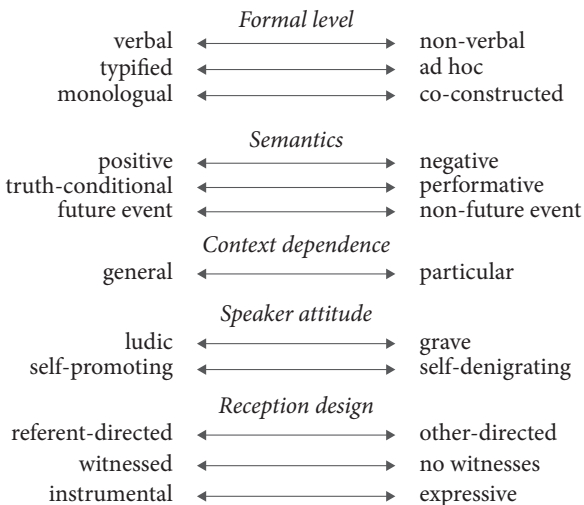


Figure 2. The pragmatic space of evaluation

be the target of an insult, a complaint or praise. As the literature on complaints shows, the surface form of a speech act may be affected by the further dimension of participation structure, namely the presence of absence of witnesses. Lastly, the future-non-future scale captures the distinction between a report, a projection and the temporal stages in-between, e.g. the live commentary on the currently unfolding events. The instrumental (normative) vs. expressive opposition is relevant for all speech acts within the space, too: as I noted earlier, some compliments may aim to encourage certain behaviour, and stereotypical complaints are inherently normative.

Finally, the context dependence of speech acts is highly relevant to the future discussion. General evaluation is accessible and understandable to all members of a speech community in a uniform way, e.g. an utterance will be unambiguously recognised by all as an insult or a complaint. In contrast, particular evaluation does not have this conventionalised effect. As further chapters will show, utterances that function as self-praise in ballet community may often appear as complaints to listeners unfamiliar with the ins and outs of a ballet student's life.

The proposed model for pragmatic space of evaluation is meant to serve for analysis of self-disclosive speech in future chapters, since its multidimensional and dynamic nature provides more adequate description of speech acts than static taxonomies of early pragmatic research.

As Culpeper and Archer (2008: 51) note, “(direct and indirect) speech acts can only function as speech acts when they are contextualised in some way.” An utterance without any context has no force at all. A prototype approach to speech acts allows the analyst to describe how the default, minimal-context understanding of an utterance may migrate to the periphery of the pragmatic space as values of certain scales are explicated through talk.

Twitter as a communicative environment

4.1 The controversial status of Twitter

Twitter is a microblogging service that offers the functionality of posting short 140-character updates on a public profile, or 'timeline'. From a minimalistic service closely related to text messaging, Twitter has grown to a popular social network that is predominantly updated from mobile devices and offers broad interactive functionality. A user may engage in conversations by '@-replying' to another tweet, i.e. prefacing the reply with an @ sign and the other user's Twitter name. Same convention can be used for '@-mentioning' another user, which differs from @-replying in that the tweets will not be strung together in a conversation. One may 'retweet' a post by using a special Twitter button or manually copy-pasting the original tweet and adding a conventional prefix (RT 'retweet', MT 'modified tweet'). The retweet will appear on the retweeter's timeline and will be visible to his/her followers. Finally, one may 'favourite' a tweet, an action that demonstrates agreement and support similarly to a retweet, but is only visible to the original author and in the detailed properties of the tweet.

Unlike many other social networks, the follower structure of Twitter is non-reciprocal. Unless the account is protected, one does not need to wait for the approval of the account owner to follow it. Therefore, following on Twitter is often asymmetrical, with massive differences in the amount of friends and followers in the same account (for example, *Annabelle* in my study is followed by 1,076 Twitter users but follows only 191 accounts). Unidirectional following results in a loose conversational infrastructure where it can seldom be predicted who the exact recipients of each particular message are. As a consequence, the expectation of reciprocity is much lower than in a face-to-face conversation, in email or on Facebook (Jucker and Dürscheid 2012, Zappavigna 2011). These factors converge to create a unique environment where normally face-threatening situations – such as publicly offering a controversial opinion or a summons which is repeatedly left unanswered – are associated with minimal face-threat. In fact, for some users Twitter seems to constitute a public arrangement which presents an outlet for socially licensed public self-talk.

The new member in the family of Web 2.0 instruments, Twitter has become a source of much controversy. It is not uncommon to hear concerned voices from public figures about Twitter's alleged shallowness, or its detrimental effect on our intellectual abilities. Entrepreneur and writer Keen (2007) warned against the ways in which today's Web threatens moral values and contemporary economy, adding Twitter to his list of guilty factors. Carr (2010) goes as far as blaming Twitter, along with other 'accelerating' Web applications and information sources, for rewiring of our neural pathways and depriving us of the ability to concentrate for longer periods of time. The productivity guru Tim Ferriss derisively calls microblogs "pointless email on steroids". Criticism of Twitter has come also from a prominent political and scholarly figure Noam Chomsky (an interview with Ralon and Eljatib 2010). One possible reason for the negative attitude towards Twitter on so many fronts may be the highly experiential nature of microblogs. As Thompson put it, "Scrolling through random Twitter messages can't explain the appeal. You have to do it – and, more important, do it with friends" (Thompson 2007). The critical voices also line up with the discourse bemoaning the detrimental effect of the new media on general literacy (Drouin and Davis 2009, Jonge and Kemp 2010, Kemp 2010, Powell and Dixon 2011).

When approaching the study of a new phenomenon in CMC, it is easy to adopt a deterministic kind of thinking that has been common in the 'first wave' of linguistic CMC analysis (Androutsopoulos 2006). First of all, such analysis tends to treat the language of various online media, or even the whole of CMC, as homogenous (e.g. 'netspeak', Crystal (2006) and the wholesale treatment of Twitter in Crystal (2011), Myers (2010)). Consequently, the construal of linguistic features that readily offers itself to the researcher is that any deviant or marked phenomena are due to the affordances of the medium, while the remaining phenomena are ignored or treated as unimportant. Thus, analyses of the 'language of email', 'language of texting' or 'language of blogs' are produced that conceptualise these as discreet and clearly delineated genres, which share large bundles of weighty attributes within each category and few low-weight attributes across categories. In fact, however, these types of CMC may have much more in common with one another (Schmitz 2002) or with offline language (Puschmann 2010). A step towards an unbiased analysis may be to choose a comparable sample of linguistic data not on the basis of authorship, but on the basis of function. Comparing microblogs and blogs (or any other form of discourse) produced by the same author inevitably puts the focus on the linguistic differences that are caused by the medium and therefore skews the analysis towards the deterministic perspective. On the contrary, samples balanced for function promote a more natural comparison that, at least partly, takes into account "the interplay of technological, social, and contextual factors in the shaping of computer-mediated language practices" (Androutsopoulos

2006:421). More selective approach to sampling has been gaining momentum in the linguistic study of Twitter (Gillen and Merchant 2013, Myers 2013, Page 2012, Page 2014).

4.2 Content and user motivation: Existing taxonomies

Until recently, Twitter has seldom been a focus of investigation in humanities. Much early scholarship on microblogs falls into the areas of sociology, information science, media studies and other non-linguistic disciplines.

Pioneer research on microblogs dealt largely with functional classifications of updates and took the form of data-driven studies. Table 4.1, which is a summary of the taxonomies proposed in five of these studies, outlines the common ground among them. All authors recognise the divide between the conversational tweets and the initial turn tweets reporting on the user's life:

Table 4.1. Functional classifications of Twitter updates

Naaman et al. (2009)	Dann (2010)	Westman and Freund (2010)	Java et al. (2007)	Zhao and Rosson (2009)
Questions to followers	Conversational	Directed dialogue Information seeking	Conversations	Real-time information
Information-sharing	Pass-along News	Real-time sharing Business broadcasting	Sharing info Reporting news	Real-time information People-based RSS feed
Self-promotion				
Me now Anecdote (me) Opinion/ complaint	Status	Personal updates	Daily chatter	Frequent brief updates
Presence maintenance Statements and random thoughts Anecdote (other)	Phatic			
	Spam			

It is worth noting that the studies from the field of Information Science, Java et al. (2007) and Westman and Freund (2010), attempted to identify user intentions exclusively on the basis of quantitative analysis. Westman et al., for instance,

adopted a definition of genre that sees genre taxonomy primarily as a type of knowledge repository where each unit is described by a small number of clear-cut and mutually exclusive attributes (after Yoshioka et al. 2001). The approach unambiguously operationalises the concept of genre in terms of several quantifiable values or features. As computer scientists, Java et al. (2007) and Westman and Freund (2010) were not interested in working out valid descriptive categories for the observed quantitative trends, and therefore their systematic is lacking in many respects. Similar critique can be levelled at Krishnamurthy et al. (2008) who used quantitative methods to come up with a categorisation of Twitter users according to the updating and following patterns. The lack of reciprocity that characterises microblogs with few followers makes judgement about speaker's intentions doubly difficult, since there is no evidence from an ongoing negotiation of meaning.

To get an impression of the analytical stance in these studies, Java et al.'s findings merit a closer look. *Daily chatter*, the largest category of tweets, is vaguely defined as "talk about daily routine or what people are currently doing" (Java et al. 2007:62). 21% of all updates in the study contained the conventional means of addressing another Twitter user, @ sign plus username, and therefore were identified as comments or replies to other's posts. The third group, *sharing information*, was identified on the basis of URL presence within the update. Finally, *reporting news* includes such diverse functions as users reporting latest news or comments about current events, automatic messages by weather channels or news websites, or RSS feeds to Twitter. Java et al. (2007) additionally identify three main categories of users on the basis of link structure: *information sources*, *friends* and *information seekers*. Although this labelling is arbitrary and carries no sociolinguistic significance, the findings may prove valuable for the future discussion of genre subgroups of Twitter. Quantitative analysis of 76,177 users took into account the links between their profiles and updates as well as daily trends in posting and demonstrated that the first group, *information sources*, tended to have a great number of followers, but did not necessarily update very frequently. On the contrary, updates from information sources may have appeared very seldom, but they maintained their following due to the valuable nature of their updates. *Information seeker* was then defined as someone who posted very seldom but followed a lot of other users. *Friends* served as a sort of miscellaneous category to account for other relationship patterns on Twitter.

Naaman et al. and Zhao and Rosson tried to transgress the limitations of the quantitative approach by using mixed (Naaman et al. 2009) and purely ethnographic methods (Zhao and Rosson 2009). These two studies served as an important bridge to social and linguistic investigations of Twitter from earlier computer science approaches and, quite unsurprisingly, are ones of the most frequently quoted in the literature. Naaman et al.'s subdivision of users into 'informers' and

'meformers' on the basis of cluster analysis has since gained great currency in the studies of CMC and has been transplanted into the discussion of blogs. 'Informers', according to Naaman et al. (2009), post messages that are mostly informational in nature and amount to 20% of examined Twitter accounts. 'Meformers', in contrast, typically post messages about the self and their thoughts and constitute an overwhelming majority of Twitter users at 80%. This result is confirmed by Crystal (2011), who found that the largest category in his sample was "observations or opinions, including opinions of others as represented by aphorisms and quotations" (49). Cluster analysis of a 100 million word Twitter corpus highlighted the third party complaining with the "I have to" collocation as a prominent illocution within the category (Zappavigna 2012: 70). A possible conclusion drawn from the preponderance of 'meforming' is that as participation on Twitter is very similar to that on Wikipedia, Twitter's function is more a publishing service or a monological medium for self-expression rather than a communication medium (Crystal 2011: 53).

Zhao et al. went beyond categorising tweets and established that microblogs have a positive impact on informal communication at work through providing an easy and unobtrusive way to maintain weak ties within a workplace community – the result that has been confirmed by other Twitter studies (Ehrlich and Shami 2010, Skeels and Grudin 2009). One of the factors contributing to this effect had to do with tweeting being less demanding than blogging because of low cost of production and sharing (Zhao and Rosson 2009: 246).

Comparing Zhao et al.'s ethnographic study with the rest, it becomes apparent that the classification based on microbloggers' own perception of their activity is the least diversified. The discrepancy with purely data-driven approaches such as the one by Naaman et al. (2009) suggests that investigation of the user perspective might reveal a picture of microblogging very different from the existing one. In case of the functional facet of tweeting, one possible explanation is that despite the diversity of the surface form, in terms of underlying motivation tweeting may be construed in terms of a single unifying activity – possibly, as Puschmann (2011) suggested for blogging, identity construction. In this context, sharing a URL of a new YouTube video may serve to create an image of self as a hip-hop fan who follows latest trends, while relating an anecdote about another presents the writer as someone who has a sense of humour (cf. Bolander and Locher 2010 for Facebook).

The purposes that people perceive as the thrust behind their use of Twitter are related to another issue, namely self-presentation and performativity in social media. The role of audience is hard to overestimate in the analysis of communication on SNS (boyd 2006b). In context of Twitter, Marwick and boyd (2011) questioned the ways microbloggers conceptualise their audiences and navigate among them. The disjointed nature of following on Twitter leads to the situation

when authors know only very few of the people who are going to read their tweets. To cope with this indeterminacy, users imagine their audiences. As Marwick and boyd (2011) found out, many average users described their audience as “the overlap between friends and followers”. Others insisted that they have no audience apart from themselves. The third solution was to address an ideal person, an imaginary interested party. On the contrary, popular users with large following had a profound understanding of their audiences and had no difficulties with listing particular topics they needed to cover in order to cater for the interests of their readers. Often, these users would choose to present what is well received over a duller or more controversial issue (Marwick and boyd 2011: 122). Marwick and boyd conclude that the audience in Twitter is a merge of a traditional writer’s audience (an idealised interested reader) and a broadcast audience (separate groups collapsed into a homogenous mass). This ‘networked audience’ may include complete strangers, but nevertheless it has a presumption of personal authenticity and connection (ibid.:129). Managing this audience involves monitoring and incorporating feedback, choosing which information to hide and which to make public, and targeting the whole following or specific individuals. Thus, successful relational work on Twitter is evidence of a high degree of CMC competence and experience with social media.

All in all, various content classifications are by far the most numerous group in Twitter-related literature. Although there are significant overlaps among them, it is unlikely that a single definitive taxonomy exists. Because user motivations function on many levels, and because users continue to creatively reinvent the medium as long as it is current, the inventing of new categories can go on to infinity. Apart from phatic communication and conversation, Twitter has been cited for use as a backchannel during offline events (Grosbeck and Holotescu 2009, McNely 2009, Sarita 2006), in science (Myers 2013, Puschmann 2014, Reich 2011, Weller and Puschmann 2011) and in education (Croxall 2010, Dunlap and Lowenthal 2009, Junco et al. 2011, Parry 2008). A recent review article, Dann (2010), summarises 16 existing Twitter taxonomies and then divides them into further 23 subgroups with status updates alone having eight different flavours. In any case, although classificatory studies may be a convenient springboard for the further description of a new phenomenon, their contribution to the understanding of the linguistic and social processes is limited. The one conclusion that can be drawn from the cohort of taxonomies is that Twitter is not uniform, but a multifunctional tool capable of infinite evolution at the hands of users. Indeed, it is unlikely that any sweeping statements can be made about Twitter communication in its entirety. Twitter is very heterogeneous and, as Greg Myers aptly remarked, generalising about ‘Twitter speech’ is akin to throwing together newspaper ads, letters and scientific articles under the heading of “inkosphere” (Myers 2013).

4.3 The language of microblogs

The introduction to this chapter highlighted some of the criticism levelled at Twitter for its role in promoting primitive and illiterate communication. The studies to date, however, did not corroborate this assumption: the expected effects of linguistic economy do not appear to have profound impact on spelling, punctuation or syntactic complexity.

To take into account numerous media and social factors that may influence the linguistic expression in CMC, contemporary studies often resort to the comprehensive faceted classification scheme proposed by Herring (2007). The central characteristics of Twitter in accordance with the scheme were outlined by Crystal (2011:38-39):

- Synchronicity: asynchronous, but time-source is in real time (“4 days ago”)
- Granularity: message-based (tweets)
- Persistence: currently 3,200 tweets using Twitter, but with an archive of all tweets planned
- Length: 140 characters
- Channels: text, with an accompanying picture (author, logo, avatar)
- Identity: named, though often opaque (using nicknames, avatars)
- Audience: publicly accessible with optional restrictions
- Adaptation: forwarding (retweets), address shortening
- Format: new tweets at the top of the screen; messages embedded in a matrix of support information.

Some of these characteristics, however, are less than straightforward. As mentioned above, target audience needs to be understood as the group of people the user has in mind when composing his/her message, although the potential audience may be far greater than that. While the synchronicity/asynchronicity distinction was claimed to be the key dimension “that ha[s] been observed to condition computer-mediated discourse” (Herring 2007: 13), several studies have since made the distinction between true synchronicity, which entails full simultaneity and co-presence (i.e. users being fully tuned-in during communication and reading the message immediately upon reception), and quasi-synchronicity (Beißwenger 2008; Dürscheid 2005, Garcia et al. 2009, Jucker and Dürscheid 2012). The second term appears to be more suitable for Twitter because although the platform does provide the affordances for synchronous communication, it often functions similarly to email – the users log in periodically throughout the day and catch up on reading their timelines.

A related issue concerns the channel of communication. The difference between spoken and written language has been shown to extend beyond the purely

formal level and include the dimensions of culture and communicative purpose (Koch and Österreicher 1985, Ong 2002, Tannen 1980), and carry special meaning in CMC (Androutsopoulos 2011, Baron 2008, Jucker and Dürscheid 2012). The crux of the matter is that a text can physically occur in the written form, but in its context and register follow the more informal and spontaneous oral modality. Consequently, a speech may resemble a written text in its style and composition. The four-way distinction was captured by Koch and Österreicher (1985) in juxtaposing graphic vs. phonic codes (physical level) and communicative distance vs. communicative immediacy. Although phonic code is associated with communicative immediacy and graphic code with communicative distance, Twitter fails to conform to this prototype. Graphic in their representation, tweets are often coached in informal language and place closer to the ‘communicative immediacy’ end of the continuum. In its hybridity, Twitter resembles other CMC modes such as instant messaging and YouTube comments.

These complications need to be taken into account when describing Twitter on the basis of Herring’s classification scheme. They may prove to be helpful in explaining some of the linguistic characteristics of Twitter which seem to merge the more standard features with the CMC markers. Despite the character constraint which is typically cited by Twitter critics as the weightiest limitation, tweets seldom reach the maximum allotted number of characters. An average tweet ranges between 65.21 characters, 13.79 words (Denby 2010) and 100.9 characters, 14.7 words (Crystal 2011). Both authors agree that there are fewer linguistic shortenings than can be expected, and that on the whole Twitter exhibits more standard language than chats or text messages. Denby (2010) found that only 62.9% possible contractions have occurred, and in his sample of 430 messages only 5.81% included initialisms, word truncations, letter omissions or abbreviations. Crystal’s data appears to be slightly more informal and contains 75% possible contractions, while 17% of examined tweets contain abbreviations and initialisms. In both studies “lol” was by far the most common instance of a linguistic shortening. This can be a consequence of the fact that “lol” is hardly ever realised in its etymologically complex status “laughing out loud”, but has taken on an iconic quality through active usage in various forms of CMC. Other iconic devices such as emoticons and logograms were equally widespread in Twitter data at 11% (Crystal 2011) and 17.34% (Denby 2010). Crystal remarks that non-standard spelling of shortenings is quite common in Twitter, which makes it similar to other synchronous forms of CMC; he quotes such forms as n “and”, u/ur “you/your”, dat “that”, das “that is”, ppl “people”, favs “favourites”, wen “when”, wat “what”, ova “over”, dnt “don’t”, knw “know”, tho “though”, gf “girlfriend”, diff “difference” and the dropped final -g. Among the non-standard linguistic features that are specific to Twitter Zappavigna (2012:133) cites self-parodying slang with the prefix “tw” (“tweeps”,

“tweetups”, “Twittersphere”) which is often seen in the naming practices and functions as a self-conscious, playful solidarity marker. She devises a classification of non-standard lexical items in her Twitter corpus consisting of eleven positions: phonetic writing (“tho”), lolspeak phonetic writing (“playz”), vowel removal (“wrk”), prefixal accretion (“twitastic”), initialisms (“ttyl”), leetspeak (“n00b”), number homophones (“gr8t”), letter homophones (“he likes u”), logograms (“dam yo u faker”), emoticons, and non-standard spelling (“gissa”). Zappavigna notes that non-standard vocabulary is used playfully and its use is inconsistent: a full form may co-occur with a logogram of the same word in the same tweet. In contrast to Zappavigna’s data, the preference for standard spelling appears to be stronger in ballet Twitters since not all of the non-standard categories are represented in my data (see Table 4.2). This could, of course, be due to the much smaller size of BaTwit. Unfortunately, Zappavigna does not quantify the features found in her material, so it is impossible to offer a more detailed frequency comparison.

Table 4.2. Non-standard features in BaTwit corpus

Non-standard features	BaTwit examples
Phonetic writing	@follower1 @follower2 please. Barbie can’t even passe. Nice arches tho
Lolspeak phonetic writing	It’s about the naptimez [link to a blog post] – <i>the only instance in the corpus</i>
Vowel removal	Some woman lit just turned up hoping she cd have her mri scan bkd for nxt wk done today as she was here. Er, no. #thestupidhurtsmybrain
Prefixial accretion	@follower congrats! you seem to be one of the best time managers in twitterworld! :)
Initialisms	@follower so sorry meant Michael’s lol brain wasn’t thinking
Leetspeak-like features	--
Numbers homophones	Once again, my progress bedwards thoroughly stalled at the On Not In point. It is just so hard! 2 chilly to sleep on top of duvet tho, so...
Letters homophones	@follower so jealous of all the RT pics of book singing in Ur homeland, when would u come 2 UK? The whole world wants a piece of u!
Logograms	@follower it feels as though ppl shd be writing epic poems abt yr heroic struggle *nods* a ALMOST abed now: just On Not In...
Emoticons	@follower glad to hear you’re feeling a little brighter now, you next class will be a reflection of your positive thinking, I’m sure :) x
Non-standard spelling	Twitter. Entertains me while I nurse. For serial, how did ladies do this nighttime feeding stuff before the Internet?

Contrary to the expectations, punctuation in tweets appears fairly standard. Although the structural properties of posts tend to make transmission-final punctuation (especially periods) redundant, it still occurs in 70% of possible slots in Denby's sample. Sentence-final punctuation was even closer to standard, 81.1% of possible slots for Denby; Crystal did not make a distinction between sentence-final and transmission-final punctuation and placed their cumulative occurrence at 66.6% of all tweets. In some cases, emoticons and initialisms fulfilled the role of sentence-final markings in tweets, and parts of each sample lacked conventional marks.

The discussion so far has already made multiple references to the work on Twitter by Zappavigna (2012). Michele Zappavigna has blazed a trail in the linguistic investigation of microblogging with her book-length study of Twitter from the perspective of Systemic Functional Linguistics using corpus methodology. Her large, automatically collected corpus of 100 million tweets enabled the first comprehensive description of Twitter language based on the findings about keywords and word frequencies, collocations, and n-grams. These findings, cited throughout this chapter, are supplemented by several case studies that focus on evaluative language, internet memes, internet humour and online political discourse.

One of the linguistic features that Zappavigna addressed in her book was the usage of hashtags on Twitter. With respect to hashtags, Crystal (2011) pointed out that every tweet consists of two parts: a message element and an optional identifier (URI, hashtag etc.), which can occupy up to 20% of tweet volume. It is these optional identifiers that constitute unique content phenomena in Twitter. One of the Twitter-specific microlinguistic features mentioned by Crystal and other scholars (Denby 2010, Yus 2011, Zappavigna 2012) concerns the use of hashtags. Tags have arrived to Twitter from an early form of Web 2.0 medium, social bookmarking websites, and represent a tool for the creation of folksonomies (Petrovic et al. 2010, Thimm et al. 2011). By labelling a unit of information with a tag, a user creates a link that leads to a list of all units tagged with the same label. These lists take different forms in different social media. In blogs, for instance, users often create finite lists of themes they cover in their posts and assign each theme a tag, so that clicking on a tag the reader could arrive to a page with all the relevant entries. The phenomenon of 'trending', the appearance of currently popular topics in the left pane of the global Twitter interface or intentional bringing of new topics into that list, is strongly associated with hashtag usage. In Twitter, hashtags were initially introduced to fulfil the same organising function across multiple accounts. This usage has grown into the new discourse modality of searchable talk – online discourse whose primary purpose is to affiliate via 'findability' (Zappavigna 2011).

However, as with so many internet outputs before it, Twitter users have taken up the technical affordance of the medium and creatively reinvented its

function. Hashtags are a tool for the creation of folk taxonomy and therefore an open class. This inevitably leads to endless variation in hashtags associated with the same symbolic content. For instance, users tweeting about the royal wedding on 29 April 2011 employed hashtags #royalwedding, #royalfamily, #rw2011, #kate, #royal and many others. The same tags could appear simultaneously in tweets on unrelated topics, for example someone tweeting about his girlfriend Kate or the dog food Royal. The outcome of this diversity is that hashtags seldom fulfil a systematising function that is cited as their main function by Crystal (2011), Yus (2011), Zappavigna (2012) and others. In fact, only the extremely popular (trending) hashtags operate as global links to thematic timelines. The remaining usage is split between ad-hoc creations such as #alsowatchingballetdvds and locally significant hashtags such as #ROHSwanLake, e.g.:

- (1) he_danseur: Truth be told though, I think I'm just not into Swan Lake in general. However did get misty eyed at very end. Ah, tragic love.
#ROHSwanLake 2:05 AM 5 Nov 2012

Zappavigna (2011) remarks that hashtags facilitate heteroglossia in microblogs insofar as they presuppose an existence of a community of writers and listeners with shared background who use a particular hashtag. #ROHSwanLake unites Twitter users who are interested in ballet and attend or follow the productions of the Royal Opera House, which often means they live and dance in the Greater London area.

Hashtags are omnipresent in Twitter and occur in a variety of formal contexts. In some cases, hashtags are appended to the end of the message and show no syntactic agreement with other components of the tweet (Gimpel et al. 2011). A hashtag may also be used within an utterance and operate simultaneously as a syntactic component of the tweet and as a searchable target of affiliation. Thimm et al. (2011) hypothesise that hashtags play a role of context cues in character constrained tweets. Continuing this line of investigation, Huang et al. (2010) label this function 'conversational tagging' and explain that the hashtag itself is an important part of the message. Rather than serving as a traditional label, tags in these cases function as prompts for user comments and may initiate massive multi-party conversations. Focusing their attention on conversational tags that inspire memes, Huang et al. (2010) look exclusively at the viral hashtags, e.g. #willgetyouslapped meme from December 2009 which may occur in millions of tweets. In these tweets, #willgetyouslapped hashtag functions as a verb phrase and follows a subject, thus being an unalienable part of the sentence; at the same time, it serves as an anchor that attracts large quantities of readers to a trending topic.

The grammatical description of Twitter also paints the picture of predominantly standard language practices with few marked features. According to Crystal

(2011), the average message length is between one and two sentences. Despite the character limit, tweets exhibit signs of grammatical complexity such as cohesive devices (found in 38% of the sample, Crystal 2011: 48):

- Conjunctions: *and, but, cos*
- Connecting adverbs: *so, well, as well, also*
- Response utterances: *lol, yeah, ok, thnx, I agree, hahaha, :)*
- Clarificatory utterances: *I meant..., really?*
- Anaphoric forms: *that is a shame, it's one of my favs*
- Direct address forms: *hey girl, u/you, your*
- Commands: *cheer up, mind your language*
- Direct questions: *is that some kinda different language?*

One trademark of Twitter discourse are truncated sentences, the feature that is alternatively ascribed to the linguistic economy (Crystal 2011) or to the pragmatic considerations of immediacy (Page 2012). Truncation poses a methodological problem for quantitative studies which use automated pattern recognition: the algorithm needs to distinguish between automatically imposed truncation, e.g. in the cases of headline feeds which are cut off after 140 symbols regardless of the syntactic status of the remaining utterance, and author-performed truncation. The problem is aggravated by the fact that both types of truncated messages tend to end with an ellipsis. Crystal (2011) notes that tweets often have a coherent structure at the clause level but juxtapose words ungrammatically at a lower level, creating syntactic structures that pose a significant challenge in their decoding. Sentences, therefore, frequently consist of several sentential fragments of different degree of grammaticality, separated by ellipses. While tweets may consist of two and even three or four sentences (41.5%, 12.7% and 3.38% respectively, Crystal 2011), the 2nd+ sentences in the sequence frequently elide the subject and the subsequent auxiliary verb. Even the first sentence subject can be elided, indicating generally informal tone (*ibid.*) and a specific nature of deixis on Twitter where the deictic centre is firmly placed onto the owner of the account in the here-and-now.

To account for the independent usage of emoticons and initialisms which in some cases constitute the whole utterance, Crystal (2011: 46) chooses to treat them as 'minor sentences'. Under this category fall most instances of what Beißwenger et al. (2012) label 'interaction signs': responsiveness such as "yeah", interaction words "hey", "haha", "omg" or "lol", interjections such as "wow", as well as abbreviations "lol" and "smh" (for "scratching my head"). 25% of Crystal's sample contain some form of minor sentences. This approach, however, raises the question of the exact size of a minor vs. complete sentence. It is also unclear whether some interaction signs should be considered linguistic items at all: emoticons, for instance, may be treated as paralinguistic items akin to facial expressions (Baron 2009).

An alternative hypothesis explaining the frequency of elliptical messages on Twitter may be derived from the work of Yus (2011). Yus examines the recipient perspective in CMC by taking a cognitive linguistic approach. Grounding his description in Relevance Theory (Sperber and Wilson 1986), Yus problematises the status of Twitter as an output that provides few or no cognitive rewards to offset the mental effort required to process it. Since such state of affairs would run contrary to the basic principles of Relevance Theory, Yus suggests a number of possible sources of cognitive reward that may account for user satisfaction in Twitter. These sources boil down to ambient awareness and the feeling of social proprioception. Alternatively, user satisfaction may stem from overcoming the challenge of processing tweets. Despite the intuitive judgement that short updates require little mental effort to process, Yus hypothesises that the sub-sentential nature of tweets challenges the reader to fill in many implicit blanks; Twitter conversations, in a similar vein, only show half the turns in each user's timeline and require certain competence to reconstruct. Thus, processing the tweets activates a number of inferential strategies to derive implicated conclusions, among them reference assignment, disambiguation and conceptual adjustment.

Despite its concise treatment of Twitter, Yus's contribution goes a long way to demonstrate the potential of the relevance theoretic approach. Relying on the universal principles of human cognition to draw conclusions about the pragmatic level of communication allows a researcher to overcome (to a degree) the lack of recipient perspective. It may prove helpful in explaining, for instance, the unique nature of interaction signs which enact their pragmatic force by expressing an attitude that is not a part of the original statement: compare the original quote "buy this product" and its retweet "buy this product :D" (from Crystal 2011: 51).

A central pragmatic issue that merits investigation in the context of microblogs is deixis. It has been demonstrated that deictic references are ambiguous in CMC due to lack of local co-presence and to synchronicity without real synchronisation (Beißwenger 2012, Storrer 2001). In microblogs, the quasi-synchronous mode of communication additionally clashes with the lack of temporal co-presence, which may provoke difficulties in decoding temporal deixis. Myers (2010) pointed out that symbolic reference, characteristic for blog posts ("Posted on Wednesday, 12 October 2011"), is substituted for the ultimate deictic reference: each post sent within the last 24 hours bears the timestamp "16 seconds ago", "2 hours ago" etc., tying the post only to the moment of reading. According to Myers, microblogs are "stuck in eternal present continuous", since unlike blogs they cannot construct "other times, with adverbials, time references, dates and seasons" (2010: 75). This hypothesis resonates with the corpus linguistic studies of Twitter (Page 2012, Zappavigna 2012). A comparison of the high frequency words with the frequency lists from the British National Corpus (BNC) and the Corpus of Contemporary

American English (COCA) confirms the high immediacy of Twitter: the temporal terms with the highest keyness were “tonight”, “today” and “tomorrow”, and the deictic pairs “now” and “then” vs. “here” and “there” showed a clear preference for the first component in each pair (Page 2012). The frequency of interpersonal and interactive units such as the trigram “thanks for the”, emoticons, the constructions “@word” and “RT” highlights the phatic and communicative functions of Twitter (Zappavigna 2012). Upscaled evaluation, realised via emphatic punctuation, spelling, capitalisation, and lexical intensifiers, emerges as a prominent practice “of increasing solidarity through emphasizing both positive and negative appraisal as shared experience” (ibid.: 67). Both studies quoted above demonstrate the potential of a corpus linguistic approach in uncovering the communicative meaning in a multimillion word corpora.

4.4 Questioning the existing mode ecology

In view of recent findings on the complex and overlapping repertoires of internet language (Androustopoulos 2015), it is hardly feasible to posit a single virtual Twitter community that shares demographic features or patterns. The knowledge that an average Twitter user in the USA as well as across the world is female (Beevolve 2013, Smith and Brenner 2012) has little meaning if it is not coupled with knowledge about genre preferences and participation patterns for this group of users and with deeper research into identity, attitudes towards the medium, and the social context of use. To date, there is a distinct lack of such research (with the notable exception of Weller et al. 2014 who investigate the diverse social contexts in which Twitter has found an application, the common practices, and various forms of social interaction on Twitter). Crystal (2011), for instance, quotes an opinion that a greater bias toward female users simply reflects the fact that women have a greater tendency to engage in social chat. This hypothesis is supported by Naaman et al.’s (2009) data which indicated that females were more likely to post ‘me now’ messages than males. The existing empirical evidence, however, is far from conclusive on the issue.

Survey data on age, in turn, offer predictable results: in line with the usual prevalence of adolescent users among early adopters of Web 2.0 applications, an average Twitter user is 15–25 years old (Beevolve 2013). The 26–35 age group is followed by the 36–45 year-olds. Crystal (2011) reported conflicting data, with the 20–26 age cohort leading in the Twitter users’ survey. He hypothesised that it reflected young people’s concern with the maintenance of identity, which is primarily realised via SNS such as Facebook, as opposed to the more information-oriented microblogs. Consequently, the shift may be due to the change in the

perception of Twitter which now has established its role as a medium for phatic communication.

The most significant debate to date concerning the patterns of language usage in Twitter juxtaposes the conversational or networking function of this medium with the monological (or blog-like) function. When linguists do turn their attention to Twitter, they may fall into one of two traps. The first one is to concentrate exclusively on the structural features induced by the character constraint. The second is assuming homogeneity of the output. Such assumptions had been made before concerning online discourse in general (cf. 'netspeak' Crystal 2006) or particular genres of CMC, and had been later subjected to criticism for reductionism of this approach (Dürscheid 2004, Puschmann 2009). Even though there is a blanket effect of the character limit on Twitter, its army of users has developed very different means and purposes of microblogging even within a single platform¹.

Twitter's suggestive self-label 'microblog' often causes analysts to approach it as a narrative genre akin to blogs – a monological, coherent discourse. The classificatory studies mentioned in Section 4.2, as well as Marwick and boyd's (2011) examination of audience design and work by Myers (2010) and Yus (2011) take this approach. Structurally Twitter demonstrates many features that are traditionally named as identifiers of blogs: the posts appear in reverse chronological order, each post is stamped with certain metadata such as author's name, location and time of posting, updates appear frequently and regularly, and the text-based posts may also be supplemented by various media and placed into wider context by links (cf. Herring et al. 2005 and Puschmann 2011 on blogging).

As mentioned, the first view stems mostly from the fact that Twitter carries the convenient label 'microblog' and has a few structural characteristics that connect it closely to the familiar mode of blogs. In the case of blogs, antecedence is often traced to personal diaries, travel journals or opinion journalism, i.e. author-centred narrative genres (Puschmann 2011). Superficially, the participation structure of Twitter appears identical to that of blogs: one-to-many communication to a wide potential audience by a single sender and a lack of clear addressivity are signatures of the push-button publishing in blogs. In contrast to instant messaging with its one-to-one communication pattern, Twitter demonstrates structural characteristics of a one-to-many medium. The reason is that Twitter has been designed as a network for information distribution 'on the go'. Every tweet made by a public account immediately appears in the public timeline, making it theoretically

1. There existed a number of other microblogging platforms, e.g. Jaiku, BlueTwit or identi.ca; however, they wilted with the growing popularity of Twitter and were consequently purchased by other social media companies.

possible for every one of 600 million Twitter users and unregistered guests to read an update immediately.

Under the same rationale, selective sharing is very limited on Twitter: what is encouraged is selective reception. The author has only two options in regulating his/her audience: to hide the account from everyone but his/her followers and then moderate the follower list by requiring an approval before new subscribers can join; or to keep the default setting and allow each tweet to be viewed publicly. At the same time, each user may selectively subscribe to a number of other Twitter accounts. This creates a personal timeline, which is an alternative to a 'noisy' public environment.

Another feature that prompts lumping Twitter together with blogs is its author-centeredness. Despite the seeming diversity of short updates, one way of looking at tweets is to recognise a sequence of short discourse units that in their entirety form a coherent text (which is, perhaps, similar to how 'small stories', everyday fragmented narratives, add up to contribute to identity building). Clive Thompson believes that Twitter timeline as a whole becomes more than simply a sum of its parts:

Individually, most Twitter messages are stupefyingly trivial. But the true value of Twitter [...] is cumulative. When I see that my friend Misha is "waiting at Genius Bar to send my MacBook to the shop," that's not much information. But when I get such granular updates every day for a month, I know a lot more about her. And when my four closest friends and worldmates send me dozens of updates a week for five months, I begin to develop an almost telepathic awareness of the people most important to me. (Thompson 2007)

The personal narrative in Twitter and its focus on self are considered in more detail in Chapters 2 and 8.

An alternative view of microblogging points out various problems with the monological approach. In contrast to essay-like blog posts, discourse units in Twitter are limited to 140 characters per message and are accordingly quite different in terms of linguistic features. While frequent updates on blogs allow one to speak about diaries with their 'dailiness' of topics, in case of Twitter one is faced with 'minuteness' or even 'momentness': low cost of production and sharing leads to very prolific updating. Together with the interactivity afforded by @mentions, @replies and retweets, these structural features speak in favour of a dialogic approach. This view of Twitter emphasises its function of maintaining the feeling of connectedness within loose networks: "Twitter and other constant-contact media create social proprioception. They give a group of people a sense of itself, making possible weird, fascinating feats of coordination" (Thompson 2007).

The second approach places a special value on Twitter's conversational nature and categorises it together with SNS such as Facebook. One of the most significant differences that led to the emergence of an alternative conceptual approach is the interactive potential of Twitter. In the flow of seemingly random updates, directed conversations spring up perpetually and contribute to the creation of a loose network of participants. Even though blogs attempt to situate the discourse within a context by using discourse markers and interpersonal deixis, they are 'a megaphone' (or 'a diary') of one person (Puschmann 2009) who can edit posts after publication, moderate or delete comments or even block them altogether. Twitter offers a conversational environment by setting the character limit of every message to the size much closer to a CA 'turn' in a face-to-face conversation, as well as providing addressivity tools such as @mentions and @replies, and a convenient conversational crutch in form of retweets. Although, similarly to other text-based forms of CMC, turn adjacency in Twitter conversations is often disrupted and audience design is infinitely more complex than in face-to-face conversations (Herring 1999), conversational infrastructure is present. The loose conversation on Twitter, with a lot of people discussing many topics at once and the potential to follow conversations among strangers, has been likened to a loud cocktail party (boyd et al. 2010). A high degree of addressivity, e.g. special means to indicate the exact recipient of a message, helps maintain the inter-turn coherence in multiparty conversations in CMC public spaces (Honeycutt and Herring 2009, Werry 1996). On Twitter, such means include the '@username' syntax and the retweet function.

Retweeting contributes significantly to Twitter's interactional nature as it may serve both as a means of information diffusion and as a way to involve new people into one's network. Similarly to providing a link to an external post in a blog entry, retweet allows one to obliquely reference a user without directly addressing him/her (boyd et al. 2010). However, on Twitter the original author is notified of the retweet (an email notification is sent unless the user changed the default notification settings, and the retweet appears in the 'Notifications' tab on the homepage), while personal blogs seldom include the pingback functionality. At the same time, the general Twitter rule that the messages need not be reciprocated applies to retweets as well. Thus retweeting a celebrity or an expert in one's field has the potential benefit of attracting their attention or even involving them into the ongoing conversation, without the risk to one's positive face in case the summons is ignored.

The interactional nature of Twitter is especially coveted in applied studies. The main advantage of Twitter in the workplace appears to be its role as "a richly nuanced medium for maintaining awareness, building relationships, and finding and sharing valuable information from internal and external sources" (Ehrlich and Shami 2010: 7). Further workplace studies demonstrated that Twitter

facilitates informal exchanges among colleagues in big companies where there is very little opportunity for face-to-face informal interaction. Such exchanges foster the feeling of connectedness that is facilitative to collaboration in the future (Zhao and Rosson 2009). In a similar vein, academic applications of Twitter place a great value onto 'just-in-time' interaction for follow-up on seminar sessions or creation of a learning community (Dunlap and Lowenthal 2009). The 140 character limit guarantees an extremely low cost of production; compatibility with many mobile devices, operating systems and third-party clients provides for a low cost of sharing. A tweet can be sent on the go from any place with mobile network coverage and constitutes immediate feedback to any event in the outside world, on the internet or specifically in current Twitter discussions. An affordance such as this can present an alternative to custom-made classroom response systems (Fies and Marshall 2006), especially as it has been shown that even despite disrupted turn adjacency tweeters maintain coherent conversations of various length (Honeycutt and Herring 2009). Construing Twitter coherence as sustained exchanges, multiple and discreet, also may prove to be more plausible than positing a single discursive macro-goal 'telling a story of self'.

To problematise the previously established view of coherence in microblogs, it is useful to adopt the practitioners' perspective (boyd 2006a). Although boyd et al. (2010) conceptualised retweets in their material as a part of a larger story, it is questionable whether practitioners themselves would agree with this view, or if it is a purely second-order construct. An additional methodological challenge in distinguishing between the monologual and the conversational usage is caused by the fact that while the evidence for the former can be easily collected by the researcher, the latter is realised via direct messages visible only to the sender and the addressee. Not only the content, but also the very existence of such messages are unknown to the researcher unless s/he personally contacts the Twitter user and requests a sample of the messages. Thus the large part of interaction on Twitter remains under the radar of an outside party.

However, when trying to apply the 'crowded party' metaphor (suggested by Herring 1999 for the loosely structured multiparty conversation in CMC) to microblogs, certain problems arise. The metaphor is misleading in some ways and may provoke generalisations that are not applicable to microblogs. First of all, the participation structure of Twitter differs significantly from any other conversational environment offline or online. Even at a crowded party, there is a discreet number of participants organised into conversational groups: they may be fluid and rearrange with time, but at any given moment there would be a sender and several obvious recipients. Although almost every face-to-face interaction includes ratified participants as well as overhearers and eavesdroppers (Goffman 1992), in the context of physical co-presence the sender may reasonably expect

to be able to predict who such bystanders and eavesdroppers might be. Purely physical constraints, such as auditory abilities of human beings, would limit the potential audience to those in the immediate vicinity of the speaker. In Twitter, however, the potential audience is unlimited and cannot be predicted: not only the registered users of Twitter, but also any unregistered guest may monitor the public timeline or check an unprotected account. At the same time, although the potential audience is vast, the intended audience is typically very small or non-existent. One of the key features of Twitter is the lack of expectation of reciprocity (Jucker and Dürscheid 2012). It applies not only to particular messages, e.g. questions to followers, but also to the network building. In the blogosphere there is an implicit understanding that as a notification of a new subscriber reaches the blogger, s/he will at least glance over the guest's profile, and usually subscribe back (see e.g. Hodgkinson 2007 on mutual familiarity among subscribers to personal journals on Livejournal.com). SNS such as Facebook or Couchsurfing go one step further by requiring both parties to confirm a 'friendship' before the profiles can be linked. On Twitter, following is largely unidirectional: the user subscribes to many accounts whose owners s/he does not know personally; no notification is sent per email; and it is certainly not a part of 'twittiquette' that the user will follow everyone who follows him/her. For example, @oliviawilde, the famous American actress Olivia Wilde, has 332,154 followers who receive her updates on everyday activities such as riding in a cab or witnessing a flash mob in New York. It can hardly be maintained that she is participating in a loud conversation at a crowded party, unless she monitors her talk taking into account 332,013 eavesdroppers (if we assume that 141 accounts she follows reciprocate the relationship).

Not only participation structure, but also the interactional scheme breaks away from the metaphor of a loud multiparty conversation. Any conversation presupposes a degree of addressivity that can be expressed through the use of interpersonal deixis, address terms, discourse deixis that presupposes audience's familiarity with earlier interactions, and the existence of certain illocutionary goals. Twitter frequently lacks many of the above.

Earlier studies have pointed out the high degree of conversationality of micro-blogs and concluded that Twitter is a network-driven mode with communication as one of its major functions (boyd et al. 2010, Crystal 2011, Honeycutt and Herring 2009, Zappavigna 2012). However, a closer look at these studies reveals that although the dialogic or 'communicative' tweets are certainly present, the conclusions mostly reflect the fact that the authors approached the analysis of Twitter from the first perspective, i.e. 'Twitter is a narrative genre'. Intending to debunk this categorical myth, they foreground the results that bear evidence to the contrary. Nevertheless, even though the numbers of communicative tweets are high enough to contest the purely narrative, blog-like nature of Twitter, they hardly

constitute an overwhelming majority. Crystal (2011) states that a significant number of tweets in his corpus were retweets, and thus non-monological. Boyd et al. (2010) found that 36% of tweets from their random sample were likely to be @replies and around 3% – retweets, while Honeycutt and Herring's (2009) findings fluctuate between 30 and 32% for tweets with the @ sign. Considering the high level of noise in Twitter environment, it is understood that a conversational thread is extremely hard to follow if it is not connected to the previous conversational turn with the help of the addressivity marker. It means that at most 39% or 2/5 of all conversational turns on Twitter are directed at someone or otherwise placed within the surrounding conversation. That is a highly atypical picture for an interpersonal interaction, where every turn is expected to be coherent on a microlevel to the preceding turn, and on a macrolevel to the topic of conversation as a whole (Sacks 1992). If the comparison to a crowded party is maintained, it would be a conversation among multiple parties where one third of the time each sender produces random turns that have nothing to do with what is being talked about, are addressed to no one in particular, and are not followed up by other participants. In the CMC context, Susan Herring maintains that

... in contrast to blogs, instant messaging services are usually characterised through adherence to one-to-one communication and similarities to face-to-face interaction: turn adjacency, immediacy, addressivity, fluid renegotiation of topics within one session. Even in case of chatrooms where audience design is significantly more complicated and adjacency maybe disrupted, conversations frequently occur in dyads or triads typical of face-to-face interaction, and pair parts are followed through. (Herring 1999)

The numbers above suggest that the one-to-one participation scheme, even complemented with a shifting addressee and a group of bystanders, seems rather inappropriate.

Thus, it appears that there are at least three types of Twitter descriptive frameworks. One characterises Twitter as a network-driven mode and an interactional tool. Tweets of this type frequently include addressivity markers and appear in retweets and conversation threads. The second practice subsumes monological status updates or retweets. Within this type, two discreet subtypes can be recognised: the behaviour of celebrity users with tens of millions of followers; and that of the vast majority of grassroot users who post personal updates and have up to a thousand followers. The latter subgroup is also characterised by low friending activity and by high overlap in following-followers lists. According to the Beevolve Inc. study, less than 1% of Twitter users boast more than 10,000 followers. Behind their backs hides the vast majority of Twitter population, 81% of average users with 0–50 followers (Beevolve 2013).

Since the mass media stars with big following are more likely to exhibit the ‘megaphone’ (one-to-many broadcast, Puschmann 2009) or conversational tweeting patterns, the descriptions of Twitter to date effectively privilege these sub-genres over ordinary tweeting. Although many grassroots users with few friends break away from the described patterns, they do not contribute to the popular image of Twitter as a medium. It is their linguistic practices that I would like to focus on in the present paper.

4.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have given an overview of the social networking platform known as Twitter – a subtype of microblogs so widespread that it has become an eponym for this output. Content classifications of Twitter abound. A glance at a range of classificatory studies that approached the task from the positions of computer science, information science, ethnography, and linguistics, has made it obvious that no such exhaustive classification can exist. This has to do with the dynamic and emergent nature of Twitter. The users of this fastest growing social platform in the world (McCue 2013) creatively reinvent microblogging, continuously coming up with new applications for the 140-character posts that researchers have not yet taken into account. Besides, the possibilities for subdividing the known uses are infinite. The one common core of the studies is the distinction between the messages that focus on the user and those that are parts of a conversation. The distinction is taken up in the monologal/dialogic annotation of BaTwit. Most authors agree that the affective dimension plays an exceptionally important role in Twitter communication – a hypothesis that is supported by statistical data such as the growing number of teenage users and the amount of evaluative discourse.

The investigations of Twitter language to date have worked with a general sample, with the notable exception of Page (2012) who sampled her corpus from celebrity Twitter accounts and used a general Twitter subcorpus for comparison purposes only. Language on Twitter appears to be standard and to include features of grammatical complexity such as conjunctions, linking devices and clarificatory questions. One signature trait of Twitter that crops up across multiple studies is syntactic truncation. It is variably attributed to the character limit, to pragmatic immediacy, or to achieving cognitive relevance through promising satisfaction from decoding. The interpersonal dimension of Twitter language is evident in the high ranking of evaluative and interactive lexical items in keyword lists. Frequent use of temporal adverbials referring to the present and recent past signals the specific deictic nature of Twitter: the microblogging posts are anchored in the here and now and are by default construed as propositions about the author.

Finally, I discussed the ambiguous status of Twitter. Although it is often construed as a conversational medium whose key function is the maintenance of weak social ties, Twitter offers a field for monologual language practices. Personal narratives, third party complaints and random observations are some of those. So rather than subscribing to one of the two views, it is sensible to posit that Twitter users have several distinct practices at their disposal and draw on them in accordance with the communicative goal and the communicative context.

While structural features of general Twitter language seem to be exhaustively described in the existing corpus studies, the speech act perspective constitutes a research gap (with an exception of Page 2014 who focussed on Twitter apologies). In the following chapters, I will examine how the monologual as well as interactive communicative modes contribute to the construction of identity of a community member. Referring back to the findings on lexis and syntax, I will describe the tweeting of ballet enthusiasts and show how such specifically CMC affordances as hashtags, @mentions and hyperlinking are embedded into the universal process of discursive self-presentation.

Describing the corpus and the annotation scheme

5.1 Introduction

Generally, a sociolinguistic investigation touches on topics such as identity, self-presentation, community and community values. Hence it is impossible to make sense of the linguistic material without taking a step back to get a broader view of who our subjects are and what matters to them in life. This chapter attempts to do just that by placing the discussion of Twitter users' personalia and the intricacies of a ballet career into the context of selection, processing and analysis of the material for the corpus.

In Section 5.2, I will describe the eleven informants whose Twitter timelines provided the 1,000 tweets for BaTwit. The theme will be continued in Section 5.3 which highlights the strong ties between the informants and transfers the knowledge about the ballet culture onto the Twitter community in question. Section 5.4 outlines the methodologies: I rely on Herring's (2004) computer-mediated discourse analysis and Androutsopoulos' (2008) discourse-oriented online ethnography to guide my analysis. After briefly describing the BaTwit corpus make-up and annotation scheme in Section 5.5, I move on to the ethical considerations in Section 5.6. After that, I provide an overview of the pragmatic repertoire of my subjects in 5.7. I conclude the chapter with the summary of the key issues and an outlook.

5.2 Material for the study

Eleven Twitter accounts have provided the data for this study. The accounts belong to Anglophone users who reside in the UK and the USA and are interested in ballet. The participants for the study were chosen from the pool of ballet-related Twitter accounts that has been comprised over the years by searching for keywords such as 'ballet', 'pointe' and 'YAGP' (Youth America Grand Prix, a large annual competition for dance students), following hashtags such as #ballerinafeet, snowballing

Twitter accounts from follower lists of other users, and asking members of that community for suggestions. Since I share an interest in the topic of ballet training and have participated in the communication among these members for three years prior to the beginning of the study, I could add an ethnographic component to the analysis. It is important to note that although the quoted data has been collected in several samples over a two year period, my conclusions are meant to be representative of the patterns of behaviour I have observed in the last five years. Being an amateur ballet dancer and an avid Twitter user myself, I found that tweeting about ballet class, dancing gear and other topics that permeate the BaTwit corpus forms a connection to fellow dancers that is almost entirely removed from the offline world. It is also a window into the backstage lives of professional ballerinas and a bridge between the apprenticeship and profession. Certainly, at first glance, ballet students are an odd choice for a Twitter study because what they do is so physical. That contrasts them to many other informant groups for the study of Twitter – scientists (Myers 2013; Puschmann 2014), cricket journalists and fans (Gillen 2014) – who form a community of practice by virtue of a joint enterprise performed online (talking, writing, discussing). The ballet students live their life in the domain of movement, and this physicality cannot be transferred onto social networks. Therefore, there is always a disjunction between the offline and online space. This tension between the offline and the online, which is not present in similar Twitter discourse communities united by a common interest, make the ballet community uniquely suitable for the exploration of how the users subvert the medium to construct an idealised identity.

The eleven subjects for the research have been chosen based on several criteria. First of all, they were all active users of Twitter in the beginning of the study, posting about 20 tweets a day. Over time, the social media interests of some users have shifted towards blogs or Facebook, while others have moved on to a challenging period in life and stopped tweeting actively. Initially, ten users comprised BaTwit. However, it has become clear that it is impossible to create a balanced corpus using only the original participants, as two of the male subjects produced too few monological tweets. As a consequence, the eleventh user has been added. Secondly, all accounts are public and do not require special permissions or registration on Twitter to access. Finally, all users post predominantly in English and the topic of their tweets is self-produced ballet-related content, i.e. these Twitters are not marketing accounts that promote links to outside websites.

Five of the subjects are female and six are male. The choice is meant to represent the even gender mix that most ballet schools and companies strive for. All participants are not only interested in ballet as an art form, but also take ballet class and engage with the ballet culture on a physical level. Most of them do not intend to make a professional career out of ballet dancing and have joined the ranks of hobby dancers quite recently, which is reflected both in the age of participants and

their discourse. Although a few of the subjects are under 18 or over 35 years old, most of them are in the 25–35 age group (see the overview in Table 5.1). Their discursive activity on Twitter is centred predominantly on ballet and on community regulation.

Since the present study is mostly qualitative, it seems appropriate to provide some background on each subject to give them a face and a voice. The richness of profile depends on how much the participants were willing to share about themselves on Twitter and in conversation, since user information on Twitter is scarce (in contrast to e.g. Facebook where a lot of discursive identity work is done already in the profile). I am very grateful to my informants who have agreed to share the details of their lives with me and gave permission to publish their stories, and I am certain that these portraits lend additional authority to the subsequent analysis.

Table 5.1. Overview of the informants

	Age group	Sex	Country of residence	Followers	Friends total	Ballet community friends (% of total)
Gazelle	30–35	female	UK	390	152	121 (80%)
FeistyGirl	35–45	female	UK	368	351	313 (89%)
dancedance	15–20	female	US	744	958	706 (74%)
pointe35	35–45	female	US	750	387	339 (88%)
Annabelle	15–20	female	US	1,076	191	159 (83%)
ROHman	20–30	male	UK	1,996	707	610 (91%)
Connoisseur	35–45	male	UK	326	500	474 (95%)
he_danseur	30–35	male	US	513	531	278 (52%)
PasDeDeux	20–30	male	US	358	181	109 (60%)
beyou	35–45	male	UK	23	75	53 (71%)
rothbert11	35–45	male	UK	346	342	312 (91%)

Gazelle is a 32-year-old female from a London suburb who travels to London as often as she can to take class in a studio near Oxford Circus. This is not the only studio she attends: many dance schools in London operate on a walk-in basis and do not require stable membership. However, her primary studio is the one she visits regularly, and it is also where she formed ties with other students who are present on Twitter. The studio becomes an offline locus to which Twitter activity is tied through Foursquare¹ check-ins, hashtags or mentions.

1. A social network based on geolocation: users grant the network access to the GPS data from their phones and check-in at various businesses throughout the day, creating a database of geographical movement and preferences.

Gazelle stands out from the other participants because of her physical condition and motivation to dance. Ballet is a gruelling sport requiring unusual strength and flexibility even from amateur dancers. An additional stress factor is pointe shoes which constrict the feet and may lead to severe injuries if balance and hip turnout are not well-developed. *Gazelle*, however, is physically impaired: she suffers from a disease called Ehlers-Danlos syndrome, a disorder affecting connective tissue such as skin and joints. Symptoms of Ehlers-Danlos include chronic pain, excessive joint mobility, easy bruising, slow wound healing, fragile and extensive tissues (Ehlers-Danlos Support UK 2013). It is a rare day that she can sleep more than three hours because of the pain, she is a regular at the hospital, and her shoulder joints pop out of their sockets frequently during class. Even making a ballet bun is a problem for *Gazelle* because she needs to twist the arms to reach the back of her neck. For all that, *Gazelle* is devoted to her amateur dancing. She says that it keeps her feeling like “a normal person who has an illness”, not “a cripple who sometimes dances.” Her Twitter reflects this sentiment, mostly concentrating on small everyday victories and only referring to the disease indirectly by hashtags #ehlersdanlos, #eds, or #broken.

Annabelle is a rather different story. She is a 14-year-old pre-professional from California. *Annabelle* has been dancing since she was five, she attends a ballet school with a professional teacher, and is already good enough to compete on the highest level in the semi-finals of the YAGP. *Annabelle*’s whole life is centred on ballet. She is home-schooled, as most pre-professional and professional ballerinas are to allow for a full-day schedule of barré classes and rehearsals. *Annabelle*’s mother is a photographer who devotes much of her time to driving her daughter to the studio, preparing her dancewear and shoes. Moreover, *Annabelle*’s ballet career is very public: part of the income for her education is derived from the social media accounts maintained by *Annabelle* and her mother, where they organise fundraisers, pointe shoe giveaways, sell a line of self-made ballet clothing and post tutorials about various aspects of the young dancer’s life. The mother follows *Annabelle* throughout her training days and adds regular photographic updates to their websites. However, the Twitter account chosen for this study is different from the fundraising Twitter shared by *Annabelle* and her mom; it is specifically marked “*Annabelle*’s private Twitter” and people are invited to follow it for backstage updates by *Annabelle* herself. The tone of this account is very conversational and indeed reflects the identity of a teenage girl rather than a brand. *Annabelle* tweets about going out with friends, flying to summer intensives, her aches and pains, and having fun with her siblings.

FeistyGirl is a professional from London who works full time in the retail industry, supplementing her busy days in charge of product range and store planning with ballet classes. She has started dancing only four years ago

on recommendation from her therapist but has improved rapidly for an amateur. She devotes significant time to evening classes and weekend intensives offered by the English National Ballet, going to the studio almost every weekday after work. Her Twitter is almost exclusively ballet-centred, giving no glimpse of her life nine to five. *FeistyGirl*'s avatar is a photograph of her in a leotard in relevé, while her personal description states that she writes about all things ballet. *FeistyGirl* is very passionate about her dancing, and although making a career out of it is not an option for her, she says that ballet has incredibly enriched her life and gives her deep moments of joy in feeling the connection between body and mind.

Dancedance is another representative of a more stereotypical ballerina cohort. She is 17, started serious ballet training five years ago and has her sights set on becoming a professional dancer. *Dancedance* has left home in Tennessee for Florida after being accepted into a good ballet school with a residence program. This is a step that many serious young dancers have to take unless they are lucky enough to live in the vicinity of a famous school. Ultimately, the best students may need to go to the UK or Russia, a change which they both dread and dream about. Recently *dancedance* has badly injured her knee, and coping with this setback featured prominently in her Twitter. Like *Annabelle*, she has serious dancing career plans, and wants to move to a bigger school to finish her education when the time comes.

Pointe35, again, is an older student who does ballet for fun and recreation. *Pointe35* is in her late thirties and lives in California. She has recently had a baby and is struggling with getting back in shape and finding time (and willpower) for regular classes. She is certain it will work out, though, for she is convinced that ballet is a great positive influence on late starters. *Pointe35* runs a popular blog about her training and everyday life with a series of posts on first ballet class experiences by older students. By giving the detailed description of what exactly is going to happen when they walk into the dreaded studio, *pointe35* is hoping to take away some of the shyness that keeps many people from taking up this unusual hobby.

One of the most well-connected members of the community is *ROHman*. He is a very active Twitter user and blogger, has follower links to every informant in this study and is well known to amateur ballet dancers in the Greater London Area for his activities as a Student Ambassador of the Royal Opera House. As most mature ballet enthusiasts in the study, *ROHman* has a second centre of gravity in his life: he is writing a doctoral dissertation in computer science at the University of Bath. *ROHman* started ballet three years ago after his girlfriend had taken him to see *Swan Lake*. Now he is 27, takes regular classes for adults and performs in several repertoire groups. Although he describes himself as a sporty person (he used to row and to compete in triathlons before starting to dance), his affection

for ballet surprised him – he insists he had always had two left feet. At the moment *ROHman* divides his time between writing up his dissertation, job-hunting, and ballet classes and rehearsals, which results in an understandable zeitnot. An additional obstacle in taking up hobby ballet is the fact that it is typically seen as a ‘girl thing’. In his blog and Twitter, *ROHman* tries to encourage men to start ballet and confronts many stereotypes that make life harder for male hobby dancers (including lack of ballet apparel for men in mass market).

Connoisseur is another mature male student, although his Twitter account is markedly different from *ROHman*’s. *Connoisseur* puts an emphasis on connecting with the art side of ballet: attending performances and reviewing them, travelling to other cities and sometimes even countries to see a particular company, and studying Russian. He resides outside London but regularly visits the city to attend performances. *Connoisseur*’s physical activities – ballet, running, cycling – deserve only rare mentions in his social media stream.

The third male subject is *he_danseur*, also a hobbyist in his thirties. *He_danseur* currently works full-time as a content editor for a large electronic publisher. *He_danseur* lives in California with his partner and is a passionate theatre goer, attending plays, ballet and opera almost every evening. After the Supreme Court of California allowed same sex marriage in June 2013, *he_danseur* married his partner and carefully documented the event on Twitter. Apart from his dedication to ballet, his Twitter reflects his persona as a gay civil rights activist. *He_danseur* also maintains a popular blog in which he posts dance news and reviews from around the San Francisco Bay Area. He began taking ballet class in 2011, although he had had some background in dance before that: he used to do jazz and musical theatre in high school. By his estimation, he spends about eight hours per week doing all things ballet: class (three times a week), shows, reading and writing articles. Although he does not aspire to a professional career and is not advanced enough to consider this option, he tries to use ballet as a means to bring fun to everyday life – for example, by doing exercises at his stand-up desk while working on a job assignment. As *he_danseur* says about his motivation, “Keeping fit is a very nice side benefit, but mostly I do it because I find it personally fulfilling and a fun and artistic way to express myself.”

The crucial step from a pre-professional to a professional career has been accomplished by one of the subjects, *PasDeDeux*. He is 27 years old and originally comes from Britain, although since getting a contract with an American ballet company *PasDeDeux* lives in the United States. *PasDeDeux* began dancing in 1999 and landed his first contract as early as 2005. He embodies the dream of every young ballet dancer – to be able to make a living from ballet, get onstage roles and tour the country with a company are the sure signs of having

‘made it’. *PasDeDeux*’s Twitter tone, however, is light and companionable, and instead of emphasizing his achievement he often shares the grievances of life on tour and posts self-ironic photos of bad stage make-up and dancers goofing around.

The last two male subjects, *beyou* and *rothbert11*, are relatively new both to ballet and to Twitter. Since only *beyou*’s monological tweets were not numerous enough to form a part of the corpus, his updates were complemented by *rothbert11*’s contributions. The two users are similar in their interests and demographic profile: both come from the Greater London Area, both are rather older than an average student and started ballet training only recently, and both juggle full-time professional careers and/or families with evening ballet classes. As male students who are not in their teens anymore, *beyou* and *rothbert11* fall outside of the typical profile of a ballet student and meet with a great deal of surprise from the world concerning their hobby. *Beyou* has started ballet in 2008, but broke off for 18 months and took it up again in 2011. Now he is doing four classes per week plus an occasional weekend class. *Beyou*’s Twitter dates back to July 2012. Three months later he began engaging with the online ballet community and connecting with other hobby dancers he met in workshops. He says that he keeps his ballet interests separate from his working life – no one at work knows that he does ballet, and it is a perk of Twitter network that he can meet other male hobby dancers and also connect with them offline. *Beyou* often uses Twitter to post appreciative comments to male actors and athletes who have come out.

Rothbert11 has a longer Twitter record and is fairly well connected among ballet Twitter users. He visits weekend intensives and UK Ballet Twitter Meets regularly. His career as a corporate trainer gives him insight into the pedagogic techniques used by ballet teachers in class, and he often blogs about that. Although his wife was first sceptical about his dancing, she is now much more supportive and brings their small son to the father’s recitals.

The group of subjects is seen as representative of a larger discourse community of ballet students and ballet lovers. A discourse community is a group whose members have common goals, intercommunication mechanisms, particular genres and specific lexis (Swales 1990). In the following chapters, I will demonstrate that all of these characteristics apply to my ballet enthusiasts. An important feature of a discourse community is that although it is united by the common knowledge and similar background, it is diffuse and incorporates a great many members who often communicate remotely (the example John Swales used was an academic discourse community). The importance of this community in the lives of my subjects can be illustrated by their mutual connections. Figure 3 shows that the Twitter connections within the group are quite dense: solid lines

connecting two users mean that they mutually follow each other, and a dotted line represents a connection when only one of the pair of users follows the other. Table 5.2 presents the ratio of friends (i.e. other Twitter accounts that the subjects actively chose to follow) from the ballet community to friends with other interests. For nine out of eleven users, more than 70% of their friends have been chosen due to their connection to ballet. The remaining two users have 60% and 52% of ballet-related friends. Certainly, this statistic is not representative of the subjects' interests in life on the whole, but it paints a clear picture of their positioning on Twitter.

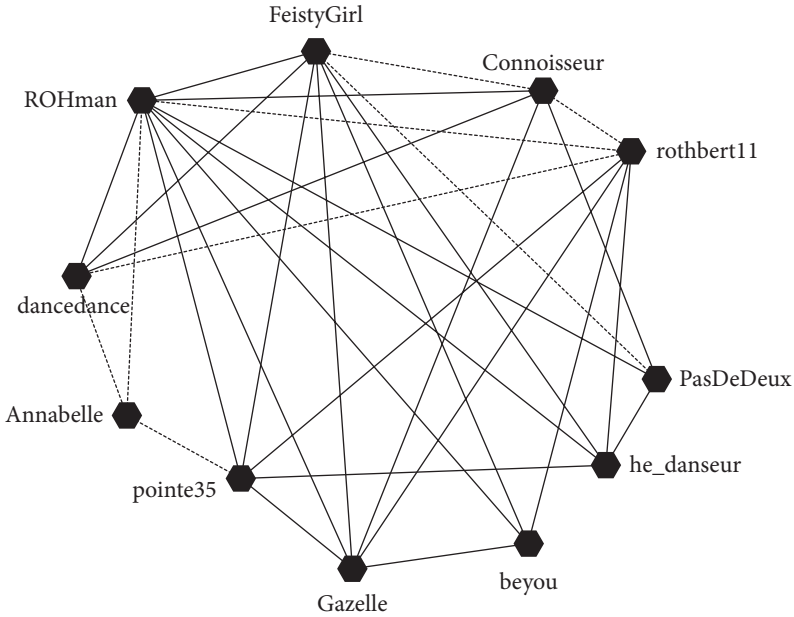


Figure 3. Connections between the subjects on Twitter

While in a traditional discourse community communication occurs over many channels, in a digital community, such as the one under investigation, engagement and negotiation will usually happen within a single channel – email, chat, or in my case, Twitter. The common goals that unite the members of a digitally-based community also tend to be somewhat less tangible. In the group in question, the subjects are involved in the project of becoming fully-fledged members of the ballet community. Offline, the physical and sociolinguistic competence that the status of a ballerina requires is achieved through a long apprenticeship first in a ballet school and later in a company. Online, this is reflected in reporting one's apprenticeship in order to discursively construct a hero identity.

Table 5.2. Prominence of ballet community in the users' friend lists

Name	Annabelle	Dancedance	FeistyGirl	pointe35	Gazelle	ROHman	Connoisseur	PasDeDeux	Beyou	he_danseur	rothbert11
Friends total	191	958	351	387	152	707	500	181	75	531	342
Ballet community friends	159 (83%)	706 (74%)	313 (89%)	339 (88%)	121 (80%)	610 (91%)	474 (95%)	109 (60%)	53 (71%)	278 (52%)	312 (91%)

To better understand the set of values and practices that govern the membership in the community, it is useful to cast a glance at the world of ballet.

5.3 Ballet

The members of the ballet community come from a similar background and come to share a wealth of symbolic attributes. It is by association with these symbolic attributes that an amateur dancer may claim the identity of a ballet student. One way to account for the social meaning of certain linguistic choices, as well as behaviour and possessions referenced verbally, is to understand them as a bundle of indexical features that signal segmentations of the social landscape to which language users consider themselves to belong (cf. Eckert 2008). The key aspect here is the notion of 'enoughness' (Blommaert and Variis 2012). Blommaert and Variis argue that in order to be ratified as an authentic member of an identity category, one needs to have 'enough' emblematic features associated with this category. 'Enough', however, is not a clearly defined amount; it is an implicit benchmark which may start with a single attribute (e.g. a fake Burberry cap for a chav identity).

A set of emblematic features that a ballet enthusiast tries to associate with on Twitter corresponds to the aspects of life of a real pre-professional ballet student. It is by reporting practices, difficulties, encounters and milestones of such a life that a ballet identity is claimed. In the next section, I describe this set of emblematic practices.

A ballet dancer is expected by the public to conform to the imago of an ethereal, exquisite human being that is elegant and well-versed in arts. As Wulff (1998: 47) notes, "there is an interesting tradition in the ballet world of educating ballet students, and even more young professional dancers, not only in ballet and

ballet culture, but in taste and manners, a rapid course in cultural capital.” The path to being a dancer starts from watching famous ballets live or in recordings, learning to appreciate the beauty, the movement and the technique. It is impossible to claim a dancer identity without purporting to understand and enjoy the ultimate product of all the hard training – a classic ballet performance. Hand in hand with the identity of a ballet connoisseur goes the recognition and love for famous dancers and choreographers. Every student is a little bit of a groupie: they crowd the staff entrances of theatres to take a picture with a prima ballerina or have their pointe shoes signed, gawk at the professionals from the back of the studio in summer intensives, and send admiring unidirectional tweets to Misty Copeland and Natalia Osipova.

A key aspect of being a ballet dancer is the physique. There are strict requirements on a ballerina’s appearance and the achievement of this ideal is predicated on strict discipline. Desired attributes include hip turnout (rotation of the leg outwards with toes ideally pointing in the opposite directions), extension (the ability to extend a straight leg up and away – a combination of anatomy and flexibility), good foot arches, spotting (a technique of keeping balance by fixing the gaze on one point while rotating the body). Dancers spend years disciplining their bodies into steps of classical ballet (Wulff 1998: 102). A typical day of a pre-professional student includes two hours of class in the morning, then several hours of ‘academics’ which are viewed by young dancers as an unavoidable evil that distracts them from training, followed by afternoon ballet and strength classes and, possibly, rehearsals in the evening. Such schedule leaves very little time for typical teenage entertainment. Nevertheless, this is the only life that may give one a chance to make it in professional ballet. The accompanying hard work and long hours become, by extension, coveted values rather than means to an end. On the whole, any character trait or action that implies the possession of self-discipline necessary to succeed is desired.

Physical effects of the gruelling training on the body – aching muscles, strained tendons, bruises and wounds on the feet – are proudly carried as the marks of dedication. The one symbol that even general public associates with ‘real ballerinas’ are pointe shoes. They become the symbolic objects around which a ballet identity could be built. Artifactual communication (“...that broad area of nonverbal communication which includes communication through the selection and arrangement of objects” (DeVito 1989: 82)) complements discursive acts in crafting a ballet hero identity. Claiming affiliation with objects and associated practices can be a powerful way to assert belonging. The shoes come with a set of associated practices available to the initiated: each shoe needs to be prepared for wear individually. Apart from sewing elastics and silk ribbons to the shoe, students soften their shoe in their favourite manner: by bending the shanks, beating

them against the wall, or dipping the shoes into water. Besides, the box – the flat surface in front of the shoe that the ballerina stands on when en pointe – needs to be stripped of its silky slippery cover. Some scratch it with sand paper, while others prefer to cut out the cloth altogether and hold the hem over the flame to stop the fabric from running. In one performance, a prima ballerina can go through five to ten pairs of pointe shoes. Even a pre-professional student uses up about two pairs a week.

The discipline throws a reflection on communicative patterns, as well. In his study on speech in ballet class, Johnston (2006: 3) says:

Traditional authoritarian ballet pedagogy is high on structure and expectations, but low on teacher warmth and responsiveness. Conformity and obedience of the student are valued over open communication. Discussion between teacher and student, or amongst students, is actively discouraged. Within this teaching style, students are expected to be seen and not heard; not to speak unless spoken to. Students should think, but dare not speak, lest they be seen as troublesome or disruptive.

Wulff (1998: 47) also remarks that in ballet, language is not used much. Johnston (2006: 3) continues to add that this teaching approach may have “a devastating impact upon a child’s ability to learn ballet when they are scared and disciplined into silence.” Kersley and Sinclair (1977: 82) comment on the “narcissism which often results from hours of practice alone [...] that, despite very close physical proximity, dancers have little idea of what are the thoughts and feelings of their fellow-workers.”

Not surprisingly, young students find other outlets to express themselves verbally: private speech, nicknaming, out of class banter with peers, or social media. Nicknaming may be a marker of the belonging to a ballet company or a class. Dancers, but also coaches and directors get nicknames. A nickname fixes one’s social identity in relation to the local system of social relationships (Wulff 1998: 90). Dancers also nickname steps and variations, which forms a repertoire of in-group lexis.

The language of ballet makes up an important component of its ‘set of cultural rules’ (Johnston 2006: 5). The movement itself possesses a vocabulary, a morphology and a syntax (*ibid.*), and there are culturally based conventions for using particular forms for particular expressive purposes. This physical side of ballet can be transcribed using systems of notation. The earliest ballet notation, for example, was Rudolf von Laban’s movement system (known as Labanotation), where all movements are anchored in the body’s centre and take place within the scope of a cube. Certainly, no notation can capture all the nuances of physical movement, and there is always room for interpretation left. As for the linguistic

side of ballet, it also possesses a trove of specialised vocabulary: French terms for steps, for example, merit a dictionary on their own. Ballet community membership plays a role in pragmatic variation, as well: expressions of luck-wishing range across languages, with the French “*merde*” common in the USA, the German “*toi-toi-toi*” in Sweden and Germany, “*poi poi poi*” in Denmark and Norway, and “*chookas*” in Australia. Referring to the Goffmanian concept of everyday life as performance and Hymes’ social performance, Wulff (1998: 141) hypothesises that avoiding good luck expressions in one’s native language is a way to call for extra supernatural power. She recalls hearing a variant of Australian “*chookas*”, “*chukkers*” in London, and “*Spark!*” in Sweden. Another instance of magical thinking is the widespread belief that mentioning the proper names of desirable conditions or objects will prevent them from happening or coming into one’s reach (‘*jinx*’ them). This leads to a complex system of shadow meanings that are understandable only to the in-group.

5.4 Methodology

Having described the subjects and the data for this study, it is time to turn to the methodological aspects. I will contextualise my research within Computer-Mediated Discourse Analysis and Discourse-Oriented Online Ethnography, which will help me to reconcile the qualitative approach taken due to exploratory nature of my research with the occasional use of descriptive statistics. In the next section, I will move on to the development of the hierarchical coding scheme for the corpus and its implications for the analysis.

Computer-Mediated Discourse Analysis (CMDA) constitutes a step in the development of a standard guideline for studying online communities. CMDA applies methods adapted from other language-focused disciplines to the analysis of CMC. Herring (2004) explains that methodologically, CMDA may include a range of things: surveys, interviews, ethnographic observation; but at its core it is defined by the analysis of logs of verbal interaction. The linguistic perspective was the crucial factor for choosing CMDA for this study:

...it views online behaviour through the lens of language, and its interpretations are grounded in observations about language and language use. This perspective is reflected in the application of methodological paradigms that originated in the study of spoken and written language, e.g., conversation analysis, interactional sociolinguistics, pragmatics, text analysis, and critical discourse analysis. It also shapes the kinds of questions that are likely to get asked. Linguists are interested in language structure, meaning, and use, how these vary according to context, how they are learned, and how they change over time. (Herring 2004: 339)

Such an approach presupposes that there are two main sites for data collection: “screen-based” and “user-based” (Androutsopoulos 2013:240). They are conceived of as a continuum, ranging from data production and collection in the log files to focus on user and what s/he does through language (Bolander and Locher 2013), see Table 5.3.

Table 5.3. Data in CMC research, Androutsopoulos (2013)

	Screen-based				User-based
Relation of researcher to the source of data	No online observation	Systematic online observation	Online observation and contact to users	Contact to users without online observation	
Resulting type of data	Online data	Online data	Blended data	Offline data	

The basic methodological orientation of CMDA is “language-focussed content analysis [which] may be purely qualitative – observations of discourse phenomena in a sample of text may be made, illustrated, and discussed, – or quantitative – phenomena may be coded and counted, and summaries of their relative frequencies produced” (Herring 2004:342). Contemporary CMC research increasingly uses both these possibilities (see Arendholz 2013, Barton and Lee 2013, Bolander 2013, Cherny 1999, Locher 2006, Page 2012). Methodological literature highly recommends going ‘beyond the screen’ to include material over and above the log file data (Androutsopoulos and Beißwenger 2008, Bolander and Locher 2013). Following their lead, I also use the mixed method and combine descriptive statistics with observation of smaller text samples and deriving patterns and categories.

Qualitative research on CMC has received the general label ‘online ethnography’. Its variation, ‘discourse-centred online ethnography’, combines the systematic observation of selected sites of online discourse with direct contact with its social actors (Androutsopoulos 2008). Systematic observation is the pillar of online ethnography, for it affords insights into discourse practices and patterns of language use on these online sites (Androutsopoulos 2008:1). Based on the data from systematic observation and log files, a researcher may continue to reconstruct fields of computer-mediated discourse, literacy practices within these fields, and participants’ awareness of linguistic variability and its social meaning.

My work does not claim to be a full-fledged ethnography. I predominantly concentrate on linguistic data while complementing it with some material from contact with the users and the offline communication. The interviews, for

instance, served the purpose of better understanding the practices and values of the subjects and are not used as a source of material for analysis. I have conducted three face-to-face interviews and five email interviews; three subjects preferred to be excluded. The tangency point between the interviews and the linguistic analysis was the check of my perceptions of the users' illocutionary goals and appropriateness judgements against the users' own understanding. The final two interviews to take place, with *FeistyGirl* and *beyou*, included several of their own tweets and the associated speech acts annotation; when asked if they agree with my judgement, the subjects confirmed that they perceive the utterances as complaining about a situation, telling something positive about themselves etc. The basic tenets of my work with linguistic material will be reviewed in the next section.

5.5 BaTwit corpus make-up

The material for the study has been collected in three sampling sessions in June 2012, January 2013 and December 2013. If a user did not post a lot of updates, however, it may mean that the corpus includes the complete timeline from spring 2012 onwards. For more prolific users such as *ROHman* and *Annabelle*, each sample comprises about two weeks' worth of tweets.

Sampling was done with the help of the Storify web application. Storify is a service that allows one to create continuous stories, or timelines, made of contributions to various social networks. To make a story, a user opens the desired sources in the right pane of the screen and drag-and-drops elements into the empty left pane. The contributions can be arranged in any order, grouped chronologically or topically, and comments can be added. Since Storify preserves the original form of each update with its layout, links, photographs and videos, and stable source URLs, it is an ideal solution to fix the changeable social media material for later study.

In this manner, a separate Storify timeline had been created for every subject. It subsumes the whole sampling period and is not subdivided into sampling sessions; thus the Storify archive includes more tweets than the annotated corpus. After determining the limits of the sampling sessions, the tweets were converted into plain text form to enable corpus analysis with the AntConc concordancer. A separate xml file was created for every tweet, and structural and pragmatic information was added in form of xml annotation. Necessarily, many web-based features such as layout, line breaks, colour scheme and fonts were lost in the plain text variant, and the data was anonymised; if needed, I may always refer to the Storify collection to look up these details. The resulting corpus consists of 1,000 tweets. The overview of the corpus make-up is available in Table 5.4.

Table 5.4. BaTwit corpus make-up

	Words		Tweets	
	Types	Tokens	Monologual	Interactive
Gazelle	1,002	2,002	50	50
FeistyGirl	1,006	2,265	50	50
dancedance	715	1,695	50	50
pointe35	590	1,209	50	50
Annabelle	677	1,444	50	50
ROHman	845	1,869	50	50
Connoisseur	580	1,144	50	50
he_danseur	946	1,819	50	50
PasDeDeux	763	1,651	50	50
beyou	531	1,032	20	50
rothbert11	216	328	30	0
Corpus total	4,571	16,458	500	500
1,000				

All Twitter names used in the study are pseudonyms, and while some of them occur on Twitter, any identification of this kind is coincidental. The pseudonyms were assigned to reflect subjects' interests, age or gender, and to resemble original nicknames (e.g. if the original Twitter handle has the format name+number, so does the pseudonym).

BaTwit is balanced for gender and for tweet addressivity (500 monologual, 500 interactive messages) and was used for making quantitative judgements. It is intended to adequately reflect the typical language usage in the ballet Twitter community. The basic descriptive statistics demonstrates that tweeting practices are relatively uniform: on average, a 100-tweet set has $M_1 = 1,678$ words and $M_2 = 791$ types with low standard deviations of $SD_1 = 365$ and $SD_2 = 167$ (users *beyou* and *rothbert11* were excluded as outliers since neither of the two represents a full 100-tweet set), which makes an average tweet approximately 17 words long. The monologual part of BaTwit includes 8957 words (3,058 types), the interactive 7,501 words (2,477 types), which means that although both categories have an almost equal lexical diversity (calculated with the most primitive formula for the type-token ratio $TTR_1 = 0.35$; $TTR_2 = 0.33$), monologual tweets tend to be longer – 17.9 words per tweet vs. 15 words per tweet in interactive tweets. On the surface level, language of tweets does not appear to have outstanding lexical characteristics: the top ranking words overlap in part with

the data from the ANC (American National Corpus) (see Table 5.5). A telling deviation, however, is the presence of personal pronouns in all three categories of BaTwit and their marked absence in the seven top ranking words in the ANC (the picture is, of course, different if we look only at the spoken component). More specifically, all three categories of tweets have the first person singular pronoun “I” in high positions. Monologual tweets also show the objective case form, “me”, which confirms the intuitions about the focus on self in this tweet category. The interpersonal focus of the interactive tweets (emphasised in the earlier Twitter studies, e.g. Zappavigna 2012) is visible in the makedly high incidence of the second person pronoun “you”.

The qualitative part of the study relied not only on the 1,000-tweet corpus, but also on a larger pool of tweets, including interactions between subjects’ friends who were not included in the corpus. These additional tweets were taken from the data stored on Storify, but were not coded in accordance with the annotation scheme like the rest of the corpus. The participants are referred to by the uniform pseudonym ‘Follower’.

Table 5.5. Most frequent words in BaTwit and the ANC

Rank	Monologual tweets	Interactive tweets	Total BaTwit	ANC
1	to	to	to	the
2	the	I	the	of
3	I	the	I	and
4	a	you	a	to
5	of	a	of	a
6	me	it	and	in
7	and	and	in	that

Each entry was assigned a corpus ID from *twit001* to *twit1000*. The header of the entry contains the information that has been stripped from the tweet during its conversion into plain text: the date of tweet’s creation, the original URL to its place of storage on Twitter servers, and the real name and Twitter handle of the author. The author is additionally identified by a user ID from *User1* to *User11*. These are matched to pseudonyms in a separate file. This procedure allows me to achieve anonymisation in the final presentation of results while preserving all of the information for personal use, should the need for double-checking arise.

Corpus annotation was performed by placing each tweet into a separate xml file and complementing it with metalinguistic and linguistic information in form of tags. Figure 4 shows an example corpus entry with several types of tags.

```

<?xml version="1.0" encoding="UTF-8"?>
<doc id='twit0002'>

<header>
  <interactivity>mono</interactivity>
  <cotext>single</cotext>
  <addressivity>mention</addressivity>
  <created>01-07-2012</created>
  <link>https://XXX</link>
  <theme>ordinary</theme>
  <profile>
    <handle>Gazelle</handle>
    <name>JaneDoe</name>
    <corpusID>User1</corpusID>
    <gender>female</gender>
  </profile>
</header>

<text lang="en">
<speechact type=indirectC> <topic type="nonballet"> So frustrating: JUST missed the
bus from Clapham Junct. </topic> </speechact> <speechact type=indirectC> <topic
type="nonballet"> Gah! </topic> </speechact>
</text>
</doc>

```

Figure 4. Schematic corpus entry

Further development of the annotation scheme is based on pilot analysis, which was necessarily qualitative, since such categories as ‘speech act’ and ‘theme’ cannot be assigned by an automatic tagger. I read every tweet individually to answer the question whether it was monologual or interactive, whether it was a part of a larger conversation or story, which topic it dealt with and what could be said about its author. This information was then coded in the header of the entry (see Figure 4):

- Cotext: single/continuous
- Interactivity: interactive/monologual
- Addressivity: mention/reply/retweet/address
- Theme: ballet/ordinary

Each tweet unit corresponds to a corpus entry. It is labelled in terms of its interactivity, addressivity, theme and co-text on the highest level of the hierarchical annotation (the tweet level). Interactivity indicates whether the tweet has an interactive dimension, which can be realised through addressing another Twitter user, mentioning him/her or replying to an existing thread. In terms of structure, interactive tweets (tagged <form>dia</form>) always involve the notation @Username. The manual tagging was nevertheless necessary because in some cases the authors use

@ to substitute the preposition “at” (e.g. “Look @me”), yielding false positives, and in others a typo may lead to a break in the @Username pattern (e.g. “@ ROHman how are you?”). The type of interactivity is labelled with <addressivity>mention/retweet/reply/address</addressivity>. While the Twitter literature often distinguishes between a mention, a retweet and a reply, which each have specific HTML syntax associated with them, an address is superficially identical to a reply. It usually does not provoke further conversation, is directed at a popular user who does not know the author, is unelicited, and is generally similar to fan mail or a groupie shouting greetings from the crowd while an actress gets out of her limousine. The one-sided nature of address distinguishes it from most interactive tweets and places it closer to the monologual end of the communicative continuum. The monologual tweets, in turn, are tagged <form>mono</form>. Addressivity in this case indicates the embeddedness of a tweet into the surrounding discursive context: if a monologual tweet is a part of a multi-tweet story, rather than a stand-alone unit, the <addressivity> tag receives the value ‘continuous’.

To be able to assess the importance of ballet as a theme around which the communication within the community centres, the tag <theme> was introduced. It can have two values – ‘ballet’ and ‘ordinary’. ‘Ballet’ covers all dance-connected aspects: own dancing as well as show reports, advice about ballet, pictures of famous ballerinas etc.

As a basic unit of annotation, I followed the example set by the creators of SPAAC (SPAAC Speech Act Annotation Scheme, University of Lancaster) and subdivided the tweets into C-units, further referred to simply as ‘units’. A C-unit (cf. Biber et al. 1999: 1069–1082) is, syntactically, an independent clausal or non-clausal unit, and functionally, a unit that can be assigned a given communicative function (SPAAC:2). C-units convey speech acts (also ‘moves’, ‘dialogue acts’, see the SPAAC document), which are regarded as the minimal communicative actions performed in talk. Since my main interest lies in discovering the use of evaluative and disclosive speech acts, I have developed a catalogue of speech act categories that was based on the literature on self-positioning, on the one hand, and has emerged from my qualitative close reading, on the other. The initial taxonomy was inspired by Locher’s (2006) and Bolander’s (2013) work on discursive moves and Searle’s (1975) original classification of speech acts. Consequently, I incorporated the relevant findings on discursive practices offline (Ädel 2011, Speer 2012). The categories were applied in a pilot study and thereafter refined to describe the informational structure of BaTwit. The classification of acts was checked for consistency and usefulness by a fellow researcher at the University of Bayreuth, who gave an invaluable outsider perspective. A sample of tweets has also been coded by three other coders. Interestingly, while linguist coders achieved a low degree of interrater agreement (under 70%), the choices of the third coder,

who was a representative of the ballet Twitter community, have shown 91% overlap with my coding. This discrepancy shows that the interpretation of an utterance as self-praise, complaint and so on is predicated upon the shared understanding of community values. For the further analysis, I decided to maintain the in-group interpretation rather than the outsider interpretation, and to provide explanations for the reader where necessary.

Each C-unit has been assigned attributes conveying the speech act category and the topic category. Tables 5.7 and 5.8 list and describe these. The categories are not intended to be completely equivalent in their scope. While self-disclosure is the focus of the study and therefore garnered the most attention and the most detailed sub-categorisation, other utterance types were grouped into larger heterogeneous categories such as ‘inform’ or ‘phatic’.

As the creators of SPAAC noted, it is impossible to achieve an entirely balanced and exhaustive system of speech act annotation that ensures a 100% consistent practice of assigning annotation, given the interpretive nature of the added linguistic information. The existing schemes demonstrate a great variability, from 200 speech act categories (SWBD-DAMSL scheme, Jurafsky et al. 1997), to 12 categories (HCRC Map Task Corpus, Carletta et al. 1996), to 41 categories of the Lancaster-based SPAAC (Leech and Weisser 2003). Specifically, the SPAAC document (p. 6) points out that in practice, a set of speech-act categories varies between the more form- or context-determined, e.g. ‘question’ vs. ‘request-service’ for “Could you check the line?”. The creators of SPAAC opted for the intermediate position on this scale given the generic nature of their data and the ultimate goal of automating the annotation. My data and research goals, on the contrary, are very specific, and the annotation is carried out manually, which allowed me to work with the more context-determined categories in the majority of cases.

In one of the first pragmatics collections, Jacob Mey (1979:9) compared linguistic approaches to looking-glasses. He said that linguists see their objects of inquiry through the looking-glass of linguistic theory. There are different looking-glasses for observing the same facts from different points of view, and theories predetermine both what and how is seen. In my case, such looking-glass is the discursive psychological theory of self-disclosure. The categories on the speech act level are seen as representing the wide class of positioning acts which may range from a positive evaluation of self (explicit positive positioning) to a non-evaluative report (implicit positioning). This in no way implies that the participants themselves ascribe higher importance to self-praising and complaining, or that these acts have the most weight quantitatively across Twitter in general. It simply reflects the focus of the present study and should be seen as training a looking-glass on a particular spot while letting the rest of the picture fade into the background for

now. It is also a methodological fact that “the boundaries of speech-act categories are fuzzy, and a major task of the annotation scheme [is] to limit the fuzziness as far as possible, even though arbitrary rules of assignment sometimes have to be employed” (SPAAC:11).

Table 5.6. The coding scheme structure

Positioning function	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
Bonding (affiliative) or Self-enhancing	Self-disclosive statements	evaluative	positive	self-praise
			negative	self-directed TPCs, self-denigration
	Non-disclosive statements	non-evaluative		non-evaluative self-disclosure
		evaluative	positive	reported evaluation, praise, thanks, expressions of support, congratulations
			negative	reported evaluation, TPCs, direct complaints, commiseration, criticism
		non-evaluative		informing, greetings, appeal for solidarity, appeal for information, agreement, thanks

The annotation was done in the following way. First, the tweets are subdivided into C-units. Each unit is given a speech act attribute and then assigned a supplementary value of a topic category (e.g. ‘skill’, ‘show’; see Table 5.8; cf. Leech and Weisser 2003: 1–2). The set of eight speech acts is arranged into groups in relation to the research focus on various types of self-disclosure: every unit is characterised as self-disclosive or non-disclosive, which may in turn be evaluative or non-evaluative (Table 5.6). The eight types (see Table 5.7) may co-occur, e.g. when the same act functions as a third party complaint and discloses aspects of ballet identity at the same time. Evaluative units receive a supplementary value of polarity (positive/negative, cf. Leech and Weisser 2003: 1–2). On a metadiscoursal level, both self-disclosive and non-disclosive groups may fulfil an affiliative or a self-enhancing discursive function; this functional level is not fixed in the annotation, but discussed later in the book on a case by case basis.

The self-disclosive categories are dealt with in the Chapters 6 and 7, where I also comment on the discrepancies between the in-group and the outsider interpretation of many utterances.

Table 5.7. Speech acts in tweets

Speech act	Explanation	Example
Self-praise	Utterances which disclose information about the author that raises his/her prestige, characterises him/her positively, or endows him/her with the attributes of a ballet hero; also referred to as “positive self-disclosure”	Filled the whole music for the grand pirouettes exercise for the first time – yay!
Third party complaint	A complaint in which the complainable is not the addressee or audience and cannot be changed or influenced by addressee or audience. TPC may target another person, an inanimate object or circumstances. TPC may also be realised as self-denigration, in which case it targets the speaker him/herself, minimises his/her own achievements, discloses negative attributes of their persona or attributes that clash with the image of a ballet hero.	So frustrating: JUST missed the bus from Clapham Junct. My problem is stability, and never seem to keep foot retiree.
Inform	This category includes assertive speech acts that contain no part that can be interpreted as evaluation and do not directly and obviously disclose information about the author; includes advice, general statements, rhetorical proposals etc. The category also includes non-evaluative self-disclosure, i.e. utterances which disclose information about the author that does not directly and obviously affect the author’s prestige, status, the ballet hero image. Reported evaluation, i.e. a quotation or a retweet of another person’s positive or negative evaluative statement that does not contain a predication about the author (retweeter), is coded as ‘inform’	that’s what Twitter is for.... I’m pacing my flat like a caged tiger in anticipation of this picture :D. RT @markhoppus: Respect to Romney. Did NOT want him to win, but that was a classy speech.
Praise	A speech act which explicitly or implicitly attributes credit to someone other than the speaker, usually the addressee, for some “good” (possession, characteristic, skill etc.) which is positively valued by both	The lovely and truly wonderful Miss Natalie Krapf! I owe her so much for all she teaches me:)
Direct complaint	A complaint in which the complainable is the fault of the addressee or the audience and/or can be repaired by them	Dear New York, I dislike this cold weather you have greeted me with.

(Continued)

Table 5.7. (Continued) Speech acts in tweets

Speech act	Explanation	Example
Appeal	An appeal for solidarity – A directive utterance whose main purpose is to perform a social task, rather than conveying information; ‘small talk’ or ‘grooming talk’, seeking agreement. An appeal for information – Questions and requests for specific information or assistance	Ever stop and think what your lifestyle would be like if you weren’t doing ballet?!. Question for critics (amateur and pro!): how do you keep track of thoughts during performances without distracting yourself from watching?
Agreement	Expressions of agreement with the addressee. May be minimal, or expand on the original statement e.g. by providing evidence	It certainly is!
Phatic	An expression of solidarity and support in relation to another’s disclosure; the speech that promotes human warmth (Burgess 1975); Congratulations; Greetings and leave-takings; Thanks	@Follower hope you get some clear direction thoughts and prayers to you!. A very happy Chanukah to all my followers celebrating tonight!. YAY...welcome back my dear, we’ve missed you!!. thanks for your show of faith Lorry
Unclear	The coder did not understand the tweet	
Other	The speech act does not fit any of the above categories	

Within the speech act subcategories one finds the information about the topic of the speech act. The tag ‘topic’ receives an attribute ‘type’ and one of fourteen values. The fourteen topics are explicated in Table 5.8. All of them, apart from the last category ‘nonballet’, invoke the balletic identity by referring to various aspects of real ballet students’ life. Just like speech act types, topic types can co-occur.

Finally, a number of additional features can be marked on every level of the hierarchy. These are optional and include:

- hashtag – <hashtag>#ballerinafeet</hashtag>
- link to a Twitter account – <twaccount>@Username</twaccount>
- link to an image file – <picture>http://XXX</picture>
- quotation from a tweet or another source – <quote>To be or not to be?..</quote>
- link to a web resource – <link>http://XXX </link>
- humorous use of language or emoticons – <humour>:))))))</humour>.

Returning to Figure 4 now, the annotation enables me to search the corpus simultaneously for specific linguistic expressions, pragmatic patterns, and metadata. To

be able to search each type of speech act separately, I created individual folders for every category and copied the corresponding corpus entries into those folders using simple batch processing. For word searches and concordancing, I used the open access concordancer AntConc developed by Laurence Anthony. This software allows the user to exclude xml tags from linguistic searches, and therefore the information such as amount of types and tokens, or word frequencies, can be extracted without having to create long stoplists.

Table 5.8. Topics of positioning

Topic	Explanation
Balletschool	reference to having gone, going or having being accepted to a respectable ballet school or studio (usually referred to by name, or sometimes in form of photos of apparel with the school's logo)
Show	ballet identity is established by making a reference to going to see a ballet, or watching ballet DVDs. Often realised as 'inform' speech act
Perform	ballet identity is established by informing the audience that the author performs in a ballet production, or has been cast to do so, and all the accompanying processes (e.g. posting pictures of costume fitting or rehearsals)
Skill	reference to ballet skill – prototypically “I can do five pirouettes”; but also more subtly, e.g. “My 40 fouettes today were very wobbly” or “Finally managed to lift my leg over 90 degrees”; pictures of doing splits, brags about being able to go to higher level class
Publicballet	brags about performing ballet exercises in public transport, in the street, at school
Physicaleffects	announcing effects of ballet on their bodies, usually as third party complaint – achy muscles, bloody feet, loose joints, bruises, tiredness
Exercise	demonstrates the speaker's knowledge of ballet as an art, ability to critique ballet shows that one has seen, and name appropriate techniques; applicable to professional shows and students' dancing alike
Dedication	tweets about activities demonstrating dedication to being a ballet dancer/student (like refusing holidays with the boyfriend for the sake of taking extra class)
Longhours	reference to working long hours because of ballet obsession – taking five hours of class, or not going to bed because one still has to train
Apparel	brags about buying or possessing cool ballet-related apparel; pointe shoes, gluing or sewing them
Celeb	reference to recognising ballet celebrities and being informed about them (e.g. when a prima ballerina's birthday is)
Unclear	the coder did not understand the topic of the tweet
Other	the topic does not fit any of the above categories
Nonballet	there is no connection to ballet

The corpus analysis of the data was based on three basic procedures. The first one is obtaining word frequency lists from the material. However, word frequency is something that requires interpretation through contextualisation (Davies 2009). The close reading of the results of a search query can be done by switching to KWIC (Key Word in Context) view in AntConc. It provides a look at the word as it occurs in the original tweet with up to 25 words on each side of the search term. Combined with the absolute frequency lists, this approach enables the researcher not only to identify the most frequently occurring items in the corpus but also to distinguish between homographs and get an impression of the usage contexts.

The absolute frequencies do not offer much insight into the data since in English the top positions tend to be occupied by the same function words. To evaluate the significance of frequent lexical words for this particular corpus, keyness is a useful measure. A keyword tool matches BaTwit with a reference corpus and measures how distinctive the use of words is in the first in comparison with the second (AntConc uses the log-likelihood measure to calculate keyness). Keywords are words which occur with an unusually high frequency in a text or corpus when that text or corpus is compared with another corpus (Bowker and Pearson 2002). The words with the highest positive keyness, then, characterise the particular style of the first corpus. AntConc also searches for the words with a high negative keyness, i.e. the words that occur unusually seldom in the corpus under investigation. As a reference corpus, the spoken component of the American National Corpus was used.

The third procedure was cluster analysis, or n-gram analysis. N-grams, also called lexical bundles, are computer-extracted recurring combinations of words found in electronic corpora that reflect formulaic usages (Adolphs 2008:97). Since n-gram frequency is predicated on two conditions – the likelihood of each word appearing in the corpus, and the likelihood of their co-occurrence – n-grams are more specific to the corpus than the frequent words and are often drawn upon to characterise genres, registers and styles (Biber et al. 1999, Greaves and Warren 2010, Scott and Tribble 2006). Taken together, the word frequency lists, the keyword lists and n-grams can sketch out the cardinal points of the subjects' linguistic repertoire.

5.6 Ethical considerations

Traditionally in research on human subjects, the study is considered low-risk if it answers the following criteria:

1. Participants are a non-vulnerable population (independent, competent, unimpaired adults);
2. The information being collected is not of sensitive or potentially private nature;
3. The method of gathering data is not physically intrusive or emotionally stressful for participants (see e.g. McGill University, 2013).

At a glance, the present study is low risk: all but one of the research participants are not vulnerable (*Annabelle* is a minor), the information which they have posted on their Twitters had been judged by the authors to be suitable for public display online and therefore assumed to be non-sensitive, the method of data gathering does not require any contact with the subjects. Nevertheless, recently there has been a fair amount of debate about what kind of internet research can be considered low-risk. The main challenge in figuring out ethical issues in CMC research lies in the difficulty of drawing a clear border between the public and the private.

In the early CMC research, most internet data short of private emails was considered public and no informed consent was obtained. Herring (1996:2), for instance, says that to avoid any ethical problems the data was drawn “from public or semi-public group interactions”, namely listserv emails. The spread of the internet, the multiplication of internet outputs, and the accompanying privacy scandals (e.g. Facebook claiming ownership of the uploaded photos) have caused researchers to reconsider. Currently, “key ... is a shift towards conceptualizing ‘public’ and ‘private’ in terms of both access and content, and accompanying this conceptualization as gradable and not absolute” (Bolander and Locher 2013:4). Bolander (2013:138–139) proposes to distinguish between data which is public in access and data which is public in content. In this manner, there exist at least four steps on the public/private cline: material may offer unrestricted access, i.e. require no password, and be impersonal; it may not be protected by a password, but be personal to the author; and the password-protected material can be both personal and impersonal. Clearly, it is also possible for a website to be less or more private: while some sites are accessible without registration (Wikipedia), others require a simple registration process and then are open to anyone (online dating websites), and yet on others only registered users with an explicit permission from the author may access the content (private profiles on Facebook). An solution to this problem has often been to anonymise the data. But in the age of Google, verbatim quotations which are invariably used in linguistic research can mostly be traced to the source without any difficulty (Androutsopoulos 2013). This underscores once again the need to take into account the participants’ own opinion about privacy and intellectual property.

The sheer multitude of online environments makes it impossible to decide on a single code of conduct for internet research. The issue is further complicated by the fact that the only person who can ultimately decide on whether content is personal is the author, and this judgment is dependent on social context and easily changes with time (boyd and Marwick 2011). A useful guideline, however, is offered in the document collectively prepared by the scholars from the Association of Internet Researchers. It recognises that at best, a flexible guideline can be produced that relies on the notions of responsibility to subjects, respect, and common sense (Markham and Buchanan 2012). The authors propose six guiding principles:

1. a researcher has an obligation to protect a vulnerable community/participant;
2. ethical decision-making is best approached through the application of practical judgment attentive to the specific context;
3. all digital research involves human subjects;
4. the rights of subjects may outweigh the benefits of research;
5. ethical issues may arise and need to be addressed during all steps of the research process;
6. ethical decision-making is a deliberative process, and researchers should consult as many people and resources as possible in this process (Markham & Buchanan 2012: 4–5).

In line with these suggestions, I have decided that the safest course to proceed would be to involve the participants into the conversation about research and give them a chance to decide how personal/private their data is. I have done this by addressing subjects on Twitter and shortly informing them that I am a linguist doing research about communicative practices of ballet students. This usually sparked up a conversation, which led to exchanging emails or private Twitter messages. If the user answered my query (which happened in all but two cases), I invited him or her in an email to confirm their desire to participate in a free-form consent form, which comprised the following key points: permission to use the tweets from the subjects' timeline in research and publications; permission to use transcriptions of interviews in research and publications; permission to use the personal information obtained from Twitter profiles and tweets (age, location, interests) in research and publications; the right to withdraw from the study; and the assurance that all data will be anonymised to the highest degree possible when providing verbatim quotations. In case of *Annabelle*, I have additionally contacted her mother who granted the permission to use her daughter's data as much as *Annabelle* sees fit. *Dancedance* has turned 18 by the moment of writing this chapter, so it was not necessary to involve her guardian. Incidentally, one of the participants exercised his right to withdraw in December 2013. This was the reason for

the late addition of *beyou's* and *rothbert11's* data to the corpus despite the fact that it could not be balanced for interactivity the same way as other corpus sections.

I believe that the anonymisation of the data, taken together with informing the participants about the study and using only public accounts, satisfy the ethical requirements to internet research. At the time of writing, Twitter did not enable full-text search of tweets, and therefore the quotations could not be traced to their sources through search engines. Certainly, one cannot completely exclude the Observer's Paradox when informed consent has been obtained. However, given that the data was collected in four short samples over a two and a half year period, and never immediately after the conversations about the research, it is reasonable to assume that the participants did not continuously adjust their communicative practices. Moreover, the analysis partly concerns such language features (forms of anaphoric reference, ellipsis) that are not readily available to conscious control of a language user.

5.7 Overview of the pragmatic repertoire of the subjects

In order to throw the three main tools of self-presentation – complaints, self-praise, and stories – into relief, this subsection will look at the totality of language practices that characterise the speech of the ballet Twitter community. It handles six categories: direct complaints, phatic utterances (greetings and leave-takings, expressions of support, congratulations, thanks), informing, praise, agreements and appeals. Table 5.9 provides the key figures for each. As noted above, the categories do not represent the same level of generality: subdivision of evaluative acts is fine-grained, while non-evaluative acts are grouped together on a level higher than offered by Ädel (2011) (phatic acts, appeals, informing).

Table 5.9. Speech act categories in BaTwit: Basic statistics

	N of occurrences	N of tweets	Tokens	Words per tweet, M	Interactivity		Unit coherence	
					mono	dia	cont	single
Direct complaint	4	4	64	16	4	0	3	1
Phatic	178	169	2,532	15	20	149	6	163
Inform	558	490	8,663	18	224	266	77	413
Praise	198	164	2,744	17	62	102	30	134
Agree	42	41	652	16	1	40	1	40
Appeal	175	156	2,606	17	70	86	32	124

A few things about this repertoire put the ensuing discussion of self-presentation into context. First of all, there is a thematic core in the community discourse that spans these ‘minor’ speech acts as well as the major vehicles of identity work. The thematic core is, naturally, ballet. For instance, a large part of the speech act repertoire of a ballet student is made up of ‘informs’ (characteristic for other social media too) that create the constant stream of low-relevance self-focused updates and induce the sense of social proprioception. The bulk of the informing (non-evaluative speech acts and reported evaluation) is tagged ‘ballet’ (280 tweets, or 57%). Table 5.10 identifies the high frequency lexical words associated with this core. Three of these words (‘ballet’ rank 2, ‘twitter’ rank 6, ‘dance’ rank 15) are in the top 15 of keywords in comparison to the spoken component of the American National Corpus, four are in the top 30.

Table 5.10. High frequency lexical words in the ‘inform’ subcorpus

Hits	Words
57	ballet
54	just
29	twitter
26	dance
25	time
22	think
20	class

The same holds for praise. In the majority of cases, praise in tweets is addressed to a third party who is not present in the audience, or includes a Twitter handle of a ballet company or celebrity who belong to the potential, but not actual, audience of the tweet. The object of praise is typically a dancer, a whole ballet performance in a theatre, or one’s teacher. Such praise reinforces common values within the community and builds solidarity by inclusivity. At the same time, praise invokes membership categories such as ‘art lover’ and ‘ballet student’ and contributes to the identity construction. In a word, praise and compliments appear to function as yet another variety of positioning acts.

Secondly, the findings highlight the presence of two identity-building repertoires: one has to do with self-disclosure and the other with affiliative, supportive evaluation. This is reflected, for instance, in the scarcity of direct complaints. While the unity of opinion in what is to be viewed negatively, and closing ranks against the norm breakers, are useful means of establishing common ground,

they are performed in third party complaints (to be discussed in Chapter 7). In contrast to a third party complaint, a direct complaint – a speech act in which the speaker expresses negative feelings towards the state of affairs described in the proposition and for which s/he holds the hearer responsible – is extremely rare in BaTwit. Community members avoid direct complaints and the associated personal shaming. Systematic observation confirms the quantitatively based conclusion that direct complaints are not a characteristic feature of Twitter discourse. It appears that direct complaints occur with any consistency only in tweets addressed to companies and service providers, as Page's (2014) study of corporate apologies shows. Even in Page's large corpus (177,735 tweets) only 1,183 apologies were elicited, which can be taken to correspond roughly to the amount of direct complaints; and her corpus was clearly biased towards a specific group of users who are likely to use Twitter for dealing with unhappy customers, disappointed fans or disgruntled employees (30 celebrities, 40 corporate accounts and 30 ordinary users). Only three searchable tweets with criticism occurred in BaTwit, and these were framed as third party complaints. None of the direct complaints in the corpus were ballet-related. Therefore, I will argue that the FTA of direct complaint is a dispreferred method of impression management in the ballet community.

The importance of the affiliative repertoire emerges from the analysis of the appeals, agreement, and phatic acts, as well. Phatic utterances include small talk, thanks, greetings, leave taking, "inquiries about health, comments on the weather, affirmations of some supremely obvious state of things" (Malinowsky 1985: 151). In BaTwit, they are very common and include mostly collective congratulations on various holidays, greetings and farewells, well-wishing to the followers on upcoming performances, commiserations, and wishes to get better which usually serve as uptake for third party complaints on 'physical effects'.

Thanking appears to play a key role in constructing the affiliative repertoire on Twitter (N=53, or 30% of all phatic units). Thanking tweets have an average length of 16 words, i.e. in the normal range and slightly under the average figure for the corpus as a whole. In contrast to direct complaints and informing, thanking is associated with a stable set of IFIDs: 'thank you', 'thanks', 'grateful' and 'appreciate' (Aijmer 1996, Jucker and Taavitsainen 2011). This tendency holds for Twitter discourse, as well, as Table 5.11 summarising the six most frequent n-grams demonstrates.

Given that IFIDs are short, usually two to four words, we may expect elaboration in thanking tweets. Elaboration is a feature of thanking among friends. Eisenstein and Bodman (1986: 176), for instance, found that "shorter thanking episodes sometimes reflected greater social distance between interlocutors". Elaboration may be performed by adding one or two conventional intensifiers, mentioning the reason for thanking, or combining the two (Cheng 2010). In BaTwit, mentioning the reason for thanking was by far the most frequent means of elaboration (N=11).

Table 5.11. N-grams in the thanking subcorpus

Rank	N-gram	Hits
1	thank you	10
2	thanks for	9
3	so much	5
4	for the	5
5	are you	3
6	how are you	3

Often it was extended with less conventional expressions of gratitude, e.g. “they come at the perfect time” in 1:

- (1) dancedance: @Follower thank you for your words of encouragment-they come at the perfect time and mean so much! 3:18 PM 24 Sep 2013

In combination with phatic acts, thanking typically took the second slot in ‘how-are-you’ chains (Placencia 2004) and served as a building block for multi-turn phatic chats. Such chains were common in my data, contrary to Ädel’s (2012: 2941) claim that they do not occur in online material. Far from being contradictory evidence, this aspect of the data lends weight to the choice of the analytical focus in the present investigation of Twitter discourse. It confirms the expectation that the community of ballet students not only has clearly delineated boundaries, but also possesses the norms that are different from other online communities (in Ädel’s (2012) case, a group of student friends communicating online). The propensity for the affiliative repertoire, at the expense of any confrontational or critical language, is quite striking, as will become evident in the course of the analysis. It also makes the community of ballet students stand out from other similar discourse communities oriented towards excelling in a physical endeavour.

Finally, the remaining two acts – appeals and agreement – crop up in expressions of support, as well. Appeals as a coding category were recognised almost exclusively on the basis of their surface form. However, in case of appeals in BaTwit, the pragmatic function tended to be uniform. The questions served to fulfil Ädel’s discourse function ‘seek agreement’, which “shows concern for calibrating one’s own opinions or goals with those of the interlocutor(s)” (2012: 2940). In line with Ädel’s findings, appeals in BaTwit demonstrated the user’s concern with group values by incorporating confirmation requests and comprehension checks into the communication (see Example 2). An expected uptake of an appeal for solidarity was often nonverbal, i.e. favouriting or retweeting the original tweet. When verbal uptake occurred, it manifested as agreement.

- (2) Annabelle: Does anyone else count down to @prixdelausanne?! New trailer out. Can't wait. Jan 2014. [link] 3:25 PM 24 Sep 2013

Agreement, or aligning, represents an expected uptake of an appeal for solidarity. Although it is difficult to make a judgement about the attitude to a withheld agreement in diagnostic contexts since passive face-threat on Twitter seldom leads to confrontation, in interviews the subjects (*Gazelle* and *beyou*) confirmed that silence in answer to three or four “friendly questions” would make them feel uneasy. Possibly, the face-threat of being ignored is mitigated by the fact that Twitter is a noisy environment where communication moves at a rapid pace. Lack of feedback, therefore, may happen because the addressee missed the tweet in the whirl of new updates on his/her timeline.

Agreeing with other community members is of key importance in establishing belonging and solidarity. Agreeing shows that interlocutors share values and opinions, which comprise the common ground crucial to the existence of a community (Clark 1996). In their study of business interactions, Clark et al. (2003) found agreements to be of paramount importance to establishing rapport. Explicit agreement is relatively rare in BaTwit (N=41). However, phatic acts, among them minimal supportive tokens such as emoticons, also constitute alignment in interactive tweets.

In this section, I have avoided almost every mention of the elephant in the room – self-praise and third party complaints, the vehicles of self-presentation which fall into the similar pattern concerning the presence of the thematic core and the preference for affiliation. They will be examined in detail in the following chapters. I have described in broad strokes other illocutionary choices available to my subjects in the hope to provide a more balanced picture of their communicative activities. It is hard to deny, however, that already at this stage the building of an identity of a successful ballet student and an agreeable member of the ballet community comes to the fore as the central communicative endeavour in the data.

5.8 Conclusion

This chapter familiarises the reader with the data and sheds light on the key analytic tool of the study: the BaTwit corpus, its make-up and annotation scheme. By operationalising some of the theoretical concepts introduced in the previous chapters, it steps up to the analysis in the next part of the book.

At the outset, I have outlined the principles for the selection of subjects and shortly described the demographic profile and interests of each of the eleven Twitter users. This recap has revealed that the subjects' personal life as well as Twitter

communication is to a large degree centred around their enthusiasm for ballet as a sport and an art form. This focal point was operationalised with the help of the analytical concept of discourse community. Relying on the anthropological literature about ballet, I have detailed the key values and practices that are associated with belonging to the community and serve as an 'enough' set of emblematic features for invoking ballet identity.

I have then proceeded to discuss qualitative methodologies for internet research. The comprehensive framework of CMDA that had been developed by Herring (2004) and refined by Androutsopoulos (2008) was chosen as a guideline for this study, since it covers the key aspects of organising research: choosing feasible research questions, selection and sampling of data, relationship to informants, operationalising theory, and hints for analysis. Necessarily, CMDA is a guide, not a rulebook to be followed every step of the way because the exploratory nature of qualitative research precludes one-size-fits-all methodologies.

Further, I have set out the technical details of the corpus collection and coding. The BaTwit corpus consists of 1,000 tweets, 16,458 words, balanced for gender of authors and for tweet interactivity (monologal vs. interactive). The subjects, with the exception of two last informants, have contributed 50 monologal and 50 dialogal tweets each. Inspired by the existing literature on speech act types and discursive moves, I have developed a catalogue of positioning speech act types based on the data itself. The resulting coding scheme contains two types of information: tweet-descriptive and tweet-content. The descriptive coding adds the information about the date of creation, original URL, user name and id, tweet theme, tweet addressivity and tweet interactivity to the corpus entry. The content coding contains the information about the type of the positioning speech act (one of eight types) and the topic of positioning (one of twelve topics). Additionally, the units can be described as including humour, qualifying moves, quotations, hashtags and links to Twitter accounts. The positioning acts that were judged important for this study and coded for include: self-praise, third party complaint, direct complaint, inform, praise, appeal for solidarity and for information, agreement, phatic acts. Topics of positioning include attending ballet performances, performing on stage, dancing skill, doing ballet exercises in public, physical effects of ballet on student's body, dedication to dance, long hours connected to ballet training, possession of ballet clothes and dance shoes, attending ballet school, spotting ballet celebrities, and knowledge of ballet terms and exercises.

Finally, I have presented some preliminary results obtained from processing BaTwit with AntConc concordance in regard to the speech act repertoire. I have shortly described the two main points of gravity that affect direct complaints, phatic utterances, praise, thanks, informing, appeals and agreement. The first is the thematic and lexical focus on ballet. The second is the emerging preference for

affiliation that completely suppresses any explicit confrontation. Contrary to the popular opinion of online discourse, swearing and insults were completely absent from the corpus. The few instances of mild derogatory words (“stupid”, “eejit”, N=10) referred to the speaker him- or herself. These aspects lead me to hypothesise that in-groupness in the ballet community is built pragmatically via cues too subtle to create an impression of solidarity by exclusivity. Although, as Chapter 9 will show, the language is standard and explicit, the feeling of community is maintained by conforming to certain rules of conduct.

As the next step, I will turn to the results on the three key communicative practices in BaTwit. In Chapter 6, I will look at self-praising practices in ballet Twitter and the function they fulfil in the community. Chapter 7 places third party complaints into the limelight. In Chapter 8, I will look at narrativity in the data: stories on Twitter, their linguistic features, and their role in identity construction. Chapter 9 will bring together the findings of the previous chapters and demonstrate that while there are two distinct interpretive repertoires used by the subjects, they both contribute to the same interactional purpose – the move from the status of a novice to the status of a full-fledged member of the ballet community.

Self-disclosure

6.1 Introduction

Chapter 3 has identified two problems tied to positive self-disclosure. First, there appear to be interactional constraints on self-praise because it may be construed as self-elevating, and therefore face-threatening to the hearer. Second, self-praise is an evaluation in which the speaker is the subject of the praise and also the object being praised. It leads to an epistemic problem, since the type 2 knowable (“an assertion hearable as repeated”) should be delivered by a party external to the evaluated trait (Pomerantz 1980). I have hypothesised that these two problems will be handled in a manner similar to the compliment responses, namely by following the strategies of the third response type. In this chapter, I will check the hypothesis against the BaTwit data. To gain a better understanding of the processes of positive self-disclosure, I will consider thematic and participatory distribution of self-praising tweets and outline the conclusions about their linguistic form on the basis of corpus analysis. Since, as the theoretical part proposed, positive self-disclosure is viewed as a type of positioning, I will also turn to the role of this speech act in constructing the virtual identity of a ballet student.

To recapitulate, the parallel with compliment responses inspires the working definition of an act of self-praise that will be used in this chapter. Drawing on Holmes’ (1986:485) definition of compliment, I consider self-praise to be a speech act which explicitly or implicitly attributes credit to the speaker for some ‘good’ (possession, accomplishment, skill, etc.) which is positively valued by the speaker and the potential audience. As such, self-praise includes announcements of accomplishments as well as explicit positive evaluations of some aspect of self.

The more inclusive definition (the in-group understanding of positive self-disclosure, including disclosures concerning excessive hours of exercise, bloody feet etc.) have resulted in a higher number of tweet units than found in the earlier analysis of an overlapping dataset (Dayter 2014). Positive evaluative self-disclosive units (further ‘positive self-disclosure’, or ‘self-praise’) are very common in BaTwit (N=313, 31%) and constitute the second most widely used pragmatic strategy for all subjects apart from *Gazelle*. Table 6.1 presents the basic statistics

on the distribution of positive disclosures per user as well as distribution by tweet type and by topic.

The results below introduce the trend that will continue throughout the corpus: there is no significant difference in the usage patterns among male and female subjects. There is a clear preference to disclose in monologual tweets and the emphasis is on positive disclosure on ballet topics. This preliminary statistic confirms the prominence of the speech act in the repertoire of the ballet community and sets the direction for a more detailed analysis.

Table 6.1. Distribution of positive disclosures in BaTwit

Category	User	N of positive disclosures	% of total self-praise
Users	Gazelle	5	1.6%
	FeistyGirl	28	8.9%
	dancedance	46	14.7%
	pointe35	25	8%
	Annabelle	51	16.3%
	Total female	155	49.5%
	ROHman	38	12.1%
	Connoisseur	26	8.4%
	he_danseur	47	15%
	PasDeDeux	22	7%
	beyou	18	5.8%
	rothbert11	7	2.2%
	Total male	158	50.5%
	Total	313	100%
Tweet type	Monologual	211	67%
	Interactive	102	33%
	Total	313	100%
Topic	Ballet-related	277	88%
	Ordinary	36	12%
	Total	313	100%

In the following section, I will discuss how the patterns of compliment responses can be recast as initial moves, and illustrate the use of the resulting three groups of strategies by ballet students. A close look at the examples will help to confirm that appropriateness of self-praise is largely predicated on the use of ballet-related topics and attributes and, therefore, is specific to this discourse community. I will

attempt to derive formulas or IFIDs which are characteristic of self-praise and could be used in corpus studies. Finally, I will illustrate the appropriateness judgments through the presence of positive uptake of self-praise.

6.2 Self-praise on ballet topics: Emblematic features

The typical assessables that feature in ‘verbal gifts’ (Kerbrat-Orecchioni 1987) of face, for instance compliments, are attractive appearance, material possessions, skills and laudable personal traits (Holmes 1988, Knapp et al. 1984). The ballet community’s self-praise may draw on the same repertoire:

- (1) Connoisseur: Happy with my triathlon result, first for four years 7:59 AM 24 Sep 2013

Here the author discloses information about his participation in a triathlon and evaluates the results positively from his subjective point of view, but the disclosure also implies such concurrent qualities as willpower and athleticism. As Table 6.2 demonstrates, self-praise on conventional assessables occurred in about 10% of all positive self-disclosures in the corpus (a unit can refer to more than one assessable, therefore the total in Table 6.2 is larger than the number of self-praise units).

Table 6.2. Topics of positive self-disclosure

Topics	Non-ballet	Show	Performance	Skill	Physical effects	Exercise	Dedication	Long hours	Celebrities	Apparel	Ballet school	Public ballet
N	34	77	40	25	14	42	9	18	22	17	21	2

But as I demonstrated in the content analysis of balletic self-praise, the positive disclosure on non-ballet topics takes a secondary role to the dance-specific attributes (Dayter 2014). Such qualities as spotting ballet celebrities (N=22, 7%) and the skill to perform a double pirouette (N=25, 8%) construct the image of a ballet hero more effectively that a general reference to physical fitness:

- (2) ROHman: Got repeatedly #balletstarstruck: Scarlett, McRae, Stix-Brunell, Cope, Lamb, @Bennet76, Hirano and more... 2:01 AM 9 Nov 2012
- (3) he_danseur: Closest to a clean double pirouette in a long while, and to the left no less! #ballet #progress (and #luck) 5:40 AM 23 Nov 2013

The balletic attributes from the Table 6.2 require a fair amount of shared knowledge for recognition. For example, ‘public ballet’ refers to a dance meme that swept through ballet Twitter several years ago and has stayed on as an emblematic activity: striking poses from the classical ballet in unsuitable public places such as libraries, streets (where bicycle racks serve as convenient barre replacements) or beaches, and preferably shocking the unsuspecting bystanders with one’s flexibility while doing it. The ‘physical effects’ category largely comprises the feet topos. References to bloody bunioned feet, the ultimate mark of pride for a ballerina, serve as a marker to distinguish genuine ballet tweeters from those who tweet about ballet (critics, fans, dance moms). On the whole, any believable demonstration of obsession with ballet is likely to award face to the speaker.

A hypothesis as to which symbolic features are ‘enough’ (Blommaert and Variis 2012) to invoke an image of a ballet hero can be formed from considering the most popular topics of the disclosures. The subjects most commonly disclose the information about their involvement in ballet performances, attending ballets, and training. This suggests two key competences that make up a ballet identity: appreciation of ballet as an art form, and practical dancing skill. Disclosure about performance is especially weighty because it validates the claim to professional status.

6.3 Strategies for rendering self-praise appropriate

In Chapter 3, I reviewed the findings of compliment research that appear to be relevant to the study of self-praise since in self-praise, the speaker’s need for truthfulness and self-disclosure (Derlega et al. 1993, Jourard 1971) conflicts with the same constraint as in compliment response: the Modesty Maxim. The common set of strategies labelled ‘the third response type’ emerged from the summary of the findings. By employing the third response type, the speakers aim to resolve the conflict between preferences in order to maintain social comity. A look at the performance of such responses may shed light on the act of self-praise, as well. Altogether, researchers have outlined six strategies which aim to reconcile the Modesty and Agreement Maxims. Table 6.3 is a summary of these findings, followed by an explanation of their relevance to the study of self-praise.

Although the underlying logic of the ‘third type’ response remains the same when applied to self-praising strategies, some issues arise pertaining to the organisation of conversational structure. To start with, bona fide self-praise is seldom a second pair-part. A look at the Table 6.3 makes it immediately evident that options such as “questioning the sincerity of the interlocutor” or “ignore” are problematic. For the purposes of our conversational context, the (a) Questions may be reinterpreted as a means of expressing hesitation. Hesitation, or hedged

Table 6.3. Compliment responses that reconcile Modesty and Agreement Maxims (adapted from Dayter 2014)

a. Questions	1. Question the content 2. Question the sincerity	Pomerantz (1978), Holmes (1986)
b. Evaluation shift	1. Downgrade the evaluation 2. Qualify the evaluation	Pomerantz (1978)
c. Referent shift	1. Shift credit away from self 2. Return the compliment	Pomerantz (1978)
d. Reinterpretation	1. Reinterpret as another speech act	Herbert and Straight (1989)
e. Comment on history	1. Legitimate evasion 2. Reference to hard work 3. State that it was easy to do	Herbert and Straight (1989), Holmes (1986), Manes (1983)
f. Ignore	1. Ignore	Herbert and Straight (1989)

self-praise, may be framed as a disclaimer ([I'm not sure I should say this, but I do double pirouettes much cleaner than other girls!] – constructed example) or incorporate parenthetical verbs (“I hope”, “I dare say”, cf. Fraser 1990). The strategy (f) Ignore the compliment may be taken to correspond to ostensible non-performance of self-praise. However, at this stage of analysis such non-performance is impossible to operationalise since we lack descriptive analyses of self-praising that would allow one to define contexts in which it may be reasonably expected to occur. Therefore, I omit (f) Ignore from the framework.

The (b) Evaluation shift group of strategies is independent of the sequential position of the act and may occur in self-praise. The evaluation of the assessable can be shifted down through mitigating by means of downgraders and evaluative lexis of lower positive valence. The (c) Referent shift causes no issues with the monological structure of self-praise, as well. A referent shift away from self involves crediting someone else for one's success. Such a shift of focus to, for example, parents, teachers or fellow dancers minimises self-elevation at the expense of the hearer and mitigates the face threat. By using the addressivity marker @ the speaker can involve those s/he shifts credit to into the conversation, although the discrepancy between the informants' offline and online social networks means that often the credited person is not on Twitter.

Explanations and accounts of the state of affairs that is the subject of self-praise are often cast in the form of one or more finite clauses. They comprise a rather disparate group of communicative devices termed here (e) Comment on history after Herbert (1989). Commenting on the assessable allows for indirectness, i.e. performing the face-threatening act ‘off-record’ (Brown and Levinson 1987). Legitimate evasion, for example, provides “a semantically relevant informative

response which simply ignores the positive affect expressed by the compliment” (Holmes 1986: 493).

(d) Reinterpretation, akin to a comment on history, performs self-praise off-record. The speaker intentionally, and sometimes coyly, misunderstands the face-enhancing function of the utterance. Herbert and Straight (1989) have shown how a compliment might be alternatively understood as a request to borrow the assessable. The compliment recipient thus chooses to see the compliment as a surface form which conveys a different illocutionary force, e.g. an indirect request. This strategy hinges on the fact that the surface structure of compliments does not unambiguously point to their function: there are no straightforward IFIDs (Golato 2005: 7) that would commit both interlocutors to the interpretation of the surface form as a compliment.

Analogously to complimenting, indirectness is possible in self-praising. Self-praise may be framed as a simple assertion without any evaluation or even with negative evaluation. The ballet-specific set of values affords the speaker an unlimited choice of surface forms. A complaint, an apology, an invitation may all constitute self-praise given the correct context – an interpretation that is confirmed by uptake in the form of congratulations or jocular expressions of envy. By ostensibly performing a different speech act, the speaker denies responsibility for breaking the constraint against self-praise.

Manes (1983) noticed an interesting paradox regarding responses to compliments on achievements. On the one hand, a recipient often denies credit on the grounds that the assessable was easy to achieve. On the other hand, it is a common response strategy to state that the assessable was indeed a result of hard work. This second approach is reminiscent of Miller et al.’s (1992) high effort attribution, which was found to be one of the crucial components in casting a self-praise act as a positive self-disclosure rather than a brag. Manes hypothesises that “in our society, talent ranks above hard work” (1983: 102), and, therefore, to claim that achieving the assessable was easy because of talent would be a self-elevation even more crass than simply accepting credit without further comment. Both types of comments may be employed in self-praise; it would be interesting to observe whether cultural variables affect their distribution.

I had hypothesised that self-praise in interaction could be performed by means of one of the six groups of strategies, or combinations of these strategies. Applying this framework to the analysis of ballet Twitter accounts has borne out the expectation that compliment responses and self-praise follow similar patterns (cf. Dayter 2014). But the close work with the BaTwit corpus has led to much adjustment of the categories, some of them emerging as more important and others fading completely. Predictably, some CMC-specific devices such as hyperlinking forced their way forward. Contrary to an earlier analysis of ballet Twitters (Dayter 2014), the

informants made extensive use of membership categorisation devices to convey self-praise. A considerable number of acts of positioning did not involve positive evaluative judgements as such, but contributed to the construction of a ballet identity by claiming membership of related categories such as a ballet student, a dancer, a ballet connoisseur. Table 6.4 below summarises the findings. In the following I will discuss in detail the descriptive statistics and qualitative findings and attempt to sketch out the key factors in the linguistic performance of self-praise.

Table 6.4. Self-praise in ballet Twitters

Strategy	Example
1. Self-praise bald on record	(4) Gazelle: En dehors pirouettes R a mix of singles & doubles. Going L doubles & triples AND ONE QUADRUPLE!!! I did 4 turns! FOUR! #balletjoy FOUR!!! 3:50 PM 9 Nov 2012
2. Explicit self-praise modified	(5) ROHman: Pic of me and one of the dancers today doing a bit of partnerwork: [link] 7:51 PM 10 Feb 2013 ROHman: @PasDeDeux Just messing about at the end of class – although I’ve got to do something similar with the guest dancer doing O/O...-/ 7:57 PM 10 Feb 2013
2.1 Disclaim the face-threat	
2.2 Shift focus away from self	(6) dancedance: cannot believe how much i am learning from this new coach! Feeling so thankful and blessed! She is amazing! 11:21 PM 3 Nov 2012
2.3 Self-denigrate	(7) he_danseur: Ugh, so. many. chaîné turns. Got praised for not taking too-big steps, but still need to spot better. Dizzy swerving, not fun. 6:05 AM 10 Nov 2012
2.4 Refer to hard work	(8) dancedance: Despite how hard it is right now, i am improving daily and each day is a new day to grow and be the best that I can be as a dancer & person! 6:13 PM 24 Sep 2013
3. Reinterpretation	(9) Gazelle: @Follower I JUST managed to complete the exercise
3.1 Self-praise followed by a complaint	*proud* counterbalances falling out of penchée later, no? (tbh, did pop knee!) 1:59AM 9 May 2013
3.2 Self-praise framed as a third party complaint	(10) he_danseur: Today could use a disco nap, but no rest for me. Done w/class at @ODCsf, now shower and dinner at home, then off to @balletsj gala! 1:54 AM 4 Nov 2012
4. Invoking a membership category	(11) FeistyGirl: The “draftwood” back drop with its soft arches, linear lines & jagged angles was a perfect match to the 2nd cast dancing of #ROHaeternum 6:47 PM 23 Feb 2013

6.3.1 Self-praise bald on record

The first strategy for performing self-praise on Twitter is to deliver it straightforwardly and without modification. This strategy is the closest to the practice of bragging.

As discussed in Chapter 3, it is usually assumed that unmitigated self-praise is a socially censored behaviour, which constitutes a threat to the hearer's positive face by suggesting that the speaker is better than the hearer (Edmondson 1981; Herbert 1990).

Contrary to this assumption, everyday narratives in Twitter frequently report the author's small achievements and successes, such as a personal record in running, as in 12, or a well-performed exercise, as in 13:

- (12) ROHman: Needless to say, I felt EPIC during my run. Had to restrain myself a little for ballet tomorrow but ended up with 6km in 30mins!:) #PB
10:43 PM 9 Feb 2013
- (13) ROHman: Filled the whole music for the grand pirouettes exercise for the first time – yay! Quick break then variation practice. 2:31 PM 10 Feb 2013

Explicit self-praise on Twitter appears to run counter to the modesty constraints. However, I suggested earlier that such self-enhancement accomplishes solidarity building in a different manner. The content of explicit self-praise in my data centres on ballet-specific assessables rather than universal commodities such as money or romantic success. With self-evaluating statements concerning such assessables (e.g. athleticism and dancing skill in Examples 12 and 13), authors endorse the constitutive values of the discourse community and give collective face. Thus, ballet-focussed self-praise facilitates solidarity by inclusivity by virtue of raising the status of the profession rather than an individual.

Uniquely to CMC environments, positive self-disclosure can also be accomplished by hyperlinking, hashtags and embedded multimedia files. Such devices are routinely built into the clause structure of microblogging posts (Zappavigna 2012) and allow users to play with a variety of virtual spaces. Autobiographical narratives on Twitter are highly embedded, i.e. cannot easily be detached from their rhetorical, discourse and social context (Ochs and Capps 2001: 36–37). Links, hashtags, pictures and short videos help to anchor tweets to the wider context and, at the same time, amplify the desired status of the Twitter user (Page 2012: 111). The role of hashtags in creating cohesion across multi-tweet narratives will be considered in more detail in Chapter 8, and varieties of hashtags in self-praise are examined in the next section. Below I focus on the role of links and pictures in substantiating positive disclosure.

In a text-based environment of Twitter, photographs of self are the key means of authenticating claims to ballet student identity. Paralinguistic devices are used to construct the minimal pattern of self-praise, which is similar to the minimal complimenting pattern outlined by Manes and Wolfson (1981): (intensifier) + adjective + noun phrase. While the compliment in the latter scheme is accomplished by stating the superiority/positive qualities of an object linguistically, the Twitter pattern may provide a hyperlink to the picture of the item in question and, optionally, an emphatic comment or clarification of the author's connection to the item:

- (14) Annabelle: Ellison Ballet 2013 #ballet #ebis by @Photographer @ellisonballet [link to a Facebook post] 10:02 AM 27 Aug 2013
- (15) PasDeDeux: Getting ready to get my 'Goon' on! @BalletCompany @Kennedy Center | Eisenhower Theater [photograph]

The link in Example 14 leads to a picture of *Annabelle* doing a jump in the Ellison Ballet studio, a prestigious institution in New York City that offers summer intensive programs. The photograph in Example 15 depicts the author in stage make up looking in the mirror in the theatre dressing room. The implicitness may be taken one step further in tweets which are not recognisable as positive disclosure (indeed, not interpretable at all) without the crucial information in the visual mode:

- (16) PasDeDeux: Love being here! [photograph of the Kennedy Center] 3:00 PM 8 Nov 2012

This pattern discloses the information about the author while leaving the evaluative judgement to the audience, who can, however, be carefully guided toward such judgement by the linguistic complements to the link.

6.3.2 Explicit self-praise modified

The special status of explicit positive self-disclosure concerning ballet-related attributes is substantiated by the fact that other forms of self-praise in my data are routinely modified. This replicates the results by Wu (2011), who found the designedly bipartite 'self-praise plus modification' turn format to be one of the most frequent patterns for performing self-praise in Mandarin.

In the following, I will describe four discursive devices that Twitter users employ to attenuate self-praise: self-praise plus disclaimer, self-praise plus shift of focus, self-praise plus self-denigration and self-praise plus reference to hard work.

Self-praise plus disclaimer. The first modifying design is a remedial apology delivered in the same tweet as the self-praise. Brown and Levinson (1987) classify

apology as a negative politeness strategy, and Fraser (1981: 259) pinpoints its function as a reaction to offences, such as violation of social norms or failure to fulfil personal expectations. The apology in tweets does not necessarily target the interactional transgression. It is a symbolic act of humility that may have as its object aspects of reality for which the author cannot be held accountable (e.g. brags about great climate or economic situation), or another action of the author:

- (17) FeistyGirl: Sorry Tweepers of Twitterville for my lack of presence of late,
there's only one of me and many things (and people) needing my attentions!
5:49 PM 9 Apr 2013

The self-elevating act in Example 17 is the reference to *FeistyGirl's* busyness and popularity. However, *FeistyGirl* apologises, not for bragging about high status, but for neglecting her Twitter audience. An apology in this example functions as a disclaimer.

Further devices that help the authors to clarify their (non-disruptive to social comity) intentions include parenthetical verbs and humour. Indeed, it has been shown that humour is a politeness strategy that attenuates face-threatening acts and may protect the speaker's positive face by expressing self-deprecatory or apologetic sentiments (Holmes 2000: 167). In a CMC environment, the intended disclaimer can be further clarified by hashtags added outside of the syntactic structure of the utterance, such as #ouch in Example 18:

- (18) ROHman: Something I've learnt playing #rothbart – don't die too violently
otherwise you'll have a fair collection of bruises the next day! #ouch
4:12 PM 11 Feb 2013

The incorporation of a compensatory act into the tweet design betrays the author's awareness of the problematic nature of self-praise and constitutes an attempt to restore 'ritual equilibrium' (Goffman 1971: 140). Alternatively, a whole 'small story' (Georgakopoulou 2007) containing positive self-disclosure may be carefully negotiated with another member of the community over several turns:

- (19) dancedance: [photo of dancedance in front of a theatre]
Follower: @dancedance aw! Hello pretty face!
dancedance: @Follower haha i was telling my mom not to take the picture
and she snapped....i was on the way to rehearsal:D how was your day?
Follower: @dancedance good! Home from work relaxing. Looking forward
to the weekend. Yours?
dancedance: @Follower good! did dulcinea for the first time "in public" and
it went pretty well but still loooooooooong way to go! Glad u get 2 relax
Follower: @dancedance Glad you're making progress! Keep at it!

The detailed analysis of this interaction is given in Chapter 8. What is important to notice here is the amount of phatic communication surrounding the two self-praising turns, the photograph and the disclosure about performing the part of *Dulcinea*. The weightier self-praise in turn 5 is delivered only after the follower provides a warrant for it by asking “Yours?” This short example illustrates how the traditional dimensions of a narrative are reshaped in the context of Twitter: co-tellership, embeddedness through links and pictures, and non-linear structure characterise the emergent small stories in microblogs (Page 2012: 116). On the level of community, the tellability of a narrative is defined by its focus on ballet-related matters and differs significantly from tellability considerations in ordinary talk.

Self-praise plus shift of focus. Assigning credit for the accomplishment to someone else is a discursive device widely used in compliment responses to restore status balance (Herbert 1990; Holmes 1988). The same is true for self-praise, although both self-praise and shift of credit are delivered by the speaker him/herself. A common scheme is to self-praise on the subject of dancing expertise, but also to credit one’s teacher for helping one achieve a high level of technique:

- (20) FeistyGirl: What a good (tough) class 2night! The lovely Miss Natalie really is pushing us to build stamina! A “well done” also helps me to feel good
10:43 PM—26 Feb 2013

Examples 3 and 6 follow the same pattern, crediting, respectively, luck and a new coach for the user’s ballet successes. While unconditioned self-praise may imply that the speaker is better than the audience, other-directed praise is mostly a safe choice. In this manner, the author aligns him/herself with the hero image by making public the achievement, and simultaneously avoids censure by recasting the speech act as a compliment to a third party.

Self-praise plus self-denigration. Returning to the research on compliment responses, we find the practice of compliment amendment or a tempered response. A tempered acceptance is an acceptance of the compliment followed by a qualification, e.g. “Wow, you’ve lost at least four pounds already!” – “Yeah, but I’ve got ten more pounds to lose” (Knapp et al. 1984: 23). A tempered response typically includes a self-denigrating statement. In the context of self-praise, a self-denigrating statement immediately following the face-enhancing act once again restores social equilibrium by reassuring the audience that the author does not intend to raise him/herself over them. The key role played by self-denigration in the performance of positive self-evaluation is highlighted by the fact that all instances of self-denigration in the corpus occurred together with self-praise, as modifying devices.

- (21) FeistyGirl: Count down to #RADGrade6Exam is underway, 6 weeks and counting (PANIC or PICNIC?) Full run through last night has shown “kinks” to iron out! 5:49 PM 9 Apr 2013
- (22) ROHman: Such an amazing rehearsal – although my brain seems to have melted from so much new choreography... #Rothbart 5:23 PM 10 Feb 2013

In 22, the author tells about a successful rehearsal of the production *Swan Lake*, where he will be dancing the role of Rothbart. The speech act, however, is post-modified by claiming the author’s inadequacy (a brain meltdown after learning a new part is not a trademark of a competent ballet dancer). Self-praise in 21 is modified by pointing out that despite the achievement (in this case, admission to examination of the Royal Academy of Dance), *FeistyGirl*’s performance is far from perfect, and thus asserts her humility.

Although potentially there are unlimited ways to add a self-denigrating element to a tweet, two prominent usages have emerged during the analysis. It appears that the subjects tend to attenuate their ballet-related self-praise with a ‘long way to go’ device and an ‘oops’ device. The first involves a reference to the fact that their expertise is still far from perfection, while the second points out how awkward or neglectful they are in other areas of their life because of the devotion to ballet, and frequently incorporates the interjection “oops”:

- (23) ROHman: Got a weird look in the gym locker room when I cracked my toes (or rather my toe ‘knuckles’)... Oops! #failedballetninja 2:49 PM 13 Feb 2013

The ‘long way to go’ device is illustrated in Examples 7 and 21. The presence of self-denigrating statements, particularly surprise statements, is one of the qualitative criteria which distinguish positive self-disclosure from bragging (Miller et al. 1992: 371). The tweet design incorporating self-denigration ensures that observers categorise the speech event as the socially acceptable variety that leads to positive dispositional inferences about the author.

Self-praise plus reference to hard work. One more feature that distinguishes positive self-disclosure from bragging is the reference to hard work the author had to invest in achieving the object of praise. Miller et al. (1992) found that high effort attributions were more frequently associated with positive self-disclosure, which was perceived more favourably than bragging. My Twitter subjects also resort to mentioning the hardships they have to overcome on the way to improvement.

The excerpt in 8 discloses the fact that *dancedance* works hard every day to become a better dancer. This claim is contextualised by the shared knowledge that *dancedance* had experienced a knee injury which had put her out of training for months and is causing pain now. This will undoubtedly be recognised

as a praiseworthy matter by her peer group. However, in contrast to bragging, which foregrounds what an inherently wonderful or lucky person the speaker is, this utterance puts the emphasis on the author's agency in her success. Example 24 makes an emphasis on *FeistyGirl's* enjoyment of the aspects of ballet training which are typically considered tedious and difficult. This is an especially effective strategy since not only the self-praising act, but also the modification itself may award face: hard work is an emblematic attribute for a ballet hero.

- (24) FeistyGirl: Back to Pointe Class 2night with Miss Natalie! CANNOT WAIT:D More pulling up, more turning out & more performance is going to be happening! 7:00 PM 9 Apr 2013

Self-praise as a complaint. The third strategy for attenuating self-praise is to perform it as an indirect speech act. Within this pattern, the object of praise is treated as a complainable matter and the speech act is coached in form of a complaint. It is one of the most productive strategies in the corpus: 41 self-praising tweets are cast as a third party complaint. The pattern has two possible variations. Example 9 demonstrates appending self-praise to a third party complaint, when the praiseworthy matter is stated and then followed by a complaint. A stereotypical positive disclosure about successful exercise is conjoined in the same tweet with two mishaps: falling out of a vertical split and 'popping' the knee. The two speech acts, while members of the same speech act set, are independent and each has recognisable illocutionary goals. The Examples 25–26, however, are formulated as complaints and constitute positive self-disclosure only in the context of the ballet community.

- (25) ROHman: Alas, instead of doing what I want to do post-5hr-ballet (home, bath, eat own bodyweight in porridge) I've got to go to work. :(5:25 PM 10 Feb 2013
- (26) PasDeDeux: Having to apply/take off/re-apply stage make-up multiple times in 1 day makes my eyes hurt and my skin über sensitive... 4:36 AM 10 Nov 2012

In fact, all the authors do is evaluate their circumstances negatively, with affective and expressive lexis ("alas", "über sensitive"), a sad emoticon, and an ellipsis which, as the much-cited Wikipedia article so poetically puts it, "at the end of a sentence ... can also inspire a feeling of melancholy longing."¹ In this manner, the author completely avoids the potential risks associated with self-praise. The tweets use a complaint to bring the praiseworthy matter to the attention of

1. Wikipedia, "Ellipsis" <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ellipsis>.

readers. It is the match between the complainable and the heroic attributes of the community ideal that makes this tweet multifunctional: potentially doing both complaint and self-praise. There exists a hashtag #ballerinaproblems which labels a special genre of self-praising behaviour. Within it, the members of the Twitter community show off various tokens of their extreme obsession with ballet (see 27 for an example from a collectively run Twitter account Ballerina Problems). These are typically framed as complaints, and would indeed be complainable matters for the general public. Here, however, they are a matter of pride and a subject of positive disclosure.

- (27) Ballerina Problems: I'm not kidding when I say "eat, dance, sleep, repeat."
#ballerinaproblems #dancerproblems 3:46 AM 2 Jul 2012

To conclude, avoidance of explicit self-praise while bringing the praiseworthy matter to the attention of the audience appears to be an especially successful strategy, which can only be understood with a reference to shared community values.

It has been documented in the literature that as a concession to maintaining social equilibrium, speakers may introduce positive evaluations of themselves as third party self-praise (Speer 2012). Such conversational gambit is close to the strategy of reinterpretation and came up in the Twitter data as well, although less frequently than Speer's exploratory study suggests. In third party self-praise, the speaker reports a compliment to himself as it was allegedly made by a third party:

- (28) he_danseur: My saut de chats (sauts de chat?) got a couple of sweet compliments in class. Love the camaraderie, so encouraging. #ballet
#payitforward 6:58 AM 17 Sep 2013

It is important to remark that I do not suggest that the subjects always use the self-praise modification strategically and consciously. To make such a claim would mean to suspect a manipulative undercurrent to all communication. It is rather my belief that the subjects conduct their social relations in good faith and attempt to follow the conventional norms of 'politeness', in the sense of politeness manuals which dictate modesty and understatement. The preference for non-evaluative acts of positioning that lay out the facts and invoke the relevant membership categories is also a consequence of the subjects' desire to receive an objective and just appraisal of their actions from a knowledgeable audience. Tweets such as 11 make up the bulk of the positive self-disclosure. In 11, *FeistyGirl* reviews the set and the cast of a contemporary piece *Aeternum*; thus she positions herself, first, as a person who has seen the piece at the Royal Opera House, and second, as someone who can appreciate the aesthetic and talk about it coherently. The identity work is done through the choice of topic, the descriptive vocabulary ("back drop with its

soft arches, linear lines & jagged angles”) from a repertoire of an art critic, and the decision to make the tweet searchable with the hashtag #ROHAeternum. On top of the image of an expert, which *FeistyGirl* “gives” to the reader, there are aspects of identity “given off”: the tautological epithet ‘linear lines’, for instance, hints at hasty formulating or the amateurish quality of *FeistyGirl*’s writing. It is such breakdowns in impression management that testify to the non-manipulative character of self-disclosures. What will be incorporated into the reader’s view of *FeistyGirl*’s identity depends on which acts persist over time. Discursive identity, in this sense, is cumulative: it emerges gradually as the author gives and gives off information about herself in the flow of communication. While we can look at single tweets and recognise the positioning done within them, it is impossible to judge their significance individually.

6.4 Linguistic features of self-praise

On the basis of corpus analysis, a few basic observations about the linguistic structure of disclosive tweets can be made.

The focus on personal narrative is reflected in the bigrams as well as in the absolute word frequencies. As Tables 6.5 and 6.7 demonstrate, first person pronouns and the contractions used to introduce accounts in the present tense hold the top positions. The frequency list of lexical words hints at the preoccupation with immediacy of these accounts: temporal references “now”, “day”, “night” and “today” anchor the reports in the recent past (the most common L1 collocate of “night” in the sample is “last”, N=6, followed by “of” and “ballet” with N=2 each). Interestingly, evaluative lexis is comparatively rare: the keyword list of the top ten keywords in reference to the spoken component of the ANC (Table 6.6) includes no instances of evaluative adjectives. The first evaluation “lovely” occupies the rank 51. This confirms the earlier intuition that self-disclosure contributes to the positive image of the speaker not by means of an explicit positive evaluation, but rather by invoking the relevant membership category. The noun “class”, for instance, is the central membership categorisation device that has high keyness rating in the Twitter data overall. Since “class” in the context of ballet Twitter community functions as a limited range NP meaning “ballet class”, it activates the membership category ‘ballet student’. The top six keywords, with the exception of “twitter”, are membership categorisation devices from the collection ‘ballet’. The dependence on shared values places positive self-disclosure on Twitter onto the particular and the ad-hoc area in the pragmatic space of evaluation.

Table 6.5. Bigrams in the positive self-disclosure on Twitter

Absolute frequency	N-gram
14	I'm
14	of the
12	in the
11	I've
11	to be
10	to see
9	Swan Lake

Table 6.6. Keywords in the positive self-disclosure on Twitter

Rank	Word
1	ballet
2	class
3	swan
4	dance
5	twitter
6	rehearsal
7	me
8	haha
9	yay
10	tonight

Table 6.7. Word frequency in the positive self-disclosure on Twitter

Frequency	Function words	Frequency	Lexical words
161	to	61	ballet
141	the	28	class
124	I	23	just
90	a	22	now
89	and	20	day
84	of	20	have
64	my	19	night
56	me	19	today

The lack of CMC spelling or neologisms in the keyword list indicates that the users overwhelmingly use standard language. Exception to this trend are the high-key exclamation “yay”, which appears to be a consistent in-group usage, hashtags (N=133) and emoticons (N=45). Emoticons have predominantly positive valence (N=42) and come in six different articulations:

- Smile, nose absent:
 - small eyes :) N=35
 - big eyes =) N=5
- Wink, nose absent ;) N=2
- Sad face, nose absent :(N=1
- Grimace:
 - nose present :-/ N=1
 - nose absent :/ N=1

The hashtags can be broadly arranged into two functional groups: classifiers and semantic modification. Classificatory hashtags are intended to make talk searchable and to tie the message to a larger discourse on the topic. Modifying hashtags have idiosyncratic, often creative spelling and are intended for humorous effect or to emphasise selected sentence elements.

- Classifiers: #ValentinesDay, #ROHmeo, #ROHswanLake, #ballet, #dancerprobz
- Semantic modification: #balletjoy, #travelgrantapplications, #loveit, #sofun, #lookingguuuud

At the level of lexicogrammar, hashtags can function as

- Sentence-external elements
 - (29) ROHman: Using today as a good excuse to listen to some romantic ballet scores – first up is Rome & Juliet! What should come next? #romanticballets 12:26 PM 14 Feb 2013
- Sentence elements:
 - Nominal group
 - (30) ROHman: Ain’t got no date tonight – I shall be learning more #rothbart from the 1990 Kirov Swan Lake recording instead. 4:42 PM 14 Feb 2013
 - Attributive elements
 - (31) he_danseur: Not missing a beat. Back home from LA last night, up and at ’em in #ballet class this morning. #inspired 8:41 PM 1 Dec 2013
- Independent clause (with finite verbs)
 - (32) dancdance: started learning Kingdom of the Shades today..only my favorite corp piece of all time! #soexcited! 5:02 AM 4 Sep 2013

The lexical diversity, measured throughout the paper with the simplest tool of the type-token ratio (TTR), is 0.34, i.e. slightly higher than the overall TTR in the corpus and three times as high as the TTR in the spoken component of the ANC. This measure gives no reason to posit a restricted lexical repertoire within the community, which is sometimes taken to be characteristic of in-group language. No evidence of lexical patterning, or formulae, has emerged in the corpus analysis of positive self-disclosure. The one common denominator of explicit, bald-on record self-praise is the presence of exclamation marks, frequently in conjunction with “yay”. In terms of grammatical structure, the first person singular pronoun and the auxiliary are frequently elided, resulting in non-finite constructions such as 33:

- (33) ROHman: Running late because of lecturing but time to watch Rambert company class and speak to their director and a choreographer!
3:05 AM 9 Nov 2012

However, this is a common feature of ‘keyboard-to-screen communication’ (Jucker and Dürscheid 2012) that marks autobiographical narrative, and Twitter in particular (Page 2012).

6.5 Uptake

Contrary to Speer’s (2012) findings, neither explicit nor implicit self-praise received conversational censure from interlocutors. In case of explicit self-praise without mitigation, feedback is either absent or overwhelmingly supportive (see Table 6.8):

- (34) (reproduces 4) Gazelle: En dehors pirouettes R a mix of singles & doubles. Going L doubles & triples AND ONE QUADRUPLER!!! I did 4 turns! FOUR! #balletjoy FOUR!!! 3:50 PM 9 Nov 2012 Favourites: 2
Follower: @Gazelle awesome!!!!!! 3:51 PM 9 Nov 2012

Table 6.8. Uptake of positive self-disclosure²

	No uptake	Second story	Other supportive uptake
Tweets	147	35	127

Favouriting the tweet is a popular low-effort means of expressing support: the follower only needs to click on a star underneath the original tweet to signal

2. Some instances of self-praise receive both second story and other supportive uptake.

his/her positive stance. Pictures especially tend to elicit supportive feedback. Another variety of supportive uptake is palliative disagreement which follows self-praise mitigated by self-denigration:

- (35) (reproduces 7) he_danseur: so. many. chaine turns. Got praised for not taking too-big steps, but still need to spot better. Dizzy swerving, not fun.
6:05 AM 10 Nov 2012

Follower: @he_danseur No sympathy on chaînés, danseur! Looked pretty good to me. Here's more inspiration: [link] #MenDancing 1:07 PM 10 Nov 2012

Implicit self-praise based on disclosing positive facts about self mostly received no feedback. When uptake occurred, it was in form of a second story:

- (36) (reproduces 23) ROHman: Got a weird look in the gym locker room when I cracked my toes (or rather my toe 'knuckles')... Oops! #failedballetninja
2:49 PM 13 Feb 2013

Follower: @ROHman That is something that all my friends freak out over. Especially when i crack them continuously☺ #sorryamnotsorry 4:57 PM 13 Feb 2013

Alternatively, the reader chose to treat both types of self-disclosures ostensibly as appeals or informing. Uptake in such cases ignored the self-enhancing illocution and presented a second pair-part for another move; e.g. in 37, *Annabelle's* implicit self-praise about meeting a ballet celebrity and getting a photo together with her is treated as an incomplete informing utterance, and a follower reacts with a request for additional information.

- (37) Annabelle: @Follower1 this one :) [photo of Annabelle with a famous ballerina] 10:29 PM 7 Jul 2013

Follower2: @Annabelle @Follower1 OMG WHEN DID THIS HAPPEN?!
5:39 AM 19 Nov 2013

It is important to remark that the evidence of possible social censure of self-praise comes from intuition (Pomerantz 1978) or few isolated examples picked from a large corpus (Speer 2012). A quick survey of the spoken component of the ANC has yielded the same two strategies as my data – no uptake or supportive uptake – in self-praise marked by the affective marker 'proud'.³ In 38, for instance, the

3. Although no IFID for self-praise has emerged from the Twitter corpus, I made an assumption that 'proud' is an evaluation that typically refers to the speaker or the speaker's close associates. Out of 43 concordance hits, 15 were instances of self-praise.

speaker characterises his actions in strong positive terms “the smartest thing I ever did” and “I’m real proud of myself”. The first evaluation receives a minimal backchannel uptake, the second has no second pair-part and the interlocutor begins a pre-closing sequence right after it.

- (38) A: and it was the smartest thing i ever did
 B: yeah good
 [...]

 A: yeah i’m real proud of myself
 B: well Nancy it’s been good talking to you

In excerpt 39, the self-praising sequence is more elaborate. C gives the positive evaluation of his work in the first and second turns (“I was pretty proud of”, “did a pretty good job”). D takes up the self-praise with the second story about building a similar deck. Finally, after C provides more and more details about his achievement, D gives explicit positive feedback “that sounds nice all done by yourself huh designed”. In fact, the conversation continues for 20 more turns beyond the excerpt and although C self-praises further on the topic of his builder’s competence, D does not censure him at any point.

- (39) C: well the last thing i did completely myself was an outside deck which i was pretty proud of
 D: yeah those are those are we’d done i’ve done one i helped somebody do one of those before those are those are you know you can buy them in kits but we didn’t do that way but it’s yeah
 C: no i designed it from scratch and did a pretty did a pretty good job those are nice though they’re pretty forgiving you know you can always tear stuff out and redo it it’s a
 D: yeah yeah that is not near like building a house or anything but yeah those are nice especially when you get done you got something
 C: right
 D: you know i don’t know i like them you just sit out on the on the deck and do whatever have a barbecue or
 C: yeah i’ve i built it two levels and with a big toy box and some benches and uh a backrest and all that stuff i’m
 D: yeah that sounds nice all done by yourself huh designed

In the ‘proud’ sample in the ANC, there was no marked response to self-praise (laughter, teasing, critical assessment (Speer 2012: 58)). The results of this superficial survey, combined with the findings from BaTwit, suggest that self-praise might not carry the social stigma ascribed to it in the theoretical literature.

6.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have focused on positive self-disclosure and acts of positioning. After examining the data, one can draw a clear distinction between two kinds of self-praise: explicit self-praise (fact+positive evaluation) recognisable to an outsider, and disclosure of the information that enhances the author's image, whose function as positive self-disclosure is community-specific. Given the similarity of interactional constraints placed on compliment responses, I hypothesised that Twitter users would try to accommodate the competing demands of appropriateness – do not self-elevate vs. agree – via mitigation, reference shift and other strategies found in compliment responses. Although the constraint on agreeing with the interlocutor is largely not applicable in my data because it contains initial or even monologal turns, the performance of self-praise despite potential face risk is driven by the demands of identity construction. It is, of course, partly a question of terminology. Following the inclusive definition of self-praise in the beginning of this chapter, any self-disclosure of desired attributes can be interpreted as such. Should an analyst take a restrictive definition that demands an explicit positive evaluation by the speaker and the audience alike, the findings regarding the performance strategies may be quite different.

The analysis has confirmed this hypothesis: Twitter users self-praised via an overlapping range of strategies, among them a bald on record positive self-statement. The unique discursive affordances of the medium emerged in the use of hyperlinks, photographs and hashtags, which serve to build a minimal self-praising pattern and authenticate claims to status. Despite the lack of explicit censure, users demonstrate an awareness of the socially risky nature of enhancing one's own face. Self-praising narratives are negotiated with other members of the community to establish common ground and disclaim face-threat. In many cases, subjects resort to circumspect self-praising strategies, aiming to rectify the status imbalance that arises from a self-directed face-enhancing act. A number of these strategies are designed to identify the face-enhancing act with positive disclosure rather than bragging, which is received negatively in Western society.

The question remains as to why Twitter users commit self-directed face-enhancing acts, given their allegedly undesirable nature. One possible reason has to do with positive self-presentation. Viewing a Twitter feed as an autobiographic narrative, it is natural that the authors attempt to construct a positive identity by ascribing to themselves the features of the 'idealised reference group', i.e. 'the heroes' of the discourse community. The complex attenuating strategies serve one

purpose: to get the knowledge about the author's accomplishments out there. Notwithstanding the degree of modification that follows a positive self-disclosure, the factual content will align the author with the abstract hero in the eyes of the informed audience. In addition, the survey of uptake practices suggests that self-praise might not have the status of a weighty face-threatening act that has often been ascribed to it previously. Lack of critical assessment, or even the presence of supportive uptake, indicate that self-praise is a normative behaviour that does not break the community's expectations of appropriateness.

The discourse community framework is especially important for understanding self-praise. Many self-praising strategies are rooted in indirection and can be recognised as self-elevation solely by the members of the in-group. For instance, such attributes as bloody feet, sore muscles, or an absence of social life due to a great number of ballet classes, which would normally be considered complainables, are desirable and raise the status of the author in the peer group. Additionally, invoking these attributes serves to establish solidarity by inclusivity and may offset the face-threatening effects of self-praise in interaction. The community-based view of what is polite or impolite has been gathering momentum in linguistic inquiry (e.g. Garcés-Conejos Blitvich 2010, Haugh 2007, Mills 2003). The present study confirms once again that relational talk can be best understood not as a function of an individual preference or a master identity, such as gender, but on the level of community.

The prominence of the professional characteristics in the pragmatic structure of praise performance suggests that the results are specific to the ballet Twitter community. It would be an interesting point for future research to analyse self-praising patterns in a different group of subjects with special interests. At this point, it is impossible to say whether self-praise is universally acceptable, or if it is a behaviour specific to occupational communities of athletes or possibly performance artists. The scarcity of corpus based linguistic studies on self-praise in the Anglophone world also constitutes a gap in the study of speech acts, which future research should aim to fill.

Turning once again to the pragmatic space of evaluation, we observe that the two continua most relevant to the description of positive self-disclosure are 'general/particular' and 'positive/negative'. Surprisingly, the acts of positioning intended to contribute to a hero identity often involve negative evaluation, e.g. in the case of positive disclosure framed as a third party complaint. The correct interpretation of the author's intention is therefore critically dependent on the context and the shared values. The variance across the other scales of the pragmatic space is broad: humour, factual accounts, expressive and instrumental communication, negotiation, reports of the past or outlook into the future all have a place in the repertoire of positioning acts. One dimension which is relatively anchored is the

ad hoc nature of the speech act – very little patterning in terms of lexis or grammar was found in the corpus. Even self-denigration occurs as a mitigation device in the self-elevating tweets. Acts of positioning, as no other category, justify the need for the broadly defined, multidimensional model of evaluative speech acts and bring to the fore the discourse community.

Third party complaints

7.1 Introduction

In Chapters 2 and 5, I have discussed the role of third party complaints in interpersonal communication. While direct complaints are face-threatening acts and have an instrumental goal, third party complaints can build and request rapport. The present chapter will look in more detail at the negative evaluative disclosive and non-disclosive units, more specifically third party complaints, in BaTwit. In this analysis, I am looking to confirm or disprove the assumption that third party complaints have a solidarity-building function, to examine their surface form and performance strategies, and to establish whether they pattern in respect to users' demographic characteristics, tweet interactivity types, or topics. I also aim to examine the role of third party complaints in constructing narratives, and in performing positioning.

In Chapter 3, I have offered two hypotheses based on the literature review. First, I have posited that due to weak social ties among the users in offline life, Twitter third party complaints will predominantly fulfil the solidarity-building and self-disclosive function, as opposed to other possible functions such as requests for remediation and assistance. Second, I have hypothesised that Twitter complaints will be realised in a minimal amount of turns, most likely a single turn, in contrast to face-to-face troubles-talk which spans multiple turns and has several recognisable preparatory stages. Finally, I have emphasised that complaints present analytical problems in such respects as vagueness of audience design in Twitter, the fuzziness of the speech act, and the absence of IFIDs that unambiguously identify a complaint. To overcome these problems, I have suggested mapping the linguistic expressions of complaining against a pragmatic space of evaluation (see Section 3.5). In the following, I test the first two assumptions and then attempt to characterise Twitter complaints within the pragmatic space.

To clarify the focus one more time, a third party complaint (hereafter TPC) is an expression of grievance or dissatisfaction which is addressed to an audience who is not immediately responsible for committing or remediating the complainable. The complainables in TPC belong to one of three types: self, other,

and an object/situation. The existing research often conflated this speech event with troubles-talk, an established rapport-building device. Researchers argued that TPC were designed to express alignment and to keep the exchange going (Boxer 1993b, Drew and Walker 2009, Ruusuvuori and Lindfors 2009). Stereotypically, monologual discourse on social media is associated with ‘yammering’ about one’s private affaires to an audience of strangers, thus placing it within the scope of TPC research. Aspects that may help to shed light on the functions and motivations of such behaviour are uptake, co-text, and macrostructure.

7.2 Frequencies of third party complaints: An overview

TPC are widespread in Twitter material, occurring in 13% (N=143) of tweets, 149 TPCs altogether. Table 7.1 demonstrates the distribution of TPCs by user, by tweet type and by topic.

Table 7.1. Distribution of third party complaints in BaTwit

Category	Subcategory	N of TP complaints	% per subcategory
Users	Gazelle	37	24.8%
	FeistyGirl	7	4.7%
	dancedance	17	11.4%
	pointe35	10	6.7%
	Annabelle	4	2.7%
	Total female	75	50.3%
	ROHman	12	8.1%
	Connoisseur	9	6.1%
	he_danseur	12	8.1%
	PasDeDeux	13	8.7%
	beyou	6	4%
	rothbert11	22	14.7%
	Total male	74	49.7%
	Total	149	100%
Tweet type	Monologual	107	72%
	Interactive	42	28%
	Total	149	100%
Topic	Ballet-related	95	64%
	Ordinary	54	36%
	Total	149	100%

The descriptive statistics paint a homogenous picture: except for clear idiosyncratic outliers (*Gazelle* and *rothbert11* who complain very often and *Annabelle* with an unexpectedly low score), users complain in approximately one tenth of their tweets. TPC are equally distributed across male and female portions of the corpus, defeating the gendered stereotypes about third party complaining as a female activity. Monologual tweets contain TPC more frequently than interactive ones, thus providing partial support for the hypothesis that the complaints on Twitter are single-turn. Another means of verifying this hypothesis is to look at the proportion of the tweets tagged ‘continuous’. The ‘continuous’ tag was used to mark tweets which are a part of a multi-tweet story or which spark up a conversation between the author and his followers that spans several turns. The portion of continual tweets amounts to 43, i.e. less than one-third of complaints. A close-up of examples in the rest of the chapter will provide a more definite answer.

There appears to be a high proportion of complaints in tweets on non-balletic themes too, which is in line with the intuition about social media being an outlet for venting one’s frustration. Ballet-related tweets in addition to TPC frequently promote in-group solidarity through positively polite acts: praise, greetings, well-wishing. In ordinary tweets, the solidarity-building is predominantly done via affiliative self-disclosure, i.e. TPC.

Given that one tweet may contain more than one speech act, it is necessary to consider the absolute number of TPC in the corpus. This amounts to 149 (as mentioned above, there are 143 tweets containing TPC), i.e. 6 TPCs co-occur with one more TPCs within one tweet. In a similar vein, one utterance may combine two illocutions, or convey one illocution directly and one indirectly (as is often the case with TPC conveying self-praise). The numbers describing such indirect speech acts are given in Table 7.2. The implications of these two findings for the discussion of self-disclosure and identity work will be handled later in this chapter.

Table 7.2. Third party complaint + another illocution

Positive disclosure	Inform	Appeal	Total tweets with 2+ illocutions
26	8	1	35

7.3 Topics and functions of third party complaints

Proliferation of TP complaints suggests that they constitute an appropriate or accepted practice. As the previous chapter has shown, the appropriateness of potentially face-threatening acts in my data is dependent on the topic; low-tellable

narratives or self-praise on ballet-related issues, for instance, are acceptable. It would therefore be sensible to consider the complainables of TP complaints. Table 7.3 presents an overview of complainables per topic as defined in the coding scheme in Chapter 5.

Table 7.3. Topics of third party complaints

Topics	Non-ballet	Show	Performance	Skill	Physical effects	Exercise	Dedication	Long hours	Celebrities	Apparel	Ballet school
N of TPC	54	14	10	16	18	11	11	8	3	3	1

The heavy bias towards non-ballet-related topics owes to two factors. First of all, the most active complainer – *Gazelle* with 37 TPCs – has a specific topic that inspires most of her complaints, namely Ehlers-Danlos syndrome. In her interview, *Gazelle* explained that for her, Twitter is an important means of coming to terms with her illness, and she is glad of an outlet for daily frustrations which she does not want to constantly ‘offload’ onto her friends and family. Although her health complaints are sometimes connected to ballet class, the illness causes many complaint-worthy difficulties in everyday life that other users cannot share. A ride home on a full bus, for instance, is a great problem for *Gazelle*, for she cannot stand for long periods of time (intense knee pain and even joint dislocation are the consequences), but her young age and slim figure make it difficult to appeal for a free seat. Secondly, the tweets with more straightforward ballet connection have been tagged as having a single illocution – ballet-related positive disclosure – even though they could be construed as complaints by a general population. These were discussed in the previous chapter in the section that dealt with self-praise framed as a complaint.

Among the complainables from the shared experiences of the ballet community, ‘physical effects’ (N=18), ‘skill’ (N=16) and ‘show’ (N=14) are the most prominent. ‘Physical effects’ complaints disclose the author’s encounters with the common plight of ballet dancers: aches and injuries caused by gruelling exercise. Self-disclosure on such personal topics is an effective means of claiming community membership. It sidesteps the risk of explicit self-praise and at the same time ascribes the author the key qualities of the hero persona: hard physical training and dedication to the demands of ballet exercise. It is a common adage in the larger cultural community (and other professional sports) that if you are not hurt, you did not train hard enough. Ballet training in particular is often cited by medical professionals as going beyond natural capabilities of the human

body, and as such essentially destructive (especially in older age). The Cleveland Clinic researchers, for instance, have compared 61 sports and found that only professional American football is more physically demanding than ballet (The Cleveland Clinic 2005). Moreover, a medical study has found that pre-professional ballet students have a greater risk of injury than other adolescent athletic populations, with 1.42 injuries per dancer and 76% risk of injury over a one-year period (Ekegren et al. 2013). The stereotypical connection between injury and real ballet life makes it a desirable attribute to report in tweets. The following examples illustrate the manner of reporting, with TPC either as a stand-alone unit or as a qualification for self-praise.

- (1) *Connoisseur*: Iced two ankles. 9:07 AM 31 Dec 2013
- (2) *dancedance*: Three steps forward. Two steps back. Knee pain:/ Hope it is just overuse from the grueling days. shish. 12:50 PM 24 Sep 2013
- (3) *Gazelle*: I JUST managed to complete the exercise *proud* counterbalances falling out of penché later, no? (tbh, did pop knee!) 4:59 PM 8 May 2013

Example 1 is quite unremarkable at first glance: it is a report of another trademark dancer activity – icing inflamed muscles and joints after long exercise. By being concise and matter-of-fact, *Connoisseur* asserts that not only does he train hard and need icing, but also that this is nothing out of the ordinary for him. What lends the tweet extra reportability is the date of posting: training on New Year's Eve implies dedication and hard work.

Example 2 escalates the theme of physical effects. Here, *dancedance* complains about knee pain as a result of active training. She had a knee injury and underwent a surgery some months ago, so the leitmotif of her recent reports has been the return to training and accompanying difficulties. Example 3 illustrates the mitigating function of TPC: a face-enhancing report about a successfully completed exercise is tempered by an ironic comment (“counterbalances falling out of penché later”) and a complaint of serious injury (“did pop knee”).

While the objects of the ‘physical effects’ TPC are a fairly fixed set, the surface form is variable. The only category that shows some stability in linguistic form is ‘dedication’ TPC. Similarly to Twitter narratives, the contrastive conjunction ‘but’ occupies a high rank in the word list (rank 18, N=21) of TPC. With another common item, ‘no’ (rank 23, N=16), it forms a cluster ‘but no’ (N=3) which repeatedly occurs in ‘dedication’ TPC. With help of the negative particle and the contrastive construction, users point out the privations they suffer to devote themselves to training:

- (4) *he_danseur*: Totally could use a disco nap, but no rest for me. Done w/class at @BalletStudio, now shower and dinner at home, then off to @Theatre gala! 5:54 PM 3 Nov 2012

- (5) ROHman: Ain't got no date tonight – I shall be learning more #rothbart from the 1990 Kirov Swan Lake recording instead. 7:42 AM 14 Feb 2013

Both examples above again contain self-disclosure of users' daily activities. As such, these activities have low tellability (class, shower, dinner, going to the theatre, or watching a DVD) but they invoke the hero trait of subordinating all of one's needs and interests to ballet. In contrast to Example 3, there is no explicit face-enhancing evaluation. Instead, the privations ("no rest", "no date") are presented as objective facts and the audience is invited to draw their own conclusions. The shared values, however, ensure that the reference will be recognised by the members of the ballet community. This is confirmed by uptake of both posts:

- (5.1) Follower: @ROHman My date & I have a dress rehearsal that ends with a lot of fake blood & sacrificing a virgin #strangevday #riteofspring 8:58 AM 14 Feb 2013

Follower recognises that the focus of the post is on ballet training rather than *ROHman's* lack of love life, and offers a second story projection to align with his world view. Post 4 did not receive verbal uptake but was favoured by a follower – a practice which expresses support and agreement.

To move on to the other two topics that feature in TPC, 'skill' and 'show' complaints have a distinct distribution and complainables. 'Skill' refers to lack of competence in performing ballet exercises and most commonly occurs in combination with self-praise as a qualifying device:

- (6) he_danseur: so. many. chaine turns. Got praised for not taking too-big steps, but still need to spot better. Dizzy swerving, not fun. 6:05 AM 10 Nov 2012
- (6.1) Follower: @he_danseur No sympathy on chaînés, danseur! Looked pretty good to me. Here's more inspiration: [link] #MenDancing 1:07 PM 10 Nov 2012

Third party complaints on the lack of skill constitute the most risky type of self-disclosure. Since community members work on associating themselves with the hero image, admitting to failings in that department can deduct from their social capital. For that reason skill TPCs never occur as stand-alone units but always qualify face-enhancing self-disclosure: informative speech acts (small stories) and self-praise. On a different note, skill TPCs are recognised by community members as a sign of special trust and thus promote in-group solidarity. The uptake of a skill TPC typically consists of supportive and affiliative comments that encourage (see 6) or reciprocate with second stories of risky self-disclosure (see 7, emphasis mine).

- (7) beyou: @ROHman and I wish I could do doubles.....that's a diff planet right now. 2:31 PM 4 Feb 2013
- (7.1) ROHman: @beyou Think of locking your foot at the knee (and using it to keep your leg turned out), and *I thought doubles were way out of touch* 2:37 PM 4 Feb 2013
- (7.2) ROHman: @beyou *but one day it just clicked. Don't give up hope!* 2:37 PM 4 Feb 2013 [my italics here and further]

Every instance of skill TPC in the corpus has received supportive uptake in form of verbal encouragement, positive evaluation, second story, or non-verbally by favouriting the tweet. Uptake, in contrast to TPC themselves, is often formulaic: phatic expressions such as “Don't give up (Ving/NP)” and “Hope (that/NP) VP” form the bulk of supportive comments. This suggests that the sequence – risky skill-related self-disclosure followed by affiliation – is a norm in the community and constitutes an appropriate solidarity-building device.

‘Show’ TPC have a specific complainable and tend to come in clusters, i.e. most of the show TPC in the corpus belong to *Connoisseur*, *he_danseur* and *ROHman*. These three users claim belonging to the ballet community by association with a subset of hero features, an ‘art critic’ persona. In terms of content a large part of their posts are reports on ballet performances they see, celebrity news, and announcements of upcoming tours and shows. They are very connected and almost every tweet is embedded into the community network: even typically monologual tweets, e.g. narratives reporting on a show, include @mentions or @addresses to tag the fellow members who might be interested in the report:

- (8) Connoisseur: @Follower I'm seeing it again today and am hm-ing and ah-ing about next Weds – no ticket yet @FeistyGirl 8 Nov 2011

In 8, *Connoisseur* answers a direct question of the Follower but CCs *FeistyGirl* on the message because presumably he feels that she might want to join (or help obtain tickets). In show TPC, it is the failure to buy tickets that usually initiates the complaint. Show TPCs and celebrity TPCs are a part of an ‘art critic’ repertoire, as opposed to complaints about skill, exercise, physical effects, dedication and long hours, which belong to a ‘practitioner’ repertoire. They are less risky, but garner less social capital than self-disclosure on the physical component of the dancing life. It is evident in the fact that the core members of the community, *Gazelle* and *FeistyGirl*, draw exclusively on the practitioner repertoire, and *ROHman*, one of the centre figures in the network, relies equally on the two repertoires.

The directionality of complaint also patterns in accordance with topics. Self-directed TPCs concern skill, physical effects, and celebrities. Other-directed TPCs concern exercise and dedication (although both often involve self-directed TPCs as well). Finally, situation- or object-directed TPCs are usually on the topics of show, performance, apparel, long hours, and school. The large group of non-ballet complaints is very varied and includes all three types.

Two quantitative factors confirm the role of TPC as a solidarity-building device in the ballet community: the predominance of ballet-related complainables (N=95, 64%) and the co-occurrence of ballet-related acts of positioning with TPC in indirect speech acts (ranking first among all of those). TPCs are a convenient device for face-enhancing self-disclosure because indirect speech acts are defeasible. In addition, the underlying illocution would likely not be recognised by non-members, which makes for an excellent in-group marker. The supposition is further confirmed by the qualitative analysis of the skill TPC sequence and the formulaic affiliative comments. Expression of support as a main response move is in line with earlier findings of complaint research (D'Amico-Reisner 1985, cf. Chapter 3) and suggests that there are no pragmatic differences between Twitter and face-to-face data in this communicative aspect.

7.4 Syntactic structure and lexical devices

The next step in trying to establish whether ballet Twitter complaints are different from their face-to-face counterparts, and if the difference could be due to the medium or the topical focus, is the structural analysis. In the following I will first look at the syntactic makeup of tweets with help of categories gleaned from D'Amico-Reisner (1985). Then I will turn to lexical items and chunks that characterise the complaints, also outlined in the work of D'Amico-Reisner (1985). In the end, I will turn to the pragmatic level of analysis, checking for objectification strategies and the level of directness.

Face-to-face complaints can be arranged into four large groups: response expected question, imperative, declarative, and rhetorical question, with the last two being the preferred modes for TPC. In BaTwit, these two categories also gathered the most hits (see Table 7.4).

Declarative sentences are overwhelmingly the most common means of expressing a third party complaint. They lay out the unfavourable circumstances and may also offer negative evaluation through internal lexical devices:

Table 7.4. Syntactic make-up of TP complaints in BaTwit

	Declarative	Rhetorical question	Response expected question	Imperative
Twitter third party complaints	135	10	1	3

- (8) Gazelle: Sadly it turns out leos @studio AD wanted 4 us were designed by someone who'd never seen a woman. Attractive. #backtothedrawingboard
3:09 PM 8 May 2013

Declarative TPCs do not have to be spelled out in full but may be constituted by an elliptical sentence, a stand-alone NP or a single word:

- (9) Connoisseur: Somewhat traumstised that I didnt take a photo of Fumi's curtain call last night 12:45 PM 27 Oct 2013
- (10) pointe35: Sore calves. 8:55 AM 16 Jan 2013
- (11) PasDeDeux: Ouch... 7:36 PM 9 Nov 2012

As in Example 9, it is the subject of the sentence which is most often elided. This is a pattern common to other speech acts on Twitter and has to do with the immediacy of the medium, i.e. the elided subject is automatically understood to be the author (Page 2012). The minimal pattern in 11 relies on an interjection, but other word classes conveying negative emotional load are also acceptable (e.g. "Sad").

In contrast to D'Amico-Reisner's findings, rhetorical questions on Twitter did not demonstrate any patterning. The three formulae "What do you mean + S", "How can you + VP" and "What (the hell)(bullshit) is this you +be Pres + Ving" did not appear in the data at all. *Gazelle* used the cluster "How is NP" twice, but since it did not crop up in other users' complaints it can be considered idiosyncratic. Apart from that, rhetorical questions followed a variety of scaffolds, some of which can be found in Table 7.5 (examples for appealers, boosting hashtags, emoticons and performative predications; see also Story 1 in Chapter 8).

Response expected questions and imperatives are understandably scarce: they have an interpersonal function and work the best in direct complaints, where the perpetrator can be influenced to remedy the complainable. Since the discussion centres on TPC, the complainee does not read the complaint

and cannot be addressed. Thus the addressee in TPC imperatives is either the author him/herself (in self-directed TPC) or an imaginary complaineé chosen for rhetoric effect (Examples 12 and 13). The response expected question is designed to elicit commiseration and asks the audience about similar painful experiences.

- (12) ROHman: Something I've learnt playing #rothbart – *don't die too violently* otherwise you'll have a fair collection of bruises the next day! #ouch
7:12 AM 11 Feb 2013
- (13) FeistyGirl: I for 1 relish every second of that class & Miss Natalie's teachings! *Out of my way "slackers"* there's ballet-ing to be done & I'm DOING IT! 3:44 PM 19 Mar 2013

A fraction of TPCs (three units) directed at objects or situations was performed in the form of direct complaints. Users resorted to reformulation as a stylistic device that raises the tellability of the complaint and, possibly, foregrounds the aesthetic value of the tweet over the conversationally risky complaining intention:

- (14) Gazelle: Dear Legs, I know (esp having seen reh pics&vid, ugh) I need to lose weight; no need to remind me by repeatedly giving way. No love, Me.
7:42 AM 6 Nov 2012

Although formulations of complaints differ depending on the complainable, and there is no single IFID to identify them universally, some lexical devices re-occur. External lexical devices frame the complaint and include address terms, interjections, hashtags, emoticons and performative predications. As such they are not dramatically different from framing devices that mark the borders of the tweets with another illocutionary force, e.g. apologies. Internal lexical devices are more specific and reflect the negative emotional load of complaints. These include evaluative lexis and swear words, but also hashtags and emoticons.

Besides lexical items found in face-to-face communication, Twitter users resort to so-called expletives (Gerdes 2005), or performative predications (Herring 2013): spelled out feelings and actions, usually set off from the rest of the text by some kind of orthographic convention. Use of performative predications has been described in other CMC contexts, e.g. IRC chat and away messages. Although initially they were considered to compensate for non-verbal cues, more recently the understanding has been that performative predications add an extra layer of meaning unavailable in face-to-face communication (or available in form of asides and ironic comments). The crucial distinction is that performative predications do not necessarily describe what the author is actually doing or feeling at the moment of writing, but rather guide the reader towards the correct interpretation of the illocutionary force. For instance, *rofl* added to a phrase

“You are ugly” is not compensating for the fact that the addressee cannot see the author rolling on the floor laughing. Instead, it marks the jocular intention of the utterance. In TPC, performative predications fulfil two functions: they may mark the end of the complaint (this is typically accomplished with the performative predication *sigh*) or they may add negative semantic value to the complaint (see Table 7.5):

- (15) Gazelle: Child who threw a wobblor at end Brownies last week & announced she was leaving has seen it thru: her mum thinks tis face-saving *sigh* 11:44 AM 10 May 2013

Performative predications are rare in Twitter discourse (they stem from chat communication) and are used as a framing device exclusively by *Gazelle*. More commonly, complaint is framed by emoticons + emotive interjections such as “Ouch”, “Oops”, “Oh dear” or “Argh”:

- (16) ROHman: *Alas*, instead of doing what I want to do post-5hr-ballet (home, bath, eat own bodyweight in porridge) I’ve got to go to work. :(8:25 AM 10 Feb 2013

Finally, the tail end of a complaint is typically marked by a hashtag. As discussed in Chapters 4 and 8, hashtags may occur as an integral part of the sentence to make talk searchable, or outside of the syntactic construction to provide additional information with a certain connotation: understating or boosting its emotive load, marking the intention as humorous or ironic. In this manner, one hashtag may function structurally as a framing device and semantically as an upgrader or a downgrader. A hashtag may deliver the crucial piece of contextual information that positions the tweet in relation to the hero persona:

- (17) dancedance: Sore from head to toe, yes sir ree-right now arnica is my best friend! #backtoballet #ouch 7:09 PM 4 Sep 2013

The data sample contains 45 hashtags per 152 complaints – a high frequency which indicates a hashtag’s importance in complaint construction.

Internal lexical devices are the vocabulary types that are frequently associated with complaints, upgrade or downgrade the evaluative content of the complaint, and mark the complaint as such. Since there are no specific IFID for complaining, we can only talk about broad classes of vocabulary. One such class includes the words of emotion. In Twitter TPCs, the most frequent emotion lexeme is {sad}: its variations (‘saddened’, ‘sads’, ‘sadly’) appear 6 times. It is followed by {frustrate} (N=3, ‘frustrated’, ‘frustrating’). Identifying what the author feels about the event, the emotion lexemes unambiguously place it into the pragmatic space of complaint and define the expected uptake. The third

Table 7.5. Internal lexical devices in TP complaints on Twitter (emphasis mine)

Modifying force	Lexical device	Examples
Downgraders	adverbial sentence modifiers	(18) Gazelle: #ROHhansel amazing; just a pity some key things lost due to the staging (for all set was v innovative-clever) 1:28 PM 11 May 2013
	expressions of tentativeness	(19) Gazelle: Pondering fact MRI scan done this afternoon may've been pointless as prob looking for tends not to show if not scanned standing up:/ 5:50 PM 11 May 2013
	understaters	(20) dancdance: still a wee bit sad to have had to miss herman cornejo's class today! iknow it was grand! 9:21 PM 22 Sep 2013
	subjectifiers	see example for extreme case formulations
	cajolers	(21) Gazelle: Really REALLY do not aime head-first MRIs. I mean , not much fun either way, but feet-first def less claustrophoby-scary. Umph. #ehlersdanlos 6:14 AM 11 May 2013
	appealers	(22) FeistyGirl: @follower that's all proper mental, they've "fired" him from a contract that didn't really exist even though he'd been doing the job!! WHAT? 9:33 AM 9 Apr 2013
	understating hashtags	(23) Gazelle: Some woman lit just turned up hoping she cd have her mri scan bkd for nxt wk done today as she was here. Er, no. #thestupidhurtsmybrain 6:13 AM 11 May 2013
Upgraders	intensifying adverbials or adjectives	(24) dancdance: @follower thank you, im trying! my knee got really tired & sore b/c of fouettes but i haven't done them so much until now! how are you 11:02 AM 22 Jan 2013
	commitment upgraders	(25) FeistyGirl: I really wanted to shout at my fellow classmates tonight!! Surely if u sign up for a pointe class u expect to (a) turn up with pointe shoes 3:42 PM 19 Mar 2013
	swear words	(26) rothbert11: What a crappy class that was:-(Grade one anyone? 2:36 PM 10 Dec 2013
	emphatic lexical choices	(27) beyou: @ROHman ROHman any suggestions on how a 40 male new to ballet can perfect a pirouette? Desperate to improve!
	extreme case formulations	(28) rothbert11: I think I have the tightest calves in the world this morning... 11:39 PM 10 Dec 2013
	boosting hashtags	(29) rothbert11: Trying to read exam syllabus has made me even more confused. #WhyAmISoCrapAtThis? 1:45 PM 16 Dec 2013
	emoticons	(30) rothbert11: Bed a 2115. How rock and roll is my life?:-(1:15 PM 20 Nov 2013
	performative predications	(31) Gazelle: How am I only at New X?! HOW?! And possibly also WHY?! *anguished noises *I am so sleepy & in need of my bed... 3:10 PM 3 Nov 2012

common lexeme {ridiculous} (N=3) marks the author's indignation and invites second stories or agreement rather than commiseration and encouragement. Other expressions of emotions are more varied but function similarly; the data contained "kicking myself", "insanely jealous", "desperate", "exhausting", "pity" and "mad".

There exists a wide range of lexical devices that upgrade or downgrade a complaint. An overview with examples is given in Table 7.5. It is based on Trosborg's (1995) findings and adapted to include Twitter-specific categories. On the whole, users upgrade more than downgrade. This is again a natural consequence of the focus on TP complaints which carry little face-threat since the complainee is not present in the audience. Downgrading expressions of tentativeness, hedges, cajolers and subjectifiers from Trosborg's scheme appeared only once or not at all in the Twitter sample. Upgraders, on the other hand, crop up in wide variety and include four additional categories: extreme case formulations, boosting hashtags, emoticons and performative predications. I will consider the first of these in more detail below.

Extreme case formulation is a strategy that underscores the deplorable nature of the event or behaviour by suggesting stark contrasts and extremes. This is done by using comparisons, superlative forms, and adverbials "never", "always", "all the time". Pomerantz (1986) argued that extreme case formulations are used to justify the complaint. They are more common in third party complaints to a friendly audience, since they are brittle and can be easily contested. For instance, someone who wishes to detract from *rothbert11*'s social capital can easily say that his claim in 28 is not empirically testable and the speaker may have tighter calves than *rothbert11*. Similarly, the extreme case formulation in 8 makes it absolutely clear that the declarative is a complaint and not neutral information sharing, but the fact that the designer has never seen a woman is obviously exaggerated and can be used to deactivate the whole complaint.

Another strategy that may modify a complaint, but generally serves to cushion its disruptive effect on social comity and to make it more appropriate, is humour. Nine complaints in the sample are accompanied by humour. The role of humour in constructing appropriateness is evident in its topical distribution: six out of the nine tweets are on non-ballet topics (Example 32). Ballet-related topics in themselves make complaints appropriate and do not require extra mitigation through humour.

- (32) Connoisseur: Feeling a bit full. On the plus side, the week old cake has gone. 2:19 PM 20 Sep 2013

Humour contributes to appropriateness by implying familiarity and shared values and attitudes. According to Fillmore (1994:272), "humor is an expression of the collective experience of the participants, and receives response only from those who share common concerns." In the TPC subcorpus, humour is of the public

non-flouting kind (Cutting 2000: 24), i.e. it is accessible to most hearers and relies on funny language or funny situations. The private flouting humour which is accessible only to in-group members is frequent in the rest of ballet Twitter data and is discussed in Chapter 9.

Every complainant faces the task of making the complaint appropriate and believable, notwithstanding the medium. Given the inherently reconstructive nature of complaints, the verbal presentation of the complaint has a great potential in influencing the perlocutionary effect. In the following I will turn to the group of linguistic strategies known as 'objectification' that the speaker employs to justify his/her complaint. The set of objectification strategies received a detailed treatment in Chapter 3, and Table 7.6 summarises once again the strategies present in the Twitter data with examples.

The empiricist repertoire commonly occurs in physical effects TPC, and then the users draw upon the 'factual presentation' device. Since Twitter TPC are predominantly self- or situation-directed, the potential for juxtaposing active and passive voice or for inserting quotations into the tweet is limited. The immediacy of Twitter makes detached accounts of events unlikely and irregular: the view from the author's eyes is what microblogging thrives on. *Verba sentiendi* and descriptions of feelings, on the other hand, are an integral part of Twitter TPCs. The verbs of feeling as such can be elided (e.g. "I feel" before "V frustrated" in 33) but the audience gets a glimpse into the complainant's mind through emotion words. The combination of factual discourse and *verba sentiendi* is a very powerful strategy to tilt the audience's opinion of a situation in the speaker's favour. While creating an illusion of objectivity, the speaker chooses one of many possible representations of the same event and thus unambiguously guides the audience in the direction of the expected evaluative judgement. For instance, given a chance to voice her side of the story, the 'someone' in 33 might have presented a version of events in which *Gazelle* jumped too far and was at fault for wrongly assessing the exercise area despite watching the other groups do the exercise.

The speaker's interpretation of events can be confirmed through witness corroboration. Discursively, this strategy is realised either through co-construction by several parties, or through reporting others' evaluations and reactions to the complainable. The co-construction of a complaint story is discussed in detail in Chapter 8 (Story 1 Dancers of mass destruction or Story 2 Wi-Fi in Costa Coffee). It unfolds over several tweet turns and has the author and the followers sharing details of the same event or accounts of a typical behaviour. Such a conversation is visible to all who follows the participants and lends veracity to the discursive representation. Witnesses' accounts, however, are similar to empiricist discourse in that they tend to occur in other-directed

Table 7.6. Objectification in Twitter complaints (emphasis mine)

Objectification strategy	Devices	Examples
Empiricist discourse	passive voice for own actions of feelings, active voice for complaine	(33) Gazelle: Oof that was a hard class. V frustrated by my last GA to left being wrecked by someone just walking out right in front of me as I jumped. 3:48 PM 5 Nov 2012
	presenting facts but refraining from evaluative judgement	(34) Annabelle: Learning a variation. So far have kicked the floor fan & the wall heater and have stepped on a squeaky dog toy. Need space!! Plus it's hot! 6:31 AM 5 Sep 2013
	quotations	(35) Gazelle: Physioterrorist seems nice. As usual, confirmed I am v broken; agreed amazing I was dxd so late ; confused physio by being broken weirdly... 3:17 PM 8 Nov 2012
Corroboration	joint production	See story 1 "Dancers of mass destruction"
	building witnesses' accounts into the complaint	(36) (cont. of 40) FeistyGirl: that is easy and doesn't make you want to be a better person/dancer/etc? I could see the frustration & disappointment in our teachers eyes! 11:43 PM 19 Mar 2013
Complaint stories	graphic narrative description	(37) he_danseur: Watched Dance Moms (or tried to) for 1st time y'day. Turned off <10 mins: my cringing and rising blood pressure. It was a health hazard. 9:33 PM 4 Nov 2013
	verba sentiendi	(38) dancdance: @follower well im not going to give up but i feel like a weary warrior sometimes!:/ 5:18 AM 24 Sep 2013
Script formulations	typicality script: normalising adverbs, present tense, habitual 'would'	(39) Gazelle: #ehlersdanlos means I struggle with proprioception but I manage not to dance on other ppl: why do noncripples fail so epically so often?! 3:55 PM 5 Nov 2012
	context-specific scripts	(40) FeistyGirl: I really wanted to shout at my fellow classmates tonight!! Surely if u sign up for a pointe class u expect to (a) turn up with pointe shoes 11:42 PM 19 Mar 2013 FeistyGirl: (b) last more than 5 mins en pointe before giving up! (c) put some effort in to doing the exercise right!! Ballet IS hard, but that's why 11:42 PM 19 Mar 2013 FeistyGirl: we continue to try & push & strive to improve, not give up and put no effort in! If ballet was easy where's the challenge in doing something 11:43 PM 19 Mar 2013

complaints. Because most of the Twitter sample deals with self or situation as a complainable, witness corroboration holds a minor position among objectification strategies (in fact, 36 was the only example of it). Since a lot of complaints refer to subjective states such as pain or frustration, it is impossible for a third party to corroborate the report.

Much more popular in Twitter TPCs is the construction of scriptedness. The imposition of a script on the reported event construes it as a single instance of a large sequence. Seeing the infraction as typical, as in 39, justifies the performance of complaint, because it portrays the author as a long-suffering martyr who endures at first, but after many repetitions of the same problem finally speaks up. The effect is achieved by inserting adverbials such as “always”, “all too often”, “all the time” into the utterance or using normalising verb forms: present tense and habitual ‘would’. A supportive move characteristic of an in-group is to refer to the normality script in a specific context. Such specific scripts develop as norms of behaviour in discourse communities and may be referred to explicitly or exist implicitly in the space of shared values and experiences. In 40, for instance, *FeistyGirl* explicitly cites three rules of pointe class, which her classmates broke and therefore committed a transgression that deserves a complaint.

Invoking the script boosts the account by presenting the complainable action as not only diverging from the complainant’s personal ideas of propriety, but also, more importantly, from the rules of the whole community. The second tweet in the story refers to another ballet-specific script, ‘Ballet is hard’. It is frequently invoked by community members to justify other-directed TPC or to mitigate the self-directed ones. In 41, *beyou* continues a conversation in which he laments his inability to perform triple pirouettes, and *ROHman* says that he has succeeded in doing them only after two and a half years of dedicated practice. “But that’s what ballet is all about” links back to the rule ‘Ballet is hard’ and mitigates *beyou*’s lack of skill by implying that he has not had the chance to put in the years of hard work yet (he started ballet several months ago and had a long break) and cannot be as skilful.

- (41) beyou: @ROHman insanely jealous, but hats what ballet is all about
1:28 AM 7 Feb 2013

A prominent place in establishing one’s entitlement as a witness is held by the package of linguistic strategies that are used to construct a complaint story (Dayter and Rüdiger 2014, Holt 2000). By borrowing from the toolbox of literary authors, a complainant endows his/her report with vivid realistic details that confirm its factuality. The effect can be reached by various linguistic means. Apart from such traditional devices as narrative present, verb initial positioning,

and affective semantic loading (Günthner 2000a), the authors frequently resort to scrupulous detailing. Filling the chronologically arranged description of a situation with specific references to people, places or times enables the author to stage it as a realistic ‘little show’ (Goffman 1974). Such description takes place in the orientation component of complaint narratives, e.g. Story 1 in Chapter 8. Non-narrative tweets make use of shorter means of graphic detailing. In 37, *he_danseur* embellishes his account of watching a bad TV show with colourful minutiae such as “cringing”, “rising blood pressure” and “health hazard” to establish that it merits a complaint.

7.5 Conclusion: Pragmatic space of complaints

Having described the Twitter TPCs via various taxonomies stemming from offline research – participants, directionality, syntactic structure, lexical makeup, objectification – we notice that the two align in some respects and there are expected deviations in others. It is hard to do justice to these differences by referring to any one feature of the data, such as the language of a community of practice, its norms or its medium of interaction. All these forces come into play, but not simultaneously and not to the same degree: some examples are clearly affected by linguistic economy and relaxed expectations towards language standard, while others follow linguistic norms but deviate along the pragmatic axis. To give an example, an attempt to place the degree of directness of TPC in accordance with Trosborg’s (1995) scale runs into obstacles. On the first glance Twitter TPC appear to be close to the direct end of the continuum, as expected in CMC environments (Meinl 2010; Vasquez 2011). We may assume that the complainable is often directly described in the proposition since a prominent part of TPCs is realised by declaratives and does not elicit clarifying uptake. The complainant’s negative attitude is clearly stated, as is visible from the range and frequency of negative emotion words and interjections and swear words: “feckitty feck”, “crap”, “bugger”, “bummed” etc. The agentive involvement of the complaineé is stated in the few other-directed complaints and has to be assumed in self-directed ones. The evaluation of the complaineé’s action as bad, again, is evident in the emotionally laden lexis and boosting hashtags. In the other-directed complaints, users clearly state that they evaluate the complaineé as a bad person – see “slackers” in 13 or “stupid” in 23. With that all five requirements for Trosborg’s directness scale are fulfilled. However, many of these features emerge in negotiation of the appropriateness of the complaint over several turns, so co-constructedness needs to be taken into account.

Besides, some TPC marked by especially colourful lexis are not in fact face threatening but serve entertaining function or are meant to mask the underlying intention of face-enhancing self-disclosure. The directness of complaints is difficult to pin down if we consider that tweets have not only the intended audience, but also the potential and the actual ones: in theory, public accounts can be read by anyone with internet access, and unidirectional following practices mean that users do not keep track of their followers.

The suggestion in Chapter 3 was to treat complaints as a fuzzy speech act that can be measured against a prototype on several dimensions. I reproduce the dimensions below for convenience.

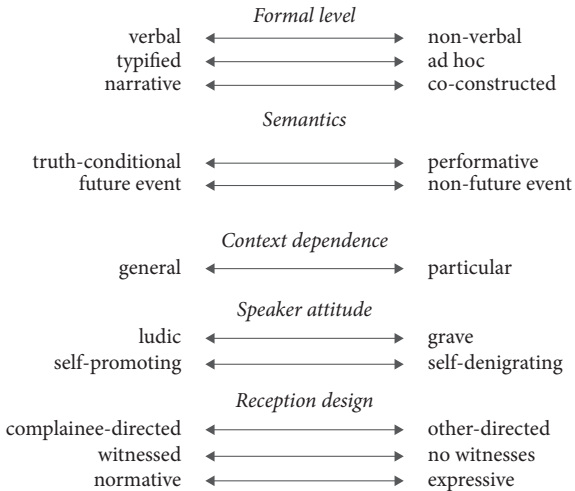


Figure 5 (2 reproduced from Chapter 3). The pragmatic space of evaluation

Twitter TPCs certainly comply with the prototypical notion of a complaint in that they are verbal; only six tweets in the data included pictures as an integral part of the complaint. The formulation of the complaint itself appears ad hoc, but the appropriate uptake is more uniform, so that the sequence on the whole may be placed closer to the typified end of the continuum. There is much variation along the narrative/co-constructed axis, but even the complaints with joint participation mostly consist of monologual tweets with switching teller roles, and co-constructed accounts of the same event are very rare. On the semantic level, exaggeration, humour and focus on low-tellable issues indicate the preponderance of a performative function: this dimension captures the tendency of TPCs to have flattering self-disclosure as the underlying goal. Although most TPCs report a past event, several outliers project future problems:

- (42) Gazelle: Guess I'll find out @ next cardiology review. Which reminds me, tilt-table test this week, really not looking forward to that, funnily:/ 2:51 AM 12 May 2013

Context dependence merits a special look. Twitter TPCs demonstrate an interesting duality in relation to this dimension. In general context, they can be readily understood by outsiders and construed as complaints. In the particular context of ballet student life (or zooming in further to diachronic detail: *dancedance's* knee surgery or *beyou's* recent acquaintance with ballet), they can be recast as having a different complainable or not being complaints at all. Speaker attitude is generally ludic, unless specifically marked as grave by sad emoticons. Self-denigrating on the surface level, disclosive TPCs are often self-promoting – a statement which holds true for ballet-related complaints. TPCs on non-ballet topics align with the results of offline research in that they are primarily self-promoting. The reception design, as remarked above, differs from the speaker and the recipient perspective. While other-directed TPCs are designed as such (with one exception, when *Gazelle* complains about Nivea's advertising campaign and @mentions the company's Twitter handle in her tweet), nothing stops the complainees from logging into Twitter and reading the complaint. Tweeted complaints, however, are certainly witnessed, so the presence of the third party would affect the performative aspect of complaining (Traverso 2009). By virtue of the reception design that does not include the addressee, the complaints are primarily expressive – the authors do not aim to demand remediation of the complainable, but vent their feelings and invite commiseration.

To conclude, the questions posed in the beginning of the chapter have received tentative answers. Third party complaints in the ballet Twitter community do not appear to pattern in relation to the gender or geographical location of the author. The only observable connection is idiosyncratic, namely *Gazelle* producing a very high number of non-ballet complaints on the topic of her illness. The ballet-related TPCs deal predominantly with the topics of skill, physical effects and shows. The initial intuition that TPCs have an underlying function as acts of positioning that construct an identity of a ballet 'hero' has been confirmed by the close reading of the examples: self-disclosure of hero attributes as well as uptake that focuses on ballet-related aspects of the complaint are evidence of that. Another factor that supports the hypothesis about self-disclosure is the preponderance of declarative utterances as the main syntactic means of realising the complaint. The pull towards concise and self-contained one-tweet complaints is evident in the data, although it is impossible to say whether this is due to the constraints of the medium, the authors' penchant for immediate interaction, or minuteness of complainables which can hardly be stretched over a longer narrative. Although the

earlier assumption that no single IFID marks complaints has been borne out, it is possible to say that TPCs are characterised by the presence of negatively loaded lexis, especially interjections, swear words and paralinguistic information in form of performative predication. The Twitter TPCs differ from face-to-face TPCs in several respects, most important of those being context dependence and reception design. On the whole, they seem to be less interactionally risky than their face-to-face counterparts described in the literature to date, and to have as their objective the construction of a ballet identity rather than venting or the elicitation of support.

Certainly, the discussion above is partly relevant to the investigation of direct complaints. Because they are much rarer than indirect ones and have a face-threatening rather than face-enhancing intention, they are briefly considered in Chapter 5 along with the other speech acts. Third party complaints, however, play a key role in the construction of the ballet identity and represent an important vehicle of social self-disclosure.

CHAPTER 8

Narratives in microblogs

8.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I will focus on the patterns of storytelling in ballet Twitters and their implications for the broader issues of self-disclosure and identity. The question to be addressed is:

- How is storytelling performed on Twitter and what is its purpose?

The subordinate questions which will help answer the overarching question are:

- How are stories negotiated? How do users overcome the constraints of the medium? Which linguistic and pragmatic strategies occur in stories? Are stories monological or interactive?

I aim to demonstrate that stories on Twitter are an important identity device that claims the identity of a ballet dancer through theme-relevant self-disclosure. I also argue that despite the limitations of format, Twitter as a medium is well suited for narrative. Although Twitter imposes much stricter character limit than, for example, Facebook statuses, the relaxed expectations of reciprocity allow users to occupy conversational time without extensive preparatory work that is *de rigueur* in more interactive environments.

While the central concepts have been laid out in Chapter 3, this chapter will reiterate the analytical scheme and go into detail in dissecting a number of examples (I extracted 70 stories from BaTwit, some of them multi-turn and some single turn). This is done to illustrate the validity of the conclusions I draw about the stories on Twitter as a whole, since the quantitative methods are of limited applicability in the case of a small corpus.

8.2 Components of a narrative

Twitter imposes the limit of 140 characters on every post. I reported in Chapter 5 that in BaTwit corpus, an average tweet is 17 words long. This means that a story

on Twitter must either fit into 17 words in its entirety or be distributed over several posts – with the ensuing demands on cohesion and coherence.

The first option is, indeed, a possibility, and is sometimes exercised as an art form (see “Twitter sized fiction” on @VeryShortStory, or a meme that rolled through Twitter in spring 2012 when users created tongue-in-cheek summaries of the great works of literature under the hashtag #140orless¹). It crops up in the corpus as well, although these short reports of daily life are less coherent and tellable than the examples above. Often the subjects prefer the longer format. They let their stories unravel over several tweets, stretching them temporally (one story being told over a day or a week) and structurally. In the following, I will address and explicate the differences between the two.

In the first round of analysis, the longer tweet stories will be examined. They are an integral part of the community discourse: 191 tweets of the 1,000 tweet corpus are part of a multi-tweet unit. These, in turn, can be subdivided into predominantly monological and predominantly negotiated stories.

The first of the narrative frameworks laid out in Chapter 2 as relevant for the present analysis, the structural narrative framework, has a four plus two format: four central components – orientation, evaluation, complicating action, and resolution; and two optional – abstract and coda. The reviewed literature suggested that this framework is well applicable to some social media environments, e.g. forums and expository websites, although not necessarily to the minimalistic genres like Twitter or Facebook statuses. I find, however, that multi-tweet stories conform to the Labovian framework to a large degree. The other influential framework that achieves high descriptive adequacy with Twitter material is the ‘small stories’ approach, which has been successfully applied to social media stories (Georgakopoulou 2013a, 2013b, 2014a, 2014b). Both of these theories can provide important insight into the storytelling practices Web 2.0, each uniquely suitable to the different narrative devices that the ballet Twitter users wield with expertise (Dayter 2015).

First, let us consider an example of a more traditional multi-turn narrative. Story 1 is a longer narrative tweeted over several posts by *Gazelle*, who is reporting a past event. The core consists of three tweets immediately following one another, is not interrupted by replies and has temporal and structural coherence.

1. Also, in 2012 The Guardian asked famous writers to come up with original fiction in Twitter format <http://www.theguardian.com/books/2012/oct/12/twitter-fiction-140-character-novels>

Story 1. Dancers of mass destruction – core.

1. Gazelle: Oof that was a hard class. V frustrated by my last GA to left being wrecked by someone just walking out right in front of me as I jumped. 3:48 PM 5 Nov 2012
2. Gazelle: Seriously, you’ve just done the ex; you know where it ends; we’re last grp so you can shift in 2 secs; wtfis with walking out into studio?! 3:55 PM 5 Nov 2012
3. Gazelle: #ehlersdanlos means I struggle with proprioception but I manage not to dance on other ppl: why do noncripples fail so epically so often?! 3:55 PM 5 Nov 2012

The story is taken up by three interlocutors, one of whom initiates her own story-telling event based on class co-membership (the second story about dancers of mass destruction) and elicits an assessment from *Gazelle*, and the other two commiserate and steer the thread towards a rapport-building interaction.

Story 1. Dancers of mass destruction – continued.

[1], [2], [3]...

Thread 1.1

4. ROHman: @Gazelle Perhaps you need to dish out some red shorts, much akin to ye olde Dunces cap... 5:31 PM 5 Nov 2012
5. Follower1: @ROHman @Gazelle Or run around behind them with a bell shouting: “Dancer re-versing. Dancer re-versing.” 5:42 PM 5 Nov 2012
6. ROHman: @Follower1 @Gazelle Depending on the combination you might even be able to shout: “Renversing dancer reversing”... 5:45 PM 5 Nov 2012

Thread 1.2

7. Follower2:@Gazelle I call them Dancers Of Mass Destruction. And then I run and hide. 5:02 PM 5 Nov 2012
8. Gazelle: @Follower2 Drives. Me. Bananas. Teacher had already had to tell someone else off for DMDing during same ex so you’d’ve hoped... *sigh*5:24 PM 5 Nov 2012
9. Follower2: @Gazelle We had a really determined DMD, no matter where you were in the studio, she’d find you & run into you. No escape, no mercy! 5:41 PM 5 Nov 2012
10. Follower2: @Gazelle But she did get better after I ran behind a friend yelping “Save me! She’s after me! Help!!” 5:41 PM 5 Nov 2012
11. Gazelle: @Follower2 *snorts*sadly I suspect some of the worst offenders Just. Wouldn’t. Get. It. *sigh*6:09 PM 5 Nov 2012

Story 1a



The core narrative in Story 1 appears to comply well with Labov's framework (see Table 8.1) and belongs to the type of Traditional Narrative, quite distinct from two other types found on Twitter: Delayed Resolution Narrative, and Tiny Story (cf. Dayter 2015). Even in Traditional Narrative, the components are scattered and often minimal, which is in line with earlier findings on internet data (Arendholz 2010). The order in which the components are presented by *Gazelle* is almost the same as in the traditional narrative scheme. The story begins with a summary that secures the reader's attention: *Gazelle* is going to report something bad that happened to her in class.

Table 8.1. Components of a narrative, Story 1 (from Dayter 2015)

Content	Component
Oof that was a hard class	abstract
that was a ... class ... my last GA	orientation
someone just walking out right in front of me as I jumped	complication
Seriously, you've just done the ex; you know where it ends; we're last grp so you can shift in 2 secs; wtfis with walking out into studio?!	evaluation
#ehlersdanlos means I struggle with proprioception but I manage not to dance on other ppl	
V frustrated ... to left being wrecked	resolution
why do noncripples fail so epically so often?!	coda

Orientation is found in unit [1] and places the narrative at the time of *Gazelle's* last class, more specifically at the end of the grand allegro – a fast exercise in which dancers do large movements, mostly wide steps and jumps, across the studio. The complicating action takes the form of a non-finite clause “someone just walking out right in front of me as I jumped”.

An evaluation is interspersed throughout the units [2] and [3]. It holds a prominent place in this small narrative, in line with Labov's suggestion that evaluation contributes significantly to the reader recognizing the reportability of the story or the ‘so what’ question. It is accomplished through evaluative commentary, rhetorical questions and a comparison with unrealised events.

The resolution happens very early in the story, right after the abstract. This is also typical of internet data because the narrator tends to anticipate events by placing resolutions in front of complications and even orientations (Arendholz 2010:130). The coda provides a statement which is “timeless’ in feel” (Labov 2004:115) by rhetorically questioning the unfairness of the world.

Story 1a also contains some components of a traditional narrative, namely complication and resolution. However, it does not constitute a fully-fledged

narrative but is a second story (Sacks 1992). The plotline and the evaluation parallel those presented in the first story and function as the warrant for the telling. Taken together with the initial narrative, they make up an interlaced story in which both participants have equal storytelling rights (Norrick 2005). Along with the rest of interaction, the second story about dancers of mass destruction creates rapport among the speakers and positions them all as knowledgeable about typical situations in a ballet class as well as the rules of behaviour.

These findings may seem quite trivial, given that the Labovian framework has held a central position in narrative theory for decades. The significance lies in the evidence that despite the severe constraints of the microblogging medium, the traditional narrative stencil is so entrenched in the communicative repertoire of English speakers that it gets superimposed even on Twitter stories. The make-up and the order of the Labovian narrative components are replicated in this unlikely setting, proving their universal relevance for the narratives of the past.

8.3 Emergent narrative

However, a story complying with the Labovian framework is an exception rather than a rule in BaTwit. Story 2 presents a more typical example of a multi-turn speech event with several plot lines and an involved co-teller.

Story 2. A bag mishap – core.

1. ROHman: Very productive train journey into London. Not only did I write a proof for part of my transfer report, but also drafted a quick blog post! 3:47 PM 8 Nov 2012
2. ROHman: Now I just need to find a coffee shop with WiFi to send the proof to my advisor and upload the blog post to my website! 3:48 PM 8 Nov 2012
3. ROHman: Oops. May have “accidentally” gone to Bloch and “accidentally” bought some warm up boots. Oops. #nomorecoldfeet #toastytoes 4:32 PM 8 Nov 2012
4. Turns out all my transfer report work, my laptop *and* a pair of Bloch warm up boots is too much for one bag to take. #brokenbag 5:25 PM 8 Nov 2012

Story 2a. A bag mishap – continued. Internet in Costa Coffee.

[1], [2]...

Thread 2.1

5. Follower3: @ROHman Costa has free wifi now:-) 3:50 PM 8 Nov 2012
6. ROHman: @Follower3 Really? Awesome! 3:58 PM 8 Nov 2012

7. Follower3: @ROHman Yep! 30 mins if you don't have a reward card, but just pick one up from the till, activate it via your 3g or smartphone. 4:00 PM 8 Nov 2012
8. Follower3: @ROHman..then it's unlimited.-) 4:01 PM 8 Nov 2012
9. ROHman: @Follower3 Awesome – I already have a reward card – win! 4:16 PM 8 Nov 2012

...[3], [4]

Table 8.2. Components of a narrative, Story 2 (from Dayter 2015)

Content	Component
train journey into London Bloch	orientation
Not only did I write a proof for part of my transfer report, but also drafted a quick blog post! May have ... gone to.Bloch and ... bought some warm up boots.	complication
Very productive Oops ... "accidentally" ... "accidentally" ...oops #nomorecoldfeet #toastytoes Now I just need to find a coffee shop with WiFi to send the proof to my advisor and upload the blog post to my website	evaluation
#brokenbag	resolution
Turns out all my transfer report work, my laptop *and*a pair of Bloch warm up boots is to much for one bag to take.	coda

Story 2-2a is markedly different from the first example. On the structural level, Labov's key components of a narrative may still be found in the core story without difficulty (see Table 8.2). An orientation sets the scene twice: first, in the train on the way to London, and second, in the outlet of Bloch, a company that makes ballet apparel. A complicating action develops in several clause fragments that are recognisable as a succession of events: taking the paperwork and the laptop to write a transfer report, writing a report, arriving to London, going to the shop to buy warm-up boots. An evaluation, again, is interspersed through the narrative to express the author's stance toward each action. It is realised through intensifiers, repetition, a modal verb, evaluative commentary, and a 'look-ahead' that sketches the favourable consequences of the events. The resolution briefly states the crux of the story: the bag has broken apart. The coda draws an edifying conclusion that the author's own ill-considered actions caused the dramatic event.

However, this analysis can be carried out only post-factum. If we take the reader's perspective, the orientational fragment "Very productive train journey into London" comes in the very beginning of the story and seemingly constitutes an abstract. *ROHman's* story appears to be about a productive writing session, and

an evaluative outlook [2] is more of a coda that “returns the verbal perspective to the present moment” (Labov and Waletzky 1967:39). Follower3 takes it as such and initiates an advice-giving sequence that unfolds over the next thirty minutes. The next instalment of complicating action [3] comes 46 minutes after [2] and appears to be a new narrative. Its role in the grand scheme of events is visible only in hindsight when the reader, another 53 minutes later, receives the information from unit [4].

The key analytical question here concerns not the reader’s but the teller’s perspective. It is reasonable to assume that *ROHman* did not foresee his bag mishap; moreover, the evaluative commentary from unit [3] gives us a reason to believe that he did not foresee buying the warm-up boots, either. Can one use the label ‘a narrative’ for a story that the teller did not intend to tell and that therefore lacks a narrative intention? An affirmative answer may begin an endless cycle, for we cannot preclude the possibility that tomorrow *ROHman* will tweet about having to cancel a holiday on Costa Rica at the last second because his passport had slipped out of the broken bag but he has not noticed the loss until now that he is trying to go abroad.² In the end, the true resolution can be found only in an account of past events since it answers the question “What *finally* happened?” (the question from Labov and Waletzky 1967, emphasis mine). Complicating action, in contrast, qualifies as a part of a narrative based on the character of events being reported (Labov 1982: 227) and does not need to be defined post-factum. In this way, tweet stories of the Story 2 kind (hereafter *Type II*, or *Delayed Resolution Narrative*) are inherently different from the Story 1 (hereafter *Type I*, or *Traditional Narrative*) in the nature of reporting.

Linguistic realisation of the narrative components merits a second look. Story 1 follows the pattern of a canonical narrative and is also conventional in its surface form. It uses past tense or non-finite clauses for the complicating action, present tense for the evaluation, and narrative present for the coda. *Gazelle* tells her story verbally in a standard manner that is not necessarily indicative of CMC. Story 2, in contrast, has a look-ahead clause in its evaluative part that constitutes its own projected narrative and receives uptake. Most importantly, the resolution event comes up only in the form of a hashtag #brokenbag. Hashtags are multi-faceted devices. On the one hand, they serve to make the tweet searchable and to enter a larger conversation or community (Zappavigna 2012). This is true for

2. Or the broken bag in November 2012 starting a string of similar incidents, with every bag in *ROHman*’s possession falling apart within a week from purchase, which led him to believe that he is cursed and seek help with a Catholic priest. There are endless fascinating possibilities.

widely used hashtags such as #ballerinafeet, #BostonMarathon or #SixWordPeer-Review. On the other hand, Twitter users frequently create idiosyncratic hashtags to add a layer of meaning to a word or phrase. It may be a pithy summary, a self-deprecatory comment, an evaluation, a joke, or a key piece of information that changes the whole point of the utterance (Dayter 2015):

1. dancendance: school work done-for the most part-now back to round two of the dancingpartofmyday-thankgoodness!! #historyenglishnotasmuchfunasballet
2. Gazelle: @User we could totally work that into Pigeon Fountain *thoughtful face* #cautiongeniusatwork
3. FeistyGirl: *Yawn*I love waking up at 9am “alarm clock” free on a Sunday morning, however I’m less impressed to discover its actually 10am #BUGGER
4. ROHman: Got a weird look in the gym locker room when I cracked my toes (or rather my toe ‘knuckles’)... Oops! #failedballetninja
5. pointe35: Yeah but the problem is I know there’s a sock in there. #sockbun

The first tweet is unlikely to be found by a like-minded stranger who just happened to input the hashtag #historyenglishnotasmuchfunasballet into the search field. Rather, hashtagging allows authors to neglect the rules of Standard English and be creative. Besides, a hashtag is easily excluded from the syntactic structure of the tweet and can add information even if there are not enough characters left for a full clause. Its parenthetical nature along with the fact that a longer hashtag is difficult to parse at a glance and stands a good chance of being overlooked gives the users a brilliant device for language play. Hashtags are used as “a comment whispered under one’s breath, meant to be heard and yet defeasible” (Dayter 2015:6).

In Story 2, the resolution is not a narrative clause as required by Labov’s model, but an isolated NP ‘brokenbag’. Linguistic economy is not a factor here as after the first sentence *ROHman* still has 24 characters at his disposal, which is enough for a full clause (e.g. “It broke” or even “So my bag fell apart!”). #brokenbag is an understated complaint – it describes the state of affairs but does not explicitly evaluate it and ask for compassion, thus remaining non-face-threatening and in good taste. The role of hashtags in third party complaints was discussed in more detail in Chapter 7.

The second application of hashtags in multi-part Twitter stories is as a marker of cohesion. An idiosyncratic hashtag re-occurs day after day in an extended story to earmark non-adjacent tweets as steps of a single narrative. Story 3, for instance, unfolds over two months and spans the episodes of the wedding preparation, the wedding itself, the reception, and the wedding pictures posted several weeks later as they are made available by professional photographers.

Story 3. San Fran wedding (bold emphasis mine)

1. he_danseur: Sneak peek: wedding crafting! Super cute style by @Partner, fiancé & literally in-house designer. **#happytogether2** [picture of a self-made place card] 8 Sep 2013
2. he_danseur: Starting to put together wedding favor bags. #gettinrealYo **#happytogether2** [picture of a gift bag] 14 Sep 2013
3. he_danseur: One week to our wedding! Read my fiancé @Partner's column in this week's @Newspaper: [link to an article in an LGBT online newspaper] **#happytogether2** 19 Sep 2013
4. he_danseur: It is done. @Partner and I are married! **#happytogether2** 26 Sep 2013
5. he_danseur: Me and @Partner, newly wed. (Photo: @Photographer, thanks!) **#happytogether2** [picture of the ceremony] 7:34 PM 27 Sep 2013
6. he_danseur: Finale to @Partner's and my wedding ceremony yesterday: [video of the ring exchange] **#happytogether2** (Thx Kevin for video!) 9:09 PM 27 Sep 2013
7. he_danseur: Up and at 'em, the wedding continues! Today is Happy Together 2.0.1: The Receptioning. **#happytogether2** 28 Sep 2013
8. he_danseur: Dapper every day! I think our wedding theme continues to inspire. Need to put on some How to Succeed etc. [picture of *he_danseur* in a dress shirt and bowtie] 9:32 PM 30 Sep 2013
9. he_danseur: Photo album: @Partner's & my wedding at SF City Hall [link to an online album] (@Photographer) **#happytogether2** [group photo from the wedding] 11:52 PM 30 Sep 2013
10. he_danseur: Wedding joy: @Partner's & my reception photos by Name Surname [link] **#happytogether2** [picture of the couple] 15 Oct 2013
11. he_danseur: Showing off at my wedding, like ya do. There was some ballet in there, I swear. Photo: Name Surname. **#happytogether2** [picture of *he_danseur* on the dance floor] 18 Oct 2013
12. he_danseur: Groom Mickey ears for @Partner & me! Awesome wedding gift from fellow Disneyphile friends. **#happytogether2** [picture of the couple in Mickey Mouse hats] 1 Nov 2013
13. he_danseur: @Partner & I rcvd wedding congrats from our great state senator, @MarkLeno. Thank you, sir! **#happytogether2** [picture of a letter] 8:23 PM 15 Nov 2013

A Twitter search confirms that **#happytogether2** is used only by *he_danseur*, his partner and one of the guests to refer to their wedding. Only one tweet in this story does not carry the hashtag. Tweet [8], however, is not an action in the

wedding story but an allusion made to the shared story at a different moment in *he_danseur's* life, and may be excluded from the narrative. In these examples, the hashtag also is removed from the overall syntactic structure of the tweet(s), but it does not constitute a resolution. Instead, its function shifts with repeated use from evaluative at its first appearance to a purely formal marker of the storyline. Such process of grammaticalisation is common for idiosyncratic hashtags and happens in the speech of a single user or across the repertoire of the whole discourse community.

8.4 Dimensions of narrative: Tellability, linearity and tellership on Twitter

Returning to the narrative analysis of Story 2, I will attempt to answer the question posed there by turning to a different analytical framework. As Chapter 2 posited, the narratives do not all strictly confirm to a set of defining features but rather sit along a continuum from a default narrative to a more fluid kind of story that is much more likely to be encountered in a natural setting. Several features of the stories 1, 2 and 3 – including followers' participation, shifting or absent points of the story, and hashtag use – can be understood better with the application of Ochs and Capps' (2001) framework.

In her discussion of celebrity Twitter, Page (2012:100) claims that "the linearity of narrative tweets is derived from the representation of time generated from the timestamp in the tweet template, the position of the tweet within an archive of updates and the content of the tweet itself". I argue that in my Twitter data, timestamp plays a negligible role in narrative identification. Firstly, the full information on the timestamp is accessible to the reader only in the first hour after the posting. As the tweet moves down the timeline, the timestamp changes to the imprecise "one hour ago", "7 hours ago", "4 months ago", "one year ago" etc. Secondly, Twitter is a noisy environment: even a minute's delay in posting the next instalment of a story will have many unconnected tweets from other users intruding between the story's turns in a reader's timeline. While Story 1's linearity is signalled by turn adjacency, Story 2 is a typical example of the content of a tweet being the means of piecing a story together, and Story 3 demonstrates the importance of a hashtag. #happytogether2 strings together a narrative from 12 non-adjacent turns, further reinforced by the reiteration of the key lexical element, "wedding".

Linearity, however, does not characterise only the succession of linguistic elements but also the relation between the reported events and the report itself.

Ochs and Capps (2001:45) construe the inconsistency in everyday conversational stories as a means of questioning the coherence that linear narratives impose on life experiences. Story 1 follows the canon of default narrative in reconstructing a linear story from a past experience: a resolution stands in clear causal connection to a complicating action in a past tense clause, followed by evaluative comments and a coda. *Gazelle* casts her story as a typical member of the script ‘dancers of mass destruction’, pre-assigning the roles and requesting solidarity from the ballet community. Her Follower’s second story supports the claim for script membership with another narrative from a more distant past.

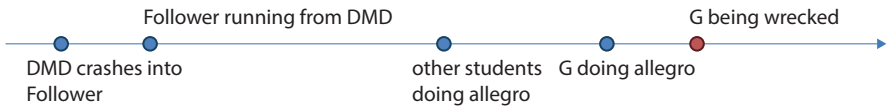


Figure 6. Story line of Story 1, Dancers of mass destruction (from Dayter 2015)

Story 2, on the other hand, does not have such a “teleologically focussed trajectory towards a definitive conclusion” (Page 2012: 12). First of all, the story is discontinuous and fluctuating. The first narrative turn already establishes what could have been a resolution (and is probably viewed as such by the author at the moment of writing). The second turn provides an evaluation of the first turn and a projection of future action, which is taken up in a different strand of collaborative narrative ‘Internet in Costa Coffee’. The third turn adds a complication which, again, at the moment of writing is perceived by the author as a separate narrative consisting of a resolution and an evaluation. The unexpected events in the fourth turn bring together the previous two narrative strands into a coherent whole. This highlights the story’s second characteristic, its open-endedness. Since the role of the given components has shifted with time, it is reasonable to posit that further shifts may occur but cannot be foreseen by the author.

The episodic quality of story lines is due to the immediacy of this medium. Life events are reported as they are unfolding and the teller does not have an opportunity to process them according to a narrative template and to present a packaged story. This is interesting because temporal sequentiality underlies most accepted definitions of a narrative (see Chapter 2). However, as Twitter shows, the teller does not always fulfil the role of a wise, all-knowing puppeteer to his/her characters. Certainly, non-linear open-ended narratives are not exclusive to social media. The analytical benefit of this output is that in contrast to everyday conversation, microblogging posts are fixed on the Twitter servers and readily available for examination.

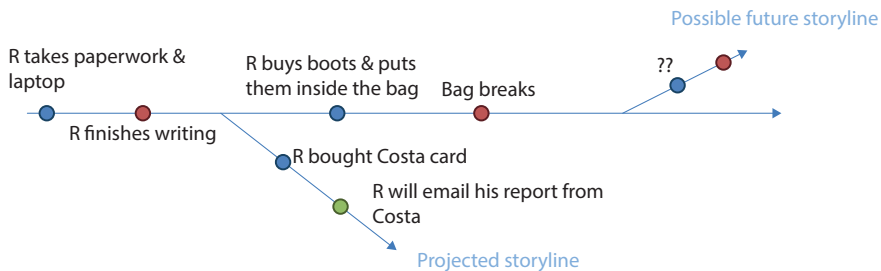


Figure 7. Story line of Story 2 (from Dayter 2015)

Intrinsically connected to the open-endedness of a narrative is its tellability. Tellability depends not on the form of the narrative but on the nature of the reported events. Twitter stories often deal in everyday, mundane topics such as watching cartoons or shopping:

Story 4. Angelina Ballerina.

1. pointe35: Angelina Ballerina. Weirdly mesmerizing 4:24 AM 19 Jan 2013
2. pointe35: The mouse tail really adds a certain something to pirouettes. #AngelinaBallerina 4:35 AM 19 Jan 2013
3. pointe35: Heh. That mouse just did a pas de chat. Heh heh. #AngelinaBallerina 4:44 AM 19 Jan 2013

Story 5. Pink ballet tights.

1. pointe35: Need new tights. GRUMPY FACE. 3:02 AM 15 May 2013
2. pointe35: "You must spend x amount more dollars to qualify for free shipping". Perfect. Pink tights added to cart. 5:15 AM 17 May 2013
3. pointe35: I love shopping for things in Ballet Pink. 6:58 AM 17 May 2013

On the tellability scale, these lie much further from the default narrative than a story about a physical injury caused by another person (Story 1), a bag which broke in transit (Story 2) or a same-sex wedding (Story 3). It appears that the only source of tellability for the likes of Story 4 and 5 is affiliative self-disclosure. That minimal mundane stories are nevertheless tellable is illustrated by the presence of uptake, as e.g. in Story 6 (similarly, Story 4 sparked off uptake from five different persons and the longest thread of a nine-turn discussion, and Story 5 had uptake from two followers and a three-turn discussion). Story 6 and similar single turn examples are recognisable as stories because they report on personal experience.³

3. Compare Story 6 to this example which is not a personal narrative despite containing a first-person finite verb: "ROHman: I need to see more Cunningham. Need to. 10:05 PM 9 Nov 2012"

As such, they are often realised through one or more non-evaluative self-disclosive units. These stories, involving “updating on minute-by-minute – often very mundane and ordinary – experience” have grown to be critically important mobile resources on social media (Georgakopoulou 2014a: 522).

Story 6. Warming up.

1. Annabelle: Warming up for class!! ♥ 4:43 PM 31 Jul 2013
Follower: @Annabelle have fun ! ☺ 4:51 PM 31 Jul 2013

As discussed in Chapter 2, Page (2012) attributes tellability of mundane stories to the interest in the back stage life of celebrities. For my subjects, this is not a satisfying explanation since they are, for the most part, ordinary people (*PasDeDeux* is the only one who regularly performs as a part of a professional company) and often personally acquainted. The motivations for personal self-disclosure have been extensively discussed in Chapter 3, and it stands to reason that one of the five social functions of self-disclosure would account for the tellability of tweets. A closer look at the corpus of stories reveals an important factor: the short mundane narratives disclose the aspects of a ballet student’s identity. Story 4 testifies that the author enjoys cartoons about ballet, Story 5 is about ballet apparel, and Story 6 reports ballet exercise. In fact, every single low-tellable story in my data contained a ballet-related self-disclosure. Ballet connection emerges as the key measure of tellability in this discourse community.

On the structural level, Story 6 is different from the examples considered before. It only involves one turn and no finite verbs. Embeddedness is crucial for making sense of one-tweet stories with minimal linearity (hereafter *Type III*, or *Tiny Stories*). Page (2012:100–101) observes that non-tensed verbs are taken to refer to events in the past, and non-finite participles can refer to the present or the future. The tweet’s co-text provides the setting which could help the reader to place the events in time, even when the adjacent tweets have no thematic connection. Additionally, *Tiny Stories* are often embedded into the wider intertextual context of the internet. A cryptic minimal commentary can be supplemented by a link to another social network, e.g. Instagram or Foursquare, and can be decoded only in relation to that link:

Story 7. Sewing pointe shoes.

1. Annabelle: Sewing pointe shoes...blhh [photograph of Annabelle grimacing in frustration over her shoes] 1:43 AM 31 Jul 2013

Linking to outside resources accomplishes important identity work for the user, informing his audience about his interests, areas of expertise and authority (Page 2012: 109) – in this community, reinforcing the ballet connection. Links to

theatre websites and to articles about ballet celebrities have symbolic meaning in this context:

Story 8. Daily life in ballet.

1. Connoisseur: Been listening to Yuhui [link to youtube] 10:12 PM 6 Nov 2012

Here, *Connoisseur* links his post to a video on the Royal Opera House YouTube channel that documents a day in the life of their soloist dancer Yuhui Choe. Along with the other references to ballet materials in his data (seven links to outside resources and nine links to Instagram pictures of famous ballerinas), this embedding strategy contributes to an identity of a savvy balletomane who is interested in the minutiae of ballet life.

Intertextuality is quantitatively prominent in ballet tweets: links to outside resource (including pictures and videos) occur in 20.9% of the total tweets, 95% of these to ballet-related resources. Of course, not every tweet is a narrative, even if a more relaxed definition of narrative is applied. Nevertheless, this finding confirms the hypothesis that identity work on ballet identity is done, among other means, through positioning self within the global network of knowledge by establishing associations with particular knowledge areas and making them salient.

The departure from a canonical narrative is glaringly obvious in the teller-ship practices of Twitter. In many cases, an uptake of a narrative develops into a co-telling or a second story, with the role of the narrator shifting from the original author to other contributors and back. Story 1 is a case in point: threads 1.1 and 1.2 take up aspects of an original narrative, with 1.1 working collaboratively on a humorous projection, and 1.2 reporting a second core story and eliciting additional evaluation from the original author.

The conversation analytic view of a narrative associates any story with a set of preparatory practices, for a narrative occupies many turns and leads to an imbalance in a conversation. Since as a rule, basic organisation of speaker change revolves around the first possible transition relevant point, stories, which by their nature cannot be accomplished within a single TCU, constitute a problem (Liddicoat 2007: 279). One way of dealing with that problem is to tell a story in response to an elicitation. An elicitation provides a warrant for the story-teller to monopolise the conversation for the duration of the story, as it gives a clear answer to the two main questions of storytelling: (a) is the story unknown to the recipient? (b) is the story of potential interest to the recipient? (Sacks 1986). In that case, the co-tellers role is minimal and is restricted to supplying a topic-initial elicitor, such as “Tell me about it!”, “So how did it go?” and so on. Alternatively, the primary teller may nominate a topic, which prompts an itemised inquiry from the secondary teller that serves as an elicitor. In Story 9, the narrative itself occupies only a

fraction of two turns – orientation in [3] and complication and resolution in [5]. For the rest of the conversation the parties negotiate the storytelling and establish rapport before and after that interactionally risky event.

Story 9. Don Quixote.

1. dancedance: [photo of dancedance in front of a theatre] 2:50 AM 17 Jan 2013
2. Follower: @dancedance aw! Hello pretty face! 4:04 AM 17 Jan 2013
3. dancedance: @Follower haha i was telling my mom not to take the picture and she snapped....i was on the way to rehearsal:D how was your day? 5:06 AM 17 Jan 2013
4. Follower: @dancedance good! Home from work relaxing. Looking forward to the weekend. Yours? 5:08 AM 17 Jan 2013
5. dancedance: @Follower good! did dulcinea for the first time “in public” and it went pretty well but still loooooooooong way to go! Glad u get 2 relax 3:36 PM 17 Jan 2013
6. Follower: @dancedance Glad you’re making progress! Keep at it! 5:13 PM 17 Jan 2013

A newbie member *dancedance* starts with a non-committal move: posting a picture of herself in warm-up clothes heading into a theatre’s staff entrance. One of her followers acknowledges *dancedance*’s contribution in a phatic turn [2]. *Dancedance* complements the picture with a disclaimer: it is her mother who is responsible for taking the flattering photograph, not *dancedance* herself. In the next turn, the follower continues with affiliative small talk and eventually provides *dancedance* with a warrant to proceed with her story: “Yours?” It is only in [5], after a 4-turn negotiation that *dancedance* delivers the point of the narrative – she discloses that she has been cast for a public performance of Don Quixote. The collaboration is concluded with a supportive comment, which demonstrates the follower’s understanding of the import of the story and signals that a point of recognisable completion has been reached.

Finally, the burden of storytelling may be equally distributed among participants. Second stories are one case in point. As Story 1, thread 1.2 illustrates, the extended turns take place in succession: first *Gazelle* holds the floor with a multi-tweet narrative, then her follower. The relevance of the story for the recipient in this case relies on co-class membership. The topic of careless people who crash into other dancers serves as a pivot around which the speaker shift occurs. The other possibility of balanced co-tellership is illustrated by Story 1, thread 1.1: the normal process of speaker change is never suspended and the projected story is woven together from complementary single tweets by *ROHman* and Follower1.

8.5 Small stories. Live reporting

These examples illustrate how the traditional dimensions of a narrative are reshaped in the context of Twitter: co-tellership, embeddedness through links and pictures, and non-linear structure characterise the emergent stories in microblogs (Page 2012: 116). Low-tellable, non-linear stories were captured in Georgakopoulou's (2007a) analysis of small stories. This concept presents itself especially for the discussion of Tiny Stories. Nevertheless, Georgakopoulou's framework may also apply to stories consisting of several turns (such as Story 4 Angelina Ballerina) or even extended Twitter narratives (see Story 10).

Twitter data is rich in small stories which users employ to draft their identities within the larger social media project of "storing oneself" (Georgakopoulou 2007a). Georgakopoulou relies on the premise about great significance of narrative in identity work: "...the separation between the tale world and the world of telling provides numerous possibilities for the teller's self-presentation: it allows the tellers to socialise aspects of their self [...] by appearing both as narrators and characters in the tale world" (2007a:16). As the next step, however, she recognises that small stories include "a whole range of underrepresented narrative activities ranging from literally small and fragmented tellings to refusals to tell and deferrals of telling" (2007a:148).

Georgakopoulou's theory provides us with the tools necessary to make sense of Story 2. As discussed in Section 8.1, that speech event was problematic because the background information and the climax could not be recognised as such by the author until the climax occurred, although the telling has started before that. Georgakopoulou proposes to view emergent narratives as 'breaking news' stories. Breaking news report what is happening to the author in real time and therefore do not have a common deictic centre to which every clause is oriented. Instead, each clause has its own origo that can be derived from the timestamp. This allows breaking news stories to include few tensed verbs and mostly rely on participles, since they are understood as referring to the moment shortly before the timestamp. Breaking news tend to be highly indexical and either exhibit low tellability on the whole or acquire tellability only as events unfold. Story 4, for instance, begins with a simple statement that the author is enjoying a cartoon about a ballerina mouse [1]. The NP referencing the subject of the narrative ("Angelina Ballerina") is exophoric and relies on a certain shared knowledge between the author and the audience. In the next tweet [2], the NP appears again, this time anaphorically and as a hashtag marker that lends cohesion to the unfolding story. The unglossed deictic reference "that mouse" in [3] makes little sense without the context of watching the cartoon, which is in turn available to the reader through the preceding text. *Pointe35* supplies a tensed verb (in conjunction with

an indefinite adverb of time) to refer to the complicating action only one time. Tweet [1] has no finite verb, and the verb form present – the present participle ‘mesmerizing’ – does not refer to the events in the narrative but constitutes an evaluation. The action, watching, is implied. The verb ‘adds’ in [2] is an evaluation and not a part of the narrative action, which is once again implied. Although occasionally the current nature of breaking news is emphasised through temporal expressions (see ‘just’ above; ‘right now’, Story 10), normally the immediacy is a given (e.g. Stories 6, 7, 8).

Story 10. Breaking Pointe.

1. Annabelle: Anybody else watching Breaking Pointe right now?:)#breaking pointe 3:35 AM 30 Jul 2013

Identity is performed in breaking news in three ways. First of all, the reported events may function as a category-bound activity and call forth a certain membership category. For instance, watching a documentary about ballet (Story 8) is associated with the category ‘art lover’, and sewing pointe shoes (Story 7) invokes the category ‘ballet dancer’. A widespread membership categorisation device is a standardised relational pair (SRP) ‘teacher-student’. Along with other MCDs such as ‘class’, ‘rehearsal’, ‘tights’, ‘pirouette’, ‘pas de chat’, mentioning a teacher positions the speaker as the second half of the SRP, namely a ballet student. Story 11 is a case in point.

Story 11. A Russian teacher.

1. FeistyGirl: Reflecting on yesterday mornings ballet class with a “very Russian” (i.e. shouty) stand-in teacher! Interesting seeing the varying reactions 12:47 PM 10 Mar 2013
2. FeistyGirl: of my fellow adult classmates, ranging from engaging & rising to the challenge to those who suddenly developed an “injury” and walked away! 12:47 PM 10 Mar 2013
3. FeistyGirl: It seems over familiarly with our regular, albeit absent teacher, ready does breed complacency 😊 Needless to say I loved it & pushed on 😊 12:47 PM 10 Mar 2013

Apart from ‘teacher-student’, the SRP ‘classmate-classmate’ is used. The nature of the ‘class’ is described explicitly with the attributive noun ‘ballet’ in [1]. Finally, the self-praise in [3] completes the hero image of self painted by *FeistyGirl*: not only is she a student in a ballet class, but she is more hard-working and dedicated than some of her peers.

Secondly, the shape of participant's turn, the local linguistic choices and devices in operation (Georgakopoulou 2007a: 91) may signal belonging to the in-group. This type of identity work will be examined in detail in the next chapter. It includes, among other things, non-anaphoric use of proper nouns referring to ballets, ballerinas and ballet-related popular culture (films, TV shows); French terminology; and implicit humour (see e.g. Story 4, the mouse ballerina doing a *pas de chat* – 'a cat's step').

Thirdly, an important means of reflexive identity formation are "the roles that participants assume vis-à-vis a story's emergent structure" (Georgakopoulou 2007a: 91), or stance.

Story 11. A Russian teacher – continued.

Thread 11.1

4. Follower1: @FeistyGirl How strange to walk out! Surely one wants to push to be the best one can be and if someone shows you how, bring it on! 12:52 PM 10 Mar 2013
5. FeistyGirl: @Follower1 my thoughts exactly, we had 3 walk out during the class, I just hope the teacher wasn't offended by their lack of commitment 12:55 PM 10 Mar 2013
6. Follower1: @FeistyGirl I'd be more embarrassed to walk out than to bomb in class. But then I hate giving up. 1:36 PM 10 Mar 2013
7. FeistyGirl: @Follower1 too right my dear, I'd much rather try and do my damndest to get it right, than not try at all! Just different mentalities! 1:45 PM 10 Mar 2013

Thread 11.2

8. Follower2: @FeistyGirl or perhaps they just don't take we'll to be shouted at. There are better ways to teach! 1:08 PM 10 Mar 2013
9. FeistyGirl: @Follower2 well in typical Russian shouty style, she just wanted the exercise done right when she could see it was being performed wrong! 1:30 PM 10 Mar 2013
10. Follower2: @FeistyGirl hmmm, it's a tough one I find it depends what they are saying and how they say it! Although I would never walk out of the class 1:32 PM 10 Mar 2013
11. Follower2: @FeistyGirl it might make me a bit grumpy!! :D 1:33 PM 10 Mar 2013
12. FeistyGirl: @Follower2 she wasn't picking on or singling out individuals, it was a collective shouty correction! I can't imagine a "Grumpy Kate" tho! 1:41 PM 10 Mar 2013

13. Follower3: @FeistyGirl @Follower2 I see both sides...sometimes if you are trying your hardest someone shouting makes you feel small... 1:35 PM 10 Mar 2013
14. Follower3: @FeistyGirl @Follower2 other times it can spur you on a bit... think it depends on the mood of the recipient! 1:35 PM 10 Mar 2013
15. Follower3: @FeistyGirl @Follower2 personally though after years of hearing people shout I'm a bit immune to it haha! 1:36 PM 10 Mar 2013

Thread 11.3

16. Follower4: @FeistyGirl Wish I'd been there as you know how I love being shouted at in a Russian accent! Good work. 1:16 PM 10 Mar 2013
17. FeistyGirl: @Follower4 she's ex Bolshoi and knows her stuff! Scary but in a good way:) 1:37 PM 10 Mar 2013
18. Follower4: @FeistyGirl Ex Bolshoi says to me you shut up & listen....it's a privilege to be taught by one of them. Always something you can take away. 1:42 PM 10 Mar 2013
19. Follower6: @Follower4 @FeistyGirl I'm going to have to go to some of your classes! Wanna do Russian! 1:47 PM 10 Mar 2013
20. FeistyGirl: @Follower4 well there's some "big personalities" in that Sat morning class, & I've been on the receiving end of some of their "wisdom" 1:50 PM 10 Mar 2013
21. FeistyGirl: @Follower4 but you can never stop learning and improving, no matter how many years of experience you have, or so you would think!! 1:51 PM 10 Mar 2013

In this example, *FeistyGirl* is the primary storyteller and she takes on the role of the expert and the leader of the group. Not only does she report the past events, but can also give moral guidance. Her three interlocutors generally support *FeistyGirl's* stance. Tweets [4], [6], [10], [18], [19] create solidarity by inclusion, while [7] establishes solidarity by exclusion and draws the line between 'us' and 'them' with "different mentalities". Although Follower3 disagrees with the teller's assessment at the beginning, she does not initiate a conflict and revises her opinion in the next turn. Also by claiming familiarity with such categories as 'Russian teacher' and 'Bolshoi' (e.g. [18]), the followers establish the shared expertise that is basic for the discourse community. Common core experiences with awkward classmates (Dancers of Mass Destruction) or strict Russian teachers contribute to the repertoire of Shared Stories (Georgakopoulou 2007a: 50) which can be later referred to concisely for group bonding. The former theme, for instance, first appeared in Twitter conversations of the community in March 2012, returned in November 2012 (see Story 1), and has been invoked since by simply mentioning

‘DMD’ whenever *Gazelle*, *FeistyGirl* and their followers had too little room for an enchainement.

Breaking news are closely linked to projections. Projections refer to hypothetical or planned events and are essentially breaking news stories displaced into the future. They are usually delivered in the present or future tense, or via untensed verbs with temporal expressions of the future. Similarly to Georgakopoulou’s findings, ballet data demonstrates preoccupation with a single topic in projections; however, here it is the ballet performances for which the author has just bought the tickets, and summer intensives to which the author got accepted. In contrast to face-to-face data, projections and shared stories account for a small part of narrative activity on Twitter. The users most frequently resort to the breaking news small stories and the Delayed Resolution Narratives. These narratives bring forth the situated identities by making ballet-related topics relevant in talk, on the one hand, and invite evaluative contributions from co-participants that make clear their community roles, on the other. The primary tellers such as *Gazelle*, *FeistyGirl* or *PasDeDeux* enjoy the status of the full-fledged members of the community, which enables them to produce the longest core narratives and to offer non-supportive evaluation to others’ narratives. Their high status on Twitter, however, makes visible the divide between the taleworld and the reality. Offline, *PasDeDeux* is the only one who lives up to the hero image of the community: he is a professional dancer who earns his living with a ballet company. Both *Gazelle* and *FeistyGirl* are very active Twitter users and widely broadcast their dedication, although in fact they do not conform to the hero persona: part-time hobbyists in their thirties who take intermediate level classes and have physical limitations unacceptable in the world of ballet. *Gazelle* and *FeistyGirl* construct their position of power on Twitter making the most influential topic nominations, by engaging into language play the most, by always ‘knowing best’, and effectively being the group’s judges of what is prestigious and appropriate. *FeistyGirl*, for example, is the person who organises meetings for members of the Twitter community for which she has introduced a special hashtag several years ago. *Beyou*, on the contrary, is presented as the novice in the group: he tweets the least, produces a lot of monological narrative with little uptake, always contributes positive evaluations to others’ stories and speaks of his ballet experiences in form of appeals for advice.

8.6 An outline of quantitative findings

The close reading of narratives in my data allowed me to sketch some patterns that appear to hold for this material. Although the story corpus is only a small part of the corpus proper (70 stories, 2,852 words), I will discuss some descriptive statistics which may confirm or disprove the hypotheses put forward above.

To begin with, the prominence of each type of the narrative could be telling (see Table 8.3). As the numbers show, Tiny Stories – one-tweet narrative accounts of the events that are unfolding parallel to the tweeting or have taken place in close temporal proximity to the tweeting – crop up most frequently. As the length of the narrative increases, its frequency falls. The scarcity of Delayed Resolution Narratives might be explained by the fact that they are hard to identify in a time-restricted sample.

Table 8.3. Types of narratives in the story corpus

Narrative type	Tiny Stories	Delayed Resolution	Traditional Narrative
Total	44	5	21

Despite the fact that the reference to the recent time of occurrence is often implicit, linguistic devices that point at the immediacy of tweets hold an important place quantitatively. Table 8.4 demonstrates the frequency of time adverbs and temporal expressions in comparison to the BNC and COCA data. The adverbs “just”, “today”, “now” and “yesterday” show a striking overuse when compared to the general corpora.⁴ Interestingly, “tomorrow” does not occur in the story corpus at all. This suggests the preference for breaking news and, possibly, shared stories as opposed to projections. It also confirms Page’s (2012:102) hypothesis that Twitter updates are grounded in the events of the present day or immediate past.

Frequencies in BaTwit are ranked similarly to the stories but are on the whole lower, with “just”, “today” and “now” leading the ranking (4.5, 1.6, and 2.2 per thousand words respectively). The occurrence of “just” which is twice as high in the stories deserves special attention. It confirms that immediacy is a very important value in Twitter narratives, which on the one hand lends tellability, and on the other signifies trust by showing that the teller is willing to reveal his/her real life to the reader. “Just” is the main lexical device that anchors narratives without a finite verb in a point in time (viz. just before the moment of writing):

Story 12.

1. Gazelle: Just waved a kitten in my brother’s face saying “you may never leave!” in what was obvs B’s voice. He looked at me like I was mental. Pah. 10:44 AM 5 Nov 2012

4. No distinction was made between the temporal and the degree uses of “just”; however, since the same treatment was applied to all three corpora, the margin of error is considered adequate. The same holds for “now” (temporal adverb and discourse particle), with an additional argument that the most frequent collocation for “now” is “right now” (eight clusters in 75 cluster tokens of two words) which confirms the significance of its deictic function.

Table 8.4. Comparison of frequencies of temporal expressions (normalised per thousand words)

	Twitter stories	BNC	COCA
just	10	1,2	1,8
today	3,2	0,3	0,5
now	3,2	1,4	1,6
day	2,5	0,6	0,8
tonight	2,5	0,07	0,1
yesterday	0,7	0,2	0,07
morning	–	0,2	0,3
week	1	0,3	0,3

A search of the stories corpus by category shows that “just” is found almost exclusively in Tiny Stories (12 per thousand in Type III, 8 per thousand in Types I and II). This is in line with the above interpretation, since Tiny Stories are the most immediate and have the closest tie to the present.

Another marker of immediacy is the high frequency of “-ing” verb forms in both Twitter samples: 41 per thousand words for the story corpus and 34 per thousand for BaTwit (13 per thousand in the BNC). In elliptical utterances without a temporal expression, they create the feeling of narrative immediacy and make the story more authentic by implying that the author did not have time to craft a specific representation of the events:

Story 13. The wheel.

1. dancedance: Stretching with a friend! 7:56 PM 25 Aug 2013 [photograph of dancedance in a stretching position with a dog on her stomach]

Finally, a look at the absolute frequencies in the stories may be suggestive. The highest position, after the personal pronouns, prepositions and articles that are common in social media speech, is taken by “but” (ranking 16th). Since Twitter imposes a strict character limit, and most tellers tend to keep their stories minimally complex, the pull is to fit a narrative into a single sentence. This can be achieved by juxtaposing the minimum of two events – background and a climax – within one tweet. The most common and simplest way to emphasise the contrast between two clausal elements is the conjunction ‘but’. With its help, authors communicate narrative tension to their Tiny Stories but keep them pithy and concise at the same time (see Table 8.5).

To sum up, the quantification confirms some intuitions about the narrative practices such as their emphasis on the present moment and the prominence of

Table 8.5. The contrastive use of ‘but’ in Tiny Stories (from Dayter 2015)

	Background		Climax
<i>FeistyGirl</i> 11:23 PM 14 Mar 2013	I’m amazed how a disinterested & uninspiring teacher can unhinge my whole day		the reverse of the coin can stimulate me in seconds!
<i>he_danseur</i> 3:48 AM 31 Oct 2013	Score, I’d bought balcony ticket online for Zhukov Dance Theatre	but	got upgraded to main floor upon arrival. (Show undersold maybe?)
<i>he_danseur</i> 8:11 PM 18 Sep 2013	Not sure why a fire truck was quickly parked next door		a hot fireman got out and changed pants right there on sidewalk. Good morning!

small stories in Twitter. Nevertheless, a very important caveat is that the stories’ subcorpus is not large enough to provide reliable descriptive statistics. For instance, extrapolating frequencies from a corpus of several thousand tokens onto a million words may skew the results as normally the relative frequency of a type falls with the growing number of tokens. That is, the relative frequency of a word extrapolated from 1,000 to a million would be higher than if extrapolated from 500,000,000 to a million. Keeping this problem in mind, it is important to view this section as an exploratory sketch rather than an accurate hypothesis testing.

8.7 Conclusion

At the outset of the chapter, I have posed the question about the manner and function of storytelling on Twitter. That question can now be answered with reference to the recurring patterns that I discovered in qualitative analysis of the data, and to the uptake provided by the followers to the subjects’ stories.

The first finding concerns cohesion and coherence in Twitter narratives. Structurally, a narrative can take place in one tweet or be distributed over several tweets. Multi-tweet narratives often are disjointed due to the dynamism of the Twitter timeline. In that case, cohesion is established through specific devices such as hashtags and repetitive keywords, but also in the canonical manner through agreement and coordination within a syntactic unit. Coherence is achieved semantically through relations and causality in a way that is no different from offline narrative.

While one-tweet narratives mostly fall into the category of Tiny Stories – small stories with low tellability and close ties to the present moment, usually live reporting of events, – multi-tweet stories may be either Traditional Narratives or Delayed Resolution Narratives. A Traditional Narrative is a retrospective report

of past events. This type shows syntactic cohesion over several tweet units, and its elements are unambiguously identifiable as orientation, complication and resolution. A Delayed Resolution Narrative is an emergent story with fluid allocation of narrative elements. Such narratives often involve additional threads that negotiate single elements, and uptake is provided for multiple units rather than the last tweet (as is the case with Traditional Narrative).

The appropriateness of a longer narrative is predicated upon the ballet connection, but it can also be negotiated with readers through topic nomination followed by a warrant. Co-tellership is a practice commonly associated with projections, or small stories about plans and expectations in the nearest future or hypothetical scenarios. Although teller rights are distributed unequally, co-constructing a story contributes a lot to every teller's status as an in-group member.

The analysis began with the assumption that self-disclosive narratives serve an interactional purpose of building rapport. As the data show, narrative context offers two distinct ways of solidarity-building. One way is to self-disclose on ballet-related topics, i.e. expand acts of positioning into small stories focussed on self. The other way is to offer supportive commentary to the core narrative. This can be done through evaluative speech acts (praise, agreement) or through corroborative second stories. The participants' stance vis-à-vis the story's emergent structure provides important evidence of their status within the community. The users that have been established as full-fledged members offer supportive as well as contradictory commentary. The novices, in contrast, offer solely affiliative commentary and often engage into monological self-disclosive narration with little uptake.

The two aspects of identity construction: face-enhancing evaluative commentary, on the one hand, and face-threatening 'hogging' of turns for long narratives, on the other – seem to be contradictory. I will attempt to resolve this contradiction in Chapter 9 by referring to two distinct interpretative repertoires of identity construction: an ego repertoire and a member of community repertoire.

Bringing the findings together

In-group language and interpretive repertoires

This chapter adds the final strokes to the picture of the ballet Twitter discourse which I have painted throughout the book. Below, I return to the research questions posed in the introduction to walk the reader once again, now with the benefit of quantitative and qualitative analysis of self-presentational strategies, through the communicative aims of ballet students and the linguistic means to achieve those aims. Before I proceed to the summary of the results and the formal conclusions, however, I would like to report one more set of empirical findings.

Here, the investigation of Twitter speech concludes with a look at the grammatical and lexical correlates of in-groupness. Despite the overall pragmatic stance of the study, I believe it is important to account for what happens on the micro-linguistic level, namely the structure of noun phrase reference. This last step will lend additional support to the discussion of two interpretive repertoires – ‘ego’ and ‘community member’ – in Section 9.4 which serves as the analytical vantage point for the whole investigation.

9.1 Implicitness in Twitter discourse

9.1.1 Grammatical implicitness

Non-anaphoric reference is indicative of an in-group code because the meaning of such referring expressions is not immediately interpretable from something concrete in the text (Cutting 2000:55). The ability to use such expressions is the evidence of a cognitive common ground – the key characteristic of a community. The expectation that the interlocutor would understand the non-anaphoric reference is expressed in the definiteness of expression.

The first observation is that some of the key forms identified by Cutting as definite non-anaphoric reference have a negative keyness in BaTwit, i.e. appear significantly less frequently than can be expected on the basis of comparison with the spoken ANC (Table 9.1). Among the remaining forms, implicit reference was

rare. The demonstrative pronoun ‘this’ (N = 65), for instance, was overwhelmingly used anaphorically, e.g. to refer to links in the same tweet (Example 1), or super-explicitly with the referent identified in the noun head and a post-modifier (Example 2).

- (1) Annabelle: I think this is Gillian Murphy. Does anyone know for sure?
#ballet [picture of a ballerina] 7:52 PM 7 Sep 2013
- (2) PasDeDeux: Dear New York, I dislike this cold weather you have greeted me with. Can't you hold off a bit longer? 7:31 PM 12 Nov 2013

Table 9.1. Definite non-anaphoric reference with negative keyness in BaTwit vs. ANC

Word form	Negative keyness rank
that	3
they	5
it	11
he	24
there	32
things	34
them	35
thing	39
then	43
these	48

Temporal non-anaphoric uses of ‘this’ were derivable from context and co-text (tweet timestamp). Only three instances of ‘this’ represented an implicit reference not immediately derivable from co-text¹ – in Example 3, *Gazelle* speaks of ‘this train’ which is identifiable by her followers since she regularly commutes from her home in the Greater London area to her studio on Oxford Circus and occasionally mentions the exact route number and junctions.

1. For the purposes of this study, a reference was considered derivable from cotext if the referent occurred in tweets 30 minutes before the tweet in question, or in the conversation leading up to it (such conversations are automatically threaded by the system and visible to the participants notwithstanding the time gap).

- (3) Gazelle: Having the “Only New X?!” despair again. How why is this train home so slow?! I can hear my bed calling me. And indeed the #balletkittens... 11:36 PM 7 Nov 2012

Further evidence that implicit non-anaphoric reference is not a staple in the ballet Twitter communication is that when such reference does occur, it is not always understandable to the fellow community members. In Example 4, *rothbert11* uses non-anaphoric ‘this’ and ‘that’, the meaning of which should be derivable from the background knowledge that it is a Tuesday and he always has class on Tuesdays 8pm² and tweets about it. However, a follower feels the need to request clarification.

- (4) rothbert11: Not looking forward to this tonight... 8:35 PM 17 Dec 2013
 rothbert11: That went better than expected! 11:53 PM 17 Dec 2013
 Follower: @rothbert11 what have you been up to? 12:30 AM 18 Dec 2013
 rothbert11: @Follower just class, but had a major crisis of confidence last night. How’s things with you? 12:51 AM 18 Dec 2013

Turning to other possible forms, ‘she’, ‘her’, ‘his’ and ‘him’ were always used anaphorically; one implicit non-anaphoric use of ‘those’ occurred in Example 5; ‘here’ appears non-anaphorically to refer to the Twitter environment, but only three times to the physical setting.

- (5) FeistyGirl: @Follower1 @Follower2 enjoy Follower1, I want to hear all about it and how the view is from those seats (future planning) Jam tart anyone? 8:06 PM 13 Apr 2013

The non-anaphoric use of the definite article was more widespread, although it occurred predominantly with ballet-themes NPs (“the Dutiful Duck solo”, “the Daria/Derek Dean story” etc.) indicating that it is the one area of knowledge where the authors do presume common ground. It is necessary to remark that in case of the definite article, the decision about anaphoric use is not always straightforward – indeed, Cutting (2000) admits that in her study, inter-coder agreement was as low as 38%. It is hard to determine, for instance, whether “the gym locker room” in 6 is homophoric or relies on shared background knowledge. On the one hand, most readers can be expected to possess the cultural knowledge that sport centres have locker rooms where people spend time in groups while changing or showering, so the reference is homophoric. On the other hand, the ballet community members are likely to know additionally that *ROHman* does weight training at his gym in Bath where the fellow athletes do not do ballet but more conventional

2. The time in the tweet is automatically inserted by Storify for the researcher’s location, i.e. UTC+01:00.

training. This interpretation adds layers of meaning to the utterance which are not accessible to an outsider and “the gym locker room” can be considered implicit non-anaphoric. For the purposes of this study, I have treated such instances as homophoric if an outsider can derive a reasonable reading of an utterance. In contrast, 7 is interpretable only at the deeper level of cultural knowledge that is specific to a ballet community – *ROHman* tweeted two hours earlier that he is taking his seat for the performance of the Rambert contemporary dance company, and the ballet lovers would know that the Dutiful Duck solo is a sophisticated male solo choreographed by the Rambert’s Richard Alston. ‘The’ also occurred non-anaphorically with neologisms used idiosyncratically by several community members, but this usage is lexically determined and will be discussed below.

- (6) ROHman: Got a weird look in the gym locker room when I cracked my toes (or rather my toe ‘knuckles’)... Oops! #failedballetninja 2:49 PM 13 Feb 2013
- (7) ROHman: Also, I kinda wish I could dance the Dutiful Duck solo – it’s awesome! 10:07 PM 9 Nov 2012

All in all, ballet Twitter communication does not exhibit grammatical features of in-group code: reference is explicit or super-explicit, and authors do not rely on shared interpersonal knowledge in formulating their definite NPs and deictic expressions.

9.1.2 Lexical implicitness

The part of lexis that signals belonging to an in-group are the special ballet community nouns. In BaTwit, four types of special community nouns were found: technical, limited range, general, and proper nouns (thus excluding Cutting’s fifth category, unique). The most prominent groups were the technical and proper nouns. While the technical nouns comprise the wealth of French terms for dance moves and exercises as well as terms for body parts, injuries and apparel, the proper nouns include names of contemporary and deceased ballet dancers, choreographers, company directors, names of companies and theatres, London dance studios (sometimes referred to metonymically by their address), and ballets. Table 9.2 contains types of in-group lexis and examples of each type.

In 8, *he_danseur* refers to a particular kind of turning exercise in which it is essential to move in small steps, and thus expresses his positive self-disclosure in a code accessible to other community members. In 9, *Annabelle* gives advice to a novice member and refers to the characteristics of pointe shoes by their technical terms – vamp and shank – without explicating them for the lay audience. In 10, *pointe35* jokingly discusses the physique of the Barbie doll in the ballet context

Table 9.2. In-group lexis in BaTwit

Ballet community nouns			
Common nouns	Technical	(8)	he_danseur: Ugh, so. many. chaîné turns. Got praised for not taking too-big steps, but still need to spot better. Dizzy swerving, not fun. 6:05 AM 10 Nov 2012
		(9)	Annabelle: @Follower your toes don't curl when plié. Vamp length and shank hardness are important. Plus the right width. 4:00 PM 31 Aug 2013
		(10)	pointe35: @Follower1 @Follower2 please. Barbie can't even passé. Nice arches tho 5:22 AM 19 Jan 2013
	Limited range	(11)	rothbert11: What a crappy stressful day. Let's hope class improves my mood. 6:18 PM 3 Dec 2013
		(12)	FeistyGirl: I'm amazed how a disinterested & uninspiring teacher can unhinge my whole day, but the reverse of the coin can stimulate me in seconds! 11:23 PM 14 Mar 2013
		(13)	FeistyGirl: of my fellow adult classmates, ranging from engaging & rising to the challenge to those who suddenly developed an "injury" and walked away! 12:47 PM 10 Mar 2013
	General	(14)	FeistyGirl: Truly wonderful day of ballet feeling grateful for having such wonderful teachers to guide me & such caring friends to encourage me #blessed 11:55 PM 5 Mar 2013
		(15)	Annabelle: Yay! Finally got a picture with Wendy Whelan ♥♥ [picture] 7:40 AM 1 Aug 2013
	Proper nouns	(16)	ROHman: Best thing about loving the Cunningham tonight? Knowing I'll be having some Cunningham-based contemporary workshops with the Russian YBC! 11:32 PM 9 Nov 2012

and concludes that although Barbie's knees do not bend, her arches – the upward curve in the middle of the foot created by the tarsal and metatarsal bones – are “nice”, i.e. high and well-defined as necessary for a dancer en pointe. The French vocabulary is used generously in the corpus (N=81) and does not elicit a single instance of explication or request for clarification. The community members assume familiarity with exercise names as an entrance requirement to the group. This is in line with the offline practices of ballet training, in which exercises are not explained verbally or translated into English even in lower grades. The students are expected to learn the names quickly by watching the teacher demonstrate the

exercise and name it. Transplanting the communicative norms from offline into online life reinforces the role of shared expertise and contributes to the hierarchy within the community.

The limited range nouns have a limited range of meanings in the context of the ballet community. “Class” in 11 is unequivocally understood as “ballet class”, “a teacher” as a ballet teacher, and “classmates” as fellow students in a ballet class, not in any other educational enterprise. Other limited range nouns include “variation” (a dance variation), “ambassador” (student ambassador of the Royal Opera House), “box” (the box of a pointe shoe), “tour” (a series of guest appearances of a ballet company and the accompanying travel) etc.

General nouns do not require special shared knowledge to be understood, but they figure heavily in the speech of the community members simply by the virtue of topics they are interested in discussing and the life events they report. Among such words are “ballet”, “dance”, “performance”, “rehearsal”. Predictably, these are the words with high positive keyness in BaTwit.

The general nouns that belong to the ‘ballet community nouns’ category, but build on the personal rather than professional aspect, are scarce. *Gazelle* consistently uses two non-standard spellings, overwhelmingly in the form of hashtags but also as non-searchable NPs: ‘balletkittens’/‘balletcats’ (N=10), and ‘ehlersdanlos’ (N=6). These two rely on the shared personal knowledge and are accessible to all *Gazelle*’s followers, notwithstanding their relationship to ballet. ‘Balletkittens’ refer to her cats about whom she tweets copiously, and ‘ehlersdanlos’ marks the tweets about her health condition.

The proper nouns appear in two distinct functions: to refer to people or ballet as such, and as metonymical or metaphorical extensions. The first use is more common and is illustrated in Example 15, where *Annabelle* uses “Wendy Whelan” to refer to the principal dancer of the NYCB by that name. Proper nouns are frequently made searchable to enable connection with other ballet enthusiasts on the topics that can spark up an exchange of opinions: ROH for the Royal Opera House (N=3) and its productions – #ROHhansel (N=4), #ROHmeo (N=3), #ROHswan-lake (N=5), #ROHtriple (N=5). Proper nouns that are assumed to belong to the shared cultural background include not only entities from classical ballet, but also popular culture, e.g. the TV show ‘Bunheads’ and its characters, the movies ‘Centre Stage’, ‘Black Swan’, ‘First Position’, the reality show ‘Dance Moms’.

The metonymical use occurs in Example 16, where *ROHman* refers to a ballet choreographed by Merce Cunningham as ‘the Cunningham’. Besides, authors play with recognisable proper nouns to express familiarity with the concepts: *ROHman* refers to his dancing the role of the evil wizard Rothbart in the Swan Lake production as ‘rothbarting’, *FeistyGirl* looks forward to ‘swaning’.

Familiarity with the key ballet concepts contributes to another mode of in-group solidarity through discourse – private flouting humour. Contrary to what Cutting observed in a group of college students, in the ballet community this form of humour is never realised through mock impoliteness. The irony is always at the author's expense, and constitutes humorous self-denigration rather than a potential face-threat to the interlocutor (Example 17). Besides, the subjects assert the in-group nature of humour through ambiguous allusions to the ballet theme. The pun on the name of the ghosts in *Giselle*, the Willis, provides the punch line to the tweet 18.

- (17) Connoisseur: Feeling a bit full. On the plus side, the week old cake has gone. 11:19 PM 20 Sep 2013
- (18) Follower: Some Halloween Costume Inspiration: Ghostly Bride [picture of a ballerina in a ghost costume]
pointe35: @Follower gives me the Willis 4:46 AM 22 Oct 2013

Much flouting humour occurred on the border between the public and the private categories. The joke in 19 builds on playing with the assumption that the point of avoiding certain things for Lent is to deny oneself the pleasures and typically concerns food or entertainment. *ROHman*, however, claims that he will give up a ballet exercise. The humorous effect is multiplied for the in-group who understands that it is a tedious and exhausting exercise that people rarely enjoy, and the direction *en dedans*, i.e. starting from the back, is typically the more difficult variant to perform correctly. A wave of delighted responses demonstrates that the joke is appreciated in its private context.

- (19) ROHman: I've decided for Lent I shall be giving up grande ronde de jambes. Especially *en dedans*. 11:24 AM 12 Feb 2013
Follower1: @ROHman ROHman, that's the best ballet joke I've ever read! 11:26 AM 12 Feb 2013
Follower2: @ROHman haha that's brilliant!!! 11:27 AM 12 Feb 2013
Follower3: @ROHman haha this made me laugh! 11:56 AM 12 Feb 2013
Follower4: @ROHman Quite the sacrifice. 1:44 PM – 12 Feb 2013
beyou: @ROHman hmmm Jesus wouldn't ! Petit battement coupe de pied maybe.... 2:19 PM 12 Feb 2013

The same is true for the non-flouting humour. Inherently funny situations, such as a photograph of *ROHman* posing in his everyday clothes while wearing flippers, swimming goggles and a swim cap, are interwoven with ballet themes:

- (20) ROHman: 1 of weirder things I've done: ballet pose in flippers to help @Follower in an online scavenger hunt! #badtechnique [picture of self posing in *passé* with swimming accessories] 8:35 PM 19 Aug 2013

Concluding this final empirical section, one may observe that the analysis of the in-group language confirmed the earlier intuitions based on the speech act analysis. Implicitness is not widespread in ballet Twitter community, and when it occurs it is predicated on the cultural knowledge of ballet as an art and sport. The authors claim in-groupness by demonstrating familiarity with the technical vocabulary and inserting ballet references into humorous utterances.

9.2 Limitations of the study

In the preceding chapters I have attempted to paint a comprehensive and adequate picture of the communicative practices of the ballet Twitter community. That said, one must keep in mind that there is a variety of possible functions over and above the ones outlined in this study. As Wortham (2008) reminds, “no matter how robust the relevant regularities, language users often deploy signs in unexpected yet meaningful ways.” The small size of the corpus presents the first obvious limitation to the analysis. Although the cut off at 1,000 tweets is justified by the time constraints and the difficulty of pragmatic annotation, which is necessarily interpretative and can only be carried out manually, it does not change the fact that 17,000 tokens is too little to draw any significant statistical conclusions. Therefore, I stress once again that this is a small exploratory study which is meant to map the directions for further research and to test some preliminary hypotheses. This makes it all the more important to continue on this avenue of investigation to confirm or disprove the initial findings. There exist larger corpora with pragmatic annotation (e.g. SPICE Ireland corpus, 600,000 words) which speak for the feasibility of such an undertaking.

Another limitation of the study is the conscious choice of sampling methods which balanced the corpus for speaker sex. The vagueness of the sex/gender divide and its effect on discursive identity are often discussed in the linguistic literature. For instance, the fact that two of my subjects are gay could have skewed the results. However, language and gender was not the focus of my investigation and any gender-related phenomena were only mentioned in passing. If a future study intends to explore the effects of gender on Twitter language, this factor would need to be given more careful attention.

An issue which did not receive the extensive treatment it may warrant in the Twitter context is multimodality. Although I referred to non-verbal devices occasionally in my analysis, recent studies have shown that the effects of multimodality extend much deeper than simple claim authentication or compensation for missing paralinguistic cues (Page 2010; Sindoni 2013). Hashtags especially require special attention for being positioned on the intersection of the verbal and the

para-verbal. As Twitter continues to add functionality that builds other media seamlessly into the tweet, the complex meanings created between picture and text need to be taken into account. The theory of pictorial metaphor is one framework which may prove helpful to make sense of these phenomena.

Last but not least, by developing and applying an annotation scheme to the data, the researcher inevitably makes choices about what will figure prominently in the study and, consequently, the findings, and what will remain on the margins. Although the classification of speech acts is based on iterative work with the data and has been extensively discussed with the subjects and other researchers, it clearly foregrounds self-disclosure and lumps other possible categories together. For instance, distinctions could have been made among congratulations, apologies, criticism, leave-taking etc. Also, the classification may have lacunae which I am not aware of because the absence of a phenomenon is much harder to detect than its presence. All these points would have to remain ongoing risks that would hopefully emerge and be dealt with as the inquiry moves forward in a continuous, incremental process.

9.3 Revisiting the research questions

Twitter has undergone an unprecedented growth spurt in the recent years and has attracted the attention of social, language and information scientists. The comparative youth of the medium, however, means that few studies have progressed beyond content classification and making statements about the general Twitter language. It is telling, for instance, that the latest instalment in the comprehensive series “Handbooks of Pragmatics”, “Pragmatics of Computer-Mediated Communication” (Herring et al. 2011), conspicuously lacks any contributions on Twitter. I intended to make a contribution to this research gap by concentrating on the pragmatics of Twitter communication. The present study was designed to investigate the pragmatolinguistic means of identity construction and the features of in-group communication on Twitter.

The nature of the study was necessarily exploratory. As the research questions in the Introduction indicated, the first steps towards this objective needed to include preparatory actions such as clarifying the nature of discursive identity online, operationalising it on the level of pragmatic acts, and taking stock of the state of the research on microblogs. Part I of the book concentrated on answering the (a) components of the research questions.

Chapter 2 tackled the questions “What is discursive identity? How is it performed? What is the role of discourse community in identity construction?” by drawing on the theories that introduce the acts of positioning and the membership

categorisation as the key tools of discursive identity construction. I have shown that identity is continuously performed in talk through a series of claims that make salient some facts about the author and understate the others. Such claims can be made effectively through membership categorisation devices that invoke certain categories in the minds of the readers. Defeasibility and the negotiable nature of self-praise mean that the understanding is crucially dependent on the shared cognitive background, and therefore on the community context. Personal narrative with its disclosive component constitutes an ideal environment for constructing a virtual identity, although one needs to resort to more inclusive analytical frameworks for making sense of online narrative. The two main frameworks reviewed in this chapter, the Labovian components of the narrative and Ochs&Capps' narrative dimensions, have both been successfully applied to online environments. However, researchers claim that the former is suitable only for longer fixed narratives which are similar to the traditional life narratives in Labov's studies. The latter, with its prototype view of the genre, allows for deviant cases such as Facebook updates and Twitter posts. The crucial notion introduced in this chapter is 'small stories', the short narratives that generously seed everyday talk in bits and fragments.

Chapter 3 set up the scene for the investigation of self-disclosive acts by answering the next set of research questions: "What is self-disclosure? Which functions does it serve? How does it become manifest linguistically? How can the linguistic phenomena be clustered and adequately described?" The nature of self-disclosure as seen by discursive psychology resides in telling about self – an activity which is believed to have a positive effect on one's state of mind and social faculties. Most importantly, self-disclosure facilitates discursive identity construction by revealing selected facts about the speaker. The five social functions of self-disclosure are expression, self-clarification, social validation, relationship development, and social control. They prompt the possible linguistic realisations, which certainly include personal narrative, but also self-praise and third party complaints. Self-praise is a subtype of positive self-disclosure. It covers utterances with explicit positive evaluation of the disclosed facts, but also implicit disclosure that lacks the evaluative comment. Finally, third party complaints go a step further and include a negative evaluative comment while at the same time disclosing certain events. The key message of this chapter was that there exists a broad continuum of positioning acts which stretches from non-evaluative or negative self-disclosure through self-praise to the more aggressive and marked forms such as ritualistic brags. The dependence of implicit disclosure and third party complaints on the community context is straightforward: to recognise these acts as face-enhancing to the speaker, the hearer needs to share the speaker's idea of what is desirable. Community plays a role in the construal of self-praise, as well, since the appropriateness judgement may affect the speaker's image even stronger than the reported facts. Earlier studies

postulated that self-praise is interactionally risky because it elevates the speaker at the expense of the hearer and because it involves an epistemic contradiction. I have hypothesised that users may attempt to make self-praise acceptable by resorting to the pragmatic strategies from compliment responses. When incorporated into the compliment response (or self-praise), these strategies shift the credit to someone other than the speaker, downgrade the positive evaluation, or reinterpret the illocution. In contrast to compliments, compliment responses did not show stable syntactic or lexical patterning, so no such patterning was posited for self-praise. Complaints, however, could be classified into declaratives, imperatives, rhetorical questions and response-expected questions, and a number of lexical modifiers repeatedly occurred accompanying the illocution. All in all, theoretical considerations revealed that self-disclosure may be performed in a variety of ways, but self-praise, third party complaints and informing (often organised as a speech event of personal narrative) are the most prominent and most likely.

Chapter 4 reviewed the main trends in microblogging research to date in order to answer the fourth set of questions: “What is microblogging? Which interpersonal and contextual factors are at play in a microblogging environment? Which linguistic features are characteristic for it?” It zoomed in on the implications of unidirectional following on Twitter: the rift between the actual and the imagined audience, and low expectation of reciprocity. Contrary to the expectations, the character limit does not seem to have a particularly strong effect on the language of tweets. They contain fewer shortenings than instant messages do, and the occurrence of linking devices suggests grammatical complexity. The corpus studies hypothesised about the prominence of the interpersonal dimension in tweets based on statistically significant frequencies of personal pronouns and phatic collocations such as “thank you”. Another interesting aspect of Twitter is its status in terms of synchronicity: although it provides the means for synchronous communication and the utterances are firmly anchored in the ‘here and now’, the medium can also function asynchronously. The absence of conventions regarding the time lag between the moment a tweet is posted and the moment it is read leads to relaxed norms of uptake. These findings converge to produce a picture of Twitter as a communication medium that creates and maintains social ties and encourages people to connect, among other things, through specific affordances such as hashtags that make utterances searchable.

All of these theoretical considerations were brought together in Chapter 5. It laid down the groundwork for addressing the research questions “Do Twitter users who study ballet or dance professionally represent a community? What is their pragmatic repertoire?” Here, I described in detail the process of sampling and gave a short portrait of each informant. Their Twitter profile is relatively homogenous: they all have under a thousand friends and have contributed 1,000–2,000 words

to the corpus (per 100 tweets). Although a motley crew in terms of demographics, the subjects share similar interests and values and communicate within a Twitter pool formed by thematic connections and hashtags. Their enthusiasm for ballet is expressed in their offline profiles as well as their Twitter friending practices: for nine out of eleven users, over 70% of their friends have been chosen due to their connection to ballet. Based on these criteria, I made a decision to treat the group as representative of the discourse community of ballet students. Defining the core values of the community was required to lay down one of the annotation levels, namely the one dealing with the topics of positive self-disclosure. Before presenting the final annotation scheme, I explicated the methodological considerations that guided my work, shaped primarily by the paradigm of CMDA and Androutsopoulos principles of online ethnography. The belief that the online environment is not public by default and that the authors should preserve control over their contributions prompted the decision about research ethics – to contact every subject and to request their informed consent.

The annotation scheme, which was developed as a result of adopting some categories from the existing literature and then rethinking and refining them during the work with the data, has two hierarchical levels: the tweet as a whole, and the utterance within it. The highest level is occupied by general characteristics of the tweet: its interactive pattern, embeddedness into co-text, addressivity and theme. The next level of annotation describes each utterance within the tweet as belonging to one of the eight speech act groups: self-praise, third party complaints, informing, phatic acts, appeals, agreements, direct complaints, and praise. Attached to this level are the topics of positioning: 'show' (seeing a performance live or in a recording, reviewing it), 'performance' (performing on stage and the associated practices, e.g. rehearsals, costume fittings), 'skill' (physical prowess and success in doing certain ballet exercises), 'public ballet' (showing off in public places such as train stations or pubs by performing ballet steps), 'physical effects' (aches, injuries and body markings caused by ballet training, e.g. bunions), 'exercise', 'dedication' (evidence of prioritising ballet over other areas of life), 'long hours' (time and effort spent on ballet training), 'celebrities' (anything to do with famous dancers and choreographers), 'apparel', and 'ballet school' (ballet studios, famous overseas schools, summer intensive programs). Topics are significant since they form important situational parameters which may influence the performance of speech acts (cf. Aijmer 1996). The first level of annotation is coded in the corpus entry header, the second is realised through XML tags added to the entry text, and the topics are coded as values to the "topic" attribute within these tags. The elements which are external to the speech act schematic, but which, I believed, could come up as significant in further analysis, are coded with their own XML tags whenever they occur in the text and form the complementary annotation level.

These include structural features such as Twitter accounts, hashtags, URL links to websites, pictures and videos, but also quotations and humour. With each tweet in the corpus described comprehensively on all annotational levels, it is possible to offer judgements about relative significance of certain practices in the material, the pragmatic frames in which certain features occur, and to confirm qualitative analysis with quantification. The close reading of the tweets in the course of manual annotation, as well as semi-structured interviews with the subjects, give a deeper understanding of the social situation that is necessary for adequate analysis.

The next three chapters traced the analysis of the corpus on the basis of the annotation and the co-textual environment. Moving from one research question to another proceeded in a circular fashion: the theoretical questions were addressed from the more general to more specific; the data-based questions, in turn, required stepping up from the more specific to the more general. Chapters 6–8 zoomed in on the linguistic practices of self-disclosure, explicit and implicit. I thereby tried to answer the (b) set of research questions “Which components of self-disclosure are relevant to my data sample? How do they become manifest linguistically? Are there any particularities that can be explained with reference to CMC mode, to the community make-up, to other factors? Can any insight be gained into motivations and mechanisms behind the production of self-disclosure in Twitter?” Finally, the investigation in the second part of Chapter 5 and the beginning of Chapter 9 was aimed at answering the research question sets 2b and 4b: “Does my material exhibit the in-group and/or CMC features identified in the literature? What other linguistic features does it have? How can the users’ pragmatic repertoire be described?”

Chapter 6 applied the taxonomy of self-praising moves to the explicit self-praise and the ballet-related self-disclosures found in the corpus. The first important finding is that such self-disclosure is indeed very prominent and forms the cornerstone of the subjects’ pragmatic repertoire. All users, with the exception of *Gazelle*, used positive self-disclosure in 16–29% of illocutions, which makes it second only to informing. Users self-disclosed twice as often in monological tweets as in the interactive ones, and eight times as much on ballet-related topics as on ordinary ones. Within the ballet-related group of disclosures, most popular topics concerned attending shows, performing on stage, and exercising. This information sketches out the situational parameters for appropriate self-praise: it is normal and expected to award face to self in initial turns on certain subjects. The choice of topics seems to correspond to Speer’s (2012) hypothesis about the epistemic paradox inherent in self-praise. Performing on stage means that one was singled out for one’s competence by an independent third party, and therefore self-praise on this topic resembles third party praise of the author. The least common topic, public ballet, is quite the opposite because it is in itself a report of the author showing off to others, i.e. self-praise squared.

So is positive self-disclosure appropriate and accepted? It appears so, especially if we look at the performance strategies. Explicit, bald-on-record self-praise (fact+positive evaluative comment) occurs seldom but without downgrading. Instead, the author may add emphasis by authenticating the facts with a picture or a link. The most common way the subjects use to self-praise is positive disclosure without evaluation. This is not modified either, probably because the self-enhancing illocution in this case is defeasible. A non-evaluative statement works towards building a hero identity by incorporating membership categorisation devices, e.g. the nouns “class” and “teacher” which invoke the desired membership category ‘ballet student’. The significance of the MCDs in the data is reflected in their high absolute frequency and high keyness. The rare cases of explicit self-praise modification include adding a disclaimer, a shift of focus, self-denigration, or a reference to hard work. The last one especially appears to be culturally dependent since, as Manes (1983) notes, talent ranks above hard work in “our society”. A context is imaginable in which hard work ranks above talent, and a reference to hard work would be aggravating rather than mitigating. Self-praise framed as a third party complaint (fact+negative evaluative comment) ranks the lowest on the implicitness scale (i.e., is the least explicit). Its correct construal is crucially dependent on the community understanding of shared values. Additional evidence of appropriateness comes from uptake, which is never critical and overwhelmingly affiliative (and often absent altogether).

No syntactic or lexical pattern has emerged as indicative of positive self-disclosure. Corpus analysis has yielded a number of lexical items of high keyness, but these correspond to the keywords in the corpus on the whole and seem to be characteristic of the ballet Twitter discourse in general (“ballet”, “class”, “swan”, “dance”). The function words and adverbials with high frequency confirm the hypothesis that Twitter discourse is closely tied to the here-and-now and is heavy on interpersonal dimension: “I”, “my”, “me” as well as “just”, “now”, “day” and “today” come up in the top eight in the wordlist. Again, this conclusion appears to be true for the corpus in general rather than self-praise specifically.

Chapter 7 looked in more detail at third party complaints, both in their function as implicit positive disclosure and as genuine complaints. The main findings here also foreground the importance of this speech act (13% of all tweets in BaTwit, and the most common illocution in the repertoires of *Gazelle* (42%) and *rothbert11* (47%)). TPCs are mostly done in monologal tweets and are more evenly distributed across ballet/ordinary themes than self-praise (37% ballet vs. 63% ordinary). Again, the thematic connection to face-enhancement is evident: the ballet-related TPCs tend to mask positive disclosure and the TPCs about everyday life are genuine complaints. The topical distribution replicates the pattern seen in self-praise, with performance and shows topping the list. Taken together, these findings imply

that users are sensitive to the epistemic contradiction in self-praise. Structurally speaking, most TPCs are declaratives (N=137, 90%) and are frequently marked by negative evaluative lexemes {sad} (N=6), {frustrate} (N=3) and {ridiculous} (N=3). Users attune their complaints to the situation through a range of lexical down- and upgraders, including hashtags, performative predications, extreme case formulations, and intensifying adverbs. These features are commonly found in offline complaints too, with the marked exception of the boosting and understating hashtags. The significance of hashtags lies not only in their semantic value, but also in the addition of the interpersonal dimension to a tweet: by making it searchable, a global hashtag such as #fail can simultaneously signal belonging and invite supportive uptake from a worldwide community of Twitter users.

An interesting finding that could be an indication of the non-manipulative character of implicit self-disclosure is the usage of objectification strategies in TPCs. These are normally used to justify the complaint and present the complainant as a truthful and reasonable person. It would stand to reason that if a TPC is a surface form for self-praise, no mitigation related to the complaining illocution need to occur. Instead, users resort to objectification in ordinary as well as ballet TPCs. This would happen if the subjects genuinely perceived their disclosive TPCs as complaints and did not make a conscious decision to mask positive disclosure underneath another speech act. The prominence of ballet-related disclosure in TPCs, then, would be a function of the overall currency of ballet as a theme in this discourse community.

An important takeaway from the analysis of self-praise and third party complaints resides in the new understanding of the pragmatic space of evaluation as fluid, dynamic and fuzzy. Even the concepts of positive vs. negative evaluation are not as straightforward as they seem at first glance and appear to flow into each other with the shifting context and co-text. The same is true for the formal features of evaluative speech acts, recipient design and speaker attitude. The only way to enable an adequate description of all the related phenomena is within a multidimensional pragmatic space, as suggested by Jucker and Taavitsainen (2000). It introduces eleven scales that can capture the shifting parameters of direct and third party complaints, explicit and implicit self-praise, praise, compliments etc. I proposed such a space in Chapter 3, and it encompasses the dimensions of data which emerged as relevant in Chapters 6 and 7. Especially reception design captures the situational variables which affect appropriateness. Thus, community asserts itself once again as the key factor in describing pragmatic repertoires. The traditional view of self-praise as a speaker-supportive speech act is also borne out in the analysis; however, a multidimensional pragmatic space is the only model that can account for borderline cases that seem to straddle the divide between self-elevation and self-denigration. An alternative solution would be to ignore the

informative and complaining disclosures as being outside the scope of a study of self-praise; but to do so would mean to ignore the evidence from the communicative practices of the users, which betray similar situational context, uptake, and purposes of all three types of self-disclosure.

Chapter 8 foregrounds the role of storytelling in discursive identity work on Twitter. Contrary to the claims in literature, short Twitter stories do, at least in part, build on the traditional narrative structure of complication-evaluation-resolution. While evaluation is interspersed throughout the story, the tension between the background and the climax has a clear-cut structure of two elements juxtaposed through the conjunction ‘but’. The critical step away from the Labovian narrative happens in the teleological structure of Twitter stories. Twitter encourages online reporting of events as they unfold, resulting in the lifestreaming (Marwick 2010) from mobile devices during the day. That means that the resolution of a story may not be known to the user who is life-tweeting the complicating action. The temporal structure of the story is inevitably affected: narrative clauses take verbs in the present rather than past tense. In most cases, however, tweet stories are contained and do not spread over several units with different narrative functions. They capture the fragmentary tellings of the current or projected events and accomplish the lion’s share of positioning in talk. These three storytelling patterns repeatedly cropped up in the corpus and received the labels Traditional Narrative, Delayed Resolution Narrative and Tiny Story. Tiny Stories are by far the most common (63%), reflecting the length constraints of the medium but also the general prominence of the small story format in everyday discourse. Word frequency analysis bears out the conclusions about the online and immediate character of Twitter stories, with the temporal adverbials “now”, “just”, “today” occurring markedly more often in the story subcorpus than in general corpora of English.

The examination of the pragmatic repertoire on the whole led to three conclusions. First, self-disclosure is the most frequent group of discursive moves in the corpus. Second, the users constitute a discourse community with a shared cultural background but do not share much personal and local knowledge. Third, the repertoire of the users is organised in two clusters: one other-supportive and another self-enhancing. These had been posited as hypotheses after eyeballing the data and analysing a pilot corpus and were confirmed quantitatively in Chapters 5–9. The three speech act categories associated with self-disclosure – self-praise, TPCs and informing – make up 53–76% of the subjects’ illocutions in the corpus. The keywords underscore ballet cultural knowledge as the main cognitive resource on which the subjects draw. Implicit non-anaphoric reference also builds on ballet topics only, and in rare cases when personal knowledge is necessary to decode the reference there are communication breakdowns. Standard language and lack of clausal ellipsis both point at an explicit, non-exclusive style of communication.

The findings so far can be summed up as follows:

- the subjects are members of a diffuse discourse community but do not form a close-knit community of practice. None of the linguistic features of the in-group were present in the corpus to a significant degree;
- the corpus exhibits the linguistic features identified in the earlier studies of Twitter: standard language, medium grammatical complexity, subject ellipsis, limited number of emoticons, performative predicates and CMC shortenings, interpersonal focus, deictic immediacy;
- self-disclosure fulfils the expressive and socially validative function for the informants. It is realised linguistically through self-praise, implicit positive disclosure, third party complaints, and personal narratives;
- there exists a broad continuum of positioning acts which stretches from non-evaluative or negative self-disclosure through self-praise to the more aggressive and marked forms such as ritualistic brags;
- self-disclosure was indeed very prominent and forms the cornerstone of the subjects' pragmatic repertoire;
- self-praise is an appropriate practice, as is evidenced in its primarily unmodified performance and the lack of critical uptake;
- Twitters of the community constitute a safe, supportive environment. No confrontation takes place, and disagreements are handled peacefully by attending to the interlocutor's face and demonstrating willingness to negotiate;
- the discursive identity that the subjects work towards is an identity of a ballet hero, i.e. a genuine ballet student that possesses enough symbolic attributes from the value pool of the ballet community.

9.4 Bringing the findings together: Doing identity on Twitter

The final conclusion addresses the overarching research question of the book, "How is discursive identity performed in my material?" Experience as well as intuition suggest that speakers do not rely on one or two of the devices described above for network integration. Instead, they choose from the pool available to them depending on the context and purposes of interaction.

The highly inconsistent, and, indeed, sometimes contradictory discursive practices that speakers exhibit were brought to the fore by Gilbert and Mulkay (1984). They noticed that their subjects (biochemists discussing a particular theoretical debate) resorted to two opposing means of representation of the same scientific process. On the one hand, scientific process was described as objective, free of human error, and the only means to ultimately arrive at the truthful knowledge

about nature. On the other hand, scientific process was described by the very same people as subject to reinterpretation, relying on human honesty and conscientiousness, and a means to serve gratuitous ambition. Each viewpoint corresponded to a fairly stable stock of lexical expressions and hedging patterns.

To account for this inconsistency, Gilbert and Mulkay introduce interpretive repertoires (IR). IRs are

recognizable routines of connected arguments, explanations, evaluations and descriptions which often depend on familiar anecdotes, illustrations, tropes or clichés [...]; the building blocks through which people develop accounts and versions of significant events in social interaction and through which they perform identities and social life. (Wetherell 2006: 153)

IRs are relatively coherent ways of talking about objects and events in the world that provide a shared basis for understanding in a community (Edley 2001). It helps us to understand two facts of social life: firstly, that people see what they expect to see; and secondly, that experiences are always reconstructed. Wooffitt (1992) uses the notion of IR to explain how people construct accounts of paranormal experiences defensively (from the point of view “paranormal does not exist and anyone who believes it is insane”) and persuasively (from the point of view “I saw what I saw”) at the same time. It is reasonable to hypothesise that IR comprise not only lexical devices but also function on syntactic, pragmatic, and phonological level.

The idea that there exist two or more repertoires of lexical devices, metaphors and constructions that on the surface espouse different views of the situation, but eventually combine to create a coherent life story, helps to explain the apparent inconsistencies in the ballet community’s pragmatic repertoire. As the overview in the preceding chapters shows, in their identity work subjects resort to two distinct varieties of illocutions: self-disclosive and self-enhancing; affiliative and other-enhancing. The dichotomy continues to other levels of language, including the preference for interpersonal devices in the second group of illocutions (second person pronoun “you” with the highest keyness among function words, phatic lexemes “congrats”, “toi toi toi” with the highest keyness among lexical words, n-grams subsuming thanking, sympathy tokens “see you”, politeness formula “hope you”, “have fun”, “how are you” etc.). The self-disclosive group of illocutions is made up differently: keywords and n-grams are focussed on the first person (“I”, “me”, “my”; “I’m”, “I’ve”); the hashtags are idiosyncratic and modify utterance meaning rather than making talk searchable for affiliative purposes; how-are-you chains have instrumental function and aim to elicit a warrant for a personal narrative. One can trace topical distribution, as well: the affiliative repertoire almost exclusively concerns shows, celebrities and skill (minimal evaluative

comments such as “well done!” were disregarded here because they are applied universally); the self-enhancing one concerns exercise, physical effects, dedication, public ballet, apparel, non-ballet themes, long hours, performance and ballet school (propositions about shows usually combine both). There is a slight preference for monologal tweets in the self-enhancing repertoire and interactive tweets in affiliative repertoire.

All in all, the two directions of identity work can be summed up as an “ego repertoire” and a “member of community repertoire”. Ego repertoire endorses speaker’s face and builds up the ballet hero image. It works towards acceptance into the community and promotion from a novice to a member by sending the message “I am a ballet dancer, I am eligible to join”. Member of community repertoire endorses others’ face. It works towards becoming a member by sending the message “Accept me into the community, I will award social capital to others”. Since the ego repertoire, for instance, creates an image of an expert, and a member of community repertoire is often performed by humbly appealing for advice, it appears that a user must pick one or the other. The analysis shows, however, that both repertoires are available to the subjects and they choose to draw on them alternatively depending on the interactional context and the identity facet salient at the particular moment. As Davies and Harré (1990) remark, people most of the time accept without difficulty that their beliefs about others are full of unresolved contradictions. The two interpretive repertoires of the ballet subjects are evidence to the truth of this statement.

Finally, it is important to note that individual users have idiosyncratic preferences that give their hero personas different flavours. With *dancedance*, there is a definite preference for the member of the community repertoire. Her talk is rich in phatic acts and affiliation; her interactive tweets address celebrities or influential users with no sequential development. Even informing has a specific focus on helpful suggestions or offers rather than personal narrative. *Dancedance*’s appeals promote ballet themes. This pattern is shared by *beyou*, who addresses praise to famous dancers and asks experienced members for advice. His tweets often contain global involvement hashtags, such as #AskStevenMcRae. *Beyou* does not engage in risky interactional behaviour and hedges his bets with implicit disclosure: the majority of his monologal tweets are links to the Instagram account. Differently to this ‘fangirl’ (or ‘fanboy’) persona, *Annabelle* adopts a persona of an expert. She often posts informative tweets about apparel and skill, which are warranted by appeals for advice from her followers. Enjoying a high status in the ballet Twitter community, the experts *Annabelle* and *PasDeDeux* find themselves on the receiving end of ‘fan mail’: addressed praising tweets to influential users that do not receive uptake. *ROHman* also adopts an expert repertoire, although his area of expertise is extended beyond purely technical issues to ballet as an art form. The third possible persona in the ballet community is an ‘achiever’, exemplified

by *FeistyGirl* and *Gazelle*. An achiever performs a lot of informing and self-praise about exercising, long hours, and dedication; although not an expert yet, she earns the high status in the community by underscoring how committed she is to becoming one. *Pointe35* also speaks in the voice of an achiever, but where *FeistyGirl* and *Gazelle* are earnest and demanding of self and others, *pointe35* attenuates her voice with good-natured humour. *Gazelle* and *rothbert11* choose to provide the reports on their dedication in form of complaints about their respective troubles: Ehlers-Danlos in *Gazelle*'s case, and a demanding career in *rothbert11*'s. The users whose social capital lies in their expertise in art adopt yet another persona, that of a balletomane. *He_danseur* and *Connoisseur*, the theatre-goers and art critics, use informing and praising with a lot of oblique references to dancers, artistic directors and companies to demonstrate their familiarity with the world of performance. They are seldom consulted on the topics of skill or apparel but receive ample appeals and mentions from other users when advice about tickets, the best seats in a particular theatre, or an opinion about a new production is needed. In this way, the central concern in the discourse of the informants, i.e. the negotiation of the identity of a ballet hero and a ballet community member, results in the formation of various personas.

9.5 The implications of the study

This study has demonstrated that a discourse community manifests on the pragmatic level through the appropriateness judgements about and a preference for certain speech acts chosen from the pool of illocutions that can perform identity work. I have also teased out the intricate connections among implicit and explicit self-disclosure, self-praise, third party complaints and other germane speech acts such as brags, which altogether form a pragmatic continuum. The contradictory and inconsistent character of human beliefs and behaviour finds a reflection in discursive identity work, which may comprise two, or possibly more, interpretive repertoires. The broader implications of this study lie in the areas of CMC, variationist pragmatics and sociolinguistics and concern the need to widen the focus of in-group language studies to include pragmatic repertoire, not in terms of linguistic choices for a particular illocution, but of larger patterning of illocutionary preference. In addition, the study has shed light on the under-researched phenomenon of self-praise and positive self-disclosure, which often escape the analytical lens because of the lack of IFIDs and their assumed rarity in interaction. The prominence of self-praise illustrates how intuitive judgements of appropriateness can turn out to be unreliable, and underscores once again the importance of data-based research. Finally, the contribution to research on microblogging

lies in clarifying its oft-disputed function. The study has shown that along with the informative (posting links with captions) and the interpersonal (connecting with friends, maintaining rapport) functions, Twitter has an important part in agentive identity construction. It is enabled by the special norms and expectations of monologual tweets, the output that combines the technical affordances for reaching a wide audience with the low face threat of non-imposition and low expectation of reciprocity.

Glossary of ballet terms

The glossary is based on Kersley and Sinclair (1977), partly rephrased to avoid introducing new terms.

Allégre – Part of a ballet class which consists mainly of jumping steps; or definition of a part of a ballet by reference to the music.

Barre – Class begins with barre work or side practice, in which the dancer lightly rests one hand, well in front of him/her, on the bar which surrounds the classroom at about hip height.

Center floor – Next [after barre] comes what is called centre practice, petit adagio or exercises au milieu, in which the barre exercises are elaborated without support. Next comes the adagio or grand adagio section of class.

Chaînés – “Linked like a chain”. A series of small turning steps with the feet in first position relevé. Weight is shifted rapidly from one to the other limb with each half turn. Performed continuously in rapid succession.

Cou-de-pied – The heel of one foot touches the other ankle while the underneath of the raised toes touches the floor.

Coupé – A joining step used to transfer the weight of the body: basically, it is no more than to put down one foot while picking up the other. The dancer brings the left foot (which may be extended or close to the other) in to replace the right, which rises slightly to touch the left ankle.

Corps de ballet – An even number of dancers performing dances, usually all doing the same step at the same moment in perfect symmetry. Their purpose is to support and frame the soloists and the ballerina.

Dedans, en – Inward: Indicates that in turns, the dancer’s body faces the direction in which s/he is turning; in ronds de jambe, the leg moves forward from the back or side.

Dehors, en – Outwards: Indicates that in turns, the dancer’s body turns backwards; in ronds de jambe, the leg moves backwards from the front or side.

Fouetté – The dancer stands with the right leg raised in front: s/he throws the right leg around to the side, rising onto the left toe, and whips the right foot in to the left knee as s/he begins to turn. At the completion of one or more turns, if s/he wishes to turn again in the same manner the dancer quickly extends the right foot to the audience and lowers the left heel, slightly bending the left knee.

Grand – Big, large.

Grand allégre – A combination of large traveling steps and jumps.

Grand battement – The dancer throws one leg high to front, side or back, the knee straight and the foot pointed, keeping the rest of the body as still and as upright as possible so that the hip joint is loosened.

Leotard – A tightly fitting garment covering the body from wrists to ankles: many varieties are used.

Pas de deux – A dance performed by two people.

Pas de chat – “Step of the cat”. The dancer brings one foot up to the other knee or ankle and out a little as s/he springs, immediately bending the other leg beneath her and travelling sideways; s/he then closes the latter down after the former.

Passé – Similar in shape to the retiré: the hip is abducted and externally rotated, the knee is bent, the foot is pointed, and the toe touches the knee of the stance limb. However, the passé is a transitional movement as the foot passes on its way to another position (such as développé).

Penché – [The dancer] stands in a pose with one leg extended behind and slowly inclines the body forward as the leg rises behind him/her.

Petite – Small, little.

Pirouette – A turn on one leg, in which the dancer spins round on one foot.

Plié – The dancer slowly bends both knees as far as possible, keeping the bottom well in and only raising the heels when necessary.

Pointe, en – A dancer is on point when she is standing or dancing on the tips of her toes. This feat is generally facilitated by the use of specially blocked shoes which leave room for her to pad her toes with cotton wool. [...] the practice of dancing on point is unnatural, uncomfortable and frequently painful, as anyone can bear witness who has seen a dancer remove her point shoes after a hard class, with the toes covered in blood.

Relevé – The dancer raises the heel of the supporting foot (or feet) off the ground, generally straightening the supporting knee or knees.

Renversé – The dancer sways his/her body from one side to the other as s/he turns, giving the impression that s/he is off balance.

Retiré – The dancer’s foot is drawn up to touch the supporting leg, bending the knee.

Saut – A jump in which the dancer springs off both feet and lands in the same position.

Shank – The sole of the pointe shoe. Pointe shoes have three shanks – the outside and middle ones being made of leather, the one on the inside of dense cardboard.

Temps levé – A hop off one foot while the other is held in a position.

Tutu – The conventional ballet skirt, either short and fluffy, or stretching to calf or ankle. It is made of many layers of nylon or tarlatan, and was originally the under-skirt.

Vamp – The top of the box between the tip of the pointe shoe and the drawstrings.

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This volume examines the language of microblogs drawing on the example of a group of eleven users who are united by their interest in ballet as a physical activity and an art form. The book reports on a three and a half year study which complemented a 20,000 word corpus of tweets with semi-structured interviews and participant observation. It deals with two main questions: how users exploit the linguistic resources at their disposal to build a certain identity, and how the community boundaries are performed discursively. The focus is on the speech acts of self-praise and complaint, and on the storytelling practices of microbloggers. The comprehensive treatment of the speech act theory and the social psychological approaches to self-disclosure provides a stepping stone to the analysis of identity work, for which the users draw on two distinctive interpretive repertoires – affiliative and self-promoting.

“This study on identity construction and the emergence of group identity in English ballet tweets is bound to receive attention since the combination of identity construction with microblogging is important but yet under-explored in CMC research. The study is commendable for its creative mixed methodology and innovative discussions of concepts such as complaints, compliments, self-praise, tiny stories and the impact of the Twitter affordances on the observed online practices.”

Miriam A. Locher, *University of Basel*

“This book presents a highly original and detailed investigation of the complexities of group membership negotiation in a ballet Twitter community. The particular strength of this study lies in the careful documentation and qualitative analysis of her target group material – 1,000 tweets of ballet aficionados – while tackling larger issues of positioning through self-disclosure and narratives in a formally restricted electronic medium. [...] Written in a clear and accessible style Dayter’s study will be an important resource for students and researchers with an interest in CMC and Twitter, speech acts and narrative discourse.”

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