

i tweet like i talk



Aspects of speech & writing on Twitter

Peter Wikström



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List of case studies

This compilation dissertation is based on the following case studies, referred to in the text as Case Study 1–4 (CS1–CS4), and appended to the print edition as Study I–Study IV.

- CS1. Wikström, P. (2014a). #srynotfunny. Communicative functions of hashtags on Twitter. *SKY Journal of Linguistics*, 27, 127–152. (Open Access: <http://www.linguistics.fi/julkaisut/SKY2014/Wikstrom.pdf>)
- CS2. Wikström, P. (2014b). & she was like “O_O”: Animation of reported speech on Twitter. *Nordic Journal of English Studies*, 13(3), 83–111. (Open Access: <http://ojs.ub.gu.se/ojs/index.php/njes/article/view/2650/2589>)
- CS3. Wikström, P. (2016a). when I need/want to: Normativity, identity, and form in user construals of “talk-like” tweeting. *Discourse, Context & Media*, 14, 54–62. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dcm.2016.09.003>
- CS4. Wikström, P. (under review). (en-)acting out: Twitter’s affordances for animating reported speech.

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Abstract

This dissertation investigates linguistic and metalinguistic practices in everyday Twitter discourse in relation to aspects of speech and writing. The overarching aim is to investigate how the spoken–written interface is reconfigured in the digital writing spaces of social media.

The dissertation comprises four empirical case studies and six chapters. The first study investigates communicative functions of hashtags in a speech act pragmatic framework, focalizing tagging practices that not only mark topics or organize hypertextual interaction, but rather have more specific locally meaningful functions. Two studies investigate reported speech in tweets, focusing on quotatives typically associated with informal conversational interaction (e.g., *BE like*). The studies identify strategies by which Twitter users *animate* (Tannen, 2007) speech reports. Further, one of the studies explores how such animating practices are *afforded* (Hutchby, 2001). Lexically, orthographically, and with images, but primarily through typography, users make voice, gesture, and stance present in their tweets, digitally re-embodying the rich nonverbal expressivity of animation in talk. Finally, a study investigates notions of *talk-like tweeting* from an *emic* perspective, showing how users negotiate how tweets can and *should* correspond to speech in relation to social identity, linguistic competence, and personal authenticity.

Six chapters situate and synthesize the case studies in an expanded theoretical framework. Together, the studies show how Twitter’s speech–writing hybridity extends beyond a mix of linguistic features, and challenges a traditional idea of writing as a mere representation of speech. Talk-like tweeting *remediates* (Bolter & Grusin, 2000) presence and embodiment, forgoing the abstraction of alphabetic print writing for nonverbal expressivity and an embodied written surface. Twitter talk is shown not simply to substitute literacy norms for oral norms, but to complicate and reconfigure these norms. Talk-like tweeting makes manifest an ongoing cultural renegotiation of the meanings of speech and writing in the era of digital social media.

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List of abbreviations

This list comprises academic and technical abbreviations as well as abbreviated expressions from Twitter discourse, listed in alphabetical order. The expressions from case study data are italicized.

@	At; Twitter's addressivity marker
#	Hash; The character that designates hashtags
3G	Third Generation (mobile wireless connectivity)
<i>4EVR</i>	<i>Forever</i>
AAVE	African American Vernacular English
<i>AF</i>	<i>As Fuck</i>
<i>AMAs</i>	<i>American Music Awards</i>
ASCII	American Standard Code for Information Interchange
BVE	Black Vernacular English
CA	Conversation Analysis
CMC	Computer-Mediated Communication
CMDA	Computer-Mediated Discourse Analysis
CS	Case Study
DM	Direct Message (on Twitter)
<i>DNT</i>	<i>Don't</i>
EMCA	Ethnomethodological Conversation Analysis
GIF	Graphics Interchange Format
<i>HAM</i>	<i>Hard as a Motherfucker</i>
IG	Instagram
IM	Instant Messaging
IPA	International Phonetic Alphabet
IRC	Internet Relay Chat
<i>IRL</i>	<i>In Real Life</i>
<i>LMAO</i>	<i>Laughing My Ass Off</i>
<i>LMBO</i>	<i>Laughing My Butt Off</i>
<i>LOL</i>	<i>Laughing Out Loud</i>
MAU	Monthly Active Users
MOOD	Microanalysis of Online Data
<i>MTV</i>	<i>Music Television</i>
<i>NaNo</i>	<i>National Novel (in reference to NaNoWriMo, National Novel Writing Month)</i>
<i>NYC</i>	<i>New York City</i>
<i>OMFG</i>	<i>Oh My Fucking God</i>
<i>OMG</i>	<i>Oh My God</i>
<i>POTUS</i>	<i>President of the United States</i>
Q	Question
QWERTY	Shorthand for the standard keyboard layout in Anglophone contexts
<i>R&D</i>	<i>Research and Development</i>
<i>RDJ</i>	<i>Hollywood actor Robert Downey Jr.</i>
RS	Reported Speech
<i>SMDH</i>	<i>Shaking My Damn Head</i>
<i>SMH</i>	<i>Shaking My Head</i>
SMS	Short Message Service
<i>SNL</i>	<i>Saturday Night Live</i>
SNS	Social Networking Service/Site
<i>SRY/SRRY</i>	<i>Sorry</i>
<i>TED</i>	<i>Technology Entertainment and Design</i>
TLT	Talk-Like Tweeting
<i>WTF</i>	<i>What The Fuck</i>
<i>YT</i>	<i>YouTube</i>
<i>ZOMG</i>	<i>Variant of OMG; the Z does not abbreviate anything</i>

1. Introduction: Tablet to tablet

some of yall need to tweet like you talk...you'd be 75% more interesting

– Twitter user, July 2010

From carvings and inscriptions to the print revolution and the smartphone, from clay to Apple tablet, from non- to mass literacy and anxieties about a postliterate society, notions of the relation between speech and writing have mattered to both popular and scholarly understandings of technologically mediated communication. The present dissertation presents four case studies of everyday, text-based discourse in English on Twitter, framed in relation to aspects of the complex concepts of *speech* and *writing*. Throughout this dissertation, these terms should be understood as referring to spoken and written language-in-use, as this may be described by empirical linguists, as well as to the broader cultural concepts of speech and writing, to which many connotations and valorizations attach (Barton, 2007, p. 5; R. Harris, 2000; Olson & Torrance, 1991; Ong, 1982/2012). That is, the terms refer to both empirical spoken and written discourse, and to conceptual discourses of speech and writing. The breadth of scope of these terms is not incidental to the project: Individually, the case studies concern whether Twitter users can be described as tweeting like they talk in one sense or another. In this dissertation as a whole, the case studies are compiled for a discussion of what talk-likeness, spokenness, or orality comes to mean and how notions of how writing relates to speech are negotiated in an environment of digital writing.

Twitter, a popular microblogging and social networking service (boyd & Ellison, 2007), provides a compelling case in point when it comes to attempting to assess the meanings of the speech–writing interface in the era of online, socially mediated communication. The very name of the platform is an aural metaphor, likening the linguistic production and interaction of its users to the chirping of birds. If the medium, in the spirit of McLuhan (e.g., 1964/2003), is taken to be the message, this aural metaphor is a declaration of the sender's intent. Beyond a transfer from the domain of animal noises to the domain of human language, the name also suggests a move from sound to vision. Twitter is

fundamentally a text-based platform. Over the years since the launch of the service under the name “Twtr” in 2006 (Arrington, 2006), Twitter has gradually expanded its affordances for integrating multimodal content, from a minimalist restriction to typography and hypertext to native support for emoji and the embedding of images, audio, and video in tweets. Nevertheless, the Twitter user experience remains visual: What meets the typical user scrolling along a Twitter feed is a wall of pictures and text – an ambient soundscape of bird song, transposed into the visual field.

In short, Twitter is at face value illustrative of a theme of hybridity that has emerged in both media studies and linguistic approaches to new media (Scolari, 2012; Soffer, 2010; Tagliamonte & Denis, 2008). This hybridity is often – though certainly not always nor solely – a matter of characteristics at the speech–writing interface (Thurlow & Poff, 2013). Something about these new media, even when they are extensively or exclusively written, makes it tempting to invoke spokenness – to ask why email “looks like speech” (N. S. Baron, 2003), to call internet relay chat or instant messaging “conversational writing” (Jonsson, 2013), to describe the “conversation-like interactions” of social media (Zappavigna, 2012, p. 6), or to understand Twitter as a manifesting “secondary orality” (Bounegru, 2008; Ong, 1982/2012). Yet while such characterizations are intuitively appealing, and can be effectively argued for, researchers also tend to be critical of unqualified appeals to ideas that specific linguistic repertoires are representations of or direct analogues to face-to-face repertoires (e.g., Arminen, Licoppe, & Spagnoli, 2016; N. S. Baron, 2009; Darics, 2013). The four case studies that form the empirical basis of this dissertation were designed to probe the intuition that language use and interaction on Twitter may in some sense exhibit spokenness. This dissertation thus addresses both the appeal and the inadequacies of construing Twitter discourse as spokenlike, and does so in relation to key themes in a tradition of both empirical and theoretical scholarship on the interface of speech and writing.

The case studies in this dissertation can be related to a broad array of particular topics that have been of interest to scholars of Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) and to Computer-Mediated Discourse Analysis (CMDA; Herring, 2004). For instance, they provide

perspectives on the emergent communicative functions of CMC forms such as hashtags and emoji, on practices such as respelling (Tagg, 2011), and on particular formats such as reported speech. Further, they provide insight into how users of Twitter *enregister* their platform (Agha, 2003, 2004), constituting and negotiating the linguistic character of Twitter discourse through reflexive, metalinguistic activity. The case studies do these things mainly with a qualitative, *microanalytic* focus on particularized and situated meanings (Giles, Stommel, Paulus, Lester, & Reed, 2015; Giles, Stommel, & Paulus, 2017). As individual publications, they should thus be of interest to scholars of CMC as well as linguists, in ways that extend beyond the thematic focus on the speech–writing interface. However, that theme is what brings the case studies together in this compilation, and will thus be the center of attention throughout.

1.1 Stenographic definitions of *speech* and *writing*

As with many conceptual binaries, the speech–writing pairing is probably easier to deconstruct than to define. To the extent that the project aims to chart various discursive constructions of notions of speech and writing, it would be counterproductive to set out a fixed definition of these categories in advance. However, it seems appropriate to provide what K. R. Popper calls a “stenographic” definition (1997, p. 100), that is to say, an elaboration of what the terms *speech* and *writing* serve as terminological shorthand for throughout this text.¹

As suggested earlier in the chapter, this dissertation not only employs these terms to refer to spoken and written language-in-use, but also speech and writing as broader concepts that are active in various ways in Anglophone and Western culture, in everyday discourse as well as in cultural theory and philosophy. In this broader context, as is outlined in Chapter 3, speech and writing are not neutral channels or mere mediators of language use, but are rather value-laden constructs that can come to stand for anything ranging from personal qualities to educational status, from cultural habits of life to epistemological principles (Jahandarie, 1999). Speech and writing can be viewed as metonymically associated with cultural norms and values, as in

¹ Stenographic definitions, like operational definitions, may be contrasted with “realist” or “essentialist” definitions (Büttemeyer, 2005; Gupta, 2015).

frameworks of *orality* and *literacy* (Havelock, 1991; Olson & Torrance, 1991; Ong, 1982/2012). Frequently, the terms are presented as opposites, either as a categorical dichotomy or as opposite poles on a continuum. In its most positively valorized conception, speech gets tied to immediacy, presence, authenticity, and the intimacy of the personal voice. Writing, when positively valorized, comes to represent authority, stability, civilization, and objectivity. The discussion presented in Chapter 5 focuses on how the case study findings reflect and enter into dialogue with several major themes encountered across a variety of such conceptualizations of speech and writing.

In some frameworks, binaries such as *speech–writing*, *orality–literacy*, and *talk–text* are all qualitatively different distinctions, and in others they are treated roughly synonymously. Either way, it is rare for them to be rigorously and systematically distinguished from one another, and individual accounts are at times internally inconsistent. This dissertation project goes along with the fuzziness of these terms instead of imposing an arbitrary definitional clarity. That being said, there is an attempt to be clear from context to context whether what is being referred to is a documented linguistic form associated with spoken conversation, a cultural stereotype projected onto the speech of a particular social group, a notion of a cognitive quality associated with the development of literacy, and so forth.

Since this dissertation presents empirical analyses of textual material in English, most references to writing concern, more specifically, alphabetic writing, and references to standard or traditional norms of writing refer to the conventions of standard written English. Most of the theoretical sources employed focus on Western alphabetic writing, and thus references to literacy as a concept are also mainly, often tacitly, concerned with literacy in alphabetic contexts (however, see Section 3.2.3).

1.2 Aims

This dissertation comprises four case studies that present empirical findings regarding specific linguistic practices on Twitter, an influential and uniquely constituted social media platform. In addition to contributing to scholarship on communication and language use in

social media settings, the purpose of the project is to examine how the case study findings connect to several themes that have been of importance to cross-disciplinary scholarship on speech and writing during the 20th and 21st centuries (with roots running much further back in time). Twitter discourse illustrates how many kinds of speech–writing distinctions are still culturally active, even while the terms of those distinctions are being renegotiated. This latter point is important: In the scholarship that informs this project, notions of speech and writing, of orality and literacy, are rich with both descriptive and normative contradictions and contestations. This project explores how several such contestations are both reproduced and reformulated in a contemporary context.

This dissertation is organized in relation to two central aims:

- First, to examine how particular linguistic and language normative practices in naturally occurring Twitter discourse can be understood in the light of key themes from empirical and theoretical traditions of scholarship on the speech–writing interface; and
- Second, to investigate how these practices reflect and negotiate competing and contradictory understandings of the relation between speech and writing, as part of the emergence of new language norms in the context of digitally mediated interaction.

In order to address these aims, the dissertation departs from the typical compilation format to some extent. The discussion of the case studies, beyond summarizing and synthesizing the findings of the four case studies, attempts also to expand those findings by reframing them in relation to a substantially broadened theoretical framework. Therefore, these chapters introduce several theoretical themes that tie into but also extend beyond issues expressly addressed in the case studies. The purpose is to complement the empirical contributions that the case studies make to the field of CMC with a more substantial theoretical contribution than a straightforward summation of the case study findings would permit. Baym and boyd (2012, p. 320) write that social media “mirror, magnify, and complicate countless aspects of everyday life.” This dissertation aims to explicate some of the important ways in which Twitter mirrors, magnifies, and complicates aspects, specifically, of speech and writing.

1.3 Outline of the dissertation

This dissertation comprises two main components, namely the four empirical case studies and a set of six chapters, providing the general theoretical framework and overarching discussion and conclusion of the dissertation as a whole. Chapter 2 introduces Twitter as a social media platform, characterizing the platform in terms of its history, the demographics of its user base, and its basic affordances as a technological platform for communication and interaction. Chapter 3 provides an expanded theoretical framework, outlining selected major themes in scholarly understandings of speech and writing as well as relevant research on aspects of speech and writing in CMC contexts. Chapter 4 describes the main methodological considerations that both unite and distinguish the four case studies, ranging from matters of data collection to analytical procedures and questions of research ethics. Chapter 5 provides summaries of the individual case studies, and a discussion of the case studies in relation to the framework outlined in Chapter 3. Finally, Chapter 6 summarizes the discussion, sets out the implications of the findings of this dissertation project, and provides suggestions for further research on CMC and social media discourse at the speech–writing interface.

2. Twitter: Situating a digital writing space

This chapter introduces the social networking and microblogging service Twitter in greater detail. The chapter is divided into three sections that aim to provide information that should help contextualize the case studies and discussion presented in this dissertation, and explain some characteristics of Twitter that are intermittently referred to throughout. Section 2.1 gives a general overview of the platform's history, of its user demographics, and of how the platform has been received both in a popular and scholarly context. Section 2.2 introduces the concept of *affordances* and outlines some of Twitter's general distinctive features in relation to a framework of communicative affordances. Section 2.3 introduces the concept of *remediation* as an overarching framework for conceiving of Twitter as hybridizing – recalling and reconfiguring – speech and writing.

2.1 What is Twitter?

Twitter was launched in July 2006 by the podcasting company Odeo, and was initially described as a “sort of ‘group send’ SMS application” (Arrington, 2006). Arrington (2006) initially framed the public page – the timeline of tweets that forms the centerpiece of a registered user's public presence on Twitter – as a side note and a “privacy issue” with the service. However, the public (or semi-public) nature of Twitter discourse quickly became one of its defining features, together with features such as the 140-character message length constraint and hashtags (Murthy, 2013, p. xi; see Section 2.2.2). As noted, the name of the platform – originally “Twtr,” subsequently expanded to “Twitter” – is evocative of the chirping of birds. This is, of course, by design. One of the service's creators and the company's CEO, Jack Dorsey, has said that the design of the platform was inspired by the “squawking” of vehicle dispatchers and delivery drivers, constantly sending out small status updates within their networks about where they are and what is going on (Sarno, 2009b). The name “Twitter,” according to Dorsey,

was just perfect. The definition was “a short burst of inconsequential information,” and “chirps from birds.” And that's exactly what the product was. [...] The whole bird thing: bird chirps sound meaningless to us, but meaning is applied by other birds. The same is true of Twitter: a lot of messages can be seen as completely useless and meaningless, but it's entirely dependent on the recipient. (Sarno, 2009b)

The service was intended for, as he put it, “normal people” to squawk, in inconsequential bursts, about what they are up to or thinking about, in the course of everyday life. This format is often referred to as microblogging.²

While this basic function of Twitter – quotidian squawking – is in focus in this dissertation, it is not the only function that is central to the platform’s overall appearance and character. Twitter is perhaps most widely known as a (quasi-)journalistic medium and a space for encounters between political figures, the media, industry and the broad public (Kwak, Lee, Park, & Moon, 2010; Murthy, 2011, 2013; cf. the discussion of networked publics in boyd, 2010). Twitter is home to everyone from ordinary nobodies to world leaders, from *@JoeShmoe* to *@POTUS*. For many, Twitter has become a go-to site for live updates on what Jack Dorsey once called “massively shared experiences” such as natural and anthropogenic disasters, major events, and presidential elections (Sarno, 2009a).

Twitter has thus had a social impact across many domains, and has, accordingly, been of interest to a wide variety of research disciplines. *Inter alia*, researchers have focused on Twitter’s implications for political communication (Enli & Skogerbø, 2013; Stieglitz & Dang-Xuan, 2011; Straus, Glassman, Shogan, & Smelcer, 2013); business, marketing, and public relations (Greer & Ferguson, 2011; Lin & Peña, 2011; Page, 2014b); as well as social, environmental, and political discourse and activism (Anderson & Hitlin, 2016; Andersson, 2016; Segerberg & Bennett, 2011; Small, 2011; Wikström, 2016b).³ The list of research documenting Twitter’s role in contemporary (Western) public life is extensive. However, the main reason for introducing this aspect of Twitter here is to bracket it off. The case studies in this dissertation focus rather on Twitter as a form of environment for interpersonal communication, an electronic writing space (Bolter, 2001). This space is populated mainly, if not most prominently, by private individuals who tweet mostly in interaction with relatively small audiences rather than

² As Honeycutt & Herring (2009) suggest, the term *microblogging* is not quite adequate, since much Twitter use is more directly interactive than blogging (see Section 3.3).

³ In terms of academic discipline, a majority of Twitter research has tended to come from computer science and information science (Zimmer & Proferes, 2014).

massive publics. The role of Twitter in public life should be noted, however, because Twitter’s hybridization of public and private, formal and informal, as well as institutional and personal is part of what makes it particularly interesting to look at through the lens of the speech–writing binary, which is often described in relation to such domain distinctions.

2.1.1 Size and demographics

This section outlines some statistics about Twitter usage, to give a sense of the social scale of Twitter as a communicative ecology. In addition, since the individual case studies do not empirically investigate or control social or demographic variables, these general statistics may be useful in giving a sense of what kind of userbase the empirical materials are most likely to reflect.

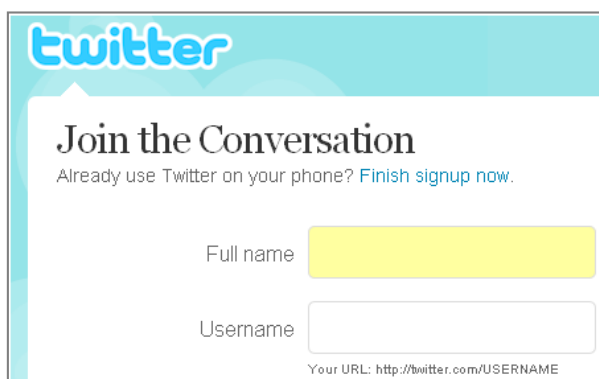


Figure 2.1. Join the conversation, circa 2014.

It used to be the case that if one visited Twitter.com without being already logged in to an existing user account, one would be encouraged to sign up and “Join the conversation” (Figure 2.1). Many have taken up the injunction and joined. As of 2015, Twitter was estimated to have over 1.3 billion registered user accounts (Wagemakers, 2015). Given that many accounts are long-term inactive or abandoned, the metric that tends to be of most interest is *MAU* – Monthly Active Users. As of mid-

2017, Twitter's official MAU is 313 million (Twitter, 2017b).⁴ For reference, the social media titan Facebook has 2 billion MAU, and Instagram has around 700 million (Constine, 2017; Noyes, 2017). To give a sense of the sharp increase in the popularity of social media over the last decade, the trendsetter Myspace, which introduced the concept of social media to many, had a peak of 80 million monthly visitors around 2008 (Gillette, 2011; note that a visitor count is a more inclusive metric than MAU). The most prominent non-Western social media platform at the moment of writing is the Chinese Weibo, which has a similar MAU to Twitter at approximately 340 million (CIWTeam, 2017). By both Western and global standards, Twitter is hugely popular, but far from the biggest. In the US specifically, Twitter is one of the most popular social media platforms, together with Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, and Pinterest (Pew, 2017). In the period 2012–2016, Twitter has grown in popularity from being used by 13% of Americans to 21% (Pew, 2017).⁵

According to the website ranking service Alexa (2017), Twitter users are somewhat more likely to be male than female and to be highly educated (college or graduate school) compared to Alexa's estimated "internet average." In the US, the Pew research center on Internet & technology shows that Twitter use is fairly evenly divided between men and women (whereas Instagram and Pinterest are much preferred by women; Pew, 2017). Twitter is somewhat more popular among highly educated and high income households, as well as among Hispanic Americans, but usage is relatively evenly distributed between White and Black Americans, as well as across urban and rural populations (Pew, 2017; the racial/ethnic categorization is Pew's, and does not cover other groups than Black, Hispanic, and White). Approximately 37% of the users are

⁴ However, out of these MAUs, 9–15% may be "bots," that is, automated accounts (Varol, Ferrara, Davis, Menczer, & Flammini, 2017). As a further side note, out of the 313 million users that are active on a monthly basis, about 100 million are active on a daily basis, posting 500 million tweets per day (Aslam, 2017).

⁵ Given that this dissertation project restricts its focus to English language tweets, it bears noting that a majority of Twitter users are not Anglophone. Large userbases are situated especially in Central America and East Asia (for instance, there are over 20 million users in Mexico and over 25 million in Japan; Aslam, 2017). However, the single largest national userbase is in the US (67 million users). The second biggest Anglophone userbase is the UK (13 million users; Aslam, 2017).

aged 18–29, making this the most represented age bracket on Twitter. The platform is also quite popular with teenage users in the US. Among high school age teenagers, substantially more girls than boys use the service (Newberry, 2016). There may yet be at least a kernel of truth to Dowd’s (2009) suggestion in *The New York Times* that Twitter is “a toy for bored celebrities and high-school girls.”

2.1.2 Commodified communication

The newly emergent socially mediated communicative landscape opens up many possibilities for scholars of language and communication. Still, it is beyond the scope of this dissertation to engage with what is arguably one of the most consequential characteristics of social media (see Fuchs, 2017), namely the fact that the major actors on the scene are commercial enterprises. This dissertation is concerned with Twitter as an environment with certain affordances for interactants to engage in various linguistic practices, as a kind of communicative ecosystem. As appealing as the image may be of this environment as a new *agora* (cf. Johansson, Kleinke, & Lehti, 2017; Papacharissi, 2015), a text-based public square, however, Twitter is not a public square but a publicly traded company. Initially, Twitter grew as a typical Silicon Valley startup financed by venture capitalists, and at the time of writing has an annual revenue of over USD2 billion (Neate, 2017). Twitter makes almost all of its money from advertising – notably through the integration into users’ feeds of “promoted” tweets – and also gets some income from “licensing” user data (Investopedia, 2017).

Ultimately, Twitter as a communicative environment cannot be understood independently of Twitter as a for-profit business (Fuchs, 2017). For instance, when Twitter’s user interface was revised to better integrate streaming video, it may have had less to do with modally enriching the user experience and more to do with helping advertisers to “better show off their content” (Gadkari, 2013). To the extent that a service like Twitter provides a platform for everyday interaction between private individuals, it also represents the commercialization of everyday social life and the commodification of public discourse. Speaking of earlier electronic media, McLuhan wrote that

[o]nce we have surrendered our senses and nervous systems to the private manipulation of those who would try to benefit from taking a lease on our

eyes and ears and nerves, we don't really have any rights left. Leasing our eyes and ears and nerves to commercial interests is like handing over the common speech to a private corporation, or like giving the earth's atmosphere to a company as a monopoly. (McLuhan, 1964/2003, p. 99)

While this aspect of Twitter discourse is left unexamined in the present project, what is suggested here is one possible answer to the question what it might mean to tweet like one talks – namely, handing over common speech to a private corporation.

2.2 Twitter's affordances

Simply put, *affordances* are enablings and constraints for behavior provided by some object or environment to some agent. Gibson's (1977, 1986) affordance concept is outlined at some length in Section 2.2.1, both to frame a general introduction to the affordances of Twitter and because the concept is part of the theoretical framework of the case studies. Section 2.2.2 discusses some of Twitter's characteristic features in the light of affordance theory, and Section 2.2.3 describes the appearance of an individual tweet to a reader using the web interface or the official smart device application.

2.2.1 Gibsonian affordances and technologized communication

Affordance theory was introduced as a central concept in ecological psychology by Gibson (1977, 1986). As a trivial example of affordance, a ladder affords climbing, since the physical structure of a typical ladder is such that an entity embodied more or less like an average human being can climb it. Conversely, the same ladder does not afford fly swatting, being in equal parts too unwieldy and too full of big holes (which perfectly afford escape to a fly). Accordingly, affordances are relational, emerging at the intersection of the structural features of some object or surface and the structural features of an embodied agent interacting with (or by means of) that object or surface (Gibson, 1986; Hutchby, 2001, 2014). Strictly speaking, an affordance is not merely a structural feature per se, but rather 'meaningful' action possibilities (Pinna, 2017, p. 31). Thus, for instance, the flatness of a tabletop is not an affordance, but rather a feature that can yield the affordance of putting things on it to an agent for whom 'putting' is a meaningful action. That is, the salient affordance is not the flatness, but the put-on-ability (similarly, the climbability of the ladder).

This dissertation follows Hutchby (2001, 2014) in thinking of technological communication media as affordance structures. Arguably, McLuhan's (1964/2003) notion of media as "extensions" of humans is a comparable idea. A medium is an extension of us precisely insofar as it affords – enables and constrains, encourages and discourages – communicative behaviors, expanding our extant behavioral repertoire. McLuhan's mentee and associate Ong (1982/2012, p. 1) contended specifically of writing that many features of thought and expression in our society "are not directly native to human existence as such but have come into being because of the resources which the technology of writing makes available." From this perspective, media do not just channel meanings, but rather themselves provide action and meaning potentials.

Hutchby (2001) schematizes a division between *technological relativism* – the view that media are mere conduits or channels that signify only whatever interactants put into them – and *technological determinism* – the view that the logic and structure of a medium substantially influences and constrains communication. As an example of the former, Hutchby (2001) cites Grint and Woolgar (1997, p. 21), according to whom the use of a technology "is the result of interpretations and negotiations, not determinations." The determinist view can loosely be exemplified by McLuhan. His cited-to-death slogan that "the medium is the message" (McLuhan, 1964/2003) was a purposefully provocative rebuttal of the view that reduces technologies to mere conduits. Taken too literally, however, "the medium is the message" suggests a view that is equally reductive in the agency it ascribes to the medium as the conduit view is in denying it. Hutchby (2001, p. 30) speaks rather of "the interface of the actor's aims and the technology's affordances." He summarizes the position as follows:

Technologies do not impose themselves on society, mechanistically altering the pattern of human relations and social structures. Neither does human agency encounter technologies as blank slates, as infinitely malleable forms. Technologies for communication possess materiality not only in the physical sense but in the sense of their very conditions of possibility. Technologies do not make humans; but humans make what they do of technologies in the interface between the organized practices of human conversation, and the technology's array of communicative affordances. (Hutchby, 2001, p. 206)

The individual case studies are framed with this general perspective in mind. For example, the first case study focuses on how the hashtag, a

technological feature of Twitter, in addition to its topic sorting function – the most salient function from a design perspective – is also employed by Twitter users to serve a broad range of informational, metalinguistic, phatic, and ludic functions (Wikström, 2014a). What Hutchby terms a technological relativist perspective might highlight how Twitter users as empowered agents have appropriated the hashtag function to serve purposes beyond what it was engineered for, showing how use of a technology can deviate from the technology's design. The determinist perspective might conversely highlight how the material specifications of the hashtag format provide for and constrain user behaviors, and how the hashtag itself comes to characterize Twitter discourse more than any 'content' any given user might put 'in' a given tag. The hashtag is the message. From the relativist perspective, the discourse participants characterize their discourse by making what they will of the hashtag form; from the determinist perspective, the hashtag form characterizes the discourse by setting the parameters of expressability and itself becoming an emblem of the platform. In the terms of affordance theory, there is little sense in characterizing the discourse as afforded *either* by the users *or* the technological forms, since the discourse is mutually constituted by both – it would not exist as-is without either.

2.2.2 Twitter's affordances in outline

Types of platforms for computer-mediated interaction vary considerably. A professional email, an instant messaging conversation between family members, a celebrity video uploaded to YouTube, and a text comment posted below that video are all very different things, not just because of the contextual differences but also because of the different affordances of the technological formats. The material appearance of a platform can presumably matter a great deal. For instance, the design of a typical instant messaging application – with small input boxes, constantly visible and continuously updated output boxes, text or symbols that inform you when your partner is currently writing, etc. – encourages synchronous interaction with quick, short turns to an extent that a typical email application does not (see N. S. Baron, 2013; C. Lee, 2007).

Twitter, of course, has its own set of affordances. On a very general level, Twitter discourse shares the basic affordances of most online or internet-based interactive domains as outlined by boyd (2010, p. 45), namely

persistence, replicability, scalability, and searchability. Thus, tweets are archived, they can be copied and shared, they can reach audiences ranging from a handful of friends and family to worldwide masses, and they can be identified and retrieved from the archive. These core affordances are of consequence to researchers when it comes to methodological and ethical considerations (Spilioti, Tagg, Bolander, Locher, & Georgakopoulou, 2016, p. 164; see also Section 4.4). In terms of the specific aims of this dissertation, they are also of consequence for the question of spokenness and writtenness: Persistence and replicability are salient affordances of writing, especially since the print era, and scalability and searchability are salient features of digital writing, of hypertext (see Landow, 2006). That is, these general affordances seem to be characteristic of text rather than talk.

The remainder of this section attempts to characterize Twitter more specifically by listing a number of the platform's features that have been of relevance to this project on levels ranging from methodological considerations to specific analyses in the case studies.⁶

- **MULTI-DEVICE.** Twitter can be used through different applications on various devices, ranging from web browser access to Twitter's website on a desktop computer to indirect access via third party applications on portable devices. However, several core characteristics are constant across platforms. This mobility across types of interfaces and devices is itself an affordance that invites various ways of using the service. Mobile use of Twitter might promote more off-the-cuff and unedited microblogging, whereas static use at a computer terminal might promote more carefully constructed and edited tweets (cf. Twitter CEO Jack Dorsey's comments in Sarno, 2009a).
- **TYPOGRAPHIC TEXT.** The body of a typical tweet is mainly typographic; many, if not most, tweets are text-only. Overall, Twitter may be growing more multimodal over time, especially since users of various social media often cross-pollinate services, e.g., by cross-posting images from Instagram or videos from YouTube in their Twitter feed. Twitter accommodates embedded video and still images now, but did not originally. However, the core of Twitter is typographic characters. Most applications for accessing Twitter focus on displaying text,

⁶ The reader may wish to refer to Zappavigna (2012) and Gillen and Merchant (2013) for complementary descriptions of Twitter's features and affordances that are useful despite being somewhat out of date.

meaning that a third party application for reading tweets will display any textual and typographic content of a tweet but may not display embedded images or emoji.

- LIMITED GRAPHICS. Many Unicode glyphs (such as ♥) are available, and users can employ standard typographic symbols, such as punctuation marks, to create ASCII graphics and both simple and more complex emoticons such as :-), or ^_^('v)^_/. Further, online-hosted images, audio, and video may be hotlinked, or in some forms embedded and displayed inline (inside or adjacent to the body of the tweet). In later years, Twitter has expanded support for image and video in various ways. Twitter also has full emoji-support, having even designed its own version, *Twemoji*, of the full Unicode Consortium emoji-set (Davidson, 2014).
- ADDRESSIVITY. Tweets can be addressed to specific users via the @-addressivity device. For instance, adding *@example123* to the body of a tweet addresses it to the user registered with that handle. Further, a tweet can be posted as a reply to another particular tweet, using the *reply*-feature. If the @-address is the very first thing in a tweet, the tweet will not be public, but rather visible only to the addressee and their followers. Users that are addressed receive notifications to bring their attention to this.
- TAGGING. Hashtags (a string of letters pre-fixed with the #-symbol) may be added to the body of a tweet. The tag itself functions as a hyperlink leading to a timeline of all tweets containing the same tag. This enables various kinds of interaction, affiliation, and playful expressivity. This format was introduced in August of 2007 by direct analogy to the use of the hash symbol to create and jump between ‘groups’ in Internet Relay Chat (Messina, 2007; Smith, 2016).
- LENGTH-CONSTRAINT. As of late 2017, tweets are restricted to containing 280 characters or fewer (Perez, 2017). Famously, individual tweets used to be limited to 140 characters. Longer messages must be broken up into multiple tweets.⁷ Leading up to the expansion to 280 characters, Twitter loosened the length-constraint in various ways, for instance integrating ways of quoting tweets without the enquoted material counting towards the character cap (Kelly, 2017). Most users adapt to the length constraint, and even tend to write tweets that are substantially shorter than what is possible (Kuseta, 2012; Perez, 2017).
- MIX OF DIRECT AND AMBIENT INTERACTIVITY (Zappavigna, 2011, 2014). Twitter has multiple features for notifying a user when someone directly interacts with them, e.g., via address or reply, and thus affords

⁷ Some users get around the length constraint by using third party services that host longer messages or by embedding bitmapped images of longer stretches of text into a tweet.

direct interaction. However, a lot of interaction on Twitter is ambient. For instance, a user may participate in an open-ended multi-user conversation on the topic of a recent news event by using a relevant hashtag without ever directly addressing or being addressed by any other user or group of users participating in that same general conversation.

- ONE-TO-MANY. To tweet is to post an electronic message that instantly becomes visible to many potential readers, especially one's followers. Originally, the main intended purpose of tweeting may have been to push status updates to friends and acquaintances (see Section 2.1). The typical tweet is presumably not intended for a sole recipient, and will almost inevitably reach handfuls if not multitudes of readers regardless of intention.⁸
- PROFILE-AND-FRIENDS CENTEREDNESS. The individual user's experience is centered on their own profile, the other users that they follow, and the users that follow them. This means that users typically have their own immediate "network" as intended or imagined audience (see the discussion of social media as "networked publics" in boyd, 2010).
- PUBLICNESS. At the same time as Twitter is similar to networks such as Facebook in providing a user experience centered on oneself and one's network, it is arranged to feel more public. For instance, instead of having "friends" a Twitter user *follows* and is *followed*, casting Twitter activity as something more like public performance that an audience might be interested in regardless of any personal relationship. Further, while standard use of Facebook is to post messages visible to friends only, standard use of Twitter is to post publicly.
- HETEROCHRONICITY. Twitter's basic features permit and encourage real-time interaction (within the limits of the time that message composition and transmission requires). However, at the same time, the one-to-many structure and features such as retweeting encourage careful composition for impact and shareability. Tweets are both interactional actions in the present and archived artefacts. CMC scholars often refer to this kind of mixed temporality as semi-synchronous, but the term *heterochronicity* arguably better captures the simultaneous presence of several different temporal logics (P. Prior & Hengst, 2010).
- RECENCY. Despite its heterochronicity, Twitter privileges a sense of recency (Page, 2012a, p. 196). Until 2016, Twitter timelines appeared strictly in reverse chronological order (Kleeman, 2016), so that the most recent tweets were displayed first whenever a Twitter timeline

⁸ Twitter also permits direct messaging to individual recipients. Since this dissertation is limited in scope to considering publicly posted tweets, the direct messaging system is not further discussed.

was accessed or refreshed. Early on, Twitter did not even permit historical searches. Users could jump into ongoing conversations at any point, but only to a limited extent dig back into the past. This focus on the present has been reduced by features such as enhanced access to the historical archive of tweets, relevance algorithms that may present tweets out of chronological order, and “while you were away” summaries of activity for returning users (T. B. Lee, 2016; Oremus, 2016). However, Twitter still emphasizes recency.

This list is not comprehensive, but addresses the main features that should be helpful to the reader in understanding the case studies and the discussion further on in this dissertation. This list also illustrates how Twitter, on the level of its structural features as a medium, invites being understood as a kind of hybrid, as outlined in Chapter 1 and Section 2.1. By structure, Twitter privileges one modality, typographic writing, while not strictly speaking being unimodal. Further, it is neither public nor private, neither synchronous nor asynchronous, and neither purely monologic nor purely dialogic/polylogic.

2.2.3 Basic anatomy of a tweet

This section illustrates how individual tweets appear to a reader in both the web and smartphone app interfaces of Twitter. Figure 2.2 shows a text-only tweet as it appears, at the time of writing, in the timeline of a user accessing Twitter via its website.⁹ This tweet is from the spoof account *@Justin_Buber*, which posts mashups of quotations from philosopher Martin Buber with song lyrics or tweets from popular artist Justin Bieber. The far left shows the profile picture of the account. The top line above the body text of the tweet shows what the user has entered as their full display name (“Justin Buber”) as well as the username/address (“@Justin_Buber”). The top line also shows the date that the tweet was posted. To the right of the body text, the small downward arrow can be expanded to show the reader options such as getting a direct hyperlink to the tweet or reporting the tweet as abusive. Below the body text of the tweet, there is an interaction-themed tool bar with buttons allowing the reader to reply (this tweet has two replies), retweet (this tweet has been retweeted 232 times), like (this tweet has

⁹ Tweets containing only text were by far most common in the materials of the four case studies.

been liked 78 times), and send a private direct message to the poster of the tweet. If one clicks on the tweet, an expanded view opens up, where it is possible to read any public replies and to see which other users have interacted with the tweet.

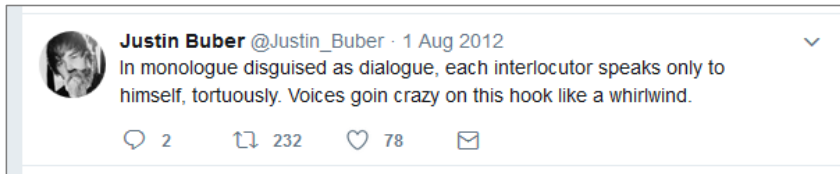


Figure 2.2. An individual tweet on the desktop version of Twitter's website.

Figure 2.3 shows the same tweet, with some additional context from the user's timeline, as it appears in the Twitter mobile app on a smartphone. Twitter's web and app interfaces have been assimilated over time. The design previously differed in some minor, mostly cosmetic, regards.



Figure 2.3. A user's public timeline in Twitter's smartphone application.

During the time that this dissertation project was conducted, the exact appearance of interface elements has changed somewhat, though the basic elements of the tweet (profile picture, name, and body text), and the central metadata (replies, retweets, and likes – previously ‘favorites’) have been almost identical across the case studies. The main difference over time in this regard has been the increased prominence of reply chains forming conversations.

2.3 Remediation

One of the possibilities for thinking about the spokenness of online writing brought up in the case studies is the notion of *remediation* (Bolter & Grusin, 2000). To say that new media remediate old media is, roughly, to say that a new medium builds on the ‘logic’ (Landow, 2006, p. 49) of prior media. In a general sense, Bolter and Grusin use the term *remediation* to cover a number of ideas previously explored by McLuhan (1964/2003, 1988) about how new media, in a complex media landscape, always retrieve, enhance, and make obsolete characteristics of prior media on various levels. More specifically, Bolter and Grusin (2000, p. 65) argue that every new medium “appropriates the techniques, forms, and social significance of other media.” Newspapers remediated town criers; telephony remediated dyadic face-to-face conversation; television remediated radio; the internet brought with it a multitude of platforms that now remediate any number of media in one form or another.

As Scolari (2012, p. 217) points out, the notion of remediation characterizes all media as being fundamentally hybrid. The question is therefore not whether a new medium hybridizes other media, but what specific “constituents” appear as salient for understanding the hybrid (Bolter & Grusin, 2000, p. 58). YouTube saliently remediates television, and therefore in some sense needs to be explained in terms of how it reconfigures traditional television. From its inception, Twitter plainly remediated SMS text messaging, as evident, *inter alia*, from the length constraint.¹⁰ In the ongoing evolution of the ecosystem of social media, Twitter may be seen as remediating aspects of instant messaging, as well

¹⁰ Early on, some referred to Twitter as “the SMS of the internet” (Socialmediaoracle.com, 2009). Cf. Section 2.1.

as the public or semi-public journaling aspect of blogs and Facebook. Increasingly, there is an emphasis on images and streaming video in the character of platforms such as Instagram and YouTube. In a larger media historical perspective, Twitter may appear somewhat as the mutant offspring of the public notice board and the personal telegram. Further, in an even more general scheme, McLuhan frequently positions speech and writing as fundamental media, providing principles that underlie other media, and proposes a chain of influence going back from modern technologies of writing to the spoken word:

[T]he “content” of any medium is always another medium. The content of writing is speech, just as the written word is the content of print, and print is the content of the telegraph. (McLuhan, 1964/2003, p. 19)

From this perspective it would not be, to a contemporary CMC researcher, a question of *whether* a CMC platform remediates speech, but only *how* and to what extent. A remediation framework therefore makes clear why it is relevant to understand a new medium in terms of the traditional-but-disputed categories speech and writing. Even if new features emerge in CMC, a technology is always a bricolage of prior technologies, never invented from thin air. As regards discourse participants, the first generations of interactants in computer-mediated settings have been enculturated into traditions of writing and speaking and socialized into already extant norms of written and spoken genres and registers. Traces of those traditions should be evident in negotiations of new norms for new media.

It should be noted again that what is at stake is not just the recurrence of aspects of old media, but also their transformation. Prior and Hengst (2010, p. 11) argue that “dialogic approaches to discourse,” such as their framework of semiotic remediation, need

a theory of connection that accounts for the *re-*, for what makes something a re-petition, a re-cognition, a re-play, a re-presentation, a re-use. A *re* cannot be *re-* because it involves simple relations of identity (that is, because it is the *same* thing again); instead, the relations that we define as *re-* [...] must emerge from some mix of indexical, iconic, and/or tropic mappings between events or between entities.

The same goes for the non-semiotic side of remediation. Email transforms our sense of what a letter can be, and YouTube transforms our sense of what television can be. The questions addressed by this dissertation have to do not only with the extent to which Twitter

discourse reflects one or another characteristic traditionally attributed to speech or writing, but to what extent a medium like Twitter suggests ways of rethinking the relation between speech and writing. Bolter (2001, pp. xii–xiii) has contested the general idea that “electronic writing” manifests “a new kind of orality,” highlighting instead its more obvious remediation of print writing:

The development of the Web and multimedia has foregrounded the relationship of word and image, so that the history of the tension between verbal and visual representation seems more important than ever. For that very reason, however, the history of phonetic writing seems to me less relevant now than it did nine years ago. Digital technology is not now elaborating on phonetic writing in interesting ways. Perhaps as speech recognition technology matures, the pendulum will swing back. At present, however, it seems to me that the computer is not leading to a new kind of orality, but rather to an increasing emphasis on visual communication.

The notion that computers, electronic communication, and CMC represent an increased importance of image, of the visual, is quite well established (e.g., Kress, 2003). This dissertation will not challenge that observation per se, and will not dispute that electronic writing such as that found on Twitter most obviously remediates print writing, at least on a basic material and technological level. Nevertheless, Bolter expresses an assumption that can be challenged, namely that electronic writing is oral to the extent that it enhances phoneticism. As is argued throughout Chapter 5, there is more to talk-like tweeting than mere phoneticism.

3. Aspects of speech and writing

This chapter concerns the central concepts that form the theoretical linchpin of this dissertation, namely *speech* and *writing*. As noted in Section 1.1, rather than starting from a specific and narrow definition, this dissertation treats these terms as an umbrella for a range of conceptions of spoken and written language. While there is a rhetorical reliance throughout this text on treating speech and writing as binary opposites, this dissertation shares the non-essentialist view espoused, among many others, by Chafe and Tannen (1987, p. 398), who emphasize the “inextricability of speaking and writing in even those modes of discourse that seem most exclusively a matter of writing and reading.” To contextualize the dissertation project, this chapter highlights the fact that the spoken–written interface has many facets and, accordingly, that the relative spokenness of any written discourse can be construed in many ways. The aim of the chapter is to provide a general overview and to highlight some influential perspectives and relevant themes from both scholarship on language in general and CMC in particular. The aspects of speech and writing introduced here, beyond having long been of general interest to scholars of language, culture, and communication, have connections to both popular and scholarly debates about online communication today. More importantly, the themes introduced here resonate with the findings of the case studies, as is discussed throughout Chapter 5.

This chapter is divided into three main sections. Section 3.1 outlines major and recurring characteristics that have been used to contrast speech and writing, and highlights some main approaches to the speech–writing contrast in the study of language and communication. Section 3.2 focuses on how speech and writing have been normatively valorized and positioned in a hierarchical relationship to one another in ways that have implications extending well beyond linguistics per se. Section 3.3 surveys previous research on the spokenness of written CMC, including a discussion of some such work that has specifically focused on Twitter. Throughout these sections, several themes are introduced regarding scholarly construals of spoken and written language, regarding normative valorizations of orality and literacy, and regarding the speech–writing dichotomy as a locus for debate about the linguistic, social, and cultural implications of technologically mediated

communication. Chapter 5 goes into the specifics of how these themes are reflected in the findings of this dissertation project in a number of concrete ways, giving rise to new implications for the current era of socially mediated writing.

3.1 Characterizing speech and writing

The basic problem explored in this dissertation is the notion of written CMC as spokenlike. To some extent, this notion may be problematic simply because the speech–writing dichotomy itself is contested. It may even seem surprising that so much weight has been attached to contrasting speech to writing, because, as Barton (2007, p. 91) puts it, when describing the empirical differences between speech and writing, “one is forced to say ‘typically’”: There are no grand and glaring distinctions that differentiate all speech from all writing. Characteristics that have been explored range from concrete formal traits identified through linguistic analysis to more abstract qualities, making for a complex field of conceptualizations. Section 3.1.1 presents a general overview of ways in which spoken and written discourse have been contrasted with one another across scholarly accounts.

3.1.1 A survey of contrasts

This section surveys some lines of differentiation and contrast that appear across various accounts of the relation between speech and writing. This outline is presented across Tables 3.1–3.4. The tables synthesize a great number of contrasts from sources that feature different terminology and different strategies (or lack thereof) for organizing or grouping characteristics. Needless to say, particular sources may disagree on some contrasts. Several such theoretical disagreements are discussed throughout the later sections of this chapter. The presentation and grouping here is not representative of any particular source, and is not intended to be a comprehensive inventory. The purpose is rather to provide an outline of speech–writing contrasts that tend to recur, in various constellations, in the literature that forms the

theoretical framework for this dissertation, and to introduce key terms that will be returned to throughout this chapter and Chapter 5.¹¹

Table 3.1 exemplifies frequently recurring contrastive characteristics on the level of utterance form and content. Characteristics of this kind tend to be referred to both in linguistic descriptions of spoken and written registers (e.g., Biber, 1988; Chafe & Tannen, 1987), but are also sometimes referred to in more anthropologically, sociologically, psychologically, or philosophically oriented literature on the *orality–literacy* interface, further discussed in Section 3.1.3.

Table 3.1. *Characteristics pertaining to utterance form and content*

<i>Speech (orality)</i>	<i>Writing (literacy)</i>
The unit of expression is the utterance. ¹²	The unit of expression is the sentence.
Utterance meaning is fragmented and fuzzy; implicated situationally.	Sentence meaning is integrated and precise; explicitly specified.
Utterances are frequently non-declarative; have non-propositional, e.g., phatic, functions.	Sentences are generally declarative expressions of propositional meaning. ¹³
Utterances tend to be short (single word utterances are common).	Sentences tend to be longer than spoken utterances.
Syntax is additive/coordinate.	Syntax is constellational/subordinative.
Syntax is irregular and elliptic, incomplete.	Syntax is standardized and ‘fully realized.’

¹¹ The main sources used to compile these tables are Barton (2007), Biber (1988), Biber et al. (1999), Chafe & Tannen (1987), and Jahandarie (1999). The tables also include contrasts and terminology from N. S. Baron (2003, 2008), Barthes (1971/1977), Biber & Conrad (2009), Chafe (1982), Crystal (2006), Gleason (1961), R. Harris (1996, 2000), Havelock (1963, 1986), Huddleston and Pullum (2002), Jones (2016), Jonsson (2013), McLuhan (1962, 1964/2003), Olson (1993; 1991), Ong (1982), Quirk et al. (1985), Sampson (2016), and Tannen (1982, 1983). As there has been an attempt here to synthesize many different kinds of discussions of spoken and written discourse into a very blunt and general overview, it should be emphasized again that the contrasts in the tables are not representative of any particular source.

¹² Some alternative units of talk have been posited, such as the more rigorously defined conversation analytic “turn construction unit” (TCU; Sacks, Schegloff, & Jefferson, 1974). Note that *utterance* is frequently used as a superordinate category that subsumes rather than contrasts with *sentence*.

¹³ *Proposition* is used throughout this dissertation in the traditional, broadly Aristotelian sense. The ‘canonical’ linguistic form of a proposition is a declarative subject–predicate statement that describes some state of affairs that could be evaluated in terms of truth-value (McGrath, 2014).

Structure is redundant; repetitions, digressions, 'performance errors.'	Structure is parsimonious; polished and edited, no 'performance errors.'
Organized in terms of intonation units, turn-taking, negotiation of 'floor.'	Organized in terms of logical/compositional units such as sentences, paragraphs.
Utterances are prosodic and have 'suprasegmental' features.	Sentences have punctuation and diacritics.
Lexicon is restrictive and repetitive; type-token ratio is low.	Lexicon is elaborate and varied; type-token ratio is high.
Lexicon is vernacular; regionalisms, colloquial style, slang and obscenity.	Lexicon is formal and standardized; 'literary' style.
Lexicon is rich in deixis; personal pronouns are extremely common; highly specified nominal phrases are uncommon.	Lexicon disprefers deixis; personal pronouns rare whereas highly specified nominal phrases are common.

Table 3.2 exemplifies contrastive characteristics having to do with the materiality or physical conditions of spoken and written language use. Such characteristics tend to be more extensively considered in scholarship focused on mediation per se, for instance media theory in the tradition of McLuhan (cf. Section 2.2). In a mechanical linguistic account such as Biber (1988), the physical mode of production is important to the extent that it constitutes the one and only defining difference between spoken and written registers. However, variation between spoken and written language tends to be explained in terms of situational, genre, and register differences rather than in terms of materiality (Biber & Conrad, 2009).¹⁴

Table 3.2. Characteristics pertaining to materiality and modality

<i>Spoken language...</i>	<i>Written language...</i>
is basically acoustic.	is basically visual.
is multimodal or modally enriched through prosody, kinesics, haptics, gaze, etc.	is modally poor, consisting of just text or text and a few images.
has no discrete units; sounds are holistic and continuous.	has discrete units; characters, letters.
has meaningful physicality; the way that a	is abstracted from its physicality; the visual

¹⁴ Materiality is an aspect increasingly made relevant in work on writing such as that presented throughout Bazerman & Prior (2003), and on speech as mediated communication (Jones, 2016).

voice sounds matters.	surface is transparent, letters are arbitrary.
is topical; spatially situated.	is atopical; spatially autonomous.
is synchronic; plays out in real-time as a process or event.	is asynchronous; is static as a product or object
is ephemeral/evanescent – but irreversible; cannot be unspoken.	is static/permanent – but eradicable; can be erased, burned, deleted.
is active; 'comes at' the hearer.	is passive; accessed by the reader.
is biological; natural, innate, evolved.	is cultural; artificial, learned, invented.

Table 3.3 exemplifies contrastive characteristics having to do with situational and interactional characteristics. Such characteristics are fundamental especially to interactionist linguistics and disciplines such as mediated communication and conversation analysis, but tend to be addressed in most surveys of speech and writing (e.g., Biber, Johansson, Leech, Conrad, & Finegan, 1999). Indeed, these aspects have been considered centrally meaningful at least as far back as Plato, for whom the dialogicity of speech was part of what made speech superior to writing as regards the pursuit of knowledge and truth (see D. Baron, 2009, pp. 3–5).

Table 3.3. Characteristics pertaining to interactional situation

<i>Spoken language...</i>	<i>Written language...</i>
is directly interactive; embedded in an immediate interactional situation.	is autonomous of immediate interactional context.
requires spatial and temporal copresence; interlocutors are always contemporary.	does not require copresence; dialogue can happen across historical timespans.
requires improvised composition.	permits planned composition.
requires immediate comprehension; slow and careful interpretation is not possible.	does not require immediate comprehension; slow and careful interpretation is possible.
is typified by everyday conversation.	is typified by prepared manuscript writing; academic, journalistic, or literary prose.
is one-to-one dialogue.	is one-to-many monologue.
is privately and personally situated; often, participants have a personal relationship.	is publically situated; no expected personal relationship between participants.
is focused on developing personal bonds.	is focused on communicating information.

Table 3.4, finally, outlines contrastive characteristics at a somewhat higher level of conceptual abstraction. These contrasts have to do with cognitive or cultural implications of the conditions of orality and literacy, for instance in anthropological or psychological scholarship (see especially McLuhan, 1964/2003; Ong, 1982/2012). Such associations tend not to be extensively addressed in empirical linguistic accounts of spoken and written language. These more speculative contrasts are of relevance to this dissertation in relation to how speech and writing are discursively conceptualized and valorized (see Section 3.2) rather than as regards their empirical status. However, the reader may wish to refer to Jahandarie (1999, pp. 311–314) for a discussion of the latter.

Table 3.4. Characteristics pertaining to cognitive and cultural implications

<i>Spoken language / the condition of orality...</i>	<i>Written language / the condition of literacy...</i>
promotes integrative, synthetic reasoning.	promotes fragmentative, analytical reasoning.
promotes a communalism, participation.	promotes individualism.
is culturally conservative/homeostatic in relation to traditional knowledge.	promotes a critical stance in relation to traditional knowledge.
favors agonistic, narrative, and poetic expression.	favors dispassionate, expository, and prosaic expression.
favors subjectivity; a focus on lived experience and feelings.	favors objectivity; a focus on rationality and facts.
favors the concrete.	favors abstraction.

Even this general and incomplete survey of contrasts suggests that Twitter writing could be described as spokenlike in very many ways. Section 5.2 provides what may be termed an impressionistic overview of how the empirical materials of the case studies may be characterized in relation to these contrasts. However, the main purpose of introducing them here is to provide a general contextualization and some key terms for the introduction of more specific themes in this chapter.

Two qualifications should be noted in relation to Tables 3.1–3.4. First, particular accounts of all the contrasts outlined throughout the tables tend to emphasize that differences are gradual, that counter-examples always exist, and that some traditional distinctions reflect stereotypes

that can be empirically undermined. For instance, while it is common to characterize speech as process/event and writing as product/object, notions such as *utterance*, *discourse*, or *text* can obviously be attached to a speech event to itemize it. Similarly, it is not uncommon to talk of writing as process and to describe even published and printed texts as part of a processual flow of communication (Bazerman & Prior, 2003). Further, if literate activity favors a focus on “facts” and “objectivity,” writing is also emblematically represented by the register of literary prose (e.g., Biber & Conrad, 2009), which is often defined precisely in opposition to ‘factual’ discourse (Tannen, 1982). In short, scholarship frames these differences as tendencies, not absolutes.

A second issue to note about Tables 3.1–3.4 is how some contrasts may seem to contradict others. For instance, for McLuhan (1964/2003, p. 112), speech comes to stand for integration and writing for fragmentation, as in Table 3.4, among other reasons because writing is associated with the phonetic alphabet, which fragments sounds into discrete units, and because print literacy promotes analytical reasoning and “habits of individualism and privacy” which fragment the individual from the collective. However, to Chafe (1982; Table 3.1), it is writing that has the characteristic of “integration” because written texts integrate more explicit information in individual sentences and texts. Such complications arise partly from the substantially different foci of various perspectives, but also from the polysemy of descriptors such as *integrated*. Contradiction is, in itself, a theme which will recur in the discussion in Chapter 5, in relation to how language in new media such as Twitter may appear, as Baym (2015, p. 72) puts it, “neither spoken nor written yet both.”

The conceptual complexity of speech and writing is dealt with by scholars in different ways. Jahandarie (1999, p. 147), after outlining several of the contrastive characteristics just introduced, describes a tradition of “statistical reductionism” which deals with the complexity by suggesting that the probabilistic variation across spoken and written discourse really boils down to variation along some ‘underlying’ dimension. Specifically, he refers to earlier studies that attempt to explain speech–writing variation in terms of other dichotomies, such as integration–fragmentation and involvement–detachment (Chafe, 1982; Chafe & Tannen, 1987); contextualized–decontextualized (Denny, 1991;

Rader, 1982); focused–nonfocused (Scollon & Scollon, 1984); self-monitored–spontaneous (Halliday, 1987), planned–unplanned (Ochs, 1979); formal–informal (Akinnsaso, 1985); and pragmatic mode–syntactic mode (Givón, 1979). As Jahandarie (1999, p. 147) notes, the “most elaborate attempts” at systematic reduction are those of Biber (1986, 1988), whose framework is based on the statistical identification of ‘dimensions’ of variation. Biber’s framework is perhaps the one that best fits Jahandarie’s notion of reductionism, insofar as the quantitative distribution of countable features is given analytical priority to any preconceived notion of register or genre. A radically different kind of approach could be said to be represented by philosophers or cultural theorists such as Derrida (1967a/2016, 1968/2004; Matteo, 1986) or McLuhan (1962, 1964/2003), who provide rich explorations of cultural meanings and values that are discursively tied to concepts of speech and writing. If Biber’s descriptivist “reductionism” attempts to avoid preconceived notions, the philosophical approach of Derrida’s “grammatology” (1967a/2016) may perhaps be described as interested precisely in grappling with preconceptions. As the discussion in Chapter 5 will elaborate, such radically different approaches can in their respective ways yield insight into the spokenness of Twitter discourse.

3.1.2 *The continuum model*

The previous section emphasized two important observations that recur in both linguistic and non-linguistic literature on speech and writing. Firstly, any dichotomized construal of speech and writing can be challenged by particular empirical counterexamples. Secondly, many of the descriptive terms and metaphors are themselves polyvalent enough that they can be used to characterize speech and writing in conflicting and contradictory ways. Throughout the 1980s in particular, several linguists proposed ‘continuum’ models of speech–writing variation to address this complexity (Chafe & Tannen, 1987; Koch & Oesterreicher, 1985). Such models suggest that if particular registers such as everyday conversation and academic prose are taken as constituting poles of ‘maximum’ spokenness and writtenness respectively, most registers and genres of spoken and written discourse actually fall somewhere in between those poles as regards any given linguistic feature or discourse characteristic (Chafe & Tannen, 1987). Tannen (1982), for instance, suggests that both “oral and literate strategies” may occur to various

extends across spoken and written discourses. As is discussed in Section 3.3, the continuum view has influenced some approaches to the spokenness of CMC, but has also been challenged. Chapter 5 discusses several ways in which the results of the case studies illustrate the limitations of describing CMC platforms such as Twitter in terms of a spoken–written continuum.

3.1.3 The interactional turn

Beyond the continuum view of spoken–written variation, approaches to online writing (including the present dissertation) have increasingly been influenced by what may broadly be called an “interactional turn” in approaches to language in the mid-to-late 20th century (Helasvuo, Johansson, & Tanskanen, 2010). The main interaction-oriented discipline that has influenced qualitative work on CMC is pragmatics. Historically, pragmatics emerged as a reaction to an analytical philosophical tradition that had tended to dismiss ‘ordinary language’ as deficient. This tradition was programmatically ‘literate’ in the sense that, as a philosophy of language, it assigned primacy to the well-formed and extensively propositionally specified sentences of formal writing (see R. Harris, 1996). Scholars such as Grice (1975), Austin (1976), and Searle (1969, 1979) recognized instead that in ordinary language, far from all utterances are “constatives” – the kind of predications that are of interest to philosophers in terms of referentiality, truth value, etc. Instead, early pragmatics emphasized the situationally contingent performative dimension of language as it is ordinarily used in social life (Austin, 1971; Jones, 2016, p. 29; Searle, 1971, p. 6). Among other things, the terminological emphasis in this ordinary-language-cum-pragmatic tradition on speech acts, speaker meaning, speaker intention, etc. (Searle, 1971, 1979) makes explicit its turn to language as interactionally situated *speech*. Prior and Hengst (2010, pp. 2–3), in introducing their notion of semiotic remediation, describe an equivalent shift in semiotics with reference to the “dialogic insight” that

language and signs need to be understood as concrete, historical, situated, and social phenomena rather than as abstract, depersonalized, and unsituated systems. [Bakhtin, Voloshinov, and others] signaled this shift in part by contrasting the usual units of language to notions of speech – contrasting linguist’s [sic] *sentences*, for example, to people’s situated *utterances*.

Further, these developments coincide with the emergence of fields such as interactional sociolinguistics, the ethnography of speaking, and conversation analysis (Jones, 2016, p. 21), which have later come to intermingle with more empirical, as opposed to philosophical, pragmatics (Grundy, 2008, pp. 211, 223). As it has influenced current frameworks of mediated interaction (e.g., Page, Barton, Unger, & Zappavigna, 2014, pp. 27–28), this overall interactional turn is of note here in two main regards. Firstly, it informs the methodology of this dissertation, as is described in Chapter 4. Secondly, it affects the status of the spoken-written distinction in CMC research, as is further discussed in Sections 3.3 and 5.2. The application to written CMC of frameworks such as conversation analysis (Giles et al., 2015), even insofar as it is an adaptation, can arguably be described as starting from a recognition of the talk-likeness, the conversationality, of the discourse.

3.1.4 Speech and writing as orality and literacy

In a broadly historical, sociological, anthropological, and media and communications oriented tradition, speech and writing are often treated under the headings of *orality* and *literacy*, as conditions of whole cultures as well as of individuals and groups within cultures. While this dissertation is not centrally framed in terms of ideas of orality and literacy, it is argued throughout Chapter 5 that the case study findings have several implications for debates and normative contestations within orality–literacy discourses. As Havelock (1991, p. 12) notes, there was a veritable explosion of scholarship on orality and literacy following some influential publications in the 1960s (Havelock, 1963; Lévi-Strauss, 1962; McLuhan, 1962). Perhaps the most widely read scholarly incarnation of the orality–literacy pairing is the one presented by Ong (1982/2012). Ong pursues the thesis that writing technologies initiate substantial shifts in habits of expression and thought, and that differences between primary oral cultures and literate cultures are easily underestimated, since we can only study them from within a literate mindset. “Ongism,” writes Hartley (2012, p. xiv), “is the place where mind is determined by medium,” along the lines of the contrasts presented in Table 3.4 above (Section 3.1.1; cf. also Gronbeck, 1991). Others within the tradition (see. e.g., Barton, 2007; Finnegan, 1988; Goody, 1987; Olson & Torrance, 1991) have come increasingly to emphasize that careful distinctions need to be made between the impact

of literacy on individuals as compared to the introduction of a culture of literacy in particular cultural settings. The idea that new digital media may be substantially oral in the ‘Ongist’ sense have only been explored to a limited extent (e.g., Soffer, 2010, 2016). Several influential ideas from orality–literacy scholarship, particularly regarding social and cultural values tied to speech and writing, are introduced in Section 3.2.

3.2 Valorizing speech and writing

A central component of the traditional speech–writing complex that makes it relevant to understanding new media and CMC today is how conceptualizations of speech and writing tend to either imply or explicitly come packaged with normative and ideological valorizations. This section outlines the main ways in which speech becomes normatively valorized over writing and vice versa.¹⁵ These normative dimensions provide an important context for the discussion of the case study findings in Chapter 5. As scholars have signaled at least since McLuhan (1962), new communication technologies are of interest not only for how they may affect the forms but also the norms of linguistic expression (cf. N. S. Baron, 2008; Baym, 2015; Levinson, 1999). The findings of this dissertation have implications for such discussions, especially in relation to the examination of Twitter users’ own normative orientations, as is argued in Chapter 5. Section 3.2.1 surveys some influential perspectives on how speech has traditionally been valorized over writing, introducing some key themes relating to ideals of presence, immediacy, and authenticity, and of writing as a secondary representation of speech, which are central to the discussion in Section 5.3.2. Section 3.2.2 focuses on *literacy* rather than *writing*. This is because in general writing is assigned normative primacy over speech most obviously in the broad context of education, where literacy in the narrow sense of being able to read written texts gets expanded both metaphorically and metonymically to represent values such as civilization, education, objectivity, and truth. This association is often taken to hold specifically for *phonetic* writing. Section 3.2.3 focuses on

¹⁵ The specific terminology of, e.g., a “valorization of speech over writing” is perhaps mainly found in reference to Derrida’s (1967a/2016, 1968/2004) deconstruction of discourses of spoken and written language. Throughout this dissertation, “valorization” is to be understood simply as meaning that one term in a dichotomy is positioned as normatively superior to a second term in some salient way.

nonphonetic writing, which by contrast has been associated with expressivity, and the body rather than the mind. Both of these associations, between (alphabetic) literacy and education on the one hand, and nonphonetic writing and expressivity on the other, are central to the discussion in Section 5.3, especially 5.3.3.

3.2.1 *The living language and its ghost – the primacy of speech*

A considerable portion of Western philosophy has consisted in the philosophy of language (Searle, 1971, pp. 1–2), and philosophical debate about speech and writing dates back at least to Plato and Aristotle. In this tradition, speech has primacy, and writing is first and foremost positioned as mnemotechnic, as a technology either for preparing a speech to be delivered or for enhancing memory (for useful historical surveys, see D. Baron, 2009; Bolter, 2001; R. Harris, 2000). It is especially following Plato that notions of speech and writing become emblematic of epistemological principles, in relation to the production, communication, and preservation of knowledge (D. Baron, 2009; Derrida, 1968/2004). In much scholarship on the relation between speech and writing, the historical primacy of spoken language is positioned as obvious (Ong, 2002, p. 6). Children learn to speak before they learn to write, and cultures are oral before they develop literacy – these could practically be axioms of language acquisition and linguistic anthropology (cf. Barton, 2007; R. Harris, 2000; Jahandarie, 1999; Ong, 1982/2012). However, this section focuses on some key ways in which the valorization of speech over writing concerns more than just historical precedence. This section discusses some ways in which such construals of the relation between writing and speech have been, and still are, expressed in scholarship on the speech–writing and orality–literacy binaries, in order to set the stage for a discussion of the implications of this tradition for the findings of this dissertation in Chapter 5.

In a number of critical discussions of how speech and writing are constructed in traditions of language philosophy and structuralist linguistics, Derrida (1967c/1993, p. 226) has characterized Western thinking as suffused with a “metaphysics of presence.” In various ways, Derrida paints the picture of a long tradition of suspicion of writing as the deceptive image of true and ‘present’ language – a tradition

from Plato to Lévi-Strauss, through Rousseau and de Saussure, [that] has mistakenly privileged oral speech over written language, treating writing as a ‘scandal,’ an artificial and conventional, and hence deficient instrument with which to convey oral speech, which is in turn perceived as more natural, more pure, more innocent, more referential, more apt to express the subject or indicate the object in a direct manner. (Matteo, 1986, p. 146)

Possibly the most basic question at stake in the linguistic description of speech and writing is the question of how these two categories are framed as relating to *language*. Linguistic tradition has been somewhat confusing on this score. De Saussure (1916/1983), for instance, devotes several chapters to defining and delimiting *language*, and much of this work is done in relation to the speech–writing binary. To de Saussure, the object of a linguistic science proper is spoken language, yet not language use but rather the language system – not *parole* but rather *langue* (de Saussure, 1916/1983, pp. 10–15). The core of the *langue* is the symbolic function of the linguistic sign, the pairing of a form with a meaning, the “sound pattern” or “sound image.” Phonetics is central to Saussurean linguistics, whereas writing is dismissed as a separate sign system, secondary to language proper (de Saussure, 1916/1983, p. 23). Plato’s *Phaedrus* (275d)¹⁶ introduces a view of writing as mere representation of the living word – a view that writing is to speech as a painting is to a person. Echoing the Platonic critique of writing, de Saussure (1916/1983, p. 25) calls writing a mere “photograph” of language.

Similar configurations of speech and writing occur among other influential 20th century linguists, such as Sapir (1921), and Bloomfield (1983). As Chafe and Tannen (1987, p. 383) note, these scholars “went out of their way to emphasize the primacy of spoken as opposed to written language, relegating the latter to a derived and secondary status.” Tannen (1980, p. 207) says in summary that “European and American structuralists were concerned only with spoken language, considering written forms as an impoverished attempt to record spoken utterances” (cf. Jonsson, 2013, p. 23). In much of 20th century linguistic tradition, *speech* is used as a full or partial synonym to *language*,

¹⁶ Throughout, references to Plato are based on the translation in Cooper (1997), using the traditional Stephanus notation.

whereas *writing* is at best a special case of language use, and at worst a reductive representation of the living language. In keeping with this linguistic tradition, Sampson's (2016) survey of writing systems devotes a considerable portion of its introduction to justifying the very idea that writing systems are worth paying attention to, even while ultimately accepting that "*a script is only a device for making examples of a language visible*" (Sampson, 2016, p. 10; italics in original).

Similar perspectives exist in the tradition of orality–literacy scholarship. For instance, Ong (1982/2012), in addition to construing orality as primary to literacy historically and quantitatively, assigns orality a kind of structural primacy. Here, too, writing is a "secondary" and "dependent" system (Ong, 1982/2012, p. 8). Ong goes so far as to suggest that unlike spoken words, written words are *not real*:

What the reader is seeing on this page are not real words but coded symbols whereby a properly informed human being can evoke in his or her consciousness real words, in actual or imagined sound. (Ong, 1982/2012, p. 74)

As is argued in Section 5.3, it is worth tracing the echoes and implications of such views in an era when more people than ever write, and much of this writing happens in virtual spaces, where even the discourse participants themselves do not always seem convinced that what they write is really real. A further question raised by such orientations is, of course, whether the 'real' of language is really *words*. Section 5.3.3 especially discusses the case study findings in relation to nonverbal meaning (cf. Sections 3.2.3 and 3.3.1).

McLuhan, whose perspective has been highly influential in media theory, positions speech and writing as fundamental media whose logic underlie other media (e.g., 1964/2003, p. 19). McLuhan does not systematically privilege speech over writing, but in some instances expresses a romanticized, vaguely exoticizing view of oral culture and preliterate people:

Literacy creates much simpler kinds of people than those that develop in the complex web of ordinary tribal and oral societies. For the fragmented man creates the homogenized Western world, while oral societies are made up of people differentiated, not by their specialist skills or visible marks, but by their unique emotional mixes. The oral man's inner world is a tangle of complex emotions and feelings that the Western practical man has long ago eroded or suppressed within himself in the interest of efficiency or practicality. (McLuhan, 1964/2003, p. 75)

To this extent, McLuhan inscribes himself into the tradition of valorizing speech over writing: Even if speech is a medium, it is earlier in the chain of mediation, more immediate, and is associated with a greater self-connection, a more integrated subject. Literate people are construed as analytically “fragmented” and “eroded” as compared to the complex yet holistically integrated people in contexts of orality. There has been some scholarly debate concerning the extent to which notions of pre-literate orality may be essentializing and exoticizing – possibly manufacturing rather than identifying cultural and cognitive differences from an ethnocentric Western perspective (see Jahandarie, 1999, pp. 279–282; Olson & Torrance, 1991; Pattanayak, 1991).

Simplifying somewhat, what has been outlined in this section is a tradition of viewing *speech* as *language*, and writing as a secondary *representation*. This tradition, as Pettersson (1996, p. 198) points out, “does not only presuppose a narrow view of writing but also of spoken language as well as natural language.” As Chapter 5 argues, the case studies in this dissertation demonstrate several ways in which language use, linguistic reflexivity, and popular debate about digital and social media today rehearse and reconfigure themes that used to attach to the representationalist view of writing.

3.2.2 Literacy – The primacy of writing

The case studies in this dissertation reflect and make relevant not only norms that privilege the presence of speech, but also norms that privilege the “authority and fixity” of writing (Bolter, 2001, p. 165; see Section 5.3.2). The height of cultural valorization of writing makes literacy emblematic of civilization itself. For instance, 19th and 20th century anthropologists generally accepted the view of alphabetic writing as a yardstick of distinction between the primitive and the civilized (R. Harris, 2000, p. 4). The development of alphabetic literacy was considered, in Goody’s (1973, 1977) formulation, “the domestication of the savage mind.” While few would presumably subscribe to such a view today, it is nevertheless still the case that writing, and the ability to write *properly*, is connected with privileged cultural values.

In ‘continuum’ accounts of speech–writing variation (cf. Section 3.1.2), academic writing is often cited as one of the best exemplars of

writtenness (Biber & Conrad, 2009; Biber et al., 1999). To some theorists of media and language, this association between writing and the domain of education is not incidental, but rather says something about the nature of alphabetic print literacy. Landow (2006, p. 32), summarizing the argument of McLuhan (1962), says that writing “permits a new kind of education, as well as itself becoming a goal of education, since teaching reading and writing becomes a primary function of early instruction in eras in which these skills are important.” Writing enables practices of individual, silent reading. As Levinson (1999, p. 6) puts it, “the alphabet and the printing press encouraged us to see the world as a series of discrete sources and pieces, from which we could be easily detached, as when closing a book,” which by extension affords practices of detached, objective, and critical analysis. Further, the “permanency of writing [...] confronts us with the incorrect ‘knowledge’ of earlier generations and thereby fosters a generally critical attitude towards knowledge” (Biber, 1988, p. 3). Literacy, then, becomes part and parcel of the most valued cognitive habits of modern education – the mindsets of analysis, criticism, and objectivity. By figurative extension, literacy – in the concrete sense of the ability to read and write – also becomes a metaphor for learnedness in general. Indeed, in some discourse today, all kinds of media and technology-related, and even civic, competencies are metaphorically termed “literacies” (cf. Barton, 2007; Denny, 1991; R. Harris, 2000; Pattanayak, 1991). It is in light of this connection – between writing itself, certain forms of writing practices as institutionalized by educational systems, and cultural values of education and achievement – that informal writing practices in new media can come across as challenging societal norms (see N. S. Baron, 2008; Barton, 2007; Kress, 2003; Thurlow, 2006). That is, popular concern about, for instance, the effects of social media on young people’s spelling and grammar are, by extension, concerns about knowledge and competence. For example, in a *Washington Post* article on this topic, Weeks (2008) quotes an interview with the US Librarian of Congress James Billington:

“I see creeping inarticulateness,” [...] This assault on the lowly – and mighty – sentence, he says, is symptomatic of a disease potentially fatal to civilization. If the sentence croaks, so will critical thought. The chronicling of history. Storytelling itself. [...] The New York Times reported that the crowd laughed when Billington, at the presentation of the report, sounded the alarm about “the slow destruction of the basic unit of human thought – the sentence.” Undaunted, he continued. Online communication is sloppily written, he said, and “the sentence is the biggest casualty.”

The extrapolation from the formal nuts and bolts of traditional educated writing to the very capacity of critical, rational thought lives on in criticism of online writing. As is discussed in Section 5.3.1, such literacy norms are also reflexively negotiated in Twitter discourse.

3.2.3 Nonphonetic writing and the “theatrical hieroglyphic”

One of the central questions at stake in this dissertation project is whether and how writing on Twitter *represents* speech. In the case studies, many particular textual strategies are analyzed in terms of whether they have a salient representational function or not. This section, together with Section 3.3, introduces some notions that are used to reframe those analyses in Chapter 5 (particularly in Section 5.3.3).

To Derrida (1967a/2016; cf. R. Harris, 2000), the idea of writing as representation of speech is tied historically, specifically, to *phonetic* writing as representation of sound. In a broader cultural context, such as the Anglophone context, where the phonetic alphabet is taken as the norm, it is no surprise that writing becomes configured as an impoverished second to speech: As Sampson (2016, p. 13) notes, if phonetic representation is the aim of a system of inscription, even a specifically engineered tool such as the International Phonetic Alphabet is quite inadequate for capturing the dynamics of speech. Further, it has been argued that the Greek invention of the alphabet was, in practice, a move away from ‘naturalistic’ sound representation: Jahandarie (1999, p. 12) argues that the Greeks “change[d] the essence of writing systems from sound-based syllabaries to a rationalized system of phonemes which had no actual counterparts in human speech.” Notwithstanding whether syllabic scripts are more natural representations of speech sounds or not, the question remains whether writing needs to be regarded as representation.

Attention to nonphonetic writing may be valuable in understanding the development of informal writing in online settings. Kress (2003, p. 61) asks whether the compromising of the traditional educated norm of literacy is more likely to entail a “move back towards speech-like forms” or “back in the direction of [writing’s] image origins” – that is, either toward greater phoneticism or its opposite. In a concrete application of the latter idea, Danesi (2017) discusses the semiotics of emoji and

suggests that emoji may very well be understood as a reintroduction in Western writing of a hieroglyphic logic. The broad implications of the shifts described by Kress and Danesi may be framed in terms of McLuhan's (1964/2003) construal of phonetic and nonphonetic writing systems:

[P]ictographic and hieroglyphic writing as used in Babylonian, Mayan, and Chinese cultures represents an extension of the visual sense for storing and expediting access to human experience. All of these forms give pictorial expression to oral meanings. [...] In contrast, the phonetic alphabet, by a few letters only, was able to encompass all languages. Such an achievement, however, involved the separation of both signs and sounds from their semantic and dramatic meanings. (McLuhan, 1964/2003, p. 124)

The alphabet is to McLuhan the pinnacle of the segmented representation of speech sounds, but as the quote above suggests, the abstraction that the alphabet requires to represent language as sound units rather than units of meaning entails a loss of semantic richness on the level of the sign.¹⁷ Therefore, alphabetic phoneticism represents, to McLuhan (1962, p. 50), “the meaningless sign linked to the meaningless sound.” In this sense, important for the discussion in Section 5.3, McLuhan subverts the idea that phonetic writing ties writing more closely and more necessarily to spoken language or is overall better equipped to represent spoken language: It is only the meaningless sounds, not the rich dramatic meanings, that phonetic script is better at representing. For dramatic meanings, even the ideogram may be superior, because “the ideogram is an inclusive gestalt, not an analytic dissociation of senses and functions like phonetic writing” (McLuhan, 1964/2003, p. 120). To McLuhan, nonphonetic writing systems are, in this regard, more oral media, and therefore never brought about the kinds of cultural shifts he associates with alphabetic, and especially print, literacy (cf. Jahandarie, 1999, pp. 51–52; Scholes & Willis, 1991).

McLuhan's discussion of nonphonetic and pictographic writing systems certainly reflect Bolter's (2001, p. 59) observation that “the appeal of traditional picture writing is its promise of immediacy” – an immediacy

¹⁷ It should be noted that referring to the writing systems listed by McLuhan as “pictographic” is an oversimplification (see Sampson, 2016, especially p. 27). Nevertheless, McLuhan's arguments rest mainly on the recognition that the alphabet represents a fairly radical departure from writing systems that are to a large extent grounded in iconicity.

of expression that is somehow more comparable to embodied face-to-face communication. A similar perspective, with some potential for understanding the possible trajectory of writing practices in social media, emerges in how Derrida tends to discuss nonphonetic writing. Throughout commentaries on Rousseau, Freud, and others, he notes in several places that nonphonetic writing has historically been attributed more of the presence and immediacy of speech than has the abstracted phonetic signifier (Derrida, 1967a/2016, 1967b/2001). For example, for Rousseau, “[h]ieroglyphic language is an impassioned language” which captures “the proximity and rapidity of the gesture and the glance” (Derrida, 1967a/2016, pp. 258–259). The hieroglyph becomes a metaphor that makes evident how writing does not necessarily have to be the medium of dispassionate, abstracted, verbal–propositional reason, but can also be an embodied “gesture which speaks before words” (Derrida, 1967a/2016, p. 258). Hieroglyphics is also the metaphor chosen by Artaud, who believed that genuinely expressive form of theater could only be underpinned by a “genuine physical” form of writing, written in gestural signs rather than words (Artaud, 1938/1958, p. 124). To Artaud’s artistic conception of expressive writing, “the spirit of the most ancient hieroglyphs” could serve as the foundation of a “pure theatrical language” (Artaud, 1938/1958, p. 124; cf. Derrida, 1967b/2001, pp. 240–241). In his reading of Artaud, Derrida contrasts this hieroglyphic spirit with the abstract *logos* represented by phonetic writing. Derrida’s ironic point is that while it is phonetic writing that assigns primacy to speech, the presence of speech finds a better peer in the full-bodied “writing made flesh” of the nonphonetic “theatrical hieroglyphic” (Derrida, 1967b/2001, p. 242).

While this foray into the metaphor of theatrical hieroglyphics may seem somewhat arcane, Chapter 5, especially Sections 5.3.2–5.3.3, argues that this metaphor can be constructively applied in drawing out the wider-ranging implications of several particular practices examined in the case studies. Alphabetic literacy entails an abstraction of the written sign, in the sense that the letters making up a word are meaningless apart from the abstract function of making the reader recall the sounds or words that they symbolically represent. More generally, as Wysocki (2004, p. 125) emphasizes, while some specialized text types (for example, a children’s picture book) may bring attention to their visual surface, “the visual presentation of an academic or literary page is generally supposed

to efface itself.” That is, readers are in some sense not even supposed to notice that they are attending to a visual surface, but are rather supposed to read between the lines – to attend to the ‘ideas’ beyond the page, be they an imaginary narrative or an academic argument. In the light of the conceptualizations of nonphonetic writing outlined in the present section, Chapter 5 discusses several ways in which talk-like tweeting achieves its effects by shifting attention to the written surface itself.

3.3 The spokenness of written CMC

This section outlines a tradition in CMC research from the 1980s until the time of this writing of scholars debating whether and how to construe CMC in relation to spoken and written discourse. The aim is to outline the central findings and debates in the literature that have informed this dissertation project. Therefore, this survey focuses especially on CMC research that concerns spoken–written hybridity, face-to-face analogues, and the idea that CMC writing is representational of, and possibly inferior to, the ‘fullness’ of spoken, face-to-face interaction. Section 3.3.2 narrows the focus specifically to discussions of nonverbal features in CMC writing, and Section 3.3.3 surveys the literature on the conversationality of Twitter.

3.3.1. CMC as written speech

Given that the distinction between speech and writing has been of such importance to the study of language and communication, it is not surprising that scholars have taken an interest in how that distinction is complicated by the forms that writing has taken in computer-mediated communication. In various ways, scholars of CMC have both reproduced and problematized some of the assumptions about and valorizations of speech and writing. The sense that informal writing online is somehow more like everyday face-to-face conversation than other writing informs, for instance, Herring’s (1996, pp. 155–156) description of CMC as “pre-transcribed” language data, the “greatest boon to the study of language since the invention of the portable tape recorder.” This, Herring suggests, is why linguists should be excited about the emergence of everyday CMC. Her suggestion seems to reproduce the assumption that the study of language is basically the study of speech, and that writing should be of interest to the linguist only insofar as it serves as a proxy for

language as spoken. Given the link between literacy and education (see Section 3.2.2), scholars have also linked the discussion of the spokenness of written CMC with debates concerning illiteracy and linguistic decay or “ruin” (Tagliamonte & Denis, 2008). Thus, for instance, N. S. Baron (2008, p. 46) writes on the topic of instant messaging (IM) that

IM users themselves tend to describe IM as a written version of casual speech. [...] If it really has the characteristics of informal speech, then IM has the potential to chip away at the prescriptive standards of traditional written language. Alternatively, if it turns out that IM embodies relevant traits of more formal written language, then we need not be so quick to panic that the medium is sending writing conventions to the dogs.

Here, Baron seems to accept the presupposition that spokenness entails sending “writing conventions” (if not language itself) “to the dogs.” However, largely, CMC scholars (including Baron) are open-minded about spokenness – they merely question the assumption that CMC is actually very spokenlike on empirical grounds (Baym, 2015, p. 71).

Quite a number of CMC researchers have addressed the assumption that CMC is “written speech” (Maynor, 1994), both to investigate what makes it appear as such and to challenge the assumption (e.g., Arminen et al., 2016; N. S. Baron, 2002; Danet, Ruedenberg-Wright, & Rosenbaum-Tamari, 1997; Ferrara, Brunner, & Whitemore, 1991; Hård af Segerstad, 2003; Ling & Baron, 2007). Typical features that are taken to make written CMC more spokenlike include synchronicity, stylistic informality, phatic and emotive pragmatic message functions, and repertoires that may be taken to represent pronunciation, prosody, or other nonverbal or paralinguistic aspects of communication (Baym, 2015; Herring, 2007; Tagg & Seargeant, 2014). Many scholars have been influenced by the continuum view of spoken–written variation (see Section 3.1.2). Thus, there have been attempts to position CMC in general or particular CMC platforms in the spoken–written continuum, while also often commenting on the over-simplicity of such a model (see Crystal, 2006; Johanyak, 1997; Jonsson, 2013; Kloučková, 2012). Koch and Oesterreicher (1985, 1994) were early in proposing a more complex continuum model. Their model complements the continuum between oral/proximal and written/distal with a perpendicular phonic–graphic dimension. The oral–written dimension is “conceptual” whereas the phonic–graphic dimension is “medial” (cf. Dürscheid & Frehner, 2013, p. 46). Koch and Oesterreicher’s framework does not appear to be widely influential outside of the German-speaking scholarly community.

However, their idea of an intersection between conceptual and medial spokenness/writtenness is an influence on the approach taken in this dissertation.

As noted in Chapter 1, some scholars have also suggested that it is important to investigate online linguistic and interactional practices in their own right without necessarily starting from the assumption that the speech–writing interface is analytically relevant. Arminen et al. (2016, p. 12) specifically argue this case from a broadly ethnomethodological perspective, suggesting that it is inappropriate to take face-to-face interaction as a given standard of comparison or frame of reference for analysis of mediated interaction when it might not be so for the discourse participants themselves. That argument, of course, presumes that the discourse participants’ understandings of what they do should have analytical priority, as is typical in ethnomethodological frameworks such as conversation analysis (Schegloff, 1997). However, arguments against comparing features of online interaction to features of face-to-face speech can also be framed simply in terms of what is considered to be analytically productive from the scholar’s perspective.¹⁸ Darics (2013), for instance, argues convincingly against the assumption that letter repetition in written CMC represents pronunciation, which may preclude the precise investigation of the local, situated functions of instances of letter repetition. Similarly, simply understanding emoticons as substitutes for facial expressions may be to ignore more specific and important functions. In that vein, Harper and Savat (2016, pp. 35–36) propose that emoticons and emoji should be analyzed not in terms of whether or how well they imitate something else, but rather as Deleuzian “image machines” which should be understood specifically for what they *do* rather than what they represent.

Baym (2015) succinctly expresses what may currently be the most common perspective among scholars of CMC and mediated interaction when it comes to direct comparisons between face-to-face settings and digital settings. She notes that “[w]e need conceptual tools to

¹⁸ Further, Page, Barton, Unger, and Zappavigna (2014, pp. 27–28) associate the spoken–written distinction with “more traditional” as opposed to more “progressive” understandings of language, which suggests that analyzing interaction in new mediated settings in such terms may increasingly be perceived as irrelevant in relation to contemporary frameworks of language-in-interaction.

differentiate media from one another and from face-to-face [...] communication. We also need concepts to help us recognize the diversity amongst what may seem to be just one technology” (Baym, 2015, pp. 6–7). She proposes seven concepts that can be used to compare media, namely *interactivity*, *temporal structure*, *social cues*, *storage*, *replicability*, *reach*, and *mobility*. In these regards, face-to-face interaction is highly interactive, characterized by synchronic temporal structure, rich in multimodal social cues, ephemeral rather than stored, never exactly replicable (other than through reductive recording), has limited reach, and is mobile only to the extent that interactants can move together (Baym, 2015, p. 12). Other media may be more or less like face-to-face interaction on any of those dimensions. From a linguistic perspective, what is conspicuously absent from Baym’s seven concepts is differentiation based on the form and content of utterances, which is what is in focus in most of the case studies in this dissertation. However, most of Baym’s categories – specifically, interactivity, temporal structure, social cues, storage, and replicability – are alluded to throughout Chapter 5 as part of the broadened contextualization of the case studies.

3.3.2 Nonverbal features

One of the most obvious ways in which prototypical speech differs from prototypical writing is in how the former is elaborately nonverbal, that is, in how the words of spoken utterances are supplemented by qualities of voice, facial expressions, gestures, and other dimensions of nonverbal communication.¹⁹ Among others, Walther (2005) has argued that the integration of verbal and nonverbal cues is central to “relational communication” in face-to-face interaction, and may therefore be so in CMC settings as well (see also Baym, 2015, pp. 57–63; Knapp, Hall, & Horgan, 2013, p. 4). Accordingly, one of the obvious ways in which CMC can be considered to exhibit spokenness is through features such as emoticons and emoji, and various strategies for achieving expressivity

¹⁹ *Verbal* is an ambiguous term, but should here be understood as referring to words and word meanings; *nonverbal*, correspondingly, refers to parts of utterances or aspects of utterance meaning that are not words – gestures, prosody, gaze, proxemics, etc. (cf. Knapp et al., 2013). The verbal–nonverbal dichotomy can of course be problematized (see Streeck, Goodwin, & LeBaron, 2011), but is arguably quite useful for characterizing many emergent textual strategies in CMC.

through punctuation, orthography, and other (typo-)graphical modulation of messages (Carter, 2003; L. D. Rosen, Chang, Erwin, Carrier, & Cheever, 2010; Tagliamonte & Denis, 2008). Phonetic respelling strategies (Tagg, 2011) are an especially compelling case in point when it comes to notions of spokenlike writing.

Interest in CMC “paralanguage” dates back at least to the early CMC research of the 1980s (Carey, 1980). Since then, views have varied on the extent to which there is parallelism between nonverbal CMC features and nonverbal cues in face-to-face interaction (Darics, 2013). It is nevertheless still common to view such features as “correlates of vocal and visual nonverbal behaviors” (Tolins & Samermit, 2016, p. 77). The idea may be, straightforwardly, that a given emoticon represents a particular facial expression or that a given spelling represents a way of pronouncing a word. However, such features may also be seen in a more general sense as ‘filling the void’ left by the absence of the nonverbal cues of face-to-face interaction – what N. S. Baron (2009) refers to as the “myth of the impoverished signal” (cf. also Maybin & Swann, 2006; Riva, 2002; Rojas, Kirschenmann, & Wolpers, 2012; Walther & Addario, 2001).

While the ‘impoverished signal’ – also known as the ‘cues filtered out’ approach – is out of fashion as an explanatory theory of features such as emoticons (N. S. Baron, 2009; Baym, 2015, pp. 63–64), the notion of writing as inadequate on its own is still alive in CMC research at the moment of this writing. Consider for instance the following framing of emoji from Danesi (2017, p. 75) :

While alphabetic writing also involves the use of visual-graphic elements, such as punctuation marks, it is the inability of written text, in the majority of instances, to align the symbols with a specific tone or intended interpretation, with the constant danger of intended meaning not being apprehended, that makes the emoji system a powerful one, overcoming the inadequacies of phonetic writing in this domain.

Danesi cites reports from focus group subjects suggesting that some habitual CMC users – at least upon elicitation – consider disambiguation to be a key function of emoji. Similarly, in an analysis of the use of animated GIF images as enactments in text message exchanges, Tolins and Samermit (2016, p. 89) conclude that in sending GIFs depicting particular bodily behaviors, interactants in text message exchanges “use the bodies of others” to make up for the impossibility of “demonstrating

these behaviors through their own bodies.” Thus, their analysis is that this emergent CMC practice makes up for a cue deficit, hovering on the verge of the simplistic “spoken language fallacy” that N. S. Baron (2009) criticizes. More precisely, however, Tolins and Samermit (2016, p. 75) argue that the use of written CMC formats that “limit copresence and restrict nonverbal communicative channels,” for the purpose of everyday interaction, forms a pressure to develop novel multimodal practices. Such practices both “mirror face-to-face dialogue and extend beyond it.” The view of nonverbal cues in CMC proposed in this dissertation largely accords with this view. Features such as emoji permit a richness of expressivity that meaningfully expands the repertoire of CMC contexts such as Twitter. However, one may ask whether this expansion of repertoire necessarily makes up for an “inability” or overcomes an “inadequacy.” The discussion in Section 5.3.3 picks up this thread to problematize the issue beyond what was possible within the scope of the case studies themselves.

3.3.3 The spokenness of Twitter

Very little scholarship explicitly addresses the spokenness of Twitter. Further, when the topic is addressed, it tends to be specifically in terms of *conversationality*. Honeycutt and Herring (2009), in a study conducted during the time that Twitter was just emerging as a major presence on the public scene, noted that even though Twitter’s user interface was not optimally designed for direct interaction, the platform permitted interaction akin to instant messaging. Dyadic interactions occurred in their data, and the obvious feature affording such interaction was the @-addressivity device. Honeycutt and Herring (2009, p. 9) thus construed Twitter as a platform that presents some obstacles to direct conversation for its users, but is nevertheless appropriated for conversation by many of those users. More recently, Twitter features such as hashtags and retweeting have been discussed in terms of their “conversational aspects” (boyd, Golder, & Lotan, 2010) and how they enable “conversational style” (Scott, 2015). These features have also been discussed in terms of somewhat more general notions of interpersonally oriented interactivity and the dialogic comingling of voices (Gruber, 2017; Zappavigna, 2012). Gillen and Merchant (2013) also address the dialogicity of Twitter, from the autoethnographic perspective of two academic Twitter users.

De Cock and Roginsky (2016) suggest that while Twitter presents itself as a platform for conversation (for instance via the slogan “Join the conversation!” – cf. Chapter 2), it is in practice seldom used as such (cf. Page, 2012b). De Cock and Roginsky discuss the affordances of Twitter in relation to several definitions of “conversation” from the fields of communication studies and linguistics. They include a consideration of retweeting and ‘liking’ as potentially conversational actions, depending on definition. In their empirical material, they found that initial tweets seldom contained features that directly invited reactions, and that reactions, such as replies, seldom yielded prolonged interaction. Instead, they suggest that the features that afford conversation are more often used for self-presentation. However, the initial tweets in question were posted by professional politicians (specifically, members of the European Parliament). De Cock and Roginsky’s (2016) study is therefore valuable in terms of addressing a popular assumption that Twitter promotes democracy by enabling direct interaction between politicians and their constituents, but does not necessarily say much about the conversationality of Twitter overall. Their results may be compared to Page’s (2012b, p. 191) findings in relation to hashtags related to “national events,” which she notes are of questionable “conversationality”:

[A]lthough these tags give prominence to the participatory potential of Twitter, they still position the commentators as an audience which consumes and responds to content created by others, rather than as producers [...]. (Page, 2012b, p. 191)

Papacharissi (2015, pp. 24–25) construes Twitter as a “third place,” akin to a public house, café, or a kind of modern *agora*, or public square (cf. Section 2.1.2 in this dissertation). Papacharissi’s focus is broadly on the political and social implications of Twitter as one of the new, digital “affective publics,” and frames Twitter as exhibiting digital orality in a narrative sense. In setting out the implications of her analysis of affectively charged movements, often based around hashtags such as *#egypt* (Egyptian revolution of 2011) or *#ows* (“Occupy Wall Street”), she argues that media such as Twitter “present ways for individuals to claim semantic agency by telling their own story” (Papacharissi, 2015, p. 135). She concludes her exploration of Twitter and other affective publics by invoking Ong’s (1982/2012) notion of orality (cf. Bounegru, 2008):

The orality of storytelling has evolved from being primary and interpersonally motivated to secondary and print oriented to digital. The

evolution of oralities and their respective interfaces for telling stories generate their own literacies, which further include and exclude storytellers and their stories. For students of evolving oralities, every artifact tells a story – if one knows how to read it. (Papacharissi, 2015, p. 136)

In another study assessing the conversationality of Twitter, McArthur and White (2016) analyze activity in “Twitter chats” based around specific hashtags such as *#foodiechat*. Like Papacharissi, McArthur and White also invoke the notion of “third places,” though they focus on a specific type of chat stream on Twitter such as that of *#foodiechat*. They note that unlike Twitter activity at many other types of hashtags, the specific tags that they focused on were clearly the site of synchronous, real-time, interaction, and therefore more directly conversational.

As this brief survey shows, there has been some research addressing the conversationality of Twitter. This research has focused on whether direct conversational interaction occurs, and various aspects of what the character of such interaction is, for instance in relation to concepts of oral narrativity. On the whole, research on Twitter’s conversationality to date suggests that Twitter may primarily be a medium for indirect or “ambient” interaction (Zappavigna, 2011, 2015), and only to a limited extent for more directly conversational interaction. Nevertheless, or perhaps for this very reason, Twitter may appear as a good case in point of what Baym (2015, p. 72) refers to as the “specter of a new language form, neither spoken nor written yet both.” Thus, while some CMC scholars have been hesitant about the value of comparing emergent modes of discourse to more traditional notions of speech and writing, it can be argued that “the multimodal turn of discourse analysis has raised questions about the meaning potential of different material resources and mediations, and thus made ‘spoken’ and ‘written’ relevant factors again, but from a new perspective” (Karlsson & Makkonen-Craig, 2014, p. 5). This dissertation project, then, argues for the utility of perspectivizing the spokenness of online writing in relation to several types of frameworks. The discussion in Chapter 5 elaborates on how the case studies in this dissertation complement previous research on the conversationality of Twitter by addressing the wider range of aspects of speech and writing that have been introduced in the present chapter. Before that, Chapter 4 outlines and discusses the methods and materials of the case studies.

4. Methods and materials

The present chapter outlines and discusses the overall methodological considerations that have informed this dissertation project. The individual case studies were methodologically developed separately from one another, both in terms of initial conception relative to their respective aims, and in terms of the processes of adjustment that the manuscripts underwent in being prepared for their publication venues and in response to peer review and editorial suggestions. However, there is substantial methodological overlap across the case studies. In its broadest outline, this project can be described as ‘text hermeneutic’ or ‘text analytic’ (R. Johnson, Chambers, Raghuram, & Tincknell, 2004; Seebohm, 2007), in that the methods of the case studies boil down to the process of delimiting selections of texts and producing ‘readings’ of these texts in relation to questions of broader cultural and theoretical interest. However, the case studies do draw more specific influences from certain fields within discourse analysis and linguistics. The project is situated within what Herring (2004) terms Computer-Mediated Discourse Analysis (CMDA). To be more precise, the four case studies combine methods from corpus linguistics, pragmatics, and microanalysis of online data (MOOD, an emerging field drawing inspiration from ethnomethodological conversation analysis, EMCA; see Giles et al., 2015, 2017).

CMDA encompasses “all kinds of interpersonal communication carried out on the Internet” (Androutsopoulos & Beißwenger, 2008, p. 1). It is not a theory, nor precisely a method, but rather an umbrella for a number of approaches to CMC that share features in common. Herring notes that CMDA “adapts methods from the study of spoken and written discourse to computer-mediated communication data” (Herring, 2007, p. 4), which does not necessarily presuppose that any given type of CMC is like or derivative of speech or writing. Whether the methodological influence comes from linguistics, communication studies or rhetoric, the core focus of CMDA is the analysis of “log data” of verbal interaction, or the analysis of human behavior in online settings via “textual observations” (Herring, 2004, p. 339). In introducing the notion of CMDA, one of Herring’s purposes was to encourage scholars to make use of the unique opportunities that CMC log data provide to researchers (2004, p. 340). CMC resources such as Twitter provide a ready-made,

searchable archive of naturally occurring language use, enabling lines of inquiry that would have been difficult if not impossible to make empirically investigable before. As the following section outlines, the case studies utilize this archive in various ways.

In what follows, the case studies are referred to as CS1–CS4, in chronological order of publication (see Table 4.1). The case studies are summarized in Section 5.1 and discussed in Sections 5.2 and 5.3.

Table 4.1. Overview of the case studies

<i>Abbreviation</i>	<i>Citation</i>	<i>Title</i>
CS1	Wikström 2014a	#srynotfunny. Communicative functions of hashtags on Twitter
CS2	Wikström 2014b	& she was like “O_O”: Animation of reported speech on Twitter
CS3	Wikström 2016a	when I need/want to: Normativity, identity, and form in user construals of “talk-like” tweeting
CS4	Wikström (under review)	(en-)acting out: Twitter’s affordances for animating reported speech

Section 4.1 describes the empirical materials of the case studies. Section 4.2 introduces the over-arching discourse analytic framework of the dissertation, and describes the major analytical considerations of the case studies and the project as a whole. Section 4.3 mentions the main delimitations of the project, and Section 4.4 presents ethical considerations which were important in the process of designing the case studies but could not be substantially addressed in the articles.

4.1 Materials

Much research in linguistic or discourse-centered CMC is “based on small, ad-hoc data sets” (Androutsopoulos & Beißwenger, 2008, p. 1), posing obvious challenges as regards the representativity and generalizability of findings. On the other hand, it has also been common to approach platforms such as Twitter using large-scale computational and “Big Data” approaches, posing challenges such as spurious correlation, decontextualization, and the smoothing out of heterogeneity in naturally ‘messy’ material (boyd & Crawford, 2012; Fan, Han, & Liu,

2014; Gandomi & Haider, 2015; Gerlitz, 2016; Puschmann & Burgess, 2013). An overarching methodological consideration for the present project has been to strike a useful balance between the small and ad hoc and the unsurveyably big. The case studies have been designed to permit some degree of generalization, while mostly prioritizing a qualitative analytical accountability to the particulars of Twitter data at the level of individual utterances.

Table 4.2. Overview of the case study materials

Case study	Description	Source	Time span	Size (N tweets)
CS1	Tweets featuring various types of uses of hashtags	Twitter.com, arbitrary user profiles	Uncontrolled, mainly throughout 2010	1,200
CS2	Sets of tweets containing reported speech in various frames	Twitter.com, advanced search	March, 2011	1,800
CS3	Tweets containing the phrase “tweet/-s like [pronoun] talk/-s” and co-texts	Twitter.com advanced search	March–August, 2014	520
CS4	Instances of quotative BE <i>like</i> .	IllocutionInc. corpus	Throughout 2012	1,000,000 (corpus) 4,312 (retrievals)

It was considered important that the case study materials represent *naturally occurring* Twitter discourse – that is, discourse produced “by online participants for their own purposes” (Herring, 2004, p. 350), as opposed to elicited, solicited, or invented material. Table 4.2 shows an overview of the case study materials. These materials are described in fuller detail further on in this section, as well as in the case studies themselves.

The case studies make use of methods from corpus linguistics for the purpose of material selection and collection. In line with the idea of the web as corpus (Lindquist, 2009, p. 188), CS2 and CS3 used Twitter itself

as a corpus, employing the advanced search interface provided on twitter.com²⁰ to perform exact phrase searches delimited by date. CS4 used a corpus compiled by the group IllocutionInc., which comprised a random sample of one million tweets collected at regular intervals throughout every day of 2012 (IllocutionInc.com, 2013). CS1 is focused on arguing a qualitative case concerning the functional flexibility of the hashtag format, and to this extent relies on a small set of arbitrarily selected examples. CS1 could be called a “corpus-informed” study, using Twitter as a “bank of examples to illustrate a theory” (McEnery & Hardie, 2012, p. 17). For CS2–CS4, the purpose of the corpus-based sampling procedure was to collect sets of material that could reasonably be taken as representative of all occurrences of the targeted phrases on Twitter, while also being small enough for exhaustive qualitative analysis to be possible. The case studies forgo many methodological considerations that are often considered important, especially for quantitative rigor, in corpus linguistics, such as cross-corpus comparability, varietal representativeness, inclusion of generic or sociolinguistic metadata, etc. (see Granath, 2007; Kennedy, 1998; Lindquist, 2009; McEnery & Hardie, 2012). These considerations were ultimately not considered relevant to the fundamentally qualitative aims of the case studies. Pursuant to the case study aims, the materials are meant to provide windows on specific linguistic practices, repertoires, and reflexive orientations to shed qualitative light on how spokenness and writtenness are negotiated and reconfigured in and by Twitter discourse.

CS1 is concerned with various communicative functions of hashtags in Twitter discourse. The study presents analyses of 72 selected tweets out of an initial material of approximately 1,200 tweets, mostly from 2010. The collection process was unsystematic, and can be described as an opportunity or convenience sample (cf. Brady, 2006; Herring, 2004, p. 351). The material was compiled through a combination of browsing arbitrary user timelines, monitoring trending hashtags at various times, and scouting for odd hashtag uses across various contexts. In a few instances, hashtag uses similar to already observed uses but with spelling or wording alternations were manually searched for. A

²⁰ www.twitter.com/search-advanced.

limitation of the study is thus that it is not equipped to say anything about how common the observed types of usage are, or how they might be distributed in Twitter discourse. The focus of the study was to analyze in granular detail how specific instances of use showcase the functional flexibility of the hashtag format, both in terms of how some uses exploit the format's affordances (such as in "hashtag games") and in terms of how some uses subvert the expected use of tagging to index conversational topics or to structure interaction. The main benefit of the arbitrary selection approach was, then, to allow the study to target precisely the types of idiosyncratic uses that a more automated large-scale data approach would be likely to miss.

CS2 presents the analysis of 1,800 tweets containing reported speech. There are 450 tweets for each of the investigated quotatives (SAY, BE *like*, BE *all*, and GO). These sets were collected manually via Twitter's search interface. The most recently posted retrievals (excluding irrelevant, i.e. non-quotative, hits) were collected, with a limitation by end-date, until the desired material size of 1,800 tweets was attained. All retrievals were posted in March of 2011. The purpose of the collection procedure was to enable comparison of frequency of what the study terms *animating features* across the quotatives (as well as grammatical person and quotee gender) while still having a dataset small enough to make it possible to engage qualitatively with every individual tweet. The decision to restrict selection by time was intended to yield what is in effect a randomly representative material without necessitating the cumbersome labor of compiling and subsampling a full corpus. This sampling procedure is not strictly speaking random, but the pseudorandom strategy of sampling backwards from an arbitrarily chosen end date was considered adequate for this study.

CS3 is intended to shed light on how Twitter users themselves enregister their discourse at the speech-writing interface by targeting instances of users' explicit construals of 'talk-like' tweeting. The study presents the analysis of 300 tweets featuring the phrase "tweet/-s like [pronoun] talk/-s" (60 instances for each of the pronouns *I*, *you*, *he*, *she*, and *they*). Seventy out of those instances were parts of conversational reply-chains, and therefore an additional 220 cotextual tweets from those reply chains were also collected, for a total material of 520 tweets. As with CS2, this material was collected using the advanced search interface provided by

Twitter's website, with a limitation by end-date. In this case, the end-date was August 31, 2014. For each of the search strings (i.e., each pronoun), the most recently posted retrievals were collected until the desired quantity had been reached, excluding irrelevant hits (i.e., hits that were manifestly not comparisons of someone's way of tweeting to their way of talking; Wikström, 2016a, p. 56). Thus, as with CS2, the sampling procedure was not strictly random, but was considered sufficiently arbitrary to permit coarse generalization. The inclusion of conversational exchanges was especially valuable in relation to the emic focus of the study, since it made visible instances of users negotiating perspectives across interactional turns.

CS4 was designed to complement CS2. It is restricted in scope to one specific quotative frame, namely BE *like*, but gives a more rigorously representative picture of the use of this quotative frame on Twitter. This was made possible by a corpus provided by the group IllocutionInc. (2013), which enabled an exhaustive and totally accountable (see McEnery & Hardie, 2012, pp. 14–16) procedure. This corpus comprises one million tweets, filtered to contain only English language tweets, from every minute of every day throughout 2012. It was randomly subsampled from a larger, continuous corpus by the group, who also performed the filtering. As noted in CS4, the filtering required at least part of the tweet to contain words from lists of English core vocabulary and common online slang, and yielded a material that is representative of general English use on Twitter, not of any particular variety. In the corpus, there were 4,312 retrievals of the search phrase “BE like,” of which 1,113 instances were judged to be quotative (across 974 unique tweets, since some tweets contained multiple quotatives).²¹ These instances of quotative BE *like*, and especially the subset containing some form of animation of reported speech, constitute the material for the study, which aims to give a representative picture of how Twitter affords such animation.

²¹ All instances of the target phrase were included that could plausibly be interpreted as enquoting whatever followed in the body of the tweet (words, non-lexical typographical material, images, etc.). It was reasoned that the operational definition of quotative *like* needs to be fuzzy and inclusive. As a pragmatic marker, *like* is notoriously flexible in its uses (see Andersen, 1998).

4.2 Analytical considerations

As indicated in the introduction to this chapter, the basic approach to Twitter discourse in this dissertation project is qualitatively text analytic, and thus interpretive. Herring (2004, p. 363) outlines three general levels of interpretation, namely “interpretation close to the data,” “interpretation close to the research question,” and “interpretation beyond the research question.” The four case studies are focused on interpretative analyses close to the materials, with discussions that broaden the scope to address the respective research questions and aims. Chapter 5 discusses the findings in relation to broader concerns that could only be touched upon quite briefly in the case studies themselves. Thus, the intention of this project is to move from close, granular analysis, to implications that extend beyond the specific research questions. The case studies were designed to allow for some degree of generalization while mainly emphasizing a qualitative focus on the details of particular tweets. All four case studies share this analytical approach in order to address the overarching aim of the project.

Around the time that this dissertation project was initiated, large-scale computational and “big data” approaches were in vogue, and much such work on Twitter was published, primarily from disciplines such as computer science and information science (Zimmer & Proferes, 2014). The overall emphasis in the case studies on qualitative analysis was to some extent a reaction to this dominance of large-scale approaches, addressing a gap in the research. Arguably, it is still the case at the time of writing that scholars of language and communication, and discourse analysts in general, are underutilizing Twitter as a resource for granular, microanalytic research.

The case studies employ different constellations of theoretical and analytical frameworks, ranging from quantitative corpus linguistic analysis to speech act theoretical pragmatic analysis and EMCA-oriented microanalysis. The question arises to what extent these frameworks are reconcilable within the scope of one project. In short, the intention of combining these approaches is for the project as a whole to be able to address different aspects of the spokenness of written Twitter discourse also on a methodological level. Specifically, it was considered valuable to combine the focus on linguistic features and their functions in CS1, CS2, and CS4, with the focus on discourse participants’ orientations in CS3.

While the frameworks may, to some extent, be considered theoretically incompatible with one another, they were found to be complementary in terms of yielding analytical findings valuable to the overarching aims of the project. In aggregate, the analyses presented in the case studies serve to explore particular aspects of what talk-likeness, spokenness, or orality come to mean, and how notions of how writing relates to speech are negotiated, in an environment of digital writing. The remainder of this section outlines the specific considerations informing the design of the four case studies.

When work on CS1 was initiated, hashtags were only beginning to be addressed by researchers. Some scholars had begun to consider hashtags as a resource for enabling conversational interaction on Twitter (e.g., Honeycutt & Herring, 2009; Huang, Thornton, & Efthimiadis, 2010), and other scholars were using hashtags as a resource for selecting data and performing content analysis or sentiment analysis in relation to particular topics or public conversations (e.g., Liu, Li, & Guo, 2012; Small, 2011). CS1 addressed hashtags on a different level, as a semiotic resource or as an *element* of interaction rather than a technological *enabler* of interaction. The traditional speech act pragmatic framework proved useful in understanding this novel technological format in CMC, in considering hashtags in a way that other researchers had not. The Gricean framework, especially notions of flouting or exploiting conversational maxims proved useful in analyzing ‘unexpected’ uses of hashtags, in line with the study’s focus on diverse rather than obvious and typical uses of hashtags.²² The description and analysis of hashtag functions was also aided by Searle’s (1969, 1979) notions of illocutionary *point* and *force*, as well as the notion of *face* from politeness theory (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Goffman, 1955). The majority of research on hashtags can, arguably, be said to treat hashtags as metadata rather than data proper, using hashtags to find conversations or target a selection of

²² One qualification may be added regarding the Gricean framework. As Danesi (2017) notes in a discussion of emoji, Grice ultimately considered information exchange to be the point of communication. It is questionable whether the “emotive-rhetorical nuances” (Danesi, 2017, p. 58) of phatic and expressive online language can meaningfully be explained as matters of information transfer. However, the Gricean framework was applied in CS1 as an analytical framework, not as an explanatory theory.

discourse.²³ Thus, analyses have tended to focus on what Twitter users say or feel *about*, for instance, *#Obama* (cf. discussion in Wikström, 2014a, p. 129), rather than on what the Twitter user says or expresses *by means of* the tag on a level of local, situated meaning making. Focusing expressly on the latter is one of the study's major contributions.

CS2 and CS4 focus on strategies for animating reported speech. Unlike CS1, these two case studies do not apply any particular analytical terminology. However, they may be considered broadly pragmatic and microanalytic in their approach. These case studies also include quantitative analysis, though this component of both studies is quite limited. In CS2, it is mainly limited to comparing the frequency of animation across four quotative introducers (validating the hypothesis that the more informal quotatives would more frequently feature animation). In CS4, quantification served to compare the frequency of occurrence of the four basic types of animation identified (lexical, orthographic, typographic, and graphic), enabling the observation that typography is the main resource for animation. Above all else, the studies were qualitatively centered on comparing and contrasting the main 'devices' used for animating instances of reported speech in terms of particular, situated narrative and expressive functions. These two case studies focused also on commenting on the animating strategies in relation to whether they invite being understood as drawing upon or representing face-to-face practices in any salient ways. In relation to the aim of the dissertation, these studies provide good input concerning notions of how writing can 'represent' face-to-face conversation, but also how the strategies go beyond being merely representational. The operationalization of Tannen's (2007) notion of animation as a tool for analyzing the functions of nonverbal and paralinguistic strategies in written CMC may be considered an analytical contribution to the field in its own right (cf. Wikström, 2014b, p. 89). Moreover, the notion of animation was helpful in elucidating some key qualities of digital writing that can make it 'feel' expressively rich. This aspect is further explored at length in Sections 5.3.2 and 5.3.3, in relation to several of the theoretical themes introduced in Chapter 3.

²³ Zappavigna (2015, p. 276) and Zappavigna and Martin (in press) may be cited as recent studies that, while focusing on the hashtag as "social metadata," also recognize other discursive functions.

CS3 was chronologically the last case study to be initiated, inspired by an emergent trend of scholarship on computer-mediated discourse influenced by interaction-oriented approaches to language and communication (Arminen et al., 2016; Herring & Androutsopoulos, 2015). As part of, or in parallel with, this trend, CMC has garnered increasing attention from scholars drawing on ethnomethodological and microanalytic methods from (or inspired by) conversation analysis and discursive psychology (Giles et al., 2015, 2017; Meredith, 2017; Paulus, Warren, & Lester, 2016). In this dissertation, CS3 cannot be said to have a 'core' EMCA aim, since the study does not attempt to say anything about the orderliness and structural organization of conversational interaction on Twitter per se. However, the study has an ethnomethodologically influenced interest in 'member's' own (metalinguistic) understandings (Garfinkel, 1996; Schegloff, 1997), and at least a partial analytical interest in how such understandings are accomplished across interactional turns (in the form of Twitter reply-chains). This approach was found to mesh well with the framework of metalinguistic reflexivity and enregisterment from Agha (2003, 2005). The analytical framework for CS3 was thus one that emphasizes the reflexivity built into everyday language use. The application of that framework to a material of explicit metalinguistic activity was intended to yield a rich source of insight on users' own perspectives, in line with the case study's aim. Further, this approach addresses the dissertation's overarching aim of examining the spokenness of Twitter discourse in the light of participants' as well as theoretical perspectives. While CMC scholars have addressed the general topic of the spokenness of written CMC discourse in various ways, the topic has, to the knowledge of the present author, never been addressed in relation to endogenous, reflexive perspectives and normative negotiations in the manner of this case study (however, cf. Stæhr, 2015). CS3 therefore contributes a particularly novel approach to the topic. The implications of taking discourse participants' perspectives into account are further discussed in Section 5.3.1.

4.3 Delimitations

Several delimitations particular to the case studies are discussed in the respective case studies. This section discusses the major delimitations of the dissertation project as a whole. Arguably, the main delimitation of

this project is the absence of a comparative perspective. Three kinds of comparisons could have been relevant to this project, namely a cross-comparison of registers within Twitter, a comparison to one or more other CMC platforms, and comparisons to spoken language corpora. An early tendency in scholarship to construe all forms of CMC as one single mode was quickly supplanted by an emphasis on distinguishing between different types of CMC and recognizing the various constraints and functions of different platforms (Crystal, 2006; Herring, 2007). The case studies in this dissertation only to a very limited extent include comparisons to types of CMC other than Twitter, in the form of discussions of findings in relation to previous research on, e.g., SMS text messaging and instant messaging contexts. Across the case studies, a focus purely on Twitter discourse was preferred in order to permit more extensive, detail-oriented analyses. More importantly, since this dissertation project is thematically focused on the speech–writing interface, it is certainly a limitation that none of the case studies feature direct empirical comparisons between Twitter discourse and other sources of spoken or written language. However, as is laid out in Chapter 1 and elaborated in Chapter 3, this project is less focused on the descriptive features of particular spoken and written registers than on speech and writing as concepts, on stereotypical speech–writing distinctions, and on endogenous user perspectives. Direct empirical comparisons, for instance along the lines of Jonsson (2013), were not deemed necessary to address the particular aims of this project.

A second major delimitation of this dissertation project is that all of the case studies rely almost exclusively on log data – that is, on tweets alone. In a few instances, the analyses were informed by contextual information or metadata such as profile pictures and biography notes, or the targets of hyperlinks. This was mostly to aid the analysis of tweets that were difficult to interpret, and, in some instances, motivated by analytical relevance. Androutsopoulos (2008) has argued convincingly for the merits of a “discourse centered online ethnography” that fully considers online language use as situated, embodied, social, interactional practice by taking into consideration additional data sources beyond log data, such as observations or interviews. However, the case studies in this project were considered to address their respective aims sufficiently without additional data. In relation to the value of considering participant understandings, it is worth keeping in mind what is

demonstrated by CS3 in this dissertation: Log data alone can yield rich insights on participant perspectives – without any of the problems inherent to researcher intervention or elicitation – if what is targeted are logs of reflexive activity.

This project is restricted in scope to Twitter discourse produced in English, but without regard to national or regional variety. This implies two important delimitations: The materials for this dissertation do not represent any language other than English, nor any particular variety of English. Around the relevant time period (2010–2014), English was clearly the single most popular language on Twitter. Nevertheless, English-language tweets constituted only about 34% of all tweets (Z. Fox, 2013). Thus, it cannot be said that the empirical findings presented in the case studies represent ‘all’ or even ‘most’ of Twitter discourse per se. The reader should bear in mind that all references to Twitter discourse throughout this dissertation, unless otherwise specified, refer to Twitter discourse in English.

As regards variety of English, there are some aspects to consider. Judging by contextual clues and some linguistic features, the materials comprise tweets from the United States, Great Britain, Australia, Nigeria, etc. Judging by occasional instances of language-switching, the materials also include non-native uses of English. The language under study could thus be loosely termed ‘Global Twitter English.’ Impressionistically, the most frequently occurring variety across the case studies is American English. This impression is borne out by the demographics outlined in Chapter 2, which suggest that American Twitter users substantially outnumber other Anglophone groups. However, a platform such as Twitter is intrinsically international, whether considered as an expression of “virtual cosmopolitanism” (McEwan & Sobre-Denton, 2011) or as a product of global capitalism. The global English represented by these materials can arguably be considered an “ecologically valid” representation of Twitter discourse (see Brewer & Crano, 2014). That is, the multivarietal *mélange* of native and non-native uses of English that occur in the materials is in all likelihood a better reflection of what meets the average Anglophone browser of Twitter than selective targeting of one specific variety would be.

The changeable nature of social media warrants a final note in this section. The case study materials date from 2010 to 2014. This means that the case studies represent a slightly different Twitter than the one that was launched in 2006 and, more crucially, the one extant at the time of the publication of this dissertation. From 2012 onwards, Twitter has introduced the possibility of putting line breaks in tweets, introduced and expanded affordances for embedding audio and video, and expanded emoji support in conjunction with releasing their own emoji set, in addition to adding multiple features that deviate from the platform's original focus on timelines organized in strictly chronological order (Gibbs, 2015; Mangalindan, 2015; Newton, 2014; B. Popper, 2012). In 2017, as compared to 2010, the typical Twitter feed is much less purely textual and typographic, and instead more multimodal, with an added emphasis on pictures and video. These differences are not radical, and do not make the case studies irrelevant to Twitter as it looks at the time of writing. However, the reader needs to bear this aspect in mind to have a good sense of the precise circumstances that the materials reflect.

4.4 Ethical considerations: Unwilling participants or uncredited authors?

Ethics has emerged as a problematic dimension of social media scholarship generally, and Twitter research specifically, due to an absence of standards and certain ambiguities inherent to the domain (Fuchs, 2017; Zimmer & Proferes, 2014). While it was decided that the present project did not require a full ethical review process,²⁴ ethical concerns raised in CMC and social media literature have been considered throughout. Two central conflicts inform the discussion in this section. First, inherent to social media settings such as Twitter, there is an erosion of the public-private boundary (Marwick & boyd, 2011; McArthur & White, 2016). While “more than ever, data are widely accessible, visible and searchable” (Spilioti et al., 2016, p. 163), standards of ethics for online research are yet to solidify, and it is difficult to calibrate ethical intuitions. This is perhaps especially the case when it comes to the casual, everyday Twitter activity of users who are

²⁴ This decision was made based on Swedish law and standard research ethical practice (see www.epn.se).

not celebrities, politicians, or other types of public figures. To retrieve and read the tweets of random strangers may seem akin to browsing the postings on a public noticeboard, but it can also be likened to overhearing fragments of a conversation as one walks along a public square. This tension informs the second conflict, namely, whether it is more appropriate to consider Twitter users to be authors of texts, who are entitled to be credited, or to be ‘research participants’ whose identities should be protected (cf. Giles et al., 2015, p. 47; Örnberg Berglund, 2009, p. 48).

In the case of both these conflicts, it is not clear which intuition is more ethically sound, nor which corresponds better to how the average Twitter user is likely to think about their own postings. Further, it has been noted by many that digital text, in its replicability and hypertextuality, challenges both the appropriacy and practicability of the modern paradigm of intellectual property and copyright (Heim, 1999; Landow, 2006, pp. 367–368; Lessig, 2004; Örnberg Berglund, 2009, p. 48). Diverse and conflicting views are likely to be held among both discourse participants and observers. It may be noted in passing that the ambiguity outlined here in itself activates the question of the spokenness or writtenness of Twitter discourse: Neither the scholarly community nor the culture at large seems quite ready to decide whether a CMC interactant, such as a Twitter user, is an author of publications, or an everyday conversationalist who deserves not to have their talk listened in on (cf. Herring, 1996; Markham & Buchanan, 2012; Sormanen & Lauk, 2016).²⁵

A user of Twitter, in signing up and posting on the platform, agrees to the platform’s terms of service (Twitter, 2017a). It has been argued that such terms, among other factors, permit a researcher to assume “implicit informed consent” on behalf of the users (Bartlett & Reynolds, 2015, p. 81). Over the years that this dissertation project was conducted, the

²⁵ An additional ethical complication results from how the intention to respect the privacy of individuals can conflict with the academic freedom to criticize (see also Fuchs, 2017, p. 59; Herring, 1996, p. 154). Thus, beyond the question of whether online interactants themselves think of their discourse as public or private, there is the question of whether the researcher *should* respect such understandings. Herring (1996) calls the ethical model that gives priority to participants’ preferences a “consensus model,” and points out that indiscriminate insistence on such a model makes certain forms of research, for instance Critical Discourse Analysis, impossible.

Twitter terms of service changed somewhat, but more so in relation to presentation than substance. For instance, the 2016 revision of the terms of service was intended to simplify the terms and making it more clear to users what is public and what is not (Cohen, 2016). In the rhetoric at the time of writing, the user “should only provide Content that [they] are comfortable sharing with others” (Twitter, 2017a capitalization in original). Throughout the period that the case studies were conducted, the exact phrasing varied, but always made it explicitly clear to users that posting public tweets has consequences as regards how tweets may be accessed, shared, and recontextualized.

Throughout this dissertation project, several strategies for dealing with the concerns outlined above were considered. One option is simply not to reproduce specific tweets or identifiable stretches of text. Paraphrase and summary would obviate privacy concerns. However, in the case studies, the basic unit of analysis is the individual tweet, and the fundamental approach is granular, qualitative analysis. Therefore, it was considered necessary to reproduce actual examples – and as many of them as possible – both for the purpose of pedagogical illustration and for inviting critical scrutiny of the analyses. Usernames and personal names were anonymized, though most of the tweets reproduced as examples could still potentially be retrieved through exact phrase searches (Zimmer & Proferes, 2014, p. 258). Anonymization was intended to constitute at least a gesture of respect for the privacy of the posters of tweets, but perhaps more importantly for other people talked about or mentioned in the materials (cf. Carr, 2013, pp. 188–189; McEnery & Hardie, 2012, p. 62). Exceptions to anonymization were made for public figures, such as television celebrities or users with “verified” status (cf. Herring, 1996).²⁶ At face value, it is more likely that public figures should be more aware that their posts might travel across contexts. Further, they may be more desirous of recognition or credit for their published material than the average user. As Herring also notes (1996, p. 157), the “banality” (perhaps more precisely termed ‘innocuousness’) of the discourse is also a factor. That is, the topics treated and stories told in the type of discourse investigated here are often so low-stakes and quotidian, and related in such an indirect and

²⁶ “Verified status” means that Twitter staff have authenticated the identity of the owner of a user account. Verification prevents the impersonation of politicians, celebrities, etc.

fragmentary fashion, that it seems unlikely for their reproduction out of context to cause harm to the people involved. In the process of analyzing the materials of the case studies, and especially in selecting examples for presentation, there were continuous efforts to assess whether the reproduction of any given tweet could potentially pose some risk for the author (cf. Bartlett et al., 2014, p. 37).

Finally, users may change their minds about what they wish to make public, may desire a fresh start, or may wish to abandon Twitter entirely. Thus, a tweet that was posted publicly in 2012 may at the time of writing have been hidden or removed. In general, it is probably a good thing for the users that social media tend to offer such options. However, needless to say, the publications represented by this dissertation cannot be retrospectively modified to accommodate such changes. Twitter, as a living archive of text, is ever changing, but a scholarly publication cannot be. Anonymization helps ameliorate this problem: If a user chooses to delete their tweets in the future, anonymization in these publications will help ensure that there is no record tying their name to the subsequently deleted post.

In sum, the approach throughout the case studies has been to reproduce authentic examples as collected (with some reconstruction required, e.g., when it came to emoji in the case of CS4) but with anonymization of usernames and personal names in most cases. There is no evident risk of harm to any of the Twitter users that appear in the case studies as a result of this publication.

5. Presentation and discussion of case studies

This dissertation project compiles four case studies on detailed aspects of naturally occurring Twitter discourse. The findings resonate with both old and new questions concerning the forms, functions, and concepts of spoken and written discourse. The communicative activities of Twitter users, in addition to serving particular, local interactional purposes, also reflect and negotiate matters of language normativity. This chapter focuses on tracing the main connections between the Twitter discourse investigated in the case studies and such themes in empirical and theoretical scholarship on speech and writing, as introduced in Chapter 3. Such connections are not necessarily intended by the discourse participants: The Twitter user that employs a notion of ‘voice’ to substantiate a suspicion about the authorship of another user’s tweet is almost certainly not intentionally going into dialogue with a Socratic critique of “deceitful” writing (D. Baron, 2009, pp. 3–5), and the Twitter user that dissociates voice from presence is similarly, presumably, not intentionally channeling Derrida (e.g., 1967a/2016). However, these users are not manifesting such orientations in a vacuum, but rather in the context of a culture where current doubts about the authenticity of mediated identities trace a rich lineage back through history. These are concerns linked to notions of speech and writing, to linguistic mediation and representation, at least since the time of Plato.

While the case studies in this dissertation have independent aims, they all address the notion of the spokenness of Twitter discourse in some way. CS1 examines uses and functions of Twitter’s hashtag format in an analytical framework tailored for everyday conversational interaction. CS1 further argues that several of the examined uses of hashtags serve pragmatic functions analogous to the functions of nonverbal cues in CMC as well as face-to-face interaction. CS2 and CS4, instead of targeting a format that is unique to typewritten hypertext (as hashtags are), focus on a format that is typically associated with informal spoken discourse, namely reported speech. CS3 shifts analytical focus from the spokenness of particular forms or repertoires to endogenous perspectives on the talk-likeness of Twitter discourse, as they are expressed in metalinguistic activity by Twitter users themselves.

This chapter begins with a summary of the case studies in Section 5.1. Section 5.2 discusses how observations from the case studies might position Twitter discourse in relation to the contrastive characteristics of speech and writing that were introduced in Chapter 3 (Section 3.1). Finally, Section 5.3 presents a more detailed discussion of the selected themes introduced in Chapter 3, and focuses on extrapolating from the particular findings of the case studies in order to draw implications for understanding how Twitter remediates and reconfigures speech and writing.

5.1 Summaries of the case studies

The following subsections, 5.1.1–5.1.4, summarize the four case studies (CS1–CS4). The case studies are presented and numbered in chronological order of publication.

5.1.1 CS1. “#srynotfunny: Communicative functions of hashtags on Twitter” (Wikström 2014a)

CS1 was conceptualized and conducted as an open-ended investigation of communicative functions served by hashtags in Twitter discourse. The study aimed to contribute to the, at the time quite limited, research on hashtags with attention to the functional variety of the hashtag format through qualitative analysis of particular uses. Hashtags are hyperlinks formed through prefixing a string of letters, e.g., a word, with a hash symbol (#). This hyperlink leads to a timeline of all tweets containing that same tag. As CS1 was carried out, hashtags had already been observed to facilitate conversational interaction (Huang et al., 2010), as well as topic marking and searchability (Zappavigna, 2012). These functions are clearly salient affordances of the hashtag as a hyperlinking format, though CS1 aimed also to include and analyze instances where the technological function of the hashtag was less salient or even irrelevant. On a methodological level, the study aimed to assess the applicability of a traditional speech act theoretical framework for the purpose of understanding a novel feature of a new medium. The material for the study was a convenience sample of approximately 1,200 tweets (see Section 4.1). After cursory analysis of the initial material, a smaller subset of tweets representing a range of different functions of hashtag usage was examined in detail, in a speech-act theoretical framework,

resulting in the presentation of 72 illustrative examples across eight types of functions. These functions do not constitute a typology, and are not mutually exclusive, but rather serve to illustrate the breadth and flexibility of functions of hashtags across particular situations of use. In the material, hashtags were found to be employed not only for topic marking and the organization of multi-user interaction (functions discussed under the rubrics of topic tagging and hashtag games), but also to typographically mark and separate meta-comments and parenthetical additions, to mark particular words or phrases for emphasis, and to mark 'emotes' in a manner similar to asterisked prompts such as **laughs**. Hashtags also served as a locus in the body of a tweet for self-referential or metalinguistic playfulness, and for adding references to pop culture or memes, as well as delivering punchlines to jokes. A central analytical point is that some uses of hashtags plainly forgo the structurally intended purpose of tagging, the hyperlinking function, indicating that Twitter users are, in a sense, appropriating the hashtag format for their local ad hoc communicative aims without regard for the "expected" functionality of the format (Wikström, 2014a, p. 150). The hashtag uses examined in the study thus frequently exploit or flout the Gricean conversational maxims (Grice, 1975). The speech act theoretical framework permitted fruitful interpretation of the functions of a diverse set of uses of hashtags. To that extent, the study suggests that even novel technologically mediated formats can be, and perhaps even require to be, understood within an already established logic of everyday talk as situated in interaction. Twitter users employ the hashtag format with flexibility and creativity to clarify or change utterance force, to hedge or disclaim undesired implicature, to manage face, and so forth, sometimes in ways reminiscent of nonverbal cues in face-to-face conversation.

5.1.2 CS2. "*& she was like 'O_O': Animation of reported speech on Twitter*" (Wikström, 2014b)

CS2 addresses the spokenness of Twitter discourse through examining pragmatic aspects of reported speech in tweets. Specifically, CS2 presents analyses of speech reports framed by SAY, BE *like*, BE *all*, and GO. The first of these quotatives, SAY, is a standard and neutral option for verbal speech reports across spoken and written, as well as formal and informal, contexts. It therefore serves as a ground of comparison for use

of the latter three quotatives, which are in particular tied to informal conversational speech and stigmatized in some contexts. CS2 employs an analytical framework derived from Tannen's (2007) notion of *constructed dialogue*, with a special focus on how such constructed dialogue is *animated* through various performative strategies. In CS2, instances of reported speech were considered animated if they featured non-lexical items, nonverbal elements, typographical elements, non-standard spelling strategies, or style shifts that clearly add an expressive dimension to the report. This last criterion (the addition of an expressive dimension) is both important and problematic. A typographical error is not a form of animation, whereas a respelling that suggests a particular pronunciation, or even a nonsense string of letters that suggests an agitated emotional state, is. However, it is an analytical challenge to determine the difference in some cases. In a material of 1,800 tweets (450 per quotative frame), the study found that instances of SAY were animated 22.5% of the time, whereas instances of the "non-traditional" quotatives were animated approximately 60% of the time. CS2 concludes that the various animation strategies show how Twitter users can, and do, employ CMC resources to enable a kind of playful and emotive expressivity. While there are important modal differences, this expressivity is meaningfully reminiscent of the rich multimodal animation of reported speech in face-to-face contexts.

5.1.3 CS3. "when I need/want to: Normativity and identity in user construals of 'talk-like' tweeting" (Wikström, 2016a)

CS3 addresses the notion of spokenness from a different vantage point relative to the other case studies, namely in terms of discourse participants' perspectives. Specifically, the aim of CS3 was to shed light on Twitter users' own understandings of talk-like tweeting. To this end, the study presents analyses in a framework inspired by Agha's (2005, 2007) notions of metalinguistic reflexivity and enregisterment as well as EMCA-inspired microanalysis of online data (Giles et al., 2015). The empirical material of the study is a collection of 300 tweets that feature users explicitly comparing someone's Twitter activity to how they talk, specifically in the frame "tweet/-s like [pronoun] talk/-s." The material comprises a further 220 conversational cotexts; see Section 4.2. The analyses focus on how these users, either in the body of individual tweets or throughout a conversational reply-chain, elaborate on or substantiate

notions of talk-like tweeting. The study found that formal linguistic features are only made relevant to a very limited extent, for instance in references to spelling, grammar, and lexical choices. Users also made relevant notions of both personal identity and social group membership. What above all else characterizes the construals of talk-like tweeting is the enforcing or negotiation of linguistic norms. Several users associate talk-likeness with poor spelling and grammar, enforcing a traditional literacy norm in the context of Twitter, whereas other users orient to such a norm as irrelevant or optional. Some users approve of talk-like tweeting, associating it with authentic self-expression, whereas others construe it as ignorant or annoying. There were also evaluations, at times depreciative, of how some group supposedly talks, and associations between the idea of talk-like tweeting and identity stereotypes (for instance concerning how “teenage girls” talk). On a case-by-case basis, the situated functions of these comparisons of tweeting to talking range in function from policing style to performing social identity. As CS3 argues, the various construals of talk-like tweeting show how Twitter users enregister the platform: They negotiate the boundaries of appropriate linguistic form and self-expression at the intersection of various normative notions of talk – and notions of how writing should and should not correspond to talk – on Twitter.

5.1.4 CS4. “(en-)acting out: Twitter’s affordances for animation of reported speech” (Wikström, under review)

CS4, like CS2, concerns reported speech in Twitter discourse. CS4 focuses on reports framed with BE *like* specifically, in order to enable more in-depth analysis of how these reports are animated. CS4 was designed to complement CS2 in several ways. First, CS4 gives a more representative picture of the use of this particular quotative on Twitter (see Section 4.1). Second, CS4 makes the notion of ‘animation’ in a typewritten context a more rigorous construct than in CS2 by using more elaborate and specific coding criteria and enlisting multiple coders. CS4 also specified the notion of animation in relation to the concept of *affordance* (see Section 2.2), focusing analytically on how Twitter affords animation. In a corpus of 1 million tweets, there were 1,113 instances of quotative BE *like*. Out of these, 587 instances (53%) were coded as animated. The study divided the various strategies of animation into categories based on whether the strategies were afforded lexically,

orthographically, typographically, or graphically. Animation was most frequently typographically afforded (44%). It was afforded lexically 26% of the time, orthographically 21%, and graphically 9%. The study therefore concludes that typographic strategies – for instance, iconic uses of typography, excessive punctuation, and typographic marking or emphasis of lexical items – are the primary ways in which Twitter users add a performative, expressive dimension to their speech reports. Like CS2, CS4 discusses several instances of emoticon use, respelling, case shifting, and other orthographic and typographic strategies that invite analogy to embodied nonverbal strategies in face-to-face interaction such as facial expressions and voice modulation. However, CS4 problematizes that analogy further, noting the differences between cases where such an understanding is more readily invited versus cases where it is not manifestly relevant. This distinction depends mainly on how the report is framed narratively. However, it is argued that many nonverbal cues in CMC nevertheless *remediate* embodied expressivity from face-to-face interaction. Even when an emoticon is not manifestly intended to represent an actual face, it remediates facial expressivity. CS4 further argues that some other strategies for animation neither represent nor remediate face-to-face expressivity, but rather harness an expressive potential that is inherent in a typography-based textual setting or in emergent online genres such as image macro memes.

5.2 Situating Twitter at the speech–writing interface

Section 3.1 presents an overview of ways in which speech and writing have typically been contrasted with one another throughout much scholarship. This section returns to those contrastive characteristics to position the Twitter discourse investigated in the case studies in relation to them. This section is organized in relation to the four tables of contrasts introduced in Chapter 3, Tables 3.1–3.4. Accordingly, Section 5.2.1 focuses on aspects of utterance form and content, Section 5.2.2 discusses material and modal aspects, Section 5.2.3 discusses situational and interactional aspects, and Section 5.2.4 discusses aspects pertaining to cultural and cognitive implications of orality and literacy. This discussion of speech–writing contrasts aims to characterize the materials of the case studies, not the totality of Twitter discourse. The reader should bear in mind that the case studies were designed to target discourse that makes notions of spokenness relevant in various ways.

Therefore, while the case study materials are naturally occurring and certainly represent some proportion of Twitter discourse – especially the informal, everyday Twitter discourse of private individuals – it should not be assumed that all Twitter discourse is as suffused with spoken characteristics as these materials are. Further, it should be noted that ‘hybrid textuality’ is not necessarily a feature of every tweet. Rather, it tends to be the case that some individual users write in highly informal and playful styles whereas other individual users write mostly according to the conventions of standard written English (cf. Johanyak, 1997). However, it was observed in both CS2 and CS4 that some users employ stylistic shifts within the bodies of individual tweets as a strategy for animation of speech reports.

5.2.1 Aspects of utterance form and content

Some general observations from the case studies can be related to the contrastive characteristics presented in Section 3.1, Table 3.1. For instance, if writing is normatively characterized as favoring declarative utterances that express well-specified propositional meaning, it is safe to say that many of the tweets throughout the case study materials depart from the written norm. They are frequently ‘fragmented’ and ‘fuzzy’ in the sense that they contain little or highly unspecified propositional meaning. In CS1, this becomes analytically salient in relation to how hashtags sometimes function to add clarifications of intended meaning or to ‘tack on’ information that was not specified in the main body of the tweet. Throughout the case studies, the frequently fragmentary and elliptic character of the materials was one of the main analytical challenges. For instance, in CS3, many of the comparisons of tweeting to talking were too elliptic for there to be clearly identifiable construals of talk-like tweeting. Some Twitter users write in ‘fully realized’ syntax – that is, complete sentences – but the materials are replete with sentence fragments. Many users write only in fragments, and some write with no punctuation or highly non-standard use of punctuation, to the extent that they simply do not write in sentences.²⁷ Further, throughout the case study materials, the units of expression tend to be quite short. This

²⁷ In that regard, if the kind of writing that is investigated here were increasingly to become the norm, there could be some legitimacy to fears about the creeping death of the sentence mentioned in Section 3.2.2.

is unsurprising given Twitter's character limit, but most tweets in the materials are much shorter even than what the limit permits.²⁸ At the same time, as is discussed in CS1, some textual strategies seem to be characterized by expressive and playful redundancy rather than the kind of parsimony that one might expect the length constraint to impose (Wikström, 2014a, p. 149). As can be seen simply by surveying the examples presented in CS1–CS4, the style is frequently spokenlike in terms of being vernacular and colloquial.²⁹

5.2.2 Material and modal aspects

In Section 3.1, Table 3.2 presented contrastive characteristics pertaining to the materiality and modality of spoken and written discourse. In relation to these characteristics, Twitter discourse can fairly straightforwardly be described as writtenlike. It is basically visual,³⁰ and the discourse consists of discrete units (boundaried tweets, comprising letters and other typographic characters). As digital texts, tweets are spatially autonomous. If vocal speech is a naturally evolved phenomenon and writing is an artificial technology, Twitter is clearly more like the latter than the former. On the other hand, Twitter appears all the more hybrid in terms of its heterosynchronous character, its blurring of the lines between permanence and evanescence, and how it appears modally enriched compared to prototypical text types. On the one hand, tweets have the permanence of archived writing, as database entries. On the other hand, Twitter permits what is practically real-time interaction, permitting a sense of temporal immediacy. To the user, Twitter emphasizes the present and favors recency (Page, 2012a, p. 196; Twitter's heterosynchronicity is further discussed in Sections 5.2.3 and

²⁸ The average tweet length across the case studies in this dissertation was never calculated, but it is unlikely to be very different from the 'global' 2012 average mentioned in Section 2.2.2 (see Kuseta, 2012). That is, most tweets do not even utilize half of the 140 character limit.

²⁹ Impressionistically, hallmarks of formal writing such as complex, subordinative syntax and complex nominal phrases are rare in the materials. However, this was never investigated.

³⁰ The word "basically" may be problematized. It could be argued that Twitter discourse is basically digital information, not visual script, since it is substratally constituted in computer code (cf. Landow, 2006, p. 36). The code is, of course, read by the computer, not by the human. Phenomenologically, a tweet is visually materialized.

5.3.2).³¹ However, the aspect that proved most relevant to the case studies is not temporality but rather the modal enrichment and embodiment associated with speech. This aspect is made relevant, for instance, in the analyses of strategies for animation of reported speech in CS2 and CS4. Twitter users' strategies for animating reported speech can be seen as constituting a form of embodiment of the discourse, and this embodiment is arguably not just limited to strategies of body representation (for instance, pictures or icons of faces). As is argued in Section 5.3.3, it can also be understood on the level of the materiality of the written signifier itself, as a de-abstraction of the written surface.

5.2.3 Interactional/situational aspects

As noted in Section 3.1.3 and Section 3.3, CMC researchers informed by pragmatic and other interactionist traditions have increasingly come to emphasize the importance of analyzing online communication as situated interaction. Twitter appears extensively hybrid in relation to the contrasts outlined in Section 3.1, Table 3.3. The general character of this hybridity has already been discussed (see Chapters 2 and 4), especially in terms of the consequences of the blurred distinction between the personal and the public, as well as between the improvised and the carefully prepared. Further, as Section 3.3.3 shows, Twitter researchers have been interested in the conversationality of Twitter precisely in the interactional sense. The empirical materials in this dissertation project feature both tweets that designedly function as stand-alone textual products – that primarily appear as carefully composed, one-to-many, monological texts – and tweets designed as interactional turns in some conversational exchange. CS3, especially, attends to conversational tweeting, including some instances where the meaning of talk-like tweeting is something that is negotiated across turns. Generalizing, most of the tweets in the case studies come across as designed in the way that, for instance, a Facebook status update might be designed – intended to be read and comprehended neither by a direct addressee nor a broader public, but by an open-ended group of friends or followers. Further, the tweets in the materials tend to address topics, refer to events, or tell

³¹ In this sense, Twitter, like other social media, is also active as opposed to passive. Twitter does not just wait for the reader to access the text: Push notifications and similar systems are designed to engage the reader. If someone addresses you, Twitter immediately tells you about it.

“small stories” (Dayter, 2015) that make them relevant to contemporary readers rather than posterity. Section 5.3 returns to the topics of the temporality of Twitter discourse, as well as to the notion of copresence, which is also characteristic of the spoken interactional situation. While physical presence is not typically a factor in Twitter interaction, it is argued in Section 5.3.2 that some sense or semblance of presence is made relevant to Twitter discourse by users themselves in CS3, and is discursively accomplished through the various strategies of animation discussed in CS2 and CS4.

5.2.4 Characteristics pertaining to cultural and cognitive implications

In Chapter 3, Table 3.4 presented contrastive characteristics having to do with cultural, cognitive, and epistemological implications of the conditions of orality and literacy. These characteristics derive from descriptions of the general modes of thinking privileged by conditions such as primary orality (Goody, 1987; Ong, 1982/2012), print literacy (McLuhan, 1962), or logocentrism (Derrida, 1967a/2016). Arguably, the Twitter discourse examined in this dissertation exhibits many of the oral characteristics outlined by Ong (1982/2012, pp. 43–50), such as being engaged with the situational rather than the abstract, with relating narratives rather than manipulating information, and producing discourse that is “agonistically toned” and “close to the human lifeworld.” Thus, for instance, the narrativity of Twitter arguably has more in common with everyday conversational narrative than journalistic or literary narrative (cf. Dayter 2015 on Twitter narratives). CS2 and CS4 in particular touch upon this aspect, since reported speech is commonly a format of everyday storytelling. Beyond this, the contrasts outlined in Table 3.4 recur in 5.3 as the discussion expands to encompass broader theoretical implications of the case study findings.

5.3 Thematic discussion

Sections 5.2.1–5.2.4 have sketched how the Twitter discourse examined in the case studies might be positioned in relation to several prevalent types of speech–writing contrasts. This section presents an in-depth discussion focused on relating both general and particular findings in the case studies to the major themes of speech–writing scholarship that

were introduced in Chapter 3. The purpose of the discussion is to present arguments as to how Twitter discourse may be seen to exhibit spokenness from certain perspectives, for instance in terms of the notion of speech as a technology of presence, but also to problematize those perspectives. Further, the discussion aims to lead into some general conclusions about how Twitter discourse both instantiates and reconfigures some traditional notions of how writing relates to speech, especially in relation to the notion that writing “represents” speech.

Section 5.3.1 focuses on how scholarly perspectives on spokenness and writtenness on the one hand compare with the orientations of Twitter users on the other hand, especially in relation to the findings of CS3. Section 5.3.2 discusses how Twitter can and cannot be understood as a talk-like technology of presence. This discussion subsumes considerations of Twitter’s ambiguous temporality, as well as how the case study findings make relevant notions of intimacy, immediacy, authority, authenticity, and identity. Finally, Section 5.3.3 focuses on what is the main theme throughout the case studies, namely how Twitter discourse, as writing, can be seen as either representing or – as this dissertation suggests – remediating the envoiced and embodied character of speech. Ultimately, Twitter’s remediation of speech is also a reconfiguration of writing.

5.3.1 Orientations – scholars and participants

It is no longer a given that it is possible or meaningful to place a platform like Twitter somewhere on a continuum between maximal writtenness and maximal spokenness. As mentioned in Section 3.3, CMC scholars have found a continuum model useful to describe and differentiate CMC platforms, while also acknowledging that some aspects of CMC discourse do not readily fit on such a continuum (e.g., Crystal, 2006; Johanyak, 1997). However, comparisons to speech or face-to-face interaction have also been criticized as the imposition of a context that may not be analytically relevant, and may not be relevant to the discourse participants’ own understandings of what they are doing (Arminen et al., 2016; Schegloff, 1997). At the same time, many of the scholars challenging the tradition of comparing new media writing to face-to-face speech do so from perspectives that, in a sense, presuppose (or perhaps rather *recognize*) the orality of the discourse, with influences from fields

such as pragmatics and conversation analysis. As is described in Chapter 4, this dissertation is partly informed by this interactional turn in CMC, most explicitly in the application of a speech act theoretical framework in CS1 and the partly EMCA-inspired microanalytic approach of CS3.

CS1 argues – in opposition to a proposal by Crystal (2010; cf. Wikström, 2014a, p. 149) – that a traditional speech act pragmatic framework may in many respects be sufficient for the analysis of CMC. The study does so specifically in relation to the functions of a novel technological format, emphasizing the point. Hashtags are obviously not understandable as linguistic features of spoken language per se, since they are by definition typographically produced. However, the types of functions examined in CS1 – having to do with play, emotive expression, face management, and so forth – not only can but, arguably, have to be understood within a logic of interactional conversationality. To that extent, the application of a speech act theoretical framework in CS1 constitutes, on a methodological level, a performative demonstration of the orality of Twitter discourse. In the same vein, CS2 and CS4 show that hashtags are included among the typographical resources that Twitter users employ to animate reported speech (e.g., Wikström, under review, pp. 22–23). The analyses throughout CS2 and CS4 similarly demonstrate how particular writing practices on Twitter are understandable in a framework – here, the animation framework – grounded in the analysis of face-to-face practices.

CS3 in particular adds to this dissertation an explicit consideration of the relationship between analysts’ understandings and discourse participants’ understandings, that is, between *etic* and *emic* perspectives (Arminen et al., 2016; M. Harris, 1976). The main conflict between typical scholarly accounts of CMC and the emic orientations to talk-likeness identified in CS3 is that the latter are explicitly, and unabashedly, normative. Section 3.3 indicated that CMC scholarship has partly been influenced by a linguistic tradition of construing variation between spoken and written language as a continuum (cf. Section 3.1.2), and partly by a turn toward language as interaction (Section 3.1.3). When scholars of either tradition invoke notions of spokenness or conversationality, they plainly have an interest in doing so that is descriptivist rather than prescriptivist. However, judging by the findings of CS3, Twitter users invoke the spokenness of Twitter discourse first

and foremost in language-normative, even language-policing, activity (Wikström, 2016a, p. 60). To tweet like one talks was construed as a natural given by some users, as a legitimate strategy among other options by some, and as laughable or inappropriate by yet other users – as an index of poor education by some, as an index of personal authenticity by others. Scholars may note that spoken and written registers have different grammars, but most linguists at present would not agree that speech has ‘deficient’ grammar. The association between spokenness and poor grammar is, however, entertained in popular commentary on socially mediated interaction, yet more commonly countered by CMC scholars (Crystal, 2008; Tagliamonte & Denis, 2008; Thurlow, 2006; Thurlow & Brown, 2003). In the folk linguistic speech–writing interface of some Twitter users, as in the following example, it is implicit:

I hate when people text or tweet like they talk , where is your proper grammar ? (Wikström, 2016a, p. 58)

It is not entirely incidental that this example comes from the part of the CS3 material where the pronoun is *they* (“tweet like *they* talk” as opposed to any of the other pronouns). A pattern observed in CS3 was that negatively charged and stereotyping construals were associated with the third person plural (Wikström, 2016a, pp. 59–60). The talk-likeness of an out-group, generic or specific, is more likely to be laughed at or “hated,” as in the example above.

As mentioned in Section 3.2.2, one of the debates in orality–literacy scholarship has been the extent to which notions of orality come to serve as a vehicle for essentializing and exoticizing a cultural other, to privilege a (largely Western) ideal of literacy, and, arguably, to manufacture rather than describe cultural differences (Olson & Torrance, 1991; Pattanayak, 1991). On a microsociological level, the findings of CS3 resonate with this problem. In several instances, Twitter users laugh about, criticize, or mock how Jamaicans, people from the southern US, or teenage girls tweet like they talk, in ways that presuppose that these groups have peculiarly identifiable ways of talking, and corresponding ways of tweeting. Of course, it is a commonplace of descriptive linguistics that speech – as opposed to the more standardized registers of writing – is expressive of dialectal, sociolectal, and idiolectal variation, and thereby of social identity. There has been much debate about what to make of such correlation (see Jones, 2016, p. 135 for an overview).

Broadly speaking, a sociolinguistic variationist tradition has tended to view variation in speech as a reflection or consequence of speaker identity, whereas microsociological and postmodern constructionist scholarship has tended to view social identity as something accomplished in and through interaction or through discursive “positionings” (Bolander & Locher, 2015). While some Twitter users reproduce stereotypes that imply an essentialist view of identity – for instance in relation to gender (Wikström, 2016a, pp. 59–60; see especially Example [40], p. 60) – it is ultimately unclear how the users in question think about the matter. Regardless, written English is generally described as being roughly the same not just across classes, age groups and regions within a nation but even internationally (Biber et al., 1999, p. 18; Culpeper, Kerswell, Wodak, Katamba, & McEnery, 2009). This descriptive generalization fits into a conceptual matrix tying writing to categories such as publicness, fixity, and objectivity, and speech to the personal, private and subjective. In short, the depersonalized standard is a norm of literacy (cf. Section 3.2). To that extent, a person writing in a way that reflects their identity, communal or individual, is breaking an expectation of traditional literacy. As the argument goes in CS3, when users of Twitter complain about or laugh at talk-like tweeting in this sense, it suggests that to tweet like one talks is to fail to write as one should – an index of orality that is, consequently, an index of illiteracy.

A generalized implication of CS3 is that Twitter users’ orientations to speech and writing have little in common with how linguists treat these categories – that is, descriptively, and primarily with a concern for linguistic structure and form. Instead, the endogenous perspectives on speech and writing expressed by the Twitter users resonate all the more with perspectives in the traditions of scholarship that focus on speech and writing as categories for reproducing, negotiating, and exploring social, cultural, intellectual, and institutional values first and for describing linguistic forms second if at all.

5.3.2 Presence: Immediacy, intimacy, authority, and authenticity

Speech has been characterized, perhaps most famously by Derrida, as a “technology of *presence*” (Landow, 2006, p. 31; emphasis in original). Writing, on the other hand, “signifies the absence of the speaker” (Spivak, 2016, p. lxi). While some, especially early, perspectives on

digitally mediated communication suggested that new media might challenge the traditional norm of presence for other interactional norms, it is not clear that this has happened (e.g., Baym, 2015; Hutchby, 2014). This section argues that the case studies in this dissertation resonate with the tradition of constructing orality as defined by presence, and writing as defined by absence and distance, in several specific ways. Section 5.3.2.1 discusses the dissertation findings in relation to presence and authorship, Section 5.3.2.2 in relation to presence and temporality, and Section 5.3.2.3 with a focus on animation as a strategy for accomplishing presence.

5.3.2.1 Authorship and authenticity

There are several kinds of ramifications to understanding Twitter as a medium of presence. These have to do with whether the discourse is perceived as trustworthy, authentic, and personal, whether the discourse is considered suitable for objective or subjective expression, and whether the discourse reflects, or should reflect, social identity. A respondent to a 2016 PEW Internet poll about ‘trolling’ and other antisocial behaviors in online discourse captures the importance often assigned to presence in these regards:

Online our identity is disembodied, only a simulation of what we do in the physical presence of others; it is missing our moving countenance, the mask that encounters – and counters – the world. As online discourse becomes more app-enabled, our ability to disembody ourselves will only grow more dexterous. Online, our face is absent – a snapshot at best, a line of code or address at worst. Politeness, sociologists tell us, is about ‘facework’ – presenting a face, saving face, smiling, reassuring, showing. But online we are disembodied; our actual faces are elsewhere. This present-yet-absent dynamic not only affects our identity, whether people can identify us behind the shield of online presentation, it also affects our speech and, ultimately, our ‘performance.’ (Rainie, Anderson, & Albright, 2017, pp. 37–38)

This PEW respondent’s way of expressing the point is eloquent and academic, but topicalizes a broadly distributed anxiety having to do with the author’s tangible *absence* in textual mediation. This is not a new concern, but rather one of the classical problems of writing (e.g., *Phaedrus*, 275b–e). Derrida’s (1968/2004) deconstructive reading of this dialogue notwithstanding, in the thought of Plato, truthfulness is guaranteed by the presence of speech (Havelock, 1963). Conversely, in the classical critique, “writing is ambiguous, if not downright deceitful”

because “the text, orphaned by its author once it’s on the page, cannot defend itself against misreading, and readers can never really know if they’ve got it right” (D. Baron, 2009, p. 4). In the dissertation findings, these matters are manifestly relevant first and foremost in the normative orientations to talk-like tweeting in CS3, but they are also indirectly reflected in the other case studies. For instance, the use of hashtags for functions such as meta-commentary and face management is analyzed in CS1 as ways of managing interpretation and disambiguating or disclaiming pragmatic force (Wikström, 2014a, p. 137) – in short, as ways of anticipating and preventing problems of digital self-presentation and text interpretation.

D. Baron (2009, p. 134) suggests that the authority and authenticity of discourse in print culture needs institutional support, since it cannot come from presence and immediacy. Examples of such support might be curation and editing, publication in respected venues, or other forms of imprimatur. From there comes the problem of authenticity in digital communication, where anyone can publish anything under any name and deception and impersonation become salient threats (cf. Page, 2014a). As CS3 shows, Twitter users orient to such meta-discursive threats locally, in quite concrete ways. For instance, two examples (Wikström, 2016a, p. 59) show users explicitly addressing a concrete problem of authenticity – the question of whether a celebrity is really writing her own tweets – with an appeal to spokenness, to voice. One user sees the issue as resolved not through some institutional aid, such as the little check mark indicating a “verified” account, but due to recognizing the celebrity’s voice in how she tweets. In such an authentication process (see Androutsopoulos, 2015), Twitter users are arguably orienting to a spoken rather than written norm of authority.

The kind of orientations outlined here are invited by Twitter’s branding and marketing (see Chapter 2). Twitter follows the tendency of new media to make claims of achieving ‘immediacy’ (Bolter & Grusin, 2000, p. 53). Noting the resemblance between Derrida’s concept of presence and Bolter and Grusin’s notion of immediacy, Landow (2006, p. 31) describes a tendency among proponents of new media today to “automatically assume that presence has more importance than all other qualities and effects of any particular information technology.” This may take the form of advocating audio and video technologies rather than

writing technologies, but proponents of the latter also “emphasize their potential to reach out and touch” (D. Baron, 2009, pp. 178–179).

The spoken word supposedly always gives more immediate access to the real (e.g., Derrida, 2016, pp. 11–12), whereas writing mediates and distorts. The case studies in this dissertation reflect how, at present, this sentiment seems to attach more generally to new digital media than to traditional writing (D. Baron, 2009; Baym, 2015; Benwell & Stokoe, 2006, pp. 246–251; Landow, 2006). Concerns about accurate representation of reality or authentic displays of identity suffuse the materials on several levels. For instance, CS1 discussed the role of meta-commentary hashtags in disambiguating the real meaning of utterances (Wikström, 2014, pp. 136–137). In another instance, a user typed a tweet entirely in capitals and added the hashtag *#idontactuallytalkinallcaps* (Wikström, 2014a, p. 137), preempting negative reactions by distinguishing between a mock performance and her real behavior. On a different analytical level, an example from CS2 illustrates how animation can make authenticity relevant through expressivity rather than explicit topicalization:

Then I was all “AHA. AHA. AHA. AHA. :|” She was all “HA. HA. HA :|”
(Wikström, 2014b, p. 98)

The user shows rather than tells that the laughter is fake. Further, the issue of authentic self-representation in writing is centrally manifest in the material of CS3. Some of the construals of what makes tweeting talk-like either explicitly reproduce or indirectly depend on ideas that one’s mediated presentation of self on Twitter is a model of an underlying ‘real-world’ or ‘actual’ personality. In some cases, there is, further, a clearly expressed norm that this secondary, mediated representation *should* correspond to its primary ‘real-world’ signified. Interestingly, one example from CS4 shows a user expressing this norm in a different way, animating her reaction and disappointment in response to discovering that a celebrity account that followed her was fake:

RT @user: When a fake Selena account follows you and you're like
“ASDFGHJKLZXCVBNM. oh...” (Wikström, under review, p. 14)

Many theorists, especially from the earlier days of CMC, have proposed that the digital paradigm’s potential for letting people perform identities beyond their ‘real-world’ constraints is one of its strengths (Baym, 2015,

p. 118; Benwell & Stokoe, 2006, p. 243; Landow, 2006, pp. 36, 281). However, anxiety about the accuracy of self-representation on Twitter was one of the topics dealt with in normative orientations to talk-like tweeting. That being said, there were also many instances of users expressing notions that talk-like tweeting really does make the author feel present, really does evoke her voice, really permits authenticity. Examples such as the following make very manifest the discursive link between talk-like tweeting and authentic performance or representation of self, implicitly in the first case and explicitly in the second.

I tweet like I talk. Vulgarities and all. Don't like it? Fuck you too.
(Wikström, 2016a, p. 58)

Its like weird when you know someone and they don't tweet like they talk in the real world.. Funny as hell tho (Wikström, 2016a, p. 59)

Twitter users' orientations to presence through written voice, and the weight that they attach to a correspondence between digital and 'real-world' selves are indications that age old speech–writing debates are still discursively active and relevant. Further, they are also an illustration of what McLuhan means by “the medium is the message” – namely that new technologies introduce new “scales” to social life and extant problems (McLuhan, 1964/2003, p. 19). The problem of the author, or of textual ‘authority’ (Bonnycastle, 1996), is no longer merely a problem in ivory tower hermeneutics, for philosophers and literary scholars, but a problem for everyone who lives out some significant part of their everyday life in the communicative ecosystem of social media. Twitter tweaks the social scale of the problem of the author. It also tweaks the qualitative character of the problem: When a Twitter user thinks that they can identify the author of a tweet because she tweets like she talks, the identification is grounded in neither the actual physical presence of speech nor the detached, objective, and institutionally vouchsafed authority of writing. Despite some users suggesting that talk-like tweeting lets one *really* hear the author’s voice (Wikström, 2016a, pp. 56–57), actual hearing is precisely what is not going on. The user is responding to a virtual intimacy – to the metaphor of voice, not an actual voice. Importantly, the old problem of the author is not resolved – and from one perspective, it is perhaps made worse: With globalized mass telecommunications, more and more authors can be farther and farther apart, even as the sense of presence is enhanced. From a cynical

perspective, therefore, Twitter may appear as a failure of both speech and writing (cf. Baym, 2015, p. 72).

5.3.2.2 *Temporality – From specious permanence to specious ephemerality*

An important component of the presence of spoken language is temporal, whether what is being considered is the required contemporaneity of interactants or the temporal ephemerality of the spoken word (cf. Section 3.1). Writing, on the other hand, is defined by permanence. R. Harris (2000, p. 17) summarizes the main critique of writing in Plato's *Phaedrus* as a concern over how writing lends "a specious permanence to words."³² The constant stream of writing on Twitter, however, does not feel static in the way that a manuscript or printed book feels static. The constantly refreshing flow of text imbues a platform like Twitter with the oral sense of impermanence. Twitter is a staple of the emergent "real time web" (Zappavigna, 2012, p. 4), and like similar modes of CMC, it "feels ephemeral" (Baym, 2015, p. 72). The animation practices described in CS2 and CS4 illustrate in a very particular way how such a sense of presence can be textually created: Reported speech can evoke something absent by blurring "the boundary between the past and the present" (Sandlund, 2014, n. 5). Animation heightens this effect, making the narrative situation more compellingly present in its performative dimension (see Section 5.3.2.3). However, in a broader context, the question remains to what extent this feeling of immediacy is illusory.

One widely read popular critique of Twitter (Meyer, 2015) argues that the platform has defaulted on its promise of a conversational feel, with reference to several changes that make the archiving and searchability/retrievability of tweets more salient as affordances. Features that remind users that what they write is retrievable pushes them into feeling more responsible, into the mindset of authors of lasting products. Consequently, the user is less comfortable with tweeting informally, off the cuff. Of course, even before Twitter made search tools visibly available on the website, the tweets were already

³² Writing's permanence is "specious" to Plato because even though the written characters are fixed, their meaning to the reader is not. This is part of what makes writing deceitful.

being archived – the feeling of oral ephemerality was already in some sense an illusion. However, there is little to indicate that Meyer’s critique is relevant to the Twitter users represented in the case studies in this dissertation. For instance, as CS1 suggests, even Twitter’s hashtag feature, which saliently affords the searchability of Twitter talk (Zappavigna, 2015), is in many usage scenarios employed as if this function is not really relevant. The user who types *#sadwharrgarbl* (Wikström, 2014a, p. 141) into their tweet is manifestly not doing so to be searchable and retrievable. That user is designing the tweet not for posterity but for a local, ephemeral end in a particular interaction.

The sense of ephemerality of Twitter was one of the main concerns for the case studies on a level of research methodology and ethics. As discussed in Chapter 4, it is difficult as a researcher to judge whether it is more appropriate to treat tweets as authored textual artefacts or as (semi- or pseudo-) private interaction. The irony is that when Twitter is used as if it were a platform for intimate, private interaction, a research project such as the present one can account for it precisely because it was never private. Ephemeral Twitter conversations can be accounted for because they were never ephemeral. Another critique of writing from Plato is therefore just as relevant to Twitter as it ever was to any written medium: Regardless of whether Twitter is used in an intimate spirit of oral conversationality, “it is impossible for what is written not to be disclosed.”³³ In this regard too, the social scale of the problem is altered (cf. Section 5.3.2.1). It is so hard “to escape your past on the Internet now that every photo, status update, and tweet lives forever in the cloud” that entire societies need to legally enshrine the “right to be forgotten” (J. Rosen, 2011, p. 88). Structurally, Twitter is a textual archive, accessible over time to unimagined and unintended readers, whether users orient to it as such or not. If for traditional writing it is the sense of permanence that is specious, in social media, it is conversely the sense of ephemerality that is specious.

³³ This critique is from Plato’s second letter (*Epistola II*, 310b–315a), which is of disputed authenticity. Cf. discussion in Derrida (1968/2004).

5.3.2.3 Animation – accomplishing presence in text

If notions of textual ‘voice’ and ‘presence’ come across as abstract and figurative – perhaps even illusory – their most concrete manifestation in this dissertation may be the strategies for animation examined in CS2 and CS4. As discussed in Section 5.3.2.1, CS3 shows that Twitter users are metalinguistically concerned with presence. CS2 and CS4 may be seen as illustrating some of the strategies by which Twitter users accomplish it. Quotation practices such as those investigated in CS2 and CS4 do not describe, but rather *demonstrate*, in the sense of Clark & Gerrig (1990), or *enact* (B. A. Fox & Robles, 2010; Tolins & Samermit, 2016). These case studies focus on animation precisely in order to emphasize how these Twitter users make aspects of interaction such as physical action and voice discursively present, how they perform rather than describe stance and emotion. The texts that these Twitter users produce, as CS4 frames it, transpose into writing richly embodied face-to-face strategies associated with quotative frames such as BE *like*. These texts can be described in line with Pollock’s (1998, pp. 80, 94) notion of “performative writing,” which is “citational” and “evocative” – that is, it brings forth voice. Performative strategies in writing operate “metaphorically to render absence present – to bring the reader into contact with ‘other-worlds,’ to aspects and dimensions of our world that are other to the text as such by re-marking them” (Pollock, 1998, p. 80). What Pollock is suggesting is that various types of citation in writing accomplish a kind of Bakhtinian heteroglossic presence (see Bakhtin, 1934/1998) – the presence of multiple voices. CS2 and CS4 thus illustrate how Twitter users employ features and strategies that frequently depart from the conventions of standardized English writing in order to accomplish a form of textual presence, of their own as well as other voices. These writing strategies present a performance instead of merely mediating verbal content. What remains to be explored – the topic of Section 5.3.3 – is the value of construing the presentations of these performances as *re*-presentations.

5.3.3 Voice: Representation and the body of writing

This section focuses on an aspect of Twitter discourse that proved to be analytically salient in all four case studies, which is especially in focus in CS2 and CS4, namely Twitter’s affordances for representing voice and body, and for supplementing verbal text with nonverbal expression.

While CS1 and CS2 employ the notion of ‘representation’ without problematizing it, CS4, especially, topicalizes the limitations of the metaphor of representation. CS3 further addresses some ways in which Twitter users orient to such representational ideas (Wikström, 2016a, pp. 57, 60). The discussion of this topic here addresses two main themes in speech–writing scholarship, namely the importance of nonverbal language to speech (Goodwin & Heritage, 1990; Jones, 2016, pp. 67–68) and the idea of a greater importance of the visual as opposed to the phonetic in writing in new media (Danesi, 2017; Kress, 2003). The discussion in this section summarizes the case study findings as regards strategies for representing the nonverbal, and proposes a recontextualization of those findings. Representation is only one component, and possibly a relatively minor component, of how the text in CMC is made embodied and nonverbally meaningful.

5.3.3.1 *Reconceiving representation*

In terms of formal repertoires, respelling (see Section 3.3.3) proved to be one of the most common and analytically most salient features of Twitter discourse throughout the case studies. As noted in Chapter 3, these departures from standard orthography, when they are not simple mistakes, often appear to be phonetically motivated – for instance in how writers of English in many contexts respell *going to* as *gonna*, departing from an orthographic form that documents historical syntactic origin in favor of a form that better suggests pronunciation (cf. Biber et al., 1999, p. 1052). Phonetic representation has been suggested as a common function of respelling practices in CMC contexts, but not necessarily the only or most important function (Darics, 2013; Tagg, 2011). Corroborating such previous findings, this project’s case studies showed respelling practices to be salient in diverse ways. In the material of CS1, respellings were salient in demonstrating how hashtags were used in the context of, and as part of the performance of, typographical playfulness and expressivity. Concretely, an ad hoc respelling in the body of a hashtag itself, such as *#Jeeeesus* (Wikström, 2014a, p. 142), is a *prima facie* indicator that the hashtag is not really intended to integrate the tweet into a larger conversation or to serve as a ‘topic tag,’ but that the tagging is rather part of an expressive, emotive strategy. In CS2 and CS4, respellings were salient as some of the most common and clear exemplars of animation. In CS3, there were several instances of Twitter

users explicitly enforcing or negotiating spelling norms in relation to their notions of talk-like tweeting, either suggesting that talk-like spelling is poor spelling or, conversely, insisting that voice-imitation is a legitimate spelling strategy.

Respelling strategies, emoticons, emoji, and related formal repertoires were central to the case studies because prior research has construed them as representing – or filling the gap left by the absence of – face-to-face nonverbal cues (see Section 3.3). Insofar as these textual elements are understood as representing embodied behavior (cf. Tolins & Samermit, 2016), they are subject to the dualistic split inherent to the representational metaphor (Rorty, 2009): A representation is always *merely* a representation – by definition it is something *other* than what it represents. To emphasize the character of such strategies as representational, as imitative or mimetic, is to reproduce the traditional configuration of writing as a “secondary” and “dependent” system (as in Ong, 1982/2012, p. 8; Sampson, 2016; Sapir, 1921 and many other accounts). To recall the representationalist critiques of writing from Plato, the emoji is to the face, at best, as a painting is to a person (Havelock, 1963; *Phaedrus*, 275d). The ultimate import of such an understanding of the technologically mediated sign is that, for instance, an emoji is not there to express. As representation, it is there to indicate that real expression is happening somewhere else, or can merely be imagined as happening somewhere else. Adding insult to injury, an emoji is not even a good painting.

However, as argued primarily in CS4 in this dissertation, to reject a fundamentally representational view of CMC’s nonverbal strategies does not necessarily entail denying that there is an oral underpinning to their expressive potential (Wikström, under review, p. 29). It is better, perhaps, to describe these repertoires as *remediating* expressive face-to-face strategies. These latter can be construed, in the sense of Jones (2016, pp. 56–68), as themselves being “technologies of talk,” available for transposition to and reconfiguration in other technological media. Prior and Hengst (2010, p. 5) explore the same line of thinking, referring to “how people dialogically [envoice and embody] others” as an example of semiotic remediation. Arguably, much of the popular skepticism over whether an emoji represents a ‘real’ smile or whether a *lol* represents ‘real’ laughter – as expressions of distrust of the superficial and

deceptive character of digital mediation – reproduces the representationalist view of writing. The idea that emoticons and other CMC nonverbal signals are like face-to-face cues has at times been critiqued on the grounds that the CMC signs are crude and ambiguous (cf. Crystal, 2006, pp. 38–39; Wikström, 2014b, p. 88). However, a smile is ambiguous. A wink is ambiguous. A laugh that is heard as affiliative by one interlocutor may be heard as derisive by another. The ambiguity of the emoticon may make it less useful as a representation of a particular (actual, physical) smile. However, as CS2 argues, the ambiguity makes it functionally more like smiles on a general level (Wikström, 2014b, p. 88). The exact implicature of nonverbal signs is always context-sensitive. Further, as much as an emoji may seem to lack definition as compared to a face, it is informationally overdetermined as compared to an alphabetic letter (cf. McLuhan, 1964/2003, pp. 39–40).³⁴ What is interesting about an emoticon such as :-) is not how much it looks like an actual person's face, but how it might accomplish, as a technology of interaction, some of the things that faces typically accomplish (Wikström, under review, pp. 13–14). CS4 also extends this reasoning to semi-lexical items such as *ugh* and abbreviations such as *wtf*: Beyond the possibility that *ugh* may represent a vocal sound, or that *wtf* may represent the utterance of the phrase *what the fuck*, what is actually notable about the animating use of these items is the expressive, emotive, and playful functions they perform in situ. These functions are dependent on a remediation of oral expressivity, but not necessarily a representation of actual speech. Further, remediation is also always transformation (see Section 2.4). For instance, the following example of expressive repetition from CS4 clearly both draws upon and transforms the representational basis of the smiley:

@user HAHAHAHAHHA I was laughin to myself and you were like 'what' and I was like 'nothing:):):)' hahah they're vile (Wikström, under review, p. 21)

Reframing the 'faceness' of :) as remediation rather than representation provides a framework within which to discuss how it resituates and resemiotizes (P. Prior & Hengst, 2010) the face as an element of virtual, textual interaction.

³⁴ As Bolter (2001, p. 59) puts it, many of the interpretive difficulties posed by "picture writing" stem from how "each element means too much rather than too little."

5.3.3.2 *The body of the text*

To shift focus from mimesis to materiality, the strategies discussed above, beyond being in some sense representational of embodiment, are themselves embodied. They are so in two main ways. First, there is the bodily action of typing something out. The example in CS4 of ‘keyboard mashing’ letter strings makes this aspect of embodiment analytically salient (Wikström, under review, pp. 14–15). A string such as *wejkljwlek* does not in any obvious way represent a sound, but does seem to have been produced by the author ‘mashing’ at the keyboard, alternating between left and right hand (given how the clusters *we* and *jkl* are arranged on a standard keyboard).³⁵ The expressive potential of a non-orthographical string of text is not necessarily a remediation of the expressive potential of voice; it may rather be more directly indexical of the keyboard strokes themselves. Further, this expressive resource can be conventionalized. CS2 discusses two instances of animation including the item *ZOMG*, which may be framed in this way (Wikström, 2014b, p. 99): While *OMG* abbreviates the exclamation *Oh my god*, the *Z* in *ZOMG* does not abbreviate anything. Instead, it is often interpreted as a kind of fossilized typo, indexing how an excited typist may ‘miss’ the left shift-key and instead hit *Z*.³⁶ Such examples illustrate how the bodily mechanics of typing can become both an ad hoc and a conventionalized resource for expressivity.

Second, beyond any aspect of human embodiment that a written signifier may be taken to represent, there is the graphic body of the writing itself. The strategies under discussion here make relevant the materiality of the written sign. This aspect of writing was introduced in Chapter 3, in the discussion of the ‘theatrical hieroglyphic’ as a metaphor for concrete and gestural writing in Derrida (1967b/2001, pp. 240-242) and of McLuhan’s (1964/2003, p. 124) argument that nonphonetic writing better conveys “dramatic” meanings (see Section 3.2).

³⁵ CS2 also features an instance of conspicuously clustered characters in a ‘nonsense’ string, namely *hjhfg* (Wikström, 2014b, p. 98). However, in that case, the narrative situation of the speech report is plainly a face-to-face situation, meaning that it is still likely that the string was intended to represent some kind of vocalization.

³⁶ See <http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=zomg>. See also the analysis of *!!!1!!!* in CS4 (Wikström, 2014b, p. 99).

The kind of Twitter writing that is in focus in CS2 and CS4 is rich in departures from orthographic convention, in the use of typographic characters as pictographic elements (such as in emoticons), etc. These elements are to some extent conventionalized, but to a greater degree than the signs of typical print literacy they signify concretely rather than arbitrarily. The discourse is therefore at least partly hieroglyphic in Derrida's sense, and the written surface does not efface itself (Wysocki, 2004; cf. Section 3.2.3) – it is there to be looked at rather than looked past. This is an abstract argument, but can be concretized through exemplification. Parenthetical marks (opening and closing brackets) have a conventionalized logical function in standard English writing (“logical” in the sense of Gleason's discussion of punctuation marks; Gleason, 1961). That is, they entail a certain logical relationship between elements in the discourse. However, when a closing bracket) is turned into the mouth of an emoticon, :-), this logical function is completely forgone, as the character is being used only for its visual appearance, a symbol appropriated as icon. This same de-abstraction happens with the alphabetical letter *e* in the emoticon *_e*, where *e* is used to illustrate a half-shut or twitching eye as part of a user's story about getting something in their eye (Wikström, 2014, p. 102). In general semiotic terms, this is an alphabetical symbol being appropriated as icon. This hieroglyphic aspect of animated writing in social media constitutes on the microsociological stage of quotidian communication what, for instance, the *poesie concrete* movement constituted on the avant-garde stage of art. It is a measure of resistance against the abstract signifier of high literacy, an insistence on the concrete materiality of the written sign.

One of the central arguments from CS1 may be recast in this light. The hashtag is superficially a highly novel format, and has some novel functions tied to its technological specificity. For instance, Zappavigna's (2015) analysis of hashtags ultimately emphasizes how tagging turns Twitter discourse into “searchable talk.” Zappavigna's analysis is sound, and, certainly, searchability may be the most salient affordance of the hashtag format, for discourse participants as well as researchers interested in the more or less unique and novel provision that this technological feature provides. However, many ways of using hashtags do not make the searchability affordance relevant. Indeed, as already noted, hashtags such as *#Jeeesus* or *#sadwharrgarbl* appear

designedly unsearchable – in the sense of markedly deviating from conventionalized and expected orthographic forms or word combinations. Nevertheless, these unsearchable tags are functional, and analytically salient, on a much more concrete level. As is argued in CS1, part of the effect of the hashtag resides simply in how whatever is tagged is typographically marked, that is, materially contrasted to the rest of the utterance through its graphical appearance. Thus, while Zappavigna (Zappavigna, 2015, p. 799) is right in noting that the tag in a tweet mentioning “#*obama* country” makes the tweet “louder” in the sense of making it searchable and retrievable by more readers, the tag also, simply, makes the name *Obama* visually louder. In being tagged, the word becomes more noticeable to the eye by contrast to the surrounding words, which enables any number of pragmatic effects. Among many other such functions, CS1 shows a Twitter user complaining about being called *sir* or *mister*, turning those words into tags in a manner that strengthens the pragmatic force of distancing or disaffiliation (Wikström, 2014a, p. 144). CS2 and CS4 illustrate several uses of hashtags to animate speech reports. Tags that are, at least at face value, unlikely to be searched for, illustrate how the visual emphasis may be the primary or perhaps even only effect that the author is looking for, an effect of material expressivity, not searchability. In such cases, even a hashtag can be, like the metaphorical hieroglyph, a “gesture which speaks before words” (Derrida, 1967a/2016, p. 258) – that is to say, a gesture that signifies something before or even without any accompanying verbal or propositional meaning.

Whether the expressive strategy suggests the doing of speech (as with #*Jeeesus*) or suggests the doing of typing (as with *wejkljwlek*), whether the emoticon diagrams a body to suggest an actual doing of gesture or facial expression or to evoke an emotional state, stance or attitude, what is happening is a de-abstraction of writing. This is the sense in which expressive, performative writing (see Section 5.3.2.3) is more oral – if orality is understood as being more substantially grounded in the presence of gesture, glance, and passion than in the *phoné* (Derrida, 1967a/2016, pp. 258–259). In some individual instances, these written signs in Twitter discourse are clearly representations. That is, in a situation that is being reported on, a certain gesture was present, and in the written body of the report, the emoticon is there to make that gesture *re-present* – present once more. However, in most instances observed in

CS2 and CS4, the animating typographical or orthographical manipulations, emoticons and emoji, and images and video, are meaningful in their appearance, not in their reference.

The opposition outlined here is between seeing animating strategies as representing face-to-face strategies and seeing them as accomplishing something like the richness of face-to-face expressivity by virtue of their very materiality. As noted, it is the tension between a logic that considers the written sign as meaningful insofar as it transparently refers to something else and a logic that sees the written sign as meaningful in its opaque appearance. In the framework of remediation, this is a special case of what Bolter and Grusin (2000, p. 53) discuss as a tension between immediacy and hypermediacy: “Transparent digital applications seek to get to the real by bravely denying the fact of mediation; digital hypermedia seek the real by multiplying mediation so as to create a feeling of fullness, a satiety of experience, which can be taken as reality” (cf. Bolter, 2001, p. 64). If the “real” of Twitter discourse is orality, it can either be reached for mimetically, through better representation of the oral, or materially, through its own de-abstracted textuality. Seen in the latter way, emphasizing hypermediacy, the unconvincingness of the emoji as a representation of a face, the incontestable artifice of its mimesis, is perhaps its greatest quality. To an extent, the emoji and other hypermedial features of animated digital writing are something like the “ten thousand and one expressions of the face caught in the form of masks” of Artaud’s theatrical hieroglyphics (Derrida, 1967b/2001, p. 241). They may be expressively successful not despite the fact that they are masks, but precisely because of it. In the way that matters most, these crude cartoons are not there to *re-present* but to *be present*.

6. Conclusion: Status update

Another beautiful day for art to imitate life. Life to imitate art. And Twitter to imitate neither.

– @NeinQuarterly, July 2015

This chapter concludes the dissertation by summarizing the findings and drawing out the main implications in relation to the project's aims. Section 6.1 discusses the overarching findings and implications. Section 6.2 gives some suggestions for further research to follow up on the case studies in this dissertation. Finally, Section 6.3 presents a post scriptum reflection on talk-like tweeting.

6.1 Findings and implications

This dissertation has examined several linguistic and language normative practices in naturally occurring Twitter discourse. The aim was to understand these practices in the light of key influential themes from a tradition of scholarship on the speech–writing interface, and to examine how Twitter discourse instantiates and reflexively negotiates competing understandings of the relation between speech and writing. The discussion in Chapter 5 has presented several possible ways in which the empirical findings may be contextualized in relation to various perspectives on the relation between writing and speech. The key themes under discussion have been the stereotypical contrastive characteristics attributed to spoken and written discourse; the contrast between scholarly–descriptive and popular–normative perspectives on speech and writing; various aspects of oral *presence*, in relation to notions of textual authority, authenticity, and immediacy; and, finally, themes of textual envoicement and embodiment at the interface of theoretical notions of phoneticism, representation, and materiality. In sum, the case studies and the discussion have suggested and problematized many possible arguments for understanding Twitter discourse as oral or spokenlike. As such, this dissertation has explored what it might mean to tweet like one talks, with implications for the understanding of the emergent language norms of digitally mediated interaction.

Twitter users' reflexive, metalinguistic activity suggests that categories of speech and writing are relevant to them in normative terms first and in terms of linguistic form second, if at all. If, to the linguist, talk-likeness suggests more personal pronouns than complex noun phrases, to the Twitter user it suggests more authenticity than education. The endogenous logic of talk on Twitter is empirically accessible to linguistic analysis targeting reflexive activity. Theoretically, however, this logic may be better addressed via a discussion of the complex values and norms associated with orality and literacy found in various strands of cultural theory than via linguistic description. In Twitter's folk linguistics, the echoes resound of a long tradition of debate on the social, psychological, and epistemological implications of script, print, and digital text.

In relation to typical contrastive characterizations of speech and writing, Twitter discourse clearly comes across as hybrid, in a way that corroborates such descriptions of broadly similar forms of CMC in previous scholarship. However, this mixed quality does not merely result from the discourse having 'some features from column A, some features from column B,' or from being somewhere in the middle of a continuum. Seen in the light of a broader tradition of speech-writing scholarship, many features are ambiguous in themselves. Notably, phonetic respelling strategies make the discourse more spokenlike because they position spoken production as an underlying model of the written discourse. However, those strategies also manifest the dependent quality that has traditionally been definitional of writing as secondary to speech – not actually a likeness so much as a reduction of its original.

Ironically, Twitter discourse may come across as more substantially oral in its inclusion of nonverbal graphics, and in its emphasis on the visual materiality even of alphabetic characters. In this light, the question is not whether emergent writing practices are 'more oral' *or* 'more visual' – they are more oral *by virtue of* being more visual. Talk-like writing on Twitter is animated. It remediates presence and embodiment, sacrificing the abstraction of phoneticism for the greater nonverbal expressivity of a more concretized writing. As Bolter suggests (2001, p. 61), such a development points both backwards and forwards, to the "pre-" and "post-" of alphabetic print literacy. Thus, bells and whistles such as hashtags need to be understood not only in terms of their novel

affordances, but also in terms of how they are integrated in the time-tested doings typical of talk. Further, if the emoji-fied script presents the reader with a more intimate and personal written surface, it does so in a writing space that is globalized, commodified, and mass distributed to an extent that analogue print literacy could not have dreamed of. In this space of spokenlike writing, everyone and no one is an author.

This dissertation has stressed the hybridity of Twitter, but oral–written hybridity has been common since ancient writing. This hybridity spans the use of writing to prepare manuscripts intended for oral performance, the constructed, “impossibly artful” (Bolter, 2001, p. 102), dialogues of Plato, and writing as transcribed speech. However, the hybridization of speech and writing in social media runs deeper than the *pro memoria*, the program for performance, or the representational record: In a real, if not straightforward, sense, it has its basis in an emergent affordance of always-online ubiquitous computing, not merely for the representation but the telepresent *doing* of animated talk-in-interaction. Therefore, notions of speech and writing are put to work in Twitter users’ normative self-understandings of their discourse, and still have work to do in scholarly understandings of what makes writing in social media like, and unlike, the writings that came before.

6.2 Suggestions for further research

Speech and writing are many-faceted constructs, and the complexity of their interrelationship is compounded by new media and new situations of use. Further research from many perspectives – from data driven descriptive linguistics to media theory and philosophy – is needed to elucidate the implications of media like Twitter for how our culture understands the speech–writing interface, and vice versa, in ways that go beyond what was possible in this project.

While scholars of mediated interaction are naturally often interested in identifying the major ways in which new technological formats shape or constrain interaction, the approach to hashtags in this project suggests that counter-intuitive uses of technological formats may also be of analytical interest. Further research can move beyond the limitations of this study by considering a greater diversity of functions in larger datasets, attempting a quantitative mapping of main functions,

comparing hashtag uses across platforms (including, e.g., Facebook and Instagram), to name a few areas that are only beginning to be explored. An emic approach was found to provide a fruitful perspective on how notions of speech and writing are active in new discursive contexts, as nodes or reference points for the negotiation of linguistic normativity. What may especially be of interest for future research is the use of keyword searches in a corpus to identify reflexive endogenous perspectives without necessitating intervention or elicitation methods. This dissertation's focus on user construals of talk-like tweeting could be expanded through targeting categories such as *speech*, *writing*, *grammar*, or any other keywords that are likely to isolate metalinguistic activity, to open more windows on the online development of linguistic and interactional norms in social media. Finally, any number of linguistic strategies for enactment and dramatization may be targeted through searchable sources of linguistic data such as Twitter, to yield further insight on these linguistic strategies in their own right. More examples of how quotative or similar strategies get translated from face-to-face interaction to written CMC, and deeper analyses of how these formats are transformed, would certainly be valuable. The focus of these case studies on particular quotative strategies could be forgone in order to enable broader explorations of animation per se – of the expressive, emotive, and embodied textuality of digital writing spaces.

6.3 Postscript

The term *virtual* in everyday use tends to have a pejorative dimension – it is conventionally understood as being opposed to *real*. In this sense, to suggest that Twitter discourse is virtual speech is to dismiss it as not *really* being speech. For all of how immediate Twitter users appear to one another, in how and what they say, they are never more than telepresent. For all of how respelling practices enable the animation of voice, it is a voice of discrete characters, not of seamless sound. And the asterisked 'stage direction' is not an action, nor is it likely ever to be acted out other than as an act of imagination. In muddying the waters of distinctions such as public–private, explicit–elliptic, phatic–prosaic, everyday–occasional, ephemeral–monumental, formal–informal, and agonistic–informative – Twitter becomes an instructive aporia of spoken and written mediation.

In spite of its often depreciative overtones, virtuality can also be understood in the sense developed by Deleuze (1966/1988), as opposed to *actual* rather than *real*. In this sense, the virtual is not directly materially tangible, yet nevertheless really real. In this vein, if a Twitter user experiences hearing the voice of their interlocutor in how they tweet, they are reporting the experience of virtual rather than actual – non-physical but consequentially meaningful – voice. Twitter discourse, then, would be written on its actual surface, but oral in its virtual “underneath” (Deleuze, 1966/1988, p. 41). A candidate answer to the question of whether Twitter discourse is more like speech or more like writing might be ‘it is virtually speech, actualized in writing.’ This may be a viable way of addressing the both alluring and somehow inadequate feel of characterizations of written CMC as ‘written speech,’ ‘conversational writing,’ or the like. Further, it may be the central way in which hybrid media such as Twitter reconfigure, rather than make obsolete, traditional notions of spokenness and writtenness. The case studies in this dissertation present us with written discourse that is both more phonetic and less phonetic than standard English writing, that replaces the specious permanence of traditional inscription with the specious ephemerality of the reverse chronological timeline, that has interactants laughing about the very idea of talk-like tweeting while in the midst of an informal conversational exchange, speaking without organs of speech. If the argument presented comes across as somewhat rife with paradox, that is precisely what this hybrid discourse demands – the demands of the “fucked up ass grammar” of talk-like tweeting.

Regardless what aspect we focalize, the oral qualities of Twitter text are real but virtual, and actually embodied in digital script. Talk-like tweeting has the materiality of writing, but its written sign is de-abstracted to gesture at oral meanings. The author is absent but the text is envoiced, animated like living language. The conventional nomenclature of designating the individual message in online writing as a *post* seems apt, as Twitter talk – a visual script of virtual speech – is inevitably post-writing.

Summary in Swedish / Sammanfattning på svenska

Denna sammanläggningsavhandling undersöker olika aspekter av talspråkighet och skriftspråkighet på den sociala nätverkstjänsten och mikrobloggen Twitter. Frågor om förhållandet mellan talspråk och skriftspråk har länge varit centrala när det gäller hur människor ser på teknologiskt medierad kommunikation. Genom olika tidsperioder och över disciplinränsar har forskare intresserat sig för att klassificera tal- och skriftspråk. Dagens utbredda debatt om språkbruk och kommunikationsmönster i digitala och sociala medier är inget undantag. Inom forskningsfältet *Computer-Mediated Communication* (CMC) har det sedan 1980-talet debatterats om, och i så fall i vilken utsträckning, skriftlig kommunikation i nya medier präglas av talspråkliga drag eller hybridiserar tal och skrift. Twitter är i grunden ett medium för digital skrift, men inbjuder på olika sätt till att förstås som mer talspråkligt än traditionella skriftliga medier. Tjänstens namn är en ljudmetafor (*twitter* antyder fågelkvitter), och plattformen utlovar omedelbarhet och en närvarokänsla. Twitter ger åtkomst till interaktion och samtal, *conversation*, med såväl vänner och bekanta som personer i hela världen. Föreliggande sammanläggningsavhandling har två övergripande syften:

- att undersöka hur specifika språkliga och språknormerande praktiker i vardaglig Twitterdiskurs kan förstås i ljuset av viktiga teman som återkommer i olika empiriska och teoretiska forskningstraditioner beträffande förhållandet mellan talspråk och skriftspråk; samt
- att undersöka hur dessa praktiker i Twitterdiskurs aktiverar och reflexivt omförhandlar olika teoretiska sätt att förstå förhållandet mellan talspråk och skriftspråk, som ett led i framväxten av nya språkliga normer i dagens digitalt medierade kontexter.

Avhandlingen omfattar fyra empiriska delstudier och sex kapitel. Den första delstudien (Case Study 1, CS1) undersöker hur s.k. *hashtags* (#) används på Twitter med hjälp av ett pragmatiskt och talaktsteoretiskt ramverk. En hashtag är hyperlänk som leder till en tidslinje med meddelanden som innehåller samma hashtag. Därmed är grundfunktionen att markera ett meddelandes ämne, att göra meddelandet sökbart samt att skapa interaktionskanaler. Delstudien fokuserar dock framför allt på hashtags med mer specifika och situationsavhängiga funktioner som ofta gör den organiserande

funktionen delvis eller helt irrelevant. I dessa fall rör det sig till exempel om att en hashtag används för att ge visuell emfas till ett särskilt ord (i synnerhet ett känsloladdat ord), eller att en hashtag ger extra information eller en reflexiv kommentar som förtydligar eller förändrar meddelandets pragmatiska innebörd. Dessa diskursiva användningar har oftast ingen koppling till hashtaggens teknologiska funktion som hyperlänk. Studien visar således hur Twitteranvändare i praktiken ser och utnyttjar andra möjligheter för betydelseskapande, grundade i deras lokala interaktionella förehavanden, än de teknologiskt givna. Delstudien hävdar därför att sådana funktioner synliggörs just genom tillämpningen av ett analytiskt ramverk som har sin grund i vardaglig, talspråklig interaktion, i det här fallet en pragmatisk ansats som analyserar twittermeddelanden som talakter.

Två delstudier, närmare bestämt den andra samt den fjärde (CS2 och CS4), behandlar bägge indirekt tal på Twitter. De fokuserar verb som används vid indirekt tal och som förknippas med informella, talspråkliga sammanhang (BE *all*, BE *like*, samt GO). I talspråkliga situationer berikas indirekt tal ofta med kroppsliga uttryck som till exempel gester eller röstlägesändringar, vilket Tannen (2007) kallar för *animering*. Bägge delstudierna identifierade flera sätt på vilka Twitteranvändare åstadkommer liknande animering i skriftligt indirekt tal. Den andra delstudien jämför hur ofta indirekt tal animeras på detta vis mellan de tre ovan nämnda verben jämfört med verbet SAY. De tre informella verben animeras signifikant oftare än SAY, vilket bekräftar att sådan animering är kopplad till informell talspråkighet. Den andra delstudien redogör också för hur Twitteranvändare åstadkommer animering genom att frånga konventionell stavning och konventionellt bruk av typografiska resurser som till exempel skiljetecken, genom andra grafiska resurser, samt genom stilistisk kontrast. Den fjärde delstudien undersöker indirekt tal med BE *like* i närmare detalj i förhållande till det teoretiska begreppet *affordance*, vilket har att göra med hur handlingar och praktiker möjliggörs inom ramen för teknologiska och övriga strukturella begränsningar. Denna delstudie syftar bland annat till att mer systematiskt redogöra för hur Twitters repertoar för animering ser ut. Animeringen av indirekt tal möjliggörs framförallt typografiskt, men även genom lexikala, ortografiska och grafiska resurser. I vissa fall framgår det tydligt att Twitteranvändare använder dessa resurser som direkta motsvarigheter till kroppsliga uttryck i interaktion ansikte mot

ansikte. I andra fall är det dock inte tydligt att animeringen utgör ett försök till återgivning (*representation*) av talspråkets ickeverbala resurser. Däremot argumenteras i delstudien att animeringen av indirekt tal på Twitter i grunden utgör en sorts översättning eller omkonfigurering, närmare bestämt en *remediering* (Bolter & Grusin, 2000), av det talade språkets ickeverbala och kroppsliga uttrycksfullhet.

Den tredje delstudien (CS3) undersöker hur Twitteranvändare själva konstruerar "talspråkligt twittrande" (*talk-like tweeting*). Delstudien analyserar twittermeddelanden där användare uttryckligen jämför någons sätt att skriva på Twitter med hur denna någon pratar. Dessa jämförelser handlar ibland om konkreta språkliga drag, men oftare om utsagans innehåll eller stil. För flera Twitteranvändare betyder talspråkligt twittrande att det går att "höra" skribentens "röst" i det som skrivs. Talspråklighet kopplas också samman med individuella eller kollektiva identitetspeglingar. En del Twitteranvändare antyder således att det finns något karaktäristiskt för hur geografiskt eller etniskt definierade grupper som till exempel nigerianer, eller köns- och åldersdefinierade grupper som till exempel tonårsflickor, pratar. Dessa gruppers föreställda sätt att prata antas speglas i hur de skriver på Twitter. I vissa fall försvarar Twitteranvändare sitt eget talspråkliga twittrande genom att framställa detta som ett sätt att vara autentisk i sin självframställning. Andra Twitteranvändare uttrycker sig negativt om talspråkligt twittrande, och menar att det är irriterande eller speglar okunskap och bristande språklig förmåga. I sådana fall kopplas skriftspråklighet samman med värden som bildning och språklig korrekthet, och talspråklig skrift framställs då som en oförmåga att åstadkomma normativt korrekt stavning eller grammatik. Delstudien visar hur föreställningar om det talspråkliga och det skriftspråkliga används för att befästa respektive omförhandla Twitters språkliga normer. Det framgår dock tydligt av resultaten att Twitteranvändarnas karaktäriseringar av talspråk inte enbart handlar om språkbruksnormer i sig utan framför allt om hur talspråkighet kopplas samman med föreställningar om självframställning, autenticitet och identitet.

De sex kapitel som utgör kappan till denna avhandling ger en övergripande kontextualisering av delstudierna i förhållande till språkvetenskaplig och diskursorienterad forskning inom fältet CMC samt en bredare tradition av forskning och teoribildning om förhållandet

mellan talspråk och skriftspråk. Kapitel 1 är en introduktion som redogör för avhandlingens övergripande syften och struktur. Kapitel 2 beskriver Twitters egenskaper och kontext som socialt medium, samt introducerar de teoretiska begreppen *affordance* (Gibson, 1977) och *remediation* (Bolter & Grusin, 2000). Remedieringsperspektivet förutsätter att alla nya medier på olika sätt bygger på, utvecklar och förvandlar tidigare medier. Detta perspektiv används för att rama in avhandlingens forskningsobjekt, talspråklighet och skriftspråklighet i Twittdiskurs. Ur detta perspektiv är inte frågan om Twitter remedierar tidigare talade och skriftliga medier, men däremot väcks frågor om på vilka sätt och i vilken utsträckning detta sker, samt vilka förvandlingar som sker i mediernas karaktär.

Kapitel 3 redogör för ett urval inflytelserika språkvetenskapliga, medieteoretiska, antropologiska och filosofiska perspektiv på talspråk och skriftspråk. Kapitlet fokuserar delvis på hur talspråk och skriftspråk beskrivits och delvis hur de värderats i förhållande till varandra. I språkvetenskaplig tradition handlar det ofta om att beskriva språkliga register eller genrer gällande språkliga former och funktioner (se till exempel Biber, 1988). I mindre empiriskt och mer teoretiskt eller filosofiskt orienterade ramverk har forskare bland annat intresserat sig för om och hur tal och skrift kan sägas stå inte bara för olika sätt att uttrycka sig språkligt utan olika sätt att tänka, till exempel om utbredd läs- och skrivfärdighet leder till kognitiva förändringar på både kulturell och individuell nivå (se till exempel Barton, 2007; Ong, 1982/2012). De olika perspektiven har ofta det gemensamt att vikt fästs vid att talspråk präglas av tidsrumslig omedelbarhet och interaktivitet medan skriftspråk präglas av avstånd, statiskhet och avsaknaden av omedelbar interaktion. Med andra ord är arketyperna för talspråk samtalet som situerad process och arketyperna för skriften texten som objekt. Sådana konceptualiseringar av tal och skrift som skilda fenomen har historiskt inte tenderat att vara neutrala beskrivningar, utan har ofta präglats av olika sätt att värdera tal och skrift i förhållande till varandra. Till exempel kan talspråk premieras över skrift som ett mer levande och autentiskt medium för subjektivitet, medan skrift kan premieras över tal som ett medium för säker och bestående kunskap (Derrida, 1967a/2016; R. Harris, 2000; McLuhan, 1964/2003). Kapitel 3 redogör också för hur forskning inom CMC behandlat frågor om talspråklighet i skrift, samt för det fåtal studier som hittills behandlat Twitters talspråklighet.

Kapitel 4 beskriver delstudiernas empiriska material och analytiska metoder, och diskuterar metodologiska och, i synnerhet, etiska överväganden som varit relevanta under projektets gång men som inte behandlats i detalj i delstudiemanusen. Delstudierna placeras inom fältet *Computer-Mediated Discourse Analysis* (Herring, 2004), med metodologiskt inflytande från korpuslingvistik, pragmatik, samtalsanalys, samt mikroanalys (*microanalysis of online data*). Den centrala etiska konflikten för kvalitativ språkforskning på Twitter är huruvida Twitters användare ska betraktas som forskningssubjekt vilkas anonymitet måste skyddas eller som författare till publicerade verk vilkas upphovsrätt måste respekteras. Denna konflikt, som inte har någon uppenbar eller vedertagen lösning inom forskningsfältet, har sin grund i hur ett socialt medium som Twitter suddar ut gränserna mellan det privata och det publika.

Kapitel 5 presenterar och diskuterar de fyra delstudierna (CS1–CS4). I den första delen av kapitlet sammanfattas delstudierna med fokus på metod och resultat. Kapitlets andra del diskuterar delstudierna i relation till en serie kontraster mellan talspråk och skriftspråk som introducerats i kapitel 3. Twitter framstår över lag som ett blandat eller hybridiserat medium. I dess materialitet är mediet visuellt och typografiskt, och således tydligt skriftspråkligt snarare än talspråkligt. Sett till Twitters interaktionella situation och twittermeddelandens form och innehåll, däremot, har Twitter många egenskaper som traditionellt förknippas med talspråk. Kapitlets tredje del diskuterar i detalj valda teman som introducerats i kapitel 3 i förhållande till både specifika och allmänna resultat från delstudierna. Syftet är att både bredda och fördjupa delstudiernas bidrag till fältet på en teoretisk nivå. I fokus är speciellt idéer om talspråkligheten som präglad av *närvaro* och *omedelbarhet* (Bolter & Grusin, 2000; Derrida, 2016; Landow, 2006), i tidsrumsliga men även i metaforiska avseenden. Det är tydligt att Twitter som medium liksom Twitters användare på olika sätt premierar och eftersträvar närvaroeffekter. Den *animering* som undersöks i andra och fjärde delstudierna kan exempelvis förstås på detta vis. Samtidigt illustrerar Twitter det motsägelsefulla i föreställningar om medierad omedelbarhet. Diskussionen fokuserar även idéer om skriftspråket som mimetisk återgivning (*representation*) av talspråkets ljud och kroppslighet. Delstudierna ger belägg för vissa sätt att förstå

typografiska och andra strategier som ljud- och kroppshärmande på sätt som åtminstone delvis går i linje med en idétradition som ser på skriftspråket som en sekundär återgivning av tal. Ljudhärmande omstavningspraktiker (*respelling*; Tagg, 2011) utnyttjar och utvecklar alfabetets fonetiska logik. Kapitel 5 avslutas med argumentet att återgivning dock bara är en liten del av vad som får Twitterdiskurs att upplevas som talspråklig. De olika animerande strategiernas huvudsakliga funktion är inte att göra den mänskliga kroppen närvarande genom återgivning utan snarare att konkretisera det skrivna tecknet – att göra den textuella kroppen levande genom att göra skriftens materiella och visuella närvaro påtaglig och betydelsefull.

Avhandlingsprojektets övergripande resultat summeras i kapitel 6. Twitterdiskursens talspråkighet är präglad av mediets hybriditet, och således på flera sätt ofullständig och tvetydig. I den mån Twitter och dess användare åstadkommer en talspråklig närvaro är det ändå det skrivna tecknet, inte den mänskliga kroppen, som är materiellt närvarande. Den Twitterdiskurs som undersöks i delstudierna kan beskrivas som virtuellt prat – en materiell skrift som uttrycker och premierar muntliga och kroppsliga betydelser. Sammanfattningsvis visar delstudierna och diskussionen i kapitel 5 hur språkliga och språkreflexiva praktiker i vardaglig interaktion på Twitter speglar problem och debatter, både samtida och sådana som sedan länge förekommit i språk teori och filosofi, om hur skriftspråk kan och bör förhålla sig till talspråk, samt om vilka sociala och kulturella konsekvenser detta förhållande kan leda till. Talspråkligt twittrande bidrar således till en omförhandling av talspråkets och skriftspråkets betydelser och normer i de digitala och sociala mediernas tidevarv.

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I tweet like I talk

What does it mean to tweet like one talks? To pose this question is really to ask what happens to the relation between spoken and written language, and to cultural values tied to orality and literacy, in the digital writing spaces of social media. This dissertation investigates particular features of Twitter discourse in relation to questions concerning the technological mediation of language-in-interaction, with an emphasis on themes traditionally linked with ideas of speech and writing.

Based on the findings of four empirical case studies, the dissertation argues that Twitter writing remediates speech, hybridizing spoken and written language in ways that extend beyond a mere mix of linguistic features. The everyday digital texts of social media revive and reconfigure ideas about how, or whether, writing represents speech, about textual authenticity, about the conditions of possibility for personal presence and voice in virtual spaces, and about the educational norms of traditional literacy. What is at stake is not merely a substitution of literacy norms for conversational norms, but rather a complication of their relationship.

In its linguistic and reflexive practices, Twitter talk makes manifest a cultural renegotiation of the meanings of spoken and written language today.

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