

The Textual Functions of Personal Weblogs Stability, Diversity, and Change

1. Introduction

- *Personal Weblogs*:
 - diary-like texts
 - typically written by one author
 - reversed chronological order (newest entries first)
 - „history“ of nearly 15 years
- research questions:

1. What textual functions can be considered typical of the genre *Personal Weblog*?
2. What is the diachronic dimension of these functions in terms of stability, diversity, and change as far as the Personal Weblog is concerned?

2. Data, Theory, and Method

2.1. Data

- some bloggers' insider reflections on textual functions
- results of ethnographic studies
- diachronic corpus of Personal Weblogs *DIABLOK*

			Texts	Postings	Token
period I		1997-2000	30	773	ca. 33,364
period II					
Personal	II.A	2002-2005	93	1,035	ca. 202,910
Weblogs	II.B	2006-2008	80	649	ca. 173,743
	II.C	2009-2012	80	736	ca. 210,775
		Total:	283	3,193	ca. 620,792

2.2. Textual Function

- textual function: the complex task a text is designed to fulfil
- may contain various components simultaneously:
 - informative
 - appellative
 - obligational
 - contact
- genres characterized by set of functions
- sources:
 - metadiscourse
 - metacomments
 - textual indicators:

multimodal structure	• explicit performative formulae • grammatical structure • style • pictures / other elements
semantic structure	• topic(s) and sub topics • topic treatment • stance
context	• cotext • participants • ...

2.3. Method

- multi-stage process as combination of Grounded Theory and linguistic analysis
- open-ended, geared towards theoretical saturation
- bloggers' categories preserved in analysis and description

3. Textual Functions of Personal Weblogs

3.1. Filter

multimodal structure	• elliptical constructions • concise matter-of-fact style • hyperlinks are central
semantic structure	• various topics without topical coherence • treatment: descriptive • stance: epistemic / evaluative
context	• author's web travels
function	• informatory (source, content, evaluation) • appellative (follow the links)

3.2. Update

multimodal structure	• elliptical constructions • concise, even telegraphic style
semantic structure	• topic: <i>What's been going on?</i> • various, only loosely related subtopics • treatment: descriptive / narrative • stance: epistemic / evaluative
context	• often friends / family addressed • limited amount of writing time
function	• mainly informative

3.3. Sharing Experience

multimodal structure	• complex structures • cohesive devices • idiosyncratic style
semantic structure	• single topic • sub topics: event + reflections • treatment: descriptive / narrative • stance: epistemic / evaluative
context	• varying audience scope
function	• informatory (event + reflections) • appellative (warning, advice)

4. Conclusions: Stability, Diversity, and Change

- stability:**
- pattern continuity over all periods
- diversity:**
- fuzzy categories with various overlaps
 - numerous functions besides core patterns
- change:**
- shift from *filter* to *sharing experience* as central functions
 - emancipation of functional patterns from period I to period II
 - rise and decline of *update*

References

- Askehave, I.(1999): Communicative Purpose as Genre Determinant. *Hermes* 23, S. 13–23.
<http://tinyurl.com/busxp54> (15.11.2012).
- Askehave, I. & J. Swales (2001): Genre Identification and Communicative Purpose. A Problem and a Possible Solution. *Applied Linguistics* 22 (2), S. 195–212.
- Barrett, Cameron (1999): Anatomy of a Weblog. <http://tinyurl.com/bnotxzu> (08.03.2013).
- Baumer, E. et al. (2008): Exploring the role of the reader in the activity of blogging. <http://tinyurl.com/ag4rm6z> (08.03.2013).
- Benton, Michael (2006): Why I Blog. *Reconstruction* 6 (4).
<http://reconstruction.eserver.org/064/whyiblog1.shtml> &
<http://reconstruction.eserver.org/064/whyiblog2.shtml> (08.03.2013).
- Blood, R. (2000): Weblogs. A history and perspective. http://www.rebeccablood.net/essays/weblog_history.html (19.10.2011).
- Blood, R. (2002): *The weblog handbook. Practical advice on creating and maintaining your blog*. Cambridge (MA): Perseus.
- Blood, R. (2004): How Blogging Software Reshapes the Online Community. <http://tinyurl.com/btg2yps> (15.12.2011).
- Brake, D. (2007): Personal webloggers and their audiences. Who do they think they are talking to. http://www.well.com/user/derb/brake_who_talking_to.pdf (06.04.2012).
- Brinker, Klaus (1983): Textfunktionen. Ansätze zu ihrer Beschreibung. *ZGL* 11, S. 127–148.
- Brinker, K.(2000): Textfunktionale Analyse. K. Brinker et al. (eds.). *Linguistics of Text and Conversation. An International Handbook of Contemporary Research*. Mouton de Gruyter, S. 175–186.
- Brinker, Klaus (2010): *Linguistische Textanalyse. Eine Einführung in Grundbegriffe und Methoden*. Berlin: E. Schmidt.
- Efimova, L. (2009): *Passion at work. Blogging practices of knowledge workers*. Dissertation. Universiteit Utrecht, Enschede. <https://doc.novay.nl/dsweb/Get/Document-99720> (06.12.2011).
- Glaser, B. & J. Holton (2004): Remodeling Grounded Theory. *Forum: Qualitative Social Research* 5 (2). <http://tinyurl.com/bu2zw9y> (05.03.2013).
- Gumbrecht, M. (2004): Blogs as "Protected Space". <http://www.blogpulse.com/papers/www2004gumbrecht.pdf> (15.12.2011).
- Herring, S. (2003): Past, Present, and Future of Weblogs. SLIS Colloquium Series. vw.indiana.edu/talks04/herring.ppt (31.01.2013).
- Herring, S. et al. (2004): Bridging the Gap. A Genre Analysis of Weblogs. <http://ella.slis.indiana.edu/~herring/herring.scheidt.2004.pdf> (30.03.2012).
- Herring, S. & J. Paolillo (2006): Gender and genre variation in weblogs. <http://tinyurl.com/b3v67zr> (06.12.2011).
- Lenhart, A. & S. Fox (2006): Bloggers. A portrait of the internet's new storytellers. <http://tinyurl.com/cz9pclf> (06.12.2011).
- Nardi, B. et al. (2004): Why we blog. <http://tinyurl.com/cfzhcoe> (06.12.2011).
- Mayring, P. (2010): *Qualitative Inhaltsanalyse. Grundlagen und Techniken*. Weinheim: Beltz.
- Reed, A. (2005): 'My Blog is Me'. Texts and Persons in UK Online Journal Culture (and Anthropology). In: *Ethnos* 70 (2), S. 220–242.
- Rosenberg, S. (2009): *Say everything. How blogging began, what it's becoming, and why it matters*. New York: Three Rivers Press.