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Editorial: Recontextualization: Modes, media, and practices

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Editorial on the Research Topic [Recontextualization: Modes, media, and practices](#)

Since its introduction in [Bernstein's \(1990\)](#) writings on pedagogical discourse in the late 1980s, the concept of recontextualization has gained increasing attention in discourse studies ([van Leeuwen, 2008](#)). In such studies, the recontextualization of semiotic material is broadly understood as a discursive practice through which intertextual (and interdiscursive) relations between two utterances produced at different historical moments are established. Recontextualization thus involves both formal and sociopragmatic dimensions. Formal aspects of recontextualization include different modes of discourse representation (e.g., textual, visual, and multimodal), while sociopragmatic aspects include the positioning of producers vis-à-vis audiences, and changes in illocutionary and perlocutionary aspects of recontextualized utterances, including possible loss of original meaning(s) and addition of new meanings ([Bauman and Briggs, 1990](#)). In the field of pragmatics and discourse studies, recontextualization practices have been studied in the context of traditional mass media and their use of different forms of quotations (e.g., [Fairclough, 1988](#)). However, since the advent of computer-mediated communication and social media with their technically afforded ease of reusing others' messages, practices of "linguistic recycling" ([Haapanen and Perrin, 2020](#)) have become ubiquitous in various other kinds of technology-mediated communication as well.

The aim of this Research Topic is to bring together contributions that deal with the intersection of traditional and "new" practices of recontextualization across discourse modes and media. In this editorial, we begin by giving a quick overview of recontextualization practices, and key dimensions of these that have been studied in discourse studies and pragmatics. We next introduce the five studies that comprise this Research Topic, and summarize the contribution that each makes to advancing our understanding of recontextualization practices across different modes and media. We conclude by briefly outlining directions for future research.

Recontextualization practices

Recontextualisation involves the extraction of semiotic material from a source context and insertion of this material into a target context. It thus recurrently involves three inter-related actions:

1. an original locutor *A* produces an utterance *p* with illocution *x* directed at an audience *A'* at point of time 1 (production of source context);
2. a locutor *B* selects and extracts parts of or the whole utterance *p* at point of time 2 (extraction from source context);
3. locutor *B* produces an utterance *q* with illocution *y* directed at an audience *B'*; this utterance contains parts of (or the whole) utterance *p* and traces of illocution *x* (entextualisation in target context).

The various ways in which the recontextualized utterance *p* contributes to the illocutionary effect of utterance *q* involves a number of key factors, including: (1) the semiotic mode of recontextualized material; (2) formal modes of recontextualization; (3) the medium of recontextualization; (4) participation formats or contexts of recontextualization; and (5) effects of recontextualization. Recontextualization practices are designed to address particular constellations of these factors.

In relation to the first factor, the semiotic mode of recontextualization may be either monomodal or cross-modal. In the case of monomodal recontextualization, the original semiotic mode is preserved during the recontextualization process (although different semiotic modes may allow for different forms of recontextualization). In the case of cross-modal recontextualization, the semiotic mode of the recontextualized item is changed during the recontextualization process. Formal modes of recontextualization refer to whether the recontextualization practice involves direct or indirect quotes, as well as whether it is content oriented or form (e.g., genre) oriented. The medium of recontextualization is important because recontextualization practices may occur in all media of communication, ranging from oral to written through to technology-mediated communication. Similar to the semiotic mode, recontextualization may occur in the same medium or may be cross medial. As different media may have different participation formats (one-to-one vs. one-to-many vs. many-to-many, etc.), recontextualization practices may occur within or across these formats and may hence yield different communicative effects. Finally, the effects of recontextualization range from semantic (e.g., possible loss of original meaning aspects and addition of new meaning aspects of recontextualized items), to pragmatic (e.g., changes in illocutionary and perlocutionary aspects, changes in audience design features of recontextualized items, etc.), through to semiotic aspects of that recontextualized utterance (e.g., changes in indexical value).

Recontextualization practices across modes and media

While early work on recontextualization focused primarily on the role of reported speech and other textual dimensions of recycling prior talk in public (e.g., traditional media) and private (e.g., everyday talk) settings, the rise of new media has enabled the rise of a wider range of recontextualization practices as well as blurring the lines between public and private discourse. The

articles in this Research Topic each address these developments in different ways. The first three articles examine recontextualization practices in the political domain at the intersection of traditional and social media. [Weizman](#) examines responses in the news media and by ordinary online commentators to a speech by the Israeli president during the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic, and demonstrates how recontextualization processes systematically vary along a scale of (in)directness. In a study focusing on how small stories are contextualized and recontextualized by leading British politicians, [Fetzer](#) examines the responses of ordinary online commentators and how (extra-)ordinariness may be contested. [Pfurtscheller](#) examines the discursive processes by which private chat messages by politicians in Austria were recontextualized in the public domain through cross-media transfer and transformation. The role of recontextualization in the private domain is the focus of [Chen and Chen](#) study of WeChat typed talk, and the extent to which such processes reflect features of other forms of naturally-occurring talk. Finally, [Bülow and Johann](#) set out to examine the perceptions of ordinary netizens of political internet memes, demonstrating that such perceptions and effects are primarily a function of the overall presentation of the meme.

Conclusion

The contributions to this Research Topic contribute to furthering our understanding of recontextualization practices across different modes and media, highlighting the importance of engaging with both formal and sociopragmatic dimensions of these practices. They highlight the ways in which the rise of recontextualization practices are breaking down traditional distinctions between public, political, and private discourse, and how different members promote or resist this blurring. The contributions also draw attention to the need for new ways of theorizing these discursive processes, and the need for novel methods that enable us to address the (almost inevitable) variability in how different sections (or even members) of the audience interpret and respond to what and how something has been recontextualized. It is our hope that these studies will collectively stimulate further research that continues to address such questions and imperatives.

Author contributions

All authors listed have made a substantial, direct, and intellectual contribution to the work and approved it for publication.

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