Future Rewind: Language@Play in New Media Discourse

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Abstract. *In the context of technological advances and emerging and transformative practices, language is used creatively in the new media, which has been established as the ultimate space for play, long-existing forms and familiar practices being thus recycled and repurposed. Such creative practices that are manifest predominantly in the consistent and pervasively deliberate attempts to play with norms of spelling, punctuation and grammar, are motivated precisely by the relational needs of the participants, the young people or the so-called non-elites, and not at all by brevity and speed of communication, as previously suggested. What they successfully accomplish is to bring words off the screen and language into life, a unique opportunity that is capitalized by advertisers for obvious marketing purposes. The aim of this article is to develop a conceptual mapping of this new aesthetic on creativity and language play originating in text-messaging styles, as illustrated in popular advertising campaigns.*

Keywords: *new media discourse; advertising; language creativity; language play; commodification*;

> *Well, gentlemen, are you satisfied that resistance is futile?*
> (Arthur J. Burks, *Monsters of Moyen*, 1930)

Introduction: Why Creative 2.0?

As printing was industriously spreading in Europe causing the information revolution of the fifteenth century, in Germany, in 1492, Benedictine abbot Johannes Trithemius wrote a treatise (*De Laude Scriptorum*/ *In Praise of Scribes*) which, first of all, he chose to have printed [*sic*] − bluntly against his own recommendation for preserving the tradition of manuscript hand-copying. In his book, Trithemius lavishly praised the advantages of hand-copied manuscripts, boldly superior to their printed counterparts, for a union of practical and religious reasons, he contends, among the most notable of which were long-term durability of information written on the traditional parchment, its accessibility and costs, and undoubtedly the accuracy of scribes' handwriting.

The monks should not stop copying because of the invention of printing

Brothers, nobody should say or think: "What is the sense of bothering with copying by hand when the art of printing has brought to light so many important books; a huge library can be acquired inexpensively."
I tell you, the man who says this only tries to conceal his own laziness.
All of you know the difference between a manuscript and a printed book. The word written on parchment will last a thousand years. The printed word is on paper. How long will it last? The most you can expect a book of paper to survive is two hundred years. Yet, there are many who think they can entrust their works to paper. Only time will tell. (Trithemius 63)

And time did tell. The monastic system of devotional copying disappeared indeed, but not necessarily because of the rapid spread of printing, but because of the devastating impact that the turbulent times of Reformation had had on monastic life both in England and in Europe. The abbot's voice remained, however, echoed in time by those who were to be petrified at the sight of the first automobile or airplane. Cameras and telephone answering machines produced similar reactions of absolute fear of having souls or voices stolen by the new technologies.

From the first commercial mainframe computers that were developed in the 1950s, which occupied an entire room, to the hand-held devices that were later released to the public, such fears did not die out. On the contrary, they have recently been rebranded as serious threats to the social and linguistic fabric of our millennial existence. A plethora of public debates have centered on the demise of real, face-to-face exchanges that are being replaced by their alternative computer-mediated opportunities created with the technological advances, the question prominently arising from all being: Will language standards be irretrievably compromised by new media in all its forms and fashions?

It was not up until a few years ago that concerns about the damaging effects of computer-mediated communication on the English language could loudly be read in the mainstream media. Thurlow (2006; 2009) presented various such instances of the so-called "moral panic", in particular evident in popular media regarding young people's text messaging habits, including abbreviations, unconventional punctuation, and nonstandard spelling. The media often views these linguistic practices as detrimental to the English language. Quotations from various sources (reported in the literature) highlight the extent of this panic:

> The English language is being beaten up, civilization is in danger of crumbling. (*The Observer*, March 7, 2004; quoted in Thurlow 2006: 678)
> Texters are vandals who are doing to our language what Genghis Khan did to his neighbours eight hundred years ago. They are destroying it: pillaging our punctuation; savaging our sentences; raping our vocabulary. And they must be stopped. (*The Daily Mail*, 2007; quoted in Crystal 2008: 9)
> Text messaging corrupts all languages. (*The Economist*, May 2008; quoted in Thurlow 2009: 1038)

To counter these claims, an understanding of the social and cultural context in which language in new media emerged, can be useful. With the advent of the latest technologies and their immediate influence on the English language, since after all, all communication online is and remains text-based, since 1996, there has been a lot of research interest in the way people communicate in English in the new digital environment (Herring 1996; Danet and Herring 2007; Rowe and Wyss 2009; Baron 2000, 2008; Crystal 2001, 2008).

It is widely known that throughout history, many people have been concerned about the need to establish or maintain linguistic standards in the English language (Baron 2000; Crystal 2008). One example is Orm, an Augustinian canon who proposed a new spelling system in a lengthy homiletic verse around 1200, during a time when medieval English spelling was particularly chaotic. Prescriptive grammars were particularly popular in the 18th and 19th centuries, with self-appointed authorities setting out normative rules, including the rule against ending sentences with prepositions. The lower classes were among the consumers of these handbooks, as proper speech and writing were seen as necessary for improving one's social status. The 20th century saw a new generation of language pundits, such as Henry Fowler in England and John Simon or Edwin Newman in the United States, with Lynne Truss and the popular press continuing this tradition in the early 21st century.

However, it is important to consider this focus on prescriptivism in a broader linguistic and social context. As Naomi Baron argues in *Alphabet to E-mail* (2000), the relationship between speech and writing has undergone major changes over the past 1200 years. In earlier times, writing primarily served to record formal spoken word or to be re-presented as speech, with authors like Chaucer and Shakespeare reading their works aloud. Later, writing emerged as a distinct medium from speech and became a platform for defining standard language. Yet, in recent decades, writing has shifted back

towards recording informal speech, resulting in a more casual style of 'off-line' writing such as the language of e-mail and texting (as opposed to the language of newspapers and magazines).

These linguistic changes have also had significant social consequences, including a trend towards social informality in address, casual dress, and a shift in the role of teachers from being the center of the classroom or the so-called *sage on the stage* to *guide on the side* (Baron 2000). The rise of youth culture has also influenced adult behavior patterns, and multiculturalism has led to greater tolerance for people from non-mainstream (cultural and/or linguistic) backgrounds.

It is specifically at the heart of this youth culture that the new digital-social milieu that suited the modes of interaction favoured by those inhabiting the *Userland* emerged– the Web 2.0. The term has already become associated with popular web-based platforms characterised by social interaction and user-generated content. The emergence of Web 2.0 has led to new forms of human discourse, including text, audio, video, and static images, which may require new methods of analysis, hence Discourse 2.0 (Herring 2013). While some aspects of the discourse in these environments are familiar, others have been reconfigured and new and emergent phenomena have arisen (Crowston and Williams 2000). The concept of "technological affordance" (Gibson 1977) was also adapted to refer to the newly emerged situation in which technology provides opportunities and constraints on human action, without the assumption that these opportunities are innately known by the individuals (Norman 1999).

Consequently, the study of new media requires consideration of both technological and social factors, including multimodality, media convergence, and situational and cultural aspects. While some of these factors may not be new to new media, they continue to shape the way we use language and communicate in the digital age.

Research objective
In the context of technological advances and emerging practices, language is used creatively in the new media, the ultimate *space for play*, existing forms and familiar practices being thus recycled and repurposed. Such creative practices that are manifest predominantly in the consistent and pervasively deliberate attempts to play with norms of spelling, punctuation and grammar, are motivated precisely by the relational needs of the participants, the young people or the so-called *non-elites*. We dismiss therefore the arguments of brevity and speed of communication that were previously discussed in the literature (Crystal 2008, Baron 2008, Crispin and Poff 2013). What is successfully accomplished is this effect that words are brought off the screen and language into life, a unique opportunity that is capitalized by advertisers

for obvious marketing purposes. The research objective in this article is to propose a conceptual mapping of the *new aesthetic* of recent advertising campaigns (English-language-rooted) on creativity and language play originating in text-messaging styles in the new media. What we intend to explore is to what extent such new media creative uses of language still maintain their authenticity if disembedded from their playful native context of informal e-chat and repurposed as recycled forms.

Language play in the new media discourse
In the study of creativity, the focus has shifted from the elitist view of 'high culture' (of art or theatre) to urban exchanges among ordinary language users. This is evident in the works of various scholars, including Carter (2004), Cook (2000), and Crystal (1998). The creative practices of young people and non-elites who are not in control of the official mechanisms by which they are represented have also been studied by Cameron (2000) and Bourdieu (1999). In the new media environment, as a mode of vernacular literacy, creativity is characterized by its poetic, playful, and pragmatic nature.

What is language play in the new media discourse after all? Tones of the afore-mentioned voices of 'moral panic' are immediately revived, excerpted from the mainstream media: *hieroglyphs, gobbledegook, technobabble, crysptic chat, jumble, ramblings, cryptic symbols, gibberish, argle-bargle, hodgepodge communication*. To silence such voices permanently, we ought to consider the anti-establishment of new media discourse a.k.a. Discourse 2.0, primarily characterised by non-standard, innovative orthographic, discursive and stylistic tactics (North 2007). Innovation in orthography is typically represented by 'incorrect' spelling and grammar. Typical examples include: uncapitalised first-person pronoun 'i', no genitive apostrophe, no apostrophe for third person singular verbs forms, drop of the vowel 'e' in regular past tense verb forms. Colloquialisms (*nope*, *playin*, *jus*, *sec* etc.) are also highly represented here. Among notable discursive tactics we mention topics (gossip etc.); humour (hehe); laughter (hahaha); taboo (punning); in-group terms; teasing. Stylistic devices are also rich in form, from onomatopoeia, capitalisation, emotes to reduplicated punctuation.

None of all such instances of innovation or non-standard use of language will in fact obstruct understanding. Innovative, non-standard use of language by the young communities of users of the latest technologies advances what we might call *vernacular orthography* (Shortis 2007) which entails the recycling of existing forms and familiar practices. The real significance and creativity of new media language does not lie in its orthographic innovation motivated by brevity and communication efficiency

or by speech simulation (Shortis 2007; Thurlow and Poff 2013). Creative practice is motivated by the pragmatic, relational needs of participants as much as by their deliberate attempts to play with norms of spelling, punctuation and grammar.

New media discourse exemplifies the creative possibilities that emerge out of, in spite of, and because of restrictions and obstacles. Previous studies validated e-chat as being closest to the variety of spoken language, containing more prominent colloquial and vernacular features than any other digital genres for at least two reasons: its synchronous nature that allows for real-time, interactive exchanges and its familiar conversational patterns that caters for small and playful talk (Crystal 2001, Paolillo 2001). Drawn from Jones and Schieffelin (2008, 2011), samples of reported speech (English native) in Instant Messaging demonstrate self-evident visual or multimodal literacy at play. As argued in Jones and Schieffelin, the effect is to create a sense of functional immediacy and dramatic tension such as with the dramatic pause '...'; hyper-stylised exclamation 'oooo'; frustrated call out 'ZACHARY'; surprised phonological effect '!!!!!" and 'OOOOHHHH'; the exaggerated performance of '::moans::' and 'Nooo'; the dramatic staging of '*complete silence*'.

To gather more linguistic evidence and to parallel the native use with the non-native use of English in text-messaging styles, we collected our own sample of reported speech (non-native English) in IM from a chat group of undergraduate English majors at Ovidius University of Constanta, Romania. All the participants were informed about the language collected. The following extracts are part of a transcription that Ioana Șandru completed as part of an optional language postgraduate course assignment.

Extract 1
1. leaffkun: hi bestieeee
2. EXALTED: Hiii bestie
3. leaffkun: how are youuuu
4. EXALTED: I'm goooood! How are you?
5. leaffkun: i'm great thank you!
6. leaffkun: i am here to bring you some news
7. leaffkun: some… mews?
8. leaffkun: (sends cat picture)

As illustrated in Extract 1, the ellipsis marks create a dramatic pause (line 7), which in turn expresses a sense of immediacy and tension. The example also illustrates non-standard, innovative orthographic techniques such as 'incorrect' spelling. In this category we can mention the use of uncapitalised 'i' (line 5) and the colloquialism 'bestie' (line 2), an informal

variant of the term 'best friend' (line 2). In reference to stylistic devices, we identify the exaggerated repetition of vowels, 'Hiii' (line 2), 'goooood' (line 4), which functions as an intensifier in the process of the rhetorical lengthening. The onomatopoeia in the same sample leads to the formation of a new word which imitates another, based on similarity in pronunciation: 'mews'- 'news' (lines 6-7).

Extract 2
1. Wendy: i feel cheated.
2. Wendy: also good luck!!!
3. Alma: yeah me too
4. Alma: thank you!
5. Alma: btw how are you?
6. Wendy: i'm okay
7. Wendy: a lil sick
8. Wendy: i've been sick since 2 weeks ago and it doesn't want to recover
9. Alma: oh nooo thats awful :^(
10. Alma: maybe youre allergic to something????
11. Wendy: oh and um
12. Wendy: i got a boyfriend
13. Wendy: BYE
14. Alma: a WHAT

Extract 2 shows similar non-standard, innovative orthographic techniques, more specifically, the 'incorrect' spelling: 'i' is not capitalized (line 1), the apostrophe does not appear between the subject and the short form of the verb 'be, 'youre' (line 10), and the colloquialisms 'lil' (line 7) and 'yeah' (line 3) are used. The reduplicated punctuation '????' (line 10) and the dramatic repetition of vowels 'nooo' (line 9) appear in this extract as well, alongside the use of emotes ':^(' (line 9) and the use of capitalisation which creates a dramatic exit: 'BYE' (line 13). The written interjections 'oh' and 'um' (line 11) have the role of imitating spoken conversation, whereas the abbreviation 'btw' is specific to written conversation.

Mapping creativity
In the ever-evolving landscape of new media discourse, the intersection of creativity and language play becomes a crucial focal point. In an attempt to map the intricate terrain of creativity within this context, we draw on linguistic innovation, social dynamics, and power structures.
The conventional narrative of creativity often aligns with notions of freedom and unshackling constraints. However, Negus and Pickering (2004)

prompt reconsideration, asserting that creativity is not a solitary, autonomous force. Instead, it operates within the boundaries of convention, shaping and being shaped by existing rules, devices, codes, and procedures. This paradoxical relationship between creativity, normativity, and structure lays the foundation for understanding its nuanced manifestations in new media discourse.

A dynamic interplay is sandwiched between fixity and mobility, constraint and freedom, convention and innovation (also articulated in Jakobson; Maybin, Swann). This tension forms the context from which creativity emerges, challenging binary oppositions and emphasizing the coexistence of seemingly contradictory elements. Understanding this tension is crucial for deciphering the intricate relation between creativity and normativity.

While traditional perspectives often associate creativity with 'work time,' Liberman (1977), Murdoch and Ganim (1993), and Sutton-Smith (2001) redirect attention to 'down time' (leisure, pleasure, and play). This spatio-temporal shift challenges the notion that creativity is confined to professional spheres, highlighting its pervasive nature across various aspects of human experience. Acknowledging creativity in both work and leisure unveils a richer tapestry of linguistic innovation in new media discourse.

Crucially, creativity is not just a linguistic phenomenon but is deeply embedded in the immediate cultural and social context (Maybin, Swann 2006). In the context of language play, creativity is intrinsically linked with humor, emphasizing its social and pragmatic functions.

Humor thus emerges as a potent catalyst for creativity. Thurlow (2007) sheds light on the challenges faced by young people employing artful language, particularly when their expressions encounter censorious interventions from language workers, a.k.a journalists and the semiotic merchants of commerce, a.k.a advertisers (Jones, Schieffelin 2009). The reluctance to acknowledge emerging literacies in new media discourse, noted by Burgess (2006, 2010), reveals a reactionary stance. Understanding this resistance is essential for unraveling the complex dynamics between the purists of language, educators, policy makers, and the evolving landscape of new media discourse. Cameron (1995) and Foucault (1981) delve into the sociolinguistic realities that dictate why certain examples of creative discourse are deemed 'good and acceptable' while others are labeled 'bad.' All this absolutely points to inherent biases that influence our perceptions, highlighting the need for a nuanced understanding of societal perspectives on language use.

Everyday creativity that is born from unsanctioned, non-elite marvels of language is undeniably pervasive and plays a pivotal role in preventing language and culture from stagnating. It implies that the everyday, seemingly

mundane linguistic creations contribute significantly to the vitality and evolution of language and culture.

In recent years, human communication has undergone a process of technological integration and commodification, as discussed by Fairclough (1992) and Cameron (2000). The use of social networks as technological tools for fostering sociability is frequently subject to devaluation and criticism. There is a limited acknowledgment of the fact that many activities undertaken by young people in the realm of new media primarily revolve around facilitating interpersonal relations. The idealization and misrepresentation of new media by traditional media outlets are centered on preparing young individuals for consumption. Youth becomes a strategic market commodity and a fashion aesthetic, employed to meet the consumer-based demands of privileged adults, as emphasized by Giroux (19).

Drawing from the 2007 Canadian advertising campaign for the Calvin Klein perfume, twelve ads are sampled to illustrate various forms of play inherent in language, including type play, word play, interactional play, identity play, sound play, and topical play, which provide tangible examples of the diverse creative expressions found within the realm of new media discourse.

Examples of commodification of new media language

The following ads were sampled from popular advertising campaigns from 1993 to 2021. Classified into five categories (beverage, food, transport, technology and pharmaceuticals), they offer relevant examples of languages play, recycled and recontextualised.

As illustrated in Sample 1 (Figure 1), sound play is created by similarity in the pronunciation of two words: 'here' is replaced by 'hare' in order to represent the emblem of the product. Thus, the slogan, 'wish you were hare', has double meaning: it conveys the idea of closeness between people and illustrates the representative character of the brand.

Figure 1. Sample 1 [BEVERAGE] Badger Campaign, UK, 2012

Sample 2 (Figure 2) is illustrative of two types of language play. The word play can be recognized by the use of colloquialisms: 'YO!', 'whassup!', 'bud', 'nothin'', 'watchin'', 'havin'. The capitalisation in 'TRUE' and 'YO' and the repetition of 'whassup!' are examples of type play. We notice that these phrases are typical of spoken, informal English, especially among members of social groups.

Figure 2. Sample 2 [BEVERAGE] Budweiser Campaign, US, 1999

The next sample (Figure 3) is an example of word play through the use of the colloquialism 'nope'. This informal variant of 'no' usually appears in spoken discourse, but in our example, it functions as an eye-catcher: it attracts, through its simplicity, customers' attention.

Figure 3. Sample 3 [BEVERAGE] Gordon Campaign, US, 2014

Figure 4. Sample 4 [BEVERAGE] Hansa Pilsener, South Africa, 2011

In sample 4, which is again a beverage ad (Hansa Pilsener, 2011), we notice the nonstandard spelling of 'that's', due to the absence of the apostrophe between the demonstrative 'that' and the verb 'be'. Moreover, the ad deals with both type play, as shown in the phrase 'THAT'S POURFECT!', and sound play, created by the blended word 'pourfect', as the combination between the verb 'pour' and the adjective 'perfect'. The choice of applying this word building process can be explained by the context in which the newly-created word

appears: *to pour* means to make a liquid, in our case the beer, flow from a container into another container hence the picture of the glass.

The last sample in this category (Mickey's Campaign, 2013) deals with word play, in the form of colloquialisms. The words 'friggin'' and 'waitin'' are employed as to suggest the informality of the message conveyed by the slogan. The absence of the final 'g' is characteristic of spoken discourse.

Figure 5. Sample 5 [BEVERAGE] Mickey's Campaign, US, 2013
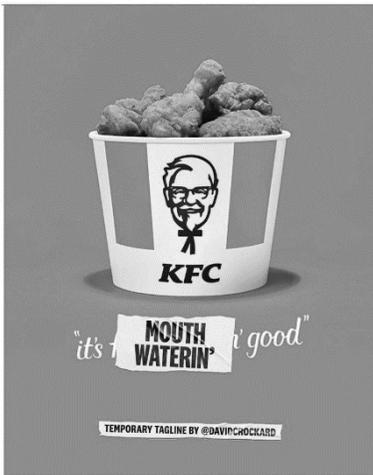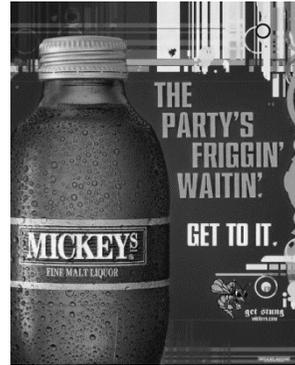
Figure 6. Sample 6 [FOOD] KFC Campaign, US, 2020

Moving on to the next category of ads, it is easy to notice that sample 6 (KFC Campaign, 2020) is an illustrative example of word play because of the colloquialism 'waterin'' which appears in the new slogan 'it's mouth waterin' good'. During the Covid pandemic, it functioned as a replacement for the original slogan 'it's finger lickin' good'.

Figure 7. Sample 7 [FOOD] Snickers Campaign, US, 2013

Sample 7 (Snickers Campaign, 2013) is full of instances of sound play and words misspelled. The sound play is based on the similarity in the pronunciation of the following words: 'deer'-'dear', 'your'-'you're', 'keap'-'keep', 'to'-'too', 'mutch'-'much', while the nonstandard spelling is easily recognized in the examples 'its', 'spel' and 'snikcers'. However, the message itself explains the choice of giving up on spelling norms: 'its hard to spel when your hungry'.

Figure 8. Sample 8 [TRANSPORT] Air Asia Campaign, Malaysia, 2008

Sample 8 (Air Asia Campaign, 2008) is illustrative of sound play based on similarity in pronunciation. Judging by the category in which the ad belongs, the choice of using the geographical name 'Phuket' is self-explanatory. However, it does not convey only the name of the Thai island, but also the phrase 'fuck it'. On top of that, the latter leads to topical play, as the ad experiments with norms of appropriateness and politeness.

Sample 9 (Opel Campaign, 2019) has the communicative function of warning drivers not to text while driving. In order to exemplify the effects of this bad habit, the ad resorts to the use of misspelled words: 'typijing', 'drivinh'.
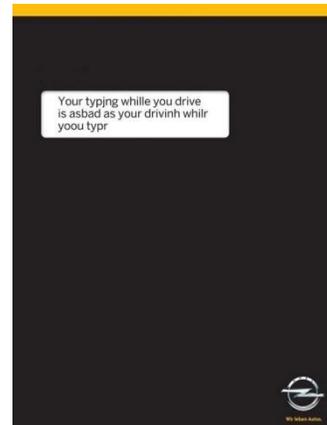
Figure 9. Sample 9 [TRANSPORT] Opel Campaign, Germany, 2019

Figure 10. Sample 10 [TECHNOLOGY] IBM Campaign, US, 1993

Sample 10 (IBM Campaign, 1993), belonging in the technology category, is an instance of sound play. Starting from Descartes's 'I think, therefore I am', the ad creates a similar slogan which contains the name of the company: 'I think, therefore IBM'. The association between 'I am' and the company's name is possible through the pronunciation of the letters I, B and M.

In the same category we can include the example of word play in sample 11 (VPN Campaign, 2021). Similar to the ad in extract 1, the sound play is based on the similar pronunciation of the words 'cyber' and 'cybear' and on the fact that this novel word refers to the emblem of the company.

Figure 11. Sample 11 [TECHNOLOGY] VPN Campaign, US, 2021
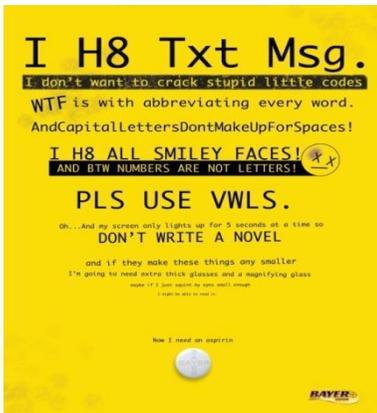

Figure 12. Sample 12 [PHARMACEUTICALS] Bayer Campaign, Germany, 2008

Our last sample (Bayer Campaign, 2008), which is part of the pharmaceuticals category, is rich in different types of language play. Starting with sound play, the eye-catching 'H8' is a homophone based on the combination between letter 'h' and number 'eight'. The capitalisation in the sentences 'PLS USE VWLS', 'DON'T WRITE A NOVEL' and the repetition of 'H8' are instances of type play and they act as methods of attracting viewers' attention. In the group of abbreviations, we can include 'Txt Msg.', 'WTF', 'BTW', 'PLS' and 'VWLS', specific of informal, written English. Due to the fact that the abbreviation 'WTF' violates the norms of appropriateness and politeness, the ad also deals with topical play.

The examples sampled from popular English-language advertisements from 1993 to 2021, categorized into five groups (beverage, food, transport, technology, and pharmaceuticals), showcase diverse instances of language play that are recycled and recontextualized from original, native informal e-chat. In the beverage category, sound play is cleverly employed by creating a dual meaning; at the same time, language play is further generated on heavy use of informal, colloquial English. In the food category, the advertisement demonstrates word play colloquialisms, sound play and intentional misspellings. In the transport category, sound play and topical play are used

by playing with norms of appropriateness and politeness. The technology category also features sound play by associating the company's name with Descartes's famous phrase. Word play is based on similar pronunciation. In the pharmaceuticals category, sound play, type play in capitalizations and repetitions, and topical play through unconventional abbreviations are also used. Overall, these advertisements showcase the creative and strategic use of language play across different industries. Clearly, such recontextualisation, beyond its unexpectedly exotic, foolish, even outrageous nuances that result from the separation from their original context, i.e. informal e-chat, serves the marketing purposes best. On the one hand, in the media etc. there has been a lot of concern about the misuse of language online, as argued previously; on the other hand, in the market there has never been more obvious demand for innovative and commercially minded solutions and strategies to gain competitive advantages and meet the ever changing customers' needs.

Concluding remarks
The intricate convergence of creativity and language within the sphere of new media discourse involves a multifaceted interplay of diverse forces, each exerting influence and continuously shaping the media landscape in distinctive ways. This dynamic interplay contributes to the ever-evolving nature of the intersection between creativity and language in the context of new media discourse.

The collaborative efforts of language workers and semiotic merchants often result in the exaggeration of separateness within youth culture and their creative practices. This disembedding from ordinary playful contexts is then recontextualized for marketing purposes, ultimately selling back the language at play to the very individuals who initially crafted it.

As observed through the lens of scholars like Thurlow (2007), the authentic playfulness and vernacular creativities of the youth are resemioticized not merely as exotic but as strategically designed to appeal to the senses and memories of the millennial generation. This demographic, having extensively utilized these forms of communication during their formative years when the technologies were still in their infancy, becomes the most substantial target audience for such recontextualized language at play.

The close relationship between creativity, humor, and play, as highlighted by scholars like North (2007) and Danet (2001), underscores the significance of these elements in shaping the language practices that become the fetishized objects of commerce. Text-messaging serves as an epitome of non-standard shorthand language that media loves to criticize; yet it has

become an integral part of the expressive and creative modes in the digital age.

However, it seems that the danger of fixating solely on linguistic forms and orthographic features when analyzing new media discourse has never been more real. It is absolutely true, however, that although adopting overly restricted viewpoints may be tempting, assessments of language and creativity goes beyond mere practical applications. These evaluations should consider broader aspects such as ideologies, societal status, and existing inequalities. The cautionary guidance underscores the need to appreciate the multifaceted nature of language and creativity, acknowledging their profound implications on not just practical usage but also on overarching belief systems, societal hierarchies, and issues of fairness. In this context, a comprehensive understanding requires looking beyond the immediate application of language and creativity to encompass the diverse and interconnected realms of ideologies, social standing, and disparities. By broadening our perspective in this manner, we gain a more nuanced comprehension of the intricate interplay between language, creativity, and the complex socio-cultural fabric, ultimately enriching our appreciation and analysis of these intricate phenomena.

The discourse surrounding new media is not a mere simulation of speech; it is a distinct, expressive mode with its own meaning potentials, aesthetic pleasures, and poetic nuances. Previous research reminds us that learning how to write involves unlearning how to produce multimodal, visual representations, highlighting the need to embrace the multimodal nature of new media discourse.

The transformative nature of digital humanities work further amplifies the understanding of new media discourse. As technological capabilities evolve, so do the semiotic and creative possibilities. The boundaries between art, commerce, and vernacular creativity blur, mirroring the cultural politics of young people's engagement with new media, akin to the rebellious spirit of graffiti.

Thurlow (2006, 2007) aptly describes the cultural politics surrounding new media, where the vernacular becomes elite, and the creative becomes normative. This judgment is often fuelled by an exaggerated sense of novelty, presentism, and alarmist opposition from the established literacies. The language play of new media communicators is unfairly labelled as unauthorized, subject to ridicule, or outright condemnation.

Yet, this article asserts that evaluating the creativity of new media language requires a double standard. The language play of new media communicators is as creative, imaginative, and reflexive as concrete poetry or verbal art. The terms used to describe this creativity (anti-language,

subcultural, transgressive, counterliteracy, weird English) all underscore the innovative nature of the language practices in the digital realm.

In essence, new media discourse transcends linguistic boundaries, becoming fully multimodal and reaching a material extent where language is not just spoken or written but is felt, lived, and organic. The physical consequences of language creativity in new media discourse are both pleasurable and political, demonstrating the transformative power of creativity and innovation. As Lessing (2002) pointed out, creativity builds on the past, but the past attempts to control the very creativity it fosters.

In conclusion, rising above the superficial curiosity of language workers a.k.a. journalists [sic] and semiotic merchants a.k.a. advertisers [sic] requires recognizing and appreciating the multifaceted nature of new media discourse. It demands a broader perspective that embraces the playful, artful, and provocative aspects of language at play, acknowledging its aesthetic regard for normative practices while challenging the double standards imposed by exaggerated novelty and opposition from established literacies. Ultimately, understanding new media discourse involves navigating the dynamic interplay between creativity, language, and the transformative potential of digital humanities.

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