



Annarita Taronna. *Digital English as a Lingua Franca: Shaping New Models through Question-and-Answer Websites*, Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2022, 259 pp. ISBN (10): 1-5275-8800-9; ISBN (13): 978-1-5275-8800-4.

Digital English as a Lingua Franca is a cutting-edge study that stems from an ambitious research project exploring emotions underlying Question and Answer websites. Its main objective is to identify and establish new models for sentiment analysis to be applied in the realm of online communication.

The topical value of Annarita Taronna's monograph is intimately connected with the issue concerning the rise of the digital age and its profound implications on human interaction, which nowadays tends to be largely performed on virtual platforms. Therefore, starting from the assumption that the advent of the internet has provided fertile ground for the development of alternative ways to bring people together beyond physical boundaries, this work draws its lifeblood from the great potential of online communication, which is conceived as a space of encounter and socio-cultural sharing, where the traditional codes of interaction are subverted.

This book consists of four chapters examining the different facets of digital communication from a theoretical and practical perspective. The contents are thoroughly analysed and clearly exposed, which makes the text a useful resource for both expert and non-expert audiences.

Chapter 1 relies on a comprehensive literature review of the evolution of language and communication in the digital age, challenging Lakoff's (1982) standard categorization of written and spoken discourse, as the line between the two has become increasingly blurred. In this context, the emergence of the so-called "e-language" over the past two decades, typically observed on Q&A websites, is a consequence of the ever-increasing overlap between written and spoken communication, creating a unique form of speech that can bridge the physical gap between people. Furthermore, since Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) continues to gain traction as a burgeoning research field, Taronna's study delves into an in-depth and exhaustive exploration of this umbrella term, taking Squires's (2016) seminal work as a model. The significance of CMC is emphasized in this chapter, highlighting its potential as a formidable instrument in shaping culture and ideology while simultaneously challenging socio-linguistic boundaries.

Chapter 2 focuses on the role of English in digital communication, with emphasis on its exceptional global standing as the *lingua franca* of CMC and Q&A websites accordingly. In this context, English is viewed as the glue that binds internet users together in accordance with the principle of "unity through diversity", so that this shared language enables individuals from various linguistic backgrounds and diverse cultures to connect with one another.

In Chapter 3, the analysis of the aesthetics of Q&A websites proves to be fundamental as it sets the stage for a pioneering study, presented in the final part of this monograph. The author here dwells

on the cultural, social, and linguistic value of these innovative platforms, regarded as a frontier area of research that still holds immense potential for exploration. Most importantly, a consideration of the emotional impact of language lies at the core of the chapter. In this regard, Taronna evokes Jakobson's (1960) widely recognised article *Linguistics and Poetics* in order to stress that the word and the world are closely linked, thus implying that language is not a mere exchange of information at a cognitive level, but a means to convey emotions, too. Moreover, she observes how Q&A websites are a successful vehicle for expressing emotions and opinions, arguing that the use of specific lexical items and morphosyntactic patterns in questions elicits a certain reaction (positive or negative), thereby affecting the overall emotive quality of the replies.

The closing chapter of this book represents a point of convergence of all previous observations on digital communication and the role of emotions within online platforms. Hence, Taronna conducts a ground-breaking case study, in which she resorts to sentiment analysis in order to gauge the efficacy of interactions on Stack Exchange, a large network of Q&A websites, by evaluating how questions, answers, and comments are formulated.

One of the major strengths of *Digital English as a Lingua Franca* is the combination of rigorous methodology with a critical evaluation of the two Q&A websites selected from Stack Exchange, namely English Language & Usage (ELU) and Language Learning (LL). Sentiment analysis is carried out by blending a functional and pragmatist approach with the author's personal assessment of the collected data. In addition, Taronna adeptly exploits the intersections of affective computing as well as applied, and computational linguistics yielding a well-organised piece of research with remarkably insightful findings, whose sphere of application encompasses the pedagogical realm. Thus, by postulating that online platforms are a place of identity construction, where linguistic diversity and variation are widely embraced, the end results of this study successfully contribute to a deeper understanding of the pervasiveness of digital English on the internet, occupying a niche in the domain of applied linguistics, employed in order to investigate question-and-answer websites, which are still a relatively unexplored field of research when compared to mainstream social media, such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.

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