

From the e-sphere

Understanding orality through online fanfiction: Implications for writing and pedagogy

Vittorio Marone and Anthony D. Neely

Abstract

Fanfiction is a work of fantasy in which fans write stories based on original books, movies, TV series, and other cultural and artistic forms of expression. This study looks into fanfiction dedicated to the popular TV series Breaking Bad. In particular, it examines how fans construct the (spoken) dialogues of their (written) stories. The article explores the pedagogic value of using fanfiction in educational contexts, focusing on the analysis, creation, and enactment of stories inspired by TV series and movies that feature a combination of narration and 'written speech.'

The article also offers practical recommendations for classroom and online activities that support the development of skills and understandings related to writing and orality. The effort of representing speech in a written form (i.e., writing dialogues and descriptions of conversations) can help students reflect, with the aid of the teacher, on the distinctiveness and specificity of written and spoken communication. By comparing, contrasting, and critiquing audiovisual and written texts (e.g., the episodes of a TV series and the transcriptions of its dialogues), and by creating their own dialogue-rich stories, students can improve their understanding of the idiosyncrasies of writing and orality across modes, thus advancing their literacy and critical skills as creative producers, not just consumers, of popular culture and media.

KEYWORDS: ORALITY AND WRITING; ONLINE FANFICTION; FANDOMS; YOUTH INTERESTS; TV SHOWS; BREAKING BAD

Affiliation

University of Texas at San Antonio, One UTSA Circle, San Antonio, TX, USA
Email: vittorio.marone@utsa.edu (corresponding author)

Introduction

Since the time of Aristotle, scholars have examined the intricate relationship between written and oral forms of communication. Though different, there is often an overlap between the two constructs in which written communication resembles oral and vice versa (Biber and Finegan, 1989; Chafe and Danielewicz, 1987; Horowitz, 1987; Tannen, 1982). While written and oral forms of communication tend to differ in sentence structure, lexical density, grammatical intricacy, degree of spontaneity, organization, and contextual embeddedness (Amador-Moreno and McCafferty, 2012; Halliday, 1987; Horowitz and Samuels, 1987; Hughes, 2009), it has been said that written and oral communication are interrelated and ‘work together to create a new discourse (and mind) that ultimately creates new knowledge’ (Horowitz, 2007: xi). One such form of new discourse is the composition of written dialogue in works of fiction.

While written communication tends to be more artificial than oral, in that it can be edited and refined before being made public (Halliday, 1987), the construction of written dialogue in works of fiction challenges authors to bridge the spoken and written by producing text-based representations of oral dialogue. Page (1988) contends there is a dilemma in this task:

The writer of dialogue [...] seeks to create by the use of one medium the effect of language used in another, and if there is a means by which this can be accomplished, however incompletely, it is certainly not by the slavish reproduction of the features of actual speech. (p. 11)

In other words, attempting to accurately capture the natural tenets of oral communication is difficult because written communication lacks ‘the detailed rendering of both the contextual and the phonological elements that carry much of the information and significance conveyed by real speech’ (Amador-Moreno and McCafferty, 2012: 1). Likewise, the degree to which the nuances of spoken communication are mimicked in written form can influence readers’ perceptions of the quality of a written dialogue. For example, although it is possible for written dialogue to represent authentic features of oral communication such as colloquialisms, stammers, interruptions, laughter, and pauses, there is a delicate balance between making such representations appear authentic or absurd to readers (Amador-Moreno and Nunes, 2009).

While fictional dialogues are crafted for artistic purposes, as opposed to scientific purposes (Ives, 1950), authors of fictional dialogues take on the role of sociolinguists who capture and construct oral communication in written form (Amador-Moreno and McCafferty, 2012). In this article, the authors explore such constructions in works of online fanfiction by

examining the ways in which authors express or signal the use of orality in their stories. This is achieved by analyzing 'cues of orality' in written texts. A cue is a 'marking in the structure of the language that expresses some information that can be used to determine the relationship between forms and meanings' (Kail and Diakogiorgi, 1994: 325). In this context, the authors use the terms 'cues', 'markers', and 'signal words' of orality interchangeably to denote vocabulary choices which represent or signify everyday talk in written form. Additionally, the article discusses ways in which the analysis and creation of fanfiction by students can improve their understanding of writing and orality across modes.

Online fanfiction

Fanfiction is a form of contemporary literacy in which fans construct and co-construct original works of literature and art based on television shows, movies, video games, and books (Berkowitz, 2013; Jenkins, 1992; Mackey and McClay, 2008). Although not part of the traditional literary canon, notable scholars in the field of new literacy studies, such as Gee (2004) and Lankshear and Knobel (2008), contend that researchers and practitioners alike should consider non-traditional literacies, such as fanfiction, in curricular design and pedagogical applications, in order to advance students' reading, writing, critical, analytical, and creative skills. Supporting this stance, numerous studies have explored the relationships between student-composed fanfiction and writing practice. For example, it has been proposed that fanfiction can motivate students to participate in writing activities because it not only allows them to compose works related to their own interests, but it also allows them to receive authentic feedback from others with whom they share said interest (Curwood, Magnifico, and Lammers, 2013). Fanfiction has also been shown to benefit diverse learner populations, such as English language learners, supporting their development in writing proficiency and empowering them to express their own voice (Black 2005, 2006; Jwa, 2012). Additionally, composition and publication of fanfiction allows students to be part of web-based communities in which they are exposed to diverse cultural perspectives and can actively participate as readers, commenters, and authors (Black, 2005, 2006; Jenkins, Purushotma, Weigel, Clinton, and Robinson, 2009). In this context, the Internet offers broad opportunities for reading, critiquing, and sharing fanfiction in communities that stem from the interests of their participants. Gee (2004) defines these places as 'affinity spaces', calling attention to the socially building and binding functions of interests ('affinities') in physical and virtual sites ('spaces') open to user contribution and participation.

In the context of online fanfiction, one of the most popular websites is the *Archive of Our Own*, 'a fan-created, fan-run, non-profit, non-commercial archive for transformative fanworks' (<http://archiveofourown.org>). The website features more than 16,000 fandoms (interest-related domains), almost 400,000 registered users, and 1.2 million fanworks (texts and artifacts created and shared by fans). On the website, fandoms are divided into ten main categories (plus an 'uncategorized' section): 'anime and manga'; 'books and literature'; 'cartoons, comics, and graphics novels'; 'celebrities and real people'; 'movies'; 'music and bands'; 'other media'; 'theater'; 'TV shows'; and 'video games'. This study focuses on the 'TV shows' section and, more specifically, on fanfiction dedicated to the popular TV series *Breaking Bad* (five seasons, 2008–2013), collected in a dedicated subsection.

In their online texts, fans imagine 'prequels' and 'sequels' (stories that respectively precede or follow the accounts presented in the TV series), spin-off plots (that often feature secondary characters as protagonists), and more. In these practices fans 'transpose' the oral interactions of imagined dialogues between the characters of the TV series into written form, alternating and complementing narration with direct speech enclosed in quotation marks. This fan-produced transposition of orality into written form is similar to the non-professional practice of subtitling audiovisual media, called 'fansubbing' (Hu, 2006; Lee, 2011). Bruti and Zanotti (2012) conducted a linguistic analysis of the markers of orality in 'fansubs' (fan-produced subtitles) created by Italian fans of the American TV series *Lost* (2004–2010). They report that, compared to professional subtitles, fansubs feature 'greater accuracy in rendering idiolectal traits, character identity and intertextual references' (p. 168), with a remarkable degree of innovation and creativity. This is attributed to a better knowledge and understanding of contexts, events, and characters in the TV series, as fans produce subtitles for their peers, who share the same passion and a sophisticated knowledge of the topic. Both fansubbing and fanfiction are oftentimes undertaken in online settings (O'Hagan, 2011) that offer ample opportunities for social, creative, and learning practices, such as collaborative writing, reciprocal feedback, and negotiation of meanings (Gee, 2004; Jenkins *et al.*, 2009).

Objectives and methods

This study has two main objectives. The first one is to understand how creators of written online fanfiction cue orality (direct speech) in their stories. The second one is to propose pedagogic approaches that integrate fanfiction (and the cues/markers found in the analysis) in activities aimed at improving students' understanding and proficiency in the use of

orality in written and spoken contexts. In other words, the authors argue that the diamesic transformation (transition from oral to written code) in interest-driven fan-generated texts can be beneficial for the understanding of writing and orality (Horowitz and Samuels, 1987), the development of transmodal competencies (writing/oral), and the advancement of writing skills through analysis, composition, and performance in cooperative settings, both face-to-face and online, supervised by the teacher and supported by technologies. Further, the written form of orality forces students to reflect on paralinguistic and phonostylistic (verbal and nonverbal) features of spoken face-to-face discourse (Guillot, 2008), such as intonation or hand gestures, that are difficult, if not totally impossible, to render in written form.

For this study, the authors randomly selected 10 fan stories (for a total of approximately 20,000 words) dedicated to the TV series *Breaking Bad*. The stories have been downloaded from the *Fandoms > TV shows > Breaking Bad* subsection of the *Archive of Our Own* website (<http://archiveofourown.org>). Given the organization and privacy rules of the website, it was not possible to determine users' personal identifiers such as sex, age, and origin. The linguistic analysis focused on cues of orality in quoted speech sentences, in order to understand what kinds of markers fans-authors used to signal, convey, and characterize direct speech in their stories.

Cues of orality in online fanfiction

The analysis of the fan-created stories showed that fanfiction writers use a variety of tools to express orality in their written renditions of spoken dialogues (enclosed in quotation marks). Instead of referencing pre-determined lists of cues of orality, the authors used a discourse analysis approach. In particular, paraphrasing Gee (2010: 20), when analyzing reported speech in the texts, the authors of this article asked the following question: 'How does this piece of language privilege or signal orality?' After that, the authors transcribed and categorized such cues according to their grammatical classification and function in the discourse. The list of cues presented in this section is not exhaustive, but rather intended to provide examples of cues of orality used by authors of fanfiction in the analyzed texts:

- first and second person singular and plural pronouns (*I, you, we*)
- address pronouns and vocatives (*Jesse, man, you*)
- deixes (*here, this*)
- interjections and exclamations (*aw, aye, er, ha, ha-ha, hey, huh, nah, oh, okay, uh, uh-huh, um, woah, yeah, yo, yup*)

- onomatopoeic expressions (*bam*)
- exhortations and imperatives ('go to sleep'; 'hang on a minute'; 'let's hear it'; 'sit down and shut up')
- repetitions of letters (*haaa, hoo, uhh, shh-shhhhh, yeahhh*)
- repetitions of words ('I, uh, uh..'; 'No. No, no-'; 'Perfect. Just perfect, Pinkman'; 'Thank you, thank you, thank you')
- foreign words ('My *abuela* wouldn't let me leave the house')
- tag questions ('don't you?'; 'right?')
- rhetorical questions ('Isn't it wonderful, Walt?')
- punctuation, such as ellipses (*or..., so...*), dashes (*n-no*), and exclamation marks ('they will say goodbye to their childhood and start their path to the grown up life!')

Further, the analysis of cues of orality revealed an extensive use of contractions, elisions, and omissions (a frequency count is provided in brackets):

- 'bout (about) [1]
- buncha (a bunch of) [1]
- cap'n (captain) [3]
- 'cause (because) [8]
- cuz (because) [1]
- dunno (I don't know) [4]
- 'ey (hey) [2]
- gettin' (getting) [1]
- gimme (give me) [1]
- gonna (going to) [19]
- gotta (have got to) [8]
- if y'ask me (if you ask me) [1]
- 'im (him) [1]
- imma (I am going to) [1]
- kinda (kind of) [3]
- lotta (a lot of) [3]
- oughta (ought to) [3]
- shoulda (should have) [1]
- that you? (is that you?) [1]
- 'til (until) [3]
- wanna (want to) [5]
- y'know (you know) [1]
- you saying (are you saying) [1]

The analyzed texts also show a widespread use of discursive fillers ('but hey'; 'I'm just saying'; 'I mean'; 'know what I'm sayin?'; 'to be honest'; 'you

know'), informal adverbs and conjunctions ('He'll *totally* know it was you'; 'Now I'm screwed for, *like*, ever'), colloquial/slang constructions ('I gotta catch my ride'; 'the matter wit'chu?'; 'what's up'; 'whatcha think, Jesse?'), and non-period punctuation such as points of ellipsis [8], exclamation marks [52], and question marks [215].

Functions and uses of cues of orality in online fanfiction

Online fanfiction writers use a wide range of discursive cues to help orality 'come alive' in written form and recreate the audiovisual experience of the TV series in their texts. Further, the analysis shows that each occurrence of the cues of orality discussed above carries specific functions enacted by the characters of the TV show to accomplish situated discursive goals that include, but are not limited to: admiration, agreement, astonishment, clarification, correction, emphasis, exhortation, hesitation, indifference, interruption, pause, reluctance, restatement, sarcasm, surprise, suspension, and uncertainty (see examples in Table 1).

Table 1. Discursive meanings and functions of 'yeah' in the analyzed texts (selected examples).

Quote	Meaning	Function
His teacher [Mr. White] opens a folder and pulls out two papers. He sets them both side by side, and Jesse recognizes one as the quiz he took yesterday. The other belongs to the girl who sits in front of him. 'I couldn't help but notice certain similarities between your test and Laura's,' Mr. White says. 'Do you see what I'm talking about?' 'No,' Jesse answers automatically, without even looking. 'You both got the exact same answers.' 'Uh, yeah? ' Jesse replies, raising an eyebrow. 'There's only one right answer, right? So...'	'Really?'	Rhetorical question
[Badger and Pete speaking to Jesse] 'Yo, but like... He'll totally know it was you if you do it now,' Badger points out as he exhales a stream of smoke. (...) ' Yeahhh ,' Pete pipes up. 'You gotta be all stealthy about it.'	'He is right'	Restatement
[Jesse and Mr. White] 'Thank you again, Mr. White. I... hope next year's prom will be better for you than this one.' 'That's very... thoughtful of you, Jesse. I guess I will see you around.' 'Uh, yeah . Good night, Mr. White.'	'Sure'	Colloquial exclamation

One of the analyzed stories revealed a surprising and creative use of writing and orality in relation to ‘Internet slang’, which is a situated form of language used in computer-mediated settings that includes acronyms (e.g., ‘LOL’ for ‘laughing out loud’), emoticons (e.g., the popular ‘:-)’ smiley), and onomatopoeic spellings (e.g., ‘hahaha’). Let’s consider the following two excerpts from the story:

‘;D’ she said enthusiastically. No one knew how she managed to say it out loud – scientists had pondered for months on end but it had become one of the greatest mysteries of the modern universe.

[...]

‘;D’ was Amber’s reply. Again, how she was able to say this was one of the greatest mysteries –

The emoticon ‘;D’ is a pictorial representation of a winking face, symbolized by a semicolon, with a broad smile or grin, symbolized by a capital letter ‘D’. In written computer-mediated communication (CMC) emoticons are used to compensate for the lack of nonverbal and auditory cues of face-to-face communication to express moods, feelings, and emotions (Dresner and Herring, 2012). In the excerpts presented above, the author playfully ‘subverts’ the expected context of use (from *online* to *face-to-face*), mode of communication (from *written* to *spoken*), form of expression (from *non-verbal* to *verbal*), and type of representation (from *pictorial* to *auditory*), as illustrated in Table 2.

In fact, the ‘;D’ emoticon is commonly used and interpreted as a written and pictorial representation of non-verbal cues in online interactions. On the other hand, the author lets one of the characters (Amber) verbalize it in a face-to-face context, which represents a spoken mode of communication and an auditory type of representation (which is cued in the text by ‘say it out loud’, ‘say this’, and ‘reply’). The author highlights the peculiar and unfathomable nature of the phenomenon by saying that it was ‘one of the greatest mysteries of the modern universe’. By using the adjective ‘modern’ in this context, the author seems to zero in on the contemporary character of language, influenced by present-day technologies such as the Internet.

Table 2. Use of the ‘;D’ emoticon in the analyzed text: conventional vs. playful.

	Context of use	Mode of communication	Form of expression	Type of representation
Conventional use	online	written	nonverbal	pictorial
Playful use	face-to-face	spoken	verbal	auditory

By wittily ‘remixing’ different forms of communication (writing, orality, and Internet slang), the author unveils their idiosyncrasies, suggesting novel uses that creatively combine them. On the other hand, in order to fully appreciate such playful uses of language, the reader needs to be aware of the specificities and conventional uses of each of the aforementioned modes of communication. For example, in the quoted excerpt, as it appears in the text, a semicolon is followed by a capital ‘D’ and a comma:

‘;D,’

Without the knowledge of Internet slang (the ‘winking’ emoticon composed by a semicolon followed by the capital ‘D’) and writing conventions used to represent orality (the quotation marks) and narration (the comma within the quotation marks), it would have been impossible to identify such discrete elements, let alone understand their discursive functions.

Pedagogic applications of online fanfiction

Building on these findings, the authors of this article suggest a pedagogical use of fanfiction as a tool to help students familiarize themselves with differences and similarities of written and spoken discourse. In this section, the authors propose five pedagogic activities that can be carried out with the support of the teacher. These activities can bridge personally relevant practices that take place in informal settings (fandoms) with formal and non-formal learning environments (e.g., school and after-school programs). This can foster a meaningful connection between virtual and physical settings, as well as the global and the local, thus expanding the opportunities for social learning and creativity in an ‘internetworked’ setting (Hunter, 2002) that opens the classroom to online affinity spaces. In other words, by implementing fandom and fanfiction writing activities, students can collaborate with peers, in the classroom and online, pursuing their passions, improving their writing skills, and refining their understanding of writing and orality. The proposed activities are discussed in detail in the following sections.

1. Discussing, transcribing, and presenting

In this activity students reflect on and discuss their favorite TV shows. First, the teacher prompts students to think of their favorite show and write down: (a) three reasons why they like the show; (b) a list of their three favorite characters of the show; and (c) a description of such characters and their role in the show. This part of the activity helps students reflect on their understandings and perceptions of the show and its characters.

In the second part of the activity, the teacher asks each student to share with the class what their favorite TV show is. After that, the teacher gathers students in groups of three to five students, based on identical or similar TV shows (e.g., comedy, crime, etc.). In this part of the activity, students share with their group what they like about the TV show and discuss with the group who their three favorite characters are and what their characteristics are. If available, students can use school computers connected to the Internet (one per group) or personal electronic devices (e.g., smartphones, tablets, etc.) to show videos and pictures of the show. After that, each group presents to the class the features of the TV shows discussed in the group and their favorite characters, with their specific traits.

These tasks are functional to setting the stage for a subsequent part of the activity, which can take place on another day. In this part, the groups search for (e.g., on the video-sharing website *YouTube*) and transcribe in written form in a word processor short dialogues (approx. 30 seconds) that feature the characters of the TV shows discussed and presented in the previous part. Students undertake this task without prior instructions on how to perform the transcription from oral/auditory to written/textual form. Following this, students share with the class the audiovisual fragment of the TV series and their transcription of the fragment of dialogue. The teacher examines the transcription and discusses features of both the audiovisual and the textual representations, asking questions related to writing and orality, helping students understand their specificities and giving them opportunities to improve and enrich their transcriptions.

After all groups have presented, the teacher asks students to accomplish four tasks: (1) review and improve their transcriptions; (2) highlight (or underline) the cues of orality found in their dialogues (e.g., interjections, exhortations, and repetitions); (3) create a list with such cues of orality; and (4) for each cue, write its discursive function in the context of the transcribed dialogue (e.g., agreement, interruption, surprise). The groups then present their lists of cues with their related functions, as the teacher asks questions directed at furthering students' understanding of writing and orality.

2. Selecting, analyzing, and critiquing

In this activity, prior to the class start time, the teacher finds fan-websites with content appropriate for the school grade and age of the students. Some of these websites, like the *Archive of Our Own* (<http://archiveofourown.org>), include tags that signal explicit or violent content. The teacher indicates the websites or webpages selected for the activity and asks students to search for fanfiction stories related to their favorite TV series. Students

are requested to form groups, negotiate a TV series they want to focus on, and find a story that features dialogues between the characters of such TV series. They may use the computer lab or their personal electronic devices.

After that, students print and present to the class the selected fanfiction story inspired by their favorite TV series. In the presentation, each student is prompted by the teacher to read a few dialogues found in the fanfiction piece and discuss what makes these dialogues different from the narration of the story, identifying the cues of orality and their functions, with the help of other students and the teacher. The teacher (or a student) compiles in a word processor a list of cues of orality with their situated discursive functions (e.g., hesitation, joy, despair, etc.) and/or pragmatic goals (e.g., gain sympathy, avoid a topic, construct a rebel identity, etc.), for all the groups that present.

Subsequently, students are asked to analyze the selected story by looking into the differences between dialogues and narration, and highlight all the cues of orality, contrasting the voices of the characters (dialogues) with the voice of the narrator (narration). For example, students may answer the question 'How do authors signal the passage from "written-written" (narration) to "written-spoken" (direct speech) communication?' Students are also asked to critique the analyzed texts in order to understand if and how the authors of the stories were able to successfully transfer orality into written form, and how such texts could be improved and rendered more effective. For this part of the activity, the teacher stimulates class discussion and points at 'critical' fragments of the text that might be good or bad instances of orality rendered in written form.

3. Writing, publishing, and sharing

In this activity, students ideate a short fanfiction story with characters and settings derived from their favorite TV series. Students may either work in groups, in pairs, or individually. For example, when working in pairs as co-writers, one student may be responsible for 'writing' (narration) and the other student for 'orality' (dialogues).

Following the creative writing process, students read the story to the class. The teacher and the classmates ask questions related to the story and the use of cues of writing and orality (the teacher can encourage the students to revise some parts of their work). Students are then asked to collect all the stories in a blog or webpage created for the assignment. The stories may be published in an online space open only to the class or the school, or be made freely available on the Internet (e.g., on a fanfiction website where other fans may comment on it), at the discretion of the teacher.

As an option, students can be asked to publish two versions of each story: a 'clean version' (without comments) for readers interested in the story, and a 'lab version' (with comments and cues of writing/orality signaled through highlighted or underlined text). Additionally, if the story is made accessible outside of the classroom, students can create an 'advertising campaign' to promote their stories between family members and friends, designing posters and flyers, and using social media and other digital tools deemed appropriate by the teacher. Further, in order to encourage student participation in such activities outside of the classroom, the school (or district) may organize a contest for 'best student fanfiction', with reading sessions, presentations, and awards. By writing, publishing, and sharing their stories, receiving and offering feedback, students engage with writing and orality in a social environment that stimulates critical thinking, negotiation of meanings, and ownership of content.

4. Composing, rehearsing, and performing

In this activity, prior to class start time, the teacher prepares a set of 5–10 flashcards with cues of orality (e.g., those presented in this article or other cues selected by the teacher) for each group (an identical set of cues for each group). Then, the teacher starts the lesson discussing writing and orality, pointing out their differences, and the functions of some cues of orality.

After that, students are invited to work in small groups (3–5 students) to create fanfiction stories based on their favorite TV shows. The teacher distributes the sets (5–10 flashcards with cues of orality) to each group and asks each group to include them all in the dialogues of their stories. Students are asked to create stories in which one of them is the narrator and the other students in the group perform like actors. For example, in a group composed of four students, one student would be the narrator and the story would have dialogues written for three characters that would then be performed by three students.

Once all the stories are completed, groups are offered some time to (quietly) rehearse their stories. After that, each group is asked to write on the back of the flashcard the discursive function of the cues of orality used in their story, answering the question 'What is this cue doing in this context?' Following that, each group acts out the collaborative story and the rest of the class is asked to identify: (1) the cues of orality; (2) their functions; and (3) the differences between the parts read by the narrator and those enacted by the 'students-actors'. The answers of the students outside of the group are then compared with what groups had written on the back of the flashcards. This activity can help students reflect on the differences/

similarities of orality and writing and how the same cues of orality can perform different discursive functions in different situated settings, and how they can be strategically used to bring their stories to life. For example, depending on the context, the exclamation ‘yeah’ can signify different things, as illustrated in Table 1.

5. Playing with writing, orality, and multimodal forms of communication

In this activity, students are asked to randomly form small groups of 3–4 students. After that, students are invited to think of their favorite TV series and select the character of the series they like the most (each student selects one character; each character needs to be from a different TV show). Following that, students are asked to create a short story that features the characters they selected in their group. For example, a group of three students will have three different characters from three different TV series. Students are asked to include narration and dialogues and enrich their stories with at least one other form of communication (e.g., images, sound, video, Internet slang, etc.). Students are also encouraged to play with writing and orality (e.g., like the verbalized ‘D’ emoticon, presented and discussed in a previous section of the article). Then, students are asked to perform their short story in front of the class including the selected forms of communication. The teacher and the students ask questions on the choices and functions of different cues of orality and modes of communication.

This *intertextual* (characters from different TV shows) and *multimodal* (different modes of communication) activity helps students combine and contrast in meaningful and intentional ways writing, orality, and multimodal forms of communication, integrating a creative writing activity with content found on the Internet (e.g., pictures, music, and videos). As a complementary activity, students may post their multimodal projects in an online repository/blog created by the teacher (open to the class, school, or the Internet, at the discretion of the teacher). In the comments/descriptions to their artifacts/stories, students need to make clear how they integrated and played with different forms of communication, crossing the boundaries of writing and orality, auditory and visual, as well as verbal and nonverbal forms of communication. Students are then encouraged to comment on each other’s blog entries providing constructive feedback and ideas for further development.

Limitations and recommendations

This article was conceived to propose pedagogic applications of fancreativity and fanfiction in formal and non-formal contexts to help students understand and apply written, oral, and multimodal forms of communication, using the Internet as a resource for materials, a tool to share content, and a social environment for collaborative and creative endeavors. The study is limited by its circumscribed focus (on one of thousands of TV series) and the delimited number of texts selected for the analysis. Future research may consider other TV series, movies, comics, or other expressions of fandoms and youth cultures. Further, the pedagogic activities proposed in the previous section should not be considered as prescriptive plans, but rather as flexible blueprints that may be modified, combined, and adapted to fit students' and teachers' needs. Future research could look into the effectiveness of these activities in different contexts and explore alternative solutions, including students' and teachers' voices in the design of such activities. Future studies could also focus on the affordances of different technologies, analyzing their potential for the understanding of writing and orality, and the use of students' personal electronic devices in the retrieval, creation, and sharing of fanfiction and other forms of fan-generated content.

In the context of this article, it is also important to bring attention to issues of accessibility to technologies, considering at least three possible scenarios: (1) school districts may lack the computing and media tools necessary to fully implement the proposed activities; (2) school districts may restrict access to various websites and social media; and (3) several students may not have personal electronic devices or school districts may not allow their use in the classroom. Notwithstanding these limitations, the authors believe that teachers can still draw inspiration from the proposed activities and adapt them to available technologies and learning environments.

Conclusions

The use of online fanfiction in educational contexts can help students develop a vast array of skills that are fundamental for twenty-first-century learners: reading, writing, and communicating in different settings (face-to-face/online), critical (analysis of extant fanfiction), creative (writing new fanfiction), social (collaborative writing, presenting, and performing), and technological (finding and downloading/uploading fanfiction; using word processors and other software to write and edit stories; understanding online privacy and copyright issues). Further, fanfiction-driven activities can become a bridge between formal and informal learning environments,

stimulating students' interest for writing inside and outside of the classroom. By analyzing and composing fanfiction stories, students can advance their ability to represent the unique idiolectal traits (the variety or forms of language) of characters of TV shows and movies, exploring ways to express character identities through 'written orality'.

In conclusion, online fanfiction can offer an engaging gateway into an interest-driven pedagogy of writing and orality, enriching students' understanding of their idiosyncrasies and similarities for informed and creative uses of different techniques, registers, and styles in oral and written communication. Further, the integration of writing, orality, Internet slang, and multimodal forms of expression, can advance students' multiliteracy skills and stimulate their creative thinking. Most importantly, these activities can help students progress from the production of 'intuitive utterances' to informed and intentional uses of oral and written discourse, enabling effective (and inventive) ways of communication across modes and media.

About the authors

Vittorio Marone is Assistant Professor in the Department of Interdisciplinary Learning and Teaching at the University of Texas at San Antonio.

Anthony D. Neely is an Alumnus of the Doctoral Program in the Department of Interdisciplinary Learning and Teaching at the University of Texas at San Antonio.

References

- Amador-Moreno, C. P. and McCafferty, K. (2012). Fictionalising orality: Introduction. *Sociolinguistic Studies* 5 (1): 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.1558/sols.v5.i1.1>
- Amador-Moreno, C. P. and Nunes, A. (Eds) (2009). *The Representation of the Spoken Mode in Fiction: How Authors Write How People Talk*. Lewiston, NY: The Edwin Mellen Press.
- Berkowitz, D. E. (2013). Framing the future of fanfiction: How the New York Times' portrayal of a youth media subculture influences beliefs about media literacy education. *Journal of Media Literacy Education* 4 (3): 198–212.
- Biber, D. and Finegan, E. (1989). Drift and the evolution of English style: A history of three genres. *Language* 65 (3): 487–517. <https://doi.org/10.2307/415220>
- Black, R. W. (2005). Access and affiliation: The literacy and composition practices of English-language learners in an online fanfiction community. *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy* 49 (2): 118–128. <https://doi.org/10.1598/JAAL.49.2.4>

- Black, R. W. (2006). Language, culture, and identity in online fanfiction. *E-learning* 3 (2): 170–184. <https://doi.org/10.2304/elea.2006.3.2.170>
- Bruti, S. and Zanotti, S. (2012). Orality markers in professional and amateur subtitling: The case of address pronouns and vocatives. In C. Buffagni and B. Garzelli (Eds) *Film Translation from East to West: Dubbing, Subtitling and Didactic Practice*, 167–192. Bern: Peter Lang Publishing.
- Chafe, W. and Danielewicz, J. (1987). Properties of spoken and written language. In R. Horowitz and S. J. Samuels (Eds), *Comprehending Oral and Written Language*, 83–113. San Diego, CA: Academic Press.
- Curwood, J. S., Magnifico, A. M., and Lammers, J. C. (2013). Writing in the wild: Writers' motivation in fan-based affinity spaces. *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy* 56 (8): 677–685. <https://doi.org/10.1002/JAAL.192>
- Dresner, E., and Herring, S. C. (2012). Emoticons and illocutionary force. In D. Reisenfeld and G. Scarafie (Eds), *Philosophical Dialogue: Writings in Honor of Marcelo Dascal*, 59–70. London: College Publication.
- Gee, J. P. (2004). *Situated Language and Learning: A Critique of Traditional Schooling*. New York: Routledge.
- Gee, J. P. (2010). *An Introduction to Discourse Analysis: Theory and Method* (3rd ed.). New York: Routledge.
- Guillot, M-N. (2008). Orality and film subtitling: The riches of punctuation. *The Sign Language Translator and Interpreter* 2 (2): 127–147.
- Halliday, M. A. K. (1987). Spoken and written modes of meaning. In R. Horowitz, and S. J. Samuels (Eds), *Comprehending Oral and Written Language*, 55–113. London: Academic Press.
- Horowitz, R. (1987). Rhetorical structure in discourse processing. In R. Horowitz and S. J. Samuels (Eds), *Comprehending Oral and Written Language*, 117–160. San Diego, CA: Academic Press.
- Horowitz, R. (Ed.) (2007). *Talking Texts: How Speech and Writing Interact in School Learning*, 55–90. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Horowitz, R. and Samuels, J. S. (1987). Comprehending oral and written language: Critical contrasts for literacy and schooling. In R. Horowitz and S. J. Samuels (Eds), *Comprehending Oral and Written Language*, 1–52. San Diego, CA: Academic Press.
- Hu, K. (2006). The power of circulation: Digital technologies and the online Chinese fans of Japanese TV drama. *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 6 (2): 71–186.
- Hughes, R. (2009). *English in Speech and Writing. Investigating Language and Literature*. Abingdon and New York: Routledge.
- Hunter, B. (2002). Learning in the virtual community depends upon changes in local communities. In K. A. Renninger and W. Shumar (Eds), *Building Virtual Communities: Learning and Change in Cyberspace*, 96–126. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511606373.009>
- Ives, S. (1950). A theory of literary dialect. *Tulane Studies in English* 2: 137–182.
- Jenkins, H. (1992). *Textual Poachers: Television Fans and Participatory Culture*. New York: Routledge.

- Jenkins, H., Purushotma, R., Weigel, M., Clinton, K., and Robison, A. J. (2009). *Confronting the Challenges of Participatory Culture: Media Education for the 21st Century*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Jwa, S. (2012). Modeling L2 writer voice: Discoursal positioning in fanfiction writing. *Computers and Composition* 29 (4): 323–340. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.compcom.2012.10.001>
- Kail, M., and Diakogiorgi, K. (1994). Morphology and word order in the processing of Greek sentences: A crosslinguistic and developmental study. In I. W. Philippaki, K. Nicolaidis, and M. Sifianou (Eds), *International conference on Greek linguistics. Themes in Greek Linguistics: Papers from the First International Conference on Greek Linguistics, Reading, September 1993*, 325–332. Amsterdam: John Benjamins. <https://doi.org/10.1075/cilt.117.48kai>
- Lankshear, C., and Knobel, M. (2008). *Digital Literacies (New Literacies and Digital Epistemologies)*. New York: Peter Lang.
- Lee, H.-K. (2011). Participatory media fandom: A case study of anime fansubbing. *Media, Culture and Society* 33 (8): 1131–1147. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0163443711418271>
- Mackey, M., and McClay, J. (2008). Pirates and poachers: Fan fiction and the conventions of reading and writing. *English in Education* 42 (2): 131–147. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1754-8845.2008.00011.x>
- O'Hagan, M. (2011). Community translation: Translation as a social activity and its possible consequences in the advent of Web 2.0 and beyond. *Linguistica Antverpiensia New Series – Themes in Translation Studies* 10 (1): 11–23.
- Page, N. (1988). *Speech in the English Novel*. Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press International. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-349-19047-8>
- Tannen, D. (1982). The oral/literate continuum in discourse. In D. Tannen (Ed.), *Spoken and Written Language: Exploring Orality and Literacy*, 1–16. Norwood, NJ: Ablex.