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Crafting the interface: The cultural politics of UX writing

Based on a larger discourse ethnography of UX writing, this paper makes an empirically-based, conceptual intervention into digital discourse studies. Typically working behind the scenes and often invisibilized, UX writers are the people responsible for crafting the verbal content of websites, apps, or other software interfaces. Drawing on fieldwork and interview data from my project, I demonstrate how UX writers consistently emphasize transmodality and embodiment through their work. As such, they are particularly attuned to the way interfaces operate not just through what is said, but above all through the affective and embodied action(s) they incite (cf. Jones, 2022). It is in this way that my research points to a productive connection between digital discourse studies and the recent turn to posthumanism in sociocultural linguistics (e.g. Pennycook, 2018). Ultimately, I argue that this helps us better understand the cultural politics at work in/though interfaces.

References

Jones, R. H. (2022). Commentary: Critical digital literacies as action, affinity, and affect. *TESOL Quarterly, 56*(3), 1074–1080.

Pennycook, A. (2018). *Posthumanist applied linguistics.* Routledge.

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