

Publication

“You will be glad you hung onto this quit”: Sharing information and giving support when stopping smoking online

Book Item (Buchkapitel, Lexikonartikel, jur. Kommentierung, Beiträge in Sammelbänden)

ID 3018204

Author(s) Rudolf von Rohr, Maire-Thérèse

Author(s) at UniBasel [Rudolf von Rohr, Marie-Thérèse](#) ;

Year 2015

Title “You will be glad you hung onto this quit”: Sharing information and giving support when stopping smoking online

Editor(s) Arnott-Smith, Catherine; Keselman, Alla

Book title Meeting Health Information Needs Outside of Healthcare: Opportunities and Challenge

Publisher Chandos/Elsevier

Place of publication Waltham, MA

Pages 263-290

ISSN/ISBN 978-0-08-100248-3 ; 978-0-08-100259-9

Series title Chandos Information Professional Series

Keywords online health, computer-mediated communication, relational work

Extended Abstract: This linguistic study investigated information exchange in a smoking cessation forum in view of persuasion based on a small corpus of ten threads. Fellow quitters share information about how to best deal with the quit smoking journey, they encourage each other to persevere in quitting and give each other advice on medication or coping with withdrawal symptoms. According to interpersonal pragmatics, these interactions always feature both, informational and relational aspects. It is thus of interest how participants share information in online settings, e.g. what kind of speech acts participants use to convey information and how participants deal with the rhetorical challenges of showing their authenticity or expertise through language. The content structure of messages was determined by categorizing entire messages of threads into discursive moves, i.e. what a passage contributes to ongoing interaction (Locher & Limberg, 2012). Results illustrate that sharing information happens in a certain order on threads, in which there are clear communicative expectations of contributors. Thread initiators assume the role of help-seekers since they provide more information on their own background, request advice and thank participants for advice received. Contributors who respond to a first post become advice-givers: they share personalised information in the form of advice, assessment and of their own experience. However, responding contributors do not directly dive into the more informational exchange of their message, but often engage in tending to the relational side of interaction. For instance, they greet initiators in more than half of all posts and welcome them to the community if initiators are entirely new to the group. Assessment and advice were the most frequent discursive moves used by advice-givers or responding contributors. My analysis showed that these discursive moves usually appeared in a preferred sequence. Assessments tend to be initial moves in respondents' post, often pre-sequencing advice. In contrast, advice was more often found to be the last move before farewell. Qualitative close readings showed that there are three overall discursive functions of assessments: First, participants normalize concerns through the use of will-future and of adjectives such as common and normal. Secondly, they reassure help-seekers by using the present continuous do + adjective to evaluate initiator's situation, which has an encouraging effect. Thirdly, assessments are used to praise help-seekers' efforts, which has an entirely interpersonal function. The qualitative close readings of the discursive move ad-

vice showed that there are four different thematic kinds within this particular online support group. Firstly, respondents gave advice to continue posting to the forum, which was characterized use of the verb by post or keep posting in terms of linguistic patterns. This kind of advice can be seen as discursive community work as it is geared towards strengthening the ties between the initial contributor and the overall group. Secondly, responding contributors gave advice to persevere in quitting, which featured imperatives of verbs with a time component stick to, keep, hang in there, etc. Advice to persevere has a clear motivational function since respondents explicitly encourage help-seekers to continue quitting. Both of these first two advice types have a clearly interpersonal function, geared towards building rapport with the initial contributor. Thirdly, responding contributors give advice to take one day at a time, which is the most commonly suggested coping strategy in the group. At the same time, it often co-occurs with displays of empathy as advice-givers reassure help-seekers that it is normal to struggle. Finally, responding contributors also give concrete pieces of advice on how initial contributors should alter their action environment. In these cases hedging and mitigation was more common. For example, advice-givers use if-or when-clauses to index the optionality of their advice. Moreover, imperatives do rarely occur on their own without hedging or sub- clauses. Further, the discursive move 'own experience' appeared to be multi-functional as also discussed by previous researchers. It was used to bond with initiators while also constructing responding contributors as experienced, thus serving as a legitimizing strategy. Moreover, own experience could be constructed as indirect advice in some cases. As the other side of the medal, background information was used by initial posters to show their authenticity as help-seekers. They share relapses, or inform about their progress, describe withdrawal symptoms and discuss health problems, which confirmed findings from earlier studies. These findings highlight that sharing information and giving support were inextricably linked since the declared persuasive purpose of wanting to affect each other's quitting journey meant that, ultimately, any information or advice aimed at reinforcing help-seekers' determination.

edoc-URL <http://edoc.unibas.ch/42959/>

Full Text on edoc No;

Digital Object Identifier DOI 10.1016/B978-0-08-100248-3.00012-3