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Small stories and extended narratives on Twitter

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This article investigates narrative practices on Twitter. The qualitative analysis is based on the corpus of 1000 tweets sampled from the timelines of 11 Anglophone users. The users form a diffuse community united by an interest in ballet as a physical activity and an art. Storytelling emerged as one of important tools for identity construction, although Twitter stories differ from a prototypical narrative on several levels. These differences are examined from three theoretical angles: the structural approach (Labov and Waletzky, 1967. Narrative analysis: oral versions of personal experience. In: Helm, J. (Ed.), Essays on the Verbal and Visual Arts. Proceedings of the 1966 Annual Spring Meeting. Distributed by the University of Washington Press, Seattle, pp. 12-44), the dimensional approach (Ochs and Capps, 2001. Living Narrative: Creating Lives in Everyday Storytelling. Cambridge, MA, Harvard UP), and the small stories framework (Georgakopoulou, 2007a. Small Stories, Interaction and Identities. Benjamins, Amsterdam). Along with multi-tweet stories that can be analysed into orientation, complication, evaluation and resolution, two kinds of stories typical for the eyewitness microgenre were present. The first of these is a delayed resolution narrative, i.e. live commentary that obtains the integrity of a single narrative only post-factum. The second type is a tiny story, i.e. a fragmentary, minimally newsworthy report on everyday activities with unclear narrative stance.

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