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Small stories research & social media: The role of narrative stance-taking in the circulation of a Greek news story

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Small stories and social media:
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1. Introduction

Small stories research was developed as an epistemological paradigm for the analysis of narrative and identities (Bamberg 2006; Bamberg & Georgakopoulou 2008; Georgakopoulou 2006, 2007, 2008). Its aim was to argue for the inclusion within narrative and identities analysis of a range of communication practices that had hitherto been under-represented or not viewed as stories, even though they permeate daily life and are of major consequence for the tellers' self-presentation. In more recent work (in press, 2013), I have begun to document a close association of such small stories with the pervasive presence of new/social media in everyday life, as that is facilitated by the increasing media convergence and the fusion of social networking sites (Georgakopoulou in press, 2013)[1]. Media-rich environments afford opportunities for sharing life in miniaturized form at the same time as constraining the ability of users to plunge into full autobiographical mode (think of the 140 characters). In particular, they offer users the ability to share experience as it is happening with various semiotic (multi-modal) resources, to update it as often as necessary and to (re)-embed it in various social platforms.

Following up on this line of inquiry, in this paper, I will show how small stories research can offer a conceptual apparatus for the study of new/social media practices that facilitate the circulation not just of personal stories, but of public and 'news' stories too. I will connect my discussion with recent pleas and attempts within sociolinguictics for the development of a new vocabulary for the analysis of text and discourse circulation beyond the single speech event and within processes of globalization (e.g. Blommaert & Rampton 2011). I will specifically employ the small stories analytical heuristic *ways of telling-sites-tellers* so as to explore the connections between specific choices of telling and the affordances or constraints that specific new media environments pose. The emphasis on sites allows us to tap into processes of recontextualization and resemiotization: how different tellings shape and are shaped by movement across spaces but also how this movement mobilizes different semiotic resources, by who, and why. I will also examine the ways in which circulated stories index previous and anticipated tellings, intended /imagined audiences and multiple tellership processes. The emphasis on tellers brings in aspects of them not just as part of a social group but as individuals with embodied and biographical attributes, as stage-directors who casts themselves and others in specific scenarios, who tell and circulate certain stories. I will argue that one key-concept that helps unlock the relationship of ways of telling and sites with tellers in the circulation of stories on social media is that of narrative stancetaking (henceforth NS). NS encompasses the processes that allow us to attend to the moment in which the teller more or less agentively decides if narrative form and indexicalities (i.e. conventional expectations implicitly signaled, Silverstein 1985) are

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appropriate for telling and/or circulating a discourse activity. I will show how NS plays an important role in signaling, proposing and anticipating certain sites and participation frameworks (tellers and audiences) in the circulation of a story.

I will draw on a 'telling case' (Mitchell 1984) to substantiate my claims: In the run up of the recent, much discussed –in old and new (European) media- second election in Greece, a particular incident became a 'viral' story: The assault of two female leftwing party MPs, in particular the 'slapping' and 'punching' of one of them, by a male MP candidate from the far-right party Golden Dawn, on a breakfast news show of live TV (7 June 2012).

2. Small stories and social media: towards an analysis

My previous work (e.g. Georgakopoulou 2007) on small stories in interactional environments has shown the limitations of the longstanding tradition of viewing stories as sustained, full-fledged, teller-led performances (e.g. see Labov 1972; Bauman 1986) that unfold within a single event from beginning to end. Within social media in particular, if we associate stories with the social practices of individuals with a 'mobile social presence' (Arminen & Weilemnann 2009), who are in 'perpetual contact' with others, 'present absent' in their immediate surroundings (Katz & Aaakus 2005), and with 'continuous partial attention (Stone 2006)',[2] what we need is analytical vocabulary that can tap into:

'Storytelling for announcing and performing the minute-by-minute experience, whether ordinary or extraordinary, that may develop in different media and be embedded into a variety of online and offline environments, connecting or disconnecting them, with different semiotic modes and that may be sanctioned and re-contextualized in unforeseeable ways and by unforseseeable –networked audiences (Marwyck & boyd 2011), with processes of like, share and follow' (Georgakopoulou, forthcoming: 10).

There is wide recognition of the need to track discourse trajectories and circulation both in linguistic anthropology, and in (new) media studies. Certain concepts have increasingly emerged as pivotal for such an analysis: for instance, entextualization-decontextualization-recontextualization (cf. Blommaert & Rampton 2011), going back to the influential work of Bauman & Briggs (1990). Also, the ideas of multimodality (Kress & van Leeuwen 1981) and resemiotization (Iedema 2003) that emanate from the tradition of social semiotic discourse analysis (cf. Androutsopoulos 2010; Coupland 2003). With the help of these concepts we can begin to analyze how, why, and which texts get circulated on social media, how socially situated meaning-making shifts from context to context and what semiotic modalities are mobilized to do certain things at certain times. Nonetheless, there is yet no unified, coherent or agreed upon framework of new media discourse analysis for bringing together these concepts. Similarly, the ways in which these concepts can work together or not are far from explored. More importantly for this study, the existing work is not pitched to narrative activities.

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[2] 'We pay continuous partial attention in an effort not to miss on anything. It is an always-on, anywhere, anytime, any place behavior that involves an artificial sense of constant crisis. We are always in high alert when we pay continuous partial attention. This artificial sense of constant crisis is more typical of continuous partial attention than it is of multi-tasking' (Stone, www.lindastone.net).

In the light of the above, my aim in this paper is to put forth a framework that will provide a point of entry into the analysis of stories as transportable and circulatable events on social media. From the outset, I view this kind of analysis as necessarily and inevitably a non-totalizing, non-exhaustive project: tempting as it may be, it is impossible and methodologically non-advisable to attempt to follow an activity in all its recontextualizations. Any analyses of new media practices need not get bogged down into following every single step of a discourse journey. This exoticizes the data as something untamable and uncontainable by any analysis[3] as well as unnecessarily complicating the analytical task. My contention is that what is, instead, needed is an acknowledgment of the importance of a recontextualizations-aware analysis that can document circulation/ circulatability of the activities beyond the single speech event, not necessarily as actual, cataloguable events, but as interwoven into the here-and-now of any activity. From this point of view, we can assume that activities will signal parts of their journey, however implicitly, with various *recontextualization cues*: e.g. stories will refer to and anticipate previous tellings, tellers and audiences.

My contention is that the analytical vocabulary appropriate for this mobile storytelling should aim at uncovering the interconnections amongst three layers of analysis, which I call *ways of telling-sites-tellers*. I have discussed these three layers in detail elsewhere (Georgakopoulou 2007, 2012). Here it suffices to say that how stories are told in what kinds of social places with what kinds of affordances and constraints, what the social spaces and worlds that they narrate are all about and by what kinds of tellers as characters, here-and-now communicators and biographically shaped. The three layers follow multi-scalar conceptualizations of context (Blommaert & Rampton 2011), in that I accept that there is both durability and contingency involved in all of them. Meaning making is not just a matter of the here-and-now, the intersubjectivity of the moment, but also of 'resources, expectations and experiences that originate in, circulate through and are destined for networks and processes that can be very different in their reach and duration '(idem: 9). The provenance of such resources can be signaled in more or less implicit and indirect (indexical, Silverstein 1985) ways. Furthermore, the layers of ways of telling-sites-tellers are reconfigured differently in the different recontextualizations of a discourse activity. To tap into these configurations, I propose NS as a key-concept for the study of stories as mobile activities. I define NS as follows:

A moment of position taking where a speaker more or less reflexively mobilizes more or less conventionalized communicative means to signal that the activity to follow, the activity underway or the activity that is indexed, alluded to, deferred, silenced is a story. In doing so, he or she positions him/herself as a teller: somebody who is in a position to tell and assume a point of view on the telling and/or told.

Defined by DuBois as 'taking up a position with respect to the content or form of an utterance' (2007), the concept of stance and stancetaking have been at the heart of the sociolinguistic study of processes by means of which speakers signal varying levels of commitment and engagement with what they are saying and how (see chapters in Jaffe 2009). In the case of studies of storytelling, it has somewhat been under-represented in

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[3] Susan Herring, a leading figure in computer-mediated communication stresses that the analysis of new media communication should avoid the pitfall of equating everything that happens in it with 'novel' but instead strive towards a balanced uncovery of 'the familiar, the emergent and the reconfigured' (2012).

favour of other –affiliated- concepts, e.g. evaluation (Labov 1972 & post-Labov work), involvement (e.g. Tannen 1989), self-presentation (e.g. Hill 1996, Schiffrin 1996), positioning/positionality (e.g. Bamberg 1997). But what brings together work that has drawn on these concepts and existing work on stance in storytelling (e.g. Baynham 2011) is their emphasis on what is going on once an activity has been established as storytelling and is unfolding. But what about stancetaking in relation to signaling and establishing an activity as storytelling or in relation to referring to a previous activity as storytelling? With the concept of narrative stancetaking, I wish to draw attention to the moment of the teller agency, when the teller *chooses* to signal with certain conventionalized means, a narrative tale or telling in process, in the making and/or in circulation. Key in the process of NS is the indexicality of a) *what a story is but also what a story does, what the expectations are about what stories to tell and circulate, where and how*[4] and b) *who the teller is, what telling rights they have and what local participation roles are associated with this 'discourse identity'* (Zimmerman 1998), *e.g. who is selected as audience.*

I have shown elsewhere (Georgakopoulou, forthcoming) how by choosing to take a narrative stance in specific social networking sites, the discourse identity of a teller involves submitting authorial control to the audience in any of the following ways: The tellers may be bidding for the audience's show of interest which can generate a further emplotment, including updates for ongoing stories; or they may be bidding for the audience's show of appreciation and stance uptake which may generate the distribution and circulation of a story. [5] Here, I will take a step further and show how NS not only projects certain discourse identities for the tellers but it also selects specific audiences and de-selects others. Specifically, it (re)localizes the events and conditions and anticipates their further circulation. In this way, NS partakes in specific indexical groundings.

3. Data: A media and vernacular spectacle

In the run up of the recent, much discussed –in old and new (European) media- second election in Greece, a particular incident became a 'viral' story: The assault of two female leftwing party MP candidates, in particular the 'slapping' and 'punching' [6]of one of them, by Ilias Kasidiaris, spokesman for the far-right party Golden Dawn, during a political debate on a breakfast news show of live TV (Antenna TV, 7 June 2012). Mr Kasidiaris threw water at SYRIZA's Mrs Rena Dourou and then repeatedly hit Communist Party MP candidate Mrs Liana Kanelli. This took place after Dourou referred to a pending court

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[4] It has been shown that particular ways of talking are associated with specific kinds of stances or subject positions (e.g. Agha 2007; Eckert 2005, Jaffe 2009). Similarly, certain stances or clusters of stances become associated with a social identity through practice conducted within hierarchical social formations. This process of naturalization primarily involves the connotational rather than the referential significance of activities. In other words, what a way of talking indexes (Silverstein 1985) points to indirectly, conventionally implies or alludes to.

[5] In my corpus of facebook updates, there was a clear correlation between how a narrative stance was taken and what further telling, if any, ensued. The event and evaluation telling combination normally elicited 'Like' from different members of the audience while the evaluation alone triggered responses (comments) that in turn generated elaboration from the original teller.

[6] As we will see below, whether Mr Kasidiaris actually slapped or punched the female MP became a point of contention after the event.

case of Kasidiaris and suggested that the Golden Dawn party, which on the basis of the May election looked set to enter Greek Parliament,[7] would take the country back 500 years. Dourou also referred to a pending court case of Kasidiaris.[8] The programme went off air immediately after the incident but reports suggested that the brawl continued when the cameras were off. An arrest warrant was issued for Mr Kasidiaris who went into hiding after the incident. Mr Kasidiaris posted a statement on Facebook saying he regretted becoming involved in an incident that could damage the party's image ahead of the general election on 17 June, but blamed his adversaries for his actions.[9] In return, Liana Kanelli said that 'Kasidiaris's behavior was proof of why some 450,000 Greek who voted for the neo-Nazi Chrysi Avgi on May 6 should withdraw their support in the June 17 election' (ekathimerini.com/4dcgi/_w_articles_wsite1_1_07/06/2012_44574).

Following the incident, the actual video from the programme was shown on numerous official and unofficial outlets, both Greek ones and international. On Web 2.0 environments in particular, the story went viral: at least 3000 video postings can be found on YouTube with varying numbers of viewers from a few hundred thousand viewers to single thousand figures.[10] The number of related videos is equally substantial. Various Facebook groups were set up in support of either Kasidiaris or Kanelli. Jokes circulated on email, some of which featured and originated in the highly popular TV stand up show by comedian Lakis Lazopoulos, 'Al Tsadiri News'. As we will see below in more detail, the resemiotization of the incident took various forms. [11]

This multi-platform and varied dissemination of the incident presents elements of both a *media spectacle* and a *vernacular spectacle* where the official and the unofficial work alongside one another. This is partly connected with the fact that the incident was an official media event in the first place. Therefore, its dissemination involved recontextualizations/resemiotizations in both other official and unofficial media by a variety of journalists, commentators and ordinary people. In media studies, 'media spectacles' refer to 'events which disrupt ordinary and habitual flows of information, and which become popular stories which capture the attention of the media and the

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[7] Chrysi Avgi (Golden Dawn) rose from 0.29% in 2009 to 7% in the May in June 2012 elections, winning18 parliamentary seats. Recent polls in Greece show that Golden Dawn has risen to the third political party after New Democracy (right wing) and SYRIZA (left-wing). Golden Dawn is viewed in the Greek and international press as a party with Neo-Nazi allegiances and increasingly support from within the Greek police. Its increase in support from the ordinary public is attributed to Greek financial crisis that has turned part of the population against mainstream parliamentary politics and immigrants (http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2012/oct/26/golden-dawn-greece-far-right).

[8] Kasidiaris was due to go on trial for a separate incident 4 days after his live TV appearance. He had been accused of being an accomplice in the beating and mugging of a student outside the Athens University halls of residence in 2007.

[9] "The events that took place on Thursday morning on 'Antenna TV' were staged with the sole aim of provoking an extreme reaction on my part," he wrote."I am sorry that without intending to, I got mixed up in a case that has confused public opinion and was aimed at hitting Golden Dawn. I will go to the prosecutor in person to sue those behind the illegal actions that have taken place in the last two days." (www.ecathemerini.com)

[10] A google trends search shows how the story peaked in web-related postings within the first 48 hours after the incident, remained 'active' for a week and gradually subsided. This however does not preclude the continuing posting of comments in e.g. YouTube videos which were uploaded soon after the incident occurred.

[11] As Androutsopoulos (2010: 210) has argued, re-semiotization in Web 2.0 environments allows a large number of people to become 'intertextual operators' by digitally modifying multi-modal texts.

public, and circulate through broadcasting networks, the Internet, social networking, cell phones, and other new media and communication technologies.'. It has also become apparent that 'in a global networked society, media spectacles proliferate instantaneously, become virtual and viral, and in some cases becomes tools of socio-political transformation, while other media spectacles become mere moments of media hype and tabloidized sensationalism' (Kellner 2012: PAGE NO). On the other hand, the term 'vernacular spectacles' has been employed to refer to any 'multimedia content that is produced outside media institutions and uploaded, displayed, and discussed on media-sharing websites such as *YouTube'* (Androutsopoulos 2010: 212). Androutsopoulos argues that such vernacular spectacles provide lay people with 'new opportunities to actively engage with global media flows' from below, and 'from a local perspective … They are a site of grassroots media creativity that takes different shapes in terms of originality, reworking, and appropriation of people's own, amateur footage, pirated material', etc. (idem).

The fact that the event under study was broadcast in a national TV channel facilitated its subsequent spectacularization, not least in that a professional video was readily available not just to other official media but to anyone who wished to circulate and upload it in any sites. As I suggested above, the aim of the present analysis is not to produce an exhaustive account of all the transpositions of the story. In this case, the first –temporally- step in the story's vernacular spectacularization was the uploading of the video on YouTube by numerous ordinary people and this seemed an intuitive point of departure for the analysis of the story's transpositions and this is what I will mainly focus on below.

4. NS and small stories circulation

4.1. NS as/in a YouTube video title

Hundreds of videos and hundreds of related videos[12] can be found on YouTube about incident under study. I chose to single out for close qualitative analysis the 50 most viewed (and commented upon) YouTube videos. [13] My analysis suggested that a prime location for the signaling of NS was the title of YouTube video postings of the incident under study. YouTube video guidelines encourage users to 'give the video an accurate title and description to help people discover it'.

NS choices for the title varied for how much detail of the incident under study they referred to explicitly or just indexed. For instance, a title along the lines of 'Kasidiaris vs Kaneli Live on Ant1' did not invoke any specific details of the events. In other cases, however, the reproducer produced a NS that took the form of what Labov (1972) would call a story abstract: a heading that provided what was seen as the main event, the main character(s) and/or the teller's' evaluation of it.

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[12] As Androutsopoulos (2010) reminds us, YouTube video postings are parts of pages with multiple navigation bars (from above the video screen to the related videos on the right), which create a web of intertextual relations.

[13] This selection took place at the beginning of the analysis, August 2012. Since then, it is certain that viewing figures have changed and comments have been added, and it is also very likely – and not uncommon on YouTube- that the ranking of videos in terms of viewing figures has changed.

1. *Ο Κασιδιάρης χαστούκισε την Κανέλλη στον αέρα!*
    Kasidiaris slapped Kanelli on air!

2. *Ο Kasidiaris rixnei bunies sthn Kanelli ston aera!*
    Kasidiaris punches Kanelli on air!

3. *kasidiaris kaneli ksilo papadakis*
    kasidiaris kaneli beating papadakis

The choice of Greek as opposed to e.g. English for the title is not without consequences, not least in terms of the possible audience selection that it comes with. We will elaborate on this in 4.2 below. Here, it is worth noting how the choice of describing the (main) event as 'punching' as opposed to 'slapping' projected different affiliations on the part of the teller: In the wake of the incident, the punching was routinely cast as more negative than the slapping. As a result, there was a close association in the data between the act being described as punching (*bunies*) and the indexing of a negative evaluation of the act, which in turn projected a left-wing ideological affiliation. This was evident in the intersubjective dynamics that each choice generated. The contestation of the assault as 'punching' invariably aimed at lessening the bad deed and vice versa, the characterization of the main deed as 'punching' upgraded its seriousness: e.g.

4. *Pe noumero[14] apo pote ta xastoukia htan bunies? Eleos.*
    You joke since when have slaps become punches? Please.

5. *δεν ηταν χαστουκι ηταν μπουνια.*
    It wasn't a slap it was a punch.

The same contestation around punching vs. slapping applied in other sites too, e.g. on blogs:

6. *"Όταν του ζήτησε το λόγο η Λιάνα Κανέλλη για αυτή τη συμπεριφορά, ο Ηλίας Κασιδιάρης ξέφυγε από κάθε έλεγχο, και επιτέθηκε μαινόμενος στην κυρία Κανέλλη με γροθιές και χαστούκια τρεις φορές."*
    When Liana Kanelli queried him about this behavior, Ilias Kasidiaris got out of control and attacked Mrs Kanelli by punching and slapping her three times.

    Δυο χαστούκια έφαγε που τα δικαιούταν ζήτησε ευγενικά το λόγο με ύβρις οπως φασισταριά πουσταριά κτλ και χτύπημα στο πρόσωπο με πάκο απο έγγραφα στην τελική μην ανυσηχείτε η κυρία κανελ ο θεός να την κάνει θα πάει στη βίλα της στην εκάλη που για να την αποκτήσει δούλεψε σκληρά ο Ελληνικός λαός να την περιθάλψει το υπηρετικό προσωπικό της που το πληρώνουμε εμείς επίσης και μετα μιλάνε για ΕΡΓΑΤΙΚΟ ΚΙΝΗΜΑ.
    She received two slaps which she deserved, she asked for the floor politely, i.e. with swear words such as fascists, faggots, etc. and a hit in his face with a pack of

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[14] This derogatory term, literally meaning 'number' but metaphorically meaning a non-serious person, was notably used by Mr Kasidiaris against Mrs Dourou when throwing the glass of water at her. It was subsequently addressed to various respondents in the comments section of the YouTube videos of the incident by various commentators who seemed to take a sympathetic view of Mr Kasidiaris.

papers. In the end, don't you worry, Mrs Kanelli if you can call her that will go to her villa in Ekali[15] which she acquired through the hard work of the Greek people and she'll be looked after by her domestic help which we are also paying for and then they talk about a LABOUR MOVEMENT.
http://www.katohika.gr/2012/06/blog-post_945.html#idc-cover

Which character was included and seen as key in the events also signaled the teller's position and constituted a form of implicit evaluation. For instance, despite the fact that the actual incident involved two female MP candidates, two thirds of the titles chose to focus solely on Kasidiaris and Kanelli rendering the incident as a duel. In fewer cases, the TV presenter, Mr Papadakis, was added and in even fewer cases (5 out of 50 videos), a politician co-interviewee, was assigned a key role too. In both cases, the men were included as passive, non-actors and their role as bystanders to a serious incident was negatively evaluated. It is notable that Papadakis and Prokopis figured more prominently, along the same lines of negative assessment, in the resemiotization genres of the incident (see discussion below).

As I argued above, any case of NS implies a choice of the position of a 'teller' with a specific point of view vis-à-vis the events and characters of the uploaded video. This discourse identity has implications for the audience participation roles and tasks; put differently, for the sequential implicativeness (Jefferson 1978) of the NS: the teller proposes a specific understanding of the events and characters in them and in that way he/she makes certain audience responses more relevant than others. This has been shown to be the case in conversational stories (idem). But in this case, one of the sequential implications of the choice of NS in the title of the video is the indexing and selection of a specific audience as the designated one for a particular posting. NS in this way indexes affiliation with certain readers more than others; it addresses and includes some readers more than others. This audience indexing has to be seen in connection with the phenomenon of *context collapse* in Web 2.0 environments, particularly social networking sites: context collapse refers to 'the infinite audience possible online as opposed to the limited groups a person normally interacts with face to face. In a limited group, a person is constantly adjusting their tone and presentation of self to fit into the social context. In a situation of context collapse, this becomes impossible. In addition, behaviors and materials intended for a limited audience can suddenly clash with parts of the wider audience they actually receive' (Wesch 2008; Marwyck & boyd 2011). From this point of view, the signaling of a specific NS in the data at hand arguably counteracts context collapse by projecting both certain kinds of audience engagement as more relevant than others and certain members of the audience as co-tellers or as counter-tellers.

In similar vein, the choice of title is intimately linked with what related videos would be intertextually linked with the current video. The title, therefore, along with the related videos place the actual posting in a specific indexical chain and not in others. For example, NS favouring Kasidiaris in the title has as related videos other videos where Kasidiaris exhibits bravado or puts other politicians in their place as well as videos with a negative portrayal of Kanelli: e.g.

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[15] Affluent suburb of Athens.

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7. *Kasidiaris tapvnei Kapsh*
   Kasidiaris puts Kapsi in his place

8. *Petaksan giaourtia sthn Kanelli*
   They threw yogurt at Kanelli.

4.2 Audiences as co-tellers/ narrative stancetakers

Like the uploaders of the videos, the respondents have a choice to either taking a narrative stance or not. In the case of taking a narrative stance, the comments more or less explicitly recognize the incident as a story with specific characters and events. Furthermore, they provide an assessment of the characters and the events. A non-narrative stancetaking involves the respondents detaching themselves from the events of the story and providing general social and political commentary. The positioning of the respondents in each case is very different. In the first case, the respondents position themselves as story recipients and furthermore as co-tellers. In the second case, they position themselves as commentators with an explicit political and ideological agenda: e.g. as European citizens, as pro- or anti-EU bailouts of countries like Greece, as politically affiliated with one party or another, etc.

9. *Fuck Greece! Stupid lazy scum sucking pieces of shit. Have fun trying to survive after Glorious Deutschland kicks your shit country out! Deutschland Deutschland uber alles! Still is true to this day. Fuck Greece!*
   DangerousBatman 4 weeks ago

10. As soon as you start paying your debts for the usage of OUR Democracy (yes you were still savages and you were still living in caves while we were using Democracy), for the usage of OUR Civilization (yes, you savages climbed down from the trees because of US), for the crimes of germany against Greece during WW2, etc etc etc, we will be glad to give you the change :)
    Until then, GTFO of Youtube and start reading history books.

11. *Οι καθεστωτικοι τελικα ειναι πολυ γελοιοι!*
    Η μαζικη επιθεση ολου του καθεστωτος κατα της Χρυσης Αυγης, μονον καλο
    *μπορει να της κανει σε αυτην την περιοδο, που*Α *η μιση Ελλαδα ειναι ετοιμη να*
    παρει τα οπλα εναντιον τους
    Achilles acjo 2 months ago
    The status quo advocates are after all ludicrous!
    The mass attack of the Golden Dawn by the status quo can only be beneficial for the party in this period when Greece is ready to be up in arms.

As we can see in examples 9-11 above, responses that choose not to take a narrative stance explicitly signal specific ideological and political affiliations. They also make relevant the larger context of the Greek financial crisis and the rise of the far-right political party Golden Dawn, which Kasidiaris is an MP candidate for. The specific incident is therefore abstracted from in favour of the macro-political context. In contrast to this, in the case of NS, the signaling of any ideological or political

positionings is more indexical, rooted in the positive or negative assessments of what the respondent sees as the main events and characters of the uploaded video signaled. For instance, by assessing Kasidiaris' actions positively or by justifying them, respondents are positioning themselves even if implicitly as affiliated with his politics.

There are various forms that the respondents' NS takes vis-à-vis the uploaded video but they can be grouped into two types, which I call 'events-focused' vs. 'characters-focused' contributions. *Events-focused* NS tends to dwell on what exactly happened. For instance, the title of a video uploading may be contested on the basis of the accuracy of the events, as in examples 4 & 5 above. [16]Other respondents' interpretations of the events may also be contested on the basis of lack of accuracy.

12. *Τελικά ο Κασιδιάρης σηκώθηκε να αποχωρήσει από την αίθουσα και η Κανέλλη του επιτίθεται με τις φωτοτυπίες. Έλεος. Δείτε προσεκτικά τη σκηνή.*
In the end Kasidiaris got up to leave the room and Kanelli attacked him with the photocopies. Please. Watch the scene carefully.

In the *characters-focused evaluation*, the respondents may re-voice a character, mostly with the aim of affiliating with them but also in a mocking or playful way. The addition of smileys, emoticons and punctuation contextually cues the position of a respondent as affiliative or disaffiliative

13. *ADE VRE NOUMERO !!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!*
COME OFF IT YOU JOKE!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!
(This is what Kasidiaris said before throwing water at Dourou).

14. *to xastouki tis agapis de ponaei:-))) ante vre noumero:-))))*
The slap of love does not hurt☺))) come off it you joke☺)))

15. *☐oxi oxi oxi oxi oxi xaxaax*
john13lamiara 2 months ago
no no no no no xaxaax[17]

16. *xesthke o papadakis :P*
Katsaitis1 2 months ago
papadakis shit himself: P

17. *500 ΧΡΟΝΙΑ ΠΙΣΩ ΛΕΕΙ Η ΨΩΛΑ Η ΑΛΛΗ..ΕΝΩ ΤΩΡΑ ΜΕ ΟΛΟΥΣ ΤΟΥΣ ΓΚΟΓΚΟΛΕΖΟΥΣ Κ ΤΟΥΣ ΣΟΜΑΛΟΥΣ ΘΑ ΠΑΜΕ ΜΠΡΟΣΤΑ ΠΟΥ Ο ΠΑΤΕΡΑΣ ΤΟΥΣ ΣΚΟΤΩΝΕ ΛΙΟΝΤΑΡΙΑ*
AEKGETTO 2 months ago
500 YEARS BACK SAYS THE OTHER BITCH[18], WHEREAS NOW WITH THE CONGOLIANS AND THE SOMALIANS WE'LL GO AHEAD WHOSE FATHERS USED TO KILL LIONS

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[16] In the events-focused commentaries, a main point of contention was whether Kasidiaris actually slapped or punched Kanelli, as I argued in 4.1. above.
[17] This is what presenter Papadakis kept on saying during the assault of Kanelli by Kasidiaris. In the aftermath of the event, he was criticized and/or mocked in many forums for not taking a more proactive stance during the escalation of the incident.

18.   *Rezili exi gini o geros Prokopis allos "antras" kiaftos pou exi xesti epano tou kai vlepi mia gynaika na tin xtipane etsi..*
      Old Prokopis has been humiliated call him a 'man' when he shitted himself seeing a woman being beaten like this.

In certain cases, respondents bring in biographical or other information about any of the main characters as lending weight to a particular interpretation or assessment of their actions in the specific incident. For instance, Kanelli's wealthy life style (e.g. where she lives in Athens, what car she drives, etc.) is brought in as part of a negative evaluation of her and as providing justification for Kasidiaris' actions, as we saw in example 6 above.

19.   *egw xserw oti i kiria kanelli exi 24 spitia. ke to pezi ke koumouni*
      [sakatis](#) in reply to [lillioumystar](#) 2 months ago
      what I know is that Mrs Kanelli has for 24 houses and she says she is communist

NS and explicit self-identity claims on the part of the respondents are not two mutually exclusive categories. There are cases, where a character assessment either follows or precedes an explicit positioning statement about the respondent. This is reminiscent of how stories are frequently told to provide evidence for or refute certain personal beliefs and points of view (e.g. Georgakopoulou 2009, Schiffrin 1996).

18.   *ime gennima aristeros ke tora oudeteros isos ke ligo antifasistas ALLA i kyria dourou tin kouventa me tin anavoli ti tin ithele?*
      I am born left-wing now neutral and a little anti-fascist BUT what was Mrs Dourou thinking when she talked about the adjournal?[19]

NS –both events and characters-focused- was closely associated in the data with choice of language: Greek speaking respondents proved to be more likely to adopt a NS than non-Greek speaking respondents, who instead positioned themselves as commentators of the macro-context of the Greek financial crisis and the ideological issue of the far right. Put differently, Greek speaking audiences stayed more closely to the microcosm of the story, the accuracy of its events, the characters, their motives, their personality traits, etc. It is notable that when non-Greek speaking respondents adopted a NS positioning, they tended to place themselves in a non-knowing story recipient role: e.g. they asked questions about who the characters were; what certain words meant.

19.   *Who was the guy who punched the woman and who was the woman in red?*
      The guy was a Nazi and the slapped woman was from the communist party.
      [windyfire18](#) in reply to [realolba](#) 3 months ago

The above suggests that there were issues of story entitlement and ownership in the data. Language-related and local (as in Greek) expertise seemed to create dividing lines in terms of: who was meant to report on what; how the incident was re-categorized in its circulation (as story or not); how local were the contexts that were invoked as

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[18] Just before the incident, Dourou claimed that the Golden Dawn would take Greece 500 years back.
[19] This was in reference to an upcoming court case for Mr Kasidiaris.

relevant for it (e.g. domestic issues to do with the Greek crisis, the crisis in the Eurozone, etc.).

4.3 Changing genres: NS and resemioticization

As I have shown elsewhere in relation to retweets (forthcoming), the actual brevity of NS facilitates quotability and iterativity and is therefore conducive to the process of a story's transposition in different Web 2.0 environments. We can see this at work in the case of the resemioticization of the incident. The video itself provided an easy way of circulating the story and inserting it into video-uploading sites such as YouTube. But a parallel process of stripping of the visual also happened e.g. with many email circulars of jokes based on the incident. The resemiotization into text-only genres in all cases produced condensed forms that alluded to previous well-known texts (e.g. films) from the Greek popular culture. In this case, indexicality was pushed to its limits. The incident was arguably re-localized, i.e. re-inserted into local contexts and for the benefit of local audiences that partake in specific indexical associations: they have watched specific films, sitcoms, are familiar with specific types of popular culture, have been participants, however active or passive, in the 'internal' conversation surrounding the incident, know of specific biographies of actors, have laughed with the same jokes as others, etc. Reminiscent of communication that capitalizes on the interlocutors' shared interactional history (Georgakopoulou 2007), the resemioticization of the incident was premised on humorous associations and parodic stances that were assumed to be shared and specific evocations for the local audience. This was evident in the constant drawing of analogies between characters and actions from the specific incident and famous popular culture figures (e.g. actors, singers) and events.

20.   *Κασιδιάρης εναντίον Δούρου - Κανελλη : Θέλει ο φασίστας να κρυφτεί και η...*
      Τηλεόραση δεν τον αφήνει.
      Kasidiaris vs Dourou-Kanelli: the fascist wants to hide and the telly is not letting him.

21.   *Άλλη τις τρώει και ζορίζεται (Κανέλη) και άλλη τις τρώει και δροσίζεται*
      (Δούρου)...!!
      One is getting a hiding and having a hard time (Kanelli) and the other one is getting a hiding and feeling refreshed (Dourou)...!!!

In both examples above, well-known proverbs have been re-worded and adapted so as to fit the incident in question while retaining the humour of the original. In the case of 21, the rhyme and alliteration of the contrastive relationship between the effects of the action of beating up (*zorizetai-drosizetai*) is retained.

22.   *Αχ κανελάκι κανελάκι ξύλο που το φας.... το χέρι του Κασιδιάρη με ριζοσπάστη μην*
      χτυπάς
      Sweet Kanelaki kanelaki you're going to get a beating ... don't hit the hand of Kasidiaris with a rizospastis[20].

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[20] Rizospastis is a newspaper that describes itself as an 'organ of the Central Committee' of the Greek communist party (KKE).

In this case, a well-known nursery rhyme is reworded. This re-adaptation is facilitated by the similar sound of the name Kanelli (in diminutive form: *kanelaki*) with the diminutive of rabbit (*kounelaki*- bunny).

23.　　Όπως η Βουγιουκλάκη ερωτευόταν όποιον την χαστούκιζε πλάκα θα χει τώρα
　　　και η Καννέλη να δηλώσει φουλ καψούρα με το Κασιδιάρη....!!!!
　　　Like when Vougiouklaki fell in love with whoever slapped her imagine if Kanelli now declares she fancies Kasidiaris…!!!!

Actress Aliki Vougiouklaki, who starred in numerous popular Finos films in the 60s, was a national star. The indexical analogy of Kanelli with her, like the re-appropriations of the sources in 20-22 above, capitalizes on the creation of incongruous associations between two very different media genres: Vougiouklaki starred in romantic comedies and the act of slapping by the male lead, in the motif of the taming of the shrew, was normally part of a developing romantic interest.

In all the above cases, we note a re-scripting of the original incident as a key- aspect of its resemiotizations that did not include the original video: not only does the form of circulation change, but the characters and the events too are inserted into new contexts and scenarios, while analogies with other stories and characters are being created. This re-scripting also applied to resemiotization cases that involved enactments of the same incident through different visual material and videos. For instance, amateur videos were uploaded on YouTube in which ordinary characters in a variety of settings (e.g. on the beach) replayed the events and dialogues of the original incident (e.g. *Kasidiaris Kaneli sfaliara paralia*: Kasidiaris Kaneli slap beach). Similarly, there were appropriations of the well-known YouTube video clip from the movie 'The downfall' that is often used with fake subtitles that create an obvious incongruence between the actual video and the subtitles (cf. Androutsopoulos 2010). A detailed discussion of these is beyond the scope of this chapter. What is notable is the creative act of re-scripting as part of the vernacular spectacularization of the incident. This, as we have seen, involves processes of indexical NS, addressing those who are 'in the know'.

5. Conclusions

The focus on the mobility of semiotic resources within processes of globalization is part of a latest 'paradigmatic shift' in sociolinguistics (Blommaert 2010: 41). Following on from this, my aim in this paper was to show how small stories research can offer a conceptual apparatus for the study of new/social media practices of wide circulation of stories as vernacular spectacles. I specifically introduced NS as a useful way of orienting to the interconnections of the three layers of ways of telling-sites-tellers. Small stories research allows for a transpositions-aware analysis that examines the choice of a story as a semiotic activity in the first place and the ways in which subsequent circulation may index previous and anticipated tellers, tellings and audiences. I drew on a 'telling case' to show this kind of analysis at work: The assault in Greece of two female leftwing party MPs, in particular the 'slapping' and 'punching' of one of them, by a male MP from the far-right party Golden Dawn, on a breakfast news show of live TV (7 June 2012). The specific story had a video attached to it and YouTube became a platform of high

preference for the circulation. But in that environment too, as I showed, there was much scope for the recontextualization to produce new meanings (Bauman & Briggs 1990) and for both the video uploaders and the respondents to take a specific narrative stance. The analysis specifically demonstrated how the choice of NS was interconnected with specific sites affordances, e.g. titles on YouTube video postings. NS in YouTube video titles was found to create specific indexical and intertextual chains: these involved the implicit signaling of specific positionings for the teller and in turn the selection of specific audiences. This suggested a specific recontextualization context and purpose of the here-and-now recontextualization of the story. At the same time, it anticipated and projected specific further circulation. NS on the part of the respondents tended to create equally indexical understandings of their political and ideological positionings by means of events-focused or characters-focused assessments.

The analysis of the resemiotization of the incident showed a tendency towards condensed, text-based genres that in many ways re-localized the event, grounding it in highly local Greek realities and in culture-specific and densely indexical understandings. Resemiotization has been argued to privilege different domains of experience, to enable different resources and to harbour different possibilities for negotiability and accessibility of a given material (Iedema 2003). In this case, it lent itself to more localized and shared meanings, characters- and events-based, and to more micro-cosmic interpretations of the specific news story, The local and particular incident became globally available and transcended its local boundaries the minute it entered a multitude of Web 2.0 environments. At the same time, its various resemiotizations lent themselves differently to the de-localization of the incident and indeed to its re-localization too, its reclaiming by audiences as a specifically Greek TV event. In this way, the circulation of the incident under study did not necessarily produce a wealth of interpretative meanings but instead ended up closing up meanings for the sake of specific audiences and networks. As I showed, in this process, NS partook in specific indexical groundings, in the signaling of what contexts were seen as relevant for the assessment of the events.

The above findings provide useful insights into current sociolinguistic discussions of processes of globalization and localization. Glocalization, as the making of global localities. has been critiqued for its connotations of uniformization and the ubiquity of the global, and the term translocalization has been proposed as an alternative that serves the nuanced scrutiny of localities (Blommaert 2010: 79), the myriad ways in which global processes affect local conditions. However, there is scope for 'gaining a clear sight of what localities mean if we are to understand globalization' (idem). At the same time, the emphasis in the study of new media practices has been on the –however dynamic- localization of globally recognized formats, genres, etc. (e.g. Androutsopoulos 2010). But to find out more about the locality, the interplay between delocalized events and processes of relocalization need to be established, as we saw in the story under study. Processes of NS in their interconnections with a story's ways of telling, sites and tellers need to be recognized as pivotal for this interplay. As we saw, different kinds of NS in different resemiotizations were intimately linked with how relocalized a story was presented as, in different social media environments. Documenting these links is a necessary analytical step for identifying how local stories can escape their confines, and what new perspectives and meanings, if any, their transpositions across social media can generate. In doing so, we will be in a better position to assess the utopian or equally

the dystopian discourses (Baym 2010) that abound around the potential of new/social media for text and discourse mobility.

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