Research Article

Jerzy Stachowicz*

Digitally Assisted Conversation—Google and Changes in Literacy Practices

https://doi.org/10.1515/culture-2018-0074
Received April 21, 2018; accepted December 10, 2018

Abstract: The use of search engines such as Google is an activity that produces a transformation of communication practices related to the use of digital devices (especially smartphones) and has a significant impact on Internet users' linguistic practices. One of these practices is conversation—not Internet chat, but "ordinary" face-to-face dialogue. People often search the web during conversations. This practice transforms a simple conversation into a digitally assisted one. A digitally assisted conversation is a dynamic combination of speaking, typing and reading on the screen. In this paper, I present some consequences of this change, such as the way searching during conversations "forces" interlocutors to take a different look at their statements and why reaching for a smartphone and using a search engine can be perceived, regardless of the results displayed on the screen, as a significant rhetorical gesture of negation (usually considered rude). Proficiency in searching and using a smartphone with broadband Internet is considered socially attractive today, just as erudition and literacy once were. This is currently considered an extension of erudition.

Keywords: new media, literacy practices, conversation, smartphones, search engines

Introduction: Googling as a Basic Literacy Practice

Communication practices, including literacy practices, have been unquestionably transformed since the popularisation of digital devices. For many people, writing and reading on the display of a digital device connected to the web has become a basic activity in which they use literacy skills gained in school (Barton 7). They chat, blog, tweet, send text messages, write emails, novels or poetry, and, above all, search for information by typing words or phrases that interest them into search engines such as Google.

The use of search engines is an activity that specifically produces this transformation in communication practices (see Baron; Carr; Halavais). Googling has become one of the primary ways of using the Internet and, at the same time, has influenced spheres of life beyond work with the computer and communication mediated by the screen. We can say that this activity has motivated the creation of a new model of conversation: search engine-assisted conversation. Searching while talking has also become a collective activity and almost a type of party game.

In this paper, I pay special attention to the social aspect of this activity. I consider that searching the web is not so much a distinct cultural practice but an activity leading to the transformation of existing cultural practices and the creation of new practices related to the use of language, collecting and processing knowledge in everyday life (see Godlewski).

***Corresponding author: Jerzy Stachowicz,** Institute of Polish Culture, Faculty of Polish Studies, University of Warsaw, Krakowskie Przedmieście 26/28, 00-927 Warszawa, Poland. Email: jurek.stachowicz@gmail.com.

Theoretical Background: Always-on lifestyle

It is worth highlighting the limited perspective, flattened by the lack of historical distance, that is currently available to researchers of digital phenomena. The terminology used to describe search practices and the practices themselves are still "under construction" as they still are being formed by digital device users (Filiciak, Danielewicz, et al.).

For that reason, it is hard to determine whether such behaviour has become a well-established cultural practice or is merely ephemeral (see Bauman). This applies particularly to linguistic practices related to digital media. I primarily adopt the perspective of the user of a digital device (especially mobile device) for whom using a search engine is an act of manipulating text, writing or typing words.

How does one describe the people who perform these new practices related to search engines? Who are they? Because the Internet is dispersed and connects millions of people around the world, it is difficult to make such a characterization, to select a group of users, or to investigate and specify the area of fieldwork. "Lifestyle" is a useful term here.

Giddens describes the ongoing process of the "reorganization of time and space" that creates a new configuration of "locality and globality" during which the individual is faced with a range of possibilities while family ties and existing values are weakened (81). He also emphasizes the importance of "lifestyle" as a factor in organizing the identity of modern people, defining the individual as well as connecting individuals with one another.

People who practise digitally assisted conversation share the lifestyle that Danah Boyd defines by the term "always-on lifestyle" (71). A paramount role is played by the web and mobility; individuals are always online, have smartphones, and use them often. They have accounts on social networking sites and log on to them using portable digital devices. They use smartphones as essential tools for work and contact with friends, and the Internet is, to a large extent, their work environment and one of their most important sources of information (see Baron; Boyd; Turkle).

According to Boyd, there must be a clear distinction between simply being online and pursuing the always-on lifestyle (72). Being always-on means, above all, using digital networks to interact with friends and/or other users, intensifying and supporting these relations with new technologies. Therefore, members of this group are extremely active on social-networking sites. Not everyone is always-on just by virtue of having a smartphone connected to the Internet; this status applies to those who actively use their digital devices and for whom the Internet accompanies the most mundane daily activities. It is important for these individuals to operate in a group of people with similar interests who are also always-on and with whom they wish to share their insights through social media. They are oriented towards a social life associated with the new technologies. This type of person does not consider technology, especially the web, an obstacle in social interaction or regard it as an alienating medium; instead, it is viewed as a tool for opening up new opportunities to practise social life.

It should be particularly emphasized that representatives of the always-on lifestyle cannot be easily distinguished as a group by age, social status or even spatial localization, because the traditional sociological criteria cannot, in this case, be the fundamental determinants that define the group (Boyd 72).

As Boyd demonstrates, representatives of the always-on lifestyle are not interested in virtual reality—services such as Second Life—but rather in augmented reality, which enables them to practise everyday activities and stay connected to the web at the same time (74). They do not treat the Internet as a separate reality, but they feel that they are a part of it and are part of the web. The distinction between virtuality and reality, or, to use the more colloquial forms, "the virtual" and "the real" (which are still popular among Internet users), turns out to be inadequate (Lemos 104). This is not about total immersion in "electronic reality" and focusing all your senses on the electronic transmission and digitally generated images or texts. Always-online users represent a different approach. In reference to the use of portable digital devices, it would be better to talk of constant sensual contact with both the web and the world around the user— they are operating in "hybrid spaces" (de Souza e Silva 273). There are moments when people using smartphones focus fully on the screens of their devices, but these moments do not last long.

Method and Sample

The following observations and reflections are based on research that can be described as quasi-ethnographic qualitative and narrative research. I started my research as a part of broader project *Linguistic practices as cultural practices from the perspective of anthropology of the word* conducted in the Institute of Polish Culture University of Warsaw. I combined traditional ethnographic methods such as participant observation and interviews with online communication tools (see Kozinets; Boellstorff et al.) and methods of interpretation worked out by the anthropology of the word, the sub-discipline which I represent (see Godlewski). I decided not to consider individual observations and points of view separately, but rather to concentrate on "regularities," thus a certain set of assumptions and statements which are common to all observations and interlocutors.

Preliminary observations in a group of friends, on the streets and in public places (parks, libraries) inspired me and helped me to determine and to narrow the group of people on whom I focused during my observations—those who shared the always-on lifestyle ("I'm practically always online using my mobile phone, so whenever I feel the need, I search the net and get it relatively frequently" Marcin, aged 31) and lived in Warsaw, Poland. The group of people I studied included persons between 25 and 45 years old with a relatively high socioeconomic status who were urban residents and creative professionals, lawyers, university lecturers or students. They were not just so-called "digital natives" or the "net generation" (see Prensky; Tapscott); most of them were "early adopters" of IT products, especially smartphones that are constantly connected to the web.

The specificity of digital media in the era of mobile devices constantly connected to the Internet (see Boellstorff et al. 61) meant that almost every visit to a café, conference or social gathering (such as house parties) became a pretext for observation and reflection on the use of search engines. For that reason, another important methodological choice was to limit my observations to the central districts of Warsaw. The centre of the city contains places where always-on people meet one another and practice digital-assisted conversation.

Finally, I conducted more than 250 observations in streets, cafes and social meetings between 2013 and 2016. I participated in more than 40 house parties. Each observation lasted approximately 2-3 hours. The numbers of men and women involved in the observed situations were quite equal. I conducted additional observations during family events. Although studying one family confirmed my observations, it is not a representative sample.

I used, first, classical tools to prepare my field notes, a notebook and a pencil, which proved to be most useful in cafes and during meetings focused on conversations about searching. However, it was embarrassing to use the notebook in social events and unexpected situations. The smartphone (and even "the ordinary" mobile phone) proved to be an excellent tool in such situations. Holding a smartphone and writing on it or browsing the Internet or using a search engine is not embarrassing. Currently, a person who writes on the screen of a mobile digital device does not raise curiosity and attracts no attention; the action is socially neutral. Much more attention is paid to someone using a classic notebook.

I additionally conducted interviews involving thirty individuals. They were people I could reach by means of instant messengers and Facebook and are considered representative of the target group. The method I adopted to communicate with participants can be described as a semi-structured online interview with elements of synchronous and asynchronous communication. This form of communication guaranteed that the interviewees were representative of the type of web-users I chose. Some of them (eight) were previously participants in situations I described in the field notes. The most important problem that appeared during interview preparation was gender inequality. Only ten women agreed to be interviewed. The women involved in situations I observed were not willing to talk about them. As I wrote in the field notes, Google-assisted conversation is not a "boy thing," but the following reflections are not devoid of gender bias.

Discussion: Digitally Assisted Conversation

"For it must be remembered that the arrival of a new means of communication does not replace the earlier (except in certain limited spheres), it adds to it and alters it," concludes Jack Goody (155), characterizing the process that I call remediation, after David Bolter (see Bolter; Bolter et al.; Stachowicz *Komputery, powieści i kino nieme*). Indeed, we now talk of the remediation or extension of conversation. Googling affects the form and content of the conversation that occurs in the "real world."

In the practices (of being always-on) described below, the distinction between virtuality and reality turns out to be inadequate, and the boundary between using the Internet and traditional conversation is abolished. This description can be treated as a kind of ideal type, constructed by merging several perspectives (see Swedberg 181).

Digitally assisted conversation is a dynamic combination (a mash-up) of speaking, typing and reading on a screen. To borrow a term coined by Jack Goody, this type of conversation can be defined as a "lecto-oral" practice (56) because oral communication is mediated by typing (writing) and reading texts on the screen. Interlocutors interrupt the conversation from time to time to use their smartphones and type words into the search-engine window to look for information related to the topic of the talk. They then "immerse" themselves in the reality of the Internet and, after a moment, read aloud and comment on the search results that appear on their personal screens: "We're talking about something, there is some issue, so I check it immediately and present my knowledge/opinion on the subject" (Marcin, aged 31).

Such discussions, to an observer who is not involved in them, may seem jerky, jagged and even incomprehensible. The fact that speaking is sometimes combined with communication by means of digital devices (applications for chatting and instant messaging) also complicates the reception of the conversation. A thread that is started orally can be transferred onto the screen in the form of electronic writing. When the interlocutors exchange links to the search results, an intense conversation can turn into a series of "throwing" short messages every now and then: "I've shared! Check it out. Check this link, see ..." etc. These short oral elements are conventional and seem to perform only a phatic function of maintaining bonds of sociality between participants.

Even when it is less extreme, digitally assisted conversation may be more like an academic seminar than a casual chat. In these cases, speaking is interrupted by moments of reading, working with a text, and extracting information from the text to maintain the conversation. "In the same way, people used to reach for a book to check a fact" (Jerzy, aged 41).

Based on the general characteristics of this new practice, we can evaluate circumstances: when and why are people Googling while talking? What do individuals think about digitally assisted conversation?

Respondents who were asked about the use of search engines during conversations often claimed that they hardly ever participated in such an activity. However, in response to further questions, they noticed that they often searched Google during a conversation. Searching during a conversation, although sometimes irritating, has become a normal practice:

> "Do you ever interrupt an action to search for something on the web?"
> "Of course I do, but I do not treat searching as an interruption but usually as a supplement" (Marcin, aged 31).
> "During a conversation? Depends on what form it takes. I have a friend who uses his tablet non-stop, always checking something on it; this is annoying because I get the impression that the equipment is more important to him than the person he talks to. Access to the web can be helpful but should not dominate the conversation.
> Apart from that, the conversation might occur from the beginning at the computer and refer to something on the Internet. On the other hand, during a social gathering, where the Internet is a source of information that we need, it looks slightly different. It all boils down to the fact that this technology has to be an addition to the person, not the other way round" (Jerzy, aged 41).
> My interlocutors also recognized situations in which searching during a conversation was inappropriate or even rude: "Unless that person is talking only to you, then this is inappropriate, but with the company of friends, without a problem" (Paweł, aged 28).
> "In a conversation with someone, everything depends on the context; sometimes it is not okay, but if there is an issue to be resolved, then yes, by all means" (Radosław, aged 35).

My observations indicate that the above views do not translate into practice. Google-assisted conversations can be very formal, such as during a business meeting or an intimate face-to-face meeting. Searching seems to be an almost unnoticeable part of daily routine. In such situations, searching may even take the form of actions that are not so much conspicuous, as they are in the case of a social gathering, but instead are embarrassing and thus concealed from the other party. In such a case, one of the interlocutor's searches was because "he quickly wants to fill a gap in his knowledge which is holding back the conversation" (Daniel, aged 29).

Most of the interviewees emphasize the social aspects of Google-assisted conversation. Usually, especially in the case of an informal social gathering and often in a larger group where searching takes the form of a more conscious activity on the part of the participants, it becomes an important element of the conversation itself and sometimes even its dominant component: "As I sit with friends drinking beer, by the end, someone always raises a question of this type: And what's the name of that guy from that movie, fuck, you know. In this and similar cases, up comes Uncle Google" (Łukasz, aged 32).

The very act of searching in the course of a conversation can also be considered a type of phatic communication that maintains contact and *esprit de corps* within a group of people talking to each other. In this way, using web resources appears to be the best and the easiest way to maintain contact apart from gossiping about friends. Searching is also used to illustrate points one has made during a conversation. For instance, if someone wants to illustrate a story about an interesting place they have visited, they may look for a photo of it on the web to show to their audience. Typing is a way to evocate images. Gossip may also take the form of comments illustrated by audio-visual materials ("Have you seen his hairstyle? Have you seen his picture on FB?").

In specific situations, the practice of searching while talking acquires the character of a collective practice; it is not only part of the communicative practice that is conversation but also becomes a primary practice in which a group is involved, collective fun, a ludic practice that we might call a "Google party." Someone says a phrase, someone else enters it in a search engine and the result arouses laughter and applause, so the next member of the group proposes another topic.

Usually, the basis for such games are phrases that lead to unexpected results, such as typing the name of a popular politician leading to display links and images of a vulgar or sexual nature.

One of these games I watched was initiated by the phrase "Mexican cucumber." These words typed into the Google bar on a smartphone screen gave an unexpected result for most of the attendees: a picture of a phallus-shaped bottle of alcohol. The game then was transformed into typing the same phrase into other search engines (such as Bing). Such activities, according to my observations, draw a group of people together around the screen of a digital device that then becomes a "home entertainment centre," and the person entering data is a type of MC.

Having fun searching is a type of a wordplay based on the misleading hypertextual "associations" of the machine. An algorithm bug or a joke prepared by a search engine optimization specialist becomes a comic element and unveils a ludic aspect of digital searching.

One of the most important elements of this type of "Google party" is the competition that arises between persons who invent topics to search. Those who gain the highest approval of the guests are those who can find content that the rest of the group would find attractive and are able to find something the others do not yet know. This type of competition reveals the hierarchy of digital literacy: the best are the ones who spend the most time using search engines, are up to date with web trends and are always-on. Google party participants need some prior preparation by performing searches on their own and gaining proficiency in digital literacy: "As I search in Polish, I usually look for something I've seen before and I want to show to others" (Łukasz, aged 32). Those who know how to find the required text quickly and can narrow the search area easily become the most socially attractive.

Therefore, in the described cases, searching is not always the same practice and can be divided into at least two steps or types:

- Pre-search, focused on "private" acquisition and management of knowledge—not public and improving the skills of the searcher;
- Searching for show, focused on the contact with other users and knowledge transfer to strengthen the social position of the searcher.

Proficiency in searching and operating a smartphone with broadband Internet are considered socially attractive today, as erudition and literacy once used to be. This is considered an extension of erudition: "I ask about everything. I check, research, recall, read more, etc. It's something such as a virtual overlay of life, the brain extension" (Ziemowit, aged 36).

In the past, to gain a position in a social group and be considered well read, in addition to conforming to conventions, one had to acquire knowledge in both written and printed form and recognize numerous connections between works and authors. It seems that all those abilities are currently offered by the web and its resources. Even unobvious connections—historical trivia, quotes from the classics—are offered by Google and hyperlinks.

Another interesting consequence of extended conversation leads to self-reflection and a corporal sphere of talking. Google-assisted conversation changes not only the sphere of words but also the context. Searching during conversations "forces" interlocutors to take a fresh look at their statements. When I met up with friends in the days before the Internet, especially before the popularity of portable digital devices, and the conversation turned to controversial topics, the course of the conversation would depend on the confidence and the persuasive force of the speaker. One could prove his arguments using only knowledge, memory and personal authority. However, everyone can feel like an expert with the ability to check the web immediately for information. Finding relevant arguments in the debate can be transferred to a computer. The search process works as an independent adjudicator: "I had to run the Internet on the mobile because I wanted to check with my friends which one of us remembers the distance from the Moon to Earth better" (Jerzy, aged 41).

Therefore, reaching for the smartphone and using a search engine can be perceived as a significant rhetorical gesture regardless of what results are displayed on the screen. This act is similar to other negation gestures, such as shaking the head. These examples demonstrate that using a search engine creates a new context of conversation, and digitally assisted conversation becomes incomplete and confusing without it.

A similar use of search engines may occur during more formal events. One of my interviewees, who works as a lecturer, noted that the prevalence of this practice may lead to an undermining of the authority of the teacher. Currently, students in a course, similar to the case of digitally assisted conversation, are more inclined to display the attitude of a "digital sceptic." The digital device user constantly verifies aspects of the competence of the lecturer, such as their memory and the accuracy of their speech, and is willing to contest it using search engines.

One interviewee (Agnieszka, aged 37) was subjected to such verification; during a lecture, one of the students had checked her words using Google and Wikipedia and then stood up and publicly stated that the content of the lecture did not agree with the Google results. Although it turned out that the article in Wikipedia gave false information, the lecturer, contrary to the students, could not support her arguments using the Internet. She had to rely on her own authority and the knowledge contained in books as well as on her memory. Such a situation may cause the lecturer (and the interlocutors during a conversation as well) to have a sense of a constant undermining of their words and authority. A consequence of such situations is the loss of interest in the lecture caused by the conviction that all of the required knowledge is easy to find on the Internet.

The problem of the constant use of search engines to dispute the researcher's knowledge also has a deeper dimension that influences academic life and the learning process. Search engines have become a weapon in the fight against research paper plagiarism. The prevalence of such searches has coincided with the growing number of cases of plagiarism. Anyone can type a suspected part of the material into a search engine. Therefore, academics have obtained an extremely efficient tool to check this aspect of their students' papers. I have proved several times that students pasted entire passages of work written by someone else into their text. The flipside of the widely available knowledge is an increase of confidence in the information found on the Internet, especially on Wikipedia. In addition to the situation of being monitored, described above in the case of the lecturer, we can observe the opposite situation: students overestimating the possibilities offered by easy-to-use Internet search engines.

However, in contrast to the use of less advanced mobile phones, which do not have access to the web, the current usage is not an unobtrusive background activity that is against the rules but may be fully

accepted by both parties, provided that the search concerns topics related to the academic work. Through the use of search engines, students can follow up on difficult terms, contexts and images related to the subject matter that have not been explained by the teacher in the classroom. The ability to use personal digital devices has changed the image of lecture halls at universities and, in many countries, classrooms in schools. Accustomed to the use of analogue tools in classes and university seminars (when I could no longer use the tablet, I quickly returned to a paper notebook), I did not even notice that using a laptop or iPad in the classroom is normal for students.

Studies cited by Nicholas Carr suggest that listening to a lecture in a multitasking mode significantly reduces the ability to concentrate and that continuous Googling of difficult terms makes it easy to lose track of the conversation and lecture (see Carr 132-43). Sherry Turkle goes further and suggests that multitasking is uncreative and addictive (Turkle 42). An additional negative factor is the inability of teachers to control what students are really doing during classes with their devices; they may be doing something other than taking notes or searching for information related to the lecture. This problem has already appeared with mobile phones but was never before so explicit (see Stachowicz, *Komórka—gadżet tożsamości* 61).

The Flight from Conversation?

Using a search engine, as demonstrated so well by digitally supported conversation, can be said to significantly affect the nature of knowledge possessed by the interlocutors, in line with Postman's statement that "definitions of truth are derived, at least in part, from the character of the media of communication through which information is conveyed" (17).

The accumulation of knowledge is undergoing a far-reaching extension. Information now can be found on the web, and if someone wants to use it in conversation, all they need to do is search for pieces of information and then assemble and present them as their own. Acquiring knowledge is thus, at least potentially, a unique and singular process. The acquisition of knowledge becomes a process with no predesignated trajectory. The interlocutor's knowledge is refreshed and organized anew for a specific conversation. Selecting the results that are most relevant to the question becomes an important skill. The primary factor shaping such knowledge is the ability to select from search engine resources—sifting out irrelevant information, selecting, and remixing existing knowledge.

Therefore, in the age of "search engines," linguistic competence determines how close we are able to get to the information we need and how quickly we can find it (see Halavais). Is there still any value in knowledge that is stored in human memory or acquired by an individual through experience, or is the only thing that matters the ability to manage external memory through the practice of typing in a search bar? We could say that a person's competence in writing is much more important than their level of expertise in the digital world, and those who have highly developed competence do not need to have knowledge—in the traditional sense of the word—to function well in this environment, managing or using knowledge accumulated by others (see Goldsmith). In this context, the very concept of knowledge becomes problematic, especially the acquisition of knowledge. The statement, "We know history when we can reproduce dates or discussions about the French Revolution, not when we know where to look it up in Furet, Ozouf or the *Encyclopaedia Universalis*" (Goody 158) has, in a certain sense, been devalued in the Internet era. This is because knowledge transferred to the machine undergoes a partial devaluation. Something that you can have at any moment is no longer as important as it used to be. In the statements of my interviewees, we can find an argument resembling the one used by Plato in critique of writing—the weakening of the human intellect and memory in favour of the new technology. To the question, "Do you ever use a search engine during a conversation or meetings with other people?" my informant Łukasz Z. (aged 31) replied, "Unfortunately, yes. Usually to verify some information which I don't remember fifteen minutes later (and neither does my interlocutor)."

There are additional consequences. As a result of Google-assisted conversation, interlocutors do not want to engage in extended discussion but immediately use search engines as an arbitrator and source of information. They deprive themselves of the opportunity to address the problem; they attempt to find

a solution or reach a conclusion that may be mistaken but often becomes the essence of the discussion. Conversation often takes a form of a competition that gives the interlocutors some type of pleasure. Trying to persuade one's adversaries of one's arguments can also have social value—bond-forming and/or hierarchy-setting functions in the group (see Turkle 25, 39). However, these functions may disappear if discussion is abandoned in favour of a search. In this way, the conversation can be deprived of the value it brings: sharing uncertainty of knowledge and the mutual satisfaction of reaching a conclusion without external help.

The intellectual pleasure of logical thinking, drawing a correct inference, or having internalized knowledge is replaced by the type of pleasure derived from constant access to potential knowledge; unimaginable until now, a whole "library" is now available in a pocket. We almost always use a search engine when a question appears (not necessarily an important question) because the answer we need can be found immediately. Having a search engine close at hand seems to trigger the desire to acquire information about something immediately, to broaden the context of a particular activity to the data contained in Internet resources. As one of my informants said, "Searching is pretty impulsive because of the easy access to knowledge, on the basis: I want to or I need to know something now, so I start to search right now, without delay" (Radosław, aged 35).

Of course, searching, especially with the (so far successful) monopoly of this activity by Google, can be considered in a broader context: as a significant change in the system of distributing knowledge and even as an attempt to build a completely new system to replace the old paper-based system. Critical observers of these changes, such as Nicholas Carr, note that specific economic interests and ideologies professed behind the new knowledge distribution system are hidden from individuals and that search practices are largely designed in advance, in accordance with the business strategy of large companies (see Carr; Halavais; Kurz). Therefore, looking at the world through a search-engine window is very deceptive.

This point of view should not be overlooked, but I would argue that the development of this approach would require a different type of study using other research tools. We also should not forget that critics of the Internet tend to idealize the knowledge distribution system of the age of print and old types of practices connected with it. They emphasize the merits of using this medium to promote attitudes of freedom and extended circulation of thought, but they ignore the facts that show that established institutions and laws controlling the circulation of printed information always have existed in censorship and limited access to technology. The distribution of knowledge was always limited to selected social groups and controlled by the intellectual elite of society. This has not changed, although a different elite now exercises control. We may lose something important through these changes, but we may also gain something: something that we do not yet know.

Concluding Remarks

While this paper is limited to a handful of case studies and ideal types, the examples presented here provide important insights on the ways in which mobile internet and search engines transform our conversations. With these caveats in mind, the analysis and interpretations in this paper lead to some key conclusions.

First, the use of Google therefore changes our language practice in many aspects. It is not just a mere adjunct of our knowledge, kind of portable encyclopaedia, but it changes the situation of the conversation. This kind of practice transforms a simple conversation into a digitally assisted. It also extends oral practice into literacy and blurs boundaries between texting and speaking. We can describe it as new "lecto-oral" practice.

Second, searching during conversation seems to be an almost unnoticeable part of daily routine for those who I described as always-on persons. Digitally assisted conversation has become an important element of human social life. It is practiced, both during very formal meetings and intimate face-to-face meetings. Sometimes digitally assisted conversations become dominant components of informal social gatherings and even changes into a collective search practice called "google party." Search engine literacy and skills in operating a smartphone seem socially attractive today, as erudition and literacy once used to be. This is currently considered an extension of erudition.

Third, this change of conversation habits brings important consequences to the sphere of knowledge and trust. The Internet becomes a determinant of the interlocutor's credibility. The smartphone replaces the authorities, undermining the confidence and the persuasive force of the speaker, but can also lead to self-reflection. Digitally assisted conversation can be also be regarded as a symptom of wider social change determined by the digital web.

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