

DTC 355

Rhetorical Analysis Project

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At and Through on a FF forum

I am a freelance designer of game websites so user interface is of particular importance to me. My Final Fantasy forum I found to be oddly enough a good example of transparency and reflectivity (at and through). As most people know a forum is (a conversation) divided in two main groups admins and members. Admins are designers which create the “at” because they have to make sure every function that a user touches (say for example a topic in an individual forum) works perfectly and is not broken or requiring HTML code make it more user friendly. If this happens not only is user interface interrupted, but design flaws in the coding can cause users trouble and make them want to migrate to a different forum which is easier to use. (An unfortunate example of a breach in transparency occurred when a user tried to paste a topic in a language other than English and it showed up as nonsensical code instead). This breach ended up with me painstaking teaching my users how to use HTML code to input language. This turned into a mess (essentially because every character required a different HTML code) and caused me to update to a new forum language all together with was a serious design flaw.

Before the “through” of a forum can be examined, one must first understand what the “through” is on a forum. User interface for a member on a forum is quite easy and allows for many functions, although learning all the functions usually takes a while. Since forums are conversations, members have an e-version of themselves to post called profiles. Profiles can be considered the “through” of a forum as they are not only essential but control absolutely

everything on a forum. Profiles are different on every forum, but in general one can depend on a few functions always being universal such as usernames and password, avatars and signatures, PMs (private messages) and information about the member such as where they live, their birthday, interests etc. An important part of the “through” on forums that profiles provide is the opportunity to have private messages between members that all only open to two people about any subject/topic of their choice. Admins are closed completely to them unless there is a good reason for intervention such as trolls. Forum software is relatively easy to use when it comes to the “through” of posting as after clicking on a thread in a certain topic that there are only a few symbols that one needs to understand to use posting properly, such as emotion icons, and how to input video, pictures, and quotes. Members must also learn that on some forums the “through” of posting also sometimes includes quick replies that are a bit different than replies by themselves.

Although I didn't code the either forum software myself, (I rather got them for free), I am in a unique position because I am both the user and designer. (Using the analogy of transparency of looking though a window from the text, I can see both “at and though”) clearly as I am always working with and in both.

The rhetorical qualities of Synecdoche, Metonymy, and Metaphor in the “at” and “through” on my FF forum are more design based rather than functionality based. Metonymy can be found in the emotion icons. They aren't essential but sometimes communicate better than a paragraph of posting. The most obvious rhetorical quality is metaphor in its design and color. The color is pink and the banner shows two lovers in a flower field (or did until it was updated on the 1st.) Although not many people like the color pink (it presents a light hearted environment to talk about not just who loves who but almost any subject like in a living room.) After getting

past the “pinkness” of the place, the members or guests can get a feel for the topics-- which vary from the FF series to politics to help with classes, even venting about one's most hated book series ever (The unanimous vote is Twilight). Now I may not know about colors much, but it one of the most essential aspects of a forum because most people decide whether or not to come back based on the environment of the place. An example of Synecdoche in my forum would be templates for posting. Synecdoche as I understand it is like outside of my forum is like the body of an html document or C++ computer language which is originally apart of C. Forums which are the most successful/userfriendly will employ the three rhetorical devices together.

My Final Fantasy forum is unique and unlike many rhetorical technologies/devices such as the iphone in that only a select group of people can be members. Most forums revolve around a single idea or tv/game pairing. My most widely used forum is dedicated to two Final Fantasy characters—Cloud—and Aerith---and if people haven't played the series, like the characters or even know who the characters are, people will be at a loss. However, many forums (mine included) try to remedy this problem by having different topics of interest such as anime/comics, books, and real life issues (on my forum it is called the Lifestream section where only serious intellectual conversation is allowed under the threat of warnings.) so that new members that may know nothing about the series/characters don't feel left out and can have at least a reason to return because ultimately user retention is a goal for a forum. After all can one really have a conversation with oneself?