

Digital slip narratives as Cultural infrastructure

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A slip is an error made by an agent when she performs an unintended action (Norman, 1981) such as buying margarine instead of butter (Anscombe, 2000) or pouring tea into a tomato can instead of a cup (Norman, 1981). While often trivial, slips can also be disastrous, as in medical errors or failures in high-risk domains such as aviation or nuclear power (Reason, 2007). Beyond their consequences, however, slips also generate narratives. They are retold, shared, and commented on, becoming cultural material in their own right.

The digital world provides a unique infrastructure for such narratives. Everyday mistakes are recorded, uploaded, and circulated across social media platforms, blogs, and video-sharing sites. Interfaces like TikTok, YouTube, and Instagram not only host these narratives but actively shape their form and dissemination through templates, comment functions, and algorithms that structure visibility. What might otherwise remain private errors are transformed into collective stories, memes, and sometimes even global spectacles, such as the widely publicized “Nipplegate” incident.

This presentation explores how slip narratives may be seen as cultural practices shaped by the infrastructures and interfaces that mediate them. Platforms operate as infrastructures that determine how, when, and to whom slip stories become accessible, while interfaces frame the aesthetic and discursive possibilities of narration. At the same time, slips invite creativity, empathy, and humor; they become icebreakers, bonding devices, and sites of self-reflection. By studying digital slip narratives as infrastructurally conditioned cultural expressions, we can better understand how digital culture organizes error, visibility, and affect.

In contemporary digital culture, infrastructures such as YouTube, TikTok, Instagram, blogs, and memes have become key sites where everyday errors are rendered visible, shareable, and narratable. These platforms function simultaneously as infrastructures that organize circulation and accessibility, and as interfaces that afford specific modes of representation and engagement. Studying how slips are transformed into digital narratives within these infrastructural and interface conditions allows us to understand processes of cultural production, affective exchange, and meaning-making that are central to digital humanities.