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Starting a conversation in an online discussion: How do I write to get a reply from others?

Other

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Version: Poster

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Starting a Conversation in Online Discussion

How do I write to get a reply from others?

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Problems?

Posts that receive replies **21%**

Posts that do not receive reply **79%**

Fig. Percentage of posts that receive replies in the online discussion of 12 free online courses offered by FutureLearn (www.futurelearn.com), which I investigate.
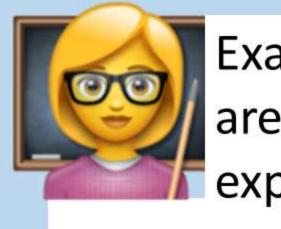
Online users join online discussions to socialize or exchange opinions with others BUT
Very few posts receive replies in various online spaces

Why?

Discourse is how people use language to communicate

The discourse in the posts may or may not invite others to reply?

Let's test this hypothesis! I am going to compare these two types of posts by examining the words used in them.

Words used more often in the posts that receive replies

"For example, we have experienced first-hand "
"This is a very useful article"

By explicitly mentioning what you are going to talk about, you set up a common ground for others to comment on.

The common ground is like a concrete object that others can also talk about

"Anybody has similar problem?"
"Anyone interested in…"

By calling out others, you start a conversation with potential audience.

Examples of how words are used in the posts are in quotes in each bubble, followed by explanation. Only selected words are explained.

Fig. The bigger the font of a word, the more often it is used in the posts that receive replies compared to those that do not. Words with the same colour share similar discourse.

"I might be wrong"
"Am I missing something"

By displaying you don't know something, you invite others who know to answer you.

"This could perhaps mean that"
"It would be unsurprising"

By displaying uncertainty when voicing out your opinions, instead of stating it matter-of-fact, you welcome others to raise alternative point of view.

The two types of discourse above establish a conversation relationship in terms of knowledge between you and potential audience.

Not knowing or Partially knowing

partially knowing or knowing

Addressing others as if you are talking to them establishes a conversation relationship with a potential audience.

Hooray! Now I know how to write a post to increase my chance of getting a reply!

All emojis are from https://emojipedia.org/

- Language matters even in online world. Mind your language!
- You can create a relationship with others in an online discussion with your discourse.
- Language use in online world is one kind of digital literacy, i.e., a person's ability to utilize digital platforms, that warrants educators' and researchers' attention, such that online world can be cultivated positively despite the potential aggression that happens online.