Conversation and Technology: From the Telephone to the Internet

By Ian Hutchby

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We live in a world where social interaction is increasingly mediated by technological devices. In this book, Ian Hutchby explores the impact these technologies have on our attempts to communicate. Focusing on four examples - telephones, computerized expert systems at work, speech-based systems dealing with enquiries from the public, and multi-user spaces on the Internet - Hutchby asks: are we increasingly technologized conversationalists, or is technology increasingly conversationalized?

Conversation and Technology draws on recent theory and empirical research in conversation analysis, ethnomethodology and the social construction of technology. In novel contributions to each of these areas, Hutchby argues that the ways in which we interact can be profoundly shaped by technological media, while at the same time we ourselves are shapers of both the cultural and interactional properties of these technologies.

The book begins by examining a variety of theoretical perspectives on this issue. Hutchby offers a critical appraisal of recent sociological thinking, which has tended to over-estimate society's influence on technological development. Instead he calls for a new appreciation of the relationship between human communication and technology. Using a range of case studies to illustrate his argument, Hutchby explores the multiplicity of ways in which technology affects our ordinary conversational practices.

Readers in areas as diverse as sociology, communication studies, psychology, computer science and management studies will find much of interest in this account of the human and communicative properties of various forms of modern communication technology.

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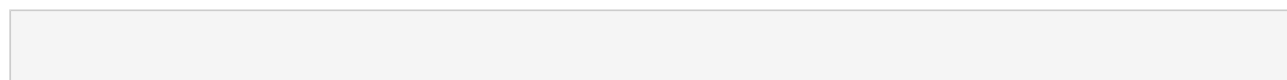
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Editorial Review

Review
"'Postmodern babble has done little to help us understand how contemporary communication technologies have changed our world. This book fills a crucial gap in our knowledge by sticking to a focus on how ordinary people actually interact with these technologies. Using the insights of conversation analysis in an easy to understand way, this impressive volume will be required reading for students of work, technology, organizations and cultural studies." *David Silverman, Professor Emeritus of Sociology, Goldsmiths' College, London*

From the Back Cover
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About the Author
Ian Hutchby is Senior Lecturer in Sociology and Communication at Brunel
University and Honorary Research Fellow in the School of Social Sciences at Cardiff University. His research involves the application of conversation analysis to various areas of technologically-mediated interaction, including the distinctive properties of broadcast talk and the possibilities of human-machine interaction; as well as the analysis of children's communicative competence

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