

Facebook's Influence on Language and Communication

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## Abstract

Language is a vital aspect of any culture. With today's digital age of social media, Facebook has influence language and how a society communicates. Facebook has become a vital aspect of communication with the introduction of multiple features. Facebook has created a space where digital assemblies can occur. Facebook has also helped eliminate a language barrier with their translation feature. The social media has also helped the pronunciation of names. Facebook has also shown to utilize slang and acronyms through their messenger feature which has shifted oral and written language. Facebook has also used autocorrect feature to help improve writing. Overall, Facebook has been a successful tool for communicating while shifting language in today's digital age.

*Keywords:*, communication, digital, emoji, Facebook, language, messenger, oral, pictures, video, written.

## Introduction

Language is the most essential aspect of any culture. Society has created numerous innovations to ensure language communication is constantly occurring. Social media has become one of the most exciting aspects of the digital age.

Therefore, has anyone ever asked you to Facebook them? You are not alone. Countless people use the social media, such as Facebook, on a daily basis. Social media is defined as “websites and applications which enable users to create and share content or to participate in social networking”(Oxford English Dictionary, 2002-2018). With 62% of users utilizing Facebook at least once a day (Statista 2018) and approximately one billion active users in October of 2012 (Facebook), it is asserted that Facebook has affected oral communication, literacy communication as well as digital communication. Facebook enables an individual with contact with anyone on a global scale within seconds. Communication interactions have changed drastically since Facebook humble beginnings in 2004 when created by its CEO Mark Zuckerberg. Facebook was initially created for students of Harvard and has since grown to include the entire world(Facebook,2001). Facebook has open doors for various thoughts to be expressed by posting comments, pictures(including gifs), videos and even an interactive live stream video. This website alongside with its application access and messenger have influenced the world in today's digital age. Therefore, how did facebook change the means of language and communication?

Facebook was not a vast aspect of my life. Just as many people, this was a space of communicating with family members who live far away. But in one day, Facebook became my emergency savior as well as affecting how I view language and communication. On September

20, 2017, Hurricane Maria hit Puerto Rico. "Loss of communication and electricity, scarcity of water, isolation of some residents, slow coordination of the aid that has been sent, and the magnitude and scope of the necessary repairs all merit a call for help from and the engagement of the global community."(Zorrilla, Nov 19, 2017, pp. 1801–1803.) Horrifying images and video surfaced on Facebook of my father's mountainous hometown of Utuado. I spend hours on the phone trying to get through to him. Puerto Rico lost all access to phones and any source of communication. I could not get information from FEMA, Utuado Police department or the Utuado National Guard. I even tried emailing pictures to FEMA, hoping they will recognize my dad's house and street. I was not successful. Yet, how were hurricane survivors posting videos and pictures from Puerto Rico to the social media outlet known as Facebook?

### **Loss of Physical Contact**

Physical contact has been the missing content of communication due to the convenience of Facebook. Personal experience with the ease of Facebook's content makes interaction a breeze. Therefore "Facebook, in particular, enables variations in indirect means of disclosure"(High, Oeldorf-Hirsch, & Bellur,2014). Facebook interaction occur with internet access on computers, game systems, and smartphones. People conversate with other users via comments, messages, pictures, and videos in which it can be viewed continuously. Because everything is digitized, users are now cyborgs to a digital screen(Haraway, 1985-2001). Being a cyborg, I used Facebook, utilizing its varies communication innovations, enabling it as my own emergency communication to find my father and relatives. The "language used through social media has created a heightened awareness of communicating in different registers.,"(Sharpe

UWIRE Text, 6 Mar. 2014, p. 1). This is what makes Facebook a successful social networking media.

### **Facebook Groups**

Facebook has created groups, a vital communication aspect, which allow for quick digital assemblies to occur. This I joined the Facebook group "Huracan Maria" (Hurricane Maria) which has now been changed to Cuarto De Oracion (Prayer Room). To find my family, the group interaction brought various kinds of people of multiple backgrounds globally struggling to find their relatives, friends, and colleagues. This Facebook group create a tone in which "Cultures do not talk to each other; individuals do" (p. 138)(Lee and Choi 51). Each connection made became formal as we shared similar circumstance grieving together. The group grew increasing fast as ever. This made finding my family effectively when social media engage your social media audience in the right ways with lots of followers (Ward's Dealer Business,2012,). The multiple group members each brought multiple Spanish dialects.

### **Translation Tool**

Interestingly enough, I lacked in my Spanish speaking skills, only able to understand basic terms. This became a dilemma that many face with language barriers. However, Facebook's creation of the "See translation" option changed the dynamic of language barriers between users. The group included members who had family missing as well as others who wanted to help in any way possible. At times it was difficult to understand the discourse because online "We speak both formally and informally," said by Professor Michael McCarthy"(UWIRE Text, 6 Mar. 2014, p. 1). Some users used Spanish slang when posting missing person descriptions with pictures or videos. Ultimately, the creation of the translation tool made

communication easier. This technology may not always clearly translate material. It is in this sense some information must be interpreted. As I wrote and read numerous post, I began to write and read Spanish without needing the translation tool. I found the literacy and orality of my Spanish began to improve. I began to find a connection between words and their meanings. When the group communicated with live-feed videos, I was able to contribute by engaging in a two-way interaction.

The translation feature helped eliminate language barrier, during a time of crisis. Initially, I was unaware of this tool. Facebook created their translation tool in 2008, which is available in 65 languages (Stone,2009). Facebook has also made this tool accessible to other websites(Stone, 2009) which shows the dynamic in which Facebook has an influence on media. Today, 15,000 Websites or apps(application) to work with Facebook Connect, which has allowed users to access content outside of the social network (DevSource, 2009). This tool was vital in my search for my father. I was grateful for this tool to allow me to comprehend with those who have interactive with my father. I found out my family home suffered a landslide in which he was able to escape with other relatives just in time.

### **Acronym, Slang and “Teenage Language”**

In addition, Facebook has also affected literal communication. This social media has used acronyms and slang, often used in the text or instant messaging, for communication. For example, to incorporate humor in a sentence instead of saying “that was funny”, users use “LOL” which stands for “laugh out loud.” Users also drop letters when creating a message. For example, the word living would be written as “livin” in which the “G” is dropped. The use of slang on facebook has shortened the word count to get information across at a faster rate.

Language is constantly changing and adapts to situations and become new social norms in which new words in our language new constructions become acceptable (Sharpe UWIRE Text, 6 Mar. 2014, p. 1). In an interview, entitled "Facebook Influence on Your Language" with 17-year-old Stephanie Diaz, who has grown up with numerous media and new media outlets, she expressed how most of her communication relies on her smartphone applications. When asked if she uses Facebook often for communication, she stated "Yes. At Least once a day." She explains numerous terms in which she commutes which often incorporate an acronym and slang (also known as short language). This "teen language" as she asserts is difficult for those who are not in her age group. Diaz also stated most of the terminology has been passed through Facebook Messenger group chats or even comments on a user's post. One word, for example, is "Stan" which represents an obsessive follower of someone famous, a derivative of Eminem's rap song "Stan". I immediately understood the context, being a fan of the song. Victoria Fromkin ideas of words including the assertion that word meanings can alter and constantly change over time. The word "Stan" now take represent the idea of obsession. Some words and acronyms also mentioned by Diaz include the acronym "RT" for real talk, the word "Clout" for seeking attention, the word "flexing" for bragging, and the word "deceased" for laughing intensely. Diaz mentioned that she sometimes finds herself mistakenly using these terminologies during class during a discourse discussion. Kourtney Poland, a senior psychology student assert a similar notion by stating "when I write papers or formal letters, and I have to rethink the way I spell words and make sure I write correctly and not with my texting lingo," (UWIRE Text, 2014). Learning how these words have circulated throughout Facebook quickly has demonstrated the power Facebook can have in the language. This interview has helped me understand

conversations between teenagers.

### **Facebook Messenger**

The promotion of slang word has been widely distributed, as Diaz mentioned, via Facebook Messenger. Facebook creation of their messenger service has allowed users to be connected to other profiles. Facebook Messenger is free a separate application in which users must download to utilize, when in use on a smartphone or a tablet. On a computer, users can use this feature directly on the Facebook website. With one click, users gain access to voice chat, text messages, group chats, and video chat as one continuous interaction (Assocham Bulletin, 2011). This feature is easy to use. It is similar to iMessage of Apple and traditional SMS messaging, which makes it easy to use with a limited need for instruction. Facebook Messenger allows new interaction with numerous family members I never met before. The exchange of written messages, as well as phone calls, gave vital information for my father's whereabouts during the storm. I also began to "pick up" on Spanish words while able to use the phone calls aspect to practice pronunciation. This completed changed the way I looked at Facebook. Before it was solely an account to post pictures, videos, and stories to stay in touch with family and friends. Facebook developed into an ultimate form of communication means.

### **Name Promotion**

Overall, Facebook as a technology has also influenced the creation and enhancement of other various communication tools. Facebook has even created a tool in which users can learn how the proper pronunciation of a user's name. This feature contains an audio clip besides an individual's name and will transmit the name with the correct accent(Mondal, 2015). This innovation allows for users to efficiency pronouncer their friends name without the



embarrassment. To use this feature, click 'About' on the profile and select on 'Details About You' section the option called 'Name Pronunciation' with a breakdown of your name and a small play button, to play back the pronunciation(Mondal,2015). When I found new relatives from Florida online also searching for my family in Puerto Rico, this feature made me feel more comfortable when speaking to them on voice messenger since I properly can pronounce their names.

### **Video Features**

Furthermore, Facebook videos are also an essential part of their success in the number of users they have. Many use videos on Facebook for humor, instructional, informative and persuasive content. For the citizens of Puerto Rico, video communication was an essential communication tool. In the group, Huracan Maria (Hurricane Maria), there was a random guy traveling around the island recording videos of people. Again, Facebook was a better communication tool than phone or email. Essentially his mission for the videos was to record survivors saying a message of them being okay. Multiple people in the group forum were urged to “share” the video until their families commented on the video in relief. It seems like years had passed with the amount of content posted just after the storm hit. I would often check multiple times a day with no luck of anyone I knew. Then, a glimmer of light. I finally found a video of my dad and my cousin. The one-way communication of the video posts brought relief to multiple people of the group forum. I was able to actually understand the Spanish my father spoke, just as easily as his English. This occurred because of the constant live video feeds alongside the translator feature in the comments had helped improve my Spanish. Facebook features changed the way I understood Spanish and it is possible others in my position have experienced similar

attributes.

As days past, Facebook messenger rang. Messenger has a feature that enables users to call each other just as a regular phone call. I began to scream as the phone call was my father. We could not understand the dynamic that Facebook had for communication. This technology proved to be more vital in an emergency situation, such as this hurricane disaster. Oral communication has also been affected by this social media outlets. With the use of Facebook messenger with video calling and phone calling alongside videos, oral communication has improved my Spanish. The constant interaction of common conversation reiterated a memory foam with I am thankful for.

### **Emoji icons and Gifs**

Interesting enough, the Facebook messenger has not only influenced written communication and oral communication but it has also introduced a new form of representing emotions. This extensional app has also included the use emoji icon, GIF, images as a style of communication to represent emotions just as regular SMS text messaging provided on a cell phone. I always have conversations with icons. At times, I do not utilize words. This evolution tries to bring back the emotional interaction to digital text that face-to-face conversation easily obtains. A static shows that 70.4% of United States internet user asserts that emoji use helps accurately express thoughts (Statista, August 2015). The graph "Leading reasons for using Emojis according to U.S. internet users as of August 2015"(Statista, August 2015), also include research data explaining how important and vital emoji use has in communication. The data also stated that some users even use this tool instead of actual words.

Facebook ideals are similar to the Jesuit Priest and religious scholar Walter J. Ong. With

Facebook and its close relation to SMS text messaging, one may see the similarities in the language use. Ong asserts, without human awareness, writing alters a person. Traditional communication of language orality included face-to-face communication. Facebook eliminates physical contact yet one can see still an individual in real time with video chat. This has been allowed with the secondary orality with literacy as well as being in a highly digitalized era. Facebook's successful communication tools have allowed for a universal discourse of various ideas.

### **Auto Correcting Tool**

Another important feature Facebook has is an autocorrect feature used for correcting misspelled words. This has made writing become more efficient. The autocorrect innovation often occurs instantly. It has taken over the need to want to become more proficient in writing.

How has Facebook changed the way we communicate? Has Facebook become our new telephone and video chat with the features that have been provided through their messenger? I speculate Facebook will eventually be the main source of contact in which discourse will occur. Dates and contact information are clearly laid out in this program. Users do not need to remember important dates. People can interact with multiple people at the same time. Facebook has the ability to connect to other social media outlets as well as numerous other sites. Even though Facebook is an amazing communication tool that has influenced language, Facebook removes the physical contact. Facebook should not be an alternative to in-person conversations but just as a tool to bring people together when physical contact is not realistic.

### **Conclusion**

Facebook has been around since 2004 and I do not see this social media diminishing anytime soon. Facebook is a staple for today's communication. This online website and application have shown dominance in language and communication. With the success of the multiple tools and the response to these innovations, Facebook will eventually create more ways to make communication even more personal and accessible. I cannot wait to see what the future holds.

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