

Communicative and psychological aspects of the usage of Facebook

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Résumé

The latest technological advancements transformed the way people communicate in modern society. The most obvious example for that is Facebook, which is considered to be today's most frequently used social networking site. Its platform provides for the users numerous opportunities to gain information, communicate and express their personality, as well as to build a virtual community. Previous studies state that there is a connection between social functioning and individual psychological well-being, but it is a controversial issue regarding the effects of computer-mediated communication (Kraut 1998, 2002; as cited in Rodriguez). In my research I shall examine whether computer-mediated communication contributes to the psychological well-being of people by using the website Facebook as a field for the investigation.

According to an American psychologist, Abraham Maslow, there is a hierarchy of human needs with levels such as the need for safety, love and belonging, esteem and self-actualisation (as cited in Atkinson, 1994). In my point of view the popular social networking site helps some of our social needs to be met despite the fastness of the world and shortness of time through the facilities it offers to communicate and express ourselves. As on the virtual platform speakers reach their aims through computer-mediated communication I would like to integrate a pragmatic analysis into my study. I shall examine the intentions and cooperation of the speakers within the framework of the Speech Act Theory by J. L. Austin (Austin, 1962). Michael Halliday's language function categories will also be applied to analyse the utterances and examine how the different language functions convey the sender's individual and social needs (as cited in Wardhaugh, 1993).

1. Introduction

With the latest technological advancements Internet-based communication is becoming an integral part of modern daily life, allowing people to communicate in various forms through long distances. Smart electric devices and wireless internet access enhance this new form of information exchange. After the appearance of emails, blogs and online chat-rooms, social networking sites started to gain more and more popularity offering the users appealing opportunities for self-expression and communication. Facebook, which started to operate in 2004, is one of them. With the largest number of active users it is considered to be today's most frequently used social networking website. It is hypothesised that Facebook is so popular by virtue of its ability to satisfy some of the users' psychological needs, and the aim of this research is to investigate how this function is fulfilled.

The first chapter of my study will include a general overview of the website of Facebook regarding the channel of communication, its synchronous and asynchronous features, and the importance of anonymity. Exchanging information via electric devices, using online platforms such as Facebook, is called computer-mediated communication. CMC has several distinctive features which distinguish it from face-to face communication; on the other hand, in case of Facebook there are also many similarities. While experts often criticise CMC regarding it as a less expressive form of communication (Perry, 2010), Facebook has several distinctive features which facilitate understanding and communication such as emoticons and stickers. I aim to make a comparison between oral speech and CMC and point out their similar features.

The following chapter will discuss the psychological effects of Facebook use. An American psychologist, Abraham Maslow, set up a hierarchy of human needs including the psychological and physiological ones. Our physiological needs, which are at the top of the hierarchy, include those actions which are necessary for our survival like eating, sleeping, breathing, etc. The further psychological levels include our need for safety, love and belonging, esteem and self-actualisation and self-transcendence (as cited in Atkinson, 1994). These terms are organised into a pyramid, with the least important ones on the top. When the peoples' basic necessities are satisfied, they move to the next levels, which are increasingly satisfied by online activities in our digitalised world.

As the world changes, the methods to satisfy our basic needs vary too. Let us take the physiological need of eating for example. We don't have to hunt any more to have something to eat, but the consequence of buying food in a supermarket is the same, we eat it and won't feel hunger. As technology develops, we are not tied to one place any more, our relations get looser but internet and the fast and smart gadgets that come in parallel with it provide a virtual space where some of our abridged social needs can adapt to the fastness of the world and shortness of time. Self-esteem, confidence, achievement, respect by others, creativity and spontaneity are all qualities that an active Facebook user might achieve expressing himself with the almost infinite ways of the language. At the same time Maslow's pyramid needs some revising as it lacks an important factor: social connection and collaboration (Ruthledge, 2011).

Following the discussion of the psychological effects of Facebook, I will proceed to introduce the pragmatic background of the study. There is a connection between speech and action as we use language to interact and influence the behaviour of the people who we communicate with. A common language not only makes communication possible, but also allows the speakers to use it for their own purposes. All utterances are formed with some kind of a goal, although the speaker is not always aware of it. Based on the intentions of the sender of the message, we can differentiate various language functions. They can serve the purpose of conveying information, expressing ourselves, directing others. The different posts that people share, whether they are texts, pictures or videos all have a purpose, a function. To understand what an utterance really means, we have to ask first what the speaker's intention was.

The present research intends to take Maslow's categories of human needs and examine how these are communicated in the individuals' Facebook posts via linguistic and non-linguistic means, defining what different language functions the utterances have. Non-linguistic devices include pictures, videos and other means that Facebook offers. These functions and purposes of the utterances will be examined on different samples of Facebook conversations, by trying to define the sender's aims, reactions of the audience and the successfulness of the exchanges using the Speech Act Theory of Austin (1962) as a framework for the research. Halliday's language functions (as cited in Wardhaugh, 1993) will be also applied to see how they convey the sender's individual and social needs.

2. The communicative features of Facebook

2.1 Computer-mediated communication

First of all it has to be stated that Facebook is a form of computer-mediated communication system which plays a key role in the initiation, advancement and sustenance of social relations (Walther). It has an impact on the individual's psychological and social well-being. According to Herring (2001) Computer-mediated communication refers to the process when people communicate by sending messages through networked computers (as cited in Rodriguez). It is an umbrella term which includes email, instant messengers, chat rooms and also networking sites such as Facebook. At the same time the effectiveness and usefulness of this kind of system is controversial compared to offline communication. According to earlier studies, CMC is less effective and inferior to face-to face communication, while more up-to-date researches discovered that people are able to adapt to the new technologies and communication forms, so they experience little hardship in the conveyance and interpretation of the message (Perry, 2010). Other studies state like Anolli et al (2005) and Bargh, McKenna, & Fitzsimons (2002) that with the numerous opportunities it provides for connection, CMC helps the development of identity and leads to closer relationships (as cited in Rodriguez).

As CMC is text-based, many studies focused on how this channel affects our experience of interpersonal communication, how it differs from and how it resembles face to face interaction. Early literature mostly described the drawbacks and deficiencies of online channels based on their low number of cues being at the speakers' disposal. Two theories, the Media Naturalness theory of Koch (2004) and the Media Richness Theory developed by Richard L. Daft and Robert H. Lengel (1986) focused on the shortcomings of the CMC channel to prove its inferiority. Both concentrate on the nature of the channel. The Naturalness Theory states that the natural mode of human communication is oral and other modes may lead easier to ambiguity during interpretation and lower levels of communication satisfaction. The Media Richness Theory refers to CMC's reduced number of cues, which, as a consequence, may be a hindrance to communication. Other problematic characteristics of the channel could be its text-based form, as non-verbal signs are not available for the users, asynchronous format, which means the delayed delivery of the message and thus making impossible immediate feedback (Perry, 2010).

2.2 Familiarity and adaptation

However, these theories are not valid under all circumstances. Findings show that with increased use and familiarity of the online environment it becomes natural for the users similarly to offline communication. They manage to adapt to the channel by converting their message including their emotions into text-based cues (Walther & Burgoon, as cited in Perry, 2010). Further literature pointed out that through CMC users are able to transfer equal amounts of affect and it is not less emotional or personal than oral communication (Perry, 2010).

2.3 Communicative cues

The development of communicative cues can be well observed on the platform of Facebook. Both the users and developers of the website aim at actualising a kind of communication which involves and is able to give back all the nuances of spoken language. That is the reason for the appearance of emoticons and stickers. Emoticons are small icons that represent facial expressions and try to mediate the temper or the mood of the sender, which is greatly expressed in oral speech by body language and prosody. Stickers are small figures, mostly funny and some of them animated, which people can send. They have almost the same function as emoticons, but they enable the users to choose from a more sophisticated variety of emotions, as the small figures visualise several feelings like anger, reluctance, disagreement or sleepiness for instance.

At the same time the users are also able to bring other prosodic features of communication into the typed sentences. These include expressing such intentions as sarcasm, irony, loudness or emphasis by some modifications in the written language, as part of the adaptation process. Text messages are sometimes written in a unique language to be able to give back the sender's thoughts without the presence of paralinguistic features. For instance there are utterances with capital letters which can suggest more emphasis, or the overuse of punctuation marks such as exclamation marks (Ong'onda, Oketch & Ongarora, 2013).

2.4 Synchronous and asynchronous features

At the same time the validity of the above discussed theories also depends on the particular type of communication (Perry, 2010). For instance email systems are much more restricted than the platform of Facebook, which offers the users various options to communicate. These

include sharing information on the news feed, which also appears on the personal profile, instant messaging, the 'poking' and 'liking' features. Facebook has communicative features which are synchronous, while others are asynchronous, it combines the two (Pérez-Sabater, 2012). For instance, communicating through the news feed is rather asynchronous, as people are not obliged to answer the disclosed information rapidly or they can even ignore it. On the other hand, the instant messaging function is synchronous as the communicative process has continuity like it was face-to face communication. The speakers should respond in real time, especially since Facebook signals when the receiver has seen the message. So there should be little time shift in the exchanges.

2.5 Anonymity

When characterising Facebook, it should be taken into account if it allows its users to be anonymous or not. It is an important issue regarding the fact that anonymity influences the behaviour of people and total anonymity can lead to unscrupulousness. It can be responsible for the speakers' irresponsible and unaccountable attitude, which leads to negative social interactions such as lying or deceiving others and uninhibited, aggressive behaviour (Anolli et al, 2005; Bargh, 2002; Harman et al, 2005; Herring, 2001; Kiesler, 1985; and Postmes et al, 2001 as cited in Rodriguez). Despite the fact that people can register to Facebook with whatever name they want, they generally stick to their real names, as fake names would make getting into contact with relatives and friends more difficult. Even without a profile picture, people are not anonymous on Facebook. This means that less conflict is predictable among the users, while the distance allows a more open kind of interaction.

2.6 Online environment

From the theories and information discussed above, it can be concluded that Facebook created an online environment where people can more freely express themselves, and being aware of the privacy settings, they can minimize harsh conflicts. At the same time, they have to adjust themselves to the norms which also characterise face-to face interactions. People sign in with their real names and add only those people to their friends' list who they consider appropriate, whom they have met before or have some kind of connection with. This way the likelihood of their behaving in an inappropriate way surrounded by people who know them is low. Besides, Facebook supports positive feedback on its platform. The most easily recognisable sign of this is the 'like button' with the use of which people can express their favour towards others' posts such as photos, status updates, links or comments. The

developers integrated no dislike function as it probably would have a negative impact on the users' experience and promote negativity, distracting the people instead of connecting them.

3. Summary of studies investigating the psychological effects of Facebook use

One of the studies that investigated the effects of internet usage and computer-mediated communication was the Kraut et al. (1988) and its follow-up study in 2002. The interesting fact is that the two investigations led to different outcomes. The first one showed that internet negatively impacts our lives, isolates people from society and it is harmful for relationships. The results of the later study are just the opposite, concluding that internet use helped the development of social skills and contributed to the well-being of people. The difference of the results can be explained with the changes in internet use and with the users' adaptation to the new channel of communication (Rodriguez). Considerable time has passed since then, but the improvements in the online world may have further enhanced the positive effects.

My conception is that social networking sites, especially Facebook contribute to the fulfilment of our psychological needs, based on a unique factor: social connection. The levels of Maslow's pyramid will be discussed one by one, but first it should be pointed out that the pyramid lacks one basic level, which is social connection. None of the needs mentioned previously, from the lowest level to the top, can be satisfied if people lack connections and can't collaborate. As humans are social creations, in order to survive, they need to cooperate and connect, as it is a precondition for both physical and mental survival. This has been true for our ancestors and even more for us today, as with the complexity of our societies our reliance on each other grows. Social technologies, such as the network of Facebook connect people who adapt their social behaviour to the environment to meet their basic needs (Ruthledge, 2011).

The importance of connection and collaboration is also reinforced by the studies which found that people use the internet mainly for interpersonal communication (Kraut, Patterson, Lundmark, Kiesler, Mukopadhyay, & Scherlis, 1998 as cited in Rodriguez).

Now I am going to discuss how interaction on Facebook supports Maslow's basic categories.

3.1 Safety and security

Safety originally refers to having order in one's life, when there's no threat of war, disaster or violence or other crisis. On the other hand, people rarely feel safe when they feel abandoned.

As social networks connect people so they can interact with each other and strengthen their bonds to others they may feel safer as part of online communities, not so vulnerable.

3.2 Love and belonging

The need of belonging is connected to the need of safety. It refers to our emotional longing to belong to a group where we can give and gain care and affection. Several studies show that people are dependent on the support of others, and ostracism negatively affects the individual's well-being, including one's self-esteem, self-worth, health, etc. When one belongs to and is accepted by a group the social support he or she gets facilitates happiness and health (McConnel, 2013). Facebook offers a virtual way of belongingness, as we can get into contact with anyone instantly, be members of different groups and in this way find people who have the same interests. We belong to a virtual community, where we have much freedom but do not feel abandoned. Researches also state that communication through social networks like Facebook helps the maintenance and can also improve the quality of relationships (Perry, 2010).

3.3 Intimacy

Tindwell and Walther (2002) concluded that people disclose more information more intimately on CMC channels than face-to face (as cited in Perry, 2010). Social networking sites operate largely around self-disclosure, as elements such as the news feed and the timelines on Facebook demonstrates. Sharing personal information about the self may be the basis of intimate social relationships (Jiang, Bazarova, & Hancock, 2010). As Sternberg (1988) states, when people disclose such information, like thoughts and feelings to another person it promotes closeness and connectedness in a relationship. (as cited in Jiang, Bazarova and Hancock). These findings suggest that the active participation on Facebook, such as posting, and sharing personal kind of information can result in stronger relationships as the connected people get to know each other better. Computer-mediated communication fosters self-disclosure and leads to more intimacy than Face-to face interactions, due to visual anonymity, the absence of non-verbal cues and asynchronous message composition (Jiang, Bazarova, & Hancock, 2010). Because of the lack of cues which characterise oral speech, the meaning of the disclosed information is more ambiguous, which people try to compensate by disclosing more. It is also true that online disclosures are less threatening for the speakers as the physical distance creates a sense of security and comfort making intimate talks easier. At the same time intimacy does not evolve under any circumstances, only when the message is

desired to relate to the receiver, which is called interpersonal attribution to the sender's disclosure (Shpancer, 2014).

3.4 Esteem

The level of self-esteem is in close connection with the previous need to belong, as one important factor from which it depends is social acceptance. When people are able to develop successful relationships it contributes to their self-esteem, while rejection from a group leads to loneliness and undermines it. As presented in a study about self-esteem reactions and social interactions, others' liking and also interpersonal conflicts, as indicators of social acceptability, determine our self-esteem (e.g. Denissen, Penke, Schmitt, & van Aken, 2008; Srivastava & Beer, 2005 as cited in Nadkarni and Hofmann).

A study called "Mirror, Mirror on my Facebook wall: Effects of exposure to Facebook on self-esteem" (Gonzales & Hancock, 2010) examined whether Facebook, especially posting information on one's profile enhances or undermines self-esteem, as previous findings about the effects of internet usage suggested. Their results proved that the usage of Facebook can be an effective tool to enhance self-esteem: "Exposure to information presented on one's Facebook profile enhances self-esteem, especially when a person edits information about the self or selectively self-presents" (Gonzales & Hancock, 2010). This means that the key factor which contributes to the positive impact of the posted content to the self is its selected nature. The Facebook wall and timelines are asynchronous features of the site, so they allow the users to think over carefully what they share, and they also have a chance to modify the disclosed material afterwards. Due to this, users can present themselves selectively, which means that they emphasize their positive properties. These presentations can modify the way we view ourselves and increase our self-esteem (Gonzales & Hancock, 2010).

There are also more obvious examples which can boost people's level of esteem, such as the reactions to the shared material. The "like" button functions as a means of instant positive feedback, but it can have various meanings like acknowledgement, a pleasant gesture, or because the post is popular, why not.

Although according to Back, the profiles of the users show their real personalities, not an idealised one (as cited in Nadkarni and Hofmann, 2011), there are critiques which state that there are cases when Facebook can affect the users' self-esteem and self-worth also negatively. As everyone tries to show their best side and hide their weaknesses, people can fall into a trap and feel imperfect, less lucky or talented than the others.

3.5 Self-actualisation

The usage of social networking sites can also enhance the process of self- actualisation, partly by contributing to the lower needs. Self-actualisation means when someone manages to find and benefit from his or her talent, achieving full potential by creativity, spontaneity, independence, etc. On Facebook people can share information such as knowledge, inner thoughts and show their creativity.

4. Presentation of the pragmatic background

4.1 Theoretical Framework

The research was conducted within the framework of J. L. Austin's speech act theory (1962). His basic concept was that speech can be considered as a series of acts, as all utterances have both descriptive and effective aspects. It means that speakers can use language as a tool, and get things done by the utterance of words to achieve their aims. In the present research it is hypothesized that many of these aims in Facebook communication are related to satisfying the psychological needs described by Maslow. To understand the speaker's aim it is necessary to determine what speech act the given utterance is. Austin distinguishes three different kinds of speech acts: the locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary acts. The locutionary act is responsible for the meaningfulness of the utterance, so that a certain sense can be attached to it. An illocutionary act is the action itself that we carry out with the utterance, such as stating, describing, admitting, requesting or offering something. A perlocutionary act is not a communicative aspect of an utterance, but the actual effect on the audience, influencing their actions, feelings or thoughts, for instance making them surprised, encouraged, embarrassed, persuade them, etc (Austin, 1962).

4.2 Language functions

We express our intentions, thoughts and also influence other people by using our language and achieve our aims through it. We use it to develop bonds with others and maintain relationships, connections. Language is also an effective tool to express ourselves, to develop and show solidarity with others. These examples show that language can be used in several ways, in other words it has several functions depending on the intentions of the speaker. During the years linguists also examined these functions and several classifications were born which cover more or less the same data. I will use Michael Halliday's framework, in which he differentiated seven categories of language function. These are the instrumental, regulatory, representational, interactional, personal, heuristic and imaginative functions (as cited in Wardhaugh, 1993).

The instrumental function refers to the usage of language to change and get things done through the mere utterance or writing of words, for instance when a couple is pronounced husband and wife. The second function, the regulatory prevails when we use language in

order to control events, including other people or ourselves. It is often used during interactions to signal the role of the other or to influence their behaviour. When we describe the world and give information about how things are, we use the representational function. Lying, misinforming others is also in this category. The fourth, which is an important function from psychological aspect, is the interactional use. This accounts for the maintenance and making of relationships, it serves as a community building device. It has an essential social role, including the phenomena of 'phatic communion'. People not always exchange new and genuine information, sometimes they indulge in meaningless small talks, which may seem unimportant, but they have a significant role. These assure us that the channel of communication is open and we can rely on the other person, if we have something important to say or need help. These exchanges reassure the maintenance of social contacts and lead to a sense of group solidarity. A similarly basic function in connection with well-being is the personal one. Much of our communication revolves around us. We give opinions, speak about our feelings, views and other personal things which together give an impression of our personality. This function helps one to express his or her individuality. The heuristic function is somewhat similar to the representative in that it is an informative use of language. It is used to pass on collective wisdom, and to learn or discover. Finally language is also often used in an imaginative way, to create a world of imagination. Examples for this are poetry or verbal games, puns, which at the same time aim at entertaining us (Wardhaugh, 1993).

5. The study

5.1 Aims

The present study was designed to explore the different psychological needs and their pragmatic connotations in the various utterances of a Facebook user, shared on the newsfeed and appearing on his timeline. It is essentially a pragmatic content analysis, which focuses on the shared content in detail, trying to identify the intention of the sender and describe the impact on the audience, whether their feedbacks reflect the desired effect or not. This research also intends to examine how people utilize Facebook for social purposes and how they benefit from sharing different information. Based on the above discussed material about the environment and psychological effect of social networking sites the following hypothesis is developed: Facebook contributes to our psychological needs based on social connection. The main objective of this paper is to analyse the chosen user's utterances from the aspect of Maslow's categories. I take the different human needs and identify which one the user wanted to satisfy with the disclosed information and how, identifying the different speech acts of the posts and also of the comments that follow, as well as the language functions.

5.2 Data and participants

The data for the research was collected from the website of Facebook from an English-speaking user's timeline who was chosen at random. It is a pilot study examining the timeline of a particular person and aims at analysing how this person makes use of the online environment that is at his disposal. The subject of the analysis is a 34 year-old American male, born in Flanders, New York, having an MA diploma in International Relations and European Studies and working as an ESL teacher in different countries. Various wall posts, status updates, comments and discussions were collected from the user's Facebook account. Not only the posts but also the reactions to them are included in the study. The selected posts were chosen based on the various categories of Maslow's needs that they represented. To make the research more systematic I divided Maslow's categories into smaller subcategories, sorting out those which can be related to the online world. These subcategories include social security, social support, affection, care, friendship, solidarity, closeness, sympathy, respect, encouragement, achievement, etc.

5.3 Analysis and discussion

Sample 1 illustrates the reaction of the user's friends to one of his profile pictures about himself. In the picture he faces the camera, slightly smiling in a park or green area, wearing his backpacks backwards. In each sample the different participants are signalled with the initials of their names.

Sample 1:



👍 Cséinds V és további 43 ember kedveli ezt.

 **Sean T** It's just good sunlight:)
2013. augusztus 26., 19:43 - Tetszik

 **Kozenkai L** I like your new hair 😊
2013. augusztus 26., 22:45 - Tetszik

 **Tim S** The backpack straps look like the collar of a stupendous cape.
2013. augusztus 27., 1:41 - Tetszik

 **Sean T** I am, batman.
2013. augusztus 27., 4:09 - Tetszik - 👍 1

 **Lorielle V** looking good sean!
2013. augusztus 27., 5:04 - Tetszik

 **Sean T** Thanks lorielle!
2013. augusztus 27., 15:47 - Tetszik

 **Sean T** The sun likes me
2013. augusztus 27., 15:48 - Tetszik

 **László B** Where is your hair, beard and mustache?
2013. augusztus 27., 15:52 - Tetszik - 👍 1

 **Sean T** Its all gone away on vacation!
2013. augusztus 27., 15:56 - Tetszik - 👍 2

 **Peter L** sean you are wearing your backpack backwards.
2013. augusztus 29., 1:23 - Tetszik

 **Sean T** I realize this sir..its now a frontpack eh
2013. augusztus 29., 4:29 - Tetszik - 👍 1

 **Sing Y** sunshine boy! 😊
2013. október 1., 17:27 - Tetszik

 **Sean T** The sun is my friend
2013. október 1., 17:30 - Tetszik

Sharing a self-portrait is a key element of making a self-image, where people can emphasize their positive and attractive characteristics. As mentioned earlier, disclosing personal information can enhance one's self-esteem not only because the updaters view an idealised image of themselves, but also because the response they get influence their self-perception. Our self-esteem depends largely on others' judgements and observations. When the person signalled with S.T. updated his picture, which is a non-linguistic act, he probably longed for a pleasant response to his self-disclosure, which may boost his self-esteem. This concept is reinforced by his own comment. S.T. starts the discussion shortly after updating his photo remarking on the advantage of sunlight. His sentence „It's just good sunlight" comprises a locutionary act because the utterance is a well-formed descriptive declarative sentence. But in the given context, accompanied by his profile picture and a smiley, it may be also an illocutionary act in which he requests the audience to react and contribute to the reinforcement of his positive self-image which includes several items. The first of them is his physical appearance. The commenters K.L. and L.V. understand his desire and comply with it. They compliment S.T.'s appearance, which is a positive feedback and probably increases his self-esteem. The second item is an inner quality which he wants to express, his sense of humour. Both the non-linguistic element, his picture, and his comments suggest that he wanted to seem funny, spontaneous and witty. The first source of the jokes is the unusual position of his backpack. Both T.S. and P.L. notice this aspect and react to it. T.S. comments about the straps of S.T.'s backpack on the picture, saying that they remind him of „the collar of a stupendous cape". In response S.T. associates the cape with batman, and jokes that he is batman. P.L. also remarks on the wearing of a backpack backwards, while S.T. responds with a verbal pun stating that it is a frontpack then. L.B. notices that S.T. has shaved himself, to which he again answers in a witty way, personifying his hair, beard and moustache. These jokes are both illocutionary and perlocutionary acts. The illocution is to represent one's creativity and wit, the perlocution is that they entertain the audience.

The sample shows that many of the user's friends noticed and reacted to his post, they understood its illocution and were willing to collaborate. This way the illocutionary act was successful and as the speaker achieved the desired effect, it can also be considered as a perlocutionary act in which the commenters reacted to the various items of S.T.'s self-image.

This is how the personal function of S.T.'s initial comment leads to the interactional one, when people give feedback by „liking" and commenting on the photo. Liking one's post is

itself a sign of social acceptance and acknowledgement. His picture was 'liked' by 44 people and 6 left comments. But utterances are not restricted to having only one language function. In one situation they either have one or mixed functions. The same utterance usually has different non-overlapping functions in different situations. For instance the first utterance of S.T. may fulfil the personal function, by which he suggests his own opinion, that it is a well-made photo of him, especially with the smiley punctuation at the end. But as well as any initial posting this one also seeks feedback from the viewers and this is why it may have a regulatory implication also. With his utterance he also tries to regulate how people should react to the post, meaning that he needs supportive comments. This use turns up frequently during the whole discussion. S.T.'s role is a kind of moderator, who sometimes jokes, thanks and comments to the others' reactions, expressing his personality and exercising control over the situation.

This sample serves as an example for self-presentation. The picture is an element of S.T.'s selective self-presentation: he might have chosen one which appeals to the audience, a selfie with a funny element in which he is wearing his backpack backwards. His comments reflect a positive portrayal of him. He manages to make a good impression, achieves social acceptance and connectedness. He also takes advantage of his humour and creativity, which is a step to self-actualisation.

The others' comments embody the interactional function of language as they cooperate in order to maintain the relationship with S.T. expressing their interest. Some of them are combined with the personal function, such as K.L.'s appreciation of the new hairstyle, L.V.'s compliment or T.S.'s personal opinion to which S. T. answers using the imaginative function, creating an imaginary situation about his being batman. L.B. interacts by asking a kind of rhetorical question, to which S.T can show his creativity again with the imaginative use of language. P.L. gives information about how things are in the picture, with the representational use, and the response to it is also representational, a statement. The last commenter's utterance is again combined with the personal use, as it is his own thought, and the reply is a further example to the representational function. Friends can support and inform each other, express their personality, attitude and aims and regulate their relationships through their online activity.

Sample 2.

Besides his attempts at self-presentation, S.T. frequently shared posts about his activities and opinions. These status updates can reduce the user's feelings of loneliness as they create interaction. And if the level of loneliness reduces, people will feel more socially connected and more satisfied. In sample 2 below he shared a status update about his being back at home again after a long time.



The status update that S.T. posted on his timeline is a locutionary act, a declarative sentence about his whereabouts. It is also an illocutionary act, as it does a number of other things such as informs, and indirectly asks the audience to welcome him and revive those social ties which connected them before his leaving, using the representational and interactional functions of language. The post informs his friends that he is back at home, probably after a long time encouraging them to react. The perlocutionary act is realised when the statement

surprises his friends who express their happiness towards his comeback and give positive feedback.

C.R. besides welcoming S.T., leaves a message for his mother too establishing a connection also with her. The illocutionary act of his comment has two parts, first of all the welcome, and the other which is the request to pass over a message to the mother.

The locution of T.J. is an imperative sentence and the illocution is a request, the hidden message of which may be the intention to meet S.T. as he is finally back or to organise a program together. C.L. and A.I. express their happiness through interjections. The Japanese user answers to the information content of the post, the illocutionary act is to express sympathy. M.P. inquires about S.T's feelings based on his homecoming and asks back to the initial statement, expressing her interest and care. S.T. answers only her and only to her first question, as the second is evident. E.P. expresses her surprise and at the same time her intention to meet S.T., using a nickname and two exclamation marks in order to convey a strong urge.

This is how S.T's post becomes a perlocutionary act, as the different comments strengthen his sense of belonging to the group which he previously left and now returns to. His friends welcome him, express their surprise, happiness, and their wish to meet him.

This passage is a proper representation of another level of Maslow's pyramid, which is belonging. People are social beings who wish to connect with others and when their friends comment to their posts, especially to the personal ones, it further strengthens their relationship and makes them feel that they are part of a community, they are not alone. It is particularly important to check the old ties, which he left behind. Humans are highly dependent on the social support of others.

Two distinctive language functions can be observed here. The first is the representational, as S.T. discloses an important piece of new information to the public. The second is the interactional. Almost all public posts aim at creating interaction with others, creating some social involvement. In this specific case S.T's statement informs the viewers about his comeback and exact whereabouts, and also that he is with his family. This new information attracts the attention of his friends who suggest through their interaction that they also want to see S.T. in person. The comments that follow S.T's post all represent the interactional function, but with different connotations. In the first comment the personal and regulatory functions mingle. C.R. expresses her personal happiness and excitement, but also asks S.T. to

pass over a message and thus she wants to control his behaviour. In the second comment the interactional function is mixed with the regulatory one, as T.J. asks S.T. to do something. C.L. as well as the Japanese commenter and A.I. all express their personal gladness, but the Japanese user's expression of hope can also belong to the imaginary function. M.P's questions are simply interactional, S.T's answer is personal and representational. He gives new information, but also expresses his feelings about the tiring travel. In E.P's utterance the personal function prevails. The sample shows that through providing a personal update about one's situation and friends providing interactional feedback, users manage to strengthen their togetherness even in lack of personal connection.

Sample 3 illustrates an other lately added post.



S.T's utterance about the weather and his cooking is an illucutionary act which informs his friends about the weather and his present activity. He didn't disclose them any valuable information except the fact that he is staying in Brooklyn and the bad weather suggests his boredom. This sentence can be considered as a representational and also as an interactional use of language, the beginning of small talk, where he seeks some kind of a social involvement. At the same time, the last part of the post is also personal, as it is evaluative. R.H. assures him that the channel of communication is open, when he remarks on the fact that S.T. is still in Brooklyn. He uses the personal language function, telling his thoughts. The small exchange closes with S.T's response laughing ironically at the length of the time he spends there, which is again a personal language use. By such small talk the speakers can make sure that they are not rejected, not alone, contributing to their feelings of security and

belonging. The post was also liked by thirteen users, who expressed their appreciation and provided the updater social support.

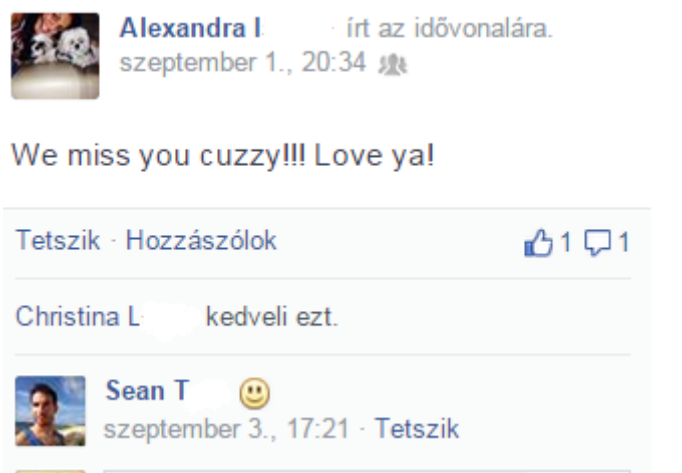
Not only those information are valuable that S.T. himself shared, but also those that others posted on his timeline. Samples 4 and 5 highlight two of the posts his friends shared on his personal profile.

Sample 4



In sample 4 the illocutionary act is a welcome, as T.S. welcomes his friend, S.T. for the occasion of his homecoming as a friendly gesture. He aims at ensuring social maintenance so expression is given to the interactional function. Y.W. who may be an other friend of S.T. joins into the talk expressing her pleasure at the new information that S.T. comes home. S.T. liked the post and funnily identified himself with the 'big bird' which T.S. must have used as a metaphor for the plane. The perlocutionary act of T.S.'s statement is the strengthening of their connectedness, a pleasant feeling that S.T. is welcomed by him.

Sample 5



The above exclamation was written by S.T.'s niece and demonstrates how computer-mediated communication can help the maintenance of close relationships. A.I.'s utterance is a direct speech act in which she expresses her emotions missing S.T., who is a person close to her, a cousin. The simple act of writing a post like this can help to maintain the relationship, as it informs the other person that he or she is not forgotten. Although a personal feeling is expressed it is rather the interactional function which is dominant. S.T. responds with a 'smiley' an emotion expressing happiness, indicating that he is pleased with such a message.

Sample 6

Besides changing his profile picture S.T. updated several photos about the places he visited and the different people he met. The following comments were written to an album of pictures uploaded by him including photos he took during his staying in Japan. Many of the pictures were taken about the place, he appears only in two of them.



Pictures are visual representations of S.T's experiences, being attractive, personal and informative at the same time. They are more prominent than simple typed posts and more easily grab the audience's attention. These posts may serve as hints, through which his friends can keep track of his life, even when he is abroad for months or a longer period. The small bits of personal information that people mutually exchange help to maintain the connection among them.

Four of his friends commented to the album, the preview of which shows five small pictures, one about the updater and four about the scenery itself. C.L. is the first commenter, expressing herself in three words, but her utterance is a meaningful statement, so it serves as a locutionary act. It is also an illocutionary act, in which she intends to express her amazement and regard towards S.T, considering him lucky to have those experiences, with some jealousy mingling in her voice. J.L and J.T. react to the picture in the album on which S.T. is present, noticing the change of his appearance, and finding it favourable. The illocution of J.L. is obviously to compliment, while J.T. gives advice answering to the updater's comment about the reason of the change. J.T. doesn't express himself so explicitly, but as he joins the

discussion, it is clear that he agrees with J.L.. H.X. comments on a personal quality of the updater, calling him hands-on, which means that he learns things by doing rather than reading or studying about them. Sample 6 is a good example that also non-linguistic elements, such as pictures can evoke perlocutionary acts, in this case the friends' amazement and encouragement. All comments can be considered as examples of the interactional function of language, written in order to give S.T. feedback in form of personal thoughts. In J.T's comment, also the regulatory function turns up, as he wants to control S.T.

If S.T's aim was to provide information to his friends who are interested in his activities, he succeeded. Although they cannot meet personally, they are informed what happens to each other by their posts, how their appearance changes, so they may feel less surprised and alienated from each other when they meet personally again. This means that it is a further example of how interaction on Facebook fosters connectedness. Thirty-five of his friends clicked on the 'like' button below the album, signalling their presence and appreciation.

6. Conclusion

The study of this paper investigated the different psychological needs that can be met by using social networking sites, taking Facebook as the scene for the investigation. Facebook is a social networking site based on computer-mediated communication, where users can express themselves in a way that resembles face-to face communication, due to their adaptation to the online environment, the presence of communicative cues and other features of the site. The samples which are presented above provide an insight into how the different posts of a user and those of his friends shared on his timeline contribute to satisfying his psychological needs, as well as demonstrating how the audience interpret the disclosed information and how they collaborate based on Austin's speech act theory and Halliday's language functions. By analysing the utterances the following observation was made: activity on Facebook revolves around social interaction, which is a precondition of connectedness. I have introduced examples to demonstrate the different needs including the need of belonging, and how the reaction of friends reinforce this sense, providing a feeling of security for the user by reinforcing him that he is not abandoned. The feedback coming from the friends also provide the user social support, including recognition, respect and care nourishing their social ties, both strong and weak connections. The sample with his profile picture illustrates how the user selectively self-presents himself both by his picture and his own comments gaining recognition, which can improve his self-esteem. The many updates the user shares may benefit him also passively as they reinforce his positive and appealing qualities, showing his idealised self. I have also suggested that having the chance to express their qualities such as creativity and spontaneity, users can get a step closer to self-actualisation.

The current study on the other hand is just a pilot study, which while managed to introduce some main concepts and illustrate them with examples, only investigated a small sample size. Additional or more extended research is needed to confirm the plausibility of the current results and provide further different examples.

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