

# THE CONSTRUCTION OF FACEBOOK AS AN AFFECTIVE PROSTHESIS

LA CONSTRUCCIÓN DE FACEBOOK COMO UNA PRÓTESIS AFECTIVA

LA CONSTRUCTION DE FACEBOOK: UNE PROTHÈSE AFFECTIVE

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## ABSTRACT

The current use of Facebook has developed a series of changes in the agents' communication practices. This article identifies the solid changes that have occurred from a students' population in one public school in Bogotá. The following research gathered data from participants' Facebook Wall and in-depth interviews in order to highlight these transformations. This research was framed within a qualitative approach and phenomenological methodology. The results showed that for the majority of this student group, Facebook became an affective prosthesis, which allowed users to virtualize their emotions linguistically within the dynamics of a linguistic market.

**Keywords:** communication practices, computer-mediated communication, Facebook, linguistic market, virtual socializing

## RESUMEN

El actual uso del Facebook ha desarrollado una serie de cambios en las prácticas comunicacionales de los agentes. Este artículo expone qué cambios se han producido en una población de estudiantes de un colegio público de Bogotá. Con el propósito de hacer evidentes estas transformaciones, esta investigación recolectó las intervenciones de los participantes en sus muros de Facebook como también tomó en cuenta sus percepciones por medio de una entrevista a profundidad. Esta investigación está adscrita al paradigma cualitativo con una metodología fenomenológica. Como resultado, se evidenció que para la mayoría de esta población, el Facebook se ha convertido en una prótesis afectiva, la cual permite virtualizar sus emociones lingüísticamente, esto dentro de las dinámicas de un mercado lingüístico.

**Palabras clave:** comunicación mediada por el ordenador, Facebook, mercado lingüístico, prácticas comunicacionales, sociabilidad virtual

## RÉSUMÉ

L'usage de Facebook a fait surgir une série de changements dans les pratiques communicationnelles. Cet article expose les raisons de ces changements apparus au sein d'une population d'élèves d'une école publique à Bogotá. Les données collectées sur les usages faits de Facebook Walls et des perceptions

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obtenues à partir d'entrevues permettent de rendre compte de façon tangible de ces transformations. Cette recherche qualitative adopte une méthodologie phénoménologique. Les résultats montrent que, en général, étant donné les moyens offerts par le Marché Linguistique qui permet à ses usagers de virtualiser leurs émotions, Facebook est devenu une prothèse affective.

**Mots-clés:** pratiques communicationnelles, Facebook, marché linguistique, socialisation virtuelle, cybercommunication

## Introduction

The internet service has immersed in human life; web services such as e-mails and social networking are employed in daily life especially in juvenile population varying their social practices. This has developed some recent behavioural patterns, for example: “the common use of emoticons online” (Berlanga, I. & Martínez, E, 2010, p. 51), borrowings, technical words (e.g. chattear, clickear...) and abbreviated language in both, spontaneous writing and oral expression. As an example of it, Facebook has become an empirical virtual environment where it is feasible to observe these behaviours, so that it is an interactional scenario where users can express themselves naturally, and it deserves to be analysed in order to reveal how new ways of agents’ communicational practices have emerged.

This empirical text is a part of a research project called *Exploring Communicational Practices through Facebook as a Mediatic Device* focused on the Mediatic Device (Ferreira, 2008) as theoretical basis, which is based on three branches: technical technological branch, semio-discursive branch and socio-anthropological branch. The article will expand only the socio-anthropological Facebook branch, in lay terms, it endeavours to explain what the modes of interaction are produced in this social network in a particular young population.

In the early stages of this research, we sought out preceding investigations about social networking identifying different perspectives about how researches have been approached to it. Initially, Piscitelli et al. (2010) approached to Facebook focused on education and participation. That is to say, they systematised learning experiences based on generating collaboratively knowledge.

Secondly, we found a board field of investigations working on physical and digital identity construction on Facebook discerning new ways of virtual socializing. Zhao, S., Grasmuck, S., and Martin, J. (2008) “suggested that identity is

not an individual feature, it is not an expression of something innate in a person, it is rather a social product, the outcome of a given social environment and hence performed differently in varying contexts”(p.1831). Therefore, subjects situated them as “True selves, real selves and hoped for possible selves” (Zhao, S. et al., 2008, p.1832).

Cáceres, M.D., Ruiz, J.A., and Brändle, G. (2009) inquired about how young population performed within the communication process through technological mediation. Their main conclusion asserted that identity on Facebook could be identified as uniform and selective pattern. The former pattern is manifested by means of modifying or not modifying subject’s identity, it means, to post actual information or to post false one. The latter pattern is expressed in subject’s ability to cope with information in accordance with different situations.

García, K. (2010) and Díaz, V. et al. (2010) centered their attention on building identity in students of Javeriana University. They concluded that Facebook permits to its users to manage its applications with the purpose of building up their lives as they wish in it, so that their identities are posted by selected segments of tastes or wishes. Aguilar, D. and Said, E. (2010) pinpointed the elements which enable young population to build identity and subjectivity in Facebook. By using them, users are able to create and recreate themselves ceaselessly. Sanabria, F. (2011) and other scholars spotlighted on what it is happening in diverse social networking examined as virtual heterotopias. They asserted that social bond-link-has been modified because of people do not live in a world of doors or bridges, on the contrary, contemporary people live in a world of “virtual windows”.

Thirdly, Boyd and Hargittai (2010) exposed how young adults were concerned about their privacy on Facebook. Most of the adolescents modified their privacy settings in order to show it to a particular audience. In doing so, they

selected certain information through managing and sharing it, not hiding it from other users. In short, this made evident the connection between content and privacy. West, Lewis and Currie (2009) explained the overuse of Facebook involves a redefinition of users' privacy and public spheres.

Fourthly, Cardenas, E. (2009) worked on how certain university students deploy Facebook to communicate. As a main result, it stated that there is not a relevant difference between virtual and non-virtual interaction, indeed, both spaces of communication complement each other. Berlanga, I and Martínez, E, (2010) explained Facebook from a language view, analysing the communicative process in terms of semantic, syntactic and pragmatic areas.

With the above in mind, there was not any research which explains the correlation between language used on Facebook Wall and agents' social practices carried out there. Most of them progressed substantially in the field of virtual socializing working independently, delving into identity construction, subjectivity, privacy and knowledge construction. Notwithstanding these investigations, we inquire about *what are the modes of interaction produced in Facebook as a Mediatic Device?*

### Theoretical Concepts

This socio-anthropological Facebook branch deemed some constructs that are relevant in order to comprehend this communicational phenomenon on Facebook. That is why, considering that language and reality emerge as a social construction, it is necessary to understand the latent application of Bourdieu's (1984) premises to the study of the Communicational practices. In the early 1960s, Bourdieu (1984) developed a fruitful approach to comprehend the diversity of reality, where concepts as *Field*, *Habitus*, *Practice*, *Agent* and *Capitals* came out. In fact, these categories have a close, dynamic and interdependent relationship to each other in order to construct and characterise the social world.

Accordingly, the material circumstances of existence — specific to a certain class condition — produce and constitute a *Field* and a *Habitus* which correspond at the same time to “the structures constitutive of a particular type of environment” (Bourdieu, 2007, p. 72). The former is the place where objective interactions occur and the latter is a system of durable dispositions which are the principles of generation and structuring of Practices and representations which can be regulated and regulating (Bourdieu, 2007). Therefore, the *Habitus* produces *Practices* which have a tendency to reproduce those regularities. Hence, whilst the *Habitus* and the *Field* conjointly describe the environment and rules within which the classes struggle, both of them are derived from a group of *Capitals*.

Besides, the Field might not be a static structure; on the contrary, it is a space in which a game takes place among certain active features. Firstly, the Field is constituted by a diverse flow of capitals such as the cultural, social and symbolic capitals. It indicates that the same “Field can have a vast number of different capitals”<sup>1</sup> (Gutiérrez, 2002, p. 31). As well, there is a predominant capital which generates struggles and disputes among agents for acquiring it. Secondly, the Field is determined by “what is at stake” (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 136). In other words, the Field involves a game in which agents dispute and mobilize for certain interests based on their Habitus. Consequently, the underlying dynamic of the Field lets agents increase or decrease their capitals.

Regarding these capitals, they constitute the main causes of agents' struggles as we have mentioned before. This is because Capitals comprise “a set of goods which are produced, distributed, consumed” (Costa 1976. as cited in Gutiérrez, 2002, p. 35). Thus, it is important to say that the preceding concept must be released of economical connotation (Gutiérrez, 2002). At this point, Bourdieu made a distinction concerning the

1 Original in Spanish. Translated by the author.

variety of capitals immersed in a field, namely: cultural, social, symbolic and economic ones. First, the Cultural capital is related to knowledge, science and art. This capital can exist in the habitus, in objectified conditions and institutionalized conditions. On the other hand, the Social capital is a set of stable or potential social relationships; in basic terms, it refers to the membership of a particular social group. And thirdly, the Symbolic capital is the way in which other kinds of capitals are endowed with a symbolic value when they are collectively recognised and assumed as legitimate by agents (Gutiérrez, 2002).

Also, the field requires agents' Habitus, which is a set of socially learnt dispositions; ways of acting that are acquired through daily life experiences (Bourdieu, 2007). This concept allows us to articulate individual and social features, internal and external structures in order to understand how they are part of the same agent's reality. In this sense, the Habitus is observable in diverse agents' characteristics such as their body or their language. In this case, we focus on the Linguistic Habitus which "is a sub-set of dispositions acquired in the course of learning to speak in particular contexts (the family, the peer group, the school, etc.)" as said by Bourdieu (1991, p.17). Consequently, the Habitus is evident in agents' social reality due to the fact that it shows and expresses what agents' life experiences are actually based on and their language appropriation.

Under this perspective, the linguistic Habitus is a result of social agents' interactions in which language use is socially accepted and understood. The process of producing and understanding this language among agents is called *Linguistic Market* (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 17). It may primarily be a situation in which agents produce a discourse to address other agents who are able to evaluate, appreciate and set a price for certain agents' linguistic goods (Bourdieu, 1991). Therefore, the Linguistic Market is a social situation characterised by intrinsic operating rules and dynamics with a "degree of formality" (Bourdieu,

1991, p. 79). Simultaneously, this degree shows how agents actually communicate with others based on their social capital. To put it simply, the Linguistic Market may be a set of variable rules and dynamics to set a price for agents' linguistic productions according to their social capital.

As mentioned above, the Habitus and Field play then an important role in Bourdieu's theory and methodology because the scientific limitations for the subjectivity and objectivity are overcome. Equally, the concept of social *Agents* introduced here as being able to invent and improvise in the Field through the *Practice* (Gutiérrez, 2002). As a result, the Agent constructs the social reality individually and collectively. That was why it became relevant for Bourdieu to open the agent's attitude to think and act in the world. In other words, an agent is a producer and reproducer of objective meaning through his/her practice in the *field* where his/her *Habitus* materialises.

### Materials and Methods

This research project was executed within a qualitative paradigm (Creswell, 2007; Johnson, & Christensen, 2008) and a phenomenological method (Johnson, & Christensen, 2008; Merriam 1998). All together, they allowed us to comprehend and describe the Communicational Practices.

Moreover, the data collection procedures consist of structured participant observation and in-depth interviews. Regarding the data collection instruments, the former are Communicational Formats (See appendix 1) and the Invention bank (See appendix 2). Communicational Formats were deployed to gather analytical features such as Topics referred, Lexical items repeated, Expressions and Frequency as said by Krippendorff (2004). Besides, an organization of speech acts (Cohen, 1996) and among other features (Crystal, 2008; Mante & Piris, 2002). Invention bank was used to gather informal data which was not established in the Communicational formats. It was structured

as the index and meaning of emoticons derived from Crystal (2008). Face-talk was an in-depth interview (Holstein & Gubrium, 2001), in order to unveil ninth graders' perceptions on the communicational phenomenon.

This research is framed within pedagogical project subject in 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> semester of the bachelor degree in English Language Teaching as a foreign Language at Distrital University, Bogotá, Colombia. The school and the grade were given to us according to the academic availability.

The participants were 33 students, 17 girls and 16 boys whose ages ranged between 13 and 16 years, from Bogota's public school. 90 percent of the students belonged to the middle class and most of them live near to the school. However, only 12 students were chosen as the sample for this research project since they count on permanent access to internet at home, secondly their prior knowledge on social networking, thirdly being Facebook users and high frequency of Facebook use (everyday logging).

Afterward, the data analysis is performed through the stages proposed in the Grounded Approach (Freeman, 1998; Merriam, 1998), so that deriving our categories from data. In addition, the Content Analysis technique (Krippendorff, 2004) is utilised to make valid inferences from data gathered. And finally, data management strategies such as Color coding and indexing are used as well.

### Findings and Discussion

In this section are established the main features of the Socio-anthropological Facebook branch that are: The Affective Prosthesis and the Linguistic Market rules.

Initially, the Facebook Wall was established as a field because it was endowed with both, *objective* and *subjective* elements (Gutiérrez, 2002). The former involved the Facebook Wall format as a *blank canvas* which received and kept any kind of linguistic invention. The latter, the Facebook

Wall was a virtual space where agents could effectively post what they were, felt, tasted and did through their linguistic goods. Simultaneously, the Facebook Wall was determined as "a field due to a flow of diverse capitals, with a predominant one" (Gutiérrez, 2002, p. 31). Consequently, agents virtualised their "cultural capital in form of habitus"<sup>12</sup> (Gutiérrez, 2002, p. 37). In simple words, agents posted their subjective element (discourse) on the Facebook wall, which acts as an objective condition.

Figure 1 called Hyperdiscourses shows that the Facebook Wall capitals emerged first as the most recurrent hyper-discourses, such as: affection hyperdiscourses, social interaction hyperdiscourses and entertainment hyperdiscourses. Thus, they became affection and entertainment capitals due to the fact that they seemed to be "a set of goods which were produced, distributed and consumed" (Costa, 1976. as cited in Gutiérrez, 2002, p. 36) by affective agents inside the Facebook Wall. As a result, the Facebook Wall became a field where these capitals flew based on affective agents' practices for producing, consuming and gaining the capitals mentioned by means of discourse.

Under these circumstances, agents conveyed their "cultural capital in the form of Habitus" (Gutiérrez, 2002, p. 37) by sharing their favourite music, their ideas about the world, their tastes and dislikes; in other words, the entertainment capital. As it was observable, this capital was one of the most prominent, inasmuch as agents used constantly the Facebook Wall for sharing music such as rap, metal and reggaeton. For instance, AQ, DB and AS shared music according to their musical taste, namely: rap and reggaeton music in AQ-01: "Orrendo Tema!!! (O.o)" [*It is a terrific song!*]. Equally, AS posted about metal music in AS-02: "HELL.....viva el metal y no dude de q seguir siempre firme con el estandarte de satan" [*Hell... long live metal! Believe me I will remain firm with Satan*] and he mentioned it in Face-talk:

2 Original in Spanish. Translated by the author.

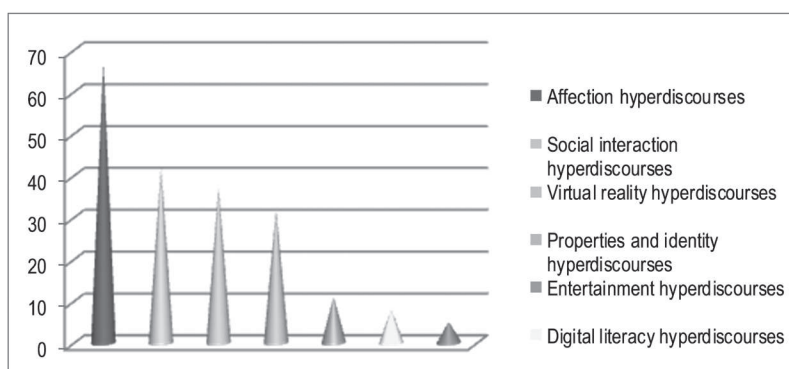


Figure 1. Hyperdiscourses

F2-AS-115: “Metal- Porque es una forma diferente de expresarse” [*Metal, because is a different way to express myself*]. Consequently, these affective agents showed and posted their “durable dispositions in relation to their knowledge, ideas and abilities” (Gutiérrez, 2002, p. 39) in Music.

Therefore, the Facebook Wall field was also defined as “what is at stake”<sup>13</sup> (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 136). In this case, the entertainment —cultural— capital was the predominant one in the Facebook Wall as a Field. However, agents in this research employed this capital in order to increase their Social or the Affection capital. Actually, they disputed and struggled for the Affection capital, “playing a social game in which they gained and lost the capital at stake” (Gutiérrez, 2002, p. 32). Then Agents put the cultural capital at stake for acquiring a Social capital, getting friends, company, girlfriends and flexible relationships while losing the facility to interact without the Facebook support.

Taking into account the preceding aspects, we identified two emerging phenomena in the socio-anthropological branch. First, the Facebook Wall may be an *Affective Prosthesis* for agents to interact there. —The isolated concept of Prosthesis was taken from Broncano (2009) —secondly, these ones seemed to produce and perform a particular

*Linguistic Market* (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 17) in the Facebook Wall.

**The Facebook wall as an affective prosthesis.**

The Facebook Wall could be considered as an *Affective Prosthesis* due to the fact that it invaded agents’ quotidian practices; it means it introduced significant changes in agents’ *modus operandi* in relation to affection practices such as flirting with and meeting people. More simply, the Facebook Wall became an indispensable device for agents with the purpose of knowing and meeting new people. Ergo, agents utilised emoticons as strategies in order to virtualise their emotions and be more expressive through their Communicational Practices in the Facebook Wall.

Then the Facebook Wall was a highly used social network by the population of this research. In fact, most of the participants were on during the sixteen weeks (See Table 1: Weeks off/on). In view of that, we inferred that agents developed a dependency on Facebook and they did not think on their daily life without checking it as AC and VV expressed when referring to the Extinction of Facebook:

**Except 1: Perception Sample**

**Y:** ¿Qué pasaría si Facebook desapareciera hoy?  
 [*What do you think about if Facebook will disappear?*]

3 Original in Spanish. Translated by the author.

Table 1: Weeks off/on

	AQ	DB	DC	DS	AO	AS	NC	TM	AC	NF	CV	VV
WEEKS ON	16	16	11	10	15	10	15	11	16	16	14	13
WEEKS OFF	0	0	5	6	1	6	1	5	0	0	2	3

AC: Me vuelvo loco  
[It drives me crazy!]

VV: Para volverse loco, Pues porque si uno se quiere contactar con alguna persona y ya no puede, se hace más difícil. Pues si uno no tiene el número o algo así ya  
[To drive me crazy, well, because if I want to contact someone, I could not it, it will be difficult. Even, if I do not have contact information.]

Y: ¿el celular o sea no te ayudaría a contactar?  
[And what about cell phone, does not it help you?]

VV: Pues sí, pero si no tiene el número de celular o número de teléfono sería más complicado  
[Well, yes it works, but if I do not have contact information, it will difficult.]

Within this example, AC and VV asserted to “be driven crazy” if they could not use Facebook for contacting people. This is because agents considered the Facebook Wall as an essential tool for contacting people since any of the other media devices such as the cell phone was not enough for them. In other words, agents checked their Facebook accounts for the purpose of increasing their social capital effectively, making the Facebook Wall a virtual extension for communicating among them.

Regarding that, Agents opened and used commonly Facebook for keeping their social relationships. It was evident since the majority of them asserted to have opened a Facebook account for their friends’ suggestion when asking them: ¿Por qué les llamo la atención el Face? [Why were you interested in Facebook?] in F3-AC-06

answered: “Porque todos los amigos tenían Face” [Because all my friends had it.-Facebook-] and in F3-TM-10: “Haber, yo lo abrí pues porque al principio no me gustaba, pero después vi que toda la gente lo tenía, pues yo quería tenerlo también” [Well, I had opened it. However, at the beginning I did not like it. Then, I noticed everybody has Facebook]. In simple words, agents opened it owing to their interpersonal interests of group membership.

Additionally, opening Facebook accounts may also be an overwhelming process for agents’ affectivity in view of the social pressure as another important cause. As agents had the main intention of being part of a social network for their friends, they did not want to be out; they wanted to be in Facebook as the others. This practice could be summarised in the repeated perception by participants from the previous samples namely, “Everybody has Facebook”. In that regard, this social pressure was overcome through “keeping in touch” virtually. As a result, Facebook was established as an indispensable social network for agents because they considered it so relevant to have it as their partners did.

As a consequence, agents developed a virtualization of certain social practices namely, affective practices, sexual practices and entertainment practices. Nonetheless, the affective ones had the highest recurrence because of the predominant affection hyper-discourses. In this manner, agents constructed virtual practices in the Facebook Wall that permitted them to know how and when they were effectively flirting with someone. In basic terms, there was a group of defined steps to build those social practices up in the Facebook Wall due



to the virtualization process implied. Here CV described these steps:

**Excerpt 2:** Perception Sample

**CV:** Cuando una niña, tú la miras y ella se ríe y entonces te está copiando, y uno le habla y ella como que también se interesa y ahí le está copiando a uno.

*[When there is a girl, you look at her, she smiles so you confirm that she is interested in you. Then, you talk to her, she answers you, so she likes you]*

**CV:** Y si es en Face pues también uno le habla, le dice hola ve, y entonces le dice hola, y uno le dice como estas, y si ella le dice por ejemplo, bien y ya y ahí le cierra la conversación, eso es que paila que no le copia. Pero si le dice bien y tú y le mandas corazoncitos y caritas y esas cosas entonces que tan bien le copia, que hay conexión, entonces que tan que hay relación.

*[On Facebook, it happens, too. You chat with a girl. You post "Hi", she answers, too "Hello". Then, you post "How are you" She replies such as "I am fine", she immediately closes the window, it means that she is not interested in you. But, if the girl replies "I am doing good, and what about you?" After you will send heart and smile emoticons and all kind of stuff, then she does, too. She likes you, as a result, there is a bond – connection- there is a relationship]*

Inside this virtualization of agents' affective practices, virtual codes were included while they were chatting with someone else. These codes were the replacement of agents' nonverbal language in this virtual scenario. Under this perspective, agents interacted in the Facebook Wall, trying to be similar to the non-virtual conventional process of communication

However, it was not possible for agents to bring exactly the same non-virtual practices to the virtual scenario. That is why agents' emotionality attempted to modify the usage of the Facebook format, adding socially some alternative codes

with particular connotations. For that reason, the emoticon emerged here as a re-signification of conventional signs (Punctuation signs), giving them an emotional value. These codes virtualised the affective social practices because of the codes mediatized the communicational exchange reshaping the predictable patterns related to it. Thus, the uses of these emoticons could be considered as *strategies* (Gutiérrez, 2002, p. 23) developed by agents with the aim of expressing and conveying what they actually felt. Hence, agents recognised and understood when the emoticons worked while they were communicating through them. In other words, agents developed their own *modus operandi* in which they signified virtually their affective practices.

In respect to the sexual practices, they were also virtualised by agents through the use of Facebook. These practices acquired a value for the agents because they have defined signs which represented them in their Communicational Practices. It was observable in DS's comments about a female agent who posted a message to him in order to have a sexual intercourse.

**Excerpt 3:** Perception Sample

**Y:** ¿Qué mensajes recuerdan así con una característica que les llamó más la atención?  
*[What are the most remarkable messages you have in mind? Do they have something relevant for you?]*

**DS:** No, pues que me pusieron 66 y que significaba sexo.  
*[No, well one day someone posted 66 and it signified sex]*

**Y:** Pero, y ¿Quién lo escribió, pues si se puede saber?  
*[But, who posted to you it? If we can know it]*

**DS:** Una amiga que se llamaba Camila  
*[It was friend, her name is Camila]*

**Y:** ¿Y tú que dijiste o como respondiste a eso?  
[What did you answer in relation to it?]

**DS:** Yo también le escribí 66]  
[I posted 66, too]

Here, it was possible to observe how agents unfolded strategies for communicating in Facebook taking into consideration agents' sexual practices; seeing that they signified the number 66 in relation to sex. It was feasible for agents because they endowed a value to that sign; that is to say, a sexual connotation. In this fashion, these interactions generated signs with a sexual implication which was socially accepted among them. For that reason, agents used Facebook and its technical options for constructing and developing their social practices; nonetheless, it was noteworthy that they were actually virtualised by means of agents' interactions along the Facebook Wall.

Again, the Facebook Wall may be a crucial tool for agents in order to increase their social capital. In fact, they employed constantly Facebook for meeting and partying with each other as it was evident in agents' comments in excerpt 4:

**Excerpt 4:** Perception Sample

**Y:** ¿De qué hablan más en el Facebook ustedes o de qué se sienten cómodos ustedes más hablando?  
[What are the most common conversational topics on Facebook about?]

**CV:** De farra.  
[About party]

**DB:** De fiesta. Porque uno tan, osea un viernes. Uno se comunica  
[About party, because on Friday I want to know about it, just keep in touch]

**NF:** O un sábado, que uno se levanta por ahí a las seis y mira y que no que hay farra en tal lado y uno ah bueno.  
[On Saturday, I get up around six and have a look on Facebook about party, where it is and all right]

**DB:** No y que uno llega y tan se parcha y se va.  
[Well, I get there, then I get together and then I go out]

**G:** Osea ¿Qué ustedes lo tienen porque se encuentran con los amigos o para hablar así con...?  
[I mean, why do you have it (Facebook)? To keep in touch with your friends?]

**NF:** Si, osea como por conocer gente.  
[Yes, it means, for meeting people]

On the other hand, agents had the routine to check their Facebook accounts during especial days on the week with another particular aim namely, to find out and confirm the next social meeting or party. Hence, agents published this kind of information in the Facebook Wall with the intention of sharing social events and inviting more friends and new people. Simply put, the Facebook Wall constituted an *Affective Prosthesis* or necessary part of agents for knowing people and going to parties.

Additionally, the Facebook Wall as an *Affective Prosthesis* had the role of facilitator that seemed to contribute to agents' mood. In this sense, the Facebook Wall through hyperlinks as emotional supporters helped agents to avoid personal and social pressure. This is due to the fact that those hyperlinks facilitated a virtual delivery of messages. As a result, it was feasible to notice that Facebook was evidently used by agents to perform their social practices (See Table 1: Weeks off/on). In sum, the Facebook Wall was an extension of the emerging affective agents who used it daily for increasing their social and then affective capital.

Accordingly, the Facebook Wall assisted agents in their way to meet new persons through technical technological mechanisms such as the hyperlink. It provided the mobility to agents in the field; concisely, this mechanism sped up the mode of knowing and meeting agents in their Facebook accounts. This process implied intrinsically the

possibility of eliminating the anxiety when agents met each other. It means that “the virtual proximity achieved to disable the non-virtual proximity social pressures”<sup>14</sup> according to Bauman (2005, p. 88).

As a consequence, agents used Facebook with its hyperlinks with the aim of being in and being out of the Facebook agents’ lives without a formal commitment.

In consonance with it, the Facebook Wall also has the “I like” option as a hyperlink. In this study, this option was the most common one among the twelve participants with 630 interventions of 1072 total ones. In that regard, affective agents may use this option so frequently inasmuch as the click on it made them feel omnipresent agents in a virtual community unlinked apparently to reality (Cuellar, 2011). This affective function of the “I like” was explicit with our population in NF and CV’s comments which they felt their friends’ company through it. (See excerpt 5).

**Excerpt 5: Perception Sample**

**Y:** Otra cosa que hemos visto es que dicen estoy triste o ponen una cara triste o sea, se nota que hay un problema en esa persona y los otros le responden “Me gusta”

*[Well, we have noticed, for example some people posted “I am sad” or posted a sad emoticon, it means one friend has a problem and the others respond with “I like”]*

**NF:** Sí, como que tiene apoyo, pues yo lo entiendo así.

*[Yes, it is like support, I got it like that]*

Osea, es como decir, “no estoy acá” Osea es como decir “yo estoy acá para usted”.

*[It means, it refers to “I am not here”, it means, “I am here for you”]*

**CV:** Lo mismo que decir que tiene mi hombro pa’ que llore

*[It is the same as you can cry on my shoulder]*

**NF:** Lo mismo, decir “me gusta” es como decir si yo estoy acá

*[It is the same to click on “I like” as I am here supporting you]*

Bearing it in mind, affective agents used this technological option with the intention of being there for other agents or to provide each other with an emotional support. They clicked on “I like” as a caress for dealing with difficult situations shoulder to shoulder. Then agents gave this option a varied affective meaning, inasmuch as it was socially shared. Thus, they felt a sense of omnipresence through it, and considered this option as a way to be and strengthen their social relationships in a virtual scenario. In a nutshell, affective agents utilised the “I like” option to go along with others and construct social bonds.

This Prosthesis also was a facilitator of virtual message delivery, agents shared in the Facebook Wall information in relation to affection in the Facebook Wall as well it was apparent in Face-talks 1 and 2 when asking them: “Respecto a los mensajes que envían por el Facebook; en el muro, o ya sea privado. ¿Cuál es el mensaje que más les ha gustado?” *[In respect to messages such as Inbox or on the Wall, Which one do you like the most?]* VV responded: “El de mi novio” *[My boyfriend’s messages].*

In view of that, affective agents were able to narrate themselves to others by showing, expressing and relaxing their emotions in the Facebook Wall as an Affective Prosthesis. Actually, it was a way to join each other’s humour as well as feelings to be a single community. This one in turn was built up by its agents who conveyed and interpreted virtually this kind of affective information, reducing the stress of the non-virtual meetings.

**The linguistic market in the Facebook Wall.**

The Facebook Wall was a virtual scenario where agents employed a common language for communicating among them. Although this language

<sup>4</sup> Original in Spanish. Translated by the author.

had particular features, its main feature was that it did not fit with the official language. The last one is the mandatory used “on official occasions and in official places (schools, public administrators, political institutions, etc.)” as said by Bourdieu (1991, p. 45). On the contrary, this Facebook language involved virtually elements of common or informal communication. Accordingly, this language use involved a *Linguistic Market* (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 17) in which agents were eventually expropriating the objectified linguistic resources; it means their official language.

In addition, this *Linguistic Market* had its own conditions, rules and dynamics for constituting itself. In relation to the former, it is essential to point out that agents were part of the *Linguistic Market* using their *Linguistic Habitus* defined as the “sub-set of dispositions acquired in the course of learning to speak in particular contexts (the family, the peer group, the school, etc.)” (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 17). Therefore, a *Linguistic Habitus* was employed by agents in the Facebook Wall for the high number of messages exchanged in that *Linguistic Market* weeks. Table 2, Interactions per agent, shows how CN reached the highest number with 108 interactions, whereas it was followed by AQ with 95, NF with 88 and DB with 86. In this way, apart from the technical technological support in the Facebook Wall, the *Linguistic Habitus* kept on being the prime condition of this scenario as agents seemed to interact through their linguistic habitus.

Hence this Linguistic Market may work, following three main rules in the Facebook Wall. The first one was about the rareness of using everyday language as “a pure instrument of communication” (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 66). As we claimed before, affective agents used language in

the Facebook Wall for showing what they were, liked, hated and knew; it means they virtualised their *Linguistic Habitus* in terms of their cultural capital. Then language was employed for multiple purposes evident in the capitals flowing there such as the affection, entertainment and social capitals (See Graphic 1: Hyperdiscourses). As well, the Facebook Wall offered to agents the setting for inventing new ways of using language based on its technical options. For instance, they showed their taste for the Colombian soccer, creating signs such as a [°/M] in (DB-03). More simply, affective agents were themselves the message communicated in the Facebook Wall. For that reason, their words, signs and figures posted in that scenario were modes for being in it and showing the rest of agents their *Linguistic Habitus* according to their cultural capital.

The second rule corresponded to “the pursuit of maximum informative efficiency” (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 66) when agents communicated through Facebook Wall. Consequently, agents developed practices for speeding up the process of virtual communication. It was observable in the recurrent use of abbreviations, such as k/k, q/Q, bn, Bb, x/X, pa, mk and marik. It was worth mentioning that “K/k” outweighed greatly the other abbreviations with 145. Also, it was evident that “Q/q” was subsequent with 65. As well as emoticons showed that “♥ Heart” went up until 239; hence, it had the highest frequency among the other emoticons. These practices became *strategies* because agents could play and modify the usage of the given Facebook format so that *practicing* in it (Gutiérrez, 2002). For that reason, affective agents stated that they wanted to achieve an effective communication in the shortest amount of time: “Para agilizar más la conversación, uno quiere escribir rápido para que le contesten rápido” in

Table 2: Interactions per Agent

Interactions	NC	AQ	NF	DB	CV	AC	DC	AO	VV	AS	DS	TM
	108	95	88	86	68	67	62	42	30	25	19	14

CV-04 [To speed up the conversation, I want to post quickly in order to receive the message quickly, too].

And finally, the third rule referred to agents' linguistic patterns which were particular to defined agents. In this case, the "Linguistic practice inevitably communicates information about the (differential) manner of communicating, i.e. about the expressive style" (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 67). In line with it, affective agents used lexical items repeatedly and expressions which informed about their expressive style; for instance, words such as: *querer*, *linda*, *amor* and *perras* [To love, you are so beautiful and bitches]. It is important to mention that "Querer", "Pero" and "Linda" prevail over the other lexical items (11) as well expressions such as: "te Kelo"

[I love you] in (AQ-04), "te re kiero" [I love you so much] in (DC-05), and "k Parche Nero jajajajaja"

[What a whoopee buddy (Smiles)] in (AQ-06) were recurrent in the data.

Also, another characteristic of these affective agents' expressive style was the usual indirectness of expressive speech acts which went up to 208. It was the highest number. Indeed, this indirectness was acknowledged by NF and DB after asking about some lyrics posted on the Wall: DB: "Si como uno se acuerda que cuando - quieres sexo siempre me llama- ser y tan y a uno le gusta una chica y las cancioncitas y uno se ríe tan y después

la chica siente que uno puede estar hablando de ella" [For example, when I remember a song "She wants sex, she always calls me". So if I like a girl and I am chatting with her about us. I post a song on the wall because the girl can get it. I posted it to her] and NF added: "Es que es como para mandar el indirectazo" [You know, it drops a hint]. Briefly, affective agents had a differential manner to communicate among them, especially in their expressive style.

On the other side, the Linguistic Market had two dynamics that were concerning two main ways to practice in the Facebook Wall. The first was related to agents' expropriation of the "objectified linguistic resources from books, grammars and dictionaries" (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 57). The second one was about agents' practice, using language according to the "objectified linguistic resources" (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 57). The former was evident in a naturalised Communicational Practice agents did not question during their interactions in the Facebook Wall. For example: "hola komo estas" [Hi, How are you?] in (DC-07), "No Ndita Amr♥ Escucho Musika iiY Tu Que Mazz" [Nothing much My love. I am listening to music, and how about you?] in (DC-08), or "... grax mi Bff thu también estas muy linda te re kiero" [Thanks my best friend, you are so beautiful, too. I love you so much] in (DC-09). In this sense, the chief matter here for agents was to be understood without an "objectified system of linguistic norms" (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 19).

Table 3: Abbreviations

K/k	q/Q	bn/bna	Kiero	Bb	x/X	mariK/mk	pa/pA/pAR	hp/Hp	ke
145	65	34	30	27	22	21	21	15	15

Table 4: Emoticons

♥ Heart	:) Smile	;)D Big Smile	;) ) Wink	XD Grin	:( Sad	:P Tongue	:3 Curly Lips	:'( ) Crying	🎵 Musical Notes
239	65	65	48	38	27	25	18	9	8



The preceding practices were endorsed due to the fact that the Facebook Wall —where a Linguistic Market took place— had its own “degree of formality of the situation” (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 79). Actually, Social institutions do not have direct jurisdiction for regulating this usage of language and discourses in this virtual space; hence, Agents can use language and post messages without restrictions in the Wall. Then affective agents unfolded these social virtual practices according to their Social capital. Consequently, they could post themselves, their territories, likes, dislikes, ideas and hates.

## Conclusion

As a result of this discussion, Facebook clearly became a virtual environment where agents could express themselves naturally. They could effectively post what they were, felt, tasted and did due to settings of Facebook allow them. When it occurred, agents’ habitus started virtualizing; therefore their capitals started flowing online. In this case, affection, entertainment and social capitals were flowed as predominant ones. This process could be interpreted as the virtualization of whole people’s life spheres.

This virtualization process of life has been getting stronger, transforming Facebook as an *Affective Prosthesis*. Agents developed a dependency on Facebook. Firstly, they permanently utilised it for meeting people and they did not think on their daily life without checking it. Secondly, this social network was an essential tool for contacting people since any of the other media devices such as the cell phone was not enough for them. They employed it for keeping their relationships updated virtually. “Everybody has Facebook” was a common motto full of social pressure. That is why Facebook established as an indispensable social network for agents because they considered it so relevant to have it as their partners did. Thirdly, agents were virtualizing their emotions through the usage of emoticons. These codes are the replacement of agents’ nonverbal language in this virtual scenario.

From this view, agents interacted in the Facebook Wall, trying to be similar to the non-virtual conventional process of communication.

Fourthly, hyperlinks of Facebook facilitated a virtual delivery of messages. This mechanism sped up the mode of knowing and meeting agents in their Facebook accounts. This process implied intrinsically the possibility of eliminating the anxiety when agents met each other. In this fashion, “*I like*” was used with the intention of being there for other agents or to provide each other with an emotional support, it was as a caress for dealing with difficult situations shoulder to shoulder. Agents gave this option a varied affective meaning, inasmuch as it was socially shared. Thus, they felt a sense of omnipresence through it and considered this option as a way to be, to construct and strengthen their social bonds in a virtual scenario.

Henceforward, Facebook could be interpreted as an *Affective Prosthesis* because of its incursion in the agents’ affective daily life, changing them to a new ways to behave and to be.

Additionally, *Linguistic Market* in the Wall of Facebook was evident because of agents’ language. This scenario required it as a prime condition to exist, employing both, formal and informal linguistic resources to interact. There were some specific rules and dynamics unfolding on Facebook.

Dealing with the rules, first, agents used language in the Facebook Wall for showing what they were, liked, hated and knew. They merely utilised the language as a tool of communication. This case, they virtualised their *Linguistic Habitus* in terms of their cultural capital. Second, agents sped up the steps of virtual communication, handling abbreviations and emoticons looking for maximum efficacy in communicational process. Thirdly, agents developed an expressive manner of communicating by means of lexical items repeated and expressions commonly used and understood as hints in this scenario.

Regarding the dynamics of the *Linguistic Market*, agents could expropriate or appropriate the language. They could create and recreate it, breaking its rules or could appropriate it by following its rules. As a consequence, agents who aimed to be understood by others, utilising and inventing new linguistic resources were developing an emerging competence in this scenario. Hence, agents conferred to the virtualised language what they were, hated and loved in order to be understood as a community.

Facebook Wall in combination with Linguistic Market permitted to develop agents' interactions made their social distance explicit. They posted their positions from the groups they belonged to. In short, agents' messages implied a symbolic authority socially recognised by their groups. In this struggle for imposing their vision, they built up a discourse.

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Henceforth, all rules and dynamics were practices carried out by agents, becoming them as *strategies* because they could play and modify the usage of the given language and Facebook format so that *practicing* in it.

Lastly, it is solid the socio-anthropological Facebook branch entailed the Facebook Wall as an Affective Prosthesis for agents because they required it for interacting among themselves emotionally. Moreover, those interactions involved a flow of capitals in which the Cultural one was the predominant with the aim of increasing the Social one. These processes of acquiring Social capital provoked agents' struggles in the Linguistic Market which implied the virtualization of social practices, mainly the affective ones. This way, agents developed some linguistic patterns that allowed them to post and understand their emotions effectively. Thus, the Facebook Wall as an Affective Prosthesis lets agents virtualise and expand their own modes of constructing their emotional social life.

## Suggestions for Further Research

Studying the Communicational phenomenon on Facebook as a Mediatic Device allowed us to understand it from the triadic view where diverse dimensions were addressed. Albeit, we were able to notice there were further aspects to be examined through additional research.

In respect to socio anthropological branch, it is relevant to conduct research in relation to varied aspects of the contemporary social life, for instance: broadening the comprehension about the rules and dynamics of the linguistic markets in diverse virtual scenarios. Expand analysis in the field of people's dependency in relation to social networking and communicative devices. Explore new areas of adolescents' subjectivity and identity development in Facebook from its diverse scenarios such as the wall, the profile and photos. In this fashion, a contribution can be made around the understanding of how today's youth constitutes their social life as well as their self-concept in Facebook. As well, it would be helpful to deepen on the implications of the common use of social networks by the youth population such as the possible transformation of teenagers' private and public life.

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**Appendix I**  
**Communicational format**

Week From ____ to ____	Number of interactions
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Name:	Date (Last post):
Interactional mode:	Date (Data collection):

Part I

a.1 Image (Number)	a.2 Number of interventions	a.3 Text	I like

Part II

b. INDICES				c. ANALYTICAL FEATURES		
b.1 Topics Referred				c. Frequency		
Academic		Non Academic				
				c. Frequency	c.2. Label (Name – Meaning)	
b.2 Emoticons						
				c. Frequency	c.3 Standard Form	
b.3 Abbreviations						
				c. Frequency	c.4 Syntactical Units	
b.4 Lexical items repeated						
				c. Frequency	c. 5 Meaning- English gloss	c. 6 Speech Acts
b.5 Expressions						

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**Appendix II**  
**Invention Bank**

Index	Meaning	Location

**How to reference this article:** Rivero Ortiz, G. A., Aldana Gutiérrez, Y., & Baquero Rodríguez, M. J. (2014). The Construction of Facebook as an Affective Prosthesis. *Íkala, Revista de Lenguaje y Cultura*, 19 (2), 149-166.