

Language and Facebook: Effects and Factors on Social Class

Emmanuel Chukwudi Ugwu

Department of English Language and Literature, Unizik, Awka, Anambra State, Nigeria

ABSTRACT

Language is still the key for every successful discussion and for every social class there are people that matter in such class. Once a respected personality drops any hint on social media, people keep following the person in constant wave in order to place him rightly. Facebook and since its inception has been a conundrum to reckon with. Once the users forget to place selves were they ought to be, there are bound to have conflict of interest and respect. But once one places self where he/she ought to be, there must clear placement of orderliness. The work was hinged on the theory of social functions of language and data used for the analysis were descriptively analysed with proper channels on Facebook such as: comment, reactions and shares. Finally, social class has upper, middle and lower case, it depends on where one supposed to be and taking the proper place in one's professional areas. One must understand that classes are attained according to levels from one level to another.

Keywords: *Language, Social, Class, Media, Facebook, Comments, Shares, Reactions.*

***Corresponding Author**

Emmanuel Chukwudi Ugwu

Department of English Language and Literature, Unizik,
Awka, Anambra State, Nigeria



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INTRODUCTION

Language in every sphere makes interaction very accessible. Language makes any society to triumph on social media forum. For conversation to be rich and reachable to those within the environment of the speech community, language must play its pivotal purpose. Syal, Pushpinder and D.V. Jindal [1] state that "language is a very important means of communication between humans. A can communicate his or her ideas, emotions, beliefs or feelings to B as they share a common code that makes up the language (5)." So the idea is that as the communication progresses, language must take the centre stage and unites the interact ants in a social environment. In every speech community there must be a dignified code that they must communicate and be conversant with. Both of them further see language as a form of social behaviour. They address that, "A human child learns to speak the language of the community or the group in which he or she is placed (9)." So in a group like Facebook, one must understand tenets involved and the other person at the end who receives the message. As they exchange the information they usually do that manner that makes them understand each other.

So language helps achieve most things we do on daily activity and even in a given society. One may consider a society with a defined language, it will be a total failure. It is an integral part of humans and their societies. Although not all language is expressed with speech, some languages come in diverse ways of emoticons, emoji, stickers, signs, gestures, miming, winks and all manner of semiotics approach. Facebook and other social are not left out in these directions. Most times communications in it take this stage of smiley, emoji, codes, etc. that they can flow in their thoughts, Denham, Kristin and Anne Lobeck [2] sincerely adjudge thus:

Language is what makes us human, and we all seem to be naturally curious about it. We do much more than just communicate with language: we play game with it ...; we use it to identify each other ...; we have many questions and often very strong feelings about it. We value some ways of speaking over others, and we all have our pet peeves about language. Numerous websites, newspaper columns, books, and entire radio and television programs are devoted to interesting facts and musings about language as well as to critiques of language "misuse" and "deterioration." (2)

Distinctiveness in Class and Social Class

In every setting and community of sociolinguistics, there is this situation of class which people identify with. Some diversify their variants in every social class and group each one where he or she belongs. To arrive at this grouping one needs to be extreme careful and placing one where it rightly belonged. That is why one is always cautions of language one uses in social group, to avoid being taking sides that ought not be, Wardhaugh [3] understands this scenario when he asserts that, "The most complicated factor of all is social-class membership, if we consider 'social class' to be a useful concept to apply in stratifying society – and few indeed would deny its relevance (130)!" Herk and Katamba [4] also

support that, “A finding across many speech communities has been that certain linguistic variants are more closely associated with the upper classes and that these variants carry the most prestige (505).”

This prestige in question is sorted out via various categories of classes: upper, middle and lower classes where people group one another in any given society. They decide to use language differently and particular language that suit each class. A clear example is trying to greet Good morning to these classes. Upper Class is possibly to get “Sir, Good Morning Sir,” middle class may get “Good Morning Sir,” and while lower class will definitely get only “Good Morning.” People attach more prestige in these classes so that difference will be very clear, Holmes [5] in her social class style state that, “When we combine information about the way people from different social groups speak with information about the way people speak in different contexts, it is clear that features of social class and contextual style interact (251).” In standardising the language in every class, Holmes [5] brought in hypercorrect especially when variations set in, in language usage among the classes. She states that hypercorrect usually goes beyond norms in every language. It also involves extending a form beyond the standard. In one of her analyses, she employs the generalisation post-vocalic [r] among these classes who use and over use it. The idea was conducted among the standardised usage in New York and later came up with thus:

There is an exception to this generalisation, however. The third interesting point ... the lower middle class (LMC), to pronounce [r] even more often than ..., the upper middle (UMC) in the two most formal styles. LMC speakers out-perform UMC speakers when they are reading isolated words. This is hypercorrect behaviour – the LMC are overdoing it. UMC speakers serve as model for the LMC, but in the styles where they can most easily monitor their speech, the LMC go beyond the UMC norms to produce a style which can be described, perhaps somewhat ironically, as ‘more correct’ than the standard – ‘hypercorrect’ speech. Some have called it ‘super-standard’. (253-4)

Note that in social media this inferiority complex usually sets in, while handlers continue to over abuse the classes involved. Where the lower class keeping being cautious of language on social media while the other counterparts may not care to follow procedures. Though at their levels they converge and

Facebook and the Factors on Social Class

Social status of one, on Facebook indicates and determines an individual’s social position in a particular social network which is based on power, influence, monetary value, educational prestige, working class, areas of profession, religious views and other classes which people access before agreeing to send an online friend request or accept friends on Facebook.

According to Mugglestone[6] the notion of the speech community, class can be inherently about division or it can be seen as a construct that emphasises concensuality (156).

She further says that

Social class is a notion that has its intellectual basis in theories of social and political economics dating from the nineteenth century, and theories of social class which have its propounding figures like Karl Marx and Max Weber (156).

Trudgill in Akindele and Adegbite[7] concurs that social class is generally taken to be aggregates of individuals with similar social and/or economic characteristics (12). Herk and Katamba[4], (505) also see “class, or socioeconomic status (SES), as a classic social distinction in studies of industrialised societies, and has played a role in sociolinguistic studies from the beginning.”

The language we use daily in our various speech community means a lot and determine so many factors in social class setting. The communication varies according to the class one wants to associate with, such as their level of education, political status, economic constituents and parental background; and other criteria like lower, middle and upper classes, with also the working class, depending on the scale one wants to measure them with.

Hudson[8], Affirms also that social class, sex and age also dialectologists use social dialects, or sociolects, to refer to non-regional differences. He states that:

Because of these other factors, a speaker may be more similar in language to people from the same social group in a different area than to people from a different social group in the same area. Indeed, one of the characteristics of the hierarchical social structure of a country like Britain is that social class takes precedence over geography as a determinant of speech, so that there is far more geographical variation among people in the lower social classes than there is amongst those at the ‘top’ of the social heap. This has gone so far that people who have passed through the public school system (or would like to sound as though they had) typical have *no* regional traits at all in their language (42).

On Facebook, clear observation made it that people decide to choose who and who should be their friends. What to like and what to comment and to whose wall (timeline), they want to comment and also how they want to pass their message in such timeline.

Milroy and Milroy [9] opine that

Of the social variables that are commonly used, two at least are composite (or complex) variables, in that they are calculated by reference to a number of indicators. These are socioeconomic (social) class and social network. Quantitative measurements of social class depend on which indicators as income, trade or profession, and educational level, while social network depends on indicators of density and multiplexity in a speaker's social relationships (54).

The position of one in a social network will attract the particular language that is suitable for the person. William Labov[10] in his studies at the mid-1960s proves that social aspirations and status influence speech patterns; more especially when one wishes to associate with a particular set of class.

Those who move in a particular direction will like to adjust their utterances and writings to suit the present situation they find themselves in. For example: those who are friends of the Facebook ID - Joy Eyisi, always try to articulate their grammar correctly whenever she posts any thread on her wall. Friends of Chris Anyamene are always jovial and playful with their words, not minding his status. Many who have come across Ilochi Okafor on Facebook will note that he accepts all friends request sent to him but he will never comment or reply people's messages on his wall. The above ID names on Facebook are all professors announced from this university Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka.

Those following or friends of Uchechukwu Sampson Ogah, a business mogul, and current Minister of Federal Republic of Nigeria will observe that anything he posts on Facebook, friends rush in to comment; the same with the ID of Afikpo Chic who oversees and owns the 'Ndi Igbo' page and some Igboist pages, any of her posts attracts hundreds of comments once such posts emanate from them and their likes.

Sequel to this on Facebook social status, before November 2013, the immediate past Governor of Anambra State was an owner of just two Facebook IDs; but now, over hundreds of ID with his name, picture and skimpy information on his profile flood Facebook and the question is who owns and operates the said governor's various IDs?

Nigeria's Facebook situation is filled with religious activities. Any post on prayers and religiosity always comes with claims that end with "Type Amen." Some do not even have the time to read the words of pastors on Facebook and other religious leaders' prayers that 'Amen' needs to be typed to. One will observe that within a space of an hour, thousands of AMEN will be rolling on such a thread.

Whenever good jokes are updated, hundreds tend to send their solidarity of acknowledgements to such jokes. Nigerians derive much joy, appreciation and concern when such jokes are posted, as such posts usually attract a lot of comments and likes.

Bright[11] posits that

An individual's social network is definable as the sum of relationship which he or she has contracted with others, and these may be spoken of in terms of relatively strong or weak ties. The Milroys' research suggest that strong ties within communities result in dialect maintenance and resistance to change; but individuals who have large numbers of weak ties outside the community tend to be innovators, and to serve as instigators of language change. This approach does not replace the concept of social classes, which determine relationships of power at the institutional level (91).

Theoretical Framework and Methodology

The work was hinged on the theory of social functions of language. Hudson[8] states that, "they are the ways in which we use language to give our view of our relationship to other people (230)." There are ways we relate with people especially on social media. When we want to interact with people, sometimes, we consider their class first. Other times we are mindful of our relationship with them. In other ways we are interested on the information a post is passing or who is involved in passing the information to the society. That is the reason he also pointed in the same page that; "Sociolinguistics is the sole discipline responsible for the indirect method of communicating information about our social relationships. For convenience we shall call the information which is conveyed in this way 'social information'."

Since this work is on social media employing the social class aspect of it, it uses the purposive sampling technique to collate its data. The technique was used because of the peculiarity of work in generating the data. Most data analysed were got from people's posts on Facebook with comments and reactions towards the posts.

Analysis of the Data Collected

How do people react to posts on Facebook in respect to Social Class?

Most posts on social media especially on Facebook always attracted with so much reactions once one is made or posted. Currently, Facebook has upgraded to actual seven reactionary icons instead of normal like icon it used to have. The reaction icons are in these orders like; love; care; haha; wow; sad and angry.

In a clear observation from this research, the paper observed that most well placed profiles, always get a good number of reactions once they made a post or share one. Even if the post is not worth commenting on at least like reaction icon may be tapped. Often times the friends to the said account may not comment but showed solidarity of reactionary icons, towards the post.

Although the essence of the reactions is to choose the right icon that fits the very post but most friends keep clicking the like reaction, even when the post deserved angry or sad reaction. In essence one may observed that a single post may attract those different icons. But the question remains why? Since a post deserved a particular reaction, example birthday post may require the first three icons but you see some using the angry icon which is best known to them. Someone announced obituary on Facebook instead of sad reaction, still out of laziness they keep clicking like reaction for such a post.

There are icons and celebrities on Facebook, that attract great reactions once they even say common “hi” on their wall. The researcher has monitored the page of Cristiano Ronaldo, who is a great legend in football world and found out that within few minutes of any of his posts you will see hundreds of thousand reactions to that very post. The likes of Lionel Messi attract such reactions and traffic towards posts on his page.

Data1: Cristiano Ronaldo’s Inside Swimming Pool Picture

A football legend with name Cristiano Ronaldo of Portugal origin that currently plays for Manchester United Club just posted his picture where he was whiling away his time inside a swimming pool. The picture was posted at 17.52 hours on 16th January, 2022 being a Sunday. Currently the picture is seriously making wonderful waves by his followers.

Much attention has been given to the picture with this caption “Relaxing 🍷” and still counting till date.

Within these months the picture was able to garner some of these attractions to it:

Under reactions = One Hundred and Seven Million reaction of several emojis.

Under Comment = Eighty Thousand comments.

Under Share = Seventeen Thousand Shares were seen recorded on the picture.

Data2: Cristiano Ronaldo and Wife’s Relaxation Picture

At the one, the picture was screenshot at the sixth hour of posting it. This time the picture was a picnic by glancing through the background and they are relaxing may be on beach because the man was without shirt with the wife. In this sixth hour of picking the picture with two emojis of heart of love and peck cheek without any other word, we observed these classes on it.

Under reactions = one million four hundred thousand reaction emojis.

Under Comment = Sixty Six Thousand comments.

Under Share = Ten thousand sharers have shared the picture within the shortest hour

Data3: Cristiano Ronaldo’s Relaxation Picture

The same Football Legend just posted his picture where he was relaxing in a particular room and with happy emoji on it without any other word to describe the picture. The researcher was able to screenshot the picture at the second minutes of the uploading of the picture. Unimaginable happened with these two minutes. In a class like this Ronald the player obviously proved a point of the social class he belonged in.

Within these two minutes the picture was able to garner some of these attractions to it:

Under reactions = One Hundred and One Thousand reaction emojis.

Under Comment = Six Thousand Eight Hundred comments.

Under Share = Already One Thousand Shares were seen recorded on the picture.



Data4: Umeh Chisom Update on Cristiano Ronaldo's Picture

Hear a friend of the researcher on Facebook was seen uploaded his timeline with the picture of the same Legend on 15th July, 2022 and captioned it "The traffic on this post can stretch from Earth to the outermost regions of the solar system." He screenshots the picture with remarkable circles at the one hour of the time he saw the picture and number of the reactions reaped at that moment. Unfortunately for Umeh Chisom the post he made over the picture has only seventeen comments, twenty-two reactions and only two shares, as of the time of this work.

A clear analysis of the comments will agree that the Footballer is indeed a Legend in terms of social class. The first comment stated he saw it when it was just 4minutes with six hundred and eighty thousand reactions. The second comment was of the view that the comments were pouring like a heavy rain and he decided to go away from the post to save his data. The subsequent replies and comment over the original post of Facebook handle of Chisom Umeh will make one to understand the power of social class.

□ Fabbest Drew Logic AndGates

I saw it when it was just 4min... 680K likes...

Umeh Chisom

Fabbest Logic Andgates Dah! Is everybody in the world liking the post?

Fabbest Drew Logic AndGates

Umeh Chisom I just wonder. The guy has a huge fan base

□ Bench W

Omo... I went in the comment section and the rate at which comments were pouring in, I ran for my data life.

Umeh Chisom

Bench W They can stampede you in that place sef.

Bench W

Umeh Chisom It's crazy the power that man has amassed.

□ Joyce Onyinyechi

Shebi I say you should ask Mark how I fit dey verified with my 900 followers, make my own post dey reach heaven sef 🙄🙄🙄🙄.

Anyways come watsap, I been drop like five minutes voice note for you 😭😭

Umeh Chisom

Joyce Onyinyechi Oh, I done forward your query to Mark. Em dey work on am. 😂

□ Bella Egooyibo Ubeoyibo Obi

Beautiful goals

□ Ken MacDonald

He's a global brand.

Umeh Chisom

Ken MacDonald True.

□ Warri Rebel ·

king

□ Ralphono

...and the guy is not bothered about the blue thick wey we dey celebrate for here like say tomorrow no dey 😂😂

Umeh Chisom

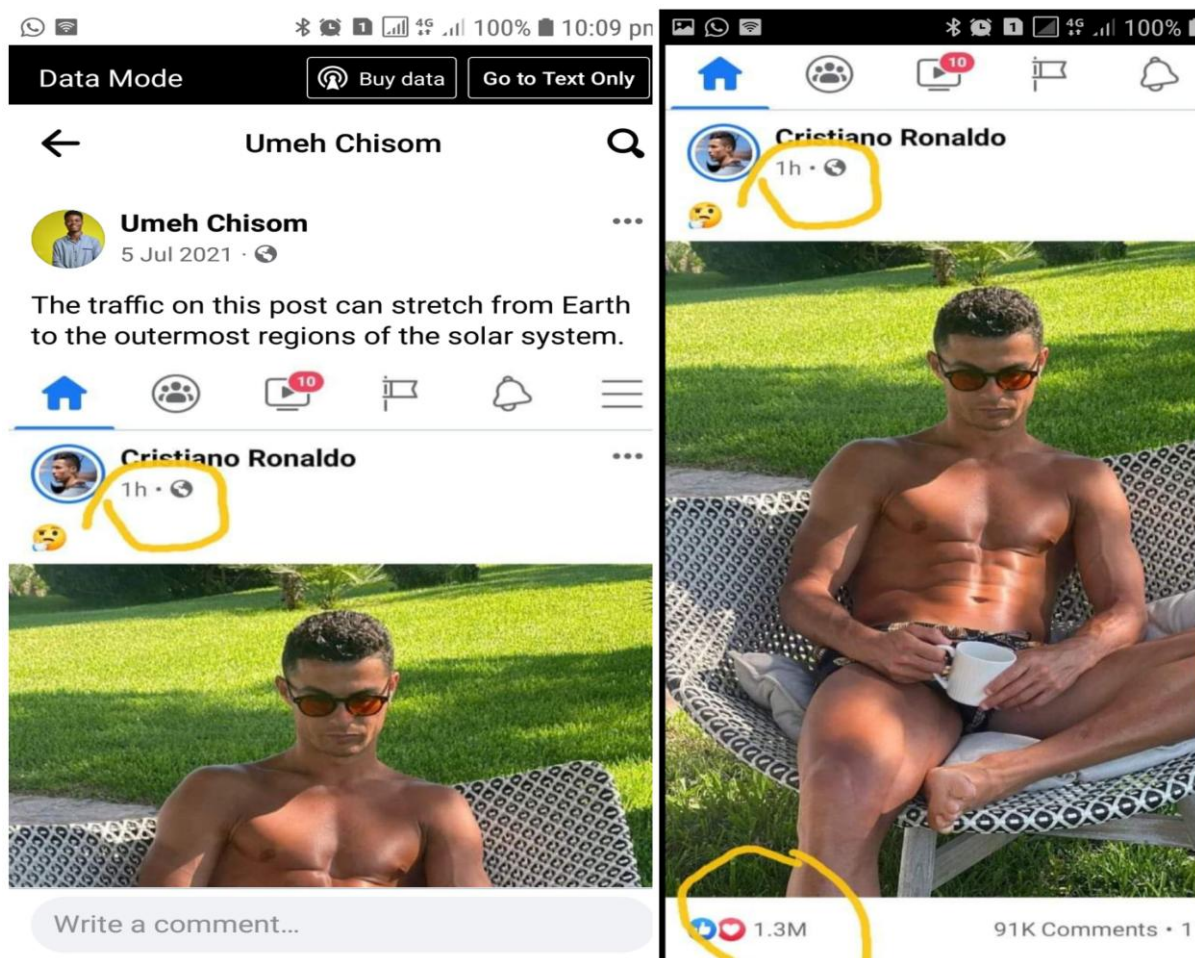
Ralphono I'm telling you. Something people are tearing pants for over here.

□ Daniel Okeke

There are levels to this celebrity stuff.

□ Suleiman Ayuba

Nawa o. 😏



CONCLUSION

Sometimes I post birthday wishes to a senior colleague on his or her wall, you see some of the students attached to the colleague reacting towards the post. They did so because of class the colleague has attained in the lives of those students. A clear observation from the comment attached to the data 4 really proved a point what social class is all about. even Mark Zuckerberg the owner of Facebook may not gather such traffic towards his posts on social media. The researcher has never made a post on Facebook and gathered up to two thousand reactions or two thousand comments or even over hundred shares since he joined Facebook world in 2009 despite having over four thousand and four hundred friends and over one thousand and seven hundred followers.

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