

Written Network Communication: Communicative Needs and Ambiguity of Interpretations

Mariana Sokol¹, Olga Petryshyna², Volodymyr Misko³, Tetiana Mykolenko⁴,
Eleonora Palykhata⁵ & Lilia Shtafirna⁶

¹ Doctor of Pedagogical Sciences, Professor of Romanic-German Philology Department, Ternopil Volodymyr Hnatiuk National Pedagogical University. Ternopil, Ukraine. ORCID ID 0000-0003-3876-026X

² PhD in Philology, Head of Department of the Ukrainian Language and Methods of Its Teaching, Ternopil Volodymyr Hnatiuk National Pedagogical University. Ternopil, Ukraine. ORCID ID 0000-0001-5427-200X

³ PhD in History, Dean of the Faculty of History, Ternopil Volodymyr Hnatiuk National Pedagogical University. Ternopil, Ukraine. ORCID ID 0000-0002-0113-9966

⁴ PhD in Philology, Associate Professor Department of the Ukrainian Language and Methods of Its Teaching, Ternopil Volodymyr Hnatiuk National Pedagogical University. Ternopil, Ukraine. ORCID ID 0000-0002-7437-3892

⁵ Doctor of Pedagogical Sciences, Professor, Department of the Ukrainian Language and Methods of Its Teaching, Ternopil Volodymyr Hnatiuk National Pedagogical University. Ternopil, Ukraine. ORCID ID 0000-0003-4995-1184

⁶ PhD student, Department of the Ukrainian Language and Methods of Its Teaching, Ternopil Volodymyr Hnatiuk National Pedagogical University. Ternopil, Ukraine. ORCID ID 0000-0002-9262-6398

Correspondence: Prof. Mariana Sokol, Doctor of Pedagogical Sciences, Professor of Romanic-German Philology Department, Ternopil Volodymyr Hnatiuk National Pedagogical University. Ternopil, Ukraine.

Received: February 24, 2021

Accepted: March 28, 2021

Online Published: April 1, 2021

doi:10.5430/ijhe.v10n5p10

URL: <https://doi.org/10.5430/ijhe.v10n5p10>

Abstract

Social networks are dynamic, accessible virtual planes of communication, through which users carry out the cross-border and transient exchange of information and emotions, meeting their communication needs. The article outlines the main aspects of written communication, its communicative needs, and the ambiguity of interpretations.

The constant growth of the popularity of social networks with the simultaneous displacement of the importance of live, direct communication forces scientists in various fields, including the theory of communication, communicative linguistics, to rethink the phenomenon of "communication". It is about creating a special discourse, which is caused by the specifics of the communication channel/code between communicators and the virtual chronotype. Attention has been drawn to written communication on social networks in terms of speakers' intentions, the interpretation of explicit and implicit information, its impact on the participants of communication, the formation of the special culture of communication (non-library), etc.

Specificity in the written form of communication in the social media has been caused by many factors: the readiness or unreadiness of the virtual interlocutor to interact; dominance of visual perception, hence, special attention of recipients to the layout, structuring of the text, volume, photo accompaniment, etc.; knowledge of the latest trends in online communication (fashion clichés, abbreviations, slang, memes); replacement or substitution of non-verbal means by various means of paragraphemics, for example, smilies, stickers, pictures, animation, etc.; developing of a specific network chronotype, in which there are no time limits and which is constantly expanding in volume due to the multiplicity of accounts, texts, chats, groups.

Not everyone who communicates on social media knows the intentions of other people. On the one hand, such communication generates the selectivity or concealment of true meanings in the author's texts and on the other hand, additional meanings are taken on during the recipients' interpretation.

Keywords: written communication, communicative needs, the ambiguity of interpretations, intercultural discourse

1. Problem Statement in General

Traditionally, communication is understood as the exchange of information to establish contact, relationships, solve specific problems, etc. The development of digital technologies, globalization processes, and the expansion of intercultural discourse have minimized direct contact communication and significantly expanded the boundaries of Internet communication. « Communication modes are changing and have now crossed such distances with the help of computerization and digital technology especially the emergence of the Internet and its various new applications. Communication and interaction may now take place online or in a virtual world or cyberspace without having to face each other at the same place and same time. Many more people use the new media technology, the Internet, in particular, to meet their psychological and social needs. Internet is the place to meet and interact and form relationships. This form of social interaction or communication has become increasingly common in our daily lives» (Siti Ezaleila Mustafa, Azizah Hamzah, 2011).

The relevance of the given research is based on the need to study the communicative needs, intentions of speakers, which they satisfy or seek to satisfy in social networks, as well as the variability of their perception of written texts. In our opinion, it is important to scientifically substantiate whether social networks, in which users spend a lot of time, are the optimal chronotype in which any kind of discourse can be developed, or whether it is partly a virtual communicative alternative to real communication, which speakers choose for convenience and public access.

With the help of Internet communication, people meet some communicative (and not only) needs: get an education, work on self-development, create communities of interest, visit stores and shop, meet and fall in love. «Scholars of computer-mediated communication (CMC) attribute the internet's popularity as a social medium to at least four characteristics of internet communication. First, in internet communication, people have more time to reflect than in face-to-face communication. As a consequence, they can easily control if, when, how, how much and what they communicate to others on the internet; hence it offers controllability» (McKenna and Bargh, 2000; Walther, 1996). Second, internet communication conveys fewer social status cues than face-to-face communication (Kiesler et al., 1984). As a result, contact between communication partners may not only emerge more easily in internet communication than in face-to-face communication, it may also be of greater reciprocity in the sense that communication partners feel that they and others are more responsive in internet communication than in face-to-face communication. Finally, due to anonymity and reduced visual and auditory cues, people may more easily overcome shyness on the internet than in face-to-face settings (McKenna and Bargh, 2000). This may make it easier for people to talk about a greater number of topics (breadth) and to feel less inhibited in disclosing personal or intimate information about a particular topic (depth)» (Jochen Peter, Patti M. Valkenburg, 2006).

It has been added that the space-time of Internet communication has no restrictions: different mentality, values, social roles, religions, linguistic and communicative characteristics are leveled in the plane of the Internet; on the other hand, time zones, a distinction of time of day, accounting of working / free time also lose significance for communicators who initiate or participate in Internet discourse. The low level or lack of responsibility for statements, zeroing tangibility of nonverbal communication in writing is a negative aspect that has been observed in the study of communication on social networks (and respondents note this).

The aim of the study is to propose the understanding of the main aspects of written communication, its communicative needs peculiarities of interpretations.

2. The Main Material of the Research

Nowadays, social networks are one of the most popular types of Internet communication. In other words they are like internet-based channels that allow users to opportunistically interact and selectively self-present, either in real-time or asynchronously, with both broad and narrow audiences who derive value from user-generated content and the perception of interaction with others (Carr C. T., Hayes R. A., 2015. P.50). The study has been based on communication in the most relevant nowadays-social networks in Ukraine: Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok, which has become popular. Their list correlates with the age categories of users: middle - young/youth - teenagers/teenagers - children.

3. The Methodology of the Research

In order to establish the specifics of public communication in social media the questionnaire of different age respondents have been conducted. The investigative method included the observation of communicative behavior in social media and interview that allowed finding out the experience aspects of different kinds of communication. The young/youth persons became the most representative and contact oriented group of respondents for our research as the most active, creative users of social media.

It should be noted that the basic needs of the individual have been identified and structured in 1954 by A. Maslow. (Maslow, Abraham H. 1970) The results of his research formed the basis of modern classifications of human needs, including the typology of A. Sokolov, where individual needs occupy an intermediate position or through. In the course of the research, 840 respondents have been interviewed (probability sample of individuals, spontaneous). The communicative needs of speakers, which they realize when communicating in social networks, as well as the variability of interpretations of written Internet texts have been studied. The study relied on the classification of individual communication needs proposed by A. Sokolov. The scientist has been distinguished the following needs: biogenic (vital, organic) needs, which are characteristic of man as the highest biological species, and sociogenic (social, socio-cultural), inherent in man as a member of society (Sokolov A., 2002). In this typology, individual needs occupy an intermediate position or through. For our study, it was important not to distinguish between these needs within the classification, but to update all varieties when surveying respondents about communication on social networks.

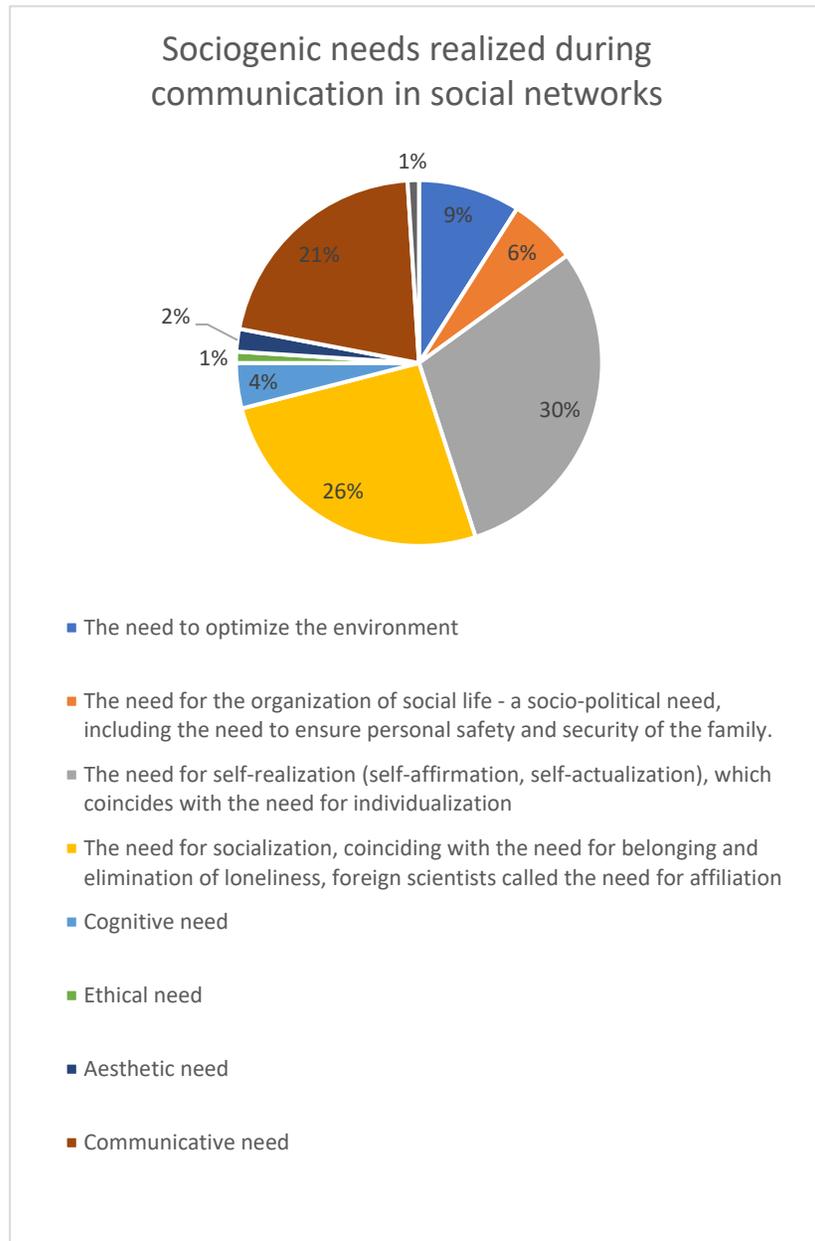


Figure 1. Sociogenic needs to be realized during communication in social networks

Figure 1 illustrates the distribution of answers to the question: What biogenic communication needs do you meet during written communication on social networks?

- material physiological: needs for food, warmth, movement, rest, sexual, etc.; the need for normal physical development by the genetic program (5%);
- intellectual need - the need for the exercise of mental abilities (7%);
- emotional need - the need to maintain a positive balance of the emotional sphere, i.e. the predominance of positive emotions over negative ones (33%);
- the need for freedom, free expression of the vital forces of the individual (12%);
- volitional need - the need to overcome obstacles and fear (6%);
- need for games (3%);
- mnemonic need - the need for memory (3%);
- contact need - the need to communicate with other people, "the need for another person"; this also includes the "linguistic need" - the need to speak and understand the language heard (29%);
- your answer option (2%).

What sociogenic needs, in your opinion, are realized during communication in social networks?

- the need to optimize the environment (9%);
- the need for the organization of social life - socio-political need, including the need to ensure personal safety and security of the family (6%);
- the need for self-realization (self-affirmation, self-actualization), which coincides with the need for individualization (27%);
- the need for socialization, which coincides with the need for belonging and elimination of loneliness, foreign scientists called the need for affiliation (26%);
- cognitive need (4%);
- ethical need (1%);
- aesthetic need (2%);
- communicative need (24%);
- your option (1%).

1. Messages - the function of sending personal messages; at the same time chats within messages can be created (from 2 to 30 people). Additional information can be attached to messages: files, map mark, emotional state, interested people, etc.;

2. News is a line of public messages or statuses of groups and individuals to whom the user subscribes. The comments can be written and media files or documents can be attached in the line.

3. Groups is a service that allows users to organize two types of communities - groups (any member can write in the line) and public pages (editing and publishing messages are available only to the administration, suitable for official groups of companies and stars). It is also possible to create "events" to organize a meeting of people in a certain place.

Today, the social network has become a media environment that is a tool for self-development, expression of one's "I" (Nastoyascha K., 2019. P. 24). American professor of social communication Joseph Voltaire states that due to selective self-presentation on social networks, people have the opportunity to make the best impression of themselves and maintain it for a long time. This is because communicators can write about their most attractive qualities, virtues, reasoning, and actions without worrying about inconsistencies with their appearance, inconsistent actions, or clarifications from third parties who know their shortcomings (J. Walther, C. Slovacek, L. Tidwell, 2001). The scientist defines selective self-presentation as a positive representation of oneself in the networks of unconditional discrepancies, which provides an opportunity for people to create the most pleasant impression (E. Griffin, 2012).

The given study allowed forming different groups of markers-self-presentations that have a completely positive connotation.

Here are the main ones:

1. Markers for social roles: *The best hosts of any event,*

2. Markers that describe private life *I am a happy mother! I am a wonderful hostess, I am happy, My family is the best, My children are my everything, He is my support* and so on.

3. Markers-identifiers of personal achievements: *Sport is always with me, Who is the champion? - I'm the champion! Hurray! I am a master*

4. Markers expressing positive emotions: *Sunday evening was full of sincere emotions! Life is like candy*

The following remarks should be added to this group. Sometimes the authors of messages on social networks focus not so much on the specifics or causes of a particular emotion of the communicant, as on their emotionality, emotional intelligence, and the ability to share them, realize and discuss them. This is how posts about the negative, at first glance, emotions appear, for example, *Sadness; Life - pain: I put on a corona (* picked up a coronavirus); Day - total disappointment...* Nevertheless, due to the aesthetics in the expression and design of the content, most of these messages have a rather positive impression.

Here is an example of a different interpretation of the public message. These are reactions to one of free opened post on the social network (Internet link, 2019 https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=1034521726941110&id=100011498768787).

Life often resembles an escalator.

We go up 🏠

- *we look into the upper perspective - and we have specific expectations, plans, goals*
- *we try to catch the eye of "our" people*
- *sometimes we standstill, and more often we run, accelerating the rhythm of life*
- *it is funny to go next to someone, you want to run away from someone by at least 5 steps* 🏠
- *the main thing - not to lose the purposes in a flicker of deceptive lights (words/situations/passengers)*

We go down - and

- *draw conclusions*
- *evaluate gain /losses*
- *plan a new rise*

That's how we live! 🏠

And what does your life look like, friends? 😊

The respondents have been asked: "What do you think about this written message?". Predicted (probable) answers, based on post comments, as follows.

Escalator 4%

Figurative, metaphorical perception of the world 39%

Personal experiences (sadness, emotional variability, reflections, frustration, devastation, etc.) 24%

Work 6%

Method / desire of original self-expression 5%

Personal brand promotion 11 %

Game (emotional, intellectual) with followers 7%

Another answer 4%

The answers offered by the addressees have been the most unexpected: *Promotes shopping* (author's note: accompanying photo on the escalator in the mall); *Strives to become popular*; *To increase the number of subscribers*; *Looking for friends by misfortune*; *Pretends to be a victim*; *Strives to please*; *Charismatic girl*, etc.

It can be seen that the specifics of the perception of written communication in social networks and the allocation of recipients of various subtextual information largely depends on the communicative needs of both the recipient and

recipients and optional, accompanying information (photos, hashtags, indications, etc.) from age and individual psychological characteristics of users of social networks.

Identification of the response to a particular message has active and passive manifestations, respectively, is realized through smiles offered directly next to the message or comments that recipients write and thus implement feedback from the recipient.

More spontaneous text creation in social networks is also manifested in commenting - it is a form of interaction when the user responds to the publication of the addressee. Comments may include:

- praise: *You're great!; You are a genius; I admire you; How creative you are !; Beauty;*
- Question: *What do you mean?; Will we never see facial expressions with a dog?; Why are you talking only about the financial dependence of women on men ?;*
- disagreement: *Complete fool!; I perceive this as humiliation; What about sexism?!*;
- tips: *I love reading you. Write more about books; During pregnancy, she did not use transport at all; I recommend; Try to wake up at 6 and go for a run, see how long and productive your day will be;*
- critics (hating): *Why this sarcasm?; You are a two-faced person; Here it is - the real face of a bad blogger.*

Commenting as a communicative reaction in various ways facilitates online conversation on the topic proposed by the author through hashtags, the tag of others, pictures and smiles, etc.. Smile as a message of the communicant, as a cue is not very informative, more conveys emotions, but not always unambiguous in terms of content. A large number of comments indicate that the proposed publication is relevant, interesting, and useful. Accordingly, due to its active discussion and dissemination, the event has a high frequency of reproduction in the line based on the social network algorithm, and the author strengthens his position. At the same time, commenting reveals the real attitude of readers to the depicted, textual expression gives a full-fledged establishment of two-way communication.

Pseudo-closeness online is an interesting phenomenon for the study of interpersonal communication. In virtual life, people communicate more, exchange information, and when it comes time to meet in reality, in a sense, meet again: on emotional, behavioral, discourse levels. The other extreme is that communicators avoid communication / do not find topics for conversation / feel obvious discomfort during communication / do not greet each other, because they have developed communication skills only in digital time-space.

For example, a blogger will write: *A woman's strength is weakness. I had never paid attention to this phrase before. I have always been a strong woman. Took on too much of everything. However, it is impossible! You need to be weak, small, tender, and beloved for your husbands, whom you want to take care of, protect and help. Some subscribers in response will formulate provisions that reflect the attribution of similarity: It's like about me! Very wisely written!; I agree with you!; I share your views!; Your words are very close to me, I learn everything lightness and weakness, and so on. The second part will take a neutral position without expressing one's own opinion.*

Every second respondent in our survey answered that he would like to become a well-known blogger with thousands of subscribers both for his pleasure and to make money on social networks. That's why hundreds of truthful and pseudo-experts offer expensive and free workshops on SMM-technologies, promise to make us experts in creating content that "will fall in love at first sight", "shake the account", "conquer hundreds / thousands of subscribers" etc. What do such courses teach? Mechanisms, technologies, methodologies for creating messages that "engage" the desired target audience, make you believe, subscribe to the page, disseminate information, and more. What is the basis of this training? To be liked at any cost.

"At any cost" often means:

- do not provide unnecessary information (read "hide" / "lie"),
- decorate, present in a favorable light (read "exaggerate" / "lie").

Our experience of studying in SMM-school, courses, seminars showed an interesting trend: many speakers are emphasized the need to be as sincere as possible in communication on social networks. The token "sincerity" is the dominant characteristic of the ideal content that lecturers teach to create.

But can people be taught to be sincere if they do not have this characteristic in their personal arsenal, or are inherently introverts, or cautious, timid in expressing their intentions and emotions? It seems that such training imposes artificially created, tested algorithms of self-presentation in social networks, interaction with the audience. For example, the owner of a successful, promoted page must learn and adhere to the matrix (template) of content: in a specific sequence, colors, sizes to upload photos to attract subscribers; on clearly defined days, hours to download posts, because they are better

perceived, gain more likes and comments; the ratio of posts in the feed and pages, enough of them per week / month for the account to be active...

On the other hand, subscriber users are also taught life hacks, such as commenting on or tagging a well-known blogger, to increase the number of their subscribers. Between these obligatory, fulfilled, imposed attributes of communication, the significance of intentions, real needs, which we strive to satisfy in communication, has been lost.

In this case, the correlation between the concepts of "being yourself", "being sincere", and "artificial communication algorithm", in our opinion, is a very weak or absent or fake one. Hence the understanding that selective self-presentation, and ultimately communication on social networks, often contains fraud or is a fake one. It creates the effect (especially from the point of view of a remote observer) of communication between fictional personalities. This is especially noticeable when you know a person in real life and can compare communication with him online and offline.

Another thing, when the recipients are configured, expect relative lie ready for it, because their aim other than to obtain reliable, accurate, reliable information. To the question "Are you sure that the messages written by your idols-bloggers are true?" 58% answered "no" and another 13% "not always". The purpose of the following studies is to determine the need for such information. Preliminary oral interviews show that it is mostly a desire to hear what is needed at the moment or to obtain motivational messages that are explicated in statements such as: *Be yourself; You deserve the best; You have uniqueness, develop it; You can!; Work on self-development; Look for a comfortable environment, etc.*; the desire to be involved in authoritative personalities, to imitate them.

Famous scientist Joseph Voltaire compares computer communication with a fun journey aimed at developing a relationship, which contains its joys, dangers, surprises, spontaneity (Griffin E.,2012. p.329).

Features of written communication in social media largely depend on the communicative needs of users.

According to the results of our study (sample - 840 people, probabilistic, spontaneous), people prefer social media for personal purposes (69%). It is primarily about the need to communicate, search for like-minded people, present personal life positions, track current beauty, fashion, music, video content, etc.; to obtain knowledge and information.

How complete or selective is the self-presentation of virtual communicators in this case? Can we always consider people as like-minded who are far from us and we have not faced with any life difficulties together? Some textual information leads us to think like this.

Some respondents (21%) want to receive or expand information about specific people (bloggers, politicians, artists, scientists, athletes, etc.). There are certain social stereotypes (especially among young people) about the success, exemplary life of famous people. The illusion of conditional involvement in them is created: through friendship on the social media is, contemplation of their interests, reactions to odious events, news from private life, etc., correspondence, mutual exchange of likes, comments ... What hides such communication?

Another group of respondents (10%) declares communication on social networks as a habit, in fact, devoid of a specific purpose, the desire to fill their lives with something, escaping from idleness and boredom.

4. Conclusions and Prospects for Further Studying

Thus, the need for communication and self-presentation, which drives people, encourages the use of social media is, written writing, which, in addition to obvious, readable information, contains hidden, additional meanings, or, conversely, incomplete, selective, or partial information. It is important not to be deceived. Alternatively, if we want to be deceived, we should be aware of it.

Therefore, communication on social networks can be a hobby, communication for the sake of communication, a way to make money, even an addiction. When the expectations of communicators are not fully realized due to veiled information, the substitution of concepts, there are doubts about the effectiveness of such communication, its objectivity / illusory. On the other hand, communication in social networks, despite all the advantages and disadvantages, ambiguities, hidden meanings, is often the only possible option for human interaction and relationship development. The realities of the pandemic in which humanity now finds itself have once again confirmed this view. The prospect of further research is the study of communicative approaches to the formation of a personal brand in social networks.

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