12. Selfie: One Man's Trash is Another Man's Treasure

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ABSTRACT

Selfie is commonly defined as a self-portrait posted online in the social networking sites such as Facebook. The number of selfie photos in Facebook has grown tremendously in the recent years. With the development of mobile technology to the like of smartphones and tablets, the process of taking selfie has been easier as compared to the past. The obsessive selfie-taking has been classified as a mental disorder and many psychologists have categorised this kind of disorder as 'selfitis'. Looking into the language and linguistics perspective, however, selfie brought about many insights in the form of communication in related to speech act theory. This study was carried out to examine the reasons on why social networkers post selfie and types of feedback retrieved from each selfie photo posted in the Facebook site. A total of 200 respondents were selected randomly from a local private institution of higher learning to take part in the survey. Data from the social networking was also retrieved to analyse types of feedback posted by the respondents in respond to selfie. Overall findings had shown the analysis of frequencies on selfie-types and illocutionary speech acts presented could vary chances for language users to 'speak up' in communication.

Keywords: Selfie, self-portrait, feedback, speech act, communication

Introduction

Social media is the future of communication, a countless array of Internet based tools and platforms that increase and enhance the sharing of information. This new form of media makes the transfer of text, photos, audio, video, and information in general increasingly fluid among Internet users. Hu and Wang (2009 in Hamzah et. al., 2013) denoted that the studies on the World Wide Web and the Internet have been dominated by the evolving of social collaborative technologies, such as Social Networking Site (SNS), blog Wiki and other Internet services. Social media has relevance not only for regular Internet users, but business as well. Social media offers a variety of avenues through which we can communicate with people. In fact, social media is known to have been used widely in the educational field.

Over the last 30 years, the nature of communication has undergone a substantial change and it is still changing. Communications are shorter and more frequent than when letters were the norm and response time has greatly diminished. It was quite recent that researchers had started to do research on how these social networking sites like Facebook Chat affects the student's behaviour and performance. Most arguments suggested that it only affects them negatively. Starovoit (2012) mentioned that since texting is much preferred and it deviates people from speaking since all the issues can be texted eventually affecting the speaking skill as well. Online communication tools also have the potential to increase our awareness of the movements of our professional or social contacts. Internet is the third place where people connect with friends, build a sense of togetherness. Increasingly, a computer with an Internet connection is the locus of a range of interactions in a variety of media and a gateway to an array of social spaces for work and play. They offer a way to keep in touch with existing communities that users belong to offline, such as social and professional groups.

The kinds of interaction that occur on these sites centre around shared interests and include not only verbal commentary, but commentary in the form of original or derivative works based on popular pieces. One of the reasons people prefer such form of media is because of the interactions they can have there, both social and professional. Whether it is as simple as checking back to see what other comments have been added to yours or as involved as attending a workshop or presentation in a virtual world, the nature of the attraction lies in the connections between people that these online spaces afford.Hamzahet. al. (2013 cited Wang et. al., 2010) had claimed the Internet has become a principal venue for social interactions. Hence, for those of which may not be able to express themselves using words will then turn to other alternatives which is discussed in this paper – Selfie.

This, however has the nation's dislike of selfies seemed to have reached yet another peak with a hoax article claiming that obsessive selfie-taking had been classified as a mental disorder.

This study was carried out to determine on how selfie pictures could be used to generate communication among learners. A selfie is a self-portrait, typically a photograph that is posted online. The most common places for selfies are blogs, social networking sites, such as Facebook, and photo-sharing websites, such as Instagram. The number of self-portrait photos online has grown rapidly as a function of the simultaneous growth of social networking and smartphone use. Another factor is the inclusion of self-facing cameras on many phones and tablets, which make it very easy for users to take their own photographs.

Social Network Sites as Educational Tool

There is now a vigorous debate on the educational purposes of social network sites as stated by Munoz and Towner (2009 in Hamzah et. al., 2013). Particularly in the era of Web 2.0, we see that these modes of discourses have been vastly expanded to the like of Twitter in feeding messages, Facebook in wall posting as well as other social network sites easily available online. Educational use of social media was thought to be an eligible subject for the study because of the following reasons: the number of social network users in intense communication was high; every user knew the setting and Facebook offered e-mail, forums and chats as a learning management system did. On the other hand, it was critical to reveal the reasons for daily intended use of the applications and rapid spreading since it could define possible factors to influence educational use.

There is a need for English language teachers in looking for new strategies and teaching techniques in making the classroom fun and interesting for their students. The problem that follows with every new teacher is to which method works best in their own classroom. Most certainly there are many strategies that they can apply but in the Malaysian Education System, teachers need to incorporate many teaching techniques together to produce an effective teaching and learning environment. With the use of pictures, to the like of selfie, have the ability to manipulate student's motivation in communication and somehow generate opportunities for students to express themselves. Through this, language teachers may be able to produce desired learning outcomes from the students using the right stimulus.With chat groups and the World Wide Web could easily be accessed, Sovinsky (2009) added that with a single click on the mouse and with the help of Internet, communication could likewise display these obvious speech act like characteristics. Chat groups are basically large-scale instant messaging platforms, where people participate in a conversation. It is easy to see why speech acts stand out in this mode of discourse as well: you type a message, click send, and participate in a conversation.

Through the understanding on how communication could take place between people, theory of speech act should firstly be understood. Moldovan et. al. (2011) stated that speech act is a term in linguistics and the philosophy of language referring to the way natural language performs actions in human-to-human language interactions, such as dialogues. Its contemporary use goes back to John L. Austin's theory of locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary acts.Students would then stand to benefit from this study. Should this study prove that this method is effective in an ESL classroom then the result will enable more students in performing better in speaking and writing English language in the future due to the increase in motivation towards the language. Subsequently, the percentage of Malaysian students possess better proficiency in English language would also increase should more teachers apply this method in their teaching.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate whether selfie pictures could be used as a tool or method in teaching productive skills to ESL students. More specifically, the study intended to identify the effectiveness of stimulus from the teacher's perspective. The aim of this study was to see the development of students' communicative competence by engaging them in meaningful interaction. Students' ability to speak and write in English accurately and fluently ensured their communicative competence in English. Two research objectives were identified as stated below:

- to identify Selfie Types most frequently posted in Facebook

- to determine the most frequent types of feedback based on Illocutionary Speech Acts

Review of Literature

Selfie in the Perspective of Technology

With the advancement of technology and the introduction of Web 2.0, taking selfie has become a common phenomenon. Regardless of negativity and disadvantage of selfie, the team of social researchers used selfies to conduct their projects. From a previous project "Phototrails.net" (Hochman, 2014: p.1; Sokol, 2014; Tifantale, 2014: p.13), they theorized and visualised the changing nature of contemporary visual experiences. Their analysis and examination were based on 2.3 million of photographs posted to social media, i.e. Instagram. Their findings offered the ways that how images were structured and organised with other metadata, i.e. location, time indication, to build specific socio-cultural process.

Dewey (2014) went on to add that more recent project was undertaken by the same team is "Selficity.net", an "ambitious selfie-mapping project". Here the selfie was treated as a form of self-expression of individual and social media was used as "tool to study human behaviour".Kindberg et al. (2004: p.1-3; 2005a: p.1545-1546; 2005b: p.42-43) had widely researched about how and why people used mobile phone images for social and personal purposes and affective and functional purposes. Their method was to interview the mobile phone users from May to July 2004 and collected and examined images they had captured or received. Their results had two different dimensions. Firstly, the image was taken for an "affective" reason, i.e. emotional, or a functional reason, i.e. to support the accomplishment of a specific task. Secondly, whether image was taken for "social reason", i.e. to be shared with others, or "individual reason" no sharing was intended.

Selfie in the Perspective of Psychology

People who used social network sites – Twitter and Facebook – the most often were also categorised as the most narcissistic, according to a new infographic that cites results from two studies. Costanza (2013) stated that when it comes to Facebook, 18-25-year-old users who frequently updated their statuses, posted pictures of themselves, and used quotes or mottos to glorify themselves drew a higher narcissism score in a study that used the Narcissism Personality Inventory and Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale. Contanza (2013) went on to say that the college undergraduates who posted most often on Twitter also scored higher in narcissism in a University of Michigan study. Since Twitter was used, in part, to broadcast a user's views and broaden his or her social circle, this led him or her to over-evaluate the importance of their opinions, according to the findings. Academic studies of the effects of social media, as stated by Vincent (2014), had reached similar conclusions that excessive photos sharing online can lead to "a decrease in intimacy" and damaged personal relationships.

A psychologist and Director of the Media Psychology Research Center, Dr. Pamela Rutledge stated in her article in 2013, agreed with the correlation Kalpidouet. al.(2011) found in their study. Rutledge (2013) focused on selfie usage in social media and viewed them "as a by-product of technology-enabled self-exploration." And while many viewed these "self-portraits" to be proof of generational narcissism and moral decline, she listed several reasons why selfies had nothing to do with narcissism. In her article she stated that selfies "facilitate self and identity exploration," "clearly identify a passion or interest," "can be more about the context than the self," "are not all about seeking external validation," and they "offer users the ability to create a life narrative through images".

According to an article in Teen Vogue titled "Selfie Control" by Walker (2013), girls are more likely to fall into the pattern of low self-esteem. Walker (2013: p.233) notedpsychologist, Dr. Jill Weber, Ph.D. that girls in particular are socialized toward seeing themselves as loveable and worthwhile only if others value them and "selfie culture is a way for this tendency to go into over drive," or multiple post that follow one after the other. Walker stressed that there could only be one explanation for total selfie overload and girls who repeatedly post selfies struggle with low self-esteem.

Selfie in the Perspective of Art

Self-portrait connects the body and concept of 'self'. While taking selfie, the attention is usually paid to body with question of "how am I look like" and "do I look good". Gai (2009: p.201-202 in Schwarz, 2010: p.166) agreed that selfie allows seeing body from new angles. Gai (2009) went on to say selfies provide a useful test bed for studying art production, perception, and naïve aesthetics. A recent paper used in-laboratory selfies by non-professional photographers to study posing preferences (Bruno &Bertamini, 2013), an issue usually addressed by observational studies of professional's works. As (pseudo-artistic) real-life behaviour, selfie-taking provides a way to test principles of art production in populations uncontaminated by academia, and in-lab selfie-taking represents an obvious way to standardize conditions and procedures. Bruno and Bertamini (2013) showed that their results in using selfies taken in controlled conditions provide interesting information on the status of these principles, as well as on the psychological process of taking images of oneself.

Research Methodology

This study was carried out to determine on how selfie pictures could be used to generate communication among students studying in a local private institution of higher learning. The researcher had conducteda survey study to determine type of communication feedback posted in respond to the type of selfie pictures over the social network site – Facebook – among 200 undergraduates. The researcher collected the data at a specified point, at the end of a semester through a set of questionnaire used to gather information of the subjects of the study. This enabled the researcher to "measure" attitudes and obtain subjects' perception on the reasons for posting a selfie and the type of feedback expected.Questionnaire was used as the main tool to collect data from the samples and according toTharumarajandNooreenNoordin (2011), this data gathering technique in survey research has the advantage of a high response rate and low cost, making it suitable for the researcher to analyze the students' feedback on how selfie pictures can be used as a tool or method in communication among ESL students. Tharumaraj and NooreenNoordin (2011) agreed with Aryet. al. (1990) had added that questionnaire is a very convenient way of getting data, as well as can guarantee confidentiality that elicit more truthful responses than would be obtained with a personal interview.

Findings

Descriptive Data

Data analysis was carried out almost immediately on completion of the survey in analysing students' responses and feedback on how frequent they used social media for communicating purposes. A total of 200 respondents had returned the survey questionnaire and data had been categorised into sections in response to the research questions stated earlier. From the total respondents as stated in Table 1, 50 (25%) are male and 150 (75%) are female students studying in a local private institution of higher learning.

Table 1
Gender of respondents

Male	Female
25%	75%

The identified samples used in this study were those studying in either diploma or degree programmes after graduating from their secondary school years. The age varied due to the time and years spent in the institution of higher learning. Table 2 shows the age of respondents for the study. The highest age group responded to the study fall into the age range of 21 to 22 with 26% and 34.5% respectively while the lowest was the age range of 26 to 27 which contributed only 1% respectively.

Table 2
Age groups

Age (y.o.)	Frequency (%)	Age (y.o.)	Frequency (%)
18	1.5	23	13
19	12	24	3.5
20	5.5	25	2
21	26	26	1
22	34.5	27	1

Data of a number of selections on the types of activities performed by the respondents through Facebook were collected and three major focus of activities related to the study were presented in this findings. Based on Table 3, a total of 86% (Very Frequently-13.5%; Somewhat Frequently-33%; Sometimes-39.5%) respondents agreed of having commented on statuses, wall posts and even on pictures of others. While a total of 74% (Very Frequently-9.5%; Somewhat Frequently-19.5%; Sometimes-45%) of respondents agreed in having posted photos in the social media. In return, 86% (Very Frequently-24%; Somewhat Frequently-32%; Sometimes-30%) respondents had frequently viewed photos of others on Facebook and it was significantly high to see the kind of activities done by social networkers on social media in an everyday basis.

Table 3
Frequency on types of activities performed on Facebook

Types of Activities	Very Frequently	Somewhat Frequently	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Commenting (on statuses, wall posts, pictures, etc.)	13.5%	33%	39.5%	12%	2%
Posting photos	9.5%	19.5%	45%	22%	4%
Viewing photos	24%	32%	30%	11%	3%

Table 4
Frequency on types of Selfie pictures posted in Facebook

Types of Selfie	Very Frequently	Somewhat Frequently	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Everyone Fit In	8%	24%	30%	16.5%	21.5%
Gym	0%	1.5%	9.5%	10%	79%
Bathroom	0%	1.5%	4.5%	10.5%	83.5%
Duck face	1%	2.5%	7.5%	15%	74%
Off To Work/Class	5%	17%	28%	22%	28%
Outdoor Activities	17.5%	24.5%	27.5%	14.5%	16%
Under The Blanket	0%	3.5%	7%	8%	81.5%

Table 4 showed the types of Selfie pictures frequently posted by respondents in their social network. Eighteen most common types of Selfie were inserted into the questionnaire in order to determine the respondents' feedback on the first research objective. Seven out of the eighteen types of Selfie were depicted from the survey as they showed a significant difference in responses.Selfie on 'Outdoor Activities' had been the most frequently posted by the respondents with a percentage of 69.5% (Very Frequently-17.5%; Somewhat Frequently-24.5%; Sometimes-27.5%) followed by Selfie on 'Everyone Fit In' and 'Off To Work/Class' with 62% (Very Frequently-8%; Somewhat Frequently-24%; Sometimes-30%) and 50% (Very Frequently-5%; Somewhat Frequently-17%; Sometimes-28%) respectively. In contrary, Selfie on 'Bathroom' and 'Under the Blanket' had the least popularity among the respondents with 94% (Rarely-10.5%; Never-83.5%) and 89.5% (Rarely-8%; Never-81.5%) respectively being posted into Facebook. Selfie on 'Gym' and 'Duck Face' had

also scored relatively low in frequency to be posted into the social media. Both types of Selfies stated had only 11% of popularity respectively.

Feedback Types

The comments found in the social network sites provided an opportunity for researcher in looking into what Austin (1962) called Speech Act. Speech act theory attempts to explain how speakers use language to accomplish intended actions and how hearers infer intended meaning form what is said. Although speech act studies are now considered a sub-discipline of cross-cultural pragmatics, they actually take their origin in the philosophy of language. Cohen (1996 based on Austin, 1962 & Searle, 1969 cited inPoupari&Bagheri, 2013) identified five categories of speech acts based on the functions assigned to them.

Table 5
Cohen (1996) Categories of Speech Acts

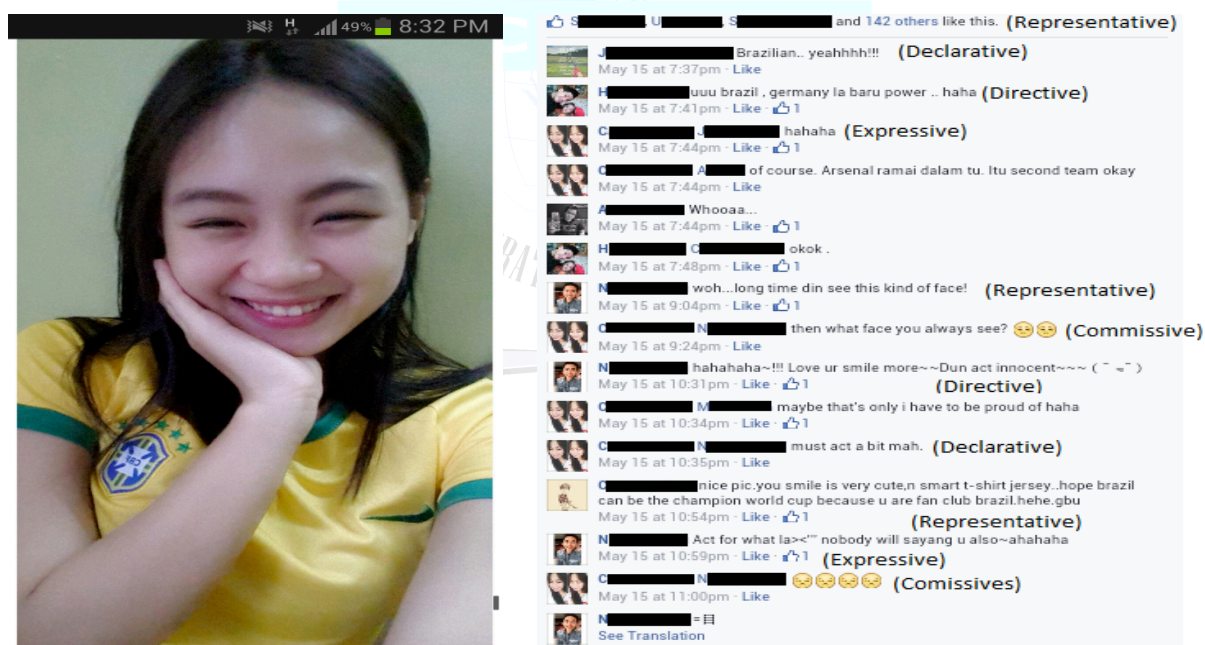| Representatives	Directives	Expressives	Comissives	Declaratives
assertions	suggestions	apologies	promises	decrees
claims	requests	complaint	threats	declarations
reports	commands	thanks	offers	

Fig 1
Sample of Selfie and Interactive Comments

Agreeing to Gai (2009), Figure 1 showed on how social networkers looked into different angles of "Self". Social networkers, as shown in Figure 1, had applied theory of Speech Act in respond to the Selfie posted and the sample data had been coded based on Table 5. In the form of Representative, a total of 145 LIKEs were collected from the selfie had proved that followers had viewed and were interested with the picture although comments were not put into words. Besides, N's claim (who..long time din see this kind of face!) was categorised in Representative category as well as a compliment by Ch on "nice pic…". In the form of Directive, H (uuu brazil, germany la baru power..huhu [You Brazil? Germany is more powerful. Huhu]) had provided a suggestion to C (owner) to cheer for Germany instead of Brazil in the World Cup based on the jersey she was wearing.

Besides, N's comment was also being categorised into Directive when N directed C, "Dun act innocent". In returned, C's comments as in Figure 1, provided some categories of Expressive – "hahaha"; Comissive – "then what face you always act?"; and Declarative – "must act a bit mah". As seen in the figure, Comissive responses could also be in the form of emoticon.

Conclusion

In today's globalized society, the ability to express oneself in a foreign or second language is a vital skill. For a speaker to be able to be considered a bilingual speaker, he or she must have the capability to talk about any subject in any situation from the dinner table to a speech. Superior level of speaking means the learner is approaching such a capacity. To reach the superior level of speaking ability, one must be able to speak about abstract topics and speak appropriately in a wide variety of settings with very few errors. However, even after studying another language for many years, learners often still never achieve this level of proficiency and have great difficulty in expressing themselves in that language to a native speaker. One good reason for the above was due to English language is placed second after the Malay Language in Malaysia and the students do not see the necessity to interact in English. Hence, they use the Malay Language to interact when people meet one another or else the students use their own mother tongue such as Mandarin, Hokkien, Tamil, etc. in their daily interaction.

Developing students' ability in productive skills – writing and speaking – are of the major problems of teachers nowadays. The time allocated for English language practice of five periods per week is certainly insufficient. Each period comprises forty minutes lesson which requires teachers to expose students to language use and literature component in English. The limited duration of time is one of the major concerns in this study. The students will only use English when they are asked to and only when the opportunity arises during classroom lessons. However, this target language will be ignored completely once they are at home or outside the school compound. Besides this constraint, problems in students' communicative ability might be caused by the lack of linguistic competency, psychological competency, cognitive competency and mother tongue interference. However, other factors that lead to the inability to speak and write in English could not be ruled out. Therefore, students who are shying away from using English language to build a filter and this will generally affect their motivation to learn.

The result is an enormous amount of information that can be easily shared, searched, promoted, disputed, and created. The means of communication change together with improving technology. Today, the number of social networksites, where communication is established, is rapidly increasing. As a part of daily life, mostly teenagers and adults use social networksites to take advantage of opening their world to friends and introduce themselves to others. At the same time, such users share their photos and videos. Hence, educators should then use this opportunity to use this medium in teaching English as a second language. Using selfie pictures could help students to generate ideas for communication and this, in returns, helps teachers to understand the reasons on why pictures were shared in the social network.

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