

Undergraduate Association of Britain: Abstract to Present

How do *likes* and *reactions* as interactional features on Facebook status updates posted in 2016 extend narrative evaluation?

Samantha Ford, University of Birmingham

Research has investigated Facebook *likes*, their role in evaluating online content, and expanding evaluative practices in a computer-mediated environment (Page, Harper & Frobenius, 2013; West & Trester, 2013; West, 2015). However, newly-released *reactions* on Facebook have not yet received much scholarly attention (cf. Tian et al., 2017). The current study takes an emic approach to inform bottom-up analysis of *likes* and *reactions* used to respond to Facebook status updates posted in 2016, in order to observe the degree of evaluation extension occurring in this environment. Three stages of data have been collected: a self-report survey, a sub-sample of status updates, and a contextual questionnaire for status update authors. The results suggest that *likes* and *reactions* have afforded an increase in and an extension to evaluative practices on Facebook when compared with past studies. Despite *reactions* being intended by Facebook to clarify evaluations in a continuum of emotion, *likes* are still used significantly more than *reactions* in 2016. It is argued that this could be due to numerous factors: *likes*' familiarity and integration in Facebook-user habits and competency compared to *reactions*; multiple meanings already attributed to *likes* before *reactions* were released; and the ease of practical and functional affordances of using *likes* as a "minimal effort response" over *reactions* (West & Trester, 2013: 145). The small selection of status updates analysed in the study limits the accuracy of the conclusions reached. A further longitudinal study involving a larger status sample would increase the representative value of the current study's propositions, and would trace the uses and attitudes concerning *likes* and *reactions* as evaluative practices on Facebook over time.

References

- Page, R.; Harper, R.; Forbenius, M. (2013) From small stories to networked narrative: The evolution of personal narratives in Facebook status updates. *Narrative Inquiry*. Vol. 23 (1), pp. 192-213.
- Tian, Y.; Galery, T.; Dulcinati, G.; Molimpakis, E.; & Sun, C. (2017) Facebook Sentiment: Reactions and Emojis. *Proceedings of the Fifth International Workshop on Natural Language Processing for Social Media*. Valencia, Spain, 3rd-7th April 2017. Stroudsburg, USA: Association for Computational Linguistics.
- West, L. (2015) *Responding (or not) on Facebook: A Sociolinguistic Study of Liking, Commenting, and other Reactions to Posts*. A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Faculty of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences of Georgetown University for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Linguistics. Washington: Georgetown University.
- West, L. & Trester, A. (2013) Facework on Facebook: Conversations on Social Media. In: Tannen, D. & Trester, A. (eds.) *Discourse 2.0: Language and New Media*. Washington: Georgetown University Press.