

CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF LANGUAGE ON FACEBOOK USED IN BIRTHDAY WISHES BY GENERATION Z

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Abstract

The present study analyzes the language used in birthday wishes and how social power is legitimized by Generation Z. It examines the relationship between the language used in birthday wishes messages, events and practices, as well as social and cultural structure and relations to comprehend how power relations influence the ideological formation of the texts. The status notification of 10 Facebook friends belonging to Generation Z is chosen in the constant experimental sampling method. The analysis was conducted following Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis with the critical linguistic approach. The study shows that the language of birthday wishes on facebook is dominated by the function of the language as a medium of self-expression and interaction. The use of informal language influences language proficiency, language variation of gender, and socio-culture practices are a common form of text production.

Key words: *Critical Discourse Analysis, Facebook, Generation Z, Social practice, social media.*

Background of the study

Facebook's existence as a social media platform linking people who do not meet face to face in the actual world is undeniable. Facebook has become a new communication trend in which individuals can use their numerous gadgets and features to fulfill their desires for connection and information exchange. Facebook differs from other social media platforms in terms of features (Tosun, 2012; Obaidullah & Rahman, 2018). People express themselves by writing birthday messages on facebook. Users openly communicate their thoughts and emotions with their friends, colleagues and acquaintances through these written communications. Language use on these social networking sites can be considered as a trustworthy psychologically and socially rich self-report of individual differences.

With the advances in science and technology, the majority of teenagers today have access to social networking sites where they may share their thoughts, interests, and knowledge. (Parks, 2010). Facebook has evolved into a new communication trend in which

people can use gadgets and features to fulfill their demands for connection and sharing information. When compared to other social media platforms like Twitter, Yahoo, Google, YouTube, and Windows Live, Facebook is the most popular online social media platform, as evidenced by the number of users and the free society as a form of participation and user demands (Alfina et al., 2018). Because of the internet networked system, communication has shifted significantly from text-based to computer-mediated communication (extracted from Cvjeticovic, 2010; Unuabonah, 2010; Him, 2012; Al-Khawaldeh & et al., 2016). Gudes et al. (2016) mentioned that although language is the most significant part of culture, it is also through it that norms and values are formed. In this scenario, the act of changing one's Facebook status and commenting on one's Facebook status is a depiction of socio-cultural habits.

Nowadays, social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter have grown to be the world's largest social networking sites (Ahad and Lim, 2014). The widespread use of instant messaging and wishes on

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the Facebook social networking site has influenced the development of unique linguistic characteristics among the new generation known as Generation Z, which is the form of computer-mediated social media discourse (Al-Khawaldeh, 2019). Since Mark Zuckerberg founded Facebook on February 4, 2004, with features such as an internet-based messaging tool, millions of individuals across the world have used it to send messages, share wishes, images, and make phone calls (Acton and Koum, 2014; Ahad and Lim, 2014). By 2009, it had become the world's most used social networking service (Gorden, 2013). People express their wishes in Facebook notification status. Individuals freely express their wishes, opinions, and emotions with their friends, coworkers, and family members. Individual differences are shown in the opinion expressed in such media as psychologically and socially rich (Adali and Golbeck, 2014; Park, et al, 2015). This is helpful to understand the link between language, social and political issues (Schwartz et al, 2013). Castells (2007) instated such information of people in social media is, "self-generated in content, self-directed in emission and self-selected in reception" (p. 248). It allows Facebook users to send text messages to other Facebook users about their everyday activities. The Facebook posts, comments or status updates can be a significant resource for scholars interested in studying the characteristics of online discourse and online communication patterns.

The members of Generation Z have grown up with global connectivity. Hence, technology plays the most dominant role in their lives with internet connectivity. They use social media and instant messages for accessing resources. Such technology has changed the way of communication in recent years (Strauss & Howe, 1991). The purpose of this essay is to describe how Generation Z uses Facebook to write text. It is based on the premise that language behavior on Facebook does not always match the speaker's real-life identity. As a result, a critical part of this article is an examination of language production and meaning reproduction. Furthermore, this article focuses not only on language analysis but also on social process analysis.

Review of the Literature

The Generation Z

Gen-Z, also known as the iGeneration, Gen Wii, Net-Gen, Digital natives, Plurals, or Zoomers, is a new generation of people who have grown up with digital technology and have easy access to the internet and social media (Strauss & Howe, 1991). This generation people think and process information differently than previous generations (Polakova & Klimova, 2019). Experts go on to argue that the way these young people use information and communication separates them from exception of earlier generations. Through social media, language is used to discuss social issues and the function of discourse in the construction and reproduction of power or dominance (Dijk, 2001). Social media written conversation analysis has the advantage of working with large samples of genuine conversations. It has been shown that conversation is systematically structured, and that participants' orientation to these structures may be seen in the ways they construct their own conversational turns and react to others'. These are social structures, and one of the main goals is to illustrate that social structures are existent and formed in everyday life, rather than being a trait of abstract society macrostructures.

The language used in social media via Facebook becomes an issue of debate in recent research because it not only shows the individual behavior but also the collective behavior (Triana et al. 2020). Guedes, et al. (2016) stated that language is the main aspect of culture on one side, and on the other side, the norms and values cannot be separated from language. In this context, the language used in birthday wishes by generation Z is the manifestation of socio-cultural practices (Triana, et. al., 2020). So, there are at least three reasons for the need for language studies on Facebook. Firstly, Facebook's language used by Generation Z is frequently a concern because it reflects not only individual but also social behavior. Secondly, language is easily accessible and transmitted on Facebook and thirdly the most popular social media platform is Facebook.

Critical Discourse Analysis

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is a distinctive method of studying written texts and spoken utterances that combines critical linguistics, critical semiotics, and socio-politically conscious and opposing approaches to language, discourse, and communication (Foucault, 1987). CDA is problem and issue-oriented, which allows it to adequately study significant social problems of inequality. It not only defines a field, but also expresses a critical attitude, perspective, or posture while examining written text or spoken utterances. It is a multidisciplinary approach to social issues that focuses on the relationship between discourse and society. CDA has traditionally encompassed a wide range of critical studies in the humanities and social sciences. The study of discourse involves all levels of discourse, especially grammar, rhetoric, speech acts, style, and strategies. CDA also examines power dynamics, dominance, inequality, enacted domination, and the ideologies that underpin them (McGahie et al., 2003). Not only that, but it also aims to establish dominated groups' unity by developing counter-power and counter-ideologies through challenge and resistance tactics. As one of the few natural principles of society that has been proven throughout history, counter-power occurs in various forms and with varying degrees of intensity. Wherever there is domination, there is resistance to domination, whether it is political, cultural, economic, psychological, or otherwise. Discourse encompasses more than just linguistic action; it also encompasses meaning, interpretation, and comprehension. Others' minds can be influenced through public discourse. So, the discussion will focus on Facebook discourse, however Facebook is viewed as a platform for people to express themselves or communicate in a confined context (Stieglitz & Dang-Xuan, 2013).

Critical discourse studies observe "language as social practice" which means the use of the language according to the context is crucial (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997, p. 5). In the English language speaking world discourse is used in both written and spoken texts (Gee, 2004; Schiffrin 1994, p. 7). It is used in 'any forms of speech that may be used to manipulate the impression given to the audience' (Roffee, 2016, p.

134). Language behavior on Facebook does not always match the speaker's real-world identity. As a result, a critical component of this study is an examination of language production and meaning reproduction. Furthermore, this article examines not only language but also social processes.

CDA is concerned with the current societal trends. It is an 'analysis of the dialectical relationships between semiotics (including language) and other elements of social practices' (Fairclough, 1992, p. 133). Such a semiotic social order is known as discourse. Discourses have various representations of social life such as everyday conversation, meeting of various types of organization, political and other forms of interviews.

Fairclough also discusses the three intertwined issues of analytical discourse: dominance, diversity, and resistance. Dominance refers to identifying dominant factors in genres, discourse, and style; diversity refers to the spectrum of variety, and resistance refers to the colonization of new domains. This research focuses on a social issue that has a semiotic component. To discover the sense of social context, the researcher looks outside the text and consults academic and non-academic sources. In this context, Fairclough (1992) believes that a broad perspective on social order leads to a feeling of important contemporary social challenges (p. 124). This study focuses on 'representation,' as Fairclough (1995) and Van Dijk (2005) mentioned that in discourse analysis, representation refers to the language employed in a text or conversation to assign meaning to groups and their social activities, events, and social and ecological conditions and objects.

To transmit knowledge and ideas, language plays a crucial role (Maynard and Perakyla, 2006; Krauss & Chiu, 2007). Pennebaker and Graybeal (2001) argue that the linguistic structure people use can be used to characterize their psychological, cognitive, and social physiognomies. This language has a specific meaning, such as factual, content, emotional, or utilitarian.

Critical discourse analysis is employed in this study to analyze the relationships between the language

used in birthday wishes, as well as to examine how Generation Z legitimizes social authority. Therefore, it examines the relationships of language used in birthday wishes texts, events, and practices as well as border social, cultural structure, and relations to understand how these texts, events, and practices are ideologically formed by relations of power.

Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis

Critical discourse analysis examines how language is used to exercise power. According to Fairclough (1995), communicative abduction occurs in all languages. Van Dijk (2014) mentioned that text, discursive practice, and social practice are all part of his three-dimensional critical discourse analysis approach. Text analysis is a word-by-word examination of written text, visuals, speech, or a mixture of these three modes of communication. Text production and text building are both discursive processes. At the normative level, the social practice is concerned with the societal language standard, which is often referred to as critical language analysis.

Discourse is a collection of words or signs in which we express our attitudes, thoughts, and beliefs. Language can be structured according to various domains as social or political discourse. The words or sentences that we use are crucial because they can change our views. Discourse is more than just a sentence as a unit of language use. Discourse can be viewed not just as a text, but also as an expression of utterance that is inextricably linked to the situation in which it is used. This viewpoint is consistent with Fairclough's (1995) assertion that language is a socially and historically constructed form of action with a dialectical link to social structure. Discourse is defined as speech behavior that is closely related to social practice in this approach, hence discourse analysis must take into account both textual traditions and society as a whole. As a result, studying speech behavior alone is insufficient to investigate the intrinsic features of language. As a result, this study requires the examination of various aspects of speech behavior. In this circumstance, critical discourse analysis becomes necessary as a basis for the study behavior as well.

The framework of this study consists of both textual and critical discourse analysis. Van Dijk (2001), assumes that textual analysis can be done in both micro or lexical and morpho-syntactic skills and macro (pragmatic and discourse level processing) linguistic aspects concerning linguistic choices and global meaning respectively. Analyzing both micro and macro aspects of language used in birthday wishes notifications of generation Z can form the base to analyze the socio-cultural factors and power relations. The analysis of birthday wishes is grounded in Fairclough's convention in critical discourse analysis that "texts are open to diverse interpretations" (Fairclough, *ibid*).

Discourse is regarded as a medium for socio-cultural processes and structures, including linguistic features and communication media (Bloor & Bloor, 2013). Thus, language analysis is used to analyze both the characteristics of language and the social behaviors (Kärreman & Alvesson, 2011). Discourse practice is a aspect of the language production and meaning reproduction process. It is also known as text production, and it is the process of expressing a writer's thoughts and feelings using a language code. The interpretation process, also known as text consumption, is the reproduction of meaning, or how the reader understands the writer's text as a speaking partner. That's why this study analyzes the conventional or morpho-syntactic patterns of language used by Facebook users in birthday wishes which could contribute to the field of language and computer-mediated social media discourse. It will be helpful to know the effects of language of social networks used by generation Z.

Statement of Problem

Individuals can use Facebook's notification status to build a virtual community where they can discuss a range of topics. A virtual community, according to Hogan (2010) and Komito (2011), is a network of persons who live inside a social network of humans through the use of particular media and is devoid of geographical or political boundaries. It means that communities formed using Facebook's social networking features are classed as virtual communities

since they are formed to suit the needs of a group of people who share a common goal of communicating via the internet. Virtual communities are created on Facebook to serve as discussion platforms and to demonstrate support for various cultures.

In terms of discourse analysis level, the prior studies have largely focused on formal discourse analysis. The written text of Facebook social media users' linguistic activities are elements of social activities. Language activities are inextricably linked to the speakers' socio-cultural values. Thus, the study of linguistic activity is not confined to linguistic qualities (phonology, morphology, syntax, and semantics, as well as the social aspects that support them), but also extends to social phenomena. Nowadays, it has been noticed that most of the people of the new generation are using Facebook social sites to express their ideas and it is an easy means of social media to express their wishes, thoughts, and beliefs. The new generation of people uses a special form of language for text messaging (Salem, 2013). A review of the prior literature reveals a dearth of studies on sociolinguistic features of Facebook birthday notification, as well as the impact of gender in the language used on online social networks. To the best of researcher's knowledge, no research has been done on assessing Facebook birthday status semantic notification and gender's impact on them. As a result, this study was done to fill a research gap by analyzing the expressions used in Facebook status notification.

Effective exclusionary reading and writing are of crucial relevance in the present era, because of the prevalence and exposure to information. The complexities and intricacies of speech generation and understanding have drawn the attention of students and even some academics. As a result, persons or institutions possessing this information can freely manipulate and enslave others (Foucault, 1975); they can utilize language as a strong tool to realize people's wishes and desires. Furthermore, Van Dijk (2000) states that the semantic component of any language is extensively and efficiently exploited for these reasons.

Therefore, social media has greatly influenced the use of language, social-cultural textile of our society. However, these computer-mediated social media language also play a positive role in socializing and sharing information (Sweeny, 2011). But some researchers claim that such use of language has an influence on language proficiency especially in spelling and grammar skills (Salem, 2013).

The computer-mediated social media written language is of great influence to be studied since it captures the communication shared among friends and acquaintances. This communication discloses personal information that can be accessed for research purposes (Naaman, Bose, and Lai, 2010). Furthermore, Back et al. (2010) believe that social media language shows peoples' true selves rather than idealized ones. So, the language used in social media can be used as an affecting factor of peoples' changes of life on their language. Besides, they may be considered huge sources of personal, social, and political data. Compared to the data of Facebook sites, this study analyzed critical discourse analysis of the language used in birthday wishes by generation Z, as an explanatory or analytical framework. This study also analyzes how genders represent themselves in computer-mediated social media language as Herring and Kapidzic (2015) believe the gender differences in teens in the use of language.

Research Questions

- A) What are the characteristics of the birthday wishes language employed in social media semantic notifications (e.g., Facebook)?
- B) How does Facebook's semantic notification affect socio-cultural values?
- C) What are the gender differences in Facebook birthday wish semantic notifications?

Research Methodology

Research Design

The present study applied a qualitative approach in which data were analyzed by using the concept of

Fairclough's critical discourse analysis. The data of this study was the language of generation Z used in their possessives' birthday wishes in Facebook social media collected from Facebook friends and relatives who were only the age of 15 to 20. The data were analyzed using an interpretative phenomenological approach that focused on the participants' lived experiences of the Facebook notification, particularly cognition and language, as described by Eatough and Smith (2008). The interpretive phenomenological method sought to learn more about how people make sense of their personal and societal environments.

Participants and sample of the study

The participants were Facebook social media users who actively updated birthday wishes. Among 4,355 friends of Facebook account, the written status notifications of birthday wishes (July and August 2020) of Facebook friend list, 10 Facebook friends belonging to generation Z (5 male and 5 female), were chosen in the constant experimental sampling method. The collected data were compiled and analyzed based on critical discourse analysis to form a predictive model of their notifications. Based on the language used by them, this study investigated the traces of social values in these semantic notifications and analyze their connotations and function of discourse.

Data Collection Procedure

The data were collected from Facebook social media that were updated by friends and relatives of generation Z. Since all the participants are unlikely to use the English language in birthday wishes, the collected data were transcribed in the English language.

This qualitative study extracted the discourses from social media sites via Facebook. Only 10 participants of generation Z birthday wishes status notifications were collected. They were analyzed linguistically and thematically. The texts used in birthday wishes were signs, words, letters phrases, sentences, or short texts.

These notifications were morpho-syntactically and thematically analyzed. The use of words, signs, phrases, sentences, emoticons, punctuation, non-conventional spelling and acronyms were classified according to the research questions of this study. After examining the micro and macro features of birthday wishes, the linguistic features of socio-cultural values and differences of gender language were analyzed.

Findings and Discussion

The semantic notifications of birthday wishes

The analysis of Facebook birthday wishes data reveals valuable data about the study of the characteristics of language used in social media semantic notifications. It was found that Facebook users of generation Z wish birthday wish to generate detailed personal profile reflections and representations for others in social media. The expressions were the way of communication expressing personal beliefs to a certain group of their Facebook community. Such written discourses examine what is going on in the mind of the person about their life and community.

The analysis of the language used in birthday wishes was analyzed in terms of language structure. The majority of the birthday wishes notifications were written in either English, Devanagari (Nepali), or both. This shows the dominant role of the second language in Nepali generation Z Facebook users. Even though most of the respondents were Nepali users in written and spoken language, they manage the code switch properly between Nepali and English. The language used in birthday wishes can be characterized having a single letter or number (2, U), exclamation expressions with abbreviations (HBD!!! HBD!!! HBD!!!), multi punctuations, question marks (*Happy Birthday Yara...Sadhai happy rahanu???* Means Happy birthday dear, be always happy). The notifications were in the form of verbal notifications with a lot of non-verbal and informal expressions (using lots of emotional pictures; *Happy birthday dear bestu 🇳🇵❤️sadhai hasi khusi rahanu be strong*

nd healthy dear sadhai dherai maya Aaja ghumna jana napaya pani party chai chainxa hoiiii Once again happy birthday dear ###[tons](#) of love jaan(Happy birthday dear. Always be blessed and happy. Be strong and healthy. Lots of love. If it is possible to go out, you shall provide a party) and the informal expressions (*Happy birthday pglni kt, Kukurni, chorni, khattani* (means happy birthday lunatic girl, you bitch! Thief! Tramp!))*Any away you are my friend till the last day of our lives, I love you.* Sweeny (2011) focused that these instant messages play a significant role to exchange information, socializing, and structuring communication. Liu (2008) viewed it as 'taste performance' which distinguishes social identity. The notifications of birthday wishes are essential features of social media as they update with the diversity of languages. These notification discourses help to define people and their culture as well as a set of values, thoughts, and beliefs. Burr (2003) claimed that discourse analysis is essential to take account of language and interaction in constructing social values and norms.

The emoticon signs were used positively or negatively according to the relation. For the relatives, formal poetic language was used whereas informal language was used to their close friends. Such informal languages were exhibited certain slang language (*Happy birthday to U Dari* (happy birthday to you beard man), the informal language with a particular expressions like *HBD* (Happy birthday), *GBU* (God bless you), use of capital letters wherever they wish (*HaPPyBirthDay 2 U*); the repeated letters (*Haaaaaaaapy birthddddddday*) can be seen stressing the word. The use of the informal language of the new generation can be viewed as a form of unique identity, expressing the sense of joy, happiness, teasing, using ironic language, and solidarity among the Facebook users. They also used weird spelling, letters, and number homophones to wish their friends (*Hippy Borthday*, instead of happy born day *Happy birthday 2 U, Grt Luv 4 U* instead of Great love for you). These features reveal that the new generation of people uses language what they exactly pronounce them. In this way, the language of generation Z is fragmented, shortened, simplified, and abbreviated according to the context of their wishes.

Salem (2013) supported that the text and instant messaging consist of verb omission, non-standard abbreviation, and reduced ending which are ungrammatical.

In this pandemic situation of COVID-19, the expressions of birthday wishes were emotional. The majority of the respondents express their wishes to be safe in this critical situation (*Happy birthday dear, Stay safe and enjoy your day. Much Love*). The text is produced as an expression of thoughts, feelings, and experiences, with reference to the situation of pandemic situation. The process of Generation Z producing their text is found more frequently in their accounts and wish their friend to stay safe.

Socio-cultural value of semantic notifications

The language of birthday wishes of generation Z is revealed to a particular person either a friend or relative. However, it provides data to reflect the life values, rituals, and feelings of individuals of a particular culture. Moreover, the discourses used by them can be taken as a representation of the target group of people. The emotional attitude (*Malie Kahile nabirses*, means never forget me) shows the pious belief of the speaker. These linguistic expressions of social media convey information about human values, style of thinking, and behavior (Bandura, 2001). The use of language has many connotations reflecting language that is written by the traditions and culture of generation Z (*Wish you a prosperous n blisfull birthday, may almighty shower you with his blessing....love u, and miss u*). Fairclough (1993) stated that discourse brings odd relationships among different social and ethnic groups. So, language is not only used for the description of a particular subject but for doing things as well. The choice of lexical syntactic features of language shows the broad socio-cultural background (*Happy birthday dear bestu. Sadhai hasi khusi rahanu. Be strong* means happy birthday dear close friend, be happy forever). Fairclough (1995) mentioned that this function of language demonstrates language's fundamental role as a part of human needs, because people desire to

tell stories, provide information, and receive information.

The analysis of data provides general socio-cultural aspects of generation Z. The language of generation Z influenced and conveyed the concept of domination, power, and authority. Van Dijk (1998) pointed out that:

If we want to know what ideologies look like, how they work, and how they are created, changed, and reproduced, we need to look closely at their discursive manifestation (p. 312).

It is because the people of the new generation write wish notifications influenced by their way of thinking.

Gender differences in semantic notifications

The collected data were analyzed qualitatively concerning the language of gender. It could be argued that the male and female Facebook users of the new generation used the same formulae to express their birthday wishes. The wishes are primarily concerned with the feelings or modes of expression of the status writer. This style of conversation exemplifies the use of text to tell a story in a pleasant way. The data below shows how this function is used in status notification.

La aayotero birthday nii!!!

Happy birthday to u guyee.

May all your dreams come true, wish you peace.

Love and happiness in your life.

Aajalai dherai maya paies vayo, xittai biha garera tero bihema nachnu paroni yarr!!! (Your birthday also came, happy birthday to you guy, may all your dreams come true, wish you peace, love, and happiness in your life, you got this much love today, marry soon and we will dance on your marriage ceremony)

In the structural construction of language, both were characterized as the same in the use of abbreviations, spelling, punctuation, acronyms, and slang. There were similarities in structural construction and means of expression, however, the notifications theme of them were different. To express birthday wishes female seems to use a more dominant voice than male. The following data shows this method of production.

Male: Happy birthday Dear Bastu, rock your day!!!

Female: Happy Birthday Ketu, Party chai daro Chahin6 hai. (Happy birthday Girl, You have to organize a best party)

The word 'Dear Bastu', as an expression that contains a teasing connotation, is the writer's choice to reflect his joking strategy. In contemporary context, the word means 'nearer person'. Besides, the word 'Ketu' means a nickname for girl. It can be understood how the notification plays an emotive function that the male and female use differently. The Male seems to highlight joking, ironing, teasing status. Females focus on the romantic tendency in their interactions.

In this way, the notification status of birthday wishes, socio-cultural practices, and language variations of gender is the focus of this study which were reflected through the use of language in the birthday wishes notification status of the new generation. These notifications are analyzed in the framework of the critical discourse analysis of Fairclough.

Conclusion

The present study concludes that the language of Facebook birthday wishes is dominated by the function of language as a medium of self-expression and interaction. The types of discourses produced by generation Z are correlated to create a valid measure of its user's personality and status. The research found that the use of informal language has an atrocious influence on their language proficiency both in Nepali and English in respect of spelling. It brought a new argument that the use of shortcut abbreviated and informal language of new generation might fossilize for a coming generation so that they cannot easily be fixed through practice. It is expected that using such kind of language in online social media might lead to harmful effectson real language learning. This also highlighted the use of both Nepali and English (mixed language) to express birthday wishes. This may impact what Salem (2013) found in his research that linguistics should find a standard way

of language to use these erroneous shortcuts that will be helpful for non-native speakers.

The participants of this study are only the Facebook users of the new generation aged between 15 to 20 who update their relatives and friends' birthday wishes frequently. Thus, the linguistic and socio-

cultural variation of speech behavior found was limited. Considering the limitations of the study, further studies can be conducted by selecting a greater number of participants and analyzing social, cultural, religious, political, and other issues of the language of the Facebook community.

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