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*Multimodal Communication Apparatus and its Role in Facilitating the Process of Mutual Intelligibility Via Facebook Platform: The Case of Master II Language and Communication Students at MMUTO*

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*Dedications*

*To:*

    *My dear parents whose unconditional love*

   *Strengthens my will,*

  *My brothers: Momoh, Massi and Sofiane,*

*My sisters: Youssra and Kahina.*

                             *Hocine*

*To:*

    *My dear parents,*

     *My brothers Rabah and Ramdhan,*

      *My sister Malika and her daughter Imane,*

    *My uncles Farid & Abdellah,*

   *My cousins Farid 'Maruti' & Mouloud,*

*My best friend Soraya.*

                             *Yahia*

## Acknowledgments

# Abstract

The present work is concerned with the investigation of the efficiency of the multimodal communication used in Facebook by the second year Master students of the Language and Communication option at the level of the English Department at Mouloud Mammeri University of Tizi Ouzou. In more proper words, the study aims at checking whether the multimodal language used on Facebook facilitates communication or not. It seeks also to discover whether using several modes (texts, images, videos, music…etc.) while communicating on Facebook can transmit more and clearer meanings than using mere words. Another objective of this research study is to figure out whether the emoticons used on Facebook can reveal the users' state of mind and their emotions. To reach these objectives, we have relied on a questionnaire submitted to the second year Master students of the Language and Communication option. In order to get more reliable data and to reinforce the answers obtained from the questionnaire's informants, we have collected few conversations that took place on Facebook as well as some timeline posts where multimodal items were used. The research methodology basically revolves around the mixed method: quantitative and qualitative. Finally the results obtained show that the multimodal language used on Facebook facilitates communication and using several modes while chatting helps the users to transmit more and clearer meanings than using the written text mode alone. The results also validate the idea that emoticons reflect the users' current state of minds and emotions.


**Keywords:** Language, Communication, Computer mediated communication, Social networking sites, Facebook, Multimodality, Emoticons. Social Media Platform.

## List of Abbreviations

CMC: Computer Mediated Communication.

SNSs: Social Networking Sites.

SPSS: Statistical Package for the Social Sciences.

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# 1 General Introduction

**Statement of the Problem**

Being an international social media platform, Facebook imposes itself as a universal means of online communication with more than one billion monthly active users *(statista.com)*, it has become the world's largest social networking site. The increased accessibility to the internet has a major contribution to the popularity of Facebook. Therefore, communication on this social networking site is fast coming to challenge the face-to-face one.

Communication on Facebook has never been a text-based affair since it offers various modes of communication to its users. These modes include: pictures, texts, emoticons, videos, voice recordings…etc. *"Facebook does not only facilitate the creation of multimodal content, but also provides (semi)-automated modes of expression that affect or even replace authors when creating texts"* Volker Eisenlauer (2013: 309). Thus Facebook is the common place for the use of multimodality, therefore it can be regarded as the suitable place for investigating the efficiency of using these multimodal items via this social media platform.

Even though multimodality has been of a particular interest in the latest years, and was explored by many international researchers who dealt with it from a holistic perspective such as: Theo Van Leeuwen (2005), Jewitt Carey (2004), Kress Gunter (1996), Norris Sigrid (2004), and Thibault Paul (2001), and Yassine Souryana (2012) who investigated the relation of *"self"* to *"other"* in the multimodally constructed text books of the Algerian school. Yet none of them tried to investigate its ability to corroborate Facebook's online communication.

**Aims of the Study**

The purpose of the study is to explore the efficiency of the multimodal language used on Facebook for communication. This work shows how the interaction and combination of multiple items (texts, images, emoticons, Videos…etc.) within Facebook is deployed in order to facilitate communication. The present work is also an attempt to prove that emoticons reflect

the user's current mood and emotions. To achieve the research objectives, the work will rely on the following claims:

- Written language has always been ambiguous, in its omission of facial expression, and in its inability to express all the intonational and other prosodic features of speech. David Crystal (2001: 38)

- Multimodal documents are assuming their central role in information dissemination in the modern world, they can apparently do much more than verbal language alone. (Thibault P. J, 2001: 294 cited in J. A Bateman, 2008: 02).

- [An emoticon] can be seen to suggest a face expressing a particular emotion. (Danesi, 2009: 110 cited in Tanimu Ahmed Jibril & Mardziah Hayati Abdullah, 2013: 201).

**Research Questions and Hypotheses**

This research aims to find out whether the multimodal language used on Facebook assists the online communication between users or makes meaning more ambiguous. And if it facilitates this communication, how can it do so?

In order to achieve the research objectives, the present study seeks to answer the following questions:

a) Does the multimodal language used on Facebook facilitate communication?

b) Does mixing different items (texts, images, emoticons, voice recordings, videos…) when communicating transmit more and clearer meanings than using the written text mode alone?

c) Do Facebook's emoticons reflect the user's current mood?

And in an attempt to answer these questions, the following hypotheses are advanced:

a) Facebook's multimodal language facilitates communication.

b) The more mixed codes you use, the more meanings you are able to transmit.

c) Emoticons are seen to reflect the user's state of mind and emotions.

**Research Tools and Methodology**

The main aim of this work is to find out whether the multimodal language used on Facebook facilitates communication or not. In an attempt to provide answers to the research questions, this work will be carried out using both qualitative and quantitative research methods. Thus collecting and analysing Facebook's wall posts (also known as timelines) and some conversations of users will be deployed using qualitative content analysis. In addition to this; a questionnaire will be distributed randomly to Master two (2) students of the language and communication option at the level of the English Department at Mouloud Mammeri University of Tizi Ouzou. The results of this latter will be analysed quantitatively and qualitatively. In few words the research tools that will be used to support this work are: the students' questionnaire and descriptions and analysis of some Facebook's wall posts and conversations.

**Organization of the Work**

The present dissertation is divided into six chapters, adding to a general introduction, which introduces the topic and a general conclusion that restates the major points and results, the work will include four (4) other main sections. The first one is mainly theoretical. In which the researchers review the literature pertinent to the topic. Several definitions of key terms: language, computer mediated communication (CMC), social networking sites (SNSs), Facebook, multimodality and emoticons will be included in the same chapter. Moreover, in the last part of this chapter an explanation of the theoretical framework that the researchers have relied on to guide this work will be presented. The methodology section gives detailed information about the methodology utilized to conduct this study. This section includes also a presentation of the research tools and the participants involved in this investigation. The third section presents the results collected from the questionnaire distributed to the Master two (2)

students of the Language and Communication option as well as from some Facebook's wall posts, and conversations. The last but not least section, which is mainly empirical, deals with the discussion of the findings resulted from the data collected earlier. It also includes a part where the researchers discuss whether the multimodal language used on Facebook facilitates communication or not. Eventually, the work ends with a general conclusion recapitulating the most important results as well as presenting some suggestions and recommendations for further studies.

## 2 Review of the Literature

## 2.1 Introduction

The main aim of this chapter is to review the main issues related to human communication such as language, communication on Social Networking Sites, Facebook as a new means of communication and the use of multimodality for communication. This chapter seeks also to describe the theoretical framework chosen to steer the research study.

## 2.2 Language

### 2.2.1 Definitions of Language

When casting a look over the influence that human continually has on the environment, it is noticeable that humans are special and different from all of the billions other living species on Earth. Humans are special in a way that they manipulate the world. Despite the fact that there are so many species that resemble humans in many aspects (evolution, physical appearance…) such as chimpanzees, yet they are quite distinct from them. Certainly, there is something special and complex that makes them so distinct from other species. As a consequence, a question that one may ask is: What makes human special?

W.T Fitch (2010: 01) argues that:

> Language more than anything else, is what makes us human. The unique power of language to represent and share unbounded thoughts is critical to all human societies. And has played a central role in the rise of our species in the last million years from a minor and peripheral member of the sub-Saharan African ecological community to the dominant species on the planet today.

Building on this, language can be seen as one of the distinctive features of the human species. It is indeed a crucial evidence that makes us humans. First of all what is human language?

According to the Oxford Advanced Learners' Dictionary (1995: 662), language is *"the system of sounds and words used by humans to express their thoughts and feeling"*. John Algeo

(2010: 2) states that *"[language] is a system of conventional vocal signs by means of which human beings communicate"*

### 2.2.2 Language and Human

As mentioned at the beginning, language is specifically a human activity. The possession of language makes us humans and therefore distinguishes us from the other living species. Thomas Lewis (1974: 86 cited in John Algeo, 2010: 1) claims that:

> The gift of language is the single human trait that marks us all genetically, setting us apart from the rest of life. Language is, like nest-building or hive-making, the universal and biologically specific activity of human beings. We engage in it communally, compulsively, and automatically. We cannot be human without it; if we were to be separated from it our minds would die, as surely as bees lost from the hive.

Moreover, Victoria Fromkin, Kobert Rodman and Mina Hyans (2013: 1), in their book *An Introduction to Language*, state that:

> According to the philosophy expressed in the myths and religions of many peoples, language is the source of human life and power. To some people of Africa, a new born child is a Kintu, a "thing" not yet a Muntu, a "person". It is only by the act of learning language that the child becomes a human being." According to this philosophy, we all become humans after learning one language.

### 2.2.3 Language and Communication

Language is of a great importance in human life, the use of language is highly manifested in the human's daily activities. Victoria Fromkin, Kobert Rodman and Mina Hyans (2013: 1) claim that people use language to communicate in their everyday activities, they communicate either face-to-face or via the electronic media. As a result, humans use language in order to reach a single purpose which is communication.

## 2.3 Communication

### 2.3.1 Definitions of communication

There exist so many definitions of communication. And there is no agreement upon a common definition for this term. For the purpose of doing so, an academic field of study came to exist in order to deal with communication and its related concepts. Bruce L. Smith, Harold

D. Lasswell and Ralph D. Casey (1946: 121) argue that communication study focuses on *"who says what, through what channels (media) of communication, to whom, what will be the result"*. The National Communication Association (1995) states that *"The discipline of communication focuses on how people use messages to generate meaning within and across various contexts, cultures, channels and media"*

Communication itself, as defined by Bjorm Granstrom, David House and Inger Karlsson (2002: 8), is the "*Transmission of content X from a sender Y to a recipient Z using an expression W and a medium Q in an environment E with a purpose/function F.*" John Fiske (1990: 1); defined communication as "*one of those human activities that everyone recognizes but few can define it satisfactorily. Communication is talking to one another, it is television, it is spreading information, it is our hair style, it is literary criticism: the list is endless*". The definition of John Fiske means that everything which can transmit information can be considered as 'communication' and not only the fact of talking to others and using verbal language is communication but also how we look and so on. All humans' daily activities are mediums of communication.

**2.3.2 The Development and Evolution of Communication**

Over time, the human communication has witnessed several changes. Thus some communication scholars divided the human communication into several ages on the basis of the dominant medium of communication i.e. on the medium that is used more. Marshall T. Poe (2011) divided the evolutionary ages of human communication to five ages. He (2011: 27) states that humans communicated first by using onomatopoetic words, hand signals and body language. This allowed them to transmit information and cooperate with one another. This first age led to the development of language what resulted in another age of communication which is the 'talking era'. During this period 150000 year of human existence ranging from 180000 BC to 3500 BC language was the unique dominant medium of communication [Ibid: 36]. The

'manuscript era' was the age that followed. It started from over 3500 BC. It was the era of the transition from oral to written culture (Marshal T. Poe, 2011: 61). The end of the manuscript era was the starting point of the 'print era' that lasted from 1450 to 1850. It was marked by the invention of the printing press and the ability to mass produce written texts. The next age was the 'audiovisual era' (from 1850 till 1990). According to Marshal T. Poe [Ibid: 61], this age was marked by the invention of, telegraph, radio, telephone and television. 'The internet era' was the last age of the development cycle of communication. It started in 1990 and lasts until the present time. It is characterized by the rapid flow of information and the birth of new methods of connecting people.

### 2.3.3 Types of Communication

Human communication is divided into two types: verbal and non-verbal communication.

**2.3.3.1 Verbal communication:** *Yourdictionary.com* defines verbal communication as *"The process of sending and receiving messages with words, including writing and sign language"*. It is that type of communication that involves the use of words, both written and spoken, for the sake of sharing information between individuals and conveying any given meaning between them. It is the main communicative resource used by humans to interact with each other. Tracii Hanes (2015) states that: *"Verbal communication acts as the primary tool for expression between two or more people"*.

**2.3.3.2 Non-verbal Communication:** Non-verbal type of communication is represented in conveying messages through some non-words rudiments. Forms of non-verbal interactions include gestures, eye-contacts, facial expressions, body language, etc. that may transport secondary information about individuals or collectives. They can be considered also as instruments used to manage relationships. The main feature of non-verbal cues is its "*ability to convey emotions and attitude*" as well as "*emphasize, contradict, substitute or regulate verbal*

*communication"* (Wei, 2012: 2-3 cited in Tanimu Ahmed Jibril & Mardziah Hayati Abdullah 2013: 201). Thus, it is noticed that non-verbal elements are integrated in human communication.

## 2.4 The Computer Mediated Communication (CMC)

As it is mentioned above, the appearance of the computers and internet made it possible to find new ways of connecting people to each other. Computers have evolved to amazing levels of processing and storing capacities in a relatively short period of time. They allow their users to create, store and even transmit data. In this section the computer mediated communication will be briefly introduced.

### 2.4.1 Definitions of CMC

Computer mediated communication is defined as *"synchronous or asynchronous electronic mail and computer conferencing, by which senders encode in text messages that are relayed from senders' computers to receivers"* (Walter, 1992: 52). Metz (1992: 3) states that computer mediated communication is *"any communication patterns mediated through the computer".*

### 2.4.2 Characteristics of CMC

From the definitions given above, it is understood that CMC is computer based communication that permits users to interconnect. Certainly, the latter has its own characteristics. Baym N K (2010) highlighted several key elements and characteristics of CMC:

**Interactivity:** The computer mediated communication requires interaction between individuals through the use of computers.

**Temporal Structure:** CMC's chromic properties vary and can be either synchronous (e.g. instant messaging and video conferencing) and occur in real time, as it can be asynchronous (e.g. e-mail and text messaging) that occur in different times.

**Reach:** the number of individuals in one's social network may vary from many to few.

### 2.4.3 Types of CMC

Communication scholars such as Romiszowski and Mason (2004) distinguished between two types of computer mediated communication: synchronous and asynchronous computer mediated communication.

**a) Synchronous Communication:** In this type, exchanges take place in real time, that is to say, it enables real time communication and collaboration in, as stated by Julia Ashley (2003), a "*same time-different place*" mode. In other words, it is described in *igi-global.com* as a: "*network-based real-time digital communication between two or more users. Participants are online at the same time*". Synchronous communication can be compared to communication "*between two people in face-to-face discussion, or talking on the phone.*" (Romiszowski and Mason, 2004)

**b) Asynchronous Communication:** In this type of computer mediated communication, messages are posted  up or sent at any time, and read or responded to by the other user/users, also, at times which suit them. In other words, users do not have to be online at the same time as they do with the synchronous exchanges. "*In offline communication, this latter* [asynchronous communication] *form is similar to letter writing, or sending faxes [...]*" (Romiszowski and Mason 2004). Julia Ashley (2003) states that asynchronous communication "*enables communication and collaboration over a period of time, through a 'different time-different place' mode.* **"**[It] *allow*[s] *people to connect together at each person's own convenience and own schedule*".

## 2.5 Social Networking Sites (SNSs)

The introduction of social networking sites (SNSs) such as Facebook and Myspace attracted millions of internet users. These SNSs have been integrated to the lives of their users. Thus, in this section a brief definition of SNSs will be presented as well as some types of SNSs.

**2.5.1 Definitions of SNSs**

According to the *Oxford Dictionaries.com*, social networking site is defined as *"[A] site or application through which users can communicate with each other by adding information, messages, images...etc."* or as *"A network of social connections and personal relationships between people."*

Danah M. Boyd and Nicole B. Ellison (2007) defined social network sites as *"web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system (2) articulate a list of other users within whom they share a connection and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system"*. In other words, an SNS permits to its users to create profiles and to send friend request to other users of the same social networking site with whom they share the same interests. Social media platforms allow its users to establish new relationships.

**2.5.2 Types of SNSs**

Mary Gormandy White (2012) states that there exist seven major social networking sites categories. These categories are summarized in the following points:

**Social connections:** The latter aims at establishing and maintaining social connections e.g.: *Facebook, Twitter and Myspace*.

**Multimedia Sharing:** The main objective is sharing photographs and videos with others e.g. *YouTube, Picasa and Flicker*.

**Professional Social Networks:** aims at managing relationships of professional nature    e.g. *LinkedIn and Nurse Connect*.

**Informational:** designed to help people in solving their daily problems e.g. *SuperGreenMe, HGTV discussion forums*.

**Educational:** seeks to help students to collaborate with each other on academic projects e.g. *The StudentRoom*.

**Hobbies:** dedicated to users who share the same hobby. E.g. *Myhobbyhive.com*

**Academic:** designed for researchers who have the intention to share their works and their findings e.g. *Academia.edu*

### 2.5.3 Communication on SNSs

According to Underwood, Kerline. L and Farrington-flit. L (2011: 1621-1626 cited in Vichuta Kruthern 2012: 08), there are two modes of communication on social networking sites: Broadcasting and Communicating. The first aims at public consumption. It involves only one sender who messages several receivers who will not reply. In the second, there is a mutual exchange of messages between the users. This one is more private when compared to the first.

## 2.6 Facebook

In the twenty first century, communication no longer moves at a low speed, yet it moves at the speed of light thanks to the constant growth in information and communication technologies. Thus electronic communication has become part of the present day living system. The internet gives us the ability to communicate instantaneously. Facebook, as a social networking site, has rapidly gained popularity among internet users in the recent years. This technology (Facebook) has extended the capabilities of the internet and turned it out into a highly interactive communication space. In the light of this, the researchers will try in this section to briefly highlight what is Facebook and when it did start. This section also aims to break down the interesting facts about Facebook as a social activity.

### 2.6.1 What is Facebook?

*Facebook.com*'s definition of this social networking site is:

> Founded in 2004, Facebook's mission is to give people the power to share and make the world more open and connected. People use Facebook to stay connected with friends and family, to discover what's going on in the world and to share and express what matters them.

Ned Ryuns (2013: 4) states that "*Founded in February 2004, Facebook is a social network that helps people communicate more efficiently with their friends, family, coworkers and acquaintances*". Nowadays, Facebook is seen as the biggest network site in the world with hundreds of millions of active users.

**2.6.2 Communication on Facebook**

As it was mentioned before, Facebook is widely adopted by millions of internet users around the world. The last statistics from *Statista.com* show that it has 1.49 billion monthly active users at the end of the second quarter of 2015. According to statistics retrieved from *internetworldstats.com*, Facebook rank on the top of the most visited websites list in recent years in Algeria, the statistics also show that there are 4.111320 Algerian subscribers to Facebook on December 31st 2012.

Keenan and Shiri (2009: 438-450 cited in Vichuta Kruthern 2012: 08) suggest that:

> Facebook encourages privacy and promotes *"real world"* connections in an online world. The connections via Facebook are mostly between people who know each other in real life and know each other's identity. Thus the communication on Facebook is rarely anonymous and the degree of trust between Facebook users is relatively high.

Facebook users can choose one of the two modes proposed by Underwood (2011: 1621 cited in Vichuta Kruthern 2012: 12). They can either send a message to many receivers via their timelines, this process is called 'the broadcasting mode' or they communicate more privately using the instant messaging tool, this process is called 'the communicating mode'.

**2.6.3 Facebook Communication as a Social Activity**

As it was mentioned before in this chapter, humans who participate in a given social activity will certainly communicate in a way or in another (see communication). Thus, interaction on Facebook can be seen as a social activity. Huang et.al (2010: 57 cited in Vichuta Kruthern, 2012: 21) assert that *"Facebook communication is a social activity in which interactions between participants take place in a virtual environment using communication*

*technology called web 2.0"*. It is worth mentioning that web 2.0 are websites that allow users to interact and collaborate with each other in a social media dialogue as creators of contents in a virtual community. (*oxforddictionaries.com*)

In the light of what has been already stated, Facebook is deemed to be the most used SNS in the world and in Algeria particularly (*internetworldstats.com*). Thus communication on Facebook is seen as the most recent social activity.

## 2.7 Multimodality

Humans, unlike other creatures, use several modes to communicate what they want. Cavemen, for instance, used to draw on the walls of their caves to transmit any given information. They also used gestures (non-verbal) and paraverbal language to communicate with each other. Nowadays humans keep using multiple modes in their everyday communication. All this means that the human communication is multimodal. This part of the work introduces the notion of multimodality. It includes also several items that are related to the concept of multimodality.

### 2.7.1 Definitions of Multimodality

Multimodality, in the scope of semiotics, is the use of several modes that have meaning in order to transmit information to others. Jewitt (2009: 14 cited in José Aldemar Alvarez Valencia 2011) states that multimodality refers to *"*[The] *approaches that understand communication and representation to be more than about language, and which attend to the full range of communicational forms people use images, gestures, gaze, posture and so on, and the relationship between them"*. Thus it is worth mentioning that the multimodal approach to communication takes into consideration all the modes or forms that can be used while communicating. Jewitt (2009: 17 cited in José Aldemar Alvarez Valencia 2011) claims that multimodality explores the *"relationships across and between modes in multimodal contexts"*.

In other words, this approach tries to understand how these different modes are used and combined to transmit a given information and reach the intended meaning.

Multimodality is, as defined by Bjorm Granstrom, David House and Inger Karlsson (2002: 1), *"the use of two or more of the five senses for the exchange of information"*. From this definition it is understood that multimodality is called the process by which humans exchange and transmit information through several mediums: gestures, verbal language, para-verbal language, images …etc. in more proper words it is a theory which tries to explain and understand how people communicate with each other, not only through the use of one mode (verbal language) but also by means of other forms of communication. Theo Van Leeuwen's definition of multimodality is: *"the combination of different semiotic modes –for example language and music- in a communicative artifact or event"* (2005: 281).

**2.7.2 The Social Semiotic Concept of Multimodality**

Social semiotics is an approach to communication that seeks to understand how people communicate by the use of various means. This latter has been strongly influenced by the work of M.A.K Halliday (1978) *"Language as Social Semiotic"* (cited in Yassine Souryana 2012: 35-36). Social semiotics has been greatly influenced by other semioticians such as Theo Van Leeuwen and Gunther Kress. Van Leeuwen asserts that: *"Social semiotics is a new and distinct approach to the practice and theory of semiotics"* (2005: 1). He also gave a special prominence to two important features of this discipline.

1. Social semiotics is not 'pure' theory, not a self-contained field, it only comes into its own when it is applied to specific instances and specific problems. It requires immersing oneself not just in semiotic concepts and methods as such but also in some other fields… the same applies to the 'social' in 'social semiotics', it can only come into its own when social semiotics fully engages with social theory, this kind of interdisciplinarity is an absolutely essential feature of social semiotics.
2. Social semiotics is a form of enquiry, it does not offer ready-made answers, it offers ideas for formulating questions and ways of searching for answers. (Van Leeuwen 2005: 1).

Fundamentally, the social semiotics concept of multimodality is based on the assumption that the construction of meaning is not only realized through language. Halliday (1975: 83 cited in Stefan Meier and Christian Pentzold 2011: 4) stresses that:

> Language shares this function [that is, the function of constructing meaning] with other social semiotic systems: various systems of arts, ritual decor and dress, and the like. Cultural meanings are realized through a great variety of symbolic modes, of which semantic is one; the semantic system is a mode of meaning. There is no need to insist that it is the "primary" one: I do not know what would be regarded as verifying such an assertion.

Stefan Meier and Christian Pentzold (2011: 4-5) argue that:

> With such an idea [Halliday 1975:83] Halliday inspired a variety of investigations into multimodal discourse. Thus many researchers like Sigrid Norris (2004), Arthur Chiew (2004) and Carey Jewitt (2004) have increasingly turned their intention to online communication. Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996-2001) have had a huge impact on the research of design and visual communication building on Halliday's contribution, Detailing Halliday's argument that meaning making is multimodal and multi-dimensional, Kress and Van Leeuwen argue that the three social semiotic meta-functions, that is the ideational function, interpersonal function and the textual function, are simultaneously present in every social communication act.

Summing up the three meta-functions, Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996: 228 cited in Stefan Meier and Christian Pentzold 2011: 5) state that:

> the ideational function is the function of constructing representations of the world, the interpersonal function, the function of enacting (helping to enact) communicative interactions characterized by specific social purposes and specific social realizations; and the textual function, the function of marshalling communicative acts to larger wholes, into the communicative events of texts that realize specific social practices such as conversations, lecture reports…etc.

In light of what has been said earlier, and according to Van Leeuwen (1996 cited in Yassine Souryana, 2012: 38-39) communicative act has three main functions: first, the ideational function which deals with how language captures reality and experiences of the world. Next, the interpersonal function is mainly concerned with the manner how language establishes relations between the sender and the receiver i.e. speaker/writer and hearer/reader.

Finally the textual function which is concerned with the general organization of the communicative act.

### 2.7.3 The Mode

No one can write about multimodality without including 'mode'. Since it is based on the use of multiple modes for communication to transfer and receive information. Arlene Archer and Denise Newfield (2014: 185) define the mode as: *"[An] organized set of resources for meaning-making including gaze, gestures, movement, music, speech and sound"*. From this definition it is obvious that every semiotic resource, which can make meaning and transmit a given piece of information is a 'mode'. They claim also that: *"it is rare for any mode to be used singularly"* [Ibid]. In other words, when communicating, humans use multiple modes and each communicative mode depends on the social context in which it is produced. Diana Mavers argues that: *"[mode] refers to a set of socially and culturally shaped resources for making meaning"*. In short, the mode is dependent on, and related to a social context, and the information received from one resource/mode will not be necessarily the same for two different groups in two different societies. Relying on what is said before, mode is a resource that makes meaning only in a given culture and social context.

### 2.7.4 Modality

Working on multimodality will necessarily push the researchers to give an idea about the notion of modality since it has its own importance in the field of social semiotics. Van Leeuwen (2005: 160) asserts that: *"modality is the social semiotic approach to the question of truths, it relates both to issues of representation […] and question of social interaction"*. In other words it is referred to in *thoughtjam.wordpress.com* as being the *"concept through which semioticians study how people use semiotic resources to create the truth or reality values of their representation"*. Van Leeuwen states that: *"the linguistic resources of modality are very important because they help and permit people to create the truths needed in forming groups*

*that will act cohesively and effectively in and on the world"* (2005:162). Language is used to create the values needed to organize any social group. By organizing we mean: to educate, to lead, guide…etc.

**2.7.4.1 Types of Modality**

Theo Van Leeuwen in his book *"Introducing Social Semiotics"* (2005: 162-167) defines two types of modality: the linguistic and the visual modality.

**a) Linguistic Modality:** According to Van Leeuwen (2005: 162-165), the modal auxiliaries: *may, will* and *must*, are the central interest of linguists. These modal auxiliaries express three degrees of modality low, median and high modality for example it may rain today (low modality), it will rain today (median modality), it must rain today (high modality). He adds that: for linguists, truth is a matter of degree. Other nouns, adverbs or adjectives can express these three degrees of modality. Halliday (1985) makes a distinction between subjective and objective modalities. By subjective modality he means: the stronger the inner conviction of someone about the truth of an assertion, the higher modality of that assertion e.g. I have a feeling that he uses another phone number (low subjective modality), I am fairly confident that he uses another phone number (median subjective modality) and I am convinced that he uses another phone number (high subjective modality); whereas in the objective modality, the objective truth is clearly expressed e.g. the sky is blue.

**b) Visual Modality:** Because human language is the most important means of communication, a little interest or better to say no interest was paid to the visual modality in the past. Hodge and Kress (1979) were the first to claim that modality can be expressed in non-verbal ways either by photographs or any other visual representations (cited in Yassine Souryana 2012: 51)

**2.7.5 Multimodality on Facebook**

Facebook has rapidly gained a huge popularity among internet users in the recent years. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010:53 cited in Eisenlauer 2013: 309) assert that: *"with one billion*

*monthly active users, Facebook has become the world's largest social network site"*. This technology has made a revolution in the internet, the latter made it a pure interactive space, where users make use of various modes in order to communicate. Facebook paves the way to its users to make use of multimodality, as a result, the latter is highly manifested on it. David Crystal (2001:35) argues that: *"in virtual worlds there are commands which allow people to express textually the emotion they feel, often with the addition of synthesized sounds and visual effects".* It is assumed that, Facebook is the perfect place for the use of multimodal elements for the aim of communication. Volker Eisenlauer (2013:309) asserts that:

> The social network site Facebook offers many possibilities for composing multimodal texts, when members connect with other members and/or tell their life stories on the platform, they seldom limit their communicative acts to the verbal, but they upload and share photos/videos or embed multimodal content that is stored on external servers.

Facebook does not only facilitate the creation of multimodal contents, yet it also offers to its users a list of multimodal items to make use of; such as emotions. Danesi (2009:110 cited in Tanimu Ahmed Jibril & Mardziah Hayati Abdullah, 2013: 201) defines the latter as:

> string of keyboard characters that, when viewed sideways (or in some other orientation) can be seen to suggest a face expressing a particular emotion. An emoticon is often used in an e-mail message or news group posting as a comment on the text that accompanies it. Common emoticons include the smiley☺, the winkey ;) and the yawn (:-O) among others.

Furthermore, Facebook updates these emoticons in an attempt to encourage its users to make use of them. Accordingly, it is obvious that multimodality is strongly manifested on Facebook in forms of texts, videos, images, voice recordings, emoticons…etc.

## 2.8 Theoretical framework

A scientific research should be based on a theory. Thus, the researchers in this study collect data to show how the theory does or does not apply to the phenomenon under investigation. Based on that, and in an attempt to verify whether the multimodal language used on Facebook facilitates communication; the researchers have relied on the following claims:

- *"Written language has always been ambiguous in its omission of facial expressions, and in its inability to express all the intentional and other prosodic features of speech"* (David Cristal, 2001: 38).

- *"multimodal documents are assuming their central role in information dissemination in the modern world: they can apparently do much more than verbal language alone"* (Thibault, 2001: 294 cited in J A Bateman, 2008: 02)

- *"[an emoticon] can be seen to suggest a face expressing a particular emotion"* (Danesi, 2009: 110 cited in Tanimu Ahmed Jibril & Mardziah Hayati Abdullah, 2013: 201)

The above claims suggest that the written language is somehow insufficient in terms of expressing some features of speech such as the writer's feelings/emotions. However, utilizing a multimodal language can provide more and clearer information than the written one. For instance, utilizing a video to describe the beauty of a given place is much more efficient than describing it with mere words. The multimodal item video acts as a cue that strengthens the written or spoken words. Therefore, multimodal items are seen to convey more meanings than written words alone. As a result, the collected data will be analysed to check whether the suggested claims apply or not to the phenomena under investigation, which is mainly *the role of the multimodal language used on Facebook in terms of facilitating communication.*

## 2.9 Summary

The purpose of this chapter is to review the literature of relevance to the phenomenon under investigation. It also describes the theoretical framework which is set out to verify the validity of the suggested hypotheses.

# 3 Research design and Methodology

## 3.1 Introduction

In this chapter the researchers are going to give an explanation about the research methodology that has been selected to tackle the research problem, as well as the tools that have been adopted for the assemblage of data. Adding to this, the researchers describe the sample selected and the procedures for data analysis. Our work seeks basically to evaluate whether Facebook's multimodal language facilitates communication. The research tools which refer to the different data collecting materials which represent the corpus of our investigation are: a questionnaire submitted to randomly selected second year Master Students option Language and Communication at the level of the English Department at Mouloud Mammeri University of Tizi Ouzou. Furthermore, the researchers are going to analyse some Facebook wall posts and some conversations. This investigation is definitely carried out using both qualitative and quantitative research approaches, that is to say the research methodology used revolves around the mixed method.

## 3.2 Procedures of Data Collection

This section presents in a detailed way the sample and the data gathering instruments chosen to carry out this research study.

### 3.2.1 Sampling

A sample is "*a group of participants whom the researcher examines in an empirical investigation [...] the main goal of sampling is to find individuals who can provide rich and varied insights into the phenomena under investigation so as to maximize what we can learn.*" (Dornyei, 2007: 96). According to this description, the fundamental concern is to make sure that the selected sample is representative of the population. Therefore we believe that the most effective way to make this achievable is by selecting a random sample. In other words, random sampling technique is adopted for this work because it is more objective in terms of gathering

data. Moreover, since there is no choice (when selecting a sample) there will be no subjectivity for both the researchers (mainly when selecting) and the sample (mainly in terms of the answers provided). As a result, the sample frame that will be used in our investigation is a group of the second year Master Students option Language and Communication (randomly selected) from the English Department at the level of Mouloud Mammeri University of Tizi Ouzou. All the second year Master students of the Language and Communication option, namely our population includes around 60 students, will be represented by our sample of 25 participants. This sample has been selected mainly because they are Master students, they have access to the department's internet room and mainly because they have a free semester devoted to their research dissertations. As a result, they will certainly log in to their Facebook accounts since they have a free time. Hence they will provide us with the suitable answers that will help in solving the research problem.

**3.2.2 Description of the Questionnaire**

"*questionnaires are any written tools that present respondents with a series of questions to which they have to react either by writing out their answers or selecting from existing answers*" (Brown 2001: 6 cited in Dornyei 2007: 102). The questionnaire designed for this investigation consists of both open-ended and close-ended items. It is straightforward and contains only few open-ended questions for fear of being time consuming. Dornyei (2003: 18) argues that: "*most researchers agree that anything* [any questionnaire] *that is more than 4-6 pages long and requires over half an hour to complete maybe considered too much of an imposition".* In other words, any questionnaire that has more than four (4) pages and necessitates more than half an hour to be completed by the respondents is not suitable and useful for carrying out a research. The questionnaire used in this study comprises two main sections:

**Section one:** is concerned with the respondents' Facebook usage such as whether the respondents have a Facebook account or not, the purpose of using Facebook, the number of

friends they have on it, and the average time they spend on it…etc. This section contains also questions about the respondents' reaction towards the use of Facebook. It includes six (6) questions. This section is a series of general opening questions to build rapport (mutual trust) with the participants. Questions about general usage of Facebook help the respondents to feel comfortable enough to start telling more about their experiences in using multimodal items while communicating via Facebook.

**Section two:** consists of six (6) questions about the respondents' usage of multiple modes for communication when interacting on Facebook, their opinions about such modes and whether they are efficient in terms of helping them to communicate their feelings, opinions and thoughts…etc. This section aims also to know the importance of emoticons in terms of reflecting the users' current state of mind and the frequency by which they employ such mode while communicating.

The questionnaire has been submitted on the 9$^{th}$ of September 2015 to 25 randomly selected second year Master Students (option Language and Communication) at the level of the English Department at Mouloud Mammeri University of Tizi Ouzou. The questionnaires have been collected in the same day. It is worth mentioning that all of them were fully answered.

### 3.2.3 Facebook wall posts and Conversations

The second data collecting tool used in our investigation is some Facebook users' wall posts and conversation where multimodality is manifested, this is mainly to show the efficiency of the latter (multimodality) in terms of strengthening what users want to communicate. Hence, it is significant to provide a brief description of the way Facebook users communicate via their walls (timelines) and conversations. Facebook wall/timeline is the easiest way for users to communicate with all their friends. All that is posted in their walls/timelines will be seen by their friends. According to Ned Ryun (2013: 15) the wall which is also named timeline is where the users and their friends can post contents that will be shared. Photos, videos, articles, web

links, thoughts and messages are just few examples of what can be posted. The process of sharing on the wall/timeline is called *"updating the status"*, this process is the easiest way to communicate with other friends on Facebook; whereas communication via conversation allows users to talk directly and privately with another Facebook user. Ned Ryun (2013: 19) asserts that:

> [Facebook] messages are very handy tool. For instance, if you do not want to post a message to your friends' wall because it is personal or you do not want anyone else to see it, you can send them a personal message instead. This ensures that only they can see the message […] you can also attach photos, links or videos in personal messages.

In other words, Facebook users can communicate in two ways, either through their walls/timelines or via instant messaging which is more private.

It is of a crucial importance to mention that the researchers have got permission from the Facebook users who their posts and conversations appear in this research study. The users have also been assured that their wall posts and conversations will be used for academic purposes. All the names that appeared on the captures have been deleted to keep their identities anonymous for ethical considerations.

To sum up, the present research study relies on two data gathering tools: a questionnaire submitted to randomly selected participants (see the sampling section) and some Facebook wall posts and conversations. The two tools will work together to determine whether Facebook's multimodal language does really facilitate communication.

**3.3 Data Analysis Procedure**

Data gathered from Facebook's wall posts, conversations and the questionnaire will be arranged, analysed and interpreted with the aim of testing the validity of the proposed hypothesis (see chapter 1 research questions and hypotheses).

### 3.3.1 Analysis of the Data Gathered from the Questionnaire

The researchers use the qualitative and quantitative methods to analyse the data gathered from the questionnaire. "*In general, the quantitative research answers the how questions, whereas the why questions are left to qualitative research*" John Biggam (2008:86). As a result the open-ended questions will be analysed using the qualitative method because the latter is the best to analyse the <u>why</u> questions in terms of interpreting the respondents' points of view about a given phenomenon. The quantitative method will be used to analyse the close-ended questions because they are mainly concerned with quantities and measurements.

In short, the data gathered from the questionnaire will be analysed using the mixed method because the researchers are going to demonstrate qualitative features such as describing the participants' opinions example: why do they think that mixing several mode of communication transmits more and clearer information than using words alone? They will also demonstrate quantitative features in a numerical/statistical way such as: the number of friends do the participants have on Facebook, the frequency by which they use emoticons while chatting.

### 3.3.2 Analysis of the Data Gathered from Facebook

The data gathered from Facebook's wall posts and conversations will be analysed using content analysis. The latter is: *"a method of analysing written, verbal or visual communication messages" (Cole* 1988 cited in Satu Elo & Helvi Kyngas 2008:107). Content analysis is mainly used to analyse written words in both users' comments and messages as well as the images and emoticons. In other words, content analysis of Facebook wall posts and conversations is used to determine the purpose of the multimodal items used by the senders and its effect on the receivers' comprehension of the message.

### 3.3.3 Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS)

SPSS is a software package used for statistical analysis and presentation of the quantitative data in social sciences. (Landau & Everitt, 2004: 1). The results obtained are represented in the form of: Histograms, Pie charts and tables which show the equivalent percentages of each answer.

## 3.4 Conclusion

This chapter aims at describing the research design and methodology used during the study, giving information about the sample selected and the reason for which it has been chosen, this chapter also describes the instruments used for collecting data as well as providing the procedures followed in analysing the collected data.

# 4 Results

## 4.1 Introduction

This chapter highlights the results gathered from the questionnaire, Facebook's wall posts and conversations. It contains two main sections. In the first section the researchers present the results obtained from the questionnaire distributed randomly to the second year Master students of the Language and Communication option at the level of the English Department. The second section contains the results obtained from a set of Facebook's timeline posts and conversations.

Before proceeding with the presentation of the results obtained from the questionnaires we have to start with a general overview concerning the way it is going to be done. We have distributed 25 questionnaires. We took into consideration only those who answered question (1) by "*Yes*". The number of the participants who did so is 22. This number (22) represents the percentage of 100%.

## 4.2 Findings Obtained from the Questionnaire

<u>**Section one:**</u> Facebook Usage:

**Question1:** Do you have a Facebook account?     a) Yes        b) No, and if yes, how long have you been using it?
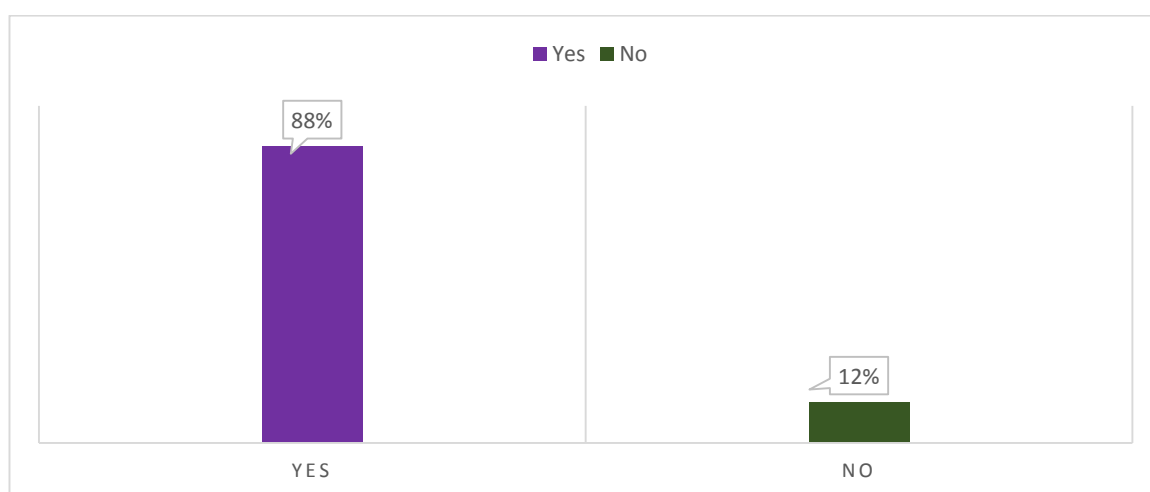


**Diagram 1: Number of the participants who have a Facebook Account.**

27

The results show the number of the informants who have Facebook accounts. As it is represented in the diagram only (12%) of the participants do not have a Facebook account whereas the other remaining (88%) do.
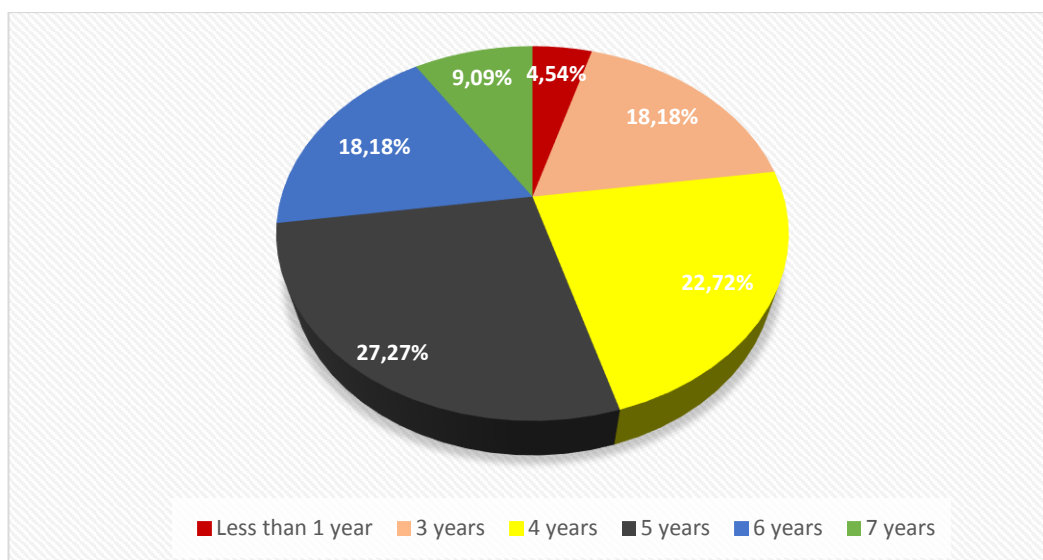


**Pie chart 1: The Period during which the Participants Have Been on Facebook.**

The pie chart above represents the period during which participants who answered the first question by 'yes' have been on Facebook. The majority of them (27.27%) have been on Facebook for 5 years and (4.54%) of them for less than one year.

**Question 2:** The number of times the participants log in to their Facebook accounts.
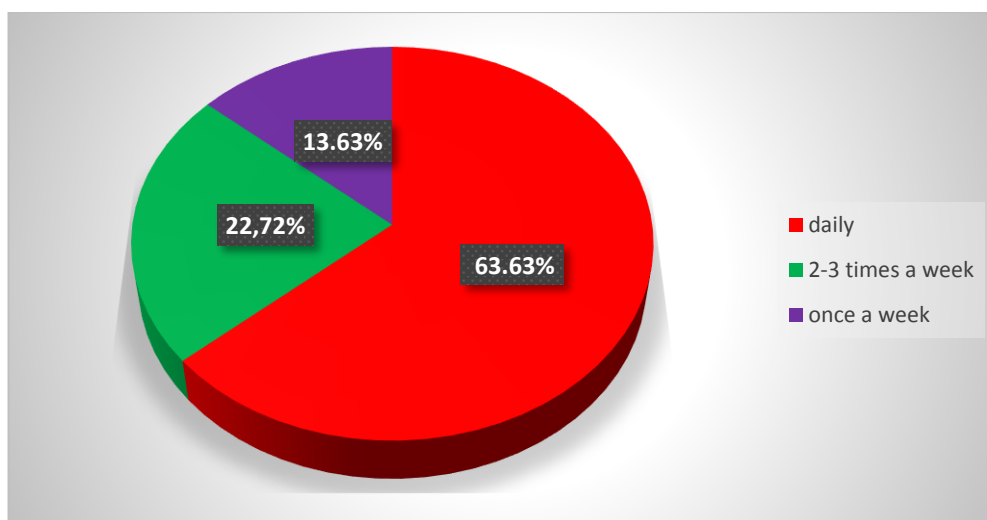


**Pie chart 2: The Frequency of Logging in to Facebook.**

According to the above pie chart, the majority of the participants (63.63%) log in daily to their Facebook accounts whereas (22.72%) of them log in from two to three (2-3) times a week. The remaining ones (22.72%) log in once a week to their accounts. We can say that they are familiar with multimodal items and their use. As a result, they can provide us with the necessary data that will be used in our work.

**Question 3:** Time spent on Facebook by the participants.
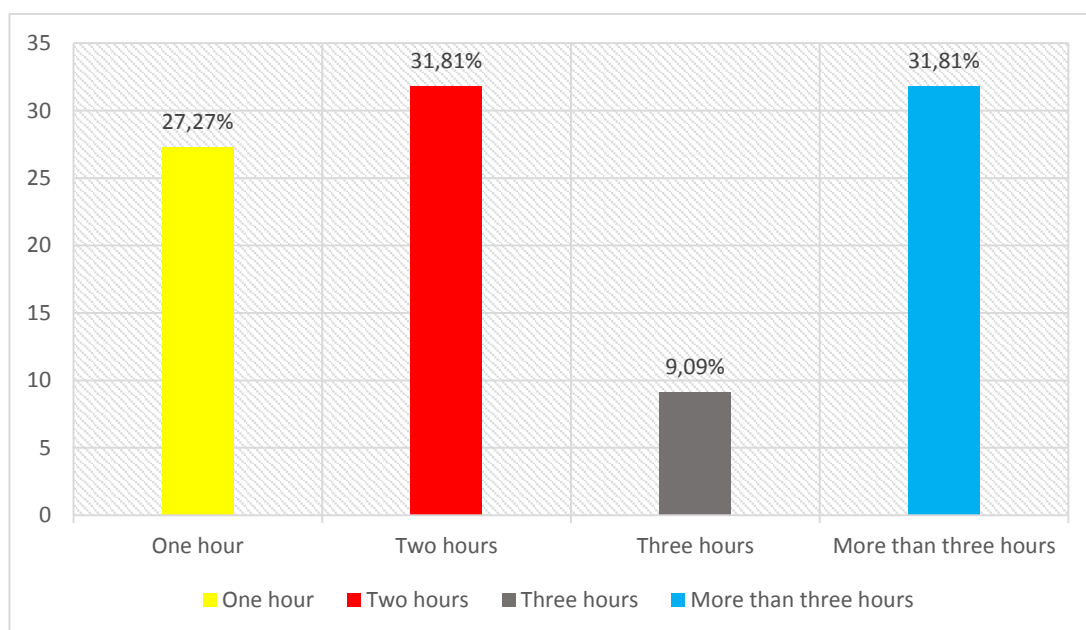


**Diagram 2: Time Spent by the Participants on Facebook at each Log.**

According to the diagram above, the majority of the participants (31.81%) spend more than three (3) hours each time they log in to Facebook. In addition to those who spend more than three hours, we can find also that the same percentage of the participants (31.81%) spend two hours on Facebook. The remaining (27.27%) of them spend one hour. And (9.09%) spend three hours.

**Question 4:** the number of friends participants have on Facebook:
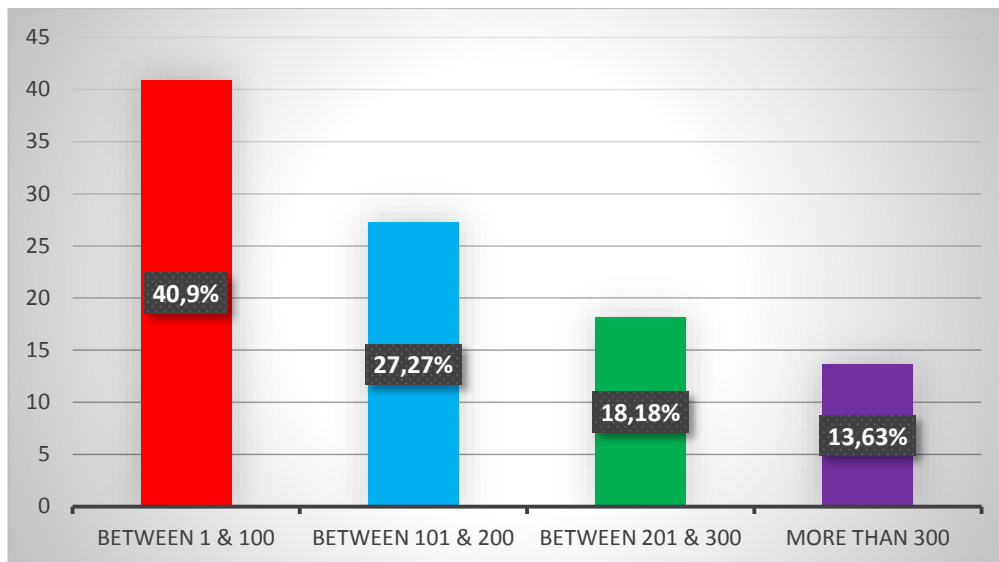
**Diagram 3: Number of the Participants' Friends on Facebook.**

The findings above show the number of the participants' friends on Facebook. 40.9% of them have between 1 and 100 friend(s) and (13.63%) have more than 300 friends.

**Question 5:** The participants' prime objective of using Facebook.
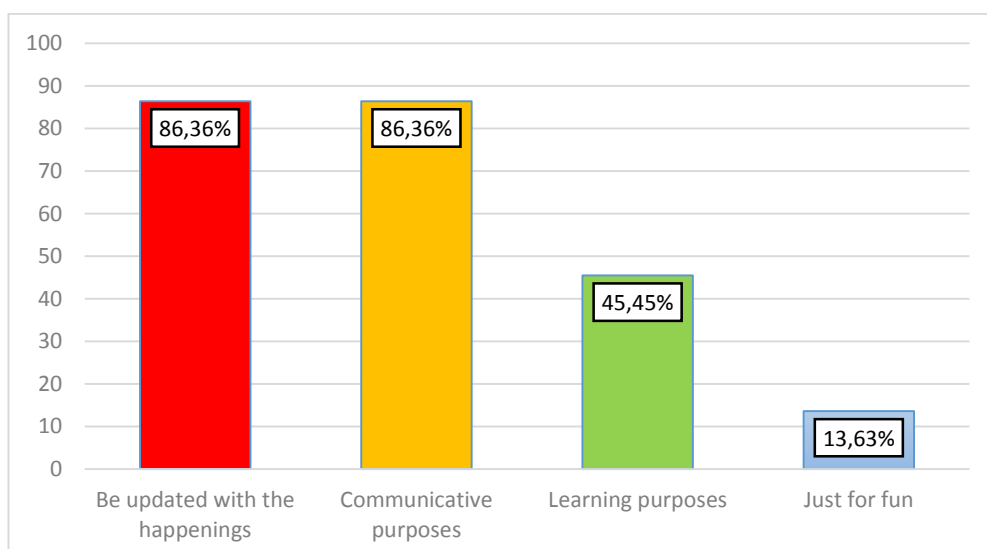


**Diagram 4: The Participants' Prime Objective of Using Facebook.**

Diagram 4 shows that, the majority of the respondents (86.36%) use Facebook to be up to date with the happenings of the world. The same percentage (86.36%) use it for

communicative purposes. 45.45% use it for learning purposes and the remaining (13.63%) use
it for fun

**Question 6:** The participant's reaction towards the use of Facebook.
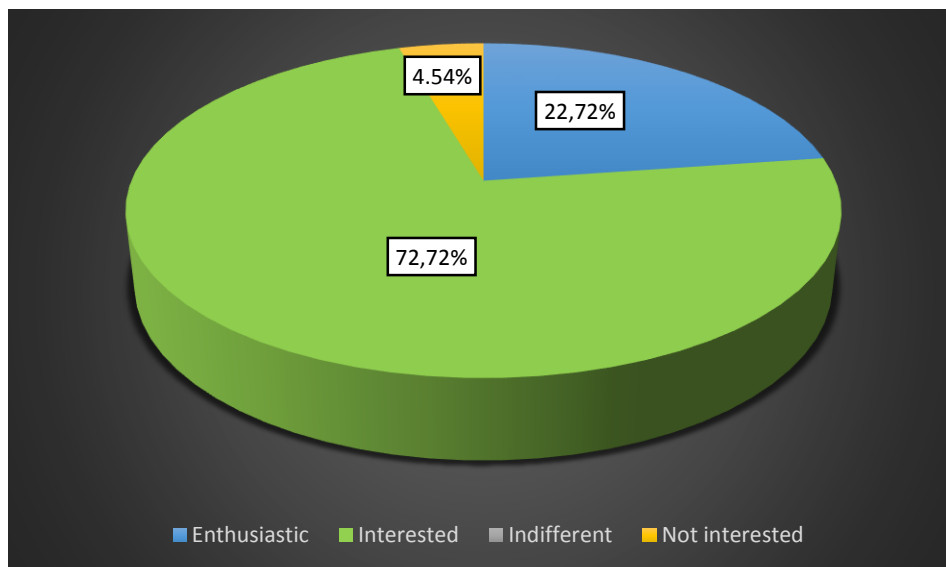


**Pie chart 3: The Reactions of Participants towards the Use of Facebook.**

The pie chart above represents the reaction of the participants towards the use of
Facebook. 72.72% are interested in using Facebook. 22.72% are enthusiastic, and (4.54%) of
the participant are not interested in using Facebook.

**Section two:** The Use of Multiple Modes for Communication on Facebook.

**Question 1:** Multimodality is of a great importance on Facebook and highly manifested on it.
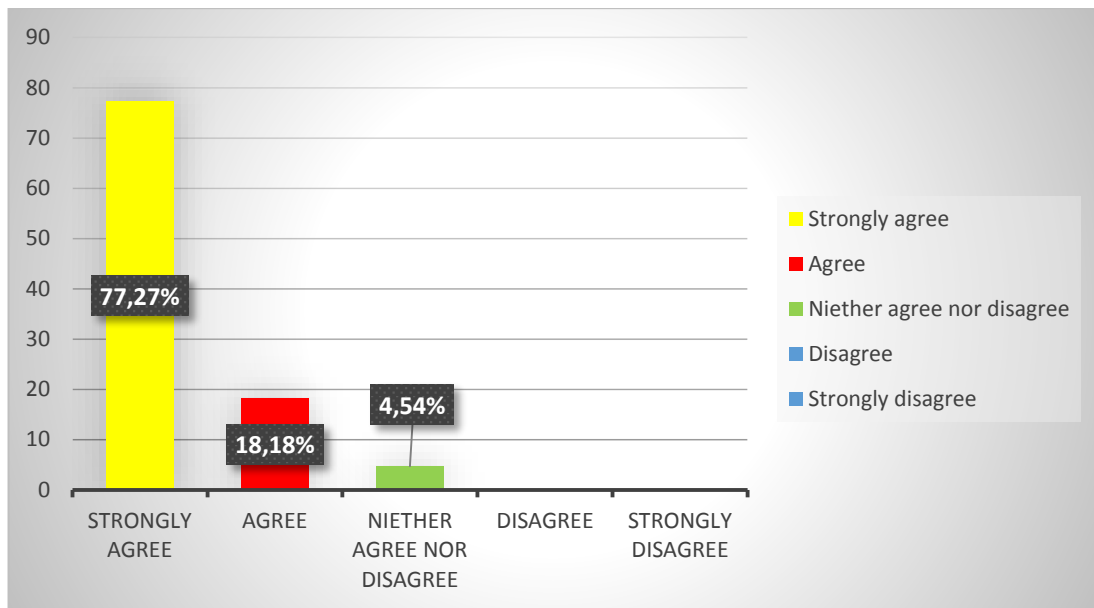
**Diagram 5: Multimodality manifestation and importance on Facebook.**

The above results highlight the informants' opinion about the importance of multimodality on Facebook. 77.27% of the participants strongly agree and (18.18%) of them agree, the remaining (4.54%) are neutral (neither agree nor disagree).

**Question 2:** the use of multimodality while chatting and expressing thoughts on Facebook?
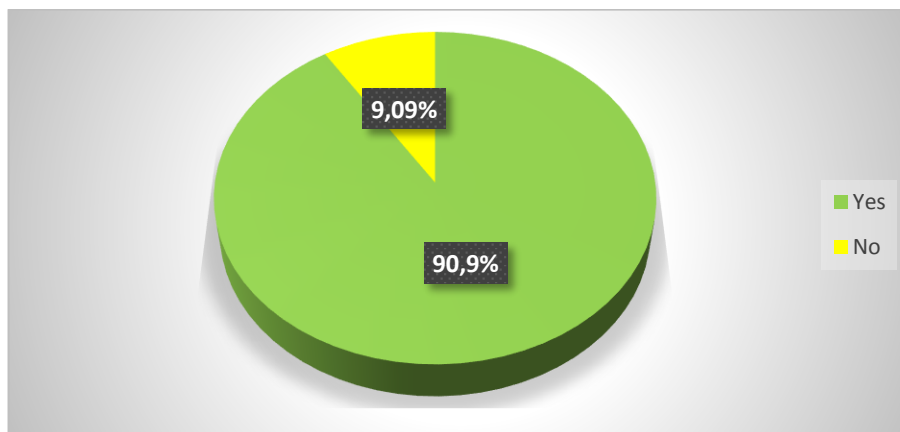


**Pie chart 4: Number of the Participants who use Multimodality on Facebook.**

It is noticeable from the pie chart above that the majority of the informants (90.9%) use multimodal items while chatting with their friends on Facebook.

**Question 3:** mixing several modes of communication transmits more and clearer information than words alone.
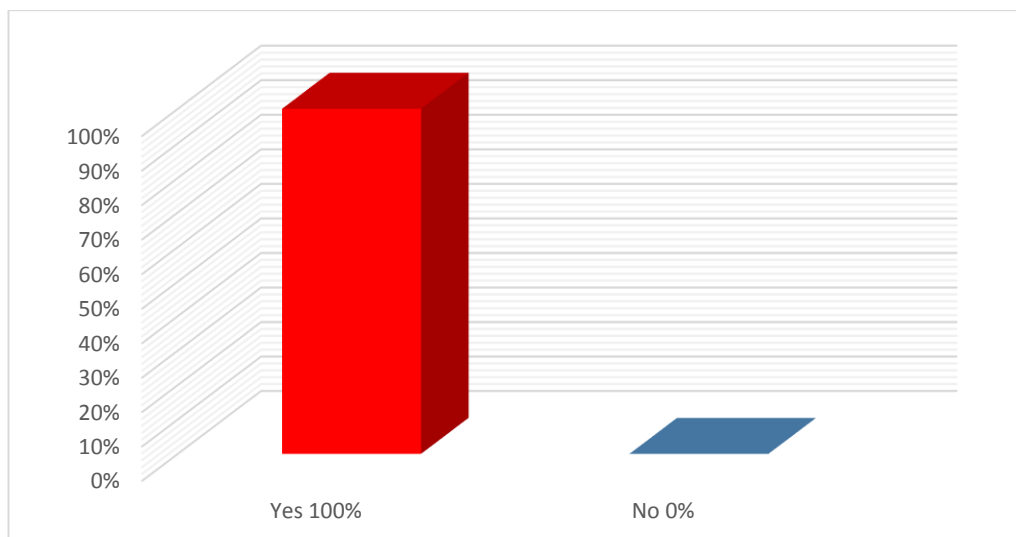
**Diagram 6: The role of mixing several modes of communication in transmitting clearer information.**

The respondents are asked in this question whether using mixed modes while communicating can transmit more and clearer meanings than using words alone. As a result all the informants (100%) think that mixing those modes will transmit clearer information to the receiver.

**Question 4:** On a scale of 1 to 10, does the multimodal language used on Facebook pave the way for users to communicate their thoughts/feelings easily?

| On a scale from 1 to 10 | 1/10 | 2/10 | 3/10 | 4/10 | 5/10 | 6/10 | 7/10 | 8/10 | 9/10 | 10/10 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Number of the respondents | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 5 | 8 | 3 | 3 |
| percentage | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 13.63% | 22.72% | 36.38% | 13.63% | 13.63% |

**Table 1: The multimodal language used on Facebook helps users to communicate their thoughts/feelings easily. This is highlighted on a scale from 1 to 10 according to the informants.**

As the table above shows, there are no marks under six (6). That is to say, all the respondents agree that multimodality helps the users to communicate easily and this is strongly

highlighted by the average mark which is (7.86/10) obtained by adding all the marks given by the participants then dividing it on the number of the participants (22).

**Question 5:** How often do you use emoticons while chatting with your friends?
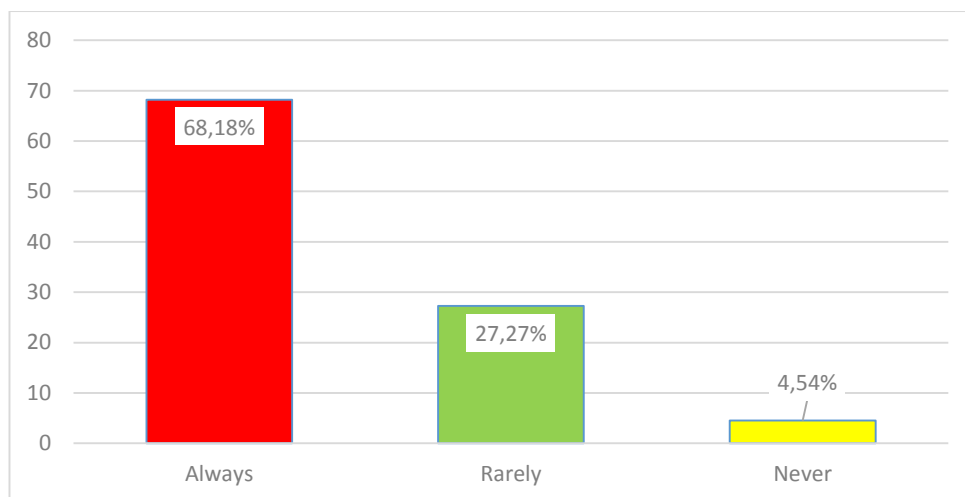


**Diagram 7: The Frequency of Using Emoticons on Facebook while Chatting.**

The figure above shows that most of our respondents (68.18%) tend to use emoticons always while chatting with their friends on Facebook.

**Question 6:** The role of emoticons in terms of representing/reflecting the users' current mood.
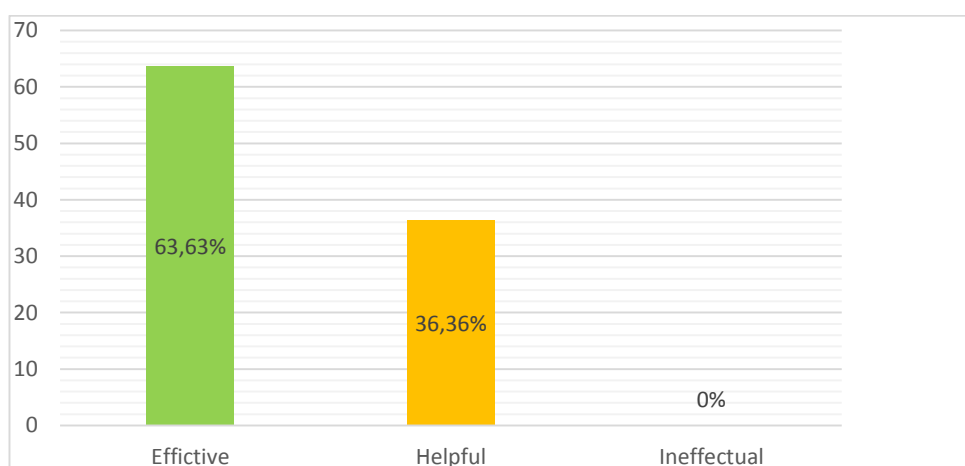


**Diagram 8: The Respondents' point of View towards the Use of Emoticons in Terms of Reflecting/Representing the Users Current Mood.**

The diagram above highlights that none of the respondents considers emoticons as ineffectual in terms of reflecting the users' current state of mind, but most of them (63.63%)

consider emoticons effective in terms of reflecting the users' current mood. (36.36%) of the respondents think that emoticons are helpful in representing the users' state of mind.

## 4.3 Data Obtained from Facebook's Timeline and Posts Conversations

This section includes a set of screenshots that have been taken from Facebook accounts of several users. A noteworthy fact is that these screenshots have been taken after getting the users' permissions.

**a) Wall posts**



**Capture 1: Wall post that represents a mixture of words and images.**

This wall post taken from a Facebook account represents a multimodal document composed of a mixture of both words and images. The user has described in few words what the picture deals with.

**Capture 2: Screenshot of a wall post that represents a mixture of two modes of communication (image + text).**

The above item is a document that is composed of words and images. The user shows

the difference between those who work hard to build their country (those who are at the building

site) and the others whose job is destroying it (he pointed to them by "*hand raisers*").



**Capture 3: A document that shows an interaction in which a combination of several modes is used.**

The item is a multimodal document, since it is composed of texts, images and emoticons,

which represents the feelings of the users after realizing that their exams are very close.

**Capture 4: Wall post that represents the user's current feelings expressed by an emoticon.**

The user in this post on his timeline shows that he is feeling optimistic. In order to do

so, he used an emoticon.
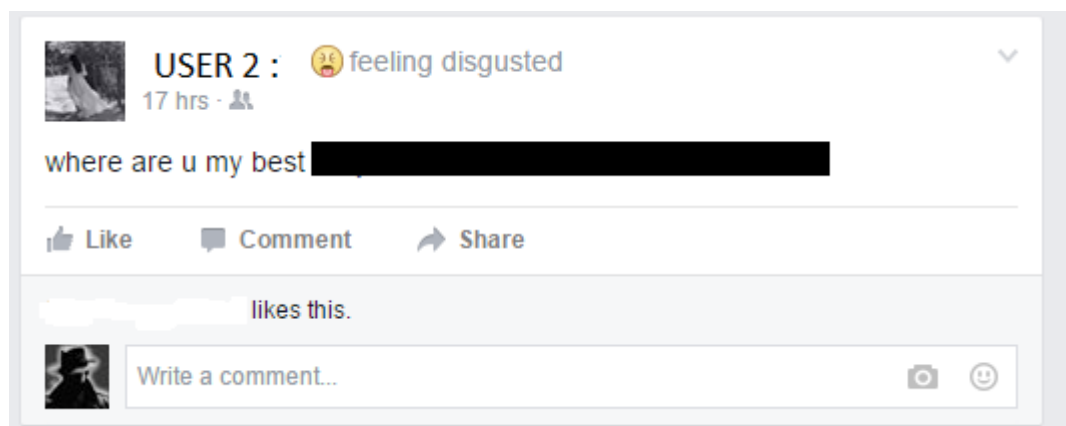


**Capture 5: A screenshot that shows the user's feelings.**

From the item above, we can notice that the user, who combined an emoticon with

words, is showing his feelings. The emoticon shows an unpleased face.

**b) Conversations**



**Capture 6: Screenshot that shows a conversation between two users on Facebook.**

The capture above is a screenshot that shows a conversation between two users on Facebook. This conversation highlights clearly a multimodal combination of words and emoticons.

**Capture 7: Image shows a group conversation on Facebook (Messenger).**

The image illustrates a group conversation on Facebook. The users named it "Birthday Dinner". It is a mixture of words and audio recorded file that guides one of the users to the birthday party.

## 5. Discussion of the Findings

## 5.1 Introduction

The collected data from the questionnaire and the description of some Facebook's wall posts and conversations is analysed and interpreted in response to the raised questions in chapter one (1). The obtained data is analysed mainly to determine its consistency with the suggested theories (see chapter one the theoretical framework). As it is pointed out previously, the main purpose of this investigation is to comprehensively examine whether the multimodal language used on Facebook acts as a communication facilitator. In this section the researchers discuss the data obtained from the questionnaire as well as the one gathered from Facebook's wall posts and conversations. Finally, it is worth mentioning that the data gathered from the questionnaire is discussed in **Discussion A**, and that of Facebook's wall posts and conversations is discussed in **Discussion B**.

## 5.2 **Discussion A**: Analysis of the information obtained from the questionnaire

### 5.2.1 Section one: Facebook usage.

From the statistics obtained from question (1), it is obvious that the use of Facebook became of a great importance in people's daily lives. The second part of this question aimed at eliciting a base of knowledge about the period of time during which those who answered the first part of the question by *"yes"* have been on that social networking platform. As it was mentioned before in the *results* section, most of the informants (95.46%) have been on Facebook at least for three years except one (4.54%) who started to use Facebook from less than one year. These statistics affirm that the majority of the respondents, after all this period of time on Facebook, are familiar with the use of multimodal items while chatting with their friends or while updating their timelines.

The second question aimed at knowing the number of times the informants log in to their accounts per week. The results collected show that (63.63%) of the informants involved in the research log in daily to their accounts, (22.72%) of them log in from two to three times a week and (13.63%) log in only once a week to their accounts. Statistics from *Newsroom.com* show that Facebook has more than 968 million daily active users. Our findings display that more than (60%) of the participants involved in the research use Facebook on a daily basis. Thus, it is worth saying that the use of this social networking site became an indispensable social activity used every day by millions of users. Huang. C. M; Chan, E and Hyder, A. H (2010: 57 cited in Vichuta Kruthern, 2012: 21) state that *"Facebook communication is a social activity in which interactions between individuals take place in a virtual environment".*

According to the results obtained, the majority of the participants (72.72%) spend two hours or more each time they log in to their Facebook accounts. The six remaining participants (27.27%) spend one hour at each log. These results show that the majority of second year Master students at the level of the English Department devote an important amount of time to the use of Facebook. Statistics from "*StatisticBrain.com"* state that the average time spent on Facebook by the active users is 18 minutes at each log.

In short, the use of Facebook for the majority of second year Master students is of a great importance since they spend a considerable amount of time on it.

The findings obtained show clearly that the majority of the informants (40.9%) have between 1 and 100 friends on this social networking site. It is worth mentioning that "*StatisticBrain.com"* states that the average number of friends for each user is 130 friends. Smith, A (2011) states that two-thirds of online adults use social network sites such as Facebook for the sake of maintaining relationships with their friends and family members. As a result, the friendship that exists on Facebook is nothing but an extension of the one that exists in the real world. Hence, Facebook permits the connection between those friends while they are not

together. In other words, it facilitates and reinforces the connection and interaction between individuals and helps to establish new relationships between users.

The participants are asked about their prime objectives of using Facebook in question (5). The results highlight that (86.36%) of the respondents use Facebook for communicative purposes as well as for the sake of being connected to the world and its happenings. Thus, interacting with both the users and the external world would be the prime objective of using Facebook by the second year Master students of the Language and Communication option at the English Department. Thus, encountering and using multimodal documents while interacting on Facebook is highly manifested in the lives of the informants because this site offers a huge amount of such documents. Even the (45.45%) of the participants who use Facebook for learning purposes encounter these documents that are used to facilitate learning or to illustrate written words. To sum up, whatever is the prime objective of using Facebook, there is no way to avoid the huge amount of the multimodal messages that exist on this online platform which are waiting for decryption.

The results obtained from question 6 show that (22.72%) of the participants have developed this eagerness towards the use of Facebook. 72.72% of the respondents are interested in using Facebook. The total percentage of the respondents who are enthusiastic/interested in the use of this online social environment is (95.44%). This may give us an idea about the value given to this networking site by our sample. This intense of interest is the result of the different services offered by Facebook to its users, and of the easy and different ways that can be used to connect people.

**5.2.2 Section two: The use of multiple modes for communication on Facebook**

The use of multimodality on Facebook in order to communicate refers to the use of different modes of communication by users in order to transmit a message (thought, point of

view, feeling and so on). In this respect, almost all the respondents (77.27%) strongly agreed that multimodality is of a great importance and is highly manifested on Facebook.

In short, the implications of the findings indicate that Facebook's users find that the multimodal items such as images, voice recordings, videos and texts are manifested in Facebook. This goes hand in hand with David Crystal's argument (2001: 35) *"In virtual worlds, there are commands which allow people to express textually the emotion they feel, often with the addition of synthesized sounds and visual effects"*. This reflects the fact that multimodal items are very important while communicating via Facebook.

One aspect of Facebook's communication is the use of a mixture of different modes. In this respect, the findings show that the majority of the participants (90.9%) (See pie chart 4 in the Results section) tend to use a mixture of different modes on Facebook in order to communicate. Some of them have stated that the mixed modes are more expressive than single-separated ones. As a result, they make use of these mixed items in order to make the transferred message more explicit. They further stated that mixing multiple modes for communicative purposes is more interesting and productive. Nevertheless, a very small percentage of the respondents (9.09%) have disagreed with that. One of them believes that using words alone is simpler. He further claimed that writing (using the text mode) helps him to improve his language. The second one has stated that he does not use mixed modes because he is not using Facebook for communicative purposes.

Question (3) aimed to reveal the users' view point about mixing several modes of communication. As a result, all the respondents 100% (see Diagram 6 in the Results section) think that mixing several modes of communication will transmit clearer information to the receiver than words in isolation. Some of the respondents have stated that words alone are sometimes insufficient in terms of transmitting what one wants to say and this matches perfectly David Crystal's (2001: 38) assertion *"written language has always been ambiguous in its*

*omission of facial expression and in its inability to express all the intonational and other prosodic features of speech"*. Furthermore the respondents stated that they make use of mixed modes when they do not find the appropriate words, the remaining responses have been almost the same where the respondents stated that mixing different modes for communication helps to transmit effectively more than words alone. This matches exactly Thibault's (2001: 294 cited in J. A Bateman 2008: 02) claim *"*[multimodal documents] *can apparently do much more than verbal language alone"*

In the fourth question the researchers have asked the respondents to give a mark on a scale from one (1) to ten (10) about whether the multimodal language used on Facebook facilitates communication. In this respect, all the participants have not given a mark under six (6). That is to say an average mark of 7.86/10 (see table1 in the Result section). This highlights that all the participants agree to a high extent that multimodality helps them to communicate easily.

The findings obtained from question 5 show that the majority of the respondents (68.18%) always use emoticons while chatting with their friends. They have stated that the reason for using emoticons is that the latter is a medium that helps to better communicate personal emotions and feelings. This matches with Danesi (2009: 110 cited in Tanimu Ahmed Jibril & Mardziah Hayati Abdullah, 2013: 201) *"*[emoticons] *can been seen to suggest a face expressing a particular emotion"*. Adding to this, some respondents have stated that one emoticon sometimes can summarize and/or clarify what they wanted to say in a whole paragraph. In other words, the ambiguous paragraph can be clarified by one emoticon. This goes hand in hand with David Crystal's (2001: 38) assertion "[one of smiley's (type of emoticons)] *role is disambiguation"*. He also claims (2001: 39) *"smileys are one of the most distinctive features of email and chat group language"*. Moreover some respondents have stated that without emoticons Facebook would be annoying and uninteresting. This explains that some

users consider emoticons an indispensable feature of Facebook's communication. On the other hand, (27.27%) of the respondents rarely use emoticons while chatting. Some of them have explained this rare use depending on the receiver. In other words, according to them, they cannot use emoticons with the higher social status persons for example they cannot use emoticons when they chat with their employers, teachers…etc. Others believe that using too much emoticons will affect the transmission and the understanding of the message. In other words, the receiver will not grasp too much. Some respondents just prefer words, the reason for which they rarely use emoticons. Finally, (4.54%) of the respondents have stated that they have never used emoticons because they do not use Facebook for communicative purposes.

The findings show also that the respondents have displayed a very positive point of view about emoticons; none of them consider emoticons ineffective in terms of reflecting the users' current mood. Eight (8) respondents (36.36%) see emoticons as helpful in representing one's mood and this complies with Amaghlobeli's claim: *"emoticons provide emotional information and represent facial expressions"* (2012: 350-351 cited in Tanimu Ahmed Jibril & Mardziah Hayati Abdullah 2013: 205). The remaining (14) fourteen (63.63%) of the respondents consider emoticons to be effective cues which reflect the users' current mood.

Therefore, it is obvious that emoticons give opportunities to Facebook users to share their state of mind with their friends, and this feature is not available in some other social sites. Moreover, it has been assumed that: *"until the advent of smileys otherwise known as an emoticons, individuals using electronic communication had no way to indicate the subtle mood change, they could not tell jokes, use irony […] or be sarcastic"* Godin (1993: 4 cited in Tanimu Ahmed Jibril & Mardziah Hayati Abdullah 2013: 202). All these findings and assertions show that: emoticons are so effective and of a great importance in terms of reflecting the users' state of mind.

## 5.3 <u>Discussion B:</u> Analysis of some Facebook's wall posts and conversations

Through the analysis of the questionnaire, we came to a conclusion that Facebook users tend to use a mixture of modes to express their feelings and opinions about political issues, current news…etc. In this connection, some Facebook's wall posts and conversations that are used in this investigation as a data gathering instrument are analysed with reference to some theories and arguments which claim that multimodal items make the communicating process much easier and clearer. To put it in simple words, the researchers are going to demonstrate the situation where users have chosen to use multimodal items to transfer a message, express their feelings and so on with arguments that their choice was the best in terms of both facilitating the transmission of what they wanted to say and being understood by the receivers.

Through the analysis of the questionnaire, it is noticeable that almost not all Facebook users make use of words alone when expressing their opinions on their timelines. Yet, they use multimodal items where two or more modes of communication are mixed, and this is strongly highlighted in both the questionnaire results (see results section, section two question 2) and the screenshots used in this investigation. The reason for which users tend to mix multiple modes while communicating is mainly due to the fact that users' fear of not being explicit. In other words, users fear that utilizing words alone will cause a misunderstanding of the message because of the ambiguity of the word-based message. David crystal (2001: 38) asserts that: "*written language has always been ambiguous*". The first screenshot used in this investigation is named <u>capture</u> 1 (see Results section). In the latter, the user has made use of a mixture of two (2) modes: images and written words. The images represent a comparison between a drawn baby body dropped by the sea and nobody is present there to pick it up and whales that came out from the sea with a group of people helping them to get them in water again. The user commented saying *"so called humanity in European countries, they have will to save the whale fish on the other hand no one there to pick up the body but capturing pic* [pictures] *is more*

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*important than capturing his body"*. The second screenshot is named <u>capture 2</u> (see Results section) where the user mixed written words and an image. The image is comprised of two (2) parts; in the left part raised hands can be seen, whereas the right part shows a group of workers in a building site. It is also noticeable at the bottom of the picture a sentence written in Arabic that we translated to English as follows: men with dirty uniforms are building the country, and men with clean suits are destroying it. The publisher commented saying: *"building the country was never by raising a hand but it is by hard work alone, hand raisers are destroying it"*. The third multimodal screenshot is named <u>capture 3</u> demonstrates a person standing and a huge sea wave approaching him. On the top of the picture, it is written: *when you realise how close exams are"*. On the right side of the screenshot we can see a number of comments pointed to as <u>sample 1</u> and <u>sample 2</u>. <u>Sample 2 </u>commented using an emoticon and words. In the latter he said: *"Omg!!* [Short form of Oh My God] *I'm done"*. <u>Sample 1 </u>commented back with a picture of a wondering person saying *"what am I supposed to feel?"*

As a result, all the users in <u>captures 1</u>, 2 and 3 have made use of a mixture of words, images and sometimes emoticons to strengthen what they wanted to convey; and they succeeded in doing so because if one tries to interpret the written words alone, meaning might be ambiguous. In other words, images in <u>captures 1, 2</u> and <u>3</u> act as clarifiers without which the meaning would be unclear. According to Derks et.al (2008 cited in Tanimu Ahmed Jibril & Mardziah Hayati Abdullah 2013: 203) multimodal items function as clarifiers in textual communication. However, such mixture (written words + images) allowed the users to transmit what they wanted to say in a clearer way as well as it helped the receiver to understand easily. In this respect Eibl-Eibesfeldt (1984 cited in Szilard Sallo 2011: 313) asserts that: *"images and words need mutual assistance because verbal and non-verbal messages are compensatorily interconnected and help maintaining the correct interpretation of the messages"*. The images utilized by the users in <u>captures 1, 2</u> and <u>3</u> made the meaning of the post simple and very clear.

Christophe Nyiri (2011: 59 cited in Szilard Sallo 2011: 313) argues that: *"words accompanied by images or even only images are more appropriate means to express our thoughts than just the mere words"*. This is because images can be interpreted easily and faster than words. According to Parkinson (2007 cited in Tanimu Ahmed Jibril & Mardziah Hayati Abdullah 2013: 203) who asserts that: *"human brain processes visual elements mainly images and videos 60,000 times faster than written texts; in other words, human brain decrypts images in an instantaneous method while language is decoded in a linear, chronological manner requiring extra-time to process"*. In other words, the importance of multimodal items such as images in terms of facilitating communication is that they can be understood even by an illiterate person but this is not the case with the written words that require a certain level of education. This is the case with the suggested screenshots. In capture 1: one may understand from the image and before reading the comments that the baby's body is abandoned and no one to pick it up even the one who took the picture, while everybody was there to help the whales to get back to water. In capture 2: one can understand from the image that a group of people who work hard in the building sites whereas the other group raise their hands and if one reads the comment he will understand more. The last image in capture 3 can be decrypted as a person approached by a danger, which is a huge sea wave, and by reading the written words one can understand that the publisher qualifies the exams by this wave which represents a danger for students; the standing person, is the student who is not well prepared for his exams.

To sum up, the wall posts represented in captures 1, 2 and 3 highlight that multimodal items work hand in hand and in a great harmony to facilitate the communication process on Facebook and written words alone can be abstruse and can cause ill-interpretation for the receiver. All this perfectly matches with the claims of David Crystal (2001: 38) and Thibault P. J (2001: 294 cited in J. A Bateman 2008:2)

Facebook timeline is used also to express the users' state of mind by making use of emoticons (see capture 4 and 5). This is mainly due to the efficiency of emoticons in reflecting the users' current mood. It is worth mentioning that all the questionnaire's respondents agree that emoticons are either helpful (36.36%) or effective (63.63%) in terms of representing the users' state of mind (see results section). This reflects Amaghlobeli's (2012: 350-351 cited in Tanimu Ahmed Jibril & Mardziah Hayati Abdullah 2013: 205) assertion that: *"emoticons provide emotional information and represent facial expressions"*. In the case of captures 4 and 5, it is obvious that both users have expressed their current mood using emoticons combined with words. The emoticons' role in the case of captures 4 and 5 is strengthening the written words. In both cases, the users write what they felt using textual mode combined with emoticons to strengthen what they feel about a given issue and facilitates the receivers' interpretation. According to studies conducted on the roles of emoticons in textual communication, emoticons are capable of strengthening the effect of an unwritten message, and emphasize a meaning and interpretation of a given message and equally written messages. (Walther, P. J and D'Addario, P. K Tanimu Ahmed Jibril & Mardziah Hayati Abdullah 2013: 203). Moreover, in a study carried out to investigate the non-verbal communication functions of emoticons in computer mediated communication Lo S. K. (2008: 595-597 cited in Tanimu Ahmed Jibril & Mardziah Hayati Abdullah 2013: 203) concluded that frequently when internet users come across texts without emoticons, they find it difficult to perceive the precise emotion and the attitude expressed.

To sum up, emoticons play a crucial role in reflecting the users' current mood on Facebook. Moreover, before the invention of emoticons, internet users have had difficulties to express their emotional feelings and they had no way to indicate their state of mind. It has been assumed that: *"until the advent of smiley otherwise known as an emoticon individuals using electronic communication had no way to indicate their subtle mood changes, they couldn't tell*

*jokes, use irony [...] or be sarcastic"* Godin (1993: 4 cited Tanimu Ahmed Jibril & Mardziah Hayati Abdullah 2013: 202). As a result, it is clear that emoticons were basically invented to enhance online communication by facilitating the process of expressing one's feelings and emotions. Hence, emoticons facilitate communication and reflect the users' mood.

Finally, as we came across some Facebook conversations we have noticed that some Facebook users mix different modes of communication while chatting with each other. Capture 6 suggests a mixture of emoticons and written words that work simultaneously to facilitate the receivers' interpretation and to reinforce the meaning of the written words. In this respect, Rezabeck & Cochenour (1998: 201 cited in Tanimu Ahmed Jibril & Mardziah Hayati Abdullah 2013: 202) argue that: *"emoticons are incorporated as visual cues to augment the meaning of textual messages"*. Capture 6 highlights also the way the user combined emoticons with text while chatting with his friend. This multimodal combination made the conversation more attractive and eye catching. It is noticeable that the receiver showed a positive attitude reading the multimodal message; he said: *"where did you get those really cool smileys?"* The effectiveness of this combination was claimed by Mitche (1986: 13 Tanimu Ahmed Jibril & Mardziah Hayati Abdullah 2013: 203) *"using visual cues combined with the text gives an added positive attitude than text only"*. Capture 7 shows a group conversation on Facebook in which the users utilized a mixture of written words and an audio-recorded piece during their interaction.

By mixing these two modes of communication (written and spoken words), the sender has transmitted a clear message in which he showed to his friend directions to the birthday dinner place. One can understand from this conversation that the sender could not indicate the directions to the receiver in written form for fear of being misunderstood, thus he made use of a file in which he recorded vocally the directions. Thanks to this file, the receiver perceived the birthday dinner place, this is seen in his answer: *"thanks, see you there"*. In other words, the

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sender has succeeded in transmitting his message and helped the receiver to get the directions easily by utilizing the voice recording item. In short, the incapability of written words in indicating the directions made the voice recording file the most suitable way of guiding the receiver. Hence, P Thibault (2001: 294 cited in J A Bateman, 2008: 02) states that: *"they* [voice recordings] *can apparently do much more than verbal language alone".*

## 5.4 Summary

The analysis of the data collected made it possible to understand that the multimodal language used on Facebook facilitates communication. It confirmed the idea that each mode of communication transmits a given meaning and the combination of several modes permits the receiver to get more information from the sender. I.e. multimodal items transmit more information than written mode does. Finally, even though some respondents limited the role of emoticons but none can deny the fact that they reveal the users' state of mind as well as their own feelings.

# 6 General Conclusion

Social networking sites are considered as the new environment in which individuals interact with each other. Interactions that take place on Facebook are based on the use of multiple modes of communication such as texts, images, videos, voice recordings, emoticons and many other documents. The use of Facebook, as one of the hundreds of social networking platforms, has a variety of goals and objectives. The main aim of this study is to explore the efficiency of the multimodal communication used on this social networking site for interaction. In other words, this study is an attempt to understand whether mixing several modes of communication while chatting on Facebook facilitates communication between users or not; and whether combining a variety of modes can transmit a clearer message than utilizing written words alone. Adding to this, the work has sought to discover how often second year Master students in Language and Communication option do use emoticons while interacting on this social networking platform, and if the use of these emoticons can help Facebook users to express their current state of minds and emotions.

The researchers, in *The Review of the Literature* section, have presented various terms and issues related to language, communication, multimodality and online networking platforms as well as a description of the chosen theoretical framework. The methods and techniques used during this study to collect data and analyse them have been described in the *Methodology Section*. It is worth mentioning that data have been collected through questionnaires submitted to second year Master students (Language and Communication option) in the Department of English at Mouloud Mammeri University of Tizi Ouzou, as well as selecting random timeline posts and Facebook conversations that have been used mainly to assure and illustrate the responses obtained from the questionnaire.

The results gathered from the questionnaire and the analysis of timeline posts as well as some conversations, confirm that the concept of multimodality is highly manifested on

Facebook since this latter encompasses a variety of modes that can be used either when communicating and interacting with other users or when expressing thoughts and ideas on timelines (while updating the user's status). Hence, it has been noticed that the use of multiple modes during interactions on Facebook or when the user wants to show his/her current state of mind is really effective and helps the user to transmit a clearer message. Thus, this variety of modes facilitates the communication process between the users.

The participants who answered the questionnaire have claimed that multimodality has a great importance in Facebook. Moreover, the findings of both the questionnaire and the data extracted from Facebook (conversations and wall posts) show that emoticons are considered to be an effective tool (mode of communication) that helps the users to express their state of mind and reflect their mood. James Simpson (2011: 668) claimed that: *"communication is multimodal; [...] and many of the contemporary written language cannot be adequately understood unless we look not just at language, but also at images, layout, typography and color"*. In this respect, the present work has succeeded in proving that the concept of multimodality is highly manifested on Facebook and that using a variety of mixed modes facilitates the communication process on this social networking site. Thus, each mode completes the other and adds extra-information to the receiver of the message. Emoticons on the other hand are representations of the current mood of the user.

## Recommendations for Further Research

The main aim of our research is to find out whether the use of multimodal items while communicating on Facebook can facilitates the communication process or not, and if the use of emoticons can reflect the current mood of the users. Thus, this work could not cover all the aspects and issues related to both multimodality and communication on social networking sites. Hence, other studies can be conducted either by using the same research tools and questions in other settings, or by adding other research tools and elements to the current work in order to

further the results and broaden them. Other researchers can include the notion of style and its importance in decrypting images on Facebook or on any other social networking platform. It is worth mentioning that the notion of style is a manner in which a semiotic artefact is produced, it indexes social categories such as provenance, class and profession. It indicates also individual lifestyle, identities and values. (Theo Van Leeuwen, 2005: 287)They can also investigate how multimodality enhance the cross cultural ties via Facebook platform and how the latter facilitates the process of cross cultural exchanges.

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## Appendices

## Appendix one: The Students' Questionnaire

The present questionnaire aims at collecting data for a research study which investigates the efficiency of using multimodal language (verbal language, images, emoticons, videos…etc.) on Facebook. The respondents are assured that this questionnaire will serve academic purposes only.

Thank you for your precious help

*Section one:* Facebook usage.

**Q1**: Do you have a Facebook account?    Yes ⬜         No ⬜

If yes, how long have you been using it approximately? ……………

**Q2:** How many times do you log in to your Facebook account?

   a)  Daily          b) 2-3 times a week          c)  once a week

**Q3:** How much time do you spend on Facebook each time you log in?

   a)  One (1) hour                    b)  two (2) hours

   C)  three (3) hours                  d) more

**Q4:** How many friends do you have on Facebook?      ………………..

**Q5:** What would be the prime objective of using Facebook? (You can tick more than one option)

- To keep one's self updated with the current news of the world e.g.  Events, crises, sports, and last inventions….etc.

- Communicative purposes

- Learning purposes

- Just for fun

**Q6:** Which of the following terms would best describe your reaction towards the use of Facebook?

- Enthusiastic

- Interested

- Indifferent

- Not interested

***Section two:*** the use of multiple modes for communication (texts, images, emoticons, videos…etc.) on Facebook.

**Q1:** Multimodality, which is: "the use of multiple modes for communication" such as: (texts, images, videos…etc.), is of a great importance in Facebook and is highly manifested in the latter.

- Strongly agree ⬜

- Agree ⬜

- Neither agree nor disagree ⬜

- Disagree ⬜

- Strongly disagree ⬜

**Q2:** When expressing your thoughts and feelings on your timeline, and when chatting with your friends. Do you tend to use a mixture of words, images, videos…etc.?

Yes ⬜          No ⬜

Why? ……………………………………………………………………………….

**Q3:** Do you think that mixing these modes of communication transmits more and clearer information than using words alone?

Yes ⬜          No ⬜

Why?…………………………………………………………………………………………

**Q4:** On a scale from 1 to 10, does the multimodal language used on Facebook pave the way for users to communicate their thoughts/feelings easily?............/10.

**Q5:** How often do you use emoticons which are: "string of keyboard characters such as: smiley☺ , winkey ;) …etc." while chatting with your friends?

Always ⬜               Rarely ⬜               Never ⬜

Why?.............................................................................................................................

**Q6:** How do you consider the use of emoticons in terms of representing and reflecting the user's current mood?

a) Effective        ⬜

b) Helpful          ⬜

c) Ineffectual      ⬜

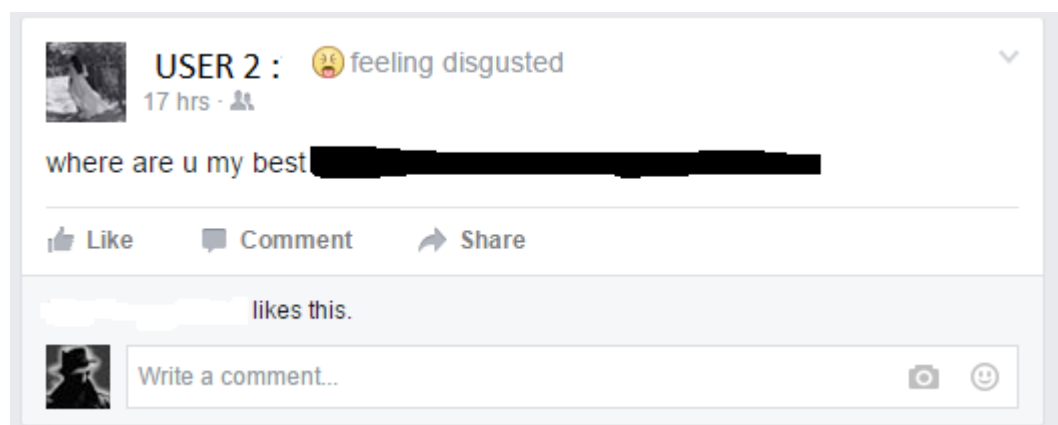## Appendix two: Facebook's captures



**Capture 1**



**Capture 2**

**Capture 3**



**Capture 4**



**Capture 5**

**Capture 6**



**capture 7**