

Intertextuality in micro-blogging

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1. INTRODUCTION

This essay is about intertextuality in micro-blogging, it is focusing on Facebook status updates. More exactly one person's statuses from 13.54 1.3. 2009 to 9.3, a point when I asked the permission to use them in this essay. This is total 21 status updates (appendix 2), 41 comments from which 17 (41%) is made by the status update writer, and 13 "I like this". This essay will focus more on status updates than comments. Status update writer is a Finnish exchange student in Italy, I call her "Anna" in this essay. She was elected because she is using her statuses in many ways, e.g. telling what she is doing or has done, what she thinks about something or asking something. Essay examine statuses through text, context, language, narrative and discourse. The main focus is what one need to know to understand statuses completely.

2. DEFINITION OF TERMS

2.1. What is micro-blogging?

Micro-blogging is grown from blogging. Nowadays instead of using special blogging sites, people are using social sites, like Friendster, MySpace, Twitter and Facebook. This essay is focusing on Facebook and in there status updates which represents micro-blogging. Usually micro-blog's text can be 140 characters or less so it is even less than sms-message. One micro-blog is usually one sentence but it can also be a link. Links are usually to news or You Tube videos. Most common text is what the blogger is doing in that minute.

2.2. What is Facebook and status update?

Facebook was established on 4th of February 2004. Now Facebook employs more than 850 people and it has more than 200 million users. Facebook has grown rapidly, like on January it did reach 150 million users and now on April 200 million. (Facebook 2009.) Facebook is one of the many Social Networking Sites (SNS) and SNS have major role especially for youth, in maintaining their friendships (Steinfeld, Ellison & Lampe 2008, 435). In larger scale Facebook is a part of Computer Mediated Communication but it doesn't only restrict to computers because it can used with mobile phone, so it is better to talk that as a part of Technology Mediated Communication (TMC). To comparing traditional CMC, Facebook's information is not only created by author but also friends and applications. (Tong, Van Der Heide, Langwell & Walther 2008, 532). There is also term which is used side pair to CMC, Socially Interactive Technologies (SIT). SIT-research has focused on who is using technology and why. (Eldridge & Grinter 2001; Grinter & Eldridge 2001, 2003; Grinter & Palen 2002, cited in Bryant, Sanders-Jackson & Smallwood 2006, 577-.) In Facebook self-presentation is one of the main things, people can put there pictures, videos, audio, links, announce their favourite bands, movies etc., report their relationship status, comment another's things and report something in their statuses.

When we think about dialogue between statuses and comments it is always asynchronous communication because there is always delay between sender and receiver. This is typical for CMC but there is also synchronous communication like IRC. (Herring 1996, 1.)

Parks (2007, cited in Tong, Van Der Heide, Langwell & Walther 2008, 532) told an individual can maintain 10-20 close relationships. The total number of social relationships to

manage may be 150 (Dunbar, 1993; Gladwell, 2000, cited in Tong, Van Der Heide, Langwell & Walther 2008, 532). Walther, Van Der Heide, Kim, Westerman and Tong (2008, cited in Tong, Van Der Heide, Langwell & Walther 2008, 533) research's sample of Facebook users reported at one university student's had a mean of 246 friends, while another reported 272 friends (Vanden Boogart, 2006, cited in Tong, Van Der Heide, Langwell & Walther 2008, 533). This essay's character Anna have 330 friends. As we can see Facebook's friend amount is higher than person can handle. This will lead that people will keep contact only part of the Facebook friends. Anna's comment's and "I like this" we can see those were made only eleven different friend, so 319 Anna's friend did not do anything, in this eight day time period.

Facebook have privacy settings but the usual settings are that friends and school mates can see the profile. It could also be that only the user can see the profile or some of the friends could see only certain parts. It is up to the user decide, how open profile will be. (Zhao, Grasmuck & Martin 2008, 1823.) Definition of Facebook friends, Tong, Van Der Heide, Langwell and Walther (2008, 537) are saying mainly "friends" are acquaintance in real world, so friend in online isn't friend in off-line. Friends who can be the readers of the statuses, can also make comments about the topics. There is still need for former knowledge and capability to understand used language. These restricts some people to understanding status' information.

This essay focus on status updates and those intertextual characteristics, main question is what one need to know to understand statuses. People are using statuses many ways like asking, commenting, reporting and sharing links. In this essay status update and status words are used to mean almost same thing.

2.4. What is intertextuality?

Intertextuality (intertextualité) was introduced by Julia Kristeva in French language and it became fast widely used and abused. It means "the transposition of one or more systems of signs into another, accompanied by a new articulation of the denunciative and denotative position" (Roudiez 1980, 15). When studying the text as intertextuality, it is necessary to consider the text's culture environment and history. Need to ask questions, like how the surroundings have affected to the text but also how the text has affected to surroundings. (Kristeva 1980, 37.) Culler (1981) says that intertextuality demands attention to prior texts. The text is intelligent, when it has intertextual references. Intertextuality has two reference inputs first writer (first reader) and then reader (co-producer) (Still & Worton 1995, 2). Riffaterre's (1995, 56) definition of intertextuality is, one or more texts which reader must know to understand full meaning of the text. Nowadays intertextuality is umbrella for relationship between two or more texts (Duff 2002).

3. TARGET AUDIENCE

3.1. Text

In this essay text is approximately eight days of Anna's statuses. Statuses are telling about her life and thoughts about these days but statuses also have questions and predictions about the future. In these eight days Anna had few Finnish friends staying with her. Many statuses have comments made by Anna's friends and herself. Statuses are telling only part of life because in zero to six status updates per day is impossible to tell whole day's thoughts and experiences.

Reader's can usually understand Facebook statuses really good although, text is never complete. It always lacks some information which receiver has to fill. According to Cicourel (1969, cited in Halliday 1979, 60) in exchanging meanings people assumes that: 1. "interpretations of experience are shared" 2. There are principles how to select and organise meanings. 3. We agree what leave out from our communication and others can fill that in. 4. Words, words-in-structure and linguistic forms refer identically to past experiences.

Anna often made' assumptions that the meanings are shared, like "Anna and melancholic Finnish people. "My immortal." IN this Anna shares experience of song from Evanescence "my immortal" which is the reason why Finnish are melancholic or that Finnish are melancholic and listening music which suites the mentality. For Anna selecting statuses the most common thing is to talk about drinking and its affects. Four out of 21 Anna's statuses have direct references to alcohol. In Finnish context eight because e.g. "is still alive." and "fun evening " refers to alcohol or living after hung-over. Second most common topic is travelling, six statuses.

Anna usually leaves out from text's explanations, like Nightwish is a band and My immortal is Evanescence's song. She isn't usually telling exactly with who she is in these situations, like she is with Finnish people. Usually her friend's will know this information because she has talk about these people coming in IRC (Internet Relay Chat) or in real life. These people who were there also made five comments and four "I like this". Anna is using in her statuses words, like had and was which refers to past times and experience. One context for the word was "Anna had a fun fun evening in Venice. xD." Everybody who has been in Venice can share the experience of having fun in Venice but the reader's experience can be totally different to Anna's. Most of the Finns will read this that Anna has drunk a lot in Venice.

3.2. Context.

Everything what we do or say have a context, couple of these are cultural and accuring context. About Anna 's cultural context, she is originally from small town of west Finland. After high school she started her university studies in University of Turku, which is southern part of Finland and it is the oldest city in Finland. Last autumn she became an exchange student in Venice, Italy. She is now living with three Italian flatmates. Halliday (1979, 189) have said "... social context is predictive of the text." So about Anna's Facebook social context, who are her friends. Those consist of people from this small town, Italians, another exchange students and mainly friends from University of Turku. Of course there are also some random friends. We can see on the Facebook statuses which friends are targeted or if it is all, like "Anna has two free train tickets from Verona to Mestre. Somebody wants to visit Verona and Teatro romano with me next weekend?" This is obviously targeted to her friends in Italy. Drinking statuses are what especially Finns are interested.

Facebook and status updates are a context as themselves. It is specific and unique environment. There is certain amount of characters which you can write on one status update but there is also convention, like if the status update space isn't enough, one can continue it by commenting one's status. There is also convention that nobody writes there really personal stuff. Halliday (1979, 189) has said that context is a semiotic structure but this essay will not go any further with this idea except acknowledging it.

Facebook statuses can be read by going to somebody's "home page" or seeing them on the front page (see appendix 1) after you have logged in. Front page is only showing certain amount updates, like quiz results, pictures, statuses etc. So if you have lot of friends or you aren't really often on Facebook you have to click many times "older posts" button to see all updates, usually people do not do that so some update's can go unnoticed.

3.3. Halliday, field, tenor and mode

Halliday (1979) have analysed relationship between text and context through three terms, Field, Tenor and Mode. Field means, particular use and ongoing activity of language within the context (Halliday, McIntosh & Strevens 1964, cited in Halliday 1979, 61–62). In field the subject plays major role but also rules & procedures and rules & position. In a social context field is seen as a social process (what is going on) and is typically realised in functional-semantic component of experimental (Halliday 1979, 189). Language use can be seen in text and context chapters. The question, What is going on, is answered in narrative chapter.

Tenor tells us who is doing, this essay it is Anna or her friend. It also tells participants

relations, statuses and roles (Halliday, McIntosh & Stevens 1964, cited in Halliday 1979, 61–62). Tenor includes interaction between reader & text and relation between text & producer, like social distance, emotional and power. Tenor's typical Functional-semantic component is interpersonal. In social context tenor is looking social relationships, like who is taking part. (Halliday 1979, 189.) So what is the relationship between Anna and her friends. Anna has bigger status value on statuses and comments, because only she can update the status and remove comments. Anna is often also commenting another people's comments. Anna has roles as story teller, story's main character, commentator. Another people have reader–, side person– or just a commentator role but they can also start new story in commenting Anna's status.

Mode is targeting the question, how. It covers Humes' channel, key and target (Halliday, McIntosh & Stevens 1964, cited in Halliday 1979, 61–62). In social context mode of symbolic interaction is, how the meanings are exchanged. It has effect of the type or form of communication, choice of systems or codes and medium of communication. Mode's functional-semantic component is typically textual. (Halliday 1979, 189.) In Facebook status context this means how statuses are written and how the comments are made, focusing on textual meaning. This is handled in different chapters. As a channel Anna's friends prefer to use “I like this” over saying something which could be understood that way. There are 13 “I like this” and five comments which can be understand that way. Also to how this all is targeted to. Anna target is friends or just fragment of the friends. Anna's friend's target can be Anna or/and hers other friends.

3.4. Status' functions

Usual stuff to write on statuses is statements, like ”Anna thinks also that vampires and werewolves are so much better than men.” Statements can also tell what one have done, e.g. ”Anna thoughts that Mantova and Verona were beautiful!” Or what is doing ”Anna sings HIM with Kristiina. Great. ♥.” Statements can also tell about future, “Anna is going to have some jogging on her way to the railwaystation.” So statements gives information about what Anna thinks/does/have done/will do about something. Questions are used to demand information but this wasn't found on these 21 statuses. Demands were also lacking from these statuses. Offer was found, it have question form, ”...Somebody wants to visit Verona and Teatro romano with me next weekend?” When having nothing to say, symbols are used, like ”Anna ...”. Symbols can also be understood as a statement because those are always telling something, e.g. having nothing to say.

4. WHY FACEBOOK?

4.1. Language

Anna is using in her status updates three "langue" system (Saussure 1974, 9–10), mainly English but also Finnish and Italian. And in English it is usually written speech language. But these aren't only langue systems because Facebook is also controlling status updates by limited character amount and status updates are always beginning with the name, like "Anna has to go back to the reality and do some learning." There is also tradition of using many symbols, like in all text base TMC. Some of these symbols are ..., smiles :) :D :P ;P xD :/ :(=) etc., ♥ and replace words with letters r = are, u = you, n = and etc.

Language defines the target audience when using Italy it is the Italians, Finnish is the Finns and English is all. But there are some exceptions like status "Anna va a Milano a domani." This have four Finnish comments and one "I like this". This is really common in English statuses, Finnish take them to their selves by commenting in Finnish, although Anna is trying to keep it sometimes in English by answering in English. English language isn't a problem to Finns and they are using it really often but there is probably something to do with Finnish shame of using their language skills, although skills are really good. Finns prefer to use Finnish as always as they can, like commenting on "Anna wants to go to Mantova and see Nightwish 30.3. Sounds so cool! ♥." This have two comments in Finnish. There is also some statuses focused to Finns but they are in English and then commenting in Finnish is more natural, like "Anna has the worst hangover ever!" This is because Finns are really often discussing and planning their hung-over's like this status have three "I like this and ten comments, all are from Finns and in Finnish.

Saussure (1974, 122–124) suggests that sentences get their meaning by syntagmas. It means that word have the meaning by precedes and/or follows something. Giving example "Anna thinks that it's impossible to be unhappy in Italy." If we only take one word, like unhappy, we will not know the meaning of that. Only the words before and after can explain its full meaning. With symbols its different situation because one symbol has its own meaning, like ♥ or :).

4.2. Need to know about cultures

A social reality or a culture itself have a meanings, semiotic construct, language is only one part of it. (Halliday 1979, 2). Statuses have also many things which aren't universal knowledge like drink

called Spritz, if you do not know what is it you will miss part of the meaning in the status "Anna has had a lot of fun these days. :) (and lot of Spritz)." Without knowledge of really popular Finnish heavy metal band Nightwish you will not know what Anna wants to see in Mantova in a status "Anna wants to go to Mantova and see Nightwish 30.3. Sounds so cool! ♥." Without geographic information about Venice surroundings, it will be unclear that Mestre is sub-urban to Venice and it is the place where Anna lives. It has been in status "Anna has two free train tickets from Verona to Mestre..." It is noticeable when one represents two cultures there is an audience which cannot understand every reference, unless they are Finnish and have visited Anna in Venice. Those can probably understand most of the statuses.

4.3. Discourse

Communicating through Facebook it is possible to affect many people, directly Anna can affect to 330 of her friends but these can affect to another people and so on. Another words Facebook communication has power and it has particular way of communicating, it could be said that Facebook have its own discourse. Statuses always starts with own name and space and statuses have limited space. So Facebook has power over the writer. Also Facebook is particular cultural institution, it is serving its users because when it has users it can sell advertisement space.

One of the questions, is it possible to write something inside also another institution like communicate inside Facebook with our family with friends? According this essays material it is possible to communicate with inside another institution but Facebook is higher in hierarchy because there are this restricting element, like character amount. Anna's question "Somebody wants to visit Verona and Teatro romano with me next weekend?" is direct answer that you can communicate with different institution inside Facebook institution. Also like this Finnish drinking culture statuses and comments it can be send that it is usually another institutions which determines what can and cannot be put on Facebook, also what is too personal to put on Facebook.

4.4. Narrative

This essays narrative eight days of Anna's statuses on Facebook. Because of Facebook status is always beginning with Anna, The story is told in third person form. Even then the subject is the same person, who is telling the story. Anna's story began when Anna has nothing to say, "...". It continues by jogging to railway station and having fun in the evening. On next day it is back to reality and studying. The evening is nice with Finnish friends, she even sings HIM with one of her

friend. Later on the evening Finns are melancholic and listening "my immortality". After this appears list of drinks and mention that conversation is going on. Minute later comes even bigger list. Day after is statement, "Anna have had a lot of fun these days. :)." After two minutes it is completed with "(and lot of Spritz)". Off course after evening of heavy drinking, "Anna has the worst hangover ever! " Five hours after beginning off hung-over, life is winning. In the evening Anna has travel plans Mantova, Verona and Milano. Following days she is executing these plans and then statement "...it's impossible to be unhappy in Italy. " Then the story jumps and Anna says "Anna thinks also that vampires and werewolves are so much better than men. " It follows with a statement and question "Anna has two free train tickets from Verona to Mestre. Somebody wants to visit Verona and Teatro romano with me next weekend?" And then status went back for planning the future "Anna wants to go to Mantova and see Nightwish 30.3. Sounds so cool! ♥. "

It is also possibly see the narrative in smaller case. Story begins when status is updated, middle is when people are reading and commenting it and the end is when status is again updated. For example story began with "Anna has had a lot of fun these days. :) (and lot of Spritz). " After these it's middle section where two people comment this status, "One Spritz, two spritz.... ööööö monta spritz :D" and "WUT WAT eikai?" and the end is when status is updated next day. The next day usually have some links with previous day, like "Anna has the worst hangover ever!" This has explanation in previous day, intertextual link to another story.

The texts show clearly that the story is told by a Finn, because all the mentions of alcohol and drinking. Even the hung-over are told. In comments it is shown, how much Finns are discussing about alcohol. Twenty–three comments of forty–one are related to alcohol. Usually comments are about the quantity of drinks.

Ideologies behind these status updates could be, Finnish people cannot know how to have fun without drinking. After drinking, you will have hung-over, if not it will come later. Italy is fun place and it is impossible to be unhappy in there. Finns are melancholic and listened melancholic music.

5. CONCLUSIONS

Anna's status update's has shown that one need know many kinds of information to fully understand them. One of the main things are to understand the language and culture (or cultures) where the blogger is coming from, like it is needed to know the popular culture characters, like the bands and their song's names. Also is needed know the bloggers background and living surroundings, like coming from Finland and living in Mestre. The use of different language than English restricts friends to understand and participating discussion. It was also shown that status updates can be used many ways, e.g. offers and making statement. Analysing narrative, it became clear it is needed to know prior (or priors) status updates to understand full meaning of the current one. Syntagma did focus that it is necessary to look whole sentence not only one word.

Culture has really big effect what things blogger and commentators are writing about. Facebook status update culture is the main restricting culture and its conventions are used. Finnish culture is causing that drinking and hung-over are really popular topic. The exchange period is making that travelling is happening more often than usually so it is also really popular topic.

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Appendix 1: Facebook home page,

http://creative.ak.facebook.com/ads3/creative/pressroom/jpg/n_1236200348_Homepage5.jpg

facebook Home Profile Friends Inbox 46 Logout Search

Welcome, Christopher. You have 1 friend request and 3 other requests.

News Feed Family Closest Friends Facebook San Francisco, Stanford Product More Applications Photos Video Notes Links More

What's on your mind? Share

Post Link Add Photos Add Video Write Note

Ezra Callahan is stuffed
7:15pm • Comment • Like

Augustin Bralley → Mary Beth Cox : Hello, Mary Beth! Just sendin the loove!!
9:17pm • See Wall-to-Wall

The New York Times

U.S.: Obama's Speech to Congress

TODAY
Brett Erlich's birthday • Send a gift

HIGHLIGHTS
Photo Reynolds - ..and the...
Visra Vichit-Vadakan is tagged.

Sponsored
Connect With More Friends
Share the Facebook experience with more of your friends. Use our simple invite tools to start connecting.

Photo Mobile Uploads
2 friends like this.

Video Internationalization ~...
3 friends commented on this.

Note free crap
Kate Sehon Aronowitz likes this.

Appendix 2: Anna's status updates

Anna ...

Anna is going to have some jogging on her way to the railwaystation.

Anna had a fun fun evening in Venice. xD.

Anna has to go back to the reality and do some learning.

Anna and Finnish guests and some nice evening...

Anna sings HIM with Kristiina. Great. ♥.

Anna and melancholic Finnish people. "My immortal."

Anna , wine, beer, friends, conversations...

Anna , wine, beer, vodka, bacardi, coke, bacardibreezer, friends, conversations...

Anna have had a lot of fun these days. :).

Anna has had a lot of fun these days. :) (and lot of Spritz).

Anna has the worst hangover ever!

Anna is still alive. :O.

Anna and tomorrow Mantova, friday Verona and Saturday Milano.

Anna e oggi Mantova, a domani Verona e a sabato Milano.

Anna thoughts that Mantova and Verona were beautiful! Tomorrow Milano!

Anna va a Milano a domani.

Anna thinks that it's impossible to be unhappy in Italy.

Anna thinks also that vampires and werewolves are so much better than men.

Anna has two free traintickets from Verona to Mestre. Somebody wants to visit Verona and Teatro romano with me next weekend?

Anna wants to go to Mantova and see Nightwish 30.3. Sounds so cool! ♥.