

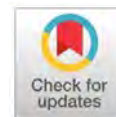
“Don’t, never no”: Negotiating meaning in ESL among hearing/speaking-impaired netizens

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ABSTRACT

Negotiating meaning can be difficult for the deaf-mute people when being in the hearing and speaking world. Social media offers a platform where the deaf and the mute can engage in meaningful conversations among themselves and between people with hearing and speaking abilities. This paper determined the paralinguistic signals that the deaf-mute students employed in their Facebook posts. Using descriptive-qualitative research design, the study analyzed the lexico-semantic features of their language and how both paralinguistic and linguistic aspects contribute to the negotiation of conceptual meaning. The results revealed that paralinguistic signals are found in emojis, punctuation mark repeats, onomatopoeic spelling, accent stylization, intensification, hashtag and combinations. These signals function to give emphasis or intensify intonation. An emoji is the predominant paralinguistic signal used to compensate the lack of words to express feelings. In addition, distinct lexico-semantic features observed in the data include the incorrect position of words, incorrect lexical choice, redundancy, and insertion of prepositions or the lack thereof. These features do not carry a specific function in negotiating meaning because understanding the semantic content of a message is possible either with or without comprehension of the syntax. Semantic comprehension is not expected to help in the acquisition of the syntactic system because it may be accomplished through the recognition of isolated lexical items and interpretation of non-linguistic cues. Finally, paralinguistic signals and computer-mediated communication for the deaf-mute across generation and race can be considered for future directions of the study and appropriate technological tools may be designed to automate errors found in the social media posts of the deaf-mute.



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1. Introduction

A deaf and mute person communicating with another person of the same disability, either schooled or trained, has no problem expressing his thoughts as they can understand each other. Research shows that when a person without a hearing or speaking disability tries to communicate with a deaf-mute, he or she faces communication issues that either one or both can try to use many ways to express intended meaning; otherwise, negotiate meaning. Brice and Strauss (2016) postulated that the deaf are often faced with the additional challenge of managing these adaptations in a hearing world, where communication and access to information, especially about their social world, are incomplete at best and nonexistent at worst.

The deaf uses strategies to reach his or her communication goals or targets. These strategies can be observed in the use of sign language, body language and facial expressions. All over the world, a widely used type of sign language is the American Sign Language (ASL). The National Institute on Deafness and other Communication Disorder (NIDCD) of the United States espoused that American Sign Language is a complete, natural language that has the same linguistic properties as spoken languages, with grammar that differs from English (NIDCD, 2019). ASL is expressed by movements of the hands and face. It is the primary language of many North Americans who are deaf and hard of hearing and is used by many hearing people as well.

In recent years, studies have shown that deaf-mute people have wanted to integrate fully into the larger society (Marschark, M., & Knoors, H., 2012) by communicating, for example, to accommodate an audience (Pizer, Walters, & Meier, 2012). Cabalfin, et al (2012) reported that “the Deaf community remains widely marginalized from the mainstream of society, lagging behind recognized disadvantaged groups such as peasants, urban poor, fisher folk and indigenous peoples”. For many years, deaf-mute people have struggled to find their place in a hearing world. One of these struggles is that deaf people cannot easily be discerned from the hearing majority so they can choose to assimilate and try to blend in with the speaking and hearing community.

In trying to assimilate, they would use platforms that can make them blend with the mainstream and where they can communicate like people without disabilities. One of the platforms is the internet, specifically the social media. Saunders (2016) posited that scholars in Deaf studies also took notice of how the Internet and social media interacted with the lives of Deaf people in society, academic environments, the workplace, and at home. Moreover, communication recently has evolved from personal to virtual interaction and which interest many researchers especially in the field of language (Quindala & Omongos, 2018). Communication can be done through social media. There were numerous channels that Deaf-mute used to express or convey their messages. Deaf-mute individuals might lack the ability to hear and speak, but these disabilities could not hinder them from learning how to communicate in social media where most of the individuals nowadays are inclined to.

This study sees the need to explore the mainstream media, that is Facebook, used by majority of the people to communicate including the deaf and the mute. The relevance of the study lies in understanding the paralinguistic and linguistic aspects of how the deaf-mute communicate as they try to negotiate meaning when communicating within their peers in their community. This study, therefore aimed to contribute to the existing literature in the field of language strategies and language negotiation of the deaf-mute. The result of the study shall serve as basis of information as well as motivation for creating instructional materials for the students with special needs, especially in line with UNESCO’s “Education for All” campaign (UNESCO, 2015)

1.1. Research Questions:

The study sought to identify the paralinguistic signals found in the Facebook status of the Deaf-mute individuals. Also, it sought to recognize the peculiarity of their language through examining its lexico-semantic features and analyzed how these paralinguistic and linguistic features function as to how meaning is negotiated in the Filipino Deaf-mute community on Facebook. Specifically, these questions guided the study:

1. What paralinguistic signals are found in the Facebook status of the Deaf-mute individuals?
2. What are the lexico-semantic features of the Deaf-mute language?
3. How does each paralinguistic and linguistic feature function in the negotiation of meaning among the Deaf-mute speech community?

1.2. Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

This study employed *Grice’s Theory of Conversation* which was deliberated in Thurlow and Poff’s (2013), the *Three Key Pragmatic Maxims of Text Message Style*. From these theory and maxims, the categories for the patterns of paralinguistic signals were based on the related studies of Elizondo’s

(2011): *Not 2 Cryptic 2DCode: Paralinguistic Restitution, Deletion, and Non-standard Orthography in Text Messages* and Balgoa and Embradura’s (2014): *Restitution in Computer-mediated Communication: Encoding Paralinguistic Signals in Facebook Posts*. These studies postulated that like in text messaging, Facebook users apply paralinguistic restitutions in their posts to compensate for the loss of paralinguistic signals such as facial expressions, gestures, and pitch, among others. These paralinguistic signals can be classified into the use of (1) emoticons, (2) punctuation mark repeats, (3) non-conventional spelling, (4) Onomatopoeic Spelling, (5) Markers, and (6) Combinations (Elizondo, 2011).



Fig. 1. Venn Diagram showing the Theories Grounded for the Paralinguistic Restitution of Deaf-mute FB Users

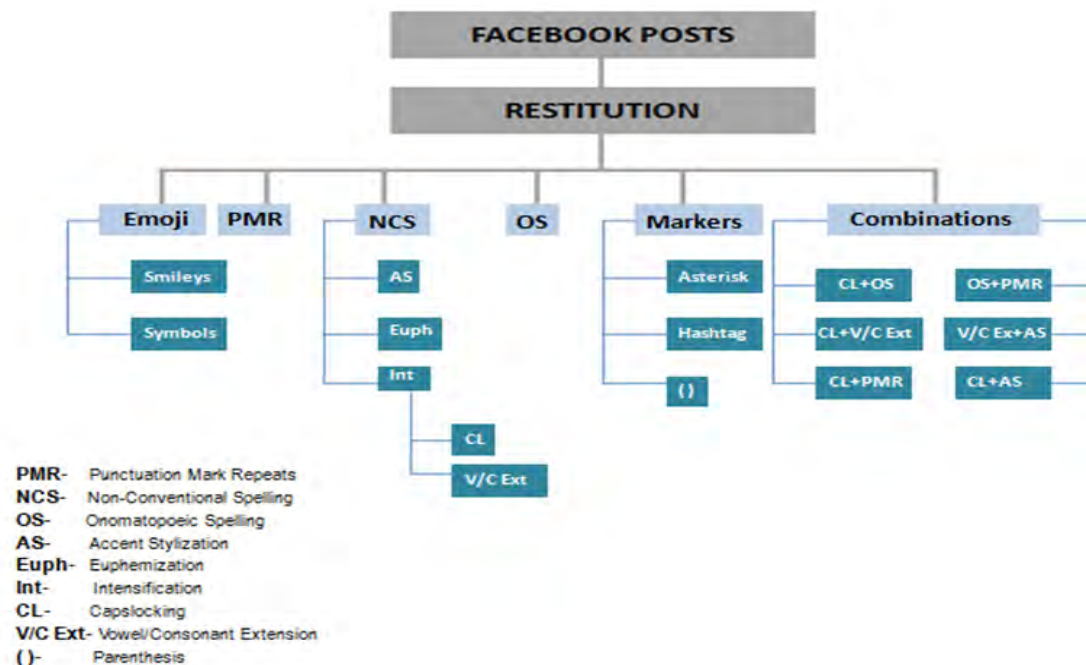


Fig. 2. Schematic Diagram showing the categories of the Paralinguistic Signals

The following paralinguistic signals are conceptualized and defined in the said previous studies and were employed in the present study.

1. **Emoticons** are facial expressions represented by a combination of punctuation mark, letters or other characters, that when viewed resembles a facial expression or, more rarely, gestures (Amaghlobeli, 2012).
2. **Punctuation Mark Repeats** which are used as markers on when to stop, to pause, and to emphasize, among others. Aside from facial expressions and gestures, people speak with sound level variations; both tone of voice and rate change; while punctuation repeats are used to achieve similar effect
3. **Non-conventional Spelling** deals with accent stylization, euphemization, and intensification. Elizondo (2011) argued that non-conventional spelling as a paralinguistic cue is used largely because people wanted to embed their accent in written discourse, for accent stylization. (A) Accent stylization refers to words that are spelled in accordance with informal regional speech; e.g. "wanna/want", "gonna/going to" and "dat/that" (Crystal, 2008 cited in Balgoa & Embradura, 2014); (B) Euphemization uses non-standard spelling to weaken or neutralize a somewhat strong and harsh word; (C) Intensification intensifies normal text by (a) Vowel/Consonant Extension or (b) Capslocking.
4. **Onomatopoeic Spelling** endeavors to reproduce sounds by means of written language;
5. **Markers** comprising (A) **The Asterisk (*)** which functions to signal an action being done or present a character in a post; (B) **The hashtag (#)**, used to prefix names of channels and groups for convenient searching and to group related subjects and Facebook later adapted its use; (C) **Parentheses ()** are used to include material to de-emphasize something or include otherwise that which does not normally fit into the flow of your text; and,
6. **Combinations** occur when two or more paralinguistic cues are employed simultaneously. Under the use of combinations, we have (1) Capslocking and Onomatopoeic Spelling, (2) Capslocking and Vowel/Consonant Extension, (3) Capslocking and Punctuation Marks, (4) Capslocking and Accent Stylization, (5) Onomatopoeic Spelling and Punctuation Marks, and (6) Vowel/Consonant Extension and Accent Stylization, among others.

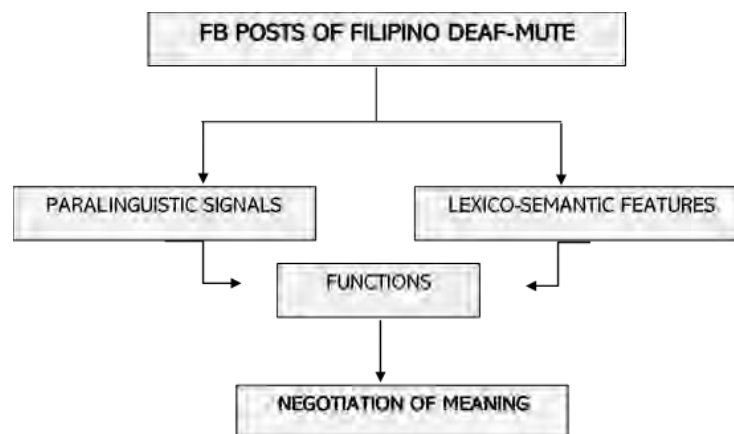


Fig. 3. Fig. 3. Conceptual Framework in Analyzing the Negotiation of Meaning of the Deaf-mute FB Users

1.3. Filipino Deaf-Mute and their Language use in Computer-Mediated Communication

There are only several recent milestone studies on the visual-spatial language of the Filipino Deaf community (i.e., Filipino Sign Language or FSL) initiated by Filipinos themselves. In the seventies and eighties, publications by North American writers, drew largely from American Sign Language (ASL, n.d.) and artificial sign systems to publish highly prescriptive material. The earliest descriptive works are comprised by the pioneering research of Liza Martinez on the sociolinguistics and structure of FSL beginning in the early nineties. To date, the most comprehensive linguistics reference was initiated by Martinez herself (Martinez, 2012). Past studies in De La Salle University, for example, with potential contributions to sign language recognition and its applications are strongly motivated by the presence of a large tertiary level program for Deaf students in its academic system.

Sign linguistics research in the country is at a young state that Filipino Sign Language (FSL) has only recently begun to be documented. The Philippine government is yet to officially recognize FSL in the language domains of schools, courtrooms, the workplace, hospitals, and mass media. In the community, both deaf and hearing Filipinos may still disregard FSL as an authentic linguistic entity and that despite the considerable research efforts for nearly two decades, the language and its users remain at the periphery of Filipino society. The Philippine Deaf Resource Center espoused that language policy is virtually non-existent for sign language use (PDRC, n.d.). Thus, this study also showed their use of language specifically in written communication and computer-mediated communication.

Hearing loss or deafness does not affect a person's intellectual capacity or ability to learn. However, as quoted in the study entitled *Deafness and Hearing Loss: A publication of NICHCY disability* (2010), "children who are hard of hearing or deaf generally require some form of special education services to receive an adequate education". In addition, people who are hard of hearing will find it much more difficult than those who have normal hearing to learn vocabulary, grammar, word order, idiomatic expressions, and other aspects of verbal communication. Laugen, Jacobsen, Rieffe, and Wichstrøm (2017) claimed that children who are deaf or hard of hearing (DHH) are at greater risk for developmental delays and difficulties than their peers with typical hearing (TH) For children who are deaf or have severe hearing losses, early, consistent, and conscious use of visible communication modes (such as sign language, fingerspelling, and Cued Speech) and/or amplification and aural/oral training can help reduce this language delay. By age four or five, most children who are deaf are enrolled in school on a full-day basis and do special work on communication and language development. It is suggested therefore that teachers and audiologists to work together to teach the child to use his or her residual hearing to the maximum extent possible, even if the preferred means of communication is manual. People with hearing loss use oral or manual means of communication or a combination of the two. Oral communication includes speech, lip-reading, and the use of residual hearing while manual communication involves signs and fingerspelling.

One focus of researchers has been the syntactical structure of sentences written by D/HH students. Regardless of students' educational placements, researchers have reported positive changes in measures of syntactical structure with increasing age; however, deaf students or sign-only children make slower progress than hearing children (Yoshinaga-Itano & Snyder, 1985, in Bornstein 2018; Antia, 2020), and the frequency of production of several syntactical structures differs significantly from that of the hearing comparison group (Yoshinaga-Itano et al., 1996, as cited in Bronstein, 2018). In addition to the syntax of written language, authors have found that Deaf students exhibit difficulty with the cohesion of ideas in writing. Yoshinaga- Itano and her colleagues (Yoshinaga-Itano et al., 1996, in Bornstein 2018) analyzed the written essays of Deaf children and reported that they were able to communicate main ideas but did not elaborate or provide details in their writing. The text they produced had few redundancies and a few cohesive devices to tie text together. Maxwell and Falick (in Hartman, Nickolarakis & Wang, 2019), examining written essays of Deaf-mute students between grades four and eight in special schools, found that although both Deaf-mute and hearing students increased their use of cohesion as grade level increased, the Deaf-mute students' lexical cohesions consisted mainly of word repetition. These authors also found that the deaf students' compositions were less frequently conceptually linked than those of hearing students. Therefore, it is important to consider where we have been, what progress we have made in these domains, and how they fit with the reality of deaf children today most especially that some of these individuals are also engaging themselves in communicating into social media and other online activities, also known as Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC). The Internet becomes a platform for communication and exchange of ideas, social and cultural values, political beliefs, expressing opinions and attitudes, and promoting civil activism (Kostic & Vilic, 2016). The Internet is indeed an interactive and dynamic world that it has enormously and significantly changed our behavior in communication (Balgoa & Embradura 2014).

1.4.Negotiation of Meaning

Ellis (2008) regarded negotiation as a kind of discourse management strategy that can be exploited to address both communication and linguistic issues. Accordingly, he distinguished between negotiation of meaning and negotiation of form and described the different objects these two strategies

were targeted at: while negotiation of form attempted to resolve the linguistic problem in the speech of a learner, negotiation of meaning was “the collaborative work which speakers undertake to achieve mutual understanding when there is some kind of communication problem” (p. 224). More recent accounts for negotiation of meaning, on the other hand, have clearly included the grammatical aspect of the target language and affirmed its positive role in promoting learners’ L2 development. For example, Long (1996, in Cook 2015) defined negotiation of meaning as a process in which learners made adjustments to linguistic form, conversational structure, message content, or all three until an acceptable level of understanding was achieved. Swain (1995, 1998, in Loewen & Sato, 2018) attributed the positive role that negotiation of meaning played in promoting incidental acquisition of certain features of L2 to the condition in which learners attended to both the form of L2 features and the meaning they convey.

1.5. Paralinguistic Restitution

Numerous studies of deaf students’ attainments in the acquisition of English language and literacy skills have been conducted over the past century and showed that most prelingually deaf children enter adolescence and young adulthood without having achieved proficiency in English. Balgoa and Embradura’s (2014) argued the non-verbal or paralinguistic cues complement oral communication. There are many possible ways a certain message could mean depending on the varieties of non-verbal cues that accompany it. Areas such as syntax, phonetics, among others have already been widely studied for some decades that they have been considered as “central” in verbal linguistics, and there has not been much focus on non-linguistic forms of communicative behavior, posited by Crystal (cited in Schuller, 2013). Crystal adds that paralinguistics serves to be a bridge of these aspects that are considered before as mutually exclusive.

Paralinguistics is the part of communication outside of the words themselves – the volume, speed, intonation of a voice along with gestures and other non-verbal cues. According to Elizondo (2011), “paralinguistic restitution consists of ways of ways of writing that compensate for the lost prosodic and visual cues found in face-to-face interaction”. It may be considered as a non-standard or informal way of written language but it does the job of communicating significant social information to be decoded the way the encoder intended it to be because these are “socially shared meanings” (Lea & Spears, 1992 in Elizondo, 2011). In the world of deaf-mute individuals, they needed to be understood specifically their language, much more their paralinguistic restitution in today’s technological world because that is where they are heard and given attention for. Considering recent research and fully recognizing the historical background of the language of these individuals, the researcher sought to describe their language through analyzing its and paralinguistic and linguistic aspects—identifying the paralinguistic signals and the lexico-semantic features of their language.

1.6. Lexico-Semantic Analysis of Sign Language

In the Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Linguistics (n.d.), lexical semantics is defined as the study of word meaning. Descriptively speaking, the main topics studied within lexical semantics involve either the internal semantic structure of words or the semantic relations that occur within the vocabulary.

2. Method

This study used a descriptive qualitative research design as Facebook posts are qualitative in nature. Anchored upon two previous studies of Elizondo (2011), Balgoa and Embradura (2014), and the theoretical lens of Thurlow and Poff (2013), the study used these frameworks in qualitatively analyzing the paralinguistic signals and linguistic features of status and comments of the deaf-mute. Conducted in the Special Education (SPED) program of Maranding Elementary Central School in the province of Lanao del Norte, Northern Mindanao, Philippines, the researchers verified and validated the informants’ identities by conducting an interview with the grade level adviser. Since personal information were confidential, the researchers sought permission from the informants’ parents. Then the researchers visited their classroom and explained the purpose of the research.

The collected materials are screenshots of the students' Facebook statuses ($n= 45$) and 74 screenshots ($n=74$) of comments or a total of 119 screenshots. No consideration was given for a specific theme or discussion in these statuses or comments for the collection of the corpus. The FB statuses were written in English only and a few *Sinugbuanong Bisaya* (the Mother Tongue). However, considerations about matters of privacy and free access on their posts were disregarded as Facebook allows its users to choose who can see their posts based on their personal preferences. Moreover, to protect the subjects of the study, their names were not revealed.

Following Balgoa and Embradura's (2014) criteria consideration, a status should have 1) presence of unusual typography not seen in formal texts; 2) use of either English and Binisaya languages in such posts; 3) Facebook post must be seen with a significant amount of unusual typography at an initial glance, and 4) post must be recent. Each FB post was thoroughly analyzed according to categories from the given existing study. A frequency count was applied to count the percentage of the patterns found in the posts. The researchers categorized the patterns or the paralinguistic cues from that of Elizondo's (2011) and Balgoa and Embradura's (2014) studies. Additionally, the researchers analyzed and observed how the Filipino Deaf-mute Facebook users negotiated meaning through examining the lexico-semantic features present in their FB posts and comments.

Finally, to stylize the presentation and analysis of the corpus, this example coding is used:

[P1S4] means Person 1, Status 4.

[P1CS4] means Person 1 Comment to Status 4.

Each referent for a particular post or comment was given a specific code for easy understanding.







3. Findings and Discussion

3.1. Paralinguistic Signals used by Filipino deaf-mute Facebook Users

3.1.1. Emoticons/Emoji

During the analysis of the corpus, a significant number of occurrences of the use of Emoticons/Emoji have been observed. It has a total of 133 occurrences against the total of 263.

Table 1. Emojis/Emoticons found in the data

Reference	Example Posts	Emojis/Emoticons	Texts
[P1S4]			I'm very over seriously sun
[P1S9]			I'm I can't laugh stop very my classmates. Happy fool's day...haha still seriously not don't hurt idk
[P3CS6]			Kulit block mmessage blue always...ugly Me idk accept bad you not good

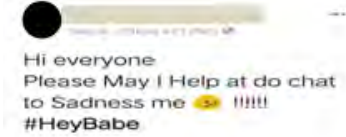
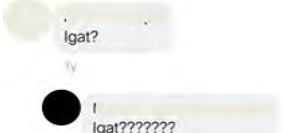
In the examples shown in Table 1, P1S4 used emojis like *sun*, *broken heart*, and *hearts* to describe his/her situation and feeling. Also, still P1S4 used the *heart* emoji to express and represent his/her feeling in a certain situation. On the other hand, P3CS6 used a lot of *angry* emojis to retribute and express his/her anger. This shows that aside from representing facial expressions, Filipino Deaf-mutes

normally use emoticons/emojis in representing objects, feelings, people, color, among others. The role of emoji in the first, second and third example, is to add a feeling or emotion toward the communicative act as a whole (feeling or emotion in parallel to the communicative act). This is in corroboration to Yus's study (2014) on the 8-function economy of emojis.

3.1.2. Punctuation Mark Repeats

In Computer-mediated Communication (CMC), researchers noted Punctuation Mark Repeats as one of the many paralinguistic cues used by the majority of people. In the case of the Filipino Deaf-mute Facebook users, from the analysis of the corpus, it has the second most number with a total of 35 occurrences observed.

Table 2. Punctuation Mark Repeats found in the data

Reference	Example Posts	PMR	Text
[P4S3]		!!!!!!	Hi everyone Please May I help at do chat to sadness me
[P3CS6]		?????	Igat [a flirt]

In the examples shown in Table 2, P4S3 repeatedly used exclamatory points. An exclamation point is a punctuation mark that expresses a strong emotion. In the second example from P3CS6, repetition of the question mark is observable which entails that something about the comment is uncertain or not understandable by the owner of the status/post. Corroborating the study of Balgoa and Embradura (2014), the data revealed that just like how the speaking and hearing persons speak, the deaf-mute students also speak with varying degrees of emotions using repeated punctuation marks. In addition, Balgoa and Embradura (2014) posited that aside from facial expressions and gestures, people speak with sound level variations, the tone of voice changes, and the rate changes. For us to deliver these orally, we need punctuation marks to serve as our “markers” on when to stop, to pause, and to emphasize, among others. But Computer-mediated Communication (CMC), in its very nature, is written discourse. Since then, these typographical symbols have been used differently. However, there are instances that punctuation marks are just used as figurative expressions or markers but have no semantic role in their language.

The study shows a recurring pattern in the use of punctuation marks as a paralinguistic cue used by the Filipino Deaf-mute Facebook user observed below.

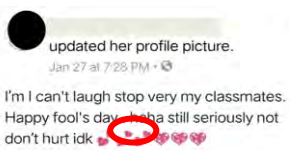
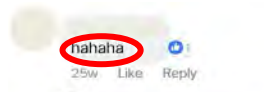
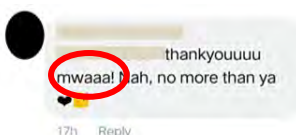
3.1.3. Onomatopoeic Spelling

Onomatopoeic Spelling ranked third with a total of 34 occurrences in the paralinguistic cues used by Filipino deaf-mute students. It endeavors to reproduce sounds by means of written language. The examples below show from *Person 1 (Status 9)* as well as its comment (also from another Deaf-mute Facebook user) that the word “haha” is also used by a significant number of Filipino Deaf-mute Facebook users to reconstitute the sound of laughter.

Data in Table 3 show the deaf-mute students' use of ‘haha’ and ‘mwaaa’ to express laughter and reconstitute the act of smooching or kissing. Balgoa and Embradura (2014) emphasized that either we are happy, frustrated, or angry---these can be expressed through sounds. In the case of the Filipino Deaf-mute netizens, they use their knowledge of sounds, because according to the Deaf and native ASL speaker, Michele Westfall, “Deaf people are not mentally blind to the concept of sound. Most of us can hear something, provided it is loud enough. There are other ways to listen, to collect information, to communicate and to learn, most of them do not require sound”. This is what happens in the use of

onomatopoeic spelling as a paralinguistic cue; a successful attempt to express sound features in a solely textual environment.



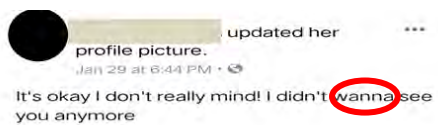
Table 3. Onomatopoeic found in the data

Reference	Example Posts	Onomatopoeic Spelling	Text
[P1S9]		haha	I'm I can't laugh stop very my classmates. Happy fool's day...haha still seriously not don't hurt idk
		hahaha	Why laugh you
		mwaaa	Thankyou mwaaaa nah, no more than ya

3.1.4. Accent Stylization (subcategory: stylized words)

Next to Onomatopoeic Spelling is Accent Stylization, with a total of 24 occurrences observed in the paralinguistic restitution of the Filipino deaf-mute netizens. It is a subcategory of non-conventional spelling as discussed in the Theoretical Framework of this study. It refers to words that are spelled in accordance with informal regional speech, for example, “wanna/want to”, “gonna/going to”, and “dat/that” (Crystal, 2008 cited in Balgoa & Embradura, 2014), shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Accent Stylization found in the data

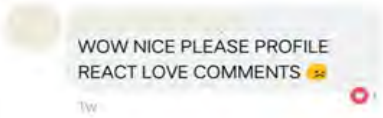
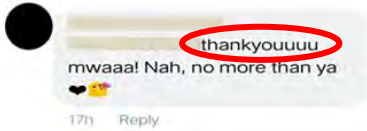
Reference	Example Posts	Accent Stylization	Text
[P1CS6]		sissy	I look like it so Pretty my sissy
		bro	Thank you my bro
[P2S7]		wanna didn't don't	It's okay I don't really mind! I didn't wanna see you anymore

From the data, it is noticeable that the words “sissy” and “bro” are stylized from the words “sister” and “brother”. In addition, the use of ‘wanna’, ‘didn’t’, ‘don’t’ in the second example from Person 2 (Status 7), shows a characteristic of non-conventional spelled words of *want to*, *did not*, and *do not*. This is seen as in corroboration to Elizondo’s (2011) finding that the use of non-conventional spelling like accent stylization as a paralinguistic cue is largely due to people wanting to inject their accent in written discourse. In this study, accent stylization is found as a discursive strategy that entails informality during a conversation with friends.

3.1.5. Intensification

Being the fifth most used paralinguistic cue in this study, with a total of 23 occurrences, intensification functions to intensify normal text by (a) repeated vowel/consonant or (b) caps-locking. The data showed a significant number of occurrences shown in Table 5.

Table 5. Intensification found in the data

Reference	Example Posts	Intensification	Text
[P1CS1]		Caps-locked	Wow nice please profile react love comments
[P3CS1]		Repeated vowel	Thankyouuuuuuu mwasss! Ha, no more than ya

In the first example, we noticed that all the words are written in capital letters (caps-locking). This gives an impression of loudness, emphasis, and importance to the text (Balgoa & Embradura, 2014). While in the second example, we notice that the phrase “thank you” is prolonged by repeating the vowel “u”. There is lengthening of the /U/ sound if we read it aloud because it was spelled to be pronounced in the same manner. In this sense, the phrase “thank you” is intensified using an informal spelling to compensate for the loss of sound in Computer-mediated Communication. The use of repeated vowels or consonants and caps-locking function to highlight important points that the deaf-mute wanted to emphasize.

3.1.6. Hashtag and Combinations

Hashtag, with 9 occurrences during the analysis, is a kind of marker used by the Filipino Deaf-mute Facebook users to help the readers to further understand what the writer is talking about. The occurrence of hashtag also aims to add intensity to the post. While Combinations are two or more paralinguistic cues used simultaneously. The occurrence of such is reminiscent of the co-temporality and simultaneous use of verbal and non-verbal cues (Kalman & Gergle, 2014). The example from P3S1 in Table 6 shows combination of Emoticons/Emojis and Intensification which implies that for a deaf-mute student to create a more expressive post, he or she tends to use more than one paralinguistic cue.



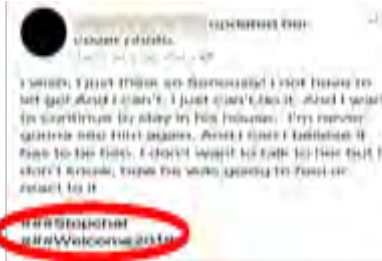
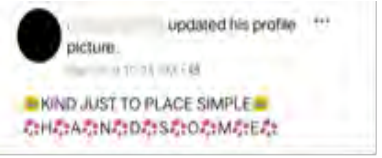
3.2. Lexico-semantic Features of the Deaf-mute Language

Filipino Deaf-mute language has its distinct features as discussed in the previous section of this paper. However, there is also a need to analyze these features in a different level of analysis especially in the lexico-semantic aspect of their language specifically in terms of the grammatical errors—syntactical and lexical found. In this study, the researcher observed the occurrences of lexical semantic features that are common in the Facebook posts of the Deaf-mute individuals who participated in this study. The features include:

3.2.1 Syntactic Errors.

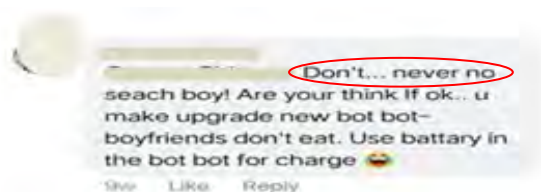
The English language follows a standard position of words in a sentence such as noun/subject followed by a verb and followed by an object or a compliment. In normal communication, the utterance “I can’t stop laughing” follows the order subject-verb-gerund which acts as a compliment. However, the sample excerpt “I’m can’t laugh stop” [P1S9] is an illustration that deaf-mute follows this order: **subject-initial verb-complement-main verb.**

Table 6. Hashtag and Combinations

Reference	Example Posts	Hashtag & Combinations	Text
[P4S5]		# and emoticons	I'm be happy so proud to smile your thank God of Blessed
[P2S6]		# and emoticons	I'm alone" I've never celebrated a Vaelntine's Day
[P2S9]		# and emoticons	I wish, I just think so seriously! I not have to let go! And I can't I just can't do it. And I want to continue to stay in this house..I'm never gonna see him again. And I can't believe it has to be him. I don't want to talk to her but I don't know, how he was going to feel or react to it.
[P3S1]		Emoticons combined with words	Kind just to place simple

3.2.2. Redundancy

Redundancy is a common feature in the language of the Deaf-mute from the data. Redundancy, generally refers to any feature of a language that is not necessary in order to identify a linguistic unit. Basically, it is the repetition of the same idea or item of information within a phrase, clause, or sentence as in the example “Don't never no”. The word ‘don't’, ‘never’ and ‘no’ are examples of negations, which is put together in a clause that makes them redundant. Findings corroborated Maxwell & Falick’s (1992) study showing that repetition happens in the language of those hard in hearing. It also corroborated the study of Yoshinaga- Itano and her colleagues (Bornstein 2018) that a few redundancies are found in dead-mute language.

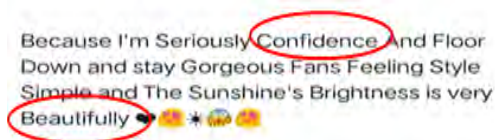


Another example is the use of “I'm I” which is redundant if read or written by normal speakers but for the dead-mute this may sound a normal way of saying something one would want to emphasize

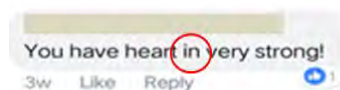
or make sure that he is understood. This corroborates to the point Ellis (2008) said on negotiation of meaning which is “the collaborative work which speakers undertake to achieve mutual understanding”. For the deaf-mute, this is their way of securing they are understood or that their points are “heard well”; thus, compensating the loss of prosodic cues and repeating the word with a slight modification is a way of “carry over a message: or what Elizondo (2011) calls as “to compensate for the lost prosodic cues”.

3.2.3. Incorrect lexical Choice

It was observed that the Deaf-mute exhibit more **incorrect lexical choice**. The performance of the deaf students is significantly below that of their hearing peers in terms of lexical and syntactic development at the sentence level. The example below shows the wrong use of adjective, confidence for confident, and the use of beautifully instead of beautiful.



Prepositions form a small but very important word class. In this study, the researcher found the deaf-mute students’ use of preposition, either lacking or inserted, is observable in their posts. For instance, the preposition ‘**in**’ should not be inserted in “*You have heart **in** very strong*”, instead, the sentence should be written like this: “You have a very strong heart”. Table 7 shows extracted samples from the data.



3.3. Functions of the Paralinguistic Signals and Lexico-semantic Features in the Negotiation of Meaning

By way of using paralinguistic signals in the FB posts, the Filipino deaf-mute netizens have shown that they are also capable of communicating the way hearing people do as evidenced in emojis, punctuation marks, stylized words, onomatopoeic spelling, intensification, hashtag, and the combinations of these signals. These paralinguistic signals contribute to extending the level of understanding in terms of how the deaf-mute negotiate meaning in Facebook. Some posts were difficult to comprehend but with the help of these paralinguistic signals, interpretations can be made easier, and comprehension can be facilitated. In this study, they function as facilitators of meaning through giving emphasis, intensifying intonations, among others.

Table 7. Grammatical Errors on Deaf-Mute People’s FB Posts

Incorrect Position of Words	Redundancy	Incorrect Lexical Choice	Insertions of/lacking Prepositions
“Please profile react love comments”	“I’m very over”	“You don’t ugly”	“...don’t love of you”
“why me send”	“I’m I”	“You are so beautifully”	“God of blessed”
“face cute”	“...seriously not don’t”	“seriously confidence”	“You have a heart in very strong”
“jacket blue”	“see not don’t never no”	“Yes, I’m are”	
“sunlight brighter”	“never not feeling”	“I am seriously”	
“style simple”	“you can’t never”		
“good very”	“not don’t understand”		
“style nice”			
“very you’re so pretty”			
“face gay”			
“I know yes”			

Moreover, in the linguistic aspect of the Deaf-mutes' negotiation of meaning, the characteristics of the posts revealed lexico-semantic features such as grammatical errors at the syntactical and lexical level. The posts were understandable despite that, either constructed in sentences or in fragments, they do not follow the standard rules of grammar but were recognizable by the help of lexical items perceived to be common among their population. The lexico-semantic features, which are the deficit in grammar--incorrect positioning present in their posts do not have a specific function in the negotiation of meaning for a reason that, according to Teng (2010), understanding of the semantic content of a message can be accomplished either with or without any comprehension of the syntax because it may be accomplished through the recognition of isolated lexical items and interpretation of non-linguistic cues or paralinguistic signals.

It is remarkable in the analysis of this study that Deaf-mute Facebook users exhibit paralinguistic signals which are also present in the computer-mediated communication used by hearing people. But one integral thing that is observable in this study was the deficiency in grammatical knowledge employed by the Deaf-mute Facebook users when it comes to written discourse. Writing is one of the most complex and difficult tasks for the challenged people like Deaf-mute. Several authors (Robinson & Henner, 2017; Yunbao & Huayin, 2008) corroborate to the difficulty that Deaf people have in writing English. The texts they produce have deficiency in cohesive devices to tie text together. Because of difficulty accessing and learning English on its syntactical and morphological structures, either auditorily or visually, they make numerous errors at the sentence level. In addition, because many Deaf have difficulty with reading, their exposure to models of good writing may be limited. This has to do with the study that typicality in the sign modality shows many of the same characteristics as linguistic deficits in hearing people. Deaf people often struggle with complex morphology; their lexical processing is less efficient (Pozos, et al., 2017) and that deaf people make slower progress than hearing people; however, there is little evidence that sign language interferes with the development of spoken language and, in fact, it may support spoken language development according to Yoshinag-Itano (in Sass-Lehrer, 2014).

Moreover, meaning is still negotiated and being responded by fellow Deaf-mute Facebook users as observed in the data gathered and despite that their syntactic skills employed in their comments did not conform to the standard rules of grammar. Evidently, commenters also committed syntactical errors in writing their comments but were still able to negotiate and being responded by fellow Deaf-mute. Interestingly, it demonstrated that this group of Deaf-mute who belong to a similar and familiar community, have understood each other. According to Teng (2010), comprehension represents the hypothesis that understanding of the semantic content of a message can be accomplished either with or without any comprehension of the syntax. Semantic comprehension is not expected to help in the acquisition of the syntactic system because it may be accomplished through the recognition of isolated lexical items and interpretation of non-linguistic cues. When comprehension takes place through a combination of semantic and syntactic processing, the linguistic characteristics of the input can become an intake, that is, comprehended language that holds the potential for developing the students' linguistic system.

To summarize, the written language of Deaf-mutes differs from their hearing peers on several dimensions. Their writing continues to improve with age. However, students with severe and profound hearing losses, like the informants of this study, remain considerably delayed when compared with their hearing peers and their use of the social media is a great equalizer as they tried to assimilate in communicating with anyone. It is then a common observation of the Deaf-mute Facebook users to have grammar which does not conform to the standard rule but is still negotiated because comprehension of meaning can function between this group of challenged individuals with or without the comprehension of syntax, which also means that paralinguistic cues and other features in their written discourse are essential in the negotiation of meaning.

4. Conclusion

The study sought to determine the paralinguistic and linguistic signals that deaf-mute students used in their Facebook posts as they negotiate meaning. The Study found that most predominantly used paralinguistic restitution of signals include Emoticons/Emoji, Punctuation Mark Repeats, Onomatopoeic Spelling, Accent Stylization, Intensification, Hashtag and Combination. These linguistic units have distinctive functions as the Deaf-mute tried to understand and to be understood.

Just like normal hearing people, they also restituted facial expressions through emoticons or emojis. As Balgoa and Embradura (2014) stated, this explains why emoticons seemed to complete the message of a text: the person encoding an emoticon/emoji is or would be expressing the same facial expression in Face-to-Face interaction for a certain situation because emojis represent the feelings, place, object, etc. It either complements or supplements what the text cannot supply.

In addition, Yoshinaga-Itano (in Bornstein, 2008) argues that Deaf-mute Facebook users make slower progress than hearing people and the texts they produce have a deficiency in cohesive devices to tie text together. In relation to this, there are recurring patterns of lexico-semantic features in terms of grammatical errors which were found in the language of the Deaf-mute in Facebook. These include (1) incorrect position of words, (2) redundancy, (3) incorrect lexical choice, and (4) insertion of prepositions/lacking prepositions. However, meanings were still negotiated and being responded by fellow Deaf-mute Facebook users as observed in the data. In addition, the study has shown their deficiency in grammatical knowledge, that is, not conforming to the standard rules of grammar; however, this does not hinder comprehension since the understanding of the semantic content of a message is possible with or without any comprehension of the syntax. Semantic comprehension is not expected to help in acquiring the syntactic system because comprehension may be accomplished through recognizing isolated lexical items and interpreting non-linguistic cues.

In recommendation, the study hopes that future researchers can generate more categories or themes on the functions of paralinguistic and linguistic features in the negotiation of meaning by and between Deaf-mute individuals. For future directions of the study and for researchers who would want to replicate this study, the following may be considered: (1) Paralinguistic signals and computer-mediated communication for the deaf-mute across generations and races can be considered for further study; and, (2) Collaborators or researchers from other fields can design appropriate technological tools that can automate found errors in the posts of the deaf-mute in social media in order to mainstream people with special needs.

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