

The reader in networks: transformations and approaches

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Abstract

This text tries to approach the reading in the timeline in social networks, like a specific act of generation and transformation. From the specificity of reading and its support in social networks such as synchronous exercises, through writing as a component and the vision of genetic inheritance as a condition of transmission and expression of content. Its final intention is to connect the reading format in social networks as a core of participation, which must be analyzed with the magnifying glass of the narrative to overcome the obstacles that may imply an argumentative structure.

Key words: Timeline, reading, writing, memory, social communication, social networks

*“As soon as information is acquired,
it is very rapidly replaced by still newer information”.*

Marshall McLuhan

Reading is a verb with so many definitions and appreciations as uses. From the recording and coding action of a device in a supermarket, to the concentrated exercise that can be glimpsed in the figure of Fantin-Latour’s sister-reader (Fantin-Latour, 1861). The gestures are read, the images are read, the documents are read, the theories are read, the data is read, the lines are read, the readings are read (Record) codes, read (live) stories.

Thus, by the way, the panorama that allows us to define what is to read seems unpractical and we are not even trying the possibility of the metaphorical, but of the merely circumstantial and semantic. The RAE (Real Academia Española) also does not give many lights or, at least, maintains the wide range of meanings. In his dictionary, he goes from “passing the view” to “discover by clues” when he tries to define the verb that questions us (RAE, 2014).

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And it is not worth stopping even in the definitions of reader or reading because the tendency is similar and the intention of this text is to refer to the synchronic action and not to 'The Reading', which is probably the subject of more ahistorical studies.

The theme of time

It would not be wrong to rethink the old fear of Socrates in our era of computer encyclopedism, when we both rely on the memory of computers. The emergence of Gutenberg's mobile type printing press was also met with hostility in some quarters, with arguments not unlike those put forward five centuries later against television, namely that individual reading would isolate and segregate the citizens of its community and that this separation could be dangerous for them and for their social cohesion (Gubern, 2006, p. 11).

It is important to look at a key focus: reading is something that happens over time. Although its own functionality is the support of history (along with writing, which is its inevitable counter from intentionality), the exercise is always active and occurs in the time that unfolds what is read.

However, beyond reading as an active phenomenon, it is necessary to speak about what is read. We could make an extensive tour of the various technologies and supports that have been the object and substrate of reading throughout history, but for practical purposes of this text we will concentrate on two. On the one hand the printed book, as symbol more reputed and respected, as more complete product and more flexible concept; And on the other, the timeline in social networks, as the most popular format to read in our days.

Let's start with differentiation: What is different about books? Books are diachronic while reading as an act (like reading) is synchronous. Instead, the timeline on social networks is synchronous, like the act of reading itself. The book does not change and human interaction with it does not materially transform or modify it. It can remain motionless under a table leg or on a shelf until the termite or dust destroys it. When we put it into action, when we read it, we give life to it from its personal representation, but leave it intact. On the other hand, the single contact, the single story shared with the timeline, modifies it, transforms it and makes it changeable, mobile. It is a medium that is transformed by our interactions and interests and that displays different contents at different times. It always changes, it always transforms, in front of our eyes or in its symbiotic structuring with the connections that it establishes with our surroundings, the interests of the platforms and all type of relation that delimits what we see in a given moment.

This situation determines a distance in the experience that should remain in the analysis of the same, since, if we judge the reading in social networks (which is mediated by different devices and logics) with the concepts, precepts, needs and characteristics that are attributed to the printed book, it will be impossible an encouraging panorama for any look.

It is there where a relevant feature of the medium of reading appears in these new supports: its mobile condition, it is more its condition of life. If we recognize this first characteristic in the

artificiality that configures reading in social networks and its behavior (as a way of proceeding) we find the possibility of conceiving its operation as that of an organism.

And if we consider that their existence is shaped by experience, we understand that it is an overcoming of the structural vision of the text that is classically a selection of the thought of the experience and now is the experience itself. The text read is the result of a cross of conditioning factors that configures it. As Greg Marra, product manager for the News Feed area on Facebook says, "The News Feed (or Timeline) is made by you ... try to show you the things that may seem more interesting to you, in a Very personalized system (...) we try to make users take control" (Herrera, 2014). Marra says there are endless signs that tell Facebook what to show someone on their timeline, including relationships with other users, the subject of a clicked content, the time it takes to read a story that is found in facebook, the visit of a certain profile or the activity of his friends in a certain publication. "We learn from what you have done in the past and try to learn quickly from the things that interest you" (Herrera, 2014).

Our actions determine what we read, which includes the action of writing. Writing also in its broadest meanings leaves the boundary of the merely instrumental to become an exercise of selection and decision about the world. His look, in this text, is limited to his ability to contribute to and co-construct the reading experience in social networks. As Franco points out: "The most common behavior is to hunt information and be brutal in ignoring details (...). Thus, Web content needs to support (...) access to information: search and consumption. The texts need to ... give the answers that the user seeks" (s.f., p. 37).

Shortness as key

In this sense, in almost any manual that we review or in the articles and recommendations that make the experts, the suggestion is to write short and little.

En la investigación 'Eyetrack III' del 2004, realizada por *Poynter* en asocio con el *Estlow Center for Journalism & New Media* y la firma *Eyetoools* se encontró que 'los párrafos más cortos se desempeñaron mejor que los más largos. Nuestros datos revelaron que las historias con párrafos cortos recibían el doble de atención visual que aquellos con párrafos más largos. El formato de párrafos largos parece desestimular su observación (...) los usuarios solo leían el primer tercio de los titulares' (Franco, s.f., p. 27).

If we refer to this, writing little on the Internet, and particularly in social networks is the key to getting read. This speaks directly, if you align the perspective, of reading rather than writing: because it is about defining which format of content is more attractive: Twitter allows up to 140 characters, Facebook privileges content with fewer words, Instagram, Snapchat or Pinterest do not require letters. This implies that reading on social networks is an intentional multimedia experience, integrating various elements and privileging the moment of linking with content. Where it was thought that to read better it was important to concentrate and isolate

themselves, social networks define that the key is the multiplicity of connections and stimuli tied to a single experience, thus implying a detriment to the quality and quantity of content.

This means that reading and writing, as an integrated symbiotic system, are determined by the way in which we have made use and compression of what we live in social networks. These are not radical determinations (because the algorithm of social networks is influenced by multiple intentions) but of conditioning factors that are configured in the participatory articulation of acts of reading and writing. As Franco points out, the various readings claim the communication in networks, after all the implications that can derive from the “task of finding information”:

- Explore: general search for information that is not triggered by a particular goal.
- Find: users are looking for a specific fact, document or piece of information motivated by a specific goal
- Recolecting: search for multiple pieces of information, thanks to the reader is open to any answer, is not looking for one in particular (Franco, s.f., p. 43).

Inheritance and interaction

In Plato’s *Phaedrus*, Theuth, the inventor of writing, maintains that his invention will make men wiser and more memorable, for it has been created as a way of counteracting oblivion, as a drug of memory and wisdom. King Thamus, with whom he converses in this section, maintains the contrary and affirms that those who learn letters will not become wiser or more memorable, but the opposite: they will forget more easily and become apparent sages, Knowledge from outside and not from within.

Likewise, the so-called “new technologies” are accused of condemning the human being to the fragmented, volatile and ephemeral thought that seems to be announced by King Thamus in Plato’s *Dialogue*. From this perspective any logic of memory processing, looked at from another, is doomed to be wronged: the minstrel will condemn the reader / writer of papyri, as the reader of papyri would condemn to that of books and the latter will do the same with the reader in screen.

However, analogies and referencing have allowed connections between technologies to enable a generation to inherit criticism from the old and to attend to the interaction of the new. In these evolutions there are irreconcilable confrontations of side and side while in the transition the fundamental concepts are transformed: the memory happens of being accumulation to being speed and the reading changes from exclusivity to being openness.

This condition of memory can allow us to make an analogy that can contribute to the understanding of the process of reading / writing: if we think of it as an axis of the construction of our experience in social networks we can determine it systemically (if we consider that it

is possible Defining the time line in social networks as an organism with living conditions), as has been studied from genetic memory and the laws of inheritance:

They inherit a set of internal factors, genes, and the internal genetic state of each individual (their genotype) is a consequence of the dynamic laws that regulate the passage of these entities from parents to children. The two laws of inheritance are laws of transmission, they make no reference to the appearance of the organism (the phenotype). The phenotype, with respect to heredity, is an epiphenomenon without interest, as it results from a different causal process: the epigenetic process of ontogeny, which depends on the state of genes but not on the laws of their inheritance (Lewontin, 1992). The genotype is transmitted and expressed. And the phenotype is the expression of the genotype. Genotype and phenotype are structural concepts, they are entities. Transmission and expression refer to processes associated with genotype: genotype is transmitted and expressed (Barbadilla, s.f).

We could link these notions of genotype and phenotype to reading in social networks: genotype is the very crossing of interactions, interests, desires and connections of those who navigate and elude the notions of past and future. The time line is a present hyperconcentration that brings together the contents of the now for who reads or writes about it: it is the phenotype that results from the genotype, the expression that results from complex "genetic" links, structural, fundamental and poetic.

We, then have in social networks, a space of privileged reading where the connections with the artificiality are also connections with the creation itself and the structural and material determination of the read. We observe in this format the potentiality of connecting with the medium itself through its reverse and reverse: the device is not a mystery but a trace of ourselves.

The participating reader

All this turning, even biology, becomes a determinant conclusion that connects in a substantial way the reading in the social networks with the narrative, since if it is judged from the argumentative look, its possibilities of generation of knowledge and of complete fulfillment of the conditions of the rational, fail.

The key may be in the way the reader who participates is defined, and that is where the discussion is connected with the generative visions of language. As Navarro defines it: "The reader plays an important role in the construction of meaning of each story, where it is not on the margin as a mere spectator, but as an accomplice reader is a partner in the sensations, effects and emotions that awakens everything Great story from the moment of its creation to its reception on the other side of the bridge" (2012).

This allows us to move on to the reader figure in an extended perspective, looking precisely at the timeline itself as a reader, properly. Very in the line of the Model Reader of Eco that is conceived as "textual strategy" postulated by the same text at the time of its creation. In the

words of Eco: “The reader, as an active principle of interpretation, forms part of the generative framework of the text itself” (1981, p. 16).

Thus, the inseparability of the strategy of reading in social networks, assumed as individual and collective construction of memory, as a story that is lived and participated and as a setting of meaning that links what we want, we say and click, with what we record, understand, decipher, guess, analyze, interpret and live in the timeline.

Reading and writing are modes of social communication, with a deep emphasis on the word ‘social’, because it has to do with the formation of personality, taste and with a vision of what are the reading practices of the majorities. Reading and writing are not the personal, nontransferable, pleasurable or backwards instrumental medium, but they are the key component of ‘social’ communication (Barbero, 2005, p. 1).

To read as a social phenomenon, in an organism with living conditions and in a format presented as a strategy for discovery and participation, will be an exercise and a strategy of understanding the world. Looking from there, we can overcome the condemnation of a generation that lives the experience of reading through social networks and we can understand their experience as the determination of their own life, creative and memorable.

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