

# Bro: Linguistic Dilemma, Network Intruders or Medico-social Approach: Research Analysis



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**Submission:** August 08, 2017; **Published:** August 18, 2017

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## Keywords

Bro; Network; Linguistic; Data

## Introduction

The word bro, is one that can be heard everywhere, regardless if one is on a college campus or an MTA train; in the twenty-first century, with roots dating back to the sixteenth century, it is heavily used [1]. Bro has also been an interesting system used for detecting network intruders in real time [2]. Due to its popularity and age, bro has adopted many different definitions, often even more in smaller societies, and has even evolved into a subculture on college campuses [3]. Due to its prominence in modern English and culture, to investigate the validity of these definitions and ideas, and to see how bro is a language feature, this paper examines the aspects of the word through research conducted on a small scale and incorporating other scholars' research on it. More specifically, this paper looks at how people define the word bro, when they use it as a linguistic tool, in what contexts and settings they use it. In addition, it looks at who uses it and where the word bro is primarily used by using data collected in three different cities and a survey that participants answer.

## Methodology

The research was conducted on multiple platforms to collect various types of data on the word 'bro'. Initially, when the investigation started, it was limited to a survey on Survey Monkey. This survey asked participants their age, ethnicity, and gender. These initial questions were general so that if there was a connection between the use of the word bro and participants' demographics, it could be kept track of. The questions of demographics were kept constant throughout the course of the research regardless of the medium of research. The survey then moved on to ask specific questions such as if participants used the word 'bro' at all. The survey asked the participants what are appropriate and inappropriate contexts of the word 'bro'. It

also asked why they used it, and what the meanings of the word bro. are In addition, I visited Portland, Maine and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania over spring break. The research was continued there as well. In New York, using public transportation and listening to strangers communicate; the use of the word 'bro' is common. I wanted to see if this was true for the populations of Portland and Philadelphia as well, to gauge how location may influence the use of the word.

### A. Data (Ethnicity, Age, etc)

The survey gathered extensive amounts of data that was well rounded. First, the survey was conducted on ten people. Out of these, the ratio of men to women was about one to one. This provided enough data that enabled looking at the use of the word from both genders. The survey kept track of the ethnicity of its participants. Since the survey was mostly conducted in New York, the ethnicities varied. About forty percent of the participants identified themselves as Hispanic/Latino, thirty percent as white, ten percent as Black/African American and the rest as Asian. In addition to ethnicity and gender, the survey also kept track of age, and was conducted on people with different ages. The data showed that most of the survey's participants were eighteen to twenty-four years old at fifty percent, followed by twelve to seventeen years old at forty percent and 25-30 years old at ten percent.

### B. Data (Responses to questions)

Most participants, over ninety percent, said that they use the word 'bro', regardless of their age. When asked, "How often do you use bro?", participants' responses varied. About forty percent said that they only use it about one or twice and about thirty percent said that they used it about three to four times with the remainder saying they used it more than that and some participants mentioned they used it, "a lot." In response to the question, "With who do you use the word bro with?", seventy-two percent of the responses were with friends, forty-five

percent said that it doesn't matter who, eighteen percent said that they used it with colleagues and the remaining eighteen percent said that they used it with strangers and parents. The remaining questions tried to engage the audience's reasoning and analysis of the use of the word bro. When asked "In what context/setting is it appropriate to use bro in?". Participants responses included, "When you're just hanging out with friends, at any social event." or "If any, with friends in a private setting or casual setting." Some outlier responses included, "Positive things" and "At the gym, when you are talking with a guy you don't know, talking to any guy, anywhere that is not formal or a professional environment. When your bro gives you a back rub." On the contrary, when asked when it is inappropriate to use the word bro, responses included "The workplace, classroom, professional public places (i.e. a bank), and in front of family.

### C. Data (Observational Research)

I also performed research using observational techniques to compare the use of the word bro in Portland and Philadelphia to that in New York. In Portland, Maine, during my time on public transportation and during times of heavy public conversation. I noted that the use of the word bro was extremely infrequent. During the whole day in Portland, I only heard the word bro about twice. On the contrary, in New York and Philadelphia, the usage of the word could be heard at least four times on every public transportation ride.

### Analysis

**a) First Pattern:** The data collected through the survey and observational data revealed a few patterns relating to the word bro. The first pattern was that 'bro' mainly means friend. Throughout the survey, whenever asked the meaning or uses of bro, answers tended to state it primarily is used or can be used as a placeholder for friend. For example, one of the participants of the survey said, "Bro could mean brother, friend, dude, buddy. To me, it's just another word used to call a close friend of yours." And many other said, "When speaking with friends" or "If any, with friends in a private setting or casual setting." Additionally, when observing people who used the term bro. They often were with their friends.

**b) Second Pattern:** The second pattern that could be observed was that bro is generally used for males however it can be used towards women. The survey included approximately the same number of males to females. So, when asked where is it appropriate to use the word the word bro, most participants implied that it with males. However, some said that they also use it with their female friends regardless if they are a male or female. Some responses that highlight this pattern include, "... [Someone] gives you the vibe that he (or even she) is like a bro.

**c) Third Pattern:** Furthermore, the ubiquitous trend that the data showed included with what audience/setting would people use the word bro in. When asked the question, "With who would you use this word with?", seventy two percent of

participants said with friends and a mere nine percent said they would with parents. From the numerical data and responses to questions by participants, a trend that can be noticed is bro is generally not used with authoritative figures or in a professional setting. Many participants stated that they would never use it with professors, parents or with their work colleagues. Some responses to highlight this include, "anywhere that is not formal or a professional environment", "it's not professional to use bro and inappropriate to call for example teachers, your friend's parents, etc."

**d) Fourth Pattern:** Moving on, one of the interesting aspects of the research was that participants stated that bro has more meaning other than the conventional brother or friend or buddy. In addition to these definitions, participants stated that it means a very close friend, or someone they have a tight bond with. Some responses to highlight this include, "I use it for when I want to show somebody that I see that as my brother and that we have a pretty tight bond" and "To me, it's just another word used to call a close friend of yours."

**e) Fifth Pattern:** In addition to the survey, the use of the word bro seemed to be more common in cities such as New York and Philadelphia. This could be due to an age factor. Most people encountered in Portland seemed to be above the age of twenty-five. Whereas in New York and Philadelphia, the population encountered a mix of all ages. Furthermore, it can be noted that most of these people who used the term bro in these cities were below the age of twenty-five.

### Reference with Other Research

In addition to the data collected, some scholars have conducted their own research that compliments this research's findings. The first article by Lilla Petronella Szabó, "You're a good friend, bro!" A Corpus-based Investigation of the Meanings of bro, talks about the different meanings of the word bro. Once listing many of the meanings of the word bro, it talks about how some meanings are more prominent than others such as friend rather than brother. It also mentions the process of the creation of the word and how it is different in many dialects and accents such as British English, American English, Australian English etc. This article helps to verify the data that was collected in this research. Firstly, the definitions of the word bro that were stated by participants of the research were like the one's mentioned in the article. Also, when this word was used and how it was used. For example, one participant of the survey said that they use the word when they forget someone's name, "It is easy to use it when I forget a guy's name."

This is also mentioned in the article, "a familiar mode of address to a man, esp. one whose name is not known" [4]. It also provides some clarity on data collected. The article states that the ratio of users of the word bro, use it more with the associated definition of friend, rather than brother. This is a trend that can be noticed in the survey data as well. Majority of the participants

stated they use the word bro when talking about friends more than those who use it in its conventional meaning of brother. The second article, Mapping the geographical diffusion of new words by Jacob Eisenstein [5], provides clarity on where the word is used within the United States subcontinent. The findings of this research involved tracking the use of different words such as bro and bruh; how these words spread through the US.

The researchers who conducted this research were Computer Scientists; therefore, they used geotagged tweets on Twitter. In addition to this, they applied various statistical regression algorithms to create a map of where the word is most frequently used. Their research concluded that the use of the word bro fades out in the northern regions of the continent and is more prominent in the South. These findings are interesting because they help to understand the geographical spread of the word bro, as noted in the collected data from Philadelphia, New York and Portland. Portland in the findings reported having the least amount of people who used the word bro, whereas in New York and Philadelphia, it was common. This article helps confirm that this is a trend that can be noticed by other researchers as well.

## Conclusion

Finally, the word bro remains a word that is used by many people. Dating back to its roots in the development of modern English into the twenty-first century it remains ubiquitous. The

research displayed various definitions of the word bro and many patterns. These patterns were identified by the help of Survey Monkey and analysis of the use of the word in three cities. This data showed that the word bro primarily meant friend and had alternate definitions such as someone who is extremely close. It also showed that the word is mostly used towards men but can also be used for women and that it is generally only used in a casual setting and not a professional one. In terms of use in the United States, its use fades on the northern regions of the country in cities such as Portland, ME. The data was verified by scholars who have conducted similar research on the word. With this in mind, the word bro continues to be an integral aspect of modern American English.

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DOI: [10.19080/OAJS.2017.05.555661](https://doi.org/10.19080/OAJS.2017.05.555661)

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