

Politeness, gender, and English-medium Facebook communication

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Abstract: Computer Mediated Communication has made it possible for its users to interact freely with each other despite physical distance. Social networking sites, notably Facebook, particularly encourage informal contacts between their users, which are not infrequently maintained in English as a language of international communication. The purpose of Facebook-mediated interaction is to exchange information on a variety of subjects, but what appears to be its overriding aim is to sustain contacts and good relations with one's friends and acquaintances, as well as enhance one's own, usually positive, image. The phatic function of language appears therefore to be one of the chief traits of Facebook communication. The primary aim of the paper, inspired by my research of the use of English as the first, second and foreign language, represented in the study by numerically parallel groups of British, Indian, and Polish Facebook users (cf. Dąbrowska 2013) [1], is therefore to evaluate the character of the strategies of politeness recorded in the collected material. The study focuses on the identification of particular intentionally polite speech acts (cf. Watts 2003) [2] expressed in the posts generated by the three aforementioned groups of users, and their discussion within the framework of Brown and Levinson's (1978/1987) [3] classical division into positive and negative politeness, their frequency as well as the form of the language shaped by conventions of online politeness. Moreover, the discussion examines examples of emotive language (cf. Janney and Arndt 2005) [4] which additionally broaden the scope as well as reinforce the strength of polite meanings. The analysis is carried out with respect to both the cultural and linguistic background of the authors of the posts and, primarily, the users' gender, which, as will be demonstrated, proves to be the major factor influencing the frequencies of use of a variety of polite meanings, with women invariably taking the lead in this respect, regardless of their diverse cultural and linguistic background.

Keywords: politeness, genderlects, English as a global language, Computer Mediated Communication, Facebook.

Introduction

The material used for the analysis following were posts written by British, Indian and Polish users of English, originally used to investigate the linguistic behaviour of users of English as the first, second and foreign language in order to identify possible similarities and differences in the use of this tongue (cf. Dąbrowska 2013) [5]. They were selected as representatives of Kachru's (1992) [6] circles model of the use of English, depending on the status of the English language in the respective countries, i.e., the Inner Circle (with the British group as a model), the Outer Circle (the Indian group), and the Expanding Circle (the Polish group). As the above discussion relied on the material excerpted from a social networking site, a platform which, apart from allowing its users to exchange news and views serves also as a tool for maintaining friendships, a natural spin-off of the primary goal of the research turned out to be observations concerning the strategies the platform users chose in order to strengthen their ties and rapport with others. The following is therefore an analysis of how the authors of the collected posts, evenly divided into groups of women and men, behaved in relation to others when writing on Facebook. Particular attention is paid to whether their posts conveyed polite meanings and of what type, considering that some of the users utilise English not only as the first, but also a second or a foreign language. The paper is organised in the following way:

firstly, a general discussion of Facebook studies and their findings is offered to present the context of social networking sites (SNSs) more broadly. Subsequently, a reference is made to genderlect studies, with a particular focus on the use of politeness by women and men. The theoretical introduction ends with an overview of studies concerning the phenomenon of politeness and a presentation of the methodological framework of the analysis. The investigation of the collected data that follows is divided into two sections, the analysis of the conventionally polite (politic) behaviour and of emotive, interpersonally polite language strategies. The result of the investigation demonstrates that, despite the diverse cultural background, women and men in the three cultures make similar language choices when interacting with their Facebook friends and use polite strategies to a similar degree. This finding offers an additional proof of the existence of potential differences to be found between the female and male conversational styles as regards politeness not only within one relatively homogeneous national group, but also cross-culturally.

Facebook as a context of study

There are certainly various reasons accounting for users' decision to establish their personal profile on Facebook. Next to the very pragmatic reason of maintaining contacts with one's friends and acquaintances, one must naturally mention a need to create one's own image too (cf. Crystal 2011) [7], as it allows one to present oneself the way one wishes to be perceived by others and thereby gain acceptance and enhance one's own face. This is achieved by means of what one writes in one's Facebook profile updates, as well as photos, links and comments on what other people write. The user's creation of one's self image is also shaped by the way one formulates one's messages (i.e., the choice of vocabulary, spelling conventions, the use of emoticons or their avoidance), as well as the selection of the actual language of communication (cf. Dąbrowska 2013 [8], Sophocleous and Themistocleous 2014 [9]). In other words, Facebook allows one to project on others "who one wants to be rather than who one really is" [10]. Such a form of communication will therefore certainly be very carefully phrased and monitored, so that it does not become too personal, and that at the same time it fulfils general social expectations regarding public, but informal or semi-informal interaction.

Online social networks have been attracting more and more attention as a research subject. An attempt to define the features of a social networking site (SNS) in relation to web pages used earlier and the history of the concept are offered by boyd and Ellison (2007) [11]. Jucker and Dürscheid (2012) [12], on the other hand, discuss Facebook in reference to the convergence of traditionally separate communication genres in the context of the Web 2.0 phenomenon and the difficulty with labelling them (cf. Pérez-Sabater 2012) [13]. The issue of "collapsed contexts" [14] and multiple "publics" [15], i.e. the necessity to address multiple audiences on a SNS is analysed by boyd (2010). An aspect of investigation are also social ties created by means of social networks, their character, strength as well as local social practices (cf. Haythornthwaite 1998 [16], Ellison et al. 2007 [17], Deumert 2014 [18]) as well as their interaction with offline life (cf. Baym 1998 [19], 2000 [20]). Also boyd [21] points to the value of SNSs for the development of social ties, seeing the comments made there more as "social grooming" than a "pointless babble." The paradox of treating SNS as a public and at the same time a private space, which creates a "conundrum of visibility" [22] is in turn discussed by boyd and Marwick (2009 [23], cf. Baym and boyd 2012 [24]). Also the study by West and Trester (2013) [25] focuses on the aspect of facework on Facebook. A critical approach to the institutional use of Facebook and pseudo-sociality in the modern era is, on the other hand, offered by Thurlow (2013) [26]. A study concerning the vocabulary choices made by Facebook users in their posts in connection with their personality, investigated in respect of the users' gender and age is one compiled by Schwartz et al. (2013) [27]. Blattner and Fiori (2009) [28] study Facebook as a tool of learning enhancement, whereas Pérez-

Sabater (2012) [29] discusses the use of the opening and closing formulas used on Facebook university sites in terms of their level of formality. Some data concern the sociological aspect of social networking sites, e.g., the fact that Facebook is more often visited by women than men, that women are more prone to discuss more serious subjects on the public profile. My own data (cf. Dąbrowska 2013) [30], incidentally coinciding with Schwartz et al.'s (2013) [31] investigation and corroborating some of their findings, show that there is indeed a certain amount of difference in terms of the choice of topics of discussion, with men choosing to discuss more objective, and women – more subjective themes. Worth pointing out is also the difference in terms of emotionality and verbosity levels between the two genders, the latter additionally linked with the choice of the language of communication. Additionally, as my earlier Facebook analysis demonstrates (cf. Dąbrowska 2013) [32], there are some significant differences to be observed in terms of gender, age and cultural background detected through the Facebook medium, for instance when it comes to the informality level and the use of certain CMC spelling strategies, especially when the same language (notably English) is used by both native, second language, and foreign language users. Facebook also proves to be an interesting source of data for the analysis of the concept of the community of practice (Dąbrowska 2011d [33], cf. Wenger 1998 [34], Trousdale 2010 [35]), despite earlier predictions that “computer networks only isolate us from one another rather than bring us together” [36], cf. Thurlow et al. 2004 [37]. Finally, one of the most recent Facebook-based studies which is at the same time politeness-oriented is a volume edited by Locher et al. (2015) [38], which includes, among other, papers by Theodoropoulou (2015) [39] concerning Facebook birthday wishes and by Bolander and Locher (2015) [40] on identity construction on Facebook. The present analysis, which also deals with Facebook politeness conventions and strategies, will explore this aspect of online interaction further, placing a particular focus on the gender and culture of its users.

Genderlects and politeness

The question of differences (more than similarities) in communicative strategies of women and men has attracted much attention ever since the influential and also controversial paper by Robin Lakoff (1975) [41] was published. Lakoff viewed female linguistic behaviour as deficient, and the high incidence of polite forms which she identified in women's language, next to a number of other characteristics, was, according to her, a marker of weakness and female inability to compete against men in conversation. However, the studies undertaken by Tannen (1990) [42], Coates (1993) [43], Cameron (1995) [44], Bing and Bergvall (1996) [45], Talbot (2003) [46] and others have managed to demonstrate that those putative signs of deficiency are in fact manifestations of women's cooperative and supportive speaking style. It is focused on feelings and well-being of their interlocutors, contrary to the overall competitive character of the male speech behaviour, marked to a great extent by verbal duelling, demonstrating one's knowledge and proving who is right (Tannen 1990, 1994) [47]. In conclusion, it has been claimed that interaction between men aims at exchanging information (i.e. Holmes's (1995) [48] *referential style* or Tannen's (1990) [49] *report speaking*), and the female interactional style, through the choice of more personal and emotional topics, is mainly concerned with establishing *rappport* with their interlocutors (Tannen 1990) [50], thereby giving them an opportunity to share feelings and views in an amicable atmosphere (cf. Holmes's (1995) [51] *affective style*). Some studies on gender and language (e.g. Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 2003 [52], Mills 2003 [53], Sunderland 1995, 2006 [54]) have also stressed the necessity for a more functional interpretation of certain linguistic forms and the need to view them in the social and cultural context in which they are typically uttered and by which they are necessarily shaped. This approach currently informs other areas of research too, including that of politeness, and will also be adhered to in this paper.

As indicated above, women have traditionally been noted to use more polite language than men, which in the early days of genderlect studies was linked with their relative lack of power in interaction (cf. Lakoff 1975 [55], Brown 1980, 1990 [56]). One of the first accounts of polite behaviour in language were Lakoff's (1973 [57]) principles *Be polite* and *Be clear*, which would work at counter-purposes. Since, in her view, women lacked power in interaction, and thus would not be inclined to speak clearly and directly, they would tend to follow the *Be polite* principle. However, it is only with the development of Brown and Levinson's theory of politeness (1978/1987) that a more precise description of verbal polite behaviour attracted a more detailed research. The shift of paradigm in genderlect studies, connected with the criticism of Lakoff's views led to the re-interpretation of female verbal behaviour as well. With the introduction of Brown and Levinson's division of polite behaviour into the four main categories, i.e. *bold on record politeness*, *off record politeness*, *on-record positive politeness*, and *on-record negative politeness* a more careful investigation of various communicative strategies made it possible to establish with greater detail that women, at least women in the English-speaking world, where most studies in this field have been conducted, indeed paid more attention to the expression of polite meanings in interaction. This claim was made particularly with regard to the use of *first-order politeness* (cf. Watts 1992) [58], which would be linked with women's cooperative attitude in verbal behaviour. It has thereby been demonstrated that women do indeed employ a more polite language. As studies, notably the first-wave politeness studies (cf. Kádár and Haugh 2013 [59]) have proved, it is primarily *the on-record positive politeness* i.e., speech acts and moves which strengthen the expression of positive feelings of liking, admiring, approving and caring about others (cf. Fishman 1983 [60], Brown 1980, 1990 [61], Holmes 1993, 1995 [62], Dąbrowska 2012, 2013 [63]). The use of hedges and certain types of question tags may also be a manifestation thereof (cf. Holmes 1995 [64], Swann 2000 [65]), as well as asking questions, which, as has been shown, women do more often than men, since this enables men to answer them and display their knowledge (cf. Stockwell 2002 [66]).

Analysing linguistic politeness

The above comments point to a more general problem with the right interpretation of what behaviour is to be considered polite or impolite, and what politeness in fact is. Linguists generally agree that few of the approaches to date have been in-depth enough to be considered theories – as Watts [67] states, "[t]he fact remains that only Leech and Brown and Levinson have elaborated their positions in sufficient detail to allow them to be tested through application to real-life data." Out of the two, however, it is arguably Brown and Levinson's (1978/1987) [68] theory that has gained wide popularity as *the* politeness theory and inspired the current, second-wave politeness research (cf. Culpeper 1996 [69], Bousfield 2008 [70]). According to the second-wave politeness research precepts, though, Brown and Levinson's theory is not free from flaws and interpretational difficulties (cf. Thomas 1995 [71], Watts 2003 [72], Kádár and Haugh 2013 [73]). What has evoked the strongest criticism on the part of contemporary politeness scholars (cf. Eelen 2001 [74], Bousfield 2008 [75], Kádár and Haugh 2013 [76]) is the observer-coding of Brown and Levinson's theory which relies strictly on the analyst's perspective, thereby completely ignoring the participant's perspective of what is being said (cf. Kádár and Haugh 2013 [77]), as well as the fact that it follows preconceived categories of polite speech acts. The second-wave approach to politeness research, initiated by works of Eelen (2001 [78]) and Watts (2003) [79], on the other hand, is largely participant-oriented in the analysis and the interpretation of samples of language. It also takes into consideration the actual context of interaction and what a given speech act means in this context, rather than automatically focusing on the form, for, as Eckert and McConnell-Ginet [80] point out "[w]hat looks like the same kind of act – for example a compliment – might be positively polite in one context but not in another." An attempt to classify examples of speech

acts excerpted from Facebook in terms of their polite character presented below will therefore follow the functional interpretation principle, not only the formal one. It will indeed be conducted from the analyst's point of view as regards their interpretation, it needs to be borne in mind, however, that the analyst may be, and in the case discussed here simultaneously is a participant of a given interaction too, which is why the approach, despite its weaknesses, appears to be justified.

In view of the above the analysis of the data presented further will consist of two steps – firstly, the classification of polite expressions according to the first-wave, Brown and Levinson's (1978/1987 [81]) theory will be conducted, and, secondly, it will further be expanded on by a discussion of emotive elements which, in my interpretation, following Janney and Arndt (2005 [82], Watts 1992, 2003 [83]), contribute to and emphasise the polite reading of the analysed Facebook posts (see below). The reason for the selection of the above method of interpretation is the medium of communication. A social networking site is a written, not a spoken medium, which makes the posts uploaded by the users often more of a carefully phrased reaction (not infrequently quite removed in time) to other users' posts rather than an immediate spontaneous spoken response. This is in keeping with the view that Facebook, as said above, is a medium serving the maintenance of good relations with one's friends, and thus showing care about their face as well as at the same time enhancing one's own face. The third party, however, where the observer also belongs, has a significant role to play in a social networking context, for the awareness of their presence certainly influences the form and the meaning expressed via the platform (cf. boyd 2010 [84], Kádár and Haugh 2013 [85], cf. also Bell's (1984, 2001 [86]) concept of audience design) and not infrequently makes the linguistic choices rather conventionalised and generally acknowledged. This is where Watts's (1992) [87] concept of politic (vs. polite) behaviour appears to be particularly fitting. Politic behaviour is a strategy directed "towards the goal of establishing and/or maintaining in a state of equilibrium the personal relationships between the individuals of a social group" [88], or, as he elaborates on it later, "behaviour, linguistic and non-linguistic, which the participants construct as being appropriate to the ongoing social interaction" [89]. The above may further be subsumed under the general concept of relational work, i.e. "all aspects of the work invested by individuals in the construction, maintenance, reproduction and transformation of interpersonal relationships among those engaged in social practice" [90]. Relational work is in turn centred around the concept of face (cf. Goffman 1967 [91], Locher et al. 2015 [92]), which, according to Sifianou [93] is "conjointly co-constituted by interlocutors in interaction." The classification of the data will thus prove to be fairly straightforward and in agreement with general assumptions concerning civil behaviour, compared to some possible other contexts.

Additionally, one also needs to bear in mind that online communication, and notably that on a social networking site, where many persons can read one's post, and where what one does is often more of a phatic but also quite a superficial character, the linguistic forms used tend to be rather simplified, shortened to a bare minimum. This, in fact, is the form of communication that characterises the general nature of many virtual communities of practice marked by a multiple membership that the Facebook platform undoubtedly is (cf. Crystal 2006 [94], Baron 2008 [95], Dąbrowska 2011a [96]). What additionally contributes to the simplicity of expression is also the fact that in the case of two out of three groups of post authors analysed in this study the English language used by them is not their first, but second or foreign tongue, which may also have an influence on the form of the language used, especially in the case of the foreign language users.

As indicated above, the discussion of female-male similarities and differences in their online expression of polite (politic) meanings will further be complemented with the analysis of emotive expressions. These, directly, by means of emphasising an already conventionally polite speech act, or indirectly, by making the emotive reading of a sentence or an expression

especially face-oriented and positively or negatively polite, often contribute to the polite reading of Facebook posts. As emotional behaviour is in general typically associated with the speech of women (cf. Lakoff 1975 [97], this aspect will provide an additional point in characterising the female and male behaviour on Facebook. This choice is in keeping with the approach to analysing politeness developed by Janney and Arndt (2005) [98] hinted at above. In their interpretation of linguistic politeness they analyse the concept in the light of interpersonal politeness (later *tact*), which they view not only as a suitable social behaviour (cf. Watts's (1992, 2003) [99] politic behaviour), but also as being interpersonally supportive in interaction, and showing concern about another person's face. Being supportive in language can be achieved by means of emotive language, and this may in turn be expressed with the help of cross-modal emotive cues (cf. Arndt and Janney 1983, 1985 [100]). In my analysis of linguistic politeness on Facebook I will thus view emotive expressions as an enhancement of positive relations one has with one's Facebook friends, especially when such forms are used in comments on what one's Facebook contacts have written, and thus, as will be shown below, as an extension of and elaboration on Brown and Levinson's positive politeness in particular. Here Watts's division (1992, 2003) [101] between politic and polite behaviour might be adduced again. When viewed in these terms, emotive language used as an enhancement of positively oriented speech acts is thus to be seen as polite rather than politic in that it is the "behaviour beyond what is perceived to be appropriate to the ongoing social interaction" [102]. Indeed, contemporary studies concerning CMC, and social networking sites in particular frequently analyse participants' behaviour in terms of their identity construction strategies (cf. Turkle 1995 [103], Androutsopoulos 2006 [104], Locher and Hoffman 2006 [105], Barton and Lee 2013 [106], Bolander and Locher 2010 [107], Locher et al. 2015 [108], in view of which the emotive online behaviour can naturally be seen as a tool of building one's image of a friendly, outgoing and at the same time computer-literate person as regards the use of emoticons. Following the assumption that politeness, also online politeness is a relational work (cf. Baym 1998 [109], Locher 2006, 2008 [110], Locher et al. 2015 [111]), however, I will argue, similarly as Theodoropoulou (2012) [112] does in her analysis concerning Greek Facebook users' responses to birthday wishes, that emotive behaviour in a social network will perform not only an identity construction task, but will also be a tool of maintaining good relations with others, showing them that they are remembered and their actions are interesting to their friends. In other words, by taking care of the other's face Facebook users will at the same time enhance their own positive face. Such face-enhancing acts may be communicated by means of a neutral, politic language due to the fact that the medium is a public space, which makes some users opt for more conventionalised expressions. However, the presence of emotive language in a social networking context also proves that in the case of others the focus on the more interpersonal, intimate relations might be more preferred. The analysis of the following examples will explore this aspect of Facebook English-medium communication further against the background of the overall use of markers of politeness in order to investigate the gender-related use of politic and polite language at a more in-depth level.

Method of the study and data

The discussion presented below is based on samples of language collected from Facebook profiles of 108 persons. The analysis is originally a part of a broader study of the subject of the English language variation with regard to the users' culture, gender and age (cf. Dąbrowska 2013 for details [113]), and has been summarised as well as expanded on below, focusing on the use of markers of politeness.

Following the precepts of contemporary trends in sociolinguistic and genderlect studies, which, as already said, aim at making the analysis group-specific, and only after the obtained results prove reliable enough, can they be recognised as more universal, I have decided to

divide the three aforementioned groups of respondents and the material collected into parallel, strictly defined categories in terms of gender. I assumed, for the sake of clarity, the dichotomous division into women and men, with full awareness, however, that the classification in this respect, especially in view of the contemporary feminist approach, is never binary, but with various subcategories, e.g., transgendered, transsexual, etc. In the original study (Dąbrowska 2013) [114] these two subcategories were further divided into three age cohorts, i.e., between 20 to 35, 36 to 50, and above 51, with an equal number of respondents in each (6). This method allowed me to attain a balanced representation of each category. Due to the limited length of this paper, however, the age variable will not be extensively covered in the analysis below. Thus, the resulting categories, i.e. the two genders further divided in terms of the three national groups, gave me an opportunity to make numerous observations concerning the analysed samples with respect to the use of markers of politeness, and view the obtained results as considerably reliable and representative. In the analysis the total number of 108 was further divided into three groups of 36 persons for each of the three cultures. Every national group generated 400 posts (and thus 1200 posts in all), out of which 200 were produced by women in each subgroup (i.e. by 18 persons, 6 young, 6 middle-aged, and six senior ones), and 200 – by men (also 18 persons per group, with a division into three groups of 6 persons in terms of age), and thus there were 11-12 posts per person.

Results and discussion

In keeping with the above theoretical introduction the discussion of the data will be divided into two categories. The first group will present the classification and characteristics of polite expressions of the first order inspired by Brown and Levinson's study with regard to the two gender groups subdivided in terms of the three circles of the use of English. The data presented in tables below will additionally show the distribution as regards the age of the Facebook authors for the sake of a better illustration of the observed tendencies. However, this distribution, as mentioned above, will not be discussed in detail (for further details see Dąbrowska 2013) [115]. The second analytical category will concern the samples of emotive language recognised as additional carriers of polite meanings within the above group with regard to the gender of the users in the three contexts of the use of English. The characteristics offered below will essentially be of quantitative character, with the primary aim to establish whether any general, cross-cultural tendencies concerning the two broad gender groups can be identified with regard to politeness manifestations on a social networking site. Although the language of the investigated posts is English, they need to be interpreted in the context of the three cultures selected for the study, as the character of the position and frequency of use of the tongue in the relevant culture is undoubtedly reflected in the form of the language selected by the users. Thus, at this point it needs to be stated that all the Facebook profile owners (i.e. 36 Facebook users from the three circles each, thus 108 persons altogether) whose posts have been sampled for the present study are personally known to me as my Facebook Friends. It is therefore known that they all have a minimum secondary school education, as many as 104 of them have in fact graduated from the university and they are all successfully employed or already retired. Due to this their knowledge of English, also in Poland as the country that represents the Expanding Circle, is fluent, especially that 26 out of 36, i.e. 72% of Polish profile owners are graduates of English studies. All the British profile owners are white educated native English users born and bred in the UK, while the Indian profile owners all come from the Hindi-speaking belt (mainly from the area of Mumbai and Delhi), 94% of them have graduated from a college or a university, and thus their command of English ranks them among the middle-to-high strata of the society.

Polite speech acts

The tables presented below display the use of the most frequently observed strategies of politeness which were found in the analysed posts, with examples taken from the groups of British, Indian, and Polish women and men, respectively. The classification of the data shows that, in keeping with earlier remarks, a fairly straightforward division into classical categories of speech acts traditionally linked with politeness was achieved as a result of the unambiguous contexts of their use and quite a transparent form and meaning of the comments analysed. The collected data will thus be divided, following the frequency of use, into wishes, thanks, compliments and congratulations, and apologies, each of them illustrated by examples collected among women and men from the three analysed cultures. Additionally, where appropriate, further comments concerning possible subtypes or tendencies found in the below categories will be laid out in the subsequent discussion:

Table 1. Wishes

	<i>women</i>			<i>men</i>		
	<i>British</i>	<i>Indian</i>	<i>Polish</i>	<i>British</i>	<i>Indian</i>	<i>Polish</i>
<i>young</i>	6	3	12	3	8	0
<i>middle-aged</i>	6	7	3	4	4	2
<i>senior</i>	11	5	7	6	0	9
<i>Total</i>	23	15	22	13	12	11

Examples:

Women: *Happy Birthday; Have fun and safe trip; Good luck with the exams; may your wedded life reflect the beauty and the grace of the nikah reception;*

Men: *Happy Onam to all; Happy Birthday; Have a nice day; merry xmas;*

Table 2. Thanks

	<i>women</i>			<i>men</i>		
	<i>British</i>	<i>Indian</i>	<i>Polish</i>	<i>British</i>	<i>Indian</i>	<i>Polish</i>
<i>young</i>	1	18	4	4	11	2
<i>middle-aged</i>	12	12	5	4	10	2
<i>senior</i>	4	23	10	5	18	10
<i>Total</i>	17	53	19	13	39	14

Examples:

Women: *Thanks X; Thanks for the lovely evening, Thanks for the warning; Thanq guys; Thank you dear friends;*

Men: *Tks; Thanks a lot; Thank you everyone, Many thanks to all*

Table 3. Compliments and congratulations

	<i>women</i>			<i>men</i>		
	<i>British</i>	<i>Indian</i>	<i>Polish</i>	<i>British</i>	<i>Indian</i>	<i>Polish</i>
<i>young</i>	4	5	3	4	4	0
<i>middle-aged</i>	8	7	0	2	1	2
<i>senior</i>	1	5	4	1	1	0
<i>Total</i>	13	17	7	7	6	2

Examples:

Women: *Nice pic by the way; You look fab on the photo!; Well done; Congratulations and lots of blessings;*

Men: *Nobody does it better than you X; Well done; Congratulations X; Glasses become X – don't they*

Table 4. Apologies

	<i>women</i>			<i>men</i>		
	<i>British</i>	<i>Indian</i>	<i>Polish</i>	<i>British</i>	<i>Indian</i>	<i>Polish</i>
<i>young</i>	3	1	1	0	1	0
<i>middle-aged</i>	1	0	0	1	0	1
<i>senior</i>	1	3	2	0	0	1
<i>Total</i>	5	4	3	1	1	2

Examples:

Women: *Sorry friends; So sorry I didnt get to talk to you more than the brief hello and hug; Sorry for the 2 week delay!;*

Men: *Sorry for the delay in replying; Sorry I can't be there; Please forgive me...; Really sorry, X, but I won't be able to make it.*

The above demonstrate the most frequent markers of linguistic etiquette collected from the Facebook posts for the three cultural groups [116] (for a complete coverage see Dąbrowska 2013) [117]. When summed up in the respective groups, the distribution of first-order politeness markers in the three national categories, subdivided into the two genders, gives us the following results in raw numbers: British women – 58, British men – 34, Indian women – 89, Indian men – 58, Polish women – 51, Polish men – 29 markers of politeness, which, when classified according to gender alone produce the following distribution: women altogether expressed polite meanings 198 times, and men – 121 times.

Thus, it can be immediately seen that, following the terminology used to describe polite formulas introduced by Brown and Levinson (1978/1987) [118], i.e. *bold on record politeness*, *off record politeness*, *on record positive politeness*, and *on record negative politeness*, and especially the latter two visible in the tables above, the context of Facebook, a social networking service whose aim is to allow people to interact with their friends and exchange news and views, is most conducive to expressing politeness of the positive type, as wishes, thanks, and compliments and congratulations are certainly ways of showing others that we appreciate and admire them. It is only natural to find them on Facebook as they help the users to maintain friendly contacts with others. The only more visible marker of negative politeness (i.e., one that shows others that we do not wish to impose on them) is the category of apologies, yet a simple comparison with the previous three strategies demonstrates a much more restricted use of this facet of human communication on Facebook. A social networking service is not a space for quarrels and apologies, and certainly not public displays of these – if any misunderstandings occur, they are presumably resolved primarily by means of private messages. Consequently, the examples of apologies collected here relate to some petty transgressions and lack of attention, mostly delayed responses or apologies for the author's inability to attend some meeting. Disregarding the gender and culture differences, they all tend to use simple phrases, mainly with the word *sorry*, which additionally diminishes the weight of the fault (see below for the details concerning each of the three cultures).

The markers of positive politeness are much more pronounced. The overall number of all the items of positive politeness amounts to 303, whereas there are only 16 elements of negative politeness presented in the above tables. They have been divided into the three above-mentioned categories, i.e. wishes, thanks, and compliments and congratulations, although the last one is usually treated as two different communicative strategies. However, as the examples below the tables and in the further discussion illustrate, the language of the polite formulas is typically quite simple, colloquial, truncated, also because of the use of the CMC

language strategies, and as regards compliments and congratulations, it at times appears hard to decide which category the phrases should be placed in, e.g. a simple phrase like *well done*. Altogether, it is thanks that exceed the other two types of speech acts in the overall number (89 expressed by women + 66 expressed by men), yet when it comes to the majority of these strategies in the three cultural groups, it is wishes that dominate in the British and the Polish groups (British 36, Poles 33), especially in the female posts (compliments and congratulations account for 37+15 items for women and men altogether, respectively). It is in fact the Indian group that tips the scale towards thanks, which points to a cultural difference in this respect, and appears to be common to both women and men, though to a different degree.

It is impossible to discuss the collected examples thoroughly in terms of their qualitative aspects, as the present analysis has a primarily quantitative character. When it comes to the details concerning the nature of the speech acts used, however, the following can be noted as regards the three groups of the users of English. The numerical analysis of the British group shows that, as indicated above, the most frequent speech act carrying polite meanings is that of a wish (used 36 times in all), most typically a birthday wish, recorded 12 times for women, and 7 times for men (the other wishes concerned various types of festivities), and the samples collected here formally follow the traditional *Happy...* pattern. Also the recorded examples of thanks (17 used by women and 13 by men) take the rather simple and informal form *thanks* (e.g., *thanks for your wishes, for kind words, for the warning, for a lovely evening, thanks for saying hello*, etc.). Only four utilised the more formal *thank you* form (three in young men's posts, in response to wishes and one written by a young woman thanking a friend for dinner). Although much less frequent than thanks, compliments combined with congratulations were used by women 13 times (with the two speech acts addressed almost equally often to either other women or groups of people) and 7 times by men. Most of the compliments concerned photos found in one's friends' profiles (e.g. *Nice profile picture* written by a young man). Some had a very informal character, e.g. the *Well done* form (all used by British male respondents in recognition of e.g. a friend's graduation from the university), which pointed to a relatively low face-threatening character of the whole speech act. The apologies found in the sample are even more limited in the British group, having been used 5 times by women and once by a man. They do not concern any serious issues and typically take the simplest possible form *sorry*, e.g., *Sorry + First Name (FN)*, e.g. when apologising for not being able to meet. The only more elaborate example was *So sorry I didnt get to talk to you more than the brief hello and hug*, used by a young woman. This, therefore, seems to confirm the conclusion that Facebook is not a space for apologies or for showing negative politeness as such, which will also be corroborated by the character of the polite speech acts found in the other two groups.

In the case of the Indian group the most frequently represented speech act are thanks, used here as many as 92 times (women – 53, men – 39). The expression of gratitude appears therefore an important aspect of the Indian culture. In the examples recorded the form *thanks* (as in *Thanks/Thanx/Tks (+ FN)*, *thanks guys*, *thanks again*, *many thanks*, *thanks a lot for your wishes* in women's posts, and *thanks (+ First Name)*, *thanks guys*, *thx*, *thanks for the wishes* in men's posts) is by far the most popular (61) compared to the other option which followed, i.e., *thank you* (23 instances), as in *Thank you ([dear]+ FN)*, *thank you so much + FN*, *thank u all*, *thanq* written by women, and *Thank you (+FN)*, *thank you dear friends* posted by men. Alternative forms, as e.g., *heartfelt gratitude to all my family n friends for the wishes* or *I can't thank you adequately enough for your unflinching support* (written by women) are very infrequent. Worth pointing out are some of the forms visible above which show alternative spellings typical of the CMC code, as *thanx*, *thanq* or *tks*, which, interestingly enough, were used by women rather than men.

Wishes occupy the second highest position in the Indian group, with 15 items recorded for women and 12 for men (27 in all). Their form likewise, as a rule, made use of simple

formulaic formats, especially in regard to birthdays and religious or national events, as e.g. in posts written by women: *Happy birthday* (+ FN), *Happy (Onam/Janmashthami) to all*, *Happy teachers day*, *Many happy returns of the day*. It needs to be noticed, however, that when offering more personal wishes, women employed more elaborate, unique formulas, as in *May your wedded life reflect the beauty and grace of the nikaah reception; Wish you lots of happiness n peace*. Wishes offered by men, as can be seen below, were less formulaic in character, and in fact referred to public events more than birthdays, which appears to be less face-threatening. In many of them the word *wish* could be found, as in *Best wishes on this Independence Day; Thank you for the wishes and wish you a very happy birthday too; Wish you all a very happy Ganesh Chaturthi*. Other alternative forms to *Happy birthday* were also *Best of luck; Have an awesome birthday; Greetings on the Auspicious Sri Ganesh Chaturthi*.

The last category of positive politeness examples contains compliments and congratulations. In this group women exceeded men considerably, since as many as 17 examples were recorded in their posts and only 6 in men's. The Indian women in fact typically opted for congratulations, noting such events as birthdays, birth of a grandchild, weddings, rather than pay compliments, e.g. *Congratulations uncle* (+ FN), *Congratulations and lots of blessings*, and when the latter speech acts appeared, they related to the person's looks or character, as in *you are glowing; Having u around the congress was a bonus and the latino friends real treat*. Complimenting someone's property is a highly face-threatening act in India, as it may be interpreted as a request for the complimented object (cf. Tannen 2001). Men, in the few cases that were recorded, for the same reason preferred to comment on their friends' abilities and their importance in the author's life, e.g., *You were always a special friend and will be; m proud of my frnds; Nobody does it better than you + FN, Congrats....*

The only strategy representing negative politeness discussed here are apologies, though these are very infrequent in the Indian group (4 in women's posts, 1 in men's), and all take the simplest form of a sentence initiated by *sorry*, with the ellipsis of the subject *I*, thereby making the apologies rather casual-sounding. The cases of apologies concern some minor issues like coming late with a reply to some message or for saying something that others might misunderstand or disagree with, e.g. *Sorry for the delay in replying; Sorry the last one did not work; I'm sorry for the late reply* (women), and *Sorry for all the Apple bashing people* (men). Their content confirms that the reasons for apologies are petty, and therefore the act of apology itself is not threatening to the author's face to a great extent.

As regards the Polish group, the most frequent polite speech acts, represented by 33 each, are wishes and thanks, respectively. Altogether, out of the 33 instances of wishes (used 22 times by women and 11 times by men) as many as 9 were birthday wishes, but their share was much lower in the case of men (in fact, only one example was recorded, viz. *Happy birthday*, used by a senior man, which once again shows that men are more reluctant to offer birthday wishes to others, perhaps for fear of their intentions being misinterpreted). The ones used by women were on the whole rather conventional, making use of the typical *Happy Birthday* (+ FN) phrase, occasionally followed by some additional element, as in *have a great day* or *Hope you have a lovely day*. This shows that Poles as users of English as a foreign language preferred to stick to well-known and safe language patterns. Other types of wishes also appeared, 24 in number, here, however, only 8 such wishes were expressed by men, e.g. the most frequent *All the best*, then e.g. *Happy Holi to all who celebrate it, Happy New Year (All/everyone)* or *Good luck*. Women in this group made references to quite a variety of events too, e.g. *Merry Christmas to all, merry xmas, Happy New Year to you, Happy International Women's Day!, Happy 4th, Happy half-term*. It may be thus concluded that one of Polish women's Facebook uses and rituals is to send others wishes on a variety of occasions.

The group of speech acts which numerically matches wishes is that of thanks (19 written by the women, and 14 by the men). Thanks are naturally an expected reaction to wishes, praises, etc., too, hence in an environment like Facebook their visible presence is not surprising (cf.

Theodoropoulou 2015) [119]. At the same time the expressions of thanks noted for Polish users, much as in the case of the two previous groups are not too elaborate or formal. In the material collected all but one phrase took one of two the forms, i.e., *thanks/thanx* (18 cases) or *thank you* (14 cases), the exception being a much more formal sounding phrase, viz. *I would like to thank most sincerely the friends who remembered about 'my special day'!*), used by a middle-aged man. Thus, women expressed thanks 19 times (11 times using the form *thank you*), mainly to thank for wishes, for keeping in touch, for liking one's posts, for help, e.g. *Many thanks to all, Thanks a lot (+ FN), Thanks for sharing this, Big thank you to everyone, Thank you all in advance, Thank you for all your "likes" and comments*, while men did it 14 times (4 times with the help of *thank you*) in a similar way, e.g. *Thanks (+ FN), Thanks a lot for the greetings, Thank you for checking*.

The next group of polite expressions were compliments and congratulations, represented by 9 instances in all (7 expressed by women, 2 by men), and thus these speech acts were certainly less represented in the case of the Poles than in the previous groups. The compliments covered a variety of forms and subjects, ranging from the simplest like *Well done! :); Congrats X!; Congratulations, X!; Good job X!*, to more indirect praises, as in *I have such a handsome husband; This sounds really good!*. It may be seen, however, that almost all instances found in this group bear markers of emotionality, and as such should be viewed more as instances of emotive politeness, to be discussed in the next section. Men's compliments are very few and much more toned down, i.e.: *You are one lucky man, and Glasses become X – don't they?*. Thus, it can be seen that giving words of praise or complimenting one is not a strong side of the Polish character (cf. Herbert 1991 [120]). It is not only face-threatening to the speaker, but also culturally less pronounced, possibly as an outcome of the previous regime, when possessing nice things or achieving something better than the average generated quite a high dose of jealousy.

Finally, there are apologies, a negative politeness act, which, however, were barely marked in the Polish group, with 5 examples in all, 3 of which were found in the posts written by women, i.e., *Really sorry X, but won't be able to make it; Please forgive me... but it was our 30th anniversary trip; I'm sorry I can't be there* vs. 2 instances of apologies which were offered by men: *Hi X, apologies for late reply... and FN, my apologies! My new website is under construction*. Thus, the main apologetic element found was the informal word *sorry*, much as in the case of the other two groups. Additionally we can also see a much more formal sounding phrase *please forgive me* (written by a senior woman). It is most likely a calque of a fairly typical expression used in Polish, i.e., *Proszę wybaczyć*, which was translated literally into English, hence its somehow more formal feel.

In conclusion, therefore, is not difficult to observe that, as concerns the communicative styles of women and men, there are clearly common marked tendencies visible across the three cultures. All the four strategies of politeness presented above show that it is always women who pay more attention to the expression of polite meanings in such an environment as Facebook creates, regardless of the fact whether these are markers of positive or negative politeness. An important consideration, no doubt, is the fact that in order to maintain healthy and lasting relations with one's friends via the social network medium, women feel particularly obliged to show their attention, admiration and gratitude to others, thereby confirming Tannen's (1990) [121] claim about their rapport speaking. However, a fairly high percentage of such communicative devices in the posts written by men shows that, whether by natural inclination, or due to accommodation to the requirements of the medium and the female participants there, men also manifest such features of behavior to a considerable extent. It is also to be noted that whereas the British and the Polish women and men, respectively, use a similar number of markers of politeness (which is remarkable in view of the fact that English is the first language for the former, and foreign for the latter group), the Indian women and men exceed the other two groups in terms of the expression of polite

meanings, thereby pointing to visible cultural differences in terms of manifesting politeness verbally, notably between collectivist and individualistic cultures. Another possible cultural difference to be noted is a visibly lower number of compliments and congratulations in the Polish group, which might point to the national trait of envy and reluctance to acknowledge the success of others often found with Poles. In terms of age, both the senior and the young persons appear to employ a considerable number of wishes when on Facebook, which may result from their care about their friends as well as a sense of duty when prompted by Facebook birthday alerts. It is to be assumed, however, that the choice of the above-mentioned speech acts is mostly spontaneous, which confirms a possible gender-related difference here in the type of expressions which come to the users most naturally.

Emotive language

In view of the above introduction concerning the use of emotive markers, a feature to be discussed first with regard to ways of communication employed by women and men on Facebook and at the same time also manifestations of a more spontaneous mode of expression is the use of emotional language in general, as a subject frequently analysed in reference to possible genderlect differences. A number of studies have demonstrated a much higher degree of emotional language on the part of women when compared to men (e.g., Lakoff 1975 [122], Handke 1994 [123], Dąbrowska 2007ab [124]). Our present analysis will help us to determine firstly whether this tendency is culture- and language-specific or whether it may also be considered to some extent universal, and secondly, whether there is any link between gender, emotionality and politeness, manifesting itself specifically in the form of emotive cues as carriers of interpersonal politeness.

In general terms, emotionality in the written language as far as an informal or semi-formal medium like Facebook is concerned may be marked in a variety of ways. They are more numerous than in a standard form of written communication, thanks to the character of the electronic medium, which allows for the use of a number of innovative options (cf. Kalman and Gergle 2014) [125]. These devices, referred to by Gumperz [126] as contextualization cues “serve to construct the contextual ground for situated interpretations” and they help the speaker/writer to signal to his/her addressees how to understand his/her message. An overview of these strategies noted in the analysed posts points to a departure from the neutral language forms as a result of the use of particularly emotive undertones and yields the following options (for a detailed account of each of the three cultures see Dąbrowska 2013) [127]: exclamation marks (*Brilliant!!!*), a sequence of exclamation and/or question marks (*How long for?!; hate????????????*), a sequence of dots (*Absolutely mindblowing.....*), the use of capital letters, in CMC often interpreted as shouting or, following Lakoff’s (1975 [128]) notion, speaking “in italics” (*HAPPY BIRTHDAY*), combination of capital letters and exclamation marks (*CHEERS!!!!*), onomatopoeic expressions (*Yuk!; tut tut; Oooops; yipiee*), typical CMC acronyms (*OMG, lol*), use of emoticons (:), :) :D, :-P, ;), :(, :-o), :(, XD, ♥); the use of X/x as a symbol of “kisses,” employment of emotionally loaded vocabulary, including colloquialisms, slang and swearwords (*love you; Bummer!; it doesn’t make me bloody giggle; thrilling; phenomenal; holy smoke; FUCK YEAH!*), adverbial intensifiers and emphatic *do* (*but we do love you all!; super-happy to be safely in our little home; really awesome*), the use of the so-called “empty” adjectives (cf. Lakoff 1975) [129] (*That’s lovely...; very very cute!; soooo cute; cutest*). The above list is quite extensive and allows for multiple ways of showing one’s affective (positive and negative) attitude to things being discussed on Facebook. It needs to be said that both women and men make use of most of the indicated markers, though to a different degree (e.g., the use of swearwords and slang, although quite limited in such a public medium, still appears more often in the posts written by the male respondents). There are, however, two clearly rather gender-exclusive features which characterise only the posts of women. Interestingly, bearing in mind all the limitations

connected with the use of English as a second and notably as a foreign language, they do appear in the posts of all the three groups of women, the British, the Indian, and the Polish ones. These are the *X/x* or three *xxx* to symbolize kisses, as well as the so-called “empty” adjectives referred to above. Their appearance not only confirms Lakoff’s (1975) [130] assumption, but also, thanks to the comparison of the three distinct cultures, shows that they do appear in the informal written posts produced by women in general as a marker of the female community of practice, regardless of their cultural background and their varying approach to the use of English as the first, second or foreign language.

The presentation of the numerical distribution of all the emotional markers in the analysed posts (regardless of their function) is summed up in the table below:

Table 5. Emotionality markers

	<i>women</i>			<i>men</i>		
	<i>British</i>	<i>Indian</i>	<i>Polish</i>	<i>British</i>	<i>Indian</i>	<i>Polish</i>
<i>young</i>	110	146	92	38	99	59
<i>middle-aged</i>	69	104	103	52	63	41
<i>senior</i>	84	95	67	44	75	55
<i>Total</i>	263	345	262	134	237	155

The comparison of the three cultural groups and age cohorts yields clear and balanced results. In all the three cultures the women whose posts were investigated show a far greater tendency to display their emotional attitude in language, also in the written medium, than the men. This demonstrates that they are more emotional not only in spoken interaction, but also in a more conscious use of language, where they have to make decisions as to what to write and how. In all the three groups the comparison of the total results is at least by ca. 110 items more in the posts authored by the women than by the men, and in the British group even greater, by nearly 130. While in the case of the British women the rate of emotional display grows, it drops in the case of the British men, by contrast to the Indian and the Polish groups, in whose case while the women become less emotional with age, the men venture to display their affective attitude more freely. This difference might be linked with the control of emotions traditionally observed with the British senior generation, notably men (the proverbial “stiff upper lip”), which, in turn has not been noted with Indians and Poles. On the other hand, the less pronounced emotionality of the Indian women in the older age may possibly be linked with their more limited experience with the electronic media, which gained popularity in those countries later than in the west and is less wide-spread across the Indian population than in the other two countries [131]. The lower rates in the case of the older Polish women may additionally be caused by a less general and weaker command of English of that generation (English became the first foreign language taught in Polish schools only after 1989, when Poland shifted from socialism to capitalism, thereby taking the former position of Russian). Hence their more self-conscious and self-controlled use of the language in such an environment, as it is not their first or even second language that they are utilising in the analysed posts, either. Despite some more detailed differences, however, the fact remains unquestionable that female use of emotional language in the three cultures appears to characterise their behavior in the informal CMC context, and the written medium too, more than that of men.

After the overview of the general use of markers of emotionality, which clearly shows the females’ preference for their use in many contexts and the numerous forms of marking them available on social networking sites, I would like to explore the emotive language samples with regard to the assumption hinted at above, i.e. that emotive language may also serve as a carrier and an enhancement of polite meanings, thereby making them sound more friendly and supportive. Thus, following Watts (1992, 2003, 2005) [132], they assume not only the politic

character by simply acknowledging their friends' messages and responding to them as conventionally expected, but also polite as a result of the additional emotive cues (cf. Janney and Arndt 2005 [133], Theodoropoulou 2015 [134]). Firstly, the general numerical data are presented in the table below:

Table 6. Emotive markers enhancing polite meanings

	<i>women</i>			<i>men</i>		
	<i>British</i>	<i>Indian</i>	<i>Polish</i>	<i>British</i>	<i>Indian</i>	<i>Polish</i>
<i>young</i>	13	19	23	2	8	0
<i>middle-aged</i>	11	15	17	4	4	5
<i>senior</i>	11	17	8	9	11	13
<i>Total</i>	35	51	48	15	23	18

Examples:

Women: *you look fab on this pic!; Happeee Birthday my lovely!! Xx; Thank you thank you :D *blush blush*; Wish you all a very Happy New Year!! May it bring lots of joy, good health and happiness; Well done!! :-), THANK YOU SOOOOOO MUCH FOR ALL THE SWEET WISHES! YOU GUYS ROCK :) :****

Men: *And thanks for a great meal!; Happy birthday to you!; tnx a lot to all of you...:)); Congrats...Our Rockstar !!!; Forgot to tell you: You are one lucky man, man!; All the Best to you and yours!*

The collected examples reflect the use of such expressions which, when interpreted in terms of the emotive markers (i.e. those chosen from the extensive list of carriers of emotional meanings enumerated above), are treated here as equivalent to Janney and Arndt's (2005 [135], verbal, vocal and kinesic aspects of communication that add to or enhance the polite reading of the whole phrase. As the authors maintain, it is a form of interaction "in which affective displays are produced consciously and used strategically in a wide variety of social situations to influence others' perceptions and interpretations of conversational events" (Janney and Arndt 2005: 27) [136]. Thus, included here are devices like, e.g. *Happy birthday!!! :D, Wish you all a very happy New Year!! May it bring lots of joy, good health and happiness...!!*, or *Wow! That's great :)*, but not e.g. *Happy birthday from us both* or *My lovely garden!* In other words, in order to count as an emotive politeness enhancement marker an expression has to be directed to an addressee (and not be just a random comment about something unrelated to the addressee) and bear a marker of emotionality. If only the former was fulfilled, it was counted as polite, but neutral and conventional (politic), and accounted for in the section concerning expressions of politeness in general, whereas expressing emotions alone may have had a very different topic which would not necessarily show the addressee that he or she is particularly liked or admired in this way. The emotive, politeness-enhancing markers, on the other hand, make the reading of a given phrase particularly personal, stress the bond between the author and the addressee, as a result of which its polite, especially the positively polite reading is considerably strengthened.

A more detailed illustration of the use of emotive markers by the female and male representatives of the three cultures yields the following results. In the case of the British women the three age groups show an even distribution of the use of emotions to stress the polite and friendly reading of different speech acts, notably wishes, especially to celebrate somebody's birthday, but also other occasions, e.g. *Happeee Birthday my lovely!! Xx, Hey, happy birthday, have a good one xx, HAPPY BIRTHDAY + FN!, HAPPY BIRTHDAY my darling daughter!, Happy birthday sir!, Thinking of you, have a great day!, Happy Mothers Day!, happy mothers day 2 all mothers xx*. These are followed by thanks, as in *Thanks + FN!, Thanks for a lovely evening, Thanks for the warning and really worth doing!*, compliments

and congratulations, e.g., *Lovely photo, I am interested to know who everyone is!, oooh - congratulations from me too! Xx*. Men's use of emotive language was obviously less marked, but similarly it could be found in, among others, wishes, viz. *Happy birthday to you!, Happy belated + FN! Hope it was a good one!, Happy Holi!*, compliments, e.g. *Brilliant + FN. Well done :), Well done + FN! :)*, or thanks, viz. *And thanks for a great meal!, Thanks for the tip off!*. It may thus be seen that some devices used, especially exclamation marks, are common to both genders, however, the use of capital letters, sequences of letters, empty adjectives and Xs are found only with women. Men's emotive displays of politeness are also typically shorter than women's, but make a more frequent use of smileys, as if to mitigate the sense of commitment such sentences may evoke.

Indian women chose to use emotive language to convey especially thanks, as in *THANK YOU ALL for the wishes, the blessings, the sharing, the caring., Thank you thank you :D *blush blush*, Thanks again for your time and responses!!, thanks!, Thank you so much FN sahab!, Thank you FN :), Thanks againnnnn, thanks FN n co for te fantastic time :P, thanks FN - how are yoooo, Hey guys, million thanks for all your wishes*. Wishes were represented by *Happy birthday, dear FN!, heyya.... many happy returns of the day!, Wish you all a very Happy New Year!!*, while compliments by *My adorable ppsiiii, You both represent our hope-giving future!*. In the case of the Indian men the typical use of emotive markers was also found in thanks, viz., *Thanks FN :), tnx a lot to all of you..:)) :P, Thank you!, Thanks for your wishes :)*. These, similarly as in the case of women, were followed by wishes: *Happy Birthday!!! :D, Have an awesome Birthday...., Wish you all a very happy Republic day of India!* and compliments, as in: *FN - your eyes are so SHARP !!, suuupper bike !!!, Rocking !!!, Good one!, Congrats...Our Rockstar !!!, that was great food, thanks guys!* It may thus be concluded that, as in the case of the British women, Indian women made use of a variety of emotive markers. Those were more limited in the posts written by men, except for the expressions of compliments and congratulations, where the language displayed a particular intensity of feelings, however, those were focused on objects rather than persons.

Finally, Polish women, especially the younger and middle-aged users, made use of the more personally-oriented expressions of politeness especially in wishes, e.g. *HAPPINESS, PEACE, HEALTH and PROSPERITY, Happy Birthday FN, have a great day!, All the best and lots of love xx, Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to U 2 !!!, Happy International Women's Day!, Happy half-term to all of you :), Have a nice day :), Happy 4th!, With the best wishes for New Year to all of you, try to listen and follow:), Best Wishes for everyone in the Family!!!!*. These were followed by thanks, e.g. *THANK YOU SOOOOOO MUCH FOR ALL THE SWEET WISHES! YOU GUYS ROCK :) :***, THANK YOU !!!!!!!!!!!!!, Many thanks to All:) xx, Thanks a lot + FN, Thank you for good wishes to my kittens and me!!!*, as well as compliments and congratulations: *Congratulations, FN!, Well done!! :-), Wow !!!!! Looking great my friend !!!! :D, Good job FN!, I have such a handsome husband!! :)*, how gorgeous you two are!! *Love, Beautiful! xx*. Polish men, on the other hand, used emotive markers least of all the groups discussed here, and those were especially senior men who chose this mode of expression. It was visible in e.g. wishes: *Happy Birthday Emma !!!!!, Happy Holi to all who celebrate it :), Happy New Year All!!!!, All the Best to you and yours!, Enjoy your break!, Good luck!*, thanks, e.g. *Thanks, FN, for the weekend in San Francisco!, Thanks for checking!*, compliments and congratulations, as in: *You are one lucky man, man!, funky !!!*, and even apologies: *FN, my apologies!*. Once again, apart from the size of the sample, the two sets differ mostly in terms of the variety of the options of emotive marking that may be found in the posts written by women as compared to men, while the exclamation marks appear to be the most common, gender-neutral marker.

The comparison of the above results with the overall numbers of polite markers recorded for the studied sample is as follows: out of 121 markers of politeness recorded for all men in the three groups in total 56 were expressed with the help of emotive markers (i.e. 46% of all

politeness strategies), and, in a more detailed account, the sample consisted of 15 emotive markers for British men (out of 34 of politeness markers in total, i.e. 44%), 23 for Indian men (vs. 58 in total, i.e. 40%) and 18 for Polish men (vs. 29 in total, i.e. 62%). For women the results presented themselves as follows: out of 198 politeness makers in all 134 were emotive in nature (68%). In terms of the three cultures investigated here the British women used emotive markers 35 times (vs. 58 in total, i.e. 60%), Indian women 51 times (vs. 89 in total, i.e. 57%) and Polish women as many as 48 times (vs. 51 in total, i.e. as many as 94% of all). The calculation once again clearly confirms a difference in approach to the expression of polite meanings, this time those more personalized and stressing especially the positive attitude towards the addressee, as regards the two genders, with women exceeding men very significantly in this respect as well.

Another observation to be made with regard to the data in Table 6 concerns the cultural background of the Facebook users. It may also be observed that this use of emotive markers in the function of carriers of politeness is the lowest in the British group, both the females and the males in it. Although British women do tend to be very emotional in their linguistic expression, which can be seen in Table 5 presenting the distribution of emotionality markers, and as one of my previous studies demonstrated (Dąbrowska 2007ab [137], cf. Schwartz et al. 2013 [138]), to a far greater degree than e.g. Polish women also investigated in that study, here the numbers appear considerably lower. At the same time both the Indian women and men, especially the latter, as well as the Polish women and men in particular make use of the emotive device as a carrier of polite meanings to a far greater extent than their British counterparts. My interpretation of this discrepancy between the three cultures, and also in comparison with my earlier study of British and Polish women (Dąbrowska 2007b) [139] is in the first place linked with the choice of the language in which the posts were written, and its status in the three countries. While for the British group it is their native tongue, in which case their Facebook linguistic behavior needs to be viewed as natural and mirroring the regular everyday use of the language in speech, for the Indian group it is the use of their second language. It is, however, a language which, as my broader investigation of the case has demonstrated (Dąbrowska 2011b, 2013) [140], enjoys a very high status in India and as such carries positive symbolic connotations, hence possibly a much higher number of polite meanings expressed in English in general and also of emotive language with a polite function in particular. Finally, as regards the Polish group, English is predominantly a foreign language for the post authors in the studied groups, although its command may be, and in the case of most of the respective respondents is very fluent. Thus, Poles hardly ever use English in everyday communication in speech, and far less so in writing. When, therefore, as I argued elsewhere (Dąbrowska 2013) [141], Poles do decide to use it, especially in the written, and thus a more lasting and at the same time challenging form, they frequently do it as if they said something in inverted commas, i.e. with a special, often playful attitude. What is especially visible in the case of women, notably the older ones, is a considerable degree of caution (ibid.), possibly for fear of being criticized if their grammar or spelling prove to be imperfect. This might have caused the particularly high percentage of emoticons and other emotive devices marking this rather unnatural choice of a means of expression, which can be especially notable in the polite meanings expressed in the posts.

Concluding remarks

The observations discussed above with regard to the use of language, and specifically the use of English in the written informal medium by representatives of the three cultures in order to convey polite meanings and thus stress the bond of friendship with their Facebook friends have led to the following conclusions as regards the communicative styles of women and men:

- despite some obvious differences stemming from the cultural background and consequently the degree of ownership of the English language the female users tended to show a particularly uniform sociolinguistic behaviour, notably in respect of their positive and friendly attitude towards their addressees,
- as regards the primary object of analysis in this paper, i.e. the use of markers of politeness, the investigation of the data demonstrated a visible preference on the part of the female Facebook users, regardless of their cultural background, to opt for polite expressions more often than was the case with the men in the three groups. This observation was confirmed in all the categories of polite speech acts, which, due to the simplicity and often a rather formulaic character of the expressions used, could be quite unambiguously classified into the categories of the first-order politeness, out of which four main types, i.e. thanks, wishes, compliments and congratulations as well as apologies, were selected.
- what could also be noticed was that the use of the above-mentioned speech acts was not evenly distributed. While strategies catering for the addressee's positive face were abundant and preferred by both genders, negative politeness was very limited and mostly visible in the category of apologies, which, however, were apologies for very minor and mildly face-threatening acts. The visible majority of positively polite speech acts were once again clearly marked for the women in each culture and each age group. At the same time a more general conclusion concerning the use of politeness in the context of social networking sites can be made that such genres foster the expression of positive meanings, also possibly as self-image enhancement devices, and stress the phatic character of this type of CMC medium.
- moreover, in keeping with earlier findings as regards the female genderlect, a much more affective behaviour was commonly noted in the three cultures analysed, which no doubt also adds to the general cooperative and intimate character of the feminine style of communication. This manifested itself in a wide range of emotional and emotive language devices, and especially certain types of emoticons, three x's, the use of capital letters, and expressive vocabulary being typically associated with the female language.
- the use of emotive devices was also analysed with regard to their possible role in the expression of polite meanings. The results obtained clearly demonstrate that affective language has an important part to play in the expression of politeness, side by side with the politic behaviour. It is particularly visible as a marker of positive politeness as regards both genders in the three cultures, especially when their representatives communicate by means of the same language - English. This way of conveying politeness certainly contributes to a more interpersonal and also more friendly, distance-shortening reading of the speech acts selected by the post authors. However, as could be predicted, it is especially women who show this tendency to a far greater extent – while the overall share of polite expressions enhanced by an emotive device amounted to 46% in the case of men in general, it reached the level of 68% for the group of women. This high frequency no doubt contributes to the impression that women are particularly affectionate and emotive in their communication. The study thus suggests that emotive markers may in fact play a supportive role in the development of a view that women are more polite than men.
- the data collected also demonstrate a particularly marked tendency to use emotive devices in the Facebook posts written by Polish users, i.e. in the group in which English is not a native, but a foreign language. The particularly high share of emotive markers in the posts written by Polish women and men, especially the senior group, indirectly stresses the fact that the use of English may feel somewhat unnatural for the users. Hence the use of smileys, exclamation marks, etc. which may be read as an additional expression of concern both about the addressee's and the sender's face in case some linguistic inadequacies may appear. Additionally, it enhances the polite reading of the respective posts.

On the whole, the above observations show without doubt that gender is a variable which not infrequently introduces marked differences in the linguistic behaviour of women and men,

here particularly visible in the share of markers of both politic and polite character; what is more, it also shapes the language use in certain uniform ways despite cultural boundaries. It may thus be assumed that gender is a variable that has a potential to affect the language use in all cultures. However, the degree of intensity with which gender-related features will surface themselves in particular contexts may vary with regard to the cultural background the language users represent as well as the medium of communication.

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- [115] Dąbrowska, M. (2013). *Variation in Language: Faces of Facebook English*. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang Edition.
- [116] At this point it needs to be clarified that the numbers in the original analysis (Dąbrowska 2013) were somewhat higher with respect to each culture, especially the Indian one, but also Polish and (far less) the British one, as apart from the four categories above, which appeared in each of the three groups, it was also possible to identify less generally used markers of politeness, mainly of positive politeness, like e.g. greetings and closing formulas, offers and invitations, expressing hope about a meeting, or, only in the Indian group – expressing requests, which would be classified under negative politeness. As those were of a more ephemeral character, both in terms of their uneven distribution and very low numbers,

and a much harder categorization, they were not included in the present analysis. In the current study the same number of categories for each circle of the use of English has been accepted for the sake of a balanced presentation of the two gender groups in the three cultures, as these are the main aspects of investigation.

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