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DIALOGUES ACROSS BORDERS: DISCOURSES OF INTERPERSONAL AND INTER-GROUP ENCOUNTERS

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This special issue of the *International Journal of Cross-Cultural Studies and Environmental Communication* offers a peer-reviewed selection of thematically representative papers presented at the 4th ESTIDIA Conference hosted by Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”, on 29-30 September 2017. The conference, whose title was “*Dialogues without Borders: Strategies of Interpersonal and Inter-group Communication*”, brought together an international group of junior and established scholars representing a wide range of disciplines and research approaches to dialogic strategies of interpersonal and inter-group communication. One of the major goals of the contributions included in the present issue is to highlight the role of context-specific communication practices in dealing, from different disciplinary perspectives, with challenging situations emerging in interpersonal and inter-group encounters in 21st century societies, and mainly with the representation of individual and group migration processes, culture-specific perceptions of migrants/migration, as well as online and offline discourses about migrants.

While the dynamics of interpersonal and intergroup relations has been a recurrent topic in several disciplines, such as psychology, social psychology (Tajfel 1978, 1982; Haslam et al. 1998) and political science (Sherif 1966; Sidanis & Pratto 2001), research on communication and miscommunication in interpersonal and intergroup interaction has been conducted primarily within the fields of linguistics, sociolinguistics anthropology, rhetoric and communication studies (Hymes 1964; Gumperz 1971; Gudykunst 1998; Gudykunst & Mody 2002; Giles 2012; Berger 2014). A major advantage of these research strands lies in their intergroup perspective that considers people not only as individuals, but also as members of social groups (in terms of e.g., gender, age, ethnicity, nationality, region), and investigates the ways in which various social group memberships relate to the way that we communicate with each other.

Consequential work on intergroup issues was inspired by the development of Social Identity Theory (SIT), initiated by Tajfel and Turner (2004), who explained that an individual does not just have a personal selfhood, but multiple selves and identities associated with their affiliated groups, and therefore the individual might act differently in varying social contexts according
to the groups they belong to, which might include a sports team they follow, their family, their country of nationality, and the neighborhood they live in, among many other possibilities. A major finding of social identity theory consists of the insight that social behavior falls on a continuum that ranges from interpersonal behavior to intergroup behavior, since most social situations call for a compromise between these two ends of the spectrum.

The importance of intergroup and interpersonal communication in understanding ongoing societal changes has been convincingly highlighted by Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT), by exploring the links between language, context, and identity and by examining the reasons why individuals emphasize or minimize the social differences between themselves and their interlocutors through verbal and nonverbal communication (Giles 1977; Giles, Howard, Coupland, J. and Coupland, N. 1992; Gallois, Ogay & Giles 2005). CAT focuses on both intergroup and interpersonal factors that lead to accommodation, as well as the ways in which concerns about power, macro- and micro-context affect communication behaviour in various professional settings, such as the medical field (Watson & Gallois 1999; Gasiorek, Van de Poel & Blockmans 2015), the legal context (Aronsson, Jönsson & Linell 1987; Davis 2007), and police interrogations (Berk-Seligson 2011), to name but a few. Cultural perspectives on ingroup and intergroup relations that have been developed within the framework of the ethnography of communication, strongly rooted in anthropology (Gumperz and Hymes, 1964) have added valuable insights into sources of misunderstanding and asymmetrical communication. Investigations like the ones carried out by Carbaugh, Berry and NurmiKari-Berry (2006) provide evidence that ways of speaking, behaving and interacting define social and group relationships within and across cultures.

Today many countries, including European countries, are confronted with great challenges following the increasing societal and economic globalization, the internationalisation of cross-border cooperation and the effects of cross-border mobility through the arrival of migrants and refugees (Berry 1997; Bhugra and Becker 2005). A constantly recurring phenomenon consists in the diversification of discursive, rhetorical and technical modalities in which communication in the public sphere interfaces with communication in the private sphere. Subtle differences in private or public interaction patterns can result in misunderstandings and disagreements, which can lead to serious conflicts involving local, national and regional actors, groups and communities (Sherif 1966; Sam and Berry 2010). How to avoid misunderstandings and prevent conflicts at interpersonal and group level? Irrespective of the approaches used, dialogue is a must since it requires and encourages a spirit of inquiry, self-reflection and personal scrutiny (Pettigrew 1998; Hermans 2001). The inclusiveness, open-endedness and long-term perspective of dialogue are necessary prerequisites for building interpersonal, inter-group and inter-community bridges by fostering exchanges of views, by searching for common ground in cross-border encounters, by acknowledging the value of difference and diversity. These constantly topical issues call for further in-depth research across a diverse range of socio-cultural and political situations and fields of activity, including context- and culture-sensitive language usage attitudes, cross-cultural communication strategies, public and private interaction practices, intergenerational communication, and computer-mediated communication (Hymes 1967; Williams and Pittam 1999; Gudykunst and Mody 2002; Gabrielatos and Baker 2008; Giles 2012).

The development of a wider public sphere and a diversity of social networks has opened up the possibility of disputing the dominant position of traditional media, enabling the emergence of multiple voices and visions through increasing participation in discussions on digital media. The authors of the papers included in this special issue have investigated how various
categories of individuals, belonging to different professions and socio-cultural groups – from less to more powerful – feel empowered by the resources and new technologies of social media and intermedia networks and use them to address multiple audiences and express/promote their visions and concerns. They highlight the urgency of the challenges that many of us are faced with at both interpersonal and inter-group level: how media and digital environments intervene in the public definition of topical issues, and in the selection and characterization of perspectives relevant to their discussion; how ideas and representations involving different spaces and media evolve and circulate; how they influence the translation between different visions, the emergence and development of controversies and the search for effective and sustainable solutions. Some of the major questions in search of answers/solutions are the following:

- How do the groups people belong to influence the (positive and/or negative) ingroup-outgroup stereotypes they hold? What role do language and linguistic representations play in spreading or exposing stereotypes?
- What types of pro-migrant and anti-migrant arguments are being put forward in official media coverage and in the social media? In what ways do they differ and how do they affect individual and group reactions?
- How can digital communication cultures contribute to fostering a multidimensional and multidirectional dialogue across groups and communities?

The articles in this issue tackle several of the above challenges from different disciplinary perspectives, using different, yet complementary methodologies. They explore a range of many-sided problematisations of ongoing migration processes or migrant/immigrant experiences, intercultural (mal)adaptation and shifting public perceptions of (im)migrant stereotypes.

Analysing Erasmus students’ blog narratives, Valente’s article shows that international students can develop coping mechanisms and resilience when faced with acculturative stressors during the adaptation process in a host country. The author points out that international students’ acculturation process can be comparable to immigrants’ experiences in terms of emotional responses and stress to master a foreign language and culture. To identify students’ coping mechanisms and resilience during their adaptation in a foreign university and country, Valente draws upon the Complex Adaptive System (CAS) approach to examine discursive and non-discursive elements and strategies in Erasmus students’ personal blog narratives. The findings indicate that world view differences can lead to divergence in communication (e.g. miscommunication, cultural bias, environmental imbalance), widening the gap between host and guest agents during social interactions. Yet, humor and irony were used as the students’ coping mechanisms to deal with stressful experiences and to mitigate cultural stressors when interlocutors’ worldviews diverged.

In Vargolomova’s article, the writing practice in blogs is used consciously by immigrants as a strategy used to take control of the inner narrative of the self and to stabilize the misbalanced immigrant condition. Social identity is defined as part of the self-perception that derives from the imagined belonging to a significant social group. Immigrant blogging is envisaged as a process of identity negotiation and renegotiation, whereby the personal story is deconstructed and reconstructed in order to include new life events and redefine the perception of the self. As a result of Vargolomova’s analysis, the practice of blogging is seen as a controlled personal space, but also a social one, where identity is reconsidered and renegotiated with the
community through writing personal stories in order to moderate and support a transition period.

Sezonov’s investigation provides evidence about how contemporary art creation strategies (as well as interviews, documents, and participatory observation related to migration) can be analyzed using an Actor-Network paradigm, since top representatives of contemporary plastic art construct intermedia networks by means of heterogeneous elements, instrumentally using controversies related to their image to mobilize groups and audiences and create works of art characterized by socio-political agency. The two artists, whose works are contrastively analysed, are Dan Perjovschi and Ai Weiwei, both of them travelers between virtual worlds, who transform everyday objects into hybrid virtual objects, conceived to draw attention and raise awareness about the migration crisis and important adjacent social events. The discourse and the social practices triggered by these two artists around the iconic topic of migration involve a transformative process of stirring up controversies and witnessing, through self-reflexive usage of personal images or the re-circulation of works of art through all the media, in an online–offline space-time metaphorical awareness.

The discourse representation of Syrian migrants in the mass and social media and the effect of the discourse on the migrants are the target of Esmer’s study. Using detailed concordance and collocational analysis, she analyzes the pro- and anti-Syrian migrant arguments being put forward in Turkish newspapers having different political ideologies and in online conversational practices of Turkish citizens having different political ideologies. The findings confirm previous results, according to which the discourse representation of migrants in the social and mass media changed according to the columnists’ and ordinary people’s political standpoints. Pro-government columnists and ordinary people used an inclusion-oriented, pro-migrant discourse to portray migrants positively as people contributing to the prosperity of Turkey, whereas anti-government used a blaming and homogenizing discourse on migrants portrayed negatively as a burden to Turkey and a threat to the safety of the Turkish state. As for the Syrian migrants, the positive discourse of the pro-group made them feel safe, proud and integrated, while the negative other-representation of the anti-group made them feel isolated from the Turkish society.

Challenging the traditional and stereotypical image of women according to which they are “to be seen, not heard”, Dabrowska examines the comments of female and male users on some of the most popular social networking sites, such as Facebook and YouTube. The focus is on the issue of emotions expressed through various speech acts, notably praise or compliment on the one hand and, notably, criticism, blame, accusation on the other. While so far researchers have most often examined positive emotions, this study seeks to fill a gap by also looking into negative emotions (including manifestations of politeness and impoliteness) and evaluating them quantitatively in respect of the two genders. Dabrowska’s findings show that, contrary to traditional stereotypes, women can also behave in a more negatively emotional and more impolite way than men, thereby revealing not only positive, but also negative aspects of their online behavior. Hopefully, the articles in this special issue will help stimulate further dialogue about context-based strategies of interpersonal and inter-group communication among researchers, and across disciplinary boundaries and theoretical approaches.
References


RESILIENCE AND WELL-BEING AMONG INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS DURING ACCULTURATION PROCESS: BLOGGING WITHOUT BORDERS

Andrea C Valente

Abstract: This article explores eight personal blog narratives by Erasmus students who post about their cross-cultural experiences while studying in a foreign country. The study defends that international students can develop coping mechanisms and resilience when facing acculturative stressors during adaptation process in a host country. Thus, it analyzes students’ narratives to verify how they can cope with cross-cultural stressors in their everyday through discursive and non-discursive strategies. This study relies on an integrated view of discourse analysis inspired by concepts from Complex Adaptive System and ecology of composition. Key words: international students; Erasmus Program; resilience; blog narratives; acculturation; cross-cultural communication; complex adaptive system; cultural convergence; worldview.

Introduction
How to build resilience against everyday adversity while studying abroad? To answer this question, this article explores international students’ blog narratives to identify how students cope with cross-cultural stressors during acculturation process in a host country. As International Student Mobility (ISM) has been on the rise, an increase number of undergraduate students have participated in exchange programs sponsored by their home universities. Contributing to current internationalization of higher education, International Student Mobility involves a dynamic flow of human beings, technology, and culture which articulates a network of institutions. Although students and scholars leaving their homeland on a quest for knowledge has not been a new phenomenon (Guruz 2), the current trend shows more inclusion and diversity among participants in academic exchange programs worldwide. In the case of university students, the majority is enrolled in structured exchange programs such as European Erasmus, American Fulbright Student Scholarship, and Saudi Arabia’s King Abdullah Scholarship Program. Despite the specificities of each mobility program, an exchange process can be itself an overwhelming experience for students due to its complexity – from logistics to knowledge of local language and culture to facilitate adaptation into a host country.

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Since cross-cultural communication awareness is usually overlooked during an exchange program, most students end up experiencing “acculturative stress” (Berry 287) or “culture shock” (Oberg qtd. in Berry 287). The cross-culture stressors may affect students’ well-being during their adaptation to a foreign institution, which is different from their native language, culture, and pedagogical practices (Guo and Chase 306). In this case, international students’ acculturation process can be comparable to immigrants’ experiences in terms of emotional responses and stress to master a foreign language and culture. Even more so, international students are expected to meet the requirements of a foreign university and classroom practices in a short period of time, putting them under high level of “acculturative stress”. One strategy students may use to cope with cross-cultural stressors is writing on a blog. Hence, this article explores Erasmus students’ blog narratives (i.e. from an emic perspective) of their everyday experiences in dealing with cross-cultural stressors while studying abroad. It examines discursive and non-discursive elements and strategies in the first-person narratives in order to identify cope mechanisms that promote resilience during students’ acculturation process in a foreign university.

While scholarship on immigrants’ experience of acculturation and adaptation has been solid and abundant in the field of the humanities and social sciences, the same cannot be said about studies on international students’ acculturation process in foreign academic environments; they are insipient at the very least. Nevertheless, what can be usually found is statistical presentations about trends and successes in International Student Mobility locally and globally. It usually reflects a top-down perspective initiated by organizations such as the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada with its 2014 report on “Internationalization at the Canadian Universities”. What seems to be missing here, however, is a bottom-up approach to report on international students’ standpoint of their everyday acculturation experience and well-being. In this case, ‘official data’ on International Student Mobility and wellness are either inexistent or scarce, with very few shelved in the university admission archives.

Due to this, I felt compelled to search for international students’ wellness data beyond institutional sources, as for example, online journalism. It came as no surprise that I have found a reasonable number of headlines in American and Canadian contexts such as “Guest: International Students need a bridge to mental health counseling” (The California Aggie) and “International Students Blues” (The Silhouette). Yet, I wonder if similar headlines about international students’ mental wellness were also reported in the European press, with its Erasmus Program celebrating its 30th anniversary in 2017. A brief internet search among French, German, and Spanish headlines reveals a distinct reality, respectively: “Etudiants

2 This study opts for the term ‘acculturative stress’ instead of ‘culture shock’ as it offers a broader scope according to Berry: “Since acculturation has both positive (e.g. new opportunities) and negative (e.g. discrimination) aspects, the stress conceptualization better matches the range of affect experienced during acculturation […] The term culture implies that only one culture is involved, while the term acculturation draws our attention to the fact that two cultures are interacting, and producing the phenomena” (294).

Erasmus: Le blues du retour”, “Gefangen in Erasmus Blues?”, and “Erasmus Triste”. The headlines are about Erasmus students’ negative feelings and reactions (i.e. ‘post-blues’) when they face the ‘back home reality’ once the program is over, implying that students have had a great time abroad.

Based on the headline news about Erasmus students’ positive experiences, I hypothesize that most international students are able to build resilience when facing cross-cultural stressors during their acculturation process in a host country. To defend such claim, I examine some Erasmus students’ personal blog narratives to verify how they cope with everyday stress and anxieties while studying abroad. I aim to identify discursive and non-discursive elements and strategies that can indicate students’ coping mechanisms and resilience during their adaptation in a foreign university and country.

2. Theoretical Background

2.1 Complexity

This contribution is based on Complex Adaptive System (CAS) and Complexity Thought (CT) as seen in the works by Edgar Morin and Ilya Prigogine in relation to the notion of ‘self-organization’. Both schools of thought share a holistic view of participants in their everyday interactions with society and environment. According to Morin, a living being to be autonomous (i.e. ‘self-eco-organization’) “depends on its environment on matter and energy, and also in knowledge and information” (14). Social interactions among human beings are complex, dynamic, non-linear, and context-dependent. Furthermore, social interactions are prone to uncertainties and fluctuations that are vulnerable to push-pull forces, in attempt to keep order and disorder levelled. As Prigogine and Stengers state,

"In our world, we discover fluctuations, bifurcations, and instabilities at all levels. Stable systems leading to certitudes correspond only to idealizations, or approximations. (55)"

Here, we can correlate complex systems thinking to acculturation process, as seen in the case of international students’ mobility, in which students’ cultural adaptation success depends on complex interactions within an unfamiliar environment. It involves a dynamic interaction between foreign students and instructors, peers, institution administration, lodging personnel, and off campus services, among others. To understand such a complex social network, I draw upon Complex Adaptive System (CAS) where “elements, called agents, learn or adapt in response to interactions with other agents” (Holland 24). Moreover, dynamic relations can correlate to students’ coping mechanisms and resilience building as consequence of their interactions with other agents. According to Holland, “the behaviour of a CAS is always generated by the adaptive interactions of its components” (32).

Transferring the notion of CAS to narrative studies, such as student’s online stories, I identify three types of layers with shared points of interaction (i.e. nodes): 1- a narrated story (i.e. discursive layer); 2- a discursive agent (i.e. narrator); 3- the living agents (i.e. students) with their lived experiences in a ‘real world’. Once stories are narrated and posted on students’ blogs, they “become agents at the next level up” (Holland 32). In other words, the narrated stories become digital narratives ready to interact with a virtual agent (i.e. reader), who forms
a subsequent layer every time a new reader accesses those students’ blogs. Thus, narratives on
digital platforms reinforce complex interactions that are dynamic and non-linear.

2.2 Acculturation
In general, acculturation process can be stressful for exchange students as they fear losing their
sense of belonging, which is based on one’s ethnic and cultural identities. International students
may feel under pressure to make proper “adjustments” (Ward and Kennedy qtd. in Berry 292)
to socially fit in a host environment. Students’ internal struggle to keep their original identity
while living in a foreign environment may lead them to alienation and or marginalization. They
may either feel threatened to lose affiliations with both their home and host countries, or to be
absorbed into a new culture (i.e. assimilation). Experiencing cultural changes in one’s identity
“can be stressful and result in problems with self-esteem and mental health” (Bughra and
Becker 21). Thus, international students who are genetically predisposed to develop mood
disorders such as anxiety and depression may have their academic self-efficacy affected while
studying abroad. To aim for a positive outcome and ‘healthy’ adaptation, exchange students
should embrace integration by showing affiliation with both cultures.

While examining Erasmus students’ blog narratives, I aim to identify types of discursive
and non-discursive strategies that can indicate students’ coping mechanisms and resilience
against acculturative stressors in order to facilitate their integration in a new environment.

2.3 Resilience
Erasmus students’ ‘successful blog stories’ can be interpreted as result of students’
psychological abilities, that is, their emotional “competence” when faced with cultural
misunderstandings and miscommunications in their everyday interactions on and off campus.
A relation between the notion of “competence” and resilience has been explored in Garmezy’s
work. Students’ successful stories become evidence of resilience, as he mentions,

resilience is manifest competence despite exposure to significant stressors. It seems to me that you can’t talk about resilience in the absence of stress (7) […]. Especially since so much of resilience is a function of the interaction of multiple, complex factors. (14)

Garmezy’s definition of resilience as a “manifest competence” resultant of an individual’s
interactions and networks becomes the basis for an ecological perspective, which is thereafter
developed in Ungar’s work with depth and breadth. In an ecological view, resilience is shared
between individuals and collective to deal with adversity. Ungar explains,

In the context of exposure to significant adversity, resilience is both the capacity of
individuals to navigate their way to the psychological, social, cultural, and physical
resources that sustain their wellbeing, and their capacity individually and collectively to
negotiate for these resources to be provided and experienced in culturally meaningful
ways. (225)

Hence, in an ecological view of resilience, collaboration and collectivism replace
individualism; in other words, an agent’s (i.e. individual) resilience is built upon processes and
outcomes of collaborative interactions to overcome stressors. Hence, an ecological perspective
of resilience has affinity with Complex Adaptive Systems (CAS) as both can deal with dynamic
systems which are capable of adaptations despite disturbances (i.e. stressors). In this manner,
Masten’s defines resilience as “the capacity of a dynamic system to adapt successfully to disturbances that threaten system function, viability, or development” (10); moreover, she explains,

Resilience emerges from commonplace adaptive systems for human development, such as healthy human brain in good working order, close relationships, effective schools and communities, opportunities to succeed, and beliefs in the self, nurtured by positive interactions with the world. (8)

Thus, an ecological view of resilience combined with CAS can offer an insightful theoretical ground to develop this study. The blog stories can reveal Erasmus students’ coping mechanism and resilience against everyday cultural stressors, such as a foreign language, unfamiliar pedagogical context, and poor social capital, which constantly test their competence to adapt into a new environment.

3. Methodology and Analysis

3.1 Ecology of Writing

To analyze Erasmus student’s blog narratives, I take Margaret Syverson’s ecological view of composition as a model to understand the writing process in contextualization, that is, as a social network with its complexity, marked by “interrelationships in which writing is embedded” (Syverson 6). Moreover, she argues,

writers, readers, and texts form just such a complex system of self-organizing, adaptive, and dynamic interactions. But even beyond this level of complexity, they are actually situated in an ecology, a larger system that includes environmental structures. (5)

Hence, this study considers (digital) writing complex systems in which various agents can collaborate and interact among themselves. For example, Erasmus students’ blogs are identified as digital environments offering various possibilities, among them, allowing writers and readers to share experiences by bringing forth lived experiences into narratives.

Following Syverson’s model, I attempt to identify discursive and non-discursive elements and strategies in students’ blog narratives as complex system. Thus, her model guides me to understand discourse analysis in an integrated approach that includes not only textual and rhetorical elements but also visuals and strategies.

3.2 Data Selection

Contrary to current trends that employ quantitative methods such as data mining (i.e. web analytics) to deal with a massive amount of online data, this contribution takes a case study approach into account. It randomly selects a few Erasmus students’ blogs on Google search, which are written in English by either native or non-native speakers. While sorting out the data, I identified three types of blogs, as following:

1- top-down blogs are usually organized and posted by educational institutions (e.g. universities) serving as ‘survival manual’ with tips and resources for prospective students;
2- bottom-up blogs are personal independent blogs organized and posted by Erasmus students, serving as a ‘diary’, marked by reflections on the everyday;
mixed blogs combine institutional and personal posts usually organized and maintained by the university administration to give ‘recommendations’ and ‘advices’ based on students’ experiences abroad.

In this view, I argue that bottom-up blogs deal with exchange students’ authentic and genuine experiences, as bloggers may not feel constrained to express thoughts and feelings as they hold ownership of a blog; whereas top-down and mixed blogs may format students’ stories by utilizing institutional templates and guidelines. In mixed blogs students are invited to write about personal accounts of their exchange experience abroad under an agreement that their stories may be ‘sanitised’ for advertising purposes. Yet, in top-down blogs there is the sole voice of an institution, which falls out of the scope here; thus, most of the examples considered for analysis are based on first-person narratives as seen in bottom-up and mixed blogs.

The following table indicates the types of blogs as well as student-bloggers’ basic demographic analyzed here:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Blog</th>
<th>Blogger’s original country</th>
<th>Blogger’s host country</th>
<th>Blogger’s gender</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bottom-up blog</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Poland</td>
<td>Czech</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Scotland</td>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed blog</td>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>Portugal</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>Female</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>England</td>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1.2 Analysis

3.3.1 Cultural Convergence
The main objective in this case study is to identify students’ coping mechanisms and resilience building in their blog stories through discourse analysis to understand how cultural stressors can be minimized to facilitate exchange students’ integration. Examining students’ blog narratives in terms of discursive strategies, I have found that ‘code-switching’, ‘humor/irony’, and ‘visuals’ such as photographs and emoji are frequent elements to convey cultural convergence, which ultimately leads to illustrate students’ resilience against acculturative stressors during their adaptation period.

Here, I draw upon Gile and Coupland’s understanding of convergence “as a strategy whereby individuals adapt to each other's communicative behaviors in terms of a wide range of linguistic-prosodic-nonverbal features” (7). The frequent use of three discursive strategies such as code-switching, humor, and visuals observed in the narratives show that exchange students are willing to learn and adapt to a host language and culture despite facing everyday acculturative stressors. In other words, the narratives show that students make efforts to minimize cross-cultural differences by creating reciprocal strategies that facilitate their...
interaction with their host agents and environment. The examples below illustrate the discursive and non-discursive elements and strategies that can indicate cultural convergence as evidence of students’ resilience during their adaptation period:

a- Code-Switching:
   Example 1: “Boa tarde from the sunny Lisbon!”
   (Posted by a female Finnish student in Lisbon, Portugal).
   Example 2: “Ciao tutti! Hi everyone” 😊
   (Posted by a female Finnish student in Torino, Italy).

b- Humor:
   Example:
   Obviously, I got a room on the top floor. The interior designer, on the other hand, clearly admired Alfred Hitchcock as entering the main lobby of the dorm is like an earthquake and the tension only rises from then on.
   (Posted by a male Polish student in Prague, Czech).

c- Visual:
   Example: Photograph followed by a caption: “My first ever corn maze. And my Canadian BFFs”. 4
   (Posted by a female Finnish student in Ontario, Canada).

In these examples, code-switching from English to Portuguese and Italian, respectively, (e.g. *Boa tarde* and *Ciao tutti*) and visuals (e.g. photograph and happy face emoji) indicate convergence relations between exchange students and host agents. The use of code-switching as a discursive strategy in the narratives shows that exchange students switch from English to local language (e.g. Portuguese and Italian) to indicate their positive attitudes towards acculturation. In the case of non-discursive strategy such as visuals, student-bloggers post photographs of theirs with local students as evidence of social integration. The smiling face emoji at the end of a sentence can be identified with the blogger’s feelings and evaluation of her experience in Italy.

Yet, the use of humor has an ambiguous value in cultural convergence. In the example of the Polish student’s narrative, the blogger uses humor and irony as rhetorical strategies to express his disappointment with the accommodation (dorm) reserved for him. Despite facing stress, the blogger uses humor to mitigate the negative experience in the narrative, which goes with a positive psychology necessary to build one’s resilience.

3.3.2 Social Network and Mindset

To support students’ mobility to a foreign country, some traveling organization such as setting previous contact with host university and or students’ associations seem to facilitate students’ navigations through the first days of arrival. In this regard, establishing ‘social network’ should be considered a communicative action that involves both discursive and non-discursive strategies to mitigate exchange students’ acculturative stress on and off campus activities. The following extract posted by a male Scottish student in Spain describes how receiving initial

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4 See picture at http://exchange.blogs.tamk.fi/tag/canada/
local support (i.e. social network) has facilitated his adaption into the new environment, which otherwise, would cause him a lot of stress:

So we decided to go the next morning before meeting my friend Alberto who lives near the city centre. He came with us to view three flats, helping me with any translating and guiding us around the city.

Yet, exchange students’ poor social and adaptation skills can have a negative effect on their experience abroad. The lack of competence to establish social network and to learn a local language and culture can hinder students’ self-efficacy, and ultimately, their success in both academic and everyday contexts. The following extract written by a male English student in Spain illustrates such issue:

Obviously, you don't know the city very well and so when you go looking for flats you don't know where to go… I should have perhaps gone to university a bit more, made more of an effort, even if I didn't understand it, at least I was there and I might have just taken away one thing from it…I mean there were times when it was very lonely and very isolating and very frustrating when you don't know what's happening or what you can do to improve.

In the extract above, the English student has not developed sufficient coping mechanisms to deal with acculturative stressors (i.e. foreign language and culture). Consequently, he feels responsible for his own failures by blaming himself for not being resilient enough while living abroad. Nevertheless, he is unable to realize that his self-efficacy also depends on social and human capital, as for example, belonging to a social network and or local community so that one can receive some emotional support.

To create a sense of belonging while studying abroad, exchange students should engage with some local groups. However, ‘holding membership to local groups’ (e.g. after-school programs and clubs) and ‘doing what locals do’ involve complex convergent strategies that demand from foreign students’ competence and resilience to step outside their comfortable zone and to integrate into the host community. By taking this initiative, foreign students can avoid isolation and feelings of alienation during the acculturation process. The following extract posted by a female English student in the Netherlands shows how she attempts to interact with the local community:

Most times I triumph in them thinking I am a true Dutch gal but other times if they say anything unexpected I am forced to admit that I am just a lousy English girl trying to be Dutch. Oh the pain!

Moreover, mindset growth towards cultural differences such as adopting a positive and non-biased attitude can alleviate acculturation stressors. For example, in certain countries arriving late at an appointment is culturally acceptable without being frowned upon by its local group; whereas, in other countries, the opposite behaviour could be interpreted as offensive and disrespectful to the hosts. The following extract posted by a female Finnish student in Portugal shows how she has changed her mindset and has become empathetic at a local custom which is completely different from her original culture:
It is okay to be late in Portugal and sometimes you need to wait a long time to see your local friends – obviously as a Finnish person I am arriving too early […] I have learned how to live more stress-less life here in Portugal.

In this example, the Finnish student shows that her native cultural values and customs are questioned against a foreign tradition without biases. Her mindset changes to converge with a ‘foreign’ custom. Moreover, she has even considered incorporating the Portuguese custom (e.g. arriving late) into her routine so that she can enjoy a stress-free life. This example points out that plasticity in thinking is necessary to overcome cultural stressors. Recognizing that “it’s ok to be late” instead of criticizing the host culture, the exchange student shows competence and resilience to cope with acculturative stressors so that she can adapt to the local group.

3.3.3 Worldview Divergence
As seen, foreign language, alien culture, and new environment are frequent acculturative stressors during international students’ adaptation process, which can affect their mental health and well-being. These elements consist of one’s worldview that is embedded in an individual’s consciousness, demanding therefore, lots of efforts when one’s worldview needs to be changed in a short span of time. Worldview differences can lead to divergence in communication (e.g. miscommunication), widening the gap between host and guest agents during social interactions. An alien worldview can challenge international students’ level of competence and resilience due to interlocutors’ lack of cross-cultural skills to negotiate meanings. Moreover, if students have low competence skills with poor self-regulatory abilities to cope with cross-cultural stressors, they are more likely to face miscommunications, cultural bias, and environmental imbalances. As consequence, misunderstandings, alienation, and isolation may emerge during students’ acculturation period delaying their adaptation to a new environment. The following extract illustrates a case of worldview divergence. It is written by a male Finnish student in an Erasmus program in Turkey while taking a local intercity bus on his own:

The best part was definitely when he was telling me my seat number on the bus. This he did by yelling out “otuz iki” (32) about 15 times, grabbing his chair and jumping up and down with a mad look on his face. …And I also didn’t forget my seat number. 😂

The narrative shows that insufficient convergence of culture and language between interlocutors creates tension, misunderstanding, and miscommunication, leading to a stressful situation. The student attempts to navigate through a foreign environment holding his native worldview that is completely distinct from the host’s. Yet, to cope with cultural stressors the Finnish student uses humor in his narrative to alleviate the tension along with a fake smiling face emoji to signal irony at the end of the narrative. Furthermore, the use of code-switching to mark the number thirty-two in Turkish (otuz iki) shows that the exchange student is willing to adapt to the host environment despite facing linguistic and cultural challenges. This extract is an example of how the international student copes with worldview divergence and builds resilience against cross-cultural stressors.
Final Remarks
This article concludes that international students’ blog narratives can offer insightful cross-cultural stories for institutions involved in organizing exchange programs at post-secondary education. The stories posted on personal and mixed blogs reveal students’ competence and resilience to cope with acculturative stressors during their adaptation in a foreign country. To examine students’ narratives this study relied on discourse analysis to identify discursive and non-discursive elements and strategies to deal with cross-cultural stressors. For example, code-switching was used as a discursive strategy to signal empathetic relations and convergence of culture, which can be attributed to students’ positive attitudes to maintain a balanced well-being. Yet, humor and irony were used to mitigate cultural stressors when interlocutors’ worldviews diverged. Moreover, humor and irony were frequently identified as students’ coping mechanisms to deal with stressful experiences. Yet, non-discursive strategies such as photographs and emojis (i.e. smiling face) to illustrate students’ blog narratives were usually used for reinforcing cultural convergence and willingness to adapt into a foreign environment.

An ecological view of those Erasmus students’ stories can offer meaningful resources for professionals that support exchange students in pursuing their academic goals as well as in improving students’ well-being while studying abroad. Moreover, supporting international students to engage with blogging as a self-reflective practice may result in more efficient ways to deal with acculturative stressors. Hence, I suggest that a cross-cultural communication awareness program should be developed for both exchange students and university personnel so that participants can be better equipped to negotiate worldview differences and to create resilient environments.

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THE WRITING PRACTICE AS A RENEGOTIATION OF IDENTITY IN CONTEXT OF EMIGRATION

Diana Vargolomova

Abstract
The paper discusses the connection between writing, identity and community in the online communication, presenting a part of a PhD thesis which reviews 12 blogs of recent Italian emigrants in the United States between October 2011 and October 2014. The identity is examined through by the means of two theories. The first theory is the Narrative Identity Theory, which assumes that the identity is a process of construction of the self, a personal project, mediated by narratives that can be consciously renegotiated and elaborated. The second theory assumes that not only one identity is contained within one person, but the self is guided by many voices or “I positions” (The Dialogical Self of Hubert Hermans). This theory sees the writing as a way to actively reorder the I-positions according to the needs of the situation. It’s fundamental to be able to integrate the new context and the new events in the global “legend” of the self in a period of passage and discontinuity. The blog writing is analyzed as a strategy to take control of the inner narrative and stabilize a disbalanced condition. The blogosphere takes the part of supporting community in the absence of the traditional migration connections.

Topics: media, intercultural communication, internet communication, linguistics
Key words: writing, identity, blogs, online communication, online community, emigration.

Introduction
The moments of transition in the traditional society are limited; the life phases follow a predictable rhythm: birth, adolescence, marriage, death. The transition to every phase is associated with a rite of passage which is intended to present the person in the new social role through a special kind of rite engaging the community. The rite changes the perception of who the person is. As a result, a perception of the world with an accent upon change instead on

1 Sofia University „St. Klimet Ohridski”, department of Roman studies, Italian language and culture.
stability\textsuperscript{2} appears. While the ancient rites of passage are lost, the need they were accommodating persist in some forms. The paper considers the writing as a specific kind of ritual of the modern age which allows the person to restore the continuity in the perception of the self and to overcome a moment of discontinuity and identity crisis.

The presented analysis is part of dissertation named Digito Ergo Sum (Linguistic and anthropological analysis of blogs of Italian emigrants in the United States) which studies the writing of 12 bloggers, part of active virtual community in the period between October 2011 and October 2014. The blogs are examined according to two theories of identity: the first considering the identity a process and technology for constructing of the self with its cultural and social limitations, and the second one presumes the existence not of one but of many identities which can be individual, social and which, connected in a complex ecosystem, can create the perception of the self for a definite moment.

Two methodological approaches combined in an interdisciplinary research are applied in the dissertation: a linguistic and an anthropological one. One of them is the discourse analysis with its formal linguistic methodology and the other approach is the traditional anthropological methods of the anthropology of language and writing. While the discourse analysis aims to arrive to the meaning of the practice through the examination of different language levels – lexical, morphological, syntactic etc., the anthropology uses its interpretational ethnographical techniques for the same purpose. The anthropology of language, according to its historical origin, studies predominantly the oral discourse; while a recent branch, the anthropology of writing, is focusing on personal narratives, the so called egodocuments, texts that in our hyperconnected society increasingly often mediate the communication and inhabit the virtual spaces.

**Theoretical overview**

The identity as a process

*The identity here is studied not as an attribute but as a process where the writing assumes the role of a field for rationalization and construction.* This process is more dynamic in the blogs compared to the traditional personal diaries since the border between the public and the personal sphere is blurred in the virtual space, where it becomes a subject to renegotiation and as a consequence the identity process develops in specific way.

According to Paul Ricoeur (2009) the story of our life has two contradicting elements – one is permanent since the person wears the same name during their life, and another is variable and represents the physiological and psychological changes. What kind of dynamics governs these changes is traceable through the self narratives. Zygmunt Bauman thinks that while the keyword of the modernity is *creation*, it is *recycling* (Bauman 2000:110) for the postmodern world. The recycling of contents and identities is a fundamental characteristic of digital culture. Furthermore, the *identity according to him is a noun but it behaves like a verb, for it has the shape of a process and it is fluid.*

For Smith and Watson (2001:39), who work mostly with autobiographies, the identity is a discursive construct, made of models, which the people have available and use in their narratives (Smith, 2001:39). Anthony Giddens (1991:75), who is interested in the changing nature of the identity in the context of the transition from the traditional to modern society, believes that the modern human needs to make decisions about who they are and what they want, constantly observing themselves. As a consequence for them, the I is reflexive and the identity is not a quality of one specific moment, but an account of the life and it depends on the ability to maintain a particular *narrative.*

\textsuperscript{2} See for exemple the Liquid Modernity of Bauman, 2000.
In different ways all these authors talk about modern people’s identity as a process of creating a construct. The identity therefore is not immediate, it needs mediation for its existence, and this mediation is performed by different types of narratives. Ricoeur (2009:95) says that the narrative’s mediation underlines the fact that the cognition of the self is also an interpretation of the self; he is also asking how exactly is happening this mediation. According to the Italian anthropologist Francesco Remotti (1996:54) the identity is alimented by the practice of writing and the writing is giving the identity a suitable skeleton. The writing frames the identity, tearing it out of the stream of the possible alternatives and fixing it in a stable form. Charlotte Linde (1993:3) calls the oral narratives “life stories”. She defines them as the aggregation of all the stories people tell about themselves, they show to the others who we are and how did we get here. These stories represent a valuable resource for the identity formation, as well as a resource for the self presentation and the self negotiation. Although Linde expressly excludes the written autobiographies from her “life stories”, the view on the identity as a process of self narration can be applied also to the blogs.

All these theories are associated with the narrative identity, which assumes that the people form their identities, integrating their experiences in the real life in one global inner story of the self. This story is not static, it is subject to development and it establishes the sense of continuity and purpose in life.  

This narrative must be able to incorporate the events occurring in the world maintaining the narrative’s coherence. We can suppose that this is what precisely happens in the blogs: the personal story is deconstructed and reconstructed in order to include the new life events, redefining in that way the perception of the self.

The contemporary culture gives the possibility of people to consciously work on their identities. In addition, this process generates a product in the social networks, which is accessible to public and suitable for trading. And that process is particularly useful in a period of a drastic change and discontinuity.

The transition period

The choice of blogs is not casual - the bloggers are recent emigrants, they don’t have the institutional support of the traditional emigrant communities and they activate the social practice of writing in search of stability. The main characteristic of the diary is that it requires an active effort. Beginning a diary activates a social resource. This active effort emerges when the identity is threatened or it needs to be declared. A typical situation of this sort is the transition periods such as emigration.

The central place in the blog’s content is reserved for the interpretation and the reflection on the differences between the birthplace and the new home. The blog community is formed by people who need to talk about their experiences as emigrants. They are writing as if they explain the American reality to the readers, trying to feel more involved in the new context and to find their new place. This can be seen in the following example of how the different reality is assimilated and considered:

„Nel mio immaginario la farmacia per eccellenza rimane la vecchia farmacia di una volta, con i mobili di legno e i vecchi vasi di ceramica di un tempo in esposizione (la farmacia per eccellenza è per me, torinese, quella di fronte al Duomo in via XX settembre!) qui le farmacie sono dei grandi, immensi, tristissimi supermercati, dove trovi di tutto e ancora di più... ma non nel senso di medicine , nel senso di tutto, dal pane al latte, passando per i cosmetici, le lampadine e i prodotti per pulire la casa…”

3 Concerning the narrative identity see McAdams, 2001.

In my imagination the model pharmacy is the old pharmacy with its wooden furniture and the old-time ceramic vessels (for me, coming from Torino, the model for pharmacy is the one in front of Duomo, at XX September street!) Here the pharmacies are some very sad supermarkets, where you can find everything and more… not in sense of medicines, I mean everything, from bread to milk, cosmetics, light bulbs and detergents…”

Writing means regaining control of your life in situation of transition and loss of stability, if we recall the functions of Lejeune⁵. The bloggers openly declare their intention to “think in Italian” (citing one of the blogs title), maintaining this way connections with the Italian culture (the choice of language demonstrates that they need to think over the new reality in their native language) in a situation where they feel they are losing these connections. Amongst the subjects they discuss prevail the ones concerning their everyday life in America, interpretation of the events and search of their meaning. Writing allows giving a personal meaning to the events. Here is another example - a passage where the boundary conditions become transparent:

Ogni tanto in questo periodo ho qualche difficoltà a tenere i contatti con l'Italia, forse e' per questo che ho cominciato a scrivere questo blog. I primi tempi qui, mi rendevo conto che parlare qualche minuto in italiano, sentire la famiglia e gli amici, poteva realmente dare senso a una giornata. Poi però, ho capito che, per loro, dall'altra parte del mondo non era così. Le loro vite andavano avanti come sempre e io, involontariamente mi stavo ancorando al passato in una maniera che mi impediva di vivere pienamente il mio presente. E' difficile abituarsi ad avere due vite che scorrono parallelamente. C'e' sempre la paura che qualcosa ti sfugga di mano, la paura di essere dimenticati, il pensiero che corre da una parte all'altra senza soluzione di continuità⁶

Sometimes in this period I have difficulties to maintain contacts with Italy, maybe this is the reason I started to write this blog. Since the beginning I realized that talking Italian only for a minute, hearing the family and friends, really can make sense of the day. Then, however, I understood that for them, in the other part of the world, it wasn’t like that. Their life was going on as before, while I unconsciously grabbed onto the past in a way that prevented me from living fully in the present. It is difficult to live two parallel lives, there is always the fear of losing something, the fear of being forgot, the mind always racing from one extreme to the other, without a consistent solution.

It is curious how this paragraph summarizes the first Lejeune’s function: “release through expression”. For him writing is also separation and purification, and the detachment from the past follows the emergence in the new environment, which needs to turn from alien to their own.

One possible point of view is the perspective of the identity as a process of maintaining the consistency and continuity in the perception of the self. It focuses although only on the inner dynamics. We can talk of identities in plural in order to also observe in detail the implications of the relationships and the environment.

The dialogical Self
The notion of the “Dialogical Self” theorizes the perception of the Self as a contact of (relatively) autonomous “voices”, called “I positions”. These voices function as actors in a

⁵ According to him the functions of the diary writing include: expression, reflection, memory, stopping the time, the pleasure of writing.

⁶ Non si sa mai. “La scatola nera” 13 Aug 2013
story they need to tell. In his book about the dialogical self, Hermans (2001) tries to link the psychological perspectives for the continuity and discontinuity of the identity with the decentralized conception of the self and the narratological theories of Bahtin: the metaphor of the polyphony of voices. In counterbalance with the individualistic and essentialist conception for the identity, the dialogical self is based on the assumption that an autonomous I which governs our behavior doesn’t exist; instead there are many I positions occupied by the same person. These positions are not static, they move according to the specific conditions. The Self is not only dialogical, it is also connected and social, and therefore dependent on the social communication. The positions, in this sense, are not actuated on theoretical and imaginary levels; instead they take form in concrete speech acts, where they take the shape of “voices”. The Self, following the same line of thought, is dependent on the language, because it can be achieved only in discursive context.

The Herman’s model was applied in different fields in order to observe the modalities and the functions of the online communication (for example to blended communities where the social interaction includes face to face and online communication).

Herman’s model consist of internal positions of the Self (me as a mother, me as an emigrant, me as a daughter, me as an ambitious worker etc.) and external positions perceived as a part of the environment (my children, my colleges, my friends, my partner). The external positions include the connections with people or situations relevant from the perspective of the internal positions.

Since these positions are moving, an external position can become more relevant in accordance to changes in the internal dynamics. (I feel more Italian when I write in Italian). On the other hand, the internal positions receive their significance from the connection with one or more external positions (I am a father, because I have children). In addition, new
combinations can result from the old once, for ex. *I am Italian + I live in America = I am an emigrant feeling nostalgic + I write a blog = I belong to a specific virtual community*).

This theory has its limitations but it provides good perspective for the dynamics of the identity and the self presentation. The theory is also relevant because it catches the complexity of the perception of contact and limit after emigration. The theory’s author itself presumes that there are situations in which these phenomena are more sensitive, such as translocations and movement (Hermans, 2001: 243). The positions and the connections between them, are naturally affected by the borderline situation the bloggers are in, and consequently the need to confirm the belonging to a certain group appears (Italian speaking emigrants) as well as the need to confirm the continuity of the personality (*identity* as defined by Riceour). This situation is the reason for the *loss of orientation in the voices of the dialogical self*. After such a split, the full series of possible identities are presented, including the ignored or forgotten once\(^{10}\).

**Personal, social and community positions**

It is well observed that not only the personal, but also the social identity of emigrants is subject to transformations\(^ {11}\). Apart from the individual positions, positions for group belonging also exist. The social identity is defined as a part of the self perception that derives from the imagined belonging to a significant social group\(^ {12}\). The perception of belonging is intensified mainly by the discrimination between *inside* and *outside* the group\(^ {13}\). In this study the community consists of emigrant bloggers who write, read and comment.

Another categorization can be added based on Herman’s theory, specifically the distinction between internal and external positions. Such categorization which distinguishes between *individual* and *collective* positions\(^ {14}\) and is made by Spadaro, is very practical for the virtual communities.

**Data collections and methods**

**Analysis of the *I positions* in a blog**

A detailed analysis of the positions in one emigrant blog is made following the distinctions of Herman (internal, external positions) and Spadaro (individual and collective positions). The main purpose is to observe which ones stand out, which ones are suppressed and how those interact. The analysis categorizes the blog posts according to the dominating voice in the posts (although sometimes it is difficult to define a center of the post). The individual and the collective positions are categorized into internal and external ones. The interpersonal positions are added as an additional category since those positions are very important for the solidification of the group.

**Individual positions:**

- **Individual internal positions**

\(^{10}\) More about the identity in situation of change: Martsin, 2010.


\(^{13}\) More about the linguistic image of the community belonging see Kresova, 2012: 137.

- Individual external positions

Collective positions:
- Collective internal positions
- Collective external positions

Interpersonal positions
- Direct interpersonal positions
- Indirect interpersonal positions (which indirectly mention one or more persons)

The analyzed blog posts are 42 in the period of 7 months. The blog is *Alice e la Bestia*. The blog posts are categorized in the table below. Numbers represent blog posts count.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Internal Related to the Italian context</th>
<th>External Related to the American context</th>
<th>Related to the Italian context</th>
<th>Related to the American context</th>
<th>Related to the blog community</th>
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<tr>
<td>Individual positions</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>11</td>
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<tr>
<td>Collective positions</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Direct interpersonal positions</td>
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<td>Indirect interpersonal positions</td>
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**Results**

The following results are observed:

1. The blog posts representing the *direct interpersonal positions* are among the most interesting and most frequent positions, as seen in the following examples:
   “Vorrete mica sapere pure del colloquio?! Fate la vostra giocata al toto-colloquio qui sotto, nella sezione "commenti"”
   Do you want to know also about the exam?! You can place you bet at the exam lottery in the comment section
   “… va dai, ve lo conto domani, quando mi ripiglio! (comunque, come al solito potevo pure correre meno!!)

   Ok, I will tell you Tomorrow, when I recover!
   *(However, as usual I could run less!!!)*

2. The second interesting category is that of the *external individual positions*, related to the American context. Code-switching is frequently observed in the posts from this category, as in the following example:

   *15 Alice e la Bestia. “Un ordinario pre-colloquio di paura” 13 Aug 2013*

I no longer have excuses and way out. My work permit has arrived. And now it is time to give my contribution and resuscitate the economic destiny of my family. I launch. In the Job Market. Doing what, I still don’t know.

3. Posts from the individual external positions, related to the Italian context also contain code-switching very often:

“In Italy ho lavorato per una libreria parecchi anni, fatto la maestra nelle materne comunali, gestito laboratori di lettura e promozione del libro per le biblioteche... ma il mio inglese e’ al momento scimmiesco e penoso, quindi conto di fare i coriandoli con la mia laurea, gli origami con miei corsi in letteratura infantile e di far valere invece gli anni passati da barista per lanciarmi come waitress...”

In Italy I worked in a library for several years, I was a teacher in a nursery school, managed reading workshops popularized books for libraries... but my English at the moment is primitive and agonizing, so I can do confetti with my degree, origami with my courses in child literature and make use of the years spent as a bartender in order to launch as waitress…

The classification highlights two types of prevailing posts: posts with external positions, concerning a situation of contact (events from the present life in America or from the past in Italy), and direct interpersonal positions which are intended to sustain relationships with the readers from the community. We can presume, based on these results, that the writing has the function to activate a determinate voice, and in this way to renegotiate the perception of identity. The need to consolidate the connection with the Italian speaking community through direct communication is also observed.

The self-narrative is a social practice used by the writers to get in touch with the different voices of the Self. In this aspect, the blog is a controlled and secure space, detached from the immediacy of the physical life; a space which allows organizing the voices of the self when they need to be confirmed and renegotiated. Three series of mechanisms are activated through writing in the analyzed blogs: 1) Me as an Italian, part of the Italian culture, 2) me as emigrant, trying to adapt to the new context, understand it fill it with senses 3) me as part of virtual emigrant community.

Conclusions

In situation of disjunction such as emigration, the need to restore the balance determines a specific reflexive behavior in search of stable sense and continuity between the previous experience and the new situation. In that context, writing has stabilizing function, because it allows the writer to take control over their inner narration and to moderate the transition from one situation to another. This can be illustrated with the anthropological metaphor of discursive rite of passage. A key role in this process is played by the community, as the writing practices (pratique de écrit ) in the blogs, are composed by the act of writing but also by the act of reading other’s writings and adding comments. As a result of the analysis, the practice of blogging is seen as controlled personal space, and also a social one, where the identity is reconsidered and renegotiated with the community through writing of personal stories and the presentation of a positive image of the self in order to moderate and support a transition period.

16 Alice e la Bestia. “Frozen moment” 13 Aug 2013

17 Alice e la Bestia. “resumee, cv e altre amienità” 13 Aug 2013
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THE SOCIAL-SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS OF SEVERAL ARTISTIC-ACTIVIST ONLINE DISCOURSES REGARDING THE CONTEXT OF IMMIGRATION

Ana-Maria Sezonov

Abstract

My study aims to analyze two international well-known artists: Ai Weiwei and Dan Perjovschi, which use their visibility strategies to disseminate civic and artistic messages as hybrid quasi-objects of works of art and discourses, in order to reflect upon the important issues related to migration in Antropocene era.

I argue that contemporary artistic strategies related to migration, can be analyzed using an Actor-Network paradigm, since the contemporary plastic artists construct intermedia networks of heterogeneous elements, instrumentally use controversies related to their image in mobilizing groups and audiences and create works of art, characterized by socio-political agency (generalized symmetry).

Keywords: ANT (actor network theory), agency, generalized symmetry, selfie, works of art.

The general context of intermedia contemporary artistic practices

Nowadays, the social and aesthetic strategies of contemporary artists mobilize a multitude of civic platforms and media discourses through which “the condition of contemporary art stands for dissolution of distinctions between mediums in the spirit of artistic pluralism; and an

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increasing self-reflexivity on the part of artistic practice, whereby its aesthetic content becomes indistinguishable from its theoretical content.”

The sociological and semiotic approach concerning the communicative dimensions of artistic practices must take into account the evolution from linguistic turn\(^8\) to pictorial\(^9\), spatial\(^10\) and finally to “digital turn”\(^11\) and the research paradigm of Actor-Network Theory (ANT)\(^12\) developed by Bruno Latour, John Law and Michael Callon. The contemporary work of art became a complex communicative open dialogue, “as an unpredictable open structure, requesting the public’s participation in interactive communication networks”,\(^13\) in reconfiguring social practices.

I claim that the strategies implied in contemporary artistic practices can be analyzed under the Actor–Network Theory -ANT, in terms of recirculation of discourses and signification within three categories: object as work of art and agency, intermedia discourses, auto-reflexive instrumental appeal to selfies. My aim is to analyze how the political and civic iconic theme of migration, is strategically interpreted into an intermedia artistic and civic strategy, capable of raising awareness and reenact social reconnaissance and visibility\(^14\). I intend to integrate the theoretical analytical tool offered by Actor-Network–ANT paradigm of research, to describe the modality in which the artists transmit and incorporate images, discourses about migrants, in social and political inter dimensional network of media communication. Following to Bruno Latour’s advice, my focus is” to follow the actors”- the artists capable of constructing networks of communication\(^15\), putting together groups of civic and artistic interest. According to ANT, the objects too have a powerful agency-generalized symmetry\(^16\). The images and the artistic practices of the works of art, became objects of protest, as well as vectors of artistic practices used by contemporary artists through civic, museum and online spaces. There is an

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interdependency between their online verbal discourses and their digital artistic and social practices and the mediated visibility\textsuperscript{17}.

The political and humanitarian debates triggered by the illegal immigration, produced an immense level of implication, in which the image of migrants plays a significant controversial, and social humanitarian role\textsuperscript{18}. Reconnaissance of migrants, became a point of political interest and controversy for global audiences.

Contemporary art presents a significant social impact. Christoph Menke considered that “in the modern world, there has never been more art and art has never been more visible, present and socially influential than at the moment. At the same time, art has never before represented such an integral part of the social process as it does today, but only as one of the many forms of communication that define art; as a goods item, an opinion, an insight, a judgement, an action . . .” Therefore, the social omnipresence of art goes hand in hand with the steady loss of what we can call its aesthetic strength.”\textsuperscript{19}

The contemporary plastic artist transformed itself into a communicator, making possible the transition from a perceptive and cognitive space to a multidimensional communicational sphere, he became a node in the network communication, investing virtual and physical spaces of street-art, galleries, online-social networks, converting everyday objects into objects of art and protest.

Artistic movements like \textit{Fluxus}\textsuperscript{20} represented by artists like Joseph Beuys, George Maciunas, Dick Higgins and the manifesto of the “sociological art” (Hervé Fischer, Fred Forest, Jean-Paul Thénot), prefigured this development of the work of art as an unpredictable open structure, a hybrid artist–object, quasi-object\textsuperscript{21} in a complex mix of discourses and objects of art. The objects of everyday life are symbolically invested with political agency\textsuperscript{22}, becoming vectors of protest requesting the public’s participation in interactive communication networks.

As Petru Bejan stated “the traditional artistic object; and this object dematerializes itself completely, becoming information disseminated in the rhizomatic, labyrinthine networks of the Internet - genuine on-line territory”\textsuperscript{23}. The sociability model of relational art is constructed upon the vast opportunities offered by the technological development of the hybrid practices of networked communication of the online media.

Nowadays, the artist has developed a hybrid esthetic and social practice as actor in a network society\textsuperscript{24}, in which he became “messenger, communicator, translator; bringing back and


integrating knowledge that is otherwise discarded, underrepresented, forgotten, and irrelevant – the artist as a connector and cultural agent” 25. He is now a facilitator between his esthetical work of art and the audience, an interrogator of concepts and context, a student and an agent of change. In the continuous search of new forms of visibility26 and social reconnaissance, the contemporary artist must be aware of different turns in which the complex cultural paradigms of postmodern expression evolve. He is investing many spaces of reflection and expression and his art “creates a space conjured up by the image, a space that we can enter due to imagination, an unstable space, a space in between, a space that can go either way’ in its continuous transition between, a space that can go ‘either way’ in its continuous transition.”27

The functional social-semiotic relations are transmitted through different iconic multimodal images and crossing the spatial/time dimensions of different communication assemblages 28 of street, museum, gallery, and social media. The symbolic and social function of the work of art is done by transgression objects, their agency, the multimodal and intertextual discourses, from daily-life objects to works of art, in a continuous symbolic recirculation between virtual and physical worlds. The selfie photography became a weapon of personal visibility and auto-reflexive dimension, a proof and witness of artist engagement and migrant drama but also a constant source of controversy.

The contemporary artist is mastering his image as a self-reflexive tool of communication, engaging in a “the aesthetic performance of the self”29, a strategy of remediation-practice of digital new visibility through multiple mediascapes30, in a process of “the remediation of ordinary voice… in distinct forms of communicative activism, through this news network, and finally, the possibility for trans-mediation, that is the transfer of this voice from the symbolic realm of communication to the realm of physical action, within or outside the scene of the news.”31

The artist chooses to transform his image into an aesthetic performance of the self, which constitutes which constitutes “impartial spectatorship through recontextualization and remoralization”.32 The images of political cartoons and objects of art are symbolically charged and configured, to attain a higher exposure, in a similar process of remediation, inter-mediation and trans-mediation.

Corpus and Methods

I propose a diachronic crisscross examination between mainstream quality online articles and the analysis of the several types of social networks, as political assemblages of well-known plastic contemporary artists Ai WeiWei and Dan Perjovschi, in order to analyze the semiotic functional and relational elements, responsible for the transgression of meaning and signification.

I choose these well-established contemporary artists who developed different artistic and communicative approaches, in order to construct networks of communication and visibility and to support the civic and human rights of migrants. Ai Weiwei is the most known and commented contemporary artist, who uses his status and his own image, in strategic intermedia frantic efforts, while The Romanian artist Dan Perjovschi is configuring his strategic media position, between global and local; he is “marginal in mainstream”, (the artist’s self-characterization) and is shifting the visibility and agency towards his political cartoons.

I used the principles of ANT (Actor-Network Theory) theory, of Bruno Latour, John Law and Michel Callon, in analyzing interviews, documents, and participatory observation- a mixed qualitative approach, in order to describe the transfer of signification and controversial meaning between “: 1. The visual impact of the selfie, 2. The functional agency of objects and drawings as everyday life objects, as works of art or political cartoons, and 3. The symbolic intermedia transitions between the online space of social networks and the civic spaces of streets and art galleries.

My data were collected in order to analyze visual resources and online journal articles and reviews related to news about migrants from: Instagram posts of Ai Weiwei, Facebook posts of Dan Perjovschi personal site, during 2015-2017. Thus, resulted a collection of visual records (more than 300 selfies, for Ai Weiwei; 100 political cartoons for Dan Perjovschi and 100 news articles (mainstream media and blogs) for each artist.

In order to analyze Dan Perjovschi’s artistic and communication practice, I took part in several participant observations of his performances “ Albums - Bande dessinée et immigration. 1913-2013” which took place on 17, 18, 19 January 2014- The Palace of The Golden Door, Museum of Immigration of Paris, and in the years 2015 and 2016, during his interventions on the “Horizontal Journal”-the street-art wall, in Sibiu.

Ai Weiwei –The Constant Witness in a Selfie Performance

(Chinese, b. Beijing, 1957) is considered the one the most controversial and well known Chinese contemporary artists, which stirred worldwide media controversies, mostly due to his continuously strained relationship with Chinese authorities. His esthetic and engaged artistic manifesto became an instrument of resistance, a subversive political vehicle, which

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transformed and reinterpreted everyday life objects into works of art, in order to raise political awareness and social reconnaissance about controversial social humanitarian topics. His history as a well-known dissident, is framed and established within a strategic simple but poignant discourse against the political oppressions of Chinese authorities. The Chinese public was an active witness of Ai Weiwei troubled relationship within his 81-day imprisonment in 2011, all the stages of this open conflict were revealed in the documentary “Faked case” (2013), in which the artist tells the dramatic story of his real struggles with Chinese authorities which closely monitored his home and his studio.

The long-lasting creative relationship between the artist and everyday life objects became fundamental in configuring it’s artistically and esthetical practice. From Han dynasty broken or repainted urn (Dropping a Han Dynasty Urn in 1995, According to what ? in 2013) to bicycles (Forever Bicycles, 2015), sunflower seeds (Kui Hua Zi, 2010-2011) and traditional books (An Archive, 2015), steel reinforcing bars from Sichuan earthquake (Straight, 2008-2012) and floating devices and lifejackets (Soleil Levant, 2016-2017), Ai Weiwei has used the symbolic influential functional meaning, in order to transform a simple object into enriched artistic one as an efficient and active metaphor.

The artist cultivated an active interest towards the recent migratory phenomenon, viewed as a political and civic transformation of global awareness. This concern rhymes with his ecological and human rights preoccupations, and was developed all along the period of global immigrant’s struggle of 2014, 2015, till now. He put together complex hybrid intermedia, functional and artistic assemblages35. He is aware of the high efficacy conveyed by the permanent dialogue between mainstream online and offline media developing an intense social network activity. Ai Weiwei became an expert in social media as realistic and pragmatic alternative. For a period of three years (2006-2009), his blog was highly popular, in debating the involvement of Chinese authorities in the Sichuan earthquake (Ai Weiwei posted a list of the schoolchildren who died because of the government’s “tofu-dregs engineering”). Since June 1, 2009, the Chinese authorities shut down the blog. In 2015, declaring “Twitter is art”, Ai released An Archive –an artwork installation of 9000 pages in the form of a traditional Chinese book comprising his Twitter writings between 2009 and 2013. His social media involvement continued with the transformation of Instagram platform in a space of debate and active artistic and civic reaction on the behalf of immigrant causes.

In choosing his best way to communicate, he created a continuous flux of information between spaces, temporalities, images and practical ways of expression. From the spaces of the island of Lesbos, Idomeni, Istanbul, Izmir, Syria, Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan, he visited dozens of camps and managed to put together a temporary studio, to the eclectically spaces of museums and the civic spaces of the street, he made the rapid transition to Instagram, witnessing the instances of migrants life. Present there, during years 2015 and 2016, Ai installed a studio, took photos, made installation from life jackets, lifeboats, objects enriched, transformed into artistic installations all over Europe. He declared:

“My focus is always on freedom of expression. It is an essential quality of a free and civilized society. So while my focus has not changed, the form it manifests in can change. Sometimes it requires a form fit for a fixed space with a fixed audience, such as a gallery or museum. Other times, it is about engaging a different audience, such as my recent exhibition on Alcatraz Island in San Francisco. I am always interested in discovering new possibilities for reaching new audiences.”

The flux of signification between Ai’s own image, the link between his witnessing strategy and the reconversion of objects into works of art, increased the agency of the hybrid Actor-Object relationship. This quasi-object, symbolically enriched travels between heterogeneous, diverse spaces, from the street, to the island, outside and inside the museum. The artistic instruments were the reconversion of banal, anodyne but useful objects, into various installations, a real, moral witnessing attitude, with the use of selfie images.

Fig. 1, 2, 3- Instagram selfies with floating objects as works of art (Instagram posts and marble objects from the exhibition Tyre-2016, Foam Fotografiemuseum Amsterdam).

The objects of survival were reinterpreted into works of art, charged with significant interrogations. The lifeboat jackets found on the beach, reached the walls of the museums and the survival floating devices became still and ironically charged effigies, marbled objects of art.

Fig. 4, 5, 6- Photos of lifejackets transformed in art-instalations (Berlin Konzerthaus-February 2016), and Instagram selfie with the same objects- Isle of Lesbos


The photos of his art installations and selfies were vectors of re-mediation, because Ai Weiwei instrumented the appeal to his own image, and transformed it into a pragmatic weapon of protest. In his Instagram interventions, the selfie is the most frequent tool for capturing lifetime moments.

![Fig. 7, 8- Instagram posts of Ai Weiwei recent installation-Law of the Journey, Prague-16 March](image)

The selfie became a moral open question—a performance selfie, a cry for help-witness-selfie, an intertextual link and a way to create and stir controversies. In trying to categorize the selfie strategy, it can be observed that the artist is aware of his role, of the diversity of actors, he uses the selfie with migrants and the selfie with celebrities in an efficient operational transfer of notoriety, which can provoke a rapid media response—a vehicle for constant and efficient re-mediation:

![Fig 9,10,11: Instagram photos and selfie with migrants](image)

The media circulation of the selfie photo started first on Instagram, and then rapidly migrated in online and offline media, performing an efficient role of witnessing specific dramatic times of migrant’s life. Ai Weiwei became a promoter and interpreter of the migration crisis, using available, symbolic objects, as works of art, in order to raise moral and political valid questions. The controversial artistic role of the selfies, provoked international debates, as Ai Weiwei became the favorite target of the media critiques, when he reenacted a similar shot with the photo of the little Alan Kurdi:

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One of the numerous stages of Ai Weiwei strategy, trigerring civic public reactions about migrant policies, is the documentary “The Human Flow”, promoted, through Instagram, and also online and traditional media. The film was nominated among the 15 contenders for Best Documentary at the Oscars. During the promotion, Ai Weiwei declared: “The refugees are proud people. They have dignity. They are not beggars. They come to survive. They are not asking for mercy.”

From the critical point of view of Lilie Chouliaraki, Ai Weiwei, with his technique of selfie as a performance and witness selfie, represents a "narcissistic" form of witnessing through “the systematic marginalization and displacement of the migrant’s face in Western spaces of public visibility”. The strategic discourse of Ai Weiwei is the combination and promotion of a controversial quasi-object, a complex mix of images re-mediation, media news and interviews. Ai Weiwei’s selfie strategy, with its re-mediation power generates controversies, maintained by the continuous flux of communication.

Dan Perjovschi-“Marginal in the Mainstream”

Dan Perjovschi, a well-known Romanian journalist, performance artist, political cartoonist, aware of his Fluxus artistic identity, always creating and performing, in the move, declares “I let the drawings speak for me”. He is the recipient of many important art prizes. His political charged drawings, a mixture of words and symbols, are questioning the factuality of life, in order to determine a rapid response from a global audience. His Facebook page developed a mixed artistic and activist approach of civic (local and global) themes. The simple visual grammar of his cartoons is highly adaptable in different spaces of expression. He is expressing his civic views, performing in virtual and urban street art projects, in the Sibiu Wall Project, in mail art, in the pages of the Romanian magazine “22”, but also on the walls and windows of western galleries and museums. It is an efficient way to trans-mediate and

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47 https://www.facebook.com/danperjovschi
intermediate the images of political involvement, Dan Perjovschi being one of the most cited and interviewed personalities of the Romanian artistic scene.

![Fig. 13, 14, 15, 16- Political cartoons about the condition of migrant, on the Sibiu Wall](image)

Fig. 17- Popular Political cartoon

![Fig. 18- Mail Art with Migrant Theme](image)

In the performance “Albums - Bande dessinée et immigration. 1913-2013”, which took place on 17,18,19 January 2014 at The Golden Door Palace, The Museum of Immigration of Paris, he put together an installation in which the political drawings addressed the migrant crisis, from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights perspective.

![Fig 19, 20, 21- Photos of Paris performance-2014](image)

The symbolic, economic and cultural differences between the westerner and the migrant, are according to the artist, an unrecognised, unassumed political and humanitarian global phenomenon.

![Fig 22, 23, 24 -Photos of political cartoons from 2014 Paris performance](image)

Dan Perjovschi continued to develop his artistic interest about migration in a 2017 installation, ironically titled *Breaking the News & UF Otopia*, in which the political cartoons, are drawn on several famous newspapers paper support, containing immigration news. The artistic message emphasizes the transfer of symbolic responsibility, through various media of communication, and its real persuasive force of the constant re-mediation.
The key role of symbolic re-mediation and inter-mediation \(^{48}\) and its pragmatic value lies in the esthetic and interrogative power of Perjovschi’s drawings, able to travel in multiple media spaces: from gallery walls to street-walls, from social media like Pinterest, to blogs, from book covers to review articles.

One of the most popular political cartoons about the immigration was conceived by the artist in the 2007 MOMA Exhibition “What Happened to Us?”

The picture can be retraced in posts from blogs (www.homines.com and http://outside-of-event-horizon.blogspot) related to MOMA exhibition, as one of the most persuasive, full of meaning. The author “of outside-of-event-horizon” blog considered that \(^{50}\): “I stopped by MOMA recently and was surprised by an unusual exhibition – Dan Perjovschi’s “What Happened to Us?” It was fresh, brave, smart and politically incorrect. Two big white walls of the central museum hall were covered by simplistic pictures, drawn directly on these walls. Yes, they were simplistic in style, but in content – most of them were unexpectedly involving. It’s our life right now…I hope Dan will forgive me for his copyright violation. The "Immigration" especially touched me... ”

The migration topic can be also retraced in personal or theme related Pinterest posts \(^{51}\):
In 2010, Francesca Falk wrote the review article- “Images of illegalized immigration: towards a critical iconology of politics” in which she commented the graffiti of Dan Perjovschi considering also the same picture as reference:

“On a white wall we see the black, sketchy silhouette of a falling person. The part of the body that breaks through a boundary is painted dashed; the fingers look like a skeletal hand. „I Am Not Exotic-I Am Exhausted“, says the title of this graffiti-like project which was displayed in a public space in Basel in 2007 Dan Perjovschi eludes the usual criteria of the traditional art market, where a particular product generates a profit. Illegalized immigrants are also often accused of violating the standard rules of the market.”

The same drawing was used as cover for the book entitled *Rethinking Trafficking in Women, Politics out of Security*, about the women trafficking and the needed necessary actions, written by Claudia Aradau in 2008, published by Palgrave.

We can retrace the same graffiti in an art collective exhibition in 2016, curated by Juraj Čarný and presented as: “what has been a scandal in Bratislava is from 8-31 October 2016 on display in Berlin. Artistic reflections about the fear of refugees, the dread of the unknown and the raise of xenophobia, racism and populism in Europe are the center stage of the exhibition “Mirror of Alterity”.”

On the same presentation site, the Dan Perjovschi declared:

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“I use humor very seriously. I publish drawings in political magazines since the fall of dictatorship weekly. For me this are not cartoons but statements. My aim is to condense a complicate issue into few lines. Humor is there to make those lines understandable.”

For Perjovschi, the humor is a source of triggering debates and create a controversy without a scandal, he is an artist without a real search in ego-visibility, using the simple graphics in lines and words of his cartoons as travelling metaphor through virtual and real spaces, an efficient vehicle which connect perceptions of global civic influence. For the Romanian artist the artist-network flux of communication is configured around a combined strategy, in which his image has little importance compared to his drawings. The increasing agency of his drawings is sustained by the fact that the artist tries to remain “marginal in the mainstream”, favoring a mild controversy approach, in which the humor plays the center stage role.

**Conclusions**

Both artists developed complex communicative strategies related to the migration crisis, creating a continuous flux of communication between virtual and traditional media. From the perspective of the Actor-Network Theory, both Dan Perjovschi and Ai Weiwei, were developing complex networks of heterogeneous elements (objects, actors, mediators) and highly controversial political discourses. Both actors were promoters of complex symbolic, rhetoric and artistic structures, quasi-objects with auto-reflexive, indexical, iconic, dialogical, agonic character.

If Ai Weiwei relates to his followers using constantly the Instagram posts of his now famous selfies, and artistic installations of migrant related objects of survival, Dan Perjovschi chose to shift the public attention from his own image (using the selfie strategy in an ecological campaign-Roşia Montană) to drawings as action mediators-vectors of protest.

The contemporary artist became a traveler between virtual worlds, who transforms everyday objects into hybrid virtual objects, conceived to draw attention to the important social causes. The artists are virtual networking the technological devices as agency vectors of visibility, in spatial-temporal transitions (galleries, street art, and social networks).

The work of art became a tool of rising awareness, a communication device with aesthetic-artistic dimensions for agonic political debates in all public spheres.

The discourse and the social practices triggered by these two artists, around the iconic topic of migration can be described in a transformative process of stirring controversies and witnessing, through self-reflexive usage of personal images or the recirculation of works of art through all media, in an online–offline space-time metaphorical awareness.

**Online Resources**

https://news.artnet.com/exhibitions/ai-weiwei-twitter-art-31248
https://www.artsy.net/artwork/ai-weiwei-tyre

List of figures: Featured Images: Fig.2-Ai Weiwei – Tyre (via theguardian.com. Photograph: ©Museum of Cycladic Art.), Fig.12-Ai Weiwei on the island of Lesbos (via theguardian.com. Photograph: Orestis Panagiotou /EPA); Fig. 23, 24, 28-35- Dan Perjovschi-Performance “ Albums - Bande dessinée et immigration. 1913-2013” which took place on 17,18,19 January, 2014 and Sibiu Wall Instalation 2015, 2016, 2017 -Photos taken by the author.
DISCURSIVE REPRESENTATIONS OF SYRIAN MIGRANTS IN TURKISH MASS MEDIA AND SOCIAL MEDIA AND THE EFFECTS OF THESE MEDIA DISCOURSES ON SYRIAN MIGRANTS

Elçin ESMER

Resumé: The study aims to analyze discursive representation of Syrian migrants in the mass and social media and the effect of the discourse on the migrants. Data consisted of one hundred opinion articles, one hundred social media posts and thirty interviews. Based on Van Dijk (2006)’s framework quantitative - qualitative data analysis was done. Results reveal that the representation of migrants in the media change according to the ideology and it affected the migrants’ social integration or segregation.

Key words: Turkish newspaper; opinion articles; social media posts; twitter; facebook; Syrian migrants; positive self-representation; negative other representation; discursive categories; discursive representation.

Introduction

Today migration is an important economic and social issue all over the world. Everyday, millions of people cross national borders to improve their quality of life, so the number of migrants has grown and the issue of their integration with the host society has gained importance. Mass and social media not only provide information, but also have a strong influence on public opinion, social identity formation and the host population’s attitude toward migrants. Thus they play a crucial role in the cultural and social integration or segregation of migrants (Elias 2003; Van Dijk 2005; McGregor and Siegel 2013).

Media thus plays a crucial role in the cultural and social integration of migrants (Elias, 2003). Framed in a critical discourse analysis (CDA) perspective, many studies (e.g. Reisigl and Wodak 2001;Van Dijk 2005; Törnberg and Törnberg 2016) have analyzed the discursive representation of migrants in the host media and the effect of their representation on the audience. According to the studies, the host media uses negative discourse structures that emphasize the negative characteristics of the migrants, while the negative actions of the host people are mitigated. This causes the social and physical segregation between the host and the migrant groups. Also, some studies revealed that the migrants perceived the host media discourse on migrants as overgeneralized and incorrect.

1 She is associate professor of linguistics in Mersin University. Her research interests are in critical discourse and metadiscourse. Her recent publications are: Interpersonal Metadiscourse Markers in Turkish Election Rally Speeches Delivered by Pro-Turkish and Pro-Kurdish Leaders (2017) The Viewpoint of Immigrant University Students on Turkish Newspaper Discourse Related to Immigrants and The Effects of This Discourse on Their Willingness to Communicate in Turkish As A Second Language (2017)
Nowadays the use of corpus linguistics (CL) methodology has become popular in critical discourse analysis (CDA). Baker et al. (2008) stated that “CL examine frequencies of specific phenomena recognized in CDA by examining lexical patterns, and can add a quantitative dimension to CDA” (p.296). The literature survey revealed that the total number of both CL and CDA studies on discursive representation of migrants in media is considerably limited in proportion to the number of CL or CDA studies. Thus, the study is framed in both CL and CDA perspectives.

This study aims to analyze the pro- and anti-Syrian migrant arguments being put forward in Turkish newspapers having different political ideology and in the online conversational practices of Turkish citizens having different political ideology through detailed concordance and collocational analysis, allowing us to define how ideological strategies are linguistically constructed in the host media. Also the study is to examine the effects of the host media discourse on the Syrian migrants. The following three questions motivate the study:

1. What kind of discursive strategies were used in the pro and anti-government newspaper opinion articles?
2. What kind of discursive strategies were used in the pro and anti-government social media posts?
3. What is the Syrian immigrants’ perception of the positive and negative host media (mass and social) discourse on immigrants?

1. Methodology

1.1. Research Design

The study used a descriptive survey model that enables the researcher to identify the characteristics of the observed phenomenon as-is. Quantitative and qualitative methods were applied using the both CL and CDA methodologies.

1.2. Data and Analysis

In line with the aim of the study, one hundred opinion articles published from March 2011 to March 2017 were selected randomly from six elite newspapers. The newspapers have different ideologies, three of them pro-government (Sabah, Yeni Şafak, Milliyet) and three of them anti-government (Sözcü, Cumhuriyet and Türksolu). The articles focused on topics related to migrants. Moreover, one hundred online conversational practices of pro- and anti-government Turkish citizens on Twitter and Facebook were selected randomly (fifty pro-government, fifty anti-government).

The collocations of a target word provide information about the semantic preferences and semantic prosody attributed to it (Stubbs 2001; Louw, 1993). In this study, the collocations of the keyword “Syrian(s)” was analysed based on Louw’s (1993) and Stubbs’ (2001) semantic preference and prosody theories. Stubbs (2001) defines semantic preference as “the relation, not between individual words, but between a lemma or word form and a set of semantically related words” (p.65). Semantic prosody is the “consistent aura of meaning with which a form is imbued by its collocates” (Louw, 1993: 57). Semantic prosody is evaluative, so it expresses the text producer’s attitude or evaluation (Louw, 1993; Baker et al., 2008).

Concordance analysis allows an analyst to view words in their contexts. Baker et al. (2008) and Gabrieliatos and Baker (2008) stated that the combination of collocation and concordance analysis reflects the writers’ stance towards immigration and also indexes a number of different
topoi in the discourse. For this reason, common collocates of the words were also investigated through concordance analysis. This way, the topoi, that is, recurring thematic patterns, used in the discourse by both sets of data was determined.

Also, the data analysis was done based on Van Dijk (2006)’s theoretical approach of CDA. According to him, CDA should focus on how discourse structure influence the formation and change of the mental models and social representations. Van Dijk (2006) defines “ideologies as shared mental representations of some kind, in a way that might be compared with the way language use is based on a shared grammar or discourse and conversation rules” (p.731). Also, he proposes an ideological square that highlights the two macro strategies: positive self representation (in-group favouritism) and the negative other representation (derogation of out-group). The square consists of the following overall strategies that ideological discourse has:

- Emphasize Our good things
- Emphasize Their bad things
- De-emphasize Our bad things
- De-emphasize Their good things

Moreover, Van Dijk (2006) introduces some ideological discourse categories to examine how different ideologies are expressed in different contexts such as actor description, authority, categorization, comparison, consensus, counterfactuals, lexicalization, disclaimer, evidentiality, generalization, hyperbole, implication, irony, metaphor, national self glorification, number game, polarization, populism, presupposition, vagueness, victimization, comparison.

This study will focus on the discourse categories presented in details as follows:

**Actor Description:** The way we describe actors or members of a particular society either in a negative or positive way.

**Polarization:** Categorizing people as belonging to US with good attributes and THEM with bad attributes

**Lexicalization:** An overall ideological strategy for negative or positive other-representation through the semantic features of the words.

**Generalization:** This serves to emphasize certain characteristics of the specific actors as if they belong to the whole group, thus seems to enhance the efforts to marginalize the other side.

**Populism:** The strategy is used to claim that the people do not support further immigration.

**National self glorification:** A device to create positive self representation by glorifying one’s country.

**Presupposition:** The common shared knowledge between people or the ideas taken for granted in a proposition

**Hyperbole:** A device for enhancing and exaggerating meaning. Sometimes hyperbole is implied by the use of special metaphors, (e.g. opening the floodgates)

**Metaphor:** Metaphors are the best known semantic and rhetorical means to make complex or abstract meanings more concrete and understandable.

**Irony:** Saying something and meaning something else.
Number game: Numbers and statistics are the primary means in our culture to persuasively display objectivity.

Disclaimer: Presenting an idea as something positive and then rejecting it by the use of terms such as 'but' in the second sentence.

Comparison: In racist talk, outgroups are compared negatively, and ingroups positively. In antiracist talk, a country or government is negatively compared with loathsome undemocratic regimes.

Victimization: When the Others tend to be represented in negative terms, and especially when they are associated with threats, then the ingroup needs to be represented as a victim of such a threat.

Also, the thirty interviews were conducted in order to define the migrants’ opinion of Turkish media discourse on migrants. The interviews were recorded and carefully transcribed by the researcher.

The corpus was examined using the NooJ linguistic engine module, which allows users to sort the words and perform a morphological analysis on Turkish texts (Demirhan and Aksan, 2012).

2. Findings

Firstly, to define what kind of discursive strategies are used in the mass and social media, the collocations and concordances of the keyword “Syrian(s)” were analyzed. As seen in Table (1), the analysis disclosed that anti-government corpus included a higher percentage of collocation lines in the negative category. However, the pro-government corpus consisted of a higher percentage of collocation lines in the positive category. This reveals that the anti-government group described Syrians in a negative way while the pro-government group described them in a positive way. The result was consistent with the previous studies on the representation of Syrian migrants in Turkish media (e.g. Nas 2015, Sunata and Yıldız 2016, Özözen-Kahraman 2016, Esmer 2017).

Table 1. Collocation analysis of the keyword “Syrians”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Discursive Categories</th>
<th>Anti-Government Corpus (52,932 Tokens)</th>
<th>Pro-Government Corpus (51,577 Tokens)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>97%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>98%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Moreover, the analysis showed that the discursive categories presented in Table (2) were frequently used to characterize Syrian migrants in both set of data. It was observed that these categories often occurred in combination.

Table 2. Discursive categories used in the anti- and pro-government corpus
Also the analysis revealed that the following themes or topoi presented in Table (3) were dominant in the corpus.

Table 3. The topoi employed in the pro and anti government corpus

<table>
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<th>Topoi</th>
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<th>Newspaper Opinion Articles</th>
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Also the analysis revealed that the following themes or topoi presented in Table (3) were dominant in the corpus.

Table 3. The topoi employed in the pro and anti government corpus

**Topoi**

**The anti-government corpus**

- Topos of burden
- Topos of number
- Topos of damage and advantage
- Topos of abuse and crime

**The pro-government corpus**

- Topos of advantage or usefulness
- Topos of victimization and humanization
- Topos of culture and history
- Topos of “Turkish example”

As seen in the following examples, the deictic pronouns “biz (we), bizim (our), bize (us), onlar (they), bunlar (these/those) and onlara (them), onların (their)” were used in the corpus as part of the actor description and polarization strategy denoting the distinction between Us
and Them. In the anti-government corpus, the pronoun “WE” is inclusive of writer, Turkish nation and also the reader while the exclusive pronouns “THEY, THESE” are comprised of the Syrian migrants. This way the anti-government group tried to show a positive representation of the Turkish people. In other words, they tried to create the impression that the ‘Turks' form a homogeneous group of one origin, having one identity, one culture and one language and with equal rights for all members of the group. Also they implied that Syrians are not a part of Turkish society and they are just foreigner.

(1) (Anti-government opinion article (AGOA)) “Bizdeki yaklaşık 40 bin kişi Gaziantep, Kilis ve Hatay’daki kamplarda yaşıyor...Bunlara her gün üç öğün yemek çıkarıyoruz. Devletin bizim insanlarımızdan esirgenen paracıkları Suriyeliler için harcanıyor...on binlerce kişi işsiz kaldı” (Nearly 40,000 of them of ours live at the camps in Gaziantep, Kilis and Hatay. .. We provide them three meals a day. Money of the state which had been begrudged from our own people is spent for them ..)

(2) (Anti-government social media post (AGSMP)) “bir baş belamız daha oldu bunlar bizi çok uğrəşərcək Allah sonumuzu hayır etsin.#Suriyeli” (We got into another huge bother, these will cause a lot of trouble to us. God save us!)

As for pro-government corpus, in the examples (3) and (4) the pronoun “WE” is used as an inclusive of writer, Turkish nation, and Syrians. This way the pro-government group tried to create Turks-Syrians solidarity.

(3) (Pro-government opinion article (PGOA)) “Bizim insanlarımız kendilerine sığınacakları bir liman arıyor; Suriyeli göçmenler bizim kardeşimizdir” (Our people seek a harbor to shelter; Syrian migrants are our siblings)

(4) (Pro-government social media post (PGSMP)) “Suriyeliler biziz..Bizler Osmanlıyız “ (We are Syrians ..We are Ottomans)

However, in the examples (5-7) the pronouns “bizim, onlar, sen/siz (you)” were exclusively used to show the negative representation of Turkish left wing parties, especially the Republican People’s Party (CHP) and supporter of the parties. Thus the pro-government group criticized the left wing parties and people’s attitude towards the migrants.

(5) (PGOA) “...Aile bağı ve derin etnik kökenleri bakımdan hayli esmer olanlarımız bile...Suriyeli mültecileri istemiyor. Lafta pek humanistler, pek yardımseverler ama Ortadoğu’dan gelen her suçına talebini neredeyse sosyal bir "kirlilik" gibi görürler.” (Even some of us who are quite swarthy because of their family bonds and ethnicities don’t want Syrian refugees. They are so-called humanist and pretty charitable but they see any asylum request from Middle-East as almost like a social “pollution”)

(6) (PGSMP) “İşlerine geldiğinde #Türkiye battı, yaşanmaz..İşlerine geldiğinde cennetin bir köşe ve #Suriyelilere bırakılmayacak.” (If it serves them, they say Turkey is unliveable, corrupted and if it serves them they also say Turkey is a garden of eden not to be left to Syrians.)

(7) (PGSMP) “Çanakkale’de dedenle sırt sırt çarpışan #Suriyeli’yi bugün sınır dışı etmeye düşünmek...vicdansa eğer vicdannız kurusun.” (If you think about deporting the Syrians who had fought against the enemy together with your ancestors in Çanakkale then you have no conscience and heart)
government corpus. In these examples, the anti-government group used the negative lexicalization strategy under the topos of abuse and crime. Also they generalized all negative properties to the whole group (all Syrians) based on the generalization strategy. Moreover, in these examples the populism strategy was used to denote that Turkish citizens do not want further migration. This way the anti group implied that all Syrians are burden for Turkey and they should be repatriated.

(8) (AGOP) “...son 1.5 yılda Türkiye’de en çok Gürcü ve İranlı hırsızlık suçundan yakalanırken şimdi Suriyeliler öne geçti. İşsiz Suriyeli kadınlar, hatta çocuk yaştaıı kızların fuhuşa yönlendirdikleri bildiriliyor.” (Georgians and Iranians were the most arrested ones for theft before but now Syrians has taken the lead in 1.5 years. It is reported that unemployed Syrian women or even child-aged girls had been forced for prostitution)

(9) (AGSMP) Türkiye’de vahşi eşkıya #Suriyeli istemiyoruz (We don’t want wild, bandit Syrians in Turkey)

By contrast with the anti-group, pro-group used positive lexicalization strategy. In the examples (10-11), the term Syrians was collocated with the positive semantic prosodic words such as contribution, our quests. Furthermore, all these positive properties are generalized to the whole group. Under the topos of advantage or usefulness and humanitarism, the pro-group claim that Syrian migrants are good for the Turkish economy and also social life. This way they tried to promote empathy and solidarity towards the situation of the migrants in Turkish society.

(10) (PGOA) “...Suriyeliler, ekonomiye ciddi katkı verdi.... ekonomiyi motive etti. (Syrians have made a huge contribution to the economy.... motivated the economy )

(11) (PGSMP) Suriyeli diyir bir şey yok. Mısırlırmız, din kardeşlerimiz var. (They are not Syrians. They are our guests, religious fellows..)

Under the topos of culture and history in the examples (12 -13) the anti group emphasized Turkish hospitality and Turkish patriotism. The national self-glorification strategy was used to justify the repatriation of Syrian migrants.

(12) (AGOA) “Zorda kalanla ekmeğimizi paylaşırız.......Ama “vatan’ı paylaşamayız” (we share our bread with the people who are in difficult situations but we never share our country.

(13) (AGSMP) “Savaştan kaçmış bir millete tarihini savaşarak yazmış bir milletin vatandaşlığı verilmez” (The people who escaped the battle can not be granted citizenship of a nation who wrote its history by fighting)

As for the pro-group, the category was used to praise the government migration policy and also to show the historical relation between Turks and Syrians. In the example (14), under the topos of humanitarinasm and the topos of “Turkish example”, the columnists praised the government’s (especially the president Erdoğan) example behaviour policy on the migration and its/his humanitarin attitude towards the migrants.

(14) (PGOA) “Avrupa’da sosyal devlet olmak anlamında örnek ülke konumunda bugün Türkiye.....Şimdi de Başbakan Erdoğan, sayıları yüz bine yaklaşan Suriyeli Mülteci’ye memnuniyetle ev sahipliği yapıyor. Türkün efsanevi misafirperverliğini bir defa daha gösteriyor. (Today, Turkey is in a position of being a role model country in Europe about being a social state. ......Now Prime Minister Erdoğan, with pleasure, is hosting Syrians whose numbers are reaching 100,000. He demonstrates the legendary hospitality of Turks once again.)
In the example (15), the statement “we are syrians we are ottoman” presupposed that Syria was part of the Ottoman Empire from 1516 to 1918, so Syrians and Turks have a great common history and they are siblings. This way under the topos of culture and history the columnist created and enhanced the solidarity between Syrians and Turks.

(15) (PGSMP) Suriyeliler biziz... Bizler Osmanlıyız (We are Syrians We are Ottomans)

Furthermore, the anti-government group used the rhetoric devices (metaphor, irony, hyperbole and number game categories) to show the negative representation of Syrian migrants. As illustrated in the following examples, the anti government articles and posts consisted of the metaphors such as “refugee depot”, “migrant influx”, “flora of the city”; the hyperboles-number game such as “more than one hundred thousand”, that carry negative connotations like overcrowding, flooding. Also the anti group used the irony strategy in the example (16). In this statement the “excellency” was used to refer to Turkish president. This way, under the topos of number, the anti group ironically critized the government’s migrant policy and its insufficient physical control on the migration. They more or less implicitly defined the Turkish citizens as the victims of the government’s wrong policy.

(16) (AGOA) “..iki gün içinde 100 bini aşkın Suriyeli daha sınırımıza dayandı...Türkiye, Ankara’daki hazretlerin sayesinde sığınmacı deposu oldu!..” (In two days, more than 100,000 Syrians have turned up at our borders too... Turkey has become a refugee depot thanks to the excellency in Ankara!)

As to pro- government group, they used the rhetoric devices to show positive representation of Syrian migrants. As seen in the following examples, they used the metaphors such as “migrant harbour”, “safe harbour”, hyperboles, number game such as “more than 3 million” that carry positive connotations. This way, under the topos of culture and topos of humanitarianism, the pro group praised Turkish governments’ humanitarian attitude towards the migrants.

(18) (PGOA) “3 milyondan fazla Suriyeliye ev sahipliği yapan Anadolu toprakları mültecilerin sığınığı güvenli bir liman oldu. (The Anatolian lands that host more than 3 million Syrians have become the safe harbour for the refugees.)

(19) (PGSMP) “..göçmen limanı #Anadolu, herkese kucak açmış, bugün de #Suriyeli kardeşlerine kucak açıyor.(Anatolia, the migrant harbour, has embraced everybody; today it embraces its Syrian brothers.)

However, the rhetoric phrases were collocated with the negative semantic prosodic words such as “threat”, “uncomfortable” in the pro-corpus to critize the Europe policy on migration under the topos of worry and fear. This was illustrated in the example (20).

(20) (PGOA) “Güç ve yaptırımı elinde tutan Batı bundan göçmen akını ancak kendi düzenini tehdit ettiği rahatsız oluyor” (West who holds power and sanction only gets uncomfortable when the migrant influx threaten its own order)

The following examples illustrated the use of disclaimer category in the corpus. It was observed that there was no usage of the category in social media posts in the corpus. In the example (21) under the topos of abuse and crime, the anti columnist ironically critized Syrians’ negative attitude to Turkish flag and he implied that they were threat for Turkey and Turkish citizens.
However, in the example (22), the pro-columnist ironically criticized the left wing people and the opposition party’s attitude towards the migrants.

(21) (AGOA) “Bu eylem, ülkemizde sığınmış olan “Suriyeli muhafızlar”’ın marifetiymi. Adamlar gaya Beşşar Esad’a muhafızlar. Ama bakıncı inşası, pekâlâ da kendilerine küçük açmış Türkiye’ye muhafızlar.” (This action was carried out by Syrian opponents sheltered in our country. The guys are so-called against Esad. However when you look, you see that they are against Turkey embracing them.)

(22) (AGSMP) “Lafta pek humanistler, pek yardımseverler ama Ortadoğu’dan gelen her sığınma talebini neredeyse sosyal bir “kirlilik” gibi görürler.” (…They are so-called humanist and pretty charitable but they see any asylum request from Middle-East as almost like a social pollution.)

The examples (23) to (26) illustrated the use of comparison and victimization categories in the corpus. In the examples (23-24) under the topos of damage and disadvantage the anti-group ironically critized the government policy on migration and defined the Turkish citizens as the victims of the governent’s wrong policy.

(23) (AGOA) “500 bin Suriyeli erkek, kendi memleketine sahip çıkmak yerine, bizim memleketimizde geziriyor, bizim gençlerimiz, bunların memleketini kurtarmak için oradadaki vuruşacaq, şehit düşeceq, sonra da hiç utanmadan buna “vatan savunması” denecek öyle mi?” (500 thousand Syrian men travel and have fun in our country instead of defending their country .Our youth fight there and die to save their(Syrians) country, and then that is named “defence Of the nation” shamelessly, is it right?)

(24) (AGSMP) “# halkım aç suriyeliler en kral yerlerde oturuyor” (My people are hungry, Syrians live in the best places. )

In the following examples (25-26) under the topos of humanitarianism, the pro-group critized the European countries, the Arabic countries and also the Turkish left wing parties and people’s humanitarian attitude towards the Syrians and their dissimilation policies on the migration. They implied that Syrian migrants are the victims of their dissimilation policies.

(25) (PGOA) “Suriyeli mültecilerin Akdeniz’de boğulup cesetlerinin kıyılara vurmasına sebep olan Avrupa, çete üyeleriyle cesetlerin kıyılara vurmasına açarı... Suriyelileri gelince de üç maymunu oynuyorlar... Kuveyt, Katar gibi ülkelerde bir tane mültec yok. Çünkü yasak. Hintlilere, Filipinlilere serbest ama Suriye'liye yasak “ (Europe, which has caused Syrian refugees to drown in Mediterranean Sea ...., has opened their borders to parallel mob members. When it comes to Syrians, they play ostrich… there is not even one refuge in those countries such as Kuwait, Qatar... Because it is forbidden for Syrians)

(26) (PGSMP) “#Suriyeli kardeşlerimiz üzerinden yapılan provakasyona gelme! Bir zamanlar Almanlar ‘Türken raus’di yoldur. Almanlar gibi irkçı mı olalım?’(Don’t be provoked against our Syrian fellows. At one time, Germans used to say “Türken raus”. Shall we become racist like Germans?)

In line with the second aim of the study we examined the effects of the host media discourse on the Syrian migrants. The interviews were conducted in order to define the migrants’ opinion of Turkish media discourse on migrants. Before the interviews, the migrants were informed about the anti and pro government host media discourse on Syrian migrants. Then, the
question was asked to them: What do you think about the images about the migrants transmitted by the anti and pro-government host media?

Excerpts:

(1) Facebook ya da gazete de kötü söz duyunca üzülürüm .. Türkler bizi istemez.. Türklerine anlatmak isterim biz kötü değil .. Güzel haber mutlu eder .. Türk gibi olurum (when I read the bad words on facebook or newspaper I feel sorry .. I would like to tell Turks we are not bad .. Good news make me happy .. I feel like the Turks)

(2) Sosyal medyadaki güzel yazı gurur duyarım .... kötü yazı beni mutsuz eder .. Türkler bizi istemez aklıma gelir.. konuşmak isterim hep Suriyeli kötü değil ..her ülke iyi insan kötü insan var (The good writing I am proud..the bad writing makes me unhappy .. It reminds me that Turks do not want us .. I would like to talk to Turks .. all Syrians are not bad .. There is good and bad in every country)

As seen in the excerpts above, the interview results revealed that ninety-eight percent of all the interviewees said that the negative image transmitted by the anti government host media upset them. Also according to them, the negative ones reflected an incorrect and overgeneralized perspective on migrants. They said that because of the negative news about them, Turkish people avoid contacts with them. They wanted to improve the generalized and stigmatized image about them. Therefore they wanted more contact with Turkish people to tell them the truth about themselves. Moreover, the interviewees said that the positive image transmitted by the pro-government made them happy, pride and feel themselves at safe.

3. Conclusion and discussion

The results obtained in the study were similar to the results obtained in previous studies based on CDA (Çağlar and Özkır, 2015; Göker and Keskin, 2015) that analyzed the representation of Syrian migrants in Turkish media. As in the previous studies, in this study it was seen that the representation of migrants in the social and mass media changed according to the columnists’ and ordinary people’s political standpoint.

In the study, the anti-government group pursued an exclusion, anti-migrant discourse. According to Van Dijk (2005:28), anti-migrant discourse requires that anti-migrant policies are good for “Us” or “our people”. In parallel with his claim, in the anti-group a negative image of migrants was established especially by criminalization and problematization, mostly under the topoi of burden, abuse and crime, such as migrants as a burden to Turkey, migrants as a threat to the safety of Turkish state. Moreover, they critized the migrant policy of the government on behalf of Turkish people and in their articles and posts, a positive self-portrayal of the Turkish people was given. Turkish people were represented as victims of migrants and were burdened with the presence of many migrants.

As for the pro-government columnists and ordinary people, they follow an inclusion, pro-migrant discourse. Under the topoi of victimisation and humanisation, culture and advantage migrants were positively portrayed as people contributing to the prosperity of Turkey, being useful to Turkish economy and also as people who were our co-religionists, friends and who suffered from war and persecution and needed protection. With the representation of migrants as positive out-group, the pro-government group more or less implicitly stated that they supported and legitimated the migrant policy of the government. Also, they didn’t approve of the anti-migrant policies of the opposite left wing parties and their supporters (especially CHP)
in Turkey, European and Arabic countries. According to them, the Syrian migrants were victims of these parties and these countries.

In the second part of the study, we tried to find out how Syrian migrants perceived Turkish mass and social media discourse on migrants. The interview results disclosed that the positive out group discourse of the pro-group made the migrants feel safe, proud and integrated while the negative other representation of the anti-group made them feel isolated from the Turkish society. According to them, especially the anti-government media discourse has an active role in homogenizing and fixing the discourse on migrants. In other words, the discourse represents them as a homogenous group that share the same negative characteristics and backgrounds. Therefore Turkish people do not want to communicate with them.

According to Contact Hypothesis (Allport 1954; Pettigrew 1998), interpersonal contact changes attitudes and reduces prejudice between majority and minority group members. In parallel with this hypothesis the interviewees in the study said that they wanted to have more contact with Turkish people to diminish the negative image about the migrants transmitted by the anti-government mass and social media.

References


ARE WOMEN GOOD TO TALK TO?
LANGUAGE STRATEGIES IN WOMEN’S POSTS ON SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES

Marta Dąbrowska

Abstract: CMC and notably social networking sites appear to empower their users to express their views freely. The paper investigates manifestations of an unorthodox online behaviour, especially that of women. The analysis of YouTube and Facebook (fanpages) English-medium posts demonstrates that in the context of controversial issues women often employ communicative strategies which not only put them on a par with male interlocutors, but also often exceed their use of impolite, vulgar, and abusive language.

Keywords: genderlects, CMC, SNS, identity, (im)politeness, swearwords, anonymity

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Investigating language and gender
The traditional and stereotypical image of a woman is that of a quiet, polite, and caring person. Still about a hundred years ago linguists like Jespersen (1922: 250) claimed that “women much more often than men break off without finishing their sentences, because they start talking without having thought out what they are going to say.” The traditional view was that a woman was to be seen, not heard. To a large extent this opinion persisted in the public mind until well into the second half of the 20th century. If women were associated with talking, it was rather gossiping or talking without purpose (cf. the poem Men Talk by Liz Lochhead according to which women yatter, chatter, yap, babble, etc.). It was also very much reflected at the initial

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stage of investigating women’s language. Everyone who studies genderlects is familiar with the image of women’s language as depicted in the paper by Lakoff (1975), according to which women speak politely, they talk mainly about family, feelings and household, they express themselves with great affection, use a lot of hedges, question tags and rising intonation, etc., all of which was interpreted as their lack of assertiveness.

The view presented in the paper did not go unchallenged in the years to follow. What was on the whole questioned was the perception of deficiency that was attributed to the way women spoke. Numerous studies that followed to a large extent undermined many of the claims, e.g. the frequency of use and interpretation of question tags (cf. Holmes 1995), the understanding of forms typically recognised as hedges, or the use of questions, associated with female weakness and male dominance, which is one of the theories that explain differences in the male and female speaking styles (cf. Zimmerman and West 1975). With time by focusing on female-female interaction the more feministically-oriented scholars (e.g. Coates 1993, Cameron 1995) attempted to show that the female style of speaking may have been characterised by some of the above-mentioned features, e.g. a marked use of minimal responses, asking questions, using (some type) of tags, etc., yet their meaning was to be understood differently than the traditional perception had it. Their use conveyed to the interlocutors that women were skilled conversationalists who, by using the above strategies, made their interlocutors feel attractive, liked, and important. Some of the studies, most of which were focused on the Anglo-Saxon women’s language, made a point of creating a positive view of female speaking style, e.g. the well-known study by Janet Holmes (1993), according to the title of which “New Zealand women are good to talk to” (cf. also Holmes 1995).

Thus, the more recent view on genderlect differences was blatantly opposed to the initial interpretation of female linguistic behaviour. However, it can be seen that the features attributed to women were largely the same as initially stated, e.g. more visible politeness, especially positive politeness (cf. Brown and Levinson 1987), affective language, use of hedges, tags, minimal responses, etc., yet a different understanding was assigned to those, and understood either as different from that of men’s (cf. Tannen 1991), or cooperative and focused on the interlocutor (Coates 1996), yet not viewed as a sign of weakness. It could therefore be assumed that all women should demonstrate this kind of behaviour, which, as everyday experience shows, is not necessarily true. This largely monolithic interpretation of female and male behaviour began, however, to be questioned by the most recent wave of investigation informed by feminist theory as well. The view that the new theory, e.g. the dynamic or performative theory (cf. Butler 1990), has advanced is that linguistic behaviour is not anything predetermined and almost genetically embedded in the human mind, but rather – that it may be chosen, more or less consciously, by each speaker him- or herself, in other words, that it can be performed (cf. Butler 1990, Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 2003). In this vein a much greater focus in genderlect studies has been put on the context of investigation of a given group or community of interlocutors/respondents and the value of localised investigation has been emphasised. Studies that followed accommodated a variety of behaviours that could be found with both women and men, and which were markedly different in character from the classical observations made about the speech of the two genders, e.g. those concerning geek feminists (Bucholtz 2002), AAVE-speaking women (Mills 2003), etc. The more recent approach has also accounted for the treatment of politeness in interaction. It is now treated with greater flexibility as well, being interpreted as a relational type of activity (cf. Locher 2008, Locher and Watts 2008, Locher et al. 2015). This approach also informs the present investigation, which focuses on the interaction conducted in the online context. CMC has been a rich source of data about the use of language which is not so strictly controlled (as some linguists, e.g. Danesi 2016, stress, the rules accounting for the offline type of interaction do not apply to the online world) and hence it has been a valuable source for investigating linguistic behaviour which is to a large
extent uncontrolled and produced in semi-formal or informal settings. This is the kind of data that sociolinguists have been searching for (cf. Labov 1972a), yet access to it was much harder in the pre-Internet era. Now online resources, and notably social media, have provided easy access to informal interaction, and the fact that it is written does not diminish its value, as the language found there is a lot more natural than that in e.g. books or even some type of emails.

Social Networking Sites
Indeed, what needs to be kept in mind when studying the language of social networking sites (SNSs) is that they are primarily meant to be used for maintaining contacts with others, and some, like Twitter or YouTube, for sharing information and exchanging videos, but also, as Danesi (2016, cf. Ross et al. 2009, Bazarova et al. 2013) underlines, for promoting oneself. Various studies point to a variety of aspects of SNSs and behaviours of their users, e.g. that of identity construction (cf. Turkle 1995, Danet 1998, Locher and Hoffmann 2006), demographic aspects in relation to the popularity of various types of activities on Facebook (cf. Baron 2008 regarding age and gender of users, Schwartz et al. 2013 on gender and topic preferences, etc.), the choice of the language of communication on Facebook (Dąbrowska 2013), the character of communication on Facebook (Thurlow 2013), on YouTube (cf. Burgess and Green 2009), or on Twitter (cf. Gruzd et al. 2011), the word-of-mouth marketing (cf. Helm et al. 2013), the issue of ranting and flaming online (cf. Lange 2014), etc. What also pertains to this study is investigation of anonymity online and the choice of different identities (cf. Danesi 2016), which, as might be assumed, encourages a more natural, relaxed or even defiant behaviour online, though Lange (2005) cautions against a too simplistic assumption about the relationship between anonymity and the degree of openness and hostility online. Internet communication has also been assumed to help disguise the true personality of the users, including their gender. Indeed, some research of selected linguistic features and strategies of communication demonstrates no particular difference in the choices made by the two genders (cf. Guiller and Durdell 2007, Herring and Paolillo 2006), other studies (cf. Herring 1996a, 2003, Swann 2000, Thompson and Murachver 2001, Baron 2004, Herring and Zelenkauksaite 2008, Kapidzic and Herring 2011), however, claim that it is possible to identify the gender of the user by analysing their communication strategies, e.g. the number and length of posts, the choice of standard vs. non-standard language, the number of contractions, etc. It may, therefore, be stated that the current state of research regarding genderlect differences online is at best inconclusive.

The study data
The study presented below will focus on the analysis of samples of language collected from two of the most popular SNSs, Facebook and YouTube, with the aim to investigate the character of the comments made by their female and male users. The main focus will be put on the communication strategies which determine whether the experience of interacting with other YT or FB users is a pleasant, enriching one, as indicated by the title of the paper, or quite the opposite. It is therefore of primary importance to look in the first place at the issue of emotions expressed by various speech acts, notably praise or compliment on the one hand and, notably, criticism, blame, accusation on the other. It has long been claimed (cf. Lakoff 1975, Fabes and Marti 1991, Dąbrowska 2007a, 2014, Park 2007, Perkins 2012) that women are more emotional in their communication, but what has primarily been investigated so far have been positive emotions noted by researchers. What, however, needs to be more looked into are also negative emotions and the evaluation of these quantitatively in respect of the two genders. What goes along with emotional displays are the manifestations of politeness and impoliteness too. As mentioned above, studies of genderlects have also since their outset demonstrated that women are more polite, and especially more positively polite, to use Brown and Levinson’s (1987) most classical division of the concept (cf. also Lakoff 1975, Fishman 1983, Brown
the flip side of the coin – the expressions of impoliteness – have been taken on board as a topic
of investigation as well. Initially perceived in relation to the theories of politeness (Culpeper
1996, 2005, Bousfield 2008) the phenomenon has since led to the development of more
independent theories that describe it and its own study apparatus (cf. Culpeper 2011). Most of
the studies of impoliteness so far have primarily focused on stretches of interactions from films
or TV programmes, and their main focus has been on the description of the speech acts used
and their interpretation in the context (cf. e.g. Locher 2004, Culpeper 2008, 2011), not so much
on who – women or men – are the more impolite participants, there is therefore a certain
methodological gap to be filled. With the advance of the computer mediated communication
and the phenomena to be observed there on a daily basis, like flaming or hate, there exist now
ample data that allow researchers to analyse the phenomenon more thoroughly and also from
the point of view of the participants of the act of communication. The investigation results
presented below will therefore be used to demonstrate that, contrary to the traditional
perception, women can also behave in a more negatively emotional and more impolite way
than men, thereby showing not only their positive, but also negative aspects of personality. The
analysis of polite meanings that follows will be based broadly on the classical categories
stemming from Brown and Levinson’s theory of politeness (1987), whereas judgements
concerning impoliteness will be made on the basis of Culpeper’s findings – his initial and more
detailed classification of impoliteness into the negative impoliteness (e.g. condescend, scorn,
riddle; mock-impoliteness/sarcasm, etc.) and positive impoliteness (e.g. snub; make the other
feel uncomfortable, etc.), beside off-record impoliteness (Culpeper 1996, 2005), and more
recently a more generalised approach dividing impoliteness into the conventionalised and non-
conventionalised one (Culpeper 2011). Notably the conventionalised type, which, among
others, involves insults (i.e. personalised negative vocatives, personalised negative assertions,
personalised negative references, personalised third person negative references), pointed
criticism, complaints, condescension, negative expressive, etc. will prove particularly useful
for the identification of cases of impoliteness. The identified instances of impolite behaviour
will also be viewed as manifestation of verbal aggressiveness, according to the definition of
Bekiari et al. (2017: 496), which states that it is “the usage of hurtful words and insults, aiming
at deconstructing the other person’s dignity and self-image” (cf. Infante and Wigley 1986),
which thus ties in with Culpeper’s (2005, 2008) view of impoliteness, which he sees as an
intentional action, unlike rudeness, which is unintentional.
The following analysis aims to investigate samples of comments made by female and male
participants of online communication. The major distinctive feature, beside gender of the
participants, will be the medium of communication (the type of the SNS) and the fact whether,
when writing their comments they could, and decided to, reveal their true identity or whether
they hid behind an avatar or a nickname, which would then allow them to be quite open, and
not infrequently aggressive and inconsiderate in expressing their views. The choice of
analytical material has had to therefore fulfil certain criteria. Thus, the source of the samples
had to be platforms which allowed their users to express their opinions, and offered topics or
aspects of discussion that evoked some strong emotional reactions, either positive or negative
ones. One of such types of SNSs is undoubtedly YouTube, a platform made for sharing video
clips, either made by users themselves or copied from other sources. YouTube is known for
the users’ expressing their antagonistic comments quite openly (cf. Lange 2014, Pihlaja 2014).
For the purpose of this analysis samples of the official coverage of some official events were
used which, because of their public character and quite unusual content had a potential to attract
varied audience. The events dealt with were the most recent presidential elections, and notably
the new president’s (Donald Trump) inaugural address, the results of two Eurovision song
contests, one having been won by Conchita Wurst, a transgender artist from Austria (2015) and
the other by Salvador Sobral, a Portuguese fado singer (2017), and finally the error made when announcing the results of the Oscar ceremony awards for the best picture (2017). It was assumed that comments offered on YT would be often, though not always, expressed anonymously, which, in turn, would result in a greater degree of more informal, more emotionally marked and often more aggressive comments, in keeping with the overall nature of the platform. For the sake of the analysis, however, there was a need to at least identify the gender of the users – this was done on the basis of both the form and content of the nickname (e.g. Cherry Blossom, xspringrose2, or Magic1020 were assumed to be women, and kingshearer, areyoufuckingretarded or kanyallhearmenow - men, especially if the photo/avatar attached also gave a hint about the gender of the commenter). In order to find a platform where the same set of topics was analysed for the sake of comparison, respective fanpages on Facebook were scrutinised, i.e. fanpages devoted to presidential elections, the Eurovision Song Contest, and the Academy Awards. The choice of the source here was dictated by the fact that Facebook users should (according to the website rules) use their real name and surname (this, as the practice shows, is naturally not true in every case, yet the majority of FB users do show their real personality), which, in turn, could affect the degree of displaying especially negative emotions, in keeping with the more sociability and self-presentation-oriented character of the medium (cf. Ross et al. 2009, Nadkarni and Hofmann 2012, Seidman 2013).

In order to ensure that the basis for comparison is the same for both of the media, and for both of the genders, the same number of posts was selected for comparison in each. Thus, the total number of posts scanned for analysis was 360, all produced by native speakers of English, with the two genders represented by 180 each, and these two groups representing the two media analysed (YT and FB) by an equal number of posts as well, i.e. 90 each (90 posts from women + 90 from men on YT, and 90 posts from women + 90 from men on FB, respectively).

The posts were analysed broadly in terms of departures from the neutral mode of expression (cf. Locher and Watts’ (2008) politic/appropriate but unmarked “non-polite” behaviour), i.e., the elements selected for analysis were those forms which either pointed to a visible politeness of the content (cf. Locher and Watts’ (ibid.) positively marked behaviour) or, alternately, a marked expression of impolite, even aggressive meanings (i.e. non-politic/inappropriate, negatively marked behaviour). This could be conveyed in a variety of ways, which will be discussed in detail below. What needs to be said at the beginning is that, altogether, i.e. for the two SNSs together, 92 examples of particularly polite elements of comments were identified in the material scanned (i.e. in 26% of the posts) and 217 items of impoliteness (60% of the posts). In both groups it was women who exhibited more instances of each. In total, women showed marked behaviour 174 times (i.e. in 97% of their posts), and men – 135 times (i.e. in 75% of their posts). The set of items identified in women’s posts contained, in particular, 61 items of politeness (34%) and 113 of impoliteness (63%), while men behaved politely 31 times (17%) and impolitely 104 times (58%). These introductory data alone allow us to conclude that women can be both good to talk to – when they wish to be kind, and they can also show an aggressive and defiant behaviour more than men in CMC, if the context calls for it.

The above data will now be discussed in more detail and classified according to the categories which could be identified within the examples as regards strategies that the users applied when communicating with others. Since the initial analysis has allowed us to conclude that both women and men, but women somewhat more than men, behaved in an impolite way more often, the discussion will begin with this category. The overview of the posts with markers of impoliteness and aggressiveness has yielded the following strategies: the use of swearwords, acronyms containing swearwords, indirect third person insults, direct second person insults, and sarcasm, which will now be analysed in detail. The division reflects the summation of the categories of the conventional impoliteness listed above (Culpeper 2011), combined broadly with the notions of direct and indirect aggression, the former being confrontational, personal
and aimed at provoking an individual, the latter avoiding confrontation (cf. Lagerspetz et al. 1988), hence the division into the direct second person insults and indirect third person insults in the following analysis. The instances of sarcasm are viewed as a separate category as those motivated by non-conventional, implicational impoliteness (cf. Bousfield 2008). Finally, the categories of swearwords, and the less direct acronyms containing swearwords constitute separate groups because they perform a double duty – they are impolite in their own right (cf. Culpeper’s (1996, 2005) use of taboo words as markers of positive impoliteness, and later (2011) negative expressives as conveyors of conventional impoliteness), but they can also additionally enhance the already impolite reading of other categories, as in e.g. Don’t you fucking dare be condescending to me, where the reading of the comment is insulting even without the swearword, it therefore appeared justified to discuss them separately before the more specific categories mentioned above.

**Swearwords**

As the numerical analysis has demonstrated, the most numerous category of impolite, aggressive behaviour is that of using expletives and obscene words, put together into one category as a marker of negative emotional attitude towards the addressee or as a comment. As stated above, this category was often combined with the remaining ones when the use of profanities additionally enhanced the negative reading of the other options of aggressive behaviour listed above (which is why the categories discussed further may also contain swearwords in their content). The total distribution of these elements (74 in all, 0.2 per post) as individual items presents itself as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total: 74</th>
<th>YouTube (0.26 per post)</th>
<th>Facebook (0.14 per post)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>19 (0.21 per post)</td>
<td>15 (0.17 per post)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>29 (0.32 per post)</td>
<td>11 (0.12 per post)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above results are rather telling. Although the distribution of the elements in this category looks quite haphazard, there is a way of interpreting them. It might be deduced that when interacting with others who they do not know, and in situations where they often act under cover of a nickname, i.e. primarily on YouTube, men resort to the use of swearwords extremely often, far more often than women in the same context (cf. Thelwall 2008b). On the other hand, when interacting on FB, where the real personality, and often a photo is revealed more often than not, the number of these tokens falls significantly, giving us the figure more than three times lower than on YT in the case of men. This might be a sign of some accommodation to the general norms of interaction in a semi-formal context of a fan page, contrary to the informal context of communication on YT. The similar rates of use of such items by female users regardless the type of the SNS indicate a more consistent choice of language forms. This could then indicate that when communicating online women, the traditionally more “muted” group, tend to get bolder and express their opinions in unfamiliar environments more freely, especially when discussing issues which they approach emotionally. Emotions that play a significant role in provoking and sustaining or alternately counteracting aggression are notably anger and fear. Research has demonstrated (cf. Campbell and Cross 2012) that there is little difference in the frequency of anger sensation experienced by men and women (but with a greater intensity and duration of it in the case of the latter), contrary to the level and intensity of fear, especially in the face of physical threat that marks female behaviour. However, recent studies have also proved that “sex differences are magnified for risky forms of aggression and minimised (even reversed) for less physically dangerous forms such as indirect aggression, where there is no face-to-face confrontation and the attacker can remain anonymous” (Campbell and Cross 2012: 205), which, in turn, throws some light on this somewhat unexpected discrepancy between the male and female behaviour noted here. Moreover, as Herring (2003: 207) suggests, “the
minority gender in an on-line forum tends to modify its communicative behavior in the
direction of the majority gender: women tend to be more aggressive in male-dominated groups
than among other women,” the observed ratios of expletive use by women are, therefore, not
so much surprising, and, as Thelwall (2008: 102) predicts in his MySpace swearing study
“gender equality in swearing or a reversal in gender patterns for strong swearing, will slowly
become more widespread, at east in social network sites.”

What needs to be added in this respect is that swearwords were used by women and men to a
varying degree when it comes to the openness or anonymity of expression. Indeed, in the case
of men the largest number of expletives was identified in the anonymous comments on YT (17,
i.e. 59% of all), while comments made openly on YT and on FB showed a similar number – 12
and 11, respectively, but represented 41% and 100% of the comments on the two SNSs. The
result is not surprising, as it was initially assumed that anonymity would encourage greater
displays of emotionality and aggressiveness. However, it was not the case with the female
users. Quite the reverse, when writing anonymously women used obscenities to a very
moderate extent, with only six items of the type identified (32%). On the other hand, when
making comments on YT in an open way, and on FB as well, women did not shun the use of
expletives, using them 13 times on YT (68%), and 15 times 100%), and thus the highest
number, on FB (cf. Thelwall 2008 on swearing on MySpace). Such a turn of events, however,
should not appear surprising in the light of the above explanations.

To sum up the category, it needs to be said that the most popular expletives in the material
analysed were, unsurprisingly, forms like fucking (7 times - 6 items used by men), shit (6 times
– 5 items used by men), fuck – (6 times - 4 items used by men). Some of the other forms, used
once-twice were, e.g. screw (up), pissed off, pissing, suck, fucked up, fuckups, bullshit, cock,
cocksuckers, cock up, crap, dick, ass, mothafuckas, pussy, dipshit, etc.

Out of 39 different forms of expletives noted in the posts analysed men used 22 different ones,
which shows a slight prevalence of such forms in the male language (cf. Thelwall 2008b).
Some more mitigated forms of expletives were identified in the group too, yet two of these
were used by men, i.e. FCKT*RD and f’d up, while the form f**kin by a woman. What is also
worth pointing out is the fact that, despite a few forms having been used by both women and
men, i.e. screw up, pissed off, shit, fuck(ing), cock up, sucks, cunt the forms used by women
and by men tend to be separate. While men utilised throw up, wack, bullshit, cocksuckers,
crooked, freak, women chose boob, pissing, crap, dick, ass, shitty, sod, mothafuckas, goddamn,
scum, pervert, pussy, dipshit, af, schmuck instead.

Acronyms containing taboo words
When discussing expletives it is necessary to mention the use of acronyms as well. As the
overview of the comments demonstrated, there were not many acronyms used (26), yet more
than a half of those identified (14) contained a swearword (the neutral ones were primarily lol
and omg). They are discussed separately, though, because taboo vocabulary is not immediately
visible, and to some, who are not so familiar with the CMC lingo, not identifiable. In this way
they act as a double-edged sword – they are very informal, yet at the same time somewhat
veiled. The collected material revealed what follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>YouTube (0.06 per post)</th>
<th>Facebook (0.01 per post)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>6 (0.07 per post)</td>
<td>3 (0.03 per post)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>5 (0.06 per post)</td>
<td>- (0 per post)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The actual examples are the following:
YT men: Lmao; Lmao that's hilarious; damn u dumb af
YT women: OMFG; Lmaoo; lmaooo;
FB women: Wtf!!; Lmao; Alexandra you're ugly af anyway

64
The number is indeed very small, but it adds up to the overall use of taboo language. And, what is very telling is the fact that, whereas the use of such items on YT, with the user’s identity additionally hidden (six persons), which somehow excuses their presence there (it is notable that men and women used them to a similar extent) is expected, on FB, where the identity is much more exposed, it was again women who decided to use some such items, while men did not make use of such language at all. It might then be deduced that, when writing on SNSs on which the identity is more revealed, and the audience mixed and of diverse background, men tend to mellow their language down to a certain extent and accommodate to the more universal rules of conduct. In the case of women, while this is generally also true, some females accommodate back to men, or use the public platform of communication to vent their emotions more openly than possibly they would have done in private interaction online.

Third person insults
The second of the categories which dominated the negatively marked comments of the users were the insults or criticism about someone or something, i.e. negative forms of an indirect type. The distribution of those is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total: 69</th>
<th>YouTube (0.19 per post)</th>
<th>Facebook (0.19 per post)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>16 (0.17 per post)</td>
<td>19 (0.21 per post)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>19 (0.21 per post)</td>
<td>15 (0.17 per post)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The figures in the grid thus show that the number of such forms in all the four categories is very similar, almost identical. It seems then that criticising a third party or an event, as was the case in most of the posts analysed, does not seem to be a major challenge online, and that both men and women do so to a similar extent, with minor differences. The distribution, as can be seen, is very even, with the average ratio of third person 0.19 insult per post (0.19 for women and 0.19 for men). Although the rate is not very high, it is significant, and, what is more, an important conclusion that we can reach is that women behave in a similar way to men, i.e. that they keep up with men in terms of expressing criticism in public online.

More specifically, as said above, the negative comments found in the posts can be broadly divided into criticism directed against people and criticism of events. Again, the ratio for the two genders in each of the two SNSs is very similar. In the case of the YT comments both women and men criticised people slightly more frequently (62% women, 52.6% men) than they criticised events, while in the case of FB the proportions are reversed (42% of women, 33% of men criticised people), which, as can be seen, is lowest in the posts written by men. This might mean that when men sense there is a potential chance someone might recognise them on FB, they mitigate their negative feelings, while women behave in a more consistent way.

As regards the form and content of the comments, the most popular type is that of a noun preceded by some negatively loaded modifier. The noun itself may also be expressed by means of a marked term, especially when referring to people. Other frequently used forms are descriptive sentences in the indicative form informing about what happened. Another option are also sentences with copula be. Some examples of comments made about people by women on YT are:

- *because they're homophobic cunts who can't except someone's sexual orientation!*
- *Filthy globalist demonic scum!*
- *She's probably bitter because she knows deep down that Trump wouldn't want to grab her by the pussy;*

and on FB:

- *Some stupid schmuck gave him the wrong card!!*
- *judgemental morons;*
• Polish boobs, cheesecake and a chick with a dick.

Men, on the other hand, expressed their criticism towards people on YT in the following way:
• How did this racist orange get president?,
• Hollywood is full of racist drug addicts with zero morals;
• what a fucking boss, he was like fuck it,

while the forms found on FB were:
• Hollywood morons;
• Hell yeah crooked trump and his lying administration;
• Freak that sings mediocre,

Criticism concerning events was conveyed by women on YT as follows:
• This song is so frickin bad ass;
• all the other songs were shitty

and on FB:
• Such a screw up!;
• That LaLa film was so overrated!!!!;
• No it was Humungous what a Cock up;
• the whole thing is a farce;

Men, on the other hand, expressed it on YT this way:
• FUCKIN OSCARS,
• cause the GayMoon is FUCKING PATHETIC!;
• that highschool musical shit was wack;
• la la land was shit IMO;

and FB fanpage rendered the following examples:
• What a fucking disgrace on that Best Picture cock up. School boy error;
• Complete farce;
• this is Euro-trash.

One other conclusion that can be made, apart from the fact that the comments do not differ much regardless who made them, is that they also to a large extent contain an expletive from among the forms presented above. Thus, when commenting on issues that do not leave the audience indifferent both men and women can be quite offensive and abusive in what they comment on and how.

Direct second person insults

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>YouTube (0.15 per post)</th>
<th>Facebook (0.11 per post)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>17 (0.18 per post)</td>
<td>15 (0.17 per post)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>10 (0.11 per post)</td>
<td>5 (0.05 per post)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The third category which could be identified regarding offensive or aggressive behaviour of YT and FB users is that of the second person insults which the users utilised to vent their negative emotions. The total number of the forms identified in the group was 47, which makes it visibly lower compared to the previous two, yet still significantly marked as a strategy of communication (the ratio was 0.13 per post, 0.17 by women and 0.08 by men in total). It has to be said, naturally, that the number is lower because such personal attacks as these forms convey are most face-threatening of all – while even most offensive expletives do not need to be addressed to anyone specifically, the forms identified here, and especially those with the additional use of swearwords are particularly insulting. The very fact of their presence is quite
significant as regards the form and freedom of expression on SNSs, especially on public forums, and particularly those where users can hide their true personality. Suffice it to say, many of the forms listed below were written by users who were hiding their true names behind nicknames which, however, were comparatively easy to identify as male or female (those included three men and eleven women on YT, who expressed 30% and 65% of the YT second person directed insults, respectively).

What is particularly interesting for the present discussion is the numerical difference regarding the rate of such forms for the two genders. As the grid shows, in both SNSs it was the female users again who produced a larger number of such forms – on YT there were 17 such insults identified, and on FB (where the personality was revealed) – almost the same number (15). In the case of the male users the YT posts revealed ten such items, and on FB even fewer (5), i.e. only one third of the number that was recorded for the female users (and a half of those identified on YT). It could thus be concluded that female users have proved their high level of emotionality that has been traditionally attributed to them, but in this case – of the negative type, which has so far been largely unnoticed due to the difficulty of their investigation. Thus, English speaking women are not necessarily always good to talk to, they can also be much more aggressive, and much more personally oriented than men in the same public SNS context, where the physical threat is minimised. The overview of the most significant examples illustrates the above conclusion:

Male users’ insults on YT include:

- orion2themax go scerw yourself;
- damn u dumb af;
- You’re an idiot;
- and you further prove my moutha fucking point. go suck your moms titts

It may thus be seen that men tend to use expletives a lot when addressing others, also anonymously. This, however, is not really the case when the comments made by men on FB are compared to those above. The only expletive is used in an ambiguous form, which may also be treated as an encouragement, not an insult:

- y'all are some of the most hateful people;
- you are free to really leave!!!;
- Y'all are so hateful;

While the insults used by women are not so abundant in the use of profanities (though these are visible too), their use is diluted somewhat by the length of the posts, or sentences in which the insults have been identified. This might be linked with the fact that women may interpret this communicative situation as a semi-public or private context, that is why they are encouraged to write more openly and more personally (and sometimes indeed they direct the comment to a very specific person, not the group of users):

- I pity all of you who disliked this video. I pity how shallow minded and hateful you are. You're all a disappointing addition to the human race if you can't appreciate Conchita Wurst and her total utter fabulousness;
- Get over it you idiots;
- suck it up and accept she rocks those dresses better then your girlfriend ever could and that confuses your dick;
- FUCK ALL YALL MOTHAFUCKAS WHO THINK THIS MAN WASNT GOING TO WIN;
- You will get older, too, you dipshit;
- Don't you fucking dare be condescending to me
Finally, when the FB comments made by women are analysed, as in the case of men the comments do not as a rule contain expletives or swearwords, yet the language is still heavily marked by aggressive feelings, negatively loaded nouns and adjectives. The comments are more general than personal, but the latter are also present, and, as in the case of YT, they are also quite verbose. When getting into an argument online, then, it can be concluded that women take it quite seriously, emotionally and personally, and thus they are tough opponents, more passionate than male users:

- **LITTLE CONFUSION OMG YOU ARE STUPIDS**;
- **Using memes to express your ignorance as you have no real reason for your bigotry and small mindedness**;
- **Aleksandra you're ugly af anyway so your opinion is irrelevant**;
- **Good f**kin riddance then to you and all who are like you, the planet will be a much better place!**;
- **your not human or normal either then alexsandra your one of the worst kinds i seen on here your a disgrace**;

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sarcasm</th>
<th>YouTube (0.03 per post)</th>
<th>Facebook (0.04 per post)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total:</strong> 13</td>
<td><strong>3 (0.03 per post)</strong></td>
<td><strong>1 (0.01 per post)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Women</strong></td>
<td><strong>3 (0.03 per post)</strong></td>
<td><strong>6 (0.06 per post)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Men</strong></td>
<td><strong>3 (0.03 per post)</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The last category of online behaviour which can be categorised as unpleasant are sarcastic and ironic comments (cf. Bousfield 2008, Culpeper 2011). Though in the literal reading they can often pass for positive comments, e.g. compliments or markers of familiarity and friendliness, the contextual, implicational reading can quickly show the reader the right interpretation of the message. At times it may be assumed that they are more face-threatening due to the initially positive feel and, additionally, laughter that they can evoke. They are, however, also risky to use due to the fact that not everyone understands irony, in which case the negative sense can be lost and the intended goal not achieved. This is probably why the number of such comments is very low compared to the previous options. The overall count for all the four subcategories is 13 (0.4 per post in all), with the distribution fairly even, especially as regards YT. Here men and women used three examples of irony each, with mostly a general addressee rather than a specific person. On FB the difference between the two sexes is more marked. While women do not find this strategy particularly useful, with only one general example, men do enjoy using ironic comments more, with six items in all, and also more personal. It can be summed up that the general comments were used seven times, and personal one – six times. It appears to be a strategy clearly favoured by men, possibly because its use can be compared to the situation when a more powerful person is cruelly teasing a weaker one, and this does not seem to be a marked characteristics of women, even when they make negative comments – they prefer to display their emotions more openly and directly.

Comments made by men on YT are as follows:

- **Says the guy who can't spell "You're" correctly**;
- **Humble. HUMBLE. **HUMBLE**!!??!! Humble! HIM?! HUMBLE!??**;
- **Lmao that's hilarious**

And on FB:

- **Get on the right side of history love**;
- **And the Oscar for the Best Awards Fuck Up goes to the @Oscars 2017**;
• Fucking little;
• Oh my friend you thought it was a serious song contest, that's adorable

Examples of sarcasm in women’s posts on YT include:
• you're watching eurovision, home of the ridiculously camp and flamboyant yet oh no a drag artist. how can we possibly deal. the horror. Shock;
• It looks like someone's salty that they can't go to classy fancy shows;
• I think you need to read responses more closely before you start insulting people.

And the only one found on FB is:
• Little mistake!!

Markers of positive emotions
Compliments and congratulations
While analysing female and male behaviour online, one must not focus on the markers of negativity alone, although, as the overview of the material demonstrates, those were far more frequent and varied than the positive elements on both YT and FB. The latter, fewer in number, have broadly been divided into two (unequal) categories of compliments and congratulations, and peace appeals. The first category turned out to be most numerous of the two.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total: 75</th>
<th>YouTube (0.23 per post)</th>
<th>Facebook (0.18 per post)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>33 (0.36 per post)</td>
<td>18 (0.2 per post)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>9 (0.1 per post)</td>
<td>15 (0.17 per post)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The overall number of positive comments (75 items, 0.2 per post) is in fact almost equal to the number of negatively marked third person insults alone. There were 69 of the latter in all – 35 produced by women on both SNSs, and 34 by men, so it can be seen that the proportions in the present category are quite different, with women offering positive comments a lot more than men – 51 times, compared to 24 instances noted with men. However, it needs to be remembered that beside the third person insults there were also the other types of insulting online behaviour discussed above, which makes negative aspects of communication a more pronounced feature of the YT and FB comments than the positive ones.

The examples listed below illustrate the use of positive online comments rather well. The differences between the female and the male behaviour are of two types. The first is obviously the numerical difference, and primarily the imbalance between the two genders with respect to YT comments. There women expressed their positive feelings toward, but also, about other people more than four times more frequently than men. Interestingly, while men also praised some third party and not only their immediate interlocutor (for having said or noticed something which they had not), women additionally offered a lot (and more elaborate) positive comments about the person mentioned in the post, e.g. an actor, a singer or a politician, and far more often than men (10 items used by women and 0 by men on YT, six items by women and only one by a man on FB). The other difference is also the way, and notably the length of the positively marked comments. While males typically conveyed their admiration by means of an emotionally marked noun or an adjective modified by another modifier, e.g. Great speech!!!, good eye!, and thus in a very concise manner, females’ comments tended to be much more elaborate, not infrequently in a form of a sentence, or a set of sentences, e.g. when a beautiful, talented individual sings a fabulous song with a fabulous voice, or they even addressed the third party in a direct way, e.g. You go girl!!!!; Sing on Conchita, sing on, and don’t ever change <3. The overview of the examples also shows a much more emotionally marked way of expressing views by women, e.g. by means of repetitions of emotionally marked words, sequences of adjectives, as well as by sequences of exclamation marks, and additionally the
use of ‘x’s or heart-shaped emoticons. In the males’ comments such forms were not used (except for three exclamation marks once).

The comparison of the FB posts to those on YT largely confirms the observations made above, particularly as regards the form of the compliments and positively marked comments. Posts by females are more emotionally marked (by sequences of exclamation marks, sequences of emotionally marked adjectives and other parts of speech, the use of capital letters, i.e. so-called “speaking in italics”). They also tend to be more elaborate. Yet their number is much lower than in the case of YT, while men when on FB express their positive feedback more readily than on YT, so in effect the two groups behave in a very similar way when the positive evaluation is concerned in overall terms. Interestingly enough, when men express their praises, they do so towards the third party or a film, song, event, not to another person or participant of communication. The same is the case with comments by females on FB. It seems then that when commenting openly in public neither women nor men like to praise other users for what they say or do, but rather express their opinions about the topic of discussion. It may be concluded that when communicating on YT users interact more with one another, whereas when on FB fanpage interaction is limited to a minimum; it therefore appears to be a platform more suited for expressing opinions, not for engaging in a conversation.

Examples of comments expressed by men on YT are as follows:

- Great speech!!!
- What an Amazing speech. One of the very best I’ve heard;
- Good spot!;
- spot on dude!;
- good eye!...i mean ear;
- trescs1 Good point! I didn’t notice that!;

an on FB:

- Congratulations to Casey Affleck on his big win;
- Congrats Moonlight best picture and M. Ali;
- amazing voice;
- Well done Austria;
- well done you won!;
- Congrats Conchita! You deserve the win!;
- Good one Portugal!;

When on YT, women expressed their praises in the following way:

- when a beautiful, talented individual sings a fabulous song with a fabulous voice;
- she was fantastic;
- You go girl!!!!;
- I love it xxxx;
- omg I love it! <3;
- Beautiful singer Conchita you will be a hard act to follow tonight xx and; your beautiful singing and classic song xx;
- Beautiful...simply beautiful
- Salvador has a magical quality, spiritual enchanting;
- He is a musician's musician and a beautiful Soul;
- This song and his voice and the whole performance is absolutely amazing;
- Its damn amazing!;
• It is so beautiful, and his words are so touching;
• Thank you for amazing performances;
• Warren Beatty still has that old hollywood charm in him;
• you genius; wow good observation!!!;
• You have good ears!;
• congratulations to Moonlight;
and women’s positive comments on FB were:
• Bravo!!!;
• I did see La La Land and loved the movie;
• It was a very good show!!!;
• oh my god what a beautiful video;
• Congratulations to Moonlight;
• Congrats Conchita;
• She has a fantastic voice;
• it WAS the BEST song and she had the BEST (in fact amazing);
• Conchita is a beautiful, talented and such a gorgeous soul! Big aplause for her from me;
• Great singer tho’ everyone has their own individuality, well done Austria!;
• you don’t have to be barbie to be great am just intrigued!!!!

**Peace appeals**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>YouTube (0.06 per post)</th>
<th>Facebook(0.04 per post)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total:</strong></td>
<td>17</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Women</strong></td>
<td>6 (0.06 per post)</td>
<td>4 (0.04 per post)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Men</strong></td>
<td>4 (0.04 per post)</td>
<td>3 (0.03 per post)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The last category in the group of positively marked posts and in the overall survey is that of messages that convey encouragement for peaceful solutions or behaviour. The group is much less numerous compared to the compliments and congratulations – there were only 17 such items found in the posts (0.05 item per post). Also, as the table shows, the distribution of these is very evenly spread, especially when compared to the previous category, with just a slight preference for these on YT. The form of the messages varies significantly. Either they appear as declarative sentences in the first person, e.g. *I try to teach love*, or they are more universal as regards their message in the form of a general statement, e.g. *People can be what they want to be, whether it's being gay, lesbian, transgender or bi*, which alternates with the second person sg/pl forms, as *But first you have to have a heart for people & the unity that was shown by the actors for their fellow human beings!!!*; they may likewise take the form of an imperative which calls for love and peace, e.g. *Live and live let live and the world would be a better place*. Thus, it may be concluded that it is rather the meaning that defines these examples as a group, conveying a positive message, calling for peace and tolerance, not so much the form. These posts surely constitute a counterbalance to the aggressive and hateful comments found in the majority of examples discussed above, except that their number is much lower. Examples illustrating the category found in males’ messages on YT are the following:

• People should stop insulting and attacking each other, and should instead just listen to each other;
• Love and best of luck to him and the peace loving american people..;
• Professionalism: Apologize and admit it's your mistake;
FB posts written by men showed what follows:

- How about using that passion for something positive like raising your kids not to be complete failures or volunteering etc...;
- I think there were better songs but that song won and we should respect that;

Women on YT, on the other hand, wrote:

- I try to teach love......;
- People can be what they want to be, whether it's being gay, lesbian, transgender or bi!;
- LIVE YOUR OWN LIFE AND MAKE THIS WORLD A BETTER PLACE. LOVE LOVE LOVE;
- Also, when you insult someone with profanity simply because you disagree with their position, you have become too emotional and already lost the debate.

and on FB:

- But first you have to have a heart for people & the unity that was shown by the actors for their fellow human beings!!!!;
- and that we should teach our children to fight against - war/violence/fighting/killing/abuse of animals/treating women as second class citizens,... the list is endless. But who one chooses to sleep with and how one chooses to dress should never cause such offence. Live and live let live and the world would be a better place.

Concluding remarks
The above overview of the categories identified, their distribution across the genders and the Social Networking Sites analysed, and their content showed what follows:

- In keeping with their traditional perception it is still women who express positively marked meanings online more often than men – both numerically and in terms of the length of comments (especially when conveying words of recognition and admiration to others, but also when calling for peace and reconciliation).
- Women, however, not only offer more positive comments when communicating on YT and FB, but also more of the negative ones. The latter are also linked with a greater degree of emotionality.
- Women use fewer expletives than men, but criticise both people and things more easily and more directly on the SNSs analysed than men.
- Both men and women offer negative comments on YT more readily when hidden behind nicknames, yet women opt for this strategy more often (13 insults were recorded with men writing anonymously and as many as 21 with women).
- It is YT that encourages more openly negative comments towards and about others, while FB mellows them down. It is certainly true in the case of men, who show a fair degree of accommodation to the more civil rules of conduct when communicating on FB, women, however, behave in a more consistent way on both SNSs and voice their emotions and attitudes more honestly regardless of the medium of communication.

To sum up, women can be both particularly good but also particularly bad to talk to when interacting on SNSs and discussing issues that raise controversies.

References


