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Communicating emotions online. The function of anonymity and gender.

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Abstract: The electronic media directly or indirectly encourage their users to take an active role online. This, among others, finds its reflection on the users' expression of opinions in public about various issues. The degree of freedom of expression and sharing the users' opinions and emotions with others will depend on a number of factors, the major one, as is assumed here, being the users' degree of anonymity. An important role, as some previous studies have shown, is also to be assigned to the gender of the post authors. The following study will therefore attempt to investigate the issue of the frequency and the character of emotions expressed in the posts written in English, excerpted from three types of media: *anonymous*, represented by the International Movie Data Base; *semi-anonymous*, where both real names and invented ones may appear (film fan pages available on Facebook); to opinions expressed by Facebook friends in a more private online interaction. The objective will be to establish both the character and the rate of expressed emotions (positive or negative ones) and the degree of the users' openness about their feelings, depending on the medium of expression and their gender, where disclosed.

Keywords: emotional language, power, distance and solidarity, genderlects, CMC.

Introduction

Today's world has affected our communication with other people in a significant way. What used to be reserved for family and a handful of friends still a couple of decades ago can now be voiced virtually without limitations to the rest of the world, as today the public has an opportunity to use a variety of the media, particularly the electronic ones, in multiple ways, not infrequently also shaping their content (cf. Irwin 2011) [1]. The modern means of communication allow us to share both our views and our emotions about anything with others in innumerable ways: via email, text message, personal blogs, the social networking platform, discussion forum, through posts under newspaper articles, on professionally oriented websites, etc. What all the users of the Internet have no doubt observed is, for instance, an incredible amount of hate speech which can be found on a variety of platforms, unmatched in its power and unlimited outreach by anything that existed ever before. There is a freedom of expression which has developed on an unprecedented scale. The question, however, arises as to how the users approach the different media available at their disposal and whether they feel equally bold and encouraged to express their feelings openly and without limitations in each case. The assumption which is going to be the subject of analysis in the following paper is that despite the relative freedom of expression users of online media diversify their degree of disclosure and openness depending on how safe they can feel when sharing their feelings – in other words, how they evaluate their and their recipients' power towards each other and the sense of solidarity with other participants of a given platform of communication. An additional variable which, as it is assumed here, may have a considerable influence on the degree and character of emotions that one decides to share with others is also the person's

gender, which is assumed to be an important factor deciding about how we function linguistically in both public and private space.

Theoretical background

The following analysis will be placed broadly in the framework of ethnography of communication, with a more detailed consideration of some of its factors (Hymes 1974, Wardhaugh 1992) [2]. SPEAKING, a formula that Hymes developed offers a complex tool to describe the factors shaping every communicative event that we as speakers can find ourselves in, breaking it into detailed building blocks. These elements would comprise, in brief, the *situation* and the *setting* (S), *participants* (P), *ends*, i.e. the goal of interaction (E), particular speech *acts sequence* that a given communicative event is built of (A), *key*, i.e. the tone of interaction (K), *instrumentalities*, i.e. the “carriers” of communication, like the language vs. dialect, speech vs. writing, etc. (I), *norms* of interaction (N) and the specific *genre*, if it can be identified (G). Originally applied to spoken acts of communication and focused on the patterns obtaining for a given *speech community* (Hockett 1958, Gumperz 1962, 1968, Hudson 1996, Cameron 2001) [3], nowadays this method of qualitative communication research needs to be expanded to accommodate a new concept of a community, one that transcends actual geographical or political boundaries and accommodates groups existing also in virtual reality – that of a *community of practice* (Wenger 1998, Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 1992, Seidlhofer 2007, Trousdale 2010) [4], i.e. a community with a mutual involvement in shared practices, participating in a shared enterprise and making use of a common repertoire. At the present stage of research some scholars distinguish between *communities of practice* (CoP) and *communities of interest* (CoI), where the difference lies in the actual professional knowledge and activity of the former and lack of such a professionally in-depth engagement of the latter (Henri and Pudelko 2003) [5]. Other researchers also talk about the *virtual community of practice* (Dubé et al. 2005) [6], where the participants do not need to be located in the same place in order to interact with each other. For our purpose the closest term adequate to the material analysed below will be the community of interest, as the samples of language to be analysed, excerpted from discussion forums, fan pages and private profiles, will concern the topic of films, and thus they will not be generated by people professionally involved in the film-making process.

The use of the ethnographic approach to communication necessarily involves the identification and analysis of the power relations between participants of the communication act. The concept of power, together with the notion of solidarity, first introduced to linguistic studies by Brown and Gilman (1960) [7] as a result of the analysis of the use of address forms, and more specifically the use of the 2nd person personal pronouns, has become one of the defining concepts in the analysis of human linguistic behaviour in the 21st century. Power is an omnipresent variable in the description of language use today, be it as a source of political decisions and consequently the choice of one language variety over another at the level of nation or a region (e.g. Phillipson 1992, 2009) [8], the development of the dominant form of discourse in a given society in the context of ideology, analysed within the domain of Critical Discourse Analysis (Fairclough 1989, 1995) [9] or at the level of interaction between individuals, incorporated for instance in the analysis of interaction between members of different social groups or participants of a variety of situations, e.g. in courts, at the doctor’s (Thornborrow 2002) [10], or the discussion of linguistic politeness strategies (Brown and Levinson 1987, Locher 2004) [11]. Power is also a variable that is often adduced in the context of genderlects study, both as a reason for the formation of differences between men and women in language (Lakoff 1975, Spender 1980, Coates 1993, Herring 2003, Talbot

2003) [12] and in the analysis of language of discrimination, notably sexism (Goddard and Patterson 2000, Mills 2008) [13].

As mentioned above, power was incorporated by Brown and Levinson (1987) [14] in their theory of politeness in the calculation of the degree of face-threat one makes as a result of what and how one is saying to another person (which includes, beside power, also social distance and the degree of social imposition) in order to assess how face-threatening a given speech act is and consequently how politely one should speak in a given situation. In the present analysis some reference will be made to the concepts of positive and negative types of politeness, which will be particularly relevant in the case of the final group analysed (friends) as positive politeness is one that attends to the interlocutor's need to be appreciated by others, while negative politeness is directed towards the interlocutor's wish not to be imposed upon. Alternately, some strategies of off-record politeness will also appear useful in the following discussion as strategies making use of indirect and ambiguous language elements, which may also serve to protect the interlocutor's face.

Gender of the website users, itself a frequent variable in the study of power distribution and linguistic politeness (Holmes 1995, Shields 2007, Sunderland 2006) [15], will, apart from the situational context and the degree of power and solidarity between the website users analysed below, also constitute an important source of differences in the linguistic behaviour collected through the samples. The classical binary division into women and men assumed for the descriptive purposes here (although with full awareness that in the case of a more complete set of data gender distinction should constitute a continuum, not a binary division) will be a decisive factor influencing the actual choice of vocabulary and the degree of emotional display. As numerous genderlect studies have demonstrated, women, at least in the English-speaking world, tend to behave a lot more emotionally in language (Lakoff 1975, Maccoby 1990, Herring 2003, Gray and Heatherington 2003, Dąbrowska 2007ab, 2012, 2013) [16]. However, as Kelly and Hutson-Comeaux (1999) [17] claim, the state that the emotional behaviour of women and men as well as the formation of a stereotype about it do depend on the context of interaction, an aspect which will also be investigated here. The more in-depth research has also pointed out that while men are believed to express more anger and pride, i.e. powerful emotions, women are said to vent sadness and fear more often, which in terms of power associations is described as powerless emotions (Brody 1997, Fabes and Martin 1991, Shields et al. 2007) [18]. Moreover, Parkins (2012) [19] also demonstrated that the emotional distinctiveness with regard to the two genders is still also visible in the computer mediated communication (Facebook, Twitter), despite the assumption of researchers that the greater anonymity of the CMC will result in a lower degree of gender-emotion distinctiveness. In view of the above, the analysis to follow will also aim to investigate the quality of emotions online with regard to the gender of the platforms users, not only the frequency of their emotional displays.

Methodology of research

The ethnographic approach to the analysis below will aim at describing in greater detail a broader context of three CoIs selected for the analytical purpose: that of a film discussion platform (IMDB), a Facebook fanpage, and Facebook private profile posts concentrated on film topic, in order to investigate the degree and character of the users' emotionality expressed in the discussion of the topic with regard to the context of anonymity and social distance created by a given Internet platform as well as the gender of the users. The three above-mentioned websites will then broadly constitute the first element of the analysis, i.e. the Situation/Setting. The most important element accounting for possible differences in the

linguistic behaviour to be discussed will be the definition of the P element, i.e. Participants. What will primarily determine their behaviour will be their relation to other users in each of the above-defined contexts, and thus their familiarity with other participants of the CoI, i.e. the degree of solidarity, or their lack of acquaintance with them, and thus a sense of distance and possibly difference in knowledge about the given subject of interest, in general terms viewed as a difference in power and status. The ethnographic description concerning the Participants will also in two of the three CoIs involve the specification of their gender, which will, under the circumstances defined by the S, have a bearing upon the linguistic output. The E, i.e. the objective of the comments analysed will be to evaluate a film or films that the users find attractive or, alternately, important for the present-day mass culture and hence their need to discuss them. Thus, the A from the SPEAKING formula will in the present analysis focus on one type of speech acts predominantly, i.e. that of expressing attitude, i.e. and expressive, to follow Searle's (1975) [20] classical terminology, and this will be common to all the three analytical contexts. Consequently, K – the key of the interaction, will be mostly casual and friendly, however, the anonymous interaction from group 1 will most likely sound more formalised than in the case with friends. The Instrumentalities will be the same for all the three groups, i.e. the written form of English, in each case, used as a native language in its informal and semi-formal variant in the CMC context (which may involve some characteristic CMC abbreviations and smileys (Crystal 2011) [21], depending on the type of the discussion platform. The norms of interaction (N) therefore, will be somewhat different for each group. While the IMDB as a website devoted to movies attracts persons who have a strong interest in movies, and consequently they will write more in-depth elaborate posts and express their attitudes in a more authoritative way, the expectations of both the Facebook fan page and the personal Facebook profile will be simply to express one's reaction briefly, presumably in order to show that one belongs to the group of fans of the evaluated film or is up to date with current cultural events. Additionally in the case of the Facebook private profiles leaving a comment under a friend's profile update will be an expected polite behaviour which shows that one not only is interested in the topic, but also that one cares about one's friend's face and is willing to express solidarity with that person by commenting on his/her post.

In view of what was said above, the analysis of the data will be divided into three sections, each focusing on one of the three discussion platforms hinted at above, illustrating, respectively, a fully anonymous, a semi-anonymous and a non-anonymous context. The first one will present the data from the International Movie Data Base (IMDB), the second comments found on a Facebook fan page, and the third – posts from individual Facebook profiles. The first two sources will provide us with attitudes towards the second part of *The Hobbit* series by Peter Jackson, *The Desolation of Smaug* (DOS) released in December 2013, whereas the last group, for the lack of a sufficiently high number of comments concerning this film, will generally present users' views about a variety of films and TV series. All the groups, as already indicated, will consist of comments made by native users of English, the judgement on which was made on the basis of my actual acquaintance with the post authors in the last group, and the names and surnames in the middle one, as well as the command of English, and wherever available, surnames and other hints in the IMDB group.

The above division was assumed following the parameters the three different groups would exhibit. As regards the other of the two variables to be analysed here, i.e. the gender of the post authors, the first (IBDM) group does not offer any adequate insight into the gender of the users, except their names, which are rarely provided, and are mostly substituted by nicknames instead, and their avatars which may, but rarely do contain the users' actual photos. This variable cannot therefore be considered. The fact, however, that most users

remain anonymous, and their personality is not revealed by either their nickname or their image, is very helpful in the present analysis for, as it is assumed, the inability to recognize the author of a comment by others gives him/her freedom to be who they are, or want to be, and thus to express oneself freely, without social limitations. It will therefore allow us to see if indeed the comments posted in this group, when juxtaposed with attitudes concerning the same film expressed on the fan page and in private posts will differ in any respect.

Thus, the second category contains comments offered by users of a Facebook fan page devoted to DOS, most of whom, in fact all in the sample collected, could be identified in terms of their gender, both on the basis of their names and their avatars (often personal photos). This information, unlike in the case of IMDB, was mostly available because the fan page users were at the same time individual users of Facebook and have not taken the chance to change their name or avatar. Gender, therefore, will be an important variable in the analysis of the samples of emotional language, their frequency and character (positive or negative).

The last group allows for a clear identification of the users' gender on the basis of my, above-mentioned, personal acquaintance with them, moreover, it is also a category of people who know each other, which means that the degree of intimacy between the sender and the addressee of a post is high. This, in turn, encourages a more controlled approach to expressing one's thoughts, especially if they are negative, in view of a possible disagreement or conflict with one's friend and thus threatening both their and one's own face. Alternately, it also calls for some more friendly display of emotions and positive politeness in the case the commentators agree with the view expressed in the original post.

The sample to be discussed consists of 60 posts in total. Each of the groups selected for analysis is illustrated by 20 posts, which in the case of the IMDB were mostly quite lengthy, whereas those collected from both the fan page and the private profiles tended to be made of one, maximum two sentences, at times even simple phrases. In the case of group two and three each of the 20 posts will be further subdivided into 10 written by women and 10 written by men in order to assure a balanced representation of the two genders.

Results and discussion

Analysis of posts from the IMDB

The discussion of the data will begin with the anonymous posts which were collected from the IMDB website (it will be noticed that all the analysed posts will retain their original form). The topic of evaluation, as said above, was the second part of the planned Hobbit trilogy by Peter Jackson (2013) [22], and, as will be seen, it was also viewed in a broader context of *The Lord Of The Rings* (LOTR) trilogy based on the novel by J.R.R. Tolkien and filmed by the same director a decade earlier. The object of discussion, *The Desolation of Smaug* (DOS), is a somewhat artificially extended version of the middle part of *The Hobbit* (1937) [23], itself a small book for children, which the movie director has converted into a much more serious CGI-packed saga about the Hobbit's journey from Bag End to the Lonely Mountain in order to help 13 dwarves to regain what Smaug, a frightening dragon living under the mountain, had stolen from them – the Arkenstone. The director's free approach to the novel adaptation, as the comments will show, has divided the audience in terms of the film evaluation and attracted numerous criticisms and comparison to the already classical LOTR trilogy.

The mere numerical comparison between positive and negative evaluations of the film renders an almost identical result – 45 positive vs. 44 negative views expressed. The number of recorded examples is much higher than in the two other groups as the posts left by the users tended to be rather wordy (it is not unusual to find comments consisting of 5-6 paragraphs on

IMDB). A closer examination of the positive views, numerous, as may be judged, however, shows, in the first place, that the positive views are not infrequently only about a certain aspect of the film, e.g. *The only highlight was Smaug; I thought they did a beautiful job on him; his looks and voice were amazing or I like they tweak the barrel scene than just the elvish brought the barrel to Laketown. It's more exciting with the chasing scene than just what's happening in book; I liked the finale of DOS with Smaug flying towards Lake Town and saying his (famous now) line: "I am fire... I am DEATH!"* or, what is even more frequent, the actual praise goes not to the DOS, but to the LOTR trilogy, viz. *Thematically, LOTR is so much richer; but I still feel as if LOTR has an ethical core that DOS lacks; Also, Elijah Wood was very, very good. Furthermore, I miss the friendship of the other hobbits; HOWEVER, I did like LOTR, which means they were good enough to appeal to a guy (me) who doesn't even like their genre, which means they were good; or But when I recall the LOTR films, I am still excited by the the love between Aragon and Arwen, the ambivalence of the elves, Froddo's conflicted feelings about the ring's power, the whole theme of human lust for power, and the metaphorical value of the ring wraiths.* In fact, among the positive emotions expressed under the The Hobbit as many as 10 out of 45 were about a different movie.

The form of the positive evaluations found on the IMDB, disregarding whether they concerned DOS or LOTR, varies. The overall analysis of the collected examples can be divided into three groups in terms of the pattern that the praises follow: *I+VERB+OBJ* and *X+BE+ADJ*, and finally *X+VERB+OBJ* (where *I* is the personal pronoun, and *X* stands for the movie). The overview of the examples shows that the first one appears to be more popular in the sample analysed: the strongest expressions of emotional content recorded take a form of, e.g., *am loving the movies, I'll always love the LotR trilogy; I am still excited by the the love between Aragon and Arwen, This is the reason i really liked almost every expansion i saw in the movies so far; I dunno why they find it terrible, when I enjoyed the movie more than the book actually; I liked the finale of DOS with Smaug flying towards Lake Town and saying his (famous now) line: "I am fire... I am DEATH!"*, with, specifically, verbs like *love, like, enjoy*; these are, however, quite infrequent (8 in total). A strong emotional attitude may also be seen in *10 out of 10 !*, but such a display of positive emotions is not matched by any other phrase. Thus, it may be concluded that the emotional reactions are rather toned down, and consequently, that the movie has not got very good reviews. Parallel to these are evaluations found in the second type, e.g. *The movie was great!; those movies were so much better than The Hobbit films; Also, Elijah Wood was very, very good; Thematically, LOTR is so much richer; I think he was absolutely amazing in LOTR; They are fun, exciting, feature amazing actors giving great performances, the action is good and the cgi is decent; The voice is just perfect; It's more exciting with the chasing scene than just what's happening in book.* It can thus be seen that the emphatic elements include mainly affective adjectives, like *great, good, perfect, amazing, exciting*, only at times augmented by a modifier, as *absolutely, very (very)*. The last pattern of the three included a couple of miscellaneous options, viz. *This gave me chills; The way he says his wings are a hurricane gives me chills everytime, not quite sure why.* It may thus be concluded that the IMDB users are not particularly lavish with praise, even though they are free to express their thoughts freely due to their being (almost) totally anonymous. The reason for this restraint may be twofold – they either did not enjoy the film much or it is not customary to be overly emotional, and thus, not very professional, when writing on this platform. Still, the overview shows that users do express some positive emotions, and they tend to do it following fairly predictable patterns.

Negative attitudes, on the other hand, appear to be expressed a lot more forcefully. What appears as the main difference between the positive and negative emotions is quite a visible

use of capital letters, which since the introduction of electronic communication have always indicated shouting or speaking emphatically (Crystal 2006) [24]. The collected examples here, first presented without their full context, include: *WHAT IS GOING ON HERE?!*; *SO freaking bad!*; (...) *has been FAR worse*; *we were getting THREE new films!*; *serious ASS!!*, and this aspect can be further emphasised by the use of exclamation marks (admittedly, only four times, but the positive emotions did not contain any). To stress the strength of the negative emotions even more, the use (or an attempted use) of swear words and obscenities needs to be noted too, i.e. *But the films sucks some serious ASS!!*; *Like, ugh.. wtf happened?;* *Watching Luke Evans in the film totally pissed me off*; *the sprawling Nintendo-looking farce of a drawn out fart that it is!*; *It is utterly rubbish*; *The new hobbit films are utter *beep**. This feature is to be considered the main marker of expressing negative emotions online, also in other contexts, like e.g. commenting under newspaper articles, when the users are anonymous and therefore able to say all they want to. Clearly, the need to express negative feelings appears to be of greater necessity than to share the positive ones. This also appears to be a feature most strikingly distinguishing the online communication from other types of interaction where the awareness of who we are talking to greatly diminishes (though it does not fully eliminate) the expression of anger, criticism and unhappiness.

As regards the form of the collected samples, the patterns identified for the positive comments are largely reflected in this group too, perhaps with a couple of additions and a slightly different ratio of the represented strategies (??). It appears from the investigation of the collected examples that the speakers tend to be more personal and more open about their negative feelings, which is visible in quite a high (9 examples) share of the *I+VERB+OBJ*, e.g. *I have to say I am immensely disappointed with this movie*; *I do not even care about the fact that Jackson has gone completely irate regarding the source material*; *Heck I was even positive about the fact that we were getting THREE new films!*; *On top of all of that, I hate the script*; *To be fair, I'm not a LOTR fan and this is the first movie I even bothered to watch, but I thought it was awful*; *I even don't like the wizard's versions, Gandalf the brown, the grey and Radagast etc.;* *I feel like the Hobbit franchise is a mere shadow of LOTR*; *okay, but I don't like the fantasy genre*. Thus, the emotions expressed are mostly quite strong, as e.g. *I am immensely disappointed*; however, these emotions appear to be more under control, when it comes to the vulgarity of language. On the other hand, in the *X+BE+ADJ* pattern, where the reference to the speaker him-/herself does not appear, the emotions expressed are stronger, e.g. *It is utterly rubbish*; *These films almost completely lack both the charm and the seriousness of the LOTR films, mainly because of an over-reliance on CGI, and a lack of human actors playing many of the creatures*; *So far this trilogy has been FAR worse than the Star Wars prequel trilogy*; *It is SO freaking bad!*; *The movies are outrageous and freaking awful*; *The worst scene was Thorin on the liquid-gold landslide; it looked so fake and improbable*; *The overuse of CGI Is baffling*. It may thus be seen that the power of the emotions is much higher here, also when compared to the positive ones, e.g. *utterly rubbish*, *far worse*, *so freaking bad*, *outrageous and freaking awful*; *so fake and improbable*. In other words, the value of the adjectives chosen is in itself quite powerful, and in these examples almost every sentence has some modifying adverb in addition to those, which makes the interpretation of the language even more emphatic. Similar observations can be made about the third option of the structures used in the negative opinions, i.e. *X+VERB+ADJ/OBJ*. They are represented by: *The Hobbit should have been one film and not the sprawling Nintendo-looking farce of a drawn out fart that it is*; *These films almost completely lack both the charm and the seriousness of the LOTR films, mainly because of an over-reliance on CGI, and a lack of human actors playing many of the creatures*; *But the films sucks some serious ASS!!*; *But with these Hobbit movies*

everything feels so wrong; Watching Luke Evans in the film totally pissed me off. The overview of these phrases also renders some strong emotional attitudes, visible in, e.g., a sharp comparison: *sprawling Ninetendo-looking farce of a drawn out fart*; a verb modifier: *completely lack charm and seriousness, gone completely irate, feels so wrong*; the choice of a strong noun: *over-reliance on CGI*; the already mentioned vulgarisms: *sucks some serious ASS*. Thus, the variety of options found in this category, due to its greater syntactic variability of choices, is more marked and allows for a powerful expression of the user's feelings. Finally, there are two more options, already adduced in the context of vulgarisms and capital letters used for shouting, which do not fit in any of the above categories, and can be classified as indirect forms of criticism due to their implied meanings reflected via the form of rhetorical questions *Like, ugh.. wtf happened?* and *WHAT IS GOING ON HERE?!*. They are both very emphatic due to the vulgarism, capital letters and the actual form, pointing to a complete confusion of the author. Thus, the analysis of the examples in this section in general shows that negative emotions draw on a variety of linguistic means and in the case of anonymous posts reflect rather strong emotions, unlike the category of positive feelings and praises, which are far less emphatic and follow the more fixed, unambiguous models.

Analysis of fan posts on Facebook

This group of emotional assessments that the fan page users left under the topic of *The Hobbit: DOS* movie, beside being less anonymous than in the case of the IMDB comments (as Facebook users often, though not always, have personal photos in their avatars, and also most of the time use their own or slightly modified names rather than nicknames as means of their Facebook existence), allow us to subdivide the comments into those posted by men and by women, precisely for the reasons mentioned above (photos and names). Thus, the analysis below will be subdivided first in terms of the positive and then negative comments and these in turn will have a section devoted to male and subsequently female evaluations.

The category of praises altogether contained 32 posts, which, when subdivided, consisted of 14 posts left by men and 18 by women. The analysis of the positive emotions which could be found among the posts written by men shows that, in comparison with the previous category, the most popular formula was X+BE+ADJ, as this one was represented by 10 forms out of the total 14 elements of praise that were left by the 10 men in the analysed sample. Interestingly enough, the analysis of the actual words used demonstrated a particular preference for a word used to express the feelings among most men, and as will be seen further, also women, i.e. the word *amazing*, viz. *It is amazing! I even felt bad for Smaug! He is beautiful!*; *Amazing special effects*; *Amazing film. Shames the first movie. Please Mr Jackson make The Necromancer!!!*; and this choice was followed by the word *awesome*, e.g. *Seen it today, AWESOME*; *It's awesome*. Otherwise, the remaining phrases contained some fairly strong adjectives, viz. *Breathtaking...that bloody ending!*; *Best film ever*; *Great film*; *Legolas was fab at fighting*; *Decent film*; *Still good though*. What is also to be noticed in this category is the use of exclamation marks, rather missing in the previous Internet platform as well as a (limited) use of capital letters to indicate the power of emotions.

The remaining examples of positive emotions expressed by men were limited in number and followed the I+VERB+OBJ pattern, i.e. *Loved it*. *Great graphics, loved Benedict Cumberbatch's voice over for the dragon*; *I freaking loved it have recommended it to everybody*; *enjoyed it much more like Lord of the Rings than the first one*; *I even felt bad for Smaug!*, whereas the only examples that did not fit either of the above categories were: *Let Jackson do his work!* and *Peter jackson you bellend!*. It can thus be seen that the model for the first of the two subcategories is rather simple and the language is informal, which can be

seen in the truncated subject-less phrases. The verb *love* seems to be the favoured way of expressing positive emotions by the male users here, a stronger version might be considered out of place, unless it is preceded by a rather slangy modifier like *freaking*. Otherwise an option is to use a phrase with the verb *enjoy*, and in comparison with another film, as done in another example here. Noticeable as in the IMDB posts are the emotional markers in the form of exclamation marks, both in the personal statements and the two additional sentences. The latter two constitute indirect praises, both very strongly emotional, one in the form of an imperative and the other in the form of banter which makes use of an obscene term. Such strategies certainly serve the purpose of saving the speaker's face, for he cannot be accused of being overly appreciative (and thus, possibly unmanly) in public.

The analysis of the emotional language found in the parallel group of women shows certain similarities to the language samples recorded for men. In the first place, however, women appeared to be more lavish when praising the film than men, as there were 18 praises recorded for this group. Also, as many as 10 of them had a strongly emotional character due to the additional, non-linguistic devices – the use of exclamation marks, at times more than one, and capital letters, e.g. *Omg it was amazing!!!; Saw it last night in HFR!!! INCREDIBLE!; I love her, and I love her love with Killi...I LOVE IT ALL*, which is very much in keeping with the findings about a greater emotionality of women in language (cf. Lakoff 1975, Dąbrowska 2007ab, 2013). Their emotional behaviour, unlike that of men, would be accepted as typical, which is why they do not have to feel restrained when showing it. On the other hand, much like the men, women showed a strong preference for the X+BE+ADJ formula, and particularly with the adjective *amazing* and then *awesome*, i.e. *Amazing film, can't wait to go and see it again!; Amazing, can't wait for the next one; Was amazing!; Omg it was amazing!!!; It's amazing!; I've seen it today it was amazing; IT WAS AMAZING; the movie is stand alone awesome!!! X; It was... awesome*; and these could be enriched with other adjectives, like those in *It is fab!; I saw it this morning it was fantastic; As a film its really good; Best film ever; Think it was better than the first one*. It may thus be seen that the above are quite strong as praises, be it due to the additional modifiers, as e.g. *really* or the non-linguistic elements mentioned before. Finally, among the remaining examples of positive emotions recorded for women, 6 in all followed mainly the I+VERB+OBJ model, and this contained mostly, just like in the case of men, the verb *to love*, e.g. *I love her, and I love her love with Killi...I LOVE IT ALL; Loved it; Loved it but was gutted that now I have to wait for a third part LOVED SMAUG, best dragon ever; I loved when Smaug was covered in gold!; I really want to love this film*. Altogether then the conclusion may be drawn that the expression of praise in the context when the person may be to some extent identified in the forum through the photo and the name relies on a fairly limited number of options as regards the form of phrases, mainly being limited to the X+BE+ADJ and I+VERB+OBJ types, which themselves make use of a limited choice of vocabulary. The pattern appears to be shared by both men and women, except that while women tend to be openly emotional, using a number of emotional markers, men may resort to the use of slang, obscenities and vulgarisms.

The analysis of the expression of negative emotions on the Facebook fan page shows rather marked differences in terms of the actual distribution of comments as regards the gender of the users. Altogether the number of the recorded comments with negative feelings concerning DOS is much lower, as altogether they comprise 16 items. This figure, when split between men and women, however, shows that men are still quite willing to express their negative views in public, as the number of such comments amounts to 13, while in the case of women – the remaining three. It is immediately visible how great the disproportion is in the

number of both praises and critical comments, especially the latter ones, collected both from the twenty posts on IMDB and the same number of posts found on the Facebook fan page. It is obvious that those who choose to write on IMDB are staunch film fans and have a particular interest to discuss films and share their views, sometimes rather forcefully, whereas a Facebook fan page is certainly not perceived as equally professionally oriented, it simply invites anyone who happens to love a given film, director or actors to express a comment, and it is simply a social platform where one may simply leave a mark, but not necessarily show off any professional knowledge, especially that one can be recognized by some others. For this reason it is probably safer to leave a positive comment, especially about someone or something that is widely acclaimed and much awaited by many rather than criticize it openly on an international forum. With these comments in mind it will be easier to understand the disproportions that arise between the two types of platforms, and also the Facebook private comments which will eventually be discussed in the third part of the analysis.

A closer look at the collected samples in the group of men shows, possibly not quite surprisingly, a very different tone of the comments. Although they are clearly negative, the choice of vocabulary and the whole phraseology is very different when compared to the comments found on IMDB. What can be spotted immediately is the fact that there are no slang words or vulgarisms of any kind there, additionally, there are no markers of strong emotions in the form of exclamation marks or capital letters. The pattern is mostly very simple, not infrequently a maximally truncated phrase following the X+BE+ADJ pattern. This model is shown in 5 comments describing the actual movie or elements connected with it, i.e. *Am I the only one that thought it was absolutely terrible?...; Just got out of it. Awful; the writing was very weak. It's annoying to see so much money thrown at a film when the cheapest part - the writing - feels lazy and disinterested; but the CGI was terrible;* whereas the other three, viz. *Seriously disappointed and how's it a cliffhanger ending?; very disappointed; Very disappointed want that same felling I got when I saw l.o.t.r.* refer to the feeling the user experienced when watching the movie, in which case the first element of the pattern would be I+BE+ADJ. It is notable that all the three comments in this category make use of a very “safe” word for expressing negative comments in public, i.e. *disappointed*. The previous comments, which refer to the film, and not the user himself are somewhat bolder in character, as they utilise clearly negative labels, like *terrible, awful, weak*, some of which are preceded by a modifier *very* or *absolutely*, none of them, however, sounds as offensive as some of the comments found on the IMDB. Similarly also, the remaining comments left by male users, which follow the pattern (X+BE)+NOUN, X+VERB+OBJ, e.g. *Big let down; Desolation of Tolkien; Sadly a disappointment* or *The film lacked feel like the first movie* are relatively mild and inoffensive. What it stressed is the sense of regret, waste of the original material and of money, however, it can be only sensed through the choice of words, not any additional emotional marker. It is also worth pointing out one more comment which, similarly as in some categories before, can be viewed as a very indirect criticism of Jackson’s new film, i.e. *Great! Kim Kardashian's new movie is out.* By commenting with enthusiasm about a completely unrelated movie with someone in the main role who is not even an actor the post author shows clearly that the new Hobbit film is even worse, and thus, not worth paying attention to at all, this reading, however, requires some more acquaintance with the world of celebrities.

The negative attitudes which the female users of the fan page left are difficult to classify in any systematic way due to their very limited number, as mentioned before (3 examples). The form *I'm not going to be watching it even if I had the money, first was awful, not expecting much from part 2* generally follows the X+BE+ADJ and is additionally augmented by a

phrase following the *I+VERB+NOUN*, the second comment, viz. *there is loads of added bits that are not in the book which is a bit annoying* makes use of *X+BE+ADJ*, preceded some factual statement, where, unlike in the first comment, making a direct use of the critical word *awful*, the latter phrase contains a hedge in the form *a bit*. The third and last of the three has a rather unusual informal and somewhat slangy form *Watched it today it was kinda rubbish* due to the choice of vocabulary and its spelling. What is also to be noted in the last two examples is the fact that despite being a criticism both of them contain a hedge, *a bit annoying* and *kinda rubbish*. Studies dealing with feminine style of speaking do often point out that women make use of more hedges than men, which used to be perceived as a sign of powerless language, and now is seen more as a marker of sensitivity and politeness (cf. Holmes 1995, Coates 1996), and although the presence of such items here is hardly visible, it is still more marked than in the case of men, where such instances were not recorded at all. Thus, it may be concluded that women simply do not as a rule comment on public issues, and even less so in a negative way. When they do, which is infrequent, there is indeed a tendency to use hedging devices by them in order to diminish the threat to the recipient's face and not sound overly impolite.

Analysis of private Facebook posts

The last category of analysed comments in terms of their emotionality is a group of comments collected from profiles of individual Facebook users who happened to have posted comments concerning films on their profile and some of their friends later decided to comment on those profile updates too. Thus, in this category the sociolinguistic situation is still different when it comes to the context of communication – unlike in the previous two groups the users do know each other, which shortens the distance between them and diminishes the possible power difference, and even if one or the other is making use of some nickname, the profile owner will be able to recognise them, other commentators of the posts too. It is thus the most uncomfortable situation for expressing very negative comments, especially to the post author him- or herself or any of his Facebook contacts. It is clearly easier not to write anything at all than openly engage in a conflict online in a group who knows each other and where as a result of what one says, one may lose one's face and also threaten the face of some others. Due to the above the analysis will demonstrate an even lower number of comments overall than was the case in the middle category of fan page users.

Thus, the group of praises contained only 14 posts in all, and interestingly, only four out of these were made by men, while 10 – by women. The proportions are thus similar to those found in the previous category (14 for men, 17 for women), that is with a greater participation of females, only that the overall number is by half lower, most likely due to the fact that the users were not anonymous.

The four comments of positive character found in the group of men show that men are not very willing to praise anything openly in the group of people that they know (cf. Holmes 1995). The comments are short and certainly the emotionality is largely subdued. The only openly evaluative comment is *I love it for all those reasons john*, where the user applies the *I+VERB+NOUN* personally disclosing form, and the verb used is a clear emotionality marker. The other employ much more factual statements, which follow the *X+BE+ADJ* model, viz, *Worth seeing the film for that alone, though it is too long and ends on a cliffhanger; It's one of the best movies I've ever seen. Day-Lewis is superb; Gripping stuff*. It may thus be seen that the evaluations are as short as possible when it comes to the praise itself, and they get more extended by giving some argument or facts about the movie.

Women, expectedly, were a lot more emotional in their evaluation of the films, and to be sure, commented on them twice as often as men on their friends' profiles. At the same time, however, their comments were also very short, and contrary to the above tendency referred to in the male group, deprived of additional argumentative part. The most frequent pattern chosen by women was *I+VERB+OBJ*, and the verb that appeared in the comments was typically *love*, i.e. *I absolutely LOVED it; Loved the book and can't wait to see the film; We saw The Artist yesterday and loved it; love it, we are glued to it x; And I LOVE that little bellboy. Love the sets*. These statements constituted a half of the collected comments. What is to be noticed, beside a much greater share of the emotionally loaded verb *love*, is an almost invisible argumentative part (e.g. *we loved the sets*), but at the same time a greater emotionality than was the case with men. This is manifested by the use of capital letters in order to stress the strength of the emotions. The greater degree of emotionality can also be seen in the use of exclamation marks to be found in one of the remaining examples, which altogether employ the *X+BE+ADJ* model, i.e. *Gd film x; We saw it too - harrowing, but wonderful; Great series; Hilarious; Arrow... !! Tis great x*. What we can thus immediately note is the maximally shortened form of the comments, limited to just the praise alone and a frequent use of informal language, visible in strategies of language simplification (vowel deletion) (Dąbrowska 2013) [25]. Thus, it may be said that the display of emotionality vs. the referential description, to be noticed also in the previous category, is continued here too, but at the same time severely curtailed by the fact that saying something not to the liking of others may be face-threatening.

The number of negative opinions found on private Facebook profiles is even more limited than the 14 positive evaluations found in the same context – there were altogether 8 comments found on various persons' profiles as regards films. Interestingly enough, in the context of negative emotions the proportions have been reversed and out of the 8 records 5 come from posts written by men, and only 3 – by women. Another rather surprising phenomenon is that this time, both men and women, if they decided to express some negative view about a certain film or series, did it quite emphatically, writing longer posts than those containing praises, what is more, unlike in the middle category (and like the IMDB posts) analysed here, the comments at times contained slang and vulgarisms. These, however, and particularly the latter, were recorded in the comments left by women. When it comes to the emotions of men, it is hard to establish a clear preference for a pattern, as the comments are more extensive and contain additional explanations or descriptions of the context which evoked a certain reaction, it may, however, be observed that the *X+BE+ADJ* is the general overarching type found in the central emphatic elements of the analysed posts: *Not sure. This serial has been a bi up and down in my humble opinion; Just watched 1 minute of 'the only way is marbs' and I had to turn over before I punched the TV. How this program can be called "award-winning" is beyond me. The people in it are VACUOUS!; Fun in parts, but I'll scream if there is yet another film with giant spiders, and I'm no arachnophobia; I know we are watching too how weird is it???, while the only different formula is *Between that and Benefits Street OMG got angry at one and freaked out by the other !!!*, which utilises the *I+VERB(+PP)*. Quite remarkably, there is a lot of strong emotional attitude expressed in the few forms collected here, which, apart from words and images used by the authors, like *angry, freaked out, I'll scream, weird*, are also conveyed by means of exclamation marks and capital letters. This, contrary to the general observations devoted to genderlect studies, which claim that it is women predominantly who behave emotionally in public, shows that men are quite capable of such behaviour too in public contexts (cf. also Dąbrowska 2007a) [26]. On the basis of comparison with the positive comments it may, however, be claimed that emotionality in*

public is typically allowed in the case of negative emotions (Brody 1997, Fabes and Martin 1991, Shields et al. 2007) [27]. These, when uttered, may make the men appear even more manly and powerful, contrary to positive evaluations, which may be viewed as too mushy and feminine.

This kind of emotional reaction can also be found in the comments left by women. While the obvious difference between men and women is in the frequency, with women expressing negative emotions in public rather unwillingly, as their predominant tendency, following a variety of studies (cf. Holmes 1993, 1995, Cameron 1995, Dąbrowska 2012ab, 2013) [28], is to protect the other's positive face and at the same time enhance it by positive statements. Negative comments are clearly face-threatening, however, as can be judged from these few examples, if the context induces a display of negative emotions, i.e. when they are in keeping with the views of the addressee, and do not threaten their face, their use may be encouraged, also as a marker of solidarity, and the stronger character of the utterance or post would only stress the bond of friendship with the addressee and, following Brown and Levinson (1987, Cutting 2002) [29], even function as a marker of positive politeness. This is what we can sense in the forms below *This is spooky: I, too, saw that film yesterday! I, too, didn't quite know what to make of it!; OMG! Beyond weird!; watching it.....and thinking WTF!!!!*. The first of these is a clear response to another post, which the word *too* indicates. The other two are more ambiguous, but the reference to watching a film at the given moment, without the title specification shows that it is a response to someone else's comment, and the phrase *beyond weird* may also function as a response to another person's comment *weird*. All the three are strongly emotional, which is stressed in a variety of ways: by means of the choice of vocabulary *spooky*, *beyond weird*, *WTF* ('what the fuck'), in fact the strongest slang expression recorded for this group. Additionally, the power of emotions is strengthened by numerous exclamation marks, capital letters and the use of slang. Formally, the patterns are also more complex than those of praises, but what can be seen is both the X+BE+ADJ pattern and I+VERB+COMPL that are employed. To conclude, this brief coverage of the female's posts in this category tells us that women are indeed very emotional, not only when it comes to expressing positive meanings and attending to one's positive face, but also, even more than in the praises, in the case of negative emotions. When the environment is safe, as in the case of interaction with friends who share the same views, women's reactions can be quite strong, to the point of even being vulgar. This is a finding which needs further investigation, it can, however, be partly corroborated by a great degree of informal language samples found on Facebook women's posts in my previous studies (Dąbrowska 2013) [30].

Concluding remarks

The above analysis rendered a number of interesting observations. The main aim of the investigation was to identify possible differences in linguistic behaviour of CMC users in terms of expressing emotions depending on the degree of their anonymity online, power and distance vs. solidarity relations with other users, and further, wherever possible, to establish whether there would be any differences in the emotional reactions of women and men. The presented investigation did prove that the emotional displays differ in terms of these two sets of variables. The comments the users of the IMDB portal left under the respective film, much longer and detailed in their form than in the remaining two contexts, contained a lot more emotional language, but this was visible specifically in the group of negative evaluations of the movie. No doubt, the fact that they could not be personally identified (due to the use of nicknames and mostly very non-informative avatars) gave them freedom to speak their mind openly. And while the positive comments were rather toned down and followed some rather

schematic patterns (as X+BE+ADJ, I+VERB+OBJ), while at the same time presenting rather ample reasons for feeling positive about the film, many of the comments expressed an indirect praise not about the actual film that was being evaluated, but rather the director's earlier work based on Tolkien's books. At the same time the negative emotions which the users expressed were quite strong in terms of the choice of adjectives (additionally strengthened by modifiers) or verbs naming the emotions, as well as the visible use of slang and even vulgarisms, though not extralinguistic features like exclamation marks and capital letters. Thus, powerful language can be seen as rather characteristic of the medium of communication. Contrary to this group, the behaviour of the users on the open Facebook fan page, and also to an even greater extent on users' private profiles, shows a lot more restraint in terms of emotional displays. It is visible in the actual number of emotionally marked posts, with the ever decreasing number of all of them, but especially of the negatively marked comments as one moves from IMDB to the fan page to finally reach the private posts, and their length and content are also getting more and more limited. No doubt the fact that one is writing on a page which thousands can read, and at the same time one's, in most cases, real name and photo can be seen is a reason behind the decision whether to write anything at all, and if so, then mostly of positive character, no to threaten the other's face and one's own face at the same time, as one could in theory be criticised or accused of lack of knowledge, etc. Thus, the comments found on the fan page tend to be short and rather stereotypical. They rely mostly on one or two structural patterns and make use of a limited number of words, like *amazing*, *awesome* and *love* in the positive category, and *disappointed* / *disappointing* in the negative ones. The comments tend to be short, without any detailed analysis of the object of evaluation. What is significant, no slang expressions were recorded, which shows that the users adhere to the general semi-formal social norms of interaction typically reflected by the consultative style. These observations will change yet again in the category of private messages on friends' profiles. The investigation of the samples demonstrated an even further limitation of the number of emotional comments of both types, and especially the negative ones. Much as in the case of the fan page, the positive emotions were marked by means of very short expressions, often limited to just single words or phrases. Rather unexpectedly, the negative comments, limited as they were, exceeded the positive ones as well as the character of comments on the fan page in terms of their strength and informality, using a greater degree of extralinguistic markers (exclamation marks, capital letters) and informal to vulgar language. This may be explained by the sense of security the users generally feel when interacting with friends as opposed to strangers on the fan page. The safe atmosphere as well as possibly a similarity of opinion may be conducive to the choice of language which would not be appropriate in the formal and semi-formal public context, and yet would carry markers of solidarity. It can thus be concluded that both complete anonymity and close sense of solidarity contribute to a less restrained use of language, especially in the expression of negative judgements, contrary to the interaction with complete strangers.

The other important variable which was accounted for in the analysis of data was gender of the users. As a result of the impossibility of retrieving this information from the IMDB data, due to their non-revealing nicknames and avatars, gender was discussed only in the case of the fan page and the private user profiles. The analysis was able to indicate clear gender differences in both cases. The main observation, in keeping with the genderlect studies was the confirmation of a considerably greater emotionality on the part of the female users, especially when it comes to expressing positive comments (18 vs. 13 and 10 vs. 4, respectively), and they also were more emotionally marked both in terms of the choice of vocabulary (more emphatic adjectives, verbs) and a significantly greater use of extralinguistic

markers. A certain additional difference was to be found between the fan page and the private profiles, however, and it was visible in the behaviour of women and to a lesser degree men. Namely, while women tended to avoid any negative emotional displays on a public forum (the fan page), and their comments were very few and emotionally subdued, they, despite the still very infrequent use of such comments showed a greater boldness in the choice of vocabulary when interacting with friends (in one case even using a vulgarism, which was not recorded with men). Men, on the other hand, gave proportionally fewer positive comments (and these tended to be rather conventional and neutrally marked) and at the same time more negative ones. The negative comments left on friends' profiles were also much stronger than in the case of the fan page, and far more emotionally marked in terms of extralinguistic devices, which made them more similar to those found on IMDB, i.e. the anonymous medium. These findings additionally corroborate the observation made above that the behaviour of users in both the completely anonymous, power and distance-marked and on the other hand familiar, solidarity-marked environment generates a similar type of behaviour, however, more specifically, it may be observed that it is the negative character of comments that gains in strength in the case of both men and women when compared to the positive ones, but at the same time the visible difference in frequency between the two genders remains clearly visible. This observation, in turn, contributes to a better understanding of the male and female emotional behaviour in public and private contexts.

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