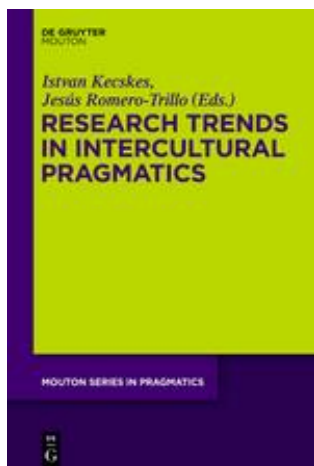


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**A compelling need to evaluate: social networking sites as tools for the expression of affect,
judgment and appreciation**

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Abstract

This chapter explores discourse on social networking sites (henceforth SNSs) and the important role played by the expression of evaluation in this genre. I will approach analysis of the data from *Systemic Functional Linguistics* (SFL), (Halliday, 2004 [1994, 1985]), applying appraisal theory to the study of evaluation (Hunston and Thompson 2000, Martin 2000, Martin and White 2005). Evaluation will be used here as "the broad cover term for the expression of the speaker or writer's attitude or stance towards, viewpoint on, or feelings about the entities or propositions that he or she is talking about" (Thompson and Hunston 2000: 5). The concept of face (Brown and Levinson 2006 [1987/1978], Goffman 1967 [1955], 1969) will be invoked in an attempt to contribute to a better understanding of relational work on SNSs. Description will be limited to the personal use of Facebook (FB) among friends in an attempt to identify the features of the site that seem responsible for the frequent expression of evaluation. The corpus for the study consists of a random sample of 400 messages exchanged by friends in the United Kingdom and the United States. The methodology for their analysis borrows techniques from Corpus Linguistics (CL) concerning the mark-up of data with categories that enable their automatic retrieval (as illustrated in Santamaría-García 2005, 2011). The results of this study show that SNSs seem to stimulate the expression of evaluation, thus contributing

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to relational work through the negotiation of individuals' faces. I illustrate how evaluation is used for relational work with the analysis of several extracts from the corpus.

Key words: evaluative language, appraisal, internet-mediated discourse, face, genre, relational work.

1. Introduction

SNSs have been developing since the end of the 1990s and have attracted the attention of many discourse scholars who have explored the role of the internet and SNSs in the development of identities and in the negotiation of the relational aspects of language use (Yus 2011, Darics 2010, Locher 2010, Upadhyay 2010, among others).

SNSs began to flourish with the emergence of Friendster in 2003 (Knapp 2006:2) and today, it is estimated that there are over 350 active sites, according to the information in Mashable, a site of reference for social networking¹. Since it was launched in 2004, FB has kept growing and is now considered to be the leading SNS with more than 600 million active users as to January 2011². It seems that new technologies are helping us implement what Aristotle already knew, i.e. that humans are "political", in the original meaning of the Greek word ("social"). SNSs facilitate relational connections with friends, families, and others through the display of a vast amount of personal information that can be disclosed at a click, with the main purpose of establishing and maintaining personal relationships. The individual's connections are visible to friends (also to friends of friends or to the general public, if wished) and users can provide their contacts with a large amount of personal data through text and images, which, otherwise, would need a lot of face-to-face interaction to be communicated. These features, together with others which will be explored in this article, seem to stimulate users' frequent expression of evaluative language. SNSs provide an excellent opportunity for individuals to keep their communities constantly informed about their plans and actions and what is more, to share other users' evaluations on them. SNSs facilitate, hence, the expression of what could be called, our *evaluative selves*. As a consequence, it can be expected that evaluative language will

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feature highly in the discourse used on SNSs and will have an important role in relational work, i.e. "the 'work' individuals invest in negotiating relationships with others" (Locher and Watts 2005: 9). Description of evaluative language through the system of appraisal will be aimed at the identification of resources exploited for relational work. Hopefully, the study will contribute to the description of communication on SNSs as a different genre, using the term as defined by Bhatia (1993, 2004 and 2008), stressing the importance of the communicative purpose in the definition of a genre.

2. Evaluation and relational work

The discourse function of evaluation will be approached through *appraisal*, the system for the expression of evaluation as developed by Martin (2000), Martin and White (2005) within the framework of SFL. Appraisal resources include *attitude*, (for the expression of meanings of *affect*, *judgment* and *appreciation*), together with *engagement* and *graduation* resources, which are used "for adopting a position with respect to propositions and for scaling intensity or degree of investment respectively", (Martin and White 2005: 39). Evaluation intervenes in the realization of prominent sub-functions of language, such as expressing opinion, maintaining relations or organizing the discourse (Thompson and Hunston 2000: 6), all of which play an important role on SNSs as a forum for the exchange of friends' opinions with the main communicative purpose of building and maintaining social relations (Santamaría García forthcoming and 2014). The study of social relations in interaction is linked to the concept of *face*, which should also be related to evaluation, as pinpointed by Channell (2000: 55): "The whole area of evaluative language seems to require tying up with the notion of 'facework' employed by Brown and Levinson (2006 [1987/1978]) in their explanation of politeness". However, I would suggest returning to Goffman for this purpose, as observed by different authors (Dippold 2009, Locher and Watts 2005, Riley 2006, Spencer-Oatey 2002 and Watts 2003). Although Brown and Levinson (2006 [1987, 1978]) borrowed the concept from Goffman (1967 [1955]: 5) they made a very different interpretation of it. As Watts (2003: 105) explains, "Brown and Levinson seem to be thinking of the self as a stable core of values lodged somewhere in the individual, whereas for

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Goffman self is far less 'real' and is constantly renegotiable". Negotiation of self and face occur in interaction: "Goffman implies that our knowledge of the world and the place we occupy in that world is gained entirely through social interaction", (Watts 2003: 123). Therefore, face is interpreted by others in interaction: "It also follows from this that face is dependent on the interpretation of the other participants more than ourselves", (Watts 2003: 124). Likewise, for Dippold (2009: 3), face is seen as the result of speakers' presentation and its construction by others: "face is a conglomerate of the self-image speakers want to present to the outside world and the image that is constructed of them by others". Goffman's face seems, then, a more helpful notion to contribute to the understanding of relational work on SNSs because of its dynamism. I will keep Brown and Levinson's concepts of positive and negative politeness, though, in order to explore users' orientation while doing relational work. As Locher and Watts (2005: 10) observe, even when Brown and Levinson's framework has been challenged in different aspects, it can still be used "(...) if we look at the strategies they have proposed to be possible realizations of what we call *relational work*". Therefore, politeness strategies will not only be considered for mitigation of face-threatening acts but for "(...) the 'work' individuals invest in negotiating relationships with others" Locher and Watts (2005: 10).

On SNSs, relational work is mediated by technology, which is creating, as Else and Turkle (2006) explain, a new state of the self: "Our new intimacies with our machines create a world where it makes sense to speak of a new state of the self [...] a subject wired into social existence through technology, a tethered self". Will this new state of the self have the same needs for positive and negative face that were postulated by Brown and Levinson for non-computer mediated interaction? The same needs can be expected although, a tethered self who relies on technology for doing relational work with the purpose of establishing and maintaining relations will most probably give priority to positive over negative face. The reason may lie in the fact that, when interacting with friends for such purpose, resources provided by positive politeness, i.e. strategies for claiming common ground or conveying cooperation, seem to be more useful than negative politeness strategies, aimed at preserving individual's need for independence. In this study, my expectation is, more

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specifically, that SNSs users will make frequent use of positive politeness strategies together with evaluative language in order to claim common ground and establish rapport while doing relational work and that this use is stimulated by distinctive features of FB which will be reviewed and illustrated in the following sections.

3. Data and method for analysis

The corpus for analysis consists of a random sample of 400 messages circulating through *FB* among friends in the United Kingdom and the United States during 21 months (February 2010- November 2011) with a total of 4,000 words. Selection of this particular site was due to the fact that it is widely spread in these English-speaking countries and considered to be the leading SNS, as mentioned above. The friends whose interaction has been observed are friends of mine but not friends among them. I have selected interaction of friends living in UK and others living in US because of my interest in the English language. While doing research, I have acted as a natural observer as my presence in their contact list was motivated by friendship, not by research interests. One of the advantages of the observation of interaction on SNSs is that it mitigates the effect of the observer's paradox formulated by Labov (1972: 113) "(...) to obtain the data most important for linguistic theory, we have to observe how people speak when they are not being observed". SNSs, on the other hand, allow for direct observation of interaction (not face-to-face but internet-mediated) without interacting individuals feeling observed. In order to abide by ethical considerations, I asked my friends for permission to include their messages in the corpus and sent them a copy of this article, in order to both guarantee their permission and check my interpretation of their messages.

Apart from facilitating observation, another remarkable advantage of SNSs for research is that they make authentic, interactional data available for analysis in real time throughout the world. Before social networking, researchers interested in interactional data had, however, either to use spoken corpora or assume the compilation of a corpus as an enterprise of their own, which involved the time consuming labour of recording and transcribing conversations.

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Data analysis has combined qualitative and quantitative methods in, what I have called, a bricolage assembling process of producing a suitable method of analysis (Santamaría-García 2011). Corpus Linguistics (CL), Conversation Analysis (CA) and Discourse Analysis (DA), have been connected in such a process. CL has motivated the mark-up of the data with tags for categories at the levels of (1) discourse acts, (2) appraisal categories and (3) positive/negative politeness strategies, what facilitates the automatic retrieval of the instances linked to them and the calculation of the percentages of their occurrences. Categories draw on CA and DA for the description of units of conversational interaction following Tsui (1994). Types of discourse act include initiations, responses or follow ups, and subtypes of all of them. This allows for their automatic retrieval in combination with tags for appraisal categories (Martin and White 2005) and positive/negative politeness strategies (Brown and Levinson 2006 [1987/1978]). Once the units of analysis have been marked up, I have used N-Vivo, a program for the quantitative analysis and statistical treatment of the data. Table 1 illustrates the categories used for the analysis of appraisal.

<table 1>

Affect, judgment and appreciation are the three regions of attitude concerned, respectively, with "our feelings, including emotional reactions, judgments of behaviour and evaluation of things", (Martin and White, 2005: 35). Engagement deals with "sourcing attitudes and the play of voices around opinions in discourse", while graduation "attends to grading phenomena whereby feelings are amplified and categories blurred", (Martin and White, 2005: 35).

4. Distinctive features of FB which stimulate the exploitation of evaluative resources

When contrasted to email, FB shows a marked orientation to the interactional and interpersonal versus the transactional and ideational together with a marked dialogic orientation. These aspects will be reviewed in the following sections in order to explore their contribution to the frequent use of appraisal resources in users' relational work. I will include several extracts from the corpus in order to illustrate how FB distinctive features stimulate evaluation which is used for doing relational work.

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4.1. Interactional and interpersonal versus transactional function and ideational meaning

Users of FB make a higher use of the interactional over the transactional function of language because of its main communicative purpose "to establish and maintain social relationships", which corresponds to the definition of the interactional by Brown and Yule (1983: 3). Interpersonal is opposed to ideational meaning, a manifestation of the purpose "to understand the environment" (Halliday 1985: xiii) and is defined as the manifestation of the purpose "to act on the others (...)" (ibídem). Both strands of meaning are enacted in communication but, while the transactional focuses on the ideational, interpersonal deals with "meaning about roles and relationships (e.g. status, intimacy, contact, sharedness between interactants)" (Eggins and Slade 1997: 49). Whereas messages in both electronic mail and SNSs may communicate ideational and interpersonal meaning to a certain degree, it can be noted that SNSs provide an extensive range of resources that stimulate communication of the interpersonal and the interactional: tools to share personal information together with pictures and lists of contacts (who are labeled *friends*), the possibility to address all your friends simultaneously, constant invitations to add more friends, announcements of social events, emoticons and prompts, such as the "what is on our mind" question or the "like" button. Discussion will focus on the possibility to address all your friends and the use of these prompts here, while emoticons will be explored as dialogic devices for construing solidarity in the following section, even when their use also facilitate the interactional and interpersonal.

The fact that one user can address a whole community of friends simultaneously, constitutes an interesting peculiarity of interaction on SNSs. Friends are a community of contacts who may only be acquaintances but are linked by "positive affective involvement", in Eggins and Slade's terms (1997: 52). Even when users select addressees according to different values (Thaeler 2008), their choice usually respond to a positive bias on the scale of affect. This fact will also foster the user's tendency to use FB for the interactional and interpersonal in order to do relational work for establishing and maintaining social relationships.

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In the following extract from my data, (1a) is expressing her happiness and announcing her plan for the following day while addressing her 184 friends at the same time. She gets some evaluative comments from two friends as a reply, (the first expressing affect and the second evaluative judgment):

(1) FILE 3 (UK)

- a. *Yeee haaaa! Off to the big smoke on the morrow!*
- b. *Hopefully for pleasure.*
- c. *ooh la la shelly, you're dead posh you are!!!*

User (1b) expresses affect by a desiderative mental process categorised as *inclination, desire* with respect to a stimulus which is unrealistic, following Martin and White (2005: 48) and user (1c) expresses an evaluative judgment of positive social esteem *admire* related to *normality* (how special) and evaluating her friends' action as *lucky* with "ooh la la shelly" (Martin and White 2005: 53), "shelly" being a nick for her surname. The phonic lengthening in "ooh" serves for the expression of intensification and can be considered a characteristic resource of internet-mediated communication, as distinct from conventional lexico-grammatical resources for intensification. The last part of her comment, "you're dead posh you are!!!" expresses an evaluative judgment of social sanction, *propriety* (how far beyond reproach), which condemns with irony her friend's behavior and results in a compliment with a positive meaning of praise. This interaction has mainly served an interactional function with interpersonal meaning and the aim of maintaining a social relationship going. We can observe the realization of positive politeness in the three turns, by means of the strategies included in table (2).

<table 2>

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Example (1) above illustrates how addressing several friends simultaneously stimulates evaluation and positive politeness, due to the fact that relational work intervenes in a public process of facework in which friends work in order to save their friends' faces.

The interactional and interpersonal are also encouraged by the prompt "What is on your mind?", which marks a contrast with respect to the priority given to the "subject" in the layout of electronic mail, i.e. to the ideational. This prompt facilitates relational work because, while sharing their thinking, users not only "speak their minds" but invite other users' contributions, which will work to build rapport and interpersonal relationships. Martin and White (2005: 95), when theorising about the negotiation of alignment, observe the following: "We note, in this regard, that when speakers/writers announce their own attitudinal positions they not only self-expressively 'speak their own mind', but simultaneously invite others to endorse and to share with them the feelings, tastes or normative assessments they are announcing". It seems that FB designers have made the same observation and have introduced the "What's on your mind" prompt to stimulate engagement through the expression of attitude. Example (2a), issued as a response to the prompt, shows an attitudinal position (of judgment of the self), which gets endorsement in (2b):

(2) FILE 3 (UK)

FACEBOOK: *What is on your mind?*

- a. *Deborah is very proud of herself! Completed the triathlon in 1 hour and 11 minutes! :)*
- b. ("Like" button + comment:) *Well done - pretty amazing! I've always fancied the swimming bit, but not the biking or running.*

Deborah praises her own behavior after completing a triathlon with a judgment dealing with social esteem and her own capacity (Martin and White 2005: 53). A friend endorses and agrees with her comment. This example illustrates how the "what's on your mind" prompt can stimulate self evaluation and other evaluation for relational work. Both turns also contain positive politeness for

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claiming common ground: (2a) conveys that the fact of completing a triathlon is admirable and (2b) also does so by attending to her interests and claiming empathy by expressing his liking, at least, of the swimming bit.

Another function of the "What's on your mind" prompt, apart from stimulating engagement through the communication of attitude, is to mitigate face risk, which is typical of introductions and exchange initiations. Face is at risk from the danger of not getting a reply or not getting the expected reply. For this reason, introductions usually recur to formulaic language, as linguistic routines mitigate the possible offense. This observation was made by Laver (1981: 289): "Linguistic routines are shown to be a tool of polite behaviour. They serve as a means of reducing the risk of face threats". Telephone call openings typically involve a high use of verbal routines (Schegloff 1968 [1972], Godard 1977, Houtkoop-Steenstra 1986, Hopper and Doany 1989, Santamaría García 1995). The FB prompt acts as a summons, like the telephone ring in a phone call, and sets the expectation of a response. It works as the first part of a question-answer adjacency pair, and facilitates the speaker's job of communicating. Speakers prefer to respond to a question rather than initiating an exchange, especially when communication is not face-to-face, as initiating an exchange (sending a new message) may occasion anxiety while waiting for a response. By replying to the "What is on your mind", however, speakers are responding to an automatic, formulaic question, complying to a request for information and, at the same time sending a message and orienting to the interpersonal construction of a relationship.

Another resource for encouraging the interactional and interpersonal is the "I like this" button. It stimulates the automatic expression of appraisal and is even accompanied by an icon for a thumbs up, simulating non verbal communication. This button seems to act as a trigger, motivating the users' expressions of *affect*, *judgment* or *appreciation*, depending on whether the S shows feelings, evaluates behavior or the value of things. Users may combine the automatic click with free production of language. For example, in the previous extract, (2b) accepts the comment in (2a) by clicking the "like" button and by adding this comment: "*Well done - pretty amazing! I've always fancied the swimming bit, but not the biking or running*".

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The “like” button may also contribute to clarify the interpretation of ironic utterances, as in the following example:

(3) FILE 1/11 (2) (UK)

a. *most annoying tune ever! x*

b. (“Like” button) *Hellllllllll noooooo!*

An utterance like “Hell, no” could be interpreted as disagreement but the intensification by phonic lengthening “Hellllllllll”, together with the “like” button, contribute to its interpretation as ironic agreement, i.e.. (3b) agrees that the tune is really annoying. In my data, I have observed that users may choose the “like” button even when a criticism is meant, like in the following turn by (4c), in example (4):

(4) FILE 1/11 (2) (UK)

a. *M. O. is far better at making capuccino’s than J. L.*

b. (“Like” button) *you guys are BARE cute hahaaaa, unluckily for me you guys making cappuccino's together means she never answers her phooooonnnnnnnneeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeee :P*

c. (“Like” button) *... but I'm sure she has better grammar than you ;)*

User (4c) is using the “like” button to indicate that she agrees with (4b). However, she uses the comment box to indicate a criticism. This illustrates that the “like” button facilitates engagement of the proclaim type (agree), thus favoring positive politeness by means of *seek agreement* and *avoid disagreement* strategies. This use of the “like” button, seems to be the equivalent to “Yes, but” in conversation and responds to the operating preference for agreement. The term *preference* is used here in the technical sense, as defined by Pomerantz (1975: 23) and Sacks (1987: 58). According to their research, after an assessment is produced as a first action of a pair, agreement is preferred, i.e., socially

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acceptable, expected, and, consequently, produced straightforwardly, with no pauses or prefaces of any kind. On the contrary, after an assessment produced as a first action, disagreement is dispreferred, and its delivery is typically characterized by a dispreferred format, i.e., following pauses, prefaces, and other delay devices. The dispreferred nature of disagreement, then, could be responsible for FB users’ tendency to choose the “like” button, even to express criticism or disagreement with friends. This behavior may respond to the “avoid disagreement” strategy (Brown and Levinson 2006 [1987/1978]: 113–114): “The desire to agree or appear to agree with H leads also to mechanisms for pretending to agree, instances of ‘token’ agreement.” They quote Sacks (1973) and his collection of examples “of the remarkable degree to which speakers may go in twisting their utterances so as to appear to agree or to hide disagreement—to respond to a preceding utterance with ‘Yes, but...’ in effect, rather than a blatant ‘No.’”

Another possible explanation for the use of the “like” button could be that speakers click it as a quick and automatic act of engagement before planning the discourse in their forthcoming contribution. There may even be no further contribution but the clicking. Users seem to click the button and omit comments more often after funny and lighthearted posts but prefer to invest time and write comments instead when the post is of more serious concern. For instance, a post like the following, got 13 “I like” clicks and eight very short comments, five of which were “amen,” as requested:

(5) FILE 2/11 (1) (US)

a. *If you don't love yourself, how the hell are you gonna love anybody else? (Can I get an amen?)*

However, a more serious post like (6) got no instances of “I like” reply but four comments instead:

(6) FILE 1/11 (1) (US)

a. *Having a minor heart attack as I begin to attempt to piece together a clear idea for this master's project....*

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b. *Welcome to my hell. I'm sure you will do marvelously, though!*

a. *heart. attack.*

c. *You are on track...*

d. *You can do it!*

Engagement is given priority in interaction at SNSs and the "I like it" click becomes a formulaic routine for engagement. Being formulaic, the illocutionary force of the speech act expressed is mitigated, as compared to freely expressed agreements. As explained above, linguistic routines are a tool of polite behavior, which serve as a means of reducing the risk of face threats, as Laver observed (1981: 289). The first user's need for positive face (i.e., his/her desire to be liked and/or admired, in Brown and Levinson's framework) would be threatened by not receiving a reply attending to this need. Therefore, the clicking of the "like" button as a response maximizes reply efficiency: The user's face is saved with a minimum of time invested. Once the first user's need for positive face is satisfied with a token agreement, the following users may carry on to state opinions that may be contrary to those by first user. Irony may also be used as a way of "superficially agreeing with the preceding utterance" (Brown and Levinson 2006 [1987/1978]: 114). In the following example, user (7a) gives an assessment on her own new hair style and user (7b) clicks the "like" button before ironically denying the possibility of the veracity of the fact reported:

(7) FILE 1/11 (2) (US)

a. *Peacock hair!*

b. ("Like" button) *Peacocks don't have hair*

a. Kristian, I cannot fight with your logic. But Ron, a pic is forthcoming....

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User (7b) is expressing a negative social sanction judgment on the veracity of the fact (Martin and White 2005: 53). User (7a) interprets the judgment accordingly and acknowledges it (*acknowledge* is used as defined by Tsui 1994: 205), and initiates a move toward proving her honesty.

It is interesting to observe that there is no "dislike" button even when it has been requested by 2,192,754 registered people, as reported in <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Dislike-Button/102038567018>. This is one of the users' opinions on the FB fan page petitioning for the change: "WE have the right to say what we like, how about the right to say what we don't like!!" It may respond to the need felt by users to express negative evaluations, as well as positive ones, in an automatic, formulaic way. Also, other sites, like YouTube, give the option of thumbs-downing things. However, the reluctance of FB administrators to have it included may respond to the belief that the network will work better if there are more opportunities to express favorable assessments toward other users.

4.2. Dialogic orientation

FB layout shows a dialogic orientation, which facilitates dialogue within a community of users, even when the individuals may not be engaged in the dialogic activity simultaneously. FB wall, the public space for interaction, keeps and shows the latest contributions of our friends creating an "heteroglossic" framework of different voices, implementing Bakhtin and Voloshinov's influential notions of dialogism and heteroglossia, "under which all verbal communication, whether written or spoken, is 'dialogic' in that to speak or write is always to reveal the influence of, refer to, or to take up in some way, what has been said/written before, and simultaneously to anticipate the responses of actual, potential or imagined readers/listeners", quoted by Martin and White (2005: 92-93) as notions which inform appraisal theory. Whereas writing has typically been an asynchronous communication mode with addressees out of sight, SNSs bridge the gap between writing and speech to some extent. Friends are visible by means of pictures and we are even announced whether they are connected at the

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same time, therefore facilitating their presence in our minds and dialogues. Moreover, the creation of a socially significant community of friends stimulates dialogue and facilitates engagement among users.

Dialogue is also used in order to construe solidarity. According to appraisal theory, solidarity is realized by the principles of proliferation and contraction. Proliferation "refers to the idea that the closer you are to someone, the more meanings you have available to exchange" and contraction "refers to the amount of work it takes to exchange meanings, and the idea that the better you know someone the less explicitness it takes" (Martin and White 2005: 30–31). When you are close to someone, you may even not say anything, but use simply a smile or any other body gesture to show attitude. In an attempt to simulate facial expression, SNSs provide the use of emoticons, a new resource for encoding attitude without words that serves the principle of contraction. Typing different combinations of punctuation marks and numbers give as a result a wide range of facial expressions, from smiling faces (smileys) to frowns, or pictures with a particular meaning (like a heart, meaning love), which can be automatically inserted in the message. A whole list of FB emoticons can be found at www.facebookemoticons.com. They are presented as a way to save typing: "You can say it all without having to spend time typing the letters one after the other" or "emoticons go a long way simplifying your conversations." For instance, if you type a semicolon followed by a closing first parenthesis you get a perfect friendly smile, which saves the effort of typing the words "I am happy" or a similar wording. On the contrary, if you are in a situation that has made you both disappointed and surprised, FB advises to put the emoticon for grumpy. You can create it by typing >:-("to let others know how so heavily you were struck by some information." From a SFL perspective, I will consider emoticons as a new resource for the expression of appraisal, which gives a different use for punctuation marks from the conventional and can serve the encoding of attitude and the expression of engagement and graduation.

Emoticons can be used to grade force, i.e., intensity or amount (using a repeated grumpy symbol, for instance) and to grade focus. Focus is graded according to prototypicality, as smileys are

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chosen as symbols for prototypes. The grumpy face is the prototype of anger, and the angel is prototype of good behavior, for instance.

From this review of FB features, it seems that users' tendency to use FB for the interactional and interpersonal together with its dialogic orientation, can have the effect of stimulating the expression of appraisal in order to do relational work by negotiating face and establishing and maintaining social relationships.

5. Results from the analysis of appraisal resources

Analysis of the corpus sample of 400 messages shows the high frequency of appraisal resources and positive versus negative politeness. When comparing *affect*, *judgment* and *appreciation*, the data show a more frequent production of affect, contained in 88% of the turns, followed by appreciation (58%) and judgment (55%). Positive politeness strategies are present in 84% of the turns (40% for affect, 30% for judgment and 14% for appreciation) while only 5% contain negative politeness strategies (1% for affect, 3% for judgment and 1% for appreciation) and 11% of the turns are unmarked for politeness realizations. Table (3) summarizes these results.

<table 3>

These figures reveal that speakers communicating through FB and orienting to the interactional, interpersonal and dialogic are making a very frequent use of appraisal resources and positive versus negative politeness. Such frequency seems derived from the use of FB for establishing and maintaining relations, a function which was reserved to face-to-face interaction before the era of online SNSs. Face-to-face interaction was defined in relation to physical presence. For instance Goffman (1969:13) defined it as "the reciprocal influence of individuals upon one another's actions when in another's immediate physical presence". Physical presence was, therefore, of much consequence for the presentation of self and the construction of identity. Repeated encounters were

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necessary because "[m]any crucial facts lie beyond the time and place of interaction or lie concealed within it" (Goffman 1969: 13). However, within SNSs, users can type and picture their presentation of self, giving off many psychological traits without their physical presence. The self can be disclosed at a click. Gossiping, understood as judgment upon others, used to play an important role in face-to-face interaction for the construction of face and identity in social groups. Nowadays, however, SNSs are taking up the role before confined to "the oral culture", with online gossiping creating a feeling of community and providing a space for sharing evaluation of real life situations. It is no surprise then, that teenagers, an age group with a strong need to negotiate identity are making a constant use of SNSs. As Martínez and Wartmann (2009: 4) claim: "Students use these sites to interact and bond with other students, to share experiences, and to participate in the new online college 'community' that is understood by students to be real." And sharing a community feeling is crucial for the construction of students' identities: "It is now unmistakable that in the era of online social spaces like FB, Instant Messenger (IM), Live Journal, Xanga, Web Shots, Blogger.com and Bebo college students use these and other online sites as a social medium, a space where they explore their identities, where they produce and reproduce rules of behavior, where they make public self-representations through text and images." (Martínez and Wartmann 2009: 4). Example (8) shows self-presentations of college students through texts:

(8) FILE 1/11 (US)

FACEBOOK: What's on your mind?

- a. I think it's kind of creepy how little my looks have changed over the last 26 years.
- b. When I gave myself bangs again as an adult, I was shocked how much I looked like me as a little kid again. Well, me with more of a beer gut!
- c. The only thing that makes me look different from H. S³. is my skin. I'm getting old :-(

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Facebook prompt gets an expression of affect (dissatisfaction type) by (8a), which is engaged with another expression of dissatisfaction and surprise by (8b). This turn also includes positive politeness with humor: "Well, me with more of a beer gut!". User (8c) engages in the exchange of evaluative remarks with another expression of affect showing dissatisfaction and surprise with humor and an emoticon for a grumpy face: "I'm getting old :-(".

Examples like (8) above seem to give a positive answer to the question formulated by Else and Turkle (2006): "Is social networking changing the way people relate to each other?" Before the existence of SNSs, private issues of an intimate character used to be dealt with mostly in the spoken mode, either in face-to-face or telephone conversation. Although email is also being used for private issues together with gossiping and building a feeling of community, real-time, evaluative comments of an intimate character, like those in example (8), (9) and (10) below, need an atmosphere of intimacy that cannot easily be built by email but which SNSs are succeeding to create. Therefore, it seems that SNSs are making it possible to use written text for expressing and building a degree of intimacy that could only be expressed and built by means of spoken interaction in the pre-networking era. Moreover, the fact that users are not face-to-face, seems to allow for more freedom of speech and behavior in some cases. In the next example, users (9a) and (9b) have never met, although they have a mutual friend. After (9a) has formulated a question, (9b) replies with information which does not address such question and orients to the building of intimacy:

(9) FILE A02/11 (UK)

a. *Hi again!! What d' u think of this music?*

b. *Dear mysterious friend, what I can tell you is that using a false identity and photographs of landscapes in your profile will affect the quality of the responses to your research questions just as much as a photograph of someone posing sexy in a bikini whom you don't know. (...) Photos in bikini will get you much better answers, of course. Ciao!*

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After a joking reply by (10a), user (10b) responds again:

(10) FILE A02/11 (UK)

b. If this is not the case, and you actually are who you say you are, that is: someone I don't know, and who I have to trust blindly, even though you have shown bias on the subject of your study, then you should have offered some sort of incentive at least. After all, this is a social network, not a focus group. Maybe not the photos in bikini, but a mojito would have sufficed. Having said all this... (...) So... When can we have that mojito? Ciao...

User (10a) interprets the question by (10b) as a move toward her positive face, as desire to build intimacy and suggests a date and place to meet. However, as reported by (10a), (10b) never replied again. This illustrates that some users are not willing to cross the border line between the fantasy of the virtual world and the real world. It seems that things that are unlikely to be said in face-to-face interaction can be said through the chat or message options in SNSs. It is not surprising then, that internet-mediated chatting is becoming a popular means to find a partner. Behind the computer, friends have access to a limited set of aspects of other users' identity. Users hide the character traits they don't like and idealize their virtues by means of evaluative discourse and pictures: In the virtual world, we are what we say and what we show.

6. Conclusions

The application of the methodology for the analysis illustrated above has resulted in the observation of a pervasive use of appraisal resources by FB users, including meanings of attitude together with engagement and graduation, and the priority given to the expression of positive over negative politeness, in order to claim common ground. Many of FB distinctive features seem to be responsible for these results as they stimulate the production of appraisal and positive politeness for doing relational work. The various resources to display personal information, together with emoticons, prompts such as the "What's on your mind question" or the "like" button, encourage users' orientation

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to the interactional, interpersonal and dialogic and stimulate the expression of evaluation. If "our knowledge of the world and the place we occupy in that world is gained entirely through social interaction", as Watts (2003: 123) claims to be derived from Goffman's concept of face, it seems logical that our tethered selves will mainly find their places in the world through technological interaction. What could be imagined as a happier world for SNSs?

The data collected from FB also illustrate the novel way in which some of the appraisal resources are being produced. Intensification, for instance, shows an increasing tendency to be expressed by phonic lengthening. It may be even infused in invariable parts of speech, (e.g. "ooh", "nooooo") and in punctuation marks, which have been converted into symbols simulating facial expressions (emoticons). I have also claimed that emoticons represent a new resource for the expression of appraisal. The analysis seems to indicate a common, ever-growing and compelling need to evaluate and share the results of evaluative appreciations. This may be due to the high potential of appraisal resources for the construction of solidarity among individuals. The success of SNSs may lie to a high extent in their use of the formal features mentioned above in order to stimulate engagement of users through the communication of attitude.

It is also interesting to note that many users are investing a lot of time and effort everyday in social networking for presenting their selves and constructing their identities. Face-to-face contexts or telephone conversations are no longer the only means for building identity.

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¹ Mashable report, available at <http://mashable.com/2007/10/23/social-networking-god/>, (accessed 24 February 2011).

² Available at: http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/40929239/ns/technology_and_science-tech_and_gadgets/ (accessed 24th February 2011).

³ "H. S." is used for "High School."

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