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## **Gender factor in Internet Communication**

Bachelor's thesis  
written by the 4<sup>th</sup> year student,  
2<sup>nd</sup> English group  
of Bachelor's programme  
“English Studies and Translation  
and Two Western European Languages”  
Field of science – 03 “Humanities”  
Specialty – 035 “Philology”  
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«Допущено до захисту»

Протокол засідання кафедри англійської філології  
та міжкультурної комунікації

Протокол № 12 від 27.05.2021

Завідувач кафедри \_\_\_\_\_ проф. Белова А.Д.

Kyiv – 2021

## CONTENTS

<b>INTRODUCTION</b> .....	3
<b>I. GENDER LINGUISTICS AND ITS SCOPE OF RESEARCH</b> .....	5
1.1. Internet communication .....	5
1.2. Gender linguistics.....	7
1.3 Gender linguistics and Internet communication .....	9
Conclusion to Chapter 1 .....	13
<b>2. LINGUISTIC FEATURES OF POSTS OF INSTAGRAM USERS</b> .....	15
2.1. Lexical features .....	15
2.2. Syntactic features .....	21
2.3. Non-verbal features .....	26
Conclusion to Chapter 2.....	32
General conclusion .....	35
<b>REFERENCES</b> .....	38

## INTRODUCTION

The bachelor thesis consists of an introduction, two chapters, conclusions to each chapter and the list of references. The total number of pages is 45 pages.

A research interest in the difference of male and female written expression on social media platforms, namely Instagram.

The **relevance** consists in the necessity to explore gender representation on one of the most popular social media platforms.

The **novelty** of the research consists in the analysis of language data produced by individuals whose language style has not been analysed yet.

The **object** of the thesis is male and female language on Instagram. The **subject** is language units peculiar to male and female written communication on Instagram.

The **aim** of the research is to perform comparative analysis of male and female written communicative style on Instagram.

The **objectives** the following:

- to distinguish linguistic features of the Internet discourse;
- analyse the main theories within the genderlinguistics framework;
- analyse the previous studies and distinguish main differences between male and female communicative styles on social media;
- conduct a comparative analysis of 2 Instagram users representing both genders.

The paper has the following **structure**:

- *contents* which allows a reader easily navigate throughout the work;
- *introduction* which gives a general outline of the work;
- *theoretical part* which incompases 3 chapters and a conclusion;
- *practical part* which incompases 3 chapters and a conclusion;
- general conclusion;
- references.

The **theoretical value** lies in systematisation of the main theories related to gender linguistics within the framework of online communication.

The **practical value** of this study consists in the fact that gender representation on social media can be further researched and the results of this paper can assist a follow-up research.

As the basis for the practical part we analysed the posts of two celebrities: an actress Lili Reinhart who currently has 29 billion followers and Cole Sprouse with the audience amounting to 35.5 billion followers. These two celebrities are primarily known for starring in Netflix TV series called “Riverdale”.

The total amount of analysed posts is 200 meaning 100 posts for each of them.

# I. GENDER LINGUISTICS AND ITS SCOPE OF RESEARCH

## 1.1. Internet communication

Revolutionised electronic communication may lead to new types of communication. Electronic discourse is a new language variety that can be the reason for significant deviations in the written language structure. Electronic discourse gave rise to a kind of semi-speech between oral and written speech with its own characteristics and graphology.

The Internet environment is a separate, alternative world where users are often given freedom of speech, the right to anonymity and the opportunity for online communication that does not require direct human interaction. Also, the Internet has its own language, which is a deformed, simplified Prokofieva A. in the article “Development of the Internet space at the present stage and its linguistic organisation” (“Развитие Интернет-пространства на современном этапе и особенности его языковой организации”) [4] highlights the following specifics of internet discourse, expressed at different linguistic levels, ordered in the following way[4].

*Graphical:* emojis; asterisks (\*); highlighted words; capital letters; repetition of words; splitting letters with blank spaces; rious Unicode symbols (% , #, \$).

*Lexical:* abbreviations; acronyms.

*Syntactic:* grammar violations.

*Morphological:*coining new words using compounding and conversion [4].

Based on the presented list, special communicative mechanisms can be distinguished which are often used in virtual discourse. For instance, to fill the lack of emotional coloring messages (in case the elements of emotive vocabulary do not fulfill this task), users utilise various relevant symbols called emoticons/emojis. Furthermore, colorful stickers, which are frequently animated, are gaining popularity. The use of only uppercase when the spelling of a word / phrase / sentence usually refers to an increased tone, with negative or positive emotional coloring,

depending on the context. Despite the relatively recent emergence of the ability to communicate by recording voice messages, onomatopoeia in writing is still relevant.

There is a number of reasons why the language of electronic communication can currently be considered a functional variety of any language. It is assumed that:

- the sphere of functioning of this sublanguage is clearly delimited from other spheres of communication, since it is carried out with the help of technical electronic means and is always mediated by them;
- this sublanguage serves to satisfy specific communicative goals (the phatic goal is communication for the sake of communication, etc.);
- this sublanguage “initiated” the emergence of a new system of multimedia genres and genre formats, and as a result contributed to the development of a new direction in the theory of conventional genres - virtual genre studies;
- linguistic means of this functional variety are characterized by a certain set of lexical and grammatical characteristics that can be easily distinguished, formalized and which form a single pragmatic complex [2].

It should be noted that the significant distinction of the language functioning on the Internet is the changes that occur in various aspects: on the lexical level, rules for constructing statements and coherent text, genre-stylistic norms, the ratio of the norms of oral and written speech, communication strategies and tactics. The most significant and frequent ones are the following changes:

- mixing of speech strategies in almost any communicative Internet format (blog, forum, chat, personal page, etc.);
- intensive generation of computer slang, the elements of which are transformed into common vocabulary;
- the revival of the epistolary genre (especially with the advent of Web 2.0 technologies on the Internet. “Web 2.0” is the term used to describe a variety of web sites and applications that allow anyone to create and share content and collaborate online[15];

- due to the spread of gaming conditions of communication, frequent use of the language game is observed;
- a high degree of creolization, dynamism, interactivity, inter- and hypertextuality of texts in almost all formats of Internet communication [1].

So, all of the above mentioned points reflect the emergence of computer-mediated communication, a language serving a new communicative environment. It became the object of research in a new field of linguistics - Internet linguistics, and the subject of a new science was the features of the functioning of language on the Internet at various levels: morphological, syntactic, lexical, phonetic and graphic.

A renowned English scientist David Crystal defines Internet linguistics as the simultaneous analysis of language in all areas of the Internet, including e-mail, various types of chats, games, web pages, as well as areas related to computer-mediated communication, such as SMS messages. According to the scientist, the rate of change over last couple years has become so high that one can already see the diachronic as well as synchronic aspects of this subject - the historical area of Internet linguistics allows us to trace the tempo of changes in the language - in vocabulary, grammar, spelling and even in pronunciation. It is also possible to trace the rapid growth of comparative Internet linguistics, as the communication environment is becoming more and more multilingual [12].

## **1.2. Gender linguistics**

Due to the growing interest in gender studies of language, different theories are formed about what exactly forms genderlect. Important milestones in the history of the study of this issue can be called the following theories:

Theory of socialization

Widely known in the history of linguistic gender research was the work of an American linguist Robin Lakoff “Language and Woman's Place” [20] which also includes the term “genderlect”. In this work, Lakoff proceeds from the theory of

socialization, which was later also supported by the anthropologist Elihor Ochs. In the presentation of these researchers, genderlect is a consequence of the socialization of early childhood. The gender-specific manner of behavior dictated to the child, depending on his or her gender, also determines the behavior imposed by speech femininity or masculinity. Lakoff singled out the following features of women's speech, which later became the basis for many studies of this issue:

- special vocabulary associated with purely female areas of activity and interests;
- an abundance of interrogative forms and separation questions, as if showing the speaker's uncertainty (“isn't it true?” “isn't it?”);
- the use of polite forms and the tendency to utilise euphemisms;
- high attention to the detailed designation of colours (aquamarine, pinkish-purple);
- the use of words and phrases that soften the categorical statement (*you know, well, like, something like*);
- hypercorrect grammar. [20]

#### Theory of the principle of male domination and female subordination

From the late 1970s to the late 1980s, when the feminist movement in the United States gained great strength and the period of the most active feminist language criticism, a number of linguists insisted on the concept of intentionalism, consciously supporting men in their superiority in social paradigm through verbal behavior. According to this theory, male behavior during speech acts is defined as a set of gender speech stereotypes aimed at the formation of their own “masculine speech”. This is also a means of strengthening and demonstrating domination over women, respectively, highlighting “feminine language”. This can manifest itself in frequent interruptions, long speech constructions, high degree straightness, etc. Based on this concept, researchers assumed that women, for the most part, are deprived of social prestige and self-esteem. Moreover, in comparison with men they are forced to agree to stick to certain speech behavior artificially imposed on them

by men. Also, according to researchers representing this direction, women are guided by tactics of “communicative cooperation”, while men - on the practice of “communicative rivalry” [36].

#### Theory of “gender subcultures”

In the 1980s, another rather radical hypothesis emerged in which linguistic differences between representatives of different genders are explored within the framework of cultural communication, which means it is also the part of intercultural communication issues. “Theory of two cultures” proposed by D. Tannen, implied male and female as completely different organized groups against each other [34]. It was explained by the fact that people from childhood are predominantly in same-sex groups, which are characterized by specific speech practices, value systems, activities that differ in male and female environments. According to supporters theory of “gender subcultures”, in adulthood this leads to misunderstanding and speech conflicts associated primarily with the difference in the cultural organization of an individual. Women and men from early childhood live in different social environments, and the difference lasts until the period of maturation. According to researchers, this may be the reason why men and women, even striving for a harmonious relationship, often feel misunderstanding or criticism from a partner. In a sense, this approach to explaining the problem can be considered as a more radical continuation of the theory of socialization.

### **1.3. Gender linguistics and Internet Communication**

At the moment, there is a number of studies of human behavior while participating in communication via the Internet including speech. Some of these works considered gender as the main factor influencing speech behavior in various communication platforms, which may include forums, chats, blogs, etc. For example, in a study by Susan Herring [17], it was found that women and men on the Internet have their own communication etiquette which differs depending on the gender [17]. This communication etiquette is dictated by society as a whole and largely coincides with that in real life, in “live” communication. It includes:

- complete rejection of obscene language by women or showing less tolerance towards its usage;
- women are more inclined to the normative and correct use of the language (this applies both to grammar and the choice of vocabulary);
- justification of male aggressiveness and competitiveness, which translates into a certain manner of communication, both in real life and on the Internet;
- expecting supportive and compassionate behavior from a woman. women are more likely to detail their speech;
- women behave less aggressively than men;
- men are more active in using jargon and specialized vocabulary;
- men more often dominate in communication and become the initiators of the change of topic [17]

*Features of female speech in Internet communication.* According to I.V. Sidorskaya [5] women use a strategy aimed at mutual understanding and providing feedback, which is not a formality of its own kind, but a sincere desire to show understanding or concern for the interlocutor [29]. Using the system of describing the linguistic identity proposed by Karaulov Yu., some linguistic features of the female language in the Internet discourse can be singled out [3].

The classification has three levels: verbal-semantic, cognitive and motivational-pragmatic.

The *verbal-semantic level* contains the following speech features:

- striving for the most literate speech, adherence to a high level of one's own language norms;
- emotiveness, frequent transmission of an emotional state; extremely rare use of obscene vocabulary, mainly used to express negative emotions; frequent introduction of questions into speech in order to strengthen the dynamics of the conversation; introductory

constructions; also female speech contains especially long speech constructions.

The *cognitive level* is represented by the following features:

- the level of emotional and evaluative vocabulary; the use of various “sharp” words in order to jokingly or sarcastically prick the interlocutor; avoidance of straightforwardness.

At the *motivational and pragmatic* level women strive to maintain a friendly atmosphere, receive support or approval of their actions; their speech is very variable; rapprochement with the interlocutor is reached by discussing common issues. [3, p. 238 ]

*Features of male speech in Internet communication.* Researchers of gender differences in speech turn to special speech markers [29]. Such markers in men can include, for example:

- rudeness, aggressiveness;
- using obscene vocabulary;
- competitiveness with other members of the group;
- straightforwardness in statements;
- argumentation.

Communication in groups with different gender proportions can, in theory, lead to different results. In a study by [29] based on the observation of behavior within 27 groups with different gender composition and approximately the same number of participants, it was found that the proportion of men in a team does not significantly affect either the manifestation of verbal aggression, or self-affirmation of their status at the expense of other members of the group. In all groups, aggression manifested itself with approximately the same frequency. The researchers also noticed that increasing the concentration of men taking part in discussions leads to more constructive and direct discourse. Thus, out of the 7 markers proposed for consideration, only two were confirmed.

For women, that study also confirmed only 2 markers out of 7: more attempts to prevent and resolve conflicts and a greater tendency to discuss personal topics.

In addition, these indicators can change depending on many parameters, be it the size of the group or the professional and / or social sphere to which the group members belong. [29]

From the results of work on gender and the correlation of speech behavior with the gender composition of groups, several conclusions can be drawn about what features are likely to be characteristic of most male conversations. Firstly, it is unlikely that the speech behavior of conversation participants will change dramatically if its gender composition changes. Secondly, in men's conversations, personal topics are discussed less often. Thirdly, discourse in male discussions is more focused and straightforward.

## Conclusion to Chapter 1

So, we see that the nature of computer-mediated communication is very complex and heterogeneous. To conclude the above mentioned chapter we can state the following:

- 1) the emergence and dynamic development of information technologies led to the emergence of a new type of communication carried out in this environment. However, due to its high dynamics of development, this new communication type has not received sufficient understanding and description although it attracts the attention of many linguists. There is also no established consensus on the terminology used in this area and, in particular, the term to designate a new type of communication. However, the most frequently used term “computer-mediated communication”;
- 2) the emergence of the Internet led not only to the emergence of a new type of communication but also to a language functioning in a new communication environment. This newly emerged language variety has distinctive features at all levels - vocabulary, grammar, rules for constructing statements, genre and stylistic norms, the norms of oral and written speech, etc;
- 3) the emergence of language which within the framework of computer-mediated communication led to the emergence of a new direction in linguistics - Internet linguistics, where the object of a research is Internet communication and the language serving it, and by the subject we mean the peculiarities of the functioning of language on the Internet at various levels: morphological, syntactic, lexical, phonetic-graphic;
- 4) the theoretical part presented three main theories of gender linguistics such as **the Theory of socialization (by R. Lakoff)**. *An overall description*. According to gender researchers R. Lakoff and E.Ochs, gender is the result of early childhood socialization. It is assumed that the child, in accordance with his gender is forced to a gender-specific manner of speaking which the differences in men and women language. The manner imposed in childhood demonstrates

the femininity of women through language, just like wearing male/female clothes or playing games typical for girls or boys.

**Theory of the principle of male domination and female subordination** (by Thorne B. and Henley N.). *An overall description.* It is assumed that men intentionally developed their own "masculine speech" to exercise dominance over women who thus has their own feminine language. The following points are considered to be the proof of this dominance: frequent interruptions, long speech chunks and excessive straightforwardness.

In comparison to men, women lack social prestige which causes low self-esteem, which is provoked by their agreement to utilise the speech constructions which are deliberately imposed on them by men. Within the framework of this theory it is also assumed that women are primarily focused on the tactics of "communicative cooperation" while men mainly prefer "communicative rivalry".



**The Theory of "gender subcultures" (by Tannen D.).** *An overall description.* This theory considers men and women as organised groups that are totally different. It is explained by the fact that since childhood they have been growing up predominantly in same-sex groups which have specific gender-based practices, values and gender-mediated activities. It is presumed that in adulthood this leads to misunderstanding and speech conflicts, which are equally compared to intercultural ones.

- 5) based on the previous studies we also managed to distinguish specific features of male and female communication style in the Internet discourse.

## 2. LINGUISTIC FEATURES OF POSTS OF INSTAGRAM USERS

### 2.1. Lexical features

The language style of both Lili Reinhart and Cole Sprouse is considered to be colloquial. We singled out these lexical features in a separate chapter since a significant number of Lili Reinhart's posts contain family-related vocabulary including references to home and vocabulary signifying mental health awareness as well as references to her own psychological states. This chapter concerns 38 posts dedicated to the above mentioned phenomenon. Such a feature has not been found in Cole Sprouse's posts. The following examples illustrate the point.

1. *I was blessed with the two **greatest parents** someone could ask for. And I wanted to share this sweet text **my mom** sent me.*
2. *Happy anniversary to my **mom** and **dad**. 27 years strong and counting.*  

3. *I can't believe this **little angel** Adeline is 2 years old  I'm so blessed to be her **godmother**.*
4. *One year ago, this **little angel** was born. And she has since brought so much joy to my life. Whatever bad things are happening in the world or in my life, seeing this **baby girl** makes everything better. My sweet **Adeline**, I'm honored to be your **godmother**. I love you, always.[38]*

We can also observe that Lili uses quite an intimate style in regard to her family. The reference “little angel” can be considered as a private code which signifies that she is talking about her goddaughter.

Posts regarding psychological processes and mental health awareness are quite numerous. Below we can see the most outstanding examples:

1. ***YOU** are the one thing in this world, above all other things, that you must never give up on. When I was in middle school, I was **struggling with severe anxiety** and **depression** and the help and support I received from my family*

*and a **therapist** saved my life. Asking for help is the first step. You are more precious to this world than you'll ever know.* [#worldsuicidepreventionday](#)

- 2. I'm always down to try new and natural ways to improve my **mental health** and have been a fan of [@humnutrition](#) for years, so I was excited to give their new Calm Sweet Calm stress gummies a try. They're made with an ancient medicinal herb called Ashwagandha which is known to **reduce stress and cortisol levels**. These (really yummy 🍯) vegan gummies will be a permanent addition to my **daily wellness routine** after seeing their ~zen~ effects. [38]*

As we can see, Lili dwells on her psychological state and the ways she maintains her mental health. It is noticeable that she feels comfortable sharing private information about her depressive states with the audience. We can also add that sharing authentic information can be considered as a way to earn the trust of the audience. Taking into account that there is no posts of such topic found in Cole Sprouse's page, we can assume that he is not interested in maintaining deep and intimate relationship with his audience.

An important place in the analysis is occupied by the patterns used both by Lili and Cole to express their gratefulness. These patterns are seemingly alike. The most widespread patterns for both Lili and Cole are “very/eternally/forever/exceptionally grateful”/ “thanks to/ big thanks to”. However, the difference lies in the frequency and sophistication of messages. By sophistication of Lili's posts we mean the complementary phrases which introduce and therefore intensify the expression of gratitude. For instance, “An honour of lifetime/ I'm so honoured/ I had the time of my life.”

Here are the most commonly used examples:

### **Lili Reinhart**

- 1. [#ChemicalHearts](#) is finally here. This movie means so much to me and **I had the time of my life** filming it. **I'm so honored** to have been part of this film from start to finish as an executive producer- **thank you** [@amazonstudios](#) for*

having faith in me. **I had the honor** of working with one of the most talented young actors out there, Austin Abrams [...]

2. **I am so honored** to be on this month's cover of @allure ✨ **thank you** for this incredibly fun shoot.
3. **An honor of a lifetime. Thank you so much** @time for having me on your #time100next list for 2019. Never thought I'd be in the position I am in today where people respond so openly to me speaking about mental health and body acceptance. **Eternally grateful** to everyone who has cheered me on these last few years.
4. **I am so honored** to be on this month's cover of @allure ✨ **thank you** for this incredibly fun shoot.
5. **I am so grateful** to have been invited to this gorgeous show, **thank you for having me** #miumiu
6. [...] **I'm so honored** to be in Hustlers and can't wait for everyone to see the incredible work of the women involved.[38]

## **Cole Sprouse**

1. Feeling **exceptionally grateful** for the teams who have helped refine my photography so tremendously. No one has gotten bit by a rattlesnake yet so clearly we're making enough noise.
2. New story with the ever resilient @estellaboersma . An absolute pleasure of an experience in Iceland. Ate my fill of fermented and dung smoked meats. Arm wrestled a Viking. Danced with the national champion. **Thanks to the fantastic team.** Can't wait to return
3. **Thanks for the love** guys, **heres** to playing 17 until I'm 40.
4. **Big thanks** to @cuixmala for hosting [37]

Surprisingly, gratitude can be even associated with indebtedness. We might assume that men consider the expression of gratitude as a sign of vulnerability, which may compromise their masculinity and social state. Hence, showing a preference to hide rather than express it [26]. That's why Cole uses quite concise forms in

comparison to Lili. He does not elaborate on extensive and sophisticated messages without deep emotional involvement as it is expressed in Lili's captions.

Lili's posts expressing gratitude amount to 28 posts whereas the number of gratitude posts published by Cole is 16.

Another feature we would like to discuss is the usage of informal language, namely colloquialisms and slang. It is known that informal style of communication on social media platforms is now considered to be the norm rather than its violation. Taking into account the entertaining nature of Instagram, slang helps establish interaction with the audience conveying an informal communicative style very close to the conversational one.

However, the number of posts containing slang is not equal in Lili's and Cole's posts.


For Lili Reinhart this number is 16 and for Cole - 26.

### **Lili**

1. [...]If you're interested in hearing me voice a **bitchy** eight year old, watch @thesimpsons May 10th at 8pm on FOX.
2. 1.5 weeks til I see this **thicc** piece of **ass** [the typos in words "til" and "thicc" are from the original post].
3. For my @nylonmag cover interview, I use the word "**sh\*t**" a record breaking amount of times. My grandparents would be so proud. (Link in my story) [38]

The above mentioned examples are characterized by the usage of obscene language. In example 3 we can see that Lili reminisces about her previous experience using an obscene lexical unit though to soften an emotional pressure she replaces one letter with an asterisks. It means that Lili is not prone to using highly informal language in her captions and smoothes the last example adding a graphic sign in the middle of the word. This might signify her desire to save the face in front of her audience since she has already established her communicative style which can be considered as semi-formal.

Apart from slang we can also find some colloquialisms in her posts.

1. *Surprised I showed up in these **pics** seeing as I've become a vampire over the last few months.*
2. *My big **sis** is growing old on me. Happy 24th, Chloe  I love you to the moon and back.*
3. *One year ago today I took Milo home with me... and **damn**, I **hit the jackpot**. My sweet little rescue dog has been an incredible source of love for me this year and I can't wait to keep making memories with my little man. [38]*

We can see that such lexical units as “pics” and “sis” can be considered as truncations which represent the informal communicative style. Example 3 shows Lili’s excitement about her new dog: she uses an exclamation “*damn*” which has a rather positive connotation since its primary function is to express anger. However, judging from the context we can firmly assume that “damn” intensifies Lili’s enthusiasm. “*hit the jackpot*” is a highly colloquial expression showing how the speaker is excited about something. Moreover, it does not carry any negative connotation.

A noticeable feature of Cole’s captions is the frequent usage of acronyms. The most used acronym is “*hmu*” which stands for “*hit me up*” and encourages someone to contact you (“*Available to officiate your birth ceremonies, weddings, funerals, and ritual circumcisions. **Hmu***”/ “*Super nice and fun-guy, **hmu** if you dig wandering through the woods like a truffling pig*”[19]). Other but less frequent acronyms such as “*lmk*” which stands for “*let me know*” and “*tbh*” - “*to be honest*”[39], have been used one time each (“*We’re out here burning our birth certificates and starting a free love egalitarian community with absolutely no murder, **lmk** if anyone wants to sign up. Here’s a shot of us for @10magazine*”/ “*Losing my fucken mind over the little one **tbh***”[37,39]. Another colloquial feature of Cole Sprouse's posts is the usage of “*gunna*” meaning “*going to*”. The peculiarity consists in the fact that the form “*gonna*” is more widespread than the above mentioned one though it has not been found in his posts (“*Resolution is to integrate my childhood trauma into my self identity for social media currency. Just **gunna** wallow in it this year oorah. No healing just reeling*” [19] ). One more feature that occurred twice is the shortening of present participle: “*gettin*” instead of “*getting*” and “*hittin*” instead of “*hitting*”

(“*@damon\_baker and I hittin you with that Sanji one two*”/ “*Gettin a lil dolled up before finding a new ex husband that disappears under mysterious circumstances*” [19]). We can also find the examples of truncations such as “*bud*” from “buddy” meaning “*a friend*”/ “*a lil*” which is a colloquial option of “*a little*” / “*collab*” from “*collaboration*” (“*Love you bud*”/ “*Gettin a lil dolled up before finding a new ex husband that disappears under mysterious circumstances*”/ “*Did a little collab with @papermagazine and @neimansman inside a giant abandoned [...] [40,37]*”). We can assume that by using shortened word forms Cole imitates a communicative style close to a colloquial conversational one. .

One of the highly noticeable features of Lili Reinhart’s posts is the usage of strong adjectives.

Analysing Lili’s and Cole’s posts we can see that the number of posts containing intensifying adjectives significantly differs. Strong adjectives have been detected in 26 of Lili’s posts while the number of Cole posts containing the same phenomenon amounts to 6 posts. Here are the most outstanding examples.

### **Lili Reinhart**

1. *The gang finally graduates, tonight. 📖 a very **sentimental, emotional** episode for everyone who has been on this Riverdale journey with us since day 1.*
2. *It is **truly an incredible, surreal** blessing that I was able partake in one of the most **iconic** television shows ever made [...]*
3. *[...]This has been an experience I will cherish for the rest of my life— it feels so **surreal**. I’m so honored to be in *Hustlers* and can’t wait for everyone to see the **incredible** work of the women involved.[38]*

It can be justified by the assumption that compared with men, women are more inclined to creating and maintaining intimate relationships.

## 2.2. Syntactic features

The noticeable feature for both Lili and Cole is the usage of **imperative mood**. We can assume that this phenomenon is connected with the desire to actively interact with the audience and trigger some kind of emotional response.

Lili uses imperative mood in 10 posts (sometimes the one post contains multiple imperative sentences) while Cole uses imperative mood in 16 of his posts (sometimes the one post contains multiple imperative sentences).

### Lili Reinhart

1. Please **take** the time to visit @melissabenoist's IGTV. I am so moved by her bravery and strength in coming forward about her experience. **Share** this message, talk to your family about this, **do not shy away** from this subject.[38]

### Cole Sprouse

1. for this valentines, **rip** these photos from the pages of the new @gq and **burn** them in whatever Wiccan summoning circle you've drawn on your bathroom floor. **Light** the candles, then **say** Cole Sprouse, Cole Sprouse, Cole Sprouse. **Wait** 6- 10 business days. Congratulations, your Cole Sprouse body pillow has finally arrived.@kelianne [37]

Considering the fact that social media posts are usually concise in their nature, such a phenomenon as **ellipsis** is a frequent occurrence. An elliptical sentence is such a syntactic structure in which there is no subject, or predicate, or both. The main parts of elliptical sentences are omitted by the speaker intentionally in cases when they are semantically redundant [30]. The aim of such feature is to convey as much information with minimal spacial (the shorter a post, the higher chances that readers will read through the end) and time expenditures (the average desktop user's attention span on any piece of information amounts to 2.5 seconds while phone users tend to spend just 1.7 seconds). [18]

Thus, ellipsis in the language appear to perform two main functions:

- it enables effective reading in case a reader has sufficient basic knowledge to infer what has been missed;
- it makes the utterance more sophisticated and intellectually stimulating [30].

In the following examples of Lili's and Cole's posts we can observe such elliptical constructions:

- the omission of the auxiliary verb ("*Been itching to post my new shoot for @10magazine . Got to drag a bunch of friends out to the salton sea for a bit of sun and fun.*" - Cole Sprouse [37]. In the first sentence we can observe the omission of a subject and auxiliary verb. In the second sentence only a subject has been omitted);
- the omission of a subject in a simple sentence ("*Nostalgic for my quarantine life.*" / "*Took a solo trip to Mount Shasta for some mental clarity and healing*". - Lili Reinhart [38]/ "*Available to officiate your birth ceremonies, weddings, funerals, and ritual circumcisions. Hmu*" - Cole Sprouse [37]).
- the omission of a subject to the first part of the compound sentence ("*Never thought I'd be in the position I am in today where people respond so openly to me speaking about mental health and body acceptance.*" - Lili Reinhart [38]. "I" is omitted in the first part of this compound sentence).

As we can see, both Lili and Cole tend to apply one of the main functions of elliptical structures - imitation of real colloquial speech as a means of being closer to their informal audience.

Though the analysis shows that Cole is more prone to using ellipsis than Lili.

Cole uses ellipsis in 32 posts while Lili in 12 posts.

Like ellipsis, **aposiopesis** is also achieved through the incomplete structure of a sentence, though this type of incompleteness differs in its semantics and structure: it appears when the speaker is unwilling to proceed and abruptly terminates his/her

narration [30]. We managed to find the only example of such phenomena among Cole Sprouse's posts. It looks the following way:

*"Well, considering the circumstances -" [37]*

As we can see, the sentence ends not even with three dots but with a dash. It implies even stronger that the main sentence part which carries the most of its sense has not been explicitly expressed. We can assume that Cole is prone to not providing the complete information to the audience which may implicitly signal about his insecurity of being exposed in front of the whole audience,

Rhetoric questions are not questions but affirmative or negative statements presented into the interrogative form. A rhetoric question does not need an answer since it should be obvious to the recipient. Communicative function of such device consists in the enhancement of language expressiveness. A rhetoric question enhances the expressiveness of speech [30]. The following caption found among Cole Sprouse posts is an explicit example of the aforementioned device.

*"[...] How will you all look back upon the time within your isolation? Did you get fit? Did you learn to cook? Did you take up guitar? Grow out your hair? Were you responsible? Did you recoil from the separation? Did you drink too much or smoke too little? The questions are eventually coming: what did you do when the world slowed down? Where were you? How were you?"[37]*

It can be assumed that Cole utilises this device as a way to draw the audience attention to some existential issues. From that we can also judge that Cole is in the state of uncertainty and confusion because he is trying to answer so many questions at a time, though there are no answers in his caption. On the other hand, rhetoric questions might have been used to engage the audience and to trigger a discussion among Cole's subscribers which can only contribute to his popularity.

**Parallelism** is a stylistic device of producing two or more syntactic constructions according to the same syntactic pattern. It creates rhythm and makes the utterance more dynamic [13]. In the following examples of Cole Sprouse's posts

parallelism is achieved by the usage of participial construction at the beginning of sentences.

### **Cole Sprouse**

1. ***Foraging** through Beverly Hills like a raccoon with @davis.bates and @fevmo. **Breaking** hearts and **smoking** darts cause my id is unhinged*
2. ***Thinking** of Whitney portal. **Thinking** of the bridge between the highest and lowest places in the Western Hemisphere.*
3. ***Sending** my apologies to every crew member I've ever jeopardized by asking them to climb mountains with props. **Feeling** exceptionally grateful for the teams who have helped refine my photography so tremendously. No one has gotten bit by a rattlesnake yet so clearly we're making enough noise.[37]*

Taking into account that parallelism is the feature of persuasive language, we can assume that Cole strives to structure his media utterance the way they appeal to the audience and make the recipients believe what is written.

A distinguishing feature of Lili Reinhart's posts is the frequent usage of the personal pronoun "I" which can be interpreted as the sign of self-focus. Furthermore, it is considered that women are more inclined to use "I," "me," "my" because they are more self-attentive than men and aware of their inner state [30]. It can be proven by the following examples since Lili uses the first person pronoun in the majority of her posts. The exact number of Lili Reihart's posts containing the above mentioned feature is 86 (out of 100).

1. ***I** would not have gotten anywhere if it weren't for your love and belief in **me**, Mom. There's nothing **I** could ever do to repay you for all that you've provided and sacrificed. **I** hope one day that **I** can be half the mother that you have been to me. **I** love you, dearly.*
2. *One year ago, this little angel was born. And she has since brought so much joy to **my** life. Whatever bad things are happening in the world or in **my** life, seeing this baby girl makes everything better. **My** sweet Adeline, **I'm** honored to be your godmother. **I** love you, always.[38]*

On the contrary Cole Sprouse used first person pronouns in 38 posts. We can suggest that Cole tries to be more impersonal whereas Lili tends to establish a constant self-focus [25].

### **Cole Sprouse**

1. *Here are some B-side sneak peeks of **my** new self-portrait story in @voguehommes September. Grab a print and keep an eye out*
2. *New editorial work for @wsjmag hits stands January 19th. Pleasure to collaborate with the amazing @stella\_greenSPAN and the ten young entertainers profiled in the story. Keep an eye out for the shots **I**'ll be posting over the next couple days.*
3. *Foraging through Beverly Hills like a raccoon with @davis.bates and @fevmo. Breaking hearts and smoking darts cause **my** id is unhinged*
4. *Somewhere in between **my** alarms, 5 minutes to restfulness, 10 minutes to delirium.[37]*

Cole also used a significant number of indefinite pronouns which also proves the point of him trying to be impersonal.

1. ***Somewhere** outside London with @ryanedgington*
2. ***Just a little something** to calm us all down.*
3. ***Some sundown** long before isolation. @lucan\_gillespie for @elleusa . A revisit of my favorite spot on earth, Death Valley. I'll be keeping you all placated with some photography for a while, help you pass the time in your solitude.*
4. ***Some American animism**, all for you.[37]*

The usage of indefinite pronouns may be considered as a signal of distancing himself from the audience, avoidance to give specific and detailed information about himself or elaborate on personal experiences.

## 2.3. Non-verbal features

As we know, the primary function of Instagram is to share photos. Sometimes text is not as necessary as the image. Moreover, one can barely imagine social media platform (especially Instagram) without different kinds of emojis. The reason for that is the desire to communicate not just the message but also emotions of an author. Without these non-linguistic means written communication on social media will definitely lack a human touch. That is a separate chapter is dedicated to examining non-verbal features of Cole's and Lili's posts.

### Cole Sprouse

A distinguishing feature of Cole's posts is that he replaces words with emojis. It is demonstrated in the following examples:



As we can see, there are 2 examples with an expression "keep an eye out" where the word "eye" has been intentionally replaced with a corresponding emoji which definitely triggers the visual effect attracting the reader's attention. Though the word has been replaced with the sign, the meaning of the expression has been fully preserved and transmitted to the audience.



Caption: "Big birthday for Brian 🎂👉🏻 aka Brock Rogers"

In the picture we can see Skeet Ulrich who is on the same Riverdale cast as Cole Sprouse. We can also notice that the photo was posted on the 20th of January

which is Skeet Ulrich's birthday [27]. Definitely, in the caption we see birthday wishes though they are addressed not directly to Skeet Ulrich but Brian Fish. Only the emoji of a fish can help us understand that it actually signifies a person's surname. A reader who has been watching "Riverdale" and knows the cast will instantly gauge that the person on the photo is not a renowned basketball player Brian Fish who has his birthday not on the 20th of January but on the 20th of December [8]. One of the reasons why Cole Sprouse made a reference towards **Brian** Fish might be the fact that Skeet Ulrich's birth name is **Bryan** Ray Trout. However, there is one more option is applicable here. In 2003 Skeet Ulrich starred in the TV series "Miracles"[24] where he played basketball in some of the episodes [33].

In a sense, Cole's posts (photos in connection with captions) are very specific in their nature. This might be explained by the fact that most of the photos Cole presents on his page are the ones of his models, not the pictures of him. If we compare Lili's and Cole's posts we might suggest that the main sense of Lili's posts is expressed in the captions she creates (hence, achieving verbal effect **HOWEVER** not always: the exceptions are presented later in the chapter) while Cole translates the meaning of his posts directly through the picture (hence, achieving visual effect). The following examples demonstrate this point.



Caption, “*Just before he ripped my throat out*”

If at first we read the caption without looking at the picture we just can presume that Cole is talking about an animal but without a clear understanding which one exactly. We also cannot gauge from Cole's words what exactly happened “*before*

*he ripped his throat out*”. For this reason, only the combination of the picture and caption can help the reader to comprehend the meaning of the post. Besides, it is explicitly hyperbolic: it is obvious the dog did not *"rip his throat out"*.



Caption, *“Losing my fucken mind over the little one tbh”*

As we can see, the same feature can be found in this post, too. Only the presence of both picture and text helps the reader realise what the author really means. Only the text helps us understand who is *“the little one”* that Cole *“loses his fucken mind over”*. Clearly, he is talking about the tiniest dog the woman is holding.



Caption, *“Love you, bud”*

The same feature can be applied here. We do not fully understand who *"bud"* is until we look at the photo of Luke Perry who died three days after the photo had been posted. So, we can assume that this way Cole tried to show his respect and support

for the colleague. It should be noted that Luke was on the same cast with Cole on "Riverside" till season 5 [23, 28].

As we can see, Cole is prone to replacing words with emojis and tightly connecting the picture and text.

## Lili Reinhart

A significant number of Lili's posts have an explicitly feministic tone. In this case the picture as an non-verbal manifest speaks even louder than the caption.



The caption “*Hey, I'm here to step on your ego*” is most likely addressed to a man. Here is how “The Daily Mail” commented on Lili's revealing outfit, “*Lili Reinhart looks like a femme fatale as she dons vampy bodysuit for sexy black and white shots... after ex Cole Sprouse is seen with new girl Ari Fournier*”[16].

Based on the aforementioned comment, it might be suggested that such bold caption in combination with the picture expressing both implicit aggression and dominance is the sign of women stoicism.



Caption, “*Happy International Women’s Day 🍷 cheers to the unstoppable, powerful, and magical beings that we are.*”

Another picture is no less feministic. This is the instance when the caption does not fully transmit the whole sense of the post. From the caption we see that Lili shows her adoration to women not just using such emotive adjectives as "unstoppable/power/magical" but also shifting readers' attention from the caption to her photo where she touches her breast purposefully emphasizing the importance of a female body. This can be seen as a manifest showing female sexuality and body image.



Caption, “*Mom, I am a rich man*”

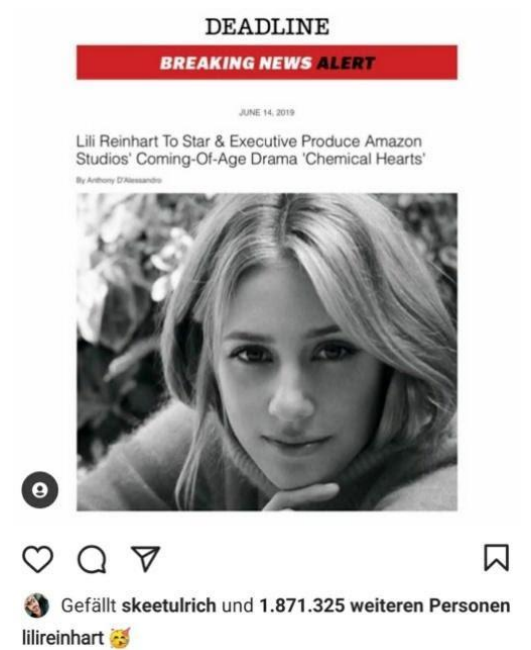
In the next post Lili is draws references to a famous American actress and singer Cher [10]. Lili's caption is in quotation marks which means she uses a citation. In one of her interviews Cher shared her dialogue with her mother who was gently insisting that Cher should settle down and marry a wealthy man. However, Cher was

already a famous and all-sufficient lady who replied to her mother, “Mom, I’m a rich man.” [11,31] . Citing Cher, Lili considers the issue of gender norms and states that a woman does not necessarily need a man to be supported.



Caption, “*Women. Get. It. Done.* 🙏 [@kamalaharris](#)”

Another caption is characterised by atypical punctuation. We can see that four words which constitute a sentence are capitalised and separated with dots. Such violation of punctuation has an explicitly assertive tone. Moreover, in the photo we see the current vice-president of the USA Kamala Harris [19,32] who along with Joe Biden was leading a 2020 election campaign called "Battle for the soul of the nation" [7]. We can also notice that Lili expressed her gratitude to the would-be vice-president adding the emoji which is used to say thank you (two hands folded together) [14]. With this post Lili might have drawn the audience's attention to women in politics implying that gender norms are gradually transforming.



The next caption has a highly distinctive feature: it contains no words. The sense of the post is wholly transmitted only with the help of the photo with headlines above. From it we can learn that Lili was successfully cast for a new role. Besides, the photo also provides us with the information about the website, so it can provoke readers' interest in the topic and push them to check the website and receive further information [9]. Moreover, the caption contains only one emoji - a parting face which is generally used to express person's excitement and desire to celebrate a joyous occasion. [15].

Based on the practical evidence, we can state that Lili's distinctive feature is to draw readers' attention to the picture which in a significantly number of cases bears an explicitly feministic tone. Moreover, Lili also uses quotation-references without mentioning any names which in fact encourages the reader to use their background knowledge in order to understand the point Lili is trying to communicate.

## **Conclusion to chapter 2**

For the research we chose 100 posts of Lili Reinhart and the same number of Cole Sprouse's posts.

The quantitative analysis has been conducted according to the following grammatical and lexical criteria:

- imperative mood;
- ellipsis;
- pronouns;
- social words: family and psychological processes;
- expression of gratitude;
- slang;

## Results

- imperative mood

Lili Reinhart - 10 posts containing this phenomenon

Cole Sprouse - 16

- *ellipsis*

Lili Reinhart - 12 posts containing this phenomenon

Cole Sprouse – 32

- *pronouns*

Lili Reinhart - 86 posts containing personal pronouns and 0 posts with indefinite pronouns

Cole Sprouse - 38 posts containing personal pronouns and 9 posts with indefinite pronouns.

- social words: family and psychological processes

Lili Reinhart - 38 posts containing this phenomenon

Cole Sprouse - 0

- *expression of gratitude*

Lili Reinhart - 28 posts containing this phenomenon

Cole Sprouse - 16

- *slang*

Lili Reinhart - 16 posts containing this phenomenon

Cole Sprouse – 26

The conducted research leads to the following conclusions:

- women's reactions are more diverse;

- the research showed that the female representative uses more layered and sophisticated language than the male representative;
- the female whose posts are being analysed is more focused on the expressive approach of conveying information to processing while the male is more prone to using less emotional and concise language structures.

We also analysed Lili's and Cole's posts in terms of non-verbal features and are ready to say this is a powerful paralinguistic tool used by both of them. From the results it can be seen that emojis are an essential part of applying non-verbal communicative techniques on Instagram. Besides, there is a tendency traced in Cole Sprouse's posts which consists in the replacement of the words in collocations and surnames with the emojis which stand for a word being replaced. Such feature has not been found in Lili Reinhart's posts. However, Lili's distinctive features is to draw readers' attention to the picture which in a significant number of cases bears an explicitly feministic tone. Moreover, Lili also uses a quotation which are used as references to important women in history. It can be considered as an intellectual exercise for readers since they have to use their background knowledge to whom Lili is referring to.

## **General conclusion**

The paper discusses the representation of gender in the computer-mediated environment. For this reason the first part of the paper is focused on providing the theoretical basis including contemporary theories of language functioning in the online discourse. The theoretical part presented three main theories of gender linguistics such as the Theory of socialization (by R. Lakoff), Theory of the principle of male domination and female subordination (by Thorne B. and Henley N.) and the Theory of “gender subcultures” (by Tannen D.). Moreover, based on the previous studies specific features of male and female communication style in the Internet discourse have been distinguished.

Here is the concise outline of the aforementioned theories.

**The Theory of socialization (by R. Lakoff).** According to gender researchers R. Lakoff and E.Ochs, gender is the result of early childhood socialization. It is assumed that the child, in accordance with his gender is forced to a gender-specific manner of speaking which the differences in men and women language. The manner imposed in childhood demonstrates the femininity of women through language, just like wearing male/female clothes or playing games typical for girls or boys.

**Theory of the principle of male domination and female subordination** (by Thorne B. and Henley N.). It is assumed that men intentionally developed their own "masculine speech" to exercise dominance over women who thus has their own feminine language. The following points are considered to be the proof of this dominance: frequent interruptions, long speech chunks a excessive straightforwardness.

In comparison to men, women lack social prestige which causes low self-esteem, which is provoked by their agreement to utilise the speech constructions which are deliberately imposed on them by men. Within the framework of this theory it is also assumed that women are primarily focused on the tactics of "communicative cooperation" while men mainly prefer "communicative rivalry".

**The Theory of “gender subcultures” (by Tannen D.).** This theory considers men and women as organised groups that are totally different. Gender differences are considered to be analogous to cultural differences which in their turn can potentially complicate intercultural communication.

It is explained by the fact that since childhood they have been growing up predominantly in same-sex groups which have specific gender-based practices, values gender-mediated activities. It is presumed that in adulthood this leads to misunderstanding and speech conflicts, which are equally compared to intercultural ones.

The empirical part discusses the language data taken from such social media platform as Instagram. More specifically, we analysed posts of two - Lili Reinhart (actress) and Cole Sprouse (actor). Observations related to their language style is following: they are both prone to using imperative mood; it can be connected with the desire to actively interact with the audience and trigger some kind of emotional response; Cole tends to use more elliptical structures than Lili; Lili's posts have a great number of the first-person pronouns which can be interpreted as the sign of self-focus; Cole mainly uses indefinite pronouns which can signal either about his desire to keep distance with the audience or his inner state of uncertainty as an individual; both of them use similar patterns of gratitude, though Lili expresses them in her posts more frequently which may be a sign of her being more compassionate than Cole; both of them use informal language which can be considered as an attempt to engage with the audience.

We also analysed Lili's and Cole's posts in terms of non-verbal features and ready to say this is a powerful paralinguistic tool used by both of them. From the results it can be seen that emojis are an essential part of applying non-verbal communicative techniques on Instagram. Besides, there is a tendency traced in Cole Sprouse's posts which consists in the replacement of the words in collocations and surnames with the emojis which stand for a word being replaced. Such feature has not been found in Lili Reinhart's posts. However, Lili's distinctive feature is to draw readers' attention to the picture which in a significantly number of cases bears an

explicitly feministic tone. Moreover, Lili also uses quotation which are used as references to important women in the history.

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## АНОТАЦІЯ

до кваліфікаційної бакалаврської роботи «Фактор гендеру в Інтернет-комунікації»

Робота висвітлює поняття гендеру в дискурсі онлайн-комунікації. Перша частина роботи зосереджена на аналізі теоретичної бази, до якої входять сучасні теорії функціонування мови в середовищі електронного спілкування. Теоретична частина містить критичний аналіз трьох основних теорій гендерної лінгвістики, такі як Теорія соціалізації (Р. Лакофф), Теорія принципу домінування чоловіків та жіночої підпорядкованості (Торн Б. та Генлі Н.) та Теорія „гендерних субкультур” (Таннен Д.). Крім того, на основі попередніх досліджень було виділено особливості чоловічого та жіночого стилю спілкування в Інтернет-дискурсі.

Теорія соціалізації (за Р. Лакофф та Е. Окс) Стверджується, що гендерна поведінка є результатом ранньої соціалізації дітей. Вважається, що дитині відповідно до її статі диктують моделі гендерної поведінки, яка різниться у чоловіків та жінок. Фемінність та маскуліність демонструються через мовні патерни,

Теорія принципу чоловічого домінування та жіночого підпорядкування (за Торн Б. та Генлі Н.). Вважається, що чоловіки цілеспрямовано розвивали власні моделі “чоловічої мови”, щоб уможливити домінування над жінками, які, в свою чергу, мають пат терни “жіночої мови”.

Доказом подібного домінування вважаються такі характеристики “чоловічої мови”: часті перебивання та відверта прямолінійність. У порівнянні з чоловіками, жінкам бракує соціального престижу, що спричиняє низьку самооцінку, а це в свою чергу провокує згоду жінок використовувати мовні конструкції, які їм свідомо нав’язують чоловіки. У рамках цієї теорії також передбачається, що жінки в першу чергу орієнтовані на тактику “комунікативної співпраці”, тоді як чоловіки переважно надають перевагу “комунікативному суперництву”.

Теорія “гендерних субкультур” (за Таннен Д.). Ця теорія розглядає чоловіків і жінок як абсолютно окремі соціальні групи. Гендерні відмінності прирівнюються до культурних відмінностей, які в свою чергу можуть потенційно поставити під загрозу міжкультурну комунікацію. Це пояснюється тим, що з дитинства як чоловіки, так і жінки виростають переважно в соціальних групах своєї ж статі, які мають особливі гендерні практики та систему цінностей. Передбачається, що в дорослому віці це призводить до непорозумінь та мовленнєвих конфліктів.

В практичній частині розглянуті мовні одиниці опубліковані в такій соціальній мережі як Instagram. Проаналізовано та порівняно публікації акторки Лілі Рейнхарт та актора Коула Спрауза. Аналіз проводився на лексичному та синтаксичному рівнях за такими критеріями:

- використання наказового способу;
- застосування еліптичних конструкцій;
- вживання особових та неозначених займенників;
- різновидність конструкцій для вираження подяки;
- вживання неформальної та обсентної лексики.

За даними аналізу можна стверджувати наступне: Лілі та Коул схильні до використання наказового способу. Це може бути пов’язано з бажанням активно взаємодіяти з аудиторією та викликати реакцію аудиторії.

Коул зазвичай використовує більше еліптичних структур, ніж Лілі.

У дописах Лілі є велика кількість займенників першої особи, що можна розуміти як вияв зосередження на власній особі. Коул переважно використовує неозначені займенники, що може сигналізувати про його бажання тримати дистанцію з аудиторією. Також це можливо інтерпретувати як внутрішній стан невизначеності.

Як Коул, так і Лілі використовують подібні патерни вираження вдячності, однак Лілі вживає їх частіше.

Обидва Коул та Лілі використовують неформальну лексику, що можна розглядати як спробу взаємодії з аудиторією та спосіб продемонструвати, що вони на одному соціальному рівні зі своїми підписниками.

Окрім того були проаналізовані публікації Лілі та Коула з точки зору невербальних засобів комунікації. З результатів видно, що емограми (або емотикони/емодзі) є важливою складовою невербальних комунікативних прийомів в Instagram. Крім того, у дописах Коула простежується тенденція, яка полягає у заміні слів у заголовках та прізвищах на емотикони, які відповідають тому чи іншому заміненому слову. Таких прийомів не було знайдено у публікаціях Лілі Рейнхарт. Однак особливістю Лілі є привертання уваги читачів до фото, які у свій переважній кількості мають чітко виражений феміністичний настрій. Окрім того, у своїх публікаціях Лілі використовує цитати-референції відомих жінок в історії, не називаючи їхні імена. Якщо читач спроможний помітити референцію, то подібний інтелектуальний прийом змушує його застосовувати свої фонові знання або ж додатково шукати інформацію.