

“I love u the most!”: CMC Acts and Politeness Variation in Instagram Live Videos

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Abstract

The present study investigates Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) acts and politeness variation in two Instagram live videos datasets, one from Spain and one from the United States. A total of 1000 utterances were collected between the two datasets, divided into 720 textual messages and 280 oral utterances across five different videos. Utterances were coded for gender in a binary male/female fashion, type of CMC act (Herring, Das, & Penumathy, 2005), and politeness behavior according to the effect produced on the addressee’s face (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Herring, 1994). Results show that commenters from both datasets displayed similar patterns in terms of CMC act variation in the written medium, while the oral data from the two live streamers presented more individual differences in their CMC acts when interacting with their followers. Analyzing gender and regional variation in the commenters’ posts also revealed that women reacted, inquired and greeted more often than men, and they also showed a higher level of engagement and participation. Finally, politeness behaviors were found to be similar in the two datasets, although the oral data in the American live streamer revealed many differences with regard to the way he interacted with his followers. The findings of the present study, therefore, provide preliminary evidence suggesting that this multimodal CMC environment might be highly conventionalized by its users, who join Instagram live videos to perform specific interactive online activities (e.g., asking questions, reacting, expressing subjective claims). Additionally, technical properties of Instagram live videos, such as the screen interface, seem to promote the use of specific CMC acts and politeness behaviors in that they encourage fast-paced, unmitigated communication among their users.

Key words: *Computer-mediated communication, CMC acts, Instagram live videos, CMC pragmatics, multimodal CMC*

1. Introduction

In November 2016, the widely known photo and video-sharing social media platform Instagram launched live videos as a feature of Instagram Stories, and they quickly became popular among celebrities and online influencers as a way to interact with their followers more personally. As a picture-sharing platform, Instagram is one of the favorite social media sites among younger generations, who use it to stay connected and communicate with friends, much like previous generations used letters or phone calls (Bergman et al., 2016). This new feature of Instagram Stories, the live videos, allows users to interact with other people in a plethora of

ways. On the one hand, the live streamer communicates through video chat as they speak on camera, while also having the option of writing and pinning comments on the chat. On the other hand, the viewers can interact with the live streamer by texting and tapping reaction emojis on the screen. This new format of online interaction, therefore, offers a unique convergence of different communication modes such as texting, emoji overlay, and oral language, introducing new possibilities for users to interact and create meaning by bringing together many features that were already present in other platforms such as Facebook live videos or Google Hangouts. Additionally, Instagram live videos greatly benefit from the fleeting nature of their streaming, as users are able to see a poster's live videos on their feed only if they follow said account and/or the original live streamer saves the video on their story for the next 24 hours. In addition, live streams appear first in line on the user's Instagram story interface, along with a different color frame indicating that the person is live sharing in that specific moment. These technical features promote the ephemerality of this emerging social media platform, creating the perception that livestreams need to be watched while they are happening, as you might no longer be able to access them in the future.

Following Herring's faceted classification (2007), Instagram live videos can be described as a synchronous multimodal medium that involves written and oral language via audio and video channels, and also offers the possibility of sending emojis quickly by tapping on the screen, a feature that indisputably promotes a fast communication. These emojis represent body gestures that contain conventional illocutionary forces such as greeting, laughing, or clapping for approval, thus their use becomes a key feature in computer-mediated communication (Gawne & McCulloch, 2019; McCulloch, 2019). Furthermore, this platform contains ephemeral text messages that scroll up after being available on camera only for a few seconds, in a one-to-

many/many-to-many participation structure. Live streamers and commenters have the option to scroll up and down the chat history to see previous messages, although it can become chaotic due to the fast-paced communication that takes place in this medium. Finally, live streamers have the choice of pinning one comment at the bottom of the chatroom to make it visible anytime, normally with the goal of highlighting what the main topic of the live stream is for viewers who join the video chat after it has already started.

Due to their recent debut in the Computer-mediated Communication (CMC) multimodal environment, Instagram live videos have yet to be explored in terms of the types of activities users perform on this platform via the different modes it offers (e.g., chatting, video, audio, emoji reactions). The technical features regarding fast-paced communication and short-lived availability make Instagram live videos a perfect platform for users to engage in spontaneous, casual conversations, just as it would happen in the offline world. The asymmetry in the direction of communication in this online environment also gives rise to some stimulating dynamics in terms of what activities users engage with in each medium. Previous research in the field of multimodal online communication has found that people perform different activities depending on their preferred communication channel (Rosenbaum et al., 2016; Sindoni, 2012), and since CMC is a field in constant growth and evolution, periodic studies that analyze how users express themselves and interact in emergent social media are needed. This is particularly important in platforms that involve synchronous, multimodal communication, as they show real-time interaction patterns that are not present in other online environments, such as fast speed communication patterns that favor direct, unmitigated interaction among their users.

The purpose of this paper is twofold. On the one hand, by using data from two accounts (one from Spain, one from the United States), it sets out to analyze the types of CMC acts (Herring,

Das, & Penumathy, 2005; Searle, 1976) and politeness behaviors (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Herring, 1994) that are present in this multimodal platform. On the other hand, drawing from a variational pragmatic framework (Barron, 2017; Barron & Schneider, 2009), this study examines how macro-level factors such as gender and region affect linguistic variation in the two datasets. As research on pragmatics in CMC environments is rapidly expanding (Herring, Stein, & Virtanen, 2013), this study aims to contribute to the research on language use and variation in multimodal platforms, an area that needs more empirical data to better understand how communication is achieved when two or more modes coexist together.

The present study is organized as follows: First, a review of the literature concerning computer-mediated communication, online discourse, and CMC pragmatics is provided, followed by the research questions. Then, the methodology and the data analysis procedures are described. Finally, the Results section reports on relevant findings, and their implications for current CMC multimodal environments, along with directions for future research and limitations of the present study, are presented in the Discussion section.

2. Literature review

2.1. Computer-Mediated Discourse Analysis

Computer-Mediated Discourse Analysis (Herring, 2004; Herring & Androutsopoulos, 2015) is an approach to researching online interactive behavior through methods drawn from disciplines such as linguistics, ethnography, and rhetoric, among many others. As illustrated in Table 1, Computer-Mediated Discourse (CMD) can be analyzed according to five domains, each taking into account different linguistic phenomena, issues, and methods.

Table 1. CMD schemata summary (adapted from Herring, 2004)

Level	Linguistic phenomena	Topic	Methods of analysis
Structure	Typography, spelling, morphosyntax, etc.	Genre characteristics	Structural and formal analysis
Meaning	Word and utterance meaning	What is communicated What is intended	Pragmatics, semantics
Interaction	Turn sequences, threads, etc.	Topic development	Conversation analysis
Social behavior	Face, identity, etc.	Contextual influence and social interaction	Interactional socio-linguistics, pragmatics
Participation	Number of messages, words, threads, etc.	Engagement	Quantitative methods

Traditional research in CMC has focused on single-mode environments (Herring & Androutsopoulos, 2015), despite the fact that multimodal platforms, also known in the literature as Interactive Multimodal Platforms (IMP, Herring, 2015), are rapidly increasing and becoming the norm for all new types of social media. As most social networking sites now offer their users the possibility of choosing from different mediums to engage in meaningful interaction, their decision of picking one over the other(s) might be key to understanding what type of discourse they are aiming to create. This mode-switching was explored by Sindoni (2012, 2014), who concluded that the spoken and written mediums constitute two different conversational floors, and the choice of one over the other might be determined by participation trends within a specific platform. Her studies show that active participants tend to prefer the spoken medium, perceived as the main conversational channel, while written messages are used as a secondary floor. Rosenbaum et al.'s (2016) study yielded similar findings. They analyzed interaction in Google Hangouts, and found that active participants preferred the oral mode, while more peripheral users showed a preference towards the written medium. Newon (2011) looked at how players on the online game *World of Warcraft* interacted through voice and chat simultaneously to create community membership norms, as well as construct identity and social roles within their own guild. Her results show that the raid leader controls the spoken medium, as it is the main

discourse channel, leaving the written floor for guild members' interaction. In another study, Bourlai and Herring (2014) compared how Tumblr users expressed emotions via texting and animated GIFs, and found the latter to be more positive and less sarcastic. Finally, Herring and Demarest (2017), explored gender variation in VoiceThreads, and found that both genders recorded positive comments in the video and audio mediums, while the written channel displayed more marked differences. Men tended to participate more, albeit they showed more negative attitudes than women. Their findings are consistent with previous studies on gender variation in social media that concluded that men show more hostile attitudes in written CMC (Herring, 1994, 1995). However, while it would appear that text-only CMC is becoming less popular within online platforms, not much research has been done on these new forms of IMPs, and certainly less so on platform-internal linguistic variation across languages and cultures.

2.2. CMC Pragmatics

The interface between CMC and pragmatics has become a popular research area in the field of linguistics, as online environments keep expanding and offer to their users increasingly more options for interacting with each other. According to Searle's (1969, 1976) seminal work in Speech Act Theory, when speakers produce utterances, they perform three acts: a locutionary act, i.e., the literal meaning of the sentence; an illocutionary act, i.e., what is being accomplished, e.g. a question or a command, and a perlocutionary act, i.e. the effect the utterance produces in both the speaker and the addressee, e.g. convincing or scaring. Illocutionary acts, that is, the speaker's intent when producing the utterance, are the central component in Searle's model, and can be classified into the following five categories (Searle, 1976): assertives (e.g. statements), commissives (e.g. promises), directives (e.g. commands), declaratives (e.g. ceremonies), and expressives (e.g. congratulations and excuses).

Speech Act Theory has attracted a fair amount of attention in CMC environments, as they show a series of idiosyncratic features, such as emojis or stickers, that allow users to modify the illocutionary force of their utterances in ways that are not possible in face-to-face communication. Dresner and Herring (2010) identified three major functions of emoticons: expressing emotions, mitigating or modifying illocutionary forces, and non-emotional content. Herring, Das, and Penumathy (2005) developed a CMC act taxonomy for coding and analyzing the speech acts that occur frequently in online environments. Table 2 provides a description of these CMC acts, accompanied by examples from the data analyzed in the present study or from Herring et al. (2005).

Table 2. CMC act taxonomy and description (adapted from Herring et al., 2005)

CMC act	Description	Example from the data
Accept	Concur, agree, acquiesce	Definitely ❤️
Apologize	Humble oneself, self-deprecate	Oops my fault :((Herring et al., 2005)
Claim	Make a subjective assertion, unverifiable in principle; assert, guess, speculate	<i>Me encantas</i> ‘I love you’
Desire	Desire, need, hope, wish, dream, promise	Come to the UK sisterrrrrrr 💜💜💜💜
Direct	Require, prohibit, permit, advise	SISTER SING
Elaborate	Comment on, explain, paraphrase a previous utterance	<i>Pero es puré</i> ‘but it’s purée’
Greet	Greeting, leave taking, inquiries about/wishes for well-being	🙌
Inform	Provide “factual” information, verifiable in principle, even if untrue; inform, state	I BOUGHT UR PALETTE
Inquire	Seek information, ask, make neutral or marked proposals	<i>Qué coméis</i> ‘what are you guys eating’
Invite	Solicit input, include, suggest, offer, seek participation/acceptance	Let’s see it
Manage	Manage discourse, organize, prompt, focus, open or close discussions	<i>Pregunto</i> ‘Just asking’
React	Show listenership, engagement (positive, negative, or neutral), endorse, approve	The sound of your nails on the screen lmao
Reject	Disagree, dispute, challenge	Gayyyy
Repair	Return, clarify, correct misunderstanding	Did you mean “school holiday”? (Herring et al., 2005)
Request	Seek action politely, make direct or indirect requests	Can you plz say hi CHLOEEEEEEEE
Thank	Appreciate, express gratitude	<i>Muchas gracias, mis niñas. Real, ¿eh?</i> ‘Thank you so much, my girls. For real.’

Ishizaki et al. (2005), who employed the same CMC act taxonomy, found that claims and reacts were the most common acts on two music websites, and that the comments posted were short in nature, favoring the use of these two acts. Kapidzic & Herring (2011) also used this CMC act taxonomy to describe gender variation in online behavior in teen chatrooms, and observed that while invites, claims, and reacts were the most common CMC acts in their sample, men showed more manipulative acts and women seemed to prefer reactive and information-exchange CMC acts. In CMC research in Spanish, previous studies have looked at the realization of certain speech acts without using this taxonomy, such as research on compliments on online platforms like Instagram (Maíz-Arévalo & García-Gómez, 2013; Placencia, 2019), and found that compliments tend to be internally modified by emojis and hashtags in an effort to convey intensification. However, more research in this area, especially in multimodal CMC environments, is needed in order to describe how the technical properties of specific modes affect the type of language and acts users perform online.

Politeness (Brown & Levinson, 1987) is another pragmatic-discourse phenomenon that has received a lot of attention from CMC researchers. Politeness theories draw on Goffman's (1967) framework on *face*, that is, an individual's self-projected, public image of themselves. On this account, positive politeness deals with a person's desire to be accepted and appreciated by the members of their community, while negative politeness relates to a person's desire to be unimpeded by others. CMC environments, unlike face-to-face communication, frequently lack social and behavioristic cues in interaction among different speakers, which often result in a violation of both positive and negative politeness norms towards the addressees. Many studies have analyzed politeness norms in CMC settings, in English (Herring, 1994; Kaul & Kurkani, 2005), Spanish (Maíz-Arévalo, 2015; Vinagre, 2008), and East Asian languages, such as Korean

(Kim & Herring, 2018). Generally speaking, it is documented that men tend to violate positive politeness more often than women by using more direct, unmitigated language, and issuing more challenges and bald disagreements, while women show a higher degree of listenership, engagement, and politeness. Differences in the ways men and women use language and discursive politeness in CMC modes have been investigated in several works (Herring & Kapidzic, 2015; Kapidzic & Herring, 2011; Magnuson & Dundes, 2008), and this is a subfield of CMC that attracts a good deal of scholars' interest.

However, it is important to point out that the notion of face tends to be dependent on sociocultural settings and interpersonal relationships (Haugh, 2013), that is, the sociocultural expectations that people have from face-to-face interactions. Bravo (1999, 2002) proposes two aspects of face: autonomy, for behaviors related to how people see themselves as individuals with their own rights within a community, and affiliation, for behaviors that express solidarity and membership within a given social group. Anglophone cultures tend to show a preference for the former, favoring negative politeness norms, while Spanish cultures show a tendency for solidarity and affiliation behaviors (Bravo, 1999, 2002). It is therefore expected that Spanish CMC will exhibit discourse features that lean toward positive politeness, while American English streamers and commenters will show more deference toward individuals, using features of negative politeness more often than their Spanish counterparts.

In light of the linguistic phenomena described thus far, this paper sets out to analyze language use and variation in Instagram live videos by addressing the following research questions:

- 1) What are the most common CMC acts that take place in Instagram live videos?
- 2) How are politeness behaviors accomplished in this multimodal CMC environment?
- 3) Do commenters show gender and regional variation in the written medium?

3. Methodology

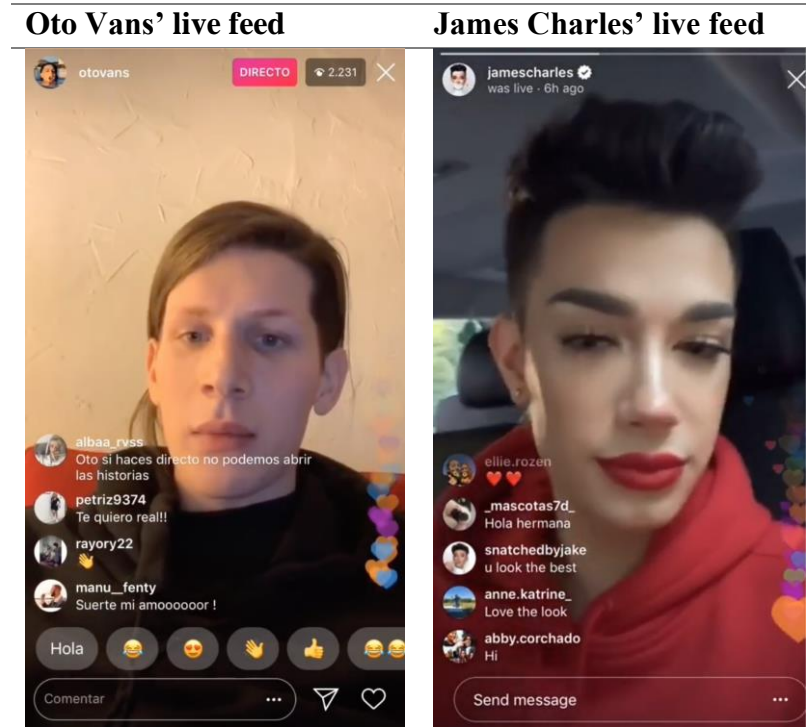
3.1. Participants

The data for this study were collected from two male Instagram live streamers: Oto Vans, from Spain, and James Charles, from the United States. The reasons for analyzing and comparing these two users' activity on social media are varied and principled. First, they are two of the leading male figures within the online beauty communities in Spain and the United States, respectively, and, thus, are highly representative of how members of these online groups use social media to interact among themselves. Generally speaking, besides posting anecdotes about their daily lives, beauty bloggers share beauty tips and make-up tutorials for their followers, mostly teenagers, while also attracting older viewers. Both Oto Vans and James Charles are extremely active on all forms of social media, including YouTube, Instagram, and Twitter, and occasionally livestream on Facebook and Instagram. This type of multiplatform interaction illustrates how individuals can use social media presence to advance their online brands by simply sharing their lives with other users online (Hearn, 2008; Page, 2012).

While their online content and audience show striking similarities, what differentiates them is the way they engage with their followers and use social media to construe their personae online. Oto Vans is a 24-year-old Croatian-Spanish men who became Internet-famous in Spain in the summer of 2015, after a video of him making fun of one of his younger brothers went viral on Twitter. Thereafter, Oto Vans' popularity has only increased, and he has slowly transitioned from sharing Twitter videos of his daily life to creating make-up tutorials for his fans. As for James Charles, he is a 21-year-old American internet celebrity whose online popularity started in 2016 after his senior yearbook photo of him wearing make-up went viral on Twitter. Unlike Oto Vans, whose popularity domains are mainly online and within a specific community of

followers, James Charles soon started to accept modeling and make-up sponsoring jobs for highly influential make-up cosmetic lines and magazines. James Charles is nevertheless very active on social media, and he posts daily on his Instagram account and twice a week on his YouTube channel. Figure 1 shows what Oto Vans' and James Charles' Instagram live videos feeds look like from the commenter's side.

Figure 1. Screenshots of both Instagram live streamers side by side



3.2. Data collection

A total of 1000 tokens extracted from five different videos were collected for this study. Since Instagram live videos is a multimodal platform that allows both voice and chat communication, oral and written language from each dataset was coded and analyzed: 500 utterances from each dataset were collected, divided into 360 written messages and 160 oral comments. The swiftness and technical properties of this CMC multimodal medium, which privileges textual communication over spoken language, is the reason for the mismatch between

the two subsets, as written chat messages were more frequent in the data as a whole. Of the five videos under analysis, three are from Oto Vans, as they are shorter and were not uploaded in their entirety, and two from James Charles. Since James Charles' Instagram live feeds are typically much longer, coding started after 5 minutes of video, in an effort to make them more similar to the Oto Vans data, whose videos started a few minutes after the beginning of his live stream. This decision allowed both datasets to be coded starting at a similar stage in their livestreams, thus avoiding the initial greetings and small talk that would be present in the original James Charles' data but not in Oto Vans'. If this preparatory stage were included in only one of the two datasets, the data might have been skewed in favor of certain CMC acts over others.

Each written utterance was coded for gender, in a binary male/female fashion. While this study acknowledges that these two users have a big number of followers with multiple gender identities along the gender spectrum, coding, for both datasets, was narrowed to male-identifying and female-identifying individuals in order to make it more systematic and less subjective. Gender assignment was determined by looking at profile pictures and/or mention of personal pronouns in their Instagram biography. When the commenter's gender identity was not clear, their utterance was discarded and not counted towards the final analysis. A total of 52 utterances (10%) in the Oto Vans data and 69 (12%) in the James Charles data were coded as *unknown* with respect to gender and, therefore, discarded from the final dataset.

3.3. Analysis

Each utterance was coded by the researcher for a CMC act, following Herring, Das, and Penumathy's (2005) taxonomy of speech acts based on Searle's (1969, 1972) original classification. However, a new CMC act, i.e., *compliment*, was introduced to code utterances

expressing approval or positive evaluation of the live streamer’s possessions, skills, or appearance, as illustrated in Table 3.

Table 3. Examples of the compliment CMC act in both datasets

Oto Vans corpus	James Charles corpus
<i>Me gusta tu sudadera</i> 'I like your sweatshirt'	Lips on fire rn
<i>Guapooooo!</i> 'Handsoooooome!'	Wow lookin sister spicy

Data were also coded for politeness behavior (Brown & Levinson, 1984) using Herring’s (1994) coding schema: +P indicates observation of positive politeness, +N observation of negative politeness, -P violation of positive politeness, and -N violation of negative politeness. A subcategory of -N behavior was introduced, i.e., -N^{+P}, for those -N utterances, such as unhedged questions or directives, that were mitigated by the use of one or multiple emojis. As the use of graphicons is increasing in CMC environments (Herring & Dainas, 2017), it is important to make a distinction between utterances featuring text only, and those modified by CMC-specific means. Examples of each politeness behavior category are presented in Table 4 below. Finally, coding was selective, as not every utterance in the spoken and written subgroups showed politeness behavior addressing the hearer(s).

Table 4. Examples of politeness behavior coding in the data

Behavior	Oto Vans corpus	James Charles corpus
+P (observation)	<i>Echaba muchísimo de menos estos directos</i> 😊 'I really missed your lives 🤔'	Love the red lippy!
-P (violation)	👉👉👉	Gayyyy
+N (observation)	---	Can you please say my namee!! It'll mean the worldd
-N (violation)	<i>Menos viajes a canaria y paga el iPhone JAJAJAJA</i> 'Stop traveling to the Canary Islands and pay for that iPhone LMAO'	When can we buy it
-N ^{+P} (violation mitigated by emoji(s))	<i>El video con el maquillaje de la ama cuando?</i> ❤️❤️❤️❤️❤️ 'When are you releasing the make-up video with your mom?' ❤️❤️❤️❤️❤️'	Come to the UK sisterrrrrrr 💜💜💜💜💜💜💜💜 💜💜

Interrater reliability was measured by sharing 10% of the total tokens with a bilingual Spanish-English coder who was familiar with both CMC act classification scheme and politeness behavior taxonomy in computer-mediated discourse. The comparison of their coding with that of the researcher yielded an 87% agreement rate; cases in which there existed disagreement were solved by discussing the differences until a final decision was made.

4. Results

The first research question aimed to investigate which CMC acts are more commonly used by the live streamer and the commenters in Instagram live videos. A total of 360 textual utterances produced by the commenters in the written medium were analyzed. The commenters' most frequent CMC acts in both datasets were reacts, greets, and inquires, and although the James Charles data showed a much higher frequency of greets (23.6%) than Oto Vans' (12%), this type of acts was still dominant in both samples. Compliments, the new CMC act introduced for this study, were more common in the Oto Vans data (10%), but they were also produced at a fair rate in the James Charles data (7.3%). A summary of these results is shown in Table 5.

Table 5. CMC acts in the written medium

CMC act	Oto Vans corpus	James Charles corpus
Accept	6 (1.7%)	10 (2.8%)
Claim	35 (9.7%)	38 (10.5%)
Compliment	36 (10%)	27 (7.3%)
Desire	22 (6%)	13 (3.6%)
Direct	27 (7.5%)	19 (5.3%)
Elaborate	3 (0.8%)	-
Greet	43 (12%)	85 (23.6%)
Inform	29 (8%)	6 (1.7%)
Inquire	56 (15.5%)	45 (12.5%)
Manage	4 (1.1%)	1 (0.3%)
React	81 (22.5%)	103 (28.6%)
Reject	13 (3.6%)	2 (0.5%)
Request	4 (1.1%)	12 (3.3%)
Total	360 (100%)	360 (100%)

The oral data presented the highest number of differences between the two datasets. One hundred forty oral utterances were analyzed for each live streamer. Results show that informs (21.4%), inquires (16.4%) and claims (13.6%) were the most produced CMC acts by Oto Vans, while elaborations (25.7%), informs (19.3%) and desires (18.6%) emerged as James Charles' preferred CMC acts. Even though compliments were used fairly frequently by the commenters in the written medium (cf. Table 5), they were barely produced by Oto Vans (0.7%) and James Charles (N/A) in the oral mode. A similar imbalance in frequency was found in reacts, which were undisputedly the most common CMC acts in the written medium, though much less common in oral language. Table 6 shows the distribution of each CMC act in the two corpora.

Table 6. CMC acts in the oral medium

CMC act	Oto Vans corpus	James Charles corpus
Accept	6 (4.3%)	1 (0.7%)
Claim	19 (13.6%)	23 (16.4%)
Compliment	1 (0.7%)	-
Desire	6 (4.3%)	26 (18.6%)
Direct	15 (10.7%)	5 (3.7%)
Elaborate	6 (4.3%)	36 (25.7%)
Greet	2 (1.4%)	14 (10%)
Inform	30 (21.4%)	27 (19.3%)
Inquire	23 (16.4%)	3 (2.1%)
Manage	5 (3.6%)	-
React	12 (8.6%)	1 (0.7%)
Reject	8 (5.7%)	1 (0.7%)
Request	1 (0.7%)	3 (2.1%)
Thank	6 (4.3%)	-
Total	140 (100%)	140 (100%)

The second research question set out to analyze politeness behaviors in Instagram live videos in both the oral and the written medium. Out of 1000 utterances surveyed, 635 featured politeness behaviors, divided into 504 written utterances (70.7% of the total written data) and 131 oral utterances (46.8% of the total oral data). The results for the written medium, that is, the politeness behaviors found in the commenters' utterances, were fairly similar across the two

datasets, with +P and -N politeness behaviors being the most common in both corpora. However, there were also some noticeable differences. The first pertains to Oto Vans' commenters, who showed a higher frequency of -P behavior (11.5%) than James Charles' commenters (0.8%) did. The second difference, though small, is that, in the Spanish data, no instances of +N were found, while the James Charles corpus featured some utterances in which +N (1.3%) was observed. A summary of the politeness behaviors used in the written medium in both datasets is shown in Table 7.

Table 7. Politeness behaviors in the written medium

Politeness schema	Oto Vans corpus	James Charles corpus
+P (observation)	133 (52.6%)	163 (64.1%)
-P (violation)	29 (11.5%)	2 (0.8%)
+N (observation)	-	3 (1.3%)
-N (violation)	81 (32%)	75 (29.5%)
-N ^{+P} (violation mitigated by emoji(s))	10 (3.9%)	11 (4.3%)
Total	250 (100%)	254 (100%)

As it was the case with the results of the CMC act variation in the oral data, politeness phenomena displayed major differences in the oral medium too, for both Oto Vans and James Charles. Out of all 280 oral utterances, 131 were coded for politeness behavior (46.8%). In general terms, Oto Vans showed a preference for -P (34.8%) and -N (43.5%) politeness behaviors, while James Charles revealed an overwhelming tendency for +P behaviors (71%). Table 8 displays the distribution of politeness behaviors in both datasets.

Table 8. Politeness behaviors in the oral medium

Politeness Schema	Oto Vans corpus	James Charles corpus
+P (observation)	15 (21.7%)	44 (71%)
-P (violation)	24 (34.8%)	6 (9.7%)
+N (observation)	-	-
-N (violation)	30 (43.5%)	12 (19.3%)
Total	69 (100%)	62 (100%)

The third research question addressed gender and regional variation in the commenters' CMC acts and politeness behaviors in the two datasets. In terms of CMC act variation, the Oto Vans data attested female commenters' preference for reacts (24.4%), inquires (17%) and greets (13%), while men produced more reacts (20%), informs (14%) and inquires (14%). The main difference between genders was, therefore, represented by the imbalance in the production of informs, which women rarely uttered (4%). The James Charles data followed a similar distribution as the Spanish data in that women were, again, mostly found to use reacts (31.1%), greets (23.5%), claims (11.2%) and inquires (11.2%). Male commenters in the James Charles data, however, behaved differently from those in the Oto Vans corpus in that their most common CMC acts were greets (23.9%), reacts (20.2%) and inquires (16.7%). Finally, in the Oto Vans data, female commenters tended to compliment more (11%) than in the James Charles data (6.9%), in which reacts represented the most recurrent CMC act (31.1%). Table 9 illustrates the results for CMC act variation between male and female commenters across the two datasets.

Table 9. Gender and regional variation of CMC acts in the written medium

CMC act	Oto Vans corpus		James Charles corpus	
	Women	Men	Women	Men
Accept	4 (1.9%)	2 (1.3%)	8 (2.9%)	2 (2.4%)
Claim	19 (9%)	16 (10.6%)	31 (11.2%)	7 (8.3%)
Compliment	23 (11%)	13 (8.6%)	19 (6.9%)	7 (8.3%)
Desire	8 (3.8%)	13 (8.6%)	8 (2.9%)	5 (6%)
Direct	17 (8.1%)	10 (6.6%)	13 (4.7%)	6 (7.1%)
Elaborate	2 (0.9%)	1 (0.6%)	--	--
Greet	27 (13%)	16 (10.6%)	65 (23.5%)	20 (23.9%)
Inform	8 (4%)	21 (14%)	3 (1%)	3 (3.5%)
Inquire	35 (17%)	21 (14%)	21 (11.2%)	14 (16.7%)
Manage	1 (0.5%)	3 (2%)	1 (0.3%)	--
React	51 (24.4%)	30 (20%)	86 (31.1%)	17 (20.2%)
Reject	9 (4.3%)	5 (3.3%)	1 (0.3%)	1 (1.2%)
Request	4 (1.9%)	--	10 (3.6%)	2 (2.4%)
Total	209 (100%)	151 (100%)	276 (100%)	84 (100%)

In terms of pragmatic variation in the commenters' politeness behaviors, while +P and -N behaviors were the most common politeness phenomena, women in the James Charles data showed the highest frequency of observation of politeness behaviors (68.3%) out of any other subgroup in the whole dataset. Both men (10.1%) and women (13.7%) in the Oto Vans data violated positive politeness more often than James Charles's commenters did. Finally, male commenters in the Oto Vans data never resorted to emojis to mitigate potential -N behaviors, whereas female commenters in the James Charles data used this CMC-exclusive feature the most out of any other subgroup. Table 10 shows the results of gender and regional politeness variation in the two corpora.


Table 10. Gender and regional variation of politeness behaviors in the written medium

Politeness Schema	Oto Vans		James Charles	
	Women	Men	Women	Men
+P (observation)	84 (53.1%)	49 (51.3%)	133 (68.3%)	30 (51.7%)
-P (violation)	16 (10.1%)	13 (13.7%)	1 (0.5%)	1 (1.7%)
+N (observation)	--	--	2 (1%)	1 (1.7%)
-N (violation)	52 (33%)	33 (35%)	50 (25.6%)	24 (41.3%)
-N ^{+P} (violation mitigated by emoji(s))	6 (3.8%)	--	9 (4.6%)	2 (3.4%)
Total	158 (100%)	95 (100%)	195 (100%)	58 (100%)

5. Discussion

5.1. CMC acts in Instagram live videos

With respect to research question (1), this study identified reacts, greets, inquires, and claims as the most common CMC acts in these two Instagram live videos datasets. The findings regarding the written medium, i.e., commenters' utterances, show similar trends in both corpora, suggesting that the technical properties and expectations of this CMC multimodal environment are determining factors in how users interact with it. In other words, though this study analyzed crosslinguistic variation in two live video datasets, one from Spain and one from the United

States, the fact that results were nearly identical seems to indicate that the written medium in Instagram live videos is highly conventionalized, and commenters generally use it to ask questions, show reactions, talk about what is happening on camera, and say hi when they enter the chatroom. Emojis such as the heart-eyed face “

In terms of CMC acts in the oral medium, informs, inquires and claims were found very frequently in Oto Vans’ speech, which suggests that his online content is more personal and reactive insofar as it mostly talks about himself and his *then* and *now*. While the high number of inquires in these data might seem surprising at first, this finding can be explained by the fact that an overwhelming majority of his inquires are, in fact, represented by some of his signature catchphrases, a core part of his online personality. Oto Vans’ online persona can be abrasive and arrogant, as he is constantly picking on his followers by means of playful banter and mock

impoliteness (Culpepper, 1996), which, however, is never perceived as ill-mannered or disrespectful by his followers. In fact, this is precisely one of the reasons why Oto Vans is so popular within the realm of male beauty bloggers in Spain. On the other hand, James Charles' oral data show a preference for elaborations, informs, and desires, and James has an overall much more positive and warmhearted interaction with his followers than Oto Vans does.

However, Oto Vans' and James Charles' individual differences in terms of their online personalities are factors that critically contribute to how the commenters interact in the written medium with them and with each other in this multimodal CMC platform. In other words, commenters are inevitably going to pick up on some of the live streamers' mannerisms and expressions in order to build rapport and show membership to these specific online communities. James Charles' oral data reveal an affectionate and pleasing online personality, and his interaction with his followers seems more caring in nature than that Oto Vans has with his followers, who produce more insults and negative language, most likely as a way to imitate Oto's attitude by showing more confrontation. Commenters in the James Charles' data tend to imitate their idol too, and they often produce his two most popular catchphrases, "*Hey, sisters!*" and "*I love you the most*", which helps to establish a personal connection with him. Particularly, "*Hey sisters!*", which James uses at the beginning of each video, has become a staple expression within the his online community, and his fans use it very frequently to show group membership, hence yielding a much higher rate of greetings in his data (23.6%) than in Oto Vans' (12%). Another linguistic feature recurrent in James Charles's speech patterns is the use of superlative forms, including "*the most*", which has also made its way into the commenters' linguistic norms. Since "*the most*" is a syntactic construction that mainly expresses subjective assertions and show engagement with the addressee (e.g., "*this is the most pretty [sic] palette ever!*", "*I miss you the*

most”), the widespread use of this superlative by both James Charles and his followers results in a larger number of claims and reacts in his data. “*The most*”, therefore, seems to have acquired its own group-specific meaning and is used by members of this online community both as a membership marker and as their preferred means to convey excitement, listenership, and to make subjective claims.

5.2. Politeness behaviors in Instagram live videos

The second research question examined politeness behaviors in both the written and oral mediums in the two Instagram live video datasets. Observation of positive politeness (+P) and violation of negative politeness (-N) were the most common trends in the written medium in both corpora. These politeness-related behaviors included compliments and reactions for the +P category, and unhedged questions and commands and directives for the -N category. Such behaviors, however, might have also been affected by the technical properties of this CMC mode, particularly due to the ephemerality of the chat messages shown on the screen. Since textual utterances are only displayed on the screen for a few seconds and the commenters want to be noticed by the person on camera, messages tend to be more direct and unhedged than usual, as they are faster to type and take up less space on the chat screen, hence yielding unhedged, unmitigated questions and requests on the followers’ side.

Individual differences in the way Oto Vans and James Charles interact with their followers resulted in politeness variation in the oral data. Oto Vans showed a high preference for -P (34.8%) and -N (45.3%) behaviors, which is explained by his frequent use of playful insults, harsh comments, and unhedged questions towards his followers. In contrast, James Charles’ politeness behavior was overwhelmingly +P (71%), consisting mostly of advice, good wishes, and compliments towards his followers. This finding might also explain why James Charles’

commenters showed a higher frequency of +P politeness (64.1%) than Oto Vans' (52.6%). Since followers tend to imitate or adopt certain behaviors that are fundamental within their community of practice, in this case the James Charles community, it is not farfetched to think that they are inheriting the positive and caring attitude that this beauty blogger shows online.

5.3. Commenters' gender and regional variation in Instagram live videos

Regarding gender and regional variation across subsets of commenters' written data, generally speaking, women reacted, inquired and greeted more often than men, and they also showed a higher level of engagement and participation. Female commenters in the Oto Vans' data also complimented more, but women in the James Charles' data were the ones who reacted the most out of any other subgroup. These findings seem to be consistent with those of previous studies on gender variation online, which concluded that women tend to be friendlier and better listeners than men (Kapidzic & Herring, 2011; Magnuson & Dundes, 2008). In terms of linguistic patterns used by male commenters, informs were widely available in the Oto Vans data, which aligns with what could be expected from the relatively patriarchal culture still common in Spain.

Finally, gender variation in terms of politeness behavior in these data follows what previous studies reported, i.e., men violate politeness in online mediums more often than women, who show a more marked tendency to observe politeness behaviors (Herring, 1994; Kaul & Kurkani, 2005), and this is especially true for American women. Spanish commenters, males in particular, violate positive politeness more often, a behavior that had been already attested in the area of CMC studies (Vinagre, 2008).

5.4. Limitations and future directions

This study is certainly not devoid of limitations. First, the data used for this analysis are to some extent restricted, as they are very specific to two live streamers from the online beauty community, and thus they might not be completely representative of what other Instagram live video streamers and their commenters do. Future studies on this multimodal CMC mode should look at other types of contents and users in order to identify possibly different linguistic patterns in this online environment. Second, coding and analyzing gender in CMC platforms can be challenging, as one can never be sure of the gender identity behind an online username. In this study, gender identification was done to the best of the author's capacities, but it is likely that some of the users might have been assigned an incorrect gender. Finally, one semiotic feature of this multimodal CMC platform that has not been discussed in this study is the visual medium, that is, what is actually happening on camera, and how visual cues affect other linguistic phenomena. Future studies should look at the interaction between video, audio, and chat in order to better describe the convergence of these three different CMC mediums.

6. Conclusion

The present study set out to compare CMC acts and politeness behaviors in two Instagram live videos datasets, one in Spanish and one in American English. While the textual medium yielded similar results in both corpora, showing a preference for reacts, greets, and inquires, the oral data showed more individual differences, probably as a consequence of the types of online personae Oto Vans and James Charles respectively adopt and display. An analysis of gender and regional variation confirmed that women, compared to men, are more likely to show a higher level of engagement and listenership when interacting online, as suggested by previous studies (Herring, 1995; Kapidzic & Herring, 2011). Politeness behaviors were highly established, with a

preference towards +P and -N phenomena, though James Charles showed an overwhelming +P behavior in his oral data.

This paper meant to represent a contribution to the rapidly growing field of research on multimodal CMC environments by analyzing and describing some of the current trends of Instagram live videos in two countries, Spain and the United States. Findings suggest that this multimodal CMC medium might be highly conventionalized by its users, who join celebrities' livestreams to interact with them by asking questions, reacting, and making personal claims. The interface layout of Instagram live videos seems to shape this kind of many-to-one communication, inasmuch as its technical properties favor certain CMC phenomena such as fast typing or emoji posting by simply tapping on the screen.

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