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Self-Discolsure on Facebook – A Language Analysis

MASTER'S THESIS

submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

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in

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by

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at the Vienna University of Technology

Advisor: Univ.-Prof. Dipl.-Ing. Mag. Dr. Geraldine Fitzpatrick

Vienna, 19.11.2013

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Abstract

Social Media has become an international phenomenon in the modern digital era conquering the lives of hundreds of millions of people and enabling individuals to share their thoughts at every given minute. While prior research focused more on privacy issues and reasons of usage, aspects like emotional implications and language analysis seem to become of higher importance. This work analyzes the degree of self-disclosure of status updates posted by Romanian students living in Austria on the social network site Facebook. Based on previous studies, the analysis starts with the assumption that a person shares more intimate information in their mother language than in other languages. The last 25 status updates of 20 users are downloaded for analysis. The self-disclosing statements are separated into factual, cognitive and emotional disclosures. The percentage of these statements in each language is compared to see if the initial assumption has been correct. The affirmations are also decomposed depending on their valence, whether they are positive, neutral or negative. Furthermore, other criteria like the use of dialect, shortcuts and emoticons are studied. Finally, qualitative interviews are being carried out to give a more detailed look into the individual usage of language. The results support some of the hypotheses that social network site users make use of language a group selector and use it as a privacy control tool. Some of the hypotheses have not been supported and were not in unison with the original work because of the time difference of the studies and because of cultural differences. Moreover, the interviews suggested that the willingness to disclose emotions diminished over time as did the general posting habit of users which is gradually replaced by the expression of emotions through pictures, songs or links to articles.
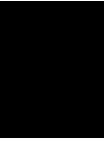
Kurzfassung

Social Media ist in der modernen digitalen Ära zu einem internationalen Phänomen geworden. Es hat das Leben von Hunderten Millionen Menschen erobert und ermöglicht jedem, seine Gedanken zu jeder beliebigen Zeit mit der ganzen Welt zu teilen. Während frühere Studien eher Privatsphäreprobleme und Gründe für die Benutzung als Fokuspunkte hatten, werden die emotionalen Hintergründe und die Sprachanalyse immer wichtiger. Diese Arbeit analysiert den Grad der Selbstenthüllung in Statusupdates, die von rumänischen Studenten die in Österreich leben auf Facebook gepostet werden. Basierend auf früheren Studien, beginnt die Analyse mit der Annahme dass eine Person intimere Details in seiner Muttersprache preisgibt als in anderen Sprachen. Die letzten 25 Statusupdates von 20 Benutzern wurden zu diesem Zweck heruntergeladen. Die Selbstenthüllungsaussagen wurden in sachliche, kognitive und emotionale Aussagen unterteilt. Die Prozentanteile dieser Aussagen in jeder Sprache werden miteinander verglichen um zu sehen ob die ursprünglichen Annahmen richtig waren. Die Äußerungen werden auch entsprechend ihrer Valenz unterteilt: positiv, neutral oder negativ. Darüber hinaus werden auch andere Aspekte wie die Verwendung von Dialekt, Abkürzungen oder Emoticons studiert. Als Letztes werden einzelne qualitative Interviews durchgeführt um eine detailliertere Einsicht in den individuellen Sprachgebrauch zu gewähren. Die Ergebnisse unterstützen einige der Hypothesen dass User von sozialen Netzwerken Sprache als Auswahlverfahren für deren Freundesgruppen und als ein Werkzeug der Kontrolle ihrer Privatsphäre benutzen. Manche Hypothesen wurden nicht erfüllt und stimmen nicht mit der originalen Arbeit überein. Gründe dafür sind der Zeitunterschied zwischen den beiden Studien und die kulturellen Differenzen. Weiters weisen die Interviews darauf hin dass man mit der Zeit weniger bereit war Emotionen zu enthüllen und die allgemeine Angewohnheit Updates zu posten wurde schrittweise von dem Ausdrücken von Emotionen durch das Posten von Fotos, Liedern oder Links zu Artikeln abgelöst.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

1.1 Motivation

Social Network Sites (SNSs) such as MySpace, LinkedIn, Twitter and Facebook have become more and more popular in the last years reaching up to hundreds of millions of users worldwide. The ubiquitous nature of mobile phones, tablets and other devices with Internet access allowed the social media to turn into a constant companion of our lives. Microtexts like Twitter messages or Facebook status updates make it possible to share every random thought, feeling or activity at every given minute of the day. These texts have the potential to provide unique perspectives on human experiences. The degree of self-disclosiveness is strongly dependend of various contexts like age, geographic location, cultural differences or how the users want to be perceived through their online persona. Thus, many factors influence the way users share their personal information in microtexts and other forms of media. The exponential rise of the social media popularity was followed by scientific research into this phenomenon with examples of focus on reasons of usage or on the hazards like privacy and addiction. The few researches that focused on language analysis lacked the emotional aspect that necessarily comes with the interaction between humans. Understanding how users express themselves, choose a language, and share different types of information and why they make these choices give a valuable psychological insight into the interaction with social media as will be further outlined in Chapter 2.

Studying in a German School in Romania, living in Austria for the last couple of years and having done a term abroad in Spain (Catalonia to be specific), I have been facing different languages my whole life and have always been fascinated not only by the languages but also by the different dialects and attitudes towards these languages. In a time where the social media is as omnipresent as it is today, the best thing by far for me is that it helps us stay in touch with old friends and new, despite the fact that they might be living in another city, another country or on another continent. Thus, it seemed a very natural thing to combine my love of languages with the social media network that I use on a daily basis to do a master thesis that intrigues me, keeps me focused and may also be interesting for other people who love languages as dearly as I do.

1.2   Problem Statement

Nowadays, it is unusual to be born, grow up and live in a single town your whole life. People tend to move to different cities or countries to explore their possibilities or live a better life. Nevertheless, humans are social beings thus wanting to be able to communicate with their family, friends and acquaintances. Especially young adults that moving to university in a different city suffer from what Paul and Brier [36] call *Friendsickness*. Thankfully due to the various social network sites it is easily possible nowadays to stay connected with your peers. This concept is called by Ellison, Steinfield and Lampe [13] *maintained social capital*. Moreover, it is even possible to find long lost friends through this medium. One of the best ways to do this is through the social network site Facebook, since it you can find people easily through their names.

So called Facebook status updates are an easy way to address your peers since they are public and everybody can see a statement at the same time. They are similar to tweets[1] but they can use up to 420 characters. The status updates provide an insight into the current activity of a user, the user may state an opinion, write about a random thought, post a question or share a piece of information. This is done via text, while it may be accompanied by a photo, video or web link. Other users see the information in the Facebook News Feed and may like the status or may comment on it. Joinson [28] states that Facebook's News Feed is a kind of perpetual contact with one's social network.

But how should a user differentiate between his old and new friends? It makes sense to address local groups differently since Andre, Berstein and Luther [2] state that local updates were rated from users as not worth reading. There is the possibility on Facebook to build privacy groups but studies like that of Gross and Acquisti [18] state that few people use these options because they lack the knowledge of their existence or because it is a very tedious work to do since one user may have more than 500 friends. Moreover, there is the problem of overlapping friends circles.

A previous study [40] has shown that many Facebook users differentiate between their circles of friends by the simple means of language. Therefore the status updates of 30 international students at a Northeastern University in the United States of America were analysed to see the degree of self-disclosed statements in their native language in comparison to that in the English language. It showed that bilingual users exploit the language barriers to serve for self-presentational goals for different social circles.

This work starts with the assumptions of the above mentioned study, trying to find out if they are true in another geographic locality. It adds aspects of the use of dialect, shortcuts and emoticons in status updates.

1.3   Aim of the Work

The aim of this work is to analyse the degree of self-disclosure of status updates posted by Romanian students living in Austria on the social network site Facebook. As cultural differences affect the way users work with, react to or percieve social media, it is interesting to see if the

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[1]Tweets are the messages that users post on the social network site *Twitter*. The maximal length of a tweet is 140 characters.

change of setting will affect the outcome in contrast to that of the work of Tang, Chou and Drucker [40]. For this purpose, the following four research questions have been formulated:

H1: *Self-disclosure will be more frequent in Romanian status updates than in other languages.*

H2: *Cognitive and emotional self-disclosures will be more frequent in Romanian status updates than in other languages.*

H3: *Self-disclosures in German and English status updates will be more positive and less negative than native language updates.*

H4: *There will be more use of dialect and shortcuts in Romanian status updates than in other languages.*

The results will support some of the hypotheses that Romanian social network site users that moved to Austria make use of language as a group selector to differentiate between their circles of friends and use it as a privacy control tool. The second hypothesis has not been supported in contrast to the original paper, which is due to the time difference of the two papers and the cultural differences. Additionally, the results will also show more nuanced ways how people use language than the original paper since interviews have been carried out with some of the participants. They provide an insight into the way multilingual persons make use of their skills in order to disclose personal information on social networks.

1.4   Methodological Approach

Based on previous studies, this analysis starts with the assumption that a person shares more intimate information in their mother language than in other languages, which is also transparent in the first three research questions. The last 25 status updates of 20 multilingual Facebook users are being downloaded for the analysis. The self-disclosing statements are separated into factual, cognitive and emotional disclosures. The percentage of these statements in each language is being compared to see if the initial assumption has been correct. The affirmations are also decomposed depending on their valence, whether they are positive, neutral or negative. Furthermore, other criteria like the use of dialect, shortcuts and emoticons are being studied. Finally, qualitative interviews are being carried out with seven of the participants to give a more detailed look into the individual usage of language.

1.5   Reference to the Field of Study

As social media has been integrated more and more into our daily lives, the number of studies on this subject has grown as well. Scientific studies look for example into the reasons why people use social networks, into the perils that can result in doing so or into language analysis.

An important part of the field of study of *Informatics and Multimedia* is the interaction between human and computer. As social network services became more and more popular, the number of scientific papers in this area has also been growing.

Additionally, another important part of *Informatics and Multimedia* is scientific research, which included amongst others the difference between quantitative and qualitative interviews. The latter will be used in this study whereas the quantitative part of the study will be the direct analysis of the Facebook status updates.

1.6   Structure of the Work

The master thesis is organized as follows: Chapter 2 describes the state of the art, Chapter 3 presents the methodology, Chapter 4 presents the results of the Facebook status updates while Chapter 5 presents the results of the interviews with the participants. Chapter 6 is a discussion of the work and Chapter 7 presents the conclusion.

CHAPTER 2

State of the Art

2.1 Literature Studies

Various studies are being done on the subject of interaction through the medium of the internet. The most popular of all social network sites is Facebook. Created in 2004, it has nowadays according to *The Wall Street Journal*[1] more than one billion users worldwide. This makes it an interesting field for Human Computer Interaction (HCI) research.

A large number of recent studies have shown a special interest in the emotional implications of Facebook users [32], [39], [48], [34] and other social media users like Twitter [38], [25], [31], [43]. Since these networks are only the playfield for social interaction, more and more researchers are intrigued by what the reasons and outcomes of these interactions are. Why do people use social media? How does emotion translate over the internet? Is the online persona mirroring the character of the real life user? These questions and many more are trying to be answered through extensive research.

Special attention has also been bestowed upon language analysis. For some studies it has been only a medium to reach the actual answers of their inquires [2], but for others the language discrepancy has been the focal point of attention [15], [33]. Since social media is spread around the world, an enormous large number of languages can be studied, as well as the different aspects of using them in the case of multilingual persons.

2.2 The Emotional Aspect of Social Media

As previously stated above, many studies looked at the usage of social media from different angles: some looked at the motives of usage, some at the use of languages and others at the cultural differences in the usage.

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[1]http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10000872396390443635404578036164027386112.html. Accessed: 2013-03-13

As users can voice their thoughts, opinions and feelings, it is only natural that many studies focus on the emotional aspects of using social network services.

Looking at the 'why' a person wants to use social networks is vital if we want to understand the fascination that humanity has with them. Joinson [28] investigated the gratifications that users derive from the use of Facebook finding out that the main uses are: social connection, shared identities, content, social investigation, social network surfing and status updating.

Looking at the personality of a user is crucial to see the way we present ourselves in the online world, what makes a user popular and if our online persona is really mirroring our personality offline. Scientists differ on the question whether a person only extends his relationships online behaving the same manner as offline (with the additional possibility of keeping loose ties together) [8] or whether communication via SNSs is completely different to the real world e.g. it is self-reduced. Quercia, Lambiotte and Stillwell [39] analyzed the personality of popular Facebook users, popular being translated through having many Facebook friends. They found out that there is a clear linear relationship between popular users and Extraversion (number of friends in the real world). Other studies focused on the romanical relationships on Facebook [48] that can be a burden because of the necessity to balance friends and the romantical partner simultaneously. The difficulties arise from different opinions on revealing private information because it involves a second partie that has to share the same views. Especially the early stages of a relationship have different degrees of openness and willingness to share romantical emotions publicly. The possibility to follow the partners' every move might also add tension to the relationship. A close look at Facebook status updates is taken by Barash, Ducheneaut and Isaacs [3] that analizes impression management. The positive image a user wants to create of himself can backfire sometimes. Posts tend to be interpreted by other users as self-aggrandizing even if a user didn't have that intention. It has been also shown that a user appreciated his own posts more than the appreciation he recieved from his friends.

Tracking happiness is not easy, nontheless many studies tried doing this through the medium of SNSs. A different take on Facebook status updates is done by Kramer [32] who looked at emotional contagion. It has been discovered that an emotional post is often followed by a valence-consistent comment. Another study on the subject of emotion sharing through status updates [34] revealed that it is associated with the users' social network size and desity, this association being moderated by the individuals motivation for relationship management. Moreover, it found out that emotion sharing decreased with longer usage of Facebook. This aspect will be reviewed in this study. Other studies focused on Twitter to prove that social media content can be used to track well-being of individuals [38]. Furthermore, they found out that the higher the normalized sentiment score of a community's tweets, the higher the community's socio-economic well-being. This suggests that monitoring tweets is also an effective way of tracking community well-being. Kivran-Swaine and Naaman [31] looked at the size and density of a user's network in comparison to the user's expression of emotions in his Twitter posts. Given that people are compelled to share emotions within a short time after experiencing them, they state that this is the prevalent reason for using micro-blogging services. They found out that users tended to share more emotion in sparser networks.

The matter of social capital is also a topic that has been researched in connection to social media. Burke, Kraut and Marlow [7] tried to find out the different types of social capital that can

be influenced by a SNS. It informs us that receiving messages from friends boosts the bridging social capital. Moreover, passive users increase their social capital as well from following the news feed. However, users with low self-esteem gain more through directed communication.

2.3 Self-disclosure on Social Networks

As stated by Tang, Chou and Drucker [40] self-disclosure is "a key component of individual identity construction. It is defined as the process of making the self known to others." Another common definition of self-disclosure is "an interpersonal interaction where one person deliberately shares private information (including thoughts, feelings, and experiences) of a personal nature with another person. It is a voluntary, intentional and honest process" [16]. Moreover, this paper categorizes the motivations for disclosure into self-, other-, relationship- and situational/environmental-focused. It states that self-focused reasons have psychological reasons like catharsis or seeking help, while other-focused reasons are the desire to inform, educate or test others' reactions. Relationship-focused reasons include the desire to increase intimacy, while situational/environmental reasons include the availability of the target and his involvement in the content of the disclosure.

As previously mentioned in Chapter 1, an earlier language analysis of Facebook status updates has been done by the Department of Communications of the Cornell University in Ithaca, New York [40]. 30 international students have participated whose mother tongue was not English whereas their last 50 Facebook status updates were being collected for evaluation. It was found more intimate native-language status updates compared to the English updates. Self-disclosure was also more positive in English. As there are cultural differences between Europe and the United States as well as between Europe and Asia (70% of the participant were from Eastern Asian countries), it has been decided to see if the results of the study will be different if the environment will be changed. The cultural differences will be looked into deeper in the next sections.

2.4 Cultural Differences

Different cultures or languages involve different patterns of self-disclosure. There are large cultural differences between and within continents, especially within Europe. The previous study of bilingual postings [40] dealt with international participants, over 70% being from East Asian countries, living in the United States. Given the immense differences in culture between these countries and Europe, it makes sense to put the study in a different surrounding as different outcomes might be expected. Moreover, since all of the participants of this study are from Romania and live in Austria, it is necessary to look at the cultural differences between these two nations as it might affect the outcomes of the study as well.

According to psychologist Dr. Geert Hofstede [20], who conducted one of the most comprehensive cultural studies, there are five dimensions of culture: Power versus Distance (PD), Individualism (IDV), Masculinity (MAS), Uncertainty/Avoidance Index (UAI) and Long Term Orientation (LTO). The PD dimension deals with the degree of inequality that exists and is accepted in a specific country, i.e. the discrepancy between people with and without power. A high

score indicates an unequal distribution of power as well as the acceptance of an individual's role in society while a low score means that the power is better distributed and inhabitants of this country view themselves as equals. According to Hofstede [23] Romania scored a 90 which is in stark contrast to Austria scoring an 11. Since this is the case, moving to a country where people consider themselves as equals might mean that the participants come to view the high discrepancy in their country with different eyes. Thus, Facebook posts might be more negative in their native language. Since the score of the United States was 40, it is expected that the difference between German and Romanian negative posts will be larger than in the prior study.

The IDV dimension differentiates between individuality and collectivity, i.e. an individualist society indicates that people look after their family and only a couple of close friends whereas a collectivistic society has stronger ties between friends making this dimension an important aspect in a study of self-disclosure in social networks. Scoring 30 reflects that Romania is a collectivistic society, which means that commitments between friends are of higher importance than in Austria, scoring a 55 according to Hofstede [21], where individuals are expected to take care of themselves and their family more. Nevertheless, it is not as individualistic as the United States of America who scored 91 which implies that ties between friends are extremely loosely knit. This might have been a reason why the number of more intimate posts was significantly lower in English than in other languages in the previous study as friendships are treated superficially in the States and they are more self-involved. If this applies also in this study has to be verified.

The MAS dimension refers to the masculinity and femininity roles in society, i.e. if a nation scores a high MAS then men are considered to be the provider of the family whereas women are working at home or have different jobs than men. If a nation scores a low MAS then women and men work equally across many professions. Scoring a 42, Romania exhibits more job equality between men and women than Austria who scored 79. This might counterbalance the previous dimension in terms of posts, as female participants might feel treated differently in the new country which might be reflected in more negative posts, but if these will be shared in either their mother tongue or German is to be seen. The USA scored a 62 according to Hofstede [24] and are considered a masculine society, where individuals are willing to talk freely about their successes and achievements. This might have affected the previous study in terms of more positive posts being posted in English which means that a different outcome could be expected in this study.

The UAI dimension refers to the degree of anxiety the members of a society feel if put in an uncertain situation. A high score means that many rules and orders are to be followed whereas unknown situations are to be avoided. A low score reflects a country that is more open for novelties. With a score of 90, Romania is highly suspicious of changes and prefers following rigid rules. Similarly, having a score of 70, Austria might not be very different in this aspect. The States scored 46 which makes them much more prone to accept new things easily.

The LTO dimension deals with views about long-standing traditions and values. A high LTO score means that a country is more future-oriented and is focusing on saving and investing whereas a low score impies that quick solutions are of the upmost importance. Western societies are considered to be more short-term in contrast to Asian countries with strong links to

Confucian philosophy[2] that are considered long-term oriented societies. The LTO dimension was added in the 1990s, later than the previous four. This is why there is no available score for Romania on this dimension. Austria scored 29 making it a short-term culture who is focusing on short-term solutions for their problems similarly to the States who scored 31. Thus, this dimension will not be taken into consideration for this study. Figure 2.1 shows a clear overview of the five dimensions of the discussed countries.

There is a sixth dimension called Indulgence versus Restraint (IVR) [22]. An indulgent society allows gratification like enjoying life and having fun, while a restrained society suppresses gratification with the help of strict social norms. However, there are no available scores on this dimension so it cannot be taken into consideration for this study.
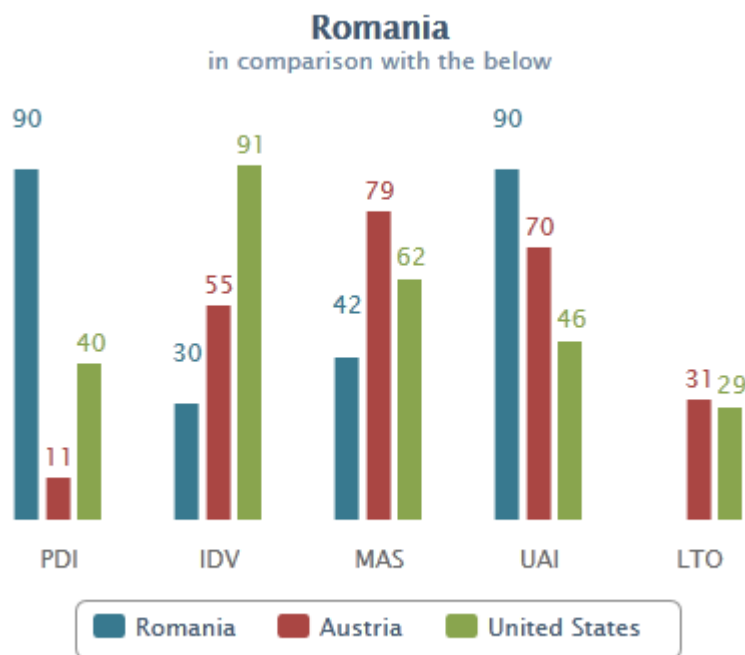
Figure 2.1: The Cultural Dimensions Power Distance, Individualism versus Collectivism, Masculinity versus Femininity, Uncertainty Avoidance and Long-term versus Short-term Orientation of Romania, Austria and the United States of America

Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner [42] have a different take on cultural differences in the form of seven different dimensions of culture[3]. However, there are similarities: e.g. their Achievement/Ascription dimension is similar to Hofstede's Power Distance dimension [19]. As

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[2]Countries that are influenced by *Confucianism* or *Confucian philosophy* are: China, Japan, Taiwan, North and South Korea and Vietnam.

[3]Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner's Seven Dimensions of Culture are: Universalism versus Particularism, Individualism versus Communitarianism, Specific versus Diffuse, Neutral versus Emotional, Achievement versus Ascription, Sequential Time versus Synchronous Time and Internal Direction versus Outer Direction.

there are no precise classifications for each country, we cannot gain any further insight from this stance.

2.5   Cultural Differences in Social Media

Recent studies have been done on cultural differences affecting social media [9], [11], [27], [29], [45]. Especially the Individualism dimension plays an important role in the use of SNSs. Jackson and Wang [27] studied the use of social media in the collectivistic country China compared to the extremely individualistic United States. Their results showed that college students from the two countries use social network services differently. Chinese students spend less time on SNS and have fewer friends than US students. As China had a 20 IDV score which is close to the romanian score, we might assume that there are similarities. As already stated in the previous chapter, this aspect might be reflected in the higher number of intimate posts in Romanian than in other languages.

A study of cultural differences in motivations for using SNS between American and Korean college students [9] found out that Korean students used social networks primarily for emotional support whereas American students placed greater emphasis on seeking entertainment. As South Korea's IDV score was 18, very close to China's score, it makes it a very collectivistic society, i.e. friendships are of the upmost importance to the society. Again, it underlines the possibility of a higher willingness to share more intimate information in a persons' mother language.

To conclude, cultural differences may affect the way users handle social media, thus, it will be analized if the outcomes of Tang, Chou and Drucker [40] will hold in a different setting. The status updates posted on the SNS Facebook of Romanian students living in Vienna will be analyzed in this study. These are being categorized in disclosive and non-disclosive, the self-disclosive ones being further divided according to their types and valences.

Since all of the participants originate from Romania and moved at a certain moment of their lives to Austria, there is the assuption that the older cirle of friends is Romanian whereas the newer circle of friends is Austrian, although some might have other nationalities since Vienna is a multicultural city. Moreover, some of the participants have also lived up to six months in other countries such as Spain or Italy. According to the social penetration theory [1], self-disclosure progresses as relationships evolve, which means that the exchange of information between persons develops from superficial to deeply personal topics. Since the closer relationships of the participants are likely to be the Romanian ones, the following research question has been formulated:

H1: *Self-disclosure will be more frequent in Romanian status updates than in other languages.*

Self-disclosing statements can also be categorized as factual, cognitive or emotional disclosures [40]. Factual self-disclosive statements reveal personal information and facts. An example of such an assertion is "I just ate an apple". A cognitive statement divulges a personal opinion of something, an attitude, a thought. Such a statement might be "I don't like apples". Emotional statements are clearly the most personal ones. Users share the emotional state they are in such

as "I am very sad". Gouws, Metzler and Cai [15] also state that updates with emotional content tend to contain repeated characters or excessive punctuation. As the cognitive and emotional statements are more personal and as stated above, self-disclosure progresses over time according to Tidwell and Walther [41], it has been hypothesized:

H2: *Cognitive and emotional self-disclosures will be more frequent in Romanian status updates than in other languages.*

Another aspect of self-disclosure is the valence of the statement, which means that it might be positive, neutral or negative. Tang, Chou and Drucker [40] explain that honest disclosures are made between closer friends whereas positive disclosures are done between new acquaintances to help initiate a relationship. Starting with this assumption, the following question has been formulated:

H3: *Self-disclosures in German and English status updates will be more positive and less negative than native language updates.*

To extend the previous research we will look at the usage of language in the Facebook status updates. Some studies looked at word usage in social networks from a psychological point of view, like Kramer and Kerry [33] who found out five psychologically relevant linguistic dimensions: Melancholy, Socialness, Ranting, Metaphysicality, and Work-Relatedness.

Gouws, Metzler and Cai [15] analyzed the linguistic variations in social media focusing on lexical transformations observed in Twitter microtexts. It was revealed that different populations of users have different shortening styles and use of dialect.

As studies focused on the usage of dialect and shortcuts in English, we wanted add another research question looking at dialect and short-cuts in different languages. Given the fact that all participants of this study were born in Romania, it is assumed that the language they are most comfortable in is Romanian. With the exception of one participant who has also German roots, German is the second or third language of the participants. Taking into consideration that people use more dialect and short-cuts in their native language than in foreign languages, the following research question has been hypothesized:

H4: *There will be more use of dialect and shortcuts in Romanian status updates than in other languages.*

3

Methodology

Tang, Chou and Drucker [40] analized the way international students that recently moved to the United States of America handled their different circles of friends on Facebook. They analized how much they disclosed in English and how much in their native language. For this purpose they divided the Facebook status updates into self-disclosive and non-disclosive updates. Furthermore, they divided the self-disclosive updates into factual, cognitive and emotional, and the valence of the statements has also been taken into account. This analisys is based on the previous study with certain alterations. The participants are Romanian students that recently moved to Vienna, Austria. Additionally to the degree of self-disclosiveness, the use of dialect, shortcuts and emoticons will be looked at. After the analysis of the Facebook status updates, semi-structured interviews will be carried out with some of the participants in order to get a more detailed look into the reasons of language use.

3.1   Participants

The previous study [40] had 30 international participants. Given that the participants of this study are all from Romania, it seemed like a reasonable number to choose 20 persons for this study. The persons have been chosen among the friends and acquaintances of the author. They have all already been so-called Facebook Friends of the author and thus their status updates were already visible for the author. Twelve participants were female and eight male, as shown in Table 3.1. Their ages vary between 22 and 30. The participants are all students with two exceptions (P13 and P16). They come from different cities in different parts of Romania. They moved from Romania to Austria in the last three to seven years. They posted between three and more than 25 updates (the number of collected status updates) which were posted in the last three weeks to three years. The participants got no compensation for the participation in this study, their participation was entirely voluntary and they could retreat from the study at any time.

	Gender	Age	Years since in Austria	Number of posts	Time frame
P01	F	22	3	25	5 months
P02	F	25	6	25	2 years
P03	F	25	5	25	1 year
P04	F	25	6	25	2 years
P05	F	24	6	25	6 months
P06	M	25	6	25	1 month
P07	F	24	5	25	2 years
P08	M	24	5	4	2 years
P09	M	25	6	25	3 years
P10	F	25	3	9	1 month
P11	M	25	6	25	3 weeks
P12	M	24	5	25	3 years
P13	F	30	3	25	2 years
P14	F	22	5	25	2 years
P15	F	25	6	11	2 years
P16	M	30	6	25	1 year
P17	F	24	6	25	2 years
P18	M	23	3	4	2 years
P19	M	26	7	3	3 months
P20	F	24	5	25	4 months

Table 3.1: Summary of study participants

3.2   Status Updates Analysis

The participants were contacted by email where a consent form has been sent explaining what the study was about and what they had to do. Even if a status update is public and was visible for the author, an ethic question comes up whether these can or cannot be used freely for research without the user's permission. This will be discussed more throughly in the ethic section below. This is the reason why it has been decided that they should be informed that their Facebook status updates were being used for this purpose, furthermore they were asked to send them themselves through the medium of a Facebook application `http://apps.facebook.com/ give_me_my_data` which retrieves the status updates of a user. A user can only retrieve his own status updates through this application. Even though one can look at the given profile of a user, the so-called wall is crowded with not only simple status updates but also photos, links, tagged photos, check-ins, posts from other friends and so on. Older status updates are sometimes not traceable anymore by simly scrolling down a user's wall. This is the reason for the use of this application. No detailed information was given in order that they should not change their updates according to the purposes of this study. A copy of the consent form can be found in Appendix A. The updates can then be transfered into a text file which gave the participants the opportunity to erase certain updates that they did not wish to be sent. This was also stated

explicitly in the consent form that they could do it in this way. The participants had to agree to participate and sent the text file with their status updates. These were copied into an Excel file for each participant. The language of each update was then determined and the self-disclosive category to which it belonged. As stated in Chapter 2 they were first divided into non-disclosive and disclosive statements. Self-disclosure was defined as a unit that "describes the subject in some way, tells something about the subject, or refers to things affect the subject's experiences" [10].

If a statement was divided into a disclosive statement then it was further subdivided into factual, cognitive and emotional. A statement has been categorized as factual if it disclosed personal facts and information, for example *I am studying in the library*. A statement has been categorized as cognitive if it revealed the opinion, thought or attitude of the user on something or someone, for example *I really like this book by Jane Austen*. Finally, a statement has been categorized as emotional if it disclosed the feeling of the user, for example *Reading this book made me very sad*. Moreover, if the statement was cognitive or emotional self-disclosive, then it was given a valence, i.e. positive or negative. A positive valence was assigned to a cognitivie statement if the post expressed a positive opinion or thought, for example it included positive adjectives or verbs like *great, amazing, like, love*. On the other hand, a negative valence was assigned if the post expressed a negative opinion or thought, for example it included negative words like *hate, awful, bad*. An emotional statement has been categorized as positive if the user shared a positive feeling, for example *happy, good, excited*. An emotional statement has been categorized as negative if the user shared a negative feeling, for example *sad, upset, angry, annoyed, depressed, lonely*. Furthermore, each status was checked if the status was written in dialect, if it had words that were shortcuts or if an emoticon[1] was in the sentence. An example of what the updates of a participant and it's classification looked like can be seen in Figure 3.1.

The last study collected the 50 most recent Facebook status updates, if the participants had less than that, then all of their updates were collected. For the time frame of this study the last 25 updates were collected. Some had less than 25, in which case all of his or her status updates were collected. These ranged from a very large period of time for the people that didn't post many updates (the longest period has been 3 years) to a very short amount of time (the shortest amount of time has been 3 weeks). These aspects will be taken into consideration for the analysis. Onomatopoeic sentences, sentences where no word was recognized or upates that contained only a name and where no language could be detected, have been discarded.

Five of the 20 participants had less than 25 status updates, thus a total of 406 posts have been collected. These were only text-based, photo captions, sharing of links or location updates have not been included. Three of the 20 participants have done an Erasmus term abroad. The updates during the time of their location being other than Austria have been skipped and older status updates have been taken for analysis instead.

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[1]An *emoticon* is a metacommunicative pictorial representation of a facial expression that is used in short text messages, chats and web forums to express an emotion like joy, sadness or anger. They help to convey the mood which is something that lacks in communication that is not face-to-face.

	Status Updates	Status Update (cont.)	Language	non-disc	factual	cogni	emot	diale	short	emoticon
1	**Status Updates**	**Status Update (cont.)**	**Language**	**non-dis**	**factual**	**cogni**	**emot**	**diale**	**short**	**emoticon**
3	uid,status_id,time,source,message									
4	100000050783292,"315074825170874","2011-11-25T03:43:05-08:00","NULL","I've got a ticket fo	HOT CHILLI PEPPERS concert	E		x			x	
5	100000050783292,"268592026485821","2011-08-25T07:03:00-07:00","NULL","Ive had too many	experiences lately. Kill me o	E		x		x	x	
6	100000050783292,"265602670118090","2011-08-19T09:22:15-07:00","NULL","I wanna kick life in the ...!"		E				neg	x	x	
7	100000050783292,"255838031094554","2011-07-31T06:14:59-07:00","NULL","ah ce rahat... eram loguita de pe compul lui Rali		R		x			x	x	x
8	100000050783292,"254937681184589","2011-07-29T08:00:27-07:00","NULL","Birthday tomorro	ll buy you some. I only accep	E		x					
9	100000050783292,"251490284862662","2011-07-22T05:33:35-07:00","NULL","Timisoaraaa!... Ne vedem? :)"		R		x					x
10	100000050783292,"241198975891793","2011-07-01T06:57:44-07:00","NULL","liver failing... 80%"		E		x					
11	100000050783292,"239784009366623","2011-06-27T11:29:13-07:00","NULL","must study. phone airplane mode: on"		E		x					
12	100000050783292,"238382069506817","2011-06-22T05:47:47-07:00","NULL","Wake up. Be hung over. Go to work. Get gloriou		E		x					
13	100000050783292,"229112373767120","2011-06-14T05:34:29-07:00","NULL","how the hell is ev s Friday?"		E		x					
14	100000050783292,"225814944096863","2011-06-01T07:49:47-07:00","NULL","the week-end starts NOW! :D"		E		x					x
15	100000050783292,"222754534402904","2011-05-20T04:49:02-07:00","NULL","Since 9 at work... no work done. I blame the sur		E		x					
16	100000050783292,"219228674755490","2011-05-06T07:16:16-07:00","NULL","To go home now and work in the week-end... o		E		x					
17	100000050783292,"218716634806694","2011-05-04T06:12:19-07:00","NULL","Oh- for ....'s sake! Let me break it to you: NOBC		E		x			x	x	
18	100000050783292,"214682991876725","2011-04-17T13:07:26-07:00","NULL","this morning: vier m thinking... ribs?!"		E		x				x	
19	100000050783292,"208035479208143","2011-03-21T07:42:43-07:00","NULL","WUZZELTISCH @ WORK!!! my boss is the aweso		G+E				pos	x		x
20	100000050783292,"205645619447129","2011-03-12T02:26:00-08:00","NULL","so... lazy..."		E		x					
21	100000050783292,"204971239514567","2011-03-09T10:46:52-08:00","2915120374","Is "there	was a power black-out" consi	E	x						
22	100000050783292,"203887336289624","2011-03-05T04:15:54-08:00","NULL","I love the first day in a year when I get to wear		E				pos	x		
23	100000050783292,"203884286289929","2011-03-05T03:52:33-08:00","NULL","Ich will Dub Fx sehen! Wer ihn heute auf der St		G		x					
24	100000050783292,"108982715843050","2011-02-02T09:44:09-08:00","NULL","bad day? drink with me!"		E				neg			
25	100000050783292,"188768911147231","2011-02-01T12:18:09-08:00","2915120374","I throw my hands up in the air sometime	E	x						
26	100000050783292,"164485130254746","2010-12-04T04:11:51-08:00","NULL","slow people should only be allowed to go shop		E	x						
27	100000050783292,"166253036741126","2010-11-18T06:02:26-08:00","NULL","is at an all time motivational low."		E				neg			
28	100000050783292,"132332553487537","2010-11-16T06:00:06-08:00","NULL","Switch your profil s fun to be a child!"		E	x						

Figure 3.1: Status updates of a participant and the classifications of each update into self-disclosive categories

3.3 Interviews

To further deepen and explore the knowledge resulted from the status updates that were collected, after the analysis had been done, interviews with seven of the participants were carried out. These participants were chosen because they were all active users of Facebook and posted more updates than the other participants from whom the status updates were collected. Another choosing criteria was that they either used mainly one language or in stark contrast to that many languages in their posts. Six of the interviewees are female and one is male. They have the mean age of 24.42. They have been living in Austria from three to six years and all of them specified that they know German since they were children with one exception (P01) who only started learning German three years ago when she first came to Austria. They all reported being very comfortable talking and writing in German. All of them with one exception (P05) claimed to be also fluent in English, as shown in Table 3.2 (the interview participants are the same as the first seven status update analysis participants). The level of the language that can be seen in the Table is his or her own account of how well they speak that language which was asked in the beginning of the interviews. Five of them specified that they also had knowledge of Spanish, Italian or French (the order of languages is the one they specified in the interviews). The participants did the interviews deliberately and received no compensation.

The purpose of these interviews was to better understand the results of the status updates and to see the posting habits and understand why language has been used the way it was in the Facebook posts. To give the participants the opportunity to talk freely about how they use Facebook, language and posts, as well as to channel them to the use of mother tongue compared to the language they used in the country they live in, semi-structured interviews have been chosen to best combine the two purposes.

	Interview location	Level of German	Level of English	Other Languages
P01	cafe	5	7	French, Spanish, Italian
P02	home	7	6	Spanish, French
P03	home	7	6	-
P04	cafe	7	6	French, Spanish
P05	park	7	4	-
P06	Skype	6	5	Spanish, Italian
P07	home	6	5	Italian, Spanish

Table 3.2: Summary of interview participants

Semi-structured interviews are qualitative interviews that make use of the advantages of structured and unstructured interviews. Structured interviews are a quantitative method to gain information most likely in the form of questionnaires, where statistics are the focal point of attention and not the what and why which are the center of this investigation. They are not very suited to be used in a qualitative way, when the purpose of the interviews are to let the participant talk about the topic at hand. Unstructured interviews, also known as ethnographic interviews, on the other hand have no interview guide and are more of a conversation between the interviewer and the interviewee. Thus, semi-structured interviews have been chosen because they do have a list of topics to cover but they allow participants to speak freely as well.

The interviews have been recorded and a consent form was given to each interviewee before the start of the interview asking if they allowed to be video and audio recorded and to use anonymous quotes from the interview in this work and other publications that might come out of this work. A copy of the consent form can be found in Appendix B.

The interview is structured in four parts. In the first part background information has been collected about the participant. These were survey questions that only required enumerations, short answers and quantitative answers. The questions included to enumerate what languages they speak, what languages they feel comfortable speaking and writing, the length of their stay in Austria, since when they talk German and how comfortable they talk and write in German and English. This was to see if the participant is comfortable enough to post something in that specific language and to see if the differences affect the Facebook posts.

The main part of the interview containted semi-structured questions about the use of Facebook. The first question invited the interviewee to generally give their opinion on Facebook and encouraged him or her to talk about why they were using it in the first place and what they liked about it. This question was followed by others asking about the situations in which they posted a status update and their motivation for doing so, continued by questions about the target audience and languages in self-disclosive statements, what personal information they reveal through their posts and if they disclose their emotional states, and closing with questions about the use of dialect and shortcuts. After almost all questions, the participants were asked to give examples to better illustrate what they were saying and to help put them in a better position to reflect on the questions at hand. Furthermore, the question *Why?* has been asked after each question in case the participants didn't explain their motives by themselves. A copy of the whole interview can

be found in Appendix C. All questions invited the participant to talk freely.

For the third part of the interview, the interviewer and interviewee took a look at the active Facebook profile of the interviewee encouraging him to talk about the posted things on his wall. The interviewer had to make sure that internet connection was available. The interviewer picked out some of the recent status updates that the interviewee posted and asked him the reasons why he posted it, who was meant to read it and why he chose the specific language. This allowed the participant to actively reflect on the questions at hand and rethink the answers given in the second part of the interview. The interviewer individually prepared a couple of status updates that the participant posted in different languages for the last part and repeated the same questions as the ones asked in the third part. The updates were taken from the collected and analyzed posts.

The interview questions were written in English but the interviewee could chose Romanian or German as a interview language in case they didn't feel comfortable expressing their opinions in English. Two of the participants chose to do the interviews in Romanian. All of the interviews were carried out in face-to-face meetings, previously an appointment was made for these meetings that suited both parts. The place of the meetings were chosen in a manner that the participants could feel as comfortable as possible, three of the interviews being taken in the participants homes, one outside and two others in a cafe. The interviews were done individually, the questions were not revealed before the start of the interview. There was one exception (P06), due to the fact that the interviewee was not in the same country as the interviewer, this interview was done via Skype. The interviews lasted between twelve and 50 minutes, depending on how talkative the interviewee was, one interviewee (P05) being particularly keen on speaking her mind on the subject.

The interviewer took notes during the interviews and after the meetings all interviews were transcribed. Two examples of transcribed interviews (those of P02 and P03) can be found in Appendix D. During transcription, key remarks were highlighted, notes were made and main topics were concluded. The data was analyzed using thematic analysis, i.e. a method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data [5]. The themes were chosen if they captured something important about the interviews in relation to the research questions, and represented a level of meaning or patterened response within the interviews. A theme was chosen if it appeared in many interviews, but prevalence was not the main criteria, a detailed account of a particular aspect was enough to become a theme, i.e. the researcher judgement was necessary to determine what a theme was.

3.4   Ethics

Given the fact that the data that is being used in this study is collected from a social network site, the subject of ethics has to be taken carefully into consideration. Privacy is an important issue if the research is being done through the medium of the internet. Buchanan and Ess [6] discuss the subject of internet research ethics, underlining the necessity of IRE (Internet Research Ethics) guidelines since confidentiality, privacy and anonymity of participants have to be protected.

Bos, Karahalios and Musgrove-Chaves [4] emphasize the ambiguity of public and private data on the internet and dwells with the question if and under what circumstances a person should be notified that his data is being collected for research purposes. Even though status updates on

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the Social Network Site (SNS) Facebook are considered public information, there remains the question whether it is ethically moral to use them for research purposes without informing the user.

For this work it has been decided that the participants of this study have to not only be informed that their Facebook status updates will be used for language analysis but will also be asked for their permission to use their information and the data will not be collected by the researcher but will be sent by the participant. This is done using the Facebook application `http://apps.facebook.com/give_me_my_data`.

A consent form has been sent to each participant stating briefly what this study is about, assuring anonymity and denial of access to any third parties. Moreover it explained that they can delete certain posts prior to sending them and that they can withdraw from this study at anytime.

Results Status Updates

It has been anticipated that English will play an important part as a language of choice for status updates and indeed it has been proven to be right. More than half of all collected posts are in English (57,39%). Overall, there have been slightly more posts in Romanian (16,75%) than in German (13,30%). Additionally, two other categories were added to the analysis: other languages and a mix of languages. Mixed languages means that one post contained more than one language in it, for example P06 wrote *Oktoberfest alguien/cineva/jemand/anybody 4-6 oct.?*, a post which includes German, Spanish, Romanian and English. Other languages, which mainly include Spanish, Italian and French, but also Hungarian or Polish, reached a percentage of 4,68%, while mixing languages (the most popular has been mixing English with another language, but also mixing German and Romanian) reached 7,88% of the total. The language distribution can be better seen in Figure 4.1.

4.1 Self-disclosure and Language

There have been significantly more self-disclosive statements (66,26%) than non-disclosive, i.e. the participants are willing to share personal information in their Facebook status updates. H1 predicted that there will be more self-disclosive statements in the native Romanian language, but H1 did not hold. Out of all five language categories, Romanian posts proved to have the fewest self-disclosive statements reaching 55,88%, while the most proved to be in mixed category reaching 81,25% (which of course also included Romanian). German self-disclosive statements were 68,52%, very close to English ones 69,10%, whereas other languages reached 78,95%. H1 was not supported. Figure 4.2 shows the distribution of non-disclosive and disclosive statements.

The length of the period in which the updates have been posted showed differences in the level of self-disclosure. The periods vary between three weeks and 3 years. The shorter the period, the more unpersonal the updates have been. Many of the participants who posted status updates frequently posted a large amount of quotes which are of course unpersonal thus non-disclosive. On the other hand, the participants that posted only few updates per month were
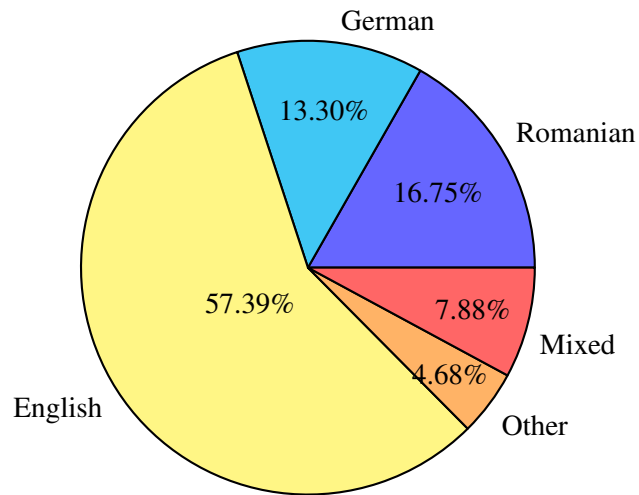
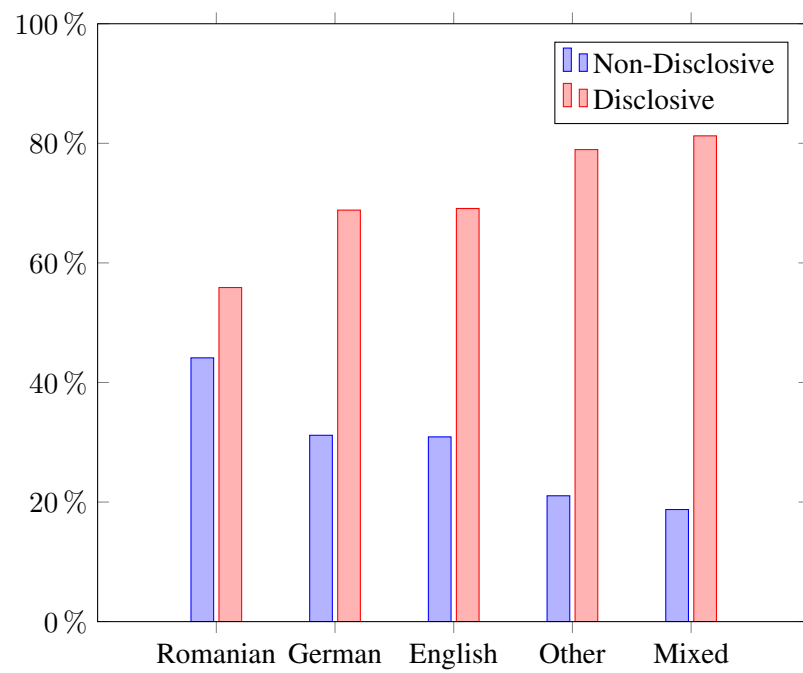**Figure 4.1:** Language Distribution in Status Updates

Figure 4.2: Distribution of Non-Disclosive and Disclosive Statements

more disclosive. Other examples of non-disclosive statements were jokes, advice given to others, song lyrics like P03 posted *I throw my hands up in the air sometimes!*, TV show lines, funny comments, questions like P06 posted *anyone spre viena duminica?* which means *is anyone going to Vienna on sunday*, comments on a sports event or televised show, birthday wishes to family members like P04 posted *La multi ani- tataaa! :D (pe care nu nu-l cheama Andrei :P) si tuturor Andrei people! <3 :D)* which means *Happy birthday dad, whose name isn't Andrei, and to all the people whose name is Andrei* (usually parents who do not have a Facebook account which is why the wishes were posted on their own wall and not a friends wall), greetings like P07 posted *Buna dimineatza <3 !* which means *Good morning*, or *Craciun fericit si plin de bucurii alaturi de cei dragi- va doresc tuturor!!!!!!* which means *Happy Christmas full of happiness next to your loved ones - I am wishing you all*, or P02 posted *Happy new year!* (seasonal greetings are also the ones that were most often posted in several languages in one status update), a general response to birthday wishes or other kinds of congratulations for example P02 posted *Merci frumos pentru urarile vostre! Vielen Dank für die lieben Glückwünsche! Thank you for the lovely b-day wishes! :* <3*, a post that included Romanian, German and English (general grateful responses were usually also written in more than one language), newspaper headlines, comments about Facebook or changes on Facebook like new guidelines like P04 posted *=)) ich krieg jetzt kroatische Werbung auf fb- hahah* which means *I am getting croatian advertisements on Facebook now*, statements about a Facebook game like P02 posted *Tap Tap- untill i get the high score! Tap Tap- Tap Tap revenge*, short statements that underline a well-known truth like P02 posted *Weekend's here* or P05 posted *so- jetzt kann bitte bald der Frühling kommen.* which means *Spring may come now please*, random thoughts or viral posts that spread over Facebook like a post about changing one's profile picture to his or her favourite cartoon character to remember one's childhood which according to PC MAG[1] started in a 92.000 people Facebook event and transformed into a campaign against child abuse. P03 posted *Switch your profile photo to your favourite childhood (cartoon) character between 14-17 November! Goal: only the memories of childhood until Wednesday! Encourage others! Because it's fun to be a child!*. Romanian non-disclosive status updates often included statements about an event that recently happened in the country, a political or sports update or other country-related statements.

4.2 Self-disclosure Type and Language

There has not been very significant differences in the self-disclosure types posted in the five different language categories. Posts in the native language did not prove to be more intimate than in other languages as initially suspected. Figure 4.3 gives a better understanding of the distribution.

Factual updates often included a statement of place for example *Is off to Rome* [2] or *At lunch*. Users like to let their friends know where they are, were or are going to be, one of the main reasons for posting a status update. As trips seem to be a prevailing topic, they are often preceded by thoughts on doing the trip like *Thinking about going to Rome*, often followed by the actual

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[1] http://www.pcmag.com/article2/0,2817,2373880,00.asp. Accessed 2013-08-7

[2] Statements in the third person about oneself are especially popular on social network sites like Facebook or Twitter making the statements more dramatic as one of the participants described in the interviews 5
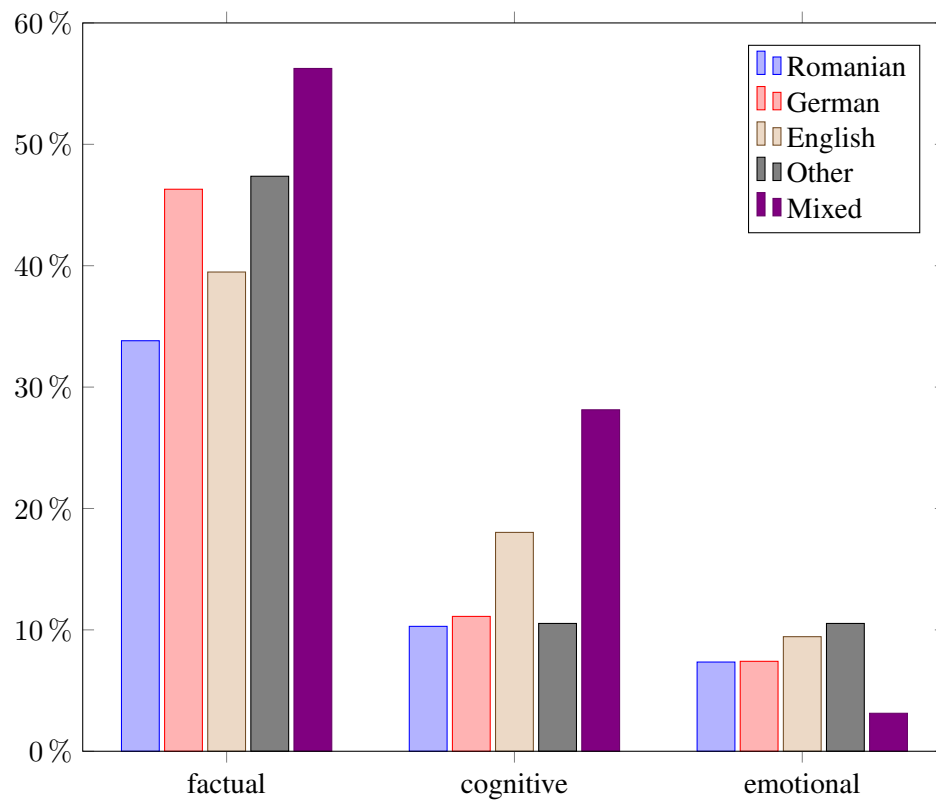
Figure 4.3: Distribution of Disclosive Statements into Factual, Cognitive and Emotional

fact of it happening *Just bought the tickets to Rome*, then followed by an update at the moment of departure like *At the airport*, one or more posts while being away such as *Such lovely weather here in Rome*, if the trip includes more than one location then usually more than one update is being posted, finalized by statements about the return *Back home*. Travelling is one of many recurring topics in updates, others might be exams or university projects that are also very popular subjects among students. They often begin by writing about their work *Working for a project*, often followed by panic before the deadline *Never going to finish this work for tomorrow*, one or more posts during the due date *The presentations are going really well*, ended by the obligatory relief of it being over *Project finally finished*. As these are disclosive statements but not too personal, the target audience is meant to be the whole friends group and this makes English the most popular language to post in, more than half of all factual disclosive statements being in English. Cognitive statements often revealed what a user really liked or what he disliked. These were often recommendations of places, movies, series, songs or finding flaws in things like electronic devices, online sites or Facebook itself or advising against places or movies.

Romanian status updates were 33,82% disclosive factual, 10,29% disclosive cognitive and 7,35% disclosive emotional. Romanian factual statements often involved home in some way in phrases like *Timisoaraaaa!... Ne vedem? :)* posted by P03 which means *Timisoara* (her home

town in Romania) *Will we see each other?*, which makes sense as the target audience for these types of updates is the group of friends from home and does not need to be understood by others.

The German cognitive and emotional updates were very close rating 11,11% and 7,35% respectively, while the factual ones were against intial belief percentagewise higher than the Romanian ones reaching 46,30%. German factual posts often related to university and included statements like *Just finished writing the exam*, *Can anyone help me with my homework for this course* or P07 simply posted *lernen :(* which means *learning*. As all users are studying or working in Vienna, it is comprehensible that of all German posts, almost half of them were factually disclosive. Also posts that included activities that took place in Vienna were posted in German, like sports courses or visits to museums or the theater, for example P06 posted *jemand interessiesrt einen USI-Kurs zu machen?* which means *is anyone interested in doing a USI-Kurs* (a sports course at university). Sometimes German has been combined with English for these types of questions like *Nussknacker anyone morgen?* posted by P06.

English statements were percentagewise similar to the German statements: factual statements reached 39,48%, the more intimate self-disclosure types cognitive and emotional reached 18,03% and 9,44% respectively. As already noted above, locations were found in most of the factual statements. Other examples are the activity that one was doing at the moment of posting or was about to do like P07 simply posted *insomnia.....*, P02 posted *Dinner and Crime tonight!* or *partying while studying? yes we can! :))*.

As posts in other languages than Romanian, German or English were few but proved to be less non-disclosive, they had a high disclosive factual rating coming up to 47,37%, while cognitive and emotional statements were both 10,53%. This might also be due to the fact that the participants did not know these languages well enough to write more personal statements and couldn't disclose their feelings through this medium as well as through their mother language or German and English which many are using on a daily basis. Another reason is that some of these statements were written while the participants were currently on vacation in that particular country and simply tried the local language so set the atmosphere of the statement like *A Roma bevendo un caffe*. Others were reminiscent of their time abroad (especially the three participants who did an Erasmus term abroad, two in Spain, one in Italy) had many disclosive updates in Spanish and Italian respectively like *Stasera una birra con gli amici* posted by P17 or *Quiere volver a Espana* posted by P06.

In the mixed languages category the updates that were disclosive factual reached 56,25%, disclosive cognitive 28,13% and disclosive emotional only 3,13%. As updates in more than one language did not seem serious and were generally rather meant to be funny, for example P06 posted *Du bist mein Flügelmann - so much about dubbing* meaning *You are my wingman* quoting a TV series and making fun of the translation, it is only natural that the least disclosive updates, the factual ones, were by far the most, while the less disclosive ones, cognitive and emotional were very scant, emotional updates in more than one language being only a few. These were often updates where one or two words were in one language, like a greeting or something easy to understand even to people that don't speak that language, while the other part of the sentence was in another language, for example P20 posted *La Sturm- prinzand cateva raze de soare cu dinti*, meaning *Drinking wine, getting the last sunrays* combining Romanian and a word in German for wine or P02 posted *Tschüss Koblenz! It has been a pleasure*, mixing

English with a farewell word in German.

Overall, the participants were not very reluctant to give away very personal information. The reasons for this will be further investigated in the interviews 5.

4.3 Self-disclosure and Valence

Factual statements will be considered neutral, whereas cognitive and emotional statements were given a positive or negative valence. Overall, there have been more statements with positive valence (59%) than negative. H3 stated that there will be more negative status updates in the native language. Consistent with H3, Romanian updates were the only ones with more negative than positive statements reaching 58,33% negative statements. Also like anticipated German status updates were considerably more positive reaching only 30% negative updates. English updates were also slightly more positive with 42.19% negative posts, other languages were balanced and reached 50% each, while mixed languages reached only 20% negative updates (which is comprehensible because as previously mentioned posts that contained more than one language usually were lighthearted like holiday wishes for example). Figure 4.4 shows the distribution.
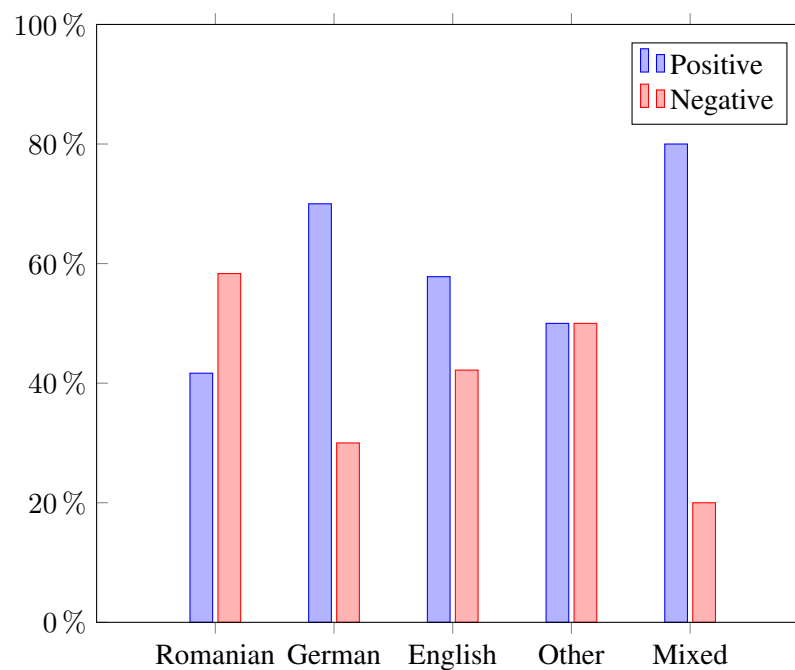

Figure 4.4: Distribution of Positive and Negative Statements

Positive statements were expressed in many different ways. They ranged from *Like* to *Love* to superlatives like *Awesome* praising places, movies, actors or simply pleasant days. Strong positive words like *Love* are not only directed to other users or persons like *I really love my mum, she is the best* but more often to places, food, weather, devices, activities, events, holidays

or any other new experience that wants to be shared with the whole world, for example P01 posted *The Hobbit=Pure Awesomeneeess* and *Home is too damn sweet <3* or P20 posted *R.I.P my laptop - I love you baby!!!*. Negative statements on the other hand were also expressed in very colourful ways as users could get rid of their anger and their strong emotions through them. They included insults and swearwords at times. Others included onomatopoeia or negative emoticons, for example P04 posted *bleaaaaah Lebensmittelrecht! X(führt aber kein Weg dran vorbei...* which means *food law, but no way to omit it*. Negative updates are sometimes also used to draw attention or compassion like *Feeling really sick today*, *Had such a bad work day* or P01 posted *Mornings-the worst thing in my life since 27.06.1991*, as these entice more comments than positive ones, friends enquiring about details or offering words of sympathy. Negative statements also have more reactions than positive ones, as the positive ones are often just *liked* but praising a friends achievements was rather rare.

4.4   Dialect and Shortcuts

Given that people use dialect and shortcuts in a language they are most familiar with, H4 predicted that the most dialect and shortcuts were to be seen in Romanian status updates, as this is their native language and supposed to be the language the participants feel most comfortable with. The results showed that this is indeed the case. 14.78% of all Facebook status updates were written in dialect. 32.35% of all Romanian posts have been written in dialect, 12.96% of the German posts, 11.16% of the English posts, 5.26% of the posts in other languages and 17.39% in the mixed posts. Popular English dialect or jargon words were *wanna* instead of want to, *dunno* for don't know, *gonna* instead of going to, *common* for come on, or *wouldya* instead of would you. P03 posted *WUZZELTISCH @ WORK!!! my boss is the awesomnest! :D*, the first word being a German dialect word for soccer table, being asked why she used it she said that everyone in Austria used this dialect word so she picked it up.

15.52% of all posts contained shortcuts. Shortcuts were generally used for cities, studies or course names, popular series or games but also insults. Shortcuts have also been used most in Romanian posts peaking ath 20.59%, the second most shortcuts were used in English posts with 16.74% and only 7.41% of the German posts were with shortcuts. Examples of English shortcuts are *til* instead of until, *2morrow* for tomorrow, *bday* instead of birthday, *fb* for Facebook, *@* instead of at, *ftw* meaning for the win, *pics* instead of pictures or loosing the last *g* in verbs like *doing*, for example P01 posted *Exercising my just now aquired voting rights @ BEST Vienna LGA. (Full ftw! Booya)*. 10.53% of the status updates in other languages contained shortcuts and 13.04% of the mixed updates had shortcuts. Additionally, the most use of emoticons has been looked at. 27.59% of all status updates contained at least one emoticon. 23.53% of all Romanian updates had emoticons, 35.19% of the German ones, 26.18% of English posts, 15.79% of the posts in other languages and 56.52% of the mixed status updates. Figure 4.5 presents a better visualisation of the results.
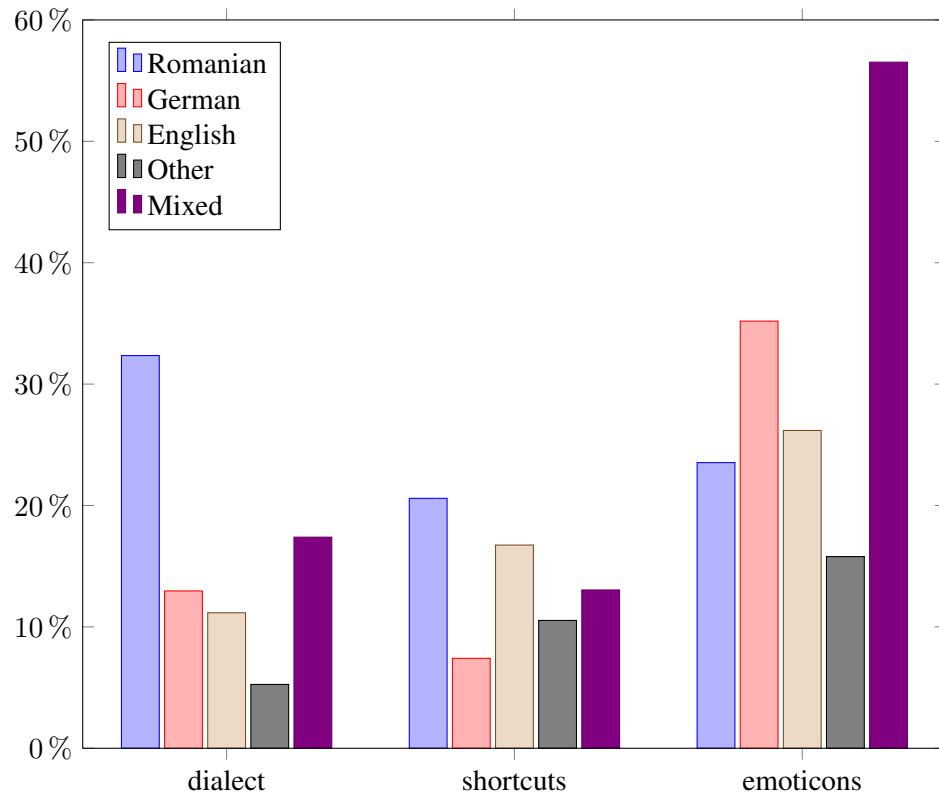
Figure 4.5: Use of Dialect, Shortcuts and Emoticons in the Status Updates

4.5 Summary

Summarizing the results of the Facebook status udpate analysis we found that H1 and H2 were false whereas H3 and H4 were true. The first hypothesis was not supported reaching the same result as Tang, Chou and Drucker [40]. There were not more self-disclosive statements in the native language than in other languages. The second hypothesis was also not supported as there were not more cognitive and emotional self-disclosive statements in Romanian than in other languages. This differed from the findings of the original study. The third hypothesis was true reaching the same result as the original study as Romanian posts were the most negative out of all languages. The fourth hypothesis was true as well as there was more use of dialect and shortcuts in Romanian status updates than in other languages.

Results Interviews

The results of the interviews deepen the knowledge resulted from the status updates answering questions like why and how Facebook is being used by the participants. They offer more insight than the findings of the original paper. As the interviews started with an open question about Facebook and their thoughts on it, they could speak their mind about it without being interrupted or restricted in any way so they could voice their opinions freely. They all basically started unanimously by saying that Facebook was a great way to keep in touch with friends and family. They agreed that it is the easiest way to see what their friends are doing without having to talk to everyone in particular and that it was indeed very user-friendly thus it disburdenend the busy lives that everyone had nowadays. Another prevailing opinion was that the main events were listed on Facebook and it was possible to see who was going where thus it made organization easier as well. If you weren't on Facebook then you would miss the events or individual messages had to be sent which was highly peculiar nowadays in their opinion. One interviewee even said as much as not having to read the newspaper because the most important information was shared on Facebook anyway. Overall, everybody agreed that it is an outstanding platform to share your views on things, your opinions, your thoughts or even your moods. Moreover, a user could carry out useful actions for the community like calling people to a protest as one participant pointed out. Some admitted being addicted to it and thinking about quitting for some time but not wanting to loose contact with so many people. In general, everybody agreed that being able to maintain a relationship with friends that live abroad, relatives, old school collegues or work collegues was why they loved using it and didn't think that they would quit it. One illustrated this by saying that she recently visited Paris and simply posted on Facebook that she was there. She found out that acquaintances of hers that were living in different countries and whom she hadn't seen in 4 or 5 years were there as well and she was certain that she would have totally lost contact with those friends if not for Facebook.

5.1 Choice of Language

It is rather hard to choose a language for each appropriate setting if you are a multilingual person. This was the clear result from the interviews as all of the participants that used more languages in their posts than English acknowledged. After being directly asked what languages they used most often in their status updates on Facebook almost all of them had to take their time and think about it, one of them (P06) even asked *Can I have a look?* because they weren't sure at all of their own choice of posting language. Some of them subsequently during the course of the interview realized that they actually posted more in another language than initially believed. So how come that they didn't know? This might be on the grounds that the deliberate choice of language is not always as deliberate as many people may thing. The interviews proved that the decision is made unconsciously at times. Sometimes the choice is deliberate if the participants took their time before the post, or if the target audience was one language group among their friends but at other times the reasons were more hidden from the eye of the observer as will be discussed now thoroughly.

The prevailing opinion of the interviewees that did post in German, Romanian and English was that the choice of language was first of all based on the theme of the status update. If the posting concerned only people in Romania, Romanian politics or happenings in that country then the obvious choice would be Romanian. If the statement concerned people in Austria, specifically Vienna, if it concerned their studies or their work, then the choice was German. The reasons for the post to be in English were numerous, some quotes from the interviewees are:

Because most of my friends right now are from all over Europe and English is our common language. -P01

It depends. If it's something concerning Romanian people then it's Romanian. But mostly so that everybody understands then it's English. Or if it's something about work then German. Depends on the kind of posting. I really think it depends on my mood too, but I guess if it's something informative, then I think it is English. But if it's something mood related then it's varying. -P04

Because it's an international language. And maybe because it is being used a lot in Romania in movies and TV and everything and most people use it. I don't know. I picked it up without noticing. I picked it up unintentionally. -P07

Because I have friends from all over the world so everybody can understand what I write. -P02

One of the interviewees posted also in Spanish and said that if the post concerned something related to his Erasmus[1] stay in Spain then he usually chose that language:

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[1]The Erasmus Programme (Erasmus is the acronym for EuRopean Community Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students) is a European Union student exchange programme.

I think more about the message. If it's something about Romania, then I post it in Romanian. If it's something concerning anyone then maybe I'll post it in English, or if it's something only concerning people in Vienna I'll post it in German or if it's something related to my Erasmus stay then probably I will post it in Spanish. -P06

Another main reason for the posting choice was if the status update had a target audience. If the participants had some particular friends in mind, then they chose their common language. Posts about missing home and friends were in Romanian as they were directed to friends or family at home. University related questions ended up to be only in German as it targeted people that studied in Vienna. If the update was directed to people with more nationalities then the language was usually English.

Another interesting choice of language was that the statements sounded better in a particular language. Some interviewees said that they couldn't express their thoughts in another language as well as they did in that particular language. Some participants thought that a statement in English *just sounds better*. In stark contrast to that one participant believed that statements in English sounded forced or fake, like the title of a book or a movie, or that it was more like showing off. This perception of language may have to do with how much they are confronted with that language in real life. It might be much more natural if they spoke it on a daily basis but might sound more out of the ordinary if they were only confronted with it in movies or in their studies. Others felt that they expressed themselves in their mother tongue the best so they chose Romanian also because some said it was a more expressive language. One said that if she couldn't express herself in English then she chose Romanian. Others thought of phrases or rhymes like P04 posted *facebook am morgen brings kummer und sorgen.* (which means *Facebook in the morning draws sorrow and worries.*) and when asked why she chose that particular language she said that she simply couldn't phrase it in another language:

It's a German saying. I mean it rhymes. Don't know how I would have said it in Romanian or English. -P04.

An obvious choice of language posting is if it directly quoted somebody which might not look as a quote on the first glance. The statement usually did involve them personally but they used somebody else's words and didn't have to think of the language at all. This means that the update was personal but the words weren't. This involves quotes from books, songs, but even emails or shirts. If not asked directly why they chose that language for the post the reader probably would't have noticed that it was a quote.

A more hidden reason for posting in a language is when the user couldn't recall why he or she chose to post in that language in the first place. In those cases the participants had to think carefully about it and said it was due to the fact that they were with their friends that spoke that language, or they were at work where they only spoke German, thus they were unconciously influenced by their real life context. Others believed that they read a book that was for example German which is why their current of thoughts continued on that topic to be in German and thus the posting was as well:

Usually when I write in German it means that I just read a book and my thoughts were in German or I wrote the quote from the book. Something that made me think. And I made the conclusion. So usually when I write something in German I was either with friends or I read a book. -P07

Similarly, others thought that they were posting about a Facebook event or about an article and that was written in English thus their thoughts continued in the same direction. On a different scala of time others believed that if they just came back from a longer stay in Romania, their thoughts had to adjust back to German, so in the first instance they were still only thinking in Romanian:

I don't know. It varies... I don't know. I do think in German normally... but also in Romanian. So that always depends if I've been in Romania lately, if I've talked a lot of Romanian or German lately. -P04

The choice of language also shifts with the changes of circumstances. One of the participants for example had many English and Romanian posts in the beginning but admitted that things have changed now that as she has been living in Austria for six years and she was much more surrounded by German talking people, having aquired also a workplace in Vienna thus she would now rather choose German to write on Facebook.

Others said that they didn't even think about the posting language. When they initially acquired a Facebook account they observed that most posts were in English which is what they picked up and they carried on in the same manner.

5.2 Reason of Posting

The choice of posting seems to have shifted in recent future according to the interviewed participants. Most of them agreed that they posted much more in the beginning, revealing many personal details and posting on a daily basis. They agreed that they are now more reluctant to give away personal details and solely posted if they had something important to say, if something really important or interesting happened to them or decided to avoid posting status updates at all and chose to post pictures and share articles or songs that revealed their preferences or reflected their moods:

Rarely, I don't think I posted any updates lately. I think the last time I posted something it was just some pictures. Just post pics and write. . . yeah. But in the beginning I really posted a lot. Like random stuff: what I am doing, studying, stressed, not stressed, going to a party. But lately really only if it's something important like a new job or for the master thesis. -P04

I have some [status updates], but in the last year. . . maybe. . . I shared a couple of things like interesting articles or interesting photos, but I don't post photos with myself anymore. Ahmm. . . And I don't say hurray something's happened. I became more a passive user of Facebook mostly. . . In the meantime. -P03

These participants revealed that they posted very frequently after they got a Facebook account. The main reason given was that they wanted to let everybody know what they are up to because this was how they stayed in contact with their friends as they also wanted to know what their friends were doing. After being asked why she shared many posts in the beginning, one of the participants simply answered:

I don't know why. Because everybody was doing it. - P03.

Others said that it was like showing off and telling the world what amazing things you are doing. One participant explained that she started by posting only a little but that it somehow without even realizing it built up and became a habit. Then she was posting about everything, what she ate and where she went every day and it became annoying because it was something she had to do.

Many participants admitted that complaining about something in a status update on Facebook helped them to blow off steam. If they were annoyed about something and they posted about it, it helped them to feel better about it. Sometimes the simple fact of posting it was enough to help them feel better, other times they expected responses and wanted to start a conversation about it. Others admitted that after feeling bad the expected some compassion from their friends.

Another reason for posting was to get praise for an accomplishment and inform also their friends that live abroad about it. One of the collected status updates from Chapter 4 was *this morning: vienna staffel marathon. since: burger- fries- ice cream- pancakes- pasta- cheesecake. I'm thinking... ribs?!.* When asked in the interviews why she posted it she answered:

Because it was funny. Because I did the Vienna marathon which is not. . . I mean. . . It's a cool thing to do. And. . . since then I spent a few couple of weeks running and eating healthy and the rest of the day I just stuffed my mouth with everything. [I wanted to] brag a bit because I was like. . . like ran eleven kilometers. -P03.

Another collected post from a different participant read *In case of insomnia no better time for an insanity workout.* When asked why she posted it she replied:

Because I wasn't able to sleep and I thought it was cool that I was doing a workout in the morning. It was really weird. [I posted it so] that my friends should know that I am working hard. -P01.

The first participant, P03, confessed spending much time running and eating healthy but she didn't post about the preparation or the hard time she had before the marathon she only posted about her success.

One interviewee admitted that Facebook is to her like a diary. Her status updates are usually not targeted at people. She admitted that she writes something, feels good about herself for a moment and then doesn't get back to see what she wrote or doesn't even think about the fact that someone will ever read it or not:

I think I feel good for a moment [after posting an update], but I don't check after it to see if somebody liked it or commented on it. I think it's like a diary. You don't reread it. You wrote it, felt okay for a moment, and after that you don't look again at what you wrote, or you don't think if someone will ever read it or not. -P07.

One participant said that the updates were sometimes notes to herself. She thought they sometimes were self motivating or self encouraging. She said that after getting Facebook addicted she motivated herself not to spend so much time on Facebook anymore by posting a status update about Facebook getting boring. Another time she posted a very happy update shortly after a breakup saying that she didn't really feel as good as the post sounded but that she was trying to encourage herself that everything will be better. She also said that her status updates were *statements* with the meaning that once she posted them they became official and she had to do what she wrote. This ironically was pointed out by her after being asked about a status update where she expressed her misery after using Facebook. She said that she also posted that she wouldn't go on Facebook for a couple of days, so after she posted it, she said that it became official and she had to do it. This didn't only concern her status updates but she also meant that after breaking up with her boyfriend and changing her relationship status she couldn't go back (after letting the world know that they split):

It was also a note to self. And a statement. Because I also post things like that "I won't go to Facebook next week" or so and I decided something and if I posted on Facebook then it's official. I have to do it. That was also the same with the breakup. Because after I posted it on Facebook it was no turning back. -P04.

This shows how seriously Facebook is taken by some people and that it actually influences their lives.

5.3 How personal do you get on Facebook?

After being asked how personal they get on Facebook, all participants unanimously answered that they were not that personal. Two of them specifically said that things like love matters were off-limits. This, however, seems to have changed in recent time as most of the interviewees have specified.

Followed by stating that they never got too personal or don't get too personal anymore, participants added that they were reluctant about sharing their feelings online. Some of them stated that they would sometimes post about being happy or frustrated with university for example, but never post that they were sad or show other kinds of weaknesses. They managed their self presentation very carefully. The participants' reactions were similar:

Yeah it's more the positive things I post. Because if I post something it's also for someone to feel happy about it. I do feel sorry for myself often but I don't do that on Facebook. Or... not anymore at least. Or maybe just if I am really mad about something then maybe I would post it. I didn't do it lately, mostly nice things. -P04

I was never too personal. Like... sharing my food. Or... I dunno my feelings. A couple of times I did share some things when I was really frustrated with university... I was like... wraaah! I posted an update that I felt bad but... most of the time nothing that personal. -P03

Not that personal. I won't tell people when I am sad that I am sad. -P01

Not very personal. Probably in the beginning when Facebook appeared I was a lot more involved, but in the meantime... from 1 to 10 it would be a 3 or 4. [If I post something happy] I probably think about sharing the feeling of happiness with the whole world, to eradiate what you feel maybe, to share your well-being with everybody. -P07

The answer of *not too personal* had though different meanings for the participants, because while some said that they would never share their food, others said that they would do that implying that this wasn't personal. What they all seemed to agree on is that they never posted family related things in their updates especially about the passing away of a close family member.

One of the interviewed participants stated that she never posts very personal things through her status updates as she is well aware of the broad audience that may or may not read it including her mother or other family members, her work superior or even her diploma thesis supervisor. She stated that because of having Facebook friends from these kinds of different circles it censors her view on the matter but she does become more personal through pictures:

I think I am very aware of the fact that it is being read by many people because I have people from many circles and then I write things that can be seen by my diploma thesis supervisor and my mum and my bosses and everyone. So I don't get very personal through text. But with pictures I would say that they are personal pictures. And they aren't pictures with me. But they are personal things. I have a huge folder with cell phone pictures. -P05

She wasn't the only one that shared that opinion, many stated that they would reveal their moods or feelings through pictures or through posting a link to a song or to an article:

It's hard to express myself [when I have something negative to say]. At least on Facebook. I do it a lot more rarely than positive. I would probably put a picture that can mean many things. I put something that can be interpreted either good or bad. -P07

This indirect manner to share personal feelings seems to be the result of the growing awareness that people nowadays seem to have with the broad audience of a social network service.

Another way to share personal things besides pictures seem to be to post short captions but never give away too many details. One participant said that she was indeed very caught up in posting personal things when she started using Facebook but that changed over time and although she still posts on a regular basis she never reveals much. Giving away the place where she is would be personal enough for her or post a picture with a short caption and not explain what it is about. Close friends know what it is about is what she insisted but the broad audience wouldn't get the meaning of her posts:

[I will post] The place where I am. Even if this might be impersonal, it doesn't say what I am thinking and so on. -P07

Returning to sharing love related things on Facebook two of the interviewees specifically pointed out that they wouldn't share their relationship status on Facebook. One of them explained that she did specify her relationship status in the beginning but that she learned her lesson after going through what she called a *Facebook breakup*. She narrated in detail how she came to that conclusion saying:

[I'm] Not so personal anymore. So I really try to be as detached as possible. I don't even post relationship statuses anymore. No... it's not a good idea. It's non of their business... I was a lot more personal [before]. I mean I had a relationship status. It was much more personal. With time I think you get that it's not a good idea. -P04

After going through a public breakup she said that she was especially aware of all the people that read her posts because everybody knew it. So after changing her relationship status she posted positive updates showing the world that she is better:

[I posted positive updates] Somehow to encourage myself. Yeah. Life is good although bad things happen. But life is still good. It was more of a . . . I mean I wasn't that fine like it sounded. That day was nice and felt good. And I just had to share that somehow. Although it wasn't that. . . my mood wasn't that good. I mean the next day was bad. It was more of a note to self but aware of all the people that read it. Yeah it was more or less about that. Cos it was a facebook breakup so everybody knew it. And it was like "No I am fine. I don't care." -P04

This is when she decided that sharing personal things may not be a good idea and she stayed away from doing it. People seem to be inclined to share positive personal things but when things go wrong they realise that it may not concern everybody.

5.4   The indirect way

As interviewees stated that they used pictures, songs or links to express their feelings we will take a look at some of them.

Participant P07 posted a picture showing sunflowers on her livingroom table with the short caption *Happy* with a heart emoticon and said it had a lot of meaning to her:

My sister was coming to visit me. I was just about to go to pick her up from the airport. She loves sunflowers. And I was so happy that she was coming and that I found the flowers. And the weather was also great so I thought that it all made sense. I didn't post the pic for anyone. People probably thought that I got the flowers but I didn't care. I was just so happy that she was coming and nobody knew what the flowers meant. It's just the way I felt. -P07

She later also posted a picture with her sister with the caption *Having a gr8 time* saying that the picture expressed more than her words would.

She also posted a picture showing a cherry and an *I* before and a *You* after the cherry with a quote *when we can do nothing else, we can still love, without expecting any reward or change or gratitude......* When asked why she posted it she said:

Because it expressed more or less what I was feeling at that moment, and it could be also seen negative or positive. And I think that everyone can see it positive if he feels good or vice versa. Because that was the way I felt, it was a little of both. But somehow with optimism. It was for nobody in particular it was just this state that I was into. -P07

Participant P03 posted a link titled *When you come home after Fusion Festival* which she attended showing a video of a dog running and letting himself fall before the camera. She said:

It was about coming home from Fusion Festival... because I was so tired and so dead so... it was like: Come home, go to sleep. -P03

The video expressed in a funny way exactly the way she was feeling.

Participant P05 is a photographer and said that pictures were more important to her than words:

I differentiate a lot between text and picutures. I post pictures every time something impressive happens that I want to share with the world. For example I just saw now some people on the floor here in Museumsquartier and I posted it. And I try not to post pictures with food, but if it looks really good then I can't help it (laughs). Or if the light is right to take a pic. [...] I communicate a lot with my boyfriend through pictures. For example if he bought milk then he wouldn't write me, he would send me a picture. [...] Pictures are like the dokumentation of my own life. -P05

5.5 Dialect and Shortcuts

After being asked if they used either dialect or the standard language, almost all of the participants didn't think they used it much, even if their updates proved otherwise. Using dialect or jargon without even noticing it might indicate how comfortable they feel with the language they wrote it in. One of the interviewees confessed after taking a moment to think about it that she did indeed like to use dialect in Romanian and used it frequently in her updates as it came to her very naturally. She explained that she considered German also her mother tongue as she spoke it since she was a child but couldn't come up with an explanation why the *spoken Romanian* came more natural to her than German. After consideration some of the interviewees thought they used dialect when writing with friends for example when they posted on someone's Facebook wall who spoke dialect, one gave an example of an Austrian friend who used dialect when she spoke, but rarely when they posted an update on their own wall. Some said they used it when

they laughed at something or were not being seriously writing about something. One dedicated interviewee had a clear opinion that people who posted in dialect seemed stupid to her and also complained about not using accented characters in Romanian which changed with the world of the internet dramatically.

The prevailing opinion on using shortcuts was similar to that of dialect, most of the participants didn't think they used shortcuts. Two of the participants said that they used shortcuts in English like *thx* or *10x* for thanks or *n8* for good night but didn't think they used them in either German or Romanian. One of the two also used shortcuts when posting in Spanish like *k* for que, which shows that he spent time living in Spain and had Spanish friends from whom he picked it up. Nevertheless, the majority stated they didn't use shortcuts, one of them explained that she didn't have to since it was not a text message to a friend thus she was never in a hurry when posting an update and there was no need for misunderstandings. Another stated that she wrote a status update without shortcuts but if a close friend commented on it she might reply using shortcuts. This was a similar view to the participant saying that he wrote dialect if he had a target audience but not if it was meant for the general public. Thus, it resulted that when written for the broad audience people usually prefer using the standard language and no shortcuts so that everybody who reads the post can understand.

5.6 Case Study

An interview with one particular participant gave a great amount of insight into the problem of bilingual users on Facebook. While the majority of the participants said that they simply posted everything in English for everybody to see and understand, especially those that had lived in yet another country doing an exchange programme where they made friends with a great amount of people from all around the globe (this was the case for two of the participants who did the Erasmus Programme), that travelled a lot or visited friends that lived abroad, this participant wasn't very convinced that English was the solution to the problem. The participant, P05, wasn't as comfortable with the English language as many of the other participants were, had few friends that didn't understand either Romanian or German, and had much to say to the way English sounded in updates. She thought that English wasn't simply a neutral language which can be understood by everybody but that it also added some sort of *coolness* that changed somewhat the meaning of what you wanted to say:

English to me sounds like "I love you all" more or less... More than the languages you speak day by day. Like the title of a book. You understand what I mean. It seems like... looking down upon things. Somehow snobbish, if I write "I am drinking my coffee", don't you think? I mean I don't have friends in Austria that don't talk German. I mean I do but not people I think of necessarily. Yeah and if I do write in English I try to write as little as possible or I don't write in English and instead I make hearts and smilies and so. And if it's stuff from vacation for example I'm in Rome then I try to excersice my Italian, like a vacation statement. And everybody understands the amount of Italian that I do. -P05

P05 revealed that she did have a great impediment with the two languages that she used on a

daily basis not wanting to use English. Being a photographer she had many employers that were from Romania and Austria at the same time. The big problem was that she was afraid to post too much in Romanian for the fear that the Austrian employers might unfriend[2] her, block[3] her or simply have a negative vibe about her person. She didn't want to spam them with posts in a language that they didn't understand. At the same time she didn't want to loose touch with all her Romanian friends, acquaintances and employers as she had many photographer friends that didn't understand German.

She resolved her problem by dividing her friends into two groups which she called *Limba Romana* that means Romanian language and *Deutsche Sprache* which means German language and added her friends to these two big Facebook groups. When she posted an update that was for one of the specific groups, for example when it was targeted for people living in Vienna, she wrote the post and chose the group accordingly. The process can be seen in Figure 5.1. Then only the friends in that particular group would see the status update.

Figure 5.1: P05 posting a status update on Facebook and choosing her target audience through her language groups

She admitted that her solution had many flaws. It was very cumbersome to group all her acquaintances as she had more than 800 Facebook friends and she didn't always maintain the groups especially when adding new friends. There was also the problem of people belonging in both categories like her former classmates that joined her to study in Vienna or other Romanian students which she met in the capital of Austria. She added most of these to both groups and as she posted some things in both languages, these users would see her posts twice once in Romanian and once in German. It was also very tiring posting an update twice but she explained

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[2]*Unfriending* somebody on Facebook means that you delete a contact from your friends list.

[3]*Blocking* somebody on Facebook means that you unfriend them and prevent them from seeing things you posted on your timeline. It is reciprocal.

that they weren't simple translations. They were also slightly modified phrases because the particular group might need an additional explanation if it was something that occured in the other state. To make it clearer P05 said that she once wrote the abbreviation *TMF* in a German post, while in Romanian she had to write it out *Theater Film und Medienwissenschaften*, her studies, because the people from back home would not understand the shortcut. She would also add the city Vienna to her posts if she mentioned being in a particular part of the city, which would be self-evident for city inhabitants, but not for ones living elsewhere. Being a very critical user of Facebook she revealed other flaws like not being able to declare more than one workplace or more than one study at a time. Moreover she complained about the fact that she mentioned her university *University of Vienna* at her studies as well as *Universitaet Wien* and Facebook didn't make the connection as if it weren't the same place. However, these flaws are not relevant for this study.

In conclusion, P05 used language as a group selector but thought it was a big amount of work to do so. As it is possible on Facebook to declare the languages you speak, an easy way to release someone from all the work of adding friends according to languages one by one, Facebook could do that automatically and build these language groups. A user might then be able to choose whether he or she wants his post to be public or visible for only the group of his friends that speaks that language. This would prevent spamming users that don't understand the language.

5.7 Summary

The insights gained from the interviews were very diverse and interesting. On the one hand, participants were very grateful to have Facebook as it helped them stay in touch with their friends, join events and didn't want to quit it, while on the other hand many confessed not wanting to post status updates anymore, not wanting to share very personal information and one even complained about struggling with addiction. When choosing their language to post in almost all interviewees said that it was topic based. A second reason for choosing an update was if it had a target audience. Sometimes they couldn't express themselves in any other language than the one they chose for posting and at times the language choice was unconciously influenced by their real life context. Reasons for posting were mostly if something interesting or important happened in their lives that they wanted to share it with their friends, but while in the beginning of having an account they posted out of habit about every little detail of their lives, many said this changed and they were more reluctant especially about posting emotional updates. Some posted if they were frustrated with something and wanted to blow off steam or if they had a bad day and wanted some compassion. One participant said posting updates was like writing in a diary whereas others said posts were like resolutions or notes to self. All interviewees agreed that they were not very personal on Facebook or at least stopped being too disclosive in time. They were hesitant to post about their feelings and if they did they only posted about happy moments or being mad about something but never about being sad or vulnerable. Many said they were content with posting a short caption or stating the place they are going to instead of giving away too many details through their postings. Others avoided posting updates completely and solely shared their feelings indirectly through pictures, songs or links to articles. Especially

posting about their love life was avoided by the participants. Most of the participants said they didn't use dialect in their posts even if many of them actually did but they didn't realize it. Some said they used it if writing on somebody else's wall who spoke dialect but seldomly in their own posts. They also said they rarely used shortcuts since they had time to write an update as it was not like writing a text message to a friend on the phone. They also wanted to avoid misunderstandings but would write using shortcuts if a friend answered to his or her post. One of the participants, P05, who didn't feel comfortable writing in English, divided her friends into two language groups, one for German and one for Romanian. She confessed that it was a very tedious work and it had flaws but she didn't want to annoy her aquaintances with posts they didn't understand. Overall, it can be said that most of the participants preferred posting in English so that everybody could understand what they were writing.

Discussion

The focus of this work was to see how self-disclosive Romanian Facebook users living in Austria are in their status updates. For this purpose the last twenty-five Facebook posts of twenty participants have been collected for analysis and four hypotheses have been formulated. This work was partly a replication of a study by Tang, Chou and Drucker [40] with different ground points: it was made two years later than the original work (which was published in 2011) thus the circumstances for social media usage changed over time, and the location of this study is different, Tang, Chou and Drucker analyzed multiple nationalities living in the United States of America with the majority (over seventy percent) being from East Asian countries, whereas this study analyzed Romanians living in Austria, thus cultural differences influenced the studies as both host country and country of origin of the two studies were completely different. Moreover, a different research question has been added about the usage of dialect and shortcuts (H4) which did not appear in the original study. Furthermore, qualitative interviews with seven of the participants have been carried out to get a more in depth understanding of the usage of social media by multilinguals (interviews were not part of the original work).

The first three hypotheses were taken from the original study, the fourth was added by us. The first hypothesis was:

H1: *Self-disclosure will be more frequent in Romanian status updates than in other languages.*

This research question did not hold. This was in unison with the original work where this research question did not hold either.

The second hypothesis concerned more intimate self-disclosure:

H2: *Cognitive and emotional self-disclosures will be more frequent in Romanian status updates than in other languages.*

Differing from the original work, this hypothesis was also false. Reasons for this might be

that the original work was done two years ago in the earlier times of Facebook thus it might affect this rapidly changing environment. Moreover, cultural differences may also play a role as will be discussed thoroughly in Section 6.3.

The third hypothesis concerned the valence of the posts:

H3: *Self-disclosures in German and English status updates will be more positive and less negative than native language updates.*

This research question was true. Romanian posts were the only ones that were more negative than positive reaching over fifty-eight percent. This was in unison with the original work.

The fourth research question concerned dialect:

H4: *There will be more use of dialect and shortcuts in Romanian status updates than in other languages.*

This hypothesis was also true.

Self-disclosure proved to be the most important reason for posting status updates on Facebook since over sixty-five percent of the collected posts were self-disclosive confirming that the participants were willing to display personal information through the medium of social media to some extent. However, the results of the interviews showed that the interviewees grew more reluctant to share too personal information on Facebook in time which is confirmed by the fact that most posts were by far factually disclosive with over forty percent of all posts which are the least disclosive statements. This implies that information about the participants' families or loved ones, about their feelings, especially when being sad, were generally avoided topics like the interviewees concluded and as sixteen percent of the statements were cognitive disclosive and barely eight percent were emotionally disclosive. The general trend was to share emotions indirectly through pictures, quotes, songs, articles or just short captions without details rather than to explicitly write about the emotional distress they are in. The importance of pictures in the documentation of one's life might also have been influenced by the growth in popularity of photo-sharing and social network services like *Instagram*, which might be considered an equivalent to *Twitter* but with pictures. Photos enable users to express themselves without necessarily being as explicit as with text. Overall, the frequency of posting status updates diminished in recent time as Facebook users grew more alert about the many hazards of living a public life and especially of the drawbacks of leaving a digital print of their activities and opinions through social media. This is confirmed by the fact that Facebook has seen a general decrease in daily users especially among teenagers as they announced in November 2013 according to The Guardian[1]. Messaging applications like *WhatsApp* are gaining more and more popularity while teenagers loose interest in Facebook because the older generation also started using it and they cannot share everything through their updates since their parents might see what they post.

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[1]http://www.theguardian.com/technology/2013/nov/10/teenagers-messenger-apps-facebook-exodus. Accessed: 2013-11-12

6.1 Choice of Language

The interviews proved that the choice for language of a status update on Facebook for a multilingual person is usually topic based. Moreover, the interviews also proved that the choice of language is made unconciously at times and depends on the surroundings of the posting. According to Grosjean [17] this holds in everyday life as well as it results that multilinguals make use of their languages dependent on the situation, the topic, the interlocutor and so on. They concluded that language choice is a well-learned behaviour and that a multilingual never asks the conscious question *What language should I speak with this person?*. Grosjean also concluded that it is a very complex phenomenon that only becomes apparent when it breaks down. It is stated that "bilinguals go through their daily interactions with other bilinguals quite unaware of the many psychological and sociolinguistic factors that interact to help them choose one language over another." He also found out that when a billingual is angry, tired or excited, he or she will often revert back to their mother language or to whatever language they express their emotions in. Stress may also cause interferences, problems in finding the appropriate words and unintentional switching of languages.

It has also been concluded that bilinguals have different language modes: the monolingual mode when bilinguals choose the language of the interlocutor and as best as they can deactivate the other language, and the bilingual mode when they communicate with other bilinguals that share their languages with whom they normally mix languages [17]. When in the second mode, bilinguals choose one language to use togheter, known as *base language* (other terms are *host* or *matrix language*) and they bring in the *guest* or *embedded language* in different ways. Sometimes they shift completely to the other language for a word or a phrase. This explains the appearance of status updates that contain more than one language. Many have the above stated appearance of a base and guest language, for example: *anyone spre viena duminica* by P05, *Wuzzeltisch at work! my boss is the awesomnest!* by P02, *wir sind hier und wir sind laut weil man uns die bildung klaut. education is not for sale...in protest mood.* by P17 or *Data quality bla bla and la gente esta muy loca..* by P20.

Researchers discovered that thinking in a foreign language creates psychological distance, encouraging systematic rather than automatic thinking, and reduces the emotional impact of decisions [30]. This could mean that the same words written in a status update in Romanian might not have the same psychological impact than when written for example in English. Researchers weren't entirely sure why speaking in a less familiar tongue makes people more *rational* but their theory was that these effects arise because a foreign language provides greater cognitive and emotional distance than a native tongue does. Why then were there not more emotional status updates in Romanian than in German or English? What appears to be a contradiction could be explained by the fact that strong words of affection or aversion like *love* or *hate* might be written more lightly or often in Facebook posts in English but would have more meaning when written in the user's mother tongue. This might explain why there are more cognitive and emotional disclosive statements in English than in Romanian or German as users might have written them more lightheartedly. It coincides with past research that's shown that the emotional impact of swear words, expressions of love and adverts is diminished when they're presented in a less familiar language.

Facebook introduced 2013 a new feature for status updates where a user can choose from several predefined activities which range from *Reading* to *Eating*. It is possible to disclose the way the user is feeling which can be chosen from: happy, sad, excited, tired, great, wonderful, annoyed, blessed, meh, loved, pretty, angry, determined, sick, irritated, bored, good, awesome, special, sleepy, bad, better, guilty, amused, hungry, down, hopeful, alone, sorry, safe, confused, exhausted, proud, lonely, free, curious, lost, relaxed, accomplished, depressed. The feelings are accompanied by emoticons that reflect the mood the user posts. This eliminates the choice of language for a self-disclosive post as the user does not have to think about the language he posts the update it, he simply chooses between the categories and the post is written in the predefined language that the user has Facebook in. One of the interviewees, P04, mentioned this new feature and said that she didn't use the other activities like *Watching* or *Playing* but did like the feeling option saying:

> *That is interesting… the feeling part. I think I did post something like "feeling great", but mostly if it's something positive, important or so. -P04*

A drawback of this option is that the other users see the post in the language of the user that posted it thus some might not understand what is written. A more elegant approach would be if Facebook would visualize the post for the other users in their predefined language as everybody would then understand the posted update.

6.2 Goffman's Front Stage

Goffman's theatrical performance [14] explains the way in which the individual in ordinary life situations presents himself and his activity to others, the ways in which he guides and controls the impression they form of him, and the kinds of things he may and may not do while sustaining his performance before them. Using this analogy, Facebook is a platform for users to manage the impressions others form of him or her. It is a constant performance as other users never see back-stage i.e. never know the real feelings or intentions of a published post. Although this analogy to Facebook has been done before in other scientific work, for example Zhao and Jiang [47], the connection to language as a selector of different personas has not been mentioned. DiMicco and Millen [12] also deal with the presentation of different personas on Facebook especially when handling between old school friends and new work collegues but does not mention language as a way to build these personas.

Newman, Lauterbach and Munson [35] compared Facebook to the front stage of Goffman's analogy where participants wanted to communicate the impression of being interesting people who were in control and positive whereas online health communities (OHCs) as the back stage where they could share their struggles. The participants shared that they went on OHCs to receive and provide emotional support, and underlined the fact that OHCs were better than social network sites because they were filled with people that shared the same struggles and provided positive and encouraging responses. Some explained that while struggling with weight loss, on social network sites like Facebook people would rather meet these problems with sarcasm and negativity. This might explain why the participants of this study were also reluctant to share their

problems on Facebook for the fear of being made fun of. Some participants of Newman's study [35] also revealed that they were not seeking consolation online as nothing compared to physical contact saying *There is nothing that can replace that physical pat on the back or the hug or that smile*. Some of the interviewees of this study confessed that they did share sometimes minor problems seeking for compassion through status updates or just wanting to talk about their bad day but when going through a major crisis they did not want to reveal it on Facebook. One participant of Newman's study [35] revealed that while having the option tho cross-post her status updates both on Facebook and the OHC SparkPeople, she was very selective using it as she might for example have posted about her runs on Facebook but not disclosing her struggles. This underlines the fact that people perceive Facebook as rather reflecting the positive image of people and the desire of the users to conceal their problems which was also one of the outcomes of the interviews made in this study. Another user of the previous study said that she shared her problems with diabetes on Facebook but that her posts were rather short and without details compared to the same messages she posted on the OHC Diabetes Daily. The rephrasing of posts to suit the online community shows that people build explicit personas according to their wants and to the way they perceive it will be read, understood and responded to by other users. It is also similar to the way participant P05 maintained her different personas through her two language groups on Facebook (see Chapter 5). One of the participants of the previous study called writing on Facebook almost like a *stand up comedy routine*. She revealed that she received messages about how great her life was but pointed out that *you know, you're only seeing what I want you to see. It's that I'm a better writer and my content is very select. It's not that I don't have problems, I'm just not putting them on Facebook*. This seemed to be lately the general mindset of Facebook users as the statement was very similar to many of the participants of this study (see Chapter 5) that confessed that they would never share that that they were sad on Facebook or only posted about their happy moments and feelings.

Another participant of Newman's study [35] stated that she was aware of her high school friends being part of her audience on Facebook which motivated her to talk about her new and healthy identity as a runner because she finally got the positive feedback which she never received during high school as she was overweight back then. This is also in accordance with the statements from the interviews of this study as they specifically stated that they liked to boast of their physical accomplishments on Facebook specifically for high school friends that were living abroad to know with whom they had rather loose ties. Participant P03 posted about her marathon experience but avoided posting about the hard time she had before the run when she had to prepare herself and had to eat healthy 5 which yet again shows that Facebook is a platform for visualizing the positive things in your life rather than confessing your struggles. A participant of the previous study specifically said that because of having friends on Facebook that she went to high school with and to whom she didn't talk in 25 years she didn't want to post about her weight issues thus rather used OHCs. One of the participants of this study, P04, specifically said after being asked about the motivation for posting a status update that she wanted to *show off* at least in the beginning of using her account. Similarly, another participant of the previous study admitted that she never shared her struggles saying *I don't want them on my Facebook wall or on a status setting. . . I want everyone to think I'm perfect*. She preferred to share her health information with strangers in order to keep up a glorified persona of herself in front of her friends.

The need to portray a picture perfect life on Facebook and the hazards of the perceptions others get because of it is also discussed by Hui-Tzu and Edge [26]. They found out that users who spend a large amount of time on Facebook and have friends that they do not know personally were only seeing the *front stage* of their Facebook friends which made them think that the lives of others were better than their own and they got the perception that life was unfair.

6.3 Cultural Differences

Returning to the question whether cultural differences influence the way we use a social network which was supposed in the beginning of this work in Chapter 2, given the fact that part of the results of the status updates differed from the study of Tang, Chou and Drucker [40] it suggests that these differences play a role in the disclosure process on a social network. In the previous study English disclosures were significantly more factual but less cognitive and emotional than native language disclosures whereas the Romanian participants in this study posted more cognitive and emotional self-disclosive statements in English than in Romanian or German. This might be explained by the Individualism dimension as the United States of America is a highly individualistic state according to Hofstede [20] (scoring 91) suggesting that friendships between American users are very superficial which is why the participants of the previous study were much less self-disclosive in English.

Given that the Power versus Distance dimension of Romania is very high (90) and that of Austria very low (11) according to Hofstede [20], it has been predicted that people that moved to a country where the power distribution was significantly better would see the stark contrast to the unequal power distribution in their home country which might result in more negative Facebook posts in their native language. The results were consistent with this assumption as Romanian status updates were indeed the only ones with more negative statements (over fifty-eight percent) than positive while German status updates were significantly more positive (only thirty percent negative).

Zhao and Jiang [46] studied the cultural differences on visual self-presentations between American and Chinese users and likewise concluded that self-presentations is sensitive to national culture as Chinese users were more likely to customize their profile images than Americans because a collectivism oriented culture tends to value looking proper in front of social groups. Even though western society is considered a individualistic society and eastern society is seen as collectivistic, American users had profile pictures that were group photos something that was rather expected from Chinese users.

Another reason that might explain why the results of this study differed in part to that of Tang, Chou and Drucker [40] is the different time frame in which the studies were carried out. The previous study was published in 2011 when Facebook was still new to many people and possibly to the participants as over eighty-three percent of the previous posts were self-disclosive whereas only slightly over sixty-six percent of all collected status updates in this study were self-disclosive. All of the participants of this study without exception explained that their attitude towards sharing personal information of Facebook or any other SNS changed. They were sharing much more personal information in the beginning and were now very reluctant as privacy issues of social media became a topic of conversation around the globe. Especially self-disclosure and

self-presentation through pictures seem to be gaining more and more popularity, according to Zhao and Jiang [37] over sixty-two percent of Facebook users consider posting pictures as a way to express who they are to other users. One of the interviewees, P04, confessed that she posted much in the beginning of having an account but that she didn't feel like it anymore and also specifically mentioned that she was concerned about the selling of information on Facebook.

However, there have been similarities to the findings of the previous study, as status updates posted in the mother tongue of the participants were the only updates with more negative valence reaching more than fifty-eight percent. This might mean that the participants stratigically constructed a more positive image of self for their new social circles. relative to their old one. These results are consistent with the social penetration theory [1] as negative self-disclosure is often used to strengthen group identity it maintaines closeness with the older social circles.

To conclude, we shared the first three research questions with the original study which took place two years ago in 2011 in the USA and analyzed different nationalities (the majority being from the East Asian countries). As two out of three research questions were in unison with the original work, we agree that multilingual Facebook users make use of their power of language to control different personas and reveal personal information. Additionally to the original work, one other research question has been added concerning the use of dialect and shortcuts (H4) and after the status update analysis, semi-structured interviews have been carried out with seven of the participants to gain more insight into their behaviour on Facebook. There have been changes in Facebook use over time which is one of the reasons why not all of the results were in unison with the original work. The other reason is that there are cultural differences since the participants from this study were Romanians living in Austria whereas the former study analyzed multiple nationalities living in the States. We found out that users grew more reluctant to reveal personal information online over time due to the fact that privacy issues of social media have become a largely discussed topic in public nowadays and the participants were not keen on leaving digital prints all over the internet. Especially negative emotions were avoided topics in status updates, but however, they have been gradually replaced by sharing of emotions through pictures with short captions, songs or links to articles.

6.4 Design Opportunities

A possible approach to alleviate the building of groups could be to create language groups automatically according to the languages you name in your personal information section (*About\Basic Information\Languages*). Participant P05 pointed out that it is very cumbersome to explicitly select her friends into groups according to the languages they speak and to maintain these groups. Thus, the choice would be left to the user if he or she wants to share their posts with everybody or if they only want it to appear in the News Feed of their friends that speak that language.

A way to animate users to post more might be to specifically ask them to do so. Wash and Lampe [44] proved that in a real-world randomized field experiment on a social media system by asking users to contribute through popup windows. They increased over twenty percent in contributions with no reduction in quality. However, the effect waned as users habituated to the popups. Additionally, users could consider these popups annoying which might lead them to frequent the social site less.

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6.5 Limitations and Future Work

There are limitations to this study. Firstly, it is limited to Romanian users living in Austria thus nothing can be said about the role of language in self-disclosure or self-presentation in social networks for users of other nationalities. Future work can look at different cultural groups to see how much the cultural differences affect the usage of language and self-disclosure. Secondly, the age of the participants range between 22 and 30. It is known that younger people make friends easier that the older generation and integrate themselves better into a foreign society thus it can be speculated that older users are even more reluctant to be self-disclosive in a foreign language than younger ones as their relationships to locals might be more formal or superficial. Thirdly, the usage of other social network services can be looked at for further insight into the matter of self-disclosure but Facebook is the most popular SNS in this area which is the reason for it being analized in this study. Furthermore, the connection between choice of language and the use of social media leaves enough room to be explored and may give more insight into the way multilingual persons think and speak.

CHAPTER 7

Conclusion

This study analized the self-disclosive behaviour on the social network site Facebook of Romanian users living in Austria. For this purpose, the last twenty-five status updates of twenty participants were collected and four research questions were formulated. To gain further insight into the reasons why participants chose languages the way they did and how they revealed personal information, semi-structured interviews were carried out with seven of the participants.

We based this work partly on a study by Tang, Chou and Drucker [40] which was published in 2011 and whose participants had different nationalities living in the United States of America with the majority of them being from East Asian countries. However, the time difference between the execution of the studies and the cultural differences affected the outcomes of the studies. While the first three hypotheses were formulated as in the original work, the fourth has been added by us. Two research questions were in unison with the original study, one was different. Adding to the previous work, qualitative interviews were carried out after the status update analysis to deepen the understanding of language usage and self-disclosure in social media.

The results support some of the hypotheses that multilingual social network sites users make use of language as a group selector and privacy control tool. The filtering did not require the Facebook privacy settings or the creation of different friends groups (which was only done by participant P05), but was done through simple language selection. This is not a secure barrier as it can be overcome through translation of updates but it seems to be sufficient for the participants to disclose differently in different languages. Nevertheless, the automatical creation of language groups of Facebook, accoring to the language data a user has to fill in their personal information section, could also help users to disburden them of the need to manually select their friends into language groups (which is very tedious and hard to maintain). A user could then choose if he or she wants to share their post with all of their Facebook friends or only with the ones that speak that language.

Cultural and time differences affected the outcome of this study as one of the research questions was inconsistent with the findings of Tang, Chou and Drucker whose English disclosures were significantly more factual but less cognitive and emotional than native language disclosures in stark contrast to the contrary found in this study. Romanian participants posted more cogni-

tive and emotional self-disclosive statements in English than in Romanian. Dialect and shortcuts appeared significantly more in the Romanian language posts than in other updates showing that people feel more familiar using their mother language.

The interview results also conclude that Facebook users grew reluctant to share very personal information, especially negative emotions were avoided. Participants preferred sharing short captions instead of giving away too many details about their whereabouts. Moreover, we found out that the posting of status updates in general diminished in recent time and started being replaced by indirect sharing of thoughts and emotions through pictures, songs or links to articles. Furthermore, we were able to show that the choice of language for a post was sometimes unconciously influenced by the user's real life context.

Even if the need to share every little detail of one's life seems to have lost its charm, social media continues to be present in our lives and will not disappear in the near future. It leaves many gaps to be explored in connection to the psychological behaviour of its users.

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Consent Form *Status Updates*

I am currently doing a language analysis of status updates on the social network site Facebook posted by Romanian students living in Austria.

I am writing to invite you to participate in this study for my master thesis at the Vienna University of Technology. This will involve downloading a copy of your postings and sending it to me. You can delete certain posts if you do not wish them being part of my analysis. Some of you might be invited to be interviewed to give a more detailed insight into you posting habits. If you are interested I can offer you a copy of my final results in the end of my work.

No names will be used in the reporting of the data and no third party will have access to your data.

If you agree to take part, please reply to this email stating explicitly that you agree. Taking part in this research is entirely voluntary. You may withdraw at anytime.

You can contact me anytime if you have any further questions.

Thank you for your interest.

Yours sincerely,
Patru Bianca
Tel: +43-664 1294788

Supervisor
Prof. Geraldine Fitzpatrick
geraldine.fitzpatrick@tuwien.ac.at
Tel: +43-1-58801-187-35

Consent Form *Interview*

I am currently doing a language analysis of status updates on the social network site Facebook posted by Romanian students living in Austria for my Master's Thesis at the Vienna University of Technology. This interview will be about your posting habits on Facebook.

The interview will be video and audio recorded. No third party will have access to these recordings. There are no right and wrong answers. The interview will take place in English if not asked for otherwise. It will take about 30-40 minutes. If you agree to participate then please fill out the consent form below.

1) Participant's name:

2) Date of birth:

3) No names of the participants will be used to preserve your anonymity. Please encircle below as appropriate:

a) I consent to me being video and audio recorded Yes / No

b) I consent to anonymous quotes being used in in my Thesis and any other publications that might come out of the work Yes / No

Signature:

Date:

You can contact me anytime if you have any further questions.

Thank you for your interest.

Yours sincerely,

Patru Bianca

Tel: +43-664 1294788

Supervisor

Prof. Geraldine Fitzpatrick

geraldine.fitzpatrick@tuwien.ac.at
Tel: +43-1-58801-187-35

Interview Questions

C.1   Background Information

I will first ask you some questions about your background.

Q1: What languages do you speak?

Q2: What languages do you feel very comfortable speaking and writing?

Q3: Since when do you live in Austria?

Q4: Since when do you speak German?

Q5: How well do you speak German? 1-7 (not at all, very bad, bad, average, good, very good, excellent)

Q6: How well do you speak English? 1-7 (not at all, very bad, bad, average, good, very good, excellent)

C.2   Main Questions

1. So. . . Facebook. Tell me about it. Why do you use it? What do you like about it? (Speak freely.)

2. In what situations do you post a status update? Can you give me some examples?

3. What is your motivation for posting a status update?

4. What language(s) do you use most often in you status updates on Facebook? Why? Do you think of specific persons when you write it?

5. How personal would you say you get on Facebook? Can you give me some examples? What languages do you use then? Why?

6. Tell me about your emotional states (upset, sad, happy) that you reveal on Facebook. What languages do you use then? Why?

7. What language(s) would you rather use if you have something positive to say? Why? Can you give me an example of something positive that you might write?

8. What language(s) would you rather use if you have something negative to say? Why? Can you give me an example of something negative?

9. Do you use the standard language? In what context do you use standard language vs. dialect? Can you give me some examples?

10. Do you always spell the words out? When do you spell them out and when do you use short-cuts? Can you give me some examples?

C.3   Recent Examples

Take Laptop/Tablet/Smartphone out. Make sure that internet connection is there. Go on Facebook.

Let's look at some of your recent posts, if I may.

Look at posts. Pick one out. (Repeat with a couple of posts).

Why did you post this? What did you think of when you posted it?

Who was meant to read it?

Can you tell me why you posted it in this language?

C.4   Prepared Examples

Prepare a couple of posts individually for each participant in advance. Insert them here. (Ask the same questions and additionally individually prepared ones.)

Let's look at some of your older posts that I have chosen.

Read post.

Can you tell me about this post?

Why did you post this? What did you think of when you posted it?

Who was meant to read it?

Why did you post it in this language?

That was it. Thank you for your time!

Interview Transcription

D.1 Example A

First background information was taken.

1:40 B: So now. The main part.

1:51 A: The sensitive questions. (laughing)

2:00 B: Yeah. Just speak freely. Facebook. Tell me about it. Why do you use it?

2:10 A: Just to talk to people... Ahm... Not really. But I use it to stay in touch with people, cos the main events... whether it's a birthydayparty or a party somewhere. Yeah. The main events are on Facebook. A lot of friends of mine... with which I don't stay in touch anymore... I mean I like to see and keep in touch with them although we are not speaking that much. Like ok Bianca is doing this, and in the meantime Iulia is there. And it's nice to... know a bit about what other people are doing.

2:58 B: Ahm, in what situations do you post a status update?

3:04 A: I never post a status update.

3:06 B: Well, you have some.

3:08 A: I have some, but in the last year... maybe... I shared a couple of things like interesting articles or interesting photos, but I don't post photos with myself anymore. Ahmm... And I don't say hurray something's happened. I became more a passive user of Facebook mostly... In the meantime.

3:40 B: Mhm. And... why did you do it before?

3:46 A: I don't know... Before it was like... yeah everybody is doing it and... ahm... I don't know why. Because everybody was doing it. And... tell people what you are up to.

4:09 B: And ahm. What languages do you use most often? When you post something? Or write something?

4:14 A: Well, I used to do it in English a lot. Because when I got Facebook, I was in Portugal and everybody told me, ah you have to get Facebook and bla bla bla. And they were like people with whom I spoke English. Ahm and. Yeah. English I think. The most.

4:35 B: And... Do you think of specific persons when you write?... Who will read it? Or not?

4:48 A: Ahmm... I can't remember it that well...it's far away... but... I think I did of course. I mean... just to some extent. Well friends mostly. Close friends.

5:08 B: And how personal would you say that you got in these updates?

5:15 A: I was never too personal. Like... sharing my food. Or I dunno my feelings. A couple of times I did share some things when I was really frustrated with university... I was like... wraaah! I posted an update that I felt shitty but... most of the time nothing that personal.

5:48 B: And when you posted something personal, that you were frustrated about. What language did you use then?

5:53 A: English also English.

6:00 B: Ahm. And what languages would you rather use when you have something positive to say?

6:19 A: Ahm, well the thing is: I used English back then because I... I had a couple... some friends that were like from Portugal, some friends were Romanian, and ahm... Germans or Austrian people. That's why I used English. If I have to post something now I mean that was back then when I posted stuff. Now I don't really post stuff other from pictures or I dunno. But now I would do it in German. Both ways.

6:55 B: What do you mean by both ways?

7:01 A: I mean when I am frustrated, when I am happy or when I am whatever, because the language that I used the most now is German. And back then actually it was Romanian, because I had a different friends circle and now it's mostly German. So that's why... if... if I would post something now, I would do it in German.

7:31 B: Do you use the standard language? Or do you use dialect?

7:37 A: Mostly standard.

7:40 B: And ahm, in what context would you use something else... like dialect? Or not at all?

7:47 A: Ahm. I dunno... I don't use it.

8:01 B: And do you use shortcuts?

8:04 A: No.

8:26 B: So then. Can we look at Facebook?

8:36 A: Yeah. Of course. It's open (laughing). (shows me her Facebook page). I posted a link here. I was tagged in a video here. ... I shared a link (...)

10:43 B: And why did you use English in those tags from Spain?

10:46 A: Cos everybody understands it. Because I was there with like a Brazilian guy, and I am sure that he doesn't speak any German or Romanian so...

11:14 B: And... ok so now the last part. It's something that I have prepared. Let's look at some of your older posts that I have chosen. One of them is: "this morning: vienna staffel marathon. since: burger- fries- ice cream- pancakes- pasta- cheesecake. I'm thinking... ribs?!" Why did you post this?

12:13 A: (laughs) Because it was funny. Because I did the Vienna marathon which is not... I mean... It's a cool thing to do. And... since then I spent a few couple of weeks running and eating healthy and the rest of the day I just stuffed my mouth with everything.

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12:50 B: So you were happy with your achievement and wanted to share it with everybody?

12:53 A: Yeah, and brag a bit because I was like... like ran 11 kilometers.

13:05 B: And... who was meant to read it?

13:16 A: The people who ran with me and... pfuu... I dunno everybody. I didn't think of anyone special.

13:33 B: OK. Another one is: "timisoaraaaa!!! Ne vedem?"

13:48 A: Ah. Well maybe I was in Timisoara and was like ok who is here who wants to meet me. And everybody speaks Romanian.

14:15 B: Ok. Anther one: "wuzzeltisch at work. My boss is the awesomest."

14:35 A: Yeah. "Wuzzeltisch" is German. Because... The people in my work are mostly Austrians. And yeah they name it this way. And I think it was a new work for me. And table football... wuzzeln what is wuzzeln? This was also for everyone. And it was a happy moment. My boss bought a wuzzeltisch for us to play.

16:02 B: Ok the last one: "I've had too many near-death experiences lately. Kill me or leave me alone- wouldya?"

16:14 A: I dunno what that was related to. Anymore. I really dunno. I've always had problems with cars. But... yeah?

16:41 B: What did you think of when you posted it? Why did you want to share it?

16:48 A: Oh... I dunno. It wasn't a happy moment. Not a sad moment. Just something random. A random posting.

17:15 B: So it didn't help you build down frustration?

17:20 A: It was more funny. And probably because... maybe I did want a bit of attention for someone to ask me what happened. This kind of posts were more for people, for close friends that were living somewhere else. Because Iulia would ask what happened or Andu would ask.

18:12 B: So for close friends living in another city.

18:16 A: Yes.

18:22 B: Ok. That was it. Thank you for your time!

18:38 A: You are welcome.

D.2   Example B

First background information was taken.

1:15 B: So now. Just speak freely. And... yeah. Let's just talk about Facebook. Why do you use it?

1:33 A: I dunno. Just to get in touch with my friends and see what they are doing and I don't know posting interesting stuff that I think others may be interested from my friends. Mm yeah. Mostly just to see what others are doing, my friends. What they are up to.

1:55 B: And, uhm. In what situations do you post a status update?

2:01 A: Hm, when I find an article that I like or I dunno when I travel and I like it to post where I am maybe just to meet other people who are in the same country or just let them know where I am. For my parents as well sometimes. Post pictures.

2:27 B: Ok. And what languages do you use most often in your status updates?

2:31 A: English.

2:35 B: And why?

2:36 A: Because I have friends from all over the world so everybody can understand what I write.

2:40 B: So do you think of specific persons when you post something?

2:48 A: Yeah. My close friends. Well… (laughing)

3:02 B: How personal would you say that you get?

3:04 A: Mmm. Not that personal. I wouldn't write that my grandpa died or stuff like that. Ahm.

3:20 B: But could you give us examples of stuff that you would write?

3:22 A: Today I feel happy. Not that deep. Just… I dunno. I am in the garden right now or stuff like that.

3:36 B: And uhm. What languages would you use then?

3:38 A: Yeah English as well I think. Or sometimes German or Romanian.

3:52 B: What languages would you rather use when you have something positive to say?

3:56 A: I think English.

3:59 B: And negative?

4:03 A: I don't really write negative stuff. If it's stuff about Uni then I would write it in German. (laughs)

4:12 B: Why?

4:15 A: I dunno, because my friends from the university are Austrians. They can relate to it and comment.

4:26 B: And do you use the standard language if you post something or do you use dialect?

4:31 A: Yeah standard. I used one time this pirate slang.

4:40 B: And do you always spell the words out or do you use more short-cuts?

4:55 A: Mmm. Yeah mostly. Sometimes shortcuts. It depends. On the words.

5:02 B: And in what languages would you rather use more shortcuts?

5:04 A: In English.

5:11 B: Can you give me some examples maybe?

5:13 A: Ahmm. Dunno. Good night. And write it with an "n" and an "8". Or thank you "10x".

5:30 B: Ok. Do you have something here, could we take a look at your Facebook account?

5:39 A: Ok yeah. (Takes laptop. Goes on Facebook.)

6:41 B: So why did you write here in English?

6:43 A: Yeah because of my friends. Well when I've been in Spain I've met people from all over the world. So. English is well-known for everybody. So I think it is kind of easy.

7:00 B: And uhm. Why did you post it?

7:04 A: I thought it is funny. (laughs)

7:18 B: What about this. Why did you post it in German?

7:20 A: Yeah this is just a status from a friend of mine and I thought I would share her status. So I thought some people were interested.

7:59 B: Why did you post this?

8:00 A: Ooh I was taking a rowing class and I saw the people having fun and we were still having University.

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8:20 B: And who was meant to read it?

8:22 A: Well my friends from the university who I thought would really wish summer holidays as well.

8:30 B: So that's the reason why you posted it in German?

8:32 A: Yeah.

8:34 B: Ok. And then the last part. Really quick. Ahm. I have here some of your older posts. So you posted once: "there is no place like home." Why did you post it?

8:53 A: I think I was at home in Romania. So . . . I posted it.

9:04 B: And who was meant to read it?

9:06 A: Ahm. I dunno. I think the people who study in other countries as well and feel homesick. So. I think they can relate.

9:19 B: Ok. Then another one: "Tschuess Koblenz. It has been a pleasure."

9:27 A: Oh yeah. I did an internship in Germany two summers ago. And that was for the people who I met there when I left.

9:40 B: And why did you post it like first German and then English?

9:47 A: Ahm. Well because it is a German city and then English because I lived in a dorm and there were people from Africa, China, a lot of different countries so that they could understand it as well.

10:02 B: And ahm. "It seems like summer is the new autumn."

10:13 A: Yeah that was the shitty weather in Austria. (laughs)

10:19 B: What did you think of when you posted it?

10:21 A: That I hate the weather in Vienna. I think it was last summer or two summers ago. It rained a lot. And I think it was July and it felt like October.

10:40 B: And the last one: "my neighbor sucks at playing instruments. Please dear god make him stop".

10:50 A: Yeah 2 years ago I lived in the 20th district. And we had a neighbour and he was pretty loud. And I dunno what instrument he played cos it was really weird.

11:18 B: So what did you think of when you posted it?

11:20 A: I was annoyed. And I think bored as well.

11:27 B: And who was meant to read it?

11:29 A: My roommate. She was at University.

11:39 B: So then how come you didn't post it in Romanian?

11:40 A: I dunno I tend to post in English. I really didn't think about it actually.

11:48 B: Ok. That was it. Thank you for your time!

11:54 A: You are welcome.