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From traditional media to the Internet. Linguistic aspects of communication on Facebook among Polish citizens 50+

Abstract. This article is an attempt to describe the linguistic aspects of communication among citizens 50+ active on Facebook (their biolect). These are people from generations who were originally socialized to traditional media and are just undergoing the process of adapting to new forms of communication. The research was conducted on the basis of 150 statements collected on Facebook in the period from December 2020 to the end of February 2021. During the analysis, four of seven forms characteristic for netspeak were observed, as well as the transfer of forms characteristic for traditional media to social media and appearance of atypical expression's forms (e.g. a quantitative advantage of polite phrases over vulgarisms), which counterbalance the linguistic tendencies in the new media.

Keywords: communication; social media; people 50+; Facebook; sociolinguistics.

Introduction

Observed demographic trends point to the ageing processes in the Polish population. At the same time, the pace of social change, in which modern technologies play a significant role, is increasing. This pace varies between age groups, and the group that is still the least active in the digital world is the *silver group*.[1] As a community socialised to traditional media, they experience difficulties that do not apply to other age groups. This manifests itself, among other things, on the linguistic level, as the Internet offers completely new ways of communicating and develops existing ones, which requires language users to acquire new competences.

This issue should be considered significant, as the biolect of Polish-speaking silver people has remained on the margins of scientific interest of linguists. Previous research on this topic has been of a comparative nature (old age vs. youth), focused on lexis, phraseology, or physiological aspects of communication, and, above all, has not taken into account the activities of people 50+ in social media (Stolarczyk-Zielonka, 2010; Gebreselassie, Godlewska, 2017; Rosińska-Mamej, 2019).

By observing the online activities of silver users and analysing the linguistic aspects of their communication, it is possible to characterise the way in which 50+ people participate in the information society and how this social group's adaptation to new forms of communication is taking place, as well as how these two components reveal themselves at the linguistic level.

This article is an attempt to determine how people 50+, and therefore socialised to traditional media, shape their communication (language) in relation to online standards and whether they have developed their own ways of expression in Facebook communication. This is an attempt to characterise the biolect of silver people active in social media.

Social media activity of *silver* people

Marshall McLuhan, in the book *Understanding the media. Extensions of Man* (2004), presents his version of technological determinism – media and

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[1] Instead of using stigmatising terms such as 'older people' or 'seniors', a term with positive or neutral connotations – silver people (commonly used in commercial and marketing research) – was used.

technologies are factors shaping their users. Depending on what technology we use, the way we use our senses and perceive reality changes. The technologies themselves, in his view, are extensions of our senses and capabilities. The other side of this approach is that the recipients/users model new forms of behaviour that can be significantly differentiated for each media generation (Szpunar, 2012; Gruchola, 2017).

However, regardless of age, every media user undergoes media socialisation, i.e. "a process of internalising and also externalising patterns and ways of using the media in question" (Szpunar, 2012, p. 34). There are two pathways involved, concerning: (1) older generations – *baby boomers* and generation X – socialised mainly to traditional media, and (2) younger generations – Y, Z, Alpha – socialised mainly to new media. Silver individuals from the baby boomer and Generation X cohorts have primarily operated in the realm of traditional media throughout their lives, making the new media linked to digital technologies, automation, and the need for suitable devices and skills a secondary and often unfamiliar environment for them (Konik, 2016).

Examples from the English-speaking community demonstrate that these generational differences are not limited to Poland. Additionally, as noted by Gretchen McCulloch, the study from 2007 of "internet users and nonusers in Britain found that the biggest gap in terms of internet use in general wasn't between young adults and middle-aged people, but between people who were over and under age fifty-five" (McCulloch, 2019, p. 82). At that time only around half of Internet users aged twenty-five to forty-four used social networking sites.

When individuals socialised to traditional media use new media, including the Internet, they act according to the principle of cognitive stinginess: "a new medium that potentially enables innovative use, the individual uses according to previously internalised behaviour" (Szpunar, 2012, p. 35).

The *silver* people socialised to old media transfer acquired patterns to the use of new media: "Our internalised ways of using mass media (old media) determine the cultural practices manifested towards a new medium such as the Internet, causing it, despite its peculiar novelty, to remain a new-old media" (Szpunar, 2012, p. 35).

Another important factor is that "[…] cultural practices have not kept pace with changes in the field of technology […]" (Szpunar, 2012, p. 35). On top of this, issues related to ageing need to be taken into account, making it doubly complicated for people 50+ to participate in digital technologies.

When it comes to the groups in question, silver people are relatively homogeneous in terms of digital skills.[2] However, we should remember about a certain fluidity and dynamics – this group begins to evolve from the stage of withdrawal from technology, through increasing immersion, to becoming silver digital natives. This potential scenario involves three stages:

1. consecutive generations will reduce the current homogeneity associated with limited participation in digital technologies;

2. greatest heterogeneity in terms of digital skills. Technology will become a factor that increasingly differentiates generational characteristics and will increasingly influence changes in the definition of old age;[3]

3. a new homogeneity related to full participation in digital technologies.

However, right now when it comes to communication, *silver* people are most likely to use e-mail, while they are less likely to use social networks and video, audio calls and instant messaging. The dominant model among them is ad-hoc use of the Internet, rather than being constantly online (CSO, 2019; UKE, 2019; CBOS, 2020). There are three types of *silver* users: novice, hobbyist and professional (Gacka, 2017, pp. 85–86). The hobbyist group is the largest and also the one whose members are most likely to stay on social networks. It is related not only to the cultural and media socialisation factors but also to functional limitations that hinder silver people from using technology in a comparable way as younger adults do, such as limited cognitive and perceptual abilities (Leist, 2013, p. 4).

This may explain why the older some Poles are, the less frequently they use social media – for the age groups: 45–54, 55–64 and 65+, the percentages of users are 42%, 23% and 23% respectively (CSO, 2019). Thus, compared to younger age groups, silver people are much less likely to be on social networks; however, the average age of a Pole online is 42 (DataReportal, 2020). Considering the current demographic trend, which is the so-called "silver tsunami" (Infuture Institute, 2021), above numbers will grow pretty soon. For now, there are over 12 million people aged 55+ in Poland (GUS), but specialists predict that in 2030 there will be over 15 million. At the same time more and more aspects of functioning in society will respond to the needs

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[2] It is important to remember that there are intergenerational differences in digital experiences and immersion. The main difference is that the older the generation, the less digital it is. However, compared to the younger group of digital technology users, this group is generally characterized by a lower level of digital skills.

[3] In future years – unlike today – it will be necessary to distinguish between the 55+ and 70+ groups more sharply due to the different level of knowledge of technology (Kerris, 2017).

of this dynamically growing group and be influenced by it, hence the need for a responsible approach to the participation of *silver* people in the digital society.

Linguistic aspects of communication on the Internet

In relation to online communication, there are talks of secondary orality, written spoken language (Lubaś, 2014, pp. 284–287), language hybridity, i.e. the combination of features of written and spoken language (Kita, 2016, p. 114), and the process of mediated communication, where the written word functions in an intersemiotic context and loses its independent meaning (Żebrowska, 2012, p. 148).

"In a mediated situation, especially with written language, most nonverbal communication disappears" (Myoo, 2010, p. 50), which is sometimes problematic for both recipients and senders of online speech. Users therefore try to make up for these deficiencies by making numerous graphic modifications to the text and adding multimedia elements – among which emoticons of all kinds are undoubtedly the most popular.

The Internet is also a place where linguistic correctness is relegated to the background (Staszewska 2010, p. 198), resulting in numerous spelling modifications that constitute a deviation from the orthographic norm. At the same time, there are many different ways of communication on the Internet, and users mostly adapt the language of the message to their own preferences and the type of message. Still, certain practices are so established and repetitive that the most distinctive features of Internet language can be identified from among them. Among these, the following stand out (Urzędowska, 2017, p. 175):

1. Polish and foreign abbreviations;
2. acronyms – mainly derived from English;
3. the emergence of so-called *pidgin Polish* – Polish that omits diacritical marks;
4. introduction of emoticons, i.e. ideograms composed of ASCII text characters – most often punctuation marks, which form "smiley faces" intended to express the user's mood;
5. use of hashtags, i.e. single words, abbreviations or even entire phrases preceded by the # sign;

6. the introduction of forms of non-verbal communication in the form of a raised tone written in verse;

7. using memes in various forms – an image, a photograph, a website, a hyperlink (including a hashtag), a highlighted phrase or a single word.

The intensity of these features can vary depending on the type of communication and the communication situation. Facebook comments and posts generally bear the hallmarks of chat and commentary from a news service (Gruszczyński, 2001, pp. 184–185). Treated as a *quasi*-genre, they are characterised by: colloquiality, expressivity, novelty, bluntness, euphemism, vulgarity, locality, metaphoricity and the creation of neologisms (Urzędowska, 2019, p. 136). In their form, they resemble the conduct of a dialogue or polylogue, of which portal users are participants. Their utterances 'arise from spontaneous decisions (revealed in the linguistic layer by colloquiality and colloquiality of forms)' (Ostrowska, 2016, p. 146).

In the case of comments and posts, a high degree of interference with the materiality of the text comes to the foreground (Godzic, 2000, p. 176), as message senders seek to go beyond the limitations of this medium (Ostrowska, 2016, p. 142). The above characteristics apply to Internet users as a whole, and thus potentially also silvers. Social media is a space where deviations from the norm become the norm, and subsequent users create new or develop already established communication and language patterns.

On the other hand, Bassam Aouil distinguishes three basic features of the Polish language used in virtual environment: economy of expression, stylisation following the example of English, and creating slang that reflects belonging to a group (Aouil, 2007, pp. 86–87). These features can be seen both in the language of online chats, blogs, e-mails and text messages, although to varying degrees of severity.

What is also worth emphasising, Internet melds writing and informality, which is something new and previously rather uncommon for the written word because we learned to read a formal kind of language typical for the newspapers or books (McCulloch, 2019, pp. 6–8).

Communication of silver generation and changes in contemporary Polish language

The Internet and social media has had a grand impact on how the Polish language changed in the last few years. These changes are not limited only to the virtual space, influencing the general shape of how all generations of Poles communicate. Following a study conducted by Adam Łuczyński (2020) on a group of 43 people aged 57 to 83, we know that the silver generation is aware of these changes and reacts to them, however, evaluating the majority as negative.

Interestingly, among the factors that, according to them, pose the greatest threat to the Polish language, the most common were: foreign language inclusions (especially anglicisms), replacing natural language communication with electronic communication (including SMS messages) and abbreviated way of communication (Łuczyński, 2020, p. 124). In addition, the respondents also pointed out that a threat to the contemporary Polish language is its vulgarisation, especially the deluge of profanity in the public debate (Łuczyński, 2020, p. 115).

This conservative attitude towards language is also manifested in the preferences of *silver* users, who proclaim an attachment to the original forms of communication: "online communication should follow the rules of traditional communication" (Kerris, 2017, p. 25). That is why they pay attention not only to the common netiquette that once existed on the Internet but also, above all, to language etiquette.

Methodology of the study

The linguistic material was taken from Facebook, which is the most popular social network platform among people 50+ (IAB Poland 2020). Although the differences in communication competences between people in their 50s, 60s or 70s may be significant, due to the difficulty in determining the exact year of birth and the small proportion of Facebook users aged 65+,[4] it was decided not to narrow down the study group to people in the fifth decade of their lives.

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[4] Among 50+ Facebook users, as many as a third are aged 55–64 and only one in six users is over 65.

The study was conducted according to the subjective assessment of the researchers (non-probabilistic technique). The group was differentiated only by age. For this reason, the article refers to biolect, i.e. a variety of Polish, dependent on age[5] (Zaśko-Zieliska, 2009, p. 117). The aim was to collect material that mapped the average silver user on Facebook. This study is exploratory in nature and involves an initial insight into a marginalised issue, and the methodology adopted does not guarantee that generalisations to the entire population of people 50+ are legitimate.

Given the broad scope of the material and the complex nature of the issue, limitations were made by basing the analysis on a sample of 150 comments and posts collected between December 2020 and February 2021, which allowed for a diverse thematic spectrum and temporal consistency of the material studied.

Each of the statements collected consisted of at least three words and was posted by a unique user. The search was conducted among publicly available content posted on profiles, groups and fanpages. Users were verified on the basis of date of birth, school graduation, beginning and ending of professional activity, information on the age of children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren, membership of groups intended for people 50+, and the presence of photographs, which made it possible to identify a given person as a person 50+.[6]

Verifying the authenticity of the information was difficult, as one's identity can be easily modified on social networking sites (Trusewicz-Pasikowska, 2018, p. 176). Nonetheless, attempts were made to minimise uncertainties related to the veracity of the declared data. Thus, statements made available by content-poor profiles were abandoned and the focus was on those where information corresponding to more than one criterion was included (e.g. having adult grandchildren and belonging to a group dedicated to people 50+).

Qualitative analysis with quantitative elements was carried out in two directions, with an emphasis on modification within graphemes. First, in

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[5] The term biolect was introduced by Aleksander Wilkoń in 1987 and denotes a variety of language that is also gender-dependent, hence many researchers deal with biolect in the context of differences between male and female language (Zaśko-Zielińska, 2009, p. 117). However, in this case, it was limited to age only, as it was the relationship between the age of the subject and their linguistic competence in social media that was of interest to the authors.

[6] This was not a conclusive criterion due to the lack of an obligation to have a Facebook profile with photos, as well as possible errors in interpreting someone's age based only on a photo.

terms of forms of expression typical of Internet language (Urzędowska, 2019). Second, in terms of adherence to typical norms for traditional media and other characteristic linguistic behaviours that counterbalance linguistic trends on the Internet (Sikora, 2016; Staszewska, 2010) or are a deviation from the accepted norm.

Analysis of linguistic material collected from people 50+ active on Facebook

In the collected linguistic material, four of the seven listed characteristics of Internet language were observed. In addition, missing diacritical marks were submarked due to a lack of Polish characters and a lack of punctuation,[7] which did not always occur simultaneously, as is the case in *pidgin Polish*.[8] However, there are no studies available to determine the frequency of occurrence of these features in the utterances of general users. For this reason, the authors have limited themselves to simply noting these features' presence in the utterances of *silver* users, as well as presenting the percentage share in the total surveyed material.

Table 1. Features typical of Internet language observed in the material studied

	Percentage of statements with a particular form of expression	Number of statements with a particular form of expression
Emoticons	22%	33
Capitalisation	15,3%	23
Lack of punctuation	16,6%	25
Lack of Polish characters	14%	21
Pidgin Polish	4%	6

Source: own study.

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[7] Determining whether this is an accidental typo or perhaps a deliberate action by the user is problematic. Therefore, it was decided to count only those statements where there is a complete lack of punctuation or a complete absence of Polish characters. This minimises the likelihood that the simplified form appeared through the author's oversight.

[8] In English, pidgin refers to a simplified language that is formed from the combination of two or more languages and is used for communication between people who do not know each other's languages [or: who do not know the language of their interlocutor]. It is also a colloquial term for an up-simplified form of a language that is spoken by people with little knowledge of it (Cambridge Dictionary Online).

The first feature noted, the use of emoticons, is an issue widely discussed by Polish language researchers (Kapuścińska, 2012; Ostrowska, 2016). They are one of the emanations of the multichannel nature of Internet communication, where the written word co-occurs with graphic elements.[9] Both the Internet and emoticons have evolved since then and have become a symbol of electronic communication over time. Originally created using punctuation and ASCII characters (e.g. :), xD, ;P), they now also appear as 2D or 3D graphic representations.

Emoticons have a modal function, expressing the writer's attitude to the content, his or her emotional state, setting the situational context, messaging according to the rules of a specific code, or adding variety to the text (Ostrowska, 2016, p. 142). The collected material was dominated by emoticons-graphics. ASCII appeared only once – it was a combination of ':))'. Statements contained from one to as many as 22 emoticons (for a text of 160 characters with spaces). They were particularly numerous in the statements, where they were used as a decoration, while the visual representation of the author's emotions usually consisted of one emoticon at the end of the statement.

a) Emoticon as representation of an emotional state and/or ornamentation:

Waw　jest　śliczne　zdjęcie😆　było　pięknie　i　tak　szybko　zleciały　te　latka
😆😃😍🙂🧑‍🦰🥖🤍💘Teraz jest 2021.r. Luty .2. i mamy WIRUSA. a jest śnieg i zimno
😆🧡👍❤️❄️❄️❄️❄️❄️⚪⚪❄️

which can be translated, while keeping the original context and errors to:

Waw　is　beautiful　photo😆　it　was　beautiful　and　the　year's　went　so　fast
😆😃😍🙂🧑‍🦰🥖🤍💘Now it is 2021.y. February .2nd. and we have the VIRUS. there
is snow and it is cold 😆🧡👍❤️❄️❄️❄️❄️❄️⚪⚪❄️

b) Emoticon as a representation of an emotional state

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[9] Their origins can be traced back to the 1980s, when in 1982 computer science professor Scott Fahlmann – considered the father of emoticons – used a combination of the characters ":-)" (Kapuścińska, 2012, p. 58).

Niestety – już dawno nie widzieliśmy naszej wnusi. Z powodu pandemii mamy kontakt tylko telefonicznie, albo na odległość … 😭

which can be translated, while keeping the original context and errors to:

Unfortunately – it has been a long time since we have seen our granddaughter. Because of the pandemic, we have contact only by phone, or at a distance … 😭

Capitalisations are also used to express emotions, as well as to emphasise a passage of speech and to introduce elements of non-verbal communication into texts (Urzędowska, 2017, p. 175). Their presence is signalled by a raised tone, which is a sign of agitation, anger or excitement. It is an alternative to the exclamation mark, which users often abandon. The appearance of the capitalisations may also be unintentional, and merely the result of carelessness or insufficient competence in keyboard use.

Users also dispense with other punctuation marks, which may appear selectively in a sentence (e.g. no commas but the use of a full stop at the end of a statement) or not at all. This also applies to Polish characters. The reasons for their absence are inaccessibility (e.g. a foreign language keyboard), the need to increase the functionality of 'recorded speech' on the Internet (Lubaś, 2014, p. 290), where communication occurs quickly and spontaneously, or low digital competence, which translates into an inability to enter characters outside the basic keyboard.

This applies mainly to those words in which the lack of Polish characters does not affect the meaning, which could hinder communication (e.g. *wóda* [boose] and *woda* [water]). The combination of these two tendencies gave rise to the so-called *pidgin Polish*, i.e. simplified Internet Polish devoid of any diacritics and punctuation marks (Gruszczyński, 2001). This extreme form was rare in the material studied (4%).

If the user chose to simplify spelling and punctuation, they tended to limit themselves to one or the other. The analysed utterances are characterised by inconsistency. It happened that some words within an utterance contained Polish characters, and some did not. Similar selectivity applied to the use of punctuation marks. As a result, a complete lack of punctuation was noted in 16.6% of the utterances and a complete lack of Polish characters in 14%.

When addressing the language of the Internet, one cannot forget memes.[10] Facebook users from the *silver group* also share them. These images most often function as an independent element of a comment or post, hence the absence of memes in Table 4 – they were not subject to the same criterion of analysis as the language material. Consequently, it was only decided to note the occurrence of such activity among users 50+ and to draw attention to the particular type of content whose publication is attributed to this particular age group.

Indeed, silver users have found their online niche, where they are successfully developing an art and communication trend. This trend takes the form of exchanging colourful greeting card-like graphics. These are published and reproduced in the same way as memes. On the Internet, it is possible to come across the name 'grażynacore'[11] attributed to this phenomenon, which was created in forums and functions as a derogatory term for the images shared by Polish women named Grażyna,[12] being the stereotypically perceived women of 50+.

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[10] Richard Dawkins is credited with coining the term meme, which he first used in 1976 in his book *The Selfish Gene*, naming the basic unit of cultural transmission and imitation, a concept analogous to a gene. In relation to the Internet, the term meme is rather used in a narrower context. The authors of the article, after Aleksandra Urzędowska, perceive images, photographs, websites, hyperlinks (including hashtags), highlighted phrases or a single word as a meme.

[11] The term is not listed by any Polish language dictionary. However, it appears regularly on Internet forums and social networks, and its definition can also be found on the less serious version of Wikipedia, the Nonsensopedia. As the term has a pejorative connotation, it is used by people who treat 'grażynacore' as *a guilty pleasure* or try to troll other users with it.

[12] The eponyms for the pronouns Grażyna (female) and Janusz (male) function in a much broader context. They regularly appear in memes, paste-ups, and other types of internet-wide creativity, and are also the basis for the creation of new derivatives – adjectives and verbs (Burkacka, 2015, 2020).
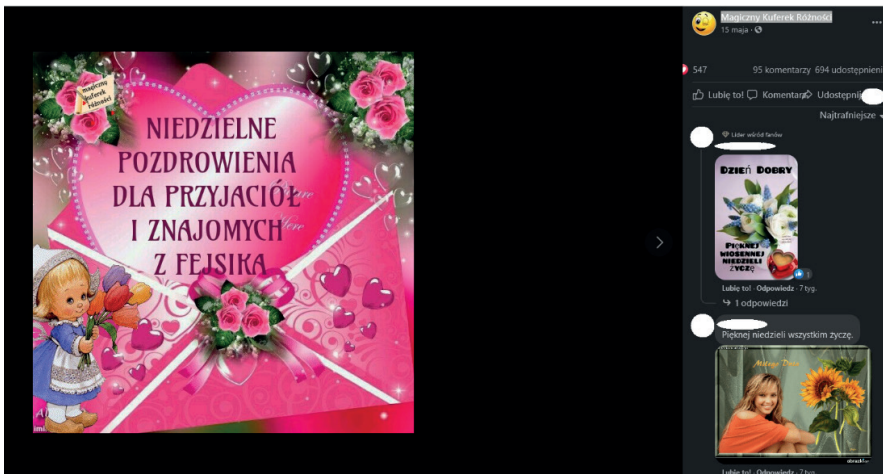
Illustration 1. 'Sunday greetings to friends and relatives from FB' on the Facebook page Magiczny Kuferek Różności, graphics are published that are part of the 'grazynacore' trend. This type of content has also been published in the comments as a response (user data obscured).

Illustration 2. Jokes, especially those related to sexuality and mocking behaviours attributed to younger generations, depicted in graphics along with cartoonish characters, are also referred to as 'grażynacore'.

'Grażynacore' is characterised by an accumulation of clipart elements such as flowers, animals, shapes, dishes or sweets. The graphics are usually accompanied by text in the form of wishes, winged words, or simple rhymes. They can be found on Facebook profiles, groups and pages, including pages dedicated to similar creativity. Facebook users send them on the occasion of holidays or simply wishing each other a good day (see Arciszewski, 2019). Some written jokes (mostly with sexual context) accompanied by specific cartoon characters (illustration 2) are also perceived as a part of 'grażynacore'. It can be compared to a phenomenon known on the English-speaking Internet as "boomer humour",[13] which is also described by some, probably younger, users as "cringy" or "cringeworthy".

This is in line with the last characteristic of Internet language, when an element of an opinion or an opinion itself is accompanied by graphic material. The content found on the profiles of people 50+ shows that they also share memes of a traditional form,[14] as well as links, comic strips or other forms of online communication.

In addition to the above-mentioned features of Internet language, other features were observed in the material studied, which were of a recurrent nature (occurring at least three times) and at the same time could not be classified under any of the features mentioned so far (Urzędowska, 2019). They were divided into two categories: modification within the spelling and construction of expressions (1–4) and linguistic politeness and forms typical of correspondence (5–7).

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[13] An example of a pejorative perception of this phenomenon by some users is the thread dedicated to "boomer humor" on Reddit (https://www.reddit.com/r/boomershumor/) and similar threads using the #grażynacore tag on the Polish-language website Wykop (https://wykop.pl/tag/grazynacore).

[14] Mimicry is crucial for the existence of memes, and for this reason there are specific formats on the internet, among which the typical elements of meme construction can be distinguished. These include a black frame, text above and below the graphic or stencilling, captured as the use of an identical or very similar depiction of a character in an image and photo (Burkacka, 2016, p. 76).

Table 2. Other forms of expression observed in the surveyed material

		Percentage of statements with a particular form	Number of statements with a particular form
Modifications within the spelling and construction of expressions	Spacing (space) before a punctuation mark	26%	39
	Starting the next part of a sentence, phrase or differential with a new line	8,7%	13
	Absence, excess or replacement of spaces between words with a punctuation mark	11,3%	17
Linguistic politeness and forms typical of traditional correspondence	Phrases and forms of politeness	34,7%	52
	Pronouns and phrases of politeness in capital letters	11,3%	17
	Various types of diminutives	8%	12

Source: own study.

In the analysis of the linguistic material, deviations from the standards of space usage were observed. It comes in different varieties, but in the context of Facebook, only the most basic one – the inter-word space – is relevant. According to spelling rules, it is used singly and should not be placed between words or numbers and the following punctuation marks, such as a full stop, comma, semicolon, colon, question mark and exclamation mark (Wolański, 2008, p. 60).

There was a twofold problem in the utterances as regards compliance with the rules on the use of spaces. As many as 26% of the statements were characterised by the presence of a space before punctuation marks such as a full stop or character combinations such as "??!!". On the other hand, in 11.3% of the utterances, the space was present in excess (two or more) or was replaced by placing a full stop or comma between words.

Respondents were therefore aware of the need for inter-word spacing, but were not always able to use spaces in a way that complied with spelling rules, and ultimately resorted to other, less intuitive, solutions. Reasons for this may include lower digital and technological competence and carelessness in wording (potentially putting content before form).

The material studied sometimes deviated from the standard format of a comment or post. On Facebook, it is the norm to write in a sequence, sentence by sentence, as statements repeat the characteristics of press genres, while resembling a chatty discussion or simultaneous debate (Urzędowska, 2017, p. 183). Meanwhile, some authors imitated patterns known from poetry: they started a sentence, a sentence fragment, or a sentence equivalent with a new line, creating verses. Such a break from the standard format occurred most often in the case of statements with strong emotional overtones (e.g. written during an argument) or with forms of expression that are stereotypically associated with lyricism, such as prayer:

1.
[Imię i nazwisko] no i co. Wyrzygaleś już swoją nienawiść?
Ulżyło ci?
I nie zaboli! Od idiotów nie boli!
A teraz otrzyj gębę, od rzygocin!
which can be translated, while keeping the original context and errors to:
[First and last name] and what. Puked out your hate yet?
Feeling better?
And it won't hurt! From idiots it doesn't hurt!
Now wipe your face, from all the vomit.

2.
Szczęść Boże!
O MARYJO,
Wielka Pośredniczko Łask,
Módl się za nami.
Amen.

which can be translated, while keeping the original context and errors to:

God bless!
OH HOLY MARY,
Great Mediatrix of Graces,
Pray for us.
Amen.

There are also patterns typical of correspondence, including e-mail, in the statements analysed. As in the case of e-mail, there is an element of boundedness in comments or posts: "in the Polish language there are no sufficiently developed genre features […] and from the very beginning [e-mail] was (and is) treated as a mode of communication resembling a letter on the one hand and a conversation on the other" (Norwa, 2014, p. 23).

However, e-mail is graphically and linguistically closer to a letter in that it contains a headline, a message to the addressee, courtesy phrases, a closing formula and the sender's signature. The same elements do not belong to the components of a comment or a post, which are by definition more informal, and the data of the addressee (name, pseudonym) and the date of sending are displayed automatically as soon as they are published.

Meanwhile, components characteristic of an e-mail or even a letter were observed in the linguistic material. The 50+ users included in the study thus transferred them from primary forms of textual communication to secondary forms, which for them are comments and Facebook posts. This could have been a two-stage path: from traditional letter to comment or, more likely, a three-stage path including electronic correspondence between the two stages above.

There is a varying degree of similarity in the material between the letter/e-mail and the commentary. For example: ending statements with polite forms, writing polite phrases and pronouns in capital letters, adapting the graphic format of statements to the format characteristic of correspondence. One user duplicated his name, which is already visible to the recipients of the message in the form of a link to his profile, and added the city and date, information that is typical for traditional correspondence and unnecessary in the case of a comment:

Pewnikiem muszę tu być.
Powiem też językiem Ferdka
Kiepskiego , trochę Go parafrazując ; CHCEM , a nawet

MUSZEM.
.... a więc mówię idźmy tam
wszyscy na spotkanie z historią – pozdrawiam i do zobaczenia.

[imię i nazwisko]
[miejscowość]
04.02.2021r

which can be translated, while keeping the original context and errors to:

A certainty I must be here
I will also say it in the language of Ferdek
Kiepski,[15] slightly paraphrasing Him ; CHCEM , a nawet
MUSZEM.[16]
.... and so I say let's go there
to the meeting with history – greetings and see you there.

[first and last name]
[city]
04.02.2021

This can be explained not only by unfamiliarity with the communica-
tion patterns of social media, but also by the preferences of *silver* users, who

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[15] Ferdynand (Ferdek) Kiepski – the name of a fictional character from the popular Polish comedy series *Świat według Kiepskich* which shows in a crooked twist the life of an average Polish working-class family, living in an old tenement in Wroclaw. Kiepski is a tragicomic character. He is portrayed as an unemployed middle-aged man who is constantly looking for a job and intentionally failing to find one, drinking a lot of cheap beer and constantly trying to figure out how to get money without any effort, dragging other family members into his schemes. His behaviour and actions lead to constant conflicts with his hard-working wife Halina and more or less friendly neighbours.

[16] "Chcem, a nawet muszem" (I want and I even have to) – a paraphrase of the phrase 'Nie chcem, ale muszem' in which Polish nasal vowels are pronounced in a distinctive manner that does not conform to the model pronunciation norm (due to a split of nasal vowel 'ę'). A correct version if the sentence is "Chcę, a nawet muszę". This words, pronounced in this incorrect particular way, are attributed to former Polish president and Nobel laureate Lech Wałęsa, who is believed to have said 'Nie chcem, ale muszem' in reference to his taking office. In fact, Wałęsa told in the newspaper Gazeta Wyborcza: "I do not want to be president. I will have to be president" (Bralczyk, 2007, p. 256). The phrase 'Nie chcem, ale muszem' appeared repeatedly in the TV series *Świat według Kiepskich* (Maćkowiak, 2014, p. 367).

proclaim an attachment to the original forms of communication (Kerris, 2017, p. 25). Furthermore, "they [pay] attention to etiquette, treating it on a par with netiquette"[17] (Kerris, 2017, p. 25). This is another issue atypical of online communication, where civility norms are increasingly being abandoned. "Scholars have argued that the conditions created by the consituation during virtual interaction are conducive to shedding inhibitions" (Staszewska, 2010, p. 198), hence the increasing vulgarisation and brutalisation of Polish, which "does not close itself within environmental barriers" (Sikora, 2016, p. 110). Against these trends, *silver* users avoid vulgarisms and readily resort to polite phrases.

Kazimierz Ożóg (1990) typologised such phrases, dividing them into two groups:

a) first-order polite phrases, which are indispensable for the proper flow of linguistic communication, are designated by primitive performative verbs; without them, communication could be disrupted or even interrupted, these include: phrases to the addressee, greetings, farewells, thanks and apologies;

b) secondary politeness phrases that do not play such a significant role in linguistic communication, these are: wishes, congratulations, condolences, toasts, weakening formulas, e.g. a categorical demand, a polite way of expressing opposition and complements.

Polite phrases representing both groups were observed in the language material studied. At least one politeness phrase appeared in 34.7% of the utterances. This includes the official forms of politeness used when addressing the interlocutor: Mr, Mrs. At the same time, statements containing any form of vulgarism[18] appeared only three times, one of which was self-censored: "Do Grupowiczów z [miejscowość] – pomóżcie znaleźć tego dzielnego rycerza broniącego wolności/*uja złamanego" (Eng; "To the Group Users from

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[17] Netiquette is a bottom-up tool that was created to regulate linguistic and social behaviour on the Internet. "The Internet's code of ethics and its savoir-vivre created spontaneously by Internet users for Internet users" (Pręgowski, 2012, p. 45). There is no single universally accepted version of netiquette, but the basis of most of them is "a reference to the most generalised rules of social coexistence online and the norms here" (Pręgowski, 2012, p. 46).

[18] Vulgarism is defined here as a unit of the linguistic system unaccepted by its general users because of its coarseness, indecency or clear membership of a linguistic social group considered inferior (Polanski, 1995, p. 593).

[city name] – help us find the brave knight defending his freedom/the utter d*ckhead").

Also present in the comments were diminutives and inflections. Although they can also be treated as a carrier of irony (Urzędowska, 2016, p. 140), in the recorded uses only a positive or affectionate attitude of the author of the statement to the named object or addressee was found, e.g.

'Happy Friday to all group members, wishing you a wonderful day, lots of sunshine in the sky and in your hearts 🤩 😙 and above all good health ❤️ 💞 "

Conclusions

Digital competences consist not only of technical skills in the use of devices and services, but also of knowledge of Internet culture – including cultural and linguistic codes, norms and values present on the Internet. These, in turn, are primarily created by the most active users, i.e. *digital natives*, people who are originally socialised to new media and are predominantly young (generations Y, Z and Alpha).

In contrast, *silver* people have limited competence in both of these dimensions, due to the dynamic development of digital technologies, past socialisation into traditional media and developmental characteristics typical of old age.

These relationships are visible at the level of the biolect of 50+ Facebook users. On the one hand, most of the features typical of Internet language (emoticons, verses, simplification of spelling) are observed in the material studied. On the other hand, some *silver* users transfer elements typical of traditional communication to social media and do so even when, from the perspective of the service or other users, it is unnecessary or deviates from the generally accepted principles of communication.

It ought to be noted, however, that although some of the 50+ respondents construct statements in an incorrect or abnormal manner, these observations concerned only a small section of the linguistic material (e.g. 26% for spacing before inter-punctuation marks or 8.7% for moving part of the statement to a new line).

At the same time, these are not characteristics that would significantly impede communication on Facebook, as evidenced by the active participation of silver people in Facebook groups or pages. At the same time, they

take care to maintain their own communication-social status quo, in which etiquette co-exists with netiquette, even despite the tendency to move away from the use of polite phrases or even vulgarise the message on the Internet.

The authors of the study are aware that the material analysed does not operate in a socio-linguistic vacuum. Their study is merely a contribution to a broader analysis, in which samples representative of all age groups active on Facebook would be put under the microscope and a comparative analysis carried out. This would make it possible to see with what frequency these characteristics appear in users of different ages and whether there are statistically significant differences between them.

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