



# A Contextual Analysis on Social Media Updates: Genderlect in Focus

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## ABSTRACT

*This qualitative, corpus-based, and contextual analysis approach aimed to give and provide the linguistic features and functions in male and female social media updates. The purpose of this study was to help the students assess the posts of social media users and to find out if there are linguistic features or linguistic functions found in their social media updates. In this study, there were a total of sixty-two (62) corpora taken from both male and female social media updates that are categorized into five linguistic features, including the intensifiers, tag questions, questions on declarations, lexical hedges, empty adjectives and six linguistic functions including the referential function, poetic function, emotive function, conative function, phatic function and metalingual function. Results revealed that in social media updates of males and females, linguistic features and functions are found by contextualizing their posts in the adopted linguistic frame of analysis. Also, it helps future English students know the linguistic features and linguistic functions as their basis, using other platforms for them to be responsible for posting online. It serves as their point of reference for the students and English instructors to unearth the linguistic aspect in social media, particularly in males and females.*

## INTRODUCTION

The concept of "genderlect" refers to the linguistic variations often observed between genders, particularly in social interaction and communication styles. It is frequently employed to describe the distinctive speech patterns of males and females (Bakir & Salazar, 2023). This study area has garnered significant interest among linguists, driven by the understanding that not only are the societal roles of men and women evolving but so too are their respective communicative behaviours, especially within digital social networks. As a contemporary platform for interaction, social media provides a unique space where individuals of different genders can express themselves and engage with others through various forms of content, including posts, comments, and messages (Karatsoli & Nathanail, 2020; Nelson & Fleming, 2019). This study explores how social media usage reflects and potentially amplifies gendered differences in communication, building on previous research (Tifferet, 2020).

In North America, research has examined gender differences in the sustained use of social media. A dataset comprising 290 participants revealed that females generally perceive social media platforms as more accessible, compatible, advantageous, and less risky than their male counterparts. Conversely, males reported higher levels of satisfaction and a greater emphasis on the quality of information when

engaging with social media compared to females. These findings suggest that while both genders are comfortable using social media, their motivations and perceptions of the experience differ ([Horrich & Bekir, 2024](#); [Janavi et al., 2021](#)).

In the Philippines, studies have indicated notable differences between male and female social media users. While contemporary discourse often posits gender equality across various domains, significant distinctions remain in how males and females manage emotions and sensitivity in communication. Each gender employs distinct linguistic styles to articulate their communicative intentions, reflecting broader sociocultural patterns ([Carreon & Balinas, 2023](#); [Hall et al., 2020](#)).

Moreover, observations have shown that female students use social media to express personal grievances, while male students more frequently share posts with broader meanings or humour, such as memes. A concerning trend is the lack of adherence to Internet ethics, with many students posting content without verifying its accuracy or considering its potential impact. It highlights the need for a study that promotes responsible social media use and understands how gender influences online behaviour. The current research aims to contribute to this discourse by exploring the construction of social media posts by male and female students, considering the implications for digital literacy and ethical online engagement.

This study is particularly relevant in today's digital age, where social media platforms like Facebook have become central to daily communication. The research findings are expected to provide insights into how contemporary users engage with these platforms, the importance of constructing thoughtful posts, and the extent to which users are conscious of their digital footprint. The study also seeks to address gaps in the existing literature, particularly regarding the ethical use of social media and how gender influences online communication practices.

## **METHODS**

### ***Design***

The current study employed a qualitative design using a contextual analysis and a corpus-based approach. As defined, qualitative research includes empirical research in which data will not be quantitative. Empirical data or research was based on anything that could be experienced or observed rather than through theory ([Newby, 2014](#)). On the other hand, contextual analysis was essentially an examination of a text that allowed everyone to evaluate languages and texts not only in terms of their historical and cultural context but mostly in terms of their textuality or the characteristics that distinguished them as text. It was relatively straightforward, which entailed situating the text throughout its time and evaluating the roles of the author, intended and actual readers, and commentators' reception. Also, the present study is a corpus-based approach by nature and conduct. As defined, the corpus-based approach was an empirical method of linguistic analysis, patterns, probabilities, elements, and description of the language that used corpora as the primary data and starting point ([Fotiadou, 2022](#)). It is the analysis of language established on an extensive collection of language used in real-life events ([Ma et al., 2024](#)).

### ***Participant***

The study participants comprised 62 Facebook posts and updates to analyze, of which thirty-one (31) were males and another thirty-one (31) were females. As advised, the ideal number of entries for a corpus-based study was between 10 and 100 ([Byrne, 2022](#)). This study's participants were purposively sampled to obtain rich and authentic data about the research topic. Thus, participants were selected based on the following inclusion criteria: the post (1) should be personal; (2) should be sociable and allow interactions with others; and (3) can be shared or tagged by other people.

### ***Data Collection Procedure***

Before the data collection procedure, the researcher has the validation of the research instrument, the interview guide. This instrument was validated by the pool of experts who were all experts in the field of research and were all doctors in their field of expertise. Consequently, after the validation of the instrument, the data collection started as a result of this cascade: (1) sent a permission letter to the college president of the college seeking permission to conduct the study; (2) asked the office of the registrar for the official list of PLs in the first semester, SY 2021-2022; (3) identified possible and

prospect participants; (4) conducted an orientation with the participants and informed them about the goal and purpose of the study; (5) completed the informed consent from the participant by informing them that some of the data were recorded in attaining the goal of the study; (6) start the interview process with the participants; (7) transcription of the raw recorded interview or data; and (8) analysis of the gathered data.

Discussed below were the different sets of processes used to collect the data for this study. After my adviser approved chapters 1 and 2, as well as the panellists, the collection of data was already commenced. The researcher started to seek possible posts and updates in the Facebook social media application to be part of the corpora based on the given inclusion criteria. Then, the linguistic analysis of the chosen corpora utilizing the selected linguistic framework was also part of the collection. The linguistic features of the posts and updates of male and female social media users in the digital age were analyzed using the linguistic feature (Koch et al., 2022). After that, the language function was also identified using Jakobson's model. After this, peer debriefing was conducted, and the analysis results were tabulated to draw conclusions and further recommendations. Aside from the validation made by the researcher's adviser, this was also corroborated by the panel of experts in Applied Linguistics to ensure that the analysis was authentic, valid, and appropriate. It also guarantees the credibility and validity of the researcher's initial analysis. Finally, since the corpora included the researcher's participants' names, to ensure confidentiality, they were assigned pseudonyms to conceal their real identity, and only their Facebook posts were counted. Similarly, each post and update was given code to ensure the participants' privacy. Thus, ethical considerations were adequately adhered to in this research, maintaining the safety and well-being of the participants and the researcher.

### **Data Analysis**

Analyzing data depicts how the data was conducted and the conclusions were formulated (Bazen et al., 2021). Further, it was a compulsory purpose that the researcher was given enough and evident information for the readers to refer into the entire data analysis process and make a conclusion on their own. Contextual analysis was described as a systematic and qualitative approach to analyzing the meaning of communicative messages. It was also used to depict and extricate communicative phenomena which follow a specific process (Laviosa et al., 2017). After this, an expert or a data analyst did part in verifying and validating the collected data for a better and more factual result.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### ***Linguistic Features Found in the Language Used by Male and Female Social Media Users***

Five linguistic features are found in the language used by male and female social media users: intensifiers, tag questions, questions on declarations, lexical hedges, and empty adjectives.

**Table 1. Linguistic Features Found in the Language Used by Male and Female Social Media Users**

<b>Linguistic Features</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>
Intensifiers	It has been very tough yet the experiences are priceless. Seeing us unite again is a heartwarming feeling, <i>gitunga man ta sa panahon pero giisa ta sa higayon sa delubyong exam hahaha</i> but still we fight together to achieve one goal, Good job we made it! (It has been very tough yet the experiences are priceless. Seeing us unite again is a heartwarming feeling divided by time hence we were united by having the examination. Hahaha!,	DITO, is very <i>makalangay kag trabahuon rong adlaw</i> . (DITO, is very slow which caused delay in doing tasks today.) (F_01)

Linguistic Features	Male	Female
	but still we fight together to achieve one goal. Good job we made it.) (M_02)	
Tag Questions	<i>ingna kog wa paka mahigugma sa akoo, Gihatag na nako ang langit ug yuta, Di paka sa akoo?</i> (Tell me if you're not in love with me, I already give you the heaven and earth, are you not choosing me?) (M_04)	<i>Naa sa Ex ang true lab palangga, diba X?</i> (True love is on our Ex dear, right X?) (F_06)
Questions on Declarative	<i>Unsa man guYs araTt naHhh</i> (What's up guys, let's go.) (M_08)	<i>ingon mo dili tibay ang Made in China</i> (They said Made in China were not durable.) (F_07)
Lexical Hedges	<i>Pangayua nalang kay kong manghiram man galing ka I'm sure dmn ghapon ka kabalo mbayad</i> (Just ask for it because if you want to lend money, I'm sure you are not good in paying it back.) (M_10)	<i>basig tam-is na ba, ky dugay nata waka ligog dagat XXXXX jok</i> (Maybe, the beach tastes sweet because it's been a while since we've been in the beach. XXXXX, just kidding.) (F_12)
Empty Adjectives	My lovely bride.... (My lovely bride.) (M_15)	My life has been better since God blessed me this two beautiful babies..Ilove you ate X and ading X (My life has improved since God blessed me with these two beautiful babaies. I love you ate X and ading X.) (F_13)

The table above shows five linguistic features commonly occurring in the language used by male and female social media users: intensifiers, tag questions, questions on declarations, lexical hedges, and empty adjectives. Each of these linguistic features demonstrates differences in how men and women communicate on social media and how they express emotions, seek approval, or convey uncertainty.

Intensifiers are used to emphasize experiences or feelings that are considered important. For instance, a male user writes, "It has been very tough, yet the experiences are priceless," emphasizing the value of challenging yet rewarding experiences. On the other hand, a female user employs the intensifier "very" in the context of work delays, as in the statement, "DITO is very slow which caused a delay in doing tasks today," indicating frustration with the situation.

Tag questions are used to seek approval or confirmation from the listener. A male user writes, "I already give you the heaven and earth, are you not choosing me?" to request acknowledgement or confirmation from another person. In contrast, a female user utilizes tag questions in statements like "True love is on our Ex dear, right X?" to invite others to agree with her viewpoint.

Questions on declaratives combine statements with questions to express invitations or reinforce assertions. For example, a male user uses the statement, "What's up guys, let's go," as an indirect invitation. Meanwhile, a female user writes, "They said Made in China were not durable," to express doubt about the quality of a product.

Lexical hedges soften statements or reduce assertiveness, reflecting uncertainty or humility in communication. For instance, a male user writes, "Just ask for it because if you want to lend money, I'm sure you are not good at paying it back," reflecting a cautious and indirect approach to criticism. In the sentence "Maybe the beach tastes sweet because it's been a while since we've been at the beach," a female user employs hedges to express doubt or possibility.

Empty adjectives are adjectives often used to express feelings without providing specific details. A male user writes, "My lovely bride...," using "lovely" as an emotional description of his wife, but without further detail. Similarly, a female user states, "My life has been better since God blessed me with these two beautiful babies," using the word "beautiful" to express love and pride for her children, yet without offering a deeper explanation. Through this analysis, it is evident that these linguistic features differ between men and women, revealing variations in how they express themselves on social media. It reflects the gender-influenced dynamics of communication in the digital environment.

The differences in the use of linguistic features between men and women on social media reflect significant variations in how they express themselves. Language use is not merely about conveying information; it mirrors identity, social roles, and power dynamics, often influenced by gender. Men and women tend to adopt different linguistic strategies in communication, reinforcing existing social norms and cultural expectations. In social media, where self-expression is highly visible and documented, these differences become more pronounced and can be analyzed more clearly ([Al-Munawarah & Nirwana, 2023](#); [Hidayati, 2022](#); [Yarchi & Samuel-Azran, 2020](#)).

One of the main factors influencing these differences is the social and cultural norms attached to gender roles. From an early age, men and women are often raised with different social expectations regarding how they should speak and interact. Women, for instance, are taught to be more cautious, expressive, and empathetic in their communication. They use linguistic features such as lexical hedges and empty adjectives to express uncertainty or add emotional nuance to conversations ([Page et al., 2022](#); [Rheault et al., 2019](#); [Yarchi & Samuel-Azran, 2020](#)). In contrast, men are often encouraged to be more direct and assertive, using more straightforward and less emotional language, which reflects their traditional roles as leaders or decision-makers ([Larasatie et al., 2020](#); [Page et al., 2022](#)).

Differences in communication goals also significantly affect how men and women use language on social media. Women often use social media to build and maintain social relationships, making them more likely to use interactive and supportive language, such as tag questions and intensifiers, which help maintain good relations with others ([Gleeson et al., 2022](#); [Vella et al., 2020](#)). Conversely, men may be more focused on information transfer or expressing firm opinions, leading them to use more direct language and less concentrated on interpersonal aspects ([Hall et al., 2020](#); [Page et al., 2022](#)). These differences not only reflect gender differences in communication but also demonstrate how men and women utilize social media to meet their social needs.

Social awareness and the need to maintain harmony in social interactions also lead women to use more subtle and non-confrontational linguistic features. For example, women frequently use lexical hedges to avoid conflict or show humility, whereas men may feel less compelled to do so as they are more comfortable with direct and assertive communication. It reflects cultural norms that position women in more supportive roles and men in more dominant ones. However, in the increasingly egalitarian digital environment, these dynamics are beginning to shift, although the influence of traditional norms is still evident ([Alonso-Almeida & José Álvarez-Gil, 2021](#); [Formato, 2020](#); [Hall et al., 2020](#)).

Psychological and emotional factors also play a significant role in these differences. Often considered more empathetic, women are more likely to use language that demonstrates emotional support, such as empty adjectives and intensifiers. They use these features to express their feelings more openly and emotionally, which can strengthen social bonds on social media ([Apridaningrum & Angelina, 2020](#); [Erayani et al., 2024](#)). On the other hand, men may focus more on communication efficiency and less frequently use emotional language, which is in line with traditional norms that emphasize emotional control and assertiveness ([Joshi et al., 2020](#); [Renner & Masch, 2019](#)).

Overall, the differences in using these linguistic features show that how men and women express themselves on social media reflects communication dynamics influenced by gender. It reveals how social and cultural norms shape language and how social media is a space where gender identities are explored and negotiated. By understanding these differences, we can better appreciate the complexity of digital communication and how language is used to construct and maintain identity in an increasingly connected environment.

### ***Language Functions are Manifested in the Posts and Updates of Male and Female Social Media Users***

Six linguistic functions are manifested in the posts and updates of male and female social media users: referential function, poetic function, emotive function, conative function, phatic function, and multilingual function.

**Table 2. Linguistic Functions Found in the Language Used by Male and Female Social Media Users**

<b>Linguistic Functions</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>
Referential Functions	The San Isidro Labrador Parish will be celebrating its 63rd Parish Day Celebration as we witness various activities and events to unite the ecclesial community of San Isidro Labrador Parish #SILPParishDay2022 (The San Isidro Labrador Parish will be celebrating its 63rd Parish Day Celebration as we witness various activities and events to unite the ecclesial community of San Isidro Labrador Parish.) (M_16)	KCAST BS Office Administration Internship Fair 2022, Day 3: 5's System Seminar and Workshop, Student's participation on Workshop 1: House of Cards Game to illustrate concept of Lean Manufacturing and 5's application. Congratulations everyone! (KCAST BS Office Administration Internship Fair 2022, Day 3: 5's System Seminar and Workshop, Student's participation on Workshop 1: House of Cards Game to illustrate concept of Lean Manufacturing and 5's application. Congratulations, everyone) (F_18)
Poetic Function	Life is like a mirror. It will smile at you, if you smile at it. (Life is like a mirror. It will smile at you, if you smile at it.) (M_19)	<i>Exigo a me non ut optimus par sim sed u malis melior</i> (I require myself not to be equal to the best but to the better than the bad.) (F_21)
Emotive Function	<i>Sakit na kaayu akong bagtak cgeg binaktas hahaha</i> (My legs hurt because of continuous walking. Hahaha!) (M_24)	<i>huuyyy, kasakit man intawon</i> (It really hurts.) (F_23)

Linguistic Functions	Male	Female
Conative Function	<p><i>Bahay kubo namin maliit lamang, Peru pero malinis to pati sa kusina, Tatlo lang kami ang naka tira dito...Hali na kayo, Hoy!Mga kaibigan ko...</i></p> <p>(Our house is only small, But it's clean even in the kitchen. Only the three of us lived here. Come on! my friends.)</p> <p>(M_25)</p>	<p><i>Walang titigil!!</i></p> <p>(Don't stop!)</p> <p>(F_27)</p>
Phatic Function	<p><i>Hello mang, misis ko yaan.. #Ganda..</i></p> <p>(Hello mang, that is my wife.)</p> <p>(M_28)</p>	<p>Have a blessed Sunday everyone!</p> <p>(Have a blessed Sunday, everyone!)</p> <p>(F_30)</p>
Metalingual Function	<p><i>Salamatt X wanay floodlikes usab dra?Hahahah</i></p> <p>(Thank you X, there were no more floodlikes there either? Hahaha!)</p> <p>(M_31)</p>	<p><i>Pa atsupay ug sungka</i></p> <p>(Which road is better? Bunawan road or Tadeco road?)</p> <p>(F_31)</p>

Table 2 reveals variations in the use of linguistic functions by men and women in their social media communication. The referential function, which focuses on conveying information or facts, is used by both genders to share details about activities or events involving specific communities or institutions. For example, men use the referential function to inform about the anniversary celebration of a parish, while women utilize this function to announce seminars and workshops attended by students. These examples demonstrate that men and women use language to deliver specific and relevant information to their audience.

Regarding the poetic function, both men and women can play with words and package their messages aesthetically. Men use simple yet meaningful expressions like "Life is like a mirror. It will smile at you if you smile at it," reflecting an optimistic outlook. In contrast, women employ more complex language, such as the Latin quote "*Exigo a me non ut optimus par sim sed u malis melior*," which reflects their awareness of high personal standards. It suggests that while both genders use the poetic function, women may be more inclined to express themselves through more abstract and profound expressions.

The emotive function, which expresses the speaker's feelings or emotions, is also used differently by men and women. Men tend to express physical pain with a humorous tone, as in the statement, "*Sakit na kaayu akong bagtak cgeg binaktas hahaha*" (My legs hurt from walking too much. Hahaha!), while women are more direct in expressing their pain, as seen in the sentence, "*Huuyyy, kasakit man intawon*" (It hurts so much). It indicates that men may be likelier to use humour to ease emotions, whereas women are more open and straightforward in expressing their feelings.

The conative function, which focuses on influencing or directing the listener, also shows variation in usage between men and women. Men use this function to invite friends to their homes in a friendly and inviting tone, as in, "*Hali na kayo, Hoy! Mga kaibigan ko...*" (Come on, friends...), women use more direct commands, such as "*Walang titigil!*" (Don't stop!). It reflects that men may prefer a persuasive and collegial approach, while women are likelier to use direct and assertive commands.

Finally, other functions, such as the phatic and multilingual functions, are employed by both genders in their social media interactions. The phatic function, which aims to initiate or maintain social

interaction, is seen in men's relaxed introduction to their wives, "*Hello mang, misis ko yaan.. #Ganda..*" (Hello everyone, that's my wife.. #Beautiful..), while women use more general and universal greetings like "Have a blessed Sunday everyone!" The metalingual function, which comments on or clarifies the meaning of language itself, is also found in the interactions of both genders, though in different contexts. Men use language to question or confirm understanding, while women more often use language to make choices or evaluate something, such as in questions about which road is better. These findings overall indicate that while there are similarities in the use of specific linguistic functions, men and women tend to express themselves in ways that align with prevailing gender and social norms.

Men and women tend to express themselves on social media in ways that reflect the prevailing gender and social norms within society. These norms often dictate how they choose words, sentence structures, and communication styles ([Comunello et al., 2020](#); [Koch et al., 2022](#)). For instance, in many cultures, women are expected to be more expressive and emotional in their communication, evident in their use of linguistic features such as intensifiers and empty adjectives ([Gough et al., 2021](#); [Renner & Masch, 2019](#)). Conversely, men are often encouraged to be more assertive and direct, leading them to use less emotional or ornate language ([Karatsoli & Nathanail, 2020](#); [Mazei et al., 2023](#)). This difference reflects the expected gender roles in society, where women are typically seen as guardians of social harmony, while men are expected to focus on effectiveness and certainty in communication.

Social norms also influence how men and women interact with their audiences on social media. Women may be more likely to use supportive language and invite participation, aligning with their traditional role as maintainers of social relationships ([Hall et al., 2020](#); [Knopke, 2019](#)). It is evident in the use of tag or declarative questions that invite responses or feedback from the audience. On the other hand, men may be more inclined to use authoritative or informative language, reflecting their role as leaders or conveyors of information ([Tifferet, 2020](#); [Wijayanti et al., 2022](#)). It highlights how social media reflects broader social dynamics, where gender roles and expectations are internalized in communication practices.

Moreover, the pressure to conform to these gender norms can affect how men and women express their identities on social media. Women might feel compelled to show empathy and support in their communication, using linguistic features like lexical hedges to indicate uncertainty or doubt to maintain social harmony ([Hall et al., 2020](#); [Tifferet, 2020](#)). Conversely, men might feel driven to present a strong and confident self-image, avoiding linguistic features that might be perceived as too soft or emotional ([Janavi et al., 2021](#); [Tifferet, 2020](#)). Thus, social media becomes a platform where gender identity is not only expressed but also maintained and reinforced through language use.

However, despite the strength of these norms, social media also offers a space to challenge and redefine gender expression. In some cases, men and women may use linguistic features that do not align with traditional gender stereotypes as a form of more authentic self-expression ([Butkowski et al., 2020](#); [Dormanen et al., 2020](#); [Streib et al., 2019](#)). For example, men might use more emotional or reflective language to reveal different aspects of their identity, while women might use more assertive or direct language to assert their opinions ([Al-Munawarah & Nirwana, 2023](#); [Muchnik-Rozanov & Tsybulsky, 2019](#)). It suggests that while gender norms influence communication on social media, individuals still have the agency to explore and express their identities beyond existing social constraints.

## CONCLUSION

The study reveals that linguistic features and functions are prominent in the social media updates of both male and female users, highlighting the role of language in digital communication. The linguistic features identified include intensifiers, tag questions, questions on declarations, lexical hedges, and empty adjectives, while the linguistic functions encompass referential, poetic, emotive, conative, phatic, and metalingual functions. These findings suggest that social media is a rich ground for exploring how genders use language differently, reflecting broader societal norms and expectations.

Furthermore, the study underscores the importance of understanding these linguistic differences for both academic purposes and practical applications. For instance, future research can build on these findings by analyzing conversations in comment threads or on other platforms like TikTok and Twitter to gain deeper insights into metalinguistic functions and gendered communication styles. Additionally, the research highlights the need for further exploration of linguistic features in different contexts, which



could enrich the field of sociolinguistics and provide valuable references for English students and researchers alike.

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The authors declare no funding and conflicts of interest for this research.

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