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**Language and Gender in blogs: An analysis of
male and female features for positioning and
interaction**

MASTER DISSERTATION

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RESUMEN EN ESPAÑOL

En las últimas décadas se ha incrementado el número de estudios enfocados a un reciente campo de investigación, la Lingüística en Internet. La popularización de Internet y la aparición de redes sociales y plataformas virtuales han permitido a un gran número de personas interactuar entre ellas de una manera imposible de predecir años atrás. De hecho, parece haber una urgente demanda por escribir en dichos entornos virtuales no solo para establecer relaciones sociales sino también para expresar opiniones personales sobre un tema en concreto. En este sentido, los blogs se han consolidado como una de las plataformas más comunes de interacción y debate virtual.

Hay una creencia común de que la aparición de redes sociales ha influido considerablemente en el lenguaje, dando lugar a un proceso de innovación del mismo que continúa hoy en día. Académicos de renombre internacional entre los que se encuentran Naomi Baron y David Crystal, han explorado activamente cómo el lenguaje de Internet se ha desarrollado como un nuevo estilo de comunicación lingüística y cómo se manifiesta una evolución del lenguaje en esas interacciones virtuales (Baron, 2008; Crystal, 2005). Asimismo, otros estudios se han centrado en el lenguaje de Internet escrito por adolescentes (ver Greenfield and Subrahmanyam, 2003; Tagliamonte and Denis, 2008). En relación a esto, Boyd and Ellison (2008) llegaron a la conclusión de que al usar redes sociales, los jóvenes señalaban identidad y afiliación a un determinado grupo a la vez que mostraban un complejo conjunto de iniciativas comunicativas y creativas. También, otros investigadores han observado cómo los adolescentes utilizaban un lenguaje específico y códigos emocionales en esas plataformas virtuales para explorar su identidad (Huffacker and Calvert, 2005).

Es más, dichos entornos virtuales se convierten en un espacio en el que además de construir identidades y establecer relaciones sociales, se manifiestan varias diferencias de género. Van Dijk (1993) ya había observado ciertas estructuras y estrategias de dominación y resistencia en las relaciones sociales de género. Se ha demostrado que ciertos rasgos lingüísticos distinguían el lenguaje de las mujeres del de los hombres (Lakoff, 1975; Tannen, 1990), tales como el uso de *tag questions* o peticiones indirectas, entre otras. Además, muchos estudios se han centrado recientemente en el género relacionado con las diferencias lingüísticas, sobre todo en las salas de chat y en Facebook (Guiller y Durndell, 2007; Kapidzic y Herring, 2011; Schwartz et al, 2013). También, algunas investigaciones han analizado los blogs en relación al uso que hombres y mujeres hacen del lenguaje (García, 2010; Nowson, 2006). Sin embargo, estos estudios se han enfocado en la identidad de género en línea y en la proyección lingüística de la personalidad expresadas de manera diferente en cada sexo.

Hasta ahora, aunque algunas investigaciones se han dedicado al estudio del uso del lenguaje en los diferentes entornos virtuales y en las diferencias de género en discurso, se ha prestado menos atención a examinar la medida en que los nuevos espacios virtuales influyen en la forma en que hombres y mujeres usan el lenguaje y contribuyen a reforzar o cambiar los patrones de género tradicionales. La tarea pendiente es entonces examinar con mayor detalle las nuevas tendencias que surgen al escribir en las plataformas virtuales y examinar en qué aspectos el lenguaje escrito por hombres difiere del escrito por mujeres. En este trabajo se aborda esta cuestión, mediante el análisis de las entradas y comentarios que los usuarios escriben en blogs. En concreto, se analizan las nuevas estrategias lingüísticas usadas por ambos sexos que se están desarrollando en las mencionadas plataformas virtuales. De esta manera, el

presente trabajo combina dos ramas de la Lingüística: la Lingüística de Internet y el Análisis del Discurso.

Por tanto, el objetivo del presente trabajo es proporcionar un enfoque a las diferencias de género en el uso del lenguaje en línea. Como el lenguaje de las mujeres y el de los hombres y sus patrones de expresión están cambiando considerablemente, hemos decidido centrar este estudio en el análisis de los rasgos lingüísticos más relevantes en blogs a través de los cuales hombres y mujeres se posicionan hacia un determinado tema e interactúan entre sí. En este sentido, vamos a realizar un análisis predominantemente cualitativo con el fin de examinar la forma en que los blogueros y sus seguidores expresan sus puntos de vista y opiniones personales y se dirigen a los demás. De esta manera, este trabajo tiene la intención de dar respuesta a las siguientes preguntas de investigación:

- ¿En qué aspectos el lenguaje virtual utilizado por hombres y el utilizado por mujeres difieren en cuanto a la forma en que se posicionan respecto a un tema e interactúan con los demás?
- ¿Cómo ha afectado el desarrollo de Internet a la manera en que hombres y mujeres se expresan e interactúan en plataformas virtuales? En otras palabras, ¿en qué medida pueden estos rasgos lingüísticos estar asociados con los llamados lenguaje femenino y masculino?

En relación a estas preguntas, se han propuesto las siguientes hipótesis:

- Hipótesis 1: Internet ha dado lugar a cambios en los rasgos lingüísticos con respecto a los patrones tradicionales y los blogs han sido una de las plataformas virtuales que reflejan dichos cambios.

- Hipótesis 2: Dado que las mujeres han ido ganando una posición más firme en sociedad de la que tradicionalmente tenían, se espera encontrar un uso más asertivo del lenguaje en la forma en que se posicionan e interactúan en blogs.
- Hipótesis 3: El lenguaje de la mujer se está acercando al de los hombres y viceversa.

El corpus de este estudio comprende entradas (posts) y sus correspondientes comentarios escritos en blogs sobre moda y salud. Para el análisis se ha escogido un total de 20 entradas y 100 comentarios escritos entre agosto de 2012 y marzo de 2015. A su vez, este corpus se divide en dos subcorpora: el corpus de hombres y el de mujeres, cada uno con 10 entradas y 50 comentarios, 5 comentarios a cada entrada. Una vez seleccionados los datos, se identificaron y analizaron los rasgos lingüísticos más comunes en cada género con el fin de encontrar cambios con respecto a patrones tradicionales y establecer una comparación en uso entre hombres y mujeres. Dichos rasgos se clasificaron en dos niveles distintos: el nivel de posicionamiento y el de interacción, en función de si se utilizan para expresar puntos de vista o para interactuar con los demás. Así, hemos examinado el lenguaje centrándonos especialmente en 1) los rasgos lingüísticos más relevantes, tales como adjetivos, adverbios, expresiones coloquiales, modales, exclamaciones, preguntas y pronombres, y en 2) las estrategias lingüísticas más comunes, tales como el uso de afirmaciones, imperativos, expresiones de agradecimiento y solidaridad, y sugerencias empleados por ambos sexos. El programa *Wordsmith Tools* se ha utilizado para ayudar con el análisis cuantitativo de algunos rasgos. Los resultados obtenidos de dicho análisis se han presentado en tablas con el fin de clarificar la información.

Los resultados muestran que existe una superposición de las diferencias de género en términos del uso de ciertas características y estrategias lingüísticas. El análisis

del lenguaje de las mujeres ha demostrado que no se limitan a utilizar los rasgos tradicionalmente asociados con la feminidad (Lakoff, 1975; Tannen, 1990) sino que muestran una posición más firme, muy diferente a la actitud pasiva y sumisa desde la que se posicionaban hace unas décadas. Por el contrario, el lenguaje de los hombres también está cambiando en ser más cauteloso en las declaraciones y en el creciente uso de características y estructuras lingüísticas asociadas tradicionalmente con el lenguaje de las mujeres. De esta manera, este estudio ha permitido explorar el impacto de Internet en las diferencias de género en el uso del lenguaje virtual.

No obstante, esta investigación implica algunas limitaciones, ya que parece bastante difícil llegar a generalizaciones que perduren en el tiempo. El uso de características y estrategias lingüísticas continuará cambiando a medida que las plataformas virtuales se desarrollen con los años. Sin embargo, los resultados podrían servir como base para realizar estudios similares sobre las diferencias de género en el discurso virtual. Una línea prometedora de estudio sería examinar con más detalle si las presentes conclusiones son aplicables al discurso interactivo en otras plataformas virtuales y redes sociales recientes. También sería interesante tratar de determinar si estas afirmaciones podrían aplicarse a conversaciones espontáneas, debates abiertos, o cualquier otro evento en el que hombres y mujeres expresen sus opiniones e interactúen con otros. De este modo, como el lenguaje virtual y las diferencias de género siguen siendo un interesante tema de estudio, una línea de investigación aún por explorar con más detalle sería cómo el lenguaje se encuentra actualmente en un proceso de adaptación a los nuevos entornos comunicativos virtuales y cómo las diferencias de género se hacen evidentes en ese proceso.

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1. Introduction

Over the last decades, there has been growing interest in Internet Linguistics to the point that this subject has never been of greater concern than it is today. The popularization of the Internet and the introduction of social networking sites and virtual platforms have allowed a great number of people to interact with each other in ways and for reasons that could not have been predicted decades ago. Indeed, there seems to be an urgent demand for writing on virtual environments not only to establish social relations but also to express personal views on a certain topic. In this sense, blogs have emerged as one of the most common virtual platforms in which such online interactions and debates are held.

There is a commonly held belief that the introduction of social networks has considerably influenced language leading to a process of innovation that continues today. Scholars such as Naomi Baron and David Crystal, internationally renowned language experts, have actively explored how language on the Internet has emerged as a new style of linguistic communication and how language evolution is manifested in these online interactions (Baron, 2008; Crystal, 2005). Likewise, other studies have focused on this online language but, more specifically, have centered on the language written by adolescents (see Greenfield and Subrahmanyam, 2003; Tagliamonte and Denis, 2008). In this connection, Boyd and Ellison (2008) found that when using social networking sites, teenagers signalled identity and affiliation to a certain group while engaging in a complex array of communicative and creative endeavours. Also, other researchers observed how youngsters used specific language and emotional codes in these online settings in order to explore their identity (Huffacker and Calvert, 2005).

Furthermore, such virtual environments are a platform in which identities are construed and social relationships are established and as a result, gender differences

become also manifested. Van Dijk (1993) already anticipated how structures and strategies of dominance and resistance were discursively enacted in social relationships of gender. It has been showed that there were certain linguistic features that distinguished the language of women from that of men (Lakoff, 1975; Tannen, 1990), such as hedges, tag questions or indirect requests. Also, many studies have recently focused on gender related to linguistic differences, mainly in chatrooms and on Facebook (Guiller and Durndell, 2007; Kapidzic and Herring, 2011; Schwartz et al., 2013). Besides, there has been some research works on the analysis of blogs related to the use that males and females make of language (García, 2010; Nowson, 2006). However, these studies have focused on online gender identity and on the linguistic projection of personality as expressed differently by each sex.

So far, although considerable research has been devoted to the use of language on the different online environments and to gender differences in discourse, less attention has been paid to examine the extent to which the new virtual spaces influence the way males and females use language and contribute to reinforcing or changing traditional gender patterns. The remaining issue is then to examine in greater detail the new emerging trends when writing on online platforms and to examine in what aspects the language written by males differs from that written by females. This paper addresses this issue by analysing comments and posts that users write on blogs. Specifically, it analyses the new linguistic strategies that are being developed in the mentioned virtual platforms used by both sexes. In doing so, it combines two branches of Linguistics: Internet Linguistics and Discourse Analysis.

Thus, the aim of this research is to provide an approach to gender differences in online language use. As female and male language and their patterns of speech are considerably changing, we have decided to focus our study on the analysis of the most

relevant linguistic features on blogs through which women and men position themselves towards a certain topic and interact with each other. In this sense, we will carry out a predominantly qualitative analysis in order to examine the way in which bloggers and respondents express their personal views and opinions, and address others. In this way, this paper intends to provide an answer to the following research questions:

- In what aspects does online language used by males and that written by females differ regarding the way they position towards a topic and interact with others?
- How has the development of the Internet affected the way men and women express themselves and interact in virtual platforms? In other words, to what extent can these linguistic features be associated with the so called feminine and masculine language?

In view of these research questions, the following hypotheses have been proposed:

- Hypothesis 1: The Internet has led to changes in linguistic features with regard to traditional patterns and online blogs are thought to reflect such changes across genders.
- Hypothesis 2: Given that women are taking a more assertive position in society than they traditionally used to take, it is expected to find more assertive uses of language in the way they position themselves and interact in blogs.
- Hypothesis 3: Females' language is becoming closer to males' language and viceversa.

The next section will provide with an overview of Internet Linguistics and online language. Also, we will offer a theoretical framework on language and gender differences as well as on the linguistic features of the language of females and males. Then, section 3 will describe the data collection procedure and the steps carried out to analyse the data. In section 4, we will analyse the data and interpret the results against the background of recent research works in the field. Finally, the last section will present the overall conclusions including the limitations of the study and suggestions for further research.

2. Theoretical background

2.1. An overview of Internet Linguistics

Since the beginning of the twenty-first century, when the Internet began to consolidate itself as the major medium for communication among individuals, studies and investigations dealing with online language started to become prominent. In this way, Internet Linguistics emerged as the new domain of linguistics that would become the focus of numerous studies and research works. Internet Linguistics focuses on the new language styles and productions arising from the Internet and related developments in emerging communication media such as instant messaging, electronic mail, chat rooms and blogging.

David Crystal was among the first linguists who began to use the term *netspeak* for the language of electronic communication. He understood *netspeak* as an alternative term for “electronic language” or “interactive written discourse”, as shaped entirely by the creativity of the online community (Crystal, 2011: 17). Crystal (2005) asserts that these new forms of interaction used in Internet exchanges are far more important than changes in vocabulary, grammar, and spelling. However, unlike educationalists who

may be concerned with the possible deterioration in the quality of the language mainly because of the increasing use of 'txt' shorthand, he defends the idea that this is a great opportunity for the development of the English language since it increases the expressive range of a language. As the author said in the Annual Conference of the AAAS (American Association for the Advancement of Science), "rather than condemning it, therefore, we should be exulting in the fact that the Internet is allowing us to once more explore the power of the written language in a creative way" (Crystal, 2005: 2).

In order to give an overall description that includes all the possible research lines within the field, Crystal (2011) defined Internet Linguistics as "a branch of linguistics that focuses on the study of all manifestations of language in the electronic medium". In his multiple studies, he wanted to examine the role of language in the Internet and the effect of the Internet on language. Along with Naomi Baron, another well-known expert in the field, he has defended the important role of the Internet for the innovation of language, fighting against the notion that the Internet is ruining the English language (Crystal, 2001; 2011). In this line, studies about online language have been quite common especially in the last years. Many researchers have focused on how language is being affected by the way Internet users interact with each other in social networking sites (Crystal, 2001; Baron, 2008; Davies, n.d.; Greenfield and Subrahmanyam, 2003; Tagliamonte and Denis, 2008). In Baron's (2008) view, digital discourse has had a strong impact on spoken and written language and has amplified the already existing linguistic tendencies. For instance, Harter understands this online language as a key means through which different roles are explored and constructed. In another relevant study for our analysis, Huffaker and Calvert (2005) explored how adolescents present their identities online as well as how language is used to express their ideas and

feelings. By doing so, they came to the conclusion that through the disclosure of their personal information and the language used to express their sexual identity, an online identity was also being constructed.

2.2. Online language

Over the past two decades, the number of studies dealing with the emergent online language has steadily increased. Since the 1990s, the growing popularization of the Internet, together with the introduction of social networks, has had impact on language users leading to a process of innovation that continues today. This new style of linguistic communication is commonly associated with the language written on online environments such as forum boards or blogs. With the development of virtual platforms in the past decade, more and more users began to create personal blogs in which they could share their experiences and personal views with their readers. Besides, as Greenhow and Robelia (2009) claim, these social environments are also considered to play a central role as they facilitate emotional support, help maintain relationships, provide a platform for self-presentation as well as fulfill essential social learning functions.

Later, with the release of the mobile phone, people have been increasingly communicating and making an extensive use of the new virtual devices. Thus, personal blogging, together with the introduction of new social networks that facilitate its sharing with bloggers' followers, opened a new area of study to explore how this language (*netspeak*) continues to evolve and how Internet users interact and express who they are. In this sense, previous extensive research has dealt with linguistic features and communication styles in synchronous text messages in teen chat sites (Kapidzic and Herring, 2011), the communicative function of emoticons (Garrison et al., 2011; Huang,

Yen and Zhang, 2008; Skovholt, Grønning and Kankaanranta, 2014; Vandergriff, 2013), ethics and social media (D'Arcy and Young, 2012; Zimmer, 2010) or with intercultural mediated communication (Maíz-Arévalo, 2013). Moreover, gender differences in language use have also been a common object of study in a wide variety of fields. In this line, Kapidzic and Herring (2011) studied the expressions of gender distinctness among teens in chat rooms. They found significant differences in speech acts and message tone, and similarly, Guiller and Durndell (2007) also found differences in the use of many stylistic variables examining student's language use and interaction styles in computer-mediated discussion groups. As gender differences in online language are a central component of this study they will be reviewed in detail in the following subsection.

Continuing with online language, we will move now to comment on its linguistic features. Today, English is said to be one of the most commonly used languages on the Internet. Because of this, Hong-mei (2010) claims that Internet English has become a new variety of English with its distinct features in word-formation and in lexicon. She holds that "Internet English refers to the language used in E-mails, Discussion Groups, Chat Rooms and WWW Pages, etc." (Hong-mei, 2010: 98). In these virtual environments, as it is usual to write as brief and concise words as possible in order to save typing time, new word-formation methods are said to be emerging. In her study, Hong-mei (2010) classifies these methods as abbreviations (including clippings, acronyms and the combination of letters and numbers), blending, compounding, derivation and the use of symbols to express emotions. This typology has also been explored in previous research with little variation in terms of classification categories (Baron, 2008; Davies, n.d; Huffaker and Calvert, 2005; Randall, 2002).

Other studies have also investigated language features and the patterns of online communicative language in order to explore the process of innovation that language is undergoing in such online environments. Merchant (2001) claims that this new way of communication is resulting in linguistic innovation, something that was also put forward later by Crystal (2005). Merchant analyses language change in online chatrooms and observes that adolescents and young people contribute to a large extent to this process of change. He observes that in those “rapid conversations” there is an interplay of distinct linguistic characteristics as “they combine features of face-to-face talk with explorations in interactive writing.” (Merchant, 2001: 300). In this way, this process of innovation is not only being enriched in that there is a group of particular features in online language but also in the sense that they are being combined with those of oral speech and ordinary conversations. Similarly, Hamin and Hani (2012) see language evolution as an ongoing process entailing new spelling innovations and the modification other linguistic features but whose development is always unpredictable. This goes in line with Baron’s study (2008) that claims that digital discourse is amplifying the already existing linguistic tendencies.

2.2.1. The language of blogs

In recent decades, there has been a growing interest in the creation of blogs. Blogs, often called weblogs, is a website with chronologically ordered texts or articles in which readers can write their comments, and the author and, sometimes other readers, reply to them. The theme of each blog is personal and they can be written for different aims either reporting personal experiences or giving and asking for advice. They cover different topics such as health, travelling, lifestyle or fashion, among others. Unlike personal weblogs whose access is often restricted to the followers of the author, most

blogs are generally open as they are of the interest to people of all ages and expectations. Language in these blogs becomes an interesting object of analysis as it can be explored in lines of study as different as the expression of the self, the interaction with others and also gender differences that are manifested in them.

The language of weblogs is characterised as mostly evaluative. Either bloggers give their opinion on a certain topic or they offer an account of their personal experiences; online language in such platform is used with a more personal tone because of the subjectivity with which bloggers express themselves. Furthermore, Nowson (2006) has shown that both gender and personality are projected by language in blogs. He also investigates the relationship between personality and linguistic features in the language of these ‘online personal diaries’, as he calls them. Likewise, Myers (2009) studies the impact that blogs have on electronic communication and focuses on aspects of language in social interaction, thus providing a basis for the analysis of discourse and genres on the Internet.

Particularly, the posts and comments analysed in this dissertation belong to the personal posts in which bloggers do not only report their personal experiences but they also comment on specific topics such as health and fashion. They share their posts with their readers who later make comments on them. As we have mentioned before, blogs can be as varied as topics can be. For example, those selected for this study are different from personal blogs whose bloggers do not expect any comment and just use blogs to express their thoughts or as a means of emotional relief. Therefore, as they follow different purposes, investigations on the language used in blogs may provide different results, as the features found in one type may be more relevant than in another type and viceversa. Further details on the type of blogs that concerns this study, will be provided in the next section.

Blogs as a genre share some general characteristics that have been widely analysed such as their differences with regard to face-to-face communication in relation to emotive features or the semantic themes explored (Datta and Sarkar, 2008; Huffaker and Calvert, 2005; Myers, 2009) and also in terms of politeness strategies and self and other presentation strategies (García, 2000; 2008), linguistic features (Datta and Sarkar, 2008, Kadir, Maros and Hamid, 2012) and discursive positionings (García, 2009). Similarly, these issues have also been a common subject of analysis in other virtual platforms such as forums or discussion groups (Guiller and Durndell, 2007) and in recent social networks such as Twitter or Facebook (Davies, n.d.; Schwartz et al., 2013). Gender has also been an area that has attracted special attention, and since it is relevant to the present research, we will provide a comprehensive overview on the literary background on gender related to identity and associated with linguistic differences.

2.3. Language and gender identity

Gender studies are a very common line of research within the interdisciplinary approach of critical discourse analysis, henceforth CDA. Language has been widely explored in terms of “power”, “ideology” and “gender”, categories that van Dijk (2001) classifies within the most common relevant contextual features in discourse. In his article, Van Dijk defines CDA as “a type of discourse analytical research that primarily studies the way social power abuse, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced, and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context.” (Van Dijk, 2001: 352). Then, we could frame the Internet within the social context, as it is on the Internet where interactive relationships are displayed and therefore, gender differences become manifested in language use.

As Van Dijk stated when analysing the aims of CDA, “much work in CDA deals with the discursively enacted or legitimated structures and strategies of dominance and resistance in social relationships of *class, gender, ethnicity, race, sexual orientation, language, religion, age, nationality* or *world-region*.” (Van Dijk, 1993: 18). Thus, gender became one of the common fields of research in CDA to study how gender differences are reinforced through language use. Since then, the number of studies exploring gender began to increase. Litosseliti (2006) addressed issues dealing with how women and men are represented in media and with the femininities, masculinities and gender relations that are constructed in the text, among others. Her study on gender and language served as one of the basis to encourage further research on the construction of gender identities in discourse. She relies on Fairclough (1989, 1995) to explain how the analysis of media language is worthy exploring for the study of the ways in which women and men social identities and relations are constructed.

Specially, because of the growing popularization of the Internet and social networking sites, gender started to be studied in media discourse. There has been detailed research on the issue of gender identity in the language on the Internet. One of the virtual platforms that have attracted the interest of many researchers are blogs. Specifically, in such investigations, young users of social networking sites seem to be the most frequent subjects in which researchers center their study on (Berg, 2012; Hamin and Hani, 2012; Huffaker and Calvert, 2005). This may be because teenagers manifest on such online environments their identities that they construe through the use of language and because they appear to be part of the process of innovation that language is undertaking in such online environments. In this way, teenagers are innovative in their use of language while enhancing the creative possibilities of language itself. Hamin and Hani claim that the “new patterns of Online Communicative

Language [...] somehow signifies a reconstruction of an online identity among the young users; regardless of their cultural differences and backgrounds.” (Hamin and Hani, 2012: 817). In their study, they carry out a content analysis and examine linguistic structures and the patterns of online communicative language so as to explore humans’ patterns of interaction and identity in online settings. Adolescents are then a key point of departure in such lines of research as they meant a significant contribution to studies dealing with language, gender and identity.

Since the introduction of virtual platforms in the past decade, many young users began to sign up mainly because they wanted to be up to date with the later news of their favourite celebrities, to be part of global communities, to get advice, or simply to comment on certain topics. According to Boyd and Ellison (2008), when using these online connections, they signal identity and affiliation to a certain group while, at the same time, they became engaged in a complex array of communicative and creative endeavours. These authors claim that “like other online contexts in which individuals are consciously able to construct an online representation of self [...] social networking sites constitute an important research context for scholars investigating processes of impression management, self-presentation, and friendship performance” (Boyd and Ellison, 2008: 219) Thus, such online settings are an essential scenario in which users display meaningful identity signals. Besides, As Harter asserts, adolescents take on the roles of others and assume different perspectives allowing them to try on different facets of who they will become (Harter, 1998). Hence, in these online settings there is an interplay of perspective, representation (of gender) and interaction that are significant factors to explore how (gender) identities are constructed.

Other investigations have also contributed to research on the construction of online gender identities (Blackmore, 2001; Leppänen, 2008). In their study, Huffaker

and Calvert (2005) examine issues of online identity and language use among male and female teenagers who created weblogs. They argue that adolescents use specific language and emotional codes in these online settings in order to explore their identity. Thus, they came to the conclusion that through the disclosure of their personal information and the language used to express their sexual identity, an online identity was also being constructed (Huffaker and Calvert, 2005). When men and women write on such platforms, they are defining themselves by what they write and how they write it. Similarly, other virtual platforms have been also of interest as regards this issue (Kapidzic and Herring, 2011). Thus, chat rooms also provide an open window for the expression of adolescent issues and for the exchange of information with their peers. Subrahmanyam, Greenfield and Tynes (2004) assert that in these virtual spaces, users find themselves in a safer environment for exploring their identity and emerging sexuality than in the real world. Nevertheless, these online practices may lead to cyberbullying. In this line, Bryce and Klang (2009) claim that the disclosure as well as the commercial and non-commercial use of teenagers' personal information can endanger their online privacy.

Additionally, Leppänen (2008) shows how young women deal with the conflicting identity scenarios they face in their lives. In the fan fiction forums that she analyses, she argues that “the girls and young women do not generally strive to build unified identities but a variety of complex subject positions, or identity possibilities” (Leppänen, 2008: 176). That is, females do not only reaffirm an empowering identity position for women but also, at the same time, they may show trouble and unsolved concerns. She holds that “fan fiction seems to be closely connected to and to reverberate with the real-life contexts, pressures, troubles and concerns that girls and young women are face with in today” (Leppänen, 2008: 176). Likewise, Berg's study (2012) focuses

on the same topic but in a very different scenario. She explores gender and sexual identities through teens' talk about their preferred texts in the library and observes that "as these teens become more conscious of the unconscious elements of identities they are enacting, they are simultaneously questioning and pushing the boundaries of discursive constructions of heterosexuality, homosexuality, gender, and adolescence." (Berg, 2012: 32). So, almost unconsciously, gender identities become constructed through language. Thus, we can see the varied settings and the extent to which discourse analysis can be applied in order to do research on gender and identity. The following subsections will present an overview on what has been studied about gender differences manifested in such online discourse from the perspective of discourse analysis.

What remains now is to explore how these identities become manifested through language use. Recently, there has been a growing interest in the analysis of blogs related to the use that males and females make of language (García, 2010; Nowson, 2006). Litosseliti (2006) offers a comprehensive study on what femininities and masculinities, and what gender relations are constructed for women and men in the media. In chapter five, she shows how the media has the power to construct ideologies but at the same time, she explores how the media is also responsible for maintaining the limiting traditional stereotypes that associated women with being consumers and responsible for relationship, and men with being macho. In the subsequent subsection, we will focus on how males and females have been represented in discourse and on the use they make of language.

2.3.1. Female language: linguistic features

Women's language has been widely explored since gender studies began to become of interest and draw the attention of researchers. Around the 1970s, in gender studies, it started to become evident that men and women used language differently. The publication in 1975 of Robin Lakoff's *Language and Woman's Place*, which can be considered as the pioneering study on the relationship between language and gender, opened a new field of studies in linguistics and inaugurated research on feminist linguistics. In fact, her work has served as the basis for much research on the subject. Since then, there has been a growing interest of research studies in this area and many scholars of language and gender have been debating and developing Lakoff's initial observations (Bucholtz and Hall, 2005; Jakobsson, 2010; Pan, 2011). In this section, we will review these studies in order to explore how traditional patterns and attitudes in language are changing.

The following text has been extracted from Lakoff (1973), one of the foundational studies that distinguished women's language from men's language and inspired many other studies that came in the following years:

Our use of language embodies attitudes as well as referential meanings. [...] In appropriate women's speech, strong expression of feeling is avoided, expression of uncertainty is favored, and means of expression in regard to subject-matter deemed 'trivial' to the 'real' world are elaborated. [...] The personal identity of women thus is linguistically submerged; the language works against treatment of women, as serious persons with individual views. (Lakoff, 1973: 45).

We can use this text as a point of departure to compare how traditional linguistic features associated with each gender have changed. In her work, Lakoff (1975) argued that language is fundamental to gender inequality. This was essential to give raise to new debates on gender issues and find differences through the use of language. She claimed that women were marginal to serious concerns of life with regard to the role and voice that men had. She held that the personal identity of women was linguistically

submerged. For her, women's language expressed lack of power. Because of this, she talked about two areas in which those inequalities were reflected: first, language used to speak about women, and second, language used by women related to how they are expected to speak. Her typology of different strategies has served as a basis to help to distinguish women's language from men's language. She proposed that there were several lexical and syntactical characteristics that distinguished women's language from that of men.

According to her study, women tend to use more expressions of uncertainty and do not express their opinion in an assertive manner. Also, she claimed that there were certain linguistic features characteristic of the language of females such as hedges, empty adjectives, super-polite forms, tag questions and indirect requests. Also, she asserted that women apologized more, spoke less frequently, avoided coarse language or expletives, used hyper-correct (prestige) grammar and clear articulation and spoke in italics. Some of her statements are nowadays commonplace but others, as we will show later, have become old-fashioned or have become equally used by both genders. A few years later, Spender (1980) found differences in conversational style that contributed to the idea that women were being silenced with regard to the use of language they made.

In 1990, fifteen years after the publication of Lakoff's text, one of her students, Deborah Tannen, published *You Just Don't Understand: Women and Men in Conversation*. In this book, she explored gender differences in ways of talking and in conversational styles, and what men and women seek from conversations. While men seek for independence, women look more for intimacy. According to Tannen, females engage more in "rapport-talk", a communication style meant to promote social affiliation and emotional connection. She held that women listen more because they have been socialized to be accommodating. Women manifested this through their

writing in that they use more expressions of solidarity, reciprocity, in-group membership and they share more often their feelings, emotions and attitudes. Similarly, other studies have focused on language and the strategies of displacement and identification as well as manifestations of gender ideology and power asymmetries in order to observe how gendered social orders are sustained in discourse (see Butler, 1990; Lazar, 2007). These notions of rapport, accommodation and solidarity will be further analysed in the blogs of this study so as to compare how they have changed in recent years.

It was not until the beginning of the twenty-first century, when investigations began to reflect differences from previous research and from the traditional patterns associated with each gender. The language of women started to seem more expressive, as women played a more active role in society as a result of having achieved almost the same status as men, and this was logically also manifested through the use they made of language (García, 2009). As previously mentioned, society and culture have considerable influence in shaping the features of female language (Pan, 2011). Also, discursive practices at work have been widely studied, as there have been changes in working positions as well because women are more and more taking on the role of manager at the workplace (Kendall and Tannen, 1997). They analyse how women enact authority and the strategies they use when holding such high positions. Martín and Gómez (2003) found a different style in the way women exercise authority as they seem to look for consensus, reinforce connections and minimize status differences. In this sense, they challenged the traditional stereotypes of the submissive and passive role of women and manifested those changes through the use they make of language.

In view of previous studies, there are certain features that are considered to be traditionally typical of females. In line with Lakoff's study (1975), Jakobsson (2010)

also claimed that hedges, tag questions, minimal responses and questions were more often used by women than by men. The use of hedges such as *I think*, *you know*, *sort of*, etc. show both uncertainty and certainty about what is being said in order to mitigate the force of what is being discussed. As Jakobsson claims, this “women’s use of hedges could have something to do with unassertiveness that Robin Lakoff claims” (Jakobsson, 2010: 4). However, as we will show in the analysis section, this has become old-fashioned as unassertiveness is less and less becoming a feature typically characteristic of women’s language. Also, some studies agree that women are much more likely to use minimal responses (e.g. 'yeah' or 'mhm') to signal their active involvement in the conversation and keep it going and to support the current speaker (Fishman 1980; Coates 1989). As for questions, they are said to reflect women's uncertainty in interactive situations, which has also been a traditional characteristic that women display in conversation.

Apart from those linguistic features, there have also been many traditional attitudes and patterns of speech commonly associated with women’s language. For instance, the powerlessness and unassertiveness typically attached to them is shown in that women are more ready to allow another speaker to dominate the conversation. Their solidary and co-operative roles have also been characteristic of females in that they use language to create and maintain social cohesiveness. Also, women look for signs of agreement and link what they say to the speech of others (Medina-Rivera and Wilberschied, 2011). Nevertheless, nowadays, because of changes in society, those traditional characteristics attributed to female language seem to be changing. García’s studies already manifest significant changes. One of his works shows how female bloggers depict themselves as self-sufficient women through analyzing two main discourse functions of utterances in their blogs: directives and informatives (García,

2009), leaving behind the image of the unassertive woman. Also, there has been a change in the image of women in terms of their communicative and relational skills (Wodak, 2003). In Wodak's paper, new models of enacting power are manifested through the language used by women who take on the role of manager in their companies.

2.3.2. Male language: linguistic features

So far research in the line of gender studies has focused more on female language than on male language. It is a fact that the amount of work studying women's language separately is much bigger than that investigation on men's language itself. However, most of the times, male language has been analysed in studies that compare it to female language. When comparing their stylistic and linguistic features, it is interesting to mention that there have been some approaches dealing with male-female miscommunication (Maltz and Borker, 1982; Tannen, 1990). Many of these studies have been applied to other fields such as psychology so as to help, for instance, with social issues and concerns like couple therapy. Besides, other studies have focused also on comparing linguistic features to examine if relevant gender differences occur. Baalen's study (2001) has shown that hedging devices are not primarily female linguistic devices because men use them as well and in similar ways to women, conclusions opposed to those of Jakobsson (2010) stated in the previous section. In her study, Baalen asserts that a difference between adults and adolescents proves that perceptions of male and female language are changing. Thus, from all these studies and some others in the same field, specific characteristics associated with male language have come into the scene.

Traditional stereotypical patterns associated with men's language have been subject of debate since studies on gender differences began. Men's speech has been traditionally said to be often used to assert dominance as opposed to women that were traditionally attached to subordination. For instance, in his study, Goodwin (1980) found that boys used aggravated or explicit directives to get what they wanted, e.g. 'Get off', 'Gimine', 'I want'. This type of command established status differences. Also, certain stylised speech events such as joking, arguing or storytelling were also common to be characteristic in boys' speech. As for their position with regard to domination, men are more likely to ignore what has been said before and to stress their own point of view as opposed to women who care more for support and require feedback. Also, a common feature traditionally associated with men's language is that they rarely talk about their feelings or their personal problems (Zimmerman and West, 1975). Furthermore, it has been argued that men generally place greater value on what is being said and on the exchange of information (Baalen, 2001). This is similar to Tannen (1990:77) who referred to this as "report talk". She claims that talk is primarily intended to preserve independence and negotiate and maintain their status keeping so a central position through verbal performance. All these features and some new ones will be analysed in detail in the following section so as to compare them to those found in female language in the blogs of this study. Overall, the following table offers a summary of the findings from previous research on the features of female and male language:

	MALE	FEMALE
LEXICO-GRAMMATICAL FEATURES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Rude words - Colloquial expressions - Second-person singular pronouns 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Hedges - Empty adjectives - Super-polite forms - Tag questions - Indirect requests - Hyper-correct (prestige) grammar - Minimal responses - Questions
PRAGMATIC FEATURES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Aggravated or explicit directives - Hedging devices - Expressions to preserve independence and maintain status 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Expressions of solidarity - Directives and informatives - Signs of agreement

Table 1. Most common features of female and male language.

As female and male language and their patterns of speech are considerably changing, we will use the aforementioned features as the starting point for our research. In order to approach gender differences in online language use, we have decided to focus our study on the analysis of the most relevant linguistic features found in each gender. This will be examined in detail in the following section.

3. Methodology

3.1. The data

The sample consisted of two corpora of male and female posts and their corresponding comments written in blogs. These blogs deal with common topics such as fashion, health or fitness. A total of 20 posts and 100 comments written between August 2012 and March 2015 have been chosen for the analysis of this study and have been divided into two subcorpora. Each corpus consisted of 10 posts, written by women (female corpus) and by men (male corpus), and 50 comments (5 comments to each post) also written by women and men, respectively. In other words, both the posts and the comments in each set belonged to the same gender. The comments were selected in order to be able to observe interaction with the writer of the post and with readers.

The female corpus makes a total of 10,356 words: 5,754 words in posts and 4,602 in comments. The male corpus contains 17,533 words: 12,346 words in posts and 5,187 in comments. This was done in order to have not only instances showing how the blogger that starts the debate positions towards a particular topic but also how readers commenting on the post give their impression on such topic. This latter separation between posts and comments has been only taken into account when gathering the data for organizational purposes but it does not have any implications in the analysis itself. The following table shows how the corpora are structured and illustrates the number of words of each corpus and the distribution between posts and comments:

CORPORA					
FEMALE CORPUS			MALE CORPUS		
	Total number	Words		Total number	Words
Posts (Fem_post)	10	5,754	Posts (Mal_post)	10	12,346
Comments (Fem_post_comm)	50	4,602	Comments (Mal_post_comm)	50	5,187
TOTAL		10,356	TOTAL		17,533

Table 2. The Female and Male corpora.

The posts and comments were coded in order to facilitate the reader a better identification of them. Posts were identified with the tag ‘Fem’ or ‘Mal’ corresponding either to female or male together with the tag ‘post’ and the number of the specific post as presented in the Appendices (e.g. Fem_post3). For their part, comments were identified with the tag indicating gender and the number of the post to which they belong to and with the tag ‘comm’ and its position in the sequence of comments to the same post (e.g. Mal_post9_comm5). The Appendices at the end only show a reduced version of the corpora because of their length. The whole corpora are attached in a CD.

We chose these data first, because blogs are one of the most common virtual platforms that individuals use to give their opinion and position themselves towards

specific topics; and second, because such online discussion sites allow us to explore how men and women interact with each other. Once the data had been selected, the most common linguistic strategies were carefully examined in order to draw a comparison in use between males and females. Tables illustrate the obtained results and facilitate its understanding.

3.2. The study: procedure

As mentioned above, in order to analyse how men and women use different linguistic strategies when they position towards a certain topic or they interact with each other, we decided to compile two corpora of female and male posts and comments written in blogs. We first looked for blogs on different websites dealing with fashion and health. Second, we selected randomly different posts and their comments written by females. Then, we repeated the process with those written by males. After collection, we identified and classified the most relevant linguistic features in each gender. In a first analysis, we started reading over the posts and their comments and looked for features and strategies that occurred with a considerable frequency and bearing in mind previous research. Later, we observed that those features could be categorised into two levels: the level of positioning and that of interacting, depending on if they were used to express their view towards something or to address others. Following this, we proceed to analyse and interpret them so as to find changes from traditional patterns and track possible gender variations. Thus, we examined the discourse as expressed in language and specially focusing on 1) the most relevant linguistic features such as adjectives, adverbs, colloquial expressions, modals, exclamations, questions and pronouns, and on 2) the most common linguistic strategies such as the use of assertions, imperatives, expressions of thanks and solidarity, and suggestions employed by both sexes so as to find gender differences in their discourse. Examples have been offered in order to show

how those linguistic features are manifested in their discourse and to illustrate the different interpretations of the results obtained from the analysis.

The choice of this method was motivated by two main reasons: first, because the compilation of a corpus allowed us to analyse real and authentic data; and second, because the use of corpora and software programs made easier the search for words and expressions. However, when compiling the corpora, we realized that the length of posts written by males was superior to the extension of female posts. Initially, we thought about reducing the number of male posts so as to have two corpora with a similar number of words. Nonetheless, in a first attempt to explore the most relevant features of male and female language, we observed that some features did not offer consistent results for the purposes of this study. Given the fact that it was difficult to provide results, it was decided to analyse the same number of posts for each gender, that is 10, regardless of the number of words they had. This would make it possible to identify more easily the linguistic features that each gender uses most frequently as well as to explore possible gender differences between both sexes.

Besides, a quantitative analysis was carried out to explore the frequency with which adverbs, pronouns and modals were employed. We used these particular features because they could be easily looked for with the help of programs so as to obtain consistent figures. Such analysis was done with the help of Wordsmith Tools, a software package for linguistic research. Such programme helped us to obtain precise figures on the number of times that each word appears. We used two specific tools the program: *Concord* and *Wordlist*. The former allowed us to find concordance lines in which we analysed the different uses of a same word and how the word and expressions functioned within a context. With such function, we looked for key words that helped us to identify linguistic strategies and the instances in which they were used. For example,

in order to analyse expressions of thanks we looked for “thanks” or “grateful” and saw the different instances in which they appeared. Similarly, *WordList* provided us with a list of the most frequent words in the whole corpus that facilitated the search of pronouns, adjectives, adverbs and other words by examining those that occurred in the first positions. So, both tools helped us in the analysis and interpretation of results and in the elaboration of the tables that are shown in this dissertation.

4. Analysis and discussion of results

The analysis focused on aspects of male and female language used in blogs so as to examine to what extent the development of virtual platforms has affected the way males and females use language and to identify gender implications. More specifically, the results show the most relevant features manifested in their writing about how they position themselves towards the topics discussed in the blogs and how they interact with readers. In this way, and as commented in the previous section, this study reveals the most relevant findings.

4.1. Positioning towards the topics

The Internet and social networking sites have always been considered as useful platforms to express personal views on specific topics. Indeed, blogs have become a good platform to recount experiences and anecdotes or to give opinions about certain issues. Because of this, on these virtual platforms, language is mostly evaluative as it is used to express personal attitudes and thoughts as well as judgments about something. Thus, in this section, we will show our findings in terms of this positioning. First, we will provide the results concerning how females position themselves towards the topics;

then, the same will be done with males; and finally, we will offer a comparison of the results found in both sets.

4.1.1. How females position themselves towards the topics

Every time speakers narrate their experience or comment on a certain issue, they are positioning toward a topic, and this is manifested through the use they make of language. One of the most relevant features that women use when writing in blogs to express their views are evaluative elements. At the lexical level, we have found that women give their opinion by means of adjectives, adverbs, and colloquial expressions. The posts and comments seem to reflect a subjective manner of describing clothes, looks, events, places and healthy routines. A qualitative examination of the results shows that women tend to express their likes or dislikes by means of adjectives carrying the meaning for evaluation instead of through verbs (e.g. *I like*, etc.). The following examples illustrate how women give their impressions on the blogger's physical appearance by means of adjectives:

- (1) Wow, it really looks **awesome** on you! (Fem_post5_comm5)
- (2) Love that snake-palm cuff, very **cool** (Fem_post1_comm3)
- (3) My goddd, you look **amazing** here! I can see how much you've grown recently in these photos, you look **stunning**. (Fem_post1_comm5)

It is also interesting to mention that the use they make of adjectives is most of the times very specific as they try to describe by focusing more on details. That is, they describe paying more attention to the physical appearance than to the subject matter itself in general. From examples (1), (2) and (3) above, it can be seen that women use adjectives to evaluate other people's looks and give their impressions on it.

Similarly, women have shown a tendency to use a high number of adverbs, especially adverbs of certainty for expressing the intensity of personal opinions which

are usually placed before the adjective or the verb they modify. It can be interpreted that women use them to emphasize the opinion they are stating and so, they position themselves with certain authority towards what they are claiming. As will be further analysed below, the use of these adverbs, especially “definitely” and “completely” can also be indicative of rapport and solidarity. In the following examples, it is shown how they highlight and emphasize their claims through the use of these adverbs:

(4) I just started my weight loss journey and I **completely** understand what you are going through. (Fem_post8_comm1)

(5) I **definitely** agree with all your points. I never really thought about the gender problem much (I’m not familiar enough with the models and have never watched their show to know that they focused on that so much) but I do find that very disturbing. (Fem_post4_comm1)

(6) I also **totally** suggest wearing shoes, at least during HIIT because you don’t want to end up with a foot injury like me. (Fem_post10)

In the previous examples, the employment of adverbs shows to what extent the action is done or the opinion is asserted. As mentioned before, women then tend to use this type of adverbs to strengthen what they want to express. In the following table, the most common adverbs of certainty and possibility are shown in terms of the number of times they are used:

	Females (number of times)
Definitely	12
Probably	7
Completely	4
Totally	4
Absolutely	2
Likely	2
Extremely	1

Table 3. Most common adverbs of certainty and possibility in the female corpus.

Besides, this strategy is also reflected in noun phrases or adjectival phrases as well. As an illustration, examples (7) and (8) show how women evaluate and, at the same time, emphasize their statement by intensifying the attribute:

(7) **It would be so helpful** to all women to be properly fitted, where the professional fitter tells you what size you should wear. (Fem_post3_comm1)

(8) Finding things to suit both a full bust and younger taste **is quite difficult**. (Fem_post5_comm4)

Apart from the ones in the examples above, other adjectives expressing grading have also been found to be widely employed. Among them, we may cite “pretty”, “enough”, and “too”. Furthermore, it has been observed that the use of these intensifiers is a bit different from that in more traditional contexts where they were reported to show. In this study, many of the instances in which they are employed are sentences where they emphasize the action of verbs of opinion. So, now these items are not only used to show an exaggerate intonation but they are also used to give degree to something and maintain a more assertive position towards the topic in debate. The table below shows the number of times that the most frequently used adjectives and adverbs for expressing degree appear in the corpus:

	Females (number of times)
Really	37
So	31
Only	21
Too	21
Pretty	17
Actually	11
Even	11
Quite	5
Virtually	1

Table 4. Most common adjectives and adverbs used for expressing degree in the female corpus.

Also, certain colloquial expressions are significant elements that carry evaluative meaning. There are some structures that are becoming more and more common in the jargon of blogs to comment, for instance, on certain outfits, i. e. the look that bloggers are wearing. In this respect, women position themselves by commenting on what the blogger has written in the post, sometimes identifying with her, giving their opinion, and even being willing to buy the outfit described in the post:

(9) Oh, I'm such a **coat geek** that I'll definitely be **tuning in!**
(Fem_post2_comm2)

(10) You've **pulled off** the 70's look really well! (Fem_post2_comm3)

(11) I'm also loving the coat, Warehouse have really been impressing me this season and **I'm so tempted to blow all my money there!** (Fem_post2_comm1)

(12) I'm definitely **digging** the 70s vibe! (Fem_post2_comm4)

This kind of expressions has been commonly considered as manifestations of closeness showing hierarchies more of friendship than of power and accomplishments which would be more typical of men (Pan, 2011). From the examples above, it can be observed that women once more tend to give their opinion through lexical strategies, either through the use of phrasal verbs, adverbs or adjectives. These expressions are also quite specific and, as was the case with adjectives, it can be due to the fact that women pay more attention to details and from there, they give their impression or express their attitudes towards them.

Another common strategy for expressing opinion and position towards a certain topic is the use of cognitive processes (see also cf. Downing and Locke, 2006). In this sense, “believe”, “think”, “consider”, and many others express in a more direct manner the opinions or points of view. Also, personal views are expressed with opinion phrases such as “in my opinion” or “to me”. In other cases, there are no explicit indications of giving an opinion but rather it is implied from the sentence itself. In the posts analysed

in this paper, cognitive processes and opinion phrases have been found to be the most relevant strategies used for positioning towards the discussed topics:

(13) **I think** the worst part of VS's techniques is that they (at least from what I can tell) OWN the teen demographic, so girls are starting out in completely wrong sizes. (Fem_post4_comm2)

(14) While they have many other issues as Treacle highlighted (in addition to the unrealistic size/image they portray), **I think** they would increase their brand further by showing women of all sizes, shapes and colors. (Fem_post4_comm5)

(15) **In my opinion**, it's actually a lost opportunity for VS. Women of all shapes and sizes want to buy lingerie. (Fem_post4_comm5)

(16) **To me**, VS portrays an image of commercialized America- cheap, fake, inauthentic- and they really only seem to promote one view of sexiness/beauty, that being super skinny with big boobs. (Fem_post4_comm4)

(17) I have to add (and you know I'm a nut for this) but their bra fitting techniques are horrific and the tone that they set in the store (which often times can be discriminatory towards large breasted women or women in too small or too large band sizes to fit into their range) **bothers me to no end**. (Fem_post4_comm1)

From the examples above it can be seen how the person positions herself towards what is being talked about in the post. In these cases, they express their personal views in a subjective manner. In examples (13) and (14) the writers state their opinion through the use of the cognitive process "think". In examples (15) and (16), the opinion is stated through explicit linkers for giving opinion. Also, it is worth commenting on the way these two examples show women's judgments. Here, they speak about the issue on debate using a statement containing third person singular. In this way, they give their opinion presenting it as a fact following from the explicit opinion words placed at the beginning. Example (17) includes "bothers me to no end", which clearly expresses the writer's discontent through the use of a mental process that shows negative affectivity. These patterns, either linking expressions of opinion or

cognitive processes are the most common strategies that women use to give their opinion.

Regarding women's views, we will also analyse their judgments towards somebody else's attitudes or actions. This positioning has become more and more frequent in the language of females to comment on the issues that other people are discussing about. Especially in blogs, this kind of comments has significant relevance because such virtual platforms are most of the times used to share personal posts and see what others think about it and, for this reason, they become an opportunity to express one's opinion. From the examples, it can be observed that there is a gradation from certainty to uncertainty. In those instances, we can distinguish between two types of attitudes on: 1) how women position themselves towards the whole issue, and on 2) how they try to influence reader's actions. The former type of attitude makes use of the epistemic modality (see also Downing and Locke, 2006: 379-94) as it assesses the truth of the propositions or their potential occurrence in terms of certainty, probability or possibility as shown example in (19). The second attitude is enacted by deontic modality, as in examples (20) and (21). Examples (18) and (22) do not include modal verbs, but other expressions to show certainty and probability:

(18) I'm **sure** you have thought it all out before putting yourself on a diet plan.
(Fem_post8_comm1)

(19) Green knitted trainers, blue vintage dungarees and a red coat **may** seem strange on paper but I just love throwing different things together and seeing the end result. (Fem_post2)

(20) Brilliant! If only more people realized that in order to lose weight, you actually **have to** eat more BUT more of the right foods. Keep it up.
(Fem_post7_comm5)

(21) You **might** want to force yourself to cut back a bit on the exercise (or eat more to fuel these workouts and slow your weight loss). (Fem_post6_comm4)

(22) But you are **likely** placing yourself at risk of injury if you were doing very little 4 months ago – depending on the type of exercise you are doing.
(Fem_post6_comm4)

As can be observed, there seems to be a tendency to express opinion by including expressions of certainty and modal verbs accompanying the opinion itself. They use instances such as “I’m sure you have...” or “you actually have to...” so as to make it clearer what is their positioning and how they show themselves towards it. In this sense, it can be interpreted that they are being more direct in their assertions, which contradicts previous research claiming that women tend to be more indirect and insecure in their statements (Lakoff, 1975).

The use of modal verbs may deserve a bit more attention as they are another common strategy relevant in female language. Throughout the whole sample of posts and comments, the following table illustrates the ones that have been found to be the most frequently used, ordered by the number of times they appear:

Modal verb	Females (number of times)
Can	40
Will	30
Would	22
May	16
Could	15
Have/has to	9
Might	8
Should	7
Must	1
TOTAL	148

Table 5. Most common modal verbs in the female corpus.

These verbs have been traditionally used to make requests and offers, or to give permission. Nonetheless, apart from this function, women use them in blogs quite

frequently to express whether something is certain, probable or possible, or not, as in example (19) above. Besides, examples (20) and (21) show how they can be used as a kind of exhortation or recommendation. The modals “have to” and “might” can be interpreted as intended for giving advice on what to eat or how to slow her weight loss, respectively, thus making use of deontic modality. As García claimed in his study, modal verbs are important in the construction of assertiveness as “bloggers use the imperative form of the verb and/or modal verb structure to impose a course of action on the addressee” (García, 2009: 64).

Thus, as shown from this analysis, women tend to position themselves in a more assertive manner than they traditionally used to do or were stereotypically thought to do. There are some factors that recent research associates with the origin of these changes. As Pan holds, “the factors that shape the features of female language are not only because of the influence of physiology and psychology, but also because of the influence of the society and the culture” (Pan, 2011). Besides, García suggests that it is the more predominant presence of females in the public sphere that changes their conceptualization of their role in such environments (García, 2008). So, as opposed to previous studies that argued that males use a more active and resolute language than females (Huffaker and Calvert, 2005), there is a tendency for women to make their claims stronger through the use of linguistic choices. In this sense, women are adopting an assertive style showing more assurance when positioning towards the topics discussed in the blogs.

4.1.2. How males position themselves towards the topics

When writing a post or commenting on other people’s posts, men also express their views by using adjectives and adverbs as evaluative elements. In the previous section

we examined how women give their opinion through the use of adjectives and adverbs. Similarly, men also use them as evaluative elements to comment on the topic on debate in posts. Interestingly, there seems to be a tendency to use adjectives that are traditionally associated with women's writing. The following examples illustrate how males express their view through the use of these lexical elements:

(23) It's **great** for getting your press release picked up by the AP, but these studies are all missing the point: as a population, we are unfit. (Mal_post7_comm5)

(24) Such a **nice** finish. I would love to carry this look for my office and casual tours. (Mal_post2_comm5)

(25) They're up-to-date without being too **trendy**. They're classically dressed without appearing stuffy. (Mal_post5)

In the examples above, men evaluate and comment from their point of view on the discussed issue. Throughout the whole sample of posts, it has been observed that they choose both general and specific adjectives. In examples (23) and (24), "great" and "nice" are expressions that do not carry a very specific nuance on their position. Other adjectives that are frequently used by males are the following: "excellent", "awesome", "best" and "worst". Also, they tend to use more concrete adjectives, something that was traditionally associated with women as they were more interested in fashion. Adjectives such as "trendy" from example (25) and "minimalistic", "futurist" or "complete" are starting to be widely used also by males to comment on the blogger's outfits, attire or style. This fact challenges the traditional stereotype that saw men as not being interested in fashion or talking about it in general terms.

Men also use adverbs when giving their opinion. The following examples illustrate the use of adverbs as evaluative elements:

(26) Its a great look and **I'll definitely rob that one**, just a question about the pocket square though: Do you not think it makes the look too formal and thereby taking away from the Casually tailored appearance? (Mal_post2_comm4)

(27) **Certainly** fitness forgives a lot of ills you need to work around if you aren't thin. (Mal_post5_comm1)

(28) I can **honestly** say I've grown into all these habits **naturally**, not to brag though. (Mal_post5_comm2)

(29) At any rate, **ironically**, the fix for these various food sensitivities is in the gut biome itself. (Mal_post6_comm2)

(30) **Unfortunately**, when you are on a fat loss program (AKA when you are dieting down for beach season or spring break), the way testosterone effects insulin management gets a little screwy. And insulin (or rather insulin resistance) is a tremendous problem for most guys trying to lose fat. (Mal_post10)

Examples (26) and (27) above illustrate the use of adverbs of certainty. However, although such type of adverbs are the most common for positioning towards a topic, there are others that are very frequent in the language of males. In examples (28), (29) and (30), we can see how males use adverbs from a varied range of types for indicating in a very specific manner their personal attitude towards the discussed issue. Apart from the ones used in the examples above, other common adverbs that men employ quite frequently are “totally”, “actually” and “really”. As we can see in the examples, they use adverbs to express their attitude either on the whole clause (examples 27 and 30) or on their moral attitude (example 28). The following table shows the number of times that the most common adverbs of certainty and possibility appear:

	Males (number of times)
Probably	8
Definitely	6
Likely	7
Extremely	3
Absolutely	2
Completely	2
Possibly	2
Totally	1

Table 6. Most common adverbs of certainty and possibility in the male corpus.

Generally, when they are commenting on the whole clause, the adverb usually is located at the beginning of the sentence followed by a comma. However, when the subject's role is being evaluated, adverbs tend to appear next to the verbal group. It also seems to be common for men to use more adverbs than adjectives for expressing degree. From this it can be interpreted that men give more importance to the way of doing something or comment on the whole clause than to describe objects or events. They seem to be more willing to give their opinion through adverbs as they allow them to position themselves in a firm status and so, express clearly their attitudes towards the issue on debate. However, as the table below illustrates, men use adjectives more frequently when they want to give degree in their statements:

	Males (number of times)
Really	24
Even	23
Only	22
Too	22
So	17
Pretty	8
Actually	7
Quite	3
Virtually	1

Table 7. Most common adjectives and adverbs used for expressing degree in the male corpus.

Furthermore, they sometimes position and express themselves with a derogatory tone as can be manifested through insults and rude words. This type of language has been traditionally associated with men's speech as they tended to assert their dominance and make others more dependent. However, in this study, the use they make of such contemptuous elements has not been found to be as frequent as expected. There are only few cases of some bad words as the following examples illustrate:

(31) At this stage you become a **gym rat** who never really improves unless he takes anabolic steroids. (Mal_post8)

(32) Years of gym training and all I can lift is that **measly** weight! (Mal_post8)

(33) Don't get me wrong, I love a nice scotch, but if you turn your nose up at Jack Daniels (especially if you use the word "swill"), I believe **you deserve a swift punch to the dick**. (Mal_post1_comm2)

As we can observe, in example (31), the man uses a rude term but not to refer to anybody else or to show dominance or a superior status. Instead, it is used as a vulgar expression not addressed to anybody. Similarly, in example (32) the adjective “measly” is used as a rude term to indicate a presumptuous attitude. Example (33) shows, however, a more derogatory treatment towards somebody else. Nonetheless, it is again

important to highlight that this kind of terms appears in only some cases, from which it can be interpreted that the tone men use when writing is being softened and becoming less aggressive than it was traditionally claimed to be.

Likewise, another characteristic that men use to position themselves is the use of colloquial expressions and phrasal verbs. As the examples below show, they use informal expressions that allow them to show a closer rapport with the addressee while giving their opinion on the discussed topic:

(34) I'm just yet to **take the plunge** and explore pink and yellow out of the colours recommended. (Mal_post3_comm5)

(35) **Let's not kid ourselves** - if you really cared that strongly about accuracy, you would **swap out** that ugly, oversized, overpriced boutique diver for the \$15 quartz Timex that will run circles around it, accuracy-wise. (Mal_post1_comm4)

(36) I think **it's silly** to be such a purist that you forget the fact that the cheaper, "worse" movement is objectively superior in virtually way except, perhaps, sentimentality. (Mal_post1_comm4)

(37) Most of the guys are older and making decent bank so **it's not a big deal** for them to drop \$500 on a pair of shoes. If you even mention or ask for suggestions on lower end brands, they **crap** all **over** you. (Mal_post1_comm1)

From the examples above it can be seen that men use many colloquial expressions as well as phrasal verbs, which suggests that men show themselves in a more informal tone than women do. In this sense, males show more intimacy with those they are addressing. In general, a high amount of this kind of colloquial expressions has been found in all the posts in comparison with those of females who tend to use them to a limited extent. This will be analysed more in detail in the following sections when dealing with how men interact and address others.

Another linguistic feature that has been observed to be relevant in men to evaluate what is being talked about is the use of modal verbs. When analysing all the

posts and comments, the following have been found to be the most common ones, ordered by the number of times they appear:

Modal verb	Males (number of times)
Can	80
Will	46
Would	27
Should	24
Could	15
Might	14
May	12
Have/has to	11
Must	4
TOTAL	233

Table 8. Most common modal verbs in the male corpus.

Whereas women used them for several purposes, i.e. to express if something is certain or probable, to make requests and offers, to give advice or as a kind of exhortation or recommendation, men seem to employ them most of the times either to strengthen their claims, as in example (38) below or to sound more cautious when giving their opinion. Example (39) illustrates how the writer uses the modal for expressing certainty towards what he thinks the modern man should wear. As in example (39), men use modals, specially “will”, for as expressions of certainty, in this case, for making predictions about the effect that some workouts may have on the body or about what will make improve their style. Lastly, in example (40) it can be seen that the man expresses his view and also uses the modal to comment on a hypothetical situation:

(38) I think now that I’m in my 30’s I’ve matured and my once boyish looks are leaving me or have left. The ruggid, older, modern man **can definitely pull off** pink or bright yellow or green, with black the perfect partner. (Mal_post3_comm1)

(39) Contrast stitching in the jeans **will also lighten it up** a bit.
(Mal_post4_comm4)

(40) Something along the lines, if there were no snobbery **there would be no point in** manufacturing anything beyond a certain (lowish) quality level.
(Mal_post1_comm5)

The examples above show instances of some of the most common modal verbs that men use to express their positioning towards a certain topic. There is a tendency for men to use many modal verbs when commenting on an issue (up to 233 instances of modal verbs). This opposes to previous research that claimed that men tended to minimize doubt (Tannen, 1995) or that hedges were typically used by women (Lakoff, 1975).

Also, this new different tendency of not being too assertive when stating their opinion is also manifested on how they provide evidence in their claims so as not to sound too assertive. In these cases, they position themselves supported by experts on the field such as professors or sport professionals, or even their own clients as the examples below show. In this way, they also become more reliable to their readers. The following examples show then how both the bloggers that write the post and the readers that comment on it rely on professionals as a strategy of mitigation so as to lessen the force of their statements. At the same time, they illustrate how males are positioning towards the discussed issue in a closer tone.

(41) Along those same lines, **there is some evidence to support that** drinking a moderate dose of apple cider vinegar prior to meals containing carbohydrates has similar effects. (Mal_post10)

(42) **As a professor** of young meatheads, I can say that cell phones and other similar media devices are always a distraction if they're out.
(Mal_post9_comm3)

(43) To achieve the increases, **my clients all** have at least 1 day per week dedicated to lifting near maximal loads. (Mal_post10)

From examples (41) and (42) it can be seen that males while giving their opinion they highlight that those opinions are stated by professionals on the field showing so certain reliability. Example (43), however, sounds a bit more persuasive as it is not supported by the opinion of any particular professional but on the fact itself suggesting that as the blogger's clients have done it, other readers can also do it and get the same effects. This example does not either sound too imposing because the opinion does not totally falls upon the writer himself but it is in a way relying on his clients. Males then do not state their views displaying an authoritarian position but they rely on others so as not to sound too domineering. Once more, they are not showing themselves as assertive as they were thought to be and tend to rely on others in a similar way than women do.

Likewise, another strategy that seems to belong to women's language is the way men make personal judgments on what is being discussed. There is a tendency for men to employ certain expressions that were stereotypically more common in female speech. Also, it must be highlighted that men make a lower use of judgments on others than women do. Instead of commenting on others' looks, they tend to position themselves towards the issue on debate in more general lines. This may be because men usually care more about giving their opinion of how this topic is concerned with him rather than on how the issue affects others. In this sense, men use less critical explicit expressions, although they are more critical when the issue has something to do with them. The examples bellow illustrate how males position themselves on the way the issue is concerned with them:

(44) **I'm personally a fan of** canvas over leather. I'm not one to get too dressed up, ever, so **canvas fits into my life better**. (Mal_post2_comm2)

(45) **I try to incorporate** these colors into my wardrobe as often as I can, but some, especially yellow, are hard to find in a shade that complements my golden skin tones. (Mal_post3_comm4)

(46) **I'm definitely an advocate of** staying fit, it makes dressing well so much easier. I have seen some larger men who were impeccably dressed, it just takes more effort. (Mal_post5_comm5)

As we can see in the examples above, men are incorporating in their writing language of self-positioning to talk about fashion. In this sense, men show their opinions with expressions that could be perfectly thought to be written by women. What may lead us to think so is that these expressions show a sort of vocabulary associated with the world of fashion that men were not used to be worried about. “Being a fan or an advocate of something”, “robing a look” or “incorporating colours into the wardrobe” could be said to be expressions that men have begun to include in their vocabulary. This tendency may have arisen when they have started to be more active in this type of virtual platforms to which blogs belong to. Then, these online environments have provided men with a space to share their views on these issues that could not be commented on before but that now are starting to be frequently discussed. So, it can be interpreted that males’ language is being colonized by certain features traditionally associated with the language of femininity and that have emerged because of their pervasiveness in the mentioned platforms.

4.1.3. Comparison: gender differences in positioning

In the previous sections, we have examined the most relevant strategies that males and females use to evaluate and position themselves towards the topics discussed in blogs. Having analysed different strategies and features, we have observed that patterns have changed from how they used to be a few decades ago. We have seen that the language of women has adopted a more assertive and self-assured style of discourse while that of men tends to include terms and expressions typical of female language.

The findings showing the more assertive position that women are taking in their discourse go in line with previous research that shows how the language of women is becoming much distinct from how it was a few decades ago. As García (2000) claimed, females are adopting the discourse patterns of male speakers. In this sense, he argued that women “(a) constantly interrupt the speech of men; (b) are likely to challenge or dispute men’s utterances [...]; (c) use mechanisms of controlling the topic and challenge men’s attempts to do so; and (d) make direct declarations of facts or opinions, even though they may be face-threatening acts- to men.” (García, 2000: 123). In this way, in his study, he showed how unstable and variable the discursive strategies adopted by both men and women were and how they differed from stereotypical patterns.

The changing of the female attitudes and patterns in culture and society is also evident in their language used in the blogs. Despite keeping on using hedges and many evaluative adjectives, women are now more willing to express their views and opinions with a more assertive tone, as opposed to Lakoff’s hypothesis of females favouring uncertainty and not expressing strong feelings (1973). As we have seen in the previous sections, such assertiveness is manifested through the use of adverbs of certainty and through utterances that make their claims clearly stronger. We have also seen how they are even using more and more a kind of vocabulary and expressions that have been commonly employed by men to enact authority and maintain their status.

Thus, gender barriers seem to be overlapping one another as neither females nor males are strictly adjusting to traditional patterns and so, they are not anymore using the same linguistic strategies as some decades ago. Women seem to have left behind the traditional stereotype of being shy when expressing their view in virtual environments. It is their adaptation to such online platforms that has provided them a space in which they feel comfortable and can share their experiences and views in an open manner.

Thus, women have developed a more assertive style of discourse without showing the uncertainty and insecurity typically associated with their speech which opposes to traditional patterns that favoured that men had a more active and resolute language (Huffaker and Calvert, 2005). For their part, while women are showing more assertiveness in their writing, men minimize it and this becomes evident through the use of modal verbs to sound more cautious.

Regarding modal verbs, both men and women use them to make their statements more cautious and not to sound too domineering. As can be seen in Tables 3 and 6 above, the modal verbs that both males and females use more frequently are “can”, “will” and “would”. Both sexes tend to use modals to express their position about whether something is certain, probable, possible, or not. Women also used them as a kind of exhortations or recommendations for giving advice. For their part, men used them most of the times to strengthen their claims but interestingly, they also employed them for not sounding too domineering when giving their opinion. Contrary to predictions, we have found that males make extensive use of the modal “should” (24). Most of the times, they use it to make suggestions or to give advice on what to wear or how to improve their style, something that has been traditionally proper of women. Also, men try to be more cautious through the use of colloquial expressions not to sound too imposing (e.g. “Don't get me wrong, I love a nice scotch, but...” – Mal_post1_comm2). In this way, there is a tendency for men to be more supportive and not too assertive as their language traditionally used to reflect.

One of the differences between both genders lies in their use of adjectives. As Lakoff (1975) asserted, there were adjectives confined to women's speech such as “divine”, “adorable”, “gorgeous”, “sweet”, “lovely” or “charming”. Similarly, other studies claimed that women's language was more emotional and evaluative than men's

and so, they used more adjectives expressing emotional value judgments (Haas, 1979; Pei, 1969). However, in our study, we have observed that they use adjectives that are also widely used by men in their descriptions (in the examples above “awesome”, “cool”, or “stunning”). It is true that women keep on including more concrete adjectives (e.g. “trendy”) on their descriptions to give more specific details but they have increased their range of adjectives to those that were only traditionally used and related to emotions.

Similarly, differences were also found in the frequency of use of certain adverbs. Both genders use adverbs of certainty and possibility for expressing the degree of certainty or uncertainty towards something. They are used as markers of subjectivity and also indicate the degree to which the writer takes responsibility for what he or she is saying (see also Marín-Arrese, 2007). In the Tables 1 and 4, we offered the number of times such adverbs were used by each sex. In terms of the number of occurrences, both use more commonly “definitely” and “probably” whereas men also show preference for “likely”. Both genders use them to make their claims stronger and hold a more assertive position towards what they are talking about. Besides, it is worth mentioning that men use a wider variety of adverbs for expressing possibility than women. In the posts and comments analysed here, whereas women used “probably” among the most frequent ones, men also used that adverb but together with “possibly” and “likely”. Interestingly, this suggests a pattern change as women employ more often adverbs of certainty than of possibility, thus showing a more assertive position while men tend now to write in a more tentative way not to sound too authoritarian in their statements.

Second, both males and females used quite frequently adjectives and adverbs to give degree on their statements and claims. This second category would include adverbs such as “actually”, “only” or “even” and adjectives such as “really”, “so” and “too”,

among others. Some of them are also used to express insufficiency such as “only” or abundance in their statements such as “so”, “too”, “quite” or “pretty”. Specially, the use of “pretty” drew our attention as it is chosen as one of the most commonly used by men and this adjective was traditionally associated with female speech. Besides, it is also worth mentioning that women use them more frequently than men. Even though the corpus of female language has fewer words than that of male language, the number of these adjectives and adverbs for expressing degree is still higher than the number of times that men use them. These findings go in line with previous studies that claim that women are likely to use intensifiers and exaggerated intonation in order to provide emphasis (Key, 1975; Lakoff, 1975; Pan, 2011). This may be attached with the new tendency for women to be more expressive and to provide in their utterances elements that carry a more emphatic personal tone through which they position themselves towards what is being discussed. Once more, through the use of these adverbs women position themselves in a more assertive manner while men tend to express doubt and uncertainty more frequently than they traditionally used to do.

4.2. Interacting with readers

If the Internet and social networking sites have provided us with a space to share personal views, they have also allowed us to interact with others expressing our opinion in such online environments. The blogger or the person who writes the post is not the only one that will receive comments but also different discussions may arise among all the comments of a same post. Thus, it would be interesting to analyse how those debates manifest also gender differences in terms of how bloggers and respondents interact among each other. In order to explore this issue, in this section, we will show our findings on how men and women address others. First, we will provide the results on

how females interact with their readers; then, the same will be done with males; and finally, we will offer a comparison of the differences between both sexes.

4.2.1. How females interact with readers

When interacting with each other, women tend to express solidarity and rapport towards the others. Showing themselves as cooperative with others has been traditionally associated with women's behaviour, as females usually focus on the rapport dimension of relationships (Tannen, 1995). The results from this analysis show similarities with such a traditional attitude in women as many linguistic strategies have been found through which women show a caring and supportive attitude towards other women. However, although they keep on being solidary, they make less use of strategies that they employed a few decades ago. Some of them are questions, exclamations and interjections which occur with less frequency than it was expected in our study. The following examples illustrate how women use them to express rapport towards the bloggers who write the posts:

- (47) **You look great Kavita!** I'm Portuguese and I'm so happy to know you were here :D Lisbon is a beautiful city **I'm glad you liked it!** (Fem_post1_comm2)
(48) **Wow**, it really looks awesome on you! (Fem_post5_comm5)

Examples (47) and (48) show how women express their likes for the outfits the bloggers are describing. They provide the blogger with feedback to build rapport but also to give their opinion. Here women do not praise something just because of commitment but to show themselves as self-confident and assertive persons that have a voice. This contradicts Tannen's argument (1995) that women tend to provide feedback to save face for the recipient. Similarly, patterns have also changed in the use of questions. Coates (2004) claimed that women depicted themselves weaker in interactive

situations as they ask more questions than men in order to keep conversation going. However, in our analysis, 41 instances of questions were found and they were mostly used to ask the blogger about something, as in example (49), in order to get some kind of advice and not to keep the conversation or debate going as was traditionally done.

(49) Are you getting any support processing your experience of losing the weight and losing the way you used to eat? (Fem_post6_comm4)

Another strategy very common in women through which they express rapport is the use of pronouns. Personal pronouns are essential for addressing others and, as a result, for interacting with each other. From the use of such pronouns, the degree of intimacy and solidarity they show to others and also the degree of inclusion can be observed. The use of possessive pronouns is also worth mentioning as they are also marks of rapport including others in the same group instead of marking distance. The following examples illustrate the employment of pronouns to establish rapport:

(50) Have a beautiful weekend **my** loves! (Fem_post9)

(51) I can see how much **you've grown recently** in these photos, **you** look stunning. (Fem_post1_comm5)

(52) As **you** know, I'm not very traditional when it comes to weight loss because I cannot stand counting calories or measuring my food. (Fem_post9)

Possessives are frequently used in greetings or when saying goodbye to mark closeness with their readers as example (50) illustrates. It is also a way of addressing them so as to include them in her circle thus showing a more caring and familiar tone. Examples (51) and (52) portray direct address to the blogger by using the second person singular pronoun "you". In this way, "you" appears up to 140 times always involving the addressee in their statement and showing rapport and close bonds. As the table below illustrates, the most common personal pronoun is, interestingly, the first person singular "I" referring to the person herself. It occurs in 398 times, being most of the

times for giving personal opinion. The third most frequently used pronoun is the possessive of the first person singular “my”, which is used 111 times also to show rapport including the readers as addressees of their utterances with a caring tone. Contrary to expectations, the pronoun “we” has not occurred very frequently; instead it has only appeared eight times whereas the possessive “our” only occurred twice. From this, it can be concluded that women show a more assertive tone by indicating that those opinions correspond to their views as expressed individually. The following table shows the most common pronouns women use ordered by the number of times each of them appears:

Personal and possessive pronouns	Females (number of times)
I	398
You	140
My	111
Me	56
Your	48
We	8
Us	5
Mine	2
Our	2

Table 9. Most common personal and possessive pronouns in the female corpus.

Solidarity and rapport are also manifested through the use of suggestions, expressions of thanks and even through imperatives. These linguistic strategies allow them to establish a relationship of closeness. Likewise, bloggers become more intimate and position themselves as reliable people. The following examples illustrate how they employ such strategies to build a closer relationship:

(53) I hear your frustration loud and clear. **I do wish I had some answers for you. I just want to encourage you** to keep trying because not trying doesn't

work at all. [...] I can't criticize or judge because **I have been where you are too**. (Fem_post8_comm3)

(54) **I feel so much better** when **I read your posts and statuses** because **they always help me** unload all of my silly concerns. (Fem_post6_comm2)

(55) And **keep an open mind** to the potential that it might not be overtraining, that it might be a psychological issue. [...] **Follow the advice** of your medical professional if you find yourself dealing with these issues. (Fem_post6)

(56) Your individual recovery requirements are unique, **the best thing you can do is** monitor your energy levels and sense of enjoyment during workouts. (Fem_post6)

Example (53) shows how the reader of the post manifests her support to the blogger and her willingness to help and encourage her. The writer of the comment also addresses her in a modest manner without sounding too imposing to show rapport and understanding for her. Likewise, the writer in example (54) acknowledges that she is being helped by the blogger's posts and shows gratitude because of that. For its part, example (55) is also very interesting in the sense that it illustrates how imperatives are used in blogs. Contrary to expectations, most of the cases with imperatives are used for giving advice. They are not employed as exhortations or directives to ask the reader do something but to make suggestions. Finally, example (56) also represents the use of suggestions about what would be the best her addressee should do. All these instances illustrate then the use of the different strategies that are more relevant in the writing of women when interacting with each other. Thus, women give advice, express themselves thankful to others and make suggestions to each other and, by doing so, they build relationships of rapport with their readers. Besides, by using those strategies, they are also enacting authority by assuming the role of an expert.

4.2.2. How males interact with readers

Although their language in interactions has traditionally said to be a language of “report” (Tannen, 1990), in this study, they use quite frequently the same strategies than women so as to show solidarity and rapport too. Some of the strategies they commonly used for expressing rapport are questions and exclamations. When interacting with each other, men tend to address others with a friendly and close tone as the following examples illustrate:

(57) **Wouldn’t it be wonderful** if we could just copy what we see and be guaranteed a perfectly polished style? (Mal_post5)

(58) **Just a question** about the pocket square though: **Do you not think** it makes the look too formal and thereby taking away from the Casually tailored appearance? (Mal_post2_comm4)

(59) Evaluate your asthetic weakness - **make it a goal to work on it** - train hard - play hard! (Mal_post10_comm3)

(60) **Excellent article John... and great pic too!** (Mal_post10_comm1)

From the examples above, it can be observed that men use questions and exclamations to express rapport towards their readers. In example (57), the writer asks a kind of indirect question that is not going to be responded. The writer then does not expect any answer, so the question can be seen as a strategy to show affection and rapport as he is including himself in the group of people that he is addressing in his question. Example (58) is also about a question but this time illustrating another common use they give to interrogatives so as to ask for the opinion of his readers. Exclamations are also another strategy to show rapport as they are used either to give advice as shown in example (59) or to evaluate and comment on others as example (60) illustrates. So, from this we can observe that men address others with intimacy and

solidarity establishing close virtual relationships and not maintaining the relationships of power and status that were traditionally associated with men (Tannen, 1995).

Furthermore, rapport is also manifested in the use men make of possessive and personal pronouns. Possessives are commonly used either for showing that what is being talked about affects the writer in some way as example (62) below illustrates, or for denoting closeness with his readers as in example (63):

(61) **I'm with you** on shoes. All I wear are Converse and Vans, which keeps footwear cost way down. (Mal_post1_comm3)

(62) This was the most comprehensive fashion post I have read. Enjoyed it very much thanks for the share. **Gotta implement these styles in my wardrobe.** (Mal_post3_comm2)

(63) Hey! I am discovering your blog and that's a good surprise. **I do like your sense of elegancy. See you!** Matt (Mal_post2_comm3) (Mal_post_comm)

(64) **We need** an approach where **we're moving** in various micro-sessions throughout the day, continually diversifying **our positions** and introducing new challenges to **our bodies.** (Mal_post7)

From the examples above, it can be observed that men make a notable use of personal and possessive pronouns. The table below offers the number of times the most common used pronouns appear. The personal pronoun that they use more is “you” occurring up to 316 times. Such pronoun denotes intimacy and confidence as it addresses the reader in a reciprocate way as talking to each other. Also, there are other times in which it is used by the blogger so as to refer to his group of readers as a whole showing at the same time more rapport to them by treating them all with the same close distance, as shown in example (64) through the use of the second person plural pronouns “we” and “our”. The second most frequently pronoun is the first person singular “I” (269) which is used either positioning themselves towards a certain issue or when talking about the way in which they are involved in the action of the verbal group

that follows it. Besides, men also use considerably the pronouns related to the first person plural which helps them to build the mentioned rapport and to involve readers in their group. In this sense, pronouns are used to establish closeness and shorten the distance with regard to their readers.

Personal and possessive pronouns	Males (number of times)
You	316
I	269
Your	173
My	84
We	75
Me	25
Our	21
Us	18
Mine	4

Table 10. Most common personal and possessive pronouns in the male corpus.

Other strategies relevant in the language of males when interacting with others are suggestions, expressions of thanks and imperatives. The use they make of such strategies is very similar to how women use them, that is, to signal solidarity and rapport. The following examples illustrate the way men interact with their readers cooperating among each other:

(65) I am down 20 pounds. I'm far from my goals, but I feel healthier. I originally wanted to lose weight to look better, and to avoid kicking the bucket. But I really do feel so much better, so much happier. **Thought I would share that with all of you.** (Mal_post7_comm2)

(66) **Would love to hear your thoughts** in the comments below. (Mal_post5)

(67) **Get thinking** and I will return with the answers in a few days time! (Mal_post8)

(68) If you have fair skin, **you should** be wary of wearing too much of the hue close to your face as it can wash your complexion out. (Mal_post3)

(69) **Thanks for the reassurance** though, because I'm kind of in a style rut right now (all neutrals boring!) but I really can't afford to buy anymore clothes. Otherwise I'd be living beyond my means. **This makes me feel a lot better though. Thanks Nate!** (Mal_post5_comm2)

(70) **Thanks for reading.**

Stylishly Yours,

Brian (Mal_post2)

Examples above illustrate how men show closeness and intimacy with their readers either by showing his willingness to share his personal experience with them, as in example (65), or by asking for his readers' opinions and views on what he is talking about as example (66) shows. In example (67), the writer uses an imperative with the same purpose as women, that is, for establishing rapport and not for giving readers an order. Example (68) uses a suggestion as another strategy to build a relationship of rapport. In this example, the blogger makes his readers a suggestion by using the modal verb 'should' thus not sounding too imposing, but in a friendly tone. Finally, the examples (69) and (70) show how the writer expresses thanks to his addressees, in the first case, a reader for the advice given by the blogger, and in the latter example, the blogger for being read by his followers. So, it can be concluded that with the use of such strategies, men do not only build relationships of rapport but they also leave behind the authoritarian and isolated position thus shortening the distance with their addressees.

4.2.3. Comparison: gender differences in interaction

When interacting with each other, both men and women use certain strategies to address others or to discuss with them. Both sexes show a similar use of certain strategies in order to build relationships of rapport, something that has resulted contrary to our initial predictions. Nonetheless, there are still differences in terms of the strategies that each

gender uses more frequently. The findings in this second part also validate the hypothesis that men use many strategies that were traditionally associated with female speech.

Some of the linguistic devices used to establish rapport between the interactants are exclamations, interjections and questions. First, exclamations are preferred widely by women (115) than by men (39). However, both tend to use them to show closeness with their addressees by praising their look or by showing agreement with their readers on the topic they are talking about. Second, interjections appear to be more commonly used by women rather than by men. The most frequent ones have been “wow”, “oh”, “hurray”, “okay”, and “well”. Women use them to show their feelings towards their addressees. Finally, regarding the use of questions, it can be concluded that both men and women ask questions to a similar extent. Contrary to predictions, men use many questions in their writing either to ask for advice or to ask about something they want to know. This contradicts previous research that claimed that women ask more questions than men (Lakoff, 1975; Coates, 2004). Similarly, Tannen (1995) claimed that men have been socialized not to ask questions because it may place them in a one down position.

Another of the linguistic devices that signal interaction is the use of pronouns. Here we can see a very clear difference in the most frequent pronoun used by each gender. Whereas women’s most common pronoun is “I” (398), men’s is “you” (316). From this it can be interpreted that men interact with others more frequently as the pronoun “you” inevitably involves the addressee in their statements. Women, however, tend to talk more about themselves and about how the issue affects them. Also, they make personal judgement more often than men and, instead of doing it through an indirect claim or by using a third person singular, they rather use the first person

singular pronoun holding so a more assertive position. As for the second person plural pronoun “we”, surprisingly, men (75) clearly outnumber the number of times they use it as opposed to women (8). This fact indicates that men are certainly more willing to build relationships of rapport than they traditionally intended to. By using the pronoun “we”, they assume a set of shared views and values between themselves and their readers. This differs from Tannen’s (2001) findings as she claimed that men tend to use “I” when referring to decisions a group has made and associated “we” with women of using it when referring to a collective decision. Pennebaker (2001) found that women use first person singular pronouns like “I,” “me,” and “my” more frequently than men and argued that women tend to be more self-aware than men. As for possessive pronouns, not many differences have been found in the analysis of this paper apart from the use of the pronoun “our” that seems to be more common in the language of males (21) than of females (2). Once again, this tendency to use first person plural pronouns shows that men are more and more willing to establish relationships of rapport with their interactants.

Regarding the use of imperatives, no significant differences were found in terms of use by both genders. In most cases, imperatives are employed for giving advice in a friendly tone and not sounding too imposing on the addressee. The writers do not want to give orders but encourage their readers to do something they think is good for them. In this way, especially men are changing from traditional patterns as they tended to use imperatives to show a firmer position. On the other hand, in order to show solidarity, both men and women also make suggestions to their readers frequently. Most of the times, interactions in blogs are based on feedback and for this reason, they use many expressions either asking for opinion on the discussed issue or asking for advice and so, their readers give them their views and make recommendations to them. It is also worth

mentioning that men seem to be using more and more suggestions on fashion and style, something that was traditionally more characteristic of women. Similarly, both genders express solidarity through the use of expressions of thanks either to readers or to the blogger that writes the post. So, it is through these strategies that women, and also men, are building relationships of rapport in the mentioned online platforms.

These findings contradict those of Tannen (1990) that claimed that while for women “the language of conversation is primarily a language of rapport, a way of establishing connections and negotiating relationships”, for men “talk is primarily a means to preserve independence and negotiate and maintain status in a hierarchical social order.” (Tannen, 1990: 77). She differentiated between a language of rapport and a language of report. According to her view, women are more willing to establish relationships and intimacy whereas men want to maintain status and distance with regard their readers. In a similar line, Hass (1979) asserted that men tended to be more loquacious and direct while women were more supportive and polite. Guiller and Durndell (2007) also found gender differences in the use of stylistic variables; for instance, they concluded that men are more likely to use authoritative language and to respond negatively in interactions than women whereas women tend to explicitly agree and support others more than men. Already in 2011, García pointed to a change in discourse patterns as he observed that women were aggressively relating to other girls in Facebook. As the previous analysis has shown, this paper supports the idea that that while women’s position is turning into a more assertive one in such online environments, men’s traditional relationships of status and power are increasingly changing to relationships of rapport.

5. Conclusion

Since the Internet became widespread, the emerging online language began to be a matter of concern and interest for many researchers. The Internet has meant a significant contribution to the process of innovation of language that still continues today. Furthermore, it has allowed an open environment to express personal views, share experiences and, at the same time, discuss with others on a certain topic. Because of this, we have framed the Internet as discourse in the social context, as it is on the Internet where interactive relationships are held. More specifically, virtual platforms not only have become an online environment for socializing and interacting but also, a space in which gender differences on language use are manifested.

Studies about online language have been quite common in the last years. Many researchers have focused on how language is being affected by the way Internet users interact among each other in social networking sites (Baron, 2008; Crystal, 2001; Davies, n.d; Greenfield and Subrahmanyam, 2003; Tagliamonte and Denis, 2008). Also, linguistic alterations have been widely debated (Crystal, 2008; Garrison et al., 2011; Huang, Yen and Zhang, 2008; Park, Baek and Cha, 2014; Skovholt, Grønning and Kankaanranta, 2014; Vandergriff, 2013) as well as gender differences existing in this online language (Guiller and Durndell, 2007; Kapidzic and Herring, 2011; Waseleski, 2006).

This dissertation has offered an approach about online language usage focusing specifically on the most relevant linguistic features that male and female users present when writing posts and comments in blogs. Thus, through our research, we have been able to examine the way in which women and men position themselves towards a certain topic and how they interact with each other. For this purpose, we analysed 20 posts and 100 comments so as to find changes from traditional patterns and track

possible gender variations. Thus, we examined the most relevant linguistic features such as adjectives, adverbs, colloquial expressions, modals, exclamations, questions and pronouns, and the most common linguistic strategies such as the use of assertions, imperatives, expressions of thanks and solidarity, and suggestions employed by both sexes.

The findings show that there is an overlapping of gender differences in terms of their use of certain linguistic features and strategies. The analysis of women's language has shown that they do not limit themselves to use the traditional features that were associated with them (Lakoff, 1975; Tannen, 1990) but instead they display a more assertive position, very different to the passive and submissive stance from which they tended to position a few decades ago. By contrast, the language of men is also changing in terms of being more cautious with their statements and the increasing use they make of linguistic features and structures that have been traditionally stereotyped in the language of women. This study allowed then to explore the impact of the Internet on gender differences in online language use.

Thus, when expressing their views either to evaluate something or to position themselves towards what is being talked about, women have been observed to sound more categorical, enact personal authority and position themselves with a more insistent tone while men use more adverbs of uncertainty to take a less assertive position than they traditionally used to do. Besides, women tend to use more evaluative adjectives for expressing affection and their likes but also, for being critical and making personal judgements about something, showing even a contemptuous critical tone sometimes. As for personal expressions, most of the times they use them either for giving their opinion or for making compliments but making clear that they are expressing their personal views through the use of structures such as "to me" or "in my opinion". By contrast,

men employ fewer adjectives than women but, however, they prefer to use more adverbs. This may be because men usually focus on the whole issue itself while women make a higher use of adjectives as they tend to center their attention on a specific part of the issue discussed. Nonetheless, we have also observed that they use specific adjectives (e.g. “lightweight”, “slim-fitting”) and expressions typically associated with the language of women (e.g. “spring essential”). Regarding the way they express the opinion, the analysis has shown that they are critical when giving their personal views but they also include some strategies to be more cautious not to convey a derogatory tone but to establish rapport. So, the results seem to suggest that traditional gender patterns are being subverted regarding the way men and women express their views and interact in online platforms.

Nonetheless, this research involves some limitations as it seems rather difficult to reach generalisations that last over time. The use of features and patterns will continue changing as virtual platforms develop over the years. Nevertheless, the results could be taken as a basis to develop further similar studies on gender differences in online discourse. A promising line of study would be to examine in more detail if the present findings also apply to interactive discourse in recent virtual platforms and social networking sites. It would be also interesting to try to determine whether these claims could be applied to spontaneous conversations, open debates, or any other events in which men and women express their opinions and discuss them with others. Thus, as online language and gender differences keep on being an interesting subject of study, further research is needed in order to explore how language is currently undergoing a process of adaptation to the new online communicative environments and how gender differences become apparent in that process.

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7. Appendices

FEMALE POSTS (Fem_post)

POST 1

MONDAY, 2 MARCH 2015

KAVITA DOES LISBON - THE STREETS OF PORTUGAL

A few weeks ago I popped on over to Lisbon for a few days. I had decided that for my sisters 17th birthday I would buy us both tickets to somewhere really random in Europe, and with the help of Skyscanner and Airbnb, it ended up costing only £100 for accommodation and return flights each for 3 days. Not bad, eh?

(Photos)

Burgundy hat, boohoo - £10 | Hippy Paisley Dress, Bershka* - £25.99 | Cross Sandal Sliders, Bershka* - £25.99 | Michael Kors Skylar Watch in Black & Gold, The Watch Hut* - £246 | Snake palm cuff, ebay - £3.99

I grabbed this dress and these shoes last minute from Bershka and amazingly they arrived the day I was leaving, so I shoved them in my carry on luggage excited to shoot them with the gorgeous Lisbon backdrop!

I really love the print of this dress, I think they whole relaxed hippy vibes with some gold jewellery and a structured fedora hat is a perfect combination, and I love that the dress is really loose and swishy, perfect for a relaxing warm day!

The snake palm cuff is a new obsession of mine. After getting a palm cuff from river island I fell in love with this new hybrid piece of jewellery, and the snake piece is perfect, and actually surprisingly comfortable. For £4 too its a pretty cheap but staple summer piece (yes, I now it's not summer yet, but I can dream, right?)

Also these shoes are the PERFECT sliders and I am so so happy I have a new pair of shoes that can replace my super old Birkenstocks! They are so comfortable and look 1000 x more expensive than they are!

Have you ever thought about visiting Lisbon?

POST 2

KEEPING IT CASUAL

14 October 2014

(Photos)

Coat - Warehouse via Westfield

Sweatshirt - A.P.C

Dungarees - Vintage

Trainers - Nike

You know you're getting old when you start to get excited about fleece lined tights. I do feel sad for my soon to be pasty pins though, after months of being out and proud, they're about to go into hibernation mode and I dread to see what they'll be like in 2015. For my second Westfield post styling a red coat, I decided to embrace the 200 deniers and go back to the eclectic sort of comfort I'm used to. Green knitted trainers, blue vintage dungarees and a red coat may seem strange on paper but I just love throwing different things together and seeing the end result. This Warehouse coat is the perfect oversized fit and lends itself well to a more exciting version of my at-home attire. Sweatshirts are pretty much a given at the moment, the heating can't be on 24/7 and my beloved t-shirts are a distant memory. Lucy remarked that I looked a bit like Little Red Riding Hood in this post, rather apt as I did pop to my Nan's after this for some good old Sunday dinner.

You can actually win £100 to spend at Westfield if you show me how you would style a Winter coat in three ways. Make sure you include all three looks in one Instagram image, add @westfieldlondon to your caption plus the hashtag #thepfectcoat. You have until Friday 17th to show me your styling skills, so get cracking!

I'm also hosting a Twitter Q&A this evening between 8-9pm, so tweet me any coat queries with the hashtag #thepfectcoat!

POST 3

Have You Found The One?!

by SASHA WILKINS on MARCH 3, 2015

(Photo)

I think it's fair to say that, whatever your shape and size, wearing a bra isn't always an enjoyable experience – when Caitlin Moran wrote once that removing a bra at the end of the day was one of life's great pleasures, I knew exactly where she was coming from. Until I got myself properly fitted, that is. I had had a eureka moment when I was in my first job in magazines: I went off to Rigby & Peller and moved from a 36C (the absolutely standard size that so many women just pick off the shelves) to a 32E. But over the years my shape has changed again, and I hadn't bothered to get fitted again until last year as a result of Triumph's Stand Up For Fit campaign.

(Photo)

Ridiculous, I know, for an ex-fashion editor and stylist. Especially one who knows from her own experience of dressing women of all shapes and sizes that when women feel comfortable and secure in their lingerie, their confidence shines through and they look fabulous. And oh the absolute JOY of wearing the right sized bra again!

So when Triumph asked me to be the one of the faces of their 2015 Find the One campaign I was both interested and intrigued. (And also clear that I was going to be a face, not a body – no one is ever seeing me in my underwear, however pretty it is!)

We've all seen the stats over the years, telling us that women wear the wrong bra size, but what has become abundantly clear is that, like me over the past ten years, we've been hearing the message but not acting on it.

Last year, Triumph's Stand Up For Fit campaign encouraged women to schedule a bra fitting session with an experienced lingerie professional – and to date have measured 380,000 women, shattering their original target of 100,000. By the end of this year, Triumph will measure and fit half a million women. So far so good.

Now you've been measured, and know what size you are. What next? The next plank in Triumph's campaign is to get women to Find the One.

Finding "The One" means finding a bra you love: no more pinching and no more complaints – only weightless support, comfort and a beautifully shaped silhouette.

As you can see from the short film (above) from film director Ivana Bobic, which will be released in the UK, USA, France, Germany, Italy and Spain, I've joined with five other influential global fashion and lifestyle bloggers and a beauty expert, alongside 44 women from different parts of Europe to raise an eyebrow and celebrates the wonderful feeling we experience when we find and, most importantly, wear the right bra.

The seven of us have also made a series of short films in which we share a range of helpful tips and present our favourite Triumph styles.

All of this content will be hosted on the new Triumph Hub – a new online platform devoted to the "Find the One" cause, where you can get advice, book a fitting and find and buy the ideal bra.

Do check it out here

FEMALE COMMENTS (Fem_post_comm)

POST 1

- **Comment 1:** x D x 2 March 2015 at 22:26
Love this look! Boho is one of the big trends for the summer and I love how you styled the dress by giving it a sporty edge with the sliders. Great deal on your trip, Lisbon looks great! X
<http://sweatshirtsandaddresses.com>
- **Comment 2:** Rachel Sherwood 4 March 2015 at 00:20

you look great Kavita! i'm Portuguese and i'm so happy to know you were here :D Lisbon is a BEAUTIFUL city i'm glad you liked it! i just wish you would have posted more photos in different places.

xo

- **Comment 3:** Lauren Maria 3 March 2015 at 22:53

Wish I could get cheap deals like that, living in the scotland the flights are never that cheap. Love that snake palm cuff, very cool

Lauren

Livinginaboxx

- **Comment 4:** Emma Reay 6 March 2015 at 19:57

You look amazing Kavita, so stylish with your boho dress. And what an amazing present for your sister. I hope you had an amazing trip!

Emma at www.collagemepretty.blogspot.co.uk

- **Comment 5:** Laura 3 March 2015 at 23:04

My godddd, you look amazing here! I can see how much you've grown recently (in confidence!) in these photos, you look stunning.

TINYTWISST.COM

POST 2

- **Comment 1:** Deenie 14 October 2014 at 20:01

Those dungarees are gorgeous! I'm also loving the coat, Warehouse have really been impressing me this season and I'm so tempted to blow all my money there!

- **Comment 2:** char 14 October 2014 at 12:34

Oh, I'm such a coat geek that I'll definitely be tuning in!

- **Comment 3:** Tessa23 January 2015 at 23:13

You've pulled off the 70's look really well! Those boots are incredible, I've really warmed to the idea of thigh high boots over the past few months!

- **Comment 4:** Getup & Go24 January 2015 at 15:30

I'm definitely digging the 70s vibe! Love your coat :) xx

www.getup-goblog.blogspot.com

- **Comment 5:** Kate Smith 15 October 2014 at 15:10 Looks like such fun! And that jumper is gorgeous, it may have inspired me to knit myself a navy blue jumper for winter :o)

Katie @ <http://whatyoudoingkatie.blogspot.co.uk>

POST 3

- **Comment 1:** Tray-C March 3, 2015 at 15:02

Sasha,

Thank you for bringing this to the forefront. I am a stylist as well, and I am GUILTY of not knowing what size I wear(2). Also, many lingerie stores in the US do not have good fit people. Usually, they ask you your size and pile various styles in that size in the room for you to try on. It would be so helpful to all women to be properly fitted, where the professional fitter TELLS you what size you should wear. Thank you dear friend for this help.

- **Comment 2:** Sara Hodgkinson March 3, 2015 at 19:48

I always found Bravissimo good for fittings, and have recently got my first Rigby & Peller (okay it was 2ememains but my size). Finding a correctly fitting bra was posture changing in my 30's and I've been ranting on about it for over a decade now.

WEM

x

p.s: a voiceover career is yours for the taking.

- **Comment 3:** Sol March 3, 2015 at 20:03

I think I know my size, but it is one that you almost never, ever find somewhere: 80A – tiny breasts, larger chest. Impossible. For me, best place to buy lingerie: Italy!!! You could say that 50 percent of the shops over there are lingerie shops, and even I have sometimes found beautiful and well-fitting bras there.

- **Comment 4:** Bethany March 16, 2015 at 12:48

I enjoyed reading your piece and watching the two short films on the Triumph site, but when I went to have a look at their selection of bras it was very annoying that they only start at a 32 band size (I am a 28 or 30, E cup depending on the make) so I won't be able to "find the one" at Triumph.

- **Comment 5:** Ann 30/05/13 at 3:57

Thank you for this! I feel like I can really relate to feeling a bit of body snark over bra fitting. I am a woman who stands at 6'2" and have had people (friends and store employees alike) question me when I'd give measurements. Perhaps my height tends to skew the perception of my chest? I always felt the need to defend myself, "yes I really do usually wear a D cup, I'm sorry my breasts don't appear that large to you." I also tend to be wary of bra fit after being measured multiple times at the same and different stores and always coming up with a different letter/number combo. I've pretty much given up trying to define my chest by petty, seemingly inconsistent quantities and just trying on whatever looks like it might fit and leaving with whichever ones feel and look the best in my own personal opinion. I am happy that you are turning this bra fit trend into an interesting conversation.

MALE POSTS (Mal_post)

POST 1

Dappered Classics: 5 Types of Snobs in Men's Style

BY JOE

– AUGUST 3, 2012

Snob noun \ˈsnäb\ – one who has an offensive air of superiority in matters of knowledge or taste

1. Shoe Snobs

Claims to have never owned a pair of shoes that cost less than \$200 retail. Except for that one time when he bought a pair in a department store for \$100, and he SWEARS they disintegrated in his hands as soon as he took them out of the box. The horror. Believes those who wear shoes with soles that are glued to the uppers might as well be wearing Kleenex boxes on their feet. Has a 12 month calendar with glossy photos of his favorite shoe lasts. Hasn't spoken to his brother-in-law since the buffoon had the audacity to wear bluchers instead of oxfords to his wedding. Before having his appendix taken out, demanded a Goodyear Welt post removal so he could show off the scar to his friends.

2. Automatic Watch Snobs

Announces at every given opportunity that he would never spend more than \$50 on a quartz watch, and even then, could never smile while wearing it. Always asks “does that thing have a battery?” before asking someone for the time. Sees no issue with his electric powered watch winder. Believes that when Pandora’s box was opened there was nothing but a lump of quartz inside. Wishes cars still came with cranks. For the bedroom: never latex, always lambskin.

3. Tailoring Snobs

Measures his trouser break in eighths, not halves. Is horrified when he sees pictures of himself and somehow he’s not showing 1/4” of shirt cuff. Last wore an off the rack suit during his first communion. Holds his breath when walking by standard neck and sleeve dress shirts in Macy’s. Refuses to lose the ten pounds his Doctor told him to shed for fear of collar gap. Doesn’t know how to sew on a button.

4. Tradition & Rules Snobs

Took a belt to his son when he caught the young man wearing a suit beltless. Believes the notch collar tux jacket is the designated hitter of the black tie world. “They’re not pants. They’re trousers.” Thinks a tie without a dimple is as attractive as a boil on a butt cheek. Filed a complaint with H.R. the first time he saw someone wear jeans to the office (it was a Friday, and it was New Year’s Day.) When flying, always carries a sewing kit and a selection of brass and gold buttons in his carry-on. Y’know, just in case his seat neighbor is wearing a navy blazer with dark buttons, and the guy is willing to let him swap them out after takeoff.

5. The Anti-Snob Snobs

Known to assemble and publish lists of snobs, yet fails to recognize that by doing so he projects an air of superiority which could easily be considered snobbish. Hopes his list will be seen as tongue-in-cheek by all, and none take serious offense. Except for those who are actual judgmental turds. They can, in fact, take offense.

Originally Published 11/22/11

POST 2

Prep in Your Step: Spring Business Casual

Thursday, April 9, 2015

(photo)

Spring is a great time to add in a little prep and ruggedness to your style – even at the office. Kicking off a brand new partnership with Zappos, here are a few ways to dress down a business look for spring, including a varsity jacket and twill briefcase.

(photo)

| WEARING | Gant Rugger varsity jacket, Brooks Brothers Black Fleece shirt, Vintage Yves Saint Laurent pants, Seaward and Stearns tie, Filson briefcase, Timex watch, Shoes c/o Allen Edmonds | PHOTOGRAPHY | by Rob McIver Photo

Preppy with a bit of a throwback vibe, a varsity jacket is a nice way to dress down a business look and give it a sporty flair. If the wool versions with contrast leather sleeves, big letter, soccer ball, and possibly someone else's name embroidered on it, aren't your thing, you have options. This nylon varsity jacket is simple, lightweight, and slim-fitting. A spring essential.

A briefcase doesn't need to be made of leather. Canvas and cotton twill, like my Filson Original briefcase, are rugged takes on the classic leather version. Leather handles and accents make this version handsome enough to carry to the office.

Your shirt collar has a big impact on the overall impact of a look. A button-down collar helps to dress it down and pairs well with the prep of the varsity jacket and the sportiness of the canvas briefcase.

(photo)

We are thrilled to launch this new partnership with Zappos. Everyone knows Zappos as a great place to find shoes online, but it's much more than just that. Over the next few months, we'll be highlighting some of their other offerings and showing you another side of the brand. Stay tuned!

(photo)

Thanks for reading.

Stylishly Yours,

Brian

He Spoke Style

POST 3

5 Underused Menswear Colours

Article By Matt Allinson on 2nd April 2015 | @Ollinson

Some of menswear's most underrated hues, and how to wear them well

(photo)

In Full Colour

Sid Mashburn once said about a man's wardrobe: "Guys don't need a lot of options, they just need the right options." And for the most part, we're inclined to agree.

Contrary to what every chart-topping rapper would have you believe, it's the simple, timelessly stylish pieces that make you stand out. Which is why most guys could have a wardrobe stocked with as little as thirty items and still be considered better dressed than 90 per cent of the population.

But Mr Mashburn's theory doesn't really stand up when applied to colour. Here, most men tend to be a little too reserved and conservative. We all know how relatively easy it is to pull off neutral looks made up of black, white, navy and grey, but if you really want to stand out from the sartorial pack, you've got to start embracing bolder hues.

Of course, it's not easy (not that anything worth doing ever was), and the brighter end of the spectrum can be overwhelming, but introducing a welcome shot of colour isn't as complicated as you might think.

1. Pink

Still hung up on pink supposedly being for girls? Then consider this: up until the end of the 19th century pink was – in the Western world – actually thought of as a masculine hue. Connotations of girlishness gradually came in the early 20th century as marketers repositioned pink as a feminine colour.

Whether dusty and soft or bold and bright, pink pairs well with plenty of colours you probably already have in your wardrobe – including brown, beige, blue, white and darker shades of green, such as olive.

However, wearing pink does come with its caveats. If you have fair skin, you should be wary of wearing too much of the hue close to your face as it can wash your complexion out. If this is the case, try balancing it with darker colours – for example, a pink dress shirt with a navy blazer and blue tie. Another option is to try a bolder, richer tone of pink instead.

An Oxford shirt is arguably the most versatile piece you can opt for in pink, as it teams well with everything from a brown tweed blazer and indigo jeans to a grey suit. Pink chinos or shorts are another great addition to your summer wardrobe, while pink socks can add the perfect pop to an otherwise understated outfit.

Colour Pairing Guidelines

These guidelines have been derived from the standard colour wheel. We will also offer our own recommended combinations.

Similar Colours (Easiest To Pair): Reds and mauve pinks.

Contrasting Colours (Harder To Pair): Blue violets and yellow greens.

Complementary Colours (Hardest To Pair): Blue greens.

Recommended: Brown, beige and white, along with darker shades of green and blue.

Pink Lookbook Inspiration

(photo)

Key Pieces

- ASOS CHINO SHORTS IN MID LENGTH (photo)
- BARBOUR SWEATSHIRT IN LAUNDERED COTTON (photo)
- ASOS OXFORD SHIRT IN LIGHT PINK WITH SHORT SLEEVES (photo)
- REISS EDWARD WAFFLE KNIT JUMPER SOFT PINK (photo)
- REISS STONE SPOTTED SILK POCKET SQUARE BLUSH (photo)
- BOBBIES MAGNIFIQUE SUEDE DRIVING SHOES (photo)
- POLO RALPH LAUREN SLIM-FIT BUTTON-DOWN COLLAR COTTON OXFORD SHIRT (photo)
- RIVER ISLAND PINK SLIM CHINOS (photo)
- RIVER ISLAND PINK MARL CREW NECK T-SHIRT (photo)
- UNIQLO MEN COTTON CASHMERE V-NECK CARDIGAN (photo)
- HARTFORD MID-LENGTH SWIM SHORTS (photo)

- HARRODS OF LONDON TEXTURED SUMMER JACKET (photo)

2. Brown

Although this hue tends to remind us of the less than savoury fashions of the 1970s, attitudes are changing thanks to designers such as Tom Ford, J.W. Anderson and Miuccia Prada, all of whom are rebranding brown.

The perfect partner to this classic neutral will always be blue; the combination gives blue depth, while the brown appears richer (see Prada's spring/summer 2015 denim- and leather-filled collection for an idea of what we mean). Additional complementary colours include earthy hues such as burnt orange, green, khaki, mustard and beige.

Although there's a shade of brown that will work well with pretty much every skin tone, those of you with Asian or African skin will want to avoid hues that are too close in colour to your complexion, as it can make it appear dull and faded.

This timeless colour is likely already present in your wardrobe in some – albeit small – way, but why not try upping your quotient with some tan corduroys/chinos, a chocolate brown leather jacket, dark camel merino crew neck jumper, or even a simple pair of russet brogues/Derbies?

Colour Guidelines

Recommended: Blues and earth tones.

Brown Lookbook Inspiration

(photo)

Key Pieces

- WOOD WOOD JUMPER DOUBLE AA ARMY (photo)
- SCHOTT LEATHER JACKET WITH COLLAR (photo)
- ASOS SKINNY CHINOS (photo)
- NEXT BROWN CHECK JACKET (photo)
- TOPMAN TAN HERRINGBONE BRACES (photo)
- FORBES & LEWIS LITTLEHAMPTON LEATHER BACKPACK IN BROWN (photo)
- BURTON DISSIDENT BROWN CHECKED SHIRT (photo)
- HACKETT LONDON SUMMER PARKA BROWN (photo)
- RIVER ISLAND BROWN LONG SLEEVE OXFORD SHIRT (photo)
- REISS DISCOVER CONTRAST WEAVE SUIT DARK BROWN (photo)
- UNIQLO MEN CASHMERE CREW NECK SWEATER (photo)

- RIVER ISLAND BROWN GROSGRAIN TRIM FEDORA HAT(photo)

3. Purple

The most regal of hues according to the Ancient Romans and Greeks, purple is often one of the first colours men try when they're looking to expand their palette, but often get wrong.

The easiest way to wear purple is to use it sparingly and as an accent, rather than making it the focal point of your look. It teams extremely well with beige, grey and shades of blue, from sky and duck egg to cobalt and teal.

Richer shades of purple tend to complement darker skin tones, while lighter, pastel variants such as lilac and lavender will work for fair or pale complexions.

Ties and pocket squares in purple are the ideal pieces to start with; combine them with suits in neutral colours and light-coloured shirts for maximum effect.

Purple dress shirts also look great when paired with navy or midnight blue suits, and for the especially ballsy amongst us – why not consider a purple blazer or pair of chinos for the coming summer months? Each is guaranteed to make a statement.

Colour Guidelines

Similar Colours (Easiest To Pair): Blue violets and mauves.

Contrasting Colours (Harder To Pair): Reds and greens.

Complementary Colours (Hardest To Pair): Yellows.

Recommended: Navy, grey, white and beige.

Purple Lookbook Inspiration

(photo)

Key Pieces

- QUIKSILVER SWEATSHIRT WITH CHEST LOGO (photo)
- AMERICAN APPAREL T-SHIRT WITH CREW NECK (photo)
- TOPMAN WASHED LILAC CHINO SHORTS (photo)
- J. CREW TALL ITALIAN CASHMERE V-NECK SWEATER (photo)
- PAUL SMITH LONDON PURPLE BYARD COTTON SHIRT (photo)
- RICHARD JAMES MAYFAIR CONTEMPORARY CHAMBRAY LINEN JACKET (photo)
- RIVER ISLAND PURPLE BURNOUT CREW NECK T-SHIRT (photo)
- LACOSTE COTTON-PIQUE POLO SHIRT (photo)
- AUSTIN REED LONG SLEEVE PURPLE OXFORD SHIRT (photo)

- TOPMAN PURPLE SLIP STITCH SOCKS (photo)
- CHARVET HERRINGBONE SILK TIE (photo)
- SAUCONY SHADOW 5000 TRAINERS IN PURPLE (photo)

4. Green

While most of us are no strangers to moss or khaki hues, there are so many other green tones that can be introduced to your wardrobe and help take your outfits to the next level.

No matter what shade you opt for, this masculine colour always looks best paired with blue, white and grey, while darker military variants complement similarly earthy hues such as brown and mustard wonderfully.

As for what you should look to invest in? A short-sleeved shirt or pair of chino shorts in mint green is ideal for crafting Riviera-inspired ensembles during the warmer months, while bright green details and accessories (socks, lightweight scarves, pocket squares, etc.) will add a striking element to an otherwise pared-back look.

Deeper variants like olive, avocado and hunter green are the most versatile though, with corduroy trousers, military-inspired blazers, bomber jackets and boots in these hues being particularly appropriate for autumn/winter.

An additional benefit of green is that it works with every skin tone, provided you take the time to find the shade that complements your complexion the best.

Colour Guidelines

Similar Colours (Easiest To Pair): Yellow greens and blue greens.

Contrasting Colours (Harder To Pair): Reds and violets.

Complementary Colours (Hardest To Pair): Mauve pinks.

Recommended: Blue, white and grey.

Green Lookbook Inspiration

(photo)

Key Pieces

- BELLFIELD 5 POCKET CHINOS IN SLIM FIT (photo)
- ALLSAINTS KHALID JACKET (photo)
- HE BY MANGO SLIM-FIT CORDUROY BLAZER (photo)
- HERSCHEL SUPPLY CO. RETREAT FOLIAGE BACKPACK IN MINT (photo)
- TOPMAN GREEN HARRINGTON JACKET (photo)
- TED BAKER LUNATE LEATHER WRAP AROUND BRACELET (photo)

- ACNE STUDIOS CONE COTTON-BLEND TWILL TROUSERS (photo)
- J.CREW COTTON-JERSEY T-SHIRT (photo)
- INCOTEX SLIM-FIT COTTON-BLEND SHORTS (photo)
- M&S COLLECTION PURE COTTON V-NECK JUMPER (photo)
- REISS THIAGO FINE STRIPE SHIRT GREEN (photo)
- TODS GOMMINO DRIVING SHOES IN SUEDE (photo)

5. Yellow

This one can be particularly tricky to get right and is often avoided, even by menswear's most daring.

Much like purple, yellow is a statement colour that needs to be used sparingly and anchored using neutrals. With this in mind, always look to control it with surrounding pieces in white, blue, grey, beige and charcoal.

Perhaps more importantly, though, is finding a shade that doesn't wash you out – especially if you're of a fairer skin tone. While darker skin types will be able to pull off everything from corn flour to canary yellow, pale men will need to be slightly more cautious. If this applies to you, try darker yellow hues like mustard and gold, which should help lift your complexion.

Casual separates like cotton polo shirts, T-shirts, chino shorts and vests look great in yellow, especially if you combine them with blues. If you feel like upping the ante, why not embrace your inner Nick Wooster and opt for a pair of statement shoes or trainers? You'd be surprised how versatile they can be when teamed with dark denim or grey flannel trousers.

Colour Guidelines

Similar Colours (Easiest To Pair): Yellow greens and oranges.

Contrasting Colours (Harder To Pair): Blues and mauve pinks.

Complementary Colours (Hardest To Pair): Violets.

Recommended: Neutrals – particularly white, pale grey, charcoal and navy.

Yellow Lookbook Inspiration

(photo)

Key Pieces

- PAUL SMITH JEANS SHIRT WITH CONTRAST DETAIL POCKET CLASSIC FIT (photo)
- FJALLRAVEN FOLDSACK NO.1 BACKPACK (photo)

- HE BY MANGO EMBOSSED-TRIM PIQUE POLO SHIRT (photo)
- ALLSAINTS FIGURE CREW T-SHIRT (photo)
- TOPMAN SELECTED HOMME YELLOW RAINCOAT (photo)
- NEW LOOK YELLOW ACID WASH SWIM (photo)
- RIVER ISLAND YELLOW ACID WASH OXFORD SHIRT (photo)
- RIVER ISLAND YELLOW SLIM CHINO SHORTS (photo)
- FREEMANS SPORTING CLUB WINCHESTER SLIM-FIT COTTON-TWILL CHINOS (photo)
- UNIQLO MEN COTTON CASHMERE CREW NECK SWEATER (photo)
- THOMAS PINK WOVEN POCKET SQUARE (photo)
- NEW BALANCE 574 CLASSIC RUNNING TRAINERS IN MUSTARD (photo)

Final Word

With brighter skies on the horizon, there's no better time than the present to reclaim colour. Whether you're looking for something to complement your complexion, or you simply want to liven up your spring/summer wardrobe, it's worth re-considering some of the hues you thought you couldn't wear.

Which of these brighter colours is the most appealing to you? Any tips on how to wear some of the more difficult shades on the list?

Let us know in the comments section.

MALE COMMENTS (Mal_post_comm)

POST 1

- **Comment 1:** Jim • 3 years ago
 This is why it's tough to read sites like styleforum. Most of the guys are older and making decent bank so it's not a big deal for them to drop \$500 on a pair of shoes. If you even mention or ask for suggestions on lower end brands, they crap all over you. Funny thing is that I've received more compliments from women on my \$80 aldo shoes than my \$400 aldens (and isn't girls 50% of the reason we want to dress well?).
- **Comment 2:** Deke • 3 years ago

I dislike snobs in any walk of life. I seem to encounter drink snobs a lot. Don't get me wrong, I love a nice scotch, but if you turn your nose up at Jack Daniels (especially if you use the word "swill"), I believe you deserve a swift punch to the dick.

- **Comment 3:** Le Samourai • 3 years ago

I'm with you on shoes. All I wear are Converse and Vans, which keeps my footwear cost way down.

I should add that often the worst type of snob is the reverse snob. We all know the type... They scoff at men who dress well and brag about being just a "jeans and t-shirt kinda guy." They take pride in not knowing their suit size and being unable to tie a tie. They don't see the point of beers that don't come in cans and cases. I could go on, but you get my point.

- **Comment 4:** BenR • 3 years ago

You meet a lot of automatic watch snobs while perusing online watch forums. Actually, I think people open to wearing quartz watches are probably in the minority. I like automatic watches - my everyday wearer is a Seiko 5 - but the rabid purism of some folks is just astounding. I think it's silly to be such a purist that you forget the fact that the cheaper, "worse" movement is objectively superior in virtually way except, perhaps, sentimentality. It's especially funny when these same folks nitpick about the accuracy of various movements. Let's not kid ourselves - if you really cared that strongly about accuracy, you would swap out that ugly, oversized, overpriced boutique diver for the \$15 quartz Timex that will run circles around it, accuracy-wise.

- **Comment 5:** Curta • 3 years ago

The next post should be: in defense of snobs. Something along the lines, if there were no snobbery there would be no point in manufacturing anything beyond a certain (lowish) quality level.

Basically who would the businessmen copy from, when there didn't exist dedicated craftsmen who spent all day everyday making things to the best of their ability? And they wouldn't exist if snobs didn't support/fund the whole endeavor.

Or something like that. I gave it a few mins thought.

Who would j.crew/polo/Gap/BR copy from?

The point I take from this article: snobs could do themselves a favor and relax a little. But not too much, cause (snobs) are likely holding the line on quality good. Also don't be too smug about it (snobs), there is no sympathy for your wealthier than average ass.

POST 2

- **Comment 1:** Seth Nelson • 2 days ago
Nice look! Zappos customer service is amazing! I recently bought a nice pair of patent leather Oxfords (at a good price). Finding my size (14) is not easy, but they had it. But first when they mistakenly sent me size 9, they immediately overnighted size 14, emailed a prepaid shipping label to return the wrong size, and credited me back \$20. Then when I found size 14 too big, they overnighted a size 13, again with prepaid shipping for the return, all with a friendly attitude and no questions asked. They fit and look great!
- **Comment 2:** The Kentucky Gent • 2 days ago
I'm with Albert - you've got quite the smile.
Also - Filson has some of the best bags around. I'm personally a fan of canvas over leather. I'm not one to get too dressed up, ever, so canvas fits into my life better. And Filson's canvas bags feel just as luxe as their leather ones. I'm definitely a fan!
Josh
- **Comment 3:** Matthias Cornilleau • a day ago
Hey! I am discovering your blog and that's a good surprise. I do like your sense of elegance. See you! Matt from www.stylnox.com
- **Comment 4:** Eoin Brennan • 10 days ago
Its a great *look and I'll definitely rob that one, just a question about the pocket square though: Do you not think it makes the look too formal and thereby taking away from the Casually tailored appearance?
- **Comment 5:** Mens • 2 days ago
Such a nice finish. i would love to carry this look for my office and casual tours .
Well the suits are important in a men life. i came to know about the importance of suits

POST 3

- **Comment 1:** Blaktooth Posted On 2nd April 2015:

I love my pink jacket! It's actually made up of a blue, red and white mini check but looks pink unless you're two inches from the fabric. What I've found works best though is keeping the rest of the outfit very plain. White or black shirt usually with black fine cord trousers and black loafers or monks. Most of the time I feel the all black with the pink jacket works best as the black mans up the pink. I've always been wary of pink as I'm fair skinned with blue eyes and blonde hair and always thought it would bring out my feminine side!?! Similarly black can make the fairer skinned look very pasty. I think now that I'm in my 30's I've matured and my once boyish looks are leaving me or have left. the rugged, older, modern man can definitely pull off pink or bright yellow or green, with black the perfect partner.

- **Comment 2:** Akhiazar Sabir Posted On 2nd April 2015:

This was the most comprehensive fashion post I have read. Enjoyed it very much thanks for the share. Gotta implement these styles in my wardrobe. Thanks again!

- **Comment 3:** Marco Abadon Posted On 8th April 2015:

it happens the same here in brazil; most of men are not open for colours in their wardrobe yet; maybe in the next decades! I WEAR a lot of them since the 70's but I am what COULD BE pointed AS AN EXTRATERRESTRIAL IN FASHION!

- **Comment 4:** Jake Posted On 4th April 2015:

I try to incorporate these colors into my wardrobe as often as I can, but some, especially yellow, are hard to find in a shade that complements my golden skin tones.

- **Comment 5:** Daniel Posted On 4th April 2015:

Without a doubt one of the best FashionBeans posts of 2015 so far, exceedingly helpful.

Adding these colours definitely takes your outfit to the next level. I'm just yet to take the plunge and explore pink and yellow out of the colours recommended.