POLITENESS ON FACEBOOK: THE CASE OF GREEK BIRTHDAY WISHES[1]

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Abstract

Facebook forms one of the most widely used online social networks, through which people manage their communication with diverse contacts or 'friends', ranging from members of the family and schoolmates to work colleagues and popular cultural idols or other people, whom they admire. Hence, it can be seen as an integral part of people's digital presence. Against this backdrop, the aim of this paper is to investigate the ways politeness is constructed in a context, in which it is not very typical to find politeness in the Western world: The reception of birthday wishes. The focus is on the (para)linguistic reception of birthday wishes on behalf of 400 native Greek users of Facebook, aged between 25–35 years old, as evidenced in the ways they respond to birthday wishes posted on their walls.

By using a combination of interactional sociolinguistics, discourse-centered online ethnography and offline ethnographic interviews, I argue that native speakers of Greek do not just stick to the politic behavior found in other languages, like English, of personally thanking their friends for their birthday wishes; rather, they employ contextualization cues, such as shifts in spelling, emoticons and punctuation markers, in order to construct frames and footings of politeness by actually reciprocating the wishes they received from their friends. The value of this study lies not only in being, to my knowledge, the first description and interpretation of an important cultural phenomenon for Greeks, which is the exchange of birthday wishes, but also it contributes towards understanding politeness in online environments, such as Facebook, which in turn is used for establishment and maintenance of interpersonal relationships, hence it can lead to smooth communication.

Keywords: Facebook; Thanking; Accepting of thanks; Politeness; Interactional sociolinguistics; Politic behavior; Computer-mediated communication.

1. Introduction

In the contemporary digital era, through the use of technology, which has annihilated both spatial and temporal distances, people conduct a very vital part of their communication via new media, which consist of images and text-image compositions distributed and exhibited through computers (Manovich 2001: 43). To this definition of new media, I would also add that these texts and images are distributed and exhibited

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through other devices, which nowadays share more or less the same technological capacities with computers, such as cell phones, and most prominently smartphones. Such devices play a major role in people's everyday life, at least in countries and societies, whose citizens enjoy effective access to the internet and, in this sense, belong to the privileged of the 'digital divide.'[2] In this sense, they are used for a wide range of communicative actions, which form social processes and sequences (Gumperz 1982: 46ff.). The latter encompass institution meetings, political speeches and everyday discussions among friends, among others. These communicative actions are understood, from both the perspective of the participants themselves and the scholars, who seek to analyze these events, as texts and practices (cf. Barton & Lee 2013) forming a significant and patterned part of social life, easily recognizable and readily employable.

In terms of technology, undoubtedly, some of the most important venues, where such communicative events take place, are the social networking media, including Facebook, Twitter, Linkedin, Stumbleupon, YouTube, academia.edu, to name just a few. Regardless of their unquestionable differences in terms of their formats, functions, and overall technological affordances (Herring 2007), what they seem to share is the fact that they allow their respective members to post their own and comment upon other people's texts and various other visual or audio postings. This user-generated content and the subsequent ability to share and comment on each other's posts is the very essence of Web 2.0. These activities, which involve effort on behalf of the social media users, have been referred to as 'analytic labor' (Karakayali & Kilic 2013: 175–176), inasmuch as the participants analyze the environment in which they perform. One of the most important instantiations of this analytic labor is language, since the latter is undoubtedly the primary means, whereby both exchange of information and performance of relationships take place.

Facebook, the focus of this paper, seems to be the most popular[3] social networking medium. A social network site has been defined as 'a web-based service that allows individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system' (boyd & Ellison 2007). Facebook satisfies these criteria, inasmuch as it allows its users to create a personal profile, add other users as 'friends' and exchange messages, either in public or in private, as well as provide automatic notifications when users update their profile. Additionally, users may join common interest user groups (see, e.g. Theodoropoulou 2014b), organized by workplace, school, or college, or other characteristics, such as area of residence, or hobby, or even political party affiliation. One of the most popular applications is the Wall, from where the data for this study are taken. On the Wall, both Facebook users and their 'friends', namely their bi-directional connections (boyd & Ellison 2007) who are not necessarily tied to one another in terms of friendship as used in everyday parlance, can post texts, pictures, videos, electronic postcards, or links to other websites. Essentially, this space allows friends to post messages for the user to see while displaying the time and date the message was written.

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[2] A socially-oriented definition of digital divide can be found under
http://www.digitaldivide.org/digital-divide/digital-divide-defined/digital-divide-defined/
accessed on December 22, 2014).
[3] According to its entry in Wikipedia, it is a *Social network* and website launched in February 2004 that is operated and privately owned by Facebook, Inc. As of June 2014, Facebook had more than 1.3 billion active users.

One user's Wall is visible to anyone with the ability to see his or her full profile, and different users' Wall posts show up in an individual's News Feed[4]. Many users use their friends' Walls for the leaving of short, temporal notes. More private discourse is saved for messages, which are sent to a user's inbox, and are visible only to the sender and recipient(s) of the message; in this way, these messages resemble traditional email.

Facebook profiles and Walls speak volumes on one's identity (see, for instance, Bolander & Locher 2010, this issue) and cultural expressions (cf. Pauwels 2012). More specifically, facebooking online is, I maintain, writing oneself into being, in the sense that through our Facebook activities (e.g. posting on our and our 'Friends'' Walls, commenting on each other's posts, to mention just the two easiest and widely known practices in which people engage while logged in) we construct 'an auto-biography, a narrative of who we are and what kind of person we want others to see us' (Barton & Lee 2013: 84). Through Facebook its users not only conduct a good deal of daily communication but they also draw on digital material and by taking advantage of the social medium's affordances they live (an important part of) their lives.

Facebook Walls in particular have been found to be very popular in terms of exchanging birthday wishes, a practice which, at least in Greece is considered to be culturally important in terms of showing appreciation to the wish recipient and thus maintaining contact with friends and acquaintances. More specifically, my experience as a user of Facebook since 2007 has shown me that there seems to be a pattern regarding birthday wishes in Greek and their receipt: For those users who make their birthday available on Facebook (not necessarily the year of birth, though), on that day at least 1/10 of their friends' Wall postings contain birthday wishes.

The point of departure for this study was my observation that responses to birthday wishes vary across nationalities and ethnicities. The majority of my native speakers of Greek friends tend to accept their birthday wishes not only by thanking their friends but also by wishing them well in return. This happens either through updating their status (one wish for all friends) or by responding to each friend individually. In the latter case, these responses appear immediately below the original wish on their own Wall, as a separate contribution on their friend's Wall, or through a combination of both the aforementioned actions[5]. In light of this, the focus of this article is the analysis and interpretation of how birthday wishes are received (para)linguistically by native speakers of Modern Greek, and what the data tell us about the notion of politeness (Sifianou 1992), and the ways it is constructed (or not) on Facebook.

2. Interactional sociolinguistics and politeness on Facebook

Seeking to contribute towards a newly established strand of research that focuses on (im)politeness in on-line communication (see Locher 2010), I maintain that Facebook, due to its popularity and its easily accessible data (see section 3), can offer valuable material for analysis and shed light on the mechanism of (im)politeness and the ways

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[4] By 'News Feed' I mean a list of updates on users' Facebook home page. The News Feed shows updates about those people who are in one's friends list, provided the user has not decided to hide their friends' updates. The News Feed is basically an application which allows its users to have a quick look at what their friends have been doing on Facebook.

[5] All these actions can be seen as Facebook medium factors (Herring 2007), which constrain the actual reception of messages, in general, and birthday wishes in particular.

the latter is employed in digital communication. My focus is on the ways birthday wishes are received semiotically, i.e. both verbally and non-verbally (e.g., via emoticons, or other semiotic resources, such as postings of various electronic resources, including videos or pictures, among others). In order to investigate these issues, the guiding questions are the following: How do native speakers of Greek receive their birthday wishes? To what extent and in what ways do they project a polite persona not only to the person, who wished them happy birthday, but also to the people, who access and read their Facebook Walls?

Regarding how people deal with birthday wishes in Greece, it is a standard practice to thank someone for their wishes, but it is also common to reciprocate the birthday wishes. Reciprocation of birthday wishes translates into re-wishing our wishers health, happiness and fulfillment of their personal goals. On an anecdotal note, in offline face-to-face interaction and also in the context of telephone calls, reciprocity is used primarily among members of the family or closely connected people (e.g. close friends or members of the extended family, with whom the relationship is close and good).

Contrary to what I have observed in oral communication, in Facebook communication there seems to be a re-wishing part in the cases of receiving birthday wishes, regardless on the closeness of the people involved. In light of the above, the thanking part could be seen as equivalent to what Watts (2003: 160) has called 'politic behavior', namely "the knowledge of which linguistic structures are expectable in a specific interaction, under specific contextual circumstances". This type of behavior includes the objectified structures pertaining to expectable behavior as well as the incorporation of those structures into an individual habitus (Bourdieu 1991). This politic behavior regarding how birthday wishes are received by people becomes evident in face to face interaction, where the expected answer would be 'thank you/thanks (very much)'. This sequence – or, to use conversation analytic terminology, adjacency pair (Goodwin & Heritage 1990) – could be seen as an objectified linguistic structure, which when not there, i.e. when someone wishes someone else 'Happy birthday' and the other person does not thank their wisher, is commented upon in a negative way (e.g., how rude this person is not to thank their wisher). However, at least in the Greek language, what I have observed as a native speaker in both face to face and online communication (both private and public, e.g. on my friends' and my own Facebook Wall) is that those who decide to reply to individual people's birthday wishes and not just use the sentence 'thanks everyone for your/their wishes' (in English, or Greek, or Greeklish), which is usually posted as a status update, engage themselves in what Watts (2003: 160–161) has labeled 'linguistic politeness', namely "any linguistic behavior that goes beyond the bounds of politic behavior, meaning that it goes beyond what is perceived to be appropriate to the ongoing interaction". As a result of this, politeness is seen as identical to face enhancement, namely to the communicative situation, where the "image of self delineated in terms of approved social attributes" (Goffman 1967: 5; Theodoropoulou 2014c: 11-12) is empowered. I maintain that we can talk about linguistic politeness, and not just mere politic behavior, because the re-wishing occurs regardless of the relationship one has to the people, who wished them on their birthday, something which is the opposite of what is going on in oral communication; hence, re-wishing on Facebook can be seen as an instance of excessive politic behavior, namely as linguistic politeness. By employing this model, what I aim to do in this paper is not only to identify the norms of the communicative action of birthday wishes but also to tease out

the ways politeness is constructed linguistically on Facebook in the case of birthday wishes.

A basic implicit asset of the model, which is the reason why I am employing it in my analysis of how birthday wishes are received, is that it foregrounds the role of the researcher in terms of showing when and why individual users of language classify utterances as polite or express utterances politely (Watts 2003: 255). In light of this, what is achieved through the application of this model is to allow politeness to be evaluated by individual users. By emphasizing the agency of individual users of language (both the participants' and the researcher's), it seeks to flesh out the understanding and explaining of the practical functions (Bourdieu 1990: 52, cited in Watts 2003: 160) of human communication. However, given that we are dealing with communication, which is a form of interaction involving social actors, I maintain that Watts' theory of (im)politeness should be coupled with the interactional sociolinguistic tradition, which offers the analytical tools necessary to scrutinize the contingencies of (im)politeness.

Interactional sociolinguistics (henceforth, IS) is a qualitative research strategy, which emphasizes an inductive approach to the relationship between theory and research, in which the emphasis is placed on the generation of theories. In addition, it focuses not only on the ways in which individuals interpret their social world, but it also embodies a view of social reality as "a constantly shifting emergent property of individuals' creation" (Bryman 2001: 20).

In this paper, I draw on Deborah Schiffrin's (1994) take on IS, which bridges the macro with the micro in the study of communicative practices. The latter are seen as the discursive practices (micro level) of actors in pursuit of their everyday goals and aspirations (macro level) (Gumperz 1999: 454). Communicative practices fit into the macro-micro opposition in the following way: On the one hand, they are treated as shaped by one's habitus (Bourdieu 1991), a term which, in Gumperz's (1999: 453) understanding, includes the "embodied dispositions to act and perceive the world that directly reflect the macrosocietal conditions, political and economic forces, and relationships in which they were acquired". It is in this sense that these communicative practices or events could be seen as part of Watts' politic behavior. On the other hand, the more constructivist approach towards communicative practices is identified with the understanding of the ways in which localized interactive processes work. The scrutiny of these localized interactive processes can explain if and in what ways linguistic politeness is constructed.

In order to tackle these issues, IS views talk as a means for participants to achieve their communicative goals in real life situations by paying attention to "the meaning making processes and the taken-for-granted background assumptions that underlie the negotiation of shared interpretations" (Gumperz 1999: 454). In other words, at issue for IS is not just denotational meaning, namely the semantics of the individual units that form utterances, but the more important shared interpretations about speech, which include, among others, the norms, the beliefs and the values of the communities (Gumperz & Hymes 1972), including those pertinent to (im)politeness.

The key for both analytic labor processes of inferring, i.e. trying to understand or to guess, and monitoring, i.e. controlling one's own speech, is the investigation of 'context', which is seen as continuously constructed by the interactants. The term "context" comes from the Latin word "contextus", which means "a joining together" (Goodwin & Duranti 1992: 4–5). IS views context from the perspective of actors actively operating on the world within which they find themselves embedded. In a computer-

mediated environment, such as Facebook, I would also add that this context should also include the medium and situation factors (Herring 2007), which have an impact on actors' choices on how to construct their messages. Furthermore, IS tries to tie the analysis of context to the activities in which participants engage themselves, in order to constitute the culturally and historically organized social worlds that they inhabit. Finally, it is taken for granted that participants are situated within multiple contexts, which are capable of rapid and dynamic change as the events in which they are engaged are unfolding.

IS uses three mechanisms, or analytical tools, which help researchers describe how interactants make sense of the interaction in which they participate.The first includes 'contextualization conventions or cues', which are signaling cues that operate systematically within communicative traditions and give rise to communicative strategies (Gumperz 1982: 18; Zhang 2011). They refer to any semiotic sign which, "when processed in co-occurrence with symbolic grammatical and lexical signs serves to construct the contextual ground for situated interpretations, and thereby affects how constituent messages are understood" (Gumperz 1999: 461). This category includes code-switching, intonation, stress, rhythm, tempo, and, in the case of computer-mediated discourse, capitals, stretched vowels (cf. Kalman & Gergle 2010), as well as emoticons, such as smileys (see, for instance, the analysis of example 1 below). These contextualization cues have been characterized as 'metapragmatic signs' (Lucy 1992), because they represent the way a speaker signals and informs his/her interlocutors about how language is used in a specific instance of interaction. Contextualization cues are essential for analyzing people's cognitive capacity to make inferences, which draw on background assumptions about context, interactive goals and interpersonal relations. It is on the basis of these inferences that frames are derived, in terms of which people can interpret what is going on (Gumperz 1982: 2).

The term 'frames', which constitutes the second mechanism used by IS, comes from Erving Goffman (1974), following Bateson (1972), and is identified as "the organizational and interactional principles by which situations are sustained as experiences" (Goffman 1974: 53). These organizational and interactional principles set the scene within which an utterance can be interpreted. A frame gives a sense of what activity is being engaged in, how speakers mean what they say (Tannen & Wallat 1999: 348–349). As Ortega y Gasset (1959: 3) puts it, "before understanding any concrete statement, it is necessary to perceive clearly 'what it is all about' in this statement and 'what game is being played.'"

Trying to scrutinize the linguistic ways whereby frames are constructed, Goffman (1981) initiated the term 'footing' to describe how, at the same time that participants frame events, they negotiate the interpersonal relationships, or 'alignments', that constitute those events. In his own words

> footing is a participant's alignment, or set, or stance, or posture, or projected self […] held across a strip of behavior of variable duration […] A change of footing implies a change in alignment we take up to ourselves and the others present as expressed in the way we manage the production and reception of an utterance. (Goffman 1981: 128).

Through this term, Goffman (1981: 128-151) tries to capture the dynamics involved in "the flickering, cross-purposed, messy irresolution of unknowable circumstances". The participants' footing in an interaction can change very quickly (Goffman 1981: 130-133), and these shifts can be signaled both orally (e.g. through interjections, discourse markers,

even a switch in pitch) and visually or modally (e.g. through posture, gesture, or the use of emoticons).

But how do these three mechanisms correlate with each other? First of all, it should be highlighted that Gumperz was a linguistic anthropologist, while Goffman was a sociologist. Thus, the relationship among these three mechanisms, namely contextualization cues, frames, and footing, projects itself to the level of the relationship between linguistic anthropology (closely related to sociolinguistics) and sociology (loosely related to sociolinguistics; cf. Williams 1992). According to Schiffrin (1994: 104–105), there seems to be a co-dependence between these mechanisms, which results in their being efficient analytical tools for understanding how context is constructed among interactants, and how communication, and eventually (im)politeness is arrived at. Goffman (1981: 126–127) himself notes, "what indicates shifts in footing and alignment are not just the way we manage the production of an utterance, but also the kinds of devices identified by Gumperz as contextualization cues". Hence, his suggestion that sociolinguists can contribute towards the study of footing comes as no surprise (1981: 128). Likewise, sociolinguists can draw on sociological analyses of footing. In Goffman's (1981: 128) wording, "if [sociolinguists] are to compete in this heretofore literary and psychological area, then presumably they must find a structural means of doing so […] the structural underpinnings of changes in footing".

To conclude, I would suggest that Goffman's focus on social interaction is identified with the macro dimension, while Gumperz's focus on situated inference comprises the micro dimension of IS. It is only through the understanding of these two dimensions that we can arrive at an adequate analysis (politeness$_2$ in Watts' (2003) terminology) of the contextual inferences hearers draw on, in order to make sense of their interlocutors' utterances, and, hence to evaluate (im)politeness. However, before I show how these IS analytical tools can be employed in the data analysis, some information on the data and the methodology used for their collection is in order.

3. Data and methodology

The data for this study, which were collected from July 2007–December 2010, stem from the Walls of 400 'Friends' of mine, all of whom are native speakers of Greek. 389 are native speakers of Standard Modern Greek and 11 are speakers of Cypriot Greek. (The examples used below are all drawn from the data from the speakers of Standard Modern Greek.) Table 1 provides a concise description of my corpus. In total, the 400 participants received 10,746 birthday wishes. Sixty-five per cent of these wishes received a response by the birthday persons. Only 14 of the 400 birthday persons did not respond to their well-wishers. The other 386 birthday persons answered either in English and/or in Greek (examples of the linguistic analysis are given below). From the 386 birthday persons, 317 chose to answer each well-wisher individually not only by thanking them but also by reciprocating the wishes, while 69 wrote one generic thank you post addressed to all well-wishers.

Table 1: Statistical description of the Facebook birthday wishes corpus (USERS = 400; all users received birthday wishes)

Description	%	N
Total number of birthday wishes received by 400 birthday persons	100%	10,746
Number of birthday wishes with answer by birthday person	65%	6,977
Number of birthday persons who did not react to their birthday wishes	3%	14
Number of birthday persons who reacted to their birthday wishes	97%	386
Number of birthday persons who reacted to their birthday wishes with an individualized response (thanking and wish reciprocation) to each well-wisher	79%	317
Number of birthday persons who reacted to their birthday wishes with only one thank you status update addressed to all well-wishers	13%	53
Number of birthday persons who reacted to their birthday wishes with only one thank you and wish reciprocation status update addressed to all well-wishers	4%	16

The methodology I used for the data collection is discourse-centred online ethnography (Androutsopoulos 2008), which essentially couples the systematic observation of online data, in this particular case data from native speakers of Greek's Facebook Walls, with ethnographic research on the participants themselves.

Ethnographic understanding[6] can be achieved in different ways. In this article, ethnography is identified with linguistic ethnography, and as such, it is seen as "a method of social research, [which] seeks to capture and understand the meanings and dynamics in particular cultural settings" (Rampton et al. 2004: 2). Overall, my methodology includes ethnographic participant observation (Emerson et al. 2001) and ethnographic interviews (Bucholtz 2007; Theodoropoulou 2014a: 45). The combination of these two methods aims at "informing the analysis of language produced independently of the researcher's immediate involvement" (Tusting & Maybin 2007: 579). Out of the connected characteristics identified as relevant to ethnography in this definition, the most important, in my view, and the one that underlines my analysis is the

> regard for local rationalities in an interplay between 'strangeness' and 'familiarity', namely ethnography's effort to flesh out the meanings that participants take for granted in their everyday practices and render them construable to the audiences to which the research reports are addressed. (Tusting & Maybin 2007: 579)

Seen like this, ethnography resonates with Watts' (2003) theoretical framework on politeness, which is used in this paper, inasmuch as it foregrounds the reflexivity of both the researcher (indexed by their reconstruction of participants' politeness practices), and the participants (elicited through ethnographic interviews).

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[6] See the papers in issue 11/5 [2007] of the *Journal of Sociolinguistics* for a wide range of different takes on linguistic ethnography, its targets and its processes.

Even though the issue of gaining ethical approval to use data found in social media can be a conundrum (see, e.g. Eysenbach & Till 2001; Ess & the AoIR Ethics Working Committee 2002), it is a major issue, which needs to be discussed in scholarly outputs of CMC language (cf. Bolander & Locher 2014: 16-18), in order for the reader to be able to disambiguate any "potentially ethically ambiguous data" (Sandler 2013: 59).

For the purposes of this article and as a researcher of Facebook, I have aligned myself with the idea that "the greater the acknowledged publicity of the venue, the less obligation there may be to protect individual privacy, confidentiality, right to informed consent etc." (Ess & the AoIR Ethics Working Committee 2002: 5). Facebook Wall[7] is indeed a widely public venue (depending, of course, on which privacy settings users have used; hence, a Facebook Wall can be visible only to the user's friends, or to the friends of friends or to everyone or only to the individual user of the social medium. I cannot be aware of each of my 400 participants' privacy settings choices at the time of data collection (and, let us not forget that these privacy settings can change rapidly, depending on factors, the discussion of which is beyond the scope of this paper).

Nonetheless, due to my close connection with the five people, whose data I analyze below, I was informed that all of them had, at the time of the data collection, chosen to make their walls available to friends of friends.[8] The reason why I chose to present the analysis of data from these particular five people is because I have a close connection to all of them, in the sense that all of them have been good friends of mine for a long time. Under these circumstances, my analysis stands a good chance of being reliable, because it can be argued that I grok, namely I understand my friends' online practices and their offline contextualization and consequences in such a way that as an observer I become "a part of the process being observed" (Chatfield 2013: 54). I find the term 'groking' useful here inasmuch as it allows for an emic, i.e. insider's, perspective on the data themselves, hence the possibility of arriving at an analysis that is in alignment with and does justice to my participants' take on the underpinnings of the data is a high one. Nonetheless, one should always keep in mind that the researcher always takes a certain stance towards the data analyzed and this is due to our background knowledge and our purposes as researchers (Barton & Lee 2013: 103). I argue that, as long as there is an explicit reflection of the rationale behind the analysis and the ways the relationship between the researcher and their participants is brought into the picture, the combination can facilitate the reading and understanding of the analysis.

Given that all of my 400 participants are citizens of the European Union, where strong privacy rights by law apply (see the 1995 European Union Data Protection Directive, as cited in Ess & the AoIR eEhics Working Committee 2002: 6), I asked them to give me their consent to use data from their Walls for the purposes of my linguistic study on birthday wishes. More specifically, I sent private messages on Facebook to all of my participants (individually, not circularly, in order to enhance confidentiality) and asked them to:

– Give me their consent for their personal information to be gathered online

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[7] Or 'status, photos, and posts', as it is currently labeled on the Facebook website.

[8] Issues of the publicity of the venue, from which electronic linguistic data are elicited, raise very interesting questions on performance and performativity, i.e. politeness as a performed communicative action. Even though this line of inquiry would be fascinating to pursue per se, in this paper only hints on performance/performativity will be made in section 3.

– Allow me to use their birthday wishes and their responses for the purposes of academic linguistic research focusing on politeness.

In addition, they were notified that they would:
– Be able to opt-out of data collection, and
– Be protected from having their data transferred to countries with less stringent privacy protections.

Although the argument has been made that Facebook is a public forum, consent from the participants was asked because the data would be used for research purposes and subsequently they would be made widely accessible to anyone. While all of my 400 participants agreed on my collecting their data and using them for my quantitative analysis, I got 367 approvals to use their textual data in my qualitative analysis in potential publications and these data can be used only under the condition that they be anonymized. In this way, my dealing with ethics in in accordance with the need for a more dynamic process-approach to ethics, as has been identified in the recent literature on this issue (cf. Bolander & Locher 2014: 17). The five participants, whose groked data are presented immediately below, were notified about their data being included in this paper, and they all unanimously (and quite enthusiastically) agreed on this choice. In fact, when I finished my analyses, I showed them individually to the people involved and they gave me their feedback, which has been taken into consideration in the end product in the form of ethnographic information.

The first participant I will call Andreas Papadopoulos[9]. Andreas was 32 years old in 2008 (that is the exact year to which the data analyzed belong) and he is the director of a catering family business. Overall, he can be seen as an avid fan and user of Facebook, because in his own words "it is the basic tool I employ in my everyday communication not only with my customers, but also with my friends". Given that his job keeps him very busy, he does not have the time to socialize with his friends frequently, hence he uses Facebook to make up for this by engaging in what I would call digital socialization. Tolis Andrew, the person who wishes Andreas happy birthday, is a close friend of his.

Along the same lines, Giorgos Petrocheilos is an unemployed musician, who, due to his professional status (i.e. in 2009), used to spend a significant amount of time in front of his screen, not only looking for a job but also trying to catch up with "the latest gossip about his friends". Dimitris Dimakakis, the person who wishes Giorgos happy birthday, is one of his first cousins.

On the other hand, the 26 year-old Irene Sarri, whose data are analyzed in the third example, cannot be seen as an enthusiastic user of Facebook; in her own words,

> I use Facebook only for sending birthday wishes to remote friends of mine [to friends of hers, who live abroad or in other cities and towns in Greece, but not in Athens, her native hometown, my explanation]; I very much prefer to hang out with my friends in person – that is genuine communication!

She is a teacher at an elementary school. Vasiliki Giannou, her birthday wisher, is a colleague of hers working at the same school.

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[9] In light of the discussion above, all of the names and family names are pseudonyms.

Anastasis Tangalos, aged 34, is also an elementary school teacher, who happens to be very popular among his pupils. He spends a significant amount of time on Facebook, because in his own words "I believe that the learning process between one teacher and his [sic] pupils should expand between online and offline worlds". What he usually does is that he maintains a blog[10] on Facebook, in which he posts various didactic essays (i.e. essays containing information on how to behave, what to believe, how to be polite, what to do in order to deal with a crisis etc.), which are continuously commented upon by both his adult friends and his pupils. These essays basically encapsulate his teaching ethos at school, and they are usually triggered by experiences Anastasis has at school. Panos Kratimenos is one of his pupils.

Finally, the 30-year old Stamatis Theodorakis is a children's choir conductor. He is also very popular with the children in his choir. His data are from the year 2010, when he was in Crete. In 2009, he worked in Athens putting together a children's choir in one of the northern suburbs of Athens. One of the members of that choir was Sofia Stamatiou, the person who wishes Stamatis happy birthday. Having described the participants, their data and the methodology I used in order to collect them, I now turn to the actual data analysis.

4. Data analysis

The research questions I seek to answer in this section are the following: how are birthday wishes received linguistically by native speakers of Modern Greek, and how do these linguistic receptions construct politeness on Facebook? The first question is answered by means of recognizing the patterns used in my entire corpus (see Table 1), whereby the participants receive their birthday wishes. It is argued that these patterns form variation in politic behaviour, insofar as they realize the expected norm (and not excessive behaviour) of thanking someone for their wishes. On the other hand, the second question will focus on the ways five participants send return wishes of well-being to their 'friends', acting in a manner of excess politic behaviour, which brings them closer to politeness. Of those 400 participants, I chose to provide an in-depth interactional sociolinguistic analysis of five[11] wishes that were responded to by five of my participants. As becomes evident immediately below, four of these five participants are frequent and active users of Facebook, a fact that has become evident not only through my observation of their (publicized) activity on their Walls (i.e. they post various messages on the Walls of their 'friends', they make comments on other people's postings, photos, and video links, to name just a few), but it has been also verified through my ethnographic interviews with them. Only one participant, Irene Sarri, is not a very active user, but, according to her ethnographic profile, she is logged in continuously, and she enjoys checking on her friends' News feeds and status updates. I decided to focus on these five people, because they were the most enthusiastic

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[10] A blog (a *blend* of the term web log) is a sort of *website*, which is usually maintained by an individual with (regular) commentaries, announcements, descriptions of events, or other postings, which include video, music or graphics. Entries are commonly displayed in reverse-chronological order. One of the key features of blogs is that they are interactive, allowing visitors to leave comments and even message each other via widgets on the blogs and it is this interactivity that distinguishes them from other static websites (cf. Miller & Shepherd 2004; Herring et al. 2004).

[11] Due to word limitations, I am not able to provide more analyzed examples in this paper.

participants[12] in the study and the people that are closest to me, in the sense that I know them better than the rest of the participants in both offline and online worlds, hence my analysis of their data can be seen as more reliable.

4.1. *Politic behavior: Patterns of wish reception*

In terms of answering the first question, I focus on the actual verb used and the address term used by the receiver of the birthday wishes to address the person who wished them happy birthday. Table 2 provides the patterns I was able to identify in my data sets, along with an indicative percentage of use for each of them.

Table 2: Patterns in the reception of birthday wishes (verbs) (N=6,977)

Original Greek text	English translation	% of use	N
Σ'ευχαριστώ (πάρα) πολύ για τις ευχές	Thank you very much for the wishes	16.8 %	1,172
Να 'σαι καλά για τις ευχές σου	May you be well for your wishes	15.7 %	1,095
Να 'σαι καλά	May you be well	15.2 %	1,060
Σ'ευχαριστώ για τις ευχές σου	Thank you for your wishes	14.4 %	1,005
Ευχαριστώ για τις ευχές	Thanks for the wishes	12.5 %	872
Ευχαριστώ (πάρα) πολύ	Thanks very much	9.4 %	656
Σ'ευχαριστώ (πάρα) πολύ για τις ευχές σου	Thank you very much for your wishes	9.3 %	649
Ευχαριστώ (πάρα) πολύ για τις ευχές σου	Thanks very much for your wishes	5.1 %	356
Ευχαριστώ για τις ευχές σου	Thanks for your wishes	1.6 %	112
Total		100%	6,977

Table 2 suggests that the verb ευχαριστώ ('thanks') is the most preferable form in my participants' reception of birthday wishes, as it is used in almost 69% of the wishes, while the verbal phrase να 'σαι καλά ('may you be well') seems to be in relatively wide use (31%) as well. The latter does not have many variants due to its being a verbal phrase with a complete meaning, which as such cannot take a wide range of complementizers. This situation reflects what is happening with the reception of birthday wishes in oral language as well, where ευχαριστώ ('thanks') and να 'σαι καλά ('may you be well') are used interchangeably.

But what is the difference between ευχαριστώ ('thanks') and να 'σαι καλά ('may you be well') and how is this relevant to issues of politeness? In Modern Greek, the utterance να'σαι καλά ('may you be well') is used extensively in everyday oral speech

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[12] Overall, almost all of the participants showed interest in this study, but I had to select whose data to analyze on the basis of several criteria. I have chosen enthusiasm as a criterion, which can be identified ethnographically, because it secures the reading of the analysis and, hence, its exposure to critical comments by the participants themselves. The latter aligns my analysis with the ethics of representation, namely the need to make sure that my analysis of the participants' data is "fair, reasonable and accurate" (Kahn 2011: 178). This responsibility is one of the aims of the very enterprise of (both offline and online) ethnography.

and on Facebook as well. Despite the fact that its locutionary force is a wish (it literally means: 'May you be well!'), its illocutionary force is, I would suggest, that of thanking someone (see the analysis of examples 1 and 4 found below) in a more targeted-towards-your interlocutor way than ευχαριστώ ('thank you'). The reason for this is not only because the person is the second person singular, and in this way it addresses one's interlocutor directly; rather, it is primarily due to its Demotic format (the use of the particle να (the English translation would be roughly 'may') plus the extraction of the ει in the word είσαι ('you are'), which becomes 'σαι (you're). Given the connotations that the Demotic variety of Modern Greek has as the 'language of the people' ('the spoken and live form of language in Greece' etc.), it can be argued that the Demotic form να 'σαι καλά! ('may you be well! '), through which these connotations are reflected, could be seen as an utterance simultaneously combining the intentions of both thanking and wishing for the well-being of the recipient. Thus, the expression constructs linguistic politeness, at least when used as a linguistic reaction to birthday wishes.

The second point of interest in terms of politic behavior is the use of address terms. Table 3 summarizes my findings, which indicate a strong preference for addressing the wisher by their first name or by their diminutive (e.g. with the ending – akis/-akos). So the name Kostas becomes Kostakis, and its vocative form is Kostaki). In addition, people seem to prefer to use the particle μου (grammatically the possessive pronoun for the first person singular, but used here as a particle indexing intimacy) in nearly half of the cases (48.6%). Such a choice can be explained either as a means to accommodate to the birthday wisher, or, when the birthday wisher has not used μου ('my') in their wishes, Facebook users try to create some sort of intimacy, which, as I argue immediately below, foregrounds the actual construction of politeness.

Table 3: Patterns in the reception of birthday wishes (address terms) (N= 6,521)

Original Greek text	English translation	Percentage of use	N
Όνομα + μου	My + first name	25.5%	1,663
Υποκοριστικό + μου	My +diminutive	23.1%	1,506
Όνομα - μου	First name	16.3%	1,063
Υποκοριστικό - μου	Diminutive	9.6%	626
Φίλε/φίλη + μου	My friend	9.3%	606
Φίλε/φίλη – μου	Friend	8.2%	535
Αγαπητέ/ή μου (φίλε/φίλη/όνομα)	Dear friend	5.0%	326
Αγαπημένε/η μου (φίλε/φίλη/όνομα)	My dear friend/first name	1.7%	111
Καλέ μου/καλή μου (φίλε/φίλη/όνομα)	My good friend/first name	1.3%	85
Total		100.0%	6,521

To sum up, regarding the reception of birthday wishes the dominant pattern seems to be the use of (σ') ευχαριστώ ('thank [you]') with or without the wisher's first name, either in its original form or its diminutive, which is usually escorted by the intimacy marker μου ('my'). Both of these patterns, indexing politic behavior, namely the expected linguistic behavior in terms of accepting (birthday) wishes could be seen as constructing intimacy, which in turn seems to foreground or set the scene for the construction of politeness, to whose analysis I now turn.

4.2. *Linguistic politeness: Reciprocity of wishes*

Regarding the ways whereby politeness – and not just mere politic behavior – is constructed linguistically, the data indicating reciprocity in the sending of wishes[13] fall into five distinctive categories: Full grammatical construction, full grammatical construction with metapragmatic comments, elliptical grammatical construction, elliptical grammatical construction with metapragmatic comments, and elliptical grammatical construction with the addition of personalized, context-bound information[14]. Table 4 provides the statistics of use for each of the aforementioned five categories. Each of these categories is illustrated through one example, which is analyzed from an IS perspective (see section 3 for the selection criteria). Text in bold shows the focus of analysis.

Table 4: Statistics of use for each of the politeness categories (N=6,977):

Description of politeness category	Percentage of use	N
	34%	2,373
Elliptical grammatical construction	28%	1953
Full grammatical construction	18%	1256
Elliptical grammatical construction with the addition of personalized, context-bound information	17%	1186
Full grammatical construction	3%	209
Total	100%	6,977

(1) Elliptical grammatical construction with metapragmatic comments

Original text	English translation
Panos Kratimenos *xronia polla kurie oti epithumeite!!!!!!* June 30 at 10:06pm · Comment ·Like Unlike · View Feedback (1)Hide Feedback (1) · See Wall-to-Wall	'Panos Kratimenos happy birthday, mister, (may you have) whatever you wish for!!!!!!'
Anastasis Tangalos **Να 'σαι καλά, Παναγιώτη μου! Οι ευχές των πρώτων μαθητών μου είναι σίγουρα ξεχωριστές... Με συγκινείς ιδιαίτερα! :--) Καλή πρόοδο, υγεία προπαντός και επίτευξη όλων των στόχων σου!** June 30 at 10:41pm · Delete	'Anastasis Tangalos **May you be well, Panagioti (mou)! My first pupils' wishes are definitely special… I'm deeply touched (by your wishes)! :--) I hope you make fine progress, (have) health (above all) and I wish you fulfillment of all your targets!'**

In example 1, the elliptical grammatical construction is the use of the sequence of several wishes without the use of the verb να 'χεις ('may you have'), including progress,

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[13] The data mentioned here are the Wall wishes, which have an individual response beneath them, i.e. they are the 6,977 wishes (65% of my corpus) as found in Table 1.

[14] In my data set, I was not able to find any data with full grammatical construction and with the addition of personalized, context-bound information.

health, and fulfillment of targets. According to my ethnographic notes, as a teacher who values communication with his pupils very highly, not only in offline but also in online interactions, Anastasis participates in an ongoing process of negotiation, to infer what his pupil Panos intends to convey and to monitor how his own (namely Anastasis') contributions are received. In this interaction, both participants use text and some other semiotic features, which act as contextualization cues for the creation of politeness; Panos uses six exclamation marks to show his enthusiasm, and within that frame of enthusiasm he is using the address form 'mister' to index his subsequent respect for his (former) teacher, while Anastasis uses the smiley, in order to index his appreciation for the fact that he is honored by his former pupil. This bidirectional appreciation translates into mutual respect and, as a result of this, the need to capitalize this into linguistic politeness is what urges Panos and especially Anastasis to engage in these utterances. At issue for IS is not just the denotational meaning, namely the semantics of the individual units that form utterances, but the general sociocultural context and the values attached to it in which these utterances are embedded and from which they originate (cf. Gumperz & Hymes 1972). In this particular case, the denotational meaning of Panos' wishes does not justify the denotational meaning of the metapragmatic comment made by Anastasis: Panos uses the standard birthday wish ό,τι επιθυμείτε ('[may you have] whatever you wish for'), so it is not anything special. However, Anastasis, is obviously trying to express his appreciation to his former pupil and in his answer he foregrounds the frame of his relationship with Panos as one of the first students he has taught, in order to point out that this wish is very special to him. Thus, Anastasis engages in the construction of linguistic politeness by wishing his former student Panos well-being by taking a respectful and appreciative alignment to the status of his birthday wisher as one of his first pupils, and explicitly commenting upon it metapragmatically. In light of this, Anastasis engages in face-enhancing behavior, which, as argued in section 2, is behavior that leads to politeness.

In example 2, the elliptical grammatical construction is the omission of the verb (I wish) in Irene's wish to Vasiliki. In this case, contrary to the previous one, no metapragmatic comment on Vasiliki's status is added. Nonetheless, linguistic politeness is constructed, as Irene does not restrict herself to thanking Vasiliki for the birthday wishes, but she sends back the same wishes to Vasiliki (namely wishes for health, primarily, joy, lots of successes[15] and then, taking things a step further, adds 'and whatever you wish for.' Politic behavior would be exhibited by merely thanking the well-wisher for his or her good wishes (see section 2). Here, her linguistic activity is in excess of the politic behavior, as she adds a greeting to Vasiliki's husband, Steve.

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[15] These dimensions have been also found to exist in birthday wishes in English (cf. Arcimavičienė 2010: 174)

(2) Elliptical grammatical construction

Original text	English translation
Vasiliki Giannou KALIMEROUDIA K XRONIA POLLA NA TA EKATOSTISEIS ME UGEIA K XARA K MEGALES EPITIXIES...EMATHA OTI PERASATE TELEIA DEN KATAFERAME ME STEVE NA ERTHOUME ALLA THA KANONISW NA PIOUME POTO SINTOMA SE FILW...VASILIKI-STAVROS December 22 at 11:13am · Comment ·LikeUnlike · View Feedback (2) Hide Feedback (2) · See Wall-to-Wall Vasiliki Giannou likes this.	'Vasiliki Giannou GOOD MORNINGS (sic) (DIMINUTIVE) AND HAPPY BIRTHDAY (I HOPE YOU REACH) 100 YEARS OF AGE WITH HEALTH AND JOY AND GREAT SUCCESSES… I HEAR THAT YOU HAD A GREAT TIME WE DIDN'T MANAGE TO COME WITH STEVE BUT I'LL ARRANGE FOR US TO GO FOR A DRINK SOON I KISS YOU…'
Irene Sarri **Thanks, Vasilikoula! :) Ta deonta kai sena [sic] me ygeia kai o,ti epithymeis! Pollous xairetismous ston Steve kai tha kanonisoume syntoma eksodo!!** December 22 at 2:43pm · Delete	'Irene Sarri **Thanks, Vasilikoula (diminutive)! :) All the necessary wishes (namely the same things you wished me, I wish you) to you too with health and whatever you wish for! Many greetings to Steve and we'll arrange a meeting soon!!'**

Resonating with the previous example, the main contextualization cues that Irene is employing to construct this type of politeness is the use of a smiley and two exclamation marks. Another important aspect of politeness, which needs to be emphasized at this point, is the relationship these two women have; as noted above, they are colleagues at an elementary school and friends. Irene feels the need to enhance this relationship by digitally verifying it. This digital verification in turn indexes a promise to her friend that they will go out for drinks. In other words, by aligning herself to the frame of friendship, which at least in Greece entails frequently spending time together outside work and by pledging one of the most prominent cultural activities associated with this friendship, not only does she manage to feed her friendship, but she also shows politeness constructed by Irene through establishing acknowledgment and appreciation to her friend Vasiliki.

(3) Reciprocity of wishes with metapragmatic comments (full grammatical construction)

Original text	English translation
Dimitris Dimakakis Καθυστερημένα χρόνια πολλά και από μένα maestro...εύχομαι να πιάσεις την κορυφή... May 16 at 11:35am · Comment ·LikeUnlike · View Feedback (1)Hide Feedback (1) · See Wall-to-Wall	'Dimitris Dimakakis Belated happy birthday from me too, maestro… I hope you reach the top…'
Giorgos Petrocheilos **Μητσάρα, σ΄ ευχαριστώ πάρα πολύ! Οι ευχές είναι πάντοτε καλοδεχούμενες, όποτε και αν έρχονται! :) Εύχομαι και σ΄ εσένα να είσαι πάντα καλά, με υγεία και κάθε ευτυχία, προσωπική και επαγγελματική!** May 16 at 2:46pm · Delete	'Giorgos Petrocheilos **Mitsara (nickname), thank you very much! Wishes are always welcome, whenever they come! :) I wish you too well-being, with health and all happiness, (both) personal and professional!'**

In example 3, the full grammatical construction is created through the explicit use of the verb 'I wish you'. Resonating with Example 1, here there is a metapragmatic comment, this time about the validity and significance of belated birthday wishes. This comment in combination with the excessive wishes of Giorgos towards his friend Dimitris, i.e. verbalized in more words (16) than the number of Dimitris' words (12), construct linguistic politeness in the following way: According to my ethnographic notes from my discussions with the participants, all of the things that Giorgos wishes Dimitris are things that were missing from Giorgos' life at that particular time of data collection. However, instead of complaining about not having them, and especially about lacking professional fulfillment, Giorgos uses them as contextualization cues for constructing a cool persona, in the sense that he does not want Dimitris to feel pity for him. In this way, by saving his friend's face through a sequence of wishes for well-being, which technically speaking would be more pertinent to himself than to his friend Dimitris, Giorgos manages to construct linguistic politeness in the reception of his birthday wishes.

Example 4 contains a rather indirect way of constructing linguistic politeness. The personalized, context-bound piece of information here is the existence of a flambeau and, most importantly, the fact that Stamatis has placed it in a prominent position at his place. This is basically a compliment that Stamatis decides to pay to both his choir member and her mother (who bought that flambeau) by making relevant something which, under different circumstances, would not interest anyone. In Greek culture, when the receiver of your gift compliments it, this is considered to be polite. By making reference to this sociocultural frame enhanced by the explicit sending of greetings to Sofia's mother, Stamatis engages in the construction of linguistic politeness. In other words, by taking a very positive stance (the flambeau has been put in a very prominent spot in his place) towards his choir member, the choir member's mother and

the gift per se, Stamatis manages to reciprocate the honor, and thus to construct a polite persona.

(4) Elliptical grammatical construction with the addition of personalized, context-bound information

Original text	English translation
Sofia Stamatiou kirie 8eodwraki sas euxomai ki eg k i mitera m n ta ekatostisete k n eiste pada igiis k xaroumenos!!!!!n 3erete pws dn 8 sas 3exasoume pote k oti sas sizitame poli sixna me t kalitera logia..:) October 12 at 8:44pm · Delete	'Sofia Stamatiou mister Theodorakis, my mother and I wish you reach 100 years of age and you always be healthy and happy!!!!! be aware that we'll never forget you and that we very often discuss you in a good way..:)'
Stamatis Theodorakis **Σ΄ ευχαριστώ πολύ Σοφία μου, να είσαι καλά! Ένα πράγμα θα σου πω: το κηροπήγιο βρίσκεται σε περίοπτη θέση στο σαλόνι του σπιτιού μου εδώ... Χαιρετισμούς και στη μητέρα σου!** October 13 at 12:08am · Delete	'Stamatis Theodorakis **Thanks indeed, Sophia (mou), be well! I'll tell you one thing: the flambeau (you brought me) is found in a prominent position here in my living room… (Say) Hellos to your mother!'**

(5) Full grammatical construction

Original text	English translation
Tolis Andrew an k ligo kathusterimena....HRONIA POLLA!!! ta hronia pernane alla emeis eimaste akoma edw :) November 21 2008 at 3:10pm · Comment ·LikeUnlike · View Feedback (1)Hide Feedback (1) · See Wall-to-Wall	'Tolis Andrew even though slightly delayed…. HAPPY BIRTHDAY!!! years are passing but we are still here :)'
Andreas Papadopoulos **Apostolh mou, s'eyxaristw para poly! Eyxomai o,ti kalytero sth zwh sou, na eisai panta ygihs, xaroumenos kai dhmiourgikos kai na pragmatopoieis olous tous stoxous sou!** November 21 at 3:20pm · Delete	'Andreas Papadopoulos **Apostoli (mou), thank you very much. I wish you all the best in your life, be healthy, happy and creative and fulfill all your targets!'**

In this final example, the full grammatical construction in the reciprocity of wishes becomes evident through the use of Andreas' verbs, including the indicative 'I wish', and the subjunctives 'be' and 'fulfill'. Like in all the previous examples, politeness is constructed by Andreas via establishing a rather honorary footing, through which he wishes his close friend Tolis health, happiness, creativity, and fulfillment of his targets. The honor, and thus politeness vis-à-vis Tolis is also created because of Andreas' use of

'Greeklish', namely the representation of the Greek language with the Latin script (see Spilioti 2009; Androutsopoulos 2009), an unusual choice Andreas makes to save Tolis' face. More specifically, according to Andreas's ethnographic profile, he always uses the Greek script, because he considers Greeklish "a serious peril for the language" (ethnographic interview). The fact that in this particular case he is employing Greeklish to answer a birthday wish, also written in Greeklish, suggests that he is accommodating to his interlocutor's spelling choices, a fact that indexes his effort to save Tolis' face by not shifting the spelling into his usual one, namely the Greek one, which he very strongly supports. According to my ethnographic notes, Andreas considers the use of the Greek alphabet as essential to be applied by all native speakers of Greek in their digital communication with their compatriots, in order for their national identity not be jeopardized (cf. Koutsogiannis & Mitsikopoulou 2003). In light of this, the use of Greeklish as a contextualization cue contributes towards the construction of linguistic politeness on behalf of Andreas.

In sum, as has become evident through the analytical focus on patterns of the reception of birthday wishes and the ways whereby participants decide to retribute well-being to their birthday wishers, it could be argued that, at least within this sample, native speakers of Modern Greek engage in politeness-constructing activities on Facebook. A state of rapport and intimacy (politic behavior) is introduced through the use of ευχαριστώ ('thanks') along with the use of the wisher's first name and the diminutive form μου ('my'), which in this way corresponds with the objectified linguistic structures relating to appropriate social behavior related to the reception of birthday wishes, not only in Greek but in many (diverse) languages, including English, Arabic and Japanese, to name just a few. What differentiates Modern Greek from other languages is that, as I have shown above, this politic behavior regarding the reception of birthday wishes culminates into politeness, inasmuch as people convey (para)linguistically social values in excess of politic behavior, which are consciously produced (in written and on a public medium, such as Facebook) as realizations of an extra value (Watts 2003: 162).

5. Conclusion

The focus of this paper has been on the ways politeness is constructed on Facebook, by focusing on data from native speakers of Greek and their responses to birthday wishes as found on their Walls. An interactional sociolinguistic analysis informed by discourse-mediated online ethnography showed that the native Greek participants I investigated tend to pave their way of constructing linguistic politeness by adhering to the politic behavior of thanking their wishers. This behavior, at least in the Greek context, tends to be personally targeted, something which is indexed by both the use of σ'ευχαριστώ ('thank you') and να 'σαι καλά ('may you be well'), and the use of a first name or nickname enhanced by the intimacy particle μου ('my'). Instead of leaving their interaction with the people who wished them well-being on their birthday on Facebook Walls, the participants go one step further by actually reciprocating the wishes to their 'friends', sometimes in extravagant ways (like, for instance, Anastasis in example 1). It is exactly this reciprocation of wishes that is identified with Watts' linguistic politeness. As such, it can also be seen as a good example of analytic labor (Karakayali & Kilic 2013).

In my analysis, I have also provided a tentative typology of the linguistically constructed reciprocations of birthday wishes in Modern Greek. In order to analyze these examples, I tried to argue in favor of the need to employ the interactional sociolinguistic tools of contextualization cues, frames, and footing, which can explain how the contingencies of the context have a bearing on the ways politeness is constructed interactionally on Facebook.

An issue that I have not touched upon, due to word limitations, but which would be interesting to pursue in the future, is how performance/performativity of politeness becomes evident on Facebook Walls, how it is constrained by gender, and what its impact is on interaction. In other words, it would interesting to look into what recently has been labelled 'user-generated content' (Walther & Jang 2012: 4) and how it constructs identities and social meanings associated with digital communication. The need for this question to be tackled is the fact that a Facebook Wall is usually a semi-public space (depending on individual users' privacy settings). Thus, the existence of an audience definitely has an impact on how (im)politeness is constructed, which is associated with the accumulation of all sorts of social capital and which, as such, is an important aspect of social identity construction on Facebook (cf. Brandtzæg's (2012) categories of social media users). Finally, given the major importance birthday wishes have on Facebook not only for Greeks but also for other nationalities, it would be interesting to see similar case studies in other languages.

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