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Master's Thesis

*“Want to see more?”
Null subjects in
Facebook status updates*

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Abstract

English null subjects have been under discussion among linguists for several years. This thesis analyzed the usage of null subjects in status updates of Facebook fan pages. The investigated fan pages were 28 US American and British women's and men's magazines targeting distinct readerships. A corpus of status updates was compiled and analyzed according to the use of null subjects that occurred with 26 selected lexemes, such as *want*, *need*, *think*, *ever* and *never*. The Facebook corpus findings were contrasted to the magazine sub-corpus of the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA). The results showed that US American women's magazines apply most null subjects in their status updates, whereas British women's magazines use least null subjects. Additionally, verbs of emotion are more likely to be employed by British magazines than by US American magazines. Modal verbs occur more frequently in US American magazines than in British magazines. The findings of COCA illustrated that null subjects are significantly less often applied in print magazines than in Facebook status updates. This may be due to the fact that Facebook status updates are considered to have more oral characteristics than print magazines.

Keywords: *English null subjects, Facebook status updates, US American and British magazines, COCA*

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1 Introduction

When using language, a person always strives to apply words as economically as possible, i.e. using the least amount of words to express oneself most clearly without causing any misunderstandings. Language economy can result in omitting individual elements or even entire parts of sentences. In English, the deletion of single elements or parts of sentences is not always possible and grammatical. Particularly, the ellipsis of subject pronouns seems to be very restricted with regard to prescriptive grammar.

Null subject pronouns in English have been discussed by various linguists (Trasher, 1974; Cote, 1996; Haegeman & Ishane, 1999) over the past years. From a grammatical point of view, null subjects in English are not allowed because English is a non-pro-drop language. Additionally, English does not have rich inflection, unlike Spanish or Italian, which facilitates the omission of subject pronouns. However, many studies (e.g. Hyams, 1992; Haegeman & Ishane, 2001) have shown that null subjects exist in certain informal registers of English.

The present thesis will investigate the usage of English null subjects in Facebook status updates of US American and British women's and men's magazines. 28 magazines, 14 for each variety and each gender. The null pronouns are analyzed according to their occurrence with 26 selected lexemes, i.e. *want, need, think, love, like, wanna, feel, look, know, have, had, got, thought* (verb/noun), *can't, haven't, couldn't, heading, going, having, feeling, looking, thinking, wondering, ever* and *never*. These results will then be contrasted according to women's and men's magazines and according to US American and British English. The Corpus of Contemporary American English will be used as reference corpus which findings will be compared to the results of the analysis of the Facebook status updates. The aim of the thesis is to find out whether there exist any differences in the usage of null subjects between women's and men's magazines and between the two English varieties. Moreover, it will be analyzed in which sentence types null subjects occur most often and which pronouns are omitted most. In a further analysis the selected magazines from Facebook are classified according to their target readerships to see whether specific topics trigger occurrences of certain lexemes in null subject contexts.

The subsequent chapters will discuss the following: chapter 2 will explain in more detail what null subjects are and how they fit into the English grammar. Furthermore, the chapter will give an overview of the most important studies on English null subjects. Chapter 3 explains the methodology of the present thesis, including the discussion of both

corpora and the selected women's and men's magazines. The fourth chapter will explain the results of both corpus analyses, answer all research questions, stated in chapter 3 of this thesis, and it will also point out some limitations encountered during the analysis. The last chapter will summarize the findings and present a short outlook on additional research in the field of English null subjects.

2 Literature review

2.1 Null subjects

It is not always necessary to formulate full and grammatically correct sentences in order to convey a message. Certain parts of a sentence may be left out for several reasons. One reason might be language economy, i.e. to utter as much information/words as needed to be understood, but not more than is necessary (cf. Haiman in: Wurzel, 2001, p. 394). Another motivation for leaving out certain constituents of an utterance may be that these parts are “recoverable from context” and can therefore be easily recognized by the hearer/reader (Kay, 2002, p. 453). In Chomsky’s (1965) *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax*, functional elements in a sentence that have no phonetic shape, but refer to specific parts of the extra-linguistic world are seen as elements that are inserted on the deep structure level of a clause, but that are deleted on the clause’s surface structure level (cf. Chomsky in: Wratil & Gallmann, 2011, p. 1). In general, omitted parts of a sentence are referred to as null arguments or empty categories, which include null subjects, null objects and so on (cf. Jaeggli & Safir, 1989, p. 9).

Leaving out certain elements in an utterance implies that the sentence is incomplete and may be grammatically incorrect. A plausible question to ask would be: Can subjectless sentences actually be regarded as sentences? Cote (1996) contrasts null subject sentences with non-sententials to find out whether subjectless sentences belong to the group of non-sententials (cf. Cote, 1996, p. 37ff.). She concludes that null subject sentences are indeed sentences because they, in comparison to non-sententials

clearly convey propositions, i.e., they have a predicate, expressing an action or a state, a time and a place, and all names, other than the subject, overtly present. [...] Because they have tense, if they do not have a structural subject, the only possibility is that they are non-maximal projections of I(nfl) (p. 38).

Due to their distinct characteristics, null subjects therefore cannot be part of the group of non-sententials.

2.2 The *pro*-drop parameter and the principle of morphological uniformity

The term *pro*-drop refers to a missing subject in a finite clause, which occurs in the same syntactic surrounding as overt pronominal and non-pronominal determiner/noun phrases (DP/NP) do (Wratil, 2011, p. 99). *Pro* is therefore treated as an empty pronominal category (cf. Cote, 1996, p. 9). Jaeggli & Safir (1989) define the *pro*-drop, also called the null

subject parameter, as follows: “null subjects are permitted in all and only languages with morphologically uniform inflectional paradigms” (Jaeggli & Safir, 1989, p. 29). Jaeggli & Safir define the concept of morphological uniformity as:

An inflectional paradigm P in a language L is morphologically uniform iff P has either only underived inflectional forms or only derived inflectional forms (cf. p. 30).

Firstly, this definition suggests that null subjects are only allowed in languages that have inflection. Secondly, the inflections have to be uniform, which means that all forms of a language either need to be “morphologically complex”, i.e. person and number in verbs are inflected differently, or verbs are not at all inflected to be uniform. If the paradigm consists of mixed forms, i.e. derived and underived inflectional forms, it cannot be considered as uniform (cf. Wakabayashi, 2002, p. 32; Jaeggli & Safir, 1989, p. 30). One common assumption among linguists (Jaeggli & Safir, 1989; Hyams, 1992; Wratil 2011) is that the inflectional system has to be rich enough to allow null subjects in a language (cf. p. 27). Rich inflectional languages are, for example, Spanish and Italian. This also implies that languages with simple and complex inflectional forms, such as English, cannot have null subject phenomena (cf. p. 30). Therefore, Jaeggli & Safir (1989) introduce the concept of licensing null subjects from their identification (cf. Jaeggli & Safir, 1989; Hyams, 1992). The principle of morphological uniformity states when a null subject is possible (Hyams, 1992, p. 254). Nevertheless, a thematic null subject must also be identified, i.e. “its referential value must be recovered” (p. 254). The null subject can be identified by the following three characteristics: local agreement including a tense feature, a c-commanding nominal and a topic (p. 254). Agreement refers to languages that have rich inflection, such as Spanish in which every person has a different corresponding affix (cf. Jaeggli & Safir, 1989, p. 32). The c-commanding nominal belongs to one of the three principles of the Chomskyan Government & Binding Theory¹ and can be found in Chinese, which has no inflections at all. By applying the principle of c-command² and the principle of uniformity to the Chinese language, null subjects are permitted. Null subjects are also identified by their reference to topics (cf. Wratil, 2011, p. 119). Null pronouns without any antecedent

¹ The three binding conditions are distinguished into A) an anaphor is bound in its governing category, B) a pronoun is free in its governing category and C) a name is free (cf. Jaeggli & Safir, 1989, p. 10).

² The term refers to ‘constituent command’, which was coined by Tanya Reinhart. The c-command denotes the relation between different elements in a parse tree, i.e. the domination of one element C over another element D (cf. Reinhart, 1983).

are only available and fully recoverable as specific arguments of a clause if their referent has already been introduced into the preceding discourse or gains importance in the subsequent discourse (p. 119).

This illustrates that not every pronominal element can be a null representation because not all of these elements containing thematic information in a discourse have the identical thematic capacity (cf. p. 119). Pronouns with the highest inherent topic-worthiness are first person pronouns which are followed by second person pronouns (cf. p. 119). Compared to first and second person pronouns, referents of third person pronouns have a significantly lower inherent topic-worthiness (cf. p. 119). A high degree of topic-worthiness depends on the referents high salience in the conversation, which implies that these pronouns are always related to the speaker and to the hearer, i.e. the persons immediately involved in the speech act (cf. p. 119). Wratil (2011) found evidence in her studies on Finnish and French that first and second person pronouns are more likely to be realized as null pronouns because their content is easily recoverable by the speech act situation (cf. p. 119ff.). In other words, pronominal paradigms of partial null subject languages hosting first and second person pronouns are very common in numerous language families, whereas “languages whose only pronominal null arguments are third person subject null pronouns [...] are extremely rare” (cf. p. 120).

According to Chomsky’s (1981) Universal Grammar (UG), every person is born with an innate system of abstract principles and rules which help to learn a language (cf. Wratil & Gallmann, 2011, p. 2ff.). In other words, “any linguistically significant generalization that cannot be plausibly learned on the basis of positive evidence must belong to UG” (Jaeggli & Safir, 1989, p. 8). Grammatical variations between languages are possible because various principles are parametric (cf. Wratil & Gallmann, 2011, p. 3). The corresponding parameters in particular languages are binary, i.e. the *pro*-drop parameter is generally available or completely absent (cf. Fuß, 2011, p. 53). There are two contradicting views on the setting of the *pro*-drop parameter among linguists. The first point of view states that the setting of the parameter depends on the input learners receive when acquiring a target language, they set the *pro*-drop parameter either in on or off mode. If the *pro*-drop parameter is set positively, the language learner either omits the subjects of finite clauses or represents them as null pronouns (cf. p. 3). In contrast, speakers of other languages set the *pro*-drop parameter negatively and are therefore not able to omit subjects in finite clauses or to realize them as null pronouns (cf. p. 3). Fuß (2011) argues against this binary *pro*-drop nature by proving this with a partial *pro*-drop in Bavarian, in which referential *pro*-drop is restricted to 2nd person pronouns only (Fuß, 2011, p. 56ff.). The

second view on the null subject parameter is that all learners acquire their target language with a positively set null subject parameter, i.e. all languages have a null subject grammar (cf. Hyams, 1989, p. 216). This claim is supported by the fact that the child language grammar of any language differs from the adult language grammar (cf. p. 216). When children learn a language, they usually omit the subjects in their sentences regardless whether their target language is a *pro*-drop or non-*pro*-drop language (cf. p. 216). What the subjectless sentences in child and adult languages have in common is that lexical subjects are optional and that the missing subject can be inferred from the context of the speech act (cf. p. 222). In the case of a null subject language this means, as soon as a child acquires more grammatical norms of the target language, the null subject parameter is set from positive to negative (cf. p. 227ff.). Haegeman & Ishane (1999) go one step further by suggesting that the register-related occurrence of null subjects in non-*pro*-drop languages may be explained by the fact that speakers have two overlapping grammars, i.e. one grammar in which the *pro*-drop parameter is switched on and another grammar in which the parameter is switched off (cf. Haegeman & Ishane, 1999, p. 122). A positively set null subject parameter would be the peripheral grammar, which is acquired if the speaker/writer is exposed to null subjects in their language, whereas a negatively set parameter can be seen as the core grammar (cf. p. 122).

2.3 English null subjects

Most research on English null subjects has concentrated on conversational English rather than written English because it seems to be more common in speech. Although Facebook may be perceived as a platform for written communication, I will also take literature on conversational null subjects into consideration because status updates clearly show features of a written-as-if-spoken style.

Different languages or even dialects, as can be seen from Fuß' analysis, have different levels of acceptance for null subjects or null arguments in general (cf. Cote, 1996, p. 14). On the one end of the continuum, languages such as Japanese and Russian freely allow null arguments, German and Spanish "are supposedly somewhere in the middle", whereas English and French are found on the other end of the continuum and allow no null arguments at all (p. 14ff.). *Illustration 1* shows the characteristics of null subject and non-null subject languages. Subject pronouns are to be found in a "diachronic cycle of grammaticization" which is influenced by distinct forms of economy (Wrátil, 2011, p. 102). Two competing forces face each other within this cycle, i.e. on the one hand, the

morphological and phonological economy and on the other hand, the semantic and pragmatic economy (cf. p. 102). By nature, a language tends to minimize the morphological and phonological representation of subject pronouns and at the same time tries to increase the perception of these pronouns (cf. p. 102ff.). Eventually, these contradicting forces lead to a permanent morphological change of subject pronouns (cf. p. 103).

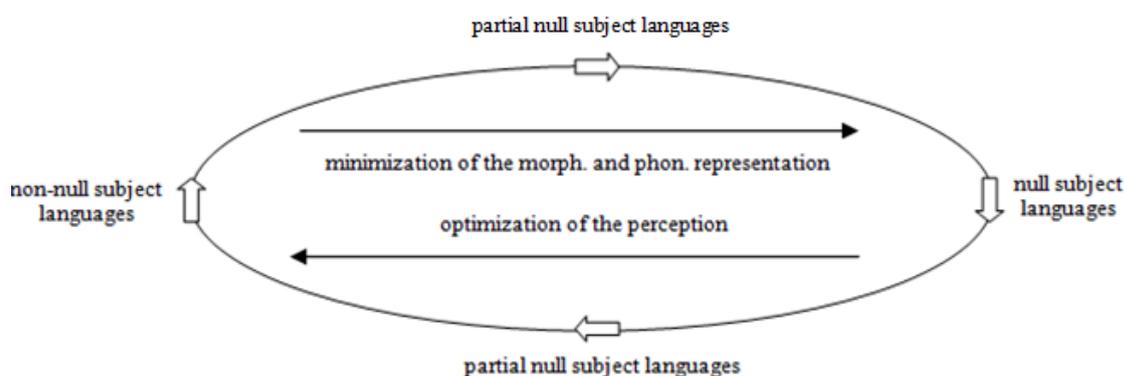


Illustration 1: Null subject and non-null subject languages (cf. Wratil, 2011, p. 103)

Although English belongs to the group of non-pro-drop languages which prescriptively do not allow the omission of subjects, unlike pro-drop languages such as Spanish and Italian, there is quite a number of evidence from linguistic data that null subjects exist in certain registers of English, for instance in informal spoken English, certain written registers motivated by language economy, e-mails, notes and interrogatives (cf. Trasher, 1974, p. 7; Haegeman & Ishane, 1999, p. 117). Cote (1996) argues that null subjects in tensed declarative and interrogative sentences are more prominent in conversational English than in written English with the exception of written dialogue (cf. Cote, 1996, p. 30).

Harvie (2000) justifies the existence of null subjects with the assumption that natural language always differs from the language described in prescriptive grammars (Harvie, 2000, p. 16). This variationist point of view differs to a great extent from the view of theoretical linguists who claim that the English language “does not fulfill the criteria proposed by null subject languages” (p. 16). These theoretical analyses of null subjects are restricted to pronominal subjects only, which are distinguished into “referential null subjects with an identifiable antecedent [...], and non-referential or expletive subjects [...]” (p. 16). For pro-drop languages, referential null subjects are allowed because their agreement morphology is rich. This also requires “that the verbal inflectional paradigm

must uniquely identify each person”, which is the case in Italian, but not in English where agreement is marked on the third person singular only (p. 16). This means that the theory of rich agreement morphology does not account for languages, such as English and Chinese (p. 16). As already discussed in the previous section, the principle of morphological uniformity states that languages that have rich or no inflection at all are allowed to use null subjects. Nevertheless, the English language lies somewhere in between inflection and no inflection. Therefore, morphological uniformity does not account for the existence of null subjects in this particular language. It is also not easy to place English null subjects within the generative literature, which differentiates between four non-overt categories: trace of A-movement, trace of A'-movement, *pro* and PRO (Chomsky in: Haegeman & Ishane, 1999, p. 119). Traces are phonologically empty categories which are established if an element in a sentence changes its position within the sentence (Cook & Newson, 2007, p. 134). A-traces always occupy (A)rgument positions and are found in non-finite clauses only. In contrast, A'-traces occupy non-argumental positions and may occur in subject positions of finite clauses (cf. Haegeman & Ishane, 1999, p. 119ff.). Non-argumental positions are “typically [found] in the left periphery of the clause” (p. 120). In non-finite embedded clauses, PRO acts as the understood empty subject and does not alternate with overt subjects (cf. p. 119). Examples (1) - (3) illustrate finite and non-finite clauses that contain three of the four empty categories:

- (2) Nelson_i seems [IP t_i to be hungry]. – A-trace
- (3) Who_i does Mary think [t_i will get here first]? – A'-trace
- (4) The cat expects [PRO to get regular meals] - PRO (cf. p. 119ff.).

Pro, as discussed in section 2.2, is the non-overt pronominal in subjectless finite clauses (cf. p. 121). Since most of the analyzed null subjects in this thesis stand in front position of interrogatives, it can be assumed that null subjects are confined to root clauses³ (cf. p. 124). In (4) and (5), the root null subjects are the subjects of the finite clause, which all stand in the highest position of the root clause (cf. p.124). Furthermore, all three root null subjects appear to be antecedentless, i.e. they are neither related to a topic, nor are they related to a moved element that left a trace in the sentence (cf. p. 124). The null subject is not identified by a constituent in the course of the sentence, but it is rather identified by a referent from the discourse (cf. p. 124). The reader of sentences, such as (4) and (5) can easily recover that the missing pronouns have to be *I* and *it*. But there are also instances in

³ Root clauses are non-embedded clauses, i.e. simple sentences are root clauses.

which it seems not so clear which pronoun can be inserted. In (6), it is not really clear whether to insert *I* or *we*. In this case, it is impossible to recover the subject of the sentence.

- (5) ‘[...] **0** Wonder who’ll get her money? **0** Won’t be me, thought, not so likely.’
(6) **0** Have done 110 pages (cf. p. 117).
(7) A: ... We, uh, got a new baby in the house –
B: Oh, yeah.
A: -- and, and, she just turned a year old, so it just kind of put the –
B: Yeah.
A: -- clamp on things. Uh,
B: So you watch videos.
A: Yeah.
B: Then, uh,
A: 0 Stop by and get them at, you know, for ninety-nine cents, and bring them home but,
B: Yeah, that's right. ... (Cote, 1996, p. 52ff.)

Cote explains such ambiguity in example (6) by the fact that the unrecoverable subject is irrelevant information to convey the speaker’s message, but it is still interpretable for the hearer (cf. p. 53).

Following Jaeggli & Safir’s (1989) identification and topic rules for null subjects and the principle of rich morphology, it seems clear that English root null subjects violate all of these proposed rules (cf. p. 124). However, Haegeman & Ishane (1999) establish a new criterion for English null subjects, namely if

an empty category occupies the highest, i.e. leftmost, position of the clause, then, precisely by virtue of its position, it may remain antecedentless. This is so because there simply exists no higher position in the clause. (cf. p. 124).

That is why the empty category in the leftmost position in the clause can be directly inferred from the discourse (cf. p. 124). This finding is linked to Trasher’s (1974) characteristics of fragments, i.e. discourse and subjectless fragments (cf. Trasher, 1974, p. 14). Discourse fragments differ from subjectless fragments in that they need preceding conversation or context, whereas subjectless sentences do not (cf. p. 15). Additional differences between discourse and subjectless fragments follow in the course of this section. He identifies three characteristics of “subjectless strings” in English: firstly, the deletion of the initial element in a sentence, secondly, the occurrence of subjectless sentences in informal communication and thirdly, they do not need any contextual information (cf. p. 7ff.). The first feature of subjectless sentences in English refers to the deletion of the leftmost element of the sentence. However, this does not mean that the

element has to start out in initial position, but that, for instance, in a *yes/no*-question a subject can be omitted after the preceding auxiliary has been deleted (cf. p. 7).

- (8) Are you gonna be busy tomorrow night?
- (9) *Are gonna be busy tomorrow night?
- (10) **Ø** Gonna be busy tomorrow night? (cf. p. 7)

Question (7) is fully grammatical. But the deleted subject in sentence (8) is impossible, which results in an ungrammatical question. In (9), the auxiliary *are* and the subject *you* have been deleted, which also results in a prescriptively wrong and incomplete English sentence. But since the question has been uttered in a conversation within a certain context, it is understandable for all discourse participants. Trasher understands the deletion process of initial elements as a kind of erosion (cf. p. 9). Erasable elements can be auxiliary verbs, subjects (restricted to pronominal noun phrases), articles, possessive pronouns and the conjunction *if* (cf. p. 9). These words all carry grammatical not lexical meaning, i.e. they are function words (cf. p.21). Any of these elements is seen as vulnerable and can therefore be eroded. The erosion process may continue until a hard/non-vulnerable element stands in initial position (cf. p. 9). A non-vulnerable element in a sentence is, for example, the main verb, which cannot be deleted (cf. p. 22). Cote cites Napoli (1982) and adds to Trasher's group of erasable elements also lexical items, such as reduced main verbs and nouns, which can be seen in examples (11) and (12). Napoli assumes that certain null subjects can be due to phonological rather than syntactic deletion (cf. Cote, 1996, p. 44). This deletion process can omit entire words, "parts of words or combinations of the two from the beginning of sentences" (p. 44). More importantly, these phonologically shortened forms are the result of stress and recoverability and not contractibility (p. 47).

- (11) 'Spect you're waiting for your mom, huh? [I ex- ...]
- (12) 'Fessor arrived yet? [Has the pro- ...] (Napoli in: Cote, 1996, p. 44)

It has to be noted that null subjects in English cannot only occur in sentence initial position, but they are also found outside of the sentence initial position (cf. p. 50). Trasher's second feature of the occurrence of null subjects in informal written and spoken contexts has been mentioned before by Haegeman & Ishane and does not need any further explanation at that point. In a speech act, elements from a nonlinguistic context that are obvious to the speaker and can easily be supplied by the listener may be left out (cf. Trasher, 1974, p. 11). In sentence (13), the nonlinguistic context is the object that is probably present when the speaker talks about its characteristics. In this instance, no subject is needed because both speaker and listener exactly know the subject of the

sentence. Nevertheless, (13) is a discourse fragment that needs a previous conversation or the object described must be present (cf. p. 16). In sentence (14), a prior conversation is not obligatory because the speaker may simply utter this statement without being asked by the listener, in this case probably a colleague, or they simply intend to start a conversation (cf. p. 21).

- (13) **Ø** Feels like real silk.
- (14) **Ø** Will be there as soon as I finish this report.
- (15) a) When is John coming?
b) **Ø** At four.
- (16) **Ø** Got an appointment at five.
- (17) *(I've got) An appointment at five (cf. p. 8ff.)

Trasher indicates further differences of discourse and subjectless fragments in his dissertation. Sentence (15) shows a speech act between person a) and person b). Person b) answers the question in a fragment without uttering a complete sentence. The whole version of the sentence would be *John is coming at four o'clock*. In (14) b) the subject, the auxiliary and the main verb are missing, which is according to Trasher a typical feature of discourse fragments. As mentioned earlier, subjectless fragments cannot omit main verbs, which can be seen in example (16) and (17). Whereas (16) merely omits the subject *I* and is still comprehensible, sentence (17) does not make any sense because the main verb is missing (cf. p. 28). Although Trasher claims that null subjects do not need context to be understood, which may be true to some extent, other linguists (Jaeggli & Safir, 1989; Cote, 1996; Haegeman & Ishane, 1999) have shown that subject ellipsis cannot function without context. Nariyama (2004) separates context with regard to subject ellipsis into situational and linguistic context (cf. Nariyama, 2004, p. 240). Situational context includes the knowledge of the speakers' shared environment, such as the representation of the speaker by the first person pronoun and the addressee is represented by the second person pronoun, which are interchangeable depending on who talks and who listens (cf. p. 240). Additionally, situational context is also related to "mutual/background knowledge, social setting, register, relationship (including perceived) between speech participants" and so on (p. 240). In this case, it might be possible to assume that English subjects are omitted according to a simple rule: First person pronoun ellipsis is usually found in declarative sentences, whereas the second person null subject is common in interrogative sentences (cf. Trasher, 1974; Nariyama, 2004). Cote disagrees with this assumption and doubts that interrogatives are a grammatical requirement for non-overt *you* (p. 39). Hence subject ellipsis cannot always be explained with such easy rules. Linguistic context is a

combination of the grammaticality of sentences (in which elements of a sentence are allowed to be left out) and reference to subsequent sentences (cf. p. 240). Although Nariyama may be right in assuming that context is always needed for null subject to occur, the Facebook data seems to suggest a different picture, which will be discussed in section 4.

As could be seen from the literature, null subjects are a much debated linguistic phenomenon among researchers in both pro-drop and non-pro-drop languages. The most prominent features for the occurrence of null subjects in general are rich or no inflection, the null pronoun needs to be recoverable from context and they need to have an identifiable topic. For English null subjects, the characteristics are quite different. Haegeman & Ishane explained the occurrence of English null pronouns by leftmost constituent deletion, whereas Cote understands null subjects rather as phonologically influenced elements than syntactically influenced. Moreover, null subjects in English appear more frequently in speech than in writing and more often in informal than in formal contexts. Since null subjects are prescriptively not allowed in a non-pro-drop language like English, one might consider the fact that natural language usually differs from the prescribed norm. Furthermore, null subjects may not be acceptable from a grammatical perspective, but a speaker's/writer's linguistic competence can easily distinguish between acceptable and unacceptable features of a learned language whether null subjects belong to a speaker's core grammar or not.

2.4 Facebook Inc.

Social networks have gained a tremendous importance in communication within the last five years. Several distinct social network platforms have emerged, such as *YouTube* and *LinkedIn*, whereas others, such as *MySpace* have lost their influence on the market. However, one network seems to grow constantly with respect to its influence and its number of users.

Back in 2004, *thefacebook.com* was founded by the Harvard undergraduate Mark Zuckerberg. It was designed to connect Harvard University students to one another by means of a platform on which they could share personal information and be friends with fellow students. Due to its immediate success, *thefacebook.com* soon expanded to Stanford, Columbia and Yale University in the same year (cf. Facebook, 2012). In early 2005, US American and international school networks were added and later that year *Facebook*, the renamed version of *thefacebook.com*, counted more than 5.5 million active

users. From that point onwards, it was only a matter of time that the network expanded its reach and was made available to people worldwide. By 2008, *Facebook* launched its website in 21 languages and increased its number of active users to more than 100 million. As of November 2011, the network is available in 70 languages, has more than 800 million active users, an estimated net worth of US\$50 billion and employs more than 3,000 people around the world (Foster Web Marketing, 2011, para. 1).

2.4.1 Facebook: A social network – definitions and characteristics

According to *Facebook's About*, the website “is a social utility that helps people communicate more efficiently with their friends, family and coworkers [...] in a trusted environment” (Facebook, 2012, para. 1). In other words, the main objective of a social network, such as *Facebook*, is the efficient communication with people whom the user knows. Whether the environment of *Facebook* can be trusted is a different question and will not be discussed here. Nevertheless, there are several other functions a social network can have. boyd & Ellison (2007) offer a detailed definition of social networks:

We define social network sites as web-based services that allow 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, p. 2).

In other words, social network sites are a collection of private or public profiles of individual users, which contain a user's customized information in a restricted system, i.e. members can access information about other members only. Customized in this respect means that the user of a social network platform can decide which information they intend to share with social network friends or members of the social network that are not known to the user. The creation of lists of other users sharing a connection refers to the fact that they either know one another and are friends in a certain social network platform or they do not know one another and merely share a specific interest, e.g. they like the same brand. Especially in the case of *Facebook*, this creates various different networks a user can belong to. boyd & Ellison (2007) identify the sharing of these created social networks with other users as a unique trait of social network websites. However, this may be true to a certain degree only. Due to recent criticism on privacy settings of *Facebook*, the platform introduced *Friend Lists* that enable the user to ‘classify’ their Facebook friends into subgroups, i.e. users may create a list of family members, close friends, colleagues, etc. (cf. Ross, 2011). This feature helps users to share information only with selected users. These

friend lists of subgroups can be either visible to other friends only, to friends and strangers or they can be completely invisible to users other than the owner of the profile. These lists help to distinguish between ‘real friends’ and ‘*Facebook* friends’ since most of the people who are befriended on *Facebook* are mere acquaintances or former school friends who do no longer belong to the circle of true friends of the respective user. Overall, it has to be said that the more information about a user is freely available to other users, either friends or strangers, the more likely it is that new circles and networks to socialize are created (cf. Curran et al., 2011, p. 27). Köbler et al. (2010) summarize three major functions of established social networks, namely generating, sharing and combining information (Köbler et al., 2010, p. 1). In order to facilitate user-generated information sharing, *Facebook* embeds videos and pictures, enables users to ‘comment’ and ‘like’ information by other users (cf. p. 2). Furthermore, users can communicate via private messages, chat and status updates (cf. p. 2). One characteristic that sets *Facebook* apart from other social network sites (SNS) is the feature of applications. With the help of applications, a user can further customize their own profile by adding information, such as which countries they have already traveled to, which brands they particularly like or which characteristics they share with a certain celebrity. This feature has been further enhanced in 2011, when *Facebook* introduced polls that enable the user to ask their friends specific questions by giving them several answer choices.

2.4.2 Milroy’s social networks

The idea of social networks was established by Barnes in 1954 and further developed by Milroy in the late 1970s. According to Barnes (1954), a social network “describe[s] an order of social relationship” (Barnes in: Milroy, 1980, p. 46). Social networks are important to understand why members of a specific group behave and speak in a certain way (cf. Milroy, 1980, p. 46).

Milroy distinguishes between two types of networks, namely open and closed networks (cf. Milroy in: Montgomery, 2008, p. 182). Her social network theory facilitates comparisons of groups (social networks) with regard to the density or looseness of their group ties (cf. p.182). In other words, open networks have loose ties and the number of ties between the members of the network is rather low, which means that not every member of the group knows one another (cf. p. 182). In contrast, closed networks have a high number of ties and “each member of the network has several ties with other members of the network” (Montgomery, 2008, p. 182ff.). This means that every member in the group

knows one another and that the structure of the network is very dense (Milroy, 1980, p. 50). It can be said that networks with relatively high density act as “norm enforcement mechanisms” (p. 50). Networks can also consist of several smaller parts also called clusters (p. 50). Clusters have high density and relationships within a cluster are much denser than those outside of a cluster (p. 50). Milroy makes one additional distinction of closed networks, i.e. uniplex and multiplex networks. People in closed networks can either be connected to other members of the group via one content, for example two people are related through their work only. This network relationship is considered to be uniplex. Multiplex networks are characterized by several contents that one or more members share with one another, i.e. members of this network may not only be related by their work, but also by their neighborhood, free-time activities or kin (cf. p. 51). Therefore, it is possible for an individual to connect to relatively few people in many contents and have multiplex network ties and/or to connect to many people in one content and have uniplex network ties (cf. p. 51). The before mentioned impact of such networks on the behavior and language of group members depends to a great extent on these contents. For instance, “the tie of kinship which connects me to my sister has a greater capacity to influence my behaviour than the economic tie which connects me to my newsagent” although both networks are closed (p. 51).

Social networks do not only impact the behavior of people, but they are also a means to exchange goods and services, to impose obligations and to confer rights to members of a network (cf. p. 47). Furthermore, language is not only used to inform members of a network about goods, services, rights and obligations, but it is also applied to strengthen network ties. Milroy refers to those activities as transactions (cf. p. 47ff.). The profit for an individual in a network can be either equal or greater than the cost (cf. p. 47ff.). It is important to keep in mind that transactions can flow in one direction, but they can also flow in both directions between links in a network (cf. p. 48). If the transaction takes place in both directions, then this process can be called exchange (cf. p.48). This implies that most speech events between individuals or groups of people are transactions of information. Moreover, an exchange presupposes obligation by the members of the network (cf. p. 49). It may be the case that one individual gives more services, goods and qualities of personality to another member. This creates the obligation to return these favors, which pressures network members and influences the behavior of an individual (cf. p.49). The behavior of the receiver of goods can react in two different ways to the transaction(s) of the giver. Either the network member takes part in the exchange process

and returns information, goods or services or the member does not join the exchange and does not feel obligated towards the other network member. At the first stage, the latter behavior would probably result in the minimization of the one-sided transaction process by the network member that provided information, goods or services. At the second stage, the ignorant behavior of the receiver of goods would lead to the break with the network provider of goods.

2.4.3 Real and virtual social networks compared

Since virtual social networks are a relatively new phenomenon, literature on a comparison between real and virtual forms of social networks is basically non-existent. In the following section, I try to draw my own conclusions from a comparison of both types of networks.

Similar to real world social networks, virtual social networks on Facebook can also be divided into open and closed networks. What seems to be quite different to real networks is the number of particularly open networks on Facebook, which may be, depending on the user, much higher than in the real world. Every time a Facebook user joins a group or likes a page of an artist, a magazine or an actor, they immediately enter a new social network. Curran et al. state that the more information users make available about themselves, the more opportunities they have to join new networks and build other groups to socialize with (Curran et al., 2011, p. 27). Assuming that a user joins the network of the women's magazine *Glamour*, they may join it because they are readers of the magazine, they may share the same interest in the magazine with their friends or they simply join the network because it was recommended by Facebook and the user is curious about it. In all three instances, it might be the case that friends of the user already belong to the network or it might also be that none of their Facebook friends is a member of the *Glamour* network. This network form can be considered as open since the members do not all know one another and they merely share the interest in the magazine with one another. Nevertheless, within this open network, it is also possible that individual users know one another and might form a closed network in which they communicate about certain topics addressed by *Glamour*. The main purpose of this closed network would be the exchange of information between members. If we return to the open network of *Glamour*, the main aim is also communication, usually initiated by status updates of the magazine. The exchange of information not only takes place between the magazine and its fans, but also between the network members themselves. Another objective pursued by the magazine is the

maximization of the network in order to increase the exchange and the magazine's popularity. Like in a real world network, *Glamour* would be in most cases the provider of information asking for comments of their readers. Members of the *Glamour* network are receivers that might feel an obligation to comment on status updates. This process also works the other way around if a user posts a comment or question to the magazines profile, then the magazine may feel obligated to answer. In real world networks, these transactions are usually a mutual exchange. This is also true for virtual networks. If the transaction would always be one-sided, no matter who posts something to the *Glamour* profile, users would probably stop commenting/asking questions and the magazine would stop updating their status.

Apart from open networks in public profiles, this type of network exists in private profiles, too. DeAndrea et al. (2010) claim that Facebook is "an SNS in which the main purpose is to aide users in maintaining their already existing relationships" (DeAndrea, 2010, p. 430). Although this might be true to a certain degree, one has to be aware of the fact that Facebook friends cannot be compared to friends in real world networks. According to Facebook's factsheet, the average user has 130 friends, which suggests that the ties between the user and their Facebook friends cannot be too strong. In addition, this implies that 'friendships' on Facebook are not cultivated as much as they would be in real life social networks. There may be only a small number of friends that are real life close friends of the user, but the majority of people are mere acquaintances, which you could also call *Fa(c)kefriends*⁴. This already hints at a multilayered network structure, which in general has an open network character. In real life networks, the number of members in open and closed networks changes from time to time depending on the life situations of individual members. For instance, some members of a network may have a new work environment or they move away from home. These factors influence the structure of networks as well as the number of network members. New friendships are established and old friendships may vanish. Naturally, people lose sight of each other and may never get into contact again. In contrast, this is different in virtual social networks. Suddenly, people have a chance to find long lost friends which are added to friend lists and the social network of a user on Facebook increases. In the end, it results in piling up old and sometimes even unwanted friends on Facebook, which were, in real world networks,

⁴ The term was coined by Cornelia Neubert.

replaced by new friends. Although user A may again befriend user B, this time in a virtual network, user B may never again belong to a closer circle of friends of user A.

On a private profile, the general friend list contains all Facebook friends of one user, which belong to different networks and are linked through different ties with this particular user. Facebook supports these different networks with friend lists that separate friends according to their tie to the user, such as family, work, close friends, school and so on. The user is able to create unique friend lists with customized network names, which may separate close friends from acquaintances. Comparable to real networks, friends of the user can be linked in closed uniplex and multiplex networks. If user A knows user B from work, then user B can be found in the general friend list, i.e. open network of user A, and in the work list, i.e. closed network that contains colleagues only. If user A is only linked through work with user B, the work list can be considered a closed uniplex network. If, however, user A and user B have the same workplace, went to the same school and are close friends, they share multiplex ties and all three networks are closed and multiplex. Real world closed networks can consist of various smaller clusters, which are much denser than the rest of the network. It can be assumed that this is also the case for some of the friend networks on Facebook. Especially in user A's network of close friends, not every member may have a dense relation to the others although all members know one another.

What became quite obvious from the comparison of real and virtual social networks is that both types of networks share a high number of characteristics, such as open and closed network structures and cluster within closed networks. But one can also find some differences between real and virtual networks. It can be said that the number of open networks in virtual social networks is much higher than in real life networks. Furthermore, virtual social networks seem to increase steadily because lost friendships are 'revived' and not replaced by new ones like in real world networks.

2.4.4 Public and private profiles

First of all, it is important to clarify what is meant by public and private Facebook profiles and additionally I will explain the difference between those two types of profiles. Facebook profiles, in general, belong to an individual person or a profit or non-profit institution, e.g. Microsoft and Greenpeace. A profile consists of two distinct sub-websites: the "News Feed" and the profile page. The News Feed contains all current information shared by friends, the profile owner and all liked profiles. The news that appear in the feed can be customized, which means that users decide which information by which user they

intend to read and which updates they want to ignore. Therefore, the user can block shared information by selected Facebook friends and liked websites. This is also possible the other way around, as it has already been mentioned above, a profile owner can decide which information they share with their Facebook friends (Curran et al., 2011, p. 27).

Facebook profiles contain biographical information of the owner, i.e. for an individual's profile name, date of birth, school and university career, etc. Moreover, the profile usually contains a photo of the owner and an "Info" section on, for instance hobbies, music interest, books and sports. Apart from the info section, several other sub-sections are available in a profile. The number of these sub-sections depends on the individual user. Sections that are common to the profiles of all users are "Wall", "Info", "Photos", "Notes", "Friends" and "Subscriptions". These sections will be discussed in more detail in the course of this chapter.

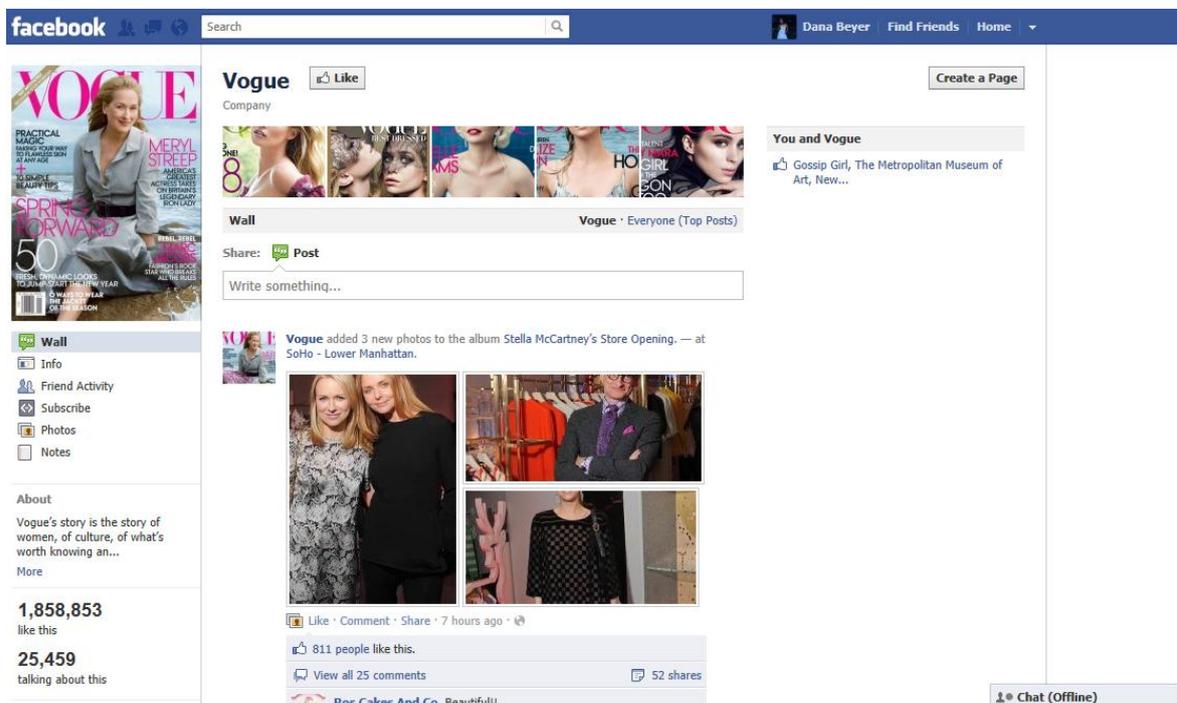


Illustration 2: Facebook public profile of the women's magazine Vogue (US edition)

For this thesis, I distinguish between two kinds of profiles, namely public and private. Profiles that are unrestricted in access and are owned by a company, an association, an organization or any other comparable institution are considered to be public profiles. Public in this sense does not solely refer to unrestricted access, but rather to the public sharing of information by a recognized institution. People who intend to learn something about a specific company simply click "Like" or "Become a Fan" to receive status updates on their *Facebook* "Wall" (cf. p. 28). *Illustration 1* shows a typical

Facebook fan page of Vogue magazine. Although some private profiles may share similar characteristics, i.e. the public sharing of information, they are owned by individuals who usually restrict the access to their profiles in such a way that ‘non-friends’ cannot read and see everything a friend could. As soon as an individual user adds friends or a company receives “Like”(s) by its fans, they are able to access the friends/fans information unless they restrict their access. Like private profiles, public profiles can customize their page to attract potential fans. As already mentioned above, profiles consist of different sub-sections, which vary from user to user. It can be said that public profiles usually have more sub-sections than private profiles. The sections that have been named in the previous paragraph are set by default and their number can be increased the more the user wishes to customize their profile. For public profiles, sub-sections, such as “Quiz”, “Cover Stars” and “Sales & Giveaways”, may be part of the profile. These sub-sections may also be found only temporarily or may change from time to time because the customization process of a profile, be it public or private, changes constantly. Profit organizations use these additional sub-sections of profiles as a convenient way to promote their products since the network is constantly growing (cf. Curran et al., 2011, p. 26). In addition, both profiles have a “Wall” on which messages, shared videos, websites, etc. can be found. All information that is visible to other users can be commented on and shared by friends/fans.

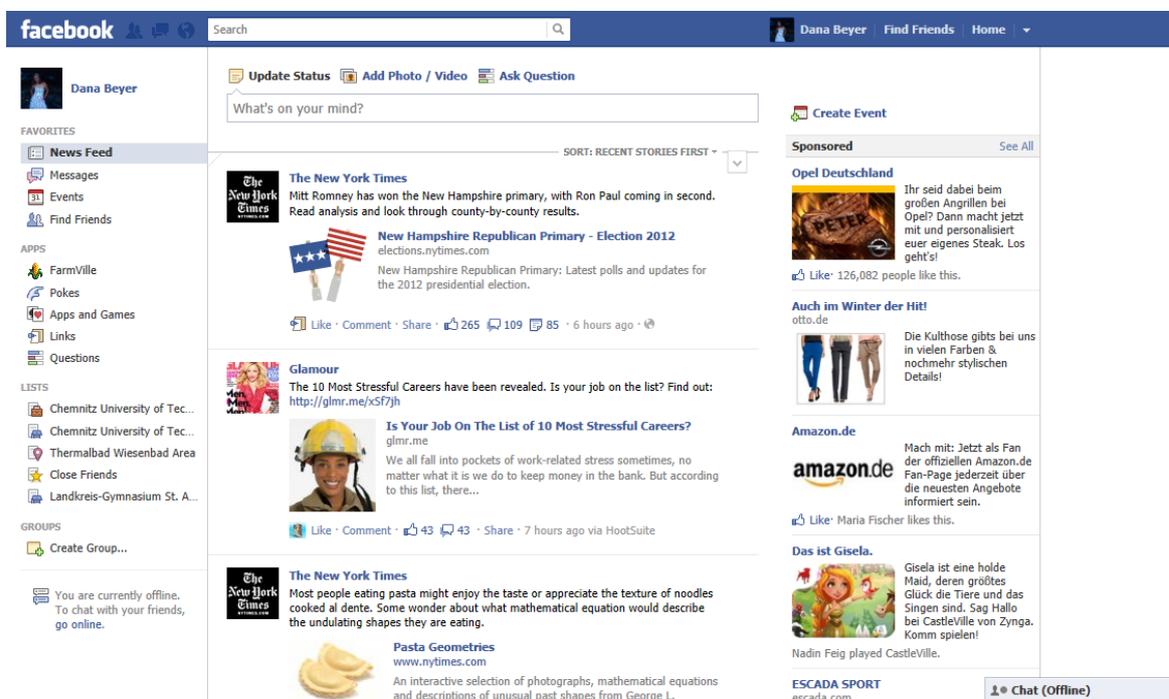


Illustration 3: Facebook News Feed

Information that has been shared by other users becomes also visible on the “News Feed” of every person who is friends with the particular user (*Illustration 2*). Therefore, the exchange of information increases with every user belonging to a different network within *Facebook*. Both types of profiles have the same functions to some extent. According to Köbler et al. (2010) main purposes of Facebook profiles are to “address human needs like self-representation, communication and curiosity” (Köbler et al., 2010, p. 1). These three functions perfectly fit for private profiles, but for public profiles these functions have to be slightly adapted. For profit-organizations, the representation of the company is equally important as the promotion of products and services. Furthermore, the understanding of curiosity is different in private and public profiles. For private profiles, curiosity may refer to the users’ interests on newly shared information by other befriended individuals, whereas for public profiles, curiosity may relate to the opinions of fans about a certain good or service of the respective company.

The success of Facebook has also changed its main objectives from connecting people socially, sharing likes, dislikes and photos to connecting people to companies by creating “Fan pages” (cf. Curran et al., 2011, p. 27). This may also change the social lives of people. On the one hand, social network users may not even have to leave their homes to socialize with other people, and on the other hand, they do not even have to leave their homes to be informed about new products and they are able to buy them online (cf. p. 27).

2.4.5 Facebook status updates

In recent years, when talking about Web 2.0 and social networks, the term “microblogging” has become very popular. Microblogging is a mixture between conventional blogging and instant messaging, i.e. updates about a user’s current status in a usually very short form. These brief messages are published in real time on any social network platform. For example, tweets are restricted to 140 signs, but Facebook status updates can have up to 63,206 characters (cf. Reface.me, 2009, para. 5). Whereas blogs enable people to post lengthy and detailed information about personal matters from a computer, the shortness of these messages makes it easier to post messages to the public or to the writer’s social network community from any device (cell phones, smart phones, etc.) that is connected to the internet (cf. Passant et al., 2008, p. 2).

According to Köbler et al. (2010), microblogging belongs to the group of asynchronous computer-mediated communication (cf. Köbler et al., 2010, p. 2). This means that users do not communicate synchronously like in chats, but they rather publish

their comments in postponed times (cf. Chrystal, 2006, p. 11). Nevertheless, it can also be the case that “microbloggers” reply in real time to the comments of their published content. This case seems to be rather coincidental since the microblogger and their readers would have to be on the same social network platform at the same time. Passant et al. (2008) support the claim that microblogging can be characterized as “rapid (almost real-time) knowledge exchange and fast propagation of new information” (Passant et al., 2008, p. 2). Especially for companies which advertize their products in social networks, the quasi real-time communication can be very advantageous because potential questions or customers’ opinions about a product can be answered immediately.

One form of microblogging is the publishing of status updates/messages on Facebook. Due to the fact that not much research has been done in the field of SNSs and particularly on status updates, definitions of status messages on Facebook are non-existent. Therefore, I bring forward my own definition of status updates on Facebook. What has to be kept in mind is that status messages of public and private profiles can differ to large extent. For public profiles, status updates may be defined as short messages containing information about a company’s news, new product, service, recommendation or an event. On the other hand, private profiles’ status messages are mostly concerned with personal emotions, activities or news of a certain individual. Recently, status updates on private profiles also feature an increasing number of shared links, videos and music, which might be influenced and reflect the manner of status updating of public profiles. What status updates have in common, regardless whether they are posted on public or private profiles, is the aim of communication and the motivation to react to status messages. It can be said that one status update plus all comments on it can be perceived as a single microblog. I will not discuss the characteristics and aims of status updates of private profiles in a more detailed way because the analysis will merely concentrate on status updates of public profiles. (18) and (19) are examples of Facebook status messages.

(18) “It’s the debate threatening to tear apart the world of barbecue hosting - gas or charcoal?” (Esquire UK, 2011)

(19) “See our chic fall ensembles that will look Fabulous at Every Age!” (Harper’s Bazaar US, 2011)

Both updates were posted on public profiles of two magazines, namely the British edition of the men’s magazine *Esquire* and the US American edition of the women’s magazine *Harper’s Bazaar*. Obviously, both status messages inform the magazines’ fans about two different gender-specific topics and intend to initiate conversations between users. *Esquire*

UK intends to start a discussion on barbecue habits of their primarily male audience, whereas *Harper's Bazaar* motivates their primarily female fans to visit the website of the magazine to see the newest fall fashion trends. Some of the fans might also leave a comment on the status update after having visited the website of the magazine.

The number of status updates per day depends on the owner of the profile. Since public profiles usually aim at selling products and/or motivating their users to do something after reading the update, it might be assumed that they update their status several times a day targeting different user groups.

2.4.6 Online advertising via Facebook fan pages

Consumer behavior has changed tremendously since products are not only available in stores, but also online. Advertising and marketing companies have to find new channels in order to sell the products of their clients. Television commercials lose their importance because nowadays the audience can decide when to watch which show without any commercial break (cf. Curran et al., 2011, p. 26). Moreover, print advertisements do not reach a broad audience anymore because most newspapers and magazines are read online or via applications on mobile devices. In recent years, companies have found a new channel for successfully advertising their products, namely SNSs and in particular Facebook. As of 2011, more than 20 per cent of online advertisements appeared on SNSs (cf. Curran et al., 2011, p. 27).

Although Facebook started out as a social network for students only, more and more brands discover the social network for advertising their goods and services. To separate private profiles of individuals, Facebook introduced pages “which are distinct, customized profiles designed for businesses, bands, celebrities and more to represent themselves on Facebook” (Pearlman in: Vorvoreanu, 2009, p. 67). This indicates that brands have to adhere to the conventions given by Facebook and adapt their advertisements to Facebook users. In the long run, ignoring communication conventions on Facebook can lead to failed communication and the brand may also be labeled as spam and ignored by users (cf. Vorvoreanu, 2009, p. 67). Due to the fact that the structure and characteristics of public profile pages have been already explained in section 2.5.4, they will not be mentioned again in this chapter. The role of the consumer, whether or not they are Facebook users, has shifted from a passive television ad consumer to a more active seeker of products who also shares experiences with purchases (cf. Livingstone in: Muntinga et al., 2010, p. 235). The sharing of brand-related content by consumers on the

web becomes increasingly important for companies. People no longer relate on corporations only to obtain their information about products, but they are also influenced by other consumers and their choice of purchase (cf. Muntinga et al., 2010, p. 235). This word-of-mouth or snowball effect, initiated by consumers, turns a company's active promoting of their products into a more passive way of observing their fans do the advertising work for them. Fans of brand pages can have distinct stages of brand-related activeness in social networks. The first of the three levels of the activity of consumers starts with the least active form of consuming brand-related material, such as pictures, reading threads or product reviews and downloading branded widgets (cf. p. 235). Consuming, however, in this sense does not mean buying a product of the respective brand. The second stage and more active level of brand-related content is a consumer's contribution by rating products or brands, commenting on brand-related links, videos and pictures or joining a brand's page on a social network (cf. p. 235). The most active level is when a consumer uploads brand-related videos, pictures and writes articles or reviews about the brand (cf. p. 235). With regard to the current analysis of Facebook status updates on fan pages of women's and men's magazines, all three stages seem to be important to each of the magazines, but level two and three are probably the most desired activities companies wish for when they join Facebook to advertise their goods. With the help of status updates, magazines, as well as other Facebook brand pages, aim at the consumption of information about the respective page/brand and at commenting on certain topics, questions, brands, etc.

3 Methodology

3.1 Data collection

The data were collected in July and August 2011 from the website *www.facebook.com*. At the beginning of the data collection process, the compilation of the corpus was done manually by copying and pasting each status update into a .txt file. In the ongoing data collection process, a parsing program which was especially written for extracting status updates from Facebook fan pages. The program parsed each fan page only for status updates published by the magazines themselves excluding links, pictures and the magazine's name, which stands at the top of every status update. Unfortunately, it was not possible to program the parser to store the status updates by their dates of publication. Nevertheless, in order to analyze language changes, it seems to be unimportant whether the status update was published two years ago or recently because linguistic changes are not

traceable within such a short time span. The different magazines started to use Facebook status updates at distinct times. Some magazines started their publication of status messages as early as January 2008 and others in March 2009. Therefore, the period of status message publications differs from magazine to magazine. The data collection for each individual magazine began with the first status update the magazine had ever published on Facebook and went on to the last status update that was published in August 2011. Each period of status message publication for the individual magazines can be found in the following chapter, which describes the corpus in more detailed manner. The extracted data were again stored into .txt files to be able to analyze the updates in the concordance program *AntConc*.

3.2 The Facebook corpus

The corpus consists of 757,969 words and has an overall number of status updates of 53,706. The status messages were collected from 28 US American and British women's and men's magazines Facebook fan pages, i.e. seven US American women's magazines, seven US American men's magazines, seven British women's magazines and seven British men's magazines. *Table 1* shows all of the 28 analyzed magazines ((m) indicating men's magazines and (w) indicating women's magazines), the date of the first and the last collected status messages, the total number of words for all collected status updates separated by the individual magazines and the number of status updates for each magazine. Due to the fact that the magazines began to update their statuses at distinct times, the number of words and the number of status updates differ in some instances to a great extent. Furthermore, some magazines update their status several times a day, whereas other magazines merely update their status once a day or only once a week, which also results in varying numbers of words and numbers of status updates. For instance, *Marie Claire UK* has a total number of status messages of 6,314 and a total number of 71,921 words from August 2009 to August 2011. In contrast, *Glamour US* started to update their status in February 2009, seven months earlier than *Marie Claire UK*, and has a total number of 3,349 status messages only and a total word count of 83,567. The differing number of status updates may be explained by the fact that *Glamour US* updates regularly, but not as much as *Marie Claire UK*. In addition, *Glamour US* seems to have longer status updates with regard to the length than *Marie Claire UK*.

Magazine	First and last collected status update on Facebook	Number of words	Number of status updates
GQ US (m)	August 2009-August 2011	14,744	951
British GQ (m)	September 2009-August 2011	45,072	2,536
Cosmopolitan US (w)	March 2009-August 2011	43,495	2,858
Cosmopolitan UK (w)	October 2009-August 2011	28,381	1,762
Esquire US (m)	May 2009-August 2011	15,081	995
Esquire UK (m)	April 2009-August 2011	10,388	676
Elle US (w)	September 2008-August 2011	20,237	1,397
Elle UK (w)	August 2008-August 2011	19,628	1,157
Glamour US (w)	February 2009-August 2011	83,567	3,349
Glamour UK (w)	July 2009-August 2011	40,279	3,810
Harper's Bazaar US (w)	January 2008-August 2011	23,846	1,375
Harper's Bazaar UK (w)	May 2009-August 2011	10,485	743
Complex Magazine US (m)	May 2009-August 2011	16,898	2,836
Loaded UK (m)	February 2010-August 2011	14,220	668
Marie Claire US (w)	February 2009-August 2011	33,294	1,894
Marie Claire UK (w)	August 2009-August 2011	71,921	6,314
Maxim US (m)	January 2009-August 2011	27,046	2,326
FHM UK (m)	June 2009-August 2011	19,875	2,004
Men's Health US (m)	June 2009-August 2011	46,460	2,907
Men's Health UK (m)	August 2009-August 2011	22,857	1,719
Men's Journal US (m)	November 2008-August 2011	8,940	597
Men's Fitness UK (m)	April 2008-August 2011	21,656	1,192
Details US (m)	February 2008-August 2011	15,302	1,316
Shortlist UK (m)	August 2009-August 2011	12,343	1,021
Vogue US (w)	July 2009-August 2011	3,927	1,186
Vogue UK (w)	June 2010-August 2011	27,672	1,651
Women's Health US (w)	August 2008-August 2011	33,452	2,706
Grazia UK (w)	April 2009-August 2011	26,930	1,760
Σ		757,996	53,706

Table 1: Analyzed Facebook status messages and respective magazines

The magazines were selected according to popularity in the respective countries. Moreover, for every US American magazine, I tried to find a British equivalent to be able to compare their status updates with each other. In most instances, the magazines have a US and a British edition, such as *Vogue US* and *Vogue UK* or *GQ US* and *British GQ*. For other magazines which exist in one of the two countries only, I looked for magazines that roughly cover the same topics and have the same audience, such as *Details US* and

Shortlist UK. There are two exceptions for the comparability of the magazine's Facebook fan pages, namely *Women's Health US*, which has British equivalents, but these magazines did not have a fan page on Facebook at the time of data collection. The second magazine is the British *Grazia*, which also does not have an US American equivalent on Facebook. In *Table 1*, all magazines were ordered in groups of two for comparison except *Women's Health US* and the British *Grazia*.

3.3 The magazines

Vogue US/UK

The women's magazine is known for its high fashion photography, travel reports, beauty products and the advertisements of luxury goods. It targets highly educated, financially independent and successful women.

Harper's Bazaar US/UK

Harper's Bazaar is popular for women's fashion, shopping, beauty and relationship advice. Famous photographers, stylists and designers publish their photographs and work in the magazine's issues.

Glamour US/UK

Glamour aims at young, financially independent and self-conscious women who like to read about fashion, style, beauty, relationship advice, celebrities and weddings.

Elle US/UK

The magazine describes itself as "the number one fashion magazine in the world" and provides a well-balanced mix of celebrity cover stories, fashion and beauty advice.

Marie Claire US/UK

Marie Claire tries to connect fashion, style, beauty and celebrity interviews to real life stories.

Cosmopolitan US/UK

The magazine clearly sets its focus on relationship and romance advice coupled with women's health, well-being, beauty, fashion and entertainment.

Grazia UK

It is known as the market leader of fashion magazines in Great Britain. *Grazia UK* combines fashion content and weekly news (mostly about celebrities).

Women's Health US

The magazine is popular for showing women a healthy way of living by providing information about nutrition, wellness, sports and exercising.

GQ US/British GQ

GQ is perceived as the male equivalent of *Vogue* and presents a wide variety of topics, such as fashion, food, movies, sports, technology, travel, books, women and romance.

Esquire US/UK

The magazine has a similar scope like *GQ* and publishes stories on fashion & grooming, food & drinks, women, technology & design and culture.

Details US

The magazine is primarily about men's luxury fashion and lifestyle, but it also covers topical political and cultural issues.

Complex Magazine US

It describes itself as a shopping guide for men, which mostly informs about streetwear, urban culture, hip hop music, graphic art and technology.

Shortlist UK

The British magazine is less concerned with men's fashion than politics, business, news, movies, cars and sports.

Maxim US

Similar to *FHM UK*, *Maxim US* publishes non-nude pictorials of models, actresses and singers. It also features stories on gaming, money, travel, entertainment and technology.

FHM UK

The main focus of *FHM UK* lies on women, usually celebrities, followed by technology, cars, entertainment and lifestyle.

Men's Journal US

The magazine informs its male readership about adventure, such as hiking, canoeing and skiing. It additionally reviews equipment needed for travel, sports, fitness and adventures and also features articles on health and nutrition.

Loaded UK

Comparable to *FHM UK* and *Maxim US*, *Loaded UK* attracts a male audience interested in women, gambling, fashion, technology, cars and sports.

Men's Fitness UK, Men's Health US/UK

All three magazines solely focus on a male readership that pays attention to a balanced nutrition supported by exercising and fitness. Like *Men's Journal*, the magazines review sports and fitness equipment and provide their readers with exercising tips.

3.4 Data analysis

The magazines were not only grouped together according to their editions and to their content, but also according to social classes. Usually magazines are classified by the age groups of the readers, but this does not make sense for this analysis because most of the magazines target the same or at least similar age groups. Therefore, I decided to group them according to the readership and their social class, which depended mainly on the content of the magazine. For instance, upper class magazines mostly do not report about romance and relationship advice, whereas in middle class and lower middle class magazines these two topics usually belong to the main content of the magazines. The classification includes three groups, i.e. upper and upper middle class, upper middle and middle class and lower middle class.

Table 2 illustrates the three different target groups for the individual magazines. Not all of the three groups are equal in size because the number of published upper class magazines is smaller than those of middle class or lower middle class magazines.

women's magazines	men's magazines
Vogue UK	British GO
Vogue US	GQ US
Harper's Bazaar UK	Esquire UK
Harper's Bazaar US	Esquire US
Glamour UK	Details US
Glamour US	Complex Magazine US
Elle UK	Men's Fitness UK
Elle US	Shortlist UK
Women's Health US	Men's Health US
Marie Claire UK	Men's Health UK
Marie Claire US	Men's Journal US
Cosmopolitan UK	FHM UK
Cosmopolitan US	Maxim US
Grazia UK	Loaded UK

Legend for social class classification:

- Light yellow box: upper and upper middle class
- Medium yellow box: upper middle and middle class
- Bright yellow box: lower middle class

Table 2: Classification of magazines according to social class of the readership

In Table 2, the order of the magazines is intended to show a basis for comparison between women's and men's magazines. The order of the magazines was again determined by the magazines' topics, which are supposed to be as similar as possible in order to ensure a balanced comparison. Obviously, this does not work for every magazine since some of the magazines do not have an exact counterpart in the respective country. If an equivalent existed, it either did not have a Facebook fan page or the magazine did not use status updates. *Elle UK* and *Men's Fitness UK* cannot be fully contrasted according to their contents because *Elle* is merely concerned with fashion, beauty and love, whereas *Men's Fitness UK* is solely about health, sports and nutrition. Nevertheless, it may be possible to compare *Women's Health US* twice, i.e. first with its male equivalent in the US and second across varieties with *Men's Fitness UK*. The other magazines which do not quite fit together with regard to content are *Marie Claire UK* and *Men's Health UK*. Again, both magazines may be compared to both US American editions. Contentwise *Glamour UK* and *Details US* are comparable, but they have different target groups, which is also true for *Marie Claire US/UK*, *Men's Health UK* and *Men's Journal US*.

The first eight women's and men's magazines in Table 2 (colored in eggshell) belong to the group of upper and upper middle class target readership. A detailed

description of the magazines and their target readership was given in the previous section. The decision for this classification was made with regard to the content and the magazine's self-description, which contains information on the target readership. The topics and the products advertised in all analyzed magazines always depends on the social class of the reader, i.e. monthly income and education. The two remaining groups belong to the upper middle, middle (colored in bright yellow) and lower middle class (colored in sunny yellow), which implies that these groups have a lower income and are not as highly educated as the upper class. A concise classification of the target readership published by the magazines themselves can be found in the appendix.

The .txt files containing the status updates were analyzed with the concordance program AntConc 3.2.1w. Overall, 26 verbs, adverbs and one noun occurring in null subject sentences were analyzed. Due to the fact that null subjects are unsearchable in a corpus, the items had been selected before the actual analysis process started, i.e. the status updates were randomly scanned for frequently occurring verbs and adverbs in null subject sentences. Those verbs and adverbs were written down and later used for the corpus analysis. It is important to note that not all verbs and adverbs that were found in subjectless sentences were included in the analysis because most verbs occurred merely five times in the entire corpus, which is not enough to receive any reliable evaluation of the data and thus will yield in insignificant findings.

On the basis of random selection, the following 26 lexemes were included in the corpus analysis for this thesis and can be distinguished into eight groups. The first group comprises verbs of emotion and attitude: *want*, *love*, *like* and *wanna*. The second group consists of the modal verbs *need*, *can't* and *couldn't*. The third group consists of the semi-modals *have*, *having*, *haven't*, *had* and *got*. The next group contains verbs of intellectual states: *think*, *thinking*, *thought*, *know* and *wondering*. Another group includes verbs of activity: *going* and *heading*. The sixth group includes verbs of perception, i.e. *look*, *looking*, *feel* and *feeling*. The last two groups are lexemes other than verbs, namely the adverbs *ever* and *never* and the noun *thought*.

British English seems to be not as conservative with respect to linguistic change as American English. The subsequent research questions may help to support or disprove this general assumption.

- I. *Do Facebook fan pages use more null subjects than printed magazines?*
- II. *Do men's magazines use more null subjects than women's magazines?*

- III. *Do Facebook fan pages of British women's and men's magazines use more null subjects in their status updates than those of US American fan pages?*
- IV. *Do upper and upper middle class magazines apply less null subjects than middle and lower class magazines?*
- V. *Does the usage of the analyzed lexemes in subjectless sentences differ between the two English varieties?*
- VI. *Do certain verbs/adverbs in subjectless sentences occur with certain topics in the status updates of the magazines?*

In order to answer the research questions, each of the 26 lexemes was analyzed individually in the Facebook corpus. The first step of the analysis was to look at the overall occurrences of the selected verbs and adverbs to find out the proportion of null subjects in the entire corpus. The next step was to classify the overall occurrences for each magazine into verbs and adverbs in front position in a sentence, into non-overt subjects and into a third group of 'others', containing all sentences that were irrelevant for the analysis. Null subjects can also occur in mid-position in English, but in the Facebook corpus there was merely one occurrence of a non-overt pronoun in this position. Therefore, mid-position was not included in the classification of null subjects. The first group, consisting of verbs and adverbs in front position, was chosen because not all verbs and adverbs that occur in front positions in sentences are always null subjects. Imperatives, for instance, were completely excluded from the analysis and are not considered to be a form of null subjects in this thesis. All other front positions, such as names and titles (ex.: movie title "Love and Other Drugs") were also omitted from the analysis. Verbs in front position and null subjects were found with the *Regex* function of AntConc, which searches the corpus for full regular expressions.

In a second analysis, the magazines were grouped according to the target readerships' social classes as described at the beginning of this section. The classification of the US American and British women's and men's magazines into three groups, upper and upper middle class; upper middle and middle class; lower middle class, resulted in a total number of twelve individual groups. This classification was chosen because magazines within the same groups have roughly the same topics and content. In addition, this facilitates the comparison within the groups and makes it easier to identify verbs and adverbs in subjectless sentences occurring with specific topics. Each of the twelve groups was again parsed for null subjects with the respective 26 lexemes. A topic was assigned to

each of the status updates in which a null subject occurred. This resulted in twelve tables with similar (for the same magazines with an US American and a British edition) but also different (magazines that do not have comparable British and US American editions) topics, e.g. fashion, beauty, sports, food/drinks/recipes and books. The tables for each target readership group can be found in the appendix of this thesis. The analysis regarding the topics of the status updates was supposed to show whether specific verbs in subjectless sentences occur with certain topics within the corpus. The verb *love*, for instance, might occur in a fashion context only, whereas *need* may occur more often in status messages with the topic food/drink/recipes. During this analysis, I further paid attention to subject pronouns that were omitted and to the sentence types in which English null subjects frequently occurred in the status updates.

To contrast the findings of my Facebook corpus with a reference corpus, I chose the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) because it is updated annually and contains a sub-corpus of US American magazines. A British corpus with a smaller amount of data (100 million words) would have been the British National Corpus (BNC), but I did not include this corpus in my analysis because the corpus is not updated on a yearly basis and the newest data is from 1994. Similar to the analysis of the Facebook corpus, the respective lexemes were examined individually in COCA. The occurrences of null subjects in the Facebook corpus and in COCA were contrasted to see whether null subjects are also applied in print versions of the magazines. The analysis of null subjects in COCA was restricted to the sub-corpus of magazines. This corpus contains nearly 100 US American magazines published from 1990-2011 and has a size of 90 million words. Therefore, it is not feasible to contrast the Facebook findings of British magazines with those of the American magazines in COCA. Thus, the investigation will solely focus on the comparison between US American magazines on Facebook and in COCA. Not all magazines that were selected for the compilation of the Facebook corpus were also available in COCA, but at least one magazine for each target readership group was found. For the upper and upper middle class readership, the women's magazines *Harper's Bazaar US* and the men's magazine *Esquire US* were found in COCA. *Men's Health US* was included in the corpus and belongs to the second group of upper middle and middle class readers. *Cosmopolitan US* represents the readership of the lower middle class in the Facebook corpus and could also be found in COCA. Despite the fact that COCA did not contain all of the previously chosen magazines, all null subjects in front position found in women's and men's magazines the corpus were included in the analysis. Since the analysis of the Facebook

corpus was the main objective of this thesis, the analysis of COCA was not carried out in such a detailed way as for the Facebook corpus. COCA also contains magazines with a general readership, which are read by both, women and men. Therefore, a third group was established in which all magazines read by both genders were included. In the second analysis of COCA, the newly established third group of magazines was excluded from the comparison of women's and men's magazines because the Facebook corpus did not contain such a category. It has to be said that these general audience magazines could not be excluded beforehand from the investigation because the user cannot choose to search specific magazines in COCA. Furthermore, the COCA magazines were not differentiated according to their target readership because the number of magazines in COCA was much higher than the number of analyzed Facebook US American magazines. This would have led to results that are not comparable to each other. Nevertheless, the comparison of the investigated lexemes in null subject contexts with regard to certain topics was included in the COCA analysis.

Due to their non-overt characteristic, null subjects are not easily found in a corpus. The focus on null subjects in front position facilitated the corpus analysis to a certain extent. To find the selected 26 lexemes, the search string was the following: period followed by a space and the capitalized lexeme, i.e. “. *Verb*”. The corpus showed only results in which the lexeme occurred in front position beginning a new sentence. Some hits also contained the chosen lexemes in mid-position preceded by a period, which were excluded from the analysis.

4 Results and Discussion

4.1 The Facebook corpus

The analysis of the compiled Facebook corpus concentrated on the usage of null subjects in status updates of US American and British women's and men's magazines' fan pages on Facebook. The size of the four sub-corpora can be seen in *Table 3*. It was not possible to collect the same amount of data for each of the four groups because the years of publication of Facebook status messages differed from fan page to fan page, i.e. some magazine fan pages began as early as 2008 to update their statuses, whereas other magazines started in 2009.

Magazine	Number of words	Number of status updates
US American women's magazines	241,818	14,765
US American men's magazines	144,471	11,928
British women's magazines	225,296	17,197
British men's magazines	146,411	9,816
Σ	757,996	53,706

Table 3: Number of words and status updates by gender and country

The table shows that a high number of status updates does not necessarily result in a high number of words. Although the status messages of the selected British women's magazines add up to the highest number of status updates in the entire corpus (17,197 updates), the number of words in the British women's magazines (225,296 words) is smaller than that of the US American women's magazines (241,818 words). This is also true for the men's magazines. The number of words of the British men's magazines is slightly higher (146,411 words) than that of the US American men's magazines (144,471 words) despite the fact that the British magazines published approximately 2,100 status messages less than the US American magazines. This illustrates that the size of the status updates of British women's magazines tend to be shorter than that of the US American equivalents, whereas for the British men's magazines it seems to be the other way around. In general, it can be said that during 2008-2011 women's magazines, irrespective of the country, tended to update their magazines status on Facebook more often than men's magazines.

The selected 26 verbs, adverbs and nouns occurred 20,628 times in the Facebook corpus, which had an overall size of 757,996 words. The pie chart in *Illustration 4* shows the proportion of null subjects in the corpus. 11 per cent of all analyzed lexemes in the Facebook corpus were non-overt subjects, which is a quite large amount in relation to the overall size of the corpus.

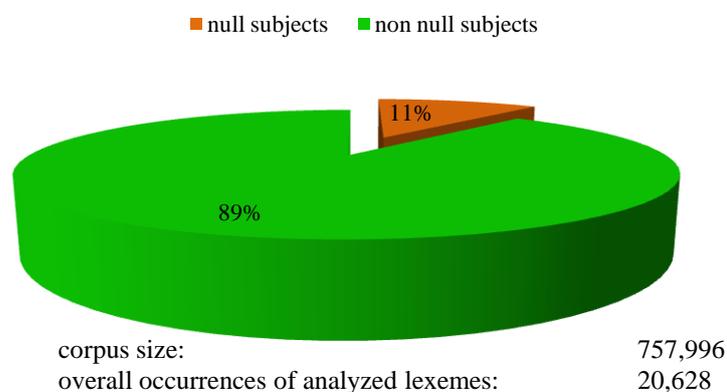


Illustration 4: Proportion of null subjects in the Facebook corpus

Illustration 5 indicates that in absolute numbers US American women’s magazines apply the most null subjects in their Facebook status updates, whereas US American men’s magazines use the least non-overt subjects in their status messages. British women’s and men’s magazines have almost the same number of occurrences of null subjects in the corpus despite the fact that the British men’s magazine sub-corpus has nearly 100,000 words less than the British women’s magazine sub-corpus. This becomes clear in *Illustration 6*, which shows the occurrences of non-overt subjects for all four groups per 100,000 words. The US American women’s magazines still have the most null subjects in their Facebook status updates, but the British women’s magazines have the least number of non-overt subjects in the corpus. The US American men’s magazines have a slightly higher number of null subjects compared to the British women’s magazines. The British men’s magazines have more than 1,000 non-overt subjects more than the British women’s magazines. Due to the fact that null subjects in English are considered to be ungrammatical and are applied mostly in informal conversations, it might be assumed that the high number of null subjects in the corpus is a result of writing conventions on Facebook. Discourse on Facebook has rather informal and spoken characteristics because most people

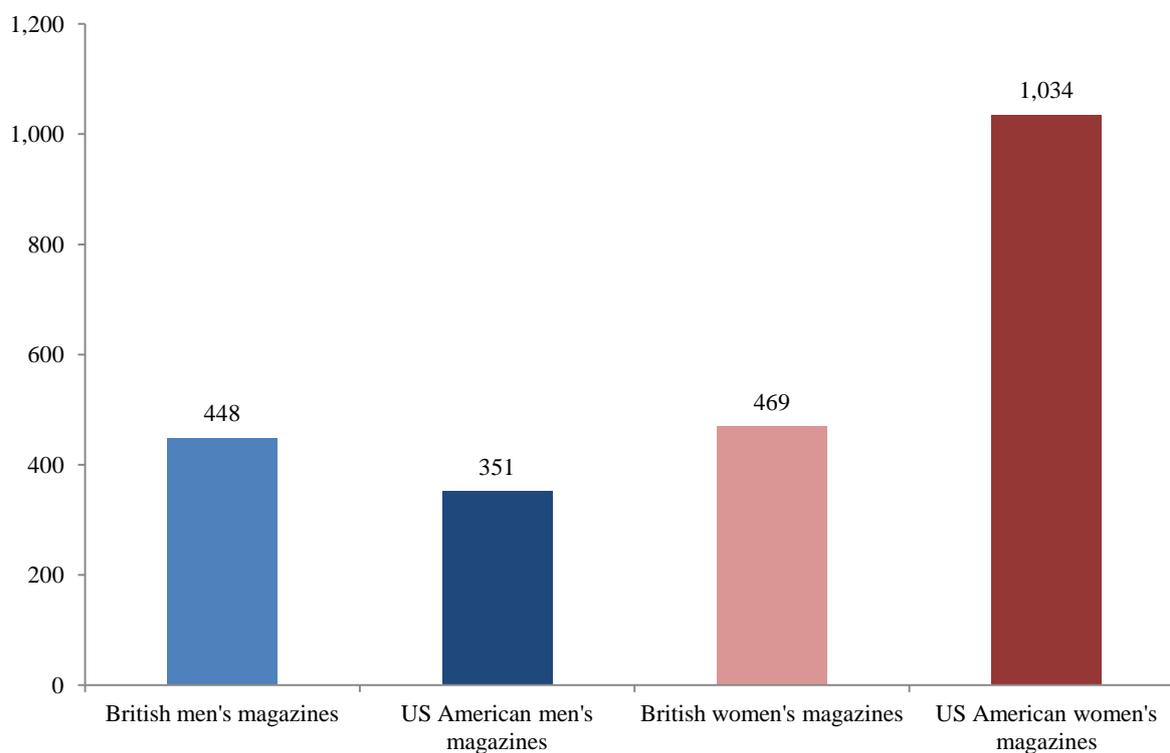


Illustration 5: Overall occurrences of non-overt subjects in the Facebook corpus

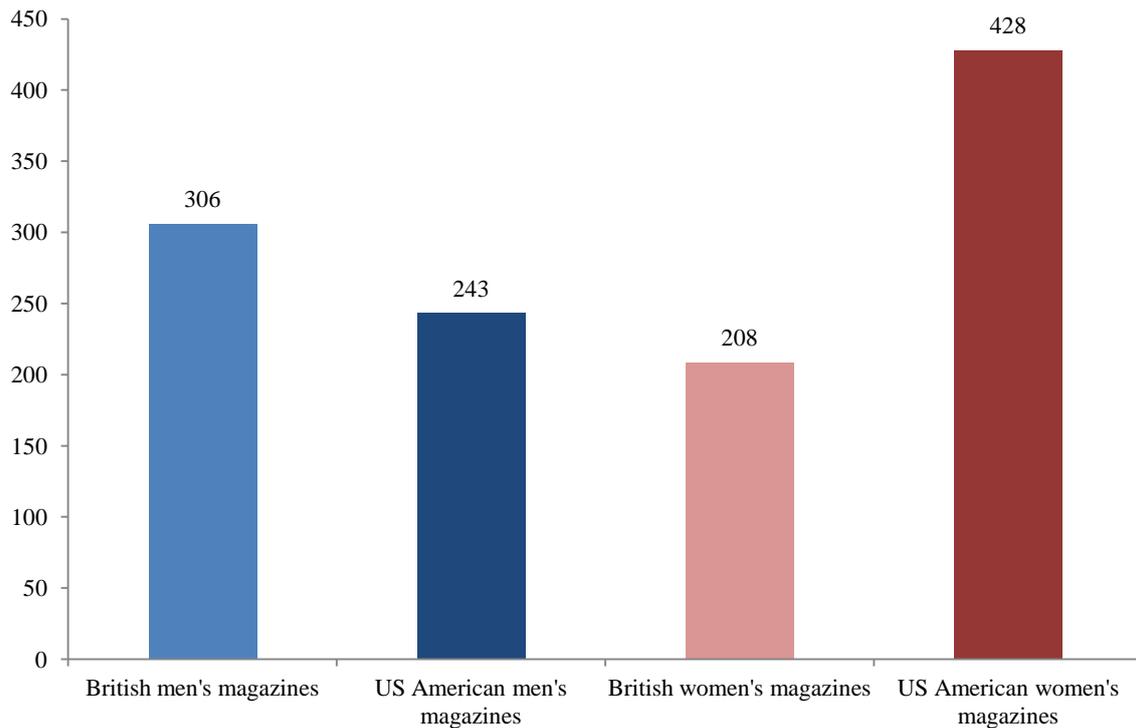


Illustration 6: Occurrences of non-overt subjects in the Facebook corpus per 100,000 words

write as if they would speak. Moreover, null subjects may also be economically motivated because status updates are short by nature and need to inform readers quickly and with the least possible number of words about news, updates, products, etc. These status messages intend to engage the reader into a conversation with the writer of the update and/or also with other readers of the updates. In order to motivate people to take part in a conversation, the status messages need to create an oral character, which make it easier for readers to reply because they do not have to adhere to a formal writing style.

4.1.1 Verbs of emotion and attitude: *want*, *wanna*, *like* and *love*

In the Facebook corpus, most null subjects in the analyzed status updates per 100,000 words occurred with *want* (143 occurrences). The comparison of women's and men's magazines illustrates that *want* appeared more often with null subjects in US American and British men's magazines' Facebook fan pages than in women's magazines. *Want* had an overall occurrence of 74 per 100,000 words in the selected men's magazines, whereas in the status updates of women's magazines *want* appeared 69 times per 100,000 words with non-overt subjects. If the results are examined individually, it becomes obvious that the British men's magazines use *want* the most (94 occurrences), followed by the US American women's magazines (83 occurrences), the British women's magazines (54

occurrences) and the US American men's magazines (54 occurrences). *Table 4* shows all results of the corpus analysis in absolute numbers. A more detailed table containing all results can be found in the appendix.

Null subjects were also examined with regard to which personal pronoun was missing in the status messages and which sentence type the null subjects occurred in. All 537 (absolute occurrences) hits of *want* emerged in questions, which not only omitted the subject pronoun, but also the auxiliary *do* at the beginning of the question. Furthermore, *want* occurred with the 2nd person pronoun only. Examples (20), (21) and (22) illustrate the usage of null subjects in three selected magazines.

- (20) Want to see Kings Of Leon this week for £15? Click here for the offer (*British GQ*)
- (21) Want a promotion? What to wear, say, and do to get one: (*Cosmopolitan US*)
- (22) So, how did you get on with the music quiz? Want the answers? Course you do. Click here: (*Shortlist UK*)

Sentences (20) and (21) immediately begin with a null subject and are followed by an imperative and advices what the reader needs to do next in order to obtain more information. Both questions do not hint at the omitted subject, but the subject pronoun is easily recoverable because the question already implies that the reader is asked. In (22), the non-overt subject and *want* follow a complete and grammatical question, which implies the missing subject in the second question, namely *you*. For all analyzed null subject interrogatives in this thesis, it seems to be irrelevant whether singular or plural *you* was dropped. The questions were still fully understandable no matter whether the authors of the status updates intended to refer to individuals or to groups of people, such as in the expression *you guys*. All three magazines pursue two goals, first that readers click on the link and take part in the raffle, read the article about how to get a job and click on the link to see the answers of the quiz. The second goal is to create conversations by asking these direct questions, i.e. some of the readers may answer the status update, which results in the achievement of the magazines' second goal. A mutual conversation or exchange of information gives the writer of the updates feedback whether the subscribers liked or disliked the update. Especially example (22) demonstrates the informal and conversational character of status messages containing non-overt subjects. The first sentence begins with the conjunction *so*, which is, according to the Oxford Dictionary (2000), clearly a spoken feature "used to introduce a comment or a question" (p. 1224). The sentence following the null subject utterance starts with the informal spoken *course* and at the same time adds the verb *do* that is missing in the previous null subject sentence.

lexeme	overall occurrences of null subjects
<i>want</i>	537
<i>need</i>	293
<i>think</i>	173
<i>love</i>	113
<i>like</i>	84
<i>wanna</i>	97
<i>feel</i>	18
<i>look</i>	43
<i>know</i>	22
<i>have</i>	58
<i>can't</i>	69
<i>haven't</i>	12
<i>having</i>	21
<i>looking</i>	128
<i>feeling</i>	80
<i>thinking</i>	46
<i>wondering</i>	21
<i>heading</i>	45
<i>going</i>	62
<i>couldn't</i>	6
<i>had</i>	13
<i>got</i>	150
<i>thought verb</i>	8
<i>thought noun</i>	64
<i>never</i>	7
<i>ever</i>	131

Table 4: Overall occurrences of null subjects in the Facebook corpus

One occurrence of a non-overt subject with *want* did not appear in an interrogative sentence:

- (23) Want her hair! The perfect colour. (*Glamour UK*)
- (24) Want to know what THE greatest cover songs of all time are? Thought so. (*Shortlist UK*)
- (25) Want a new man, new job, or just simply want to read what the stars have in store for you today? (*Cosmopolitan UK*)

(23) either omits the subjects pronoun *I* or *we* in the declarative sentence. According to Wratil (2011), first person pronouns have the highest topic-worthiness because the referent is extremely salient in the speech act, in this case the conversation between the writer(s) of

the status update and the subscriber (cf. p. 119). In this particular sentence, the speech act participant pronoun refers to the writer of the update, who is “immediately involved in the discourse” (p. 119). It may be the pronoun *I* that is missing because it is unlikely that the writer of the status message includes other members into the speech community. In (24), *want* occurs again in a question, in which the auxiliary *do* and the subject pronoun *you* is deleted. The question is followed by another null subject sentence, but with a different missing subject pronoun, i.e. *I* or *we*. Similarly to (23), both pronouns would make sense in the utterance, but due to the fact that probably only one person updated this particular status the pronoun *I* would be the logic solution. Example (24) shows that the referents of null subjects can also change within one context and that the non-overt subjects are still recoverable for the reader. In (25), the interrogative utterance is relatively long and asks what the readers of the update intend to read. Therefore, the non-overt subject *you* is deleted twice, first in front position and second in a quasi mid-position. This is possible because the question could be separated into two questions after *Want a new man, a new job?* The second part *or just simply want to read what the stars have in store for you today?* could be an independent question on its own. In addition, the second null subject needs to be omitted since it would sound rather awkward to leave out the first subject and insert the subject together with the verb *do* in the second part of the question. What is also noteworthy at this point is the very frequent use of *want* followed by a *to*- clause. More than half, namely 312 of the 537 absolute occurrences of *want* with a non-overt subject were followed by a clause with *to*.

Both English varieties in comparison show that *want* was more often employed by British magazines (148 occurrences per 100,000 words) than by US American magazines (137 occurrences per 100,000 words). This result is quite striking because according to the Oxford Dictionary *want* is more likely to be used in informal and more direct contexts and is said to be more often used by speakers of American English than British English speakers (cf. p. 1455). Despite that the result may have something to do with the topics of the status updates of the different magazines. Section 4.2 will take a more detailed look at status updates and their topics with regard to the analyzed verbs.

Wanna as a contracted form of the verb and the preposition *want to* was most often found in the status updates of US American women’s magazines (29 occurrences per 100,000 words). British women’s magazines applied the verb only eight times per 100,000 words and British and US American men’s magazines employed it three times each per 100,000 words. US American magazines used *wanna* more frequently than British

magazines, which again supports the notion of the Oxford Dictionary that the verb is used more regularly by speakers of American English (cf. p. 1224). The usage of the informal *wanna* in subjectless sentences in a written context proves that Facebook status messages have informal and spoken features and are also characterized by the principle of language economy, which tries to transfer messages as effective as possible by applying the least number of words. Naturally, this is also feasible because most status messages are linked to a website, where detailed information about the advertized topic are provided.

- (26) Wanna zap more fat? Then make sure you're eating this (and not that!): (*Glamour US*)
- (27) Wanna play London Fashion Week bingo with Henry Holland? Course you do! (*Grazia UK*)
- (28) Wanna know if life at Marie Claire is really like The Devil Wears Prada? Our Ed in Chief's assistant reveals all! (*Marie Claire US*)
- (29) Wanna know how your watch actually tells time? Hint: it has something to do with that infuriating clock on 60 Minutes...(Esquire US)

Obviously, the above listed null subjects all occur in front position, in interrogative sentences and omit the 2nd person singular/plural pronoun *you*. These findings are also true for the remaining 93 occurrences of *wanna* with null pronouns. None of the overall occurrences omitted a pronoun other than *you*, which also indicates that all hits for *wanna* appeared in questions. (27), similar to (22), clearly points out the spoken features of status messages, which again applied the contracted form *course* to convince readers to take part in a game created by the British women's magazine *Grazia*.

Like, a verb of emotion, can be either used to request something, e.g. *I would like to have a cup of coffee* or it is applied to express a person's degree of preference for something, e.g. *I like coffee*. In the corpus, *like* occurred in the latter meaning only. The verb was most frequently applied by British men's magazines (31 occurrences per 100,000 words) followed by British women's magazines (9 occurrences per 100,000 words). In contrast, US American women's magazines used the verb merely 5 times per 100,000 words and US American men's magazines showed the least hits with 4 occurrences per 100,000 words.

- (30) Like the soundtrack to the Tommy Hilfiger A/W 11 show? Hear "Boyfriend" and the rest of the Best Coast album in full and for free (*British GQ*)
- (31) Like Britney Spears and Nicki Minaj? We're giving away a pair of tickets to their Femme Fatale tour with Jesse and The Toy Boys! Enter here: (*Cosmopolitan US*)
- (32) Like vodka? Like caviar? Like restaurants which look like train carriages? Hot foot it to Soho's BBR...(Esquire UK)
- (33) Like poker but don't want to lose your money? Take £5 of ours instead (*Shortlist UK*)

Like was solely applied in front positions of questions and consequently occurred with the non-overt subject *you* only. (30) and (31) are representatives of the biggest group of null subjects, which have been already discussed for the verbs *want* and *wanna*. But (32) and (33) are slightly different from the previously discussed examples. (32) is the only instance in the corpus which has more than two successive null subjects. All three subjectless sentences omitted the pronoun *you* as well as the auxiliary *do* at the beginning of the sentence. Cote (1996) claims that the auxiliary deletion together with the deletion of the subject depends on phonological processes rather than syntactic processes (cf. p. 44). This means that destressed elements at the beginning of sentences are likely to be omitted, especially in oral conversations. Due to the fact that Facebook status updates are examples of written-as-if-spoken conversation, this rule may also apply to the analyzed subjectless sentences. (33) omitted two subjects, the first in front position and the second after the conjunction *but*. This kind of subject omission is very frequent if the subject referent remains the same within the sentence, e.g. *He sits down and eats*.

The verb *love* can be compared with regard to meaning to the above discussed *like*. The verb can also have two meanings: to utter a request and to show a person's degree of affection for something (cf. Nariyama, 2004, p. 254). It seems clear that the degree of preference for something for *love* is higher than for the verb *like*. The results of the corpus analysis of *love* in null subject context are comparable to those of *like*. *Love* with non-overt subjects was most often applied by British women's magazines (28 occurrences per 100,000 words). US American women's magazines used the verb 16 times per 100,000 words, whereas British men's magazines had 5 occurrences and US American men's magazines 3 occurrences per 100,000 words for *love*. If the two English varieties are compared, the results show, similar to *like*, that *love* was more frequently employed by British magazines (33 occurrences per 100,000 words) than by US American magazines (19 occurrences per 100,000 words). Nevertheless, *love* was used with the non-overt pronouns *I*, *we* and *you* in the corpus, whereas *like* was used with the 2nd person pronoun only.

- (34) Love this new shot from the Autumn/Winter Dunhill campaign. More pictures on GQ.com shortly...(*British GQ*)
- (35) Love this short-to-long hair transformation! See the before and after: (*Marie Claire US*)
- (36) We're at ONE MILLION FACEBOOK FANS AND COUNTING! Thanks for 'Liking' us, everyone. Love you, mean it! (*Cosmopolitan US*)
- (37) Love this Lily Allen classic... (*Glamour UK*)
- (38) Love Vogue magazine? Here's your invite to an exclusive Space NK/Vogue reader shopping event: (*Vogue UK*)

Both English varieties employed *love* more frequently with the null pronoun *you* than with the first person pronoun *I* and *we*. A clear preference for a certain pronoun for the individual varieties could not be found in the data. The analysis of *like* and *love* suggests that *like* may have a limited use for non-overt 2nd person pronouns in interrogatives. *Love*, on the other hand, seems to be not restricted to either 1st or 2nd person null pronouns. (34), (35) and (37) are common examples for the deletion of 1st person pronouns. It is not clear whether the updates refer to the entire staff of the respective magazine or just to the author of the status message. This does, however, not lead to an incomprehensibility of the sentences. In contrast, (36) leaves no doubt that the 1st person plural pronoun *we* is deleted in both parts of the sentence. The first sentence already implies that all employees at *Cosmopolitan US* are proud of one million Facebook fans. The null subject sentence in (36) consists of two main clauses, which could also be separated. Therefore, the second null subject *mean it* cannot be regarded as an embedded or mid-position null subject. (38) belongs to the group with the most occurrences for *love* with non-overt subjects, i.e. deletion of the auxiliary *do* and the subject pronoun *you*.

4.1.2 Modal verbs: *need*, *can't* and *couldn't*

Non-overt subjects with the modal verb *need* were significantly less often applied in status updates than *want*, but more often than the rest of the analyzed verbs, adverbs and the noun. The analysis showed that *need* in combination with a null subject was most often used by US American women's magazines (68 occurrences per 100,000) followed by British men's magazines (47 occurrences per 100,000 words). US American men's magazines applied *need* 22 times per 100,000, whereas British women's magazines used the verb with a null subject the least (12 occurrences per 100,000 words). As far as gender is concerned, women's magazines tend to use *need* slightly more frequent (41 occurrences per 100,000 words) than men's magazines (35 occurrences per 100,000 words). Although non-overt subjects were applied most in questions and therefore omitted the 2nd person pronoun *you*, they were also more often used in declaratives than the verb *want*, which had no occurrence in a declarative sentence.

- (39) What are your weekend plans? Need inspiration! (*Marie Claire UK*)
- (40) Need lunch inspiration! (*Glamour UK*)
- (41) Need your help! (*Women's Health US*)
- (42) Having closet fatigue and need some serious fashion inspiration! (*Marie Claire US*)

All four example sentences have the same purpose, namely to motivate the reader to comment on the status update. Nevertheless, (39), (40) and (41) differ from example (42).

The four sentences clearly have non-overt subjects in front positions and all of them omit the 1st person singular pronoun *I*. For the first three examples, it could also be possible to insert the pronoun *we* instead of *I*. But it seems that for (41), *we* may be the most plausible solution because it appears that the entire staff at *Women's Health* needs the readers' help, whereas in (39) and (40) the status update seems to refer to one person only. Apart from the missing pronouns, sentence (42) differs from the other three examples in another aspect. It has two null subjects in one sentence, one non-overt subject in front position with the verb *having* and a second null subject in mid-position with the verb *need*. Usually one would expect that the second subject in (42) is realized to make it easier for the reader to find out who the referent of the missing subject pronoun is. However, from the context it seems clear that only the writer of the status message can be the referent for the non-overt subject. The reason for the deletion of the 1st person pronouns in all four utterances could simply be politeness. It becomes more and more common to simply omit the pronoun *I* to direct the attention towards the hearer and not towards the speaker. Another explanation is provided by Trasher who claims that if the subjectless string is a statement, then the pronoun *I* can be omitted. If the subjectless sentence is a question, it is the pronoun *you* which can be deleted (cf. p. 62). Sentence (42) does not only delete the pronoun, but also the auxiliary *be*, here in its inflected form *am*, which can be derived from the progressive verb *having*. This example supports Trasher's findings, in which he points out that if the pronoun drops, the auxiliary can also be omitted (cf. p. 43). The four examples above were the only instances in which *need* was used in declarative sentences with pronouns other than *you*. All other results of null subjects and *need* occurred in questions directly addressing the reader:

- (43) Need a little nail art project for the upcoming storm? Make your own glittery nail polish! (*Glamour US*)
- (44) Need musical inspiration this morning? See what the models, photographers and fashion designers are singing along to: (*Vogue UK*)
- (45) Need someone to talk to? (*Shortlist UK*)
- (46) On Facebook all the time? Need a new phone? Win a Nokia C7! (*British GQ*)

(43), (44) and (45) represent the biggest group of null subjects in combination with the verb *need*, i.e. the status update begins with the null subject and is followed by an imperative in the next utterance or the subjectless sentence stands on its own like in (45). Example (46) illustrates a sequence of two questions and an imperative. Both interrogatives contain two differing null subjects; the first question deleted the verb *are* and the pronoun *you* and the second question omitted the auxiliary *do* and *you*. However, a

sequence of null subjects in two or more utterances was rather the exception in the analysis.

Another modal verb that was examined in the Facebook corpus was *can't*. In comparison, *can't* was equally often used by women's and men's magazines (9 occurrences per 100,000 words). Individually, US American men's and women's magazines applied most non-overt subjects with *can't* (men's magazines 12 occurrences; women's magazines 11 occurrences per 100,000 words).

The above discussed verbs occurred at times with non-overt subject pronouns other than *you*. For *can't*, a clear tendency towards a usage of the verb together with the non-overt pronouns *I*, *it* and *we* is visible. 38 of the 69 overall occurrences with *can't* contained one of the three pronouns as null subject. This implies that *can't* was less often applied with a non-overt form of *you*. The subsequent examples illustrate the usage of *can't* in the corpus.

- (47) What a great surprise on a rainy Thursday. Can't wait to watch Eclipse again tonight! Charlotte (*Glamour UK*)
- (48) It's Friendsday Friday! Tonight I'm going out with my friends in London. Can't wait to get home and have a glass of wine! Have fun whatever you're doing, Cosmo's Annabelle x (*Cosmopolitan UK*)
- (49) Can't go wrong with Nike. (*Complex Magazine US*)
- (50) Can't keep their hands off each other! (*Glamour UK*)
- (51) So Mila Kunis has split up with Macaulay Culkin. Can't say we're surprised, he's never been the same since that zombie attack...(Loaded UK)
- (52) Can't figure out why you're gaining weight, despite the fact you work out? Your diet might be to blame. Follow this ultimate nutrition plan to burn more fat. (*Men's Health US*)
- (53) Can't get enough of senior market editor Joanna Hillman's incredible style during Fashion Week? How about 30 days worth starting today! (*Harper's Bazaar US*)

A more detailed analysis on the usage of *can't* with null pronouns other than *you* showed that British magazines tend to use *can't* more often with the deleted pronouns *I* and *we* (6 occurrences per 100,000 words) than US American magazines (4 occurrences per 100,000 words). In contrast, US American magazines applied *can't* more frequent with the non-overt subject pronoun *you* (7 occurrences per 100,000 words) than the British magazines (1 occurrence per 100,000 words). (47) and (48) both omitted the 1st person pronoun *I* in their updates, which can be deduced from the fact that both authors wrote their names at the end of the messages. (48) does not leave out the subject in the second sentence *Tonight I'm going out with my friends in London* because the sentence starts with adverb *tonight*. The omission of the pronoun would result in the sentence *Tonight going out with my friends in London*, which sounds clumsy and may lead to confusion among readers. (49) deleted the

dummy subject *it* from the sentence. Trasher calls dummy subjects, such as *it* and *there* meaningless elements because they are merely surface markers (cf. p. 38). Nevertheless, they have to be present in an English sentence since English is a non-pro-drop language and therefore needs an overt subject on the surface (cf. p. 38ff.). This surface structure constraint can be

lifted if it is obvious from the resultant fragment that it once applied”, i.e. “if the fragment looks like the remains of a surface structure, *it* and *there* can be deleted (p. 41).

This rule seems to apply to sentence (49) because no other pronoun than *it* can be inserted in this position. Example (50) was the one of the two instances in the Facebook corpus which omitted the pronoun *they*. This result shows that the deletion of 3rd person pronouns, such as *they*, is rather uncommon and goes hand in hand with Wratil’s findings that 3rd person pronouns do not have a high topic-worthiness and thus are not as frequent omitted as first and/or second person pronouns (cf. p. 119ff.). Generally, 3rd person subjects are non-overt only if the referents have been mentioned previously in the conversation (cf. Haegeman, 1990, p. 167). (50), however, does not introduce the referents in a previous sentence, but the subjectless utterance is still acceptable because status updates usually show pictures or short excerpts of texts, websites, etc. of the topic that is being talked about in the status message. Example (51) displays the most features of oral conversation of all the examples with *can’t*. The first sentence is introduced with the adverb *so* and followed by a subjectless relative clause, which omitted the 1st person plural pronoun *we* in front position and also deleted the relative pronoun *that*. Although the second sentence is continued after the comma, the first part containing the relative clause could also stand on its own. The deletion of the relative pronoun is feasible because the relative clause is not too complex. (52) and (53) are typical examples of the use of *can’t* in subjectless interrogatives. (52) deleted the subject in initial position, but realized it in mid-position to avoid a completely ungrammatical and nonsensical sentence.

The modal verb *couldn’t* in subjectless sentences occurred 6 times only in the corpus. Women’s magazines used the verb merely twice with a non-overt pronoun, which means that per 100,000 words these magazines did not have any hits for *couldn’t*. The men’s magazines applied the verb three times, which results in one occurrence per 100,000 words. Despite the low frequency of null subjects with this verb, *couldn’t*, similarly to *can’t*, also demonstrated a tendency to be more often used with the null pronouns *I* and *it* than with the non-overt pronoun *you*. This may be due to the fact that *couldn’t* appeared

more often as a past form of the verb *can't* than in its epistemic meaning, which can be seen in the following three examples.

- (54) I had a barbecue on the roof of my friend's house last night for her birthday. Amazing views, cold cider, hotdogs and great company! Couldn't have asked for a better night, Annabelle. (*Cosmopolitan UK*)
- (55) Joel says: for the Brazilian JiuJitsu crowd out there, I just got the third stripe on my blue belt! Couldn't have happened at a better time. Comp-e-ti-tion season! Yeah! (*Men's Fitness UK*)
- (56) Couldn't be in Cannes? Check out our red-carpet coverage. (*Harper's Bazaar US*)

All three sentences omitted a distinct subject pronoun, in (54) *I*, in (55) *it* and in (56) *you*. The first two status updates are personal reports about events by the authors of the updates, whereas the last message aims at the readers and tries to motivate them to click on the link and visit the magazine's website.

The results of the analysis of the three modal verbs showed that *need*, *can't* and *couldn't* are more often employed by US American magazines than by British magazines. Furthermore, *need* was usually used with the non-overt subject pronoun *you* in interrogative sentences. In contrast, *can't* and *couldn't* were more often applied with the non-overt pronouns *I*, *it* and *we*.

4.1.3 Semi-modal verbs: *have*, *haven't*, *having*, *had* and *got*

The non-auxiliary *have* had the most occurrences (58 occurrences) in the Facebook corpus compared to the other three forms of *have*. US American women's magazines used *have* in subjectless sentences most frequently (17 occurrences per 100,000 words). The verb occurred less often in US American men's magazines (9 occurrences per 100,000 words) and in British men's magazines (2 occurrences per 100,000). *Have* was not found at all in British women's magazines (0 occurrences per 100,000 words). Null subjects and the negated form *haven't* appeared only 12 times in the entire corpus and was most often found in US American women's magazines (3 occurrences per 100,000 words) and in British men's magazines (2 occurrences per 100,000). It occurred only once per 100,000 words in British women's magazines and not at all in US American men's magazines. The progressive form *having* had a slightly higher overall occurrence (21 occurrences) than *haven't*. As the previous results have already shown, *having* was also applied most by US American women's magazines (5 occurrences per 100,000 words), followed by US American and British men's magazines (3 occurrences for each variety per 100,000 words) and British women's magazines (1 occurrence per 100,000 words). The past tense verb *had* had 13 overall occurrences in the corpus and was again most often employed by US

American women's magazines (3 occurrences per 100,000 words) and British men's magazines (2 occurrences per 100,000 words). US American men's magazines used *had* once per 100,000 words and British women's magazines did not use *had* at all (0 occurrences per 100,000 words). All investigated forms of *have*, except for *haven't*, were applied most by US American magazines. *Haven't* was equally often used by British and US American magazines.

All four forms of *have* appeared most with the non-overt subject pronoun *you* in interrogative sentences. *Have* occurred twice with the 1st person pronoun *I* and once with the 3rd person pronoun plural *they* in the British magazines, whereas US American magazines did not use *have* with any other non-overt pronoun than *you*. (57) and (58) illustrate the usage of *have* in two selected British magazines.

- (57) Joel's budget diet, day 8: Have stopped eating actual meals and started just eating individual ingredients (spinach, tuna, pitta) out of their packets. Still not poor enough to contemplate buying Caged Hen Eggs (15 for £1.54!) instead of free range. (*Men's Fitness UK*)
- (58) We want to know what your one must-have is in a man? Do they have to be over 6ft? Have nice eyes? Or a waist bigger than yours? (*Cosmopolitan UK*)
- (59) Have a hot date coming up? From dinner to dancing to karaoke, find the chicest dress for your big night out! (*Elle US*)

(57) is a report about a diet from the point of view of the writer of the status update, therefore the null pronoun *I* appears in a declarative sentence. In the second sentence of the same update not only the subject pronoun *I* was omitted, but also the inflected auxiliary *am*. According to Trasher (1974), the deletion of auxiliaries in negative strings is quite common because “the availability of the auxiliary-negative contraction seems to determine which auxiliaries must obligatorily drop along with the subject” (p. 48). Thus, *am* is the only auxiliary that cannot contract with the negative and consequently has to be dropped (cf. p. 49). In (58), the null pronoun *they* appears after two completely grammatical questions. The auxiliary *do* and the pronoun *they* were probably deleted to avoid repetition and/or to shorten the update. In the fourth question of this update, even more elements were dropped. The interrogative is introduced with *or* and omitted the part *do they have to have*, i.e. auxiliary *do*, the subject pronoun *they* and the *have to + infinitive* construction.

- (60) Haven't booked a holiday? Don't despair! Find your perfect getaway with our 10 Best exotic weekend breaks (*Marie Claire UK*)
- (61) Haven't worked out in a while? Learn how to jog your muscles' memory (*Women's Health US*)
- (62) Haven't had one of these for a while, it's a 50 pull-up Thursday! We're doing them on Metolius rock rings throughout the day, join in if you've got a pull-up bar near you. (*Men's Fitness UK*)

(60) and (61) show the most often occurring null subject construction in the corpus. Sentence (62) omitted the subject pronoun *we* at the beginning of the sentence only, but not the auxiliary *haven't* like in example (58). The omission of *haven't* would either result in (63) or (64):

- (63) *Not had one of these for a while, it's a 50 pull-up Thursday! [...]
- (64) Hadn't one of these for a while, it's a 50 pull-up Thursday! [...]

The first sentence is grammatically unacceptable because *not* needs an auxiliary to refer to. (64) sounds acceptable and is also understandable, but from a grammatical point of view a deletion seems to be impossible because the present perfect construction is entirely lost. The deletion of the auxiliary would imply a finished action in the simple past without any reference to the present. However, the second part of the sentence clearly shows a reference to the present, which implies that a deletion of *have* is possible. This example shows that not every auxiliary can be dropped and that negation obviously plays an important role in the process of subject deletion. The importance of tense in the deletion process seems to be not as important as negation, which can also be seen in examples (70) and (71).

- (65) Having soda for lunch? Take a look at the scary (and gross) reasons you might want to kick that habit for good: (*Glamour US*)
- (66) Having a fat Sunday? It's like a regular Sunday, but you just eat EVERYTHING. We miss doing that, but at least our muscles are building. What are your best tips for getting stacked like Arnie? (*FHM UK*)

The above explained example (42), (65) and (66), show that *have* in its present progressive form drops the subject pronouns *I* and *you* and also the inflected auxiliaries of *be*, i.e. *am* (in (42)) and *are* (in (65) and (66)). The deletion of the auxiliary and also the pronoun is feasible because the dropped elements are all grammatical and not semantic (cf. p. 55). Hence, grammatical elements in a sentence can be omitted as long as the meaning of the sentence is not impaired.

- (67) OMG! Had the #fishpedicure & I still have all my toes! Let me know what you think: (*Glamour UK*)
- (68) Had so much fun last night @DeserkBlasberg's book launch party for Classy. Check out all the lovelies who showed: (*Harper's Bazaar US*)
- (69) Is it awfully chilly where you are too? Had to bust out the coat today! (*Marie Claire US*)
- (70) Had a good day? You have now. Here are some new Kim Kardashian pictures...(FHM UK)
- (71) Had your morning coffee yet? Well, here's the truth about caffeine (don't worry, it's positive!): (*Men's Health US*)

Had was equally often applied with the 1st person singular pronoun *I* and the 2nd person pronoun *you* by US American (4 occurrences for each pronoun) and by British magazines (2 occurrences for each pronoun). (67), (68) and (69) show the deletion of *I*. The author of (67) dropped *I* referring to herself, whereas in the ongoing sentence the pronoun was added. Nevertheless, the utterance would also be unambiguous and comprehensible if the second subject pronoun slot was empty as well. All three sentences talk about finished actions in the simple past, which distinguishes them from (70) and (71). Both examples contain subjectless questions, which asked the reader about an unfinished action with reference to the present. The present perfect form, which was used, is no longer visible since the auxiliary *have* was omitted. But the reference to the present is still given in both sentences, which allows the deletion of the auxiliary. In (70), the second sentence *You have now* indicates the present reference. The present reference in (71) is provided by the adverb *yet*. It might be concluded that tense does not play a crucial role in the deletion process as long as the reference to the tense is recoverable from context. Since example (71) is American English, which frequently replaces present perfect with simple past, the sentence could also be interpreted in a simple past sense. This would mean that the original sentence is *Did you have your morning coffee yet*. (71) would then have omitted the auxiliary *did* and the pronoun *you*. At the same time, the past reference would be transferred from the deleted auxiliary to the main verb *have*. This transfer is necessary in order to keep the past reference of the utterance.

The verb *got* was classified as a semi-modal because it occurred 147 times out of 150 in subjectless sentences as a contracted form of *to have got*. Merely three examples occurred as the simple past form of the verb *get*. The semi-modal occurred most frequently in status updates of US American women's magazines (33 occurrences per 100,000 words) and in British men's magazines (20 occurrences per 100,000). US American men's magazines used *got* 14 times per 100,000 words and British women's magazines applied the semi-modal the least, namely with 9 occurrences per 100,000 words only.

Got most frequently appeared in interrogative sentences with the non-overt subject pronoun *you*. The null pronoun *I* and the dummy subject *this* occurred five times in the corpus. The overall occurrences of *got* compared to the overall occurrences of *have* demonstrate that *got* as a deleted form of *to have got* is preferred over *have*. It can be assumed that *have* is more likely to be omitted in null subject sentences than *got* because of *have* is found in more left-most position in a sentence than *got*.

- (72) Happy New Year lads & lasses. Remember, loaded 202's out now, & we've been getting a lot of love for our Lucy Pinder feature. Got us wondering, what other fine ladies are you dying to see in the mag? (*Loaded UK*)
- (73) Got a blank wall. Hit up the Whitney's Art Party for fresh art sold for a good cause. (*Details US*)
- (74) NFL players are taking over our office tomorrow! Got any questions for them? (*Maxim US*)
- (75) Got a burning desire to write? Then join us at our first ever Writer's Evening with @orangeprize on 7 June at the Southbank Centre. Sadie Jones will be in conversation with Kate Mosse PLUS our 'writer's clinic' on how to get published. (*Grazia UK*)
- (76) Excuses abound for skipping the gym. After reading this list of 21 ways to overcome them, we expect you to whistle a different tune. Got it? (*Men's Health US*)

(72) and (73) both omitted distinct subject pronouns. The first example deleted the dummy subject *this* and a part of the construction *to have got*, in this case *has*. The complete first part of the sentence would be *This has got us wondering [...]*. For (73), the deletion process is almost the same. Instead of *this*, the pronoun *I* and the verb *have* were dropped. The second sentence in the same status message also omitted the pronoun *I* in front position and the relative pronoun *that*, which frequently occurs in conversation. In (74) and (75), even more elements were deleted at the beginning of the two interrogative sentences. Due to the fact that the comprehensibility of the sentence is retained, the auxiliary *do*, the pronoun *you* and the verb *have* could be omitted in both questions. (76) represents the usage of *got* in the past tense of *get*, which has the meaning of *understand*. The question *Did you get it?* is transformed into the subjectless string *Got it?* Similarly to (71), the past tense is transferred from the missing auxiliary *did* to the verb *get*. The sentence would also be acceptable if the verb would remain in its simple present tense. But the tense of the sentence would be lost and not recoverable.

All of the above discussed verbs in this group were most often used by US American magazines. The analysis showed that *got* as a part of *to have got* is preferred in null subject contexts over *have*. If *got* occurred in null subject sentences, *have* was always omitted. *Have* in null subject sentences was significantly less often applied in status updates than *got*, followed by the progressive *having* and the simple past form *had*.

4.1.4 Verbs of intellectual states: *know, think, thinking, thought and wondering*

In null subject sentences, the verb *know* was one of the verbs that was used the least (22 overall occurrences) in the corpus. The verb was most often applied by US American women's magazines (8 occurrences per 100,000 words). British men's magazines used *know* once per 100,000 words only. US American men's and British women's magazines

did not employ the verb at all (each 0 occurrences per 100,000 words). (77) and (78) illustrate the usage of *know* in null subject sentences in the corpus.

- (77) Know any amazing men or women who deserve to win one of Cosmo's Ultimate Women of the Year Awards? Nominate them now! (*Cosmopolitan UK*)
- (78) Are you REALLY into Project Runway? Know someone who is? The best gifts for the Project Runway enthusiast: (*Marie Claire US*)
- (79) *Did work suck today? Knowing these "secret" office rules could change everything at your job: (*Cosmopolitan US*)

All 22 occurrences of the verb appeared in interrogative sentences and omitted the auxiliary *do* and the pronoun *you*. The fact that the verb did not appear with a first person pronoun in declarative sentences might be due to the fact that it can easily be mistaken as an imperative instead of a subjectless string (cf. Trasher, 1974, p. 46). The low frequency of the verb might indicate that *know* is not a typical verb which occurs in null subject sentences in status updates. In contrast to some other verbs discussed in this thesis, *know* cannot occur in present progressive tense, which may also limit the number of occurrences in a corpus. This may also have something to do with its semantics, when and with which topics the verb is used. Sentence (79), shows that *know* in a progressive form can be used as a gerund, but cannot be interpreted as a null subject. The verbs and their usage with regard to topics in status updates will be discussed in chapter 4.2.

Similar to *have*, the verb *think* was also represented in its present, progressive and past forms in the corpus. *Think* was applied most often in its simple present form (173 occurrences) followed by the progressive *thinking* (46 occurrences) and the past *thought* (8 occurrences). *Think* was most often used by US American men's magazines (29 occurrences per 100,000 words). US American women's magazines applied *think* slightly less often (26 occurrences per 100,000 words) than their male counterparts. British women's magazines employed the verb 22 times per 100,000 words whereas in the British men's magazines *think* occurred 13 times per 100,000 words. In comparison, *thinking* was again applied most often by US American magazines and in particular more often by women's magazines (11 occurrences per 100,000 words) than by the men's magazines (5 occurrences per 100,000). In the British sub-corpora, the verb was equally often used by men's and women's magazines (3 occurrences per 100,000 words). Past tense *thought* appeared least with an overall occurrence of eight hits. US women's and British men's magazines each applied the verb twice per 100,000, whereas US American men's and British women's magazines did not use it in null subject sentences.

Think was one of the verbs that was quite frequently used in status updates of magazines because it perfectly fulfills the aim of status messages on Facebook, namely to directly ask for readers' opinions and feedback on a specific topic. This might also be the reason why the verb was most often found in interrogatives with a deleted 2nd person pronoun. Although some verbs that have already been discussed showed a clear tendency to be used in declaratives with 1st person pronouns, the opinions of subscribers are more important for magazines than the self-display of the authors of status updates.

- (80) Fashion Spotlight: Amber Rose. Think Kanye West is a fashion rebel? Wait till you meet his head-turning girlfriend, Amber Rose. (*Elle US*)
- (81) Think airport terminal time should be spent browsing chick lits? Think again. ELLE reviews your essential treatments and carry-on products to ensure you start your holiday glowing and rested. (*Elle UK*)
- (82) Think we'll pass on the chicken this lunchtime: (*Shortlist UK*)

(80) and (81) are two typical examples of auxiliary and subject pronoun deletion. Although most of the analyzed status messages used imperatives after null subject strings, (81) demonstrates that *think* is applied twice in the same update in identical form, but in two different sentence types. The combination of *think* in a null subject interrogative followed by an imperative occurred frequently in the corpus. Example (82) is one out of four declarative sentences, which used 1st person pronouns and informed readers about the authors' point of view on a topic.

- (83) Thinking about your summer wardrobe? Banish the Breton and think big, bold and brave stripes: (*Vogue US*)
- (84) Thinking of hitting the bottle (peroxide, that is)? These Hollywood blondes have the most-wanted hair: (*Cosmopolitan US*)
- (85) *Thinking about chocolate can make you thin! (*Marie Claire UK*)

The investigation of *thinking* confirmed the assumption that *think* is more often applied to inquire about the readers' comment than stating the authors' point of view. No declarative sentence missing the subject was found in combination with *thinking*. Nevertheless, examples such as (85), which illustrate the usage of *thinking* as gerund, occurred in the corpus, but were excluded from the analysis.

- (86) Thought Beyoncé's "Survivor" was impressive? (*British GQ*)
- (87) Wanna have the hottest New Year's Eve ever? Thought so. Check out these brilliant tips (*Cosmopolitan US*)
- (88) In other news, the world is meant to be ending on Saturday. Thought we'd give you a heads up. (*Shortlist UK*)
- (89) Want free stuff from Aveda? Thought so. Sign up today and we'll email you a coupon on Monday. (*Glamour US*)

The analysis of *thought* resulted in a different outcome compared to *think* and *thinking*. The past form was more frequently applied in declarative sentences dropping 1st person pronouns rather than 2nd person pronouns. Three out of eight occurrences of *thought* were used in interrogatives asking for the readers' opinion; the remaining five occurrences of *thought* were either used to affirm a preceding null subject question without waiting for the answers of readers as in (87) and (89) or occurred in a simple statement omitting 1st person pronoun in front position.

Wondering also belongs to the group of verbs that had a very low overall occurrence (21 occurrences). Almost all of the 21 occurrences were used in null subject interrogatives, except one declarative sentence omitting the pronoun *we*. *Wondering* was used most by US American women's magazines (4 occurrences per 100,000 words) and by British men's magazines (3 occurrences per 100,000 words). US American men's magazines applied the verb merely 2 times and British women's magazines only once per 100,000 words. Other verbs, such as *think* and *have*, were also analyzed in their past and progressive forms, but *wonder* as a verb in its simple present form occurred five times in the entire corpus in null subject sentences and was therefore ignored in the analysis. This result indicates that *wondering*, on the one hand, is more frequently used than *wonder* by native speakers and, on the other hand, it is more often found in subjectless sentences than *wonder*.

- (90) Wondering whether or not she's interested in you? Here are 5 ways you can tell. (*Men's Health US*)
- (91) Wondering who that guy who might take over from Larry King is? For our US readers curious about Piers Morgan, here is a useful primer: when Piers met Piers: (*British GQ*)
- (92) Wondering what's going to make it from the runways of Paris and Milan to a store year you? Who better to ask than these guys? (*GQ US*)
- (93) Wondering how doable that new 'do really is? We've road-tested the A/W '11 hair trends to get you some answers... check out the results! (*Elle UK*)

Wondering is a verb used in spoken conversations to either politely ask someone for something or to "think about sth and try to decide what is true, what will happen, what you should do, etc." (cf. Oxford Dictionary, 2000, p. 1489). Due to its semantics and the usage in interrogatives, the verb is always followed by a question word, which can be seen in examples (91), (92) and (93). In (90), *wondering* is followed by the conjunction *whether*, which is another frequently occurring word implying a choice between two possibilities similar to questions.

4.1.5 Verbs of activity: *going* and *heading*

Going was used more often in the corpus than *heading*. *Going* was more often applied by men's magazines (9 occurrences per 100,000 words) than women's magazines (7 occurrences per 100,000 words). Women's magazines used *heading* more frequently (7 occurrences per 100,000) than men's magazines (4 occurrences per 100,000 words). As far as the English varieties are concerned, British magazines used *heading* twice as often as US American magazines. *Going* is almost equally often applied by both varieties (British magazines 17 occurrences per 100,000 words; US American magazines 16 occurrences per 100,000 words). Within the corpus, both verbs in this group share one meaning with each other, i.e. to move/go to a certain place. But *going* has also additional meanings used in some of the status updates in the corpus, namely to decide on something; planning to do something and to attend an event. Sentences (94), (95), (96) and (97) show the distinct meanings of *going* in the corpus. Most of the occurrences of *going* (47 out of 62 occurrences) referred to the meaning of *heading*, i.e. going to a certain place to do something.

- (94) Going out for dinner tonight? Read between the lines & eat right with the Eat This, Not That! (*Men's Health US*)
- (95) Going for pretty waves in your hair today? We're LOVING how Nicole Richie's been wearing 'em lately--what do you think? (*Glamour US*)
- (96) Going skiing or snowboarding this season? Then you need one of these hard-wearing jackets: (*Men's Fitness UK*)
- (97) Going to visit Teresa Tarmey at Neil Cornelius 1St Floor for one of her uplifting facials (*Vogue UK*)

All example sentences dropped the auxiliary and the subject pronouns. (94), (95) and (96) are interrogatives that omitted the auxiliary *are* and the pronoun *you*. In contrast, (97) is a declarative sentence, which deleted the subject pronoun *I* and the auxiliary *am*. This sentence clearly has a future reference and talks about a plan the author of the status message has. Declarative null subject sentences were found twice within the corpus, which shows that the verb is more likely to be used in interrogatives with 2nd person pronouns. The meaning of *going* in (94) refers to the readers planning on leaving the house at night to attend an event with friends in order to enjoy themselves. *Going* in (95) is used in the sense of a choice that was made in the morning, either to wear straight or wavy hair. In this status update another form of deletion can be found, i.e. phonological deletion of the object pronoun *them* to 'em. This very often appears in spoken discourse, in which word stress determines whether parts of words or entire words are dropped. (96) refers to the future, but at the same time *going* also refers to the activity of *going skiing* or *snowboarding*.

Looking at the various meanings of *going*, it can be said that the occurrence of null subjects does not depend on the meaning of a lexeme.

- (98) Heading out to a Halloween party tonight? Don't fall for these (terrible) Halloween pick-up lines! (*Glamour US*)
- (99) Heading off to V Fest this weekend? You might need one of these...(*Marie Claire UK*)
- (100) Got a date? Heading to the beach? Before you strip down, here's how to look ripped in 5 minutes flat (*Details US*)
- (101) Heading down to Vintage on London's Southbank today, for a flapper girl makeover and a spot of vintage shopping. Surely no better way to spend a day? (*Vogue UK*)

Apart from the fact that *heading* is more restricted in meaning than *going*, both verbs share that they were more frequently used in interrogatives dropping 2nd person pronouns than in declaratives deleting 1st person pronouns. In (98), (99) and (100), all 2nd person pronouns are recoverable from context, which is also true for sentence (101) referring to the author of the update. In this status message, the first null subject sentence is followed by a subjectless interrogative addressing the readers. The deleted elements in this question are the auxiliary *is* and dummy subject *there*, which does not have a meaning on its own and is only a syntactic surface element serving the rule that every English sentence needs to have a subject.

4.1.6 Verbs of perception: *look, looking, feel and feeling*

The verbs *look* and *looking* were used in distinct meanings within the corpus. *Look* appeared most often in the sense of using your eyes to see how something appears. However, these occurrences were almost all excluded from the analysis because *look* was used as an imperative in this sense. The meaning of *look*, which was most often used with null subjects, was that of to seem/to appear. In contrast, *looking* was more often found in the meaning of searching for something; trying to find ways to do something and to look forward to something in the future. *Looking* was more often used (128 occurrences) in the corpus than *look* (43 occurrences) and appeared most frequently in status updates of US American women's magazines (24 occurrences per 100,000 words) and British men's magazines (18 occurrences per 100,000 words). US American men's magazines had 13 occurrences and British women's magazines 10 occurrences per 100,000 words of *looking*. In comparison, *look* was most often applied in status messages of US American men's magazines (16 occurrences per 100,000 words), whereas US American and British women's magazines used *look* merely 4 times each per 100,000 words. British men's magazines employed *look* least often (2 occurrences per 100,000 words). The difference in

the number of occurrences of *look* between the US American and British magazines may have to do with the meaning the verb is used in the corpus. *Look* appeared most often in the construction *looks like*, which is according to the Oxford Dictionary an incorrect usage of *like* in British English, but very frequently found in spoken American English (cf. p. 759). British English prefers to use *looks as if* instead of *looks like*.

- (102) Looks like we do have something in common with Justin Bieber (*Complex Magazine US*)
- (103) Hey, smarties! Looks like all that cardio is paying off! (*Women's Health US*)
- (104) Looks good, sounds so much better. Check out the best speakers for 2011 (*British GQ*)

From the examples above, one can see that *look* was used in two different meanings in US American and British magazines. (102) and (103) use *look* in the sense of *to seem*, whereas *British GQ* uses the verb in the meaning of a positive outer appearance of a product. What all three instances have in common is the omission of the 3rd person singular pronoun *it*. In the corpus, *looks* was exclusively used with the null pronoun *it*. Similar to *there*, *it* is also considered to be a dummy subject, which is a syntactic surface element. Trasher (1974) emphasizes that a certain hierarchy of the deletion of elements in a sentence exists. He claims that auxiliaries are at the one end of the hierarchy dropping as the first element in a sentence. Auxiliaries are followed by dummy *it*, which drops easier than dummy *there*. In between are subject pronouns and at the other end of the hierarchy stands the deletion of possessive pronouns (cf. p. 88).

- (105) Looking for a new sunglass solution for summer? Martin Margiela's "Wrong Size" shades are like nothing you've seen. (*Details US*)
- (106) Looking to curb the carbs a lil' bit this summer? Good news: You don't have to sacrifice mac & cheese! Check out this recipe we love: (*Glamour US*)
- (107) Looking forward to an après work drink? Try making your very own Sex and the City cocktails with our easy recipe! (*Marie Claire UK*)

As opposed to *look*, *looking* did not occur very often in declarative null subject sentences omitting the 3rd person singular pronoun *it* (3 occurrences). All three examples delete the auxiliary *am*, which has the left-most position in the interrogatives, and the 2nd person pronoun *you*. Furthermore, each of the above mentioned sentences used *looking* in a different meaning. (105) asked the subscribers of the status messages whether they search for new sunglasses. (106) applied *looking* in the sense of how women should try to reduce their intake of carbs. (107) used *looking* to inquire about the readers evening plans and can be perceived as a fixed expression, which may also be acceptable without a subject. (105) and (106) also dropped other elements than subject pronouns. Both deleted the relative

pronoun *that* in the sentences following the subjectless interrogatives, i.e. “*Wrong Size*” *shades are like nothing 0 you’ve seen.* and in (106) *Check out this recipe 0 we love.* In the null subject interrogative of (106) phonological parts of the adjective *little* are omitted and shortened the lexeme to *’lil*, which again emphasizes the spoken character of Facebook status messages. The previously mentioned fact that simple past auxiliaries can be omitted as the past tense is transferred to the main verb, this is also possible for present progressive. However, the main verb must retain the progressive aspect to avoid to be misunderstood as an imperative (cf. Nariyama, 2004, p. 257).

The verb *feel* and its progressive verb form *feeling* show similar results to *look* and *looking*. The simple present verb *feel* (18 occurrences) had less occurrences in the corpus than its progressive form *feeling* (80 occurrences). Both verbs were more frequently found in status updates of US American women’s magazines (*feel* 4 occurrences per 100,000 words; *feeling* 16 occurrences per 100,000 words). *Feel* occurred twice per 100,000 words each in British women’s and men’s magazines. US American men’s magazines applied *feel* least (1 occurrence per 100,000 words). In contrast, *feeling* appeared more often in US American men’s (10 occurrences per 100,000 words) than in British women’s magazines (8 occurrences per 100,000 words). In status updates of British men’s magazines, *feeling* was least frequently used (6 occurrences per 100,000 words).

- (108) Feel like your guy is acting a little shady lately? Here are 4 signs your suspicions may be correct: (*Cosmopolitan US*)
- (109) TGI Friday!! The Cosmo fashion team are planning their weekend wardrobes, does anyone else think it's time to ditch the tights and get the sandals out? Feels like summer x (*Cosmopolitan UK*)
- (110) This new track from The Cool Kids is pretty dope. Mayer Hawthorne laced the hook. Feel like we might hear this one a lot. (*Complex Magazine US*)
- (111) Feel like chicken tonight? An organic breast will net you 38% extra brain-boosting omega-3s. (*Men’s Health UK*)
- (112) Feelin' the new video from Bad Meets Evil? (*Complex Magazine US*)
- (113) Feeling a bit stressed and overwhelmed lately? We hear ya! Try these 4 easy and wallet-friendly ways to chill--and see our readers' other faves in the comments: (*Glamour US*)
- (114) Feeling the need for a break? Then we have just the thing! (*Grazia UK*)
- (115) Bummed out? Got a bum deal? Feeling like a bum? This will cheer you up, guaranteed. Bum. (*Loaded UK*)

What seems to be quite striking when comparing the usage of *feel* and *feeling* in the corpus, is that the simple present form is more often applied in a positive context than the progressive form. Except (108), all other three examples of *feel* apply the verb with positive topics. This is the other way around for *feeling*. (112) is the only instance, in which the verb does not connote something negative, whereas (113), (114) and (115) refer

to negative feelings. The negative connotation of *feeling* in the status updates may derive from the fact that the magazines intend to attract readers to sell their magazines. Naturally, this would not work if every reader would be satisfied with their life. Therefore, magazines advertize their articles, advices and products, which according to the magazines, makes life much easier and better for their readers. Apart from the negative and positive connotations of both verbs, further differences between the usage of *look* and *looking* could be found. Examples (108), (109), (110) and (111) show that *feel* occurred in interrogatives as well as in declarative sentences in the corpus. Depending on the sentence type, distinct subject pronouns were dropped at the beginning of the sentences. (108) and (111) illustrate the usage of *feel* in questions, omitting the auxiliary *do* and the subject pronoun *you*. (109) deleted the dummy pronoun *it*, which expresses the author's subjective view on the weather. In addition, this sentence can be regarded as a conventional expression, i.e. "essentially set phrases whose meanings are self-contained in their own right" (p. 255). (112), (113), (114) and (115) represent the majority of the occurrences of *feeling* in interrogatives deleting the auxiliary *do* and the pronoun *you*. Unlike *look*, the verb *feeling* appeared only once in a declarative sentence dropping the auxiliary *am* and the 1st person singular pronoun *I*.

4.1.7 The adverbs *ever* and *never*

The numbers of occurrences of both adverbs were widely different. *Ever* appeared significantly more frequent in subjectless sentences (131 occurrences) than *never* (7 occurrences). *Never* occurred most in US American men's magazines (3 occurrences per 100,000 words), whereas US American and British women's magazines did not use the adverb at all in their status updates (0 occurrences per 100,000 words). British men's magazines used *never* once per 100,000 words. *Ever* was most often applied by US American magazines (women's magazines 29 occurrences per 100,000 words; men's magazines 17 occurrences per 100,000 words). British magazines used *ever* less frequently (women's magazines 8 occurrences per 100,000 words; men's magazines 12 occurrences per 100,000 words) than US American magazines. The huge difference in the usage of these two adverbs may be partly due to the fact that *never* was mostly used in imperatives, such as in example (116). However, imperatives had to be excluded from the analysis.

- (116) *Rule No. 441: Never utter the words I and love and you if you've had more than three drinks. (*Esquire US*)

Another reason why *ever* was more often employed in status updates might be that it, unlike *never*, does not exclude options and therefore may sound more positive than *never* although it is frequently used in negatives. Similarly to the verbs *feel* and *feeling*, *ever* was also used with negative topics in status updates in order to convince readers to buy magazines, to visit the magazines' websites or to read advices given by the magazines. Nevertheless, the number of negative contexts used with *ever* was much smaller than for the verbs *feel* and *feeling*.

- (117) Never cared about women's football? You will do now (*British GQ*)
- (118) Never have time to cook during the week? Whip up a week's worth on meals tonight and you'll be good to go! (Plus, you won't have any excuse to hit the drive-thru later.) (*Women's Health US*)
- (119) Never too early to start shopping for jewelry, flowers, clothes, hell, maybe even a car. Also: cards! (*Esquire US*)
- (120) Never thought we'd see the day Kanye West (*Complex Magazine US*)
- (121) Ever heard the word "snow" mentioned in a week as much as this one? (*FHM UK*)
- (122) Ever got screwed over by an outlet mall purchase? Those can be tricky. Here's how to dodge the traps. (*GQ US*)
- (123) Ever wondered how to get rid of dark circles under your eyes? What's the hottest nail colour for right now? Or whether there really is a fake tan that doesn't streak? Well now's the time to ask your burning beauty questions. (*Grazia UK*)
- (124) Ever wonder what you would look like 5 lbs thinner? Upload your picture to our virtual weight loss tool and find out now! (*Marie Claire US*)

Both adverbs were applied in simple present as well as in present perfect. Despite the fact that the auxiliaries *have* (examples (117), (120), (121), (122) and (123)), *do* (examples (118) and (124)) and *is* (example (119)) were deleted, past and present tense still remained recoverable. Apart from the low frequency of *never*, the adverb tended to occur almost equally often in declarative sentences omitting the subject pronouns *it*, *we* and *they* (3 occurrences) and in interrogatives deleting the subject pronoun *you* (4 occurrences). In contrast, *ever* appeared in interrogatives only dropping the pronoun *you*. This difference between both adverbs is due to the fact that *ever* cannot occur in a declarative subjectless sentence omitting any other pronoun than *you*. (125) and (126) illustrate the usage of *ever* in an acceptable subjectless question and in an unacceptable subjectless declarative sentence.

- (125) Ever went to the mall?
- (126) *Ever went to the mall.

For (126), either the adverb *never* has to be inserted to express that the person has never been to a mall, the adverb has to be left out completely implying that the person goes there habitually or any other adverb that indicates how often the person has been there.

However, there is one possibility which allows *ever* in a subjectless declarative utterance, namely in an *if*-clause as in example (127). But this case is rather an exception because null subjects are restricted to root clauses and can therefore not occur in subordinate clauses (cf. Haegeman & Ishane, 2001, p. 330).

(127) Ever get to the mall, I will go to the shop.

4.1.8 The noun *thought*

The corpus analysis showed that the noun *thought* (64 occurrences) was more often used in null subject sentences than the past tense verb (8 occurrences). The noun was most often applied by British men's magazines (12 occurrences per 100,000 words) and US American women's magazines (10 occurrences per 100,000 words). British women's magazines used the noun slightly more often (7 occurrences per 100,000 words) than US American men's magazines (6 occurrences per 100,000 words). Overall, it can be said that *thought* appeared more often in British magazines than in US American magazines.

(128) Arsenal fans, no need to be sad after your defeat to the Mancs, look, some lovely chap has gone and done you a music video. Ain't that nice? Well, nice, or more ammunition for other football fans. Thoughts? (*Loaded UK*)

(129) We got a sneak peek of Madonna's new clothing line. It's very um ... '80s. Thoughts? (*Marie Claire US*)

(130) *Dannii Minogue to front new BBC talent show? Thoughts please! (*Marie Claire UK*)

(128) and (129) show that the noun was used as the only element in an interrogative sentence. Not only the subject *you* was dropped, but also the auxiliary *do* and the main verb *have*. The complete utterance would either be *Do you have thoughts?* or *Do you have any thoughts?*. The second choice would even omit the determiner *any*. The deletion of main verbs in sentences disproves Trasher's claims that main verbs cannot be deleted (cf. p. 22). Although this may be true for all other analyzed subjectless sentences in this thesis, it seems that if the noun in an utterance carries the most meaning, then it is feasible to leave out the main verb. Another frequent usage of the noun in the corpus was the imperative as in (130), which, however, was excluded from the analysis because it demonstrates that *thought* used in a declarative sentence cannot be considered a null subject sentence.

4.2 Target readerships and status update topics

The classification of women's and men's magazines into three distinct target readership groups showed that null subjects were used differently often within the groups and across

both English varieties. In addition, certain verbs in null subject sentences were applied with specific topics. This is connected to the linguistic concept of priming, which refers to the way a priming word triggers a certain target word (cf. Hoey, 2005, p. 8). That means that particular words appear in specific contexts. Every word that is learned, accumulates contexts and co-contexts by its usage in speech and writing and “our knowledge of it includes the fact that it co-occurs with certain other words in certain kinds of contexts” (p. 8). With regard to semantics, words can either appear with a positive or a negative connotation, e.g. the verb *cause* is usually connected to negative events, such as *cause cancer* or *cause damage* (cf. p. 22). This phenomenon is called semantic prosody (cf. p. 21ff.). Due to the variety of topics in Facebook status updates, it may be the case that the analyzed verbs either occur in a negative or in a positive meaning.

4.2.1 Upper and upper middle class magazines

The Facebook fan pages of the following US American and British women’s and men’s magazines were included in this group: *Vogue US*, *Vogue UK*, *Harper’s Bazaar US*, *Harper’s Bazaar UK*, *GQ US*, *British GQ*, *Esquire US*, *Esquire UK* and *Details US*. *Illustration 7* shows the overall occurrences of all investigated null subjects per 10,000 words in women’s and men’s magazines of the upper and upper middle class target readership.

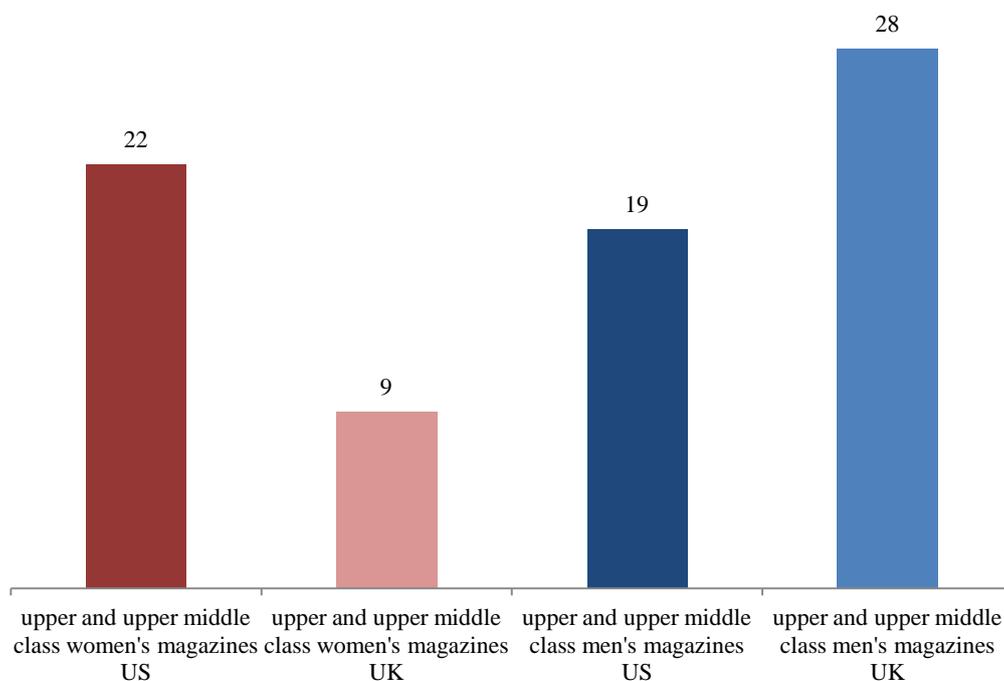


Illustration 7: Overall occurrences of null subjects per 10,000 words in upper and upper middle class US American and British women’s and men’s magazines

The most null subjects were employed by the British editions of *GQ* and *Esquire*, whereas the female counterparts *Vogue UK* and *Harper's Bazaar UK* used the least null subjects in this category. In contrast, the number of occurrences of null subjects in the selected US American magazines did not indicate such a huge difference. If the individual numbers of the occurrences in US American and British magazines are added up, it becomes obvious that US American upper and upper middle class magazines apply more null subjects in their status messages than British women's and men's magazines.

The magazines do not only differ with regard to the target readership, but also with regard to the topics that are addressed in the magazines and in their status updates. The magazines had a variety of topics addressed in their status updates, ranging from fashion, beauty, sports, movies, music, romance and relationship advice to charity and food. The analysis showed that the nine selected magazines did not cover as many topics as the magazines in the other two categories. Especially topics, such as romance and relationship advice, celebrities and sports were found as topics in status updates, but rather seldom in comparison to the other two groups. It appears that upper and upper middle class magazines tend to focus more on the advertisement and consumption of pricey and exclusive products than on the discussion of the lives of celebrities or personal relationship problems. Naturally, the choice of topics in these magazines and their Facebook status updates is dependent on the target readership, which is usually able to afford these advertised products.

All nine magazines in this category are known for their strong focus on high fashion. Therefore, it would be expected that most null pronoun status updates are concerned with fashion and style. However, this is true for the British men's magazines and the US American women's magazines only. The verbs *want* and *need* occurred most in the entire corpus and also in the status updates of British men's and US American women's magazines of the upper and upper middle class. Both verbs were employed most frequently in status messages about fashion.

(131) Happy New York Fashion Week! Want to know what you'll be wearing next spring? Check out our coverage of the collections. (*Harper's Bazaar US*)

(132) Need clean denim or Parisian-style striped tops? APC arrives in Shoreditch (*British GQ*)

Both sentences omitted the auxiliary *do* and the personal pronoun *you*. Bruthiaux (1996) claims that the omission of the auxiliary *do* and the subject personal pronoun in advertisements

represents predictable borrowings from the grammar of informal, typically spoken registers produced in face-to-face interaction in which explicit mention of addressees is often unnecessary (Bruthiaux, 1996, p. 53).

Furthermore, he states that the deletion of these two elements is not always constrained to empty and redundant grammatical elements in a sentence, which can nevertheless be unambiguously understood by the hearer, but deletion is more related to the general function of an advertisement, i.e. the concentration on usually positive statements, not to raise questions among the hearers/readers and to avoid the focus on negative issues (cf. p. 53). The modal verb *need* in (132) refers to the factual assertion of the writer of the status update that the reader intends to consume products, in this case clothing of the brand *Shoreditch* (cf. p. 54). Both verbs imply that the reader lacks a certain material good which they desire and intend to buy. Without reading these two status updates, the reader may not even be aware of the fact that they *need* or *want* this advertized item. Thus, this is the aim of advertisements to make the reader, and in this case consumer, believe that with the help of selected words they are in need of this particular item.

Love and *like* also occurred frequently in this group, especially in British men's magazines. Similar to *need* and *want*, both emotive verbs were often applied in fashion and style context. *Like* also appeared very often with topics focusing on movies and music, particularly in the selected British men's magazines, which used *like* also most in subjectless sentences. Both verbs connote a positive event, i.e. they occur in (133) and (134) with pieces of art readers may enjoy. Nevertheless, readers may also not enjoy the movie and the music named in the status message, but the verbs *love* and *like* do not lose their positive meaning through that.

- (133) Like the Social Network? Then you'll love the drunk version (*British GQ*)
- (134) Like Kate Bush? Hear her Director's Cut album, featuring classic tracks, in full and for free (*British GQ*)

One surprising finding in this category was that the negatives *can't*, *couldn't* and *haven't* were very rarely used in status updates of these magazines. This may be because of the preferred topics of the status updates since these upper class magazines do not address 'real life' problems, such as nutrition tips, general life advice or health issues, which are usually used in connection with these negatives.

British upper and upper middle class magazines used the present progressive form *heading* more than any other magazine in the corpus. Especially *Vogue* which frequently applied the verb when asking their subscribers about their weekend activities and travel plans. In contrast, *going* used in the same meaning like *heading* was most often employed

by British upper and upper middle class men's magazines, whereas *going* appeared most in null subject interrogatives asking for future travels:

- (135) Heading to Barcelona? Check out Vogue's mini guide on where to stay, eat , drink and shop: (*Vogue UK*)
- (136) Going to Dubrovnik, Devon or Costa Del Sol? Check out GQ's guide to the best refurbished resorts (*British GQ*)

4.2.2 Upper middle and middle class magazines

This group of upper middle and middle class magazines is slightly bigger than the first group, containing the following eleven magazines: *Glamour US/UK*, *Elle US/UK*, *Women's Health US*, *Complex Magazine US*, *Shortlist UK*, *Men's Health US/UK* *Men's Journal US* and *Men's Fitness UK*. *Illustration 8* indicates that upper middle and middle class magazines employed more null subjects per 10,000 words than the first group of upper and upper middle class magazines. The distribution of null subjects shows that US American upper middle and middle class women's magazines used most null subjects in their status updates, which was not the case in the first target readership group. British women's and men's magazines had the same number of null subjects per 10,000 words. This finding differs from the first group, in which British women's magazines applied least null subjects in upper and upper middle class magazines and British men's magazines had the most null subject occurrences. US American men's magazines in this group used more null subjects in their status messages compared to the first group, but compared to the other magazines in this group US American men's magazines had the least number of null subject occurrences.

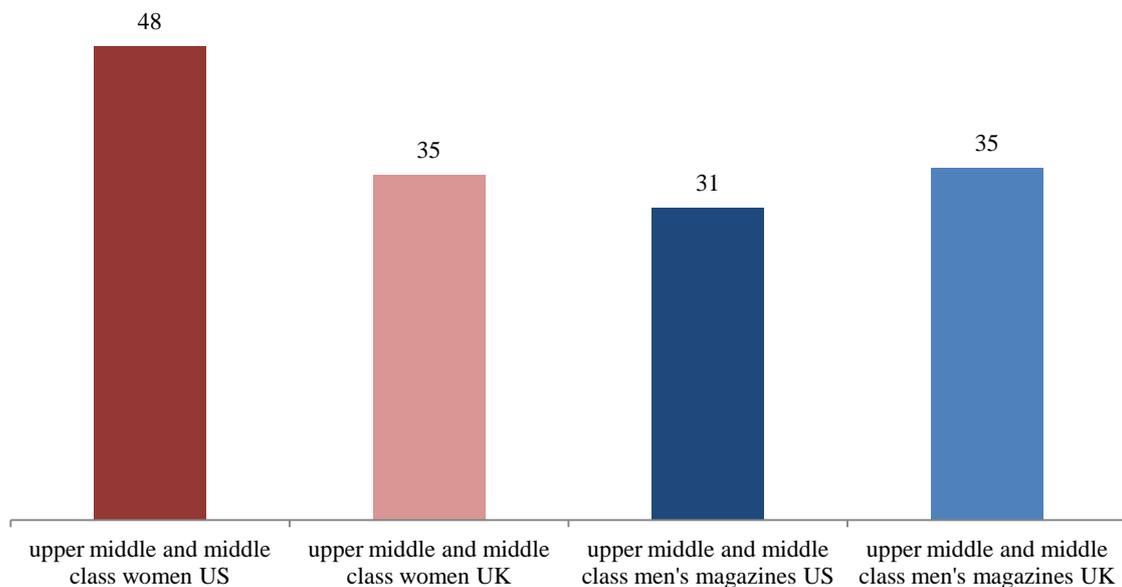


Illustration 8: Overall occurrences of null subjects per 10,000 words in upper middle and middle class US American and British women's and men's magazines

One of the main topics of upper middle and middle class women's magazines' status updates was fashion, which compared to upper class magazines were mostly connected to the verbs *want* and *need*. A topic that was rarely found in the first group of magazines was that of beauty advice, which was increasingly more often discussed in status updates of women's magazines in this particular group:

- (137) Want to flaunt a neon lip, but not sure how? Have a look our Beauty School video for some tips...(*Elle UK*)
- (138) Need an easy, classic hairstyle idea to get your hair outta your face on this hot day? Kate Middleton has one for you! (*Glamour US*)

While men's magazines of the upper and upper middle class applied null subjects with *want* and *need* mainly in a fashion context, upper middle and middle class men's magazines used both verbs most when talking about sports in general or when giving sports and fitness tips. Women's magazines used *want* and *need* also in more varied topics, e.g. romance and relationship advice, sports and fitness and food and recipes. Those results show that the topics between the two target readership groups shift from the mere consumption of high-priced goods to more personal topics that offer advice. This may also imply a shift of the role of the reader. In upper and upper middle class magazines' status updates of *Vogue* or *GQ*, the advertisements for products, designers or labels seem to be the main focus of their updates, whereas in upper middle and middle class magazines the

main focus lies on the reader who may need support in deciding what to wear, how to use beauty products or which exercise is the best for losing weight. One further difference between upper, upper middle class and upper middle, middle class magazines was that the latter group tried to involve their readers by frequently offering raffles to win advertised products. These raffles usually occurred in subjectless strings with the verbs *want*, *need* and *think*.

- (139) Want free tickets to the tour of the year? You know the routine...(Complex Magazine US)
- (140) Think gift baskets are only for girls? Enter our contest today for a chance at winning one done Men's Health-style: (Men's Health US)

In the previous chapter, the usage of negatives, such as *can't* and *haven't*, was briefly mentioned. Since people would not need to buy magazines if they had 'perfect' lives, the magazines point at negative characteristics of their readers to help improve them.

- (141) Can't see your abs? Blame your mindset. Get into these 6 simple habits and chisel a 6-pack: (Men's Health US)
- (142) Haven't quite woken up yet this morning? Try this easy little thing to perk yourself up: (Glamour US)

According to Bruthiaux, negated forms in advertising texts may lead to an increasing fragmentation of the text and a decreasing density in information (cf. p. 57). This would explain the fact why negatives do not occur as often as the verbs *want* and *need*. Both verbs as well as negative indicate that somebody lacks a certain characteristic or a product, which they need to improve or buy to feel better. Sentences without negatives would then be characterized as providing information in a denser way and less fragmented (cf. p. 53). The density is further increased by using a subjectless string, which omits all ambiguous and semantically redundant elements from a text, e.g. dummy subjects and subject pronouns in interrogatives. Relatively dense and short texts are the main features of advertisements because they intend to avoid ambiguity, repetitions and unnecessary information which may draw the attraction away from the product. Furthermore, a greater number of words in advertisements waste space, cost more money and might not serve the advertiser's interest (Cook, 2001, p. 170).

The verb *wanna* occurred most frequently in this target readership group, particularly by the US American women's magazine *Glamour*. The overall occurrences of *wanna* were significantly lower than those of *want*. This is due to the fact that *wanna* is considered to be a spoken and highly informal contracted form of *want to* mostly used in American English. The usage of such spoken and informal features in status messages

creates, on the one hand, a conversational tone and on the other hand immediacy (cf. p. 173). Additionally, the omission of elements from texts imply that the author of the status message and the reader share a certain amount of knowledge because both know what the status update is about although some parts are missing (cf. p. 173). Ellipsis and the resulting informal character of the status updates diminish or partially suspend the social distance between the addresser and the addressee (cf. p. 173).

4.2.3 Lower middle class magazines

The last target readership group consisted of magazines mostly read by the lower middle class, i.e. *Marie Claire US/UK*, *Cosmopolitan US/UK*, *Grazia UK*, *Maxim US*, *FHM UK* and *Loaded UK*. *Illustration 9* shows that lower middle class magazines applied less null subjects in their Facebook status messages than upper middle and middle class magazines. In comparison to upper and upper middle class magazines, British and US American men's magazines used less null subjects in lower middle class magazines. But lower middle class women's magazines used more null subjects than upper and upper middle class magazines. The investigation of lower middle class magazines confirmed the findings of the previous group of upper middle and middle class magazines. Lower middle class women's magazines status updates focused considerably less on fashion than the other two groups. Fashion as a topic of status messages was not found in any of the selected men's magazines in this group.

US American women's magazines used the verb *want* most often for giving beauty or relationship advice, whereas British women's magazines made an extensive use of *want* when asking their subscribers to take part in raffles. British men's magazines used *want* and *wanna* most to motivate their male readers to participate in raffles. The frequency of these raffles illustrates that upper middle, middle and lower middle class magazines intend to involve their readers more actively than upper and upper middle class magazines.

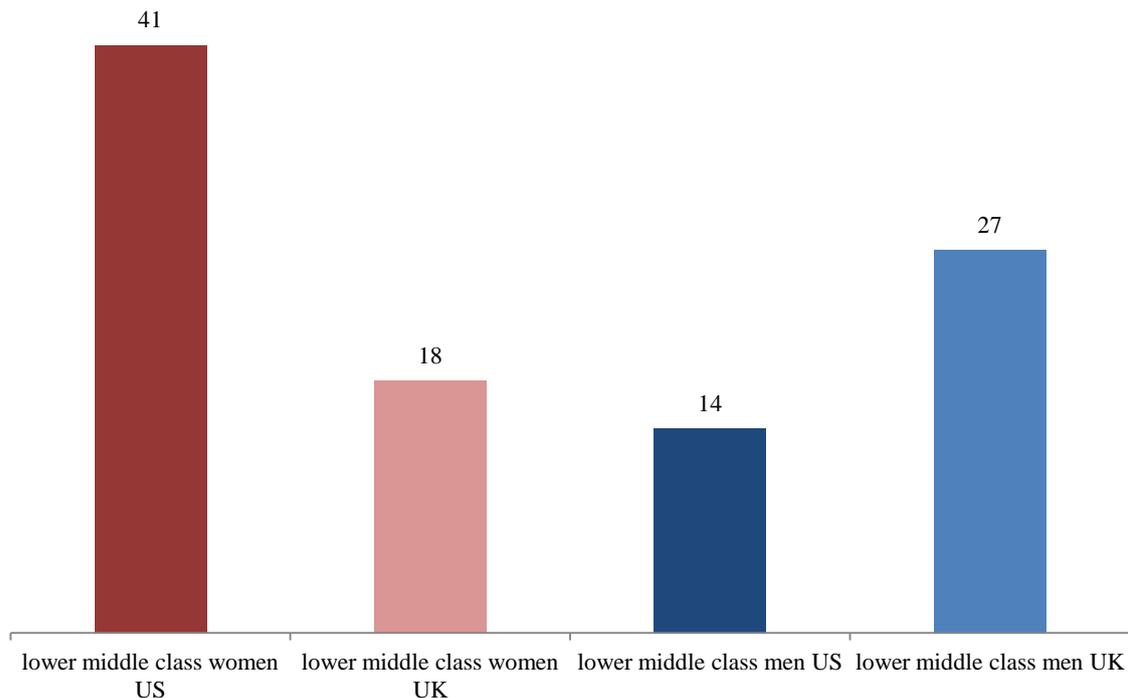


Illustration 9: Overall occurrences of null subjects per 10,000 words in lower middle class US American and British women's and men's magazines

Another topic that occurred quite frequently in British women's magazines with *want* in subjectless interrogatives was the discussion of celebrities. In no other target readership group news about VIPs appeared to such a great extent than in British lower middle class women's magazines. In contrast, men's magazines, especially the British men's magazines *FHM UK* and *Loaded UK* directly advertized their magazines on Facebook, i.e. either status update readers were asked to look at certain articles online or readers were asked to subscribe to the magazine.

- (143) Hey. Hey you. You there. Want a look in here? In loaded 208? Jessica Jane Clements in here, so is Made in Chelsea's Agne. Oh, and Snoop Dogg, Zippy from Rainbow & a load of homeless. You can come in too, just keep it under your hat, yeah? (*Loaded UK*)
- (144) Want more Maxim? Subscribe today to get the latest on girls, gear, and all that good stuff delivered straight to your mailbox. (*Maxim US*)

Due to the fact that null subjects in the three selected men's magazines occurred less frequently than in the other two target readership groups, the number of occurrences with different status message topics was also restricted. Most of the analyzed lexemes appeared merely once with a specific topic, which makes it impossible to draw any general conclusions from the results.

4.3 Null subjects in COCA

Due to the fact that the size of the magazine sub-corpus of COCA is much larger (90 million words) than the size of the Facebook corpus, the results of the occurrences of null subjects in COCA were analyzed per 100,000 words like the Facebook corpus. *Table 5* shows the occurrences of the analyzed lexemes and the occurrences of null subjects in US in COCA absolute numbers and per 100,000 words. The third group of general magazines, read by women and men, was eliminated for this part of the analysis because there is no comparable variable in the Facebook corpus. The numbers in bold letters illustrate whether women's or men's magazines had more occurrences of null subjects for certain lexemes in COCA. The total numbers of null subjects show that US men's magazines had more null subject occurrences than US women's magazines. This finding is quite contradictory to the Facebook corpus analysis, in which US women's magazines on Facebook applied the highest number of null subjects, whereas US men's magazines had less null subject occurrences than US women's and British men's magazines. A further comparison of the COCA results with the Facebook results indicates that null subjects were significantly more often used in Facebook status updates of US women's and men's magazines than in the print US editions.

If we look at individual lexemes, it becomes obvious that the verb *want* was also most often applied in null subject contexts in COCA. What differentiates this COCA result from the Facebook result is that *want* did not occur in fashion topics at all, but rather in interrogatives asking whether the readers 'wants' advice. The topics for advice were rather manifold and included for instance advice on health, money, technology and beauty. However there was no topic that occurred significantly more frequent than other topics.

- (145) *Want* someone else to make the decisions? Call ahead and ask Rubiner to design a picnic spread for you, or duck into the adjoining Rubi's [...] (COCA, *Town & Country Magazine US*, 2010)
- (146) *Want* great sound for games? Even a basic, inexpensive PCI sound board such as the Sonic Impact S go provides good output [...]. (COCA, *PC World US*, 1998)

Distinct results were found for the verbs *got* and *need*. Whereas *need* was the second most frequently applied verb in Facebook status messages, in COCA *got* was employed more often than *need*. All three verbs (*want*, *need* and *got*) occurred more frequently in US men's magazines than in US women's magazines, which differs partly from the results of the Facebook corpus. US women's magazines applied the verbs *want* and *need* with null subjects more often than US men's magazines in status updates. *Got* was used more often

by US men's magazines in COCA, whereas US women's magazines employed *got* more often in Facebook status messages. Another verb that appeared very frequently in Facebook status updates of US American magazines was *think*. This verb occurred 0.03 times per 100,000 words in both women's and men's magazines in COCA and 26 times in Facebook status messages of US women's magazines and 29 times in US men's magazines. The progressive tense form *thinking* occurred less often than *think* and past

- (147) Got superfine hair? Just coat your ends. (COCA, *Cosmopolitan US*, 2011)
 (148) When researchers evaluated the eating and drinking habits of more than 4,500 adults, they found that those who took in the equivalent of 33 teaspoons of sugar a day had up to a 77 percent higher risk of elevated blood pressure. Think you couldn't possibly consume that much? (COCA, *Good Housekeeping US*, 2011)

analyzed lexemes	US women's magazines	US women's magazines per 100,000 words	US men's magazines	US men's magazines per 100,000 words
<i>want</i>	116	0.13	202	0.22
<i>need</i>	60	0.07	73	0.08
<i>think</i>	26	0.03	31	0.03
<i>love</i>	23	0.03	7	0.01
<i>like</i>	9	0.01	8	0.01
<i>wanna</i>	0	0.00	0	0.00
<i>feel</i>	6	0.01	7	0.01
<i>look</i>	9	0.01	25	0.03
<i>know</i>	4	0.00	9	0.01
<i>have</i>	22	0.02	12	0.01
<i>can't</i>	0	0.00	0	0.00
<i>haven't</i>	2	0.00	7	0.01
<i>having</i>	4	0.00	2	0.00
<i>looking</i>	21	0.02	15	0.02
<i>feeling</i>	9	0.01	12	0.01
<i>thinking</i>	6	0.01	6	0.01
<i>wondering</i>	2	0.00	5	0.01
<i>heading</i>	0	0.00	0	0.00
<i>going</i>	5	0.01	6	0.01
<i>couldn't</i>	0	0.00	0	0.00
<i>had</i>	49	0.05	6	0.01
<i>got</i>	48	0.05	191	0.21
<i>thought verb</i>	5	0.01	14	0.02
<i>thought noun</i>	0	0.00	0	0.00
<i>never</i>	7	0.01	16	0.02
<i>ever</i>	28	0.03	41	0.05
Σ	461	0.51	695	0.77

Table 5: Occurrences of null subjects in US women's and men's magazines in COCA

tense form *thought*. In contrast, in the Facebook corpus, *thinking* appeared more frequently than *thought*. *Thinking* was equally often applied by women's and men's magazines, whereas *thought* appeared almost three times as much in US American men's magazines than in women's magazines. *Thought* appeared merely three times in interrogative sentences deleting the pronoun *you*, the remaining 16 instances occurred in declarative sentences omitting *I*. This turned out to be the same result as in the Facebook corpus. This seems to imply that the past tense form is more likely to be applied in declarative sentences omitting the first person pronoun, whereas the present and progressive tenses of *think* are more frequently employed in questions dropping second person pronouns. The low number of null subject occurrences of all three forms of *think* in COCA in comparison to Facebook may also be explained with the fact that a magazine does not communicate with its readers as directly as social media like Facebook do. A reader may be addressed with a direct question by a magazine, but the questions may be more of a rhetorical nature than on Facebook because the reader cannot reply directly after reading the question via a reply button. The questions in magazines are intended to make the reader think about themselves, but not to answer these questions straight ahead. The noun *thought* was not found at all in COCA. In the Facebook corpus, the noun was significantly more often used than the past tense verb. *Thought* was the only lexeme in the interrogatives in Facebook status updates, which shows that one noun may be enough to convey the message, namely to ask for comments of subscribers. In magazines, as already mentioned with the verb *think*, this is also possible, but not common because readers cannot directly comment on the question of the author. The other two verbs of intellectual states, *know* and *wondering* were both significantly less often applied than *think*. Both verbs appeared more frequently with null subjects in US American men's magazines than in women's magazines. Although both verbs had low overall occurrences, they showed a tendency to occur more often in interrogative sentences dropping the 2nd person pronoun than in declarative sentences in both men's and women's magazines.

The above discussed results emphasize that US American magazines on Facebook apply null subjects extensively in their status updates, while print editions do not. In COCA, the negated verb forms *can't* and *couldn't* were not at all used together with null subjects. In the Facebook corpus, *can't* was the most frequent applied negated verb form (66 occurrences in the entire Facebook corpus). The third negated verb *haven't* was used in COCA, but the number of occurrences is not significant thus general assumptions on the usage of the verb with null subjects in printed US magazines cannot be made. The adverb

never was, similar to the Facebook corpus, less frequently employed than *ever*, which might have to do with the exclusive character of *never* and the more inclusive *ever*. Both adverbs were again more often used in printed US men's magazines than in women's magazines. In status updates, *ever* was found more frequently in US women's magazines, whereas *never* occurred more often in US men's magazines.

- (149) Never thought I'd fall for the house-on-stilts deal, but I did -- hook, line and sinker. (COCA, *Town & Country US*, 2010)
- (150) I thought I was running the best race of my life. Never felt better. Then everything came up and went past. (COCA, *Sports Illustrated US*, 1992)
- (151) Ever fake hearing what she said? She said it right to your face: "Uh, let's see, something about somebody and Friday night and I have to do something." (COCA, *Men's Health US*, 1995)
- (152) Ever hear of Tommie Aaron? Tommie and his younger brother Hank hold the major league record for home runs by siblings, with 768. (COCA, *Sports Illustrated US*, 1994)

(149), (150), (151) and (152) illustrate the usage of the adverb *never* and *ever* in COCA. These results confirm the findings of the Facebook corpus, namely *ever* occurred only in interrogatives omitting either the auxiliary *do* or *have* and the first person pronoun. *Never* showed a tendency to occur equally often in declarative and interrogative sentences in the Facebook corpus. In COCA, *never* appeared in 25 out of 36 overall occurrences in declarative sentences and omitted either the pronoun *I* or *it*.

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the rare usage of negated forms may be due to the fact that magazines do not intend to appear negatively in the eyes of their readers. The purchasing decision of a reader is influenced by the headlines on the cover. If the cover and the topics in the magazine look attractive, the reader will buy the magazine. As soon as the magazine is bought, it is no longer relevant to attract the reader's attention by using a negated verb form to ask whether the reader lacks something. On Facebook, this is somewhat different. The status update of a magazine needs to catch the reader's attention because it usually revolves around one topic only. In contrast, print versions of magazines are a compilation of various topics, pictures and advertisements, which impact the reader's purchase. Additionally, the reader can choose from a variety of topics they can read or not read. But status updates are restricted in their scope with regard to the topic therefore language has to be used very effectively to convince the reader to read more on the website or buy the magazine. Using these negated forms may be a good way of attracting the reader's attention on Facebook because it separates itself from the commonly positive advertisements.

The verbs of emotion *love* and *like* showed the same tendency in COCA similar to the Facebook corpus results. Both verbs were more often applied by US women's magazines than by US men's magazines. Yet *love* occurred more frequently than *like*, which was also the case in the analyzed Facebook data.

- (153) Like to pace during meetings? Logitech's \$119 Orbicam, with an eyeball-like mechanized Lens, keeps you in the picture during video conferences. (COCA, *PC World US*, 2010)
- (154) Love Rachel's make-up? You can "try it on" at redbookmag.com using our virtual-makeover tool. And test out a new hairstyle while you're at it! (COCA, *Redbook Magazine US*, 2010)

A reason for the frequent usage of *love* in women's magazines might be explained with the verb's semantics. Since *love* expresses a strong affection for somebody or something, it may be more frequently attributed to women simply because they like to show their affection more openly than men. Therefore, *like* would be expected to appear more often in men's magazines than *love*. *Like* in US men's magazines occurred 8 times and in women's magazines 9 times per 90 million words, which again shows that in print magazines the number of null subjects with verbs of emotion are even smaller than null subjects together with the modal verb *need* and the verb of attitude *want*.

Another intriguing finding was that almost all analyzed forms of *have*, namely *have*, *having* and *had*, were more often used by US women's magazines than US men's magazines. *Having* had the least occurrences in COCA. *Had* occurred least often in Facebook, whereas *have* appeared most often. On the other hand, *had* in COCA was mainly found in one women's magazine, i.e. the US edition of *Cosmopolitan*. Particularly in this magazine, the verb was only used in interrogatives omitting the auxiliary *have* and the pronoun *you*. *Had*, like no other lexeme in both corpora, appeared solely in the context of romance and relationship advice in COCA. *Have* showed a tendency to occur mainly when the magazine asked whether the readers had any questions about a certain topic as can be seen in examples (155) and (156).

- (155) Have a question for David? E-mail him at askdavidshape.com (COCA, *Shape US*, 2007)
- (156) Have a question for us or another golf expert? E-mail us at [...]. (COCA, *Golf Magazine US*, 2003)

Nevertheless, in comparison, both corpora illustrate that *have* occurred extremely less often per 100,000 words in COCA than in Facebook. *Having* had the least occurrences of all forms of *have* in COCA, it mostly appeared in negatively connoted interrogatives in

both women's and men's magazines. (157) and (158) point out the negative usage of *having* in COCA.

- (157) Having a really bad day? Cut enough blooms for every room. While you're at it, snip a bunch for a neighbor or friend-performing an act of generosity always lifts the spirits. (COCA, *Sunset Magazine US*, 2002)
- (158) Having a bad day or week? Take a day off to loll by a stream, get a shower in town, or write in your journal. Stopping to examine what's bothering you can be an opportunity to uncover important motivation you didn't know existed. (COCA, *Backpacker Magazine US*, 2001)

With regard to negative connotation, the Facebook corpus results for US American magazines showed that *feeling* was more often employed in negative contexts than *feel*. However, this result cannot be confirmed with the data from COCA. Both verbs were more often applied in a positive context than in a negative one.

- (159) Feeling fancy? Check out the yummy add-ins on the opposite page. Five scrumptious mashed-potato combos. Put a tasty spin on the classic comfort food by stirring in one of these savory, flavor-enhancing groupings. (COCA, *Country Living US*, 2011)
- (160) Feeling stressed? Wondering when you'll ever have enough time and energy to ride your... uh... your... what's that dust-covered thingie with the pedals and handlebar called? (COCA, *Bicycling US*, 1998)
- (161) Feel like baking? We tell you how to make basic blueberry, cool coconut custard, strawberry-filled, and no-bake chocolate pies-and more-all with pointers for terrific piecrusts. And what's pie without ice cream? (COCA, *Country Living US*, 2004)

Overall, *feeling* was more often applied with null subjects than *feel*, which is also true for the Facebook corpus. US American men's magazines used both verbs more often than US American women's magazines. Due to the small number of hits, a prominent topic occurring together with both verbs could not be found. This was different for the remaining two verbs of perception *look* and *looking*. *Look* was more often employed by US American men's magazines and *looking* more frequently by US women's magazines. Similar to the Facebook corpus, *look* was most often used in its third person singular form *looks* deleting the pronoun *it*. This also indicates that *look* was not used in questions, but rather in declarative sentences. As mentioned in the Facebook results section, the construction *looks like* is more common in US American English since it is considered to be grammatically incorrect in British English. This means that *look* appeared most often in the meaning of *seem* rather than *outer appearance*. (162) illustrates the usage of *look* in the sense of how something appears in the eyes of a person, whereas (163) is an example for the use of *seem*.

- (162) Slam-proof your doors Loop a piece of string around both doorknobs, avoiding the latch. When the door makes contact with the frame, the string will absorb the shock. Looks pretty, too. (COCA, *Men's Health US*, 1997)
- (163) Looks like the former Victoria's secret spokesmodel is making a run at full-on media dominance. Want proof? Her reality show, America's Next Top Model, is the linchpin of the new CW network's fall lineup. (COCA, *Essence US*, 2006)

Looking was mainly used in the sense of *searching for something* and was only once applied in the meaning of *outer appearance*. If the verb refers to search for something, it is used in its progressive form to express that the action happens in the moment of uttering the question. It is rather uncommon to use the verb in its simple present form to ask whether somebody searches something though it would be grammatically correct. This may explain why *looking* is more often used in COCA and Facebook than *look*. If the verb is applied in the sense of *seem*, it would be awkward to use *look* in its progressive form. This may be because *seem* is usually not used in a progressive form.

The verb *heading* was not used at all in COCA in a null subject context, whereas *going*, which may be regarded as synonymous in this case, was applied slightly more often by men's magazines than by women's magazines. In comparison to the other analyzed verbs, *going* was one of the verbs that appeared least often within the entire corpus. In Facebook status updates, *going* was more frequently employed by US American women's magazines than by US American men's magazines. Due to its restricted meaning, the verb was mainly used to ask the reader whether they have plans to travel to a certain place or an event.

- (164) Going to a garden party? Look cool and summery in Armani's silk-chiffon A-line dress with a juicy print and ribbon trim (\$8,150); the silk underskirt (\$1,395) adds shape and fullness. Manolo Blahnik silver sandals with rhinestones (\$730). (COCA, *Town & Country Magazine US*, 2006)
- (165) Going to a last-days-of-summer beach event? Try a simple, classic look: faded jeans, a T-shirt, minimal sandals, and sunglasses. For the fall and winter, favor dungarees in medium to darker shades. (COCA, *Men's Health US*, 2002)

(164) and (165) are quite similar to the Facebook results, which also used *going* when asking about evening or travel plans. Furthermore, both magazines give advice on how to dress for the event using imperatives, which also occurred frequently in the status updates.

The analysis of US American women's and men's magazines in COCA illustrated that Facebook fan pages of magazines apply more significantly more null subjects than their printed counterparts. Additionally, the analysis showed the difference in genres, i.e. Facebook status updates are written conversation, but clearly have oral and informal

characteristics. Print magazines obviously use written language without any oral and informal characteristics.

4.4 Research questions and summary of the results

Both corpus analyses indicated that Facebook status updates of women's and men's magazines apply more null subjects in front position than their corresponding US print editions in COCA. Although null subjects were more frequently employed in Facebook status messages, both analyses had similar as well as different results. In the Facebook corpus, the most null subjects in status messages were applied by US American women's magazines followed by British men's magazines. US American men's magazines used less null subjects than US American women's magazines and British men's magazines, but more than British women's magazines. In COCA, only the US American magazines could be contrasted. The investigation showed that US American men's magazines used null subjects in front position more frequent than US American women's magazines. The first research question asked whether Facebook fan pages use null subjects more frequently than their print edition. The analyses clearly showed that Facebook fan pages, at least of US American magazines, indeed use more null subjects than their print editions. This may be explained by difference in genre, i.e. Facebook is a rather written-as-if-spoken medium, whereas magazines are written media which do not use as much spoken features as Facebook.

The second research question has two differing answers. It asked whether men's magazines apply more null subjects than women's magazines. For Facebook it can be said that women's magazines in general used more null subjects than men's magazines. In contrast, for COCA, which can only be answered partly for the American English variety, men's magazines applied null subjects more frequently than women's magazines. As far as the two varieties are concerned, the investigation pointed out that US American magazines applied more null subjects in their status updates (588 occurrences per 100,000 words) than British magazines (463 occurrences per 100,000 words).

The third research was intended to find out if British magazines apply more null subjects in their status updates than US American magazines. Therefore, the question has to be answered with no because US American magazines obviously employed more null subjects than British magazines, which could be seen in *Illustration 6*.

In order to find out whether different target readerships of magazines influence the usage of null subjects, the selected fan pages of magazines on Facebook were classified

into three groups, i.e. upper and upper middle class, upper middle and middleclass and lower middle class. The aim of the fourth research question was to elicit whether upper and upper middle class magazines use less null subjects than middle and lower middle class magazines. The comparison between the three groups, in general, showed that the first group of upper and upper middle class women’s and men’s magazines apply the least number of null subjects in their status updates on Facebook (78 null subjects per 10,000 words). Lower middle class magazines apply slightly more null subjects in their status messages (100 null subjects per 10,000 words). The most null subjects are employed by upper middle and middle class magazines (149 null subjects per 10,000 words). If we look at women’s and men’s magazines individually, it becomes obvious that the above described results are true for women’s magazines only. Upper and upper middle class men’s magazines apply less null subjects than upper middle and middle class men’s magazines, but more null subjects than lower middle class men’s magazines. Overall, it can be said that upper and upper middle class magazines use less null subjects than middle and lower middle class magazines.

There were certain differences in the occurrence of the analyzed lexemes in null subject contexts between American and British English. Some differences in the usage of these lexemes were not as obvious as others. Therefore, only the most important

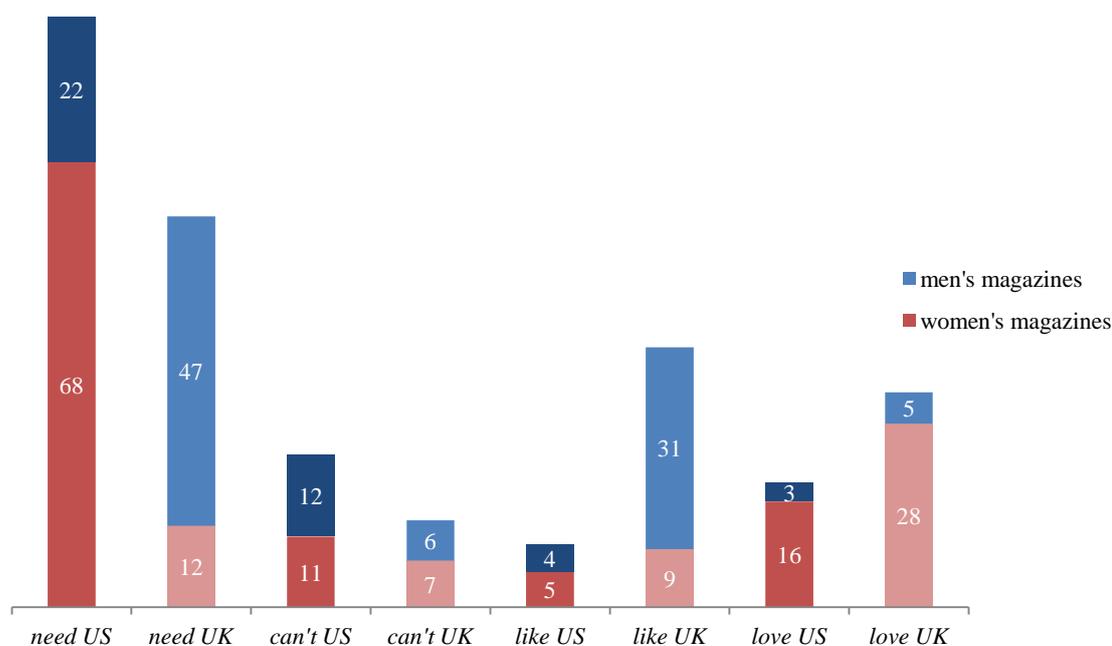


Illustration 10: Occurrences of modal verbs *need* and *can't* and verbs of emotion *like* and *love* in US American and British magazines per 100,000 words

the most striking differences between the varieties will be summarized again in this chapter. In *Illustration 10*, the variation between American and British English of four analyzed verbs in null subject sentences becomes obvious. Whereas US American magazines apply the modals *need* and *can't* more frequently with null subjects than the British magazines, the verbs of emotion *like* and *love* are more often used by British magazines than US American magazines. The two verbs *wanna* and *look* were also more often used by US American magazines than British magazines. The explanation may be that *wanna* is rather informal and is more often used in American English than in British English according to the Oxford Dictionary (Oxford Dictionary, 2000, p. 1224). The same is true for *look*, which most often occurred in the construction *looks like*. This construction is said to be grammatically incorrect in Standard British English and is more often used in American English (cf. Oxford Dictionary, 2000, p. 759). To answer research question 5, it can be deduced that there are differences in the usage of certain lexemes between the two varieties.

The last research aim was to see whether specific analyzed lexemes occur more often with a certain topic than other lexemes do. The findings emphasized that the usage of particular lexemes with certain topics is dependent on the topics that the magazines address, which is in turn influenced by the target readerships. The three target readership groups were used to analyze the different usage of the lexemes in distinct magazines. Due to the focus on high fashion, upper and upper middle class women's and men's magazines most frequently applied *want*, *need*, *love* and *like* with the topic fashion, whereas upper middle and middle class magazines used these verbs more often with beauty and relationship advice, food and sports. Due to the fact that the number of occurrences of null subjects in lower middle class magazines was lower than in upper middle and middle class magazines, the number of verbs appearing with specific topics was also restricted. Therefore, the verb *want* was the most prominent lexeme that showed a tendency to be often used in connection with the advertisement of raffles. One further difference of the usage of the analyzed lexemes was found in the Facebook corpus. The negated forms *can't*, *couldn't* and *haven't* were very rarely used in upper and upper middle class magazines. But they were more often applied in upper middle and middle class magazines when asking their status update subscribers for their negative character traits or the lack of a particular product. This might be influenced by the target readership because affluent readers of upper and upper middle class magazines are usually not asked about their personal lives and problems, whereas upper middle and middle class magazines seem to

concentrate more on real life problems of their readers than on the selling of high-priced goods. In COCA, the occurrence of lexemes with specific topics appeared to be not as prominent as in the Facebook corpus. *Want* was the only verb which showed a slight tendency towards a general topic, i.e. it was mainly applied to ask whether the readers needed any advice on for example beauty, life or technology.

A chi-square test for the occurrences of null subjects in women's and men's magazines showed that it is not significant (with $p = 9.86$ per cent the obtained results are wrong). With approximately 90 per cent, the occurrences of null subjects in women's and men's magazines are correct, but for a statistical analysis 9.86 per cent are too high ($\chi^2 = 2.75$, but $\chi^2_{\min} = 3.84$ for $p_{\text{error}} = 0.05$). In this case, the H₀-hypothesis is accepted. However, three additional chi-square tests had a different outcome from the first. The second chi-square illustrated that the occurrences of null subjects US American and British magazines are significant ($p = 0.0000337$). The same result were also found for the occurrences in US American and British men's magazines ($p = 0.0017033$) and for US American and British women's magazines ($p = 1.27929 \times 10^{-14}$). The chi-square test for US American and British women's magazines is therefore the most significant result of all four tests for the Facebook corpus. All detailed results can be found in the appendix.

The discussion of the research questions pointed out the differences between the two analyzed varieties of English, the differences and similarities between the two analyzed corpora and the contrasts between women's and men's magazines on Facebook and their print editions.

4.5 Limitations of research

For future research in the field of corpus linguistics and social networks, it is important to be aware of some of the difficulties that were discovered during the analysis of the corpus. The corpus of this thesis consisted of almost 800,000 words, which may be sufficient for the present analysis but which needs to be expanded to be able to deduce more reliable results and interpretations. Although the collection of the Facebook status updates was carried out with the help of a concordancer, it would have been helpful for the analysis to have the publication dates of the individual status messages. A diachronic comparison of the magazines' status updates might have shown whether the number of null subjects has increased over time.

Due to the fact that only one reference corpus containing magazines was available for comparison, the usage of null subjects in status updates of British women's and men's

magazines could not be contrasted with their printed British counterparts. However, it was impossible to find a corpus containing relatively current data and which included British magazines. Further research in this field may focus on a comparison of American magazines on Facebook and a select corpus only.

One last limitation of the present thesis is the fact that COCA does not only contain women's and men's magazines, but also magazines with a general audience, i.e. both genders read these magazines. Since such magazines were not included in the Facebook analysis, the null subjects found in these general magazines could not be compared to any of the results. This might be a starting point for a future analysis: contrasting the language of magazines with a general audience to their respective Facebook fan pages.

5 Conclusion

As long as a language is not obsolete, language change is an ongoing process. Although virtual social networks or microblogging websites are platforms in which written language predominates, the language used to communicate on these websites is characterized more often by spoken than written features. To establish a personal and friendly atmosphere on social network pages, many companies try to speak to their ‘fans’ as if they would sit right next to one another talking about random things. The written-as-if-spoken mode of language on Facebook and other social platforms motivates people to react more personally and openly to their ‘liked’ pages than if the language would be highly formal. Naturally, this also helps companies and other institutions to get to know their customers better and adapt their marketing strategies to the needs of the customers.

English can be classified as a non-pro-drop language, which does not allow the deletion of subjects from sentences unlike pro-drop languages, such as Spanish or Italian. It would be assumed that null subjects do not occur in English because it is considered to be ungrammatical. Nevertheless, English null subjects are very frequently found in spoken contexts less often in written contexts. The language in these contexts usually shows many informal characteristics, null subjects being one of them. One prerequisite for the occurrence of null subjects in English has to be given, namely recoverability of the deleted subject pronoun. This means if a pronoun is left out in a sentence, the hearer/reader must be able to recover from the context of the conversation which pronoun has been omitted by the speaker/writer.

To show that null subjects are more frequent in English than usually assumed, this thesis used the social network Facebook to analyze the deletion of subjects in status updates of fan pages. The main aim was to compare the usage of null subjects in status updates of US American and British women’s and men’s magazines on Facebook. In addition, these results were contrasted to print editions of US American women’s and men’s magazines. To investigate null subjects in Facebook status messages, a corpus of status updates of 28 women’s and men’s magazines was compiled. 26 selected lexemes were analyzed according to their occurrence with null subjects in these status updates. The analysis aimed at finding out whether there exist any differences in the usage of null subjects between women’s and men’s magazines and between American and British English.

The results of the corpus analyses in Facebook and COCA showed huge differences with regard to the overall occurrences of null subjects. In general, Facebook status updates contained a significantly higher number of null subjects per 100,000 words than the magazine sub-corpus of COCA. In the Facebook corpus, US American women's magazines had the highest number of occurrences of null subject sentences, whereas British women's magazines used the least null subjects in their status messages. Most null subjects appeared in interrogative sentences deleting the 2nd person pronoun *you*. Verbs, such as *can't* and *look*, tended to occur more often in declarative sentences with the deleted 1st person pronoun *I* and the 3rd person pronoun *it*. However, in comparison to the frequency of 2nd person pronouns, 1st and 3rd person pronouns appeared rather rarely. The occurrence of *look* in combination with *it* was also more often found in COCA than with any other personal null pronoun. Overall, *want* and *need* were applied most often in both corpora in null subject sentences. In Facebook status messages, the verbs of emotion *like* and *love* were occurred more frequently in British magazines than in US American magazines. In contrast, the modal verbs *need* and *can't* appeared more often in US American magazines than in British magazines. This result could not be confirmed by COCA because the corpus merely contained US American magazines. Obviously, negated verbs, e.g. *can't*, *couldn't* and *haven't* did not play an important role in the US American print editions of the magazines. In Facebook, these negated verbs were more often found in status messages usually occurring in interrogatives asking for negative characteristics of readers. These questions were always followed by imperatives showing the reader how to improve their current situation. The usage of imperatives after null subject sentences was especially common in Facebook status updates. The reason for that is that magazines intend to motivate the subscriber of these messages to become active, e.g. to purchase the magazine, to click on a link and read the magazine's article or to buy a certain advertized product. The interrogative null subject sentences in COCA were also mainly followed by imperatives giving advice how to do something. A further step of the corpus analysis was to see whether the select verbs occurred with certain topics. Due to the frequent occurrences of null subjects in Facebook status messages, several verbs showed a tendency to appear with specific topics. In upper and upper middle class magazines, *love*, *like*, *need* and *want* appeared mostly with fashion topics, whereas *need* and *want* in middle class and lower middle class magazines occurred more often with beauty, relationship advice and when the magazines tried to engage their readers in taking part in raffles. The shift in topics is probably influenced by the target readerships of the distinct magazines, i.e. upper

class magazines, like *Vogue* or *Esquire*, do usually not give advice on people's relationships, but focus more on the advertisements of luxury goods. In comparison, lower middle class magazines concentrate more on 'real life' topics and problems of the majority of people who are not able to afford such high-priced goods advertised in upper class magazines. In COCA, only the verb *want*, which occurred most often, could mostly be attributed to offering advice to readers. All other lexemes appeared not frequently enough to make any general statement about their occurrence with specific topics.

In sum, the corpus analysis of Facebook status updates illustrated that more null subjects are used on fan pages of US American magazines than on British magazines Facebook pages. Furthermore, null subjects in print magazines are significantly less common than on Facebook, which may be due to Facebook's written-as-if-spoken character of status messages, while print magazines are still more formally written.

Since magazines with a general audience in COCA had to be omitted from the analysis, it could be a starting point for further analysis of null subjects. If the Facebook corpus would be expanded, it could be interesting to also look at magazines' fan pages of other English varieties, such as Australian or South African English to find out whether they use as many null subjects in their status updates as US American magazines. Due to the very detailed analysis of null subjects on Facebook, the phenomenon of persistence could not be included in this thesis. Nevertheless, it would be highly intriguing to find out whether null subject status updates are followed by null subjects replies of readers.

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Eigenständigkeitserklärung

Ich versichere hiermit, dass ich die vorstehende Masterarbeit mit dem Titel

“Want to see more?” Null subjects in Facebook status updates

selbstständig verfasst und keine anderen als die angegebenen Hilfsmittel benutzt habe. Die Stellen, die anderen Werke dem Wortlaut oder dem Sinn nach entnommen wurden, habe ich in jedem einzelnen Fall durch die Angabe der Quelle, auch der benutzten Sekundärliteratur, als Entlehnung kenntlich gemacht.

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