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# Self-presentation strategies in Jordanian students' Instagram profile: does gender make a difference?

## Rafat Al Rousan

Yarmouk University
Jordan

## Ibrahim Darwish

Yarmouk University
Jordan

**Rafat Al Rousan:** Department of Translation, Faculty of Arts, Yarmouk University, Irbid, Jordan.
|   E-mail: rafat.r@yu.edu.jo
**Ibrahim Darwish:** Department of Translation, Faculty of Arts, Yarmouk University, Irbid, Jordan.
|   E-mail: darwish1470@yu.edu.jo

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# Abstract

This study aims to investigate gender differences in the use of self-presentation strategies in the Instagram profile *bios* of young Jordanian university students. This study is guided by sociological and sociolinguistics theories. The data for this study were collected from the Instagram profile *bios* of five hundred young Jordanian university students (250 males & 250 females). The data were then analyzed using content analysis methods to explore gender differences in the students' Instagram profile *bios*. The results indicate that the students used the strategies of ingratiation, competence, exemplification, intimidation, and supplication. The results also show that there are gender differences in the use of these strategies among the male and female students. The results reveal that face-to-face self-presentational strategies were transferred to the Instagram profile *bio*. The most commonly adopted self-presentation strategy in this study was that of ingratiation, followed by competence, exemplification, intimidation, and finally supplication. Furthermore, this study concludes that the males and females tend to differ in the use of self-presentation strategies. Specifically, the males used more competence, exemplification, and intimidation self-presentation strategies than the females did. The females, on the other hand, used more ingratiation and supplication self-presentation strategies than the males did. The findings corroborate previous findings on gender differences in self-presentation in face-to-face and in SNS communication.

**Keywords:** gender difference; self-presentation; Jordanian students; Instagram *bio*.

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## 1. Introduction

Self-presentation is a process whereby people usually create and manage a certain impression on other individuals. Leary (1996: 17) defines it as "the process by which people convey to others that they are a certain kind of person or possess certain characteristics". According to Goffman (1959: 22), "we are all just actors trying to control and manage our public image. We act based on how others might see us". In his description of self-presentation in face-to-face (henceforth, FTF), Goffman (1959) claims that people control their image consciously or subconsciously by presenting themselves in various ways. The primary aim of self-presentation is to make a positive impression on others. Self-presentation plays a fundamental role in our daily interactions, whether FTF (Goffman, 1959; Leary, 1996) or online (Kuzenkoff, 2013).

Nowadays, billions of people around the world are heavily dependent on social network services (henceforth SNSs). They are applications used by people as communication tools to build social networks and develop social relations. SNSs have created a new venue through which users can easily engage in various types of self-presentation (Huang, 2014). In fact, "one of the most important motives people using social media is for self-presentation" (Huang, 2014: 416). SNSs have changed the way people communicate with each other. They enable users to show desirable aspects of their personality to online audiences (Dominick, 1999). They also provide a great opportunity to people, especially young generations, to present themselves and be heard by a huge and diverse crowd (Herring & Kapidzic, 2015). Boyd and Ellison (2007: 219) argue that "SNSs constitute an important research context for scholars investigating processes of impression management, self-presentation, and friendship performance". It seems that the features provided by SNSs make them very appealing to both men and women.

Gender differences on SNSs have been documented by previous research (Hargittai, 2008; Herring, 1994; Huffaker & Calvert, 2005; Rice & Markey, 2009; Tufekci, 2008, among others). It has been established that men's and women's behavior online varies to an extent. For example, Huffaker and Calvert (2005) point out that females express more cooperation than men in SNS communication. Females were also found to be more expressive, emotional, and self-disclosing, whereas men were found to be more task-oriented and less emotional online (Rice & Markey, 2009). Furthermore, while women tend to use a polite and supportive language, men tend to use an aggressive and challenging language (Hargittai, 2008; Herring, 1994).

The population of Jordan is estimated at 10 million people (Digital 2019 Jordan). Eighty seven percent of them are internet users, and 80% are mobile phone subscribers (Digital 2019 Jordan). Instagram, on the other hand, is very popular among Jordanians. In October 2019, there were around 2 million Instagram users in Jordan, accounting for almost 20% of

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its entire population (www.Instagram.com). Seven hundred and fifty thousand of those are young people between the ages of 18 and 24 (www.Instagram.com). Despite its importance, popularity and ubiquitous use as a means of communication, Instagram has received less attention from scholars than other SNSs. Moreover, self-presentation on Instagram is an under researched topic, particularly in a Jordanian setting. This study attempts to contribute to the little academic research on self-presentation and Instagram, in particular. Examining self-presentation strategies is very crucial in our attempt to understand human communication. According to Leary (1996), investigating strategies used in self-presentation helps us better understand people's engagement in identity management. Chu and Choi (2010: 416) also claim that "additional research could analyze the content in participants' actual profiles to gain a more accurate and comprehensive picture of information they disclose on SNSs". Therefore, this study concerns itself with how young people use language to present themselves to others on SNSs. Particularly, it aims to investigate gender differences in the use of self-presentation strategies in the Instagram profile *bios* of young Jordanian male and female students. The study seeks to answer the following question: how do young male and female Jordanian university students differ, if they do, in the use of self-presentation strategies in their Instagram profile *bios*?

## 2. Background

## 2.1. What is self-presentation?

One of the first and most popular introduction of self-presentation was made by Goffman (1959) in his famous book *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. He maintains that everyday social interaction is similar to a theater, where people are actors on a stage, and each one of them plays a variety of different roles. Goffman (1959: 9) states that "when an individual plays a part he implicitly requests his observers to take seriously the impression that is fostered before them". For him, self-presentation is an everlasting process of "information management", to which he refers as a "performance". Another well-known definition of self-presentation was introduced by Leary (1996: 17), who defines it as "the process by which people convey to others that they are a certain kind of person or possess certain characteristics". Self-presentation, which is also called impression management, plays an essential role in our daily FTF and online interactions (Goffman, 1959; Kuzenkoff, 2013). It is based on the claim that people have an innate desire to be accepted by others (Leary, 1996). That is, making others accept the image other people try to claim for themselves is the key goal of self-presentation (Goffman, 1959). Moreover, in a self-presentation activity, an individual via multimodal communication (e.g., textual information, speech, body language, tone of voice, posture, pictures, etc.) attempts to convey a particular image and express a specific identity (Goffman, 1959; Leary, 1996). People primarily engage in self-presentation to help maintain social relationships and ensure smooth interactions (Goffman, 1959). In

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sum, self-presentation is a complex process of behavior through which an individual aims to construct a positive impression by looking friendly, humorous, generous, competent, or powerful, etc. To do so, an individual may opt to manipulate an aspect of him/herself (Goffman, 1959; Leary, 1996).

## 2.2. What is Instagram?

Instagram is a social networking application used for sharing photos and videos from a mobile phone. Instagram was introduced on October 6, 2010 as a mobile phone application by Brazilian Mike Krieger and North American Kevin Systrom (Musse, 2016). Since then, Instagram has grown rapidly and has become one of the most popular internet services (Heffernan, 2013). In September 2011, it had more than 10 million users and was named the "App of the year" by Apple (Musse, 2016). In July 2012, the number of Instagram users went up to 80 million, and in September 2013 the number was 150 million users. Then, the number kept increasing until it reached 1 billion active subscribers in 2019.

The word *Instagram* is made of *Insta*, which comes from "instant", and *gram*, which comes from "telegram" (Kalalo, 2018). Instagram has more advantages over other *SNS application* such as Facebook and WhatsApp. It allows users to edit photos and videos before posting them. Instagram offers its users the opportunity to apply different manipulation tools to transform the appearance of images. It has more than 20 filters a user can choose from. Instagram also permits its users to publish photos and videos that display daily activities (stories) that disappear after 24 hours. Concerning privacy, Instagram allows its users to post photos and videos directly to particular users, without having to share them in public profiles (Musse, 2016). It seems that sharing instant photos and videos is the main goal of Instagram. Moreover, Instagram allows its users to utilize photos and videos with textual materials. According to Marshall (2010), not only do Instagram users publish their content, but also share it with users with the same or different content, thus exchanging information and showing photos and videos. Instagram also provides users with the freedom of self-presentation. That is, they have the prerogative to reveal the kind of information about themselves. Therefore, they feel little or no pressure creating the self they desire. All the above-mentioned features make Instagram an increasingly popular SNS, particularly among young individuals.

## 2.3. Instagram and online discourse

Instagram is a new means of communication that allows people to send and receive text messages along with a wide range of options that people choose from when communicating, such as texts, photos, voice notes, videos, web links, emojis, etc. Instagram enables its users to create their own digital profile called *bio*. To complete their Instagram *bios*, users can provide their personal information, by using their names, nicknames, dates of birth, professions, majors, hobbies, etc. They can also include photos and/or web links. In an Instagram *bio*, users are encouraged to write an up to 189-character text, in which they can

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embody different pragmatic content, for example, expressing attitudes, giving an advice, using religious or literary quotations, and so forth. Generally, this study focuses on how users of Instagram utilize language to present themselves to others through the 189-character blank. This study is concerned only with written texts used in the participants' *bios*. The rest of the features are beyond the scope of this study although they are significant in the study of self-presentation. They may be discussed in future research.

Online discourse is a form of language that comprises features derived from both written and spoken language (Crystal, 2001). It is a novel language called "netspeak" (Crystal, 2001), "digital discourse" (Bortree, 2005). It has a distinct pattern of lexical, syntactic, and typographical forms, fulfilling the needs of users and the technology in which they are used (Doring, 2002). It is also called "hybrid discourse" since oral discourse is usually transferred into written texts. What makes Instagram a rich multimodal means of communication is the mixture of verbal realizations with non-verbal ones such as visual and typographical devices. Thus, Instagram discourse is an amalgamation of elements taken from different modes of discourse exchanged by the app's users. One very common and widely used multimodal device are *emojis*, which are a common feature of Instagram discourse.

## 3. Literature review

### 3.1. Self-presentation on SNS

Self-presentation is not only restricted to FTF communication, but it is also a common practice in SNSs. Self-presentation in FTF communication requires communicators to be simultaneously present. In contrast, in online communication, users do not have to be online to allow people to know them on the personal or professional level. Users of an online application, such as Instagram, can still check the profile of other users even if they are offline. SNSs greatly help users to create a desired image for themselves and construct their identities. To use SNSs, users are required to establish a public or private profile constrained by the limitations of the application (Boyd & Ellison, 2007). Unlike FTF interactions, SNSs provide users with the advantage of being anonymous, allowing them to present themselves and hide their identities strategically. They also allow better control and supervision over the image perceived by others (Boyd & Ellison, 2007; Stanculescu, 2011). For example, Boyd and Ellison (2007) claim that users of SNSs have more control of online self-presentation than that of FTF. Therefore, they can choose the best photo or text that perfectly presents their best image. People can better express their "true-selves" in online communication compared to FTF communication (Bargh et al., 2002). Furthermore, users do not always show their true identity online. Like FTF communication, some SNS users fake or exaggerate their profile information in order to look better than they really are in real life (Boyd & Ellison, 2007; Stanculescu, 2011).

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Online self-presentation is "a conscious process in which people attempt to influence the perceptions of their image. They do it by controlling and managing information presented in social media" (Paliszkiewicz & Madra-Sawicka, 2016: 203). This can be achieved through multimodal communication (e.g., texts, pictures, videos, or a mixture of them). Users take nice pictures of themselves, record impressive videos of their daily activities, post videos of their preferences, write texts expressing certain attitudes, use famous quotations reflecting their beliefs and interests, etc. That is, self-presentation is a behavior that is often influenced by different goals (Jones & Pittman, 1982). Like self-presentation in real life, the main aim of online self-presentation is to create a certain impression on others and to control the perception others form of online users. In particular, users try to be regarded as likeable and respected by others, look superior to others, express power and authority over others, express solidarity and friendliness, and influence others' attitudes, feelings and emotions (Lewis & Neighbors, 2005). Therefore, they edit, adjust, or develop their online profiles to fit the desired image (Paliszkiewicz & Madra-Sawicka, 2016). Lastly, Dominick (1999) argues that SNSs enable users to show their personality aspects that are most appealing to the audience.

## 3.2. Online self-presentation strategies

Self-presentation strategies are defined as "behaviors used to manage impressions to achieve foreseeable short-term interpersonal objectives or goals" (Lee et al., 1999: 702). People use certain self-presentation strategies in FTF communication. One of the most important classification for these strategies was introduced by Jones and Pittman (1982), who developed a taxonomy of five self-presentation strategies based on motives. **Ingratiation:** It is the most common of all strategies (Dominick, 1999; Jones, 1990; Kuzenkoff, 2013). The aim of this strategy is to be perceived as likeable (Jones & Pittman, 1982). **Competence:** It is also known as self-promotion. Individuals using this strategy try to be perceived as successful, skillful, and qualified (Jones & Pittman, 1982). **Intimidation:** The main goal of this strategy is to claim power and to be feared (Jones & Pittman, 1982). **Exemplification:** Users of this strategy look for respect and consideration, and they want to be perceived as morally superior (Jones & Pittman, 1982). And **supplication:** In this strategy, users solicit help by appearing weak, helpless, and self-deprecatory (Dominick, 1999). They show themselves as dependent of others (Jones & Pittman, 1982).

Some researchers have found that Jones and Pittman's self-presentation strategies in FTF communication can be extended to the online environment (Chu & Choi, 2010; Dominick, 1999). Based on Jones and Pittman's (1982) taxonomy of self-presentation, Chu and Choi (2010) identify three main self-presentation strategies in SNSs used by Chinese and American users: competence, ingratiation, and supplication. They indicated that Chinese users employed the strategies of supplication and competence more frequently than their American counterparts, whereas the American users used ingratiation more frequently than the

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Chinese. Lee et al. (1999) classify self-presentation strategies into two categories. The first is defensive self-presentation, in which users employ the use of justification, excuse, and apology. Users in this category seek social approval and avoid social rejection. The latter is assertive self-presentation, which employs the use of ingratiation, intimidation, supplication, entitlement, enhancement, blasting, and exemplification. In this category, people seek power, superiority, and social status.

On the other hand, Huang (2014) reveals that young people can manage the impression they make on others via SNSs by employing four strategies, namely, ingratiation, damage control, manipulation, and self-promotion. In addition, Jung, Youn, and McClung (2007) point out that on Korean weblog personal homepage *Cyworld*, young Koreans bloggers use four self-presentation strategies similar to those identified by Jones and Pitman (1982) and driven by motives that are identical to those identified in real life. The strategies used included ingratiation, supplication, exemplification, and competence. Ingratiation was used the most. Rosenberg and Egbert (2011) also report that people on Facebook employ the following self-presentation tactics: manipulation, damage-control, self-promotion, and role-model.

## 3.3. Gender and SNSs

Previous studies have reported variations in the ways males and females use and present themselves on SNSs. For example, past research has revealed that males and females differ in the degree they use SNSs. Females were reported to be more active and heavier users of SNSs than males (Hargittai, 2008; Tufekci, 2008). Females were also found to make more public comments than males do (Thelwall, 2008). Additionally, past literature has found that females have more friends on SNSs than males (Thelwall, 2008; Hargittai, 2008). Gender variation in the purpose for which males and females use SNSs has also been reported. Females tend to use SNSs to maintain relationships with existing contacts whereas males tend to use them to flirt and to form new relationships (Herring, 1996; Tufekci, 2008). While males use SNSs to obtain new information and to play games, females use them to access social information for the aim of giving and receiving more social support (Frison & Eggermont, 2015). Moreover, females tend to post beautiful photos whereas males share photos that are described as self-promoting. Unlike females' language on SNSs, which is described as polite, positive, and supportive, males' language is described as aggressive and negative (Herring, 1994; Hargittai, 2008). Sveningsson (2007) finds out that while women focus on communication, relationships, and emotions in their self-presentation on SNSs, men focus on status, power, and technology. Furthermore, Huffaker and Calvert (2005) point out that females express more cooperation and solidarity than men in their online communication. Gender differences in the use of self-presentation strategies were also shown on SNSs (DuBrin, 2011; Haferkamp et al., 2012). For instance, DuBrin (2011) claims that males use more ingratiation strategy than females.

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Haferkamp et al. (2012) adverts that females adopt the supplication strategy in Facebook status updates more than males. On the other hand, females use the intimidation strategy less than males (36.36% and 56.64% respectively). Manago et al. (2008) indicate that men's online portrayals on MySpace reflect masculinity and emphasize power, whereas women's portrayals reflect attractiveness and affiliation. Thus, gender variation on SNSs seems to reflect those found in FTF interactions. In sum, the literature review shows that there has been scarcity of research related to the study of gender and self-presentation in SNSs in an Arab context, and in a Jordanian context, in particular.

## 4. Methodology

The present study adopts mixed method research to answer its question. The following section presents the methods used in the study.

### 4.1. The participants

The participants of this study were 500 young university students (250 males and 250 females). They represent the same cultural and linguistic backgrounds. They are all Jordanian university students studying different majors at Yarmouk University, and they all speak Jordanian Arabic. The majority of the participants have some knowledge of English since the medium of instruction in most majors at the university is English, coupled with the fact that they had studied English before they joined the university. The age of the participants ranges between 18 and 24. Their mean age was 20 years. According to Duggan et al. (2015), young people between the ages of 18 and 29 are the dominant users of Instagram. Besides, young people between the ages of 18 and 24 have been identified as the largest Instagram users in Jordan (www.napoleoncat.com). Furthermore, all the participants are active Instagram users, and they all have at least one year experience in using the app. People who use their Instagram regularly often have more experience and chances of presenting themselves on the medium.

### 4.2. The corpus

The corpus of this study consists of 500 Instagram profile *bios*, which were collected during the month of November, 2019 from 500 different Instagram accounts of young university students. Five undergraduate students (3 males and 2 females) taking courses with the researchers helped in the data collection. Each of them was required to randomly collect 100 Instagram profile *bios* from Yarmouk university students. They were awarded extra marks for their assistance. The students (assistants) would approach the participants in the university campus and ask them if they are willing to take part in the study after explaining to them its purpose. Having agreed to participate, the participants were then asked to send screenshots of their Instagram profile *bios* to the assistances' phones.

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The assistants, after compiling the required data, would send them to the researchers' WhatsApp accounts. The researchers could have used the snowballing technique to collect the data, but they opted for this data collection technique due to ethical considerations. To ensure the validity of the data and the ethics of research, the following issues were highly considered during the process of data collection. Firstly, the participants were randomly selected to avoid any bias. Secondly, participation was limited to students between 18 and 24 years of age. Thirdly, personal information such as names, photos, dates of birth, addresses, etc., was not included for confidentiality purposes. Finally, the same number of male and female students was sought.

Discussion groups were also used as a data collection technique. Three discussion groups involving 20 Yarmouk university students (10 males and 10 females) who voluntarily agreed to take part in the study were held in one the researchers' offices. The discussion groups were not primarily meant to obtain data for the content analysis per se, but rather to help the researchers get in-depth explanations about the use of Instagram profile *bios* in self-presentation. The discussion sessions were held in a friendly environment, and each one of them lasted for about an hour.
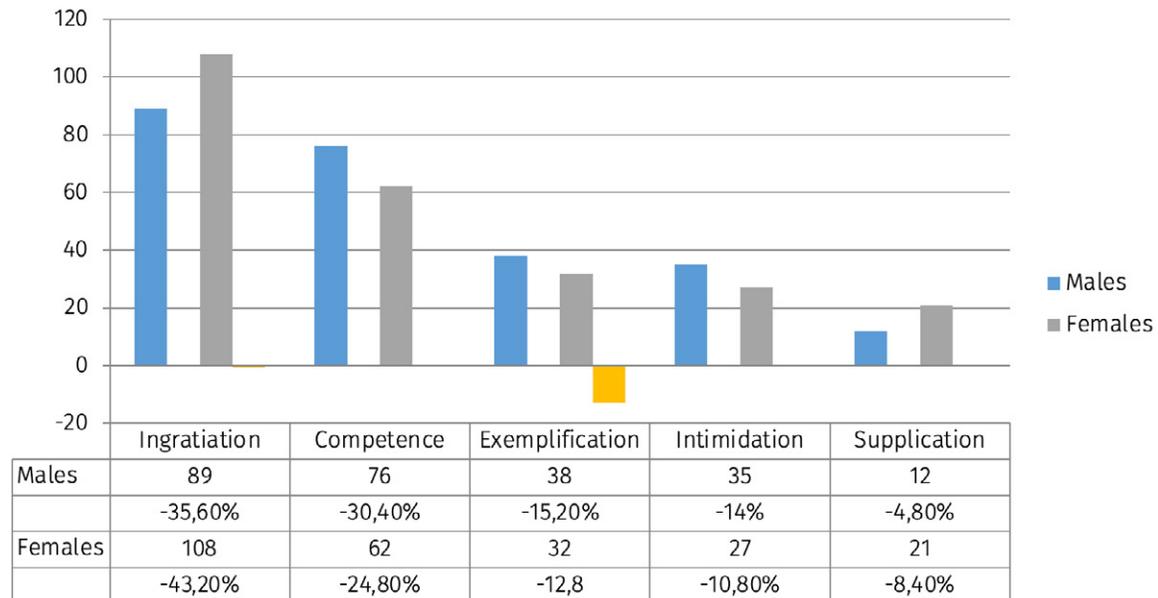
## 4.3. Data analysis

A content analysis of the data was conducted based on Jones and Pittman's (1982) taxonomy of self-presentation strategies. Their classification includes ingratiation, competence, intimidation, exemplification, and supplication. To investigate differences across genders, the data were classified according to the gender of their writer. Then, a contrast was conducted. Frequencies and percentages were also used.

## 5. Results and discussion

The focus of this study is to investigate gender differences in the use of self-presentation strategies in Instagram profile *bios* of young Jordanian university students. A content analysis of 500 (250 male and 250 female) user profile *bios* was conducted. All the self-presentation strategies identified in FTF interactions (Goffman, 1959; Jones & Pittman, 1982; Jones, 1990) and in SNSs (Jung et al., 2007; Wong, 2012) were confirmed in the data. This section describes the results of the data analysis along with a discussion of the results. Chart 1 below shows the frequencies of the self-presentational strategies used by the male and female Jordanian students as emerged from the data analysis. It is worthy of mentioning that the students used Arabic, English, and a mixture of both in writing their Instagram profile *bios*. They also used emojis, different fonts, and different colors. Future research may tackle these issues due to their importance in understanding the practice of self-presentation online. The Arabic examples below are transliterated and translated into English.

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**CHART 1**

Frequency and percentages of self-presentation strategies of Jordanian students



|  | Ingratiation | Competence | Exemplification | Intimidation | Supplication |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Males | 89 | 76 | 38 | 35 | 12 |
|  | -35,60% | -30,40% | -15,20% | -14% | -4,80% |
| Females | 108 | 62 | 32 | 27 | 21 |
|  | -43,20% | -24,80% | -12,8 | -10,80% | -8,40% |

## 5.1. Ingratiation

The aim of ingratiation is to get others to like us (Jones & Pittman, 1982). Therefore, users of ingratiation tend to be kind to others, help them, do them favors, agree with them, support them, and praise them. Ingratiation often involves displaying positive personal traits (Jones, 1990). In this strategy, individuals use statements of familiarity, support, friendliness and humor, etc. Examples on this strategy from the data are:

(a)  The world is full of nice people. If you can't find one, be one. (Female)

(b)   I loVe mY mOm 😘😍💕✌️👍        (Male)

The results show that ingratiation was the most popular self-presentation strategy among the students compared to the other strategies on Instagram. Precisely, 43.2% of the female participants (n=108) and 35.6% of the male participants (n=89) opted for this strategy. This result agrees with previous research on self-presentation in FTF and SNS interactions indicating that ingratiation is the most commonly used self-presentation strategy, such as Dominick (1999), Goffman (1959), Huang (2014), Jones and Pittman (1982), Jones (1990), Jung et al. (2007), and Wong (2012). This reveals that there is a similar tendency among young people from different cultural settings to be perceived as likeable as it is the nature of human being. This frequent use of ingratiation may be ascribed to the notion that it is more advantageous for young people to be perceived as likeable since it provides them with

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more gains than losses (Jones, 1990). Besides, students generally consider ingratiation a desirable behavior they often like to communicate on SNSs. They use it in their search for social acceptance. Additionally, young people often attempt to construct their own public image in order to be noticed. This result, further, indicates that young people, males and females, heavily focus on their relationships with others by expressing support, intimacy, friendliness, and care. One further explanation is that SNSs allows individuals more opportunities to look for new relationships. According to Tidwell and Walther (2002), people engaging in online communication usually conduct more intimate and friendly interactions than in FTF communication.

However, it was found that ingratiation was more frequently used by the females than the males. The data show that the females opted for more ingratiation than the males did, 43.2% and 35.6% respectively. This result supports the findings of some studies indicating that females use ingratiation more than their male counterparts do (DuBrin, 2011; Tannen, 1994), although other studies suggest males use it more (Haferkamp et al., 2012). The common use of ingratiation among the females could show that they desire to be perceived by others as likeable because they usually desire to establish and maintain relationships. They tend to socialize more than males do, so they have more tendency to look for new friends and followers on Instagram than males do. Therefore, females present themselves on Instagram profile *bios* by using ingratiation in order to gain social acceptance and make new friends. Barker (2009) reports that females are more interested in the social and relational aspects of SNSs than males are. As reported in FTF communication, females use language that denotes cooperation and solidarity to convey and gain support more than males do (Tannen, 1990; Lakoff, 1975). Similarly, studies on gender and online behavior reported the same finding (Herring, 2000).

## 5.2. Competence

Competence or self-promotion is another self-presentation strategy, the aim of which is to gain respect and recognition. By using competence, individuals try to get people to perceive them as competent, successful, capable, intelligent, or talented, etc. (Jones, 1990). This strategy involves claims about ability, achievement, success, and performance. It helps people "appear credible, innovative, esteemed, and powerful" (DuBrin, 2011: 137). The following are examples on this category.

(a)  Fitness is not a destination. It is a way of life. (Female)

(b)  اعطي الخبز لخبازه [lit. Give the dough to its baker!] Meaning: Let professional and competent people handle the task! (Male)

The data show that the second most commonly occurring self-presentation strategy was that of self-promotion. Precisely, 30.4% of the males (n=76) and 24.8% of the females (n=62)

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adopted this self-presentation strategy. This result is consistent with previous studies pointing out that competence often comes second to ingratiation (Bortree, 2005; Jones & Pittman, 1982; Wong, 2012). On the contrary, Jung et al. (2007) reveal that competence comes in the first place, followed by ingratiation. This may be due to cultural differences. Young people want to enhance their social image and gain more social acceptance by displaying competency, successfulness, intelligence, and responsibility, etc.

In terms of gender differences, the data indicate that the males employed more competence than the females did. The numbers show that 30.4% of the males (n=76) used the strategy of competence while 24.8% (n=62) of the females used the same strategy. This finding is consonant with previous literature revealing that males engage in more competence than females (DuBrin, 2011). The females were expected to exceed the males in the use of competence because females care more about their social image than males (Holmes, 1995; Tannen, 1990). The use of competence by the males in this study indicates a shift in the males' stand. It seems that they began to care about their social image by wanting to be perceived as worthy of respect and favorable treatment. Another reason was revealed by a female student, who stressed that males engage in competence more than females because "it is in their nature to brag about their accomplishments". She added that "some of them even lie about that to achieve their goals". This justification was supported by all the females and some of the males in the discussion groups.

## 5.3. Exemplification

Exemplification can be defined as a self-presentation strategy whose main goal is to project a desired identity image of moral superiority and trustworthiness (DuBrin, 2011; Jones, 1990). Through exemplification, an individual seeks "to be viewed as dedicated by going above and beyond the call of duty" (DuBrin, 2011: 42). To accomplish exemplification, individuals may present themselves as generous, honest, virtuous, disciplined, etc. They attempt to influence others to follow their lead. Individuals engaging in this strategy express themselves by using statements of commitment, generosity, self-discipline, and righteousness, etc. For example, in everyday interactions, teachers use exemplification to influence their students by praising their own righteous behavior. Examples from the data are given below.

(a)     Saving earth is my mission. 🌍🌲          (Female)

(b)   "If you can't feed a hundred people, then just feed one." —Mother Teresa (Male)

The data of this study reveal that 15.2% of the males (n=38) and 12.8% of the females (n=32) were engaged in this strategy. Males' and females' engagement in exemplification indicates that they have a desire to affect others' perceptions by leaving a lasting image of moral integrity and worthiness. The results show that this strategy was not as popular among the students as ingratiation and competence. It comes in the third place following ingratia-

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tion and competence. This result agrees with DuBrin (2011) and Huang (2014). Interestingly enough, some students in the discussion groups were not in favor of using this strategy because it may have negative consequences as a result of the audience's reaction, who may regard it as boasting or showing off. Gender differences in the use of this strategy were shown in the data. The male students adopted this strategy more than the female students did. This supports the claim that women online care more than men about their social image (Herring, 1994). Women usually try to protect their face and promote it positively, so they are cautious not to select a strategy that may cause a threat to their public image. Two thirds of the female students (10 female students) stated that "I always avoid exemplification because I do not want to be ridiculed or laughed at".

## 5.4. Intimidation

The fourth self-presentation strategy is intimidation. People using this strategy want to be feared. They seek power and authority. Therefore, they use language that expresses toughness, ruthlessness, and superiority. To intimidate others, people often use abusive and authoritative language. Taboo language is also a feature of this strategy. In this strategy, users use statements of threats, anger, and unhappiness. Their main intention is to be perceived as dangerous and powerful (Kuzenkoff, 2013). Consider the following examples.

(a)
👌 ركز
انا مو راعية مشاكل 😤بس تسولف من وراي
😒افرط ام الكفو بعشيرتكك 👋💚

[Pay attention. I am not a trouble maker, but if you talk behind my back, I beat the best in your tribe] (Male)
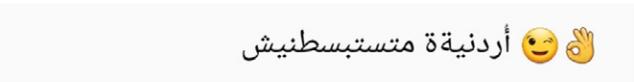
(b)
👌😜 أردنية متستبسطنيش

[I am Jordanian. Do not underestimate me] (Female)

The result shows that intimidation was second to the least frequently occurring self-presentation strategy. It appeared in 14% of the males' (n=35) Instagram profile *bios* and in 10.8% of the females' (n= 27) *bios*. Intimidation was employed by both males and females to get the attention of others. However, gender differences in the use of intimidation do exist in this study, which is evident from the numbers shown above. The numbers show that the males engage more in intimidation than their female counterparts. This result is consistent with the findings of previous research both in FTF (Lakoff, 1975; Coates, 2003) and online communication (Guiller & Durndell, 2006; Herring, 1994). In SNSs, females were found to use emotional and personal forms of language, whereas males were found to use more authoritative and adversarial forms of language. According to Coates (2003: 13), gender differences in the use of language may be "interpreted as reflecting and maintaining

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gender-specific subcultures". Particularly, gender variation may reflect the males' superior status and the females' inferior status in society. Unlike men who aim to achieve power, women aim to achieve support, help, and closeness (Coates, 2003; Lakoff, 1975). To do so, men use aggressive and self-promotional language, whereas women use polite, attenuated, and self-deprecating language (Coates, 2003; Lakoff, 1975). Previous research in sociolinguistics reported that men often employ language that expresses their stereotypical machismo and masculinity (Tannen, 1990).

Some respondents, males and females, claimed that the language of intimidation, characterized as offensive and aggressive, may serve their purpose better than polite and friendly language. This supports Guiller and Durndell's (2006: 11) claim that "an authoritative and challenging contribution may be perceived as a more convincing argument and a more valuable contribution to knowledge". Furthermore, unexpectedly, gender differences in the students' use of this strategy were not big. This finding may be discussed from different perspectives. Firstly, this may be ascribed to women's awareness of their weak social status in the society. Secondly, it may be due to the fact that the cultural gap among males and females in Jordan is narrowing down because of the effect of media such as the internet and mobile phones allowing females more freedom to communicate with males more freely. In addition, the internet allows females more privacy since it is gender neutral (Herring, 1994). Thus, people were better able to convey their "true selves" online compared to FTF interactions.

## 5.5. Supplication

Jones and Pittman (1982) define supplication as displaying weakness and dependency to get others' attention, care, protection, and support. Supplication can also be used to avoid responsibilities and to make excuses for poor performance (Weary & Williams, 1990). Statements expressing weakness, helplessness, self-deprecatory, and inability are the primary characteristic of this self-presentation strategy. For example:

(a)   اريد ان ارتاح واريح [I want to be at peace and let others be at piece too.] (Male)

(b)   يارب احفظ لي امي وابي من كل شر واذى [O' God, protect my mother and father from all evil and harm.] (Female)

The data show that this self-presentation strategy was the least frequently adopted strategy among the young students appearing only in 4.8% of the males' (n=12) Instagram *bios* and in 8.4% of the females' (n=21). This result agrees with Jones and Pittman (1982), Jones (1990), and Huang (2014). The low frequency of supplication indicates that the students want to be perceived as independent and self-reliant. However, the data indicate that the males and the females vary in terms of the use of this strategy. It is evident that Instagram constitutes a platform for young people, females in particular, on which they can seek emotions and support in a time described as a "digital age", where they spend the majority of their time

using their phones and hardly communicate FTF. Seven of the female respondents reported that they employ supplication whenever they want to publicly showcase their weaknesses and need for help in order to attract the attention of someone. The same was reported by the male respondents. However, they are different in the degree they use it. There is anecdotal and empirical evidence that women are emotion seekers and needier for observation and care. The respondents also mentioned that they often fake their use of supplication to get the attention of a man or a woman. When asked about that, 10 males reported that they did, compared to 4 females. This tendency may be explained based on the finding that men mainly perceive SNSs as a "pragmatic communication medium" whereas women perceive them as a social and interpersonal medium (Haferkamp et al., 2012). Young university students are heavily dependent on other colleagues and friends, especially in the education domain. Seeking help via SNSs, according to some respondents, may save them embarrassment, something FTF interaction does not provide. They do it to save their face as they sometimes expect rejection. Therefore, they resort to supplication in their search for help and support.

## 6. Conclusion

This study is one of the very few studies, if not the only one, that investigated gender differences in the use of Instagram profile *bio* adopting a sociological and sociolinguistic framework. The study concludes that Jones and Pittman's (1982) FTF self-presentational strategies were transferred to the Instagram profile *bio*, supporting previous literature on self-presentation and SNSs. The study shows that the most commonly adopted self-presentation strategy by both the male and female students was that of ingratiation, followed by competence, exemplification, intimidation, and finally supplication. This study also reveals that males and females tend to vary in the use of different self-presentation strategies. Specifically, the study indicates that, compared to the females, the males used more competence, exemplification, and intimidation self-presentation strategies. Females, on the other hand, used more ingratiation and supplication self-presentation strategies. Although FTF self-presentational strategies still persist in our everyday interactions, SNSs, in general, and Instagram, in particular, have created a new medium through which people, particularly young individuals, can manage their impressions and form their identities online.

The current study, of course, is not without any limitations. The sample used for the purpose of this study included only young university students between the ages of 18 and 24. Future studies may use a wider sample from different age groups because young university students may be different from teenage students and older generations. Moreover, a cross-cultural study of self-presentation in Instagram *bios* may lead to different results because it is important to study the influence of culture on the use of language in Instagram. Future research could also analyze the relationship between the pictures used in the

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Instagram profile and how males and females employ them in self-presentation. Finally, self-presentation online is a potentially significant topic worthy of investigation from many different perspectives.

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