DIGITAL HUMANITIES AND POLITENESS:
A PROPOSED GUIDELINE FOR TEXT
INTERACTIONS IN THE VIRTUAL WORLD

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ABSTRACT

This simple opinionated review paper is about digital humanities and politeness, on proposing a guideline for text interactions in the virtual world. Theories on digital humanities, civil discourse, text interactions, politeness, social media, public space, and social harmony are presented, and then outlines and standpoints are pointed out. Based on the outlines and standpoints, a guideline for text interactions is elaborated, inductively summed up, and proposed for the open society in the virtual world. The text interactions here are pragmatically viewed, i.e. how politeness should be maintained rather than camaraderie, as a common weapon for creating a social harmony in the public space of the virtual world. The proposed guideline is of three main hints: (1) Consider your surroundings, (2) Consider your physical and mental performance, (3) Consider the words and images you will have left unforgotten, and probably, unforgiven. This guideline is, however, optional, not obligatory, for those who would like to maintain a good relationship towards social harmony among netizens in the open virtual world.

Keywords: Digital humanities; politeness; camaraderie; distant language; close language; verbal text interaction; non-verbal text interaction; social media; public space; good relationship; harmony; social harmony; civil discourse; guideline.

1. INTRODUCTION

The new phenomenon of text interactions in the virtual world is, indeed, interrelated with various disciplines within humanities. Comments, opinions, ideas, criticisms, pictures, and others are interacted throughout the borderlines of ages, religions, areas, regions, countries, and continents. Humanities, the sciences with the cultural aspects, take its place in the interactions, with the stakes for its benefits in form of social harmony and for its failures in form of social disharmony or social friction. All this happens in the virtual world, the world that we live in not immediately, but intermediately, i.e. between the real world and the ‘afterworld’, if we may call the latter.

When I was still a little kid, my teachers kept telling me that there were only two worlds, i.e. the real world (Indonesian: dunia fana), the world we lived in now in time and space, the fragile world of destructions in all kinds of form, and the afterworld (Indonesian: dunia baka), the world after we all were gone, passing
away, which is either to the heaven or to the hell. However, after I am now 47 years of age, I have found out that there is another world, which was beyond my previous prediction or my imagination, and so was it beyond my former teachers’. The new world between the real world and the afterworld is called or termed ‘the virtual world’ (Indonesian: dunia maya), i.e. the broad on-line world of various environments of interactive simulations based on the computer. This virtual world is so popular that many people are willing to leave their real world for enjoying living in the virtual world, i.e. doing activities such as browsing, chatting, interacting, and other communications, one-way or two-way, in the virtual world. Escapes from stress-out in the real world are sometimes made to bear and share their problems and to heal their feelings and emotions in the real world. This is different from the old-fashioned escapes we used to make before the virtual world was created, i.e. people sometimes escaped from their stress-out directly and eternally to the afterworld through suicidal short-cuts. The new-fashioned escapes are now directed to the virtual world via different social media; however, our humanity as humans is sometimes neglected or even forgotten throughout the interactions, i.e. value borders of morality, ethics, religions, and privacies of others are violated there. This is the reason for the passing of the Laws of Republic of Indonesia, Number 11 of the 2008, on Information and Electronic Transactions (UU-ITE) [1].

Humanities are the sciences which make human-beings more human and more civilized [2], comprising: theology, philosophy, law, history, language, literature, arts, and psychology. Digital humanities are, therefore, referring to the adjustment of the humanities in the computer or digital world, as learning sources for various knowledge which can make human-beings more civilized. The relationship of digital humanities and politeness is taken into account in this article. Theories on politeness have emerged from the notion ‘face’ in the selves of human-beings, which is elaborated in human interactions, i.e. interpersonal as well as social [3]. Face refers to and is related with self-esteem, feeling, and every association to one’s self. Interpersonal and social interactions should consider this ‘face management’ so that others’ face and one’s own face are not threatened and damaged [4]. Everyone has two faces, one referring to the wish for appreciation, and the other to the wish for no depreciation nor humiliation. Interpersonal and social interactions should be directed to maintenance of others’ face, and, also for sure, one’s own face. Verbal interactions in form of words, as well as non-verbal interactions in form of images, pictures, gestures, actions, or others in the virtual world should maintain this politeness. However, what has happened in the virtual world so far might have been different or probably have scratched our common humanity.

Digital humanities, the writer contends, should maintain the social harmony in text interactions or text transactions in the virtual world. However, as the author has observed so far, the social harmony in the virtual world has probably been violated, i.e. others’ face has been threatened or damaged, or others’ privacy or comfort zone has been trespassed. Cases which threaten the social harmony and promote disintegration happen. Religion is sometimes used to deceive others for power ambition, philosophy is made up to bully others, law is reversed upside-down to show its fake good face, and the truth of historical records is denied to tell wicked lies. Language and literature are often made evil for swearing and bullying others. Furthermore, popular art images are created to express irony, sarcasm, and bullying for attacking and intimidating others. The images are also made up as excuses or justifications for pornography and pornoaction. Mass psychology is playfully elaborated towards lust for power in political practices. The author wonders if all these are the true face of digital humanities.

The virtual world with its various paths and roads under the guide of the sophisticated search engines, two of the greatest of which are Yahoo and Google, has been elaborated in many kinds of social media. The virtual world should be regarded well as public space of broad and various unlimited societies. Popular social media such as: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube as means of social interactions in the virtual world to create, share, and exchange ideas, pictures, and videos of communities in the internet should always be regarded as a public space which is open and accessible to everyone or which belongs to everyone in this world. The public space, is, therefore, a formal space or a public place, which functions as a room for strangers to interact and to transact, which cannot be reduced or converted into an informal room in the corner of our home for gossiping, joking, and making fun of others within closed people groups, with any possible topics. Topics in the public space should be maintained to instill something common, neutral, and safe, not touchy, hence not bullying particular others.

Interactions and transactions in the public space of virtual world, verbal as well as non-verbal, should maintain politeness. We could imagine what would happen when all the users of public space upload and exchange information, pictures, or even actions of any possible topics including those of profanity. The
public space would probably be dirty, the face threatening or even face damaging acts by the users would also get potentially high, and the disputes between or among the users will end in the UU-ITE trial courts. Everything is okay when the disputes are settled there. What if the otherwise happens? Disharmony and disintegration in broad societies may get greater or escalate. In cases like these, conflicts in the virtual world will change and move to the real world, causing moral, mental, and physical destruction everywhere. The phenomena of selfie, i.e. self-photograph actions, and of dangerous actions, are uploads of personal or private stuff to this public space, with the aim of virality i.e. popularity in the virtual world. These selfie actions are sometimes escapes from stress-out in the real world. Consequences of these are rampant pornography and pornactions in the virtual world. Or, life-taking tragedies happen due to these selfie actions, e.g. deaths of free-falling into deep valley in Italy and England, or of electricity shock on the train-top in Spain, or of one’s own gunshot accident in Mexico. All these are real tragedies, indeed. The virtual world temptation has stolen our humanity, or worse, has taken our lives. Digital humanities which should make us more civilized, may lose its direction, may lose its control, and may get contra-productive. Digital humanities should be used to keep our good conscience and to instill social interactions towards harmony and integration. Digital humanities should be used to maintain interpersonal and social face: mutual or common feeling, self-esteem, respect, and dignity. Digital humanities should be digital politeness, the text interactions of which should be directed by outlines of a particular guideline.

This article is proposing a guideline for text interactions in the virtual world, the aim of which is encouraging the promotion of digital humanities and politeness towards good relationship, social harmony, and integration in the digital world. The guideline is an elaborative work on theories of digital humanities, civil discourse, text interactions, politeness, social media, public space, and social harmony.

2. DIGITAL HUMANITIES, CIVIL DISCOURSE AND TEXT INTERACTIONS

Humanities are academic disciplines that study human culture and use methods that are primarily critical, or speculative, and have significant historical element - as distinguished from the mainly empirical approaches of the natural sciences. The humanities include ancient and modern languages, literature, philosophy, religion, and visual and performing arts such as music and theatre. Humanities can also be described as the study of how people process and document the human experience, for since humans have been able, we have used philosophy, literature, religion, art, music, history, and language to understand and record our world. Knowledge of these records of human experience gives us the opportunity to feel a sense of connection to those who have come before us, as well as to our contemporaries. Digital humanities are then an area of research and teaching at the intersection of computing and the disciplines of humanities. This definition is best described by Kathleen Fitzpatrick with her scholarly statement: "For me it has to do with the work that gets done at the crossroads of digital media and traditional humanistic study. And that happens in two different ways. On the one hand, it’s bringing the tools and techniques of digital media to bear on traditional humanistic questions. But it’s also bringing humanistic modes of inquiry to bear on digital media." As digital humanities can be means of exchanging the human experience in the virtual world, these disciplines cannot be separated from the notion civil discourse and text interactions. Civil discourse is engagement in discourse (conversation) intended to enhance understanding. Or it is the manner in which we persuade those with whom we disagree by keeping the discourse constructive and respectful. Moreover, according to Herrick, these disagreements can be anything to personal preferences to social and political issues. Users of technology should keep civil discourse in mind as they interact with different people and issues online. Another opinion on civil discourse is given by Kenneth J. Gergen. He describes civil discourse as “the language of dispassionate objectivity”, and suggests that it requires respect of the other participants, such as the reader. It neither diminishes the other’s moral worth, nor questions their good judgment. It avoids hostility, direct antagonism, or excessive persuasion. It requires modesty and an appreciation for the other participant’s experiences.

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1 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Humanities
2 What are the humanities?, retrieved from: http://shc.stanford.edu/what-are-the-humanities
3 "On Scholarly Communication and the Digital Humanities: An Interview with Kathleen Fitzpatrick", in The Library with the Lead Pipe, retrieved from: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Digital_humanities
4 Mark Kingwell, retrieved from: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Civil_discourse
Herrick [6] stipulates that civil discourse is related to the so-called netiquette and digital citizenship. Netiquette is etiquette for the web, in which users should be aware of certain codes of conduct when online, so they can make their online presence pleasant for others. Teachers and students, also in his stipulation, should be aware of digital citizenship which is the norms of appropriate and responsible use of technology. There are nine elements to be understood by users in order that they may be able to respect and protect themselves and others, i.e. (1) digital access: full electronic participation in society; (2) digital commerce: electronic buying and selling goods; (3) digital communication: electronic exchange of information; (4) digital literacy: process of teaching and learning about technology and the use of technology; (5) digital etiquette: electronic standards of conduct and procedure; (7) digital rights and responsibilities: those freedom extended to everyone in a digital world; (8) digital health and wellness: physical and psychological well-being in a digital technology world; and (9) digital security (self-protection): electronic precautions to guarantee safety. Besides considering the elements, Herrick [6] also suggests the presence of five qualities to allow civil discourse to develop constructively, i.e. (1) courage, as the willingness to absorb the risk of advocating an unpopular point of view; (2) honesty, as a determined commitment to telling the truth, regardless of the consequences for our position or the reception of our message by an audience; (3) cooperation, as a willingness to work with our audience, or even with an opponent, to arrive at the best understanding possible of the issues before you; (4) respect for persons, as our given attitudes in the most difficult situations with the people we are in disagreement, and as our valuing activities on the capacity of other people to reason; and (5) regards for contexts, as efforts to seek to create and to preserve the locations in which dialogue could take place. All these five qualities are each a necessary condition of resolving disagreements that arise from ignorance and clashing worldviews.

Exchanging the human experience in the virtual world of digital humanities requires text. The term text, the writer uses in context of writing this paper, means or refers to any vehicle of sign, verbal and non-verbal, which can be perceived and then interpreted by others for the meaning being conveyed. Verbal text interactions may be conducted by using pictures, images, actions, songs, dances, or any other possible visible movements in any possible social media. Text interactions are also made possible by combining or putting verbal and non-verbal texts together. Various creativities arise in this sense, which are sometimes out of or beyond moral control or common tolerance.

### 3. CONCERNS ON POLITENESS IN THE DIGITAL WORLD

Politeness has become a big world visited by various linguistic experts to share opinions as well as definitions on its hegemonial term. As have been introduced above, theories on politeness have emerged from the notion ‘face’ in the selves of human-beings, which is elaborated in human interactions, i.e. interpersonal as well as social [3]. Face refers to and is related with the public self-image, self-esteem, feeling, and every association to one’s self. Interpersonal and social interactions should consider this ‘face management’ so that others’ face and one’s own face are not threatened and damaged [4]. Everyone has two faces, one referring to the want for appreciation, and the other to the want for no depreciation or humiliation. Interpersonal and social interactions should be directed to maintenance of others’ face, and, also for sure, one’s own face, and to mitigation of others’ face-threats. Verbal interactions in form of words, as well as non-verbal interactions in form of images, pictures, gestures, actions, or others in the virtual world should maintain this politeness.

Concerns on politeness in the digital world have also been shown by authors throughout the academia. ‘Emily Post’s Manners in a Digital World: 6 lessons for being polite with technology’ is a good example to start here. This Daniel Post Senning’s book [8] offers advice in form of 6 lessons for being polite with technology. The writer is concerned with this, comparing regular social interactions, which are fairly easy to remember; send thank-you notes, choose the second fork, introduce this person to that one first, and the like, to those in the digital world, with the problems: what about the sometimes-murky world of technology and how we know if we are being polite in the digital realm. The six lessons to learn are summarized below:

#### 3.1 Smart Phones

Inconsiderate cell phone use is one of the most frequent causes of rudeness in the digital age. When the phone rings, we should consider where we

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are, and before we make a call in public, we should consider whether we would annoy anyone else or not, and whether to step aside first or not, and we should be careful when and where to use the phone. When we are waiting for an important call, we should be sure that the phone is on, powered up, and gets a signal.

3.2 Video Chatting

Video chatting should not be assumed as a casual interaction. We should dress as if we were meeting up in person, and think about the backdrop our caller will see.

3.3 Paying Attention to Surroundings

It would be better to hang up the phone for a few minutes when we think we are multitasking by talking on the phone, e.g. in the grocery store checkout line. We should pay attention to the one facing us or helping us.

3.4 Facebook Etiquette

We should resist the temptation to do a status update about every minute of our day, avoid overshare day-to-day events, and think twice or even a few times about what we are putting up on the website. We can always delete something we put on the wall, but we cannot take back the impression it made while it was visible. This can be a filter whether to share a piece of news with a select group only or not.

3.5 Nasty Commenting

We should consider what we post on the internet to be public and permanent and should think before we fire off any negative product reviews or a passionate political screed, as our personal information or unique perspective could identify us to those ‘in the know’.

3.6 Tumblr

We should be respectful of other persons’ content when putting things on our own site, reposting images and quotes from other places easily by buttons on websites like Tumblr. Crediting sources is one of the first and most important rules to observe when reblogging content if we need to participate well on these newer systems. It is a great habit to evaluate all kinds of online content and it is the honest thing to do. We should be extra careful to observe all rules for proper attribution if we are using these platforms for a business or professional purpose.

Another concern is put forward by Culpeper [9] in his post-event review of the one-day workshop at Lancaster University on ‘Politeness and Impoliteness in Digital Communication: Corpus-Related Explorations’. Topics covered in the workshop are forms of politeness and impoliteness or aggression, the latter of which are much hotter and are associated with digital communication – flaming, trolling, cyberbullying, and so on. Fifteen people from diverse backgrounds (from law to psychology) gathered together for the intense one-day workshop. The range of digital communication types – email, blogs, texts, tweets, and so on – presents a varied terrain to navigate, including plenty of corpus-related approaches and notions, including collocation, keywords, word sketches, etc. Andrew Kehoe, Ursula Lutzky, and Matt Gee talked on swearwords and swearing, based on their 628-million-word Birmingham Blog Corpus. They showed, among others, how internet swearword / profanity filters would work rather better if they incorporated notions like collocation. Ruth Page came to Twitter. Ruth focused on apologies and revealed the characteristics of corporate tweets, in which the word sorry turns out to be the seventh most characteristic or keyword for the tweets. Caroline Tagg talked about text messages focusing on convention and creativity. Caroline pointed out that heavily abbreviated messages are not in fact the norm and that when abbreviations do occur, they are often driven by communicative needs, e.g. using creativity to foster interest and engagement. Surveying the functions of texts, Caroline established that maintenance of friendship is key and that corpus-related techniques revealed the supporting evidence: politeness formulae were particularly frequent, including the salutation have a good one, the hedge a bit for the invitation, and for further contact: give us a bell.

Still within Culpeper’s review [9], Claire Hardaker and Culpeper presented a smorgasbord of relevant issues. They displayed that the stereotypical emblems of British politeness or words such as please, thank you, sorry, excuse me, can you X tend not to be frequent in any digital media variety, relative to spoken conversation. This perhaps accounts for why at least some sectors of the British public find digital media barren of politeness. The presentation revolved around using corpus techniques to help establish: (1) definitions, (2) strategies and formulae, and (3) evaluations, and showed that corpus-related approaches are not just lists of numbers, but can integrate qualitative analyses. Darren Reed, another contributor, pointed out that sometimes what we were dealing with is neither digital text nor digital image.

\[ Jonathan Culpeper, retrieved from: http://www.cass.lancs.ac.uk/ \]
but a digital act. Retweeting somebody, for example, could be taken as a “tweet act” with politeness implications.

Meanwhile, Landone [10] in the study on ‘Discourse Markers and Politeness in a Digital Forum in Spanish’ showed that some discourse markers in Spanish are frequently used and fulfill various types of dialogical functions (to structure dialogical exchanges, to involve the addressee, to express deontic modality, to express evidentiality, etc.). Some regular patterns that contribute to rapport management are identified. If the patterns are interpreted in terms of mitigation/intensification, focalization/defocalisation, agreement/disagreement, and distance/closeness, they are part of pragmalinguistic manifestations of polite verbal patterns that help to meet the participants’ behavioral expectations and face concerns in online debating.

Another concern on politeness, and hence digital humanities and politeness as well, the writer argues, is made available by Daisy Eyebright’s A Manual of Etiquette with Hints on Politeness and Good Breeding [11]. Eyebright talks about good manners for politeness and put forwards that good manners is not an accomplishment, but rather, a duty. Good manners are being agreeable to men, take away rudeness, and remit to the brute creation all coarseness. When men are crowded in communities, the art of living together is no small art. Good manners, Eyebright [11] stipulates, functions to diminish friction, to promote ease of intercourse, to make every part of man’s life contribute to the welfare and satisfaction of those around him, to keep down offensive pride, to banish the raspering of selfishness from the intercourse of men, and to move among men inspired by various and conflictive motives, and yet not have collisions. This set of opinions on good manners is something worth considering by societies for digital humanities and politeness. Eyebright makes a good point when saying that ‘not only is the violation of good manners inexcusable on ordinary grounds, but it is sinful’, and ‘every man is bound to observe the laws of politeness. It is the expression of good-will and kindness. It promotes both beauty in the man who possesses it, and happiness in those who are about him. It is a religious duty, and should be part of religious training [11:3]. Eyebright closes her book with a piece of good advice to everybody, a piece which is, the writer consents, worth learning as a great maxim, that is ‘If wisdom’s ways you wisely seek. Five things observe with care: - Of whom you speak - to whom you speak, And how – and when – and where’ [11:134].

Gabriela Missikova [12] in her study on politeness in academic digital discourse shows that academic etiquette and diplomatic language are not always maintained and personal attacks and emotive statements occur. Participants tend to express their preferences, professional standpoints, ideas and personal attitudes frankly and openly, unlike scholarly discussions at conferences. The participants may or may not use politeness strategies to mitigate face-threatening responses, expressing criticism and disagreement. This is another concern.

Starvers [13] also shows his concern on communication through the internet after he looked through an old hard drive of his BSc dissertation (2007). He talked about politeness and status in short digital communications with his main research question: are people being as polite as they think they are? What he found was interesting and kind of complicated: outside observers found it difficult to tell whether a message was intended for a recipient who was higher-status or on the same level of social power. In other words, the Internet is a sort of social leveler. Or at least it is in terms of people sending messages, who do not even think that they are using the same mode of communication they would for a friend when addressing someone with more power.

The writer has his own concern on digital humanities and politeness. Apart from his short popular academic article in a national daily Indonesian newspaper Suara Merdeka [14], i.e. Digital Humanities and Politeness, the writer has put forward his ideas in an international journal, i.e. Towards a Character Language: A Probability in Language Use [15], or, previously in the proceedings of an international conference, i.e. Politeness and Camaraderie: How Types of Form Matter in Indonesian Context [16]. Within Indonesian context, Jumanto [15,16] stipulates that language use is a matter of probabilities, and that in a diglossic situation in some societies, including that in Indonesia, we should distinguish between politeness and camaraderie. The variant of language directed to politeness is called distant language, while that directed to camaraderie is called close language. Distant language is formal, indirect, and non-literal, and close language is informal, direct, and literal. As referring to formal, indirect, and non-literal utterances, distant language is usually carefully elaborated and uses safe and common topics. Meanwhile, as referring to informal, direct, and literal utterances, close language usually involves contractions, slangs, reverse-ups, changes, taboos, swearing, f-words, and uses any topics, personal and private. Distant language is spoken to hearers with power factor, while close language is spoken to hearers with solidarity factor. Ignorance or incompetence of this may cause impoliteness, i.e. rude situations or awkward situations in interpersonal
interactions. This tendency elaborates pragmatic viewpoints from Goffman’s positive and negative face [3], Brown and Levinson’s positive and negative politeness strategies [4], Renkema’s solidarity and respect politeness [17], Jumanto’s friendship and politeness [18,19], and types of hearer in the grand theory of Brown and Gilman [20]. These ideas are of politeness concern. This pragmatic theory, the writer argues, is something worth applying in encouraging the promotion of digital humanities and politeness in the virtual world.

4. SOCIAL MEDIA AND PUBLIC SPACE

As have been introduced above, the virtual world with its various paths and roads under the guide of the sophisticated search engines, two of the greatest of which are Yahoo and Google, has been elaborated in many kinds of social media. Social media is defined as "a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content." [21]. The virtual world should be regarded well as public space of broad and various unlimited societies. Popular social media such as: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube as means of social interactions in the virtual world to create, share, and exchange ideas, pictures, and videos of communities in the internet should always be regarded as public spaces which are open and accessible to everyone or which belong to everyone in this world.

A public space is a social space that is generally open and accessible to people. The term ‘public space’ is also often misconstrued to mean other things such as 'gathering place', which is an element of the larger concept of social space. A public space may be a gathering spot or part of a neighborhood, downtown, special district, waterfront or other area within the public realm that helps promote social interaction and a sense of community. The public space in the virtual world, is, therefore, a common passage, which functions as a room for strangers to interact and transact, which cannot be reduced or converted into an informal gathering room in the corner of our home for gossiping, joking, and making fun of others within closed people groups, with any possible topics. Topics in the public space should be maintained polite to instill something common, neutral, and safe, not touchy, hence not bullying particular others. Here, we are talking about politeness, which can also be defined as the practical application of good manners or etiquette, which, the writer consents, is applicable to social media as public spaces.

5. GOOD RELATIONSHIP TO SOCIAL HARMONY

Relationship is the way in which two or more people, groups, countries, etc., talk to, behave toward, and deal with each other. In sociology, there are four types or relationship, i.e. social relationship, interpersonal relationship, intimate relationship, and ethical relationship. Harmony is a pleasing combination or arrangement of different things. In this sense, a good relationship of two or more people, groups, countries, etc., may lead to social harmony, i.e. a pleasing combination of different people talking to, behaving toward, and dealing with one another. In another sense, social harmony is peaceful interaction of human dynamics among members of a social group or groups.

How we can direct text interactions of digital humanities into social harmony is the problem we are trying to solve in the next accounts. Outlines of digital humanities and politeness are given and standpoints as the bases for the proposed guideline are highlighted, before the guideline for text interactions is made and proposed to encourage social harmony in the virtual world.

6. A PROPOSED GUIDELINE FOR SOCIAL HARMONY IN THE VIRTUAL WORLD

6.1 Outlines of Digital Humanities and Politeness

Considering theories of digital humanities, civil discourse, text interactions, politeness, social media, public space, and social harmony, the writer would like to present outlines of digital humanities and politeness before making and proposing a guideline for text interaction for social harmony in the virtual world as follows:

-- Characteristics and Guidelines of Great Public Spaces, retrieved from: https://www.planning.org/greatplaces/spaces/characteristics.htm
-- Politeness, retrieved from: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Politeness
-- Relationship, retrieved from: http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/relationship
-- Ibid.
-- Harmony, retrieved from: http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/harmony
-- Social Harmony, Clayton J., best answer, retrieved from: https://answers.yahoo.com/question/index?qid=20080919100820AAd70yN

1xviii Characteristics and Guidelines of Great Public Spaces, retrieved from: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Public_space
19xviii Public Space, retrieved from: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Public_space
1xviii Ibid.

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(1) Digital humanities can be means of exchanging the human experience, these disciplines cannot be separated from the civil discourse and its interactions in form of verbal and non-verbal texts;

(2) Concerns on politeness in the digital world are of various forms neither showing distancing strategies nor closeness strategies, as power and solidarity factors are not very reckoned; however, politeness and camaraderie are there among the theories so that this dichotomy provides choices for text interactions for social harmony in the digital world.

(3) The digital world in form of social media is a public space or a public place for common passage for strangers, i.e. netizens, to interact and transact, which cannot be reduced or converted into an informal gathering room for gossiping, joking, and making fun of or, worse, bullying others;

(4) Social harmony is peaceful interaction of human dynamics among different people, i.e. netizens, talking to, behaving toward, and dealing with each other or one another in social media.

6.2 Standpoints as the Bases for the Proposed Guideline

Based on the outlines of digital humanities and politeness above, the writer would also like to highlight two standpoints as the bases of the later-proposed guideline, as follows:

(1) That text interactions – verbal and non-verbal – of various disciplines of humanities in the digital world are the civil discourse so that politeness or network etiquette is a better choice than camaraderie or friendship;

(2) That various social media in the digital world are public spaces or public places for strangers, i.e. netizens, to meet, interact, and transact in peaceful interaction for good relationship towards social harmony.

6.3 A Proposed Guideline for Text Interactions in the Virtual World

Based on the standpoints above, the writer would like to propose a guideline for text interactions in the virtual world below. This guideline promotes digital politeness, and, therefore, it is directed to encourage good relationship for social harmony among netizens in the digital world. The proposed guideline is as follows:

6.3.1 The guideline

(1) Entering the social media in the digital world, you are coming and being exposed to the public spaces where people are watching you and are ready to respond verbally and non-verbally to your words and images that you are posting:

(1.1) Consider your surroundings;

(1.2) Consider your physical and mental performance;

(1.3) Consider the words and images you will have left unforgotten and, probably, unforgiven.

(2) Considering your surroundings:

(2.1) Mind where you are;

(2.2) Mind whom you are with;

(2.3) Mind what properties you are in or around.

(3) Considering your physical and mental performance:

(3.1) Consider in what and how you get dressed;

(3.2) Consider how you will look or sound;

(3.3) Consider why and what for you will do what you are going to do;

(3.4) Consider what probable responses you expect and how you will handle them.

(4) Considering the words and images you will have left unforgotten and, probably, unforgiven:

(4.1) Use the words of distant language: formal (e.g. I am sorry, instead of sorry); indirect (e.g. I think it is better like this, instead of Sorry, I don’t agree with you); non-literal (e.g. That is a gasbag, instead of That is talking nonsense).

(4.2) Use the words of common, safe, not personal and private topics (family, work, school, weather, sports, arts, etc.); Avoid the words of touchy and dangerous topics (politics, religion, age, race, marital status, etc.).

(4.3) Do not use dirty images and perform dirty actions (of profanity, pornography, sadism, or brutality);

(4.4) Do not post any signs or upload any videos and films of you alone, of others, and of you with others, which are suggesting dirty minds, dirty topics, and dangerous topics.
7. CONCLUSION

Upon the completion of the proposed guideline for text interactions in the virtual world above, a few points to bring this article to an end are given below:

(1) Digital humanities and politeness through this guideline will probably become a source of ideas on how netizens should interact and transact their verbal and non-verbal texts for a good relationship towards social harmony in the digital world. The civil discourse the netizens may experience will be maintained safe and convenient, as they respect others through this guideline;

(2) This guideline probably also promotes the common efforts to maintain the public spaces in the digital world clean and not dirty, and every netizen feels convenient. This way, the social harmony in the digital world is also maintained. As the social harmony is preserved, no friction and conflict among netizens happen so that their respective lives in the real world are also safe and secure to live;

(3) This guideline is still far from being perfect, and, therefore, it is open for any criticism and possible repair for its ideal state. However, this guideline is for now, the writer expects, enough for guiding those who are engaged in text interactions in the virtual world. Politeness is in the air, and a good relationship among netizens towards social harmony in the digital world makes the virtual world comfortable to share and to live in.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Author has declared that no competing interests exist.

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