Cross-Cultural Differences in Empathy, Listening-Styles, Mindfulness and Intersubjectivity in American and Polish Counseling Discourses

Beata M. Latawiec[1], Jody Fiorini[1], Małgorzata Sekułowicz[2]

[1] Department of Intervention Services & Leadership in Education, Wichita State University, US

[2] Department of Social Sciences, Wrocław University of Health and Sport Sciences, Poland

ABSTRACT:

Empathy and mindfulness, that require an attentive attitude towards the speakers, plus de-automated listening skills and collaborative discourses of American and Polish counselors-in-training, are analyzed for developmental patterns and cross-cultural comparisons. The results of the mixed methods analysis reveal that American counselors-in-training outrank their Polish counterparts in both affective and cognitive empathy, suggesting their greater metacognitive and empathic awareness. By contrast, Polish counselors-in-training show greater focus on people and content during listening (rather than time, for example), which suggests their *aural mindfulness.* Developmental (pre-/post comparisons) and cross-cultural patterns identified in the (meta)discursive analysis of 124 audio-recorded counseling sessions suggest differential conceptualizations of mindfulness and empathy as expressed in professional discourse by the American and Polish counseling-students. While the American counseling discourse features mostly implicit stance, attenuated and sentiment-rich counseling moves, the Polish discourse showcases epistemic/ evidence-rich reasoning and intersubjective, camaraderie-building 'social-lubrication.' Cross-cultural differences reflect *different conceptualizations of client needs.* Implications are offered for active-listening modification (for the US counseling-students) and multi-dimensionality of empathic-awareness and expression (for the Polish students) in order to enhance mindfulness in counseling-techniques, pedagogy, and/ or therapy-sessions.

Keywords: Mindful Metadiscourse, Empathy and Affiliative Intersubjectivity, Counseling Education, Therapeutic and Listening Skills, Cross-Cultural Counseling-Corpus Analysis

INTRODUCTION

In counseling discourses, empathy and mindful intersubjectivity are crucial for showing understanding and affiliation towards the speakers, their concerns, and uniquely owned experiences in their "trouble-talk" (Kuroshima & Iwata, 2016). Conversation participants use various linguistic devices to "empathize", "sympathize", or "affiliate" with another person's displayed stance (Goodwin, 2000; Heritage & Lindstrom, 2012).

Since Halliday's (1994) model of language differentiates between *propositional* (discourse proper/ideational content), *interpersonal,* and *textual* functions, the latter two have been viewed as metadiscourse. Metadiscourse may essentially be viewed as text-reflexivity that transcends the subject matter while organizing and commenting on the text or talk (Mauranen, 1993). Research into metadiscourse documents numerous socio-cognitive functions and benefits, e.g., enhanced social performance or attitude (Crismore, 1985), greater metacognitive awareness, critical thinking, and audience sensitivity (Hyland, 2000), and rhetorical force of arguments and interpersonal engagement (Latawiec et al., 2016), among others. The metadiscourse perspective seems especially well-suited to interpersonal, collaborative, and professional interactions in counseling, as it is considered "a forum for interaction" in text or talk (Hyland, 2005; 2017).

Mindfulness is considered conducive to creating non-judgmental circumstances for counsel or therapy. Recently, in clinical psychological and therapeutic practices, mindfulness, de-automatization, self-control, meditation, and contemplative techniques have surged in popularity (Kang et al., 2013; Melbourne Academic Mindfulness Interest Group, 2006). However, few studies analyze *how* "mindfulness/empathy in the language" is created and *how* it affects professional counseling group-practices. Meritorious exceptions include Finland, Japan, or the USA. For instance, US counselors-in-training, thanks to metacognitively-rich instruction with dyadic practice-series, developed affiliative disclosures conducive to the client's "opening-up," while reduced agentive-prompting, emphatic intonation and verbosity, which enhanced quantity and quality of client-talk (Latawiec & Fiorini, 2021).

With counseling psychology still developing in Central Europe, there is a need to explore and garner evidence of Polish counseling-instruction and support for empathy and mindfulness development, especially in comparison to the US, a motherland of counseling practice and counseling psychology. To address the literature gap, the study explores empathy, listening, and personality types as well as metadiscourse (in-interaction-with-discourse-proper) of counseling-students in professional interactions with clients while drawing from Hallidayan systemic-functionalism (Halliday, 1994), sociolinguistics (Schiffrin, 1990), and Vande Kopple's (1997) metadiscourse model.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS AND ASSUMPTIONS

An empathic stance toward the clients who need and seek help from counselors is an indispensable condition for their opening-up (Jefferson, 1981). Quite applicable seems Heritage's (2011) conceptualization of empathy, where an empathic response to personal intensive talk is displayed to "affirm the nature of the experience, its meaning, and to affiliate with the stance of the experiencer towards them" (p. 160).

Mindful affiliation expressions, as correlates of empathy (Latawiec & Fiorini, 2021), are sought in counseling-talk, where mindfulness connotes *attentive de-automated attitude or mindset*. Mindfulness requires an attentive attitude towards the speakers and active 'de-automated' listening skills (cf. Johnston et al., 2000). In the conversational-analytic views, affiliation or affinity occurs in "claiming access to and understanding of the teller's stance […] to endorse the teller's perspective" (Stivers, 2008, p. 32). Sharing of the same knowledge-basis and solidarity or "camaraderie"-signaling to be better-received and/or understood by recipients, is posited as intersubjectivity (Overstreet and Yule, 1997; Schiffrin, 1990).

Mindful metadiscourse is hereby operationally posited, in line with Latawiec et al. (2022), to reflect counselors' engagement (cognitive and emotional) with their clients, their understanding and attention to the other person's experience, with emphasis on affiliation, relationship or alliance as well as endorsement of the clients' needs and/or stances. In counseling practice, mindful skills have been emphasized in motivational interviewing. Motivational interviewing aims at developing non-judgmental understandings of the client's particular situation, for instance by such micro-skills as reflection and effortful attention and refinement of those skills following the ongoing feedback (e.g., Oberlink et al., 2017; Xiao et al., 2015).

It is also noteworthy that mindful forms of verbal solidarity and intersubjectivity have been documented to be effective in therapeutic group-practices and anonymous alcoholics (Arminen, 2004). As propounded in communication studies, the intersubjective "common-ground"

establishment in epistemic terms (Clark, 1996) as well as *interactional alignment* (Pickering & Garrod, 2006) of verbal uses by conversation participants (e.g., imitating or mirroring linguistic forms) are central to the "conversational achievement". By means of communicating similar experiences or background knowledge, the speakers (e.g., counselors) signal their intersubjective affiliation with the interlocutor (cg. Overstreet & Yule, 1997) and, more specifically, with the stance of the experiencer (Heritage, 2011). In Heritage's terms, through such expressions, counselors can create moments of the sought for "empathic communion."

In counseling techniques instruction, ever since "person-centered therapy" model (Rogers, 1961), the premium has been placed on training in relevant discourse strategies and features to promote a psychologically healthy dynamic in counselor-client interactions. Person-centered discursive techniques highlight 1. unconditional positive regard of the client, 2. empathy, and 3. congruence or otherwise being genuine and authentic in the counselor-client relationship. All of them hinge on cognitive and emotional engagement with the client and so undergird our conceptualization of mindful/ empathizing and affiliative metadiscourse uses (contingent on discourse proper) that are meant to be supportive of the client's therapeutic needs and potential client change or transformation (e.g., Ruusuvuori, 2005; Sawyer et al., 2013; Strong et al., 2011).

Empathy as a concept has evolved from unidimensional to multidimensional constructs. Metanalysis of empathy research by Stepien and Baernstein (2006) showed that nearly half of the studies approached empathy from a behavioral perspective as a type of "communication skill", while the remaining -as a composite of both cognitive and affective/ emotive components. More recently, Bayne and Hays (2017) defined *cognitive* and *behavioral empathy* as the understanding of the client from an objective perspective and as verbal and nonverbal responses that convey understanding. Reniers et al. (2011) posited cognitive and affective empathy as composite constructs. They defined *cognitive empathy* as "the ability to construct a working model of the emotional states of others" (p. 85) and *affective empathy* as "the ability to be sensitive to and vicariously experience the feelings of others" (p. 85). Importantly, Reniers et al. (2011) two-dimensional conceptualization and assessment tool have been selected for empathy internalization measure in our study, as discussed in the Methods.

For all the foregoing consideration, the interface of communication and listening skills as well as persono-

logical factors in counseling literature motivate the comprehensive study design -to account for the exploration of intersecting variables in the US and Polish counseling techniques. Specifically, this mixed-methods quasi-experimental study aims to identify 1. cross-cultural differences in empathy, listening-style, personality-types, and socio-cultural characteristics of counseling-trainees, 2. developmental trajectories over a semester-long metacognitively-rich instruction with dyadic practice-series in American and Polish (meta) discourses, 3. cross-corpora differences in counseling discourses, and 4. effective language-uses that foster mindfulness/empathy for inclusion in pedagogy and therapeutic practice.

METHOD

Participants

Sixty-two counselor-students (28 American, 34 Polish) in masters-level counseling techniques (US) and BA-level psychopathology with counseling (PL) as well as 2 seasoned counselor-trainers participated in the semester-long instruction/ study, at a heartland US and south-western Polish university respectively.

Procedures

Three procedural phases: pretest, intervention/instruction with dyadic-sessions, and posttest. At the pretest, all consented counseling-students filled empathy (Reniers et al., 2011) and demographic surveys, Listening Styles Profile-16/LSP-16 (Watson et al.,1995) and Meyers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI*). Then, students practiced counseling-techniques in dyads with peers or authentic clients. All participating counselors and clients were IRB-consented. The counseling sessions were audio-recorded and later transcribed verbatim. Supervising faculty led counselors-in-training through mindfulness activities prior to practice sessions and throughout a semester-long instruction. Likewise, empathy was stressed throughout training. Counselors-in-training were encouraged to examine difficult issues they might encounter in sessions, such as a client with racist or misogynistic views or a client who expressed anger toward the trainee. Students were then encouraged to think about where these views may have originated for the client and how those views or behaviors may be a form of defense or protection. Such exercises assist counselor trainees in separating clients from their thoughts or behaviors and enhance empathetic responses. Student practices that contained evaluative or judgmental statements, including praise, were corrected. Also, questions like "Why did you do that?", which led to

I. TEXTUAL METADISCOURSE (*shows how textual elements relate to one another*)
1. Text Connectives
   - Announcements of material
   - Reminders of material; incl. Affiliation/Sympathy
   - Sequencers
   - Topicalizers
   - Logical~Temporal Connectives
     - Additives, incl. Affiliative Additives
     - Contrastives
     - Causatives
     - If- conditionals
2. Code glosses
   - Definitions
   - Explanations, incl. Affiliative Paraphrases

II. INTERPERSONAL METADISCOURSE (*conveys essentially interpersonal meanings*)
3. Illocution Markers:
   - Speech Acts; incl. Affiliative Sp. Acts
   - Boosters
   - Mitigators
4. Epistemology Markers
   Modality Markers:
   - Hedges:
     - Morphological
     - Modal verbs
     - Adverbs
     - Lexical verbs
     - Other cautious elements
   - Emphatics:
     - Forefronting
     - Repetition
     - Intonation
   Evidentials:
     - Personal belief
     - Induction
     - Sensory experience
     - From someone else
     - If/since …, then
     - Deduction: Others in scenario (OinS); incl. Affiliative OinS, generalizations
     - Deduction: Myself in scenario; incl. Affiliative speaker's own stories
     - Aposteriori/ Retroduction intended
5. Attitude Markers
     - Explicit Attitude Markers
     - Implicit Attitude Markers
     - Deontic Modality Markers (forbidden, obligatory, permissible, possible, non-obligatory)
6. Perlocutionary Commentary:
   - Commentary Vocative/Directive
   - Commentary Interrogative:
       a. Why/How/Could you- Interrogatives (open questions)
       b. YES/NO Interrogatives (closed questions)
       c. Affiliative Check-out (confirmation/disconfirmation seeking ~ "Am I right?")
7. Metalanguage
8. Fillers/Placeholders, incl. Affiliative Fillers (~Phatic signals)
9. Pauses/Silences (long, short)
10. Sentiments (positive, very positive, negative, very negative)

Ellipses (right side): Text/Talk- Organizing Bracket; Intersubjectivity- Pragmatic Marking (e.g. "Guys", "We"- referents, slang, general extenders); Text/Talk Evaluating Bracket
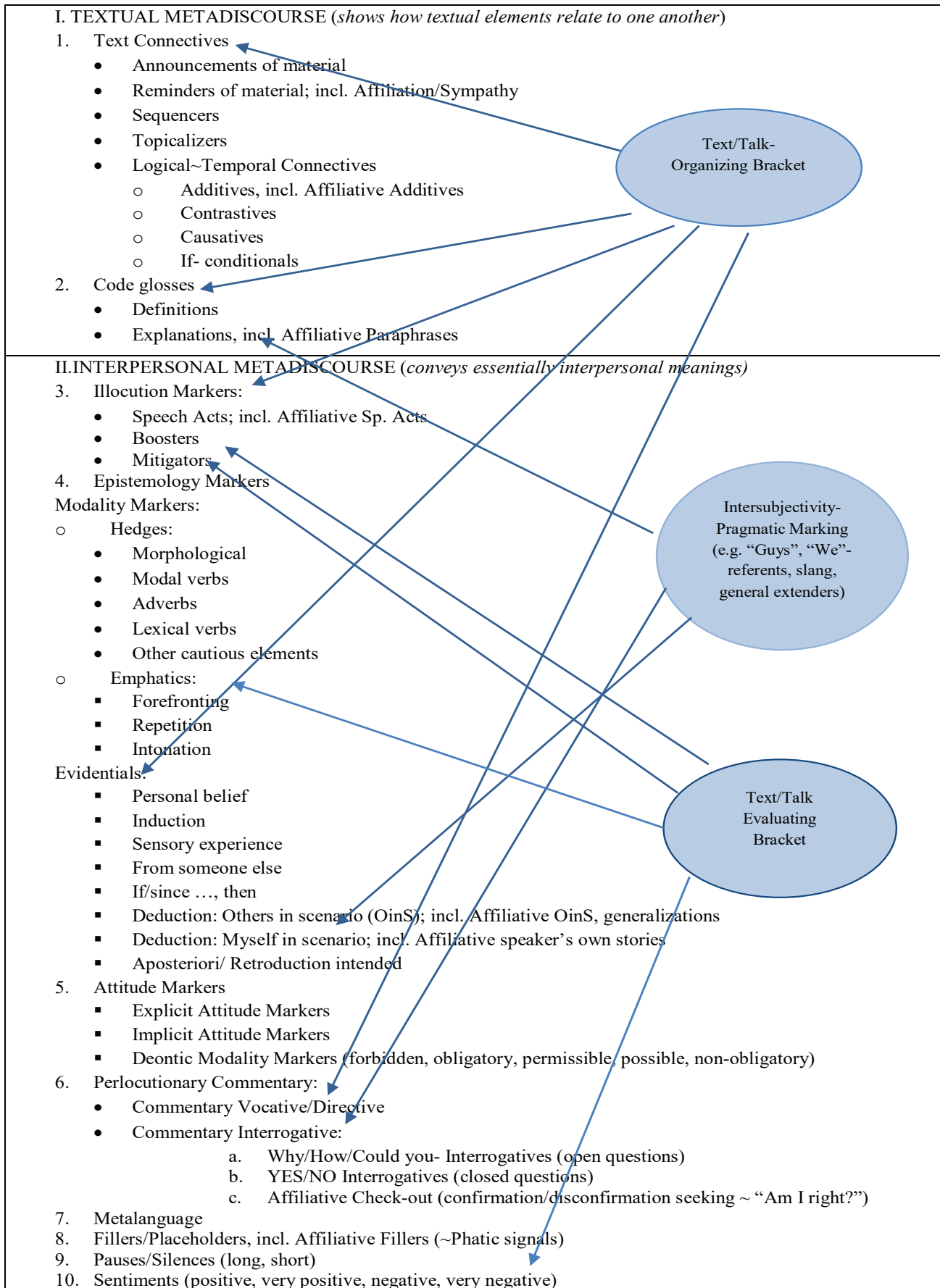
Fig. 1. Taxonomy of Counseling Metadiscourse in Interplay w/ Discourse Proper, based on Latawiec et al. (2016)

client defensiveness, were corrected. Formative feedback was provided throughout counseling practice.

Materials

Questionnaire of Cognitive and Affective Empathy/ QCAE **(**Reniers et al., 2011), with 31 Likert-scale items, subsumes Affective-empathy subscales of *emotion contagion* (automatic mirroring of others' feelings), *proximal responsivity* (responsiveness when witnessing in a close context) and *peripheral responsivity* (responsiveness in a detached context), while Cognitive-empathy - *perspective taking* (intuitive putting oneself in others' shoes) and *online simulation* (effortful putting oneself in another person's position by imagining their feelings).

Listening Styles Profile-16/LSP-16 (Watson et al., 1995) taps 4 listener-styles*: people-oriented* – concerned with others and their feelings, *action-oriented* – need clear, organized presentations, *content-oriented* – need facts and details for later decisions, *time-oriented* – focus on how little time they have.

Myers-Briggs Type Indicator/MBTI questionnaire (94-item) yields 4 bi-polar dimensions of personal preferences: *Extraversion-Introversion, Sensing-Intuition, Thinking-Feeling,* and *Judging-Perceiving*. 16 possible combinations of the MBTI preferences lead to 16 different patterns of personality.

Coding scheme: 124 Audio-recorded dyadic sessions were transcribed and coded with the sophisticated qualitative software *Nvivo 12* (QSR). The *coding scheme* used the taxonomy of linguistic functions, based on Latawiec et al. (2016) as well as Latawiec and Fiorini (2021), expanded to accommodate counseling, affiliative language, and paralanguage, and also its Polish translation.

The scheme features 3 broad metafunctions (Intersubjective, Talk-Evaluating, Talk-Organizing) and 40+ elementary categories (illustrated and elucidated in Figure 1 & Table 1, respectively). The taxonomy draws from the systemic-functional language model (Halliday, 1994), Schiffrin's sociolinguistic model (1980; 1990, reflected in Talk-Organizing and Talk-Evaluative metafunctions), and Vande Kopple's (1997) model of metadiscourse (reflected in 1-6 major categories). 20% of transcripts were blind coded by two independent multi-lingual researchers, yielding 88% inter-rater reliability across the American and Polish corpora. See Figure 1.

Major metadiscourse categories included: 1. *Text connectives* (showing relationships between textual parts); 2. *Code glosses* (defining or explaining words to clarify intended meanings); 3. *Illocution markers* (making explicit what speech acts are being performed);

4. *Epistemological markers* of two types: a) *Modality markers* (signaling degree of commitment), and b) *Evidentials* (showing the basis for referential propositions); 5. *Attitude markers* (revealing the author's attitude/emotional orientation towards propositions); 6. *Perlocutionary Commentary* (addressing recipients directly via directives/imperatives or questions drawing them into a type of dialogue/conversation); 7. *Fillers/placeholders* ("minimal responses"/back-channeling, helping to hold place/phatically maintain communication-channel open; uhm, aha); 8. *Metalanguage* - metalinguistic designations referring to language as a *code* or *use/ communication/ 'parole'* (e.g., issue, question, discussion); and 9. *Pauses.* Lastly, 10. *Sentiments* are grafted upon the metadiscourse taxonomy as 'hybrid-forms' (expressing positive/negative thoughts or feelings), sometimes overlapping with propositions (struggle, battled) or metadiscursive attitudes (awesome, great).

The coding process started with open coding on a batch of transcripts to identify affiliative and mindful uses, and then the codes were refined and more structured (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Saldaña, 2013). The counts for metadiscourse categories were tallied for each counseling-student and an overall word-use per session was recorded for a code to words ratio - to normalize data, since the more a person speaks, the higher the chances of a discursive category.

RESULTS

Approximately 30,000 metadiscursive uses were identified in the qualitative analysis of 124 counseling-sessions (20-50 minute-long). Overall, 30+ hours of audio-recording were analyzed – first qualitatively and then quantitatively. See Table 1 for illustrative US excerpts.

Firstly, analyses of socio-cultural characteristics, empathy, personality and listening types of counseling-trainees (*N*=62) revealed that Polish counseling-students were significantly younger (*M*=21.7) than American (*M*=34.5) and had less teaching-experience. Gender grouping was similarly disproportionate - Polish 26 females and 7 males (+1 other), while American - 25 females and 3 males, as utilized in linguistics. Comparative analysis *by personality-types* did not reveal significant differences in MBTI dimensions (chi-square). Note, the sample size was too small for the multiple bipolar-dimensions.

Cross-cultural analysis of empathy (Table 2) shows a higher ranking of US counseling-students in all subscales of the Cognitive and Affective Empathy Questionnaire (Reniers et al. 2011).

The analysis of listening-styles determined different listening-orientations of US and Polish counselors-in-train-

Table 1. **Illustration of Metadiscourse Categories (incl. Sentiments) with Excerpts from Qualitative Analysis of American Audio-Recordings**

Taxonomy Label	Excerpts (incl. Affiliative/Mindful uses) from Counseling Transcripts
Affiliative Reminders	**I remember** being that age and feeling that way, too. **I remember** feeling that same way the first time I left home.
Affiliative Additives	That's a lot of pressure being put on you all at once to have, you know, to have that stress at work **and then,** then you go home, and there's more stress. I remember being that age and feeling that way, **too.** I'm looking for it **as well.**
Negative Sentiment	So, you're feeling **angry, resentment...**
Evidentials Total	**If she was still wanting to be in the relationship, she would've done something**, uhm, to try and salvage (If-then). It's almost like sometimes **parents make you feel like** you owe them. (*Affiliative* Others in Scenario) **That would be difficult for me** as well. (*Affiliative* Myself in Scenario) It came like that way that you couldn't understand that **grown-ups would do such a thing that way.** (*Affiliative* Others in Scenario)
Sensory Experience	So it **sounds like** you're feeling a lot of guilt... So... definitely the word overwhelmed I could **sense**, um, you're just **feeling** very overwhelmed There you were, **hearing** what they had to say, so that's--that was--that's great.
Intonation Emphatics	That **[EMP] does [EMP]** sound like a **[EMP] very [EMP]** frustrating situation. **There you go!** **[LAUGHINGLY]** I can tell you're **really tense!**
Other Cautious Elements	**The--the** doubts and **the--the** self-talk in your head that you're not good enough...all **from that one... from that one** incident. You're just feeling very overwhelmed and **a little** stressed Um, you also said thin... like it's going really thin so... **to me,** that like just seems like that you're exhausted.
Commentary Total (Directive + Interrogative)	Keep celebrating those little victories**!** So, [Client Name], tell me what's been on your mind lately. Let's get down to nuts and bolts**!**
Commentary Interrogative Total	[Client Name], is it rational to be this worked up about this one issue**?** (Yes/No) Who hurt you**?** You wouldn't judge him and critique him like that. **Is that right?** (Check-out)
Announcement of Material	We're going to **start looking at this** then I'd like **to inform you that** um, for this session, I will be recording
Other Cautious Elements	**The--the** doubts and **the--the** self-talk in your head that you're not good enough...all **from that one...from that one** incident. You're just feeling very overwhelmed and **a little** stressed Um, you also said thin...like it's going really thin so... **to me** that like just seems like that you're exhausted.
Mitigators	I **just** wanna go over a couple of things, before we start.
Logic-Temp. Connect Misc.	What's on your mind **today**? So, you've come **to that point.** What brought you there? So **right now,** you're living in a two bedroom. You also said that you have the part-time job, **which** you seem very happy about You seem happy, but **then** it seems like **when** it comes to everything else, it's very stressful.

Table 2. **Empathy Scale Comparative Results for American and Polish Counselors-in-Training**

	GROUP	N	Mean	SD	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Perspective taking	Polish	34	19,15	3.70	-11.803	60	0.000
	American	28	31.14	4.30			
Online simulation	Polish	34	18.50	4.16	-8.159	60	0.000
	American	28	27.93	4.94			
Cognitive empathy	Polish	34	37.65	6.27	-11.929	60	0.000
	American	28	59.07	7.87			
Emotion contagion	Polish	34	8.26	1.99	-3.264	60	0.002
	American	28	10.18	2.63			
Proximal responsivity	Polish	34	7.21	2.16	-9.316	60	0.000
	American	28	12.21	2.04			
Peripheral responsivity	Polish	34	8.29	2.04	-4.788	60	0.000
	American	28	11.04	2.47			
Affective empathy	Polish	34	23.76	5.02	-7.322	60	0.000
	American	28	33.43	5.36			
Total empathy	Polish	34	61.41	9.36	-12.725	60	0.000
	American	28	92.50	9.83			

Note. Independent samples t-test, ($p < .05$).

Table 3. **Listening-Styles Differences between American and Polish Counselors-in-Training (p <.05)**

	GROUP	N	Mean	SD	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
PEOPLE	Polish	34	17.15	1.69	**2.227**	**60**	**0.030**
	US	28	16.25	1.43			
ACTION	Polish	34	11.62	2.61	1.756	60	0.084
	US	28	10.57	1.95			
TIME	Polish	34	13.21	1.77	-0.318	60	0.751
	US	28	13.36	1.97			
CONTENT	Polish	34	11.32	2.46	**2.348**	**60**	**0.022**
	US	28	9.89	2.30			

ing. Higher scores of Polish counselors-in-training (Table 3) were noted for *People* and *Content-orientation*, namely People $t(60) = 2.227$, $p = .030$ and Content $t(60) = 2.348$, $p = .022$.

American counselors-in-training were also more verbose, i.e., used more words, at both pre and post-test points.

Secondly, to determine discourse development over semester-long instructions pre/post-test comparisons of metadiscourse *within language-groups* was run (depen-

dent samples t-test). Post-test, US metadiscourse shows 9 decreases and 9 increases (see Table 4).

American-counselors reduced Commentary (Total, Interrogative, Check-Out/ Yes-No Questions), Emphatic-Intonation, Non-canonical-"So" and Myself-in-Scenario. Instead, they developed attitudinal-expressions (Attitude Markers Total and I-WOULD-oriented), Affiliative Paraphrases, Others-in-Scenario, Fillers, Global Connectives (incl. Sequencers), Boosters (of speech acts), and Paralanguage.

Table 4. **American Counselors-in-Training Metadiscourse w/ Sentiments 'Developmental Trajectory' Patterns - Comparison at Pre and Post-Test Points**

	PRE		POST				
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	t	df	Sig.(2-tailed)
Attitude Markers Total	3.23	1.27	3.95	0.99	-3.223	25	0.004
Attitude Markers I WOULD	0.16	0.12	0.32	0.21	-3.359	25	0.003
Non-Obligatory	0.04	0.08	0.00	0.00	2.577	25	0.016
Affiliative Paraphrases	0.10	0.15	0.21	0.25	-2.720	25	0.012
Commentary Total	1.52	0.87	1.10	0.67	2.151	25	0.041
Commentary Interrog. CHECK-OUT	0.34	0.34	0.19	0.20	2.202	25	0.037
Yes-No Closed Questions	0.82	0.65	0.43	0.36	2.734	25	0.011
Myself in Scenarios	0.05	0.08	0.00	0.00	3.434	25	0.002
Affiliative Others in Scenarios	0.32	0.33	0.53	0.42	-2.660	25	0.013
Intonation-Emphatics	0.18	0.30	0.07	0.11	2.268	25	0.032
Boosters	0.01	0.04	0.06	0.09	-2.288	25	0.031
Additives Affiliative	0.11	0.13	0.04	0.07	2.740	25	0.011
Non-Canonical So	0.53	0.30	0.34	0.33	2.556	25	0.017
Sequencers	0.21	0.21	0.45	0.31	-3.191	25	0.004
Attitude Ms w/o Deontic Total	1.99	0.98	2.59	0.79	-3.018	25	0.006
Commentary Interrogative Total	1.24	0.84	0.76	0.50	2.654	25	0.014
Global Connectives Total	0.91	0.54	1.33	0.55	-2.895	25	0.008
Fillers Affiliative	2.79	2.86	4.53	3.65	-3.256	25	0.003

Note. N=26, due to incomplete data, (p < .05); codes to words ratios.

Table 5. **Polish Counselors-in-Training Metadiscourse w/ Sentiments Developmental Trajectory Patterns - Comparison at Pre and Post-Test Points**

	PRE test		POST test				
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
If-then	0.22	0.33	0.61	0.61	-2.452	17	0.025
Induction	1.14	1.07	0.54	0.55	2.110	17	0.050
Personal Belief	1.22	1.06	0.61	0.77	2.237	17	0.039

Note. p < .05; codes to a word-use ratio.

For a change, as shown in Table 5, Polish counselor-trainees' patterns reveal only 3 metadiscursive changes. Namely, If-then inferencing structures increased, while Induction (Evidential inductive-reasoning) and Personal Belief (epistemic knowledge-source) significantly decreased.

Thirdly, to identify cross-cultural differences between American and Polish counseling-discourses, *between-group* analysis of metadiscourse with sentiments was run (post-test data). The comparison revealed the US counselors' higher uses in 14 metadiscourse categories than their Polish counterparts and twice as more frequented categories by Polish over the US counseling-students (see Appendix, Table I). Specifically, US counselors-in-training frequented Implicit Attitude, Emphatic Repetition, Lexical Verbs-Hedging (I *guess*), Illocution Markers, Mitigators ('de-intensified' Speech Acts), Affiliative Speech Acts and Affiliative Fillers, as well as Intersujective-Pragmatic Markers-"guys" (US-spe-

cific, though). They also used more Sentiments (positive/negative), Paralanguage, and Addidtives ("ands").

The Polish counselors-in-training outperformed the American ones in frequent Code-Glossing (explanations and definitions), Epistemological Evidentials (multiple categories), performative Speech Acts with Boosters, Causal-linking devices, Total Connectives (Logic-Temporal and Global Connectives), Metalanguage, Inter-subjective-Pragmatic Markers, Pauses/wait-time, and Commentary - especially Interrogative-Commentary (questioning).

DISCUSSION

The analyses of empathy, listening orientations, and counseling metadiscourse in-interaction-with-discourse-proper indeed revealed developmental trajectories *within cultural groups* as well as *cross-cultural* differences.

The US counselors' out-ranking in **all empathy dimensions** (on the QCAE) suggests their greater *awareness of empathic behaviors, cognitions, and feelings*. The empathic awareness cannot be overestimated as it is considered a prerequisite of socio-emotional regulation in interactions and being central to the "therapeutic bond creation" (Wiprovnick et al., 2015), especially in empathic resonance and mutual affirmation (Saunders, 1999). The US outranking may be explained by higher educational-level, age, and professional experience, and in turn perhaps increased awareness, e.g., self-awareness and/or empathic awareness. The result may partially corroborate Latavietz and Fiorini (2019) who found relationships of age and teaching experience with affective empathy in US counseling-students. Alternatively, American students' verbal expressions might be generally more positive (similarly to a "can-do" mindset or "Pollyanna effect/principle" focus on the optimistic aspects) or emphatically exaggerated, as the contrastive analysis of Longman Corpus of Spoken and Written English documents (Precht, 2003).

As for the **listening styles,** Polish counseling-trainees showed greater People-orientation and Content-orientation during listening, which reveals their greater attention to client-centered and factual-information needs. The finding suggests higher *aural mindfulness* and *attention focus on client factual-needs* in their 'trouble-talk' (Peters et al., 2015). The finding implicates for the US counselors-in-training to shift or re-orient their listening-style focus more towards People and Content. Thus, it is reasonable to highlight and model it in counseling-technique instruction.

Within language-groups, the counseling-discourse developmental patterns reveal American counseling-students' withdrawals from agentive-moves of prompting and eliciting as well as possibly over-zealous intonation, which overall suggests a positive trend towards higher mindfulness of client needs. Emphatic Intonation reduction reveals attenuation and decreased urgency, which seems conducive to clients' 'opening-up' and a floor-grabbing opportunity (to 'get things across' or just 'be heard'), instead of the counselors' monopolizing the interactions. Possibly in lieu of the reductions, the US-counselors developed more overt stances (*I would/want* and total attitude markers) and affiliative paraphrases, intensified performative verbs, para-linguistic expressions, and varied rhetorical-organization signals. The developmental trend indicates the US counselors-in-training *role conceptualization* as not necessarily prompters and/or interrogators, as at the onset of instruction, but rather 'enablers' or 'stance models' (as rendered by explicit attitudinal/stance-markers and intensified speech acts) that facilitate imitation and observational learning (Bandura, 1986). Paralinguistic expressions appealed to listeners through a "peripheral route" (indirect, relying on associations with emotions, positive/ negative appraisals) rather than a central route (logic-driven processing of the propositional content of arguments) by reference to Petty and Cacioppo (1986) elaboration-likelihood model of persuasion, thus possibly contributing 'peripherally' to the sought-for client-change.

Polish developmental-trajectory forefronts "If-then" inferencing-structures (If-so/Since-then) that resemble Toulmin's (2003) 'argumentation kernels' of warrants (+ rebuttals). The trend suggests more explicit reasoning, causally-linked argumentation, and conceptualization of client-needs mostly in cognitive terms, namely as the needs for justification and logical explanation. Reduction of Personal Belief epistemological marking suggests potential substitution of one's own beliefs for other knowledge-sources, e.g., from others (though not statistically significant). Overall, the Polish counseling-pattern suggests preoccupation with *comprehension*, persuasive gains or possible solution finding, and ultimately *change in client's cognitions* (via explicit logical/causal reasoning). The finding calls for rectification by incorporating more therapeutic bond-building devices, e.g., affective empathizing and sympathizing with client's plight and intersubjective affinity, that may help to affirm the client's perspective and attune to them on the personal level, as if in the 'empathic communion' (e.g., Heritage, 2011; Stivers, 2008).

Between-group/cross-linguistic results reveal American-counselors' higher Implicit Attitude/Stance Marking via two-argument attitudinal structures resembling metalinguistic operations (Schiffrin, 1980; *it's unfair/ unkind that X…*) and higher Mitigators. The American counselors' implicitness of stance may reflect avoidance of evaluative or judgmental statements (including praise) that suggests their mindfully metacognitive consideration and understanding of client circumstances and potential feelings of hurt or trauma. Also, US-counselors produced more Affiliative Speech Acts and Sentiment-rich counsels than their Polish counterparts, thus signaling their mindful emphasis on intersubjectively relating to and affirming the nature of client's experiences and aligning with their emotions/feelings, as if in the 'alignment talk' of Pickering and Garrod (2006). However, American sentence-binding featured mostly Additives, so simplest and least binding-conjunctions (Goldman & Murray, 1992; Sanders & Nordman, 2000), despite their pre-post development of global-coherence, as mentioned earlier.

By contrast, the Polish counselors frequented more causally linked, complex syntactic structures (Logical-Temporal, Causative, Global-Coherence Connectives), with ample epistemic-support/ justification (Evidentials and Epistemology Markers). Their higher formal devices and argument-building epistemics suggest Aristotelian 'logical appeal' to their clients' logic, predominantly. Apparently, the Polish students seemed to be guided by the evidence-based framework for counsels as well as obligation to join with their clients' life-situations by invoking hypothetical or parallel stories, for instance via Evidentials like Myself-in-scenario or Others-in-scenario, including their Affiliative sub-categories. By invoking one's own similar experiences or thoughts ("parallel experiences" when counselors disclose their own troubles), counselors, affiliative responding reveals a shared feeling of a "moral stigma and difficulty" in a dramatic or "crisis" case (Peters et al., 2015). In short, such seemingly 'epistemic' markers (of knowledge-basis or degree-of-commitment) might have accomplished an affective therapeutic function.

Interestingly, Polish-talk was more 'socially lubricated' with Intersubjectivity-Pragmatic Markers or solidarity/ "camaraderie"-signals (Overstreet & Yule, 1997), which warrants a claim about their affinity attempts and mindful considerateness for shared-knowledge basis and/or psycholinguistic convergence (distance-decreasing). Perhaps, Polish counselors felt their 'attunement' with the client-situation or plight in *intersubjectively-related* stories, to claim better understanding of and "to

endorse the teller's perspective" (Stivers, 2008). High Code-Glossing reveals their intent to clarify statements and ensure clients' optimal comprehension, possibly reflecting their metacognitive awareness of 'cognitive therapy objectives' of discovering thoughts of their clients and letting them deal with misconceptions. However, Polish higher Commentary (directives and interrogatives) suggests greater focus on controlling and managing the communicative flow and/or client's engagement (Hyland, 2005), which may potentially delimit client's freedom and motivations to "open-up" and share "trouble-stories". Nonetheless, higher Pauses/wait-time offered opportunity for agentive role-switching and letting the client grab the floor in their conversations, which suggests a mindful pattern - potentially off-setting the communicative-control devices.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Analyses of pre/post repertoires unraveled positive trends in mindful and empathizing discourses by American and Polish counselors-in-training, with the latter ones - mostly 'cognitively mindful' and socially-lubricated verbal displays. The Polish predominant focus on cognitive aspects of counseling calls for counterbalancing with affiliative and empathizing/ sympathizing devices, to better attune and resonate with their client's therapeutic needs as well as for their greater 'inclusivity.' The developmental trends (especially diverse in the US group) may be attributed to the metacognitively-rich instruction with formative feedback and dyadic practice series.

Cross-ethnic comparisons of counseling discourse suggest different conceptualizations of and different approaches to client needs. While the American discourse features mostly implicit stance, attenuated and sentiment-rich counseling-moves, the Polish discourse showcases epistemically and evidence-rich as well as intersubjectively or otherwise 'socially-lubricated' reasoning (argument-building).

The analysis of listening profiles and empathy-internalizations prompt tentative pedagogic implications for listening-style modifications of the US counseling-students on the one hand, and on the other - the client-needs re-conceptualization and greater empathy and therapeutic-bond awareness for their Polish counterparts. It is through enhanced mindfulness – both oral and aural - as well as internalized and displayed empathy that counselors may embrace both affective and cognitive dimensions, in "attunement" or "empathic communion" with clients (Heritage, 2011).

The study is, however, not devoid of limitations. The study has been limited by a moderate sample size as well as limited diversity, due to the predominance of Caucasian populations and female counselors-in-training. For instance, with more proportionate grouping by gender, the analysis of personality-traits might warrant more significant results. Also, the assessment of empathy internalization was a self-report measure and so prone to self-perception/ appraisal bias. Lastly, the study adopted a rather comprehensive and interactive model of meta-discourse (incl. paralanguage) to investigate mindfully empathic and affiliative displays, while other perspectives might potentially be equally illuminating of the linguistic phenomenon.

Considering the scarcity of studies on counseling discourse, especially in Poland (unlike in Japan, Finland, or Israel), the study fills the niche in psycholinguistic and metacognitive research in counseling theory and practice. The study enhances the understanding of counselors-in-training behavior and cognition in counseling interactions as well as provides valuable insight into the counselors' metacognitive thinking about their clientele therapeutic needs, both in the US and Polish context. Lastly, the study breaks fresh ground by exploring the cross-cultural comparisons to the United States, a counseling-psychology stronghold, and by unraveling effective techniques that foster empathic, mindful, and intersubjective counseling communication, which can be applied in pedagogy and therapeutic practices.

DECLARATION OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The authors reported no potential conflict of interest.

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Appendix

Table I. **Cross-cultural differences in the Use of Metadiscourse w/ Sentiments between American (US) and Polish (PL) Counselors-in-Training at Post-Test (independen samples t-test); Note: American higher means are bolded for ease of reading the results 'at a glance' and also fore-fronted, i.e. listed first in the table (codes to word-use ratios).**

Group Statistics	Group	N	Mean	SD	t-test for Equality of Means		
					t	df	Sig.
Implicit Attitude Markers	PL	19	0.44	0.68	-2.117	43	0.040
	US	26	**0.80**	0.45			
Commentary Interrogative CHECK-OUT	PL	19	0.06	0.19	-2.229	43	0.031
	US	26	**0.19**	0.20			
Sensory Experience	PL	19	1.00	1.06	-2.480	43	0.017
	US	26	**1.64**	0.66			
Repetition - Emphatics	PL	19	0.09	0.21	-2.206	43	0.033
	US	26	**0.23**	0.21			
Lexical Verbs - Hedges	PL	19	0.04	0.18	-2.574	43	0.014
	US	26	**0.17**	0.16			
Fillers - Affiliative	PL	19	0.25	0.52	-5.052	43	0.000
	US	26	**4.53**	3.65			
Illocution Ms. Total	PL	19	2.73	1.62	-3.833	43	0.000
	US	26	**5.85**	3.26			
Mitigators	PL	19	0.08	0.23	-2.080	43	0.044
	US	26	**0.21**	0.20			
Speech Acts - Affiliative	PL	19	0.53	0.61	-5.310	43	0.000
	US	26	**4.50**	3.21			
Intersubjective GUYS	PL	19	0.00	0.00	-3.203	43	0.003
	US	26	**0.07**	0.10			
Paralanguage-Laughter-Cry	PL	19	0.14	0.41	-2.362	43	0.023
	US	26	**0.50**	0.57			
Additives	PL	19	2.27	1.46	-2.654	43	0.011
	US	26	**3.28**	1.10			
Non-Canonical So	PL	19	0.10	0.20	-2.751	43	0.009
	US	26	**0.34**	0.33			
Positive Sentiments	PL	19	0.54	0.75	-4.724	43	0.000
	US	26	**1.66**	0.81			
Very Positive Sentiments	PL	19	0.08	0.23	-5.339	43	0.000
	US	26	**0.70**	0.47			
Moderately Positive Sentiments	PL	19	0.47	0.68	-2.983	43	0.005
	US	26	**0.96**	0.43			
Negative Sentiments	PL	19	0.38	0.51	-6.728	43	0.000
	US	26	**2.03**	0.98			

Moderately Negative Sentiments	PL	19	0.30	0.52	-3.937	43	0.000
	US	26	**0.95**	0.57			
Very Negative Sentiments	PL	19	0.08	0.20	-5.685	43	0.000
	US	26	**1.07**	0.74			
Pauses Total	PL	19	0.63	0.68	2.832	43	0.007
	US	26	0.20	0.28			
Quick Pauses	PL	19	0.53	0.67	2.605	43	0.013
	US	26	0.16	0.22			
Deontic Modality Markers	PL	19	2.19	1.29	3.020	43	0.004
	US	26	1.36	0.48			
Possible	PL	19	1.06	0.81	3.133	43	0.003
	US	26	0.50	0.36			
Code Glosses Total	PL	19	1.69	0.88	2.957	43	0.005
	US	26	1.04	0.60			
Explanation – Code Glosses	PL	19	1.42	0.86	2.957	43	0.005
	US	26	0.81	0.51			
Commentary Total	PL	19	4.38	2.32	6.848	43	0.000
	US	26	1.10	0.67			
Commentary Directive	PL	19	1.20	1.15	3.723	43	0.001
	US	26	0.34	0.25			
Commentary Interr. Misc.	PL	19	1.27	1.27	4.537	43	0.000
	US	26	0.14	0.17			
Yes-No Closed Questions	PL	19	1.85	1.71	4.121	43	0.000
	US	26	0.43	0.36			
Epistemology Markers Total	PL	19	13.05	4.01	2.959	43	0.005
	US	26	10.33	2.09			
Evidentials Total	PL	19	5.54	1.58	4.273	43	0.000
	US	26	3.90	1.00			
If-then	PL	19	0.60	0.59	3.794	43	0.000
	US	26	0.15	0.13			
Affiliate Myself in Scenarios	PL	19	0.50	0.54	4.305	43	0.000
	US	26	0.04	0.07			
Others in Scenarios	PL	19	0.86	0.91	2.160	43	0.036
	US	26	0.45	0.26			
Affiliative Others in Scenarios	PL	19	1.08	0.91	2.714	43	0.010
	US	26	0.53	0.42			
Adverbial Hedges	PL	19	1.35	0.99	4.057	43	0.000
	US	26	0.45	0.47			
Boosters	PL	19	0.28	0.48	2.339	43	0.024
	US	26	0.06	0.09			

Speech Acts	PL	19	1.84	1.07	3.380	43	0.002
	US	26	1.08	0.38			
Intersubjective-Pragmatic Markers Misc.	PL	19	2.03	1.26	2.113	43	0.040
	US	26	1.40	0.74			
Intersubjective WE	PL	19	0.29	0.50	2.334	43	0.024
	US	26	0.05	0.14			
Metalanguage	PL	19	3.53	1.91	3.264	43	0.002
	US	26	2.13	0.90			
Text Connectives Total	PL	19	10.57	2.15	2.745	43	0.009
	US	26	9.04	1.61			
Additives-Affiliative	PL	19	0.36	0.53	3.013	43	0.004
	US	26	0.04	0.07			
Causatives	PL	19	1.39	1.47	2.359	43	0.023
	US	26	0.68	0.44			
Logic-Temp Connectives Misc.	PL	19	2.90	1.87	2.311	43	0.026
	US	26	1.95	0.84			
Topicalizers	PL	19	1.11	1.09	2.359	43	0.023
	US	26	0.58	0.31			
Commentary Interrogative Total	PL	19	3.18	2.76	4.394	43	0.000
	US	26	0.76	0.50			
Intersubjectivity-Pragmatic Markers Total	PL	19	2.33	1.45	2.404	43	0.021
	US	26	1.52	0.77			
Logic-Temp Connect TOTAL	PL	19	8.89	2.17	2.172	43	0.035
	US	26	7.71	1.49			