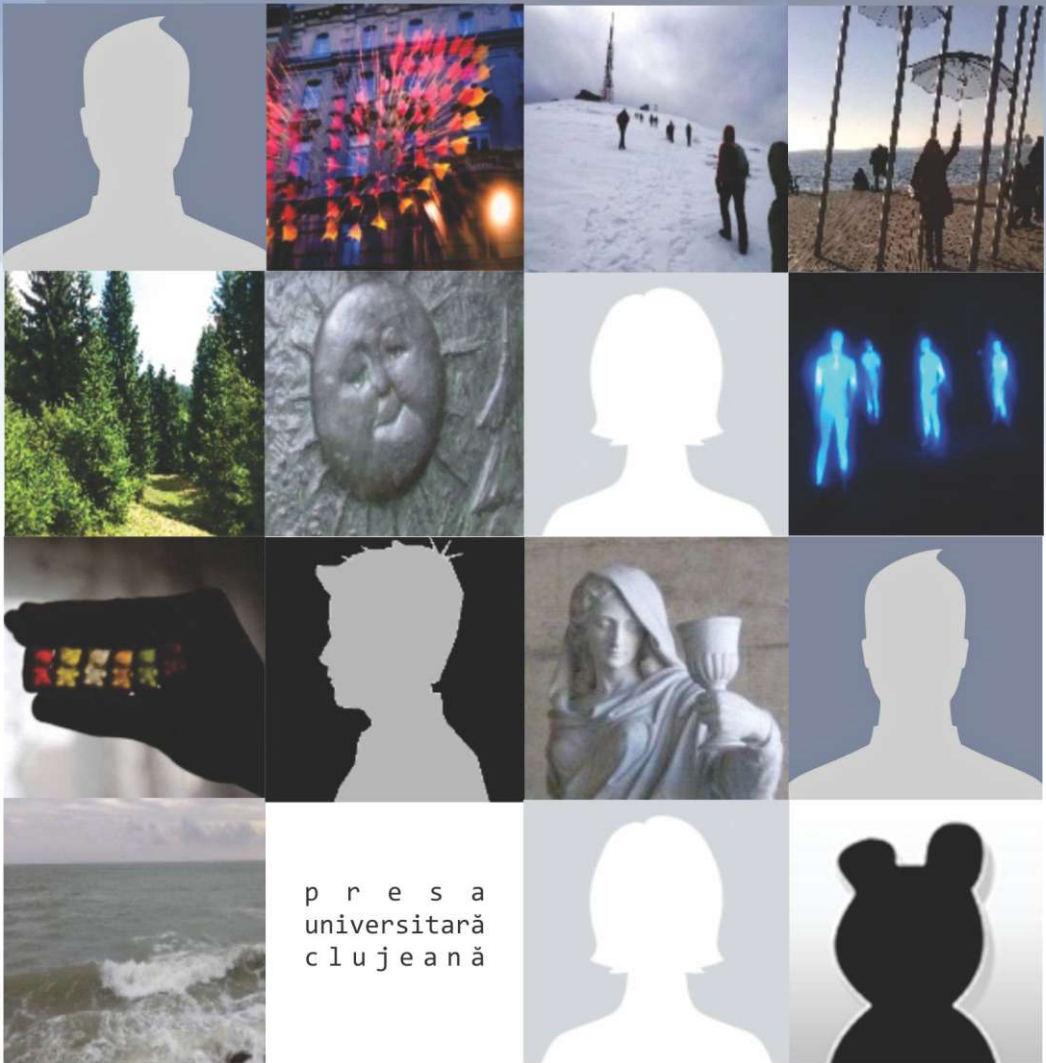


Alexandra Cotoc

Language and Identity in Cyberspace.

A Multidisciplinary Approach



ALEXANDRA COTOC

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PRESA UNIVERSITARĂ CLUJEANĂ

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Referenți științifici:

Prof. univ. dr. Ștefan Oltean

Prof. univ. dr. Liana Pop

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Tehnoredactare computerizată: Cristian-Marius Nuna

Universitatea Babeș-Bolyai

Presa Universitară Clujeană

Director: Codruța Săcelean

Str. Hasdeu nr. 51

400371 Cluj-Napoca, România

Tel./fax: (+40)-264-597.401

E-mail: editura@editura.ubbcluj.ro

<http://www.editura.ubbcluj.ro/>

“Language has no independent existence apart from the people who use it.
It is not an end in itself; it is a means to an end of understanding
who you are and what society is like”

(David Crystal)

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INTRODUCTION

The Internet and the digital world have created new opportunities for real-time conversations among individuals who are geographically dispersed, but who are sitting at their computer keyboards or are using other electronic devices. People post discourses and participate in “written” conversations in the new linguistic genre, which combines characteristics of both written and oral language, but also features specific to the digital environment. They type their messages in chat exchanges, and these messages appear on the screens of their interlocutors, preceded by the sender’s cybername (name or nickname) (see Bechar-Israeli, 2006); they register and create profiles on social network sites, blogs and game platforms. Hence, in digital spaces, Netizens’ identity comprises various variables that can be interpreted in random order, but which constitute a whole:

- Netizens’ names and nicknames: usernames/cybernames;
- what Netizens/Netters (*netters* is a term used by Bechar-Israeli in the article mentioned above) say about themselves (content) and how they say it (language);
- what others say about them;
- the networks created among the users;
- the comments, the threads of discussions, statuses, posts, notes.

This book focuses on language, identity construction and new media affordances in various digital spaces available and popular in the time span 2010–2013, presenting useful descriptions, theoretical approaches, concepts and qualitative case studies. We focus on online social networks (*Facebook*, *Couchsurfing*, *BeWelcome*, *MySpace*, *LinkedIn*), e-mail and chat services (*G-mail*, *Yahoo*), blogs and game platforms (*Catan*, *Conquizardor.ro/com*). We scrutinise the Internet situations encountered there (e-mails, forums, synchronous and asynchronous chatgroups, groups of discussion, Wall/Timeline posts, statuses, etc.) in order to account for the variables mentioned above.

Identity is a multifaceted concept which has acceptations in various fields of study: “identity research is complex, multitheoretical and increasingly multidisciplinary” (Omoniyi and White, 2006: 15–16). Hence, we use a multidisciplinary approach in order to understand the concept of identity in cyberspace/cyber-identity: social psychology, psycholinguistics, discourse analysis, pragmatics, sociolinguistics, philosophy, Internet linguistics, digital humanities. However, our main theoretical background is Internet linguistics. Furthermore, in chapter III we also present a very sketchy possible world account on names, fictional names and cybernames.

We focus on the following aspects:

- the conceptualisation of cyberspace as a digital world constituted by the digital and by digi-participants’ discourse;
- cyber-language;
- the online naming practices and cybernames;
- the construction of and play with cyber-identity/identities in different digital spaces (one Romanian blog, one French blog, one English blog, *Facebook*, *Couchsurfing*, *LinkedIn*).

We focus our attention on the way in which teenagers and young adults express/construct their cyber-identities through the content expressed (narrative identity) and through their linguistic behaviour (discursive identity). More specifically, we will observe Netizens – young adults, males and females – in various digital communities. The Netizens chosen have different cultural backgrounds in order to emphasize the cultural diversity and the *glocality* (global and local aspects) of cyberspace and to scrutinise how different languages are represented online.

We extracted our data from public spaces on the Internet, but also from our personal e-mail addresses and online social networks. In the former case, we did not change the cybernames of the users involved. In the latter case, we replaced the usernames with pseudonyms for privacy reasons. Hence, Ema Nan, Maria Cabedo, Fernando Desafina, Daniel Nikitina, Maia Pop, Yves Tounk, Barbara Jordon, Eva Parloc are all pseudonyms. We mention that the name Eva Parloc is the pseudonym we use when we engage as participant-observer.

In cyberspace, users express their identities or they assume a different identity. Still, they expose **only what they want** in virtual communities; they always make selections: of pictures posted on their profile, of avatars (the images that represent them online), of messages sent, of statuses and comments posted and so on. They can always add, remove, re-edit information. Hence, even when there is authentic information in accordance with our physical identities, we argue that online identity is a fluid representation. For this reason, we use the terms **constructing/building/exposing/displaying/performing** identities and **playing with** identities together with the term **expressing** identities; and we also use the plural form: **identities**.

In real life interactions it is easier to know if those around us express their identity because we can rely on non-verbal and para-verbal behaviour as well and, unlike Netizens, outside the digital world they cannot operate so many selections on what to expose about themselves.

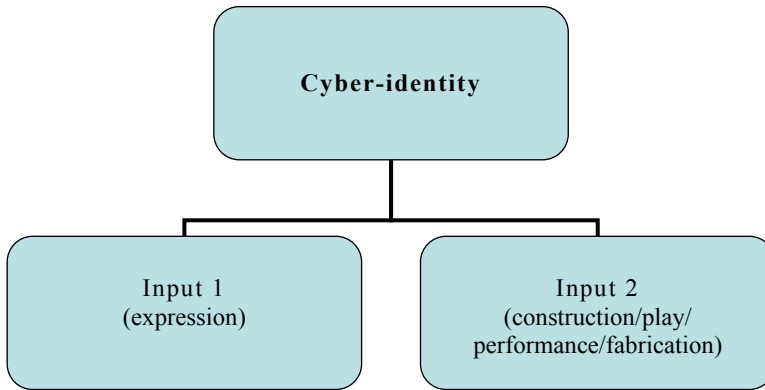
We focus on all the digital spaces mentioned in order to highlight the fact that cyber-identity is a fluid representation which changes in accordance to the different purposes and affordances of the digital spaces involved (one representation on *Facebook*, one on *Couchsurfing*, one on *Myspace*, one on *LinkedIn*, etc.). Hence, the individuals have multiple representations and function like distributed systems: “the self is no longer simply playing different roles in different settings at different times, something that a person experiences when, for example, [...] makes breakfast like a mother, and drives to work as a lawyer. The life practice of windows is that of a decentered self that exists in many [digital] worlds and plays many roles at the same time” (Turkle, 1996 :14). Thus, we also argue that, because the conditions for identity construction change in cyberspace, cyber-identity is different from face to face identity.

We provide many descriptions of digital spaces and situations and of the language variety used online because we are dealing with a new research field that needs good descriptions. Moreover, on the Internet everything changes so fast that the data provided in our book constitutes (internet) history and provides a diachronical investigation of cyberspace. Hence, as Danet states: we are “writing about a dynamic medium in a static one” (2001: 42).

The Usefulness and Relevance of this Investigation

There are several aspects which indicate that this investigation is useful and relevant:

- We embark upon this investigation because we consider that new technologies provide a new field of investigation in what language and identity are concerned: both language and identity are adapted to the new environment – cyber-language variety and cyber-identity (representation) – and need a good linguistic description all the time. We reorganize and reinterpret the theories and the resources available regarding the language-identity nexus and we apply them to digital spaces. Moreover, in the case of the ideas put forward by Crystal (2001, 2004, 2006, 2011, 2012), we observe and integrate empirical data from popular digital spaces (social network sites, blogs and the game platform of *Catan*).
- We indicate the importance of discourse analysis concepts and pragmatic concepts in the interpretation of identity in cyberspace.
- We use the concept *fluid identity* in order to account for the infinite changes of the different online representations of users' identity.
- We analyse the names encountered in cyberspace: cybernames.
- We investigate users' identity constructed in the digital world. We investigate how users perform a multimodal identity using the affordances of cyberspace (general and/or particular). We argue that identity is continuously rearticulated by the new technologies. It becomes electronic identity (e-identity)/cyberspace identity/cyber-identity and it is reflected by the content exposed by the Netizens and by their linguistic behaviour in different digital spaces.
- We argue that cyber-identity is characterised by fluidity, uncertainty and constant play. Further, we state that identity is a blend with two inputs:



Input 1 usually dominates outside the digital world and Input 2 dominates in most cases in cyberspace. Hence, the concept of *fluid identity* (seen as *representation*) in cyberspace is justified.

Hypotheses

Our hypotheses of research are the following:

- Cyberspace is a new space for language and identity research. The new medium and the general and specific affordances of digital spaces condition the users' linguistic behaviour and identity construction.
- The language used in cyberspace represents a new variety: cyber-language. It sometimes contains digitized features and it is characterised by online practices that differentiate it from the language used offline.
- The online naming practices and names used in the digital world (cybernames) present different characteristics than the names used in the physical world.
- Cyber-identity is a fluid representation because users expose only what they want, they operate selections, embellish aspects, add and remove information on a regular basis. Moreover, cyber-identity is different in every digital space, because the affordances are different. Hence, construction/play/performance/fabrication of identity prevails over expression of identity.
- Cyber-identity is a multidimensional concept including individuality, sometimes personal identity, social identity (persona), professional identity, cultural identity, ethnic and national identity, gender identity. Further, cyber-identity is fabricated by the narrative identity (the content exposed) and by the discursive

identity (the way in which digi-participants use language) and it is the social identity manifested on two levels: individual identity (what is unique to the user) and group identity (what the user has in common with other members of a group).

- In the case of *Facebook*, the individual identity is constructed on the *Facebook* profile, while the group identity is constructed through the interaction with other *Facebook* users on one's *Facebook* page or on other pages and groups of discussion.
- Cyberspace is characterised by cultural diversity and users from different cultural background interact and create what we label as the *Franca feature* of the digital world.

During our investigation we will gather evidence to confirm or infirm these hypotheses in order to provide a description of language and identity construction in cyberspace.

Objectives

Our objectives are:

- (1) to conceptualise cyberspace and to explain how it creates a digital world and why it constitutes a new field for language and identity research;
- (2) to highlight that language and socialisation in cyberspace are characterised by digitized features and online practices; to highlight the fact that sometimes the language used online is a new variety: cyber-language;
- (3) to analyse the function of cybernames because they constitute the points of access to one's identity and they have a special nature online;
- (4) to scrutinise and explain the concept of *cyber-identity*. Related to cyber-identity, we enumerate different secondary objectives:
 - to demonstrate that cyber-identity is fluid and temporary;
 - to illustrate that identity is a blend between expression (input 1) and construction and play with identities (input 2). In face to face interactions, Input 1 prevails and in cyberspace, Input 2 prevails;

- to highlight the fact that both in the digital world and in the physical world, identity is mainly a linguistic phenomenon (narrative and discursive phenomenon).

The Investigation Methods

The description of language and identity in cyberspace entails a multi-disciplinary approach and a methodology to be applied in the analysis of the empirical data taken from the digital spaces of online social networks, blogs and game platforms. With regards to the present investigation, our research on these complex phenomena will contain the following methods:

- observational method;
- experimental method (case studies situated in the time span 2010–2013): Netizens' e-discourses;
- contrastive analysis: analysing the different online representations of users on social network sites, blogs and game platforms.

All the examples will be taken from digital communities like *Facebook*, *Couchsurfing*, *LinkedIn*, blogs. The Netizens that we will focus on are active users. All the examples will be presented in **Annexes** at the end of our work.

Outline of the Investigation

The first chapter offers a general presentation of cyberspace and it conceptualises cyberspace as a discursive space. It also presents how teenagers and young adults use the Internet and how they participate in the digital spaces.

Adapting Baudrillard's theories on simulacra and simulation (1983), we create three orders of online participation (the digital image order, the collaborative production order and the hyperreality order) and we postulate the emergence of the digital approach. We also introduce the concept of *Internet Linguistics* (Crystal, 2011) and explain why it constitutes the main framework within which we place our research.

We present the general affordances of new media: technical affordances and structural affordances (Boyd, 2011) and social affordances (Parks, 2011). We also

present the concepts of new literacy and digital literacy, the digital situations and their specific affordances.

We describe in detail the online platforms of *Facebook*, *Couchsurfing*, blogs, and *Play Catan*, offering an overview of the technical affordances available in the time span 2010–2013.

The second chapter describes the “digitized” features and online practices of communication and socialisation in cyberspace: speech and writing features, “netspeak” principles and Net idiosyncrasies (for instance: emoticons). We will analyse them while dealing with authentic discourses from cyberspace. In this chapter, we state the fact that these elements give users the sense of (group) identity and that they constitute the canvas on which cyber-discourses and identities are fabricated.

The third chapter investigates names and nicknames in cyberspace: usernames/cybernames. The chapter is structured in two parts.

In the first part, we examine cybernames from a sociolinguistic standpoint. After defining proper names and nicknames, we borrow the typology established by Haya Bechar-Israeli and we apply it to the online game *Conquistador* and *Catan*, extracting empirical data from these two game platforms. Further, we examine *Facebook*, *Couchsurfing* and *Google+*'s policies concerning the online naming practice. Then, we confront the Facebook policy with the empirical data on the social network site.

In the second part of our chapter, we examine cybernames from a possible world standpoint. We briefly present the concept of possible worlds and transworld identity. We present two different approaches to proper names and we present the category of fictional names. Last but not least, we provide an interpretation of cybernames.

The fourth chapter is dedicated to the conceptualisation of identity and cyber-identity. At the beginning of the chapter, we present several dictionary definitions for the concept of identity in order to observe how identity conceptualisation has changed in time and to justify our multidisciplinary approach. Then, we present the theoretical accounts that reflect our opinion about this multimodal concept: social psychological perspectives (Deschamps and Devos, 1998, Doise, 1998,

Worchel, 1998), a postmodern perspective (Zygmunt Bauman, 1996), the identification perspective (Hall, 1996), the mediational perspective (Norris, 2011) and Ricoeur's perspective (1991). We also present how these theories adapt to the construction of cyber-identity phenomena and we provide empirical data taken from cyberspace.

In relation to the theories presented, we define cyber-identity and we give examples of identity construction through online resources. We also provide a case study which reflects the construction of identity via avatars.

We also present and define the concept of cyber-community/communities.

In the last part of this chapter we discuss the open-ended interviews that we organised with two target groups in order to find out how young participants perceive cyber-identity and what the difference between cyber-identity and real identity/identity in the physical world is, from a sociolinguistic point of view. We focus on the participants' thoughts and opinions.

The fifth chapter focuses on Romanian, English and French digital productions in order to scrutinise the linguistic and non-linguistic processes through which young digi-participants construct an online narrative and discursive identity. We focus on blogs and online social networks, with a special focus on *Facebook*, in order to highlight the fluidity of online representations. We illustrate how the *Facebook* community is perceived nowadays through a concrete example (*The Case of Salman Rushdie*); we briefly present how users construct a professional identity on *LinkedIn*, we illustrate how narrative identity is expressed on blogs:

- a Romanian blog: *Blogul lui Meșter* (<http://mirceamester.ro>);
- a French blog: <http://blog.jeromesoyer.fr>;
- an English blog: *ultrabrilliant* (<http://ultrabrilliant.co.uk>).

Last but not least, we illustrate cases of identity constructions on *Facebook*: individual identity construction in native languages (L1) and group identity constructions in L1 and L2 (English as a second language, lingua Franca). Moreover, we illustrate the construction of a cyber-group identity.

At the end of our investigation, we present the conclusions to the present work, the cyberspace lingo used, annexes, bibliography, dictionaries and online sources.

CHAPTER I

Cyberspace: A Digital Medium for Language and Identity Research

New media (CDs and DVDs, video games, computer multimedia, hypermedia, Internet, websites, Web 2.0, social networking technologies and others) have enabled easy access to content at everyone's disposal and interaction in computer-mediated communication (CMC). Additionally, with regards to the Internet, researchers have stated that it "crystallized the basic conditions of the new information society: overabundance of information of all kinds" (Manovich, 2001: 35). Further, cyberspace configures the digital society (see Nabeth, 2009: 22).

In this chapter, we conceptualise cyberspace and we present the relation between the digital world and teenagers and young users.

Adapting Baudrillard's theories on simulacra and simulation (1983), we create the three orders of online participation (the digital image order, the collaborative production order and the hyperreality order). We present the functioning and the role of hyperlinks in cyberspace. Further, in relation to the three orders, we claim that the simulation tradition and the representational tradition (Manovich, 2001: 112–113) need to be replaced by the emergent digital approach in order to interpret language and identity in cyberspace. We introduce the concept of *Internet Linguistics* (Crystal, 2011) and explain why it constitutes the framework within which we place our research.

Because identity construction in cyberspace takes up a different form than identity construction in the physical world, we present the general affordances of new media, the concepts of new literacy and digital literacy, the digital situations and specific affordances. We provide an overview of social network sites and their general affordances, we explain why they are considered "Networked Publics" (concept introduced by Boyd in 2011); we present the technical, structural and the

social affordances of social network sites. In the case of the technical affordances, we present the special case of a particular social network site (*Be Welcome*).

In the last part of the chapter, we provide an outline of *Facebook*, *Couchsurfing*, blogs, and *Play Catan*. For each of these Internet situations we present the specific affordances.

1.1. Conceptualisation of Cyberspace

Given the emphasis on the information society, researchers provide the following definitions for cyberspace:

- “cyberspace has been coined to capture the notion of a world of information present or possible in digital form (the *information superhighway*)” (Crystal, 2006: 3);
- For Michael Benedikt, “cyberspace is a globally networked, computer-sustained, computer-accessed, and computer-generated, multi-dimensional, artificial, or ‘virtual’ reality. In this reality, to which every computer is a window, seen or heard objects are neither physical nor, necessarily, representations of physical objects but are, rather, in form, character and action, made up of data, of pure information. This information derives in part from the operations of the natural, physical world, but for the most part it derives from the immense traffic of information that constitutes human enterprise in science, art, business, and culture” (1991, apud. Rosie, 2004: 237). What’s more, Michael Benedikt presents the philosophical ideas of Karl Popper who states that there are three worlds:
 - ✓ World 1: the objects we experience;
 - ✓ World 2: subjective world of intentions, calculation and subjectification;
 - ✓ World 3: purely informational. Benedikt asserts that cyberspace is an example of World 3 (1991, apud. Rosie, 2004: 237).
- For Rheingold, “cyberspace, originally a term from William Gibson’s science fiction novel *Neuromancer*, is the name some people use for the conceptual space where words, human relationships, data, wealth, and power are manifested by people using CMC technology” (1995, apud. Rosie, 2004: 237–238).

Cyberspace is informational, but it is information that is created and organised by users. Thus, cyberspace is also a discursive space (see Varga, 2011: 19). Hence, through the new forms of interactions that emerged (the World Wide Web, e-mails, chatgroups, blogs, online social networks) users enter the digital environment of cyberspace where interaction, collaboration, creativity, interactivity and literacy gain a new meaning and change the traditional perception of communication, discourse and identity. Thus, cyberspace offers individuals, who never had any cultural capital or a geographic space, a discursive space. The texts are no longer the careful construction of television producers; they are inscribed with the identity and emotions of the speaker whose voice can now be heard globally. “Thus the struggle over meaning and authenticity of a voice also becomes connected to the individual identities [...] of every single speaker in the discursive space of the internet, making the discursive work of its citizens – netizens – particularly important in the creation of the new virtual public” (Ananda, Watts, 2002: 491). In the same vein, cyberspace is conceptualised as a discursive space that is occupied by the interface between humans and computers and calls for a textual/discursive/rhetorical analysis focusing on the eloquence of representation as a principal means by which people and institutions voice themselves in this space (see Heim, 1993; Hyde and Mitra, 2000, apud. Ananda and Watts, 2002: 480–481).

Besides the everyday face to face interaction (f2f) at home, at the work place, at concerts/at the cinema and other places, people are involved, to a lesser or greater extent, in computer-mediated communication.

Users spend a lot of their time in cyberspace and the Internet has become part of everyone’s daily life: we check our e-mails, we chat with friends, we visit Web sites, and we create blogs and forums.

There are many situations in which CMC takes place simultaneously with face to face interaction. For example: people involved in a leisure activity like going out at a restaurant talk to each other, but, at the same time, they check their e-mails on their mobiles phones, send messages, chat or go on *Facebook/Couchsurfing* or other social network sites (SNS). In addition, the digital tools permit people to be always online. In our personal Gmail chat, there are users who appear to be constantly online and:

- *available* (the availability is signalled by the green colour which appears next to the name in the chat list); *idle* (the yellow colour);
- *busy* (red colour). Hence, the user dimension is part of everyday life and people are (almost) always hyper-connected.

1.2. Cyberspace and Young Users

From the wide category of users who enter cyberspace, we select teenagers and young adults because they are the most important consumers of this type of new media. Most of them have a virtual life or an online life in addition to the physical/offline life because they belong to virtual communities of chatrooms, forums, blogs, online social networks where, in Roland Barthes words: “language is, as it were, that which divides reality (for instance, the continuous spectrum of the colours is verbally reduced to a series of discontinuous terms)” (1968, apud. Manovich, 2001: 28–29).

According to how much they use the Internet and how they use it, various terms have emerged to describe the Internet population: *netizens*, *netters*, *netties*, *netheads*, *cybersurfers*, *nerds*, *bozos*, *newbies*, *surfers*, *digiterati*, *wizards*, *lusers* [‘users who are losers’], *wannabees* [‘aspiring hackers who can’t hack’] (see Crystal, 2001: 82). Further, we add that by using the agent suffix *-er*, there also emerged terms which inform about the platforms accessed while online: *bloggers*, *Facebookers*, *Couchsurfers*, *twitters*, *MySpacers*, *gamers*.

Teenagers and young adults belong to a culture undergoing computerization. In cyberspace, they are in a “transformed fake reality” (Manovich, 2001: 27) because their social exchanges depend on the Internet connexion and on the interpretation process performed by all the participants. In the digital world, more than in face to face interaction, discourse, in the form of “bit-based content” (Boyd, 2011:46), constitutes the reality of the digital and shapes the relation among the netizens. In this reality, users construct, maintain and reconstruct their identity through the iconic code and through words. Hence, the Internet becomes a “privileged terrain for personal fantasies”, “an extension of life as it is, in all its dimensions, and with all its modalities” (Castells, 2001: 118). However, Nancy

Baym states that “reality seems to be that many, probably most social users of computer mediated communication, create on-line selves consistent with their off-line identities” (Castells, 2001: 119). For example: a person who has a *Facebook* account provides information about him/herself and constructs an online persona. Nevertheless, this information provided by the *Facebook* user can be true or false.

Bringing forward the case of Alice who tumbles down the rabbit hole and arrives in Wonderland, we look at a screen and arrive in Digi-land.

1.3. The Three Orders of Online Participation

Cyberspace functions like a digital parallel of the real world. It can be: an extension of reality, a replacement, a deviation or a simulation.

When users enter cyberspace in order to accomplish tasks from face to face interaction like writing e-mails to set an appointment, getting/keeping in touch with a friend, enrolling online for courses, exchanging information on online social networks, they are actually engaging with the life outside the digital space, with the real world. On the contrary, when users write stories on a blog, manifest fake identities or construct embellished representations of themselves on social network sites, etc., cyberspace replaces reality and it creates a simulated world. We conceptualise this world with Baudrillard’s words: “in postmodern culture, images, copies and simulacra do not imitate a pre-existing reality but *replace* reality. Simulation has become reality. Signs no longer bear any resemblance or correspondence to the so-called real world. In fact, they produce their own **hyperreality**: an order of representation capable of engulfing our bodies and our minds because it neither looks nor feels unreal, but, if anything, more than real” (see Cavallaro, 2000: 211).

In cyberspace, users search for information and provide information about themselves and about others, projecting a constructed identity, but also contributing to the production of other users’ identity. Everything they produce online represents a numerical portfolio of themselves and of others: “the world is being slowly overlaid with and in turn transformed by a virtual one, conveniently allowing us to keep going while being able to look back onto our digital collections. We

bring our memories online: we scan pictures from the past to be “saved” and also shared, we digitize music, movies, books and we are working on ways that we can integrate more of our natural senses within this space. We make sure every existing physical object has its existing phantom online” (Vaucelle, 2009: 159).

Taking into account that cyberspace overlaps with the real world, transforms it and sometimes simulates it, we mention the three orders of simulacra introduced by Baudrillard:

- simulacra that are natural, naturalist, based on the image, on imitation and counterfeit, that are harmonious, optimistic, and that aim at the reconstruction or the ideal institution of nature made in God's image;
- simulacra that are productive, productivist, based on energy, its materialization by the machine and in the whole system of production: a Promethean aim of a continuous globalization and expansion, of an indefinite liberation of energy (desire belongs to the Utopias related to this order of simulacra);
- simulacra of simulation, based on information, the model, the cybernetic game: total operationality, hyperreality, aim of total control (see 1981, translated by Glasser, 1995: 81)”.

Drawing a parallel between these three orders of simulacra and cyberspace and online identity construction, we argue that there are *three orders of online participation*: the digital image order, the collaborative production order and the hyperreality order.

1.3.1. The Digital Image Order

Users who have a profile on social network sites, on blogs or various websites upload a photo of themselves or have an *avatar*: “the extension of one’s sense of self in the form of an abstract representation” (Bailenson, and Beall, 2006: 16). Hence, users create representations of themselves that are “founded on the image, on imitation and on counterfeit” (Baudrillard, 1981, translated by Glasser, 1995: 81). They create highly selective and idealized representations of themselves which researchers perceive as signs of narcissism and extraversion (see Ong E.Y.L., Ang R.P., Ho J.C.M., Lim J.C.Y., Goh D.H., Lee C.S., & Chua A.Y.K.

(In press), “Narcissism, Extraversion, and Adolescents’ Self – presentation on Facebook”).

In the same vein, Mendelson, and Papacharissi (2011: 251–273) analysed college students’ photos on Facebook and proved that there are “narcissistic overtones” of the pictures uploaded by the young users (Mendelson and Papacharissi, 2011: 270). They also argue that “these Facebook photos do not necessarily represent all photos taken by or of a person. These merely represent those images that a student or a friend *has chosen* to post or tag for others. Thus, these photos represent *a strategic representation* of a social group [...]” (Mendelson and Papacharissi, 2011: 267, personal emphasis). Furthermore, the users who see the photos uploaded become the audience who collaborate in the impression management created by the photos through commenting and tagging (see Mendelson and Papacharissi, 2011: 270).

There have even been published satirical articles addressed to the wide public. The articles also pinpoint to the narcissistic aspect of the Facebook users. For example: Fowles, Shane, “Facebook and the Narcissus Generation” in *The Standard* (available at <http://www.standard.net.au/story/793920/facebook-and-the-narcissus-generation/>):

- “While once they fell in love with their own reflection in a pool, today’s self-absorbed gaze with admiration into a media mirror; their Facebook profile, their YouTube channel. There is a new breed of narcissist and social media has provided them with what they have been seeking since the time of Narcissus – a captive audience”;
- “The mobile tech generation is the fertile territory for the new breed of narcissist, as they have a platform to record their every utterance for a circle of peers”.
- In an era of instant upload, they are the posers who think their hundreds of “friends” are hanging on their every move. Who share scores of photos of themselves taken on their mobile phones and update their statuses with dull details of their daily drudgery”.

1.3.2. The Collaborative Production Order

Observing the second order introduced by Baudrillard, we argue that in cyberspace, identities are productive, productivist and emerge as a result of the human-technology interaction. Users can create everything they want; they can expand their identity or create a totally different one. They can always modify the way in which they represented themselves and they are involved in a continuous globalization, expansion and construction/re-construction of themselves and of others. The identities emerged are ongoing processes of collaborative productions.

Cyberspace is created by the users' voices that gain the agency to speak in and address the virtual audience. Using their voices, users construct an identity and create cyberspace that they can inhabit, having, thus, a 'dwelling space' from where they address and are addressed by other users with whom they collaborate in order to produce identities in a public sphere (see Ananda, Watts, 2002: 486).

1.3.3. The Hyperreality Order

The third order enumerates characteristics that are valid for cyberspace as well: "founded on information", "the cybernetic game" or, more appropriately, the 'cyber-game/activity', "total operationality", "hyperreality" and "aim of total control".

The elements of information on which cyberspace is founded include text, graphics, photographs, animations, sound files and video files. Everything is displayed in the form of the digital tool screen, which unlike their paper counterpart, is dynamic, having numerous links that take the reader to new sets of information (see Chin and Kee, 2006: 154).

Users who participate in online social networks, blogs, chatrooms, forums, etc. are sometimes involved in the 'cyber-game' of constructing an identity that corresponds or not to who they actually are in the physical world. This game requires the use of particular linguistic means, semiotic code and digital skills which aims at total operationality and control over their identities and over other users' identities.

For Baudrillard, hyperreality corresponds to the condition in which representation and reality are displaced by simulacra (understood as copies without originals) (see Baudrillard, 1983). He speaks about representation and of the impossibility of the real. For him, “postmodern society is ‘hyperreality’, the displacement of reality by signs as a consequence of technological change, entailing the ‘implosion’ of the social – the implosion of boundaries, most of all the boundaries between image and reality. Media-generated systems of signs offer models for the conduct of everyday life. These systems are sets of binary oppositions that cancel out differences and maintain an essentially self-same system, which position individuals into an order of ‘simulacra’” (Baudrillard, apud. Chouliaraki and Fairclough, 1999: 90).

In relation to cyberspace, hyperreality is to be understood as the condition in which representation and reality are intermingled, overlapped, one in the continuation of the other or simulated. Moreover, hyperreality accounts for “the plurality of its determinations and the diversity of its manifestations” and for “the cosmopolitan and the globalism of the local” in cyberspace (Perry, 2002: 1).

1.3.3.1. Hyperlinks

In cyberspace, users can create and manipulate networks of information-containing nodes interconnected by relational links: *hyperlinks*. This feature is a characteristic of hypermedia, a popular structure of new media, and implicitly of cyberspace (see Manovich, 2001: 41).

A hyperlink connects two elements, for instance, two words in two different pages or a sentence in one page and an image in another, or two different places within the same page (see Manovich, 2011: 41).

According to the type of interconnection established, the hyperlink has different functions: “hyperlinks exist among pages within a site and across different sites. Within a site, hyperlinks serve as an information organization mechanism. Across different sites, hyperlinks represent implicit conveyance of authority to the target pages” (Liu, 2011: 5).

The information displayed by a user on an online platform can be interconnected with information displayed by the same user on the same platform or on

another platform, with information displayed by other users on different platforms or even on the same platform etc. The result of this interconnection is the production of *hypertext* or *hypermedia*: a hypertext is the interconnected piece of information that contains only text, while the hypertext that allows other media (e.g. image, audio and video files) is called hypermedia (see Liu, 2011: 2). Thus, the hyperlink establishes hypertextual and/or hypermedia relationships which “can also convey different aspects of social relationships, such as expressing content or dissent with the cited source, signaling a friendly or professional affiliation, or just adding to the context to the original posting by providing links to additional information” (Thimm, 2010: 343).

The hypertexts and the hypermedia are used to such a degree that researchers like François Ascher talk about the “hypertext society”: “in the hypertext society, the individuals (words) change everyday of fields (texts) whose structures and rules (syntaxes) are different, and where they build various selves (meanings). The digital metaphor is all the more fitting as the society constructs and represents itself even more from the mobile networks, “real” and virtual relations that structure it” (2005, apud. Abbas, 2009: 88).

On online social networks, users and the identities they express are hyperlinked to one another: users have lists of friends and they can access the Facebook page of any friend through a click. Moreover, from the Facebook page of a user, one can access YouTube channel and various websites via the hyperlinked information posted by the Facebook users. The same applies on other Internet sites. That is how all Internet sites are located in the World Wide **Web** (www). Hence, hyperlinks also reveal the online organisation of discourse and audience (see Crystal, 2011: 29). At the same time, they create an identity/identities through multiple references to apparently disconnected parts.

1.3.4. The Simulation Tradition and the Representational Tradition

In order to enter cyberspace, the screen marks the transition from the real/physical world to the virtual world: “a screen frame separates two different spaces that have different scales – the physical and the virtual” (Manovich, 2001: 112).

There are two traditions: the tradition of representation and the tradition of simulation.

“The simulation tradition aims to blend visual and physical space rather than to separate them. Therefore, the two spaces have the same scale; their boundary is de-emphasized (rather than being marked by a rectangular frame, as in the representation tradition); the spectator is free to move around in the physical space”.

The simulation approach and the representation approach are put in opposition by Manovich: in the simulation tradition, the spectator exists in a single coherent space constituted by the physical space and the virtual space that continues it. In the representational tradition, the spectator has a double identity, simultaneously existing in the physical space and in the space of representation. This split of the subject is the tradeoff for the new mobility of the image and for the newly available possibility to represent any arbitrary space, rather than having to simulate the physical space where an image is placed (see 2001: 113).

1.3.4.1. The Digital Approach

The digital world is far too complex to be approached by only one of these two traditions. The approach that is needed would encompass both of them and also the physical reality: the digital approach. This approach acknowledges the fact that, in cyberspace, users are both spectators and participants/ addressors and addressees/ senders and receivers: *digi-participants*. At the same time, users want to present themselves as “auctors” (authors/actors) of their digital lives who produce, frame and shape things as much as ... [they] might be a product of that production, framing and shaping (see Bauman, 2008 apud. Dervin and Abbas, 2009: 1). Moreover, in the digital world, we have simulations, representations, but also extensions of the physical world and ourselves. For example:

- Simulations: online games: *Second Life* – “a 3D world where everyone you see is a real person and every place you visit is built by people just like you” (<http://secondlife.com/whatis/?lang=en-US>).

In this game, users have an avatar that wears digital copies of their own clothes and has the digital copy of their haircut (see Thimm, 2010: 331);

- Representations: users who create a profile on Facebook create a representation of themselves which might coincide or not to who they actually are. Even if users do not construct a fake profile, they always operate selections and embellishments on what they display. Thus, users construct similar representations of themselves in a virtual environment;
- Extensions: e.g. by writing an e-mail to a friend, users extend their identity in the digital environment.

1.4. Internet Linguistics for the Digital Environment

We use terms like ‘traditional communication’, ‘conventional communication’, ‘non-electronically mediated linguistic communication’, ‘non-electronic world’, ‘(in the) real world/life’, ‘physical world/life’ to speak about ‘that which cannot be accessed via a keyboard’ (Ihnatko, 1997, apud. Crystal, 2006: 20). Another common term is face-to-face interaction (abbreviated to f2f). None of them have been contested so far and all are equal in terms of their semantics.

We also have many terms to define the digital communication that emerged with the Internet, but, in this case, David Crystal advances the question whether people use the proper terminology. He considers that the terms proposed to focus on this type of communication do not describe the manifestation of discourse in cyberspace. He provides an overview of the terms available (Crystal, 2011: 1–3). Furthermore, he proposes the term **Internet linguistics**.

1.4.1. Overview of Terminology

The term **computer-mediated communication** (CMC) was used to label the Internet communication in the 1990s. Crystal argues that this term is too broad, encompassing all kinds of communication (music, photographs, line-drawing, video and language). He also asserts that there are major differences between spoken, written and signed language, but also between ‘the language of painting’ and ‘the language of the face’. Hence, the terms language and communication cannot be used interchangeably.

After the emergence of mobile technology and interactive speech devices (a machine talking to us – satellite-navigation car instructions, airport tannoy announcements or us talking to a machine – telephone booking service, voice-activated washing-machine or reading an e-book), the notion ‘mediation by computer’ was no longer suitable. Thus, people used **electronically-mediated communication (ECM)** or **digitally-mediated communication (DMC)**, but Crystal considers that these two are too broad as well. He states that “It is too soon to say which of these will become standard – or, indeed, whether some other name will emerge from cyberspace. Either way, from a linguistic point of view, they are still too broad, blurring the distinction between language and other forms of communication” (Crystal, 2011: 2).

Crystal also mentions **Cyberspace**, **Netspeak** and other terms ending in *-speak*. These terms were used for a general public, “but their weakness was that they placed undue emphasis on the potential linguistic idiosyncrasy of the medium and suggested that the medium was more homogenous than it actually is” (Crystal, 2011: 2).

Another category of terms is represented by names such as **Netlish**, **Weblish**, but the *-lish* ending no longer describes nowadays situation, given the increased use of Chinese and other languages on the Internet.

Electronic discourse and **computer-mediated discourse** have also been used and are still used, especially when talking about social networks. These terms suggest the interactional and dialogical dimension of Internet communication.

The *e-* prefix (standing for *electronic*) brought about the terms **e-language** and **e-linguistics**. Another term that was used is **cyberlinguistics**.

Last but not least, the activity performed online by users generated terms like **searchlinguistics**.

David Crystal argues that *Internet linguistics* or *netlinguistics* are the most convenient names and can be used as an umbrella term for the study of the language in the electronic medium (see 2011: 2). This term includes all the terms mentioned above: “it is the study of language on the Internet – or language@internet [...]” (Crystal, 2011: 3).

Internet linguistics would provide the necessary theory to describe and explain what happens on the Internet and, as David Crystal puts it, “the one thing Internet language needs, more than anything else, is good description” (2011: Preface). Still, we do not claim that the well-established maxims of scientific investigation are altered by the emergence of the Internet. The Internet only provides a new domain of enquiry to theoretical linguistics. Conjointly, “every question linguists have asked about language, in relation to speech, writing, and sign, has to be re-asked with the qualification ‘on the Internet’ appended” (Crystal, 2011: 135).

We use the term and the theory advanced by David Crystal as the framework of our study. At the same time, because each virtual space imposes its own restrictions, or, as we shall see further on, has its own affordances, we could also speak, for example, about Facebook-mediated communication/ Couchsurfing-mediated communication/ LinkedIn-mediated communication, but they would all be situated under the main heading *Internet Linguistics*.

With regards to social network sites, David Crystal states that they are outputs whose stylistic status is still unclear. He advances the following question: Is there a single variety of social networking, offered by different companies (e.g. Facebook, LinkedIn¹, Bebo, MySpace, etc.) demonstrating ‘subvarieties’, or are the differences in functionality so great that researchers would have to call them varieties in their own right? He stresses out that this is an empirical question awaiting the description of the linguistic properties of each social network site in order to provide an answer to the question advanced (Crystal, 2011: 77).

In our book, we scrutinise the online social networks and we argue that each of them is a variety in its own right because they do have different functions (different characteristics, different purposes, different interactional patterns and different identity representations).

1.4.2. Internet Linguistics – Aspects

When studying users’ discourse and identity in cyberspace, we have to take into account that:

¹ a social networking website for people in professional occupations; it is mainly used for professional networking. The site is available in various languages.

- Internet linguistics is not an entirely synchronic investigation. The linguistic content of the digital medium is time sensitive and always offers scope for diachronic study. Each page is time stamped, even if the date at which a page was created is not immediately evident. Searches seem to be synchronic, though in fact they present simultaneously hits from different time periods (see Crystal, 2011: 119). In the same vein, scrolling² down a SNS page (*Facebook* for e.g.) may seem like a synchronic activity, but it is in fact diachronic;
- Diachrony also accounts for the cases where pages are evolving, as in forums and social networking sites, where users are always adding something new, and thus altering the semantic content of the page. “We can envisage a scenario where a page alters in semantic classification simply because the conversation moves in a fresh direction: yesterday the page was about cars; today it is chiefly about movies” (Crystal, 2011: 120). The same sometimes happens in a conversation on social network sites, the conversation starts with a topic, but then users can move the conversation in another direction, even more directions. They come back to the initial topic or they remain off topic. There can even be an on topic/off topic interplay. This aspect also stands as a proof that online identity is fluid;
- On the Internet, comments from different time zones can appear in the same text. For example, a text written in 2008 can receive comments at the moment of posting and the conversation is apparently closed as users don’t contribute anymore. But, years later users come across the conversation. They comment again and even receive replies from other users. That is why Crystal argues that Internet linguistics is *panachronic* (pseudo-diachronic) (Crystal, 2012). The following conversations/situations on Facebook constitute relevant examples of *panachrony*:
 - ✓ ***Emă Nan*** :))) *Oana, tu nu aveai feisbuc în momentul în care s-a postat această poză... nu am uitat de tine!* July 18, 2011 at 6:41pm · Like

² move through text or graphics in order to display parts that do not fit on the screen (<http://www.thefreedictionary.com/scroll>)

[Authors' emphasis. Instead of writing 'Facebook', the user writes the name of the social network site phonetically: 'feisbuc'. This spelling is not a result of the user's not knowing how to spell it correctly, but it constitutes a common spelling among some Romanian Facebook users who mark their Romanian group identity by means of deviated humorous spelling]
 [Oana, you didn't have a *Facebook* account when this picture was posted ... we didn't forget about you]

Oana Pop: *te cred, te cred ziceam si eu asa* [July 18, 2011 at 10:06pm](#) [Like](#)
 [I believe you, I believe you, I was just saying]

Cristina Marian: *nice photo* [April 28, 2012 at 7:28am](#) · [Like](#)

Emă Nan: *and nice memories :)* [April 29, 2012 at 8:00am](#) · [Like](#)

This conversation was initiated in July 18, 2011 and it received a comment nine months later.

- ✓ A picture was uploaded by a user on the 8th of July, 2009. In May 2013, another user comes across this picture and clicks the "like" button. Another user reacts to his action and, underneath a thread from 2009, the following conversation is activated:

Eva Parloc: *tu as vu cette photo maintenant, après toutes ces années? Pardon, pas photo, mais chef-d'oeuvre?* [20 hours ago](#) · [Like](#) (the 5th of May 2013)
 [did you see this picture now, after all these years? Sorry, I didn't mean to say picture, but masterpiece]

Asim Ahmad: *oui oui ma chère Eva, franchement on passer des moments inoubliable :)* [11 hours ago](#) · [Like](#) (the 5th of May 2013)
 [yes, yes, my dear Eva, honestly, we spent unforgettable moments]

- ✓ In what Facebook is concerned, the *timeline* (the section of a Facebook page introduced in December, 2011 and that shows all the users' activities in chronological order, scrolling down from the newest event to the oldest event) constitutes a clear example of a panachronic space in which we perceive "past, present and future as different dimension of a multiple reality" (Winterson, 2000: 53).
- ✓ There is a panachronic relation also between the digital space and the physical space in the sense that users can introduce information about

events of their offline identity that might give the impression of synchronicity, but, in fact, the events took place in the past:



In the example above, the user wanted to update her relationship status and introduced an event that took place five years before. However, on her Timeline, the event was displayed as if it took place in the moment of posting. The user posted a comment to her own post, clarifying the possible misunderstanding and showing self-irony.

1.4.3. General New Media Affordances

When considering observing new media in the process of identity construction, we have to take into consideration the *affordance/affordances* of the medium (Cf. Maly, 2012). That is to say, we have to identify “the unique feature sets and characteristics of particular technologies [...]” (Burden, 2008: 122). They are necessary in the process of fabricating online identities because cyber-identity is not only text; it is rather a **collage** where content and image are blended by the user-author because the digital format allows for lexical, linguistic and visual creativity (colours, layout, images, avatars, etc.) (see Balaci, 2011: 22).

All new media entail the following general affordances: cooperation, address a lot of people very quickly, present a vast amount of information and allow ready and easy access to texts. “They make it easy to use a multiplicity of modes, and in particular the mode of image – still or moving – as well as other modes, such as music and sound effect” (Kress, 2003: 5). They allow interactivity and hypertextuality: “Interactivity has at least two aspects: one is broadly interpersonal, for instance, in that the user can ‘write back’ to the producer of a text with no difficulty – a potential achievable only with great effort or not at all with older media, and it permits the user to enter into an entirely new relation with all other

texts – the notion of hypertextuality” (Kress, 2003: 5). These two notions, interactivity and hypertextuality are closely linked to the organisation of the Internet discourse and the construction of identities through multiple references to (apparently) disconnected parts. Furthermore, the new media permit bidirectionality, multiple authorship, selection, loss of authority, etc. (Kress, 2003: 1–7).

Online spaces permit researchers to interpret netizens’ identity taking into account various variables that can be interpreted in random order, but which constitute a whole: what netizens say about themselves, what others say about them, the relation among users, the comments, the discussions, etc.

Besides these general affordances of new media, every medium presents its own affordances.

We have to pay close attention to affordances, general or particular, in order to analyse how users perform their identity in the digital space.

1.4.4. New Literacy

Researchers argue that nowadays multimedia world requires a change in what the perception of literacy is concerned. The new kind of literacy is basic for online participation on various platforms and for creating one’s online identity. We briefly present some views that bring to light the main characteristics of new literacy.

Kress argues that literacy can no longer be addressed without the social, technological and economic factors (2003: 1). He mentions that there are two factors that should be highlighted: the move from the dominance of writing to the dominance of image and the move from the dominance of the book medium to the dominance of the screen medium. He claims that these two factors change the uses and effects of literacy and we embrace his view.

Kress claims that *language-as-speech* will remain the most important mode of communication and that *language-as-writing* will be displaced by image or, we could add, combined with image, becoming multimodal. Thus, new media “make it easy to use a multiplicity of modes, and in particular the mode of image – still or moving – as well as other modes, such as music or sound effect for instance. They change, through their affordances, the potentials for representational and

communicational action by their users” (Kress, 2003: 4). We add that new media changes very fast and technology enables oral forms of communication which users might prefer because they are faster and easier to use than writing messages on a SNS or in a chat. Thus, even nowadays, there are voice-activated machines, like GPS, and voice over IP services like *Skype* or more recently *Google+ Hang Out*³ which are used worldwide. Hence, if these services take over the online platforms where (multimodal) writing dominates, then Kress’ prediction is correct: *language-as-speech* will be the most important mode of communication. Moreover, as technology is unpredictable, services that permit oral communication might even be inserted on SNS, blogs, forums, etc.

In a discussion about new media, we have to mention the notion of **interactivity** which Kress sees as two-dimensional. The first dimension is **interpersonal** because the user can ‘write back’ to the writer of the text. This dimension was achieved only with great effort or inconceivable with older media. The second is **intertextual** because the user can enter into a networked relation with all other texts – the notion of **hypertextuality**. The interpersonal dimension has an effect on social power directly, while the intertextual dimension has an effect on semiotic power, and through that on social power (see Kress, 2003: 4).

Kress also presents an element which is very much used and played with in new media and which represents a new way to engage with the world: **the layout**. With the emergence of new media, the layout changes the structure of texts, it changes the form and also the way in which we perceive content, arrange and understand concepts. He gives as an example the use of bullets: “bullet points are, as their name suggests, bullets of information. They are ‘fired’ at us, abrupt and challenging, not meant to be continuous and coherent, not inviting reflection and consideration, not insinuating themselves into our thinking. They are hard and direct, and not to be argued with” (2003: 12). We agree that the layout plays a major way in which users perceive information. However, we

³ an application which allows video chat with people from everywhere in the world. It allows to connect with up to nine people at once from the user’s personal computer or the Google+ mobile app (Android, iPhone). Users can doodle with their kids when they are away from home, play poker with their buddies or share the latest news and see everyone’s reactions (<http://www.google.com/+learnmore/hangouts/>).

consider that the example with the bulleted information could be interpreted differently. The bullets are encountered everywhere in cyberspace and they make the text easier to read/scan. Sometimes, they are used in order to provide sketchy information that the users can complete or interpret using their own information.

Given that new media uses numerous modal resources in order to make 'messages' – words, spoken or written; images, still and moving; music; 3D model objects; soundtracks; actions, the author proposes to expand the use of literacy to cover all the resources involved in the making of any 'message', whether through words, images or something else (see Kress, 2003: 16). Hence, he argues for a multimodal theory of literacy. Kress continues his discussion and argues that the name **literacy** is difficult to render in other language as it will not have the same meaning as in English. He even argues that “literacy, in all its aspects, is entirely social, cultural and personal” (Kress, 2003: 18).

Kellner and Share point out that it is not enough to teach literacy that only addresses traditional concepts of print and ignores the other major way we receive, process, and create content (images, videos and written or spoken information). They state that, in the 21st century, critical media literacy is a must for participatory democracy and culture because the world has been fragmented, connected, converged, diversified, homogenized, flattened, broadened, and reshaped by new information communication technologies and by a market-based media culture. These changes have been reframing the way people think and restructuring societies globally and locally (see 2007: 1–2).

Kellner and Share use the concept **critical media literacy** and define it as an expansion of the notion of literacy to include different forms of mass communication, popular culture, and new technologies. They present three approaches to media education that we adapt to cyberspace and users of Internet (see Kellner and Share, 2007: 2–4):

- the protectionist approach;
- media arts education;
- media literacy movement.

The protectionist approach raises awareness of the possible dangers of new media (for e.g. manipulation and addiction), oversimplifying the situation by

ignoring the complex relation with the media and taking away the potential for empowerment and, thus, (self-) control from users.

The media arts education highlights the aesthetic qualities of media and the arts and the users' creativity for self-expression through creating art and media.

The third approach, the media literacy movement, marks that "media literacy is seen to consist of a series of communicative competences, including the ability to ACCESS, ANALYZE, EVALUATE, and COMMUNICATE" (Kellner and Share, 2005, apud. Kellner and Share, 2007: 3). The researchers also state that this approach expands the notion of literacy and includes popular culture and multiple forms of media (music, video, Internet, advertising, etc.) while still preserving a print literacy tradition (see Kellner and Share, 2007: 3).

The three previous models were presented in order to introduce the type of **critical media literacy** proposed by the authors. This literacy includes aspects of the previous models, but focuses on ideology critique, analyses politics of representation, incorporates alternative media production and expands textual analysis to include social context, control, resistance and pleasure. "A critical media literacy approach also expands literacy to include information literacy, technical literacy, multimodal literacy, and other attempts to broaden print literacy concepts to include different tools and modes of communication" (Kellner, 1998, apud. Kellner and Share, 2007: 4). In this multimodal approach to critical media, the audience is seen as actively participating in the process of producing meaning. In addition, the authors argue that this approach fits well with Luke and Freebody's (1999) "dynamic understanding of literacy as a social practice where critical competence is one of the necessary practices" (apud. Kellner and Share, 2007: 5). Hence, for Luke and Freebody (1999), effective literacy requires four basic roles that permit users to understand the code, to participate in understanding and composing, to use texts functionally and to critically analyse and transform texts by acting on knowledge that texts are not ideologically natural or neutral (apud. Kellner and Share, 2007: 5).

Kellner and Share point out that students and youth, in general, are often more media savvy, knowledgeable, and immersed in media culture than adults. They argue that media culture is part and parcel of their identity and a powerful cultural

experience (see 2007: 6). In this sense, command of literacy is “a prerequisite for self-representation and autonomous citizenship [in cyberspace]” (Kellner and Share, 2007: 8).

Claire Bélise presents the evolution of literacy concepts in terms of three models. The *functional* model views literacy as the technical skills of reading and writing, but also as the skills necessary for functioning effectively within the community. The *socio-cultural practice model* emphasizes the importance of social context and defines literacy in terms of access to cultural, economic and political structures of society. The *intellectual empowerment* model states that literacy means skills to deal with texts and numbers within specific cultural and ideological contexts. Simultaneously, it means enrichment, transformation of thinking capacities and, as a result, intellectual empowerment coming from the use of cognitive tools – writing, new technical instruments, etc. (2006, apud. Martin, 2008: 156).

Allan Martin states that in defining literacy within the context of a digitally infused society as, functional, socially engaged, and transformative, “we can see it as a powerful tool for the individual and the group to understand their own relationship to the digital: to be aware of the role of the digital in their own development and to control it; to place the digital at the disposal of their own goals and visions [...]” (2008: 156).

David Buckingham notes that there have been many attempts to extend the notion of literacy beyond its original application to the medium of writing. He mentions various notions introduced by researchers over the past twenty years: “emergent literacies” – used Margaret Meek Spencer, 1986, it describes young children’s media related play, “new” or “multiple” literacies – Bazalgette, 1988, Buckingham 1993, Tyner 1998, visual literacy – Moore and Dwyer, 1994, television literacy – Buchingham, 1993, cine-literacy – British Film Institute, 2000 and information literacy – Bruce, 1997 (see Buckingham, 2008: 74).

Buckingham also notes that advocates of the New Literacy Studies have even proposed the term “multiliteracies”: “referring both to the social diversity of contemporary forms of literacy and to the fact that new communication media require new forms of cultural and communicative competence” (Cope and Kalantzis,

2000, apud. Buckingham, 2008: 75). The same notion is used similarly by Kellner, pointing to “the many different kinds of literacies needed to access, interpret, criticize, and participate in the emergent new forms of culture and society” (2002, apud. Martin, 2008: 163). In the same vein, Martin (2008: 163) acknowledges other terms like “technoliteracies” (Kahn and Kellner, 2006), “literacy practices”/ “silicon literacies” (Snyder, 2002).

1.4.4.1. Components of Digital Literacy

Allan Martin identifies several “literacies of the digital”. He states that, even if most of them originate in the pre-digital period, they are essential in understanding the digital context (Martin, 2008: 156–164): *computer and IT and ICT literacy, technological literacy, information literacy, media literacy, visual literacy, communication literacy*. Thus, digital literacy is an umbrella term as all the above literacies are components of digital literacy.

We briefly define and present the literacies mentioned above as conceptualised by Martin, 2008. In what the media literacy is concerned we will mention also Buckingham’s perspective. They all refer also to the digital literacy required when using the computer medium for participating in cyberspace and creating one’s identity.

Computer, IT or ICT Literacy involves basic computer skills (how the computer works), how to use application software and practical competences rather than specialist knowledge. Besides, ICT literacy includes the individuals’ interest and attitude towards technology. It also includes the ability to use digital and communication tools in order to efficiently manipulate information, but also to create new content, construct new knowledge and communicate with others, thus participating effectively in society (see van Joolingen, 2004, apud. Martin, 2008: 157). These components (access, manage, integrate, evaluate, construct/create and communicate) represent a complex multi-layered continuum of skills:

- ✓ **Access** – knowing about and knowing how to collect and/or find information;
- ✓ **Manage** – applying an existing organisational or classification scheme or model;

- ✓ **Integrate** – interpreting and representing information. It implies summarising, comparing and contrasting;
- ✓ **Evaluate** – making judgments about the quality, relevance, usefulness, or efficiency of information;
- ✓ **Create** – generating information by adapting, applying, designing, inventing, or authoring information (see Educational Testing Service, 2002, apud. Martin, 2008: 158).

Technological Literacy is defined by Martin as the skill to use, manage and understand technology: the successful operation of the key systems of the time, the appropriateness and efficiency of all technological activities and the ability to transform information.

Information Literacy consists of knowledge of one's information concerns and needs, and the ability to identify, locate, evaluate, organise and effectively create, use and communicate information to address issues or problems at hand. It is mandatory for participating effectively in the Information Society (see UNESCO, 2003, apud. Martin, 2008: 160).

Under the heading *Media Literacy*, Martin mentions three definitions:

- The first definition is related to the convergence of text, sound and image (still or moving). Thus, media literacy is the ability to understand and use all media and genre.
- According to the second definition, media literacy consists of several communication competences. For instance: the ability to ACCESS, ANALYZE, EVALUATE and COMMUNICATE information in a variety of forms including print and non-print messages. “Interdisciplinary by nature, media literacy represents a necessary, inevitable and realistic response to the complex, ever-changing electronic environment and communication cornopia that surrounds us” (The Alliance for a Media Literate America, apud. Martin, 2008: 161). This definition relates to the fluid nature of nowadays interaction and discourse, emphasizing their temporary aspect. This also influences the way in which online identity is expressed/constructed. If the medium is changing, the identity is changing as well.

- The third definition mentioned by Martin is proposed by Hobbs: “Literacy is the ability to access, analyze, evaluate and communicate messages in a variety of forms [...]”. (Hobbs, 1998, apud. Martin, 2008: 161).

Buckingham, 2008, conceptualises media literacy in terms of its online dimension. He presents four essential components of media literacy (representation, language, production and audience) and applies this conceptual framework to media literacy that goes online, as he puts it (78–85):

- Like all media, digital media do not simply mirror the world, but they are a **representation** of it. They provide particular interpretations and selections of offline reality. Thus, users always have to evaluate the online material by comparing it with other sources and by using their own direct experiences. They always have to ask themselves whether the information comes from an authoritative source, whether it is reliable and whether it is biased or not;
- Literate users use **language** and also understand how it works: they know the functioning of various forms of communication, the codes and conventions of particular genres;
- Literacy also includes understanding who is communicating, to whom and with what purpose (production);
- Literacy also implies being aware of one’s own position as part of an **audience** (reader or user). This involves understanding how media are targeted at different audiences and how different audiences use and respond to them. “In the case of the Internet, this entails an awareness of the way in which users gain access to sites, how they are addressed and guided (or encouraged to navigate), and how information is gathered about them. It also means recognizing the very diverse ways in which the medium is utilized [...]” (79–80). The researchers also mentions that the term “audience” applies very well to “older media”, but doesn’t describe the interactivity of the Internet medium. We also argue that this term doesn’t capture the interactivity of the online media. It provides a passive perspective on the online recipients who, on the contrary, are always actively involved: they select the sites they want to read/the online social networks they want to be members of, the search engines they prefer to use, etc. Using prefixed variants like *e-audience/cyber-*

audience/Internet audience/net audience would highlight the new context of usage, but will still not capture the interactive dimension. Hence, we propose the term **digi-participants** (see 1.3.4.1 **The Digital Approach**).

Visual Literacy emphasizes the importance of the image medium for the interpretation of information and the communication of meaning. What is more, visual images are much more complex and powerful with the emergence of the digital tools.

Taking into consideration the *Communication literacy*, literacy is the ability “to communicate effectively as individuals and work collaboratively in groups, using publishing technologies (word processor, database, spreadsheet, drawing tools...), the Internet, as well as other electronic and telecommunication tools” (<http://www.wsd1.org/techcon/introduction.htm>, in Martin, 2008: 163). In addition, literacy is to be understood as “increased understanding and effectiveness in public speaking, non-fiction writing, media viewing and reading, new media and technology, as well as cultural, intercultural, and international interaction” (<http://www.artsci.washington.edu.service/Curriculum/2001Awards/Communication.pdf>, in Martin, 2008: 163).

Of course, in the digital context, “the category of ‘new literacies’ largely covers what are often referred to as ‘post-typographic’ forms of textual practice. These include using and constructing hyperlinks between documents and/or images, sounds, movies, semiotic languages (such as... emoticons (‘smileys’) used in e-mails, online chat space or in instant messaging), manipulating a mouse to move around *within* a text, reading file extension and identifying what a software will ‘read’ each file, producing non-linear texts, navigating three-dimensional worlds online and so on” (Lankshear and Knobel, 2003, apud. Martin, 2008: 163).

Martin points out that the literacies outlined overlap.

1.4.4.1.1. Digital Literacy

Several terms and definitions have been proposed for digital literacy. We will briefly mention some perspectives on this concept.

Walker, Huddleston and Pullen use the notion of **technoliteracy** to describe the users’ ability to send, receive and reshape digital data into different literacy

modes (see 2010: 3). They also point out that the convergence of digital technologies with the human desire to communicate made possible the materialisation of new literacies which led to new ways of communicating, creating meaning, being understood and understanding others, but also expressing one's self to others on a local, even intimate, and global level. Hence, as a consequence of the technology-human relationship (humachine), users participate in an increasingly multi-modal communicative environment where new digital literacy skills are required (see 2010: 7).

Allan Martin, 2003, uses the term **eLiteracy** and defines it as “the awarenesses, skills, understandings, and reflective-evaluative approaches that are necessary for an individual to operate comfortably in information-rich and ICT-supported environments. An individual is eLiterate to the extent that they have acquired these awarenesses, skills, and approaches. For the individual, eLiteracy consists of: a) awareness of the ICT and information environment; b) confidence in using generic ICT and information tools; c) evaluation of information-handling operations and products; d) reflection on one's literacy development'; e) adaptability and willingness to meet eLiteracy challenges” (Idem: 18).

Søby, 2003, proposes the term **Digital Bildung** and defines it as a holistic understanding of the way in which youths learn and develop their identity. Additionally, it also refers to skills, qualifications and knowledge. Thus, digital bildung suggests an approach that encompasses not only ICT skills and their effects on communication, critical thinking skills and identity constructions, but also reflection on these effects (see Søby, 2003, apud. Martin, 2008: 166). Thus, we argue that digital bildung constitutes the necessary literacy for users activating in SNS because it implies practical skills and, also, the reflective process of one's acts online.

In the same vein as Søby, 2003, Allan Martin reformulates his definition for digital literacy from 2003 and states that digital literacy is “the awareness, attitude and ability of individuals to appropriately use digital tools and facilities to identify, access, manage, integrate, evaluate, analyze and synthesize digital resources, construct new knowledge, create media expressions, and communicate with others, in the context of specific life situations, in order to enable constructive

social action; and to reflect about this process” (2008: 166–167). Hence, like Søby, he considers that digital literacy consists of operative techniques, effects of digital actions on social activities and critical reflection. Furthermore, researchers consider that digital literacy is closely linked to online identity: being no longer defined only by functional matters like knowing how to use a computer and a keyboard/a high-tech phone and a touchscreen, how to use online search engines, etc., it shifts from skills to *identity* and it varies from one individual to another, because individuals are different and their life situations vary as well. Thus, digital literacy “is a quality of the person, not an externally-defined threshold to be attained” (Mayes and Fowler, 2006, apud. Martin, 2008: 168).

When constructing one’s representation online (for example on Facebook), users should be aware what the advantages and disadvantages of digital literacy are. In this way, they can use the Facebook/Couchsurfing affordances to make the process much more appealing, challenging and interactive.

1.5. Digital Situations and Affordances

In order to account for language and identity construction in cyberspace, we need to provide descriptions of the Internet situations encountered: “we need to establish the salient linguistic features of each situation, and to identify variations in the way they are used. This will help us to talk more precisely about the strategies that people employ and the linguistic attitudes they hold [...]” (Crystal, 2006: 10). In addition, we also need to present the non-linguistic features of Internet situations because they constitute the context of discourse and have consequences on the users’ linguistic behaviour and identity construction. As Crystal acknowledges a few pages before, “a variety of language is a system of linguistic expression whose use is governed by situational factors” (2006: 6), “all language-using situations present us with constraints which we must be aware of and must obey if our contribution is to be judged acceptable” (2006: 7). Thus, the Internet language variety is also governed by the digital factors of the Internet situation in which users are involved.

Crystal identifies seven Internet situations (2006: 11–19): electronic mail, synchronous chatgroups, asynchronous chatgroups, virtual worlds, world wide web, instant messaging, blogging.

The electronic mail (e-mail) is the use of computer systems to transfer messages between users. Nowadays, the term is used to refer to messages sent between private mailboxes: *Inbox*. The e-mail also has the function of sending a message to more than one Inbox. There are three e-mail address elements that allow multiple readers: the *To* line (the primary recipient/recipients of an e-mail), the *Cc* line (shorthand for *carbon copy*. All the users who appear in this section receive a copy of the e-mail) and the *Bcc* line (*blind carbon copy*. A copy of the e-mail is sent without the original recipient's knowledge. If all recipients appear in this line, the user will send a 'blind' message) (see Flynn and Flynn, 2003: 12) (see **Annex 1**).

“Chatgroups are continuous discussions on a particular topic, organized in ‘rooms’ at particular Internet sites, in which computer users interested in the topic can participate” (Crystal, 2006: 11). There are two situations in the case of chatgroups: synchronous and asynchronous. In a synchronous chatgroup, users join ongoing conversations in real time. In an asynchronous chatgroup, interactions go to a central address where they are stored in a format, and made available to members of the groups only upon demand so that people can catch up with the discussion, or add to it – even if a long period of time has passed (see Crystal, 2001: 130).

Virtual worlds are imaginary spaces which users can enter to engage in text-based fantasy social interactions. The images play an important part as well. Users have the opportunity to adopt new identities, explore fantasy worlds and interact with other participants.

The world wide web (www) is the entire collection of all the computers connected to the Internet which have documents that are mutually accessible through the use of a standard protocol: the HyperText Transfer Protocol, or HTTP. It is usually abbreviated to *Web* or *W3*, and, in site addresses, it is presented as the acronym *www* (see Crystal, 2006: 13). The inventor of the Web, Tim Berners-Lee states that inventing the World Wide Web involved his growing realisation

that there was a power in arranging ideas in an unconstrained, weblike way (see Berners-Lee, 2000: 3).

Instant messaging permits e-conversations between people who know each other to take place in real time. It differs from e-mails, where the exchanges are asynchronous and from chatgroups, where there usually are many participants who do not know each other. Examples of instant messaging services include: *Google Talk* (also known as gchat, it allows both text and voice communication); *Yahoo! Messenger*, *Facebook Chat*, *MSN Messenger*. They all have similar properties. Users have a list of contacts ('contact list', 'buddy list') which also contains a status (in this section users can introduce a video from YouTube that they like, a thought, a quotation, etc.) and an availability sign (e.g. green circle for online and available, yellow circle online but far away from computer, red circle for online, but busy). The instant messaging permits multiple users to take part in the same conversation. The fact that participants involved in instant messaging know each other brings about shared knowledge, informality and in-group solidarity.

Blogging is an application of the Web. It is a personalised web page where the blogger-owner can post messages whenever he wants to. Many blogs are online personal diaries, "ranging in length from brief notes to extended essays; many are on topics of general interest or concern, such as a hobby or political issues. Some blogs are monologues; some have shared authorship; some are interactive" (Crystal, 2006: 15). The content of a blog does not go through an editorial process, like books, magazines, newspaper articles or even some websites.

These seven situations do not exclude one another. There are sites where elements are combined or where one situation is included in another. For example, on Facebook there are also the e-mail situation and instant messaging situation.

"The Internet World is an extremely fluid one, with users exploring its possibilities of expression, introducing fresh combinations of elements, and reacting to technological developments. It seems to be in a permanent state of transition, lacking precedent, struggling for standards, and searching for direction. About the only thing that is clear is that people are unclear about what is going to happen" (Crystal, 2006: 16). Thus, we mention other two Internet situations that

emerged after the seven situations mentioned above: online social networks and video conference. The latter is not in our focus, but we will explore in more detail the former situation.

1.5.1. Social Network Sites – Presentation

Social networking sites (SNS) constitute the next generation of personal home pages as personal profiles on networking sites incorporate many of the expression features of traditional home pages, including blogs. In point of fact, it seems increasingly common for teens and young users to be active on social networking sites instead of personal home pages, because they allow for self-expression and informality. At the same time, they provide opportunities for connection and relationship building. In comparison to personal home pages, social network site profiles are quite templated, but there are many opportunities for users to customize their personal profiles (see Stern, 2007: 98).

On social network sites like Facebook⁴, MySpace⁵, hi5⁶, Couchsurfing⁷, CyWorld⁸, Friendster⁹, LinkedIn¹⁰, DeviantArt¹¹, Twitter¹², users present themselves and establish or maintain connections with others, articulating their social networks and social identities.

The SNSs have different purposes which are stated on the online social network sites:

- Facebook – “Facebook’s mission is to give people the power to share and make the world more open and connected”. The original goal was to create a digital space for college students. Nowadays, Facebook is a space which permits users to maintain or establish friendships/connections;

⁴ www.facebook.com

⁵ <http://www.myspace.com/>

⁶ <http://www.hi5.com/>

⁷ <https://www.couchsurfing.org/>

⁸ <http://us.cyworld.com/>

⁹ <http://www.friendster.com/>

¹⁰ <http://www.linkedin.com/>

¹¹ www.deviantart.com

¹² <https://twitter.com/>

- MySpace is a “social entertainment” space. It connects users who share the same interests in terms of music: “Welcome to the neighborhood. Discover, share and connect with culture, creativity, sound, images and people”, “This is Myspace. Discover, share and connect to music from the world’s largest streaming library”;
- Hi5 – “rediscover friends on the new hi5”. It functions similarly to Facebook but it is less and less popular;
- Couchsurfing – “Travel the world, explore your city and host new friends. *Couchsurfing* is the world's largest travel community”, “connect with new friends all around the world”;
- CyWorld – South Korean social network service;
- Friendster – “Living the Game”, its original goal was to initiate romantic relationship, “a global social network that emphasizes friendship and the discovery of new people” (2013);
- LinkedIn – “World’s largest professional community”;
- DeviantArt – “community of artists and those devoted to art. Digital art, skin art, themes, wallpaper art, traditional art, photography, poetry/prose. Art prints”;
- Twitter – “Instantly connect to what's most important to you. Follow your friends, experts, favorite celebrities, and breaking news”.

The sites permit users to interact with people they already know offline or to meet new people. They permit users to form a community around shared interests, rather than on shared geographical location (see Ellison, Steinfield and Lampe, 2007, available at <http://jcmc.indiana.edu/vol12/issue4/ellison.html>).

1.5.2. Online Social Networks – Affordances

In this subchapter we present the characteristics that make the social network sites be labeled as “networked publics”, we enumerate the technical affordances of SNSs (general features of social network sites), we present the structural affordances (identified by Boyd, 2011) and the social affordances (identified by Parks, 2011).

1.5.2.1. Social Network Sites as “Networked Publics”

Social network sites are considered a genre of “networked publics”: publics that are reconfigured by networked technologies. In this digital format, “they are simultaneously (1) the space constructed through networked technologies and (2) the imagined collective that emerges as a result of the intersection of people, technology, and practice” (Boyd, 2011: 39). Boyd continues along the same line and mentions that network publics give people the possibility to meet in the digital space for interactions that have social, cultural and civic purposes, and they help them connect with a world beyond their close friends and family. Further, she underlines the fact that networked publics are similar to other types of publics, but “the ways in which technologies structures them introduces distinct affordances that shape how people engage with these environments. The properties of bits – as distinct from atoms – introduce new possibilities for interaction. As a result, new dynamics emerge that shape participation” (Idem: 39). Hence, networked publics/social network sites bring forth specific affordances which do not impose a particular behaviour to the participants, “but they do configure the environment in a way that shapes participants’ engagement” (Idem: 39).

Networked publics, like “publics”, bring together “a collection of people who share “a common understanding of the world, a shared identity, a claim to inclusiveness, a consensus regarding the collective interests” (Livingstone, 2005, apud. Boyd, 2011: 40). Thus, people engaging in social network sites manifest a group identity that make them feel they belong to a community which contains members that are like them. Implicitly, they are different from people engaging in different communities. In this way, networked publics are “arenas for the formation and enactment of social identities” (Fraser, 1992, apud. Boyd, 2011: 41). At the same time, “they are simultaneously a space and a collection of people” (Boyd, 2011: 41).

1.5.2.2. Technical Affordances of SNSs

Social network sites permit individuals to create a public or semi-public **profile** within a bounded space, to have **lists of friends**, to access other users’ list of friends, to **comment** and to **update** their information.

Profiles are the most important part of social network sites because they provide a representation of the individual and they constitute a place of interaction where users converse and share information. Generating and maintain a profile constitute an explicit act of writing, creating and re-inventing oneself in a digital environment, participants having the possibility to chose how to present themselves to their interactive audience. Hence, users do not have complete control over their self-representation because other users engage with them on their profile and shape their representation. Profiles can be public or semi-public, depending on the privacy setting selected by users.

The **lists of friends** constitute the users' public articulation of networks. Additionally, Hogan (2011) considers friends on Facebook to be "forms of information access control for this grant database" and "the basis of content distribution".

The friends on social network sites are rarely the closest friends: "in choosing who to include as friends, participants more frequently consider the implications of excluding or explicitly rejecting a person as opposed to the benefits of including them [...] participants simply include all who they consider a part of their social world. This might include current and past friends and acquaintances as well as peripheral ties, or people that the participant barely knows but feels compelled to include" (Boyd, 2011: 44). In the last category of people are included teachers, parents, bosses, etc. Including these people as connections on social network sites might influence the way in which users construct a social identity as they might refrain from displaying linguistic behaviour, pictures, videos, etc. that they would have displayed otherwise. Of course, the existence of various types of audience in one's Friends List is sometimes ignored by some users and various roles/social identities are constructing simultaneously. The consequence might not always be the desired one. For example, one user added an intimate tie on his Facebook Friends List and, at the same time, added a teacher. The friend that he added had a nickname instead of his real name as a username and the nickname contained offensive slang. The renowned teacher used his real name as a username. On the user's Facebook Wall the following notification appeared: *Eva Parloc is now friends with First-class [the offensive slang] and [the teacher's name]*. This might be negatively perceived by the community of the young subculture to whom the

user aspires to belong because he mixed formal ties with informal ties and, thus, jeopardized the relaxed linguistic behaviour of this youngsters' community. At the same time, the social community of teachers might feel that their formal ties with the student are compromised.

The Friends List stands as an example that with the emergence of the Internet and social network sites, the boundaries between the public and the private sphere are blurred (see Levmore and Nussbaum, 2010). Participating on SNSs involves knowing details about a person that wouldn't be available otherwise and engaging in a space characterised by "collective privacy" (see Strahilevitz, 2010).

The tools for public communication (**the comments**) are means of providing public and semi-public interactions. Comments can be posted on the users' profile or on pictures. They can involve both two-party, and multi-party interactions. All users' friends can see the comments and contribute to the conversation. Sometimes the comments have little value, they are posted only to let other users know that we noticed what they post, to greet them, to have an active e-friendship. Even so, "the ritual of checking in is a form of social grooming. Through mundane comments, participants are acknowledging one another in a public setting, similar to the way in which they may greet each other if they were to bump into one another on the street. Comments are not simply a dialogue between two interlocutors, but a performance of social connection before a broader audience" (Boyd, 2011: 45). An example which proves this point is the following:

- *A: Heeeei Anaa! Ce mai faci?? Eu ma plictisesc in vacanta, dar nu mi-e dor de Cluj ! :))* [heeeey, Anaa! How are you?? I am on holiday and bored but I don't miss Cluj! :))]
B: Hello! Eu nu mă plictii deloc ;) ... dacă nu ți-i dor de Cluj, nu te pot ajuta :D [Hello! I am not at all bored ;)... if you don't miss Cluj, I cannot help you :D]
- *A: Vacanțăăăăăăăăăă ! :)* [holidaaaaaaays]
B: iupiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiii

1.5.2.2.1. The Case of *Be Welcome*

Be Welcome, as the name suggests, is an online social network that users access and where they are active members in order to travel the world, meet people, host and be hosted by people: "Imagine arriving in a city like Paris or Mumbai

and, instead of trying to find a taxi, there is somebody already waiting for you. Imagine that instead of going to eat at the place recommended by the guidebook, someone shows you their favourite restaurant. Imagine the experience staying as a personal guest of your new friend rather than sleeping in an impersonal hotel room. Be Welcome makes it possible” (<http://www.bewelcome.org/about>).

We will not scrutinise this SNS because its functions are similar to Couchsurfing that we will analyse in detail further on. What we find very interesting about this SNS is that users negotiate the technical affordances of the medium and, in this way, they negotiate the medium in which they interact with other users. Implicitly, they negotiate their identity as well. For example:

- After the introduction of the “recent visitors on my profile”¹³ feature, users started a thread to negotiate whether this feature should be maintained or not. Negotiating this feature gives the users control over the medium, over the online activity performed and over their online representation (some relevant comments from the thread can be found in **Annex 2**). Moreover, we mention that this feature is not encountered on Facebook and Couchsurfing. It’s linked to identity construction as it is a sign of popularity/unpopularity for the users (if the number of visitors is big, the users are popular members and if the number is small, they are unpopular). It also constitutes a trace of the users who visited the profile and signals users with similar tastes and interests, thus tracing a group identity.
- When signing up for this SNS, users have to provide login information (username, password, e-mail), personal information (first name, second name (optional), last name, date of birth and gender) and location. The gender profile field had originally two options: *male* and *female*. Users complained that their gender identity is not accounted for properly and now the gender profile field includes a third option: *other*.

The debate started on the 26st of December 2011 and it was still ongoing in March 2013 (the last comment was posted on the 18th March 2013). As the

¹³ This feature allows users to see who has visited their profiles. Visiting a profile can imply more things: clicking on a particular user by mistake/random, visiting just to have a glimpse of the profile or visiting in order to read about the user.

Internet is a panachronic space, users can always start debating and voting again in the same thread even if many years pass and maybe another option will be added in the future.

The debate highlights the idea that, for this online community, gender identity is not biological but rather a sociocultural construct (relevant comments from this debate can be found in **Annex 3**).

These two examples show that the technical affordances of the medium are changing according to the users' opinions and votes. At the same time, the way in which identity is expressed/constructed changes as well.

1.5.2.3. Structural Affordances

Taking into consideration the structural affordances of networked publics when analysing identity construction in cyberspace provides the necessary interpretative framework: "people are learning to work within the constraints and possibilities of mediated architecture" (Boyd, 2011: 55).

Danah Boyd (2011: 46–48) identifies four structural affordances that "play a significant role in configuring networked publics" and also in configuring online identities: **persistence, replicability, scalability, searchability**.

Persistence refers to the fact that online expressions (text, images, music or videos) are automatically recorded and archived. While speech is ephemeral by default, technology makes the acts produced persistent by default. At the same time, the acts are transformed by the recipients. Thus, the act of constructing an online identity on an online social network like Facebook is immediately recorded and archived. Other users can see the 'recordings' and 'archives' of one's online identity and interpret it. Even if users can always come back and delete content, there might be a copy saved somewhere else, by other users. Hence, "while original records and duplicated records can in theory be deleted (or, technically, overwritten) at any point in the process, the "persistent-by-default, ephemeral-when-necessary" dynamic is relatively pervasive, rendering tracking down and deleting content once it is contributed to networked publics futile" (Boyd, 2011: 47).

Replicability in networked publics means that the bit content can be easily duplicated. Danah Boyd signals out that "in a world of bits, there is no way to

differentiate the original bit from its duplicate. And, because bits can be easily modified, content can be transformed in ways that make it hard to tell which is the source and which is the alteration. The replicable nature of content in networked publics means that what is replicated may be altered in ways that people do not easily realize” (2011; 47).

Scalability is the affordance that signals the high potential visibility of content in networked publics. Technology permits broader distribution and new possibilities for distribution. For example, on a SNS everything can be distributed: upcoming official events (*Party Festival des Très Courts @Club Midi, International Jazz Day Cluj-Napoca, byron la Cluj-Napoca, 5 aprilie 2013* [the band Byron playing in Cluj-Napoca, 5th of April 2013], *International Jazz Day Cluj-Napoca, Butterflies in my Stomach*¹⁴ ... *live in Underground, Schimb de cărți Cluj-Napoca Enigma Café Cluj* [book exchange ...]), personal life details (birthdays, engagements, weddings, etc.), videos, adverts, shorts films, images, hyperlinks to other sites or Facebook pages of celebrities, companies, restaurants, etc., political campaigns, charity campaigns and so on and so forth. The distribution of this content via SNSs, by individual users or by companies/bands/artists, etc. that use SNSs for marketing purposes, certifies that “the Internet may enable many to broadcast content and create publics, but it does not guarantee an audience. What scales in networked publics may not be what everyone wishes to scale. Furthermore, while a niche group may achieve visibility that resembles “micro-celebrity” (Senft, 2008), only a small fraction receives massive attention, while many more receive very small, localized attention. Scalability in networked publics is about the possibility of tremendous visibility, not the guarantee of it” (Boyd, 2011: 48).

Searchability is defined as a commonplace activity among Internet users. It describes the fact that content in networked publics can be accessed through search. “As people use technologies that leave traces, search takes on a new role. While being able to stand in a park and vocalize “find” to locate a person or object may seem like an element of a scientific story, such actions are increasingly viable

¹⁴ A Romanian band

in networked publics. Search makes finding people in networked publics possible [...]” (Boyd, 2011: 48). In the same vein, using Google search engine, users can type in the name of a person/place, information, press the *enter* key and entries related to that person/place/information, etc. will be selected. The same operation can be performed using the search engine of a particular SNS: on Facebook: *Search for people, places and things*; on Couchsurfing: *Find a place*; myspace: *Search people*; LinkedIn: *Search...* .

In addition to the structural affordances mentioned above, Danah Boyd also names three dynamics that play an important part in shaping networked publics (2011: 49) and, at the same time, online identity representation:

- **Invisible audiences:** Some of the audiences might not be visible or present when a user is contributing online.
- **Collapsed contexts:** It is difficult to maintain distinct contexts because of the lack of special, social, and temporal.
- **The blurring of public and private:** Without control over context, public and private become meaningless binaries, are scaled in new ways, and are difficult to maintain as distinct”. With regards to the third dynamic, Boyd argues that “privacy is simply in a state of transition as people try to make sense of how to negotiate the structural transformation resulting from networked media” (2011: 52).

1.5.2.4. Social Affordances

When we write about the Internet, we also have to keep in mind its social dimension. Hence, SNSs are more than online communities, they “function as social venues in which many different communities may form” (Parks, 2011: 105). Thus, SNSs offer particular possibilities for action: social affordances. Parks (2011: 109) argues that “three types of social affordances are required for the formation of virtual communities on social network sites: affordances of membership, expression and connection”. In what follows, we present Parks’ view on these three social affordances (2011: 109–111).

Affordances of **Membership** take into account elements like the age of users (users have to be 13 or older to sign up for Facebook, 14 or older to sign up for

MySpace), the user agreement, the last login on the SNSs (which signals an active/inactive membership) and a “public” or a “private” profile. Private profiles make public only demographic information, (sometimes) a photo, and the date of the last login. Only “friends” can see the full profile of the users who choose to have a private profile. Public profiles display the entire content to everyone, sometimes even to users who are not members of the SNS. Parks notes that “because the choice of private/public display has a fundamental effect on how others might relate to an individual, it represents a significant communicative affordance. Public profiles facilitate the formation of weak ties among unacquainted people to a greater degree than private profiles and therefore encourage community formation and cohesion” (2011: 110). We add that the choice of private/public profile also has an influence on how others contribute to the construction of users’ identity. If the profile is public, more users are likely to contribute to the social identity of the user involved. Hence, the user’s representation has a much more complex interactional dimension because it doesn’t involve only strong ties.

Affordances of **personal expression** involve customization and the display of (a) personal picture(s). Customization allows users to express themselves more individually through the choice of fonts and background colours, by embedding music or videos, by playing with the page layout. Visual images represent individuality and offer users more individualized responses in return” (see Parks, 2011: 110). We could add that visual images show the users’ tastes and communicate something about their personal selves. At the same time, the display of a personal picture might increase trust in the user because users know/think they know who they are interacting with.

Affordances of **connection** refer to the following tools: direct messages, creation and/or participation in groups of discussion, “friending”, instant messaging, bulletins and comments posted on the recipients’ page. Parks considers that the most visible are the linkages between friends and the posting of comments. He also states that these two increase users’ social connectivity. Additionally, digi-participants who use these two affordances of connectivity are more likely to experience the involvement, identification, attachment, inclusiveness and the sense of belonging characteristic of any community. Those with little connectivity are

unlikely to experience any digital space [Facebook, Couchsurfing, LinkedIn etc.] as a community (see Parks, 2011: 111). Thus, these two affordances also contribute to the construction of group identity for the active users.

1.5.3. Facebook Outline

Facebook is a social network website where users are expected to provide their real names and information. Thus, in order to be approved members of this virtual community, users have to make commitments when registering, but also when using Facebook (<http://www.facebook.com/legal/terms>): users will not provide any false personal information on Facebook, or create an account for anyone other than themselves without permission; users will not create more than one personal account; if the Facebook team disables their account, users will not create another one without our permission; users will not use their personal timeline primarily for their own commercial gain, and will use a Facebook Page for such purposes; users will not use Facebook if they are under 13; users will not use Facebook if they are convicted sex offenders; users will keep their contact information accurate and up-to-date; users will not share their password (or in the case of developers, their secret key), let anyone else access their account, or do anything else that might jeopardize the security of their account; users will not transfer their account (including any Page or application their administer) to anyone without first getting the Facebook team's written permission; if users select a username or similar identifier for their account or Page, the Facebook team reserves the right to remove or reclaim it if they believe it is appropriate (such as when a trademark owner complains about a username that does not closely relate to a user's actual name).

Facebook was created in 2004 as a social network site only for Harvard students. It quickly encompassed students from other universities and college campuses in the United States. In 2005, highschools were added to Facebook. In 2006, commercial organizations joined Facebook as well (see Zywica and Danowski, 2008: 2). It finally branched out allowing everyone age 13 or older to join. Researchers claim that one major reason why Facebook was accommodated in the school environment is because Facebook is inherently *social* and

collaborative. The *list of friends* feature is one example. So, once signed in, you can see who is on someone's list of friends, and you can invite more people to join your network. It provides a framework in which users organise and keep a circle of friends (see Kesley, 2010: 26).

Facebook sometimes represents an *online to offline* trend – offline connections that result in online meetings (Ellison, 2007). For example, some students know each other during a summer school. They spend together a month, but after the summer school is over, they continue to interact only online, on Facebook. However, Facebook represents mainly a hybrid trend: online and offline interaction patterns (Ellison, Lampe, Steinfield, Vitak, 2011: 126).

1.5.3.1. Facebook Affordances

Users can add links and song clips of their favourite bands, post messages on friends' pages, and post and tag pictures and videos. Through the site, members connect with friends, colleagues, fellow students, and family members (see Zywicki and Danowski, 2008: 2). In addition, they can add/remove friends, use the Facebook chat e-mail situation, post comments, statuses and use the *share* and *like* options. They can also 'follow' different users. The category of 'followed users' is usually represented by celebrities, newspapers, bars, restaurants and pubs, etc. that users cannot always add as friends. They can only select the 'follow'/'like' option, so that they can see the updates of these users because they are interested in this. The 'follow' option is a function specific to *Twitter*, the social networking site and microblogging, where users aim to connect with friends, celebrities, news experts and so on. Hence, the aim of the 'follow' function is to keep users up-to-date with what interests them.

All of these elements reveal and make up bits and pieces of users' identities. Users select what they want to display and what they don't. They can also select who can see the information uploaded and who cannot see it.

Last but not least, the following user¹⁵'s comments taken from a conversation on the Facebook Wall (the space of the Facebook profile where content is

¹⁵ A Romanian young female user.

displayed) highlights that new technologies and their affordances have changed the way in which we perceive communication, discourse and identity:

- *Facebook is some sort of a linguistic miracle. It made it possible for all of us to talk to walls. Yeah, you got it “vorbim cu peretii” [we talk to walls]. In my drowsy mind floating in early January blues, that is actually funny. :)))*
- *[...] poate ar merge si niste graffiti [some graffiti would be nice]. I could put that on my list of things that I wouldn't be doing in real life, but I could do here....which pretty much sums up what Facebook is... for me :D the wall I can hide behind :) Don't tell the kids! (<http://www.facebook.com>, 10th April 2011).*

1.5.3.1.1. Facebook Profile

Facebook users can create personalized profiles using the following digital features: *Timeline, About, Friends, Photos and More (Movies, Music, TV Shows, Books, Likes, Notes, Places)*.

In the *About* section, we can find general information about users: *Education and Work* background, *Relationship Status and Family* (e.g. hyperlink the Facebook pages of parents/brothers/sisters), *About You* (“write about yourself”), *Favourite Quotation* (“add a favourite quotation”), *Living Information* (current location, hometown), *Basic Information* (birthday, gender, languages spoken, religious and political views), *Contact Information* (address, e-mail and Facebook address) and *History by Year* (e.g. born on..., married on...) (see **Annex 4** for an example of *About* section);

The “Facebook Timeline is a new social media feature introduced by Facebook in September 2011 and rolled out to all users in February 2012. Timeline combines a user's Facebook Wall and Profile into one page, creating a more visually holistic profile. It includes reverse-chronological details, by year, of a user's Facebook history with key life points, including birthdays, weddings and other major events. Timeline reorganizes all stored user information for display, rather than archival. In previous Facebook incarnations, it was more difficult or impossible to view outdated events, photos and comments.” (<http://www.techopedia.com/definition/28406/facebook-timeline>). An example of Facebook timeline can be found in **Annex 5**;

The *Friends* section shows the user's list of friends. It can be grouped into categories. The categories depend from one user to another. For e.g. *all friends*, *recently added*, *college*, *mutual friends*, *people you may know*, *following*, etc.;

The *Photos* uploaded can be grouped into categories (*Profile Picture*, *Cover Picture* – a background picture and *Albums*). At the same time, the photos uploaded by other users can appear on their Facebook page (timeline) if they are 'tagged'¹⁶: the *Photos of You* section. The tagging operation constitutes a way of sharing pictures and of constructing other users' social identity. All in all, all the photos construct a narrative identity for the Facebook users via the semiotic code – images.

The *More* section (*Movies*, *Music*, *TV Shows*, *Books*, *Likes*, *Notes*, *Places*) shows the likes and activities of users, grouping them in the corresponding category. This section is also relevant for the online identity of users, expressing their interests.

1.5.3.1.2. The Like and Share Options

In the time span 2010–2013, users could click the *like* button for the pages of celebrities, places, newspapers, TV shows or any category from the *More* section. In this way, they receive notifications when these pages are updated. They can also click the *like* button in order to signal to their friends that they like their comments, pictures or status updates. In both cases, users establish a social identity and mark their belonging to particular groups of users (those who *like* the same things). Users can always *unlike* a category, operating a change in their online representation and re-structuring their network. This pinpoints the fluidity of the medium.

The *share* option is another way of marking group identity by making the other users' part of what we choose to display: photos, links to other sites (YouTube channel for e.g.) or statuses.

1.5.3.1.3. Chat

Users can join various networks and chatgroups on topics of their interest. In what chatgroups are concerned, the asynchronous/synchronous dichotomy mentioned by Crystal (2001: 130) applies to Facebook as well.

¹⁶ the digital operation which permits that users who appear in a photo to be identified by other users and hyperlinked to other users' pages

Firstly, asynchronicity on Facebook can take the form of comments to pictures, links or statuses and messages posted in a chat when the addressee is offline. Secondly, the forums are asynchronous conversations on a specific topic between one or more users. There can be large spans of time between the interventions and there are no specific rules for posting a contribution to a forum.

Synchronicity refers to ongoing conversations in real time: the messages posted in a Facebook chat when both users are online.

1.5.3.1.4. The Facebook Wall/Timeline

The Facebook Wall was the space on each user's profile page where users could post messages, links to videos or sites. Users could post on their own Wall or on other users' Wall: "When you're on your own Profile page, you notice at the very top that the Wall asks you, "What's on your mind?" You can type in a thought, a comment, a link, or a variety of other things. In other words, the Wall keeps track of things automatically so you can post whatever you want to it". Other users could see the information posted and they could react to it or post something else. Thus, the Wall gathered whatever users had been up to. [...] If they had posted a picture, joined a group, or made some comments, they would show up in the Wall News Feed. Some people chose to have some things displayed while other things remained hidden. The Wall was like a time capsule that you could scroll to see more (Kelsey, 2010: 32).

The Facebook Wall was replaced by the Facebook Timeline in 2011, in order to provide easier access to content. Thus, users can select a year and they can access the information displayed in a particular time span. They do not have to scroll down the entire Facebook page in order to reach that particular year.

1.5.3.1.5. Facebook E-mail

Besides chats and forums, Facebook Netizens can send messages to one another. The Facebook messages are private messages sent to the user's Inbox and only the sender and the recipient can see them. They are like e-mails and, thus, we will call them e-mails for the sake of simplicity and convenience. Like any e-mail, the Facebook e-mail allows multiple addressees. But, unlike regular e-mails, there are no *Cc* or *Bcc* lines. Hence, all the addresses belong to the same category and

the categorisation of users might sometimes be indicated only by the order in which the sender introduces the usernames. For e.g. the first introduced in the list might be more important than the last. Still, most of time, the order of the usernames is random.

1.5.3.1.6. Facebook Groups

On Facebook, users can create groups and invite members to join their groups or they can join groups that are already created by other users and that they are interested in and want to be up-dated with particular topics. The groups can be on any theme/with the specificity preferred by users: groups of friends (a group of friends might want to interact online with each other in the same group), buying and selling books, searching for an apartment in a specific town, groups of students who are studying at the same university/the same field, users who are interested in a particular free time activity, users who are working in similar fields, etc. Some concrete examples are the following: *Beachvolleyball Vienna*, *Exchange/Erasmus Students in Paris*, *Exchange @ ESN Uni Wien Spring 2012*, *Asociația Studenților Români din Austria* [Austria Romanian Students Association], *Universitatea Babeș-Bolyai*, *Erasmus Student Network @ Uni Wien*, *Baia Mare*, *Clasele I–XII Liceul de Artă Promoția 2004* [Art Highschool group – a particular generation of students], *Nagybányai Szentháromság plébánia fiataljai* [youngsters that go to a particular church], etc.

There are three options for the creation of groups: *Open* (Anyone can see the group, who's in it, and what members post); *Closed* (anyone can see the group and who's in it. Only members see posts); *Secret* (Only members see the group, who's in it, and what members post).

1.5.3.2. Facebook – The Users' Life Story

The digital space of Facebook resembles *Le Livre* (The Book), which Mallarmé planned to write but never did.

The Book was supposed to be a Total book which would contain all of the writer's work, the entire Universe. The writer wanted it to be his own mirror, a book where he could read about himself. Unlike a regular book, he planned to have the pages unbound, and so the order in which the Livre would be read

would be subject to permutation. Each reading of the Book would be a performance or session in which it would adapt itself to its present context and readers. For instance, the number of pages in each volume of the Livre would vary according to the number of operators and auditors present at each session. “Verso and recto are to be interchangeable in the multiple possibilities of this volume's binding; and so the Livre would not impose a single direction or vector of reading. Indeed, the notes seem to be experimental jottings concerning this variable ordination of pagination” (<http://www.antwerpjamesjoycecenter.com/ibook.html>).

Facebook is similar to *The Book* and, strangely, it is labeled “Facebook”. The name comes from the small photo albums that colleges gave to incoming freshmen and faculty members to make them acquainted with the new people (see Rosen, 2011: 175). Facebook contains the users’ version of their offline life; it represents their digital mirror, which sometimes distorts reality. Users can read themselves after constructing their identity and they can also read about other users.

Facebook contains characteristics specific to *The Book*. We may never see the same information regarding our friends when we access our Facebook accounts because most users regularly add/remove/replace information (quotations, notes, discussions, comments, pictures, changes of location and work places, adding friends on their list). Hence, Facebook is always a draft, always in the making. It presents the evolution of a text through discrete paratactic draftings. Facebook always contains hyperlinks and it can be read randomly.

We could say that Mallarmé tried to write a non-digital hypertext: a hypertext that does not depend on the HTML or the WWW Consortium. Hence, Facebook is like Mallarmé’s book and interpreting the identity of the Netizens “contained” in this book is a challenge, just as constructing a group or individual identity is for the Netizens.

1.5.4. Couchsurfing Outline

This virtual social network is defined as a ‘hospitality exchange site’ (O’Regan, 2009: 179). On this online social network, users from all around the world interact with one another in order to host other users, be hosted by other users

(surf) or just meet for a drink or a guided tour of a place they do not know (see **Annex 6a.**).

The foundation of Couchsurfing started when Casey Fenton, a software programmer from USA wanted a ‘real Iceland’ experience: to interact with people who lived there, rather than booking a hostel/hotel. He hacked into the University of Iceland student directory and sent messages to 1500 students, asking for advice and guidance. In 2004, Casey and others (co)founders created Couchsurfing (see O’Regan, 2009: 179).

On Couchsurfing, most users are total strangers to one another offline and, initially, most of them know other users only online: through the descriptions of themselves, the photos uploaded, the ratings left by other users (positive, negative and neutral) and through the detailed public references of each other. Hence, this social network “draws together, serves and connects a geographically dispersed network of strangers based around a shared interest of practice, a medium by which participants draw purpose and which suggests rather than directs a new way of life” (O’Regan, 2009: 180). However, some links originate from offline interaction. Either way, Couchsurfing aims at *online to offline* directionality – online connections that result in face-to-face meetings (Ellison, 2007). Furthermore, “the understanding that participation will lead to face-to-face contact and prolonged and intense interaction with other members shapes the dynamic of the network creating what Du Gay (1997, 15) calls a “semantic network” – which he describes as a network of shared meanings and practices associated with its own discourse” (O’Regan, 2009: 179).

On Couchsurfing, users want to have a positive image. They are expected to and they claim that what they display online is a perfect match to their offline persona. Hence, in this digital space, like Nancy Baym states: “reality seems to be that many, probably most social users of computer-mediated communication create online selves consistent with their offline identities” (Baym, 1998, apud. Castells, 2001:119). Moreover, the Couchsurfing network is based on trust and safety. Hence, users are expected to provide true information about themselves (**Annex 6 b.**) as “access to personal identity information can support relationship-

formation” (Ellison, Lampe, Steinfield, Vitak, 2011: 138). If the information is false, the users’ safety is compromised.

Users are required to create a semi-public profile, providing their real name and address and fill in personal information, pictures and interests. Like any other social network profile, the Couchsurfing profile is a digital representation of one’s identity. Still, unlike most social network sites, where users connect to known others by ‘friending’ them, on Couchsurfing, users cannot comment on other users’ profiles, ‘friend’ them or invite users to view their profiles. While Myspace and Facebook sustain and maintain an already known network of friends, colleagues, family, neighbours, etc., Couchsurfing contains dispersed strangers. The profile categories are quite rigid and users are required to state whether they can offer hospitality (accommodation – ‘a couch’, a coffee/drink), what they can offer to their guests, their language skills, past and future travel plans. Users cannot upload videos, flash or applications. They can ‘hide’ personal data (age or birthday), but their profiles default position is public (see O’Regan, 2009: 180).

Couchsurfing promotes a different kind of tourism and “each person is a node in a global network, with each individual helping to sustain the activities of the others through mobility and fixity, contributing to their own identity whether at home or on the road” (O’Regan, 2009: 182). Of course, mobility and fixity are dynamic features of Couchsurfers and they highlight two facets of the Couchsurfing users: hosts and ‘surfers’ (users who travel). These two features also help build a “collective global agency that sustains and circulates commonly recognized [...] understandings, traditions, norms, identities, values, direction, interest, practice, interaction style and purpose; that only become visible through participation in and through the medium” (O’Regan, 2009: 182).

Couchsurfing is an online participatory medium where users interact with a pre-established purpose (to host travellers or to be hosted, to interact with people belonging to different cultural backgrounds). They create textual records of their interactions, “building a sense of shared consciousness and collectivity” (Turner, 2006, apud. O’Regan, 2009: 183). Thus, individual identity is expressed and constructed through the mediation of “technologies of the self” which require communication, interaction and exchange with others (see O’Regan, 2009:

183). We also mention that “[t]echnologies of the self are concomitantly technologies of sharing: they help form bonds... tapping into communal or collective culture that in turn reshapes... identity” (Van Dick, 2007, apud. O’Regan, 2009: 183).

1.5.4.1. Couchsurfing Affordances

The Couchsurfing page contains the following features: **Username, Current Mission, My profile, Account Settings, Classic Dashboard, Home, Find a Couch, Host a Traveler, Discuss**. We briefly present them and we scrutinize **My profile** in more detail.

Even though Couchsurfing is based on trust and safety, **usernames** do not always coincide with the users’ real names. Some examples: *Benivel, Bruno-Budapest, Dana28, Deep20SS, Feri bacsi aka Uncle Franek, MARYG, MichaPolscha, Mr. Roger, NICOGRU, ThreeOfLife, V for Vyron, WAV3Girl, WHOOAHAA, 123j*. There are also couples who use the same profile and we encounter usernames like: *Guy et Armelle Massicard, Claire and Gilles Deplas*.

Current mission is the section where users introduce some thoughts or words that represent them and their future plans (some users choose to leave this space empty). The vast majority of users post optimistic messages:

- *one day at a time – fun!;*
- *To conquer the West Coast of The United States of America;*
- *Ready to be amazed!!!!;*
- *Play music. Rock-climbing. Understand time and travel trough;*
- *Live the good life, travel around and discover new places;*
- *Doing one thing everyday that scares me;*
- *To do awesome things and see awesome places and people;*
- *Enjoy the sunshine;*
- *on hosting guest, to promote my countries tourism destination so as to make my effort on tourism as i am expert on tourism in Ethiopia and overseas in Dubai;*
- *My mission is to have a coffee or beer with at least one person from every culture and with those of mixed cultures;*

- *Discovering the world, and meeting new people !! olaaa, Be happy. Have fun. Experience. Dare. Accomplish. Provoke. Dream. Live;*
- *To come back in one piece;*
- *no mission;*
- *Go with the flow...and hope for the best;*
- *Run like hell.*

Users access **account settings** in order to update the general information of their profiles: username, first name, real first name, last name, email address, phone number, gender, birthdate, ethnicity, interests – hosting, surfing or both.

On the **Dashboard**, users see the information updated in the groups of discussion they joined, surfers looking for a host in their region and the last login of their friends.

The **Home** section displays users' ongoing asynchronous conversations. Every Couchsurfer can join any conversation they are interested in, at any time. However, given that conversations on Couchsurfing are not simply small talk, joining a conversation in which users have already reached the goal would be considered spamming. Examples of conversations:

A: Hey couchsurfers, how about hanging out tomorrow for a beer? I would love to meet people who live in Cluj as I have just moved from my hometown and I do not know anyone. Just let me know where would you like to meet!! See ya!!!

B: Well, if you want, you can attend the weekly CouchDrinking get together that is held every Friday: <https://www.couchsurfing.org/n/threads/cluj-napoca-cluj-romania-https-www-couchsurfing-org-n-events-couchdrinking-94th-edition-friday-april-19th-9-p-m-shto-cluj-napoca-friday-again>

You're welcome! (if a user contributed to this conversation after too much time has passed, his intervention would be useless).

In the **Find a Couch** section, users have the possibility to search for hosts in the places they are going to visit. They introduce the place and the software automatically shows the hosts available in the region. Moreover, users have the possibility to filter their search by age, gender, keywords, network (My Friends,

Friends of my Friends, In my groups), Safety Features (has photo, verified¹⁷, vouched¹⁸), Advanced Options (the working language between him and his host, last login, ambassador¹⁹, wheelchair accessible) (see **Annex 7**).

In the **Host a traveler** section, users have to follow three steps.

Step 1 asks the users to say whether they can offer a couch or not.

If the answer in Step 1 is positive, **Step 2** requires them to “update the “Couch Information” section of their profile”, namely to describe what their home is like and what they expect from their guests. For example:

- **Couch Information, their home and rules for the guests:**

Couch Available: *Maybe* **Has pets:** *No*

Preferred Gender: *Any* **Can host pets:** *No*

No smoking allowed **Max Surfers Per Night:** *1*

Has children: *No* **Shared Sleeping Surface:** *No*

Can host children: *Yes* **Shared Room:** *No, he/she will sleep on the floor.*

In addition, users can provide other information regarding their homes (if they live alone, how big their room is etc.) or rules that are important for them (for e.g. that surfers clean after themselves, leave the house early in the morning, bring their sleeping bags, etc.).

Step 3 is called **Find Surfers to host!** Users have to type the location where they can offer a couch to surfers (for e.g. *Cluj-Napoca, Cluj, Romania*) and to introduce when they can offer the couch (for e.g.: *from 04/23/2012 to 10/23/2012*).

Users can also use the same filter as in **Find a Couch** section.

¹⁷ “a check of their name and location, to help the community see that they're being honest about who they are” (<https://www.couchsurfing.org/vouch.html>)

¹⁸ “When someone is vouched for, it signifies an elevated level of trust in the community. The only way to become vouched for is to be extremely trusted by someone who has been vouched for by three other members. You must know each other in the real world. If you are a trusted friend, the vouched member can vouch for you. Once you have been vouched for three times, you can in turn vouch for members you sincerely believe to be trustworthy” (<https://www.couchsurfing.org/vouch.html>)

¹⁹ “Ambassadors are experienced Couchsurfing members who contribute their time to activities that support the community. They meet up with new members, organize events, answer questions, and generally spread the word about how to be a great host or guest (not least of all by being good hosts and guests themselves!)” (<http://www.couchsurfing.org/contact/step2?category=Ambassadors>)

1.5.4.1.1. Couchsurfing Profile

My Profile displays the following information about the user:

- **General information.** We could label this part **Basic Identity Coordinates**. For example: *Couch available (yes/no), Couchsurf request replied to (100%/80%/50%), Last login (1 hour ago/one month ago etc., Cluj-Napoca, Romania), Member since (March 27th, 2012), Profile views (35/60/100 etc.), Age (27/30/34 etc.), Birthday (20 april) – this information can be seen by everyone or only by the user himself, depending on what privacy settings are selected, Gender (Male/Female), Membername (EVA.PARLOC etc.), Occupation (Student), Education (BA European Studies), Grew up (Cluj-Napoca, Romania);*
- **Languages.** For e.g. Romanian (expert), English (expert), French (intermediate), etc.;
- **Groups I belong.** For e.g. Table Tennis (ping ping), Vienna etc.;
- **Couch information:** Yes/no/maybe/not right now (but I can hang out)/I'm travelling;
- **Friends;**
- The following parts allow users to provide more details, to be creative and to create a positive image: **Personal Description, How I participate in CS (Couchsurfing), Couchsurfing Experience, Interests, Philosophy, Music, movies, books, Types of people I enjoy, Teach, learn, share, One amazing thing I done, Opinion on the Couchsurfing.org project, Locations travelled;**
- **Photos;**
- **References.** We have two sets that are combined: **Positive/Neutral/Negative and From Hosts/From Surfers/Travelling.** Some examples:
 - ✓ **Positive, from Hosts:** *Neil, is a nice guy, he have bad luck, I dont spend a lot time with him (when he stayed at home I was so busy), is very sociable and easy going: sorry wake up you so early!!!*
 - ✓ **Neutral, from Hosts:** *this guys is intelligence in online networking, if that's your interest then you can have a great time chit-chat with him... we have a long chit-chat nite until it was late and im so tired... hope he has a good time travel and enjoy life...*

In this section we also encountered references that are in fact **negative**: *My experience with him is not neutral, is more negative than it. I didn't hosted him but I met him for a dinner that makes me feel really disappointed, with his unpolite and disrespectful behavior. It's always nice to meet new people who apports a totally different vision over the world, but people that considers himself the whole world is not the same. It's so sad to tell this, but I will never recommend to host him or share anytime with him. It's a totally waste of time);*

or **positive**:

I hosted Neil for 2 nights and we talked allot. I liked his passion about his work as an investor and travelling. He is a nice guy and offered me advice on anything he could.

- ✓ **Negative, from Hosts:** *I truly regret for not reading his reference carefully enough, and this results in my biggest nightmare in CS. He's a horrible surfer, and someone who'll retaliate if you say something against him.*
 1. *Know nothing about basic rules: I gave him a perfect direction and he still asked me to pick him up. Reason: didn't write down the details.*
 2. *Extremely selfish: I offered to help him making bed, and he said 'ok' without doing anything.*
 3. *Left my place with a mess.*
 4. *Not interested in anything of you other than money.*
 5. *Changed his initial positive reference & friend request for me into negative as soon as he saw my negative for him. Total retaliation.*
 6. *Complained in retaliation about my drinking & smoking even I clearly stated in my profile.*
 7. *Complained about me not letting him sleep but in fact he stayed up late and talked to me until 3 am and this led me to have to finish my work until 5.*
 8. *Harassing me by constantly updating reference for 3 months. No space here for more details. Shame.*
- ✓ **Positive, Travelling:** *A great guy to meet. Interesting, informative and fun. I hope he keeps enjoying his travelling.*

There are other types of references as well:

- ✓ **Positive, from people who hang out:** *Neil sent me a request but I was unable to host him, but we met for a beer and chat, well travelled, business savvy and observant are just a few words to describe him :) I wish you the best of luck in your travels and ventures.*
- ✓ **Positive, from offline friends:** *Eva is an easygoing, funny and open-minded person. She knows how to enjoy life. She is a great friend! :)*

1.5.5. Online Media Literacy and the SNSs Case

Buckingham, 2008, presents the four components of media (subchapter 1.4.4.1. **Components of Digital Literacy** – representation, language, production and (cyber-) audience) and enumerates the issues for study in relation to the World Wide Web and games (2008: 80–85). Because different issues need to be explored in relation to other uses of the Internet, we scrutinise these four components in relation to SNSs in which users claim to express true identities (for e.g. Facebook and Couchsurfing), as these are the uses we are interested in. We borrow Buckingham’s models for WWW and games and we provide the list of aspects to be considered in relation with these SNSs.

The four components applied to SNSs bring about the following aspects:

- Representation:
 - ✓ SNSs like Facebook and Couchsurfing claim to “tell the truth” and be authentic, offering real names and real representations of users;
 - ✓ The presence of personal viewpoints or aspects of personal experience throughout the SNS via comments, videos, photos, conversations;
 - ✓ The (un)reliable, (in)accurate and (un)biased information posted;
 - ✓ The selection performed on what to display and what not to display;
 - ✓ The implicit socio-cultural values, ideologies and group identities of the Facebook/Couchsurfing (profile) pages and discourses contained.
- Language:
 - ✓ The use of visuals, audio-visuals, text and combination of the three in the construction of an online identity;

- ✓ The hypertextual structure of discourses which encourages users to navigate to other pages/profiles/forums of discussion;
- ✓ The way in which users address each other: formally or informally and, given that we are in cyberspace, sometimes, even a mixture. For example, a student might write comments to the pictures' posted by a teacher and insert a smiley in the comment, an informal element which promotes "user-friendliness" (term used by Buckingham, 2008: 80);
- ✓ The interactivity, control and feedback from other users.
- Production:
 - ✓ SNSs are used by individuals who construct an online representation, by companies or interest groups that want to persuade or influence;
 - ✓ The collaborative aspect of the online authorship;
 - ✓ The presence of commercial influences and advertisements;
 - ✓ The marketing diffused involuntarily by users who simply want to tell their friends about a concert, a place they liked, a movie they enjoyed, etc.
- Audience:
 - ✓ The ways in which users can be targeted by commercial appeals, both visibly and invisibly;
 - ✓ The nature of online participation in SNSs from messages to comments to bulletin boards and discussions to "user generated content";
 - ✓ The ways in which different groups of individuals use the SNSs and their purpose;
 - ✓ The interpretation of other users' identities and the participation in the construction of other users' online identity;
 - ✓ Public debates/ forums of discussion on any topic. For e.g. sports, politics, relationships, literature, films, religion, marriage, jobs, trips, etc.

1.5.6. Blogs – Presentation and Affordances

Web logs or blogs constitute a new genre in computer-mediated communication. They are regularly updated websites with multimodal content (text, pictures, videos, etc.) which is displayed in reverse chronological order. The audience can comment on any individual posting, contributing to the online creation of a

story. Thus, blogs contain comments, references to other online sources in the posting, links to favourite blogs in the sidebar, called the blogroll, and they form “clustered network of interconnected texts: the blogosphere” (Thimm, 2010: 343).

There are many types of blogs, different in terms of content, purpose and style: personal blogs, corporate and organizational blogs (with business purposes, marketing, branding and public relations purposes), travel/ political/ fashion/ education/ art/ music/ literature blogs, etc. We could add many other types of blogs but our purpose is not to provide an exhaustive list. We mentioned the above types of blogs only to give an overall image of the existing blogs.

Users of blogs (bloggers) themselves define it in the following ways:

- “Un blog este un jurnal personal. Un amvon zilnic. Un spațiu de colaborare. O tribună politică. Un canal pentru știri deosebite. O colecție de linkuri. Cuprinde gândurile dumneavoastră proprii. Și însemnările pe care le trimiteți lumii întregi.

Blogul dvs. este tot ceea ce vreți ca el să fie. Sunt milioane de astfel de bloguri, de toate formele și dimensiunile, și practic nu există reguli pentru ele.

Simplu spus, un blog este un site web unde dvs. puteți să scrieți lucruri neîntrerupt. Lucrurile noi vor fi afișate înaintea celorlalte, așa încât vizitatorii să poată citi ce este nou. Apoi, ei pot face comentarii asupra acestora sau pot face legătura la ele prin linkuri sau vă pot trimite e-mailuri. Sau niciuna dintre toate acestea.

De la lansarea Blogger, în 1999, blogurile au schimbat Web-ul, au afectat politica și jurnalismul și au permis ca milioane de persoane să își exprime punctul de vedere și să intre în contact cu alte persoane.

Și suntem convinși că toată povestea se află abia la început?”

(http://www.blogger.com/tour_start.g, 6th of May 2012)

[A blog is a personal diary. A personal pulpit. A collaborative space. A political stand. A particular news channel. A collection of links. It includes your thoughts. It sends your scraps to the whole world. Your blog is whatever you want it to be. There are millions of blogs of all shapes and sizes, and no rules for them.

To put it simply, a blog is a web site where you can write as much as you want, as long as you want. New things will be displayed before old ones, so visitors can read what is new. Then, they can post comments or they can hyperlink your content or they can send you e-mails. Or none of the above.

Since Blogger was launched in 1999, blogs have reshaped the web, impacted politics and journalism, and enabled millions of people to express their point of view and contact other people.

And we are sure this is only the beginning].

- “Blogs are usually (but not always) written by one person and are updated pretty regularly. Blogs are often (but not always) written on a particular topic – there are blogs on virtually any topic you can think of. From photography, to spirituality, to recipes, to personal diaries to hobbies – blogging has as many applications and varieties as you can imagine. Whole blog communities have sprung up around some of these topics putting people into contact with each other in relationships where they can learn, share ideas, make friends with and even do business with people with similar interests from around the world.”

(Rowse, Darren, 2005, <http://www.problogger.net/archives/2005/02/05/what-is-a-blog/>, 20th of April 2013)

- On problogger.net, the blogger Rowse Darren notes other definitions of blogs given by researchers:

“A weblog is a hierarchy of text, images, media objects and data, arranged chronologically, that can be viewed in an HTML browser”

(<http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/whatmakesaweblogaweblog.html>)

“A frequent, chronological publication of personal thoughts and Web links”

(<http://www.marketingterms.com/dictionary/blog/>)

‘From “Web log.” A blog is basically a journal that is available on the web. The activity of updating a blog is “blogging” and someone who keeps a blog is a “blogger.”’

(http://www.computersprintersrepairshouston.com/glossary_of_terms.html)

“A blog is basically a journal that is available on the web. The activity of updating a blog is “blogging” and someone who keeps a blog is a “blogger.”

Blogs are typically updated daily using software that allows people with little or no technical background to update and maintain the blog. Postings on a blog are almost always arranged in chronological order with the most recent additions featured most prominently.”

(<http://www.matisse.net/files/glossary.html#B>)

1.5.7. Play Catan

Play Catan (<http://www.playcatan.com/with-people.html>) is an online social platform where users can register for free and play the online strategy game *The Settlers of Catan* with other users: “Play online with real people! Ready for the challenge of playing with real people? Catanians from all over the world are looking forward to settle the island of Catan with you!”.

The game offers the map of an island with mountains, pastures, hills, fields, and forests, surrounded by the sea. Users construct villages, towns and roads using the resources that they gain during the game (wheat, brick, ore and wood)²⁰. We will not present in detail the rules of the game, as this is not in our focus. What interests us is the fact that Catan offers to users a space where they interact with complete strangers while playing an online game. Hence, users find themselves in a virtual space that, unlike Facebook and Couchsurfing, does not require them to use their real identities. They can construct any representation they want and use any pseudonym they like. They hide under their pseudonym and pre-defined male/female avatar and (sometimes) construct a discursive identity, chatting during the game. This identity is not expected to have a correspondent offline. Moreover, when users interact in this space, they start from the assumption that they are in the world of Catan, in the world of games and make-believe.

The platform contains the online *games*, *My playcatan* – which contains information about the user’s account, *forums* of discussion, *news and community* (community news, game news and event calendar).

²⁰ <http://www.playcatan.com/cow-instructions/catan-board-game.html>

In order to play the free online game, users access *The Settlers of Catan – Base Game* from the *games* section and they select *Play Catan Base Game*. In this section, users can:

- open up a new game and other users can join;
- join the games opened by other users;
- join the games that are in progress but need a substitute for a player who has left the game;
- continue the interrupted games.

Users see all the gamers who are online (their nicknames and avatars) on the right side of the Game Manager section (see **Annex 8**) where all the opened games are listed.

All the games on *The Settlers of Catan – Base Game* are opened by the users themselves. They have various options at their disposal (see <http://game.playcatan.com/browsercow/cowplay.php?size=2>):

- **Off/on keyboard chat:** If the players want to use the keyboard to chat during the game, they turn the option on. Otherwise, only the pre-defined chat messages will be available. If the chat is ON and the players are harassed by another player, they can use the mute option so he can not send messages anymore. They can also add that player to the ignore list to prevent him/her from joining other games in the future;
- **Off/On Draw seat:** players get to choose the start position;
- **Off/On Host:** the player who opens the game denominates himself as the host of the game and it is only the player who sets up the game that can change the game options;
- **Off/On Starting Player:** with this option the starting player can be determined. Otherwise, the starting player is determined randomly;
- **Off/On Invisible:** when this option is ON, the game is not listed in the Game Manager after the game has started. This option thus allows the players to play privately.
- **Off/On Players:** with this option, the number of players is set (at least three, maximum four). The game can be started only when the specified number of players has joined.

- **Off/On Friendly Robber:** the robber cannot be used to steal a resource from players who have less than three victory points. If no player has more than two victory points, the robber/pirate is not moved.
- **Off/On No Scoring:** the game is not given a score. This option can be used to play games for learning or testing purposes;
- **Off/On Free for all:** all players may join this game, regardless, of the game statistics. If a player has a high quota of unfinished games, this option is set automatically to ON when setting up a game;
- **Off/On Password:** if this option is ON and a password is entered in the entry field, only players who know the password can enter the game.

1.6. Partial Conclusions

As a conclusion to this chapter which presents the functioning of the digital world in the time span 2010–2013, we consider that cyberspace constitutes an ever-changing and, thus, always new field of investigation for language and identity research. The general affordances of new media and the specific affordances of the Internet situations have created a discursive space in which users express themselves and construct an identity seen as a representation. It is essential for us to describe the medium before analysing the online discourse and the process of online identity construction.

Given the advanced technology and the rapid change, we argue that the content, the discourses and the representations that users construct in cyberspace are shaped by the digital medium. Furthermore, the affordances change very fast and this chapter is useful because it describes the digital spaces under focus in a particular time span. Thus, this chapter can be used in order to account for the technological changes in the aforementioned spaces, and, as a consequence, for subsequent emergent identities.

CHAPTER II

Cyber-Language Socialisation and Online Practices

This chapter analyses the “digitized” features and online practices of communication and socialisation in cyberspace in the time span 2010–2013: speech and writing applied to the cyber environment, “netspeak” principles and Net idiosyncrasies (netiquette, anonymity, abbreviations, spelling practices, punctuation, emoticons). They are crucial in giving the cyber-world community of users their sense of identity. They also constitute the background for interpreting cyber-discourses and identities in every e-linguistic situation mentioned in chapter I.

We will analyse the “digitized” features while dealing with authentic discourses from cyberspace: Facebook, Couchsurfing and the chat function of these two SNSs, but also from the chat situation of our personal Gmail. Last but not least, examples will be extracted from the chat on playcatanwithpeople.com²¹.

2.1. Language Socialisation in Cyberspace

In cyberspace, users search and share information, solve tasks and send messages to one another. Nowadays, cyberspace constitutes an annex to everyday life. However, **socialisation** is the most important activity users are involved in on SNSs, groups of discussions, e-mails. That is to say, they very often engage in cyber-situations to keep in touch with people, to interact with other users and to make contacts. Above all, we argue that (cyber-)socialisation/casual communication is to be seen as:

- an ongoing activity which gives individuals a personal identity and a social identity through the practice of contextually appropriate norms, values, behaviour and social skills (see <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/socialization>);

²¹ <http://www.playcatan.com/with-people.html>

- the successful participation in communities according to local norms and expectations (see Duff, 2012: 577);
- a concatenation of everyday interaction elements which have as main function the phatic communication (see Ventola, 1979, Eggins and Slade, 1997, apud. Weber, 2010: 416).

Everyday socialisation is characterized by six properties (Weber, 2010: 417): *ordinariness, authenticity, orality, privateness, informality, lack of goal-orientation/phatic motivation*. We argue that these properties apply to cyberspace as well. Hence, using Weber's account of these properties (2010: 417–419), we adapt them to cyber-casual communication.

- **Ordinariness:** cyber-socialisation happens frequently (every day/week/month) and it is a type of ordinary, mundane social interaction. Hence, users go on Facebook and are involved in small talk, chat synchronously or asynchronously about everything (concerts/events/food/statuses, etc.), post comments on pictures/videos/links; on Couchsurfing they share travel experiences and tips, participate in group discussions on everyday activities; on online game platforms they talk about their origin, general things about the game, free time;
- **Authenticity:** the interactions included in an ideal data base are independent of the analyst in all regards, e.g. in terms of their selection, occasion, participants, structure, topics, etc. Cyber- interactions take place in an ideal place because the analyst has the possibility to scrutinise interactions which are totally independent of him. However, he can also engage in conversations and influence the other users and the conversation, in which case, the empirical data is approximately realised and it is a matter of degree.
- **Orality:** everyday socialisation is mainly spoken discourse and the role of writing outside professional contexts, for most, is of rather minor significance (see Weber, 2010: 418). On the contrary, cyber-socialisation is based more on writing than on speaking or writing is used in addition to speaking. However, the type of language used online is a combination of speaking, writing and online features. Weber argues that in the past our lives could have contained the virtual aspect of the electronic media and this was based on writing and it belonged to the science-fiction domain, mainly literature. With the new

technologies this aspect has left the SF domain and entered our actual reality (2010: 418).

- **Privateness:** the prototype of socializing is “talk at home” or in private circumstances. Cyber-socializing on Facebook and Couchsurfing is private only while using the e-mail and the private chat function. Otherwise, it is similar to talk shows on TV which are not at all private, but their success is, to a large extent, “dependent on an atmosphere of privateness, mundaneness, and authenticity” (Weber, 2010: 418). Moreover, like TV shows, Facebook and Couchsurfing contain several other properties specific for everyday communication (informality, intimate topics, inside jokes, references to a history of conversation, etc.).
- **Informality:** everyday socializing among friends is typically informal and casual. Even if at first sight, there might be no constraints and everything appears to be allowed, even small talks can have some admissible and inadmissible behaviour: some topics are not always appropriate, sometimes formal terms of address are required, jokes should be chosen carefully, etc. Hence, people usually participate in a conversation according to the politeness and face categories (Goffman, [1955] 1967, Weber, 2010: 419). Likewise, in SNSs, socialisation is informal and casual, but also formal, depending on the digi-participants and on the Internet situation in which users are engaged.
- **Lack of goal-orientation/phatic motivation:** “Talk for the sake of talking itself” (Eggins and Slade 1997, apud. Weber, 2010: 419).

Weber states that chats or socializing interactions might be considered situations where there is no orientation to intentionally pursued pragmatic goals. However, the researcher highlights the fact that, even in these situations, participants pursue quite specific goals while performing them. He gives examples of mundane activities like dinner talks where participants ask each other to pass the salt/the dishes; a couple making plans for the week-end. Similarly, on Facebook, socializing takes place for the pleasure of interacting with other users, but sometimes there are **specific goals** like organising an event, inviting someone to an event, exchanging information, keeping in touch with peers, establishing new connections. On Couchsurfing, the specific

goals are to find a host in a particular place, to offer hospitality for other users, to receive information about particular places, to take part in events, to establish travel connections, etc. Besides, there are **general goals** in socializing on SNSs. Some recurrent general goals for SNSs' socialisation are:

- ✓ constructing a cyber-group identity and/or an offline identity (on online game platforms, users do not know each other in the physical world, unlike SNSs where they usually do);
- ✓ constructing and exposing a positive, embellished self-identity;
- ✓ impressing the other users with beautiful pictures, by showing them the places we visited and writing positive things about ourselves and our lives: the narcissistic construction of cyber-identity. On Facebook, users usually acknowledge and encourage the other users' narcissistic online behaviour by clicking 'like' to their photos, statuses and comments or through their comments. The acknowledgement and expression of admiration for other users help them integrate in a group and/or consolidate their group identity;
- ✓ being up-to-date with the events in other digi-participants' life.

These six properties constitutes the features of everyday communication, in our case, everyday cyber-communication, seen as a “radial or, rather, multi-dimensional category in the center of which we find the prototype(s)” (Weber, 2010: 419).

The cyber-socialisation process is accomplished through the affordances of the digital tools (analysed in Chapter I) and through language (online linguistic practices).

2.2. Language in Cyberspace

We acknowledge the fact that communication in the cyber medium is facilitated, but also constrained by factors which are totally different from those in other semiotic situations (see Crystal, 2006: 5).

Language in cyberspace, also known as Netspeak, was labelled ‘written speech’ by several linguists (for e.g. Philip Elmer-Dewitt quoted in Crystal, 2001: 25). However, this label oversimplifies the complex nature of the online language

which is seen as a “linguistic singularity”, a genuine new linguistic medium (see Crystal, 2006). Online language is shaped by the digital environment and it encompasses digital elements which render and transform face to face elements, adapting them to the cyber-discourse. It is a new dimension and its characteristics cannot be reduced to the use of combined terms like ‘spoken writing’ or ‘written speech’ because it is completely different from both traditional writing and speaking. Language researchers consider it a fourth medium after speech, writing and signing. Hence, with the emergence of the new technologies, researchers label an additional dimension: computer-mediated language and consider Netspeak as a “development of millennial significance” (Crystal, 2006: 272).

The Internet culture is very complex. It contains everything that we can find in the physical world, but also digital variants, elements and tools which add different values to users’ communication. Nevertheless, “it is still largely a text-based affair” (Wilbur, 1996, apud. Crystal, 2006: 9). Moreover, we argue that in the time span 2010–2013 spoken language is limited on the Internet to the use of sound clips, videos, songs, films, and podcasts. With the development of technology, the use of spoken language will grow as well and researchers predict that the Internet routine will include the use of “interactive voice (and video) dialogues, speech synthesis to provide a spoken representation of what is on the screen or to give vocal support to a graphic presentation, and automatic speech recognition to enable users to interact verbally with sites” (Crystal, 2006: 9). We also keep in mind the widely used Internet calls (for e.g. Skype/Yahoo calls or Google hangouts), but SNSs, chatgroups, emails and forums of discussion still prevail in the time span under focus and we select only these situations as we scrutinise the online identity construction in its multimodal format (written/graphic elements combined with images, videos and sounds), leaving out oral discourses and interaction phenomena.

2.2.1. Netspeak – Speech and/or Writing?

Language in cyberspace or Netspeak is a form of communication which relies on characteristics belonging to both speech and writing. The characteristics borrowed from speech and/or writing differ according to the e-situations in

which we are participating: the Web is closer to the traditional writing situations, while e-mail, chatgroups, virtual worlds and instant messages, contain many core properties of speech (see Crystal, 2006: 31–32).

In what follows we enumerate the oral language features and the written language features that we encounter online.

2.2.1.1. Oral Language Features in Cyber-Situations

On SNSs, users' participation and interaction are similar to the spoken discourse. That is to say, when participating in the two types of chatgroup interactions (synchronous and asynchronous), when writing in groups of discussion, when writing comments and statuses and even during e-mail exchanges (the private Inbox on SNSs/Yahoo/Gmail, etc.), we interact with other people in a direct way and different kinds of processes – and configurations of language – work rapidly together to produce coherence: we verbalise thoughts, introduce new information, repair errors in what we say, take turns in talk, think of others, anticipate what the recipients need and want (Schiffrin, 2006: 176). We mention that coherence in the Internet world is rather a choice performed by users who have total freedom to arrange, remove, add and select information. At the same time, users think of other digi-participants when posting something because they want to highlight positive aspects of their identity and to belong to particular groups and communities.

Because we draw a parallel between the online communication and the spoken discourse we will present the seven basic characteristics of speech identified by D. Crystal (1991: 178–179, 2006: 28–30). We pinpoint which of them can be applied to which of the electronic situations mentioned (SNSs, email sites and/or even blogs) and how.

The first characteristic is that speech is time-bound, dynamic and temporary, it involves at least two participants who are usually present, and the speaker has a particular addressee/ several addressees in mind.

- With regards to the time-bound characteristic, we argue that, in cyberspace, everything can be permanent if it is saved or archived. The problem is only to find the information saved in the ocean of online content;

- The synchronous chat interaction on the e-mail sites, social networking sites and on the Catan platform is also time-bound, dynamic and temporary, but it can also be archived, option that does not exist in speech. The chat involves two or more participants who are present and active in the chat. Users are represented in the technological environment by their *ids* (the name/nickname the users chose) and their *avatars*. Sometimes it may happen that one of the participants loses internet connection and goes offline without finishing the conversation. This is perceived as normal on the Internet, but it does not happen in an offline conversation without creating an awkward situation between/among the participants and without creating a negative image for the participants who withdraw from a conversation which is not finished;
- Facebook posts can be found after a lot of time has passed by going back to the date when they were posted. Users usually do not have a particular addressee in mind when they post something and there might even be no reaction from other users. Users might also share or post something for a particular user and other users might react instead. Moreover, there is a recent convention among users to signal that fact that they are addressing (a) particular user(s): they post something on their own Wall/Timeline and then they tag users or type the @ symbol. Both addressing techniques trigger threads of comments on the users' Wall/Timeline.

According to **the second speech characteristic**, “there is no time-lag between production and reception unless one is deliberately introduced by the recipient (and, thus, is available for further reaction on the part of the speaker” (Crystal, 2006: 28). This characteristic applies to synchronous chatgroups if the Internet connection is good. However, at times, there might be time-lags because users engage in other activities at the same time – online activities (checking their e-mails, reading something on the Web, chatting with another user in a different chat box or even on a different online platform) or offline (eating, talking on the phone/on Skype, talking face to face with someone).

Like for the spoken language, we also highlight the spontaneity and speed of the “written speech” in synchronous chatgroups because messages are sent really fast. The pressure to think while typing creates looser constructions,

repetitions, rephrasing, comment clauses (e.g. *you see, you know*), lower-case letters, typing errors, lack of punctuation marks and abbreviations. Sentence boundaries are often unclear. Surprisingly, these features appear in asynchronous conversations as well, even though users have the time to think before writing. For instance, while posting comments on a Facebook picture, sometimes this might happen because users might want to type and post their comment faster in order not to miss the point when their comment fits best the conversation.

All these features appear in the following excerpt of an authentic conversation on the synchronous Gmail chat:

Lovelyday26: *how are you?*

Andreeaman: *ok you?*

Lovelyday26: *I'm ok.. few thins to do*

Lovelyday26: *then i go out*

Lovelyday26: *did u finish the paper?*

Andreeaman: *nope I had to work 4 something else.....you know*

Andreeaman: *I also procrastinated a bit..too much :P*

Lovelyday26: *??*

Andreeaman: *I mean I was lazy ;)*

Lovelyday26: *:D*

Lovelyday26: *will you go to that spring school?*


Andreeaman: *i donna knowmaybe*

Lovelyday26: *ahhhhhh you should*

Lovelyday26: *where is it again?*

Lovelyday26: *you should go*

Andreeaman: *in Austria, in the mountains*

Lovelyday26:  *GO*

Andreeaman: *brb*

In this excerpt, we can observe the following digital features used in the language socialisation between the two users:

- ✓ looser constructions: *I'm ok.. few thins to do* – the speaker leaves out the sentence *I have few things to do* –; *i donna knowmaybe* – instead of *I do not know/I don't know*;

- ✓ repetitions: Lovelyday26: *ahhhhhh you should* → Lovelyday26: *where is it again?* → Lovelyday26: *you should go*;
- ✓ rephrasing: Andreeaman: *I also procrastinated a bit..too much :P* → Lovelyday26: *??* → Andreeaman: *I mean I was lazy ;)*;
- ✓ comment clauses: *you know*;
- ✓ lower-case letters: using lower-case letters at the beginning of sentences, spelling “i” instead if I;
- ✓ typing errors: *thins*;
- ✓ lack of punctuation marks: *ok you?* (instead of *ok, you?*); *I'm ok.. few thins to do* (no full stop); *then i go out* (no full stop), etc.
- ✓ abbreviations: *did u finish the paper?*. To these we could add Internet spelling conventions: *brb* [be right back] and *nope I had to work 4 something else [...]* [for].
- ✓ sentence boundaries are unclear in this chat. Given that most of the times the sentences do not have any punctuation mark (full stop, exclamation mark, ellipsis etc.) or that both users post messages before the other digi-participant has the time to finish his sentence, the boundaries are blurred.

The third speech characteristic is that “because participants are typically in face-to-face interaction, they can rely on such extralinguistic cues as facial expression and gesture to aid meaning (feedback). The lexicon of speech is often characteristically vague, using words which refer directly to the situation (deictic expressions, such as *that one, in here, right now*” (Crystal, 2006: 28–29).

The extralinguistic cues are replaced in cyberspace (e-mails, forums of discussion, SNSs, blogs and chatgroups – synchronous or asynchronous) by emoticons/smileys. In these situations “other people faces and voices are lost. But creative means were developed to make up for this limitation, such as secondary orality style of writing (Koch and Österreicher, 1985). One graphically-realized strategy is the use of the so called *emoticons*. As the term *emoticon* suggests, these keyboard faces are used in text to enhance emotional expression” (Thimm, 2010: 339–340). They are also called “didascalies électroniques” (Mourlhon-Dallies and Colin, 1999).

The most typical emoticons are the happy and the sad face: 😊 😞. Other emoticons are: 😜 (winking), 😕 (confused), 😍 (lovestruck), 😊 (blushing), 😜 (tongue), 😘 (kiss), 💔 (broken heart), 😔 (sigh), 😎 (cool), 😭 (crying), 😇 (angel), 🤓 (nerd) etc. These emoticons were taken from yahoo, but they exist on other e-mail providers, SNSs and blogs as well. Their role is to emphasise the message transmitted, to pinpoint the user's intention (joke, irony, seriousness, etc.), to disambiguate discourses and sometimes even replace text. In like manner, “you might include a smiley as a reminder of the ongoing context of the conversation, to indicate that your words don't stand on their own. A smiley can point out to the other participants of the conversation that they need to understand you and your personality in order to understand what you've said” (Sanderson, 1993, apud. Crystal, 2006: 42).

The extralinguistic cues are also replaced by special symbols in cyberspace: ☀️, *Love it* ❤️, *Nice shot with the rainbow!* 🌈 (comments to a photo on the site dedicated to artists: <http://browse.deviantart.com/art/Wild-Poeny-372724352>). Some examples of special symbols on gmail: 🟢, 📱, 📁, 💡, 🗄️, 📧. Of course, there are many special symbols and they vary from one digital space to another, but we will not list all of them.

The deictic expressions are encountered in cyberspace as well but sometimes it can be difficult to establish their referent or they can even be misleading. For example, the Facebook website addresses the Netizens through *your/you* or directly invites the users to participate by using imperative forms of the verbs:

*What's on **your** mind? What are **you** planning?
Who are **you** with? Where are you? What
are **you** doing?*

***Write** something ...
Search for people, places and things
Update info*

The deictic expressions and the direct address acknowledge the existence of Internauts and appeal to their emotion because every Facebook user can see these sentences on their Wall/Timeline. However, they evoke “an absence of identity” (Cook, 1992, apud. Zdrengeha and Pop, 2007: 108) and users perceive themselves as addressees of these sentences because no one in particular is de-

nominated. Moreover, because, in this case, the software addresses the Facebook users, we could say that the use of deictic expressions constitutes a tool that, even though initiated as machine-user interaction, triggers interaction between users.

Unlike the case when there is machine-user interaction, sometimes it is difficult to identify the referent of a deictic expression like “you” in threads of comments involving multiple users in forums of discussions or on a picture. That is why, users started using the @ symbol or simply write the name of the addressee in order to denominate the referent:

Emá Nan: *Drazen, you are unbelievable! :)) / @ Drazen: you are unbelievable! :))*

Eva Parloc: *Ivana, are you going back to Vienna again? Ooooo / @ Ivana: are you going back to Vienna again? Ooooo*

Ana Isabel: *@Alexandra, iis very nice that your room mate is being better now*

The fourth speech characteristic is the use of words and constructions belonging to the informal speech such as the contracted forms, invented words or even nonsense words, obscenity and slang, some of which do not appear in writing. Some examples taken from the **Entertainment community** on Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/onlyforentertainment>) are the following:

- ✓ **Mary Rosenberg:** *guess what i'm gonna watch tonight to see what else i missed lol...i never fully pay attention*
- ✓ **Mohan Shaban:** *only 4 likes for that dude?*
- ✓ **Emma Biliran:** *loose ya hearing, nights do get longer cus its too hot to sleep and life gets average*
- ✓ **Jennifer Medinez:** *Hell yeah niggah you know me :)*
- ✓ *Me 2 honey i m fine thank you ..it s so.hard but we have a lot of fun too miss you Greetz to my bro Mark / Thnk bro*
- ✓ *Django unchained – meeega !*
- ✓ *Yeahyeahyeah!*
- ✓ *u don'tknow the "phrase".. i hated you cuz u eated it without me and cuz u didn't came to me to say hi!and after u said that tomorrow we'll go together and get 2 of this for us my HATE is gone... so,now i love you....!!! i really have to taste the barbecue sandwich next time! u don't have to work why r u online? PFFFFFF.... hard work,suuuree!*

Applying **the fifth speech characteristic** to interaction on SNSs like Facebook, Couchsurfing, blogs, forums of discussion, where socialisation prevails, we claim that cyber-interaction uses the social and the ‘phatic functions of communication, activating casual, informal, unplanned discourses in which users get involved on a regular basis. In addition, the prosody and the accompanying non-verbal features allow for a vast range of nuances which express social (personal and professional) relationships, and personal opinions and attitudes (see Crystal, 2006: 28–29). For example, on the Entertainment community on Facebook, the users who administer the page constantly upload photos/images/drawings post statuses or share links that initiate casual and unplanned discussions in which users express their opinions and attitudes about ordinary topics. Thus, we extract some comments from one such a discussion (the entire discussion can be found in **Annex 9**):

- The users uploaded an image with blue background and the following sentences typed on it: *Dude... I was there... Don't try to change the story*. Some comments:

Tyzor Greene: *I HATE when people do that* June 27, 2012 at 3:27am · Like · 5

Lauren Domian: *and then you just kinda go along with it because they make it sound cooler* June 27, 2012 at 3:29am · Like · 6

Daniel Barajas: *LOL true story Bro!!!* June 27, 2012 at 3:29am · Like · 1

Jerry Starr: *jack n jill went up the hill* June 27, 2012 at 3:29am · Like

Miguel Franco: *LOL Very True!* June 27, 2012 at 3:31am · Like · 1

Vickie Denton: *wow i cannot tell you how many times i have wanted to say that to a few people...lol* June 27, 2012 at 6:32am · Like

Jared Conrad Jones: *You werent there maaan'* June 27, 2012 at 7:24am · Like

Shaun McLean: *wat if i do change the story hhhmmmm?* June 27, 2012 at 8:40am · Like

Migue Lito: *Just makin a boring story more iinteresting* June 27, 2012 at 9:08am · Like · 1

In this asynchronous chat on the **Entertainment community** on Facebook, the participants use their usernames (presumably, their usernames correspond to their real names) and their profile pictures (which can be their own photo or an

avatar – something abstract, an image, etc.) to mark their identity. Sometimes, there are no punctuation marks (for e.g. *I HATE when people do that, and then you just kinda go along with it because they make it sound cooler*, etc. – no full stop to mark the end of the sentences. This creates ambiguity in what the sentence boundaries are concerned; *true story Bro!!!, You werent there maaan'* – no comma to mark the vocative expression); there are spelling/typing errors (*You werent [...], wat if i do change the story hhhmmmm?*); the lower-case letters are used at the beginning of sentences; emoticons or rendering of non-verbal cues (*LOL – laughing out loud*) complete the messages. Moreover, users express their opinions and ideas and most of the comments do not bring anything new to the conversation, exactly like in the spoken interaction where some users might simply laugh or say something without contributing to the discussion. They are involved in this socialising activity with other users in order to mark a group identity.

The sixth speech characteristic identified by Crystal is that speakers do not have the possibility to rethink their contributions and start again, modifying aspects, adding qualifications and comments and withdrawing errors or opinions. Speakers must live with the consequences of the things stated and it is normal to have interruptions and overlapping (see Crystal, 2006: 28–29). Likewise, users engaged in synchronous chatgroup interactions send messages that are read as such by the recipients. Even if they would like to withdraw their messages because there are typing/spelling errors, after clicking *enter*, this option is no longer valid. Despite the fact that the messages sent cannot be rethought and users do not benefit from the same length of time to formulate their message like in the case of e-mails, users can reformulate and repair their messages like participants in speech do. For e.g. *what I really meant was..., what I wanted to say is that..., I meant..., I mean....* There is also the possibility to repair the other: *Sorry; I don't quite get what you mean*. Even upshots can be performed: *What I'm getting at is..., What this implies is that ... (own), What are you getting at, What do you suggest? (other's)* (see Cook, 1989, p.118).

In what the asynchronous chatgroups are concerned, in the case of Facebook conversations, users have the possibility to:

end my grumpiness (yes yes I have just invented the word) and send me that thing ?];

Lyrix Turay: *ALR les filles ki sont les champions ??? heiiin kiiii ?? heiiiiin koi ???? whooooooooooooooooooooooooooooo? MDRRRR!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!*

[so, girls, who are the champions? Who? What? Who? Laughing out loud];

AnaFernandez: *mmmmmmmm, that is an interesting country indeed!*

Facebook user: *hard work, suuuree!*

- emphatic conventions: all capitals for ‘shouting’ (I SAID NO) or emphasis (*Now the RICH man is next to me* – a comment on a photo posted by a Facebook user; *Ronny is an INCREDIBLE person. He hosted me and my friends in Haifa for 2 nights [...]*. – posted by a Couchsurfer user as a reference for another user), letter spacing for ‘loud and clear’ (W H Y N O T, w h y n o t), word/phrase emphasis by asterisks (the *real* answer), word/phrase emphasis by underbars (the_real_answer) (see Crystal, 2001: 35). These emphatic conventions determine “the lower-case default mentality” (Ibidem: 87) of the Net: any use of capitalisation is interpreted as a marked form of communication as shown above.

Other features of speech which can be applied to the Internet situations are:

- “When speaking, we can move rapidly from one idea or thought to another, resulting in what Chafe (1982) calls **fragmentation**, the segmentation of information into small, syntactically simple chunks of language that present roughly one idea at a time” (Schiffirin, 2006: 186). This characteristic applies to cyberspace as well. In synchronous or asynchronous chat interaction, most of the time, the flow of ideas of one user is interrupted by other users’ posts, and users might come back to a previous topic or even chat about more topics simultaneously. Additionally, during multi-party interaction in the synchronous chatgroup, the simple chunks of languages posted by users succeed one another depending on the Internet speed. Hence, if the Internet connection is low for one participant, then his messages might appear later than predicted.
- In synchronous or asynchronous chatgroups and in informal e-mails, like in speech, there are:

✓ verbless clauses/ellipsis/omissions of any kind:
I'm ok.. few thins to do – omission of the subject and main verb *I have*;
I work a bit more now, and I have a bit more lectures that I attend. Very little free time. When I wrote last night, I came from work. – ellipsis of the subject and main verb **I have** *very little free time*;

✓ lack of concord and omitted relative particles:
*haha, I want to know how **this end**, **You looks** really sad* – lack of agreement between the subject and the verb;
*Hosting the two was super easy, probably because they are experienced travelers **[who]** know what they are doing* – Couchsurfing reference;

✓ false starts and slips of tongue; changes of direction midstream in a grammatical structure and other ungrammaticalities (McCarthy, 1997: 143):
there are people I or better I know people who are interested in this but you know... do you want me to introduce u to them?

The user starts by saying *there are people*, but then changes the beginning by saying: *I know people*. In the middle of his sentence he changes direction by introducing the filler *but you know...* followed by a question;

- The use of **fillers** (words like “um”, “er”, “erm”, “and”, “but”, “right”, “ok”) are very common in the spoken discourse. They act as pauses while talking or they accompany pauses, lengthening the gap between words. “In spontaneous speech we are ‘thinking on our feet’ and the use of fillers allows us to do some forward planning on what to say next. They help to cement ideas together in conversation.” (Carter et al., 1998: 254). We encounter fillers in cyberspace as well, even though not as frequent as we do in speech. They mostly appear in synchronous chats and their purpose is the same as in speech. For example:
- ✓ **right okey** *u've changed a bit erm u look nice though ...* (a comment posted to a user's photo on Facebook);
 - ✓ **well..** *I have been planning the class for 6 hours, **Well** after easter and french music I'm fine, **Well...**it could be better* (lines from a personal chat conversation, the interjection *well* is used as a filler to introduce a remark);
 - ✓ *never understood how she does it though but, **yeah...** and I have more examples, but it is the same pattern* (the adverb *yeah* is not used to give an affirmative reply, but as a filler).

2.2.1.2. Written Language Features in Cyber-Situations

M.A.K. Halliday pinpoints three purposes of the written language in our everyday life (1989: 41):

- primarily for action (public signs, product labels and instructions, recipes, maps, television and radio guides, bills, menus, manuals, printouts, etc.) and for social contact (personal correspondence – letters, postcards, greeting cards);
- primarily for information;
- primarily for entertainment.

Cyberspace contains all the above. Furthermore, every purpose mentioned has extra dimensions in cyberspace:

- action in cyberspace is also represented by hotel reservations, advertising, buying theatre, movie, concert tickets, etc.;
- social contact in cyberspace involves private and public spheres (the two of them are often mixed in SNSs);
- information in cyberspace can be obtained via various sites/SNSs/blogs. Entertainment is provided by the entire cyberspace. Of course, sometimes these three purposes overlap.

With all the three purposes, in the paper world texts, the written discourse often implies explicit instructions concerning graphic conventions (printing letters and connecting them in script), technical aspects (using a keyboard and managing computer files), the use of punctuation marks and the grammar rules. (Schiffrin, 2006: 186).

On SNSs, these characteristics are encountered in formal e-mails. In contrast to this Internet situation, in chatgroups, informal e-mails and forums, there are deviations from rules and instructions. These deviations stand for the young users' desire to socialise with their peers and be different from the mainstream. Some examples:

- A user's post in a discussion group on Couchsurfing called *Adventures and Travelogues > Hitchhikers* (https://www.couchsurfing.org/group_read.html?gid=12&post=14458553): *yeah although in countries like spain it's hard, but we can MOVE anyway.in spain we can pay a short distance going longway,*

there won't be any check at each station for the bus but the train YES.try buses going very late or early so there won't be many passengers on board.

The user starts the post with the adverb *yeah*, like in the spoken interaction. Commas are sometimes omitted (e.g. after the adverb *yeah*, after the adverb of place *in spain*, in the construction: *but the train [,] yes*) or used instead of a full stop (*in spain we can pay a short distance going longway*). Throughout the post, she uses lower case letters: at the beginning of sentences and when writing the name of a country (*Spain*). There are also ellipsis and breviloquence: *there won't be any check at each station for the bus but [for] the train YES* (in this sentence, *YES* replaces the sentence “there will be checks”).

- A user’s post on another user’s profile, providing a reference for the latter on the online community of beWelcome.org (<http://www.bewelcome.org/members/tomtom/comments/>): *i had really good conversations with tom. he always makes me feel interesting and welcome. haven't seen him in a while though, probably we both haven't been to any events lately :-)* getting old? haha!

The post contains lower case letter for the pronoun *I*, proper names (*tom*) and at the beginning of sentences. It also contains subject ellipsis: *haven't seen him [...]* and the rendering of non-verbal communication (:-), *haha*). The post is constituted by random thoughts about the other user, ideas which are written without any structure or organisation.

- A user’s comment on another user’s photo on Facebook: *when are u coming back to france eva*

The comment has no punctuation marks (no comma to mark the vocative expression *Eva* and no interrogation mark at the end). The sentence starts with a lower case letter and *France* is spelled with a lower case letter as well.

- A Facebook user’s status: *money will get you Money going to help you get over time without love but love can not help you get over time with no money* (there are no punctuation marks in this post).
- *happy easter lupe i love you so much i wish you a life with love and happiness and enjoy your time with your family and we are thinking of you in israel love u lupe xxx* (no punctuation marks, lower case letters, the abbreviation *u* for *you*. Because different various ideas are listed (a holiday greeting,

expression of affection, wishes and the rendering of non-verbal – xxx), the post resembles a stream of consciousness.

These examples constitute mixtures between writing, speaking and digital features: computer-mediated communication. The users' language is informal. The graphic conventions are not followed (no intended line, the ideas succeed one another without being organised in new paragraphs, lower case letters at the beginning of sentences, words which are usually written with capital letters are written with low-case letters. The keyboard is used randomly and, if typing mistakes occur, there is no correction. The punctuation is often omitted or randomly used.

Crystal identifies seven basic writing characteristics (1991: 178–179, 2006: 28–30) which he enumerates in order to highlight the differences between speech and writing. These characteristics can be adapted to the digital medium.

The first characteristic is that writing is space-bound, static and permanent. The writer is usually distant from the reader and often does not know who his reader is going to be.

Likewise, writing in cyberspace is space-bound because it is configured by users in the digital space.

The static feature is combined with the pseudo-diachronic space and the digital features of the Internet world. Hence, texts remain in the same digital place where they were initially posted/uploaded but information is actualised fast in cyberspace and search engines like Google and/or scroll options are needed to retrieve texts. At the same time, texts can be copy-pasted to a different place, option which makes texts dynamic.

The permanent feature in cyberspace is rather a **choice** of users since the Internet world provides users with the affordance to always be able to delete information. Thus, websites can be deleted by owners, but not by random users; chat conversations on Gmail/yahoo are lost immediately after closing the chat windows, unless the users activate the option to archive and save them; Facebook profiles can be de-activated (but again, they can always be activated back); e-mails can be deleted. Contrary to what has been stated above, Crystal (2012) argues that the permanent feature applies to cyberspace as everything that appears on the Internet remains there even after deletion and can be restored by forensic linguists.

The fact that the writer is usually distant from the reader and often does not know who his reader is going to be is valid for Facebook pages as well. Even if Facebook affordances permit users to select who can view their profiles, their comments and their photos by using the **privacy settings**²², they do not know who from the selected groups reads their Wall posts/statuses/comments/descriptions besides those who click *like* or post comments. In forums of discussion on Facebook or Couchsurfing and in public chats on games' platform, every member of the SNS can read the texts posted. In opposition to these digital situations, this feature is not usual for e-mails and private chatgroups where users know who their addressees are. However, for e-mails, an exception is constituted by the junk mails (advertisements/various messages) sent out by companies/users to everyone in the mailing list. Another exception for both e-mails and private chats is the situation when users show their private conversations to other people or forward them to other users.

The second writing characteristic is that there is always a time-lag between production and reception. Writers think in advance that their language will be read by many recipients in different settings of time and space. Writing allows repeated readings and close analysis. The punctuation and the layout make easy the identification of sentences and of paragraphs. The written language also displays other features, such as: capitalization, colour, graphic effects. Sometimes, the "pictorial language" (Crystal, 1991: 182) accompanies the texts.

We identified these features on some Facebook groups in 2010. They were written in a formal register and their purpose was to inform readers about a particular topic. One such group was *Scholarships for Belgrade Summer school* (**Annex 11**) (<http://www.facebook.com/home.php?#!/group.php?gid=83661914832>, 18th of May 2010). By contrast, in 2013, groups no longer draw a clear-cut line between users who created the groups and users who are simple members of the groups. They are all digi-participants and their posts are much more interactive, dynamic and collaborative. Hence, the time-lag between production and reception marks

²² **Annex 10** contains a comparison between Facebook privacy settings in 2010 and Facebook privacy settings in 2013, after the Timeline has been introduced.

the panachrony of the Internet world: users can see posts right away or after years roll by. Of course, the language used depends on the digi-participants who are more focused on expressing their opinion, socialising and marking a group identity, rather than on writing for recipients who will never write back. Hence, writing is more spontaneous and the punctuation and/or layout may present deviations.

In what Facebook pages are concerned, the vast majority of them function like Facebook groups. There are only few exceptions: the pages that are “automatically generated based on what Facebook users are interested in and not affiliated with or endorsed by anyone associated with the topic” (www.facebook.com). These pages simply extract Wikipedia information. Users only have the option to *like* these pages, but their digi-participation is not configured as they cannot contribute with anything to these pages (**Annex 12**). Moreover, these pages list the connected users who are interesting in that particular topic, highlighting a group identity for them.

Besides groups and pages, on Facebook, and on SNSs in general, there are creative and playful pieces of writing which do not respect the traditional punctuation and layout: the Wall/Timeline posts, statuses, picture comments, conversation threads – on Facebook. To these we add users’ descriptions and references on Couchsurfing. Hence, the written discourses on SNSs and blogs might not have any punctuation at all. The layout may be innovative and artistic: sentences divided in such a way as to draw the readers’ attention; letters typed in different sizes, colours and with different characters or capitalized (the graphic effect).

On Facebook and Couchsurfing, texts are always accompanied by visual elements (special symbols, emoticons, pictures, images, etc.). Hence, the SNSs discourses constitute contemporary discourses (see Cook, 1996: xiii) which use both the written text and the pictorial language to express messages.

According to **the third writing distinctive feature**, “lack of visual contact means that participants cannot rely on context to make their meaning clear; nor is there any immediate feedback. Most writing therefore avoids the deictic expressions, which are likely to be ambiguous” (Crystal, 2006: 28–29). This feature applies to Websites, but on SNSs, the non-verbal is replaced by emoticons and special

symbols. However, emoticons are not as reliable as visual contact is and there are situations when they are misunderstood. Users sometimes give immediate feedback, but most of the time there is no immediate feedback. The deictic expressions are used, but, most of the time, they are accompanied by nominal expressions in order to avoid ambiguity. Hence, the deictic expressions are used like in a play, where all characters are pointed at for the reader to be able to follow the conversation between and among characters.

The fourth writing characteristic states that some words and constructions are specific to writing: multiple instances of subordination in the same sentence, balanced syntactic patterns and long sentences. Certain items of vocabulary are never spoken. Schiffrin also argues that when writing we have time to arrange the information into long, syntactically complex chunks of language that present more than one idea at a time. The process by means of which various types and levels of information are integrated into sentences is called **integration** (2006: 186).

These features are valid for the automatically generated Facebook pages and formal e-mails on various email services, sometimes even on SNSs. However, these features rarely appear in casual e-mails, synchronous or asynchronous chat interactions and group discussions as these Internet situations resemble more speech than writing in what this fourth aspect is concerned. In these situations, the syntactic patterns are unbalanced; the sentences are simple and (very) short.

The fifth writing characteristic is that writing writing complies best with the functions of archiving facts and communicating ideas and opinions (Crystal, 1991: 178.). Some SNSs' groups communicate something and they have a purpose, for e.g. to inform the user about something, to persuade them to do something (to attend an event/a summer school, to play a particular sport). Unlike these groups, the casual e-mails, the Facebook chats and forums can be written only for the pleasure of conversation.

The sixth characteristic states that errors and all the perceived inadequacies in our written discourse can be corrected in later drafts without leaving a trace and whenever there are interruptions, they will be eliminated from the final product (see Crystal, 2006: 28–29). The Facebook group in **Annex 11** and the Facebook

page in **Annex 12** constitute examples of written language where ideas are well-structured, cohesive and coherent. There are no typing/spelling errors. On the contrary, many e-mails, chatgroups and forums on SNSs tend to be informal and they contain errors and inadequacies because the digi-participants don't correct the messages posted or sent. Needless to say that the synchronous chat interactions have even a greater number of typing and spelling mistakes because of the pressure of sending messages as fast as possible. The written language of e-mails and (a)synchronous chats represents an adaptation to the digital environment. What is more, the typing errors and other specific inadequacies (the speech characteristics and the digitised features of the cyber- discourse – the emoticons, special symbols and pictorial language that supply for the paralanguage and body language that have already been discussed) have become a basic feature of informal electronic mails, chat conversations and groups/forums.

Last but not least, Crystal argues that writing includes unique features like pages, lines, use of capital letters, spatial and paragraphs' organisation, and several aspects of punctuation. There are a few graphic conventions which relate to prosody (question marks and italics, for emphasis). Several written genres cannot be read aloud efficiently, but have to be assimilated visually. Such is the case of timetables, graphs; complex formulae (see 2006: 30). These apply to Websites, but all these features present deviations on other Internet situations, as we have argued while discussing the other six writing features. Thus, we state that on the Internet, deviations actually represent the norm.

Observing both speech and writing at the same time, Crystal argues that even though netizens talk about their online activities in terms which derive from face to face conversation, Netspeak has very little in common with speech. He underlines that the Web is most distant from it; chatgroup and virtual-world interactions are closer to it; instant messaging is even closer; and e-mails and blogging sit uncertainly in the middle. "Several of these categories are certainly more speech-like than any other variety of traditional writing; but the similarities are balanced, if not outweighed, by differences" (2006: 44) (in **Annex 13** we present **Spoken language criteria applied to Netspeak** and in **Annex 14** we present **Written language criteria applied to Netspeak** as provided by Crystal, 2006: 45, 47).

We consider that both speech and writing characteristics are encountered in cyberspace. Of course, users socialise and express their identities by typing on a keyboard, but the speech characteristics or digital adaptations of speech characteristics cannot be denied.

2.2.2. The Online Practices of the Synchronous Chat

The synchronous chat is the Internet situation which resembles most the everyday spoken discourse containing the usual mechanisms and features of speech or their adaptation to the cyber-environment. In addition, chat interactions contain online practices through which users express and construct a group identity. Users who interact with one another regularly use the same online practices (Net principles, conversational manoeuvres, etc.) and language (written and spoken features, abbreviations, emoticons, punctuation, word order, slang, etc.). Hence, users “create a special language between and among themselves, a language that is called upon and built upon in their continuing interactions. Awareness of this history of discourse is necessary to truly understand what is going on” (Tannen, 2006: 359).

Synchronous chats can be two-party or multi-party interactions. In the latter case, users can join the conversation whenever they want or when they are added by other users. Further, the two-party and the multi-party interactions can be divided into private (on email platforms on Yahoo, Gmail) or public (for e.g. on the platforms of games). Usually, public two-party interactions on game platforms or on the public chat platforms are prone to encompass more than two users because, even if the interaction starts with two users, other users join the conversation.

In the case of synchronous chat in general, users open a chat box which is split into an upper half and a lower half. While typing, users’ messages appear on the lower half and after pressing the **enter** key, the message appears in the upper half of the chat box. In the upper part messages succeed one another in the order in which they were sent. If the conversation is longer, it cannot be read without the scrolling command. Hence, unlike speech, the Internet chat can be re-read and even recorded and archived.

2.2.2.1. Synchronous Chat Turns

Ideally and in an oversimplified perspective, face to face conversation is a two-way or multi-party interaction within which the conversational turns reflect the way in which participants organise themselves to take turns at talk (to keep, to get or to give the floor). Turns occur smoothly with brief interruptions, overlaps and silences between turns. Participants speak when they are *nominated* by the current speaker or when they simply want to get the floor without being selected (*self-selection*) (see McCarthy, 1997: 127).

Even face to face interactions are much more complex and complicated, but during Internet interactions, turns occur roughly with many interruptions and overlaps and, usually, users *type* by self-selection even when particular users are nominated. We argue that the chat turns reflect the local organisation of sequences of multi-party activities.

The intertwined nature of Internet turns can be observed in the empirical data in the subchapter **2.2.2.2 Online Adjacency Pairs**.

2.2.2.2. Online Adjacency Pairs

Conversation analysts define the adjacency pairs as the pairs of utterances in talk which are mutually independent (McCarthy, 1997: 143). They constitute the basic unit on which sequences in conversation are constructed. They consist of two turns which are produced by different speakers, they are placed next to each other in their basic minimal form, they are ordered and they are differentiated into pair types (see Liddicoat, 2007: 106). The generic adjacency pair is **initiating utterance (the first-pair part) → expected answer (the second pair-part)**. For example: question → answer; greeting → greeting; congratulation → thanks; apology → acceptance; inform → acknowledge; farewell → farewell, etc.

In the two-party chat, the second pair-parts usually succeed the first-pair parts at the beginning of the conversation (greetings and the first questions) like in everyday conversation, but as the conversation unfolds, the adjacency pairs are interrupted and overlapped with other messages or other adjacency pairs.

In multi-party chat interactions, the adjacency pairs are always interrupted and overlapped with other messages.

In what greetings/farewells in multi-party chats are concerned, as users can join chats whenever they want, a greeting/farewell might not always be followed by a greeting/farewell. For e.g.: one user might post a greeting/farewell and instead of receiving another greeting/farewell, users might just continue their ongoing conversation and not provide a greeting/farewell at all. Other scenarios: they provide the expected answer later or only some of them provide the expected answer.

On public chats, which allow many users at the same time, the adjacency pairs are not always completed, as the expected answer might never come or might not be given by every user because this would impede the speed, progress and flow of the online conversation.

Another interesting aspect is that, in chat, users usually type about more than one subject-matter. As a consequence, some adjacency pairs are sometimes intertwined with other adjacency pairs. Moreover, users sometimes enter an ongoing (public) chat not knowing how many users are participating and what the subject-matter of the chat is. The user can scan the conversation in order to know what users are talking about or, if they already know the topic, to find out what has already been said and then he can greet or simply contribute to the conversation without greeting.

Given all these, we could say that the adjacency pairs in multi-party interaction change some of the basic characteristics: they are not always placed next to each other in their basic minimal form, they are not ordered and sometimes and they are not differentiated into pair types.

We provide an excerpt from a public chat conversation on a game platform in which users are participating in order to socialise with one another and be part of a group (www.conquistador.ro):

jmircea: *Buna, KA THE SNAKE ! ssa ai o zi frumoassa !!* [hello, KA THE SNAKE! Hhhave a nice daaaay]

prometheus25: *opa ave cesar mircea* [wow. Ave Cesar Mircea]

KA the SNAKE: *ssalut, mircea! o zi pe placul tau sa fie!* [hhello, Mircea! May your day be as you would like it to be]

jmircea: *Buna , minny69 ! zi buna* [Hello, minny69! Have a good day!]

Deiuuleee: eu vreau :) [Yes, I do want]

magul14: nush nu am incercat niciodata [I don't know. I have never tried this]

Usagila: prefer fotbalul de odinioara, jucat cu pantaloni trei sferturi [I prefer old-fashioned football, played with classic trousers]

ana_1986: fff tare [I tried that yesterday]

albert 2013: sall [hey]

albert 2013: cf [how are you]

jmircea: Salut , prometheus ! [Hello, Prometheus]

This interaction took place twenty-eight lines after the beginning of the chat, when users were still joining in. The adjacency pair under scrutiny is mainly the greeting-greeting pair.

In this excerpt, the user *jmircea* posts **the first initiating part**, which is a greeting addressed to a particular user: *Buna , KA THE SNAKE ! sssa ai o zi frumoasssa !!* His greeting is followed by another greeting from a different user than the one addressed. This one also specifies that he greets the user *jmircea* and not another: *prometheus25: opa ave cezar mircea*. Because the user *prometheus25* names as an addressee the first user (*jmircea*) who hasn't greeted him, but the user *KA the SNAKE*, this line constitutes **the second initiating part** of this excerpt. Only the third line represents **the expected answer** for the *jmircea*'s initiating utterance: *KA the SNAKE: ssalut, mircea! o zi pe placul tau sa fie!* We consider this entry to be the expected answer for the first initiating part because the user *KA the SNAKE* also specifies who his addressee is (*jmircea*).

In the fourth line, the user *jmircea* posts **the third initiating part** of this excerpt: *jmircea: Buna , minny69 ! zi buna*. Even though it is again a greeting, it constitutes the third initiating part because the user *jmircea* names a particular addressee for his greeting.

Line five (*Deiuuleee: eu vreau :)*) is the answer (**the second expected answer** of this excerpt) to a previous initiating part that does not appear in this conversation (*cine vrea sa intre la un pv?* – who wants to enter a private chat?). This message is intercalated with the greetings mentioned. This shows that the greeting themselves are intercalated within an ongoing conversation concerning other subject-matters.

Line six (*magul14: nush nu am incercat niciodata*) is also the answer (**the third expected answer** of this excerpt) to a different initiating part than the initiating part of line five (the answer provided by user *magul12* answers the question: *cum e playcatan? – how is [the game] playcatan?*).

Line seven (*Usagila: prefer fotbalul de odinioara, jucat cu pantalonii trei sferturi*) represents the user's *Usagila* opinion about a different subject matter than the private chat on the platform and the online game Catan. It also completely ignores the greetings posted by users.

Line eight (*ana_1986: fff tare [very very very cool]*) is the expected answer to the question *cum e playcatan?* (**the fourth expected answer** of this excerpt).

Line nine (*albert 2013: sall*) constitutes **the fourth initiating part** of this excerpt. The greeting is addressed to everyone taking part in the chat.

Line ten (*albert 2013: cf*) is **the fifth initiating part** of the excerpt. It is posted by the same user immediately after the greeting in line nine, not giving the others time to reply. This might be because he did not actually expect to receive a greeting from anyone. His question, abbreviated to *cf* [Ce faceți?] is addressed to everyone in the chat. Neither his greeting, nor his question receives a second-pair part.

Line eleven (*jmircea: Salut , prometheus !*) is the second-pair part to the greeting in line two (*prometheus25: opa ave cezar mircea*). It constitutes **the fifth expected answer** of this excerpt. Hence, between the first-pair part and the second pair part of this adjacency pair there are eight lines.

The excerpt contains eight participants, all of them use nicknames (*jmircea, prometheus25, KA the SNAKE, Deiuuleee, magul14, Usagila, ana_1986, albert 2013*) and 11 lines. It contains five initiating utterances and five expected answers. Out of the five initiating utterances, three do not receive the expected answers. Out of the five expected answers, three are answers to previous questions and they seem to be de-contextualised as users produced so many lines in-between. Hence, all the adjacency pairs are intertwined. This is a current situation of the cyber-chat where users, instead of providing the expected answers or waiting for the named addressees to provide them, they provide their own contributions, addressing the topics they are interested in and, sometimes, even making the same point as other contributions.

This interaction shows that Internet chats are based on the speed of typing and posting of messages. If users do not type fast enough, their contribution might be ignored. Hence, the lag – the time needed for a sender to type and send their message so that it appears on the screens of others – is a critical issue for this interaction, as it is for synchronous chats in general, because contributions which are delayed too long become irrelevant (see Crystal, 2001: 155).

We chose to analyse this excerpt because it contains many greetings, users acknowledging each other as participants. Additionally, in this chat, it is easy to see the practice of online adjacency pairs as the users name their addressees. We did not provide the entire conversation because it would be too long and redundant. Moreover, extracting only these eleven lines highlighted the speed with which messages are posted and the high number of participants involved in public chats. Moreover, it highlighted the web-like nature of chat conversations and adjacency pairs. Thus, we argue that online adjacency pairs are **intertwined**.

2.2.2.3. Chat Strategies

Taking into consideration that conversation turns are often realised by lexical strategies, we enumerate these strategies and we also extract some examples from our personal chat situations and from public chat situations (see Cook, 1989: 118):

- **openings:** *hello; hi; hey; hiiiiiiii; you, online?; alive?; ehi :P; how are you?; what's up?; how's things?; guess what?; you have to see this! [...]; are u there?; typing the user's name and interrogation mark; boo, how are things going?; Look at the ... website. It's unbelievable;*
- **Taking a turn:** *Yes, but; surely..., what I think is that...; I would say that...;*
- **Holding a turn:** *er; um; anyway; anyhow; you know; I mean; what's more is that..., [a silent moment which replaces words and it is marked by dots. At the same time, it signals that the current speaker still wants to hold the floor];*
- **Passing a turn:** *What do you say?; What do you think?; tag questions; and you?; what will you do today?; questions in general;*
- **Pre-sequence:** *I wanted to ask you...; did I mention that...; did I tell you...; did I send you that link?; do you know what happened?; I don't remember if I told you...;*

- **Closing:** *Right; ok then; anyway, so; ok...*;
- **Repair: self-repair** (*What I really meant was*) or **repair of other** (*I do not get it*)
- **Upshot: own** (*What I'm getting at is*) or **other's** (*What are you getting at?*)
- **Other means of turn taking** which are not encountered in the Internet chat are: changes in voice quality, elongation of syllables, pitch rise, signals of body, face, and eyes.

David Crystal adds three more lexical strategies (1991: 118):

- **Ongoing checks:**
 - ✓ by the speaker/sender: *are you with me; do you see?; can you guess what he said?; don't get me wrong; let me put it another way; what I'm trying to say is; are you still there?; can you see what I am writing?; I don't remember if I told you;*
 - ✓ by the listener/recipient: *Have I got you right?; I don't get you; mhm; lets get that straight;*
- **Changing topic: introducing a new topic** (*by the way*) or **concluding a topic** (*So it goes*);
- **Ending:** *Sorry but I have to go now; nice chatting with you; have a nice sunday; good luck; I go now.*

These strategies are used online as well, but, most of the time, in public multi-party chats, turns do not occur according to the lexical strategies. They take place when and if the users want to contribute – as seen previously in the example where adjacency pairs are scrutinised. However, in private chats, the lexical strategies are more efficient.

2.2.2.4. Online Overlaps and Interruptions

Conversational turns are signalled by overlaps and interruptions, especially in online interactions.

Overlap means typing at the same time with another/other user(s) and posting messages simultaneously. These simultaneous contributions can constitute an **interruption** (taking the floor away) or it can be a **cooperative overlap** (chatting along to show interest and enthusiasm) (see Tannen, 2006: 346). Concurrently,

one of the contributions can become superfluous and simply be ignored by the other participants in the chat. This could be considered an **un-cooperative overlap**.

Researchers argue that the occurrence of overlaps and interruptions and the perception of them being one or the other vary according to the cultural background in face to face conversation. For instance, Italians are used to speak when others are speaking, manifesting “high-involvement” style in the conversation. The Americans consider that only one person should be speaking at a time, manifesting a “high-considerateness style” (Tannen, 2006: 354) in the conversation. Hence, when people coming from different cultural backgrounds interact, they should take into consideration the cultural element. Otherwise, interruptions and overlaps cause **rule-conflicts** and **conversational breakdowns** (McCarthy, 1997: 129). For instance, in a conversation between an American, who automatically bears in mind the high-considerateness style, and an Italian, who intentionally and proudly uses the high-involvement style, the American will interpret the Italian’s interventions as impolite and inappropriate, while the Italian will consider the American uninterested.

Regardless of their cultural identity, users of Internet chat usually manifest the “high-involvement” style, interrupting other users and overlapping with other users’ posts. Outside the cyber-world, their conversation will be impossible to follow and chaotic because interruptions and overlaps occur too much. In the online chat, the cultural misunderstanding mentioned do not occur as users are aware of the fact that they are participating in a cyber-conversation in which the traditional manoeuvres and styles of conversation are transformed and adapted to the high-tech environment. Moreover, the high-involvement style of online chat constitutes a linguistic feature which marks Internet group identity.

Users in a two-way chat or in multi-party chat post their instant messages even if: they were not addressed or other users have been addressed; other users have not finished their contributions; they introduce a different topic from that of the ongoing interaction; their messages do not receive any reply. Sometimes they even post the same message several times.

2.2.2.5. Digi-Recipients' Signals

While chatting/talking with someone, there are also linguistic strategies of not taking a turn when the floor is relinquished. These strategies suggest to the other chat participant(s) that we are interested in finding out more about a particular subject and that we encourage the sender to hold the floor. These strategies are called **follow-up moves**. Some examples include: *how nice, that's awesome/interesting/incredible/unbelievable, oh my, oh dear, how awful, lucky you, oh no, I see/I understand, did you...?, ah, oh, really, hm ...* (see McCarthy, 1997: 123).

Besides the linguistic strategies, we argue that in cyberspace, emoticons constitute another category of follow-up moves because they sometimes have the same function as the linguistic strategies mentioned: they signal the sender to keep the floor. Hence, posting a happy face emoticon when the other user is typing something nice, posting a sad face when the other user is typing something sad, posting a laughing emoticon while the sender is typing a really funny story, etc. signal the recipient's interest in what has been said and in what follows:

Eva Parloc: How was your day?

Zaphael: I met Anne at the coffee shop

*Eva Parloc: 😲*²³

In the case of two-party and multi-party private synchronous chats, and sometimes in the case of multi-party public synchronous conversations too, users might use strategies to signal the user who holds the floor that they are actively following what this one is typing. These strategies are called **back-channel cues**.

In face to face interactions, some typical back-channel cues are the head nods; expressions like *aha, mmm, mhm*; short words (*yes, sure, yeah, no, nope, right*). Even the listener's way of commenting one's remark might be a back-channel cue (the content expressed, but also the para-verbal elements like loudness, pitch of voice, emphasis on certain words): *Wow! This is great!* (see Tannen, 2006: 257).

All these back-channel cues are encountered in the cyber-chat as well. However, the head nods are replaced by emoticons and the way of commenting, especially the para-verbal elements which are rendered by graphology (bold,

²³ Surprise emoticon

italics, underline), exaggerated use of punctuation marks and use of capital letters (*AWESOMEEEEEEEEEEEE!!!!!!!!!!!!!!*).

In face to face interactions, like for interruption and overlap, people coming from different cultural backgrounds sometimes apply different rules and, as a consequence, have different expectations about the manner in which interactions should take place. Moreover, even within the same culture, people might operate with different rules and misunderstandings might appear. David Crystal provides as an example the case of cross-sex conversations (1991: 118): women use back-channel cues to show their interlocutors that they are paying attention, while men use them to express agreement with what is being said. Further, misunderstandings arise from the fact that women consider men's linguistic/non-linguistic behaviour to be a sign of lack of attention, while men find it hard to understand what women's opinions are. However, we argue that the situation cannot be so clear-cut. This can vary according to the conversational context and the participants involved. Moreover, sometimes people (both men and women) use the back-channel cues to make their interlocutor believe they are paying attention, but in fact they are not.

In the cyber-chat, in cross-cultural and/or cross-sex conversations, the back-channel cues signal mainly two things variably, depending on the variables mentioned for face to face conversations:

- that the users are still online and that they are attentive to what the sender is typing because they do not see each other like in face to face interactions;
- that the users show agreement with what is being said. There might appear misunderstandings as well, perhaps even more than f2f because computer-mediated communication is more ambiguous comparing to f2f due to the lack of non-verbal and para-verbal elements. Of course, these elements are replaced by their digital variants, but their meaning is not so clear and/or transparent as their f2f counterparts.

We mention that the cyber back-channel cues, like the face to face back-channel cues, might signal something totally different from what the users who post them actually feel or do. Hence, online they are context and participants-dependent as well.

2.2.3. Digi-Participation Framework

Online participation in both asynchronous situations (comments, threads of discussion, posts) and synchronous situations (chats) involves interaction and performance.

Firstly, interaction is “the reciprocal influence of individuals upon another’s actions when in one another’s immediate physical presence”. Interaction takes place whenever individuals are “in each other’s continuous presence” (Goffman, 1956: 8). Compared with face to face interaction, in the digital interaction “the immediate physical presence” is replaced by the online availability and activity.

Secondly, a ‘performance’ is the activity of particular participants during particular events. A participant’s performance influences the other participants. Thus, the given participants and their performances are the basic elements. To these we add the audience, observers or co-participants. Every performance has a pre-established pattern of action which is unfolded during the performance and which may be repeated on other occasions. This pattern is known as ‘part’ or ‘routine’. Moreover, when individuals/performers play the same parts to the same audience, but on different occasions, social relationships are created. Within the social relationships arise social roles (that we also call **social identities**), which involve one or more parts which can be presented by the same performer on various occasions to the same type of audience or to the same audience (see Goffman, 1956: 8–9).

During each online interaction there is performance. In the case of cyberspace, every contribution is to be considered a performance and it reveals the social relation between/among the users and their social role. Moreover, the manners in which users interacting with one another and performing for one another take responsibility for typing, reading, and acting their social role are part of their digi-participation framework (adapted from Schiffrin, 2006: 183).

In cyberspace, digi-participants adopt different social roles according to the Internet situation they are engaged in. Hence, a young user can display multiple social roles: one when chatting with his friends on the private chat, a different one in public groups of discussion and public chats, another one in e-mail exchanges and yet another one while posting something on their Facebook Wall/Timeline

which can be seen by everyone in their list of friends, another one on Couchsurfing where they want to play the social role of the perfect host and/or guest. This multiplicity of social roles signals that online social roles are fluid, changing all the time, depending on the affordances of the medium, the audience/observers/co-participants and the mutually accepted online pattern of behaviour. Nevertheless, in cyberspace users sometimes adopt different social roles while performing in front of the same audience. This is the case of the Facebook Wall/Timeline. For example, a young user posts a hilarious status having in mind a group of friends (he uses slang, abbreviations, special symbols, etc.). He marks the post with the symbol @ or simply tags those users. At the same time, he posts something else for another group of users/another user (in this post he is more serious and uses formal language). He uses again the tagging option or the symbol @. However, his audience is in fact larger than the users he addressed and every user in his list can contribute to the discussion, modifying the participation framework that he envisaged for his post. Moreover, even the users selected for the online conversation thread can change the participation framework intended by the user who initiated the conversation. Further, the user marks two social identities simultaneously, in front of the same audience, despite of the fact that he tagged particular users/used the symbol @ followed by particular addressees. This would be considered abnormal in face to face conversations.

Another interesting case about digi-participation framework occurs in multi-party interactions where users adopt different roles while chatting. They sometimes even divide into different interactions within the same chat, by choosing different topics, deviating from the given topic and/or moving back and forth from the given topic to other topics. In this way, they establish different social relationships among themselves. One such example is the following asynchronous conversation taken from our private friends' group on Facebook:

Conversation Trigger: *The user Eva Parloc posts a link on the group's Wall/Timeline. She writes **dance lesson ;)** as the description of what she posted. She immediately realises that the link she posted directs users to something else than what she wanted to share with the group. She writes a comment to the link in which she acknowledges this fact (the first line of the conversation). This comment is followed by the conversation below.*

Eva Parloc: *The link somehow doesn't work anymore. It takes you to some Romanian comedy thingy, not to the dance lesson I wanted to show to you. What about the link above?*

Maria Cabedo: *I agree, i was trying to play it, but it didnt show dance...*

Daniel Nikitina: *and my thought was, what kind of a dance this is – a mental one?*

Eva Parloc: *But you did not say anything! You thought I went crazy, isn't it?*

Daniel Nikitina: *nah, I knew that your link expired*

Eva Parloc: *hm...that you were not curious enough!*

Daniel Nikitina: *no, I was dead, still am 3 nights in a row, snow cleaning from 03:30 till 10, than McDonalds, and in the night Rathaus*

Eva Parloc: *Maybe spring is not coming because of you...so that you earn more money*

Daniel Nikitina: *could be*

Eva Parloc: *ah...Here we have also a beautiful winter during spring time :P*

Daniel Nikitina: *It's sunny here..again. But I cleaned five snows since I first said that I think it's over for this winter, so I won't say anything.*

Eva Parloc: *better not say anything, yes!*

Fernando Desafina: *how many jobs do you have Daniel?*

Daniel Nikitina: *buahaha*

Ema Nan: *72*

Fernando Desafina: *I guess today is your free day?*

Daniel Nikitina: *nah, I just finished early.*

Fernando Desafina: *I understand you. Normally I start working at 6:00 and i finish at 14:00*

Fernando Desafina: *then I have the whole day for me*

Daniel Nikitina: *exactly! I happens almost every 3 years to me :D*

Daniel Nikitina: *I'm joking. This week was special, usually, I don't have to work a lot.*

Maria Cabedo: *Daniel, you are the good kind of crazy*

Daniel Nikitina: *ha! is there a bad kind?*

Daniel Nikitina: *videos on this link keep changing. Someone inform me when it becomes Puss in Boots, the movie, I want to see it.*

The initial topic of this conversation (the first six comments) is the fact that the link posted by Eva Parloc expired. However, the **participation framework** initiated by this user could have been about the link that takes users to the dance lesson and not about the link that expired (*What about the link above?*). The interesting thing is that no user answers this question.

With line seven, a **new participation framework** is activated by user Daniel Nikita. This line is linked to line six because he explains that he did not say anything about the expired link not because he was not curious, but because he was very busy and tired. However, he gives so many details explaining why he was tired and busy that Eva Parloc makes a joke on one of these details (*Maybe spring is not coming because of you...so that you earn more money*), engaging in this second participation framework.

With line 10, Eva Parloc initiates **the third participation framework** (*ah... Here we have also a beautiful winter during spring time*) by telling a fact from her country and making a joke. Daniel Nikita engages in this participation framework as well.

In line fourteen, Fernando Desafina starts **the fourth participation framework**, asking the user Daniel how many jobs he has. In reply to this question, Daniel Nikita playfully introduces a phrase which substitutes normal laugh (*buahaha*), suggesting that he has many work places, but not providing an exact number. A fifth user, Ema Nan, joins the conversation at this point and posts a joke in reply to this question (72).

Line seventeen opens **the fifth participation framework** asking Daniel Nikita if that day was a free day for him. It is only Daniel Nikita who engages in this participation framework which lasts until line twenty-three when user Maria Cabedo makes a remark which opens **the sixth participation framework** of this asynchronous conversation. She types: *Daniel, you are the good kind of crazy*, in reply to Daniel Nikita's ironic remark in line 21 (*exactly! I happens almost every 3 years to me*). This remark receives Daniel Nikitina's ironic and rhetorical question: *ha! is there a bad kind?*.

The last line of the conversation refers back to **the first participation framework** and it is introduced by Daniel Nikitina who posts an ironic remark (*videos*

on this link keep changing. Someone inform me when it becomes Puss in Boots, the movie, I want to see it).

In this conversation, there are five participants and 25 comments, out of which eleven are posted by Daniel Nikitina. He holds the floor and plays the role of the sender [speaker] most often. He succeeds in doing this by self-selection, but also by others-selection. Moreover, two of the users (Ema Nan and Fernando Desafina) do not contribute to the topic proposed by Eva, who initiated the entire conversation, and they react to the topics initiated by Daniel Nikitina. The participation frameworks change very fast, like in every Internet conversation. Furthermore, the conversation among these users could continue with the initial topic and different sender(s), it could change topic and the sender could remain the same, it could change both topic and sender or both topic and sender could remain the same. The roles that the participants play in this interaction constitute the participation framework. Like most chats, this chat presupposes a simultaneous usage of more than one participation framework.

2.3. Netspeak Principles

The cyber-communication and socialisation on SNSs (e.g. Facebook and Couchsurfing), online game platforms, groups of discussions, emails, chatgroups, etc. are based on some face to face principles which are adapted to cyberspace. These principles can be followed or deliberately/non-deliberately flouted, exactly like in the physical world. They constitute a guide for users to transmit and receive information, to interact with other users and to be accepted members of particular groups and online communities. Thus, even in cyberspace, where the language used constitutes a new variety (much more complex than “an emerging language centaur – part speech, part writing” (Crystal, 2001: 48), but speech, writing and digital properties combined), users interpret and understand other users’ discourses according to the usual face to face conversational principles which are transposed in the digital world.

We will scrutinise **the co-operative principle** and **the politeness principle** in relation to the cyber-world. Both of these principles are fundamental in order

to initiate and maintain an amiable conversation in which users socialise with one another and construct a group identity.

2.3.1. The “Co-operative Principle” in Digital Spaces

Like their face to face exchanges and discourses, the digi-participants’ contributions on SNSs are interconnected. Their contributions are usually based on cooperative efforts and all digi-participants recognise in other participants’ contributions a common purpose/a set of common purposes or a mutually accepted direction (Grice, 1991 [1975], apud Plăcintar, 2005: 53–54). Given the interconnection of cyber-contributions on SNSs (e-mail exchanges, synchronous and asynchronous chats, posts, comments, etc.), online game platforms, we take into consideration the Co-operative Principle (CP), put forward by Paul Grice, which we adapt to the digital world: the conversational contribution should be adapted to the conversation’s requirements and stage, and in accordance with the purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which people are engaged (1975, apud. Plăcintar, 2005: 54).

Users might obey or deliberately flout the co-operative principle. Either way, the efficient casual communication/socialisation between/among users takes place if there is mutual understanding of the other digi-participants’ intention.

The co-operative principle consists of four maxims of co-operation:

- **The maxim of Quality:** try to make your contribution one that is true, specifically: do not say what you believe to be false, do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence;
- **The maxim of Relevance/Relation:** make your contribution relevant;
- **The maxim of Quantity:** make your contribution as informative as is required – for the current purposes of the exchange – , do not make your contribution more informative than is required;
- **The maxim of Manner:** be perspicuous, and specifically: avoid obscurity of expression, avoid ambiguity, be brief, be orderly.

Like in everyday conversations, in the digital space, users follow or flout the gricean maxims of the co-operative principle unconsciously.

On the online game platforms, in our case on Catan, the common online practice is that users chose a nickname and do not reveal their real identity. They interact with other users in anonymity or they operate behind a false persona. This gives them freedom of social restrictions and inhibitions that would otherwise restrain them from expressing particular ideas or from using vulgar, aggressive or swear language. Hence, while interacting with other gamers on Catan, some users might recur to verbal harassment without any justification. Digi-participants are used to this linguistic behaviour. They either play along or ignore the user and simply play the online game. Regardless of the other users' reaction, they sometimes continue their harassment until the end of the game, unless they are kicked out of the game by the other users. In such cases, the maxims of quality and manner are undermined.

Cyberspace allows anonymity not only on game platforms, but also on SNSs or blogs. Even if users are required to use their real names and express their own identity on Facebook and Couchsurfing, there still are users who use nicknames and operate behind a false persona. These users might lie to other users and the maxim of quality is undermined. With regards to online lies, researchers like Patricia Wallace state that: “even if we are experts at spotting a lie, which we most certainly are not, we would be sorely disadvantaged online. The fact that it is so easy to lie and get away with our own deceptions and the harm they may cause others – is a significant feature of the Internet” (Wallace, 1999: 51). This feature is a consequence of the fact that users cannot rely on para-linguistic cues (pauses, vocal pitch, intonation, loudness) or non-linguistic cues (gestures, facial expressions) which might indicate lies and deceit. Of course, a Webcam would facilitate the detection of online lies and deceit, but this is not in our focus.

2.3.1.1. Undermining the Co-operative Principle

The four co-operative maxims are sometimes flouted or intentionally breached (exploited) in cyberspace, like in everyday communication, in order to “indirectly convey more than utterances literally denote” (Plăcintar, 2005: 55).

D. Crystal offers an overview of situations in which the co-operative maxims are breached in cyberspace (2001: 52–58). We present his account and we add examples from Catan, Facebook and Couchsurfing:

- **Undermining the maxim of Quality:** D. Crystal offers as an example the *trolling* activity: the sending of a message (called a troll) to cause irritation to others, such as members of chatgroups/participants in a game. For instance, in a language forum or in game platforms, one of the members sends a false piece of information to the group. Only newcomers to the group (*newbies*) are likely to correct it. Old members simply ignore it or they respond by saying: ‘nice troll’ to the originator or ‘YHBT’ (= ‘you have been trolled’) to the responder;
- **Undermining the maxim of Quantity.** D. Crystal introduces here:
 - ✓ **Lurking:** equated by Crystal with the refusal to communicate online. We consider that the lurking activity constitutes also a sign of curiosity and interest for the online activity of other users. David Crystal defines *the lurkers* as the persons who access a chatgroup and read the messages without contributing to the discussion. Lurking can be equated with *spying* and differentiated from *idling*²⁴. Facebook lurkers are users who access the online social network, they check their Wall/Timeline, their friends’ posts, statuses and pictures, but they never contribute to any thread of discussion/comments. On Couchsurfing, lurkers visit profiles and groups of discussion, without posting anything on the site.
 - ✓ **Smurfs and smurfettes:** users who post messages to a group without saying anything important or just repeating what has already been said. The smurfs appear in groups of discussion on a particular topic. They also appear in chats, in which users do not have a specific purpose all the time; they participate for the pleasure of communicating with other users and enlarging their network. In synchronous chats, the smurfs are sometimes users who did not type and send their message fast enough or users who did not read all the previous messages in the chat. Moreover, in synchronous public chats on game platforms or public asynchronous chats, lurking, idling and smurfing are recurrent online behaviours.

²⁴ the situation when someone is connected in a chat and everyone can see he/she is online but he/she does not chat with anyone or might even be involved in another activity (using search engines like Google, checking their e-mails, listening to music). He/she might not even be at the computer/laptop/mobile phones/iPhones, etc.

- ✓ **Spamming** refers to the sending of usually unwanted messages of excessive size. The term was first used to describe the cases where a message would be sent to many recipients. For example, when a company sends out an ad to everyone on a mailing list, producing what has been labelled as electronic “junk-mail”. Later, it started to be used also for the complementary situation: “the sending of many messages to one user, as when a group of people electronically lobby a politician or attack a company’s policy” (Crystal, 2006: 57).

Another category of junk e-mails are the messages which try to convince users that something positive will happen to them in the physical world if they forward the message to a certain number of people. These messages also threaten users that unless they forward the message, something negative will take place.

Interestingly, spamming occurs also on groups of discussion on Facebook: unwanted messages, sometimes of excessive size, are inserted by users in threads of discussion on various topics. The message itself doesn’t have anything to do with the topic/topics that is/are being discussed. We came across some examples on the **Entertainment group** on Facebook (**Annex 15**).

There are three types of spams, according to the users’ intention and their effect on other users (Charles Stivale, 1996, apud. Crystal, 2006: 58):

- ✓ Playful spamming: “occurs when visual or audio effects (such as duck quacking) have been programmed to turn up in the text, un-asked for, at interval within the game situation” (Crystal, 2006: 58). This type of spam is not encountered in e-mails, SNSs;
- ✓ Pernicious spamming: “refers to the Internet equivalent of real-life harassment, often involving sexually explicit language and description of actions, and usually prompting the introduction of control measures of some kind by the group moderators” (Crystal, 2006: 58). This type of spamming very often appears on Catan. These users can be kicked out of the game and even banned from the platform if their behaviour is repetitive and they are reported several times to the game administrator. Sometimes, their nicknames announces their intention;

- ✓ Ambiguous spamming. “The ambiguity lies in the fact that the intention behind the spam may be unclear, and the effect variously unpredictable” (Crystal, 2006: 58): **Example 1, Annex 15**, the user writes “Don’t believe” at the end of the spam. This phrase creates ambiguity as to what the user’s intention was: to annoy or to tell a creepy story and joke with the other users.

In the case of spams, whether it is a junk e-mail, a spam message inserted in a thread on groups of discussion or a game spam, recipients have to deal with quantities of unwanted text: “spamming is a gratuitous addition to the communicative exchange, and thus breaks the maxim of quantity”. In the e-mail box, recipients delete these messages and/or mark them as spam. In this way, if the sender will send more spams, these will be directed to the spam folder. Another option is to ignore them. In online games, spammers can be reported. However, in the Facebook groups, recipients cannot delete the messages posted by other users so the only option is to ignore them. However, the users can be removed from the groups by the group administrator.

Flaming behaviour is different from spamming. These two types of linguistic behaviour are presented in contrast:

Spamming	Flaming
playful/neutral	aggressive
unspecific in content	topic-oriented
anyone who is member or participant	directed at individual recipients

Sometimes flames are categorised as such subjectively, depending on the users, because individuals’ “sensitivities, tastes, communicative preferences, and styles differ – as they do in everyday conversation, indeed, where it is also not always agreed between two parties whether they are ‘arguing’ or ‘having a discussion’, or why an argument has blown up” (Crystal, 2006: 59). Sometimes users who send flames to each other do not even perceive their behaviour as being flaming unless other users highlight this to them. Moreover, the flaming perception can be a matter of cultural background.

Flames are sometimes posted in the virtual world of the strategy game Catan. They are posted while users play the game and they sometimes constitute verbal

harassment. Aggressors hide behind their nicknames. They know that their identity cannot be discovered or located anywhere in cyberspace or outside cyberspace.

Flamming also occurs in the Facebook groups of discussions between group members. In these cases, some users stop talking about the subject-matter and they exchange verbal abuse. At the same time, other users can continue discussing other topics:

- **Undermining the maxim of Manner.** “Brevity is certainly a recognized desideratum in all Netspeak interactions, in terms of sentence length, the number of sentences in a turn, or the amount of text on a screen” (Crystal, 2001: 57; Crystal, 2006: 61). Especially in synchronous chats, unless users type short messages, they will spend too much time typing and their contribution will be repetitive or posted too late, when users have already moved to a different topic.

E-mails can break the maxim of manner by containing too many details and too many frames.

Facebook users who post very long comments breach this maxim as well.

Bloggers breach this maxim by providing too many details and embellishments, by using obscure layouts and offering disordered pieces of information.

- **Undermining the maxim of Relevance.** This maxim requires contributions to be posted only if they are related to the purpose of the exchange or discourse under focus: “co-operation in communication involves contributing to the established topic or purpose of the communication event” (Žegarac, 2008: 57). However, in some Internet situations the purposes are not very clear and, sometimes, there is no purpose but to socialise with other users.

On the one hand, e-mails can have several purposes at once (informational, ludic or social), but many times the purpose of the exchange remains unclear.

On the other hand, in chatgroups, topic-shifts are numerous and this leads to the idea that no topic can be irrelevant. After all, chatgroups are informal conversations which are recognised for the relative randomness of the topic (see Crystal, 2006: 62). In chatgroups, the threads of subject-matter are always interrupted by irrelevant comments which are routinely introduced. Further, high lags of time between two desired interventions may determine repetition

from the part of the sender or deviation from the subject. In multi-party chat-groups, users type so fast, that the same ideas appear in more than one contribution. The typing speed is high and users cannot read everything that has been posted. Furthermore, a lot of contributions are posted simultaneously by many users.

A very interesting fact about cyberspace is that “people often seem to post messages not in a spirit of real communication but to demonstrate their electronic presence to other members of the group, to ‘leave their mark’ for the world to see (in the spirit of graffiti) [...]” (Crystal, 2006: 62).

The Facebook thread of comments among friends in **Annex 16**, stands as an example of the randomness of the topic and the numerous topic-shifts in chatgroups.

Users can talk about everything, even about the fact that they do not have anything to say in the conversation. In the following excerpt taken from the same thread, one user acknowledges the characteristic of Internet interactions of posting a comment/message only to mark the online presence:

Fernando Desafina: *Daniel Nikitina, are you already drowned? I've heard that is raining hard in Vienna* 12 hours ago · Unlike · 1

Maria Cabedo: *Hello!* 12 hours ago · Like

Ema Nan: *Nee, Mann! He can swim* 12 hours ago · Unlike · 2

Maria Cabedo: *(I didn't have anything more interesting to say, but I wanted to take part into the conversation)* 12 hours ago · Like · 1

Eva Parloc: *:D* 12 hours ago · Like

Eva Parloc: *Maria Cabedo is awesome with this comment* 12 hours ago · Like · 1

Ema Nan: *Well...* 12 hours ago · Like · 1

Ema Nan: *:))))))))))))))* 12 hours ago · Like

Ema Nan: *this is funny indeed* 12 hours ago · Like

Maria Cabedo: *Writing about nothing, you mean?* 12 hours ago · Like

Ema Nan: *and interesting enough* 12 hours ago · Edited · Like · 1

Ema Nan: *the comment, your comment was funny* 12 hours ago · Like

Ema Nan: *and interesting* 12 hours ago · Like

Maria Cabedo: *Thank you! Though I don't think I should deserve credit for it, I'm sure it was already invented* 12 hours ago · Like

Maria Cabedo: *I like your comments on it, though* 12 hours ago · Like

Eva Parloc: *:D* 12 hours ago · Like

Daniel Nikitina: *I drowned* 12 hours ago · Like · 2

Emma Nan: *and we get to chat so rarely that everything we write here is interesting, at least for me* 12 hours ago · Like

Maria Cabedo: *Do you know what I am remembering now?*

Emma Nan: *what did you remeber?*

In this conversation, the user Maria Cabedo inserts the comment: *(I didn't have anything more interesting to say, but I wanted to take part into the conversation)*. She posts this comment in order to let the other users know that she is online as well and that she is interested in the conversation.

She joined the conversation later than the other users, greeted them (*Hello*), but this first-part of an adjacency pair remained incomplete. The other users replied to her remark about wanting to take part in the conversation and, strangely, the conversation was focused on this comment for other twelve lines, even though there were several topics being discussed about in the conversation.

There are even metacomments:

Emma Nan: *this is funny indeed*

[...]

Emma Nan: *and interesting enough*

Emma Nan: *the comment, your comment was funny;*

Emma Nan: *and interesting.*

Maria Cabedo, through her comment *Thank you! Though I don't think I should deserve credit for it, I'm sure it was already invented*, puts forward the idea that marking one's online presence through a message which doesn't communicate anything else than this or the obvious desire to take part in a conversation is a common online practice.

Another example is taken from a group of discussions on Couchsurfing. In this thread of conversation, the user who initiates the conversation establishes a clear purpose for writing the message, starting with the title: *The 1 June party will not take place*. In spite of this, he inserts a metacomment about his message, stating that his message is purposeless:

No CouchSurfing party next weekend. Since i have told many of you that we plan to organize a party, it's better you know that we stopped organizing it. It's because many people who would have joined will not be in the town or will be busy.

I know this is a message with no-message, sorry – but i think the question would have occurred sooner or later, where the party is.

Anyway, look forward for the usual Friday meeting!

(<https://www.couchsurfing.org/n/places/cluj-napoca-cluj-romania>)

The user breaks the maxim of Relevance through the metacomment (*I know this is a message with no-message, sorry – but [...]*), even though the message itself has a purpose and it is relevant for the group of discussion where it was posted.

In contrast to Grice's maxim of Relevance, the examples from Facebook and Couchsurfing show that being relevant, especially in cyberspace, does not necessarily mean that the communicator is co-operative if he contributes to the purpose of the communication event, but rather that "the communicator could be said to be co-operative to the extent that he is sincere in aiming at optimal relevance" (Žegarac, 2008: 57). Thus, "every act of overt communication communicates (i.e. makes evident) the presumption that it is optimally relevant" and 'a communicative act is optimally relevant if processing it leads to some relevant cognitive effects without putting the audience to the expenditure of greater mental processing effort than is necessary for deriving those effects' (Sperber and Wilson, 1995, apud. Žegarac, 2008: 57). In cyberspace, the optimal relevance is achieved by the digi-participants' flexibility and adaptive behaviour to the digital environment. Cyber-optimal relevance is flexible, depending on the Internet situation and on the digi-participants involved.

2.3.2. The Politeness Principle

Starting from the cooperative principle, Locher (2010: 519) considers that when interactants do not follow one or more of these maxims, they create implicatures (additional meaning). Many of these implicatures can be explained by the politeness principle and the aim of the politeness principle is "to maintain the social equilibrium and the friendly relations which enable us to assume that our inter-

locutors are being cooperative in the first place” (Leech, 1983, apud. Locher, 2010: 519). For example, in cyberspace, the following cases might happen:

- one user might interpret a series of deviating lengthy messages, which leads to formulating a reproach and which constitutes a deviation from all the maxims of quantity and manner of the cooperative principle, as being motivated by the sender’s wish not to offend the addressee;
- one user might interpret a series of exaggerations and facts which are not true, which constitutes a breach of the maxim of quality and manner, as being motivated by the sender’s intention to be playful and make the recipient laugh. Hence, we agree with Leech that “politeness is focused more strongly on the *other* than on the *self*” (Leech, 1983, apud Plăcintar, 2005: 72). In this view, politeness is oriented towards the need of the recipient(s).

Like the co-operative principle, the politeness principle “may be formulated as a series of maxims which people assume are being followed in the utterances of others. As with the co-operative principle, any flouting of these maxims will take on meaning, provided it is perceived for what it is” (Cook, 1989: 32).

2.3.2.1. The Maxims of Politeness

The maxims of politeness are used to facilitate and smooth the social and professional interactions among individuals and to create good relationships among them. Several linguists have proposed various maxims.

Starting from the question *why people do not follow Grice’s rules of conversation?*, Robin Lakoff (1978) states that people are concerned with the rules of politeness. “For Lakoff, pragmatic competence is constituted by two major “rules”: “1. Be clear. 2. Be polite”, where clarity amounts to a condensed version of the Gricean maxims, while politeness serves to avoid conflict between participants” (Kasper, 2005: 60). She proposes three broad rules of the politeness principle/rules of rapport, anticipating Brown and Levinson’s elaborated theory of politeness:

don’t impose	→	Formality: keep aloof
give options	→	Deference: give options
make your receiver feel good	→	Camaraderie: show sympathy
(see Carter, et al., 1998: 278)		(see Holmes, 2004: 152)

“While rules 1 and 2 are clearly aspects of negative politeness, recognizing a person’s need for autonomy or “space”, rule 3 refers to positive politeness needs – individuals’ need for approval from others, their need to be liked, their need to express shared values and attitudes, and so on. In this area, then, Lakoff anticipated the most influential theory of politeness in the last thirty years [...] (Holmes, 2004: 152).

In order to follow these maxims, participants in offline and online interaction use **pre-sequences**, especially when they formulate orders and requests.

The pre-sequences are linguistic structures which do not carry any information. They are used to formulate a request which could be perceived too direct and, thus, impolite: *Could you possible / I’m sorry to trouble you but could you / Would you be as kind as to not tag me in any photos in the future?*, instead of saying: *Don’t tag me in any photos in the future!*

Leech proposes an “interpersonal rhetoric” in which the Cooperative Principle is complemented by a politeness principle (PP): “Minimize the expression of impolite beliefs” (1983). Both CP and PP are “first-order principles”, each elaborated by a set of maxims (see Kasper, 2005: 60). Thus, Leech (1983, apud. Locher, 2010: 519) formulates the politeness principle by elaborating the following six maxims which we illustrate with examples taken from cyberspace:

- **Tact** maxim (in impositives and commissives): minimise cost to *other*, [maximise benefit to *other*]: *Could I talk to ask you something – what is your nickname on Catan?*
- **Generosity** maxim (in impositives and commissives): minimise benefit to *self*, [maximise cost to *self*]: *Could I add you on Facebook?*
- **Approbation** maxim (in expressives and assertives): minimise dispraise of *other*, [maximise praise of *other*]: *Eva, you’re great! Could you send me the pictures?*
- **Modesty** maxim (in expressives and assertives): minimise praise of *self*, [maximise dispraise of *self*]: *Stupid me 🙄 – I forgot your which is your nickname on Catan. Could you say it again?*
- **Agreement** maxim (in assertives): minimise disagreement between *self* and *other*, [maximise agreement between *self* and *other*]: *You are right. However, I think that it could be better if you do not do this.*

- **Sympathy** maxim (in assertives): minimise antipathy between *self* and *other*, [maximise sympathy between *self* and *other*]: *I am very happy for you!*

To these, Leech adds three ‘second order’ principles (Leech, 1983, apud Plăcintar, 2005: 72):

- The **Irony Principle** allows competent speakers/ in our case, digi-participants to be very impolite under the mask of politeness. They superficially break the cooperative principle, but they consent to it again;
- The **Banter Principle** allows speakers/digi-participants to jokingly say something untrue and impolite with the purpose of showing familiarity and solidarity with the other participants:

Daniel Nikitina: *I know that she cannot do that*

Eva Parloc: 😏

Daniel Nikitina: *she is...woman :P*

Eva Parloc: HA HA HA you are so funny!!

Daniel Nikitina: 🤔

Eva Parloc: 😏

Daniel Nikitina: *I like to make women be mad at me when I say these things*

- The **Pollyanna Principle** refers to individuals’ tendency to show optimism and, consequently, to tackle pleasant topics in conversation rather than unpleasant ones. Thus, on SNSs, many of the conversations and posts are about positive aspects of life because people create SNS profiles in order to socialise with other users and have fun. However, on Facebook, users also post links to articles/videos which present negative aspects of life as the SNSs are sometimes used with the purpose of raising public awareness on serious problems of nowadays society. Since SNSs have global digi-participants, SNSs are efficient in spreading news and information to the whole world, having also a militant function.

For Lakoff and Leech, politeness is a coordinate construct to the Cooperative Principle, ergo first-order politeness. It is focused on the way in which members of a community perceive and classify action in terms of politeness, on the do’s and don’ts in socialising interaction, on the metapragmatic comments on what is and is not polite behaviour (see Kasper, 2005: 59). That is why this kind of polite-

ness is referred to as the “social norm view” of politeness (Fraser, 1990, apud. Kasper, 2005: 59) and it deals with “core-cultural concepts” (Wierzbicka, 1991, apud. Kasper, 2005: 59) as the maxims applied depend on the context and on the cultural background of the participants involved.

The maxims introduced by Lakoff and Leech depend on other variables as well: the **social power** and the **social distance** between the participants.

Social power includes factors like: interlocutors’ relative positions in social hierarchies, age, gender, language impairment (see Kasper, 2005: 65).

Data-based studies on speech act realisation (Wolfson, 1989), on complaining (Olshtain and Weinbach, 1993) and expressions of gratitude (Eisenstein and Bodman, 1993) showed that **social distance** affects politeness. Social distance and politeness are correlated in a reverse bell-shaped curve (“bulge”). Most politeness appears to be expended in negotiable relationships with familiars but nonintimates, such as colleagues and friends. In more fixed relationships at opposite ends of the social distance continuum, intimates and strangers, politeness is found to decrease (see Kasper, 2005: 65):



2.3.3. Politeness versus Co-operation

In cyberspace, the politeness principle may be in conflict with the co-operative principle. We present some concrete cases.

“Politeness and truth are mutually incompatible” (Cook, 1989: 33). People/users might feel obliged to break the maxim of Quality in order to be polite: they say things they do not necessarily believe to be true so that their recipients feel good. Examples:

- a Facebook user sends some photos to a private group of friends. He wants to share with them a particular event in which they did not take place. He writes: *Hey, I have just discovered a new hobby and I want to share it with you because it was awesome!!!!!! :)* and uploads the photos. The recipients answer: *cool stuff, great, you look great, you did a great job* or they click the

‘like’ option in order to communicate their admiration and approval. They might not have positive things to say about the photos posted, but, because they could make the user feel bad, they do not tell the truth.

- Facebook users might sometimes say things they do not believe even if they were not addressed directly or asked to give their opinion. Hence, when users post photos on Facebook, many users react positively and/or post very positive remarks:

- ✓ click the ‘like’ option;
- ✓ Romanian comments posted by Romanian users to Romanian users: *Ce tare e poza* [what a great photo]; *Felicitari* [congrats]; *Ce draguti sunteti* [you are so sweet]; *esti super frumoasa* [you are super beautiful]; *ooo, ce frumoasa esti* [wow, how beautiful you are]; *tu faci ce faci si tot poze frumoase faci!!! SI POZA ASTA E FRUMOASA!* [I don’t know what you’re doing, but all your photos are beautiful. This photo is beautiful as well]; *lasa incolo aparatul! esti tu fotogenica* [leaving aside the camera, it is you, you are photogenic]; *Ce imi place poza asta!!! :)* *Esti scumpa!!!* [I like this photo very much. You are very sweet]; *super tare* [awesome]; *ce frumoși sunteți* [you are so beautiful];
- ✓ English comments posted by Romanian users to Romanian users: *like like like like like !:D; love it, i like this, that is awesome!; Cooool!!!; cute cute cute; beautiful, gorgeous; great; lovely <3; perfect :); perfection; nice; sweet; so pretty; B♥E♥A♥U♥T♥I♥F♥U♥L; You look so pretty / Ever so pretty...; where is? beautiful beach (^_^); cute smile (*^_^*); still good-looking; lovely as always; really nice picture; really beautiful picture of you; you’re so cute; you are waaaaay to sweet!; u look so professional; mega like :X:X; thats my sis!!>:D<;*
- ✓ Code-mixing (English and Romanian) in the same comment. Posts by Romanian users:
double like! esti frumoasa si chic [you are beautiful and classy] *miss u a lot, miss the old days a lot;*
flawless...Minunat! [extraordinary];
Frumosilor! Miss you!;

Ar fi great [it would be great];

Man, doooooor de voi [I miss you];

That was great! Multumesc inca o data! [thank you again];

Ce frumoasă ești și Lucas e un gorgeous. [You are very beautiful and Lucas is gorgeous]

There is an interesting fact about the second part of this post: *Lucas e un gorgeous*. In Romanian, sometimes people use the indefinite article followed by an adjective which changes its morphological category and becomes a noun. For e.g.:

Singular: Masculine → Feminine	Plural: Masculine → Feminine
ești un frumos [beautiful] o frumoasă	sunteți niște frumoși frumoase
ești un dulce [sweet] o dulce [sweet]	sunteți niște dulci dulci
ești un scump [precious] o scumpă	sunteți niște scumpi scumpe
ești un drăguț [nice] o drăguță	sunteți niște drăguți drăguțe
ești un prost [stupid] o proastă	sunteți niște proști proaste

In the example *Lucas e un gorgeous*, the indefinite article for singular, masculine nouns (*un*) is followed by the English adjective *gorgeous*. The result in English would be: **Lucas is a gorgeous*²⁵.

- ✓ Interjections and/or emoticons: *Awwwww*❤️; *ioooooooooooooi<3* (Romanian interjection used in Transilvania); *wow*; *WoooooW!!!* *.*; ❤️; <3<3<3; >.:D< >.:D<.

Some of these reactions might not express the users' true opinion. They might express positive things only because they want to follow the sympathy maxim (maximise sympathy between *self* and *other*). Hence, users sometimes express an honest opinion, but we are also witnessing a lot of online flattery. Besides, there is the tendency that users who react positively to other users' photos/statuses/comments are likely to receive positive posts from the same users in return.

²⁵ The * marks that the sentence is incorrect.

The incompatibility between the politeness principle and the co-operative principle marks also the construction of a group identity. It is also a sign of recognition and acceptance shown to other users and received from other users.

Politeness and brevity are sometimes incompatible as well. As brevity is a desideratum in cyber-interactions, if users post contributions which are too long, they breach the maxim of quantity, but if their contributions are too short, they might violate the politeness principle.

In synchronous chat situations, users post very short messages. That is why they sometimes tend to be more direct than they are in real life interactions. They don't use pre-sequences when formulating requests or they do not embellish their contribution in order to make the recipient feel good. However, the *directives* are not perceived as rude, because users adapt to the digital medium. They perceive long polite formulations as inconvenient because they cause high lags between interventions. The direct address is often more efficient. Hence, in a Facebook synchronous chat users might choose not to type a sentence like *Could you/Would you please/Would (could) you be so kind to upload the photos on your blog?* (Pre-sequence and Request). They might prefer a simpler request formulation instead:

Upload the photos on your blog, pls!

Pls upload the photos on your blog!

Upload the photos on your blog (Request).

The co-operative principle and the politeness principle pinpoint that in digital spaces on SNSs, emails, blogs, chatgroups, digi-participants shift back and forth between two 'interactional ideals':

- individual autonomy
- 'social' identity (Plăcintar, 2005: 77).

In the digital world, like in the physical world, young digi-participants build their social identity bearing in mind the other users' expectations and beliefs (being co-operative and/or polite). Simultaneously, they try to integrate their personal identity. The pattern of interactional cooperativeness chosen is interpreted by the other users in order to construct the senders' identity and to accept or reject them as members of a particular online community.

2.3.4. Politeness and Face in Cyber-Interactions

From an individualistic perspective, politeness “is very much a product of the rational strategic use of language by individuals to achieve their ends, and this involves calculating the best way that they can do this, by appearing to placate and please their interlocutors” (Brown and Levinson, 1987, Mills, 2011: 22). In kind, we argue that politeness is more than a product of the use of language, it is the actual ongoing linguistic and non-linguistic strategy used by digi-participants in order to be accepted members of particular groups and, thusly, construct a group identity.

According to Brown and Levinson’s theory, we state that, like in the physical world, in cyberspace, “face” is a key concept in understanding how politeness works. Thus, digi-participants have two types of pragmatic faces/two specific kinds of desires (‘face wants’) attributed to one another: the negative face and the positive face. The negative face is the want of every “competent adult member” that his actions be unimpeded by others” and the positive face is “the want of every member that his wants be desirable to at least some others” (Brown and Levinson, 1987: 13; Brown and Levinson, 1987, apud. Locher, 2010: 515). Watts interprets these two faces as follows: “positive face is defined as the individual’s desire that his/her wants be appreciated and approved of in social interaction, whereas negative face is the desire for freedom of action and freedom from imposition” (2003: 86). Moreover, “negative face results in negative politeness (“deference politeness”, R. and S.B.K. Scollon, 1983), manifests in indirectness, formality, emphasis of social distance, and respect for the interlocutor’s entitlements and resources. Positive face gives rise to positive politeness (“solidarity politeness”, R. and S.B.K. Scollon, 1983), displayed in indirectness, informal language use, emphasis of common ground, appreciation of the interlocutor, her actions, possessions, etc. (see Kasper, 2005: 62). We could say that the negative face is the participants’ personal space, while the positive face is the image that participants expose to other participants (their social identity/representation).

Scollon and Scollon label these two sides of the pragmatic face as **independence** and **involvement**. They claim that “face is really a paradoxical concept. By this we

mean that there are two sides to it which appear to be in contrast. On the one hand, in human interactions we have a need to be involved with other participants and to show them our involvement. On the other hand, we need to maintain some degree of independence from other participants and to show them that we respect their independence. These two sides of face, involvement and independence, produce an inherently paradoxical situation in all communications, in that *both* aspects of face must be projected simultaneously in any communication” (2001: 46).

Other authors have referred to these two sides of face as “distance vs. involvement” (Tannen, 1986), “deference vs. solidarity” (R. and S.B.K. Scollon, 1983), “autonomy vs. connection” (Green, 1992), “selfdetermination vs. acceptance”, “personal vs. interpersonal face” (Janney and Arndt, 1992) (see Kasper, 2005: 61).

Other researchers do not take into consideration this dichotomy and mention only the concept of **face**. They claim that ‘face is a social phenomenon; it comes into being when one person comes into the presence of another; it is created through the communicative moves of interactants. Whereas face references the socially situated identities people claim or attribute to others, facework references the communicative strategies that are the enactment, support, or challenge of those situated identities (Tracy, 1990, apud. Locher, 2010: 515).

Looking at *face* as social phenomena, researchers have even proposed the term **supportiveness** to be used instead of **politeness**. The term follows the notions of positive and negative face wants introduced by Brown and Levinson (1987). Along these lines, a supportive speaker smooths over uncomfortable situations, or keeps delicate situations from becoming interpersonally threatening, by acknowledging his partner's claim to a positive public self-image. A supportive speaker tries to minimise territorial transgressions and maximise signs of interpersonal acceptance (Arndt and Janney 1987, in Culpeper, 2011: 66).

Other researchers who recognised the relation between face and politeness have proposed the term **linguistic etiquette** and they have claimed that “face can be correctly understood only in the context of notions of self, emphasising that such notions are necessarily informed by culturally varying perceptions of personhood and relationships between and individual and society” (Kasper, 2005: 64).

According to other researchers, politeness is defined as **considerateness** and it is one of many maxims reflecting “instantiations in a context of the Cooperative Principle” (Green, apud. Kasper, 2005).

2.3.4.1. Linguistic Politeness Strategies

All users’ cyber-contributions have the potential to be threatening to other digi-participants’ face needs and become **face-threatening acts**, that is to say they become speech acts which contain an interpersonal dimension: directives, commissives, and expressives (see Kasper, 2005: 61). “Any communication is a risk to face; it is a risk to one’s own face at the same time it is a risk to the other person’s. We have to carefully project a face for ourselves and to respect the face rights and claims of other participants” (Scollon and Scollon, 2001: 48). Therefore, during each interaction, users have to pay close attention to facework. That is to say, they try to maintain every digi-participant’s face during the social interaction by reducing face-threatening to a minimum. They achieve this by applying the politeness strategies which aim (a) at supporting or enhancing the addressee’s positive face (positive politeness) / involvement and (b) at avoiding transgression of the addressee’s freedom of action and freedom from imposition (negative face or independence) (see Watts, 2003: 86). Hence, “politeness is activity serving to enhance, maintain or protect face” (Kasper, 2005: 61).

Watts lists Brown and Levinson’s fifteen strategies of politeness which focus on the recipient’s positive face and ten addressed to the recipient’s negative face (see 2003: 88–91). He replaced Brown and Levinson’s examples with other examples arguing that Brown and Levinson’s examples are fictional and an interactional context is needed instead. We list these strategies and we replace Watt’s examples with examples taken from private e-mail, (synchronous and asynchronous) chat exchanges.

The strategies addressed to the hearer²⁶’s positive face are:

(1) Notice, attend to H (her/his interests, wants, needs, goods, etc.):

(strategy 1) *I have a friend who wants to take Spanish private classes. **I think you are the right person for him since you are very good at Spanish. Even***

²⁶ Abbreviated as *H*

- if I know that you are very busy these months, it is worth trying.*** → (FTA)
Do you think you could find some time for him?
- (2) Exaggerate (interest, approval, sympathy with H):
 (strategy 2) ***Eva, you are “green”! I was hoping you were online.*** → (FTA)
Could we skype for 5 minutes?
 This sounds awesome!!! → (FTA) *Could you pls give me more details about trip?*
- (3) Intensify interest to the hearer in the speaker’s contribution:
 (strategy 3) ***My colleagues are very nice! I spent the day with them today, and the atmosphere at the working place is very cool :) I will tell you everything about them!*** → (FTA) [begins a narrative]
- (4) Use in-group identity markers in speech:
 (strategy 4) ***Hello, Panda! How are you, sweety?*** → (FTA) *Could you send me the photos?*
- (5) Seek agreement in safe topics:
 (strategy 5) ***I agree with you. This band is better*** → (FTA) *Could you send me the link?*
- (6) Avoid disagreement:
 (strategy 6) ***I know. You are totally right.*** → (FTA) *But, you know, this is who I am.*
- (7) Presuppose, raise, assert common ground:
 (strategy 7) ***I think we should apply; we do not have anything to loose*** → (FTA)
Why don’t you fill in the registration form?
- (8) Joke to put the hearer at ease:
 A: (strategy 8) ***I little birdie told me you have information about this.***
 B: *Ahah, really? :P*
 A: → (FTA) *Give me a copy-paste version.* 🤪
- (9) Assert or presuppose knowledge of and concern for hearer’s wants:
 (strategy 9) ***I attach the photos to this e-mail. Enjoy :)*** → (FTA) *Could you also send me the photos you took?*

(10) Offer, promise:

(strategy 10) ***I will send you more photos as soon I receive them myself*** → (FTA)

Could you send me the photos you took?

(11) Be optimistic that the hearer wants what the speaker wants, i.e. that the FTA is light:

(strategy 11) ***I know you don't know how to create a zip archive, Eva*** → (FTA)

so you could upload them on Picasa.

(12) Include both S and H²⁷ in the activity:

(strategy 12) ***We should probably go back to work.*** (FTA = S wants to end the chat conversation and wants to get H to agree to do this)

(13) Give or ask for reasons:

(strategy 13) ***I think we talked too much :P*** (FTA) *How about going back to work?*

You did not have much yet (FTA) *go!!! Will talk later :)*

(14) Assert reciprocal exchange: (FTA) if you send me the photos you took at the mountain, ***I will send you the photos I received from Mary.***

(15) Give gifts to H (goods, sympathy, understanding, cooperation):

A: (strategy 15) ***Here is a useful link for you!***

B: *Great! Thank you!*

A: *Don't even mention it!* → (FTA) *Could we talk a bit?*

The strategies addressed to the hearer's negative face are:

(16) Be conventionally indirect:

(strategy 1) ***Wow, we spoke [on Skype] for one hour!***

Maybe I should let you work.

I should probably go back to the lab.

(17) Do not assume willingness to comply. Question, hedge:

(strategy 2) ***Could I ask you something?***

(18) Be pessimistic about ability or willingness to comply. Use the subjunctive:

(strategy 3) ***If you had time this week, I'd like to talk to you on skype.***

²⁷ Speaker and hearer

(19) Minimise the imposition:

(strategy 4) *Could I interrupt you for a couple of minutes?*

Give me a sec. Brb [be right back]

(20) Give deference:

(strategy 5) *Sorry! I think I might have sent you the wrong document.*

(21) Apologise:

(strategy 6) *Sorry to interrupt you, but . . .*

Sorry, I interrupt you again, could you ... ?

(22) Impersonalise the speaker and the hearer. Avoid the pronouns *I* and *you*:

(strategy 7) *A: The e-mail was sent with the subject none. I found it a week later in the spam folder.*

B: Sorry...

A: No problem...But, it did not arrive to the recipient in time :(

(23) State the FTA as an instance of a general rule:

(strategy 8) *Sending e-mails with a specific title makes it easy for the recipient to see them. So, → (FTA) now you do not have a ticket to the concert because of this.*

Brown and Levinson put forward the Cooperative principle and its four maxims as a “presumptive framework” and they do not define politeness as a conversational maxim but as a motivating force for violating the cooperative maxims. The reason why participants do not follow the most efficient and fast course of action, as they would do if they followed the Gricean maxims, is their preoccupation for face. It follows that, in Brown and Levinson’s view, politeness operates only when face wants are in danger, and therefore participants make strategic choices about how to avoid or handle imminent face threat. It is only these strategic options of avoiding or handling face-threat that are called “politeness” in Brown and Levinson’s theory. That is why, their theory is referred to by Fraser (1990) as the “face-saving view” of politeness and it is second-order politeness (see Kasper, 2005: 60) – “a theoretical construct, located within a theory of social behavior and language use” (Kasper, 2005: 59).

2.4. Partial Conclusions

As we can notice, the cyber-language socialisation implies “digitised features” and online practices which pinpoint the fact that discourses in cyberspace and the linguistic behaviour of individuals have to be analysed using the Internet linguistic framework. Hence, we demonstrated that language in cyberspace constitutes a fourth medium, the first three being speaking, writing and signing (Crystal, 2006: 272). We focused only on the casual conversations in cyberspace and the digital productions of individuals confirmed the fact that they are using computer-mediated language. Our corpus analysis in the fifth chapter will focus on the “digitised features” and online practices identified in this chapter.

We also adapted the co-operative principle and the politeness principle to cyberspace and we showed that there are cyber-situations that can be accounted for very well through these principles or through the breaking of these principles. Moreover, focusing on these Netspeak principles, we demonstrated the role of face in online self and other identity construction.

CHAPTER III

Cybernames

This chapter investigates names and nicknames in cyberspace (usernames/cybernames) because they constitute the points of access to the users' online identity.

The chapter contains two parts: **3.1 Cybernames (Names, Nicknames and Chrematonyms) – A Sociolinguistic Standpoint** and **3.2 Cybernames – A Possible World Standpoint**.

In the first part, we examine cybernames from a sociolinguistic standpoint. After defining proper names and nicknames, we borrow the typology established by Haya Bechar-Israeli and we apply it to the online game *Conquistador* and *Catan*, extracting empirical data from these two game platforms. We also present the characteristics of the *Catan* nicknames and we present a special case of online naming practice on *Catan*: when users address each other using the colours in which their nicknames is written. Further, we examine Facebook, Couchsurfing and Google+'s policies with regards to the online naming practice. Then, we confront the Facebook policy with the empirical data on the social network site.

In the second part of our chapter, we examine cybernames from a possible world standpoint. We briefly present the concept of possible worlds and transworld identity. We present two different approaches to proper names and we introduce the category of fictional names. Last but not least, we provide an interpretation of cybernames.

3.1. Cybernames (Names, Nicknames and Chrematonyms) – A Sociolinguistic Standpoint

This subchapter examines the names digi-participants use in cyberspace (cybernames) from a sociolinguistic perspective.

3.1.1. Proper Names

From a sociolinguistic point of view, the name is “a sign that defines the inner and outer being of a specific person. The name is a very significant part of our identity and it accompanies us in most cases throughout our life” (Bechar Israeli, apud. Tureac, 2008: 414). It marks our identity.

In cyberspace, digi-participants can choose to use their real names as cyber-names. What’s more, when they use cyberspace for situations that are in direct connection with their real life, they might feel obliged by the social norms to use their real names. For example: writing an official e-mail.

3.1.2. Nicknames

Nicknames are defined as “descriptive names added to or replacing the actual names of persons, places or things, or familiar or shortened forms of proper names” (Tureac, 2008: 413); “a short, clever, cute, derogatory, or otherwise substitute name for a person or thing's real name” (<http://www.fact-index.com/n/ni/nickname.html>, 10th of March, 2011).

In face to face interaction, participants usually receive their nicknames from others: they can have a story at their origin; they can make reference to the physical aspect of a person, to a quality, to behaviour, to expressions often used by the speaker; they can be ironic; they can be funny: *Blondy*; *Panda*; they can be puns to the real name or words that rhyme with it: *Mary-scary*; many of them are diminutives: *Petra* → *Petrușca*, *Petruța*, *Petruca* etc. By contrast, in cyberspace, users choose their own nicknames.

In cyberspace, in the most common online actions like creating a Facebook account, signing up to Yahoo mail/Gmail service, creating an account on a game platform or on a website, users encounter a constraint of the digital world: if they want to create an *id* which corresponds to their real names, but that *id* is already taken by another digi-participant, the software does not permit them to register on the website/SNS/game platform/e-mail address. Hence, they have to modify their real names. Some strategies could be to add a figure/number/numbers, a letter/letters, to repeat/remove letters, to use capital letters, to alternate capital

letters with lower-case letters, to use special characters (_ , . , - , * , # , \$) etc. For example, for a name like *Eva Parloc* we could use the following:

<i>evaparloc</i>	<i>eva.paarloc</i>	<i>eva_parloc</i>
<i>eva.parloc</i>	<i>evaparloc1</i>	<i>eva-parloc</i>
<i>Eva_Parloc</i>	<i>eva.parloc2011</i>	<i>evaparloc1986</i>
<i>EvAparloc</i>	<i>EvaParloc*</i>	<i>eva_088_parloc</i>

This fact might add hidden meaning to the id and thus require interpretation as the other users wonder what *1/088/2011/1986* etc. stands for. Hence, we consider that the result of this linguistic operation is a cybername which is in between proper names and nicknames. Nonetheless, the online nicknaming process is far more complex and linguistically diverse than presented above. It is also determined by the Internet situations: the selection or choice of a nick is a ritual act, required by the culture to which the individual aspires to belong, and – “as with all naming practices – a matter of great complexity and sensitivity. However, unlike traditional naming, chatgroup practice is influenced by extraneous factors, notably the principles introduced by the network” (Crystal, 2006: 165).

According to Anca Tureac “the nicknames provide a way of approaching and getting some insight into the meanings suggested by the wide virtual world”. Furthermore, “references to collective cultural, ethnic and religious themes in nicknames might indicate that the individual belongs to a certain social group” (Tureac, 2008: 413).

Crystal (2006: 166) highlights that digi-participants choose their nicknames and they get attached to them, as with all self-selected names. The nickname (nick) becomes their digital identity because it communicates something about who they are, and acts as an invitation to others to engage in conversations with them. People who feel they belong to a particular group or online community will wish to maintain that identity, “if only to insure that they are recognized as being the same person each time they log on”. Thus, nicknames establish an “electronic identity” (Tureac, 2008: 420) and most of the time are descriptive.

They indirectly communicate something about the users and they require a decoding/interpretation operation.

A statistics of the use of nicknames on different Romanian, English and French youth forums focused on specific and light topics, mostly related to music, dance, education and relationships, shows that “more than 90% prefer to use their nicknames instead of their real names, and more than 50% have chosen nicknames that contain more than one word or expression, making use of the ludic possibilities of language. The number of identifiable nicknames is quite reduced” (Tureac, 2008: 416). This statistics is also valid for www.conquizardor.ro, www.conquizardor.com, <http://www.playcatan.com/with-people.html> and other virtual spaces provided by e-games.

3.1.2.1. Nicknames' Typology

Taking into account some dominant categories, Haya Bechar-Israeli establishes a typology of nicknames (2006).

We borrowed this typology in order to verify whether it applies to [conquizardor.ro/com](http://www.conquizardor.ro/com) and [playcatan.com](http://www.playcatan.com).

Speaking about Internet Relay Chat, Bechar-Israeli (2006) argues that in this form of interaction, where one cannot see the speaker or obtain even minimal information such as sex, approximate age, skin color, race, etc. – information which is easily obtainable in face-to-face interactions, nicknames are a critical means of presenting ourselves. They are the only initial way of hinting at who we are, in literally one word or one expression. The same can be argued for the *Cyber land* (Ibidem) of [conquizardor.ro/com](http://www.conquizardor.ro/com) and [playcatan.com](http://www.playcatan.com).

3.1.2.1.1. Online Game *Conquizardor*. Categories and Examples

On examining the categories borrowed by Anca Tureac from Haya Bechar-Israeli and mentioned in her article “Youth Nicknames on Forums”, we realised that they apply very well to [conquizardor.ro/com](http://www.conquizardor.ro/com) (<http://game.conquizardor.ro>, <http://game.conquizardor.com>, 18th of May 2010). We extract some examples in order to illustrate the categories:

1. Nicknames which relate to the self-image (elements related to physical appearance, physic and psychological features, or descriptions of the moods;

- other types of characteristics): *wikingmann*, *sweety87*, *maddy 2008*, *uităcilă*, *Young. Einstein*, *Teddy*, *sebismart69*, *0crazygirl117*
- i. Job (usual occupation) related nicknames: *skater7*, *devildriver666*
 - ii. Origins or nationality (or apparently): *Berlin MS*, *1Botoșani*
 - iii. Age-related: *Wzatt24*, *sweetgirl21*, *Leon 26*
 - iv. Relationships: *nephthys k*
 - v. Preferences concerning different domains: *gothic207*
2. Nicknames related to the fauna and flora: *blackcat30*, *Grimdonkey*, *Serpent*, *rose*
 3. Nicknames representing object names: *blackwater*
 4. Nicknames related to food, sweets: *chocolate22*
 5. Nicknames referring to parts of the body: *brainiaic08*
 6. Nicknames related to diseases and death: *hades2510*, *ShadowVoid*, *Black*
 7. Nicknames referring to religion: *fallingangel*, *blueangel*, *zaphael*
 8. Nicknames related to technology and media communication: *cyber_brain*
 9. Nicknames related to identity or lack of identity: *somebody*, *Beyond Time*, *juste moi*, *nonameplayer*
 10. Nicknames suggesting identification with other persons: *adams fam*, *Salvador Dali*
 - i. Nicknames that valorize some famous names (or real persons): *beckham2008*
 - ii. Nicknames taken from literature, TV, films, or fairy tales and other stories: *jigsaw669*, *Rain-Man*, *Women Secret*, *vandame4*
 - iii. Nicknames referring to different mythologies: *Poseidon*
 11. Nicknames that involving linguistic or typographical play: *73deliCate*
 12. Nicknames that contain sound play: *Lucky Luck*
 13. Nicknames related to the sex: *babygirl25*, *womancrazy66*
 14. Provocative nicknames: *cannibal01*, *fort7*, *aboy4u*, *jamais u*, *Son Amour*, *O Honey*
 15. Real names instead of nicknames: *george115*, *emily02*, *alexx145*
 16. Uncategorized names (apparently meaningless nicknames): *s0pyk*, *d347hl4dy*, *lika 53*, *theego4lan*, *Y u m*

3.1.2.1.2. Online Game *Catan*. Categories and Examples

The same categories apply to the nicknames featured on the online platform of the game *Catan* as well. The examples were taken in several sessions from December 2012 to August 2013. The examples include the nicknames of the digi-participants who were online at the moment of the observation because the platform does not permit the users to see the names/nicknames of the users who are not online (<http://game.playcatan.com/browsercow/cowplay.php?size=2>):

1. Nicknames which relate to the self-image (elements related to physical appearance, physic and psychological features, or descriptions of the moods; other types of characteristics): *abello*, *Appuls*, *AwesomeA*, *Bella1985*, *Bully*, *ChrisVigilante*, *Crayzee*, *Crazy*, *cowboys*, *CynicalSam*, *cuteo*, *devotee3*, *eexiesTheCutie*, *funkygirl*, *funnylos*, *kramas2* (Swedish verb meaning to embrace – <http://en.bab.la/dictionary/swedish-english/kramas>), *KunoTheWise*, *lazybastard*, *loserinthegame*, *mad90*, *Mr_Propre*, *spaceboy3012*, *s.funny*, *sisterMary*, *Sprintenica* [Romanian adjective, diminutive form for *agile*], *Super Jeenius*, *vinobrunello*
 - i. Job (usual occupation) related nicknames: *Alpinistu*, *Comercant*, *kcoop13*, *lycoactor7*, *SwerveDriver*, *supercanto*
 - ii. Real or imaginary origins or nationality: *armenian4eva*, *AustriaHase8*, *canadapoet*, *iChina*, *King-Urbaan*, *Melk*, *ottoauswien*, *tolmino*, *zhutu*, *nordic*, *theoperator05*
 - iii. Age-related: *Ageless*, *aleninha*, *Cris21*, *kinder25*, *kinderu*, *neonate*
 - iv. Relationships: *buddy0710*, *BadgerMom*, *Compagnon*, *MamaB*, *OneLucky Mom*, *Sidster*
 - v. Preferences concerning different domains: *alcooliqye*, *Dantzeboy*, *hockeyguy*, *muzicman90*, *Rockstar*
2. Nicknames related to the fauna and flora [and/or nature, universe related nicknames]: *bearnybear*, *birdie25*, *BubuRuza* [Romanian for *ladybug*], *cat-ana*, *desertrat12*, *DonkeyClaw*, *DrNighthawk*, *feline*, *FrozenRabbit*, *earlybird*, *froggstytle*, *GreyTanuki*, *hampstar*, *pinkpanther*, *Mumma Bear*, *Orchidee*, *soarece* [Romanian for *mouse*, spelled without the Romanian

- diacritic (*soarece*)] *SweatyGoat*, *swedishfish*, *voda88*, *wolfff*, *WolfKnf*, *worm*, *Shadeslayrs*, *Siriusgreen*
3. Nicknames representing object names [or names related to objects]: *box*, *calidoscopi*, *cielofan*, *cube*, *diamante23*, *DieselTrain*, *elpram* [Spanish for *baby chair*], *GreenGold*, *Hammer1*, *IceBox*, *jr-ice*, *Mr Brick Brown*, *mrplow08*, *Nulblaze*, *paleguitar*, *robotzica*, *SilkWood*, *teddy007*, *train_ovo*
 4. Nicknames related to food, sweets: *ananaSandwich*, *apples*, *BaconSwag*, *BarbaPapa* (probably from the French *barbe à papa* – cotton candy), *Biscuit*, *BluePianeapple*, *Broccoli*, *caffeinefree*, *candysunshine*, *Cherri0*, *cherryvalance*, *mango*, *Merlot* (drinks), *numutella33*, *uncerveza*, *vegeta_lo*
 5. Nicknames referring to parts of the body: *Face2010*, *handsome_chin*, *ToniFist*, *yummy_tummy*
 6. Nicknames related to diseases and death: *illLogiKK*
 7. Nicknames referring to religion: *angel1011*, *El_Diablo*, *HolyGhost*, *Iuda*, *saintsun*, *DaAngel*
 8. Nicknames related to technology and media communication: *click*, *Heffalmpn-woozle* (word play: “Heffalumps and Wozles” is a song from the 1968 Walt Disney musical film featurette *Winnie the Pooh and the Blustery Day*. It was written by the Sherman Brothers – http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Heffalumps_and_Wozles), *meistercyber*, *NetExtend*
 9. Nicknames related to identity or lack of identity: *AnotherName*, *ichbinneuhier* [I am new here], *ich12345* [German for *me*], *Inc0gnit,quiqui*, *JustMe90*, *me_eee*, *questionable*, *Maybe*, *Player101*, *say_my_NAME*, *savethedate*
 10. Nicknames suggesting identification with other persons: *augenfaust*, *CavemanDa3*
 - i. Nicknames that valorize some famous names (or real persons): *beethoven*, *caligula*, *ChongYew*, *Einstein*, *erSchroedinger*, *don_vito*, *Emmeline*, *Gagun*, *JimiHendrix*, *kem*, *LadyDi*, *robinski*
 - ii. Nicknames taken from literature, from TV, films, or fairy tales and other stories: *Batman23*, *ChromeGnome*, *Fairytales*, *Jaws22*, *Lancelot0016*, *LazarusLong*, *marlies57*, *Mononoke*, *myfairlady*, *Ninja14*, *Ninja878*, *Paconcrack*, *PeterPaaPan*, *Pfanny*, *PowerRanger*, *Sandybell*, *Tchen*, *Shellan*, *XaweR*, *tweety*, *chuckychan*, *potahontas*, *Wingofsong*

- iii. Nicknames referring to different mythologies: *apollo12*, *Ares*, *euridike*, *hermes*, *Jupit3r*
11. Nicknames involving linguistic or typographical play. “Some nicknames seem to have been taken from cryptic crossword puzzles, and their level of linguistic sophistication is extremely high. People create phrases, omitting vowels or consonants in such a way that the word remains legible” (Bechar-Israeli, 2006): *badJ0k3r* [badjoker], *bogd4n*, *DSM4Life*, *gh0s7* [ghost], *m4dril*, *k3nveloo* [kenvelo], *1Knight4u2* [the nickname makes reference to the knight in the Catan game],
 12. Nicknames that contain sound play, onomatopoeia, or imitation of sounds: *BONG_WATER*, *fli flap*, *FreFre*, *Hehe_*, *mew*, *meowwhat*, *paopao*
 13. Nicknames related to the sex [gender]: *garyboy0220*, *Manbehind*, *chick*
 14. Provocative nicknames: *Alberto_Magno*, *andy_wow*, *badbadbad*, *badpit*, *Bruceallmighty*, *DirtyChampion*, *dominionlover*, *HellninJa*, *gforce*, *HerrLuft* [Mister Atmosphere], *hunger*, *Jahi*, *Monster*, *Puma*, *runel225*, *Scandal*, *widly*. In this category we could also introduce the nicknames that make reference to the game Catan or other games because they are intended to be intimidating to the other players: *AndreiCatan*, *AngievonCatan*, *Cataner1982*, *Catanienser*, *catank*, *catanned*, *Catanoo*, *catansettlz*, *catant*, *chesss123*, *iliveincatan*, *kataany*, *Katana*, *looserinthegame*, *settler09*, *settler2*, *WheatBaron*, *woolwise* [the Catan game is about having 5 resources (wood, wool, brick, ore and grain) in order to build villages and towns. Thus, the *WheatBaron* and the *woolwise* nicknames might make reference to the wheat/wool resource and to the ability of the gamer to use it in his own benefit]
 15. Real names instead of nicknames: *Gerrard*, *Haga*, *kirill*, *Leon*, *Rosy*, *Tumas* [Thomas]. Sometimes there are derivations of and addition to real names because the name is already taken by another user (cybernames which are inbetween names and nicknames): *Alecsxander*, *alexander2652*, *DeDaniel*, *dora_85*, *issandra252001*, *Johnathan414*, *John1991*, *kim.daniel94*, *MandyB*, *marcell234*, *Nita64*, *sophie 5*, *NueVal* (maybe a graphic play on actual surname Nueval), *oguz* (Turkish name/ a city, municipality and capital of Oghuz Rayon, Azerbaijan – <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oguz>), *Ryannewman*

16. Uncategorized names (apparently meaningless nicknames that cannot be categorized or seem impossible to categorize): *Akkix*, *amboojadesan*, *Anrosacris*, *AomA*, *azhang*, *chilantran*, *banshee35*, *barengott*, *BBM*, *bluelaff*, *Buckwac*, *edflobe*, *fondey*, *hhhc1801*, *ijhje*, *jkonouck*, *lainiola*, *likskiks*, *Loopbleepbloop*, *magroesj*, *Mict1*, *mie2468*, *mimi74*, *ndo*, *pkft*, *polagullo*, *Sasanr10*, *Simu1*, *sjrc*, *soood*, *SteFre*, *TTS*, *talywa*, *tetay*, *tolli*, *Tordalian*, *uebele*, *Vada*, *winlin*, *Yosen*, *000*, *8888*.

With regards to the 16th category, we mention that “even if a name bears no special meaning, it becomes a part of our identity. If our relationships with Netters whom we met by chance and who know us solely by our nickname are important to us [...], then we will usually keep our nickname as though it were an important part of our identity” (Ibidem). Furthermore, even if some nicknames might not make sense for the rest of the digi-participants, they might have a hidden meaning and they might make sense for the users who posted them.

The medium of the online game Catan is fluid because we can only see the nicknames of the gamers who are online. Hence, other categories could be introduced as well. At the same time, there are nicknames that could be introduced in two or more categories. For instance:

- *chuckychan* fits the category no.10 (Movie character *Chucky* with the ending *-chan* taken from the Hong Kong actor *Jackie Chan*), but it fits also category no. 11 because, by combining two proper nouns which are not normally combined, the gamer creates a nickname which refers simultaneously to two different worlds: the fictional world of Chucky, the killing doll, and the fictional world of the movies with Jackie Chan;
- *teddy007* fits the category no. 3 because it contains a noun which represents an object’s name. It also fits the category no. 10, because *007* makes reference to James Bond, code name 007, fictional character. At the same time, the combination *teddy* + *007* is ironic and, hence, the nickname also fits the category no. 11 because it is created through a linguistic (semantic) strategy of combining a noun containing the meaning [- animate, - human] with the element *007* which makes reference to James Bond [+ animate, +human, + male, + adult];

- *k3nveloo* [kenvelo] fits the category no. 11 because it involves the typographical game of using a figure instead of a letter: *e* → 3. At the same time, the noun makes reference to “the collection of clothing brand *KENVELO*. Women's and men's fashion” (<http://www.kenvelo.com/en/>);
- *1Knight4u2* [one knight for you] fits the category no. 11 because of the replacement of the letters with numbers: *one* → 1, *for* → 4, *too* → 2 and *you* is spelled *u*. It can also be introduced in the category no. 14, Provocative/Intimidating nicknames, because it makes reference to the knight in the game of *Catan* which attacks the other players, giving the gamer who plays a knight more chances to win.

We mention that some of these categories apparently make reference to something, but they might as well make reference to something different from what we proposed. This is a consequence of the cultural background and knowledge schemata of the users interpreting the nicknames. By knowledge schemata we understand the amount of information possessed by the speaker/writer and his assumption about the receivers' knowledge of the world because communication is based on the mutual awareness of the other's quantity and quality of information. Knowledge schemata are world knowledge and social knowledge used in the production and reception of discourse (Cook, 1989: 90).

As we can notice, the *Catan* gamers use heterogeneous criteria when choosing their nicknames.

The purpose of this typology was neither to create an exhaustive list of nicknames, nor to provide a statistical account of nicknames encountered on the online platform of *Catan*, but to highlight the users' linguistic creativity of fabricating an online identity via a cybername.

Another very interesting fact about the naming practice on *Catan* is that, while playing, users have an avatar and their cybername is written in one of the following colours: orange, blue, red or white. In each *Catan* game, the colour of the cybername changes. Thus, the gamer's cybername is variably orange, blue, red or white. Gamers very often address each other by using the colour in which their cybername is written during a certain game, and not by using the cybername (see the figure below). Because there are only four colours available and

because the colour of the cybername varies from one game to another, the colours function like deictics, pointing to a particular gamer only during a particular game.



3.1.3. Cybernames on Facebook, Couchsurfing and Google+

We examined Facebook, Couchsurfing and Google+, the social networks where users are expected to express their real identity and to use their real names as cybernames.

We argue that most of the users register with their real names rather than nicknames. Hence, they take into account the policy which requires them to use their real names and have a real account.

➤ Facebook's policy:

- ✓ "According to Facebook's official policy on names, users are required to use their real name as it would appear on a credit card or identification card. Nicknames are allowed, assuming the nickname applies to the first or middle name. Under account settings, a Facebook user can also add an alternate name which could be an extended nickname or a maiden name before a woman getting married. Professional additions to names should

also be added to the alternate name section rather than changing the main account name.”

- ✓ “Regarding the use of fake names, Facebook policy very plainly states “*we remove fake accounts from the site as we find them.*” Assuming the snitching data isn’t actually being used for enforcement, then Facebook is clearly ignoring the official policy despite finding users with fake names. According to Facebook’s internal estimates, approximately 8.7 percent of the 955 million user accounts are fake. Nearly 46 million are duplicate accounts, 23 million are classified incorrectly and about 14 million have been created by “undesirable” people like spammers.” (<http://www.digital-trends.com/social-media/facebook-snitch-on-friends-that-arent-using-real-names/>)
- ✓ “I think anonymity on the Internet has to go away,” argued former Facebook Marketing Director, Randi Zuckerberg. “People behave a lot better when they have their real names down. ... I think people hide behind anonymity and they feel like they can say whatever they want behind closed doors.” (<http://techcrunch.com/2012/07/29/surprisingly-good-evidence-that-real-name-policies-fail-to-improve-comments/>)

Recently, there have been registered complaints to the “real name” policy. However, this condition is still valid for the Facebook users:

Germany orders changes to Facebook real name policy



Forcing people to use real names on Facebook violates German laws, said data protection officials.

A German data protection body has ordered Facebook to end its policy of making members use their real names.

The policy violates German laws that give people the right to use pseudonyms online, said the data protection agency in Schleswig-Holstein.

The agency has issued a decree demanding that Facebook let people use fake names immediately.

Facebook said it would fight the decree “vigorously” and that its naming policy met European data protection rules.

“It is unacceptable that a US portal like Facebook violates German data protection law unopposed and with no prospect of an end,” said Thilo Weichert, head of the regional data protection office in Schleswig Holstein, in a statement.

The ability to use a pseudonym on Facebook was “reasonable” said Mr Weichert and would allow people to use the service “without fear of unpleasant consequences”.

Facebook's long-standing policy of making people use their real names did nothing to prevent people using the social network to throw insults or to hamper identity theft, he added.

Schleswig Holstein is piloting the action against Facebook and if it is successful the decision is likely to be adopted by the nation's other data protection agencies, it said, adding that the social network now has two weeks to oppose the decree in a German court.

The decree issued by the Schleswig Holstein office was “without merit” a Facebook spokeswoman told tech news site IT World adding that it planned to fight the order. (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/technology-20766682>, published on the 18th of December 2012).

With regards to the Facebook policy of using real names to register on the social network site, we also provide a relevant example from the Facebook page *Welcome to the Internet* (<https://www.facebook.com/4funsociety>).

The page's name was *4chan* and the Facebook users who administered the page introduced the following information in the subsection Basic Info < Personal Information:

This page does not represent the website www.4chan.org! We are just fans who post the funniest stuff we can find on the Internet.

The Problem is we cannot change our name! If you know how we can change our name, please tell us!

In August 2013, the administrators of the page posted the following status:

Sad news everyone.

Facebook just messaged me that they will not allow the name “4chan” on Facebook. Just like they don't want “Pedobear”, they are now forcing me to choose a new name.

What should the new name of this page be? You choose! Write your idea in the comments. Note that anything related to “4chan”, like “fourchan”, “chan4” etc. will not be accepted! To this status, they also added a comment: 4chan The winner will become Co-Admin for my page. Also no insults in the name please, they won't accept that. Go.

Many digi-participants reacted to this post, some of them expressing their disdain towards the Facebook naming policy. For instance:

Andy Hadden: ChanChanChanChan

Fernando Rodriguez: MySpace

4chan: The winner will become Co-Admin for my page. Also no insults in the name please, they won't accept that. Go.

Tobias Prasomsat: “some silly name facebook forced me to use”

Fraser Tasker: this

Andrew Mesa: /b/ jackie chan

Matthew Dubcaptin Jackson: NumberAfterThreeChan

Rafael Oliveira: CHANnel 4.

Adrien Niklas: ChingChangChong

Klemen Gerbec: fortune

Greg De Vries: “The Four channels”

Justin Francis: /f/ – Facebook

Bill Francis Peralta: not4chan

Stevie Dee: /b/

Gary Gillette NewChan

Adam Torres: Kill Zuckerberg?

Lars Kramare Drakblod: FourChan, 2+2chan, “Care”Bear, Catholic PriestBear ^.^

Dario Luongo: halfeightchan

Steven McCombe: √16Chan

Michael Pomponio: *Hitmonchan*

Josh Perez: *Jackie Chan IV.*

ChristineEwing-Cox: *I like Alan's suggestion.....forcedtochangechan
.....gold!!!!!!*

Brian Wong: *chanchan chanchan*

Peppino Wilbers: *3+1Chan*

Patrick Serrano: *plan /b/*

Alex Avara: *Channel Four News Team, with lead anchor Pedro Bear.*

Peter Addicott: *FOURced CHANge*

Arie Black: *Fourchains*

Majster Błażej Lechowicz: *but remember – you are free men*

Dylan Dryburgh: *4skin?*

Dang Stock: *2Girls1chan*

Espen Gabrielsen: *The Imageboard That Must Not Be Named.*

Anders Dahl Sørensen: *1+3chan*

Kota Essex Larsen: *chan to the 4th power*

Loan Casado: *TrollPedia*

Sherman Chan: *RepostChan*

Seth Ludeman: *Channel 4*

Josh Taseff: *5chan*

In the next days, the name of the page (*4chan*) was changed to *Welcome to the Internet*.

➤ Couchsurfing's policy:

“Trust is the foundation of sharing and of Couchsurfing. Helping you stay safe is our top priority. Over the years, our safety team has built a system that fosters trust among our members and helps Couchsurfers make informed decisions and stay safe.

A cornerstone of our trust system is the public references that members leave for one another following any kind of in-person meeting. They rate their experiences as positive, negative or neutral. Besides the rating, we encourage our members to leave very detailed references of each other so that others can be fully informed before agreeing to host, surf or just meet.

We also offer an optional verification system that confirms individuals' names and addresses. Those who opt in are identified with a check mark icon and are featured higher up in Couchsurfing search results.

Another safety feature we offer is vouching, which is a way for members to publicly declare trust in each other.

Ultimately, taking the time to read member profiles very carefully to make sure they've been vetted and that there's a personality match is critical to safety and a positive experience."

(<http://www.couchsurfing.org/about/faq/#1>)

➤ **Google+'s Policy:**

"Last year, Google had to quickly revise the company's police on fake names in respect to Google+. Rather than asking a user to alter their nickname or pseudonym, Google simply deleted the accounts without notifying the user. Shortly after an uproar from influential Google+ users, Google+ vice president Bradley Horowitz said that the policy would be revised to include a warning process before actually suspending the account. In addition, Google added a section in the Google+ profile for other names. Similar to Facebook's alternate name section, Google+ users can use this section to display a nickname, maiden name or professional title".

(<http://www.digitaltrends.com/social-media/facebook-snitch-on-friends-that-arent-using-real-names/>)

3.1.3.1. Cybernames on Facebook

Examining the online spaces mentioned, we state that the use of nicknames or names depends also on the different uses of cyberspace. Hence, in a cyber-community like Facebook, most of the digi-participants use their real names, while on other virtual communities, like e-games, the same users prefer to have a nickname.

In December 2012, in our personal list of Facebook friends, there were 506 friends. On examining them, we noticed that they can be included in the three onymic categories:

- **Toponyms** (names of places). There were two toponyms in our personal Facebook list. The profiles which contain a toponym as a cybername are actually

Facebook profiles which provide information about particular places and not about users:

- ✓ Two city/town pages: *Sighișoara Medievală*, *Orașul Cluj*
- **Anthroponyms** (from Gk. *anthropos*, 'man', + *onoma*, 'name', the names of human beings). The anthroponyms were represented by the following subdivisions:
 - ✓ 452 users registered with their real names;
 - ✓ 32 were either nicknames or deviated/changed/maiden names:
 - One user registered with her maiden name: *Camelia Făgărășan*;
 - One user added an initial to her name. The initial could stand for her middle name or for her father's first name, etc.: *Adriana C Prodan*
 - Five users used a shorter form of their first name together with their last name: *Cipri Pop*, *Vio Isloi*, *Aura Stan*, *Clau Antoniu Orban*, *Meli Barta*, *Vasi Carabut*;
 - Four users changed their first name: *Angie Nistor*, *Boby Bejenaru*, *Nikol Aron*, *Gt Dale*
 - Six users changed only their last name: *Andreea Scubli*, *Rudy Warin*, *Valentina Mis*, *Melanie Rodriguez*, *Theofani Zengin*. One out of six users who changed their last name took out all the vowels in the last name: *Gilles Msscrd*;
 - Seven users registered with pseudonyms or nicknames: *Orlando Rubalo*, *Miranda Plumber*, *Țestoasa Fericita*, *Ju Ha*, *Bu Gy*, *MagicHandmade Dea*, *Fritzi Anna*.
 - One user shortened the first name and changed the last name: *Dani Wolf*;
 - One user beared the name Maria, but used the English version for it and replaced her last name: *Mary Chris*;
 - One user repeated her first name: *Eva Eva*;
 - One user shortened both his first name and his last name: *Chris Web.*;
 - Two users used only their first names (shortened or changed): *Rucsanda Ralu*, *Diana Dia*;
 - One user added two elements to her real name: *Vanessa Levy Ben Chtn*.
- **Chrematonyms** (Radu, Cotoc, 2012: 78–83).

According to Galkowski (2011)²⁸, chrematonyms form a third major onymic category which includes proper names or expressions of various formal kinds, ranging from a simple lexical or paralexical element, with neological compounds, to sentences, referring to the material and non-material things created intentionally by man:

- product names or trademarks. E.g. *Nutella, Kodak, IKEA*;
- artistic and media objects: titles of artworks, Internet names (e.g. *Guernica, Skapa, gmail.com, yahoo.com*);
- corporations and social groups. E.g. names of political parties;
- actions consisting of an idea enrolled in traditional or occasional facts of human civilization (*Easter, World Blood Donor, cHoRéDaNsE and Leisure, EURO 2012*)] (authors translation).

In our corpus, there were twenty chrematonyms:

- Three were names of organizations/institutions: *Lectorat Français Cluj, Centrul Blsh, Institut Français de Cluj*;
- Three were pubs/clubs/bars/café: *Silver Church Arena, Casa Cositorarului, StudentParty, Flying Circus*;
- Three sites/magazines: *Zile și Nopti Cluj-Napoca, Flop Flip, Servus Cluj*;
- One fitness center: *Zumba Sighișoara Cu Monica*;
- One shop: *Mobila Chic*;
- Three bands: *Toulouse Lautrec Man, Byron Trupa, Kumm Romania*;
- Six students' organizations/groups: *Foreign-Students In-Vienna, Vienna-Parties Erasmus-Students, Esn Uni Wien, CampusFrance Autriche, Campus France Roumanie, Absolvent Babeș-Bolyai*;

²⁸ «Les chrématonymes composent une troisième catégorie onymique majeure qui englobe les noms propres ou expressions propres de diverses natures formelles, variant d'un simple élément lexical ou paralexical, par des compositions néologiques, jusqu'aux formes syntagmatiques ou phrasématiques, désignant les référents matériels et non matériels créés intentionnellement par l'homme: entre autre les noms des produits ou des marques de caractère commercial (p.ex. Nutella, Kodak, IKEA), des objets artistiques et médiatiques (les titres des oeuvres artistiques, les noms d'Internet, p.ex. Guernica, Skape, gmail.com), des corporations et groupes sociaux (p.ex. les noms des partis politiques, comme fr. Alternative Libérale AL, pl. Platforma Obywatelska PO, amér. Peace and Freedom Parti, it. i Popolari di Italia Domani), des actions consistant en une idée inscrite dans des plans traditionnels ou occasionnels de la civilisation humaine (p.ex. Pâques, Journée mondiale du don du sang, cHoRéDaNsE et LoIsIr, EURO 2012) » (Galkowski, 2011).

As we can see from our list of Facebook friends, the names used on Facebook belong to the three onymic categories:

Anthroponyms
Toponyms
Chrematonyms

The number of anthroponyms (real names, nicknames), toponyms or chrematonyms differs depending on the target groups under focus: teenagers, young adults or adults. Moreover, some users might not have toponyms or chrematonyms in their lists of Facebook friends.

Our Facebook list is relevant because it brings into light the following facts:

- we do not interact with all our Facebook connections outside cyberspace;
- sometimes we cannot identify who the user behind the Facebook profile is. E.g. the Facebook account of a band is sometimes administered by someone else than the members of the band itself;
- the accounts named with chrematonyms stand for a collective/group identity or an individual identity. For instance, *Byron Trupa* refers to a group identity (all the members of the band), while a chrematonym like *Sting*, the stage name of an English musician, singer-song writer, refers to an individual identity.

Another important aspect that we have to take into account is the fluid nature of the online naming process and of the online identity for that matter. Thus, users can change their cybernames as many times as they want to.

The following user's personal messages about the naming process on Facebook highlight the relevant aspects:

- the fluidity of the naming process;
- the fact that, despite of the Facebook policy, users do not always use their real names on Facebook;
- there are also fake profiles on this platform;
- on Facebook, we are dealing with a digital life and not with the real life.

We changed the user's cybernames and real name for privacy reasons:

Username: Acantha Zafer

- *my real name is : Acantha Cassandra Flavia Steger (greek.romanian.german mix) :D*
Acantha IS my REAL name and Zafer is the name of my aunts and uncles from turkey..i chose their surname cuz i dont want all people to look and find me in internet by my real name and because i dont like my real name STEGER -.-
- *i think its a 50% chance to meet somebody who uses his/her real name..the rest has fakenames and profiles..i changed my name ..yes..at the beginning it was : Acantha Kassandra....Acantha Paparizou...Acantha Visator...*
- *But is like this i can give u an example..many of my friends..at least ca. 30–40 persons have a 2nd or 3rd profile in facebook.with a totally different name or another “personality” ...i dont know why but u should know that this exists too..*
- *Haha xd*
Yes i also have some friends who will never have a fb account and its good! For me,fb was/is a possibility to talk to my relatives and real friends who live in other countries and to use it as platform to meet musicians and dancers from all over the world im not a friendcollector..i can tell u exactly who is my friend and what relation we have etc...
- *[...] fb friendships are different..some people just give i likes and some really write with u ..in chat.message.make serious comments ...*
but i also saw .especially in the profile of my sister..that people use fb to get more ATTENTION and more SELFCONFIDENCE(by getting ilikes and compliments -.-)...but sometimes they also use it to mobb people..to stalk them or to treat them bad..cuz its online and not real life..i hate it.-.-

3.2. Cybernames – A Possible World Standpoint

In this part, we illustrate a possible world standpoint in relation to cybernames. At the same time, we provide a personal interpretation of the cybername linguistic phenomena, using Gregory Currie's perspective (1990).

3.2.1. Possible Worlds and Transworld Identity

In order to provide a possible world account of cybernames, we need two basic concepts: possible worlds and transworld identity.

We define the concept of ‘possible worlds’ as “total ‘ways the world might have been’, or states or histories of the entire world” (Kripke, 1980: 18). Hence, there is the actual world and the possible worlds.

The concept of transworld identity “concerns the issue of individuals at one world being identical with themselves at every other world” (Oltean, 2009: 265).

We briefly present three attitudes identified by Kaplan (1979 [1978], apud. Oltean, 2009: 265–266): the sceptical attitude – David Lewis; the metaphysical attitude – Saul Kripke and Nicholas Rescher; the relativistic attitude – Kaplan.

1. David Lewis does not accept “transworld identity”. He considers that “similarities across possible worlds determine a counterpart relation which need be neither symmetric nor transitive. The counterpart of something in another possible world is *never* identical with the thing itself” (Lewis, 1968, apud. Kripke, 1980: 45). Thus, things from different worlds are never identical and Lewis promotes the **principle of similarity**, according to which a person in one world does not find himself in another world but his “counterpart” (“everyone to his own world”). He also states that “your counterparts... resemble you... in important respects... more closely than do the other things in their worlds... weighted by the importance of the various respects and by the degrees of the similarities” (Lewis, 1968, apud. Kripke, 1980: 76). Moreover, the researcher considers that possible worlds are other dimensions of a more inclusive universe and that they are given “only by purely qualitative descriptions” (Idem: 45).

2. Saul Kripke and Nicholas Rescher promote **the principle of identity**, stating that one and the same thing can exist in several worlds (Oltean, 2006: 98). They consider that identification can be realized through *intrinsic* characteristics.

3. Kaplan identifies **the relativistic theory**, “associated with the *bundle-of-features* metaphysics and derives from his notion of *transworld heir line*, which is involved in locating individuals in other worlds. In this view, we identify

individuals in terms of their *prominent* features, defined relative to various interests and beliefs. Identity is thus relative, not absolute” (Kaplan, 1979, apud. Oltean, 2009: 266). For example: we have an individual who bears the name Paul Johnson and is a painter. The same individual writes novels and signs them with the name John Stevens. One could treat the individual Paul Johnson – the painter and John Stevens – the novelist, which denote the same individual, as standing for different individuals. This is a consequence of different belief systems, according to Kaplan.

In this vein, if we deal with individuals bearing the same name, scholars such as D’Angeli and Napoli (2000, apud. Oltean, 2009: 266) argue that the claim of uniqueness associated with proper names is not challenged: “in this case we have to do with many different homophonous names, rather than one shared name”.

Last but not least, Kienzle (2006, apud. Oltean, 2009: 266) mentions the idea of identity of ‘origin’: *The old Wittgenstein is the young Wittgenstein* (“Wittgenstein” contains an *essence*, a *transworld heir line*).

3.2.2. Cybernames and Identity

Given the complex nature of the names used on the Internet, we will propose a classification for them through the help of the theories available for genuine proper names and for fictional names. We have chosen three spaces of investigation (face to face interaction, fiction and cyberspace) because we consider the first two categories helpful for our research on what the third is concerned. Thus, we have focused on three types of names, and we have addressed corresponding theoretical issues. We will explain the nature of proper names, of names in works of fiction and in cyberspace in the framework of possible world semantics.

3.2.2.1. Proper Names

We present two approaches to proper names: the Mill-Kripke theory, according to which proper names are labels, with no inherent meaning, and Russell-Frege theory and Searle’s theory, according to which proper names are descriptions.

3.2.2.1.1. Labels

Names have denotations but no connotations (Mill, apud Kripke, 1980: 26). They have a referent without having actual meaning: “substantivele proprii au

un referent fără a avea propriu-zis semnificație”²⁹ (Moeschler and Reboul, 1999: 152). For e.g.: if one Internet user is called Susan Johnson, the Mill-Kripke theory states that there is nothing that needs interpretation beyond this linguistic etiquette. The proper name is just a label.

John Stuart Mill argues that “proper names are not connotative: they denote the individuals who are called by them: but they do not indicate or imply any attributes as belonging to those individuals. When we name a child by the name Paul, or dog by the name Caesar, these names are simply marks used to enable those individuals to be made subjects of discourse” ([1843], apud. Van Langendonck, 2007: 24). Further, Mill also states that “we put a mark, not indeed upon the object itself, but, so to speak, upon the idea of the object. A proper name is but an unmeaning mark which we connect in our minds with the idea of the object, in order that whenever the mark meets our eyes or occurs to our thoughts, we may think of that individual object.” ([1843], Idem: 25).

Researchers claim that Mill’s tenet of proper names states that proper names are only labels for someone’s ideas of the object. Hence, De Pater and Swiggers ([2000], Idem: 26) argue that “Mill’s ideas correspond to a ‘subjective intension’, i.e. the associative, accidental meaning attributed to a referent by different speakers: the ideas can vary from person to person”.

3.2.2.1.2. Descriptive Approach

Russell-Frege theory and Searle’s theory state the contrary. They advocate the meaningfulness of proper names. On this matter, firstly, we present Van Langendonck’s perspective on Frege’s and Russell’s descriptivist theories of proper names (2007: 27–30). Secondly, we present Searle’s standpoint.

Frege attributes reference (*Bedeutung*) and ‘sense’ (*Sinn*) to proper names. He gives the example *The morning star is the evening star* in which *the morning star* and *the evening star* have the same reference, but different meanings. He also talks about **actual proper names** (‘eigentliche Eigennamen’), like *Aristotle*. For the *Sinn* of such ‘actual’ proper names, he states that there are variations because opinions on the *Sinn* may differ. However, *Sinn* is not equated to lexical

²⁹ Each proper name has its own referent without having actual meaning.

meaning and, in the case of proper names, Frege rejects also the subjective representations. “Sinn seems to be a term for ‘meaningfulness’ or ‘meaning in a wide sense’: objective, conventional [...]”. For Frege, *Sinn* is “something in-between the proper name’s reference (the object itself) and the subjective representations we might have of the object” (Idem: 27). Thus, according to Frege, the *Sinn* of a proper name seems to be a concept that at first comes close to lexical meaning but is eventually indistinguishable from associative meaning” (Idem: 28).

Initially, Russell was in favour of Mill’s theory (1903). Then, in 1918, he changed his standpoint and argued that proper names were ‘truncated’ or ‘shorthand’ descriptions.

It is important to mention that Russell makes the distinction between real/genuine ‘proper names’ (‘logically proper names’/deictic words like *this* or *that*) and “what is usually conceived of as proper name” (Socrates, Aristotle, etc.). He also uses two important concepts: “knowledge of acquaintance” and “knowledge by description” and argues that “we have knowledge by description about people that we never met or about historical figures” (Idem: 26), “what is usually conceived of as a proper name, say *Socrates*, originally functioned to solely refer to an object of ‘direct acquaintance’, but afterwards, when direct acquaintance was no longer possible, the name became a truncated description for ‘Plato’s teacher’, ‘the philosopher who drank the poison-cup, and so on” (Idem: 29). Furthermore, Russell also notes the fluctuations in these descriptions.

Russell considers that we should distinguish between referring expressions that refer uniquely at the level of established linguistic convention – proper names – and those that refer uniquely at the level of usage – demonstratives or other deictic expressions.

In agreement with the Russell-Frege standpoint, proper names have meaning because they can be evaluated through a definite description. For e.g.:

- for the user Barbara Jordon we could have the following definite descriptions: *the student of linguistics; who lives in city X; studies at the Faculty Y; who has been an Erasmus student in the country Z [...] (we could add more descriptive elements from her Facebook profile);*

- for the user Yves, the following definite descriptions are available: the person who *studied at Université d'Orléans*; who *lives in Paris, France*; who *is from Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire*; who *was born on January 18*, etc.

The fact that we can add as many descriptive elements as there are available, makes us consider Searle's view that "the referent of a name is determined not by a single description but by some cluster or family" (Searle, 1958, apud Kripke, 1980: 31). Moreover, Searle argues that proper names "function not as descriptions, but as pegs on which to hang descriptions" ([1969], apud. Idem: 31). He also argues that it is a necessary condition for an object to be *N* (Aristotle, Socrates, Susan, etc.) that at least some of these descriptions are accurate ([1969], Ibidem).

The Russell-Frege theory adds that the cluster of definite descriptions or the single definite description does not constitute the meaning of the proper name. All that it does is fixing the reference of the proper name (Moeschler and Reboul, 1999: 152).

The Russell-Frege theory and Searle's points of view entitle us to state that if we know who the user/digi-participant is outside the Facebook virtual community, we associate the name with a referent from everyday life. Otherwise, we associate the name with one of our virtual friends without placing a referent outside the virtual community. In both situations, we make the associations on the basis of the definite descriptions available. Of course, names can have more than one referent and users decide what the referent is, taking into consideration the information they possess and which describes the referent.

3.2.2.2. Fictional Names

We will focus mainly on Gregory Currie's account in order to explain how fictional names function (Currie, 1990). As a starting point, we mention Currie's emphasis on the fact that there may be fictional stories which contain **real life characters**: authors had in mind real persons when they wrote the fictional story. For example: Napoleon is a character in *War and Peace*, but not a fictional one. Hence:

- The name used is not a fictional name because there is a person in the actual world (w@) whom this name refers to;

- The name used in the story finds its reference outside the fictional story even though not everything stated in the story is true with regards to the real life character. In this case, we do not deal with a fictional name, but with a **genuine proper name** – a label, with no inherent meaning, but still meaningful because its meaning lies in its denotation; its meaning is exhausted by its reference, it is non-descriptive.

At the same time, Gregory Currie asserts that not all the names which are used in fiction and which were introduced because the authors considered real persons are genuine proper names. For example: Lewis Carroll used in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* the name “Alice”, having in mind Alice Liddell. Nevertheless, this name is considered a fictional name because “Alice” doesn't refer to Alice Liddell.

We may wonder why Napoleon is a genuine proper name and why Alice is a fictional name. Currie explains this different treatment of names in fiction by saying that the truth value of a story lies “in what is reasonable to infer the fictional author believed” (Currie, 1990: 129). In what Napoleon is concerned, everyone knew about this person at the time “War and Peace” was written. Therefore, it is reasonable to infer that the fictional author of the book intended the name to refer to Napoleon and he believed he did. By contrast, Alice Liddell was not known at the time of writing and it is not reasonable to think that the fictional author referred to her; Currie states that without identifying *the fictional author*³⁰ with Lewis Carroll³¹ we would not make this inference (Currie, 1990: 129).

Most of the fictional stories are written without them referring to actual existing individuals and we consider the names used in these fictional stories to be clear cases of fictional names. For example: Clarissa, Watson, Peter Pan, etc.

Gregorie Currie identifies three uses of fictional names (Currie, 1990: 127–181):

- **“fictive” uses** (fictional names used by authors of fiction in their works);
- **“metafictive” uses** (used by the readers of a fictional story);
- **“transfictive” uses** (comparisons between fictional stories).

³⁰ fictional construct, not the real live author of the work” (Currie, 1990: 75).

³¹ the author himself.

3.2.2.2.1. “Fictive” Use of Fictional Names

Fictional names could be considered expressions of which is true in the story that they are proper names (Currie, 1990: 128). They are **empty proper names** (Currie, 1990: 129). But then again, being proper names implies that they have reference, that they are directly referring devices; otherwise, they would be meaningless. It results that “Clarissa is buying flowers” is meaningless since the expressions “Clarissa” doesn’t contribute to its meaning. However, on the contrary, this sentence is meaningful. Currie solves this problematic aspect, by introducing the following distinctions (Idem, 1990: 132–133):

- **existing things** versus **nonexisting things**:

Existing things	Nonexisting things
dogs, children, Prince Charles, Noam Chomsky, Barack Obama, etc.	unicorns, Clarissa, Sherlock Holmes, Watson, Peter Pan, planet Vulcan, Little Red Riding Hood, etc.

This distinction would imply that: Clarissa is Richard’s wife, a hostess of parties and a nonexistent. Currie continues on this line and states that Clarrissa might also *think* that she exists and, in the exact same way, we could be like Clarissa: we *think* that we exist but we cannot be sure that we do. This will lead us to a sceptical attitude. Hence, this distinction is not helpful and he introduces another distinction:

- **what exists** versus **what is actual**: “What is actual is what exists in the actual world (@), and that world is just one of many. Things that exist in worlds other than @ are nonactual existents” (Currie, 1990: 133).

According to this distinction, Clarissa is an **actual nonexistent/a nonactual existent**. She does not exist in w@. She is empty in w@, but she exists in another world where we can identify her by a particular description: the person who does and is all the things Clarissa is said to do and be in the story. Thus, the intension (sense) of a fictional name like Clarissa (a nonactual existent) is an *individual concept* (Kaplan, 1979 [1978]: 91): “a function which assigns to each possible world an element of its universe, without the consequence that

the function always assigns something which exists in the possible world” (Idem: 92).

The worlds in which someone does everything that Clarissa is said to do (and is Clarissa) are called **qualitative worlds** (Currie, 1990: 148). Of course, this means that there is a Clarissa in W_1 , in W_2 , in $W_3 \dots W_n$, as long as they satisfy the required description: $x \in \{W_1, W_2, W_3 \dots W_n\}$ iff the W_i s satisfy P (the W_i s are sets of worlds).

The description is used to fix a reference and not to provide meaning: Clarissa’s intension (sense) is determined by its extension (reference) in each possible world.

Because we can understand the sentences in which fictional names appear without assigning a reference to them, Currie argues that sentences like:

Peter Pan flies.

Clarissa sets out to buy flowers.

Sherlock Holmes solved another mysterious case are similar to:

Someone flies, sets out to buy flowers, solved another mysterious case, etc.

(without asking who that someone is). Accordingly, fictional names can be interpreted as variables bound by the existential quantifier (Currie, 1990: 150–155). Hence, we have a story, which can be represented by the following formula: $F(t_1 \dots t_n)$ – the t is being the fictional names.

The formula above is reformulated by replacing the fictional names with a variable bound by an existential quantifier: $\exists x_1 \dots \exists x_n [F(x_1 \dots x_n)]$ (there is an n-tuple of things that satisfies the properties and relations specified in the story. Clarissa denotes, in each world, the person, if there is one, who is the first member of the n-tuple of things). This represents the **content** of the story.

For the “fictive” use of fictional names, we should also take into account that there is a fictional author/teller who “has knowledge of certain people and their actions. He has in mind a certain n-tuple of individuals, and these are the characters described in his text – whether or not there is another n-tuple somewhere else doing the same things [...]” (Currie, 1990: 153):

$\exists x_1 \dots \exists x_{n+1} [F(x_1 \dots x_{n+1})]$ (x_{n+1} is responsible for the text T and T sets out x_{n+1} ’s knowledge of the activities of $x_1 \dots x_n$) (Currie, 1990: 154).

Last but not least, in the case of “fictive” use, readers are involved in a co-operative game of make-believe.

3.2.2.2.2. Metafictive Use of Fictional Names

Fictional names are not used only by writers of fiction. They are used by readers as well. When we make statements about fiction, they are always prefixed by an intentional operator “It is part of the story that ___”:

Fs(P) = “it is part of the fiction S that P”

“It is true in the story that P”

“In the story, P”.

Currie argues that fictional names function as **abbreviated definite descriptions** when they are bound by the operator F. These descriptions depend from reader to reader. For example, for Clarissa, there are many descriptions that readers associate the name with: “the person who is married to Richard”; “the woman who hosts parties”, etc.

Kripke argues against the idea that fictional names are abbreviated descriptions (Kripke, 1980: 157–158). He claims that if fictional names function in this way, they might turn out to have reference. For example: we read a text about Clarissa and then we encounter someone who is a perfect match to the character described in the text. Currie gives the following solution (Currie, 1990: 163):

- if the author knew nothing about **Clarissa** in w@, then the text is not about C in w@ and the text he produces does not describe C in w@. Currie calls this text **T1**.
- if there is someone else who writes about Clarissa on purpose, then this text (**T2**) would be totally different from **T1** because they are products of different communicative acts. Hence, Kripke’s argument represents only a case of **aboutness/accidental reference**, concludes Currie: “a story can be true of someone without being about that someone” (Currie, 1990: 164).

3.2.2.2.3. Transfictive Uses of Fictional Names

A different use of fictional names is revealed by the following sentences:

Romeo and Juliet have a more tragic destiny than Tristan and Isolde.

I think Hamlet is like the character Hawkeye in the television series MASH.

These kinds of sentences do not occur within the scope of the operator F. They present cases of interfictional comparisons and the stories in which they appear have to be treated separately. Moreover, Romeo/Juliet/Tristan/Isolde/Hamlet is the one who satisfies a particular description in a given world: there is a (partial) function from worlds to individuals that picks out Romeo/Juliet in each world where somebody is Romeo/Juliet/Tristan/Isolde/Hamlet etc. (Currie, 1990: 172). This function is called the Romeo role/the Juliet role/Tristan role/the Isolde role, etc. It results that being *x* in a world means occupying a role in that world. Roles are also known as characters and they are:

- theoretical entities which contrast with concrete things (see Currie, 1990: 173);
- partial functions from world to individuals with no value at *w@*.

3.2.3. Rigid versus Non-Rigid Designators

An important aspect in identity interpretation is Kripke's distinction between **rigid** and **non-rigid designators**. This distinction determines the difference between *fixing the reference* (the first category) and *giving the meaning to a term* (the second category) (Kripke, 1980: 5, 55). Thus, something is a rigid designator if in every possible world it designates the same object and a nonrigid designator or accidental designator if that is not the case (see Kripke, 1980: 48).

3.2.3.1. Proper Names and Causal Chain Theory

According to Kripke's *causal theory of proper names* (1980: 91), proper names are considered rigid designators. They are singular terms. They are not ambiguous because they have a referent attributed through an initial rite of baptism through which the referential relationship between words and various classes of objects is created. This relation is then established in the linguistic community (Moeschler and Reboul, 1999: 153) through a chain of communication going back to the name *N* which has been established and afterwards passed from link to link (see Kripke, 1980: 91).

Regarding the causal chain theory, we also mention Mihaela Miron-Fulea. The researcher considers that the proper name assures the continuity between the actual world and the possible worlds of modal logic: even when we create a

possible world, taking as the point of reference the actual world, the referent remains that from the actual world. Moreover, the reference of a proper name does not change depending on the various predications attributed to the referent. The referent remains always the same when we use a proper name because of the causal chain which established the name's usage. Its origin lies in the social act of baptism through which its subsequent functioning is validated³² (Miron-Fulea, 2005, apud. Ionescu, 2011: 17).

Proper names also represent a means of marking identities: “Numele propriu acționează, la origine, ca un performativ, în sensul că atribuirea sa unui individ, prin actul de datare socială a numelui, reușește să-i impună referentului o însușire care se va integra în ansamblul celor care-i configurau deja identitatea: proprietatea de *a fi numit/N/(x)*”³³ (Miron-Fulea Mihaela, 2005: 67).

We also mention Keith Donnellan (1977, apud. Ionescu, 2011: 18): unlike Kripke who considers that the “initial baptism” is performed in the actual world, Donnellan places it in an imaginary world or in a story.

3.2.3.2. Fictional Names

Fictional names are non-rigid designators. They designate nonexistent objects which do not refer to the actual world. Hence, they are labelled as **nonactual existents/actual non-existents** (Currie, 1990: 133). According to Ș. Oltean, “pentru ca un enunț cu un termen singular să fie inteligibil, acesta din urmă trebuie să aibă referință. În caz contrar, dacă termenului îi lipsește referința, cum se întâmplă cu numele ficționale, a căror denotație este vidă, atunci enunțul nu are sens, el nu

³² „Numele propriu asigură continuitatea dintre lumea reală și lumile posibile ale logicii modale: chiar atunci când construim, pornind de la lumea reală, o lume posibilă, referentul rămâne individul desemnat în lumea reală, în plus, rigiditatea numelui propriu se manifestă și prin faptul că referința lui nu se schimbă, indiferent de variația predicțiilor atribuite referentului. Permanența conferită referentului grație numelui propriu se explică prin lanțul causal care regizează atribuirea și utilizarea numelui propriu. Originea sa se plasează în actul social de botez prin care se validează funcționarea sa ulterioară”.

³³ Initially, proper names act like a performative, as giving a name to an individual through a social act means that the referent receives a property which will be integrated into the set of properties which configure its identity: the property of *being named /N/(x)* [our translation].

exprimă nici o propoziție logică și, în consecință, este ininteligibil”³⁴ (2006: 103–4). However, the meaning of fictional names is given by the definite descriptions associated and which belong, in their turn, to the non-rigid designators’ category, referring to different objects from different worlds.

3.2.3.3. Face to Face Nicknames and Online Nicknames

Face to face nicknames and online nicknames are descriptive and they are non-rigid designators because they pick out different entities in different worlds. However, when digi-participants use nicknames to register for particular online situations (blos, SNSs, e-mail accounts, forums, etc.), the nicknames can become names. More specifically, in the case of cyberspace they become cybernames/ usernames. In this case, they are no longer descriptive and they function as rigid designators.

3.2.4. Cybernames

In this part we examine the functioning of cybernames in relation to transworld identity, the dichotomy rigid/nonrigid designators and Currie’s theory.

3.2.4.1. Cybernames and Transworld Identity

Cyberspace creates a digital world. Hence, there are two things that we could do:

- we could differentiate between the offline individuals (Users/Digi-participants) and online individuals (Netizens):

Users/Digi-participants	Netizens
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - individuals who use the Internet; - the individuals in flesh and bones; - those who are in the actual world; - external to cyberspace; offline individuals. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - individuals in cyberspace/inhabitants of cyberspace; - representations of the offline individuals; - what users decide to show online (online personas created by users); - internal to cyberspace.

³⁴ In order for an utterance with a singular term to be understood, the latter must have reference. If the singular term doesn’t have reference, as in the case of fictional names the denotation of which is empty, then the utterance is meaningless, it doesn’t express a logical proposition, and therefore, it is unintelligible [our translation].

- we could look at the concept of transworld identity in relation to cyberspace. Thus, we will take into consideration the three attitudes mentioned in **3.2.1 Possible Worlds and Transworld Identity**: the sceptical attitude (the counterpart relation promoting the similarity principle), the metaphysical attitude (the identity principle, “identification by bare particulars” – Oltean, 2009: 265), the relativistic attitude (the concept of relative identity and that of identity of origin) and provide possible digital adaptations of each.

We could adopt the counterpart theory (the similarity principle) that we adapt to the digital world projected by cyberspace. Hence, we can ask ourselves whether individuals in cyberspace (Netizens) could be considered counterparts to the individuals who use the Internet (Users/Digi-participants). Possible arguments in favour of this idea:

- Netizens do not correspond entirely to Digi-participants because they always have something that is different from the real life persona;
- Netizens are only representations of Users;
- Netizens and Users are similar, but different (the digital descriptions of a persona are never the same as those of the real life persona);
- Sometimes, there is no connection whatsoever between the online persona and the real persona.

The relativistic theory could apply to cyberspace as well. As stated in **3.2.1 Possible Worlds and Transworld Identity**, in the section dedicated to the relativistic attitude, the identification of the referent of a name is a consequence of different belief systems, according to Kaplan. The same happens in cyberspace, a user fixes the reference of a cybername according to his/her belief system. If another user has a different belief system from his/hers, then he/she will identify a different referent for the same name. Possible examples/digital situations:

- A male user has a Facebook friend with the cybername *Susan Johnson*. She added him as a friend and he accepted, believing she was a colleague from work. She has no pictures of herself, only pictures of places. In fact, she is not his colleague, but a user bearing the same name as his colleague

(homophonous names). Hence, the user assigned the referent x to Susan Johnson because of his belief system.

- There are Facebook profiles which have many users behind the keyboard. For example: the Facebook profile of a band, of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), etc. However, the Netizen represents the band/the NGO and not the manager or any other person/other people who operates/operate behind the cybername.

3.2.4.2. Cybernames: Rigid/Non-Rigid Designators

In what the pair rigid/non-rigid designators is concerned, in cyberspace, we observe a dynamics of names and nicknames. It is difficult to establish if they are rigid designators or non-rigid designators. There are various situations that make the task of the researcher difficult.

3.2.4.2.1. Cybernames on *Facebook*, *Couchsurfing* and *Google +*

In online social networks such as *Facebook*, *Couchsurfing*, *Google +* the names used could be labelled as rigid designators because generally there is a referent offline, an actual person who uses the *Facebook*, *Couchsurfing*, etc. account and who can be identified. The creation of the account is equivalent to the initial rite of baptism mentioned. The relation between words and classes of objects is established and then accepted by the linguistic community on *Facebook/Couchsurfing*, etc. (causal theory of reference, Kripke).

In digital communities like *Facebook*, *Couchsurfing*, *Google +* we sometimes come across fake identity profiles. For example, we can create a Facebook profile and claim that it belongs to N (we choose a random name for it: *Eva Parloc*, *Barbara Jordon*, *Susan Johnson*, etc.). In this case, if we search for the referent outside cyberspace, we are dealing with a nonrigid designator because the name has no real reference, exactly like fictional names.

3.2.4.2.2. Cybernames on *conquistador.ro/com*, *playcatan.com*

Users can belong to various virtual communities and in some of them, for example in the virtual community on *conquistador.ro/com*, *playcatan.com*, they usually assume different identities. One could not find the referent outside cyberspace

because these online representations do not refer to the Users who create them. Hence, we could say that we are dealing with non-rigid designators.

3.2.4.3. Currie’s Theory and Cybernames

Because cyberspace creates a digital/virtual world, we could use the distinction between **Users/Digi-participants** and **Netizens** and borrowing from Currie (1990: 124) the distinction between authors of fiction, fictional authors and characters, we could say that users are the equivalents of authors of fiction and Netizens are the equivalents of characters in a fictional work. Thus, Users are authors who create virtual/digital profiles and Netizens are characters/representations in cyberspace.

We could identify the following situations:

A. Authors of fiction →	B. Users
1. Authors of fiction write about themselves (autobiographies). →	1. Users create online profiles which refer to themselves even if these online profiles are not a perfect match to their offline profiles. In this case, they create online representations of themselves (Netizens-representations).
2. Authors of fiction do not write about themselves in their novels (for example: Lev Tolstoi, Lewis Carroll, Virginia Woolf, etc.). In this case, they create characters/entities in fiction which do not have any connection to their own person. →	2. Users do not create representations that refer back to themselves, but different entities. They assume different identities and in this way they create characters (Netizens-characters).

The difference between **A (authors of fiction)** and **B (Users)** lies in the fact that authors of fiction create a fictional world, while Users create a digital/virtual reality.

Both **Netizens-representations** and **Netizens-characters** could be considered Users’ **alternatives** that they themselves create in cyberspace.

3.2.4.3.1. External Naming: Netizens-representations

As stated above, in 3.2.4.2.1 **Cybernames on Facebook, Couchsurfing and Google +**, on these online social networks we can usually fix a referent outside

cyberspace even if not everything stated online is true with regards to the real life person. Hence, even if the digital description of a persona is never the same as that of the real life persona, the referent in everyday life can be established and we deal with a genuine proper name.

In this case we search for the referent outside the digital world and we find it: the cybername is a rigid designator. It functions exactly like the name *Napoleon* in *War and Peace*, by Lev Tolstoi. Hence, in these online social networks Users create **Netizens-representations of themselves** and the naming is external.

3.2.4.3.2. Internal Naming: Netizens-characters

When we are dealing with fake identity profiles or when users assume different identities online, we consider that we cannot identify the referent outside the virtual space because the properties are not attributed to Users, but to *cyber-referents*. That is to say, there is a User in front of the computer but he does not project his own image online, the Netizens he creates are not representations of himself, but rather different entities: **Netizens-characters**. Hence, the cybernames function like fictional names.

In this case, we search for the referent in the virtual world and the names used can be labelled, *mutatis mutandis*, like fictional names: **nonactual existents/ actual non-existents** (Currie, 1990: 133) because they always have *cyber-referents* (cyber-constructs, not the Internet users). Hence, in this case, we could say that naming is internal, not external.

3.3. Partial Conclusions

Cybernames are part of users' online representations. Given that cybernames are not given automatically, as users choose their own cybernames, they communicate something about the Netizens/digi-participants' identity and, together with the avatars/photos, they constitute the first element of their identity in every cyber-interaction.

In the first part of this chapter, we provided definitions for proper names and nicknames and we highlighted the difference between online nicknames and offline nicknames. Borrowing Bechar-Israeli's typology of nicknames, we

extracted empirical data from two game platforms: *Conquistador* and *Catan* in order to reveal the users' linguistic creativity and ingenuity. Moreover, the fact that users on *Catan* use colours to address each other during the game proves that online practices involve idiosyncratic linguistic behaviour. In opposition to the game platforms, Facebook requires its members to use their real names and identity. However, on examining the Facebook policy, we demonstrated that it does not correspond to the naming practices on the social network site because the cybernames encountered belong to the three onymic categories: anthroponyms (proper names, but also nicknames), toponyms and chrematonyms. In order to reveal this aspect, we used our personal list of Facebook friends which consisted of 506 friends in December 2012. In chapter V, we will scrutinise again our personal list of Facebook friends. However, we will focus on the version from May 2013, when the list contained 527 friends. We used the same Facebook list in two different moments, with a time lag of 5 months, in order to indicate the fluidity of the online medium and online community. Everything changes very fast and the data is always a draft, always in the making.

In the second part of chapter III, we presented the concepts of **possible worlds** and **transworld identity**. We presented different perspectives on proper names: the Mill-Kripke theory, according to which proper names are only labels, and Russell-Frege theory and Searle's theory, according to which proper names are descriptions.

We focused on fictional names (Currie, 1990) and we highlighted that there are three ways in which fictional names are used: "fictive" uses (fictional names are either bound variables or transworld entities); "metafictive" uses (fictional names are abbreviated definite descriptions within the scope of the operator F) and "transfictive" uses (roles). Further, we analysed the dichotomy rigid versus non-rigid designators in relation to proper names, fictional names and cybernames.

In the case of cybernames, using Gregory Currie's account and concepts, we suggested a personal interpretation of cybernames. We introduced the distinction between Users (individuals who use the Internet; the individuals in flesh and bones; those who are in the actual world; external to cyberspace, offline individuals) and Netizens (individuals in cyberspace/inhabitants of cyberspace). We also drew

a parallel between authors of fiction and users and explained that, like authors of fiction, users sometimes create online profiles which refer to themselves even if these online profiles are not a perfect match to their offline profiles. In this case, they create online representations of themselves that we called **Netizens-representations**. At others, they do not create representations that refer back to them, but different entities. They assume different identities and in this way they create characters that we called **Netizens-characters**. For the Netizens-representations, the naming is external as the referent is placed in the physical world, while for the netizens-characters the naming is internal as the referent is placed in cyberspace, a cyber-referent.

Whether we are dealing with an internal process of naming or an external one, in cyberspace, we could explain the naming process using Kripke's causal chain theory: [...] we could imagine a genuine *causal chain of links* from name user to name user that extends from N^{35} 's baptismal ceremony down to us today, our use of the name being grounded on the original act of naming (cf. Kripke, 1982 [1972], apud Oltean, 2009: 267). Hence, cybernames are attributed when users create their accounts (they have a referent or a cyber-referent). The creation of the account is equivalent to the initial rite of baptism already mentioned. The relation between words and classes of objects is established and then accepted by the linguistic community on the online social network involved.

³⁵ We changed the original paragraph where the author used Scott instead of *N*

CHAPTER IV

Identity Construction in Cyberspace

We start this chapter with the statement that: “Identity stands for so many concepts that to use it at all is a recipe for confusion” (Preface to Harris (ed.), 1995: v).

In this chapter, we select and present, in a chronological order, several dictionary definitions for the concept of identity in order to observe how the perception of identity changed in time. Furthermore, we extract the dictionary entries in order to show the multifaceted, multidisciplinary nature of identity and identity research. Then, we narrow down the focus from all the theories available and we present the theoretical accounts that reflect our position with regards to this multimodal concept. We also adapt these theories to the online identity construction phenomena and we provide empirical data taken from cyberspace.

4.1. Identity – Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

From a sociolinguistic perspective, we could say that online social networks, like antisocieties, offer a second life for all “netizens” (Crystal, 2001: 4) or “electronic dandies” (Manovich, 2001: 270). This life, the digital life, could be similar to that offered by antisocieties: “a reconstruction of the individual and of the society. It provides an alternative social structure, with its system of values, of sanctions, of rewards and punishments; and this becomes the source of an alternative identity for its members, through the patterns of acceptance and gratification. (Halliday, 1994: 168). The researcher emphasises that this second life constitutes an alternative reality.

In this alternative reality of cyberspace, we consider identity to be an umbrella term used to describe multiple dimensions:

- individuality
- personal identity (the inner and timeless identity)
- social identity (persona)
- sexual and gender identity
- professional identity
- cultural identity
- ethnic and national identity.

All these dimensions are signalled out by the content the digi-participants expose about themselves and by the way in which they express themselves as different “ways of speaking index certain identities” (Young, 2008: 114). Thus, the multiple dimensions of identity are revealed by the narrative identity and the discursive identity of the digi-participants.

4.1.1. Dictionary Entries

According to *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English* (1983: 495), **identity** is defined as “absolute sameness; individuality, personality; condition of being a specified person”. The dictionary also provides an entry for identity in the mathematical field: transformation that leaves an object unchanged [...] [f. LL *identitas*, f. L *idem* same (see-ITY)]”.

The Chambers Dictionary (1993: 829) provides several entries for **identity**. The ones relevant for us are: “n. state of being the same; sameness; individuality; personality; who or what a person or thing is; [...] an equation true for all values of the symbols involved (math.). [...] [LL *identitas*, -*atis*, from L *idem* the same]”.

The paragraph dedicated to the verb **to identify** enumerates also the term **identification** as a member of the same lexical family. We consider that this term could also be used to describe the phenomena of (online) identity construction: “the act of identifying, eg in establishing a person’s name and individuality; the state of being identified; something which proves one’s identity”.

Chambers. Essential English Dictionary (1995: 474) provides as a second entry for the noun **identification**: “the process of finding out who someone is or what something is [...]”. For the concept of identity, the dictionary mentions that it is usually in the singular, but it also includes the plural form (**identities**) and defines it as follows: “The **identity** of a person or thing is who or what they are [...]”. As a second entry, the dictionary includes that “your **identity** also

consists of those characteristics that you share with other people in the same racial, religious or other group, that make you aware of what kind of person you are [...]”.

The Penguin English Dictionary. 2nd Edition (2003: 695) defines identity in the following way: noun (*pl identities*) “**1a** who or what somebody or something is [...]; **b.** the individual characteristics that define a person or thing or by which a person or thing can be recognized; **2** the condition of being exactly alike; sameness”. With regards to the second entry, there is an editorial note, the philosophical perspective of Kolakowski Leszek: “we speak of two or more distinct objects being ‘identical’ in the sense that they are indistinguishable from one another (five-pence coins, identical twins), even though we know that their similarity is not absolute. In the strict sense, identity consists in being the same object, and the question is: when an object that changes in time ceases to be the same. To a person, to keep one’s own identity implies memory”.

The other entry for identity that is relevant for us is: “**3a** the distinguishing character or personality of an individual; the fact of having such individuality”. The dictionary also specifies the origin of the word: [early French *identité* from late Latin *identitat-*, *identitas*, from Latin *idem* same].

In *The Concise Oxford English Dictionary. Eleventh Edition* (2004), identity is described as: n. (*pl identities*) **1** the fact of being who or what a person or thing is. → the characteristics determining this [...] **2** a close similarity or affinity [...] ORIGIN: from late L. *identitas*, from L. *idem* ‘same’.

Le Nouveau Petit Robert (2004) introduces several interesting concepts for the definition of identity. It does not mention the plural form of the noun. The first entry is: “n.f. [...] **1** caractère de deux objets de pensée identiques. *Identité qualitative ou spécifique.* → **similitude**. [...] « les profondes identités d’esprit, les ressemblances fraternelles de pensée » (Bourget) → **communauté**”. The second entry is a definition of identity from the field of possible world semantics: “**2** caractère de ce qui est un. → **unité**. *Identité de l’étoile du soir et de l’étoile du matin* (c.-à-d. Venus)”. The third definition is related to psychology “**3** **PSYCHOL** *Identité personnelle*, caractère de ce qui demeure identique à soi-même. [...]”

Identité culturelle: ensemble de traits culturels propres à un groupe ethnique (langue, religion, art, etc.) qui lui confère son individualité; sentiment d'appartenance d'un individu à ce groupe [...] → **permanence**. Le fait pour une personne d'être tel individu et de pouvoir être légalement reconnu pour tel sans nulle confusion grâce aux éléments (état civile, signalement) qui l'individualisent; ces éléments. [...]. The fourth definition relates to logic: “4 LOG. Relation entre deux termes identiques, formule énonçant cette relation. *Principe d'identité*: « ce qui est, est; ce qui n'est pas, n'est pas » [...]”³⁶.

Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English. New Edition (2005: 804–805) provides the following entries for **identification** and **identity**:

- **Identification**: **1 ID** official paper or cards (your passport), that proves who you are [...] “**2** when someone says officially that they know who someone else is [...] **3** when you recognize something or discover exactly what it is [...] **4** the act of saying that two things are very closely related [...] **5** a strong feeling of sympathy with someone that makes you able to share their feelings”;
- “**identity** n plural **identities**: **1** someone's identity is their name or who they are; **2** the qualities and attitudes that a person or group of people have, that make them different from other people [...] **national/cultural/social etc identity** (= a strong feeling of belonging to a particular group, race etc) [...]” (Idem: 805).

Consulting *the Cambridge Dictionary*, the term **identity** signifies “who a person is, or the qualities of a person or group which make them different from others” (<http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/british/identity>, 2012).

³⁶ **1** characteristic of two identical objects. *Qualitative or specific identity*. → **similitude**. [...] “the profound identity of spirit, the fraternal resemblances of thought” (Bourget) → **community**. **2** characteristic of the person to be one. → **unity**. *The identity of the evening star with the morning star* (that is to say Venus). **3** PSYCHOL *personal identity*, characteristic of the one who remains identical to himself. [...] Cultural identity: the common cultural features of an ethnic group (language, religion, art, etc.) which offers individuality, the feeling of belonging of an individual to that group [...] → **permanence**. The fact of being a particular person and being legally recognized as such without any confusion due to the elements (civil status, in particular) that individualise him; these elements. [...] **4** LOG. Relation between two identical terms, a formula describing this relation. Identity Principle: “that which exists, exists; that which doesn't exist, doesn't exist” [our translation].

Richard Jenkins provides a definition from the *Oxford English Dictionary*: “the notion of identity contains a Latin root (*identitas*, from *idem*, ‘the same’) and two basic meanings:

- the sameness of objects as in A1 is identical to A2 but not to B1;
- the consistency or continuity over time that is the basis for establishing and grasping the definiteness and distinctiveness of something.

Either way, the notion of identity involves two criteria of comparison between persons or things: *similarity* and *difference*” (2008: 16–17). Further, Jenkins notes that the verb ‘to identify’ is a necessary accompaniment of identity because identity is active: it is not something that is ‘just there’, it’s not a ‘thing’ or a product, it must *always* be established. This adds two further items: to classify things or persons; to associate oneself with, or attach oneself to, something or someone else (such as a friend, a sports team or an ideology etc.) (see 2008, 17). In the same vein, Joseph notes that **identity** is of two types: *identity-as-sameness* (contact with what is different) and *identity-as- uniqueness* (intersection of *identity-as-sameness* categories) (2004: 37).

Hume dismisses the idea according to which each of us is aware of a self that has perfect identity and simplicity. He states instead that each of us is “nothing but a bundle of collection of different perceptions” (apud. Penelhum, 1976: 253). Similarly, identity comprises of the image that we expose in society and a multitude of other people’s interpretations of this social role (*social identity*).

Some researchers claim that identity is a matter of individual characteristics that other people might not perceive because identity is not just social. Hence, others see more what we want them to see (our social identity) than what we really are (*personal identity*):

- “Our identities, whether group or individual, are not “natural facts” about us, but are things we construct – fictions, in effect” (Joseph, 2004: 3). Thus, identity can be divided into *personal identity* (inner to the individual) and *social identity* (individual and in group).
- “[M]y very self, so uniquely individual in appearance is [...] largely a social construct” (Smuts, 1927, apud Joseph, 2004: 6).

John E. Joseph claims that there are several ‘ways of thinking about identity’ (2004: 9):

- a) identity as *self*: who I feel myself to be;
- b) *person*: identity I project to others in my socially defined roles;
- c) *ethos*:
 - “the personal characteristics which a reader might attribute to a writer on the basis of evidence in the text” (Cherry, 1988, apud Joseph, 2004: 9),
 - “general term for a person’s identity as conceived and constructed in the context of world view and social practices” (Fairclough, 1992, apud Joseph, 2004: 9);
- d) *persona*: “the self that one projects in everyday conversation”, “mask” (Goffman, 1956, apud Joseph, 2004: 9), “objective self that we create in order to position ourselves within the context of those around us” (Cherry, 1988, apud Joseph, 2004: 9);
- e) *subject, subject position, positionings*: terms that derive from the work of the French structuralists and that communicate that the self is the product of the ‘discourse’ and social ‘field’ in which it is located;
- f) *subjectivity, subjectivities, positionings, possibilities for self-hood*. These terms communicate that “identity is socially constructed and that people are not free to take on any identity they choose, but adding a sense of multiplicity, hybridity and fluidity” (Ivanič, 1998, Ibid.);
- g) *identity, identification*: identity is seen as a dynamic process, not as a fixed condition.

4.1.2. A Social Psychological Perspective

Identity is a central concept in social psychology. It is seen as a polysemic concept. There are various synonyms available: *oneself, I, the self, we, self-perception, self-image, self-representation* or *self-awareness, the ego*, etc. (see **Deschamps and Devos, 1998: 1**).

As identity is both personal and social, the main focus is on the dichotomy personal-social identity, what individualizes a person in contrast to what makes the person similar to others.

Social identity refers to similarity between/among people. Besides, Deschamps and Devos underline that “the feeling of belonging to a group and the phenomenon of identification are only possible in connection with groups or categories one does not belong to. Thus, social identity refers to the fact that the individual perceives him- or herself as similar to others of the same background (the we), but social identity also refers to a difference, to a specificity of that we in connection with members of other groups or categories (the them)” (1998: 2–3). Further, Deschamps and Devos pinpoint to the fact that there is a double orientation in the process of identity construction: the ingroup similarities and the intergroup or categorical differentiation. To this, we could add a third orientation: the ingroup differences. With respect to ingroup and intergroup differences, we agree with Turner that “difference always implies a ‘higher level identity’, so that no comparative relation in terms of difference could be assessed between two stimuli if they were not suitable to be included in the ‘same category’ at a higher level of abstraction” (Turner, 1987, apud. Serino, 1998: 33).

Belonging to a group does not only trigger the construction of a social identity, but also allows individuals “to develop a sharper and better defined self-image, to perceive themselves as being quite specific and highly distinctive individuals” (Serino, 1998: 25). Thus, personal identity indicates the individual’s awareness of his difference with respect to other individuals. This awareness is possible only in relation to others. Moreover, personal identity indicates that “the individual perceives himself as identical to himself; in other words he is the same in time and space, but that is also what specifies him and marks him out from others. Personal identity is what makes you similar to yourself and different from others” (Deschamps and Devos, 1998: 3). Similarly, Jarymowicz defines personal identity as “a subsystem of self-knowledge, which is constituted by the traits perceived as the most characteristic of and the most specific (distinct) to the self” (1998: 47).

After defining personal identity, Jarymowicz (1998: 48) draws a parallel between what she calls the content of social identity and the content of personal identity. Hence, while “the content of social identity is determined by distinctive dimensions of the we related to others, that is, those dimensions which are marked by a subject as referring to the we and not marked as referring to others in general”,

“the content of personal identity is determined by distinctive dimensions of the self related to the we, that is, those dimensions which refer to the self and not to the we”.

Deschamps and Devos introduce and question the notion of **self-permanence**, pointing to Goffman’s idea that individuals play different roles for different audiences [1956] and to Gergen’s idea that the self is **fluid** [1965, 1982]. They argue that it is necessary to think about identities in the plural form because every individual or collective social agent can actualise, mobilize or produce identities according to a specific context (see 1998: 3). We agree with them and we add that, in the digital age, all these identities are/can be actualised, mobilised or produced simultaneously in different contexts. Thus, a user participates in different SNSs and constructs a different representation on each of them: he plays a professional role on LinkedIn, a friend role on Facebook, a host/guest role on Couchsurfing, a music lover role on MySpace, etc. Furthermore, he can actualise all these identities from his mobile while he is also participating offline, constructing a real life identity as well. Hence, we argue with Clark that “we live in an ever-changing, evolving, constantly shifting world, where socially construed boundaries are becoming more obscured while simultaneously making visible the spaces, dimensions, and strategies of being and becoming multiple people in multiple places. These spaces (“real”, “symbolic”, or “imagined” [...]) and strategies, that are never neutral or passive, permit us to see how people perform multiple and overlapping identities through their everyday social and linguistic practices” (2009: 1).

Bearing in mind the personal identity and the social identity, the individual oscillates between two poles: interpersonal behaviour, which reflects the difference between the individual and others, and intergroup behaviour, which reflects the difference between groups, between ‘we’ and ‘them’. In both cases, the individual aims at positive self-image which can be obtained by comparing oneself to the others or by comparing one’s own group to other groups. By the same token, the individual can approve or change his/her position of group member, contingent upon the contribution of a particular group to the positive aspects of one’s identity (see Serino, 1998: 24).

For **Doise (1998)**, identity is a social representation: “identity is conceived of as a very peculiar set of opinions, judgements, evaluations, attitudes, manifested by a person towards him- or her-self”, “individual identity as socially organized” (13–14). Like Deschamps and Devos, the researcher also mentions the dichotomy personal-social identity: “personal identity is often considered as unique and singular. On the other hand, shared group membership involves common characteristics. Hence, individuals would be considered similar to the extent that they belong to the same or similar categories. In this sense, group membership would result in homogeneity and individual differences would correspond to personal characteristics which are not shared by other group members” (Idem: 14). Further, Doise argues that the self-representations vary from culture to culture and they are also dependent on the time coordinate. Relatedly, Worchel states that our behaviour is determined by the embrace of culture and identity is a product of culture (see 1998: 56).

Doise focuses on personal identity and states that individuals are involved in many social relationships on a regular basis and that they evaluate their own way of participating in interactions. These ways are labelled by Doise as **representations** and constitute important coordinates for individuals to position themselves in self-descriptions, identity being “individual positioning” (Idem: 17). In relation to this view on identity, the researcher also mentions the Imago theory proposed by McAdams, 1985: identity is seen as a story with typical elements like setting, scenes, characters, plot and themes. Identity emerges in the process of constructing a self-defining life story. The main characters of the story are called imagoes (see Doise, 1998: 18). Further, the researcher claims that identity emerges from the relationships between the individual and the group and that different situations signal different relationships and different identity dynamics.

Another social psychological perspective that we will focus on is proposed by **Worchel, 1998**, who describes group social identity. He claims that groups satisfy the individuals’ desire to be accepted and recognised by others. However, groups also require obedience and conformity, the placement of group needs above personal needs and giving up some of their personal identity (see Idem: 55). The same happens online with the young users who want to belong to the Internet youth subculture group. They adapt their linguistic and non-linguistic behaviour

to the digital context and to the (digital) trend established by other users in order to achieve this. There are many examples in this respect. Few of them:

- On *playcatanwithpeople*, users sometimes greet each other at the beginning of the game and/or they wish each other good luck. The usual linguistic form of these two initial lines is *hi* or *hi gl* [good luck] and all the other three/two users usually greet in the same way. Users very rarely choose the non-abbreviated form because the abbreviated form has become the mutual agreement of all the gamers who are not newbies. Likewise, at the end of the game, all the users involved in the game end the game by writing *gg* [good game]. Even the user who wins writes *gg*. Many times, the users who win the game write *gg* before scoring 10 points (which is the maximum score);
- On Facebook, users upload photos in order to show their friends their holiday destinations, beautiful clothes, precious moments that they lived, etc.;
- On Facebook, in 2013 (and not only), users uploaded photos of what they cooked, of the good food they ate (sometimes in a particular restaurant) or of the drinks they enjoy. These photos contain also the users' descriptions: *My cake :)... Yes it was as tasty as it looks!; amazing food; when you're not too lazy for a proper breakfast; enjoying; midsummer snack; Tarte tatin with salted caramel can really make your day; Spa popsicle (lemonade and cucumber). Awesome after morning jog treat!; And there's dinner as well, by [user]; Summer evening, flavoured fizzy water; Best english onion soup ever. Wait, best soup ever. Or actually best food ever. Thank you, [name] – with [user];*
- On Facebook, in 2013, many users posted or shared humorous motivational images which contained as the first sentence: **Keep calm and** + 2nd sentence. Some examples: + *find the little prince*, + *speak Italian*, + *put your glasses* etc. (see also **Annex 19**);
- On Facebook, in 2013, many users post where they are, what they are doing and with whom. They can also 'check in' a place via a mobile application: the places are hyperlinks to other Internet/Facebook pages which provide

more information about it³⁷. The users' cybernames are usually tags to the users' Facebook profiles:

- ✓ *Enjoying Prague.... my husband....love.....the days off....sun...heat.... friends....it cannot be better!!!! With [user] !*
- ✓ *Cu ana si boss – at Takis. [with ana and boss – at Takis]*
- ✓ *Nice cosy place – with [user] at [place]*
- ✓ *Ah, finally in Roman Ingarden's city – at Hotel [name] [Town]*
- ✓ *Sun is up:d – with [user] and [user] at Baile Cojocna.*
- ✓ *cu verișorii, pentru că e duminică și soooare... – with [user] and [user] at Bezid. [with my cousins, because it is Sunday and sunny ...]*
- ✓ *[user] added a new photo. – with [user] at WEEKEND TARGU-MURES.*
- ✓ *[user] checked in at Cetatea Bastionară Alba Iulia on Foursquare.*
- ✓ *Dancing days @thuishaven – with [user] and [user]*
- ✓ *Weekend time!!!! – with [...]and [user] at Concordia Sighisoara.*
- ✓ *Catching up with old friends :) – with [user] at Casa TIFF.*
- ✓ *Off to #singapore³⁸ – with [user].*

A reaction to the fact that users post many trivial things on Facebook might be irony. For instance, one user posted the following status: *Because it's 15:10 today in [place], I guess I'll just post this picture of a random turkey*. Another user uploaded a photo of her jumping, as this was another Facebook trend of constructing a group identity, and she posted the following photo description: *i never did a jumping photo before. they are as lame as i thought*.

These reactions are very rare. They suggest the users' rejection of the Facebook group trend and an attempt to make salient their personal identity, instead of their group identity. They indicate the fact that users hold two identities/one identity

³⁷ We underlined the places that are the users' 'check in'.

³⁸ The #hashtags were introduced by Facebook in June 2013: "The social network wants to make it easier for users to find content already on Facebook, and functional hashtags are the first step. According to Facebook, many users already post hashtags anyway, so why not make them work? Hashtags will be both clickable and searchable, so, for example, topics like #NSALeaks or #NBAFinals will now exist", "Twitter user Chris Messina created in 2007 the hashtag as we know it today" (<http://edition.cnn.com/2013/06/12/tech/social-media/facebook-hashtags>).

with two opposite poles: personal identity (personal characteristics) and a social identity derived from our membership in groups.

Turner (1982, apud. Worchel, 1998: 55) argues that identity (personal or social) is a function of the context in which interaction takes place: personal identity is salient in intimate relations, while social identity is salient in large groups. These ironical remarks reverse the situation: they make salient personal identity in large groups. Hence, as Worchel argues, the individual's own context (background, history, interpretation of the present situation, and anticipation of the future events, opinions) "plays at least as important a role as does the social situations in determining the salience of personal/social identity". Of course, the individual alternates group identity and personal differentiation. In this respect, the social situation influences which identity is salient, but the individual's own context motivates him or her to seek the social situations that emphasise one identity or the other (see 1998: 55).

According to Worchel, there are several important points of group social identity and intergroup behaviour (1998: 72–73):

- "groups, like individuals, must establish their own identity. This identity has two dimensions: the identity of the group (similar to the personal identity of the individual in social identity theory) and the identity of the group as it relates to other groups in its universe (similar to the social identity of individuals)" (1998: 72);
- individuals try to balance their belonging to a group and their personal independence and uniqueness. Moreover, if their social identity is threatened by events or situations, individuals will try to point out their relationships with their groups and if there are threats to their personal identity, they will seek more intimate relations (1998: 73);
- groups are dynamic units that develop through a series of stages: identification, group productivity, individuation, decay. These stages are cyclical as some members might no longer be part of the group and new members take their place. There is an amount of time spent on each stage, depending on intragroup and intergroup factors. The transition between stages can be abrupt and clear or slow and gradual.

In cyberspace, users join groups of discussion that are already created or they open a new group and others join in. The identification is achieved in the moment when users join the group and productivity depends on the number of posts, shares, comments and likes. The posts and the shares represent the young authors' input and the comments and the likes are the qualitative and/or quantitative feedback. The number of comments and the number of likes is important because they assure validation, social approval and group social identity. Besides, they show the fact that users are active on the site. This is important because an online group fades out/decays when users are no longer active. Moreover, in cyberspace, the social network sites themselves can be considered spaces where users construct a group social identity while being active members. SNSs disintegrate when users are no longer active and when they leave the site, sometimes choosing another. Researchers have labeled the phenomenon of leaving sites as **exodus** (see Hogan, 2011). One such example is Friendster. It was a very popular SNS in 2003. In 2006, users left the network and went on Facebook. Nowadays, it has been redesigned into a social gaming site (see Garcia, Mavrodiev, Schweitzer, 2013). **Annex 20** presents the decomposition of the Friendster network.

4.1.3. A Postmodern Concept

Zygmunt Bauman states that identity is defined in one way in a modern perspective and in a totally different way in a postmodern perspective. He uses the expression 'problem of identity', indicating the complex nature of identity. He states that the *modern* 'problem of identity' was the construction of a solid and stable identity. On the contrary, "the *postmodern* 'problem of identity' is primarily how to avoid fixation and keep the options open. In the case of identity, as in other cases, the catchword of modernity was creation; the catchword of postmodernity is recycling" (1996: 18). He also states that the media specific to modernity was the photographic paper which contained the gradual accumulation of irreversible and non-erasable identity-yielding events, while the media specific to postmodernity is the videotape which is "eminently erasable and re-usable, calculated not to hold anything forever, admitting today's events solely on

condition of effacing yesterday's ones, oozing the message of universal 'until-further-noticeness' of everything deemed worthy of recording" (1996: 18).

We argue that the media specific to postmodernity is no longer the videotape, but the new media: the digital environment which provides a rapidly changing, fluid, scrollable medium. Everything can be stored, but also deleted or replaced. Given this postmodern context, we agree with Bauman who, similarly to Richard Jenkins (2008: 17), states that identity functions like a verb: "'identity', though ostensibly a noun, behaves like a verb, albeit a strange one to be sure: it appears only in the future tense. Though all too often hypostasized as an attribute of a material entity, identity has an ontological status of a project and a postulate". That is why; the expression 'postulated identity' has a tautological implication because identity is always postulated. "Identity is a critical projection of what is demanded and/or sought upon what is; or, more exactly still, an oblique assertion of the inadequacy or incompleteness of the latter" (Bauman, 1996: 19). Moreover, Bauman notes that "the 'disembedded' identity simultaneously ushered in the individual's freedom of choice and the individual's dependency on expert guidance".

In cyberspace, digi-participants are free to construct any representations they want, but, at the same time, there are some constraints. On social network sites, the pages provide them with a template that they fill in, sometimes they are required to construct an identity that corresponds to their real life identity; on public chats they are required to be polite. The personal blogs are the online spaces which don't impose any specific rules or expert guidance.

4.1.4. Identification

Stuart Hall embarks on defining the notion of identity by emphasising what it is not: "this concept of identity does *not* signal that stable core of the self [...], the bit of the self which remains always-already 'the same', identical to itself across time". Further, identity is not "that 'collective or true self hiding inside the many other, more superficial or artificially imposed "selves" which people with a shared history hold in common and which can stabilize, fix or guarantee an unchanging 'oneness' or cultural belonging underlying all the other superficial differences. It accepts that identities are never unified [...]" (1996: 3–4).

In contrast to what it is not, Hall presents his view on identity. We present his view in what follows (see Hall, 1996, 3–6, 14).

He uses the plural form of the notion of identity (**identities**) and the term **identification**. He states that identities are increasingly fragmented and fractured in late modern times; “never singular but multiply constructed across different, often intersecting and antagonistic, discourses, practices and positions. They are subject to a radical historicization, and are constantly in the process of change and transformation” (1996: 4). Hall mentions globalization as the development within which the debate about identity should be placed. To this, we add Internet and cyberspace which brought about the construction of multiple representations for the same user, depending on the Internet situations in which he is actively participating. Of course, cyberspace promotes globalization as well. Further, Hall claims that identities are about using the historical resources, language and culture in the process of becoming rather than being: not ‘who we are’ or ‘where we come from’, but what we might become, how we have been represented and how we might represent ourselves. Identities are constituted within, not outside representation. Additionally, identities emerge from the narrativization of the self which implies the ‘suturing into the story’ that is partially imaginary.

Regarding narrativization, we consider that, in cyberspace, there are three situations of the narrativization of the self:

- exclusively imaginary
- partially imaginary
- the imaginary is excluded altogether.

Identities are produced within, not outside, discourse and within specific historical and institutional sites which contain specific discursive formations, practices and enunciative strategies. They are in accordance with specific modalities of power and, that is why, the focus should be on difference and exclusion, not on ‘identity’ in its traditional meaning as an “all-inclusive sameness”, “identical, naturally-constituted unity” (1996: 4). Thus, Hall uses the concept *the constitutive outside*, taken from Derrida, 1981; Laclau, 1990; Butler, 1993, to talk about the fact that identity is constructed through the relation with the Other.

Hall uses the term ‘identity’ to refer to the meeting point (*suture, intersection*) between the discourses and practices which attempt to make us the social subjects of particular discourses, and the processes which produce subjectivities, which construct us as subjects which can be ‘spoken’. Identities are thus points of temporary attachments to the subject positions constructed by discursive practices. They are the result of a successful articulation of the subject into the discourse. Hence, identities are the positions which the subject occupies; knowing that they are representations and that representation is always constructed in opposition to the Other and can never be identical to the subject processes which are invested in them. “The notion that an effective suturing of the subject to a subject-position requires, not only that the subject is ‘hailed’, but that the subject invests in that position, means that suturing has to be thought of as an articulation, rather than a one sided process” (Hall, 1996: 6).

Hall pinpoints that individuals, as subjects, identify (or do not identify) with the ‘positions’ they take up. They fashion, stylize, produce and ‘perform’ these positions. They never do so completely, only once or all the time. They negotiate and accommodate the rules with which they confront themselves. He also states that the relation of subject to discursive formation is **an articulation** and that all articulations are contingent relations (see Hall, 1996: 14).

4.1.5. A Mediational Perspective

Norris (2011) considers that identity is a process rather than being, developing rather than static, (co)-production. It is the linked development of people, cultural forms and social positions and not the simple (co)construction. She states that identity is embedded and (co)produced in the social-time-place of particular social actor together with other social actors, together with and within the historical time, together with cultural tools, and together with and within the environment. By social-time-place she means that the social actor lives within particular social structures, within a particular historical moment, and in a particular place. All of these constitute the affordances and constraints for identity production (Norris, 2011: 30–31). We add that, for the online identity, the social actors are the users, the historical moment is the digital age or the age of the Internet (see Feenberg

and Barney, 2004) and the place is limitless, accessed through any digital device connected to the Internet, entered equally from everywhere, “from a basement in Vancouver, a boat in Port-au-Prince, a cab in New York, a garage in Texas City, an apartment in Rome, an office in Hong Kong, a bar in Kyoto, a café in Kinhasa, a laboratory on the Moon” (Benedikt, 2000, apud. Ananda and Watts, 2002: 485). Hence, we are dealing with the placelessness of the dwelling space (Ananda and Watts, 2002: 485):

- “a discursive space that is occupied by the interface between humans and computers” (Idem, 481);
- “a discursive space produced by the creative work of people whose spatial locations are ambiguous and provisional. The notion of a discursive space is related to the way in which specific discourses can create unique spaces and communities that are built around the texts that are voiced in that space [...]. It is possible to argue that these ‘communities’ and ‘spaces’ are produced around the discourses of the agents who are voicing themselves [...] cyberspace is created when voices gain the agency to speak in, and to, the virtual public. Using their voices, these agents create cyberspace where speaking agents can comfortably dwell, and create their ethos or ‘dwelling space’, which they inhabit and from where they can address the public sphere” (Idem: 486).

Norris considers that identity is a multimodal concept composed of **identity elements** that are permanent and others that are volatile. She takes the term from chemistry and states that gold is permanent while hydrogen is volatile. In this sense, gold “could be viewed as similar to a social actor’s façade, which does not usually change drastically in the short term, while an identity element such as a work identity element may be closer to hydrogen, possibly changing quite quickly” (2011: 31). Adapting the identity elements to cyberspace, we argue that the online identity contains more volatile elements than permanent ones as users continuously play with their representations and operate changes. Likewise, Norris uses the plural form of the notion identity: **identities**. She claims that (2011: 33):

- identities are multidimensional;
- sets of identities are articulated at different moments in social-time-place. These sets of identities are never fixed, they can be foregrounded, mid-

grounded or backgrounded or in between because some identity elements are adopted at a particular time, some change quickly, others are discarded after a while. For instance, while commenting on a picture on Facebook, a user might foreground the identity of a person belonging to the youth subculture and of a friend, midground the identity of colleague and background the identity of brother;

- some identities are macro-socially necessitated (for e.g. national identity), others are micro-socially enforced (for e.g. family identities) and others are chosen by the individual and articulated in their social-time-place (for e.g. friend identities). Moreover, each social actor produces role-linked identity elements (for e.g. being a child, parent, grandparent), nation-linked identity elements (sometimes only through speaking a certain language or dialect) and social-group-linked identity elements (family, neighborhood, ethnicity). Of course, “social actors often (co)produce different identity elements at different times and with different social actors” (Idem: 33);
- we never know the complete identity of the other social actors. The researcher states that even if social actors know what others perceive, they might not feel that the assigned identity is correct, refuting or negotiating it in the following (inter)actions (Idem: 35);
- identities are produced in (inter)actions through higher-level and lower-level actions. “A higher-level action is produced through a multiplicity of chained lower-level actions that interlink and play together in diverse ways” (Idem: 39). She offers as examples of higher-level actions a conversation, a dinner, a class. Further, “within a conversation, a multitude of chained lower-level actions (such as utterances, gestures, posture, and proxemics) build the higher-level action as the lower-level actions are produced by the higher-level actions. Thus, higher-level actions and lower-level actions constitute each-other” (Idem: 42). The lower-level actions are also called mediational means or communicative modes. They “give insight into the construction of identity” (Idem: 43). In cyberspace, higher-level actions could be e-mails, a game on playcatanwithpeople.com, threads of comments on a Facebook

picture, a chat conversation. The mediational means enumerated for the conversation are replaced in cyberspace by their digital variants.

Norris introduces two concepts that she will use in providing her view on identity: **site of engagement** and **nexus of practice**.

She defines the site of engagement as “the real-time encounter that takes place between the opening and the closing of the event”; as encompassing the material places in which the (inter)actions take place, the times during which the (inter)actions take place, the psychological or historical make-up which make the (inter)actions possible; “the real-time window opened through the intersection of social practice(s) and mediational means that makes that *lower* (or *higher*) level action the focal point of attention of the relevant participants; and radiates from there encompassing the intersection of practices and mediational means that make those lower- or higher-level actions the less focused or un-focused points of attention of the relevant participants” (Idem: 45). During a site of engagement, specific constellations of practices intersecting with the mediational means construct the social actors’ identities (see Idem: 46). In our case, the mediational means are the new media.

The researcher asserts that “each and every (inter)action is performed within a site of engagement”, “actions, higher-level, lower-level, are a part of a site of engagement as the site of engagement makes them possible, and the actions in turn also construct part of the site of engagement. These two concepts are closely interlinked” (Idem: 51). In a similar vein, actions and identity are interconnected in interaction: “an action is always identity-telling and identity is always produced through action. One is not possible without the other. There is no action that does not speak about identity and there is no identity without action” (Idem: 53).

Norris affirms that identity is (co)produced with other social actors, time, place and environment. She also stresses out that “identity production in everyday life is often not intentional by the social actor performing an action, but is just as often read as intentional by others. The intention of the social actor lies in the performance of a certain higher-level action, but is read as intentional production of identity by others. Thus, in interaction, identity becomes clearly **phenomenological**, but at the same time, to social actor producing the identity element(s) does

not necessarily experience their own identity production as phenomenological” (Idem: 52).

In our opinion, in cyberspace, self-identity construction is intentional in some Internet actions and phenomenological in others or interchangeably intentional or phenomenological, depending on the users:

- Intentional: when users upload photos on *Facebook*, when they introduce/update information in the **about** section of their *Facebook/Couchsurfing* profile;
- Phenomenological: when they chat with other digi-participants using their private chats, but also using the public chats, when they post comments and statuses; when they join particular groups of discussions, when they click **like** for particular pages or places/universities/music/movies/TVshows/books/food/restaurants/activities/Websites/Athletes/sports teams/sports/inspirational people/clothing/events etc.; when they upload notes on Facebook.

Online identity is also assigned by other users and it is also intentional or phenomenological depending on the conversational context and on the users:

- Intentional: when users leave references for other users on Couchsurfing,
- Phenomenological: most of the time when users tag other users in their photos, when they post something on other users’ Wall/Timeline or when they post comments to photos.

Other users’ interpret the higher-level actions that others perform in identity-terms. They might perceive that the identity performed by a particular digi-participant is phenomenological, while it is, in fact, intentional and the other way around.

4.2. Cyber-Identity

Identity “is a complex personal and social construct, consisting in part of who we think ourselves to be, how we wish others to perceive us, and how they actually perceive us” (Wood, Smith: 52). In what cyber-identity is concerned, the focus is more on how we wish others to perceive us and on the process of setting forth an image we want others to perceive (online self-presentation), but also on

how we contribute to the perception of other users and how other users contribute to our perception. Hence, online identity is the social identity encountered in cyberspace, what users display on SNSs, Websites, Weblogs, public chats, emails, etc.: “digital forms of identity performance” (Drotner, 2007: 171). It is the **content** posted by digi-participants in different Internet environments and one cannot create a recognizable identity in any digital space or group without posting (Baym, 2000: 144). Additionally, cyber-identity is the social identity expressed as **individual identity** (what is unique to the user) and **group identity** (what he shares with other users).

There are several terms at our disposal: online Identity, Internet Identity, cyber-identity, digital identity, electronic identity, e-identity, CMC identity, Internet persona, Cyberspace persona, etc. In the case of virtual worlds there is also the term virtual identity, but this is not in our focus.

All users construct an identity in cyberspace, regardless of the Internet situation in which they are in. Hence, as Beck argues: “the construction of individual identity has become the fundamental social act [...]” (1992, 2001, apud. Martin, 2008: 154).

There are various online discursive strategies and identity-building resources. Some examples are: filling in basic profile information, frequent posts, names and signature files, relevant knowledge transmitted through the users’ repertoires, distinctive roles that users can take on, performances that build distinctive styles (Baym, 2000: 173). These strategies differ from one digital space to another and cyber-identities are shaped by the online contexts in which they are created and which change very fast. Conjointly, Weber and Mitchell state that “like youth identities, new technologies keep changing, converging, morphing – seemingly always in flux, and like youth identities, young people’s own digital production facilitate a blending of media, genres, experimentations, modifications, and re-iterations” (2007: 27). The researchers argue that it results a media-mix of digital productions which tell stories that are often nonlinear and multivoiced. These digital productions leave a digital trail, fingerprint, or photograph of “where I was then”, “where we are now”, “who I would like to be” and so on. This means that young people’s interactive uses of new technologies offer a model for iden-

tity processes. Weber and Mitchell propose labelling such cultural productions: **identities-in-action** claiming that, like digital cultural production, identity processes are multifaceted and in flux, incorporating old and new images. We consider that this term describes very well cyber-identity and its fluid nature: identity in cyberspace is identity-in-action.

Some SNSs permit users to choose the way in which they stake out their identities: via their real names, nicknames or anonymity. One example of online social network that is more permissive in this respect is **MySpace**. However, even in this case, there are some constraints. This SNS is focused mainly on the music industry and interests, users having the possibility to connect with musicians, but also with people who have the same music interest (*All Genres, Pop, Rap & Hip Hop, Rock, Country, Latin, R & B, Alternative/Indie Rock, Metal, Reggae, Blues, Religious, Jazz, Classical, Folk*). At the same time, there are also specific profile types: *All, Musician, Designer, Photographer, Artist, DJ/Producer, Blogger, Filmmaker, Writer, Comedian, Actor, Model, Promoter, Venue, Brand, Developer, Entrepreneur, Curator, Dancer, Athlete, Activist, Entertainer*. Hence, “use of a trademark, including a word, slogan, design or logo, a business name, or other material on a Myspace Profile or Profile URL in a manner that may mislead or confuse others as to the origin and/or affiliation of the Myspace Profile or Profile Content may be considered a violation of our Trademark Infringement Policy” (<https://www.askmyspace.com/t5/Legal-Policy/Trademark-Infringement-Policy/ba-p/1419>).

Other SNSs explicitly require users to provide their real names (as we have seen in **Chapter III**). For example: Facebook. Nevertheless, as we pointed out in the previous chapter, there are a lot of Facebook users who have a username which does not correspond to their real name. If no one reports this fact to the Facebook administrators or if the cybernames do not draw the Facebook administrators’ attention, users can preserve the cybernames chosen.

Another identity-building resource which digi-participants have at their disposal is the visual representation via an avatar: “an avatar is an image that you create to represent yourself online”, (<http://messenger.yahoo.com/avatars.php>, 2010); “an image that represents you in online games, chat rooms, etc. and that you

can move around the screen” (http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/british/avatar_1?q=avatar).

On SNSs, unless users upload a photo or image, there is a custom avatar that represents them online. At the same time, if users deactivate a Facebook account, they will still appear in the list of friends of other users, but they will be represented by a custom avatar. If users click on the cybername of a deactivated account, the following information will be displayed: “This account has been deactivated. Only you can see [the cybername of the user] on your friends list. You have the option to unfriend [the cybername of the user]”. Further, the custom avatar usually differentiates only males from females according to the information displayed by users in the basic information section of their profiles. This is the case of Facebook and Couchsurfing. On other SNSs (BeWelcome, MySpace, Twitter), the custom avatar is the same for both males and females. The custom avatars on the SNSs mentioned can be found in **Annex 18 A**.

As a case study concerning the avatars used on Facebook, we scrutinised our personal list of friends. Thus, in May 2013, we had 527 friends in our personal Facebook list and we divided them in two categories:

- institutions/bands/artists/organisations/places, etc. (twenty-five users);
- individual users (five hundred two).

Out of 502 individual profiles, 407 used a photo of themselves as a profile picture, 61 used an avatar as their profile picture, 13 had a custom avatar as their profile picture and active accounts and 21 had deactivated accounts, but still appeared in our list with a custom avatar. One user out of the 21 who deactivated their accounts replaced the account with another one using the same cybername. Some avatars of individual users that we encountered in our Facebook list can be found in **Annex 18 B**.

We mention that we did not consider avatars the photos of the users’ children, the group/family photos, the users’ childhood photos/the photos of the users when they were younger, the photos in which users turned their back to the camera or the photos in profile.

Out of 25 profiles of institutions/bands, etc., 20 profiles use an avatar as a profile picture, two use a photo which shows the members of the institution/ band, etc. and three have a custom avatar because the accounts are deactivated:

Bands/Institutions/Places/Organisations → Profile Picture (Avatars)

1. *Centrul Blsh* (a private school) → the building where the classes take place
2. *Lectorat Français Cluj* (institution) → a drawing and the name on a corner
3. *Campus France Roumanie* (organisation) → their logo (Campus France)
4. *Institut Français de Cluj* → the name of the institution
5. *CampusFrance Autriche* (organisation) → their logo (Campus France)
6. *ESN Uni Wien* (international exchange Erasmus student network) → their logo
7. *Absolvent Babeş-Bolyai* (alumni network) → an image and a logo
8. *Vienna-Parties Erasmus-Students* (students' network) → students who have a party by a pool
9. *Foreign-Students In-Vienna* (students' network) → a photo from Vienna
10. *Flop Flip* (events in Cluj-Napoca) → the name and the logo
11. *Oraşul Sighişoara* (the town Sighişoara) → the photo of a tower (the town's symbol)
12. *Servus Cluj* (events/photos in Cluj-Napoca) → the name
13. *Municipiul Sighişoara* (a town in Romania) → the image of a banner announcing a Local festival
14. *Casa Cositorarului* (a coffee house) → a photo of the place
15. *StudentParty FlyingCircus* (a pub) → the photo of a banner with the name
16. *Byron Trupa* (Romanian band) → a drawing

- 17. *Kumm Romania* (Romanian band) → an image with the letters making up the word *Kumm*
 - 18. *MagicHandmade Dea* (a user who is manufacturing and selling jewelry) → a photo of jewels
 - 19. *VogueStudio* (a beauty shop) → a window with the inscription *VogueStudio*
 - 20. *Mobila Chic* (store furniture) → pieces of furniture. (These avatars can be found in **Annex 18 C.**)
-
- **Profile Picture (Photos)**
 - Zumba Sighișoara cu Monica → the trainer’s photo
 - Toulouse Lautrec (band) → the members of the band.

The profile picture can be changed whenever the users want, the number of friends changes frequently as we add friends on a regular basis, and sometimes even remove friends. Thus, the use of avatars, custom avatars and photos of the users themselves vary accordingly. The list and numbers presented above are fluid and temporary. We have observed these facts on our Facebook list in May 2013, but the list looked different in August 2013. Moreover, looking at our Facebook list and choosing three points in time, we have the following numbers:

December 2012 (Chapter III)	May 2013	August 2013
506 friends	527 friends	535 friends

Given all these aspects of cyber-identity, we argue that the domain of online social networks “may constitute ‘a world behind dichotomies’ capable of exposing ‘the embeddeness of subjectivity in different spaces and places’ and of foregrounding not only ‘the fluid and contextual nature of identity’ but also ‘the mechanisms of those power/discursive relations through which we are constructed and construct ourselves” (Cavallaro, 2000: 34). Along these lines, “myths about identity, nature and the body are rearticulated with new technologies” (Idem: 204).

Social identity on social network sites or cyber-identity is a representation constructed in two ways:

- via narratives. The narratives (the stories that we tell about ourselves and that other users tell about ourselves) produce narrative identities. The stories/narratives take different forms, depending on the Internet situations in which we are digi-participants;
- via language. The language used by digi-participants reveal a discursive identity.

4.2.1. Open-ended Interviews

Cyber-identity can be seen as coinciding with our real identity, differing from our real identity or being a blend between the real identity and the online information provided. Thus, we are preoccupied with the way users display their identities and how certain identities are recognised by other users and also shaped and re-shaped by other users. “Identity, thus, is a two-way construction” (Paltridge, 2006: 39).

As we focus on online identity construction of young adults we are also interested in how they perceive the online identity construction. Hence, we used open-ended interviews in order to find out how they would define cyber-identity and what the difference between cyber-identity and real identity is, from a sociolinguistic point of view. We targeted two groups:

- a group of twelve Ph.D. candidates from the English Department, University of Vienna, Vienna, Austria. The interview was conducted in English.
- a group of nine students at the Master Program: *Current Trends in Linguistics*, Faculty of Letters, Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania. The interview was conducted in Romanian.

Even though we addressed two scripted questions, we focused more on the participants’ thoughts, feelings, experiences, knowledge, opinions and preferences. The two questions are: What is cyber-identity on SNSs? Is it different from real identity?

The respondents were predominantly females in both groups. They were all Facebook users, except one participant from the Vienna group. The open-ended interviews were carried out in 2012 with both target groups. The group of twelve

Ph.D. candidates provided the answers in **Annex 17 A**. The group of master students provided the answers in **Annex 17 B**.

Observing their answers, we state that:

- some users of online social networks or users of the Internet in general claim that there is little difference between online and offline identity. They claim that we are dealing with different conditions for the construction of identity, rather than with different identities. They say that the essential features are the same but the conditions are different;
- other users state that the cyber-medium influences the way in which people construct an identity and that cyber-identity is not only different in degree, but also in kind.

We consider that the representations individuals expose offline are different from the representations displayed online. Moreover, the online representations change according to the different digital spaces.

4.2.2. Narrative Identity

Users construct an identity through the stories that they tell about themselves and through the stories that other people tell about them. Adapting Holmes' theory of stories to the online environment (2007: 110), we argue that Facebook/Couchsurfing users/bloggers tell their story and, in this way, they provide a window on cultural and social facts of the global society they are members of at a particular point in time. The stories told by them reflect their preoccupations, values, beliefs and attitudes. Besides, online stories have other functions as well: they entertain, educate, provide a socialising space and inform; express individual preoccupations, opinions and feelings and contribute to building a particular identity for an individual. They also establish social connections, express solidarity and mark social boundaries. Very often all these functions operate simultaneously.

In our paper, *Online Identities on Blogs* (Cotoc and Radu, 2011: 96–97) we adapted Ricoeur's theory about narrative and narrative identity to blogs. We expand his ideas to cyberspace in general: blogs, but also forums and online social networks. Nonetheless, we specify that narrative identity takes different forms in every digital environment. We argue that sometimes users construct discourses

that reflect their offline events. At others, the online discourses are internal to cyberspace. In both cases, users interpret their own discourses and other users' discourses and always relate to others. In this way, they construct, de-construct and reconstruct themselves and others to the needs of alterity (other users) by expressing their stories in impressive narratives with dynamic structures and internal dialectics (see Ricoeur, 1983, apud. Kliková, 2004: 19–20). Moreover, individuals are pluralistic and they have multiple representations in their relations to others and the social events. Their identity is constructed within a creative process of putting together all the fragments (Kliková, 2004: 13). In cyberspace, representations are multiple also in relation to the digital affordances. One user's identity can be constructed by putting together all the online representations.

Narrative identity is “the sort of identity to which a human being has access thanks to the mediation of the narrative function” (Ricoeur, 1991: 73). Individuals' lives are readable when they are interpreted in function of the stories people tell about themselves. These “life stories” are rendered more intelligible when they are applied to narrative models – plots – borrowed from history and fiction. In the same way, digi-participants display their identity addressing history, society, culture and everyday facts that they post for other users and comment upon. Moreover, the life stories posted online also receive feedback from other users and online identity emerges only after the dialog of the self with alterity. Online stories sometimes resemble autobiographies, at others, they are fictional constructions and at others they are a mixture between autobiography and fiction.

Given the importance of stories in the construction of (online) identity, we can use some of Ricoeur's assertions (Ricoeur, 1991: 73):

- “knowledge of the self is an interpretation”;
- “the interpretation of the self, in turn, finds narrative, among other signs and symbols, to be a privileged mediation”;
- “this mediation borrows from history as much as fiction making the life story a fictive history or, if you prefer, an historical fiction, comparable to those biographies of great men where both history and fiction are found blended together”.

Ricoeur identifies two major uses for the concept of identity: **identity-as-sameness** (Latin *idem*, English *same*) and **identity as self** (Latin *ipse*; English *self*). He notes that ipseity means ‘not sameness’.

He identifies **identity-as-sameness** as “numerical identity where we say that two occurrences of one thing designated by an invariable name do not constitute two different things but one and the same thing. Identity here means uniqueness and its opposite would be plurality – not one. But two or several” (1991: 74). He also mentions the following about identity-as-sameness:

- the first sense is identification understood as re-identification of the same;
- the second sense is “the idea of extreme resemblance where we see X and Y wear the same dress, that is dresses of such similarity that they can be substituted for one another. The opposite of this sense of identity is difference”;
- there are two criteria for numerical identity: the criterion of similitude and the criterion of uninterrupted continuity. The opposite of identity would then be discontinuity;
- another sense of identity-as-sameness is permanence over time. “The opposite of numerical identity is plurality whereas the opposite of identity-as-permanence is diversity”. Identity-as-uniqueness does not thematically involve time as is the case with identity-as-permanence.

The part of identity where identity-as-sameness prevails is the part of habitude, of sedimentation of stable features of the individual, contraction, stabilisation of action under the form of roles³⁹. The character of the individual constitutes the best example, according to Kliková. She argues that there are many features in the character that allow us to re-identify a person in time. During the re-identification process, the individual’s identity is actually an identity for others (institutional identity). We can determine this identity with the help of descriptions and we can compare the changes because of the stable features. In the identity *idem*, the individual’s action is the sum of defined activities which yield defined roles.

³⁹ « le pôle où prédomine, selon Ricoeur; l’identité au sens de la mêmété, c’est le pôle de l’habitude, de la sédimentation des traits plutôt durables de la personne, de la contraction, de stabilisation de l’action sous la forme des rôles » (2004: 20).

Hence, the identity *idem* part presents the characteristic features of the individual (see Kliková, 2004: 20).

Identity as ipse (the self/to ipseity) refers to ascription, to the assignation of an agent to an action. “The term self, ipseity, covers the range opened by ascription on the place of personal pronouns and all the other deictics which depend on it: adjectives and possessive pronouns (my, mine, your, yours, his, hers etc.) and adverbs of time and place (now, here etc.)” (1991: 75).

Identity ipse prevails in the other part of identity. In this part, the individual is an ethical subject who can define the situations and ascribe adequate meaning. It is the part of the individual that does not have anything accumulated or stable. There is only permanence in time, but without any grounds. This permanence is achieved by the simple existence of the individual. In this respect, consciousness constitutes the validation of the individual and it is present in the act of promising. Further, Kliková states that « la personne est capable de s’ipseiser, d’effectuer sa maintenance de soi [...] uniquement par l’acte de sa donation à autrui. Dans la promesse, la personne s’extériorise soi-même explicitement être fixe et prévisible celle, et être une personne sur laquelle on peut compter en tant que telle ou telle et estimer sa conduite dans l’avenir. Par l’accomplissement de la promesse, la personne s’atteste, se justifie. Comme cela, la personne s’ancre de nouveau hors de soi: de façon similaire aux cas des rôles sociaux et au caractère, elle s’ancre maintenant dans autrui »⁴⁰ (2004: 20–21).

Ricoeur considers that identity-as-sameness and identity as ipse are in a dialogical relation which creates a tension. The tension is between the part of the individual which is stable, identical in the sense of *idem* and the part of the individual which is dominated by identity ipse. An individual is never only identity *idem* or only identity ipse. Out of the tension between the two emerges the narrative identity of individuals which is coherent and uninterrupted (Kliková, 2004: 20).

⁴⁰ The person is capable of becoming ipse, of carrying out self-maintenance [...] only by the act of donating oneself to alterity. In the promise, the person explicitly expresses oneself to be fixed and foreseeable that, and to be a person whom one can count on as such or such and to approximate her behaviour in the future. By the achievement of the promise, the person attests herself, justifies herself. Like that, the person anchors herself again out of oneself: similarly to social roles and character, the person anchors herself in others [our translation].

Moreover, the online narrative of users unites the identity idem and the identity ipse and emphasizes the main difference between the two: temporality. « Ipse – c’est la structure purement temporelle, le temps est seul ce qui tient l’ipseité ensemble, il est pour l’ipse le seul élément dans lequel cette identité peut être permanente. Par contre, l’identité idem, c’est une identité hors du temps, instantanée; elle peut se déterminer en tant que même dans le moindre moment séparé d’autres moments »⁴¹ (Kliková, 2004: 20).

Bearing in mind Ricoeur’s assertions and his conceptualisation of identity (identity idem and identity ipse), we state that users operate selections, delete, add information, embellish facts and act subjectively. Thus, the online representations are a mixture between offline identity and construction. To these, we add the fact that users post about themselves and about others and what they post is always submitted to the other users’ interpretations. Thus, in cyberspace, users are *writing themselves*. The phenomenon of writing oneself is very well described in the following fictional text:

*“There is always the danger of **automatic writing**. The danger of **writing yourself towards an ending that need never be told**. At a certain point the story gathers momentum. It convinces itself, and does its best to convince you, and the end in sight is the only possible outcome. There is a fatefulness and a loss of control that are somehow comforting. This was your script, but now it writes itself. Stop.*

*Break the narrative. Refuse all the stories that have been told so far (because that is what the momentum really is), and try **to tell the story differently – in a different style, with different weights** – and allow some air to those elements choked with centuries of use, and give some substance to the floating world.*

⁴¹ Ipse – it is the purely temporal structure, time is the only thing that holds ipseity together, it is for the ipse the only element in which this identity can be permanent. On the contrary, identity idem is an identity out of time, instantaneous; it can be determined as the same in a separate moment [our translation].

*In quantum reality there are millions of **possible worlds**, unactualised, potential, perhaps bearing in on us, but only reachable by wormholes we can never find. If we do find one, we don't come back.*

In those other worlds events may track our own, but the ending will be different. Sometimes we need a different ending.

I can't take my body through space and time, but I can send my mind, and use the stories, written and unwritten, to tumble me out in a place not yet existing – my future.”

(Winterson, 2000: 53, personal emphasis)

We highlighted several concepts in this fictional text. The first concept that we highlighted is **automatic writing**. This concept describes also what users do online: they write automatically about themselves. For instance, on Facebook, digi-participants post statuses which announce the world what they are doing at the moment/thinking at the moment/cooking at the moment/where they plan to go on holiday, etc. We extracted some examples from July 2013:

- *Coffee Break for everyone – kisses and hugs;*
- *Morning my dears, i wish you have a beautiful day; Buna dimineața! :*.*
O zi superbă tuturor! [Good morning! A wonderful day to all!]; Movie time!;*
- *Chilling!;*
- *Picnic day;*
- *Biking ... Irish sun days :), etc.*

The Facebook automatic writing is so common that Facebook introduced a new feature in 2013. Facebook participants can use this feature in order to tell the world brief news about themselves. Hence, there are statuses which start with the Facebook users' own words and end up with describing how they feel. In this second part, they simply select from the available options or add their own. Users can also select from the available options, without adding their own words:

Feeling + Adjective preceded by a corresponding emoticon (happy, sad, insecure, excited, tired, great, wonderful, annoyed, blessed, meh, loved, pretty, angry, determined, sick, irritated, bored, good, awesome, amused, hungry,

down, hopeful, in love, sorry, safe, ignored, important and your own – the user can write an adjective that does not appear in the list). They can also write what they are doing following the same given pattern:

Watching + list of options + And your own

Reading + list of options + And your own

Listening to + list of options + And your own

Drinking + list of options + And your own

Eating + list of options + And your own

Playing + list of options + And your own

Using this feature, users posted statuses like the following:

- *feeling awesome (05.06.2013);*
- *Buna dimineata!Time for work!!O zi faina si tie, si tie , si tie si clar ca si tie — 🍵drinking coffee (25.07.2013);*
- *Countdown!!!Incepanand de azi ne lasam de fumat!!! — 😊feeling determined (16.07.2013);*
- *I hate it when people keep liking their own posts ... — 😡feeling annoyed (30.07.2013);*
- *Se mută Ada ... — 😞feeling sad (23.07.2013) [Ada is moving out];*
- *— 😞feeling sad;*
- *I am ... — 😞feeling lonely (23.07.2013);*
- *Closer, closer... — 😊feeling happy (02.07.2013);*
- *♣– with Jeni Jaja at Casa Someseana (10.07.2013);*
- ***Emá Nan** is 🏀playing basketball (01.08.2013);*
- *Adrenaline! Bungee jumping watching! Pffffff! — 😊feeling curious at Corinth Canal (02.08.2013).*
- *“In momentul in care iti atingi nivelul maxim de incompetenta, devii sef..” – un clasic in viata — 😊feeling amused with [user] and [user] [“when you become most incompetent ever, you become boss..” – a classic of our time];*
- *[user] is 😊feeling wonderful at Casa Jazz (06.08.2013);*

- *Morning people!!Time for work!Sa aveti o zi minunata! — 🤔feeling sleepy (04.08.2013);*
- *[user] is 📖reading The 33 Strategies of War;*
- *[user] was 🍷drinking cider at The Glenmore with Barbara Jordan and 2 other people;*
- *[user] was 📖reading Introducing NLP.*

These statuses appear in the present tense if the digi-participants, who become audience, see them in the day in which they were posted. Afterwards, the verb is at past tense.

Some Facebook participants sometimes post statuses in which they write about themselves at third person, singular. We encountered this practice in the time span 2008–2013:

- *damn sure **hopes** so (21.04.2008)*
- ***hopes** [user] is having a lovely birthday (06.02.2011);*
- ***discovered** something groundbreaking in her job search: H&M IS COMING TO AUSTRALIA!!!! Barbara Jordan!!!!!! (20.06.2013);*
- **Yawns* Man, why can't Thrusday just be cancelled? [...] (18.07.2013);*
- ***Trinkt** zäpfle in wien 😊 (04.08.2013) [drinks juice in Vienna];*
- ***Sera** à ORLINZ ce wkd, mais j'ai pas de tél donc inbox !!!!!.*

The second concept that we highlighted is **writing oneself towards an ending that need never be told**. This relates very well to cyberspace as users write themselves without having in mind an ending. They write on SNSs and on blogs, they exchange emails and chat, but there is no ending to their writing. Even when they decide to deactivate their accounts, they simply deactivate them without writing anything/announcing their intention.

The third concept **to tell the story differently – in a different style, with different weights** applied to cyberspace emphasises the fact that story telling has taken a new form: the digital form which changes from one Internet situations to another. The story telling follows the digital pattern imposed by/offered by the affordances of each Internet situation.

The concept **possible worlds** reminds us of the fact that identity enactment in cyberspace implies a slightly different world from the real world: an extension of the offline world – the digital world. In the digital world, users are involved in processes of shaping, altering, selecting and/or embellishing their offline identities. These processes are applied by users to their own identity or to other users' identity. Most of the time, their purpose is to impress other users and to provide positive social representations for the other digi-participants. The following excerpt from an open-ended interview with a young user is self-explanatory in this respect: “I think my homepage is a little wittier . . . well, not wittier, but I put more thought into what I am saying rather than just like spewing off the top of my head the way I do in real life. But other than that, it's basically the same thoughts that I have and the same take on life that I have, more or less. So I think it does an accurate job of representing me. I mean, all shined up and polished. A nice shiny me” (taken from Stern, 2007: 106). On the contrary, other users feel liberated when they express themselves in the digital world. Still, their online representation is different from what they expose offline:

- “I think this is a real, honest portrayal of me that I don't give in everyday life. Because I can be a very guarded person, and I like to come off as being more confident than someone who is so utterly confused about everything in their life. And so [on my blog] you see that real side of me.”;
- “In my day to day interactions with people, I don't think I really show who I am. I try to hide behind triviality and a ‘life is good’ image. Not so on my home page” (the statements of two young bloggers, Idem: 108).

The effort of constructing a positive image for self and others in the digital world ultimately leads to the co-constitution of digi-participants. Hence, following and re-interpreting Vezeanu, we argue that this co-constitution is created during the interactions starting with the exchanges which give meanings. Writing in the digital space means (inter)acting with alterity in order to transform our worlds within an open process and in order to form and trans-form ourselves and others. Digi-participants co-constitute their interlocutors and co-construct digital worlds. In addition, digi-participants, like face to face interactants, constitute one another during a dialogical subjectivisation process. Because the process of self-construction

is also a process of other-construction, through the exchanges and the dialogues between and among the digi-participants, the process of mutual constitution of the person is in fact personal co-constitution (see Vezeanu, 2004: 121).

Users access only the virtual spaces and virtual profiles that they are interested in, interpreting everything from their point of view. In this way, they interpret and re-interpret themselves and other users. Hence, cyberspace functions like a digital book in which digi-participants read about other digi-participants and about themselves: “they would not be my readers, but the readers of themselves, my book only being a sort of magnifying glass [...]” (Proust, 1966, apud. Ricoeur, 1991: 79). In line with Ricoeur’s theory, online identity reconfiguration by narrative “confirms the aspect of self-knowledge which goes far beyond the narrative domain in that the self does not know itself immediately, but only indirectly, through the detour of cultural signs of all sorts, which articulate the self in symbolic mediation that already articulate action, among them the narratives of daily life. Narrative mediation underlines this remarkable aspect about the knowledge of the self as being an interpretation” (Ricoeur, 1991: 79). By the same token, appropriation of the online identity of digi-participants by the audience is one of its forms because the narrative interpretation provides “the figure-able” character of the users which has for its result that the self, narratively interpreted, is itself a figured self – a self which figures itself of this or that (see Ricoeur, 1991: 79). In this manner, the online narrative identity is fluid and impermanent.

Because users expose **only what they want** and are selective with what they post (profile pictures, avatars, the messages they send, Wall posts, etc.), we can say that the digital worlds are at the “intersection between the real and the imagined” (Winterson, 2000: 53).

4.3. Cultural Diversity

Cultural diversity is a prevalent characteristic in all digital environments (blogs, forums, SNSs, etc.). Thus, culture and subculture are mediating inputs of interpretations as digi-participants construct and perceive identities through the mediation of cultural signs and symbols.

On each virtual space, cultural diversity is very high and users are involved in intercultural discourses. Thus, cultural diversity and intercultural communication are fundamental elements of the way in which digi-participants relate to one another and to the world in cyberspace. These two elements are a condition and, at the same time, a result of interacting in the global, digital medium. Therefore, cultural diversity is a hybrid construct as it is a mixture of various values from different cultural backgrounds. The users themselves are multicultural because their values are intermingled with other users' values. Moreover, digi-participants construct each other's discourses and identities through their online (inter)action:

- they *like* and *share* each other statuses/photos;
- they comment upon each other's posts;
- they debate about different topics and they even have polemical discussions;
- they interrupt and continue each other's posts/comments etc.

4.3.1. Culture and (Digital) Subculture

Culture, like identity, is a very broad concept. We briefly present only the considerations of culture that help us shed light on the process of online identity expression and/or construction.

Culture can be defined as “the customary beliefs, social forms, etc. of a racial, religious, or social group”, “the socially transmitted pattern of human behaviour that includes thought, speech, action, institutions, and artefacts” (*The Penguin English Dictionary. 2nd Edition, 2003: 338*).

Culture has been referred to as:

- “all learned behaviour which has been socially acquired” (Firth, 1951, apud Brake, 1995: 2);
- “a source of signs or potential meaning structures which actors inherit and respond to” (Brake, 1995: 8). It “consists of patterns, explicit and implicit symbols, constituting and distinctive achievements of human groups, including their embodiments in artifacts; the essential core of culture consists of traditional (i.e. historically derived and selected) ideas and especially their attached values [...]” (Brake, 1995: 2).

According to Keesing, 1974, culture can be interpreted as:

- (a) a cognitive system as (inter)actions involve inferred ideational codes lying behind the realm of observable events;
- (b) a structural system because cultures are shared symbolic systems of a community which generates cultural elaborations;
- (c) a symbolic system of shared symbols of meanings: “Where the normative system . . . is Ego centered and particularly appropriate to decision making or interaction models of analysis, culture is system-centered . . . Culture takes man’s position vis-a-vis the world rather than a man’s position on how to get along in this world as it is given . . . Culture concerns the stage, the stage setting, and the cast of characters”; “the normative system consists in the stage directions for the actors and how the actors should play their parts on the stage that is so set (Schneider, 1972: 38)” (apud. Paulston, 2007: 278).

We consider that culture is always focused on the patterned behaviour of a group within society. It represents the mainstream and it contains a prevailing set of norms.

Given that culture represents the mainstream, digi-participants’ discourses reflect mixtures of Internet subcultures because they always relate to otherness and try to oppose mainstream. Hence, even if culture is seen as a “cohesive force binding social actors together, it also produces disjunctive elements [...]. In any complex society culture is divisive merely because the presence of several subcultures indicates a struggle for the legitimacy of different subgroups’ behaviour, values and life styles against the context of the dominant culture of the dominant class” (Brake, 1995: 3). Hence, teenagers and young adults in cyberspace are such disjunctive elements. They are two categories that always differentiate themselves from the rest of the society (the mainstream), offline and online alike, through their behaviour and their linguistic repertoire. Thus, they belong to *youth culture* and they sometimes form various *youth subcultures*. Moreover, online they form Internet/digital youth subcultures.

By subcultures we mean:

- “a subordinate construct that asserts its existence mainly through negotiating/resisting/opposing mainstream ideologies, re-appropriating public space, and reassigning meanings to conventional objects” (Cotrău, 2007: 152);
- “alternative forms of cultural expression reflecting a cultural plurality in a culture [...]”. They exist where there are organised and recognised values, behaviour and actions which are responded to as differing from the prevailing set of norms (Blake, 1995: 8). Thus, they are noticed because they usually break with an established order and are often associated with non-conformity (see Zdrenghia, 2005: 83). As a consequence, subcultures have different meanings, they project an image and, hence, an identity. Likewise, youth subcultures are “highly visible, named groups of young people who are apparently characterized by their style and hairstyle, music preferences, beliefs” (Widdicombe and Wooffitt, 1995, apud Cotrău, 2009: 84). However, in cyberspace, elements like the ones enumerated above are transposed in the digital medium and they gain alternative digital forms: emoticons, avatars, pictures, written discourses, etc.

Young participants in cyberspace sometimes belong to a particular subculture: *digital subculture*. In addition, young Netizens construct their social and personal identity within digital youth subcultures that are formed depending on their interests, hobbies, studies, etc. They essentially express their affiliation to particular subcultures and manifest their identities through the content posted and through the language used. These two elements (content and language) represent the core features in the maintenance of digital (youth) subcultures.

4.3.1.1. Slang

Separate youth digital subcultures have languages of their own, with special symbols and with value systems “that lead away from those goals established by the larger society” (Coleman, 1961, apud Brake, 1995: 41). With regards to the discrepant online languages of the adolescents and young adults, slang is one element that marks the language of the digital youth subcultures. Thus, it represents the non-standard ever-changing variety used online by young people and it creates youth cyber-identities. What’s more, Cotrău defines slang as being a generation

specific vocabulary associated with taboo topics that is creative and rapidly expanding (2008b: 280).

Usually, slang is spoken rather than written but in the digital environment, it is encountered all the time in written forms on SNSs, in chats, forums, blogs, etc. It plays the same role in identifying youth subculture as do clothes and hairstyles in real life interactions: “Variation in slang use, just like music fandom, clothing and hairstyle, allows teenagers to identify themselves with some of their peers while differentiating themselves from others” (Cotrău, 2008b: 281). Slang identifies youth in terms of age, religion, ethnicity, etc.

Like in face to face interaction, online slang is understood only by the members of particular groups and it is used to make a statement and to differentiate youth groups, not only to differentiate youth from adults. It results that slang is very often used to mark group affiliation and, this is why, it might carry a negative connotation because it constitutes a linguistic barrier that cannot be crossed by outsiders (members of other groups or, sometimes, adults). However, it carries a positive connotation as well because it reveals the youth capacity to innovate and to be creative at the linguistic level. At the same time, it is a symbol of adaptability, wit and even humour.

Slang is rapidly and continuously changing, all teenagers and young adults come up with new slang all the time, so it is impossible to know all the words belonging to slang or to design a finite list of slang.

We provide some examples of slang (see <http://www.slangsite.com/slang/G.html>, 2011) (“classical slang”, Cotrău, 2009: 111). The contextualised examples are taken from cyberspace, but they are also encountered offline:

– *Adalada* [Ay-duh-la-duh. Not a lot]:

A: What’s goin on?

B: Adalada.

– *Blogary* [blog, blogary, diary, weblog]: *his **blogary** is booooooring!*

– *Chatterfuge* [chat that involves false identities]: *You’ve been **chatterfuged** by that user, bigboyhot4u. He ain’t doin’ nuthin’ but the chatterfuge.*

- *Dig* [like]: One user posts the following question on the Facebook Wall/Timeline of another user: *This your dig? <http://www.metrotheatre.com.au/events/2013/09/07/gangsters-ball-2013> [Do you like this?]*

I dig this video.

- *Dude* (as form of address). Conversation between two Romanian users on the Facebook Timeline/Wall:

EmaNan was  playing *Table tennis*.

[user]: Dude, cand facem o partida? *August 5 at 9:11pm · Like · 1*

EmaNan: Dude, la orice oră! Haideți! *August 5 at 11:07pm · Like · 2*

- *E-back* [write back in an email]: *Pls⁴² e –back to let me know what you think asap* [as soon as possible].

- *Frill* [for real]:

A: John has just asked me out! B: Frill?

- *Gadzooks* (interjection showing surprise): **Gadzooks!** *this is the best website I have seen!!!!!!*

- *Gangsta* [a person living the streets the way that the hip-hop lifestyle would suggest]. The post of a Facebook user on another user's Wall: *paper gangsta? I dunno!*

- *Gant* [hungry]: *I haven't eaten all they, so I am gant.*

- *Hardore* [used to describe someone as being part of a notorious group of friends]:

A: Who's that?

B: It's ok, that's John. He's hardcore.

- *Jazz* (stuff): *... and all that jazz.*

- *Jet* (to leave quickly): *i gotta jet soon so pls play faster!!!!!!!* (Catan game platform).

- *k.o.* (to fall asleep, it comes from knock out): *I have school tomorrow guys, I'm gonna have to k.o.*

- *Lame* (cheap): *I think you are lamin around. Go learn for the exam!!!*

The band is lame.

⁴² please

- *Smash: Ahahahahah, poor **smash**!!!! I was just making the best of a bad situation! Haha! X*
- *Thanks or 10q (a short form of thank you, usually found in notes). A comment posted by a Facebook female user under her own photo: **Thanks** you guys for your extremely generous comments and for having clicked the Like button :) It's really sweet of you!!!*

Other examples of digital slang (slang specific to the e-medium) are: *I love u* [I love you]; *i gtg now too* [I have to go quickly]; *i'll tyll* [I will talk to you later]; *lol* [laughing out loud]; *omg* [oh, my God].

4.3.2. Cultural and Glocal Identity

Cultural identity displays the digi-participants belonging to a particular community and to a particular culture or subculture. As in cyberspace cultural identity is mainly expressed through language, we argue that language and culture/subculture are connected: “the meaning of utterances comes not only from the words spoken but also from culturally agreed-upon conventions for how those words are used and interpreted as well as from how they have been used in the past within a given culture” (Tannen, 2006: 343). That is why, scholars like Tannen have even suggested “that language and culture are better thought as a single entity: languaculture” (Tannen, 2006: 343). In line with this view, we consider that cultural identity in cyberspace comprises of different **languacultures**.

Cultural identity is a form of *symbolic articulation*. It connects the inner feelings with the external surroundings. We have no direct access to other people's thoughts and emotions, but words and text, image and sound operate as symbols which offer a means of expressing inner states so that they can be shared by others. The term “articulation” encapsulates the important duality of expression (as an articulate person) and connection (as in an articulated lorry) that is a key element to the way in which symbols create cultural identities. In performing identity work through digital practices, young people can gain a new perspective upon ordinary media products [...] At the same time, they can get a new perspective upon themselves because they enter new cultural and social terrain (Drotner, 2007: 174).

In the postmodern environment created by the digital medium, cultural identities are expressed in a frame of globalization. Nevertheless, they originate from a local space. Hence, we argue that users are in a global and in a local space at the same time: they are in a **glocal space** where they manifest **glocal identities**. We notice “a process of adopting specific elements from other cultures without losing the original identity, and blending the ideas, brands, and practices from different cultures in such a balanced way that one is not overwhelmed by the other” (He, 2007, apud. Cotoc and Radu, 2011: 410). That is to say, users’ discourses and online representations contain signs of globalization, but also preserve their idiosyncrasies. Besides, in cyberspace, users are at the intersection of presence and absence, in a place where social events and social relations interlace ‘at a distance’ with local contextualities (see Giddens, 1991: 21).

When talking about cultural identity, there are three important aspects that we should take into account:

- The process of **glocalization**. This process blends globalization and localization. It renders the idea that cyberspace gathers in the same space digital participants from all over the world and creates a polyphony of cultures;
- The concept of **Franca space**. This concept was introduced and defined by Corina Ciocârlie as the psychological space where people come into contact with alterity (2012);
- The concept of **English as a Lingua Franca** which is defined as “one of the symbols of our time, together with globalization, networking, economic integration, and the Internet”, “a vehicle of efficiency in for example business and science, or as a new means of communication for globally emergent localities in a variety of non-mainstream subcultures” (Mauranen, 2009: 1).

We put together the three concepts above (**glocalization**, **Franca space** and **English as a Lingua Franca**) and we argue that cyberspace functions like a **Franca space** which we define as a space where different cultural identities are intertwined and where digital participants interact with one another via the help of a lingua franca which is, in most cases, English.

We argue that, even though English is the language of the Internet, there are cases when other languages function as a lingua franca, at a micro-level. For instance,

in our article “Interdiscourse Communication and Identity Construction in Online Social Networks”, we presented the case of a group of Erasmus students, non-native speakers of Romanian, who spoke different mother tongues and who came to study in Romania. They befriended each other on Facebook and very often they would use Romanian with Romanian speakers, native and non-natives alike, when participating in the online environment, even if they were all L2 English speakers: they often posted statuses in Romanian, even though the number of non-speakers of Romanian in their list outnumbered the Romanian speakers. However, they would also post statuses in their mother tongue. In this way, they operated a selection in terms of their audience and target. They also posted comments in Romanian and chatted in Romanian. Their discourse was a glocal discourse which constructed cultural identities within the social network site of Facebook. For them, Romanian was the *lingua franca* at a micro level (see Cotoc and Radu, 2011b). The interesting fact about this group of digi-participants is that when they returned to their countries, after the Erasmus exchange was over, they continued to use Romanian for two-three months and then they stopped using it. This might be a consequence of the fact that their online Romanian speakers’ group was an extension of the offline group. Once the offline group disintegrated, as all the students returned to their countries, the online group ceased to exist as well.

4.4. Identity and Cyber-Community

Users construct an individual identity and a group identity via their narrative and via the language used. In this way, they become members of a cyber-community on SNSs and other Internet spaces which “are not communities in any singular sense, but rather function as social venues in which many different communities may form” (Parks, 2011: 105).

Wittgenstein stresses the relation between the individual and the community when talking about language use: “a “one-user language” would be impossible and, because we live in a community, we need to follow sets of rules in order to be recognized as members of that community” (Wittgenstein, 1998, apud. Furmuzachi, 2005: 22). Besides, belonging to a community involves “a continuous checking

process of whether one follows the rules which they themselves follow and gives the responses they expect” (Wittgenstein, 1998, apud. Furmuzachi, 2005: 27).

Moreover, there are three key concepts in a community (Furmuzachi, 2005: 28):

- **agreement**: a community cannot exist unless its members agree in their practices;
- the “set of responses in which we agree, and the way they interweave with our activities” (our “**form of life**”). We *agree* and we *share* a form of life;
- **criterion**: the notion of criterion is needed in order to ensure checkability, the ability to see if the other person uses the same term the same way as I do. In our *form of life*, agreement comes through *criteria*.

Besides these three concepts, Wittgenstein mentions that “an individual who is able to pass enough “tests” which prove that he masters the rules of a language is admitted as a “normal speaker of the language and member of the community” (Wittgenstein, 1998, apud. Furmuzachi, 2005: 28–29).

Talking about community, Furmuzachi also mentions the concept of **keeping one’s word**, as it appears in Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*. The concept “points out the constancy of the way in which one is expected to act. *Keeping one’s word* is a challenge to time: even if I change my opinions, my inclinations, my preferences, etc., I will still be using the same criteria in order to agree with the others who share my form of life. My self-engagement in keeping my word makes it possible for the others to trust me, which at the same time guarantees my own internal consistency (my own identity, Ricoeur’s perspective). This sort of constancy (Selbst-Ständigkeit) should not be symptomatic to a sort of stiffness or inflexibility but to a responsibility which I assume the moment I am recognized as a member of the community, a responsibility to follow the rules not as they strike me, not as “private rules” but as the community expects to follow them.” (Ricoeur, 1992, apud. Furmuzachi, 2005: 29–30).

In what the functioning of the cyber-community is concerned, we examined how the cyber-community influences the construction of the user’s social identity. Of course, the cyber-community is different in each digital space (Couchsurfing/ Facebook/a group of discussion etc.).

With regards to the concepts discussed above, we pinpoint some reflections:

- In the cyber-community, the rules that digi-participants are expected to follow are fluid, erratic, changing from one virtual space to another and changing very fast in time as the affordances of the medium are improved very fast due to technological progress. For instance, on Facebook, users have in their list of friends various people from the offline world (friends, colleagues, teachers, parents, family, etc.), but also users they have never met offline. These people form different micro-communities which are all part of the Facebook cyber-community at a macro-level. When users post something on their Wall/Timeline, the content posted is available to all the Facebook users in their list of friends (to all the micro-communities). Hence, all the rules of engaging with the Facebook community are erratic since everyone can see their posts: what they post might comply with the rules of some micro-communities, but break the rules of others. Moreover, the same content might never be uttered face to face to one particular micro-community even though it is available in the digital world for them as well. Still, there is one option at the users' disposal: they can block their Wall/Timeline so that some of the users cannot see the content they post. We argue that this act constitutes an act of constructing different identities for different categories of audience. At the same time, this act represents another proof that online identity is fluid;
- On Facebook groups of discussion, users are expected to follow the rules of the group. For instance, if the vast majority of digi-participants use abbreviations, this becomes the rule of that particular group. Users who do not use abbreviations are not well-integrated in that particular cyber-community;
- Cyber-identity is **fluid representation** because Netizens post statuses, descriptions, comments, but they can delete and replace them whenever they want to. They also chat online or offline, send e-mails and messages using the verbal repertoire that they choose. Moreover, the affordances of the digital medium change very fast and users post different content as time passes. Like face to face communication, the cyber-identity of the users "is not fixed and permanent, or finite condition [of the digi-participants], but rather a process of being and becoming" (Cotrău, 2008a: 20). Moreover, the fluidity is more easily achieved because of the medium. Even if users remain the same, they have different

representations in cyberspace and these representations are always changing. Hence, *constancy* (*Selbst-Ständigkeit*) is not a characteristic of cyber-identity because cyber-identity is to be conceptualised as a representation. Users preserve an essence that doesn't change, but their online representations might not reflect this essence.

According to Parks, 2011, online communities are to be evaluated in terms of networks of personal relationships. They “are defined as social groups that display psychological and cultural qualities of strong community without physical proximity” (Parks, 2011: 107).

There are some criteria that can be used to evaluate whether online groups function as cyber-communities (Parks, 2011: 108):

- the ability to engage in collective action;
- the members of the group should think of themselves as a community and identify themselves with the community;
- the communities' involvement in information-sharing rituals on a regular basis;
- the patterns of interaction that grow out of regularised information exchange (Bell & Newby, 1974, apud. Parks, 2011: 108);
- the existence of interlinked private networks;
- the display of attachments from the digi-participants' part. To these, the researcher adds requirements specific for SNSs: users must create and visit their profiles with some regularity; users must personalise their profiles; users must establish social contacts and interact with them.

Parks proposes an arbitrary minimum set of requirements for membership in a cyber-community: “in order for an individual to qualify as a member of a virtual community, he or she must have logged in within the past three months, have a personal picture, have at least two friends; and have received at least two comments from friends” (2011: 116). Of course, this set of requirements can be more robust, insisting on higher level of engagement: logging in the past 7/5/3 days, displaying a personal picture, having 10/20/30 friends, receiving 10/20/30 comments, post 10/20/30 comments, 10/20 statuses, etc.

Parks also suggests that a group is a cyber-community if its members engage in collective action and share in rituals, have a variety of relational linkages, and are emotionally bonded to others so that there is a sense of belonging and group identification. Social network sites provide the functionality (the social, technological and structural affordances) necessary to satisfy these requirements. Facebook/Couchsurfing and other SNSs allow very easy access to various users, offer many options for users to express and address their personal interests and are structured in such a way that they facilitate communication and relational formation among digi-participants and foster group identity construction (see Parks, 2011: 118). Further, the researcher rejects the view that virtual communities are “communities without propinquity” and states that “it may be more accurate to say that virtual communities are often simply the online extension of geographically situated offline communities” (Idem: 120). We argue that this depends on the Internet situations in which users are in and on the users’ groups of online friends. Moreover, we have to bear in mind that every Internet situation contains various micro-communities. That is to say, there is the Facebook/Couchsurfing/BeWelcome/LinkedIn cyber-community, but at the same time, on every SNS, different groups form different (micro-)communities:

- the cyber-communities on Facebook are many times extensions of offline communities, but there are also cases of communities without propinquity. For instance, users can have celebrities or public figures in their list of friends but they never interact with these users offline. In this case, the cyber-community formed is not connected to the offline world. Another example is constituted by the groups of discussions on Facebook. Users join particular groups and form an online community where they discuss topics of interest/ where they have fun, but they do not know the other digi-participants offline;
- the cyber-communities on Couchsurfing/BeWelcome are sometimes extensions of offline communities and at others communities without propinquity (some groups of discussion);
- the cyber-communities on Catan are most of the time communities without propinquity as users do not engage with one another in offline interactions. However, even in this Internet situation, there may be exceptions: users who

are friends in the offline world form a micro-community on Catan and, in this case, their group is an extension of their offline community.

We argue that cyber-communities (on social network sites – Facebook/Couchsurfing/LinkedIn/BeWelcome; on game platforms – Catan cyber-communities; on blogs) cannot be labeled on a general level either as communities without propinquity or as extensions of offline communities because the communities in each digital environment belong to the first category or to the second variably. Moreover, as we have stated above, the two labels are applied variably even within the same SNS, depending on the digi-participants and on the micro-communities formed.

Regardless of the type of cyber-community (without propinquity or extension of offline community), “people in virtual communities use words on screens to exchange pleasantries and argue, engage in intellectual discourse, conduct commerce, exchange knowledge, share emotional support, make plans, brainstorm, gossip, find, fall in love [...]. People in virtual communities do just about everything people do in real life, but we leave our bodies behind [...]” (Rheingold, 2000, apud. Young, 2008: 128).

4.5. Partial Conclusions

To conclude, (cyber-)identity is a multidimensional concept: individuality, personal identity, social identity (persona), professional identity, cultural identity, ethnic and national identity, gender identity, etc. All these dimensions are revealed by the narrative identity (the content exposed) and the discursive identity (how the content is exposed).

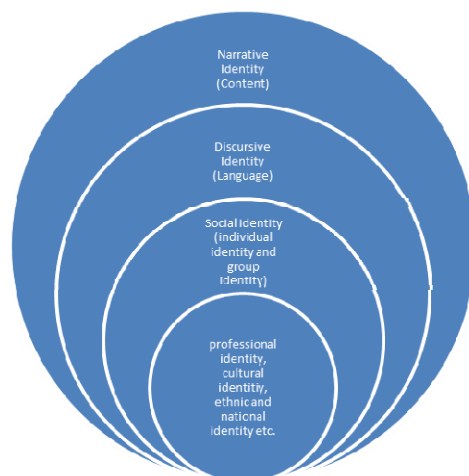
We consider cyber-identity to be a representation that digi-participants construct in cyberspace. This representation is co-constituted within the interaction with other users. Hence, cyber-identity is the social identity manifested on two levels: individual identity (what is unique to the user) and group identity (what the user has in common with other members of a group). Cyber-identity is different from offline identity because digi-participants always operate selections, add and remove information, embellish their social image:

(Offline) Identity	Cyber-identity
+ personal identity (inner identity) + social identity: individual identity (what is unique) + group identity (what is shared)	~ personal identity (inner identity) + social identity: individual identity (what is unique) + group identity (what is shared)

Identity in cyberspace changes very fast. Thus, it is a fluid representation. It is different from offline identity because the conditions are different. Similarly, because each digital space contains different affordances, cyber-identity varies accordingly.

Cyber-identity is constructed through various online discursive strategies and identity-building resources: the cybernames chosen, the semiotic code (avatars or photos uploaded) and the digi-participants' discourse. All these elements are conditioned by the affordances of each digital space. Furthermore, cyber-identity is displayed in the Franca space of the digital world in which we encounter different cultural identities and where users usually interact with one another via the help of a lingua franca which is, in many cases, English. Further, cyber-identity is built within a cyber-community which can take the form of a macro-cyber-community (the entire Facebook/Couchsurfing/Catan community, etc.) or a micro-community (various online groups).

Cyber-identity can be conceptualised as a concentric circle which contains multiple dimensions:



The narrative identity and the discursive identity reveal a social identity on two levels (individual identity and group identity) and which articulates one or more dimensions of identity: professional, cultural, ethnic and national, gender identity, etc. Moreover, cyber-identity is constructed within a cyber-community.

As one can notice in this theoretical chapter, the elements contained in the concentric circle are taken from different disciplines and applied to the digital world. We needed this multidisciplinary approach in order to capture the complexity of the online identity construction phenomena.

We will use these theoretical aspects in our next chapter which is focused on corpus analysis.

CHAPTER V

Corpus Analysis: Romanian, English and French Digital Productions

In this chapter, we focus on Romanian, English and French digital productions in order to scrutinise the linguistic processes through which young users construct an online narrative and discursive identity (which yield individual and group identity) in the time span under focus. We focus on blogs and other social networks, with a special focus on Facebook, in order to highlight the fluidity of online representations. We illustrate how the Facebook community is perceived through a concrete example (*The Case of Salman Rushdie*), we briefly present how users construct a professional identity on LinkedIn, we illustrate how narrative identity is expressed on blogs (a Romanian blog: *Blogul lui Meșter* (<http://mirceamester.ro>), a French blog: <http://blog.jeromesoyer.fr>, and an English blog: *ultrabrilliant* (<http://ultrabrilliant.co.uk>) and, last but not least, we illustrate cases of individual and group identity constructions on Facebook.

5.1. Facebook Cyber-community. The Case of Salman Rushdie

The article below was taken from the site *Daily News and Analysis, India*. The article brings to light an important characteristic of digital community overall and a change in what the perception of digital spaces is concerned.

Some years ago, the Internet allowed users to be whoever they wanted to be or to remain anonymous. Thus, this gave them freedom of expression: “about a decade ago when internet and emails were first being used, using a dummy name for sns sites or private emails was quite common. Since people were not quite sure of the security, hiding one's identity or using a pen name was the common

thing to do” (http://www.dnaindia.com/analysis/column_whats-in-a-cyber-identity-ask-salman-rushdie_1615124, accessed 15 March 2012).

Nowadays, Internet is part of everyday life. It is no longer an Internet that is strange and out there, like in the famous adage “on the Internet nobody knows you’re a dog”. On the contrary, “it is an Internet that is in here, densely connected with everything from our life: **Real Name Internet**” (Hogan, 2011). However, we agree with Hogan when he argues that not the entire Internet is real name Internet; only the online spaces where people post content that they associate with themselves and identify with a common name by which they are normally known. In these digital spaces, they are **Personally Identifiable**. Hogan mentions *Facebook*, *Google +*, *Twitter* as Real Name Internet spaces.

We are not interested in the validity of the source and we use this article only to highlight the extent to which cyber-communities have changed in time and how users perceive them nowadays: “more and more people are looking at cyber space as a community, like the real community we live in with its social norms and rules. Cyber roamers are now getting used to being responsible for using the cyber community. [...]” (http://www.dnaindia.com/analysis/column_whats-in-a-cyber-identity-ask-salman-rushdie_1615124, accessed 15 March 2012).

Because Facebook is an online space where true identity is required, the digital community requires the digi-participants to use their real names (Facebook being perceived as Real Name Internet⁴³): “Facebook assumes [like Google + and Twitter] and puts into terms of use that you are supposed to use your real name and that it is against the terms of use to impersonate someone else or to create multiple accounts” (Hogan, 2011). Hence, when Salman Rushdie was suspected of using a fake identity in order to create a Facebook account, he was banned from the network.

What’s in a cyber identity? Ask Salman Rushdie

Manjula Pooja Shroff | *Sunday, November 20, 2011*

The recent news items about the spat that Rushdie is having with Facebook over the freezing of his account definitely points to one thing. An authentic Cyber citizenship is important.

⁴³ At this point, we could claim that the concept Real Name Internet means the same thing as extension of offline community.

More and more people are looking at cyber space as a community, like the real community we live in with its social norms and rules. Cyber roamers are now getting used to being responsible for using the cyber community.

Like a democratic real world, where there are consequences and punishments for breaking laws if one is reported and caught, cyber space is also quite democratic. For example, if bad content is reported on Facebook, the account can be seized. Losing an account is quite a deterrent since once the authentic account is seized, one may never get their name back, and living an entire life without a Facebook account is quite a dreadful thought.

The hue and cry over Salman Rushdie losing his Facebook account was that the username was seized considering him to be an imposter. It was with much battle and months of communicating to the Facebook team, including emails to Mark Zuckerberg, that he was able to reactivate another account.

Responsible cyber citizenship is a whole lot more than avoiding the use of bad language, not stalking people or uploading bad and offensive content. It calls for a lot of proactive responsibility.

A decade ago cyber crimes and cyber terrorism existed only in the movies. Now it exists for real. Since the internet is used for everything from entertainment to enterprises, a lot goes online from theft of identity and web addresses, money laundering to stealing other people's data. Apart from the professional trouble makers, young inexperienced people can also get into unintended difficulties.

Sometimes young people can get into serious trouble for hacking. In India, the idea of 'cracking' a phone or an iPad or a mobile gaming device like PSP in order to use pirated software is so common that the magnitude of hacking into other people's sites on the internet may not be understood. Hacking is a serious crime and breaking into any government or security sites like NASA can lead to severe penalties such as years of imprisonment.

About a decade ago when internet and emails were first being used, using a dummy name for SNS sites or private emails was quite common. Since people were not quite sure of the security, hiding one's identity or using a pen name was the common thing to do. With increased security and with cyber-roaming

assuming significant time and lifestyle of people, using one's own identity is considered quite safe.

However, using one's name comes with a degree of responsibility or else the cyber citizen can be subjected to prolonged difficulty as Rushdie has found out. Salman Rushdie is now back on Facebook but his new account reads, Ahmed Rushdie. This is the cost of losing a cyber citizenship; one may never get back their real identity on the world wide web.

(http://www.dnaindia.com/analysis/column_whats-in-a-cyber-identity-ask-salman_rushdie_1615124, accessed 15 March 2012)

5.2. Cyber-Identity on LinkedIn. The Configuration of a Professional Identity

When using SNSs for professional purposes, users become active users within a group which functions like a *community of practice*. We define communities of practice as:

- a group of people who have the same knowledge about and ways of addressing similar (often shared) problems, situations and purposes. In the process of engaging in the practices of such communities, people reframe their identities and interests in relation to the community (see Lave and Wenger, 1991, apud. Shaffer, 2006: 227);
- “communities of practice correspond to the different subject positions people adopt on a moment-to-moment and day-to-day basis, and indeed throughout their lifetimes, depending on who they are with: family, colleagues at work, social groups as school and so on”. It results that communities of practice (CoP) are not only working environments (Block, 2006: 37–38). Moreover, communities of practice are defined by the activities of practices of its members and the most relevant of these practices is the repertoire of language varieties and speech styles that participants in a community use (see Young, 2008: 131);
- a community of practice need not necessarily be considered as such by participants. That is to say, even though participants may be mutually engaged in a joint action, they may not focus explicit attention on what they are doing,

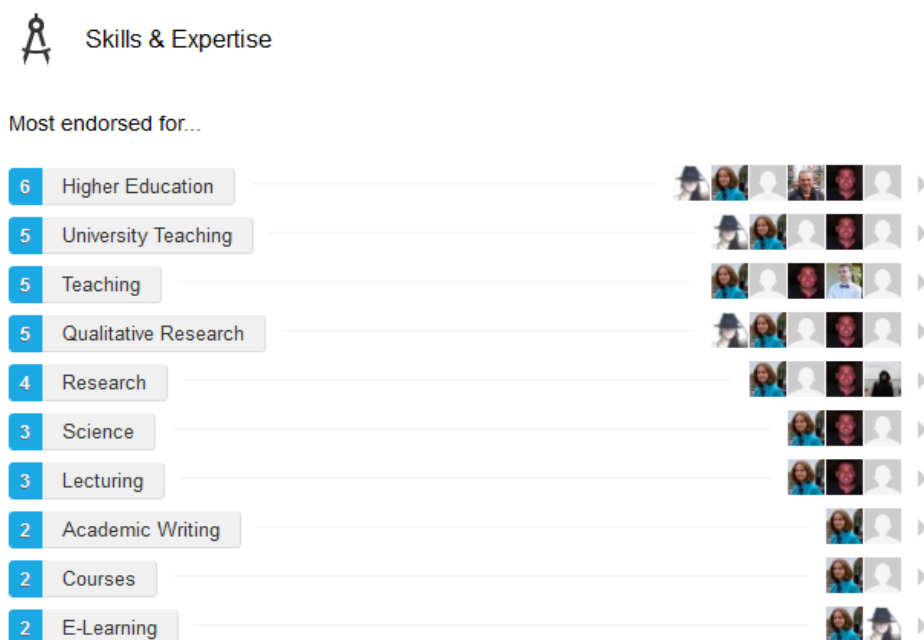
and “insiders and outsiders may not name it and thus mentally convert a community of practice into something concrete or objective” (Young, 2008: 130).

Taking into consideration the concept of (*individual*) *identity* and *community of practice*, we argue that one aim of using the LinkedIn platform is the configuration of a **professional identity** for users because they will construct a different discursive identity from the identity they construct when they interact with friends on Facebook: “the process of construction itself has entered a new level of consciousness as the Web, offering multiple dimensions of representation, creates for all of us the possibility of establishing different identities, each valid within its particular domain” (Richards, 2006: 1). Thus, professional identity is to be understood as “a set of values, attitudes, skills and concepts which enable a person to say “This is who I am as a [...] [teacher, translator, engineer etc.]. This is what I am trying to do and be in the world” (Winslade, 2003, apud. Perry, 2011: 13). Moreover, the professional identity of an individual assimilates all the narratives of the profession with the person’s personal narrative. It results a coherent private narrative with an internal logic which guides the person’s actions as a professional. Further, the professional identity is consistent with the person’s personal identity – who someone is as a person (see Perry, 2011: 13).

In the communities of practice on LinkedIn, digi-participants create a professional identity which is evaluated by the other users on the platform and which they reframe in relation to the other users. Hence, users try to construct a positive image of themselves. They write in a correct language and they are coherent. The content they display is focused on the professional experience acquired and on their educational background. They try to make useful connections, be part of useful groups of discussion etc. Of course, users will always add new events, work places, experiences so that we can observe a “professional identity development” (Gordon and Luke, 2012: 113) and a process of updating themselves (see Stald, 2007: 161).

LinkedIn users feel they belong to a professional network and, as in face to face interactions, they “tend to feel included when their desired group membership identities are positively endorsed [...]” (Jackson, 2008: 50). This happens on LinkedIn as the network contains the affordance of endorsing users from one’s

own list of friends with competences which help these users build their professional identity. Hence, identity on LinkedIn, as identity in general, is a two-way construction: individuals construct their image, but their image is shaped by the other participants as well. Once a user endorses another user, the latter receives an e-mail notification and the skill/competence appears on his profile together with the number of users who recommended him for a particular skill/competence. Below there is an example of positive identity endorsement on LinkedIn:



Besides the LinkedIn endorsement, users can recommend other users and this also constitutes an act of constructing a positive social identity (professional identity) for other users and of integrating them into a professional network of digi-participants. Some examples:

- *[name] has a rare sense of responsibility, a quality more and more difficult to find nowadays. Her commitment level and how passionate she is about her work always managed to impress me. I believe she is an excellent professional and has a great carrier path ahead of her. I strongly recommend her;*

- *[name] is one of the most valuable persons I have ever met. Loyal expert with excellent communication skills. Always takes care of the job. She is a very productive person. I can recommend [name] as a person with great knowledge and deep education of IT solutions;*
- *[name] is one of those few people who know how to read between the lines of a person's CV and understand their full potential, without pigeonholing you. It was a great pleasure to get to know her and be properly instructed by her prior to any stage of the interview process, and I appreciated every time her insightful tips. An asset in talent sourcing, undoubtedly!*
- *[name] is a very good professional. She has excellent communication skills and is passionate about languages. She is calm, friendly and detail-oriented. I am pleased to recommend her for any position which involves dealing with foreign languages.*

5.3. Narrative Identity on Personal Blogs: Romanian, French and English

The way in which users display their identity on (personal) blogs is different from the way in which they construct an identity on social network sites because the medium has different affordances and different purposes. Hence, our discussion of identity on blogs will prove once more that we are entitled to use identity in the plural form and that identities/representations are fluid in the digital environment because the conditions vary from one Internet situation to another and are totally different from the f2f conditions.

As stated in Cotoc, Radu (see 2011: 95), bloggers construct a representation of themselves through the ideas, opinions and thoughts expressed. They communicate their political and religious views, ideology, beliefs, education, details about their lives and so on. Hence, researchers claim that blog posts offer insight into the bloggers' acts of self-disclosure and self-construction. The bloggers become rhetors and "each post provides a piece of the always-under-construction self (adding, contrasting, restructuring, reinforcing), and together, these posts present a multi-faceted, mediated portrait" (Grafton, 2009: 89).

Everything is organised chronologically in different entries, but the audience reads the blogs randomly, arranging the pieces of information as they please. Still, the online narrative is coherent and the meaning remains the same. Moreover, the reading and the interpretation processes yield online narratives that even though permanently modified, preserve their core. Because of this aspect, in 2011, we compared the blogs to a Rubik cube.

We focus on personal blogs because, in this Internet situation, bloggers write about themselves and express their opinions about topics of general interest like travelling, food, free time, hobbies, books, events, technology, sports. Moreover, users can tackle whatever subject they want, there are no limits. Unlike a blog that announces to be about a particular subject and where the audience expects the blogger not to deviate too much from the subject chosen, the personal blogs reveal the bloggers' narrative identities because bloggers are telling a story which opens a window to themselves. In this respect, blogs are similar to SNSs where users post about themselves and where they receive feedback from other users (likes, comments and shares). Furthermore, we focus on personal blogs of everyday individuals, not of celebrities.

We chose the same blogs that we scrutinised in Cotoc, Radu, 2011: a Romanian blog: *Blogul lui Meșter* (<http://mirceamester.ro>), a French blog: <http://blog.jerome-soyer.fr>, and an English blog: *ultrabrilliant* (<http://ultrabrilliant.co.uk>). In our paper, we justified our choice of a Romanian blog by arguing that Romanians are very receptive to foreign languages, especially English, and this fact can be reflected in their discourse. We chose the French blog because French is a Romance language, like Romanian and the French blogger, unlike the popular belief that French people are more conservative with regards to their language, used in fact very many English words. We chose the English blog because English is the lingua franca of the Internet and the readers constitute a global audience (see Cotoc, Radu, 2011: 98).

Our choice of these particular blogs was justified by the fact that they constituted examples that highlight the theory that bloggers represent narrative identities, as they are writing their story and themselves. What is more, we decided to scrutinise the same three blogs in order to have a diachronic perspective on them

(2011 → 2013). We wanted to see how their discourse and their discursive identity changed over time: the Romanian blogger constructs the same representation, the French blog is no longer available and the English blog bears no resemblance in 2013 with what it was in 2011.

The Romanian Blogger is a male writer, an automobile journalist who writes this personal blog out of the need to write about things that would not be proper for a site about cars, as he also has a blog dedicated to cars. He says: “Trebuia să încep... Am de spus lucruri care nu-și au locul pe un blog auto” [I had to start... I have things to say which would not be suitable for an automobile blog]. Thus, in this blog, he writes about his interests, activities, hobbies and personal experiences and subjective opinions on everyday life events. His stories provide a window not only to the Romanian culture which constitutes his background, but also to himself. He always writes his impressions about the cultural events that he attended, but also about events he did not attend, but wants to share personal opinions about them. He also writes about his trips abroad, cars, food and soccer. In many of his posts he inserts personal details. For example, he mentions his girlfriend. He even writes a post which is dedicated to her: *#secrettweetmeet – Für Elise*. In this post, the blogger acknowledges the fact that Social Media provides a collaborative space in which users tell beautiful stories and are involved in useful projects:

#secrettweetmeet – Für Elise

Scris în Feb 24, 2011 de Mircea Meșter | [15 Comentarii](#) »

– *Băi, cum ar fi dacă am strânge bloggerii importanți pe care-i cunoaștem pentru a filma o versiune proprie a clipului Cele două cuvinte al celor de la Taxi?*

– *Foarte tare. Hai să facem.*

[...] 25 de blogeri au realizat un lucru mare. Și nu, nu e vorba de clipul pe care îl vedeți mai sus, ci de faptul că din Social Media pot să iasă povești frumoase, proiecte frumoase, dacă cei implicați înțeleg că lucrurile bune se fac împreună.

Fiecare am muncit pentru o fată care primește acest clip drept cadou cu ocazia Dragobetelui. Pentru că suntem români și pentru că e bine să ne

respectăm noi pe noi înșine. Cadoul meu merge, evident, înspre Eliza mea. Deci #secretweetmeet nu mai este secret, ci cadou. [...]

[– What do you think about gathering all the important bloggers that we know in order to videotape “The two words” of Taxi⁴⁴?

– Cool! Let’s do it!

[...] 25 bloggers have accomplished a huge thing. And no, it is not the video that you can see above, but the fact that Social Media makes possible beautiful stories, beautiful projects, if those involved understand that the good things are accomplished in teams.

Each of us worked hard for a girl who receives this video as a gift for Dragobete⁴⁵. Because we are Romanians and because it is good to respect ourselves. My gift is, obviously, for my Eliza. So, #secretweetmeet is no longer a secret, but a gift. [...]

Given the great variety of topics and the insertion of personal details, “all readers can identify themselves with his writing. Moreover, the readers can choose the narrative identity that suits them best because the blogger has created main categories” (Cotoc and Radu, 2011: 99): *Acasă* [Home], *Altele* [Other Things], *Cretinătăți* [Stupid Things], *Cultură și culte* [Culture and Cults], *D-ale gurii* [Food], *Fotbal* [Football], *La alții* [Others], *La noi* [Us], *Mașini* [Cars], *Pamflete* [Pamphlets], *Publicitate* [Advertising], *Românește* [The Romanian Way], *Superbități* [Awesome Stuff]. Even from the titles of these categories, the narrative identity/representation of the blogger reveals his Romanian cultural identity.

He is very creative and often ironical. He uses high standard Romanian. He even introduces a section in his blog entitled *About me* where he highlights how important “correct” Romanian is for him: “Îmi place să scriu și să vorbesc corect. Consider că limba română este primul lucru pe care trebuie să-l știe cineva pentru a putea să emită pretenții. De orice fel. Cataloghez oamenii în două grupuri: cei care vorbesc și scriu corect și cei care nu. Îi respect fără condiții pe primii, îi admir nelimitat pe cei care mă învață și m-au învățat să vorbesc și să scriu corect.” [I like to write and to talk correctly. I think Romanian is the first thing one must know

⁴⁴ A Romanian band

⁴⁵ A Romanian traditional holiday celebrating love. It is celebrated on the 24th of February

in order to put forward claims. Of any kind. I divide people in two groups: those who speak and write correctly and those who don't. I respect the first unconditionally, I admire with no limits those that teach and have taught me how to speak and write correctly]. In another part of his blog he introduces a comic that he created in order to express his disdain for those who do not use correct Romanian. He labels this comic *Grammar Nazi pe înțelesul tuturor* [Grammar Nazi for Everyone] and shows some images in which he embodies a powerful man and people who do not use correct Romanian are monsters. He is killing everyone who is using incorrect Romanian and, especially those who state that using a keyboard is a good excuse (“They used to say “Languages evolve” and you a + noun”, I’m typing with my thumbs, Gimme a break...”). He also writes a post entitled “Virgula ucide” [Comma kills] in which he explains the importance of comma giving concrete examples.

He alludes to the importance of correct Romanian and language in general in other posts as well. For instance, he writes in one of his posts about the fake seatbelts that are sold in Romania and he compares them to online writing situations: “Obiecte culturale de patrimoniu dedicate celor care sunt deranjați de centura de siguranță. Un soi de apostrof pe care-l folosesc cei care-s deranjați de cratimă” [Cultural heritage objects dedicated to those who are offended by the safety belt. A sort of apostrophe used by those who are offended by the dash]. Hence, he communicates the idea that the fake seatbelts are as useless and ridiculous as it is using an apostrophe instead of the dash, this writing situation being common online and in messages sent on the mobile phone.

In 2011, upon scrutinising his blog, we noticed that he always uses diacritics, unlike many Romanian bloggers. He has a rich vocabulary and he almost never makes grammar, typing and spelling mistakes. Furthermore, his 2011 blog posts are informal, they present objective facts, but they also reflect his opinions. They are catchy because he uses words and expressions which reflect different subcultures, humour and irony. For instance: *prafu' se alege...*, *bagă-te la un meci, fă o haltă în prima piață, să nu aibă vreo două doage la cap, metode mai mult sau mai puțin ortodoxe, Romtelefon îți înfundă gâtul cu telefoane, e nașpa*. He uses forms specific to the spoken language and short forms: *dom'le, ăsta, băi*. He also inserts

English words: *tweet-uri postate în timpul competiției; good one!; Provider de internet; device-uri; o mașină destul de capabilă în off-road; Welcome*” (see Cotoc, Radu, 2011: 99).

All the above characterise his discourse in his seven entries from 2013 (January–August) as well: *Centura neagră; Test în 1000 de caractere: Opel Adam; Lucruri peste care nu poți să treci niciodată; O secundă într-un august; Trei ipostaze; O Cutie din metal.*

We enumerate some of the ironical and humorous constructions/sentences/situations that we identified in his posts in 2013:

- *Omul nu înțelege ce vreau să spun, [...] continuă, schimonosindu-se a durere. Sufletească, probabil: – Haideți, vă rog... [He reproduces a dialog between him and a man who tries to convince him to buy a fake seatbelt: The man doesn't understand what I want to say [...] he continues in grief: Come on, please ...];*
- *Vrei portbagaj în care să-ți încapă girafa? Uită-l. [Do you want a rear boot in which to put a giraffe? Forget about it];*
- *Pentru că-i dedicată orașului, mașina e sculptată la interior pentru a-ți oferi locuri îndeajuns de numeroase pentru sticle, telefoane, farduri și alte elemente personale de care nu te poți desparte când te iei la hartă cu liniile de tramvai. [Because it is designed for the city, the car is sculpted on the inside in such a way as to offer you enough places for bottles, phones, make-up and other personal items without which you cannot do when you have to fight the tram lines];*
- *Încearcă să înțelegi că, atunci când colegu' a uitat să-ți paseze, deși erai cu poarta goală în față, n-a vrut să vâslească împotriva vântului, ci pur și simplu i s-a părut că aia e soluția perfectă atunci, în miliardimea aia de secundă în care s-a așezat pentru lovitura care ar fi trebuit să fie decisivă. [Try to understand that, when your colleague forgot to pass the ball, even though you were alone in front of the goalpost, he did not want to row against the wind, instead he really thought that was the perfect solution exactly in that moment, in that [invented word from billion] of a second in which the strike should have been decisive];*

- *La fiecare un milion de oameni care trăiesc în România (conțărani, cum îi numea plastic un comentator pe Automarket)[...] [At every one million people who live in Romania (**pejorative term**, as one Automarket reporter used to call them in a very suggestive way)].*

We also remarked that some of the 2013 posts have an oral style; the readers have the impression that he addresses them directly: *Știi, sunt tipul de șofer ... [You know, I am the type of driver ...]; Știi care-i partea proastă...? [Do you know what the bad side is?]; Știți ...? [second person, plural]; Vrei portbagaj în care să-ți încapă girafa? Uită-l. (question addressed to the readers and an imperative); Se întâmplă lucruri frumoase acolo și **trebuie să urmăriți** povestea noastră pentru a vedea ce înseamnă un proiect construit pentru cititorii săi [Beautiful things happen there and **you have to follow** our story in order to see what a project created for its readers means]; **Spuneți-mi că [...]; [Tell me that...]** and many others.*

He even uses interjections: *Uf!*

He uses very suggestive comparisons throughout the blog. They create powerful images in the minds of the readers: *un ITP luat pe șpagă este egalul vizei medicale pentru un sportiv cu o afecțiune la inimă care ia locul unei bombe cu ceas atunci când acesta aleargă [An ITP bought illegally is the same as the medical visa given to a sportsman who has problems with his heart which becomes a ticking bomb when this one runs]; dacă-i frânezi unuia în față pe autostradă, la peste 100 de kilometri pe oră, dai dovada unei inconștiențe vecină cu mirosirea tigăii pline cu ulei încins [if you use the break in front of another car on the highway, when having over 100 km/h, you prove to be as unconscious as you would be if you smelled a pan filled with hot oil] and so on.*

Some examples of English words that he inserts in his writing in 2013 are: ***Come on**, treci peste, nu fi copil!; După două luni și jumătate de competiție, îți vor rămâne în minte două sertare. Spune-le **foldere**, dacă vrei; Cum să alegi o cutie de chips-uri, fie ele și **out of this world**, în fața unei șepci din colecția Michael Schumacher? Cum?!; **Come on, get real!**; Mașinile fără poveste te pot ucide. Iar o mașină lovită de un stâlp la 100 de kilometri pe oră este departe de scânteile și de **glam-ul** pe care îl așیează atunci când o vezi într-un showroom [...]; Omul și-a depus permisul la poliție la 93 de ani și și-a văzut în tihnă*

ulterior de grădina lui și de barbecue; OK, nu avem autostrăzi [...]. We noticed that, in his 2013 posts, he writes the English words in italics most of the time, signaling them to the readers.

The English words are used by the blogger also when he replies to other users' comments: *Mulțumesc. Să fie spor, then* :). We also noticed that, unlike his blog entries, he doesn't always use the diacritics when he replies to other users' comments.

Upon scrutinising the comments received from the audience, in 2011, we argued that his blog is read by different kinds of users (2011: 99): Romanian VIPs, users who know him in person and users who don't, cultivated and uncultivated readers, people who support his ideas and people who comment against them. However, we add that they constitute a local audience as they are all Romanians. He replies to the audience and has a dialogue with his readers. In this way, he continues the narrative identity exposed in the posts and shapes it in new forms, changing it or clarifying it further in relation to the audience, making bloggers' online identity a two-way construction as well. Furthermore, the fact that he replies to the comments posted by the readers of the blog suggests the very nature of blogs: inherently and self-consciously responsive texts. Bloggers respond to other texts and comments and to their own uptakes: a blog comments on events in the world; it remarks upon the comments that readers leave in the "comments" section or on emails that readers send to the blogger (see Maurer, 2009: 138).

The second blog that we scrutinised in 2011 is the French blog <http://blog.jeromesoyer.fr>. However, in 2013, this blog does not exist anymore (*404 Not Found*). The reason why we mention this blog, even though it is no longer available, is to highlight the non-persistent content of online identity or the "temporal identity of the Internet" (Crystal, 2011: 12).

The French blog was also representative for the narrative identity on (personal) blogs because the blogger wrote about topics of general interest. He wrote about travel, music and concerts, technology, photography, films, events, books and other topics. The entries were organised chronologically, but the blogger also created categories: *on check, on écoute, on regarde, on sort, one shot*.

Like the Romanian blogger, he paid attention and tried to use correct French. However, he inserted many English words and expressions in his writing: "Du

street art, Moments les plus #fail, Moments les plus geek, Moment les plus VIP, Moment le plus Space Invader, Moment le plus shopping, Rouge, what else?! :), Du rush, En voiture open-sky, l'happy hour, le week-end" (Cotoc, Radu, 2011: 100). He used abbreviations: *ma prépa*, *y'a* [il y a], *sympa*. Unlike the Romanian blogger, he did not signal the use of English words by writing them in italics.

In 2011, we noticed a particularity of the cultural identity of the Romanian blogger and of the French blogger: many bloggers who wrote comments to Jerome's entries and who did not know Jerome in person used the personal pronoun "vous" when they addressed the blogger. By contrast, the users who wrote comments on the Romanian blogger's entries, even if they do not know the blogger in the physical world, did not use the politeness pronoun.

The third example that we scrutinise is the English blog <http://ultrabriliant.co.uk>. The blogger is from the United Kingdom.

In 2011, when we accessed the blog, the blogger presented himself/herself as a person and a writer. The blogger did not reveal the gender, providing a description and an acronym for the readers of the blog: "This is the personal blog of a writer who lives and works in Bath, England"; "Hello, I'm AK". We interpreted this fact as being a linguistic strategy from the part of the blogger to give all the readers the freedom to identify themselves with the writer (see Cotoc, Radu, 2011: 100). By contrast, in 2013, the blogger greets the readers, writes a sentence about himself in the third person, singular, in which he provides his real name, and then a second sentence in the first person, singular:

Hello

This is the personal website of Andy Kelly, a writer who lives and works in Bath, England.

I've written for, among others, Edge, PC Gamer, The Guardian, SFX, and Total Film.

In 2011, the blogger wrote about games, technology, films, music, books, Internet. He had only two categories, unlike the Romanian or the French blogger: *Diary* and *Misc*. Even if his blog was also a personal blog, he was not as playful as the other two bloggers. We noticed that his sense of humour and irony were

not pervasive elements in his discourse. His style of writing was more objective and not very catchy. He did not use many abbreviations and foreign words.

On this blog, the users who posted comments belonged to different cultural backgrounds: Americans, English, German, Danish, etc. In 2011, we considered this to be a consequence of the fact that English still is the language of the Internet and functions as a bridge language/lingua Franca for the users who have different mother tongues.

In 2011, the multimodal aspect of the blog was quite reduced: it did not have many videos, photos and colours.

In 2013, his blog is totally different from 2011. It contains an archive which provides only two possibilities to the readers: *October 2012*, *September 2012*. Each of these two months contains only one entry: *The Best of This American Life* and *Deux Ex: Building the Future*. He uses hyperlinks in the *October 2012* entry. The blogger also hyperlinks this blog to other digital spaces where he is a digi-participant by introducing the section *Links* and enumerating them: *Twitter*, *Tumblr*, *Steam*, *Last.fm*, *YouTube*. Thus, this blog stands as another example of the fact that online identity/representation is fluid and temporary, changing all the time. In this case, the blog changed from a personal blog into a blog which only provides some pieces of information but communicates very little about the blogger's identity.

The three blogs that we scrutinised followed the same pattern in 2011: they were personal blogs but there also was a central theme: the Romanian blog was focused on cars, the French blog on new technology and the English blog on games and Internet. This revealed their interests, hobbies and professional identity. However, the fact that the bloggers were mainly interested in these themes did not constitute a limitation and they tackled these subjects in such a way as to be interesting for a non-specialised audience and a specialised audience alike. Additionally, as we presented above, they tackled a great variety of subjects which were of general interest. Furthermore, these three blogs revealed the offline identity of the bloggers: mature, educated and creative people.

5.4. Acts of Multi-dimensional Identities on Facebook

5.4.1. Multi-dimensionality of Cyber-identity

Digi-participants express and expose only what they want on the Internet. We argue that identity in cyberspace is an artificial construct that might not coincide with the real life person. Moreover, even if on some SNSs, for example on Facebook, there is an overlap between the real world and the virtual world, cyber-identity is only part of or re-configuration of real identity. In cyberspace, everyone is what they **say** they are and it is on the basis of this mutual consent that a network of social interaction is constructed over time.

Cotrău states that for teenagers the paradigm identity-language usage develops on two equal levels that are constitutive of their identity: *personal identity* and *social identity*. For teenagers, personal and social identities are constructed, maintained and negotiated in everyday language (Cotrău, 2009: 85) and “it is mainly through language that teens identify with some, while distinguishing themselves from others” (Cotrău, 2009: 86). We argue that young adults are the same as teenagers in what concerns the relationship between language use and identity.

Both teenagers and young adults construct their social identity (individual identity and group identity) in cyberspace through digitised features and online (speech practices) that highlight: slang and Internet slangs, the invention of new words, the use of emoticons, innovative uses of already established words, etc. These speech practices reveal “the desire for social approval” (Edwards, 1985, apud Cotrău, 2008b: 94) and put “an emphasis upon positive in-group identity” (Ibidem) because young Netizens want to be like their peers and to belong to particular groups. Moreover, the electronic medium requires the usage of a different variety of language: “the cyberl@nguage”⁴⁶. Thus, these practices constitute an **act of accomodation** to the virtual group and to the digitised medium which, in its turn, reveals an act of identity.

We consider identity to be mainly a “linguistic phenomenon”: “manifesting identity, and even more importantly, interpreting identity, come to be seen as

⁴⁶ « la cyberl@ngue » (Déjond, 2002).

central to the very existence and functioning of language” (Joseph, 2004: Preface, x). We form conceptions of others based on the way they speak/write: “they [people] are always present in what they say and in the understanding they construct of what others say. Their identity inheres in their voice, spoken, written or signed” (Idem: 21). This also applies to “internet linguistic phenomenon”. Hence, when we speak about cyber-identity we are concerned with the interpretation of the digi-participants’ utterances in “the context of who is addressing whom in what situation” and with how digi-participants themselves are read, in the sense of the social and personal identities their listeners construct for them based on what they say and how they say it (see Joseph, 2004: 30). Hence, the way Net surfers use language does not reveal an identity that is separate from and prior to language. Instead, the way they use language is constitutive of social identity, of their persona (see Cotrău, 2008a: 34).

According to Hudson (see Hudson, 1991: 12), we are located in a **multi-dimensional space** because we play different roles at the same time: we can be students/colleagues/employees/employers, someone’s relative, someone’s girlfriend/boyfriend, etc. That is to say, the dimensions are defined by the groups we can identify in our society and we locate ourselves and others in multi-dimensional spaces based on different dimensions and parameters. We add that the roles we play in relation to the groups in our (inter)actions actualise the following dimensions of identity: individuality, personal identity, social identity (persona), sexual and gender identity, professional identity, cultural identity, ethnic and national identity. Moreover, we manifest multi-dimensional identities at the same time and different contexts actualise different identities.

The different dimensions in one’s life are represented by the linguistic differences: “Language is only one part of the picture, of course, but a particularly important part because it gives the speaker a very clearly structured set of symbols which he can use in locating himself in the world” (Hudson, 1991: 14).

Applying this to social network sites, we notice that, in a cyber-community like Facebook, there are two situations.

Firstly, these multi-dimensional spaces of digi-participants are sometimes configured simultaneously. This is the case of **the Facebook Profile page** (*Wall/*

Timeline, About section, Photos, Friends, More – Places, Music, Movies, TV shows, Books, Likes, Events, Groups, Notes). Each subsection is available to all Facebook users in one's list of friends, unless users choose to block them so that some users cannot see the content or they do not display particular subsections. For instance, when users post something on the Wall/Timeline, all the groups they can identify in their life (digital or real) are activated: their colleagues can see what they post, their friends, their family, etc. Users usually take into consideration this aspect, and they construct an acceptable representation for all these groups. However, there are situations when users ignore this aspect and post something which might not be appropriate from some users' point of view. This situation (The Facebook profile page) configures **the individual identity** of the users, how they want to be perceived by other users and what they want other users to know.

Secondly, young adults sometimes belong to particular forums or to particular groups of discussion on Facebook and they model their speech taking into consideration that of the others in the group they have joined, because that is the pattern that they wanted to use. Moreover, they also model their linguistic and non-linguistic behaviour according to the groups of users whom they interact with while posting statuses and comments, sharing videos/links/photos and clicking the like option. This situation configures the **group identity** of the individual.

We argue that both individual identity and group identity constitute social identities (personae): the representation constructed, re-constructed and de-constructed by the users themselves and by their interactants on a regular basis. The individual identity defines the digi-participants in terms of what applies only to them and the group identity defines them in terms of what they share with other digi-participants.

Our corpora consist of young users who belong to different cultural backgrounds in order to display the **glocality** and the Franca characteristic of the Facebook space. Facebook is local because users belong to particular cultural backgrounds, but at the same time, the Facebook space is global because users belong to international groups of discussion. They also have friends who have other friends and so on. Hence, everything is interconnected and international.

We scrutinise the way in which young digi-participants construct the two aspects of cyber-identity: narrative identity – the content they display online about

themselves and discursive identity – how they display that content. Both aspects configure individual and group identity (social identity).

We scrutinise cyber-identity in two sections:

In the first section (**5.4.2. Acts of Identity on the Facebook Profile**), we focus on **the individual identity** performed on the users' Facebook profile page: *Wall/Timeline* (comments, posts, statuses, etc.), *About section*, *Photos*, *Friends*, *More – Places*, *Music*, *Movies*, *TV shows*, *Books*, *Likes*, *Events*, *Groups*, *Notes*. We focus on an Australian female user (Barbara Jordon). She constructs a cyber-identity in her native language (English as a first language) and she is a very active Facebook user. We also focus on other Facebook users: a Guinean who lives in France – Yves Tounk (he uses French as the native language), a Romanian user – Ema Nan (she uses Romanian as the native language), etc. in order to have a broader picture of the online identity construction in this digital space.

This section is focused more on the content exposed: on **what** users choose to display about themselves and what they choose not to expose, rather than on **how** they express the content. Hence, in this part, the narrative identity is emphasised.

In the second section (**5.4.3. Online (Speech) Practices – Group Identity Nexus**), we focus on **group identity** created via interaction with other users from the personal list of Facebook friends and via participation in groups of discussion.

Firstly, we briefly scrutinise some cases in which young Romanian, Guinean and French Facebook users construct a glocal group identity via Romanian/French (L1) and English (L2): they use Romanian/French and English while interacting with their Facebook friends (they write/insert words, expressions and/or, sometimes, write entire threads in English).

Secondly, we scrutinise the expression/construction of a collective/group youth cyber-identity through the use of a cyber-language: French and English. In the case of French, we focus on Guinean users who construct a group cyber-identity in French as L1. In the case of English, we scrutinise an entertainment page on Facebook where users reveal a discursive group identity through small talk in English as a second language (L2). Hence, in this section, the discursive identity is emphasised.

Even if we talk about individual identity or group identity, we can adapt to social network sites, and to cyberspace in general, what Hudson says about face to face interactions: at each utterance users' discourse can be seen as an ACT OF IDENTITY in a multi-dimensional space (Cf. Hudson, 1991: 14).

5.4.2. Acts of Identity on the Facebook Profile

Facebook affordances permit users to express and construct their identity through various acts of identity on their Facebook profile. We extract examples posted in the time span May 2012 – August 2013. We also highlight how the affordances changed from May 2012 to August 2013.

5.4.2.1. Objective Information

In 2012, users displayed objective information about their social lives on the Facebook Wall or in the *info* section:

- the user **Barbara Jordon**: *Worked at Bridge Climb Sydney, Studied at University of Orléans, Lives in Sydney, Australia, From Sydney, Australia, Born on November 24, 1987;*
- the user **Yves Tounk**: *Studied at Université d'Orléans, Lives in Paris, France, From Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire, Born on January 18;*
- the user **Emma Nan**: *Studied at Facultatea de Litere, UBB, Lives in Vienna, Austria, From Baia Mare, Maramures, Romania;*
- [users] *Works at IBM 🌐 Studied at Universitatea BABEȘ-BOLYAI 🌐 Lives in Brno, Czech Republic 🌐 Knows Romanian, English, German, Norwegian 🌐 From Simeria, Hunedoara 🌐 Born on March 2;*
- **Rudy Bockstal** *is in a relationship with .../ is engaged etc.*

Of course, some users revealed more information than others. Some users provided an e-mail address as well. This highlights the idea that digital spaces are connected to other digital spaces (hyperlinks) and the idea that there isn't just one space for online identity construction, but several and all of them are interconnected. This assures interconnection between different parts of identity and signals fluidity as digi-participants' identity is different in every digital space.

In 2013, digi-participants no longer use the Facebook Wall, but the Timeline and, instead of the info section, they have the About Section⁴⁷:

• **Barbara Jordon:**

About

Work and Education:

BridgeClimb Sydney, Nomads Westend Backpackers – Sydney

University of Orléans Class of 2009 · Orléans, France

University of Sydney Class of 2008 · Sydney, Australia

Fort Street High School

Relationship:

[user]

In a Relationship

Family:

[female user]

[male user]

[female user]

Sister

Sister

Uncle⁴⁸

Living:

Sydney, Australia

Sydney, Australia

Current City

Hometown

Basic Information:

Birthday

November 24, 1987

Gender

Female

Relationship Status In a Relationship with [user]

Religious Views

indeed

Political Views

Other

Contact Information

Website [http address]

Networks University of Sydney, Université d'Orléans

Facebook [http address]

⁴⁷ The underlined words are hyperlinks on Facebook.

⁴⁸ In the *Family* section, the user is deliberately playing and joking about her family members. While we might expect to find out objective information about her family, we come across an impossible and illogical world created through linguistic means in which her sister is a male and her uncle a female. Thus, the informational value of this part is reduced to zero. However, the information introduced in the other sections is accurate.

5.4.2.2. The *Like* Section (2012)/The *More* Section (2013)

The information users include in the **Like** section/the **More** section of the Facebook profile reveals beats and pieces of their social identity and constitute acts of identity.

The **More** section on Barbara's Facebook profile looks like this:

Places: all the places she marked as visited (128), important life events (2), photos that she tagged in particular places (42), recent photos that she took in particular places (26);

Music: she marked 7 likes in this section (*Brothers Grim & The Blue Murders, Papa Pilko And The Binrats, Joe Alder Music, The Yellow Canvas, Shades Beneath, Hemina, Benadette Cajigal*);

Movies: she marked 9 likes in this section (*Amelie, Keep the Change You Filthy Animal, I Could Go on Singing, Star Wars Episode IV: A New Hope, Grease* (musical), *Groundhog Day, Back to the Future, Les 400 Coups*);

TV shows: 3 likes (*The Inbetweeners, For Shiz, I don't know how to turn my TV on*);

Books: 1 like (*I only read the Internet*);

Likes: Interests (10 likes: *Tea, Han Solo, Alto Clef, Prosody, Gchat, Northern Accents, Brass Instruments, Breakfast, Grammar, Beard*), Activities (7 likes: *Sleeping, Travel, Pressing the Snooze Button, Misspelling, Filling in Forms, Wishing I was in Europe, Westend Love machine*), Other likes (39 likes. For instance: *Alliance Française Sydney, BridgeClimb Sydney, Great Ocean Walk, Nomads Cairns Backpackers and Serpent Bar, Island Parasail, princess polly, Unicef Australia Young Ambassadors, TriPAdvisor, Ben Sherman Australia, Review Australia, STA Travel Australia, Thomas Sabo, Expedia.com.au, Backpacker Travel, BBM Magazine, IMAX, Sydney Aquarium, Travel Tribes, World Nomads, Bring Amelie Thibert Back to Australia, Charts PMS, Nomads Byron Bay, The hostel worker, Nomads Auckland Backpackers, Mad Travel Shop, I Love Sydney, Sydney University Wind Orchestra, Nomads Noosa Backpackers Hostel, H&M, HostelBookers.com, The Happy Coach Sydney*);

Events: 31 events that she attended and the dates when they took place (birthdays, parties, gatherings, concerts);

Groups: she joins 6 Facebook open groups of discussion (*Sydney University Linguistics Society, Nick Riemer Appreciation Society, Band Camp: Fort Street Chapter, Donate an hour for the Queensland flood victims, French Soc-University of Sydney, Fort Street*);

Notes: users can post anything they like (small pieces of written articles, poetry, thoughts, opinions, etc.). Usually, notes are longer than statuses. Barbara has posted eight notes and received feedback from the Facebook audience:

Note 1: *Weirdest last 21 wall posters I've ever had* (October 28, 2009);

Note 2: *25 things i once said when refering to myself* (February 11, 2009);

Note 3: *On Behalf of Bridie* (June 21, 2008);

Note 4: *Last 21 since exams are OVERRRRRRR* (June 18, 2008);

Note 5: *Last 21 People – If Bernz keeps doing them I'll have to too* (January 11, 2008);

Note 6: *I have an essay due in 6 hours worth 55%* (November 5, 2007);

Note 7: *i know everyone is over this but i promised i'd do another one* (June 21, 2007);

Note 8: *that note game thing which is actually rather awesome* (May 20, 2007).

In these notes, she writes random things about herself and about her friends.

We also present the **More** section of Ema Nan. We notice that she reveals more information in some parts and less in others in comparison with Barbara Jordan:

Places: all the places she marked as visited (6), important life events (2);

Music: she marked 120 likes in this section. For example: *Ganesha Trio, Archive, Waldeck, Otros Aires, Electric Castel Festival, Kings of Convenience – KOC, Chairlift, Theory of Mind, Kasabian, Noah and The Whale, Goo Goo Dolls, Weezer, Kate Nash, Regina Spektor, Ben Harper, New York Phillharmonic, Itzhak Perlman, Queen, Red Hot Chili Peppers, Nicole Esposito Flutist, Mario Caroli, Ska-p Official, Jazzybirds, Arcadia String Quartet, Florence and the Machine, Pink Martini, Tchaikovsky, Debussy, Beethoven, Brahms, The Beatles, Norah Jones, Travis, KUMM, byron, Grimus, The Mono Jacks, Muse, Elbow, Coldplay, etc.;*

Movies: 7 likes (*Poziția Copilului, Mary Shelley's Frankenstein, Definitely Maybe, The Orphanage, The Rite, Pathology, Mona Lisa Smile*);

TV shows: 4 likes (*Radio Guerrila, Dexter, The Ellen DeGeneres Show, Lie to Me*);

Books: 2 likes (*Montessori at Home Book, almanahe.mic*);

Likes: Restaurants (4 likes: *Casa Boema, Doamna T, BRICKS, Indigo*); Activities (2 likes: *Sending Gifts, Flute*); Athletes (1 like: *Usain Bolt*), Clothing (1 like: *RebelsMarket Steampunk & Victorian*); Other Likes (191 likes. For example: *Pionp woodworks, I Love Sighișoara, Restaurant DaVinci, wizzair, Melk, Critical Mass Baia Mare, IKEA Foundation, Romania seen through camera lens, Colours of Cluj, Team for Youth Association, Pizzeria D'Autore, ClipFlair, English is Fun, I love Travel, Upworthy, Chicago, Illinois, Terapia Asistata de Animale, Zilele Cluj-Napoca, Cinema Florin Piersic, The Levante Laudon, Belvedere Museum, Austria, Gradina Boema, Gols, Jamaica Olympics, Ich Liebe Deutsch, 50 Shades of Sheldon, Nicole Kidman, Aoro, IMDb, YouTube, dexonline, Wiener Rathaus, Poland, Prague, PhD Jokes, Carturesti, Nikonisti, Disney, Echinox, Student Sound etc.*);

Events: 36 events attended from October 2010-July 2013 (concerts, theatre performances);

Groups: she joins five open groups (*Universitatea Babeș-Bolyai, Asociația Studenților Români din Austria, Asociația Studenților Români din Austria, Balogh Zalán missing, Exchange @ ESN Uni Wien Spring 2012*);

Notes: Ema Nan has no notes;

SoundCloud: Likes (*Surrealistic collage. Live at Best of Beer Fest, Parcul Tineretului, 14 Jun. 2013*), Most Listened to (28 virtual communities of bands, artists, podcasts).

By contrast, the **Like** section for the Romanian user Ema Nan looked like this in 2012:

Sports:

Favourite Athlete: Usain Bolt

Arts and Entertainment:

Music: byron, Grimus, Kumm, The Mono Jacks, Damien Rice, Muse [60 others]

Movies:

Mona Lisa Smile, Pathology, Definetly, Maybe, The Rite, The Orphanage

Television:

Lie to Me

Activities and Interests

Activities: *Flute, Sending Gifts*

Other: *Miyazawa Flutes, Echinox, Student Sound, I admit it! I am a gmail addict, Butterfinger, Fender Guitar, Butterflies, Heath Ledger, Lena Headey, 17 februarie, FORUM GITARRE WIEN, bezzerrwizzer, Edward Aninaru Photography, Irish Pub O'Beer, Liceul de Arta Baia Mare and 31 more*

Given the amount of information Ema Nan added in one year, we witness again an identity development in time as new information is added on a regular basis. This applies to Barbara and to other active Facebook users as well.

Users do not look at their own **More** section in order to check whether their interests have changed or not and many pieces of information might no longer be valid for the users, in the offline world. Nonetheless, the information exposed is valid in the digital space, for the Netizens/the representations they fabricated in the online world. Hence, the offline identity is transformed in the digital space through the participants' online activity (construction prevails).

The More section will always be a draft, always in progress as users continuously update their preferences, interests, hobbies, activities, events attended and others.

5.4.2.3. Statements/Short Descriptions

Digi-participants can write statements about their personal identity or short descriptions about themselves. This constitutes another act of identity on Facebook. In 2013, this is no longer a common digital practice; users simply select from the available options and there is no need to describe themselves. Some examples of statements/short descriptions are:

Barbara: *I only read the Internet* (posted by Barbara in the section: *Books*);
Indeed (posted by Barbara in the section Religious views);

Other users posted descriptions like:

- *Intelligente e di spiccato intuito! Gelosa.. tanto gelosa di chi tieni sotto la tua ala.. Adori quando tutto ti va a genio, clima e temperatura compresi? Una serata lungo mare ad ascoltare musica rilassante..:) “galusca esoterica”* (Romanian Female users who lives in Romania);
- *I'm loyal. I try to help the others, but I'm really annoying some times* (in the *about* section, Spanish young user);
- *If I stopped lying, I'd just disappoint you!* [[link to the user's personal blog](#)] (female Romanian young user who lives in Dublin, Ireland);
- *It's just me Mary!* (in the section *about Mary*);
- *site under construction* (Religious views) (Romanian young adult who lives in Berlin);
- *I do believe... but it's hard to explain exactly what* (Religious views) (Spanish young adult who lives in South Hampton, England);
- *I'm the worship leader at our church and I teach music at our church preschool. I have 2 sweet little boys, and we're expecting a baby girl at the beginning of June. :-)* (in the section *about* section) (female adult from Pennsylvania);
- *i am nice funny and i love to be energetic i do some sports like cheerleading gymnastics and rifle i love playing softball basketball and volleyball with my family i love to be around my friends and spend time with them as much as possible i wish to be a doctor or and i cant wait to comepete in my showcase next year :D im irish german italian and indian i love my papillion jasper.* (highschool English female student from Washington, Pennsylvania)

5.4.2.4. Favourite Quotations

Some digi-participants post their favourite quotations on their Facebook profile. Knowing them in person as well, we state that this constitutes an act of identity as well because they reveal something about their view on life/how they would like to live and/or their personality. Some examples are:

- User 1 (German female user):
Wer nach oben will, muss unten anfangen!
Geht nicht, gibts nicht! / Everything is possible!

Erkenne, wo du stehst, wo du hinwillst. Mach deinen Plan.

Und dann geh!

Selbstvertrauen ist die erste Voraussetzung für große Vorhaben!

Unsere größte Schwäche liegt im Aufgeben. Der sicherste Weg zum Erfolg ist immer, es doch noch einmal zu versuchen! (positive message about never giving up and being self-confident)

- User 2 (Romanian female user): *today I miss you... tomorrow I won't*

- User 3 (Romanian female user):

[] :)

"When words lose their integrity so do the ideas they express." (The Literary Encyclopedia)

"What is essential is invisible to the eye." (Antoine de Saint-Exupéry)

"Ce qui embellit le désert, dit le petit prince, c'est qu'il cache un puits quelque part..." (Antoine de Saint-Exupéry) [what embellishes the desert, said the little prince, is that it hides a well somewhere]

"God's last name is not 'Dammit'." (Unknown author)

"You gain strength, courage, and confidence by every experience in which you really stop to look fear in the face. You must do the thing which you think you cannot do." (Eleanor Roosevelt)

"To dare is to lose one's footing momentarily. To not dare is to lose oneself." (S. Kierkegaard)

- User 4 (Romanian female user who lives in the United States): *Love is sacrifice!*

- User 5 (Romanian female user):

"The supreme art of war is to subdue the enemy without fighting."

"Engage people with what they expect; it is what they are able to discern and confirms their projections."

"A human being should be able to change a diaper, plan an invasion, butcher a hog, design a building, conn a ship, write a sonnet, balance accounts, build a wall, set a bone, comfort the dying, take orders, give orders, cooperate, act alone, solve equations, analyze a new problem, pitch manure, program a computer, cook a tasty meal, fight efficiently, die gallantly. Specialization is for insects."

- User 6 (Romanian female user):
We are not permitted to choose the frame of our destiny, but what we put into it is ours...
- User 7 (Romanian male user): *Always forgive your enemies; nothing annoys them so much.*

5.4.2.5. Statuses

Another online act of identity is represented by the statuses posted by digi-participants on the Facebook Wall/Timeline. They reveal many pieces of information about their identity: gender, occupation, opinions, beliefs, interests, hobbies, group of friends, etc. Even if the statuses are posted by the users themselves, some of them are written in the 1st person singular, while others are written at the 3rd person, singular.

We provide a selection of **Barbara**'s statuses from 2010 until August 2013 in Annex 21. Some examples (we write between brackets what we could infer from each status):

- *cannot believe she owns two different kinds of trombones and is not sure if she should be proud or ashamed* (January 10, 2010) (she plays a musical instrument);
- *To Mr Yalichev, remember when I was 12 and you gave us a Latin test where one of the questions relied upon us knowing the meaning of the English word "ancillary"? Well, it's been 10 years since then, and I just encountered the word for the second time in my entire life. It was in Truth and Method by Gadamer. The first time was in that test. I want a retake.* (May 12, 2010) (she reads philosophy);
- *sometimes i imagine a parallel universe in which i save my endnote library on my usb, i sleep the right amount, i do things before the day they are due, and unicorns exist.* (May 14, 2010) (she usually doesn't get enough sleep, she has difficulty in meeting deadlines);
- *i cant move for all the brass instruments in my bedroom* (June 1, 2010) (she has many brass instruments);

Some of **Yves'** statuses include:

- *No comment!!! En tt cas, j'espère que tous les noirs et tous ceux qui sont contre le racisme boycotteront tout ce qui est guerlain (October 20, 2010)* [No comment!!! Anyways, I hope that all the black people and all those who are against racism will boycott everything that is guerlain] (user who fights against racism);
- *Nostalgique!!! Pense aux samedis soir en famille devant la TV à regarder PARADE: pour ceux qui ne connaissent ou ki s'en rapelle plus c'est une émission de variétés guinéennes :-)! October 23, 2010 at 9.55 pm* [nostalgic!!! He thinks about Saturday evenings with his family, in front of TV, watching PARADE: for those who do not know it or who do not remember it anymore, it is a Guinean show] (a young Guinean adult who doesn't live with his family anymore);
- *Je veux jouer les matchs de championnat au stade Maracana, pour les matchs amicaux Le stade Mailhan d'Arles-Avignon, pour les derbys rien de mieux que le stade de Stamford Bridge, et je rêve de jouer le dernier match de ma carrière au stade d' Anfield Road (November 24, 2010)* (the user is a football player);
- *The storm is over, now i can see the sunshine...(things are getting better in his life);*
- *A ceux qui ont essayé de m'appeler, mon tél portable est décédé ce matin, je serai joignable normalement que demain en fin de journée! Pour toute urgence, inbox ou mon mail perso (October 27, 2011)* [those of you who tried to call me, my phone died this morning, I will be reachable only tomorrow by the end of the day! If it cannot wait, inbox or my mail];
- *Bonne et heureuse année à tous, que Dieu vous accorde sa miséricorde. Je vous aime!!! (December 31, 2011)* [Happy New Year everyone. May God be good to you. I love you!!!];

Statuses posted by **other users** are:

- *We worry because we think we can solve our problems...after all, we can't, only God can!* (we infer that this user is a religious person);

- “*We are not satisfied with real life; we want to live some imaginary life in the eyes of other people and to seem different from what we actually are*”;
- “*We all live under the same sky, but we don't all have the same horizon*” (Konrad Adenauer) (Romanian user);
- *just found a guy dangling out of the bathroom window brandishing a mop at the tree....! gotta love it when your younger brother has a house party;*

Many users would post statuses on their Facebook Wall almost daily in 2010 and 2011. In 2012, they did not post so much. In 2013, users started posting everything on their Timeline: what they are doing, what they are eating, where they are going on holiday.

5.4.2.6. Visual and Audiovisual Material

We mention that digi-participants post many visual and audiovisual materials in 2012 and 2013: advertisements, funny pictures and images. Users announce the Facebook community to what events they participated or want to participate. For instance: *Yves went to CONCERT YOUSSOUPHA + SEFYU + SIX MILES (Iere Partie) at La Rodia View · Join · March 28 at 11:44am*. Users also post many YouTube videos and pieces of news, links to interesting articles and websites, etc.

We argue that every visual/audiovisual post is a statement about their identity because it reflects something about their interest, preferences, free and/or work time. Hence, like in the case of statuses, we can make the same inferences from their posts: gender, occupation, ideas, free time, etc. For instance, a person who listens to pop music is more likely to post a pop song he/she enjoys on the Facebook Wall/Timeline, rather than a rock song.

Users construct their own identity when they post something on their own Wall/Timeline, but they construct others' identity as well when they post something on their Walls/Timelines. Identity is after all a two-way construction. For instance, observing three visual materials and one audiovisual material and the adjacent comments on Yves' Wall in 2012 (**Annex 22**), we could infer that:

- a. he is a football player and he will play a match on a specific day and a specific place, together with other people;
- b. he likes to watch basketball and football;

- c. he is part of a particular subculture (the hip-hop subculture);
- d. he leaves far away from his family. Knowing Yves in person as well, we mention that these pieces of information are part of his offline social identity.

5.4.2.7. Comments and Small Talk

Facebook users post comments on statuses and pictures and they receive other users' replies. These comments are very often followed by long discussions and we come across long threads of messages (series of comments). Hence, many Facebook users display a lot of small talk conversations on their Walls/Timeline.

They very often participate in conversation threads only to take part in socialising interactions with other users. For example:

George Terrill: *how come had to hear you were seeing someone from someone else! highly dissapointed!*

Barbara: *Sorry it's only a recent occurrence. But now that youve put it on my facebook wall I guess it's official..* (April 8, 2012 at 5:46am)

Interestingly, the Facebook Wall/Timeline sometimes displays conversations to which the Facebook users to whom the Wall/Timeline belongs do not participate. Yves's comment is relevant in this respect:

Yves: *Je vois kon utilise mon mur pdt que je suis pas là pr d' reglement d' compte :-)* October 10, 2010 at 7:33am · Like.

[I see people use my Wall when I am not online in order to solve problems]

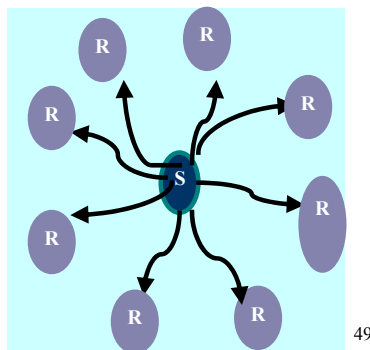
5.4.3. Online (Speech) Practices – Group Identity Nexus

Some users are active Facebook users and, in this way, they become digi-participants. As we have seen, they have a particular list of friends and they interact with some/all of them. They might even join public/closed/open groups on Facebook. In all these cases, they belong to local groups of digi-participants who form a speech community. These speech communities can be understood in the following ways:

- “a group of people who interact by means of speech” (Leonard Bloomfield, 1933, apud Cherry, 1988, apud Hudson , 1991: 25);

- “a group of people who *feel* themselves to be a community in some sense, rather than a group which only the linguist and outsider could know about” (see Dell Hymes, 1972 and Halliday, 1972, apud Hudson, 1991: 27);
- “a community sharing rules for the conduct and interpretation of speech, and rules for the interpretation of at least one linguistic variety. Both conditions are necessary” (Hymes, 2005: 6).

Digi-participants on Facebook form a speech community because they share the same rules for interpreting and using the cyber-language variety. They are all familiar with the online (speech) practices and the vast majority of users adopt these practices with the purpose of forming a group identity. Thus, they organise their linguistic actions so that they are appropriate to the Internet communicative situation in which they are involved. This shows that they follow a *linguistic etiquette* (in our case the *Linguistic Netiquette*, Marcoccia, 1999) within the speech community of Facebook (see Kasper, 2005: 58). Furthermore, we could also use the concept of speech network of Facebook because the social network site consists of “the specific linkages of persons through shared varieties and speaking rules across communities” (Hymes, 2005: 6–7). Hence, the Facebook speech community/speech network does not constitute a network in which each member has ties with other members of the network. That is to say, the Facebook speech network is not a **closed social network**. It does not look like the image bellow:



On the contrary, the Facebook speech network is an **open social network**, one in which “the number of reciprocal ties in the network is low: not everyone

⁴⁹ S stands for sender(s) and R stands for recipients

knows everyone else” (Montgomery, 1995: 156–157). This aspect is announced through the iconic code by the Facebook homepage



Within the Facebook open social network, digi-participants’ (group) discursive identities are recognised by the digitised features used and their online (speech) practices.

5.4.3.1. Glocal Identity

Young adults often use English as a second language (L2) when interacting with other Facebook users with whom they share the first mother tongue. They write/insert words, expressions and/or, sometimes, entire threads in English. We have scrutinised the online productions of Romanian users, Guinean users and French users in order to see how they use English online.

In the case of French, the mixture of French and English has been coined as “Frenglish” (Apfelbaum, 2002: 122).

The use of English in cyberspace represents a sign of integration into a global network and of constructing an identity in a second language, resulting in a L2 glocal identity, since they also preserve their specificity.

5.4.3.1.1. Guinean Digi-participants

We have scrutinised the posts and comments of the Guinean digi-participants who are Facebook friends of Yves. They sometimes insert English words in their posts. We encountered productions in “Frenglish” like the following:

- *UN VERY **BIG** MERCI POUR LE TRAVAIL DE CET APREM, tu ne peux pas imaginer à quelle vitesse nous avons avancé, merci pour le coaching et le courage que tu me donnes !!!*
- *A: sa va **mister** tounk?*
*B: ouai, je te **inbox!*** In this example, the English noun *Inbox* is used as verb. Moreover, grammatically correct, he would have to write *Je t'inbox*, but he doesn't use « la liaison ». In this way, he highlights the use of the English word;
- *Sera à ORLINZ ce **wkd**, mais j'ai pas de tél donc **inbox** !!!!!*
- ***happy belated bday!** ke du bonheur enfoiré!!!!!!*
- *haooy **bday** mon poumon!!ke du bonheur!!**kisses***
- *bon anniv le **boss** :)*
- *c'est **cool** ca!!*
- *A: Joyeux annif **boy**, **sorry** pour le retard.*
*B: Merci **Boyyyy***
- *hei **boy!!!** ♥*
- *Jesper ke ta bien pu en profite en tt kas!!! Aller en se capte biento!!! **Peace bro***
- *Thanks **bro**, alor le projet la il tient ou il tient ?*
- ***bro** tas trop chanG,on doit **speak**.....[...] **take care** et f 6gn di6 la kon discute longument!!**send** tn num en **inbox** tip*
- *yves **call** moi quand ton forfait sera là;*
- *tcho **bye bye** yves*
plein de bisous partout.
En souvenir de nos franches rigolades.
Ps pense à apprendre à nager;
- ✓ *Salut yves ça fait un **bye!!!** J'espère que tu vas bien!!!*
- ✓ *merci, je me passerai bien de ce modele, **blood brother***
- ✓ *Hello Yves, **sorry sorry** pr l'autre fs, mais ça n'est que partie remise. Je suppose que tu reviendras début Août, alors à très bientôt!!! Bisous!*
- ✓ *meeeeeeeeerde k-rote **i miiïss u** !!!!! c dingue!*
- ✓ *joyeux anniversaire **mister!** profite bien de ta journée*
- ✓ *Bon aniv **paycheck** plein de bone choz mon negro*
- ✓ *Joyeux anniversaire **man** !! **best wishes**.....*

- ✓ *Yves le gentleman*
- ✓ *Et moi looll* [laughing out loud]. The French Internet slang would be *mdr* – je meurs de rire;
- ✓ *Yoo Patttt g plu ton num, send le moi*
- ✓ *mon poumon lol big up*

5.4.3.1.2. French Digi-participants

Upon scrutinising the posts of young French users, we noticed that they sometimes use “Frenglish” as well:

- *Hey buddy what's up? alors comment tu vas? donne des petites nouvelles!!!!* (2010)
- *Héhé on a eu droit à un carnaval (bon pas aussi impressionnant que ton nouvel an chinois mais quand meme!) Je te faire looker les photos!* In this example, the English verb *look* is used with a French ending specific for the first group of French verbs: *regarder*) (2010)
- *j'ai une soiree la ba avant de commencer le trip haha* (2011)
- *content de moi pour mon premier tounoi finir a la table final avec un lot sur un bad beat en plus avis au amateur* (2011)
- *man c'est trop cool* ^ ^
- *Plop; ça y es, tu es enfin vieux, je commençais à me dire que c'était pas très juste ce qui m'arrivais ;), big up et joyeux anniversaire man* :) (2011)
- *Nope, je suis rentré il y a un moment, je travail vers Montargis pour l'instant, en attendant de reprendre mes études sur Tours ;), cool que tu sois sur Paris, tu fais quoi ? Encore aux études ou tu travailles ? ça se passe bien ?* (2011)
- *Je ne veux pas m'avancer mais pour la place du concert de Dead Can Dance, ça devrait le faire ;)* *I'll keep you posted!* (December 4, 2012)
- *Bah il suffît de suivre mes infos, j'ai publié sur ce festival, j'étais dans le listing des artistes*
C'était à Paris, checker les jardins du ruisseau pour plus d'info
Et merci à eux pour l'accueil exceptionnel et l'état d'esprit de première classe, big up à [user] (2012) In this example the English verb *check* is used with the French ending –er.

Maia Pop (Female user):

- ✓ *punct. si de la capat? Nope! Happy thoughts! In curand.* (2010);
- ✓ *I might have the flu, but the flu will not have me. I'm kicking its butt right now!* (2010);
- ✓ *I love my newly reindeerred car!* (2010);
- ✓ *About dancing: I did that today, in my car. I was waiting for the red light to turn green and there was a cheery song on the radio and I was 'dancing' with my hands on the wheel and singing the lyrics. And when I looked to my left, there was another woman in another car, from BG (that could be Bulgaria or Belgium? Have no idea) – she was alone and doing the same thing. it felt so good.* (2010);
- ✓ *And once again... habemus Christmas tree in front of the dorm!*
(thanks to [user], [user], [user], [name], [name] si [name] + [user] pentru prelungitorul extra + [user] + colegul de camera + vecina de la 1, pentru accesul semi-autorizat pe balcon! :P) (2011);
- ✓ *“Life is what happens to you while you're busy making other plans”...* (2011);
- ✓ *Temeswar: going once, going twice... Going thrice. nu-mi vine sa plec de aici...* (2011);
- ✓ *'Sleep is my drug, my bed is my dealer and my alarm clock is the police'...* (2012);
- ✓ *Whatever you want to change about yourself, now is the time to do it. Add value to who you are and to who you might want to become. Avoid procrastination, go for exploration. iLike.* (2013)

Other users:

- ✓ **le sky is absolutely gorgeous – 🥰feeling special.* (2013)
 - ✓ *Deci la Observator. Sa vedem cu ploaia asta de meteori. Guess what? E INCHIS!!! Adica, Tre sa muncim si pentru dorintele astea:)* (2013)
 - ✓ *Im not even going to get mad anymore; Im just going to expect the lowest from the people I thought the highest of.* (2013)
- Conversations between/among Romanian users:
- ✓ *A: Happy Birthday! B: Thanks a bunch!*

- ✓ [user A]: *oau....cu adevarat superb* July 19 2013
 [user B]: ***This could be the cover for National Geographic magazine or the template of a postcard*** July 23 2013
 [user C]: *eu n-as mai fi venit de acolo* July 23 2013
- ✓ [user A]: *voi ati terminat deja cu **You Know What ??*** July 11 2013
 [user B]: *Simt prezența apozitiei, din nou...* August 11 at 12:13am · Unlike · 2
 [user A]: *shhss nu-i spunem pe nume* August 11 at 12:13am · Unlike · 1
 [user C]: *Eu n-am gătat cu ...* August 11 at 12:14am · Like
 [user A]: *nici pe mine nu ma lasa...* August 11 at 12:15am · Unlike · 1
 [user A]: ***I need a good song to cheer me up*** August 11 at 12:15am · Like · 1
 [user A]: *[user D] **play that piano good!*** August 11 at 12:16am · Like
 [user D]: *Haha! Fiți atenți! Piesa asta ne-o ales pe noi :) [[http address](#)]*
- ✓ User A posts the following status to Maia Pop's Wall/Timeline:
Hello you new timeline user!!!! Just popping by to wish you a belated happy new year :)) with lots of happy momentos to post on your timeline and well...anywhere else. Soo...sending you tons of good wishes from across the street and a drop of good cheer for the entire year! Me January 12, 2012
 Maia Pop: *'ello there, you pretty lady! Your wishes are still valid, the year's still new, technically speaking it's not even mid-January yet , so you're right on time! thank you for the cheer and good wishes, will carry some with me each day during the entire year! ...and a happy 2012, indeed, will be, a little bird whispered to me. (aah... this is poetry). Poetic thoughts for your 2012 as well!*
 Me, myself and [user's B name] January 12, 2012
- Users sometimes posts photos and write descriptions of them using English: *Spa popsicle (lemonade and cucumber). Awesome after morning jog treat!; Morning!, Room with a view, Happy happy Joy joy, My sweet little cupcake – with [user], Happy B`day precioussss:*.*:*, Good friends are for life, Day-dreaming, i SO MUCH miss a party on the beach, Pijamas party with my girls..welcome home Adina!:* , In the middle of the road.. (Before), Timeless :), My Venice, In the jungle, the mighty jungle... Roxana won the fight, Nothing*

unusual, Probably the best year of my life ... Never to come back again, unfortunately ... etc.

Users also label their albums of photos on Facebook in English. For example:

Female user 1: *Concediu 2010, **I and He**, O zi (de) mai...specială ;), VIVA MEXICO!!!, **Happy Halloween!!! ;), Craciun & Rev 2012 :p, Ski Austria 2012, Faschingzeit & Karneval 2012, Bienno, Italia 2012, Prin RO..... :D, 21.07.2012 ... O zi superba!, Cei mai scumpi..., U.A.E. Revelion 2013, **Lady Transilvania 2012, The job that I love.... Make-up!!!, Pozele mele preferate ;)*****;

Female user 2: ***Graduation...**, **roadtrip(s)**, **sighii**, **21.**, **fishy!**, **Vive..**, **random.**;*

Female user 3: *summer 2010:d, Crazy HALLOWEEN >:)))*, *photoshooting, Budapest & VIENNA !!, Perfect Winter Holiday :P, post-birthday party :D, Timisoara, SUMMER '11, THE wedding :P, ERASMUS (la vie d'une etudiante en Nancy), Moments...,Greek escapade;*

Female user 4: ***Once upon a time...**, **Happy Birthday Larisa!!**, Soare, zile si nopti de Vama!!, Copilaria-in tablourile lui Zolan!, **Me&My Girls&co**, Cabana **Party!**, Practica-Geografie, Noaptea Muzeelor..Noapte de poveste!, Defilareeeee!!!Hunieeee!!!La multi ani piticot!!, **Oldies but goldies :P, ♥ ♥♥, A fost o vremea...., Me, Myself and I;***

Maia Pop's albums are labeled: *Institute for Cultural Diplomacy – Febr. 2009, Berlin, gemini reloaded, My first date with Vienna went well!, Belgium was kind... :);*

Male user 1: ***Beautiful cities & its treasures, Italy 2010, Orsova For All Seasons, Halloween Party, stuff**, 20 decembrie 2010, Prietenii mei dinozaurii, Iarna, **Alegria y Carnaval @ the Flying Circus :P**, O dupa-masa la Hodos-Bodrog, Zilele Cluj-Napoca, **Budapest;***

Male user 2: *Balea, **frosty morning view**, minitinerar, Adopta un proscris din parcul de agrement Obor., spain, vadu, Patarlagele, vama mai pustie ...cum mi-ar placea sa fie ..., **Primitive Entertainment, art i lke**, Viitura si fulger globular spre Sfinx, Zambete pentru cei mici si puternici !!, **let's not go xtreme....but think about it ...**, :) :/ :(, Garana Jazz Fest 2012, **places and faces....., fairy** pentru vase pentru copii samd, **old sweet***

home, southern villages, Taramul lui Patrocle, Places and faces II, Speed dog boarding ... testies :) 'n other toys.

Male user 3: *Cazari Camin V – 2011, Maple Country, London baby!, I Mai Muncitoresc, Festivitatea Absolventului, Cazari Camin V – 2012, Work, Miscellaneous, Castelul Electric.*

5.4.3.2. Cyber-Group Identity

All young users who interact on online social networks also establish a collective/group youth cyber-identity through the use of a particular cyber-language: English/French/Romanian, etc. cyber-language.

The cyber-language is reflected in the young digi-participants' discourses on the Facebook platform because their texts contain the digitised features and the online practices that we mentioned in chapter II (for instance: abbreviations, omissions of vowels, exaggerate use of spelling and punctuations, lack of punctuation marks, lower-case letters, looser constructions, use of emoticons and special symbols). These digitised features and the online practices are known as the international supra-language (see Chardenet, 2004: 61).

Regardless of the international supra-language, each language (English, French, German, Romanian, Spanish etc.) constitutes a different cyber-variety (see Collot and Belmore 1996).

5.4.3.2.1. Guineans' Cyber-French

We examined the discourses produced by Yves online and also the posts and comments he receives from other Guinean users.

Annex 23 contains a selection of Yves's statuses and threads of conversation triggered by these statuses. We analyse only the statuses he posted. We did not include the posts written by other users on his Wall/Timeline, the photo descriptions and comments or the descriptions he writes when he posts links or videos. The time span chosen is 2010–2013. We made this selection because the texts selected reveal the same characteristics as the entire amount of posts on his Timeline. Moreover, we chose the statuses posted by Yves and the conversations triggered by these statuses because we noticed that he writes many of his statuses in a language that does not contain the “digitised” features mentioned, but when

he comments to other users' comments or to his own statuses, he very often uses cyber-French, that is to say, his texts often contain so many digitised features that at a first glance his texts give the impression of reading an encoded message. This constitutes an online practice through which he constructs a cyber-group identity with other digi-participants who use the same digitised features.

We analyse some of his statuses and comments below. All the characteristics identified apply to the other comments as well (his and other Guinean users alike).

We present some of his statuses. He usually writes them in standard French, using the French accents, avoiding abbreviations and omission of vowels or consonants. However, he also produces statuses in which these features appear. Furthermore, we sometimes notice speech language features that we would not normally encounter in writing (exaggerate spelling and punctuation marks, interjections – in order to render the para-verbal) and typos/spelling mistakes. Moreover, some of his statuses are written in the third person, singular, which is a common online practice:

➤ **Statuses from 2010:**

Status 1: *Yves Tounk, January 2, 2010: Bonne année à tous... Je vous aime et j'ai pas honte de le dire!!! Pour cette année soyons tolérant les uns envers les autres... (standard French);*

Status 2: *Yves Tounk, January 4, 2010: Être Ecolo, c'est devenir Econom... Alors si vous le faites pas pour la planète et ses habitants alors faites-le pour votre porte-monnaie (standard French);*

Status 3: *Yves Tounk, February 15, 2010: En mode BABYSITTER pour 3 jours.... Faire biberon, changer couches, endormir, jouer.... pour le moment c génial :)). He uses the word BABYSITTER (capital letters and repetition of the vowel “i” for emphasis), the ellipsis of the copula in c génial [c'est génial] and the emoticon :));*

Status 4: *Yves Tounk, March 7, 2010: Bonne fête Mamie, tu me manques grave surtout tes plats hummmmm. J'espère que ça se passe tranquille au paradis pour toi . Ps: Papi avait flirté avec ta copine qui te ramenait des feuilles d' acacia... je ne t'ai rien dit!! Rest in peace... (standard French);*

Status 5: *Yves Tounk, March 22, 2010: Retour en 2e classe, ac des sièges pouri pa confortabl, dè gens chelou, des bagages ds les allé, tt l monde entassé.... Dur retour auprès du bas peuple... La lère m mank déjà, on c revera ds kel tps :))* [Standard French would be: Retour en 2ème classe, assez des sièges pouris, pas confortables, des gens cheloux, des bagages dans les allés, tout le monde entassé... Dur retour auprès du bas peuple... La lère me manque déjà, on se reverra dans quelque temps]

This status contains many online features and practices: abbreviations, omissions of vowels and consonants and deviated spelling (assez → *ac*, pas → *pa*, confortable → *confortabl*, des → *dè* dans → *ds*, tout → *tt*, le → *l*, me → *m*, manque → *mank*, se → *c*, quelque → *kel*, temps → *tps*), lack of concord between noun and adjective (*des sièges pouri pa confortabl, dè gens chelou*), the use of definite plural article followed by a noun with a singular form (*les allé*), the use of emoticons: :));

Status 6: *Yves Tounk, April 4, 2010 via mobile: Hommage au Pasteur Martin Luther King qui nous a quitté (on nous l'a pris) le 4 avril 1968... Nous ne t'oublions pas, et merci pour tout ce que tu as fait. Rest in Peace!* This status is written in standard French, but the last sentence is written in English;

Status 7: *Yves Tounk, April 10, 2010 via LeMonde.fr: Rest in Peace... Toutes mes condéléances aux frères et sœurs polonais pour les familles. Des victimes.* This status contains a typo/spelling mistake: *mes condéléances*;

Status 8 (written in the third person, singular): *Yves Tounk, May 10, 2010 via mobile: A une pensée pour tout le peuple noir: Victime de la traite nègrière: aujourd'hui c'est la Journée de la COMEMORATION de le Traitre Nègrière et j'espère que la télé marquera l'événement ou du moins plus que les années précédentes. RIP à tous ceux qui y ont périls!* (standard French);

Status 9: *Yves Tounk, May 25, 2010 via mobile: Papa, Maman, les gars désolé; G'ressen com une envie d' m'isoler...* In this status, there is an omission of the subject + verb: [je suis] *désolé*, he uses a noun which is normally encountered in the oral discourse: *les gars* and an abbreviation: *com* [comme];

Status 10: *Yves Tounk, May 30, 2010 via mobile: En route, bourguignon pr 6 mois et plus si affinité. ! Désolé d' pas avoir pu vous dire au revoir, vous allez tous*

m manké... G vs adorrrr. In this status, we notice: omission of vowels (pour → *pr*, me → *m*, vous → *vs*); deviated spelling (manqué → *manké*, je → *G*), exaggerated spelling in order to render the para-verbal (*adorrrr*);

Status 11: *Yves Tounk, June 13, 2010 via mobile: Du jeu, du mouvement, de la solidarité, des buts... cette équipe d'Allemagne me fait penser à l'Entente Sourcienne celle des 4–0* (standard French);

Status 12: *Yves Tounk, September 24, 2010 via mobile: ORLINz ...* He uses capital letters for loud and clear, another common online practice;

Status 13: *Yves Tounk, October 11, 2010: T'es le genre de mec qui préfère les voitures aux filles?... Je suis le genre qui aime les jolies courbes ou si je puis dire les belles carrosseries !!!* In this status, there are: oral language features: *t'es*; slang: *mec*; omission of punctuation marks: *ou[,] si je puis dire[,]les belles carrosseries*; exaggerate use of punctuation mark in order to render the para-verbal: *!!!*;

Status 14: *Yves Tounk, October 16, 2010: Ceux ki kiffe la zik comprendront: La mélodie c'est comme voir pour la 1ère fois quelqu'un, elle représente l'attirance physique: le sexe; mais si vous voulez connaître cette personne, là viens alors le texte ... c'est de la combinaison des deux que naît la vraie magie!!!* This status starts with cyber-French *Ceux ki kiffe la zik*. However, it continues in Standard French;

Status 15: *Yves Tounk, November 24, 2010: Je veux jouer les matchs de championnat au stade Maracana, pour les matchs amicaux Le stade Mailhan d'Arles-Avignon, pour les derbys rien de mieux que le stade de Stamford Bridge, et je rêve de jouer le dernier match de ma carrière au stade d'Anfield Road* (standard French);

Status 16: *Yves Tounk, December 24, 2010 via mobile: Joyeux Noël à Tous mes amis, pour ceux qui ont rien à faire ce soir je vous conseille d' regarder "le Pere Noël est une ordure" parait que c'est pas mal; moi c'est le titre que j'adore* (standard French).

➤ **Statuses from 2011:**

Status 1: *Yves Tounk, January 2, 2011: Bonne et heureuse année à toutes et tous, pour 2011 je vous souhaite de recevoir beaucoup d'amour et d'en donner en retour.*

PS: Mon tél est en SAV, dc perdus certains contacts alors merci à ceux qui m'ont envoyés des sms, et comme le tel de prêt est une antiquité j'ai du mal à écrire ac.

Je vous aime

This status is written in standard French. There are only few exceptions: téléphone → *tél*, donc → *dc*, one acronym (*SAV*), ellipsis of auxiliary verb: *dc [j'ai] perdus*;

The second status from 2011 (**Annex 23 B.**) is written in standard French, but the second part of the status is written in Arabic;

The third status from 2011 (**Annex 23 B.**) is written in standard French. However, at the end, he thanks to the users who wished him *Happy Birthday* and in this part he writes in English, Polish, German and Arabic in order to address users from different cultural backgrounds.

➤ **Statuses in 2012:**

Status 1: *Yves Tounk, January 19, 2012: MERCI à TOUS pour vos messages, sms, appel, biz ...*

In this status, the digi-participant uses capital letters in order to highlight the fact that he really thanks everyone for their wishes. This is an online practice used to render the offline para- and non-verbal cues that accompany our message and make them more powerful in terms of their pragmatic value;

Status 2 (the beginning is written in the third person, singular): *Yves Tounk, January 27, 2012: Sera à ORLINZ ce wk, mais j'ai pas de tél donc inbox !!!!!* This status contains elements of the cyber-language. However, it is not hard for the audience to decipher the meaning: *ORLINZ* (capital letters for loud and clear), weekend is spelled *wk*, and the noun English *Inbox* is used here as a verb, exaggerate use of punctuation marks to show his enthusiasm: *!!!!!!*;

Status 3: *Yves Tounk, February 14, 2012: Bein voilà je voulais m debarasser d' mon livre de régime Dukan, tiens offre lui ça pr la St. Valentin! Tkt mon pote*

elle sera ravie à moins que tu préfères la balance... In this status, the cyber-language is signaled by: the interjections *Bein, voilà, tiens*; omission of vowels: *me* → *m*, *pour* → *pr*; omission of accents: *debarasser* [débarasser]; deviated spelling: *d' mon livre* [de mon livre], abbreviations: *Tkt* [Ne t'inquiète pas]; slang: *mon pote*, omission of punctuation marks: *Tkt[,] mon pote[,] elle sera ravie[.]*
À moins que tu préfères la balance... ;

Status 4: *Yves Tounk, March 31, 2012: ça a mis du temps mais enfin ça y est je suis à nouveau joignable; j'ai mis 1 mois et demi avant d'avoir TOUT COMPRIS.* This status starts with a lower-case letter. Other peculiarities of this status are: the punctuation marks are missing: *ça a mis du temps[,] mais[,] enfin[,] ça y est[,] je suis à nouveau joignable; j'ai mis 1 mois et demi avant d'avoir TOUT COMPRIS [.]*; the use of pause fillers, characteristic to the oral discourse: *enfin, ça y est*; the use of capital letters for emphasis: *TOUT COMPRIS.*

➤ **Statuses from 2013:**

Status 1: *Yves Tounk, January 20: Merci à toutes et tous pour vos messages chaleureux qui m'ont profondément touchés. J'associe chacun à de bons moments passés ensemble et à venir. Je vous embrasse et vous souhaite tout le bonheur du monde* (standard French).

Upon observing his online behaviour, and also because we know Yves in person as well, we argue that he writes many of his statuses and, sometimes, his comments as well, in standard French to broaden his audience and possible group of interactants: to include the users who speak French as a second language (L2) and do not master French so well as to understand the cyber-variety. The following user's comments reveal this fact:

Laura Mäkelä: J'ai pas compris tout (:D) mais si tu ne rigoles pas Yves, c'est trop bien !! Je suis fière de toi !!! Ici, on a allumé le chauffage..... (-20 degrés ;)) (comment to Status 2, 2010)

Laura Mäkelä: Oh là là le français d'internet, je comprends pas beaucoup... Mais, tu habites maintenant en Bourgogne pour le stage? Et est-ce que tu as des vacances quand même pendant l'été? June 3, 2010 at 9:50pm · Like (comment to Status 9, 2010).

He switches from standard written French to cyber-French and vice-versa with ease. Hence, his comments before Laura Mäkelä's comment in which she states that she has difficulty in understanding the Internet variety were all written in cyber-French:

– Yves Tounk: *Wé man pr l stage, moi ossi aucun pac boat (fo savoir sareté kan c bon:-)!*

Moi ossi chui ma chou... [May 30, 2010 at 3:05pm via mobile · Like](#)

– Yves Tounk: *Tu pe conT sur moi bro* [May 30, 2010 at 3:51pm via mobile · Like](#)

– Yves Tounk: *Luiz jaten impatientment*

– *Alpha javè pa oublié, c k g déteste lè aurevoir mè tkt g sré là pr l début d' saison Majda, on fetra ça com ça c doi obligé*

Merci à tous [May 30, 2010 at 11:10pm via mobile · Like](#)

– Yves Tounk: *Thks Aliou* [May 30, 2010 at 11:11pm via mobile · Like](#)

– Yves Tounk: *T la meilleure Julie ton num é celui d' Casi st ds mes favori lol, g sen k g vé m plair mm si pr ma lère soirée chui ds l noir: Pa D' Electricité*

– Yves Tounk: *Ça m rapel le bled il me l mettron 2m1 dc c soir rebelott ... Hâte d' vs recevoir* [May 31, 2010 at 4:05pm via mobile · Like](#)

After Laura Mäkelä's comment, the conversation involves three users: Yves, Laura Mäkelä (Finnish) and Eva Parloc (Romanian). Yves adapts to the digital participants involved and he uses less digitised features and online practices:

– Yves Tounk: *Hey Laura cmt va? Oui je pourrai demander quelques jours de vacances en été normalement , mais je ne sais pas encore quand. Donne de tes nouvelles. Je ne sais pas lire finois donc ...lol*

[June 3, 2010 at 10:28pm via mobile · Like](#)

– Laura Mäkelä: ***Merci pour le langage "officiel"*** *Ca va bien, je vais passer 3 semaines à Brighton à partir de mardi! Et enseigner les jeunes... Ca va être super, j'espère!* [June 3, 2010 at 10:37pm · Like](#)

– Yves Tounk: *C cool ça , tu pars plus à Cluj?*

[June 3, 2010 at 10:58pm via mobile · Like](#)

– Laura Mäkelä: *Si si, j'y pars si ca va avec Eva... On a pas encore décidé la date...* [June 3, 2010 at 11:15pm · Like](#)

– Eva Parloc: *OUI ça va super bien patricia vous attend*

[June 4, 2010 at 1:55am · Like](#)

- Laura Mäkelä: *HUG* June 4, 2010 at 1:58am · Like
- Yves Tounk: *Hey Eva cmt va? Vous me tiendrais au courant comme ça je verrais si je peux prendre des vacances* June 4, 2010 at 9:18pm via mobile · Like
- Eva Parloc: *Ça va, ça va on va te tenir au courant, ou plutôt c'est Laura qui doit le faire! J'espère que tu pourras prendre des vacances !!!!* June 5, 2010 at 12:55am · Like
- Laura Mäkelä: *Mais noon, Eva, check your mails, je t'ai demandé quelque chose.* June 5, 2010 at 1:22am · Like

In what follows, we focus on Yves's comments. Unlike his statuses, many of his comments are written in cyber-French. We provide some examples. We explain the use of the digitised features and online practices only for the first example. For the other four comments we only provide the transcription into standard French between square brackets.

- (1) *Kikou, dsl d pa avoir di aurevoir mè jètè malade ensuite ya u mè exams, du cou g pa u le tps de venir o collège... :(, di o zotr k chui dsl. G n seré pa là lané prochaine :((, mè on c reverra sûr... gs bisouuu (2010)*

Standard French: *désolé de pas avoir dit au revoir, mais j'étais malade. Ensuite, il y a eu mes examens, du coup, je n'ai pas eu le temps de revenir au collège... :(, dis aux autres que je suis désolé. Je ne serai pas là l'année prochaine :((, mais on se reverra sûr... gros bisoux*

[I am sorry for not saying good-bye, but I was ill. Then, I had exams. Thus, I didn't have time to come to school...:(Tell the others I am sorry. I will not be there next year :((, but we will certainly see each other again...kisses]

In this excerpt we notice:

- the use of interjections: *Kikou*;
- constructions specific to the oral discourse: *ya u* [il y a eu];
- omission of vowels and consonants: *dsl* [désolé], *d* [d], *pa* [pas], *di* [dit], *le tps* [le temps], *gs bisouuu* [gros];
- deviated spelling: *mè* [mais], *jètè* [j'étais], *mè exams* [mes], *g* [je], *o* [au], *o zotr k chui* [aux autres que je suis], *G n seré pa* [Je ne serai pas], *lané* [l'année], *c reverra* [se reverra];
- omission of the graphic signs: *jètè* [J'étais], *lane* [l'année]

- use of emoticons: :(, :((.
 - exaggerate use of spelling: *bisouuu*.
- (2) *Ahh g m sui bien amuzé ac vou :), vs m manké déjà!* (2010)
 Standard French: *Ahh je me suis bien amusé avec vous :), vous me manquez déjà!* [I had a great time with you! I already miss you!]
- (3) *Heyy Fat dépêche d' fair l bb!! G sré ravi d' la gardé... Tkt couch, biberon,...g maitriz* (2010) [Hey Fat – abbreviation from Fatima – dépêche de faire un bébé!! Je serai ravi de la gardé... Ne t'inquiète pas, couch, biberon... je maîtrise]
- (4) *Yoo Pattrt g plu ton num, send le moi,* (2011) [Je n'ai plus ton numéro]
- (5) [user]: *C'était bien à Reims? :)* December 26, 2011 at 12:26pm
Yves Tounk: *Mdr, l chance sur l million prk ça arrive. J'ai vu tte la famille, ainsi que mon mentor . ça m'a fait hyper plaisir. Retourne toi qd tu seras ds la rue en vac, tu pourrais me voir* December 26, 2011 at 1:07pm • Like • 1
 [Meurs de rire, une chance sur un million pour que ça arrive. J'ai vu toute la famille, ainsi que mon mentor. Ça m'a fait hyper plaisir. Retourne-toi quand tu seras dans la rue en vacances, tu pourrais me voir]

We also present some examples of comments posted by other Guinean users on Yves's Wall/Timeline are. We also provide Yves' reply to some of them:

- (6) [*female user*]: *T ES OUUUUUUUUUUUU ???!!! (2011)*
DANS QUELLE ViïiLLE !!!
TU ME MANQUEEEEEEEEEEE ALERTE !!!!!
BiïSOUXX SHERYYY !!!
Yves Tounk: *Heeyyyy Ass, c clair que ça fait l bye moi aussi tu m mankkk!! Chui en région parisienne, dc si tu passes par là t tjrs la bienvenue tmtc . Et toi cmt ça se passe, inbox tn num. Biïsouuu ma zouyinnn*
- (7) Sabriina Càrbonii wrote on Cheicky Yves K'mara's timeline. November 13, 2011 at 10:09pm:
Monsiïieur quii date lol .. Cest comment ?? =P
- Cheicky Yves K'mara: *Yepp choupinette, tkil sauf que j'ai encore cassé mn tél ... inbox ton num* November 15, 2011 at 8:26pm · Like
 - Sabriina Càrbonii: *Mouahahahaha toi et les tel c pas lamour lol* November 16, 2011 at 1:14am · Like

- Cheicky Yves K'mara: *C'est eux ki ne me trouve pas à leur goût et pourtant des efforts j'en fais* November 16, 2011 at 7:55pm · Like
 - Sabriina Càrbonii: *Mdrrr t Tro nul toiïï* November 16, 2011 at 10:58pm · Like
- (8) Aissatou Boubah Balde wrote on Yves Tounk's timeline. January 18, 2011 at 10:11pm: *Joyeux anniversaire e si on sone ché toi ouvre cè le facteur qi envoi tn kdo*
- Yves Tounk: *Merci ma grde; j'ai ouvert la porte mais yavè personne*

5.4.3.2.2. English Cyber-language

We have chosen the public page *Entertainment. Art/Humanities* in order to examine the way in which digi-participants use English as a means of interacting in international groups of discussion on Facebook (<http://www.facebook.com/onlyforentertainment>).

This Facebook page was created in October 2011. In August 2013, it had 634,327 likes and 162,258 users were talking about this page. It aims at posting funny photos, links, statuses to which the participants react and post comments. In this way, this digital space shapes an online community based on socialising and humour. The page is described as:

Community

Like this page and enjoy 24/7 Entertainment.

The profile picture of this Facebook page announces the intention of the page's administrators to build an online community while having fun and being humorous:

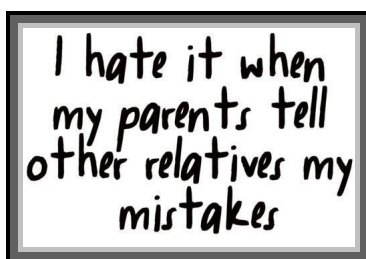


On this page, we focus on two conversation threads and we emphasise the discursive identity of the digi-participants. Firstly, we focus on a conversation from 2012. Secondly, we focus on a conversation thread started in November 2011 and which continues in August 2013 as well. These conversation threads involve both teenagers and young users.

We chose these two conversation threads randomly because all conversation threads on Facebook pages are random and focused on small talk.

All the elements that we identify in these two conversation threads and that construct an (English) cyber-group identity appear everywhere on Facebook (profiles, pages and groups of discussions).

The conversation thread from 2012 was triggered by the upload of the following image on the Facebook Wall:



The topic was established by the users who administrate the page *Entertainment* because they posted the image. This image got 3.089 like hits, 272 shares and 42 comments on the Wall in 10.06.2012, 12:00 (all these numbers changed very fast). We extracted the following comments to the image:

(1) *i cant stand tht my mom tells the hole family then they tink im a irrisponsible child and tht i cant be trusted and im like mom listen im sill young im still learning and even as an adult i will larn just watchwat i do and uderstand ur never ganna stop aking mistakes* (highschool English female student from Washington, Pennsylvania).

- typos/mistakes: *i, cant, tht, hole, tink, im, sill* (instead of *still*), *irrisponsible, larn, uderstand, ur, aking*
- no punctuation marks
- use of fillers: *im like mom listen im sill young*

- slang terms: *gonna*
- lower-case letters throughout her post.

We mention that the digi-participant who posted this comment is the same highschool English female student from Washington, Pennsylvania who posted the description that we presented in the subchapter **5.4.2.3 Statements/Short Descriptions**, under the heading **Other users**:

<p>Description: <i>i am nice funny and i love to be energetic i do some sports like cheer-leading gymnastics and rifle i love playing softball basketball and vollyball with my family i love to be around my friends and spend time with them as much as possiable i wish to be a docter or and i cant wait to comepete in my showcase next year :D im irish german italian and indian i love my papillion jasper.</i></p>	<p>(1) <i>i cant stand tht my mom tells the hole family then they tink im a irrispensible child and tht i cant be trusted and im like mom listen im sill young im still learning and even as an adult i will larn just watchwat i do and uderstand ur never ganna stop aking mistakes</i></p>
--	---

We observe some patterns in her online behaviour. Hence, she establishes a linguistic/discursive identity that can easily be detected: she always writes the pronoun *I* with a small case letter; she write *im* instead of *I'm*; she doesn't use punctuation marks; her discourse presents ideas/facts which do not make up a coherent unit; she has a lot of spelling mistakes/typos.

- (2) *I hate huh thank God my prnts nvr did..* (female user from Pakistan)
- (3) *Not my mom but dad oh yeah*
 - Omission of vowels: *prnts nvr* (parents never);
 - The use of interjections: *huh*
- (4) *Ikr... I swear maybe i shuld tell my friends what mistake they be doin see how they like it..lol* (female user, Los Angeles, California)
- (5) *Say idc*
 - The use of Internet slang: *ikr* (I know, right), *lol* (laugh out loud), *idc* (I don't care)

- (6) *ri8...!* (male user, India)
- (7) *me 2* (male user, Colombia, Sri Lanka and a female user who does not have a public profile, so we do not know her location)
- using letters and numbers instead of letters: *ri8* (right), *me 2* (me too)
- (8) *ALL the **FRICKIN** time!!! oh, oh and they **ESPECIALLY LOVE** to do it when I tell them **NOT** to! lol :p*
- (9) *they told **MY FRIENDS!!!!***
- (10) *@Natasha i know where **you comming** from they do that to me **ALL!** the time*
- Capital letters for loud and clear/emphasis: *FRICKIN, ESPECIALLY LOVE, NOT, MY FRIENDS*. Sometimes, users even add an exclamation mark/interrogation mark in the middle of the sentence: *ALL! the time*
 - Use of emoticons: *:p*
 - Use of the special character @ in order to name the addressee of the message: *@Natasha*
 - Omission of auxiliary: *i know where **you comming** from*

The conversation thread started in November 2011 and continued in 2013 proves the *panachronic* aspect of cyberspace (see **1.4.2 Internet Linguistics – Aspects**). We add that, implicitly, it proves the panachronic characteristic of cyber-identity.

The conversation was triggered by the upload of the photo of a burned laptop. The photo was uploaded by the pages' administrators who also posted a description to the photo, warning everyone that is dangerous to use the laptop on bed with blankets and pillows around because the cooling fan cannot get the air to cool the computer and that is might cause fire. They also tell a sad story in order to be more persuasive.

The photo and the entire conversation can be found in **Annex 24**. The conversation thread contained 14 different Facebook spams (see **2.3.1.1 Undermining the Co-operative Principle**). We did not include them in the Annex. We only marked their place in the conversation. The spams are posted repeatedly by different users.

The post got 826 like hits, 764 shares and 181 comments on the Timeline in 18.08.2013 (all these numbers changed very fast). We extracted the following comments from the beginning of the conversation thread:

- (11) Sandy Thao: **OMG i do this every single night!!!**
November 9, 2011 at 8:03am · Like · 8
- (12) Mohit Jena: **Thanks yar 4 awaring us...abt dis fact**
November 9, 2011 at 11:36am · Like · 1
- (13) Zelda Zombies: **i put it under my bed, an offering to the monsters ;3**
November 9, 2011
- (14) Imad Lodhi: **Thts a Dell laptop** *November 9, 2011 at 2:08pm · Like · 1*
- (15) Ali Rao: **not possible. and Syed Yasir Tahir ur computer student, tafree tu na kro yar** *November 9, 2011 at 2:13pm · Like*
- (16) Ali Rao: **at 80 degree around the cpu restarts and show error**
November 9, 2011 at 2:14pm ·
- (17) Ali Rao: **the cause may b bcs of short circuit in charger or ani thing else**
November 9, 2011
- (18) Syed Yasir Tahir: **the story is lil controversial but the things mentioned in it can be true**
- (19) Ali Rao Syed Yasir Tahir: **i wll search for it, cus if the laptop is on, for hrs it wl go on sleep. or screan wl be off. and if its idl and still nt on sleep mode then processor wont get that hot. ani ways just chill**
November 9, 2011 at 3:52pm · Like · 1

In these comments, there are:

- Internet slang: *OMG* (oh my God), *ur* [your]
- Lower-case letters: *i* [I], *if the laptop is on, for hrs it wl go on sleep. or screan wl be off. and if its idl [...]*
- Exaggerate use of punctuation marks: *!!!*,
- Abbreviations: *cause*,
- Use of numbers instead of letters: *4* [thank you for...],
- Omission of vowels: *abt* [about], *Thts* [that's – also omission of graphic signs], *the cause may b bcs* [be because], *wll* or *wl*[will], *hrs* [hours], *idl* [idle], *nt* [not]
- Deviated spelling: *dis* [this], *lil* [little], *cpu* [computer], *cus* [because]
- Use of emotiocons: *;3*,

- Typing/spelling/grammar mistakes: *the cpu restarts and show error, ani thing, ani ways*;
- Lack of punctuation marks at the end of the sentences;
- Lack of graphic signs: *wont* [won't];
- Omission of the subject + copula: *not possible*.

With regards to example 15, we mention that the first part of the comment is in English and it targets all the digi-participants, while the second part of the comment reveals the cultural background of the user (Pakistani user) and is addressed to a particular user (*Syed Yasir Tahir*). There are other comments written in other languages even if the conversation thread is mainly in English. These comments prove the glocal aspect of cyber-identity (see **4.3.2 Cultural and Glocal Identity**).

We provide some other examples that we extract from the same conversation thread:

- Slang/Internet slang: *kinda, :trollface:, lol, omg, holy**** i ant gonna, idk how to not use the laptop in bed* [I don't know], *for sakes, Oh my gosh, But I use it on a table now, so no biggie C;*
- Capital letters for loud and clear: *STUPID, OMG SO SCARY .. not, GOD I »—fânKz Œ, y would they take a PHOTO!, OVER, How sad I use the laptop in bed but I ALWAYS shut it off, MY NIGHTMARE RIGHT THERE, the story above is so SAD, how was the laptop was that OK???, JUST TRYING SAVE A LIFE;*
- Lower-case letters at the beginning of sentences, when writing the pronoun *I* and when writing proper names. Other examples: *november, june;*
- Deviated spelling: *all d intelligtss guys* [the intelligent], *imma teenager* [I am], *cuz* [because], *u* [you];
- Typos/spelling mistakes: *all d intelligtss, r presnt* [present], *i leve it safe on a laptop table, da box* [the], *i thoguht its was like a spam* [I thought it ...], *rpi his soul* [RIP], *he has seen children in bed with there laptops, thats no prettu, labtop, your laptop temp never goes higher then 80, if it gets hotter then normal [...], turn it to low perfoarmance or battery perofmance,*

comfortable temp, turn if of fast, thats so sad about te 25 year old [that's soo sad about the 25 year old];

- Omission of vowels and/or consonants: *r presnt* [are present], *tht* [that];
- Lack of graphic signs: *Dont* worry [don't], *im* good [I'm good]; *thats* why [that's why], *its* a good idea [it's a good idea], *ive* been putting my laptop, *i havent* started a fire yet, *its* a dell... xD [it's], *it doesnt* make my house catch on fire [doesn't], *ive* seen laptops overheat;
- Abbreviations: *i have the same laptop as in the pic*, *cause* [because], *b-day* [birthday], *rpi* his soul [abbreviated from *rest in peace*. However, it is also a typo: instead of writing *RIP*, the users writes *rpi*], *temp* [temperature];
- Use of numbers instead of letters: *hello evr1* [hello everyone];
- Self-repair: *blanket**;
- Repetitions: *make your your laptop temp never goes higher then 80*;
- Exaggerated use of spelling and/or punctuation marks: *thanxxxxxx.....gg'*, *i looooooove*, *yaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa ryyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyttttttttttt*, *Pooor* computer, *i wish that was my laptop!!!!!!*, *how was the laptop was that OK???*;
- Lack of punctuation marks:
 - ✓ at the end of the sentences;
 - ✓ *at first [,] i thoguht its was like a spam [,] then i saw the comments [.]*;
 - ✓ *How sad [.] I use the laptop in bed [,] but I ALWAYS shut it off [!]*;
 - ✓ *How sad [.] I'll keep that in mind .. [...]*;
- Interjections: *nhi nhi, yea, ya, Nah, pfft, WOW....* ;
- Pause fillers: *well, Um, UUUMMM.....* ;
- Insertion of comments in other languages, even though the conversation takes place in English: *farigh aadmi mera comment hai ooper, hahhaa pehle batata, lol hva skjedde, GOD I » – †ānKzü, moudel lsene, eitar kotha koisilam*;
- Rendering of the the para-verbal: *hahhaa, lol, efefefefefefefe*;
- Use of emoticons: *:D, its a dell... xD*;
- Lack of concord between the subject and the verb and omission of lexical items: *My prayers is the family, my dad tell* [tells] ;

- Omission of lexical items: *My prayers is [with] the family, thats so sad about te 25 year old* [omission of a noun] ;
- Omission of the copula: *Dis [is] sad* [combined with deviated spelling/ mistakes *dis*];
- Continuation of sentences in different comments:
 - ✓ *Alexander McCormac: This is why I want a desktop/tower, I hate laptops essentially* [November 13, 2011 at 7:56pm · Like · 1](#)
 - Alexander McCormac: Or Dell* [November 13, 2011 at 8:36pm · Like](#)
 - ✓ *Natasha Bruce B: imma teenager... idk how to not use the laptop in bed* [April 21, 2012 at 7:37am · Like · 1](#)
 - Natasha Bruce B: and when im sleepy i put it under my pillow and leave it on* [April 21, 2012 at 7:37am · Like](#)
- Use of special symbols instead of letters: *[...] if your life revolves around Facebook + Youtube* [Facebook and Youtube]

We mention that some categories might overlap with others and some items might be included in more than one category. For instance:

- the categories of deviated spelling, typos and spelling mistakes, maybe even the lack of graphic signs;
- the categories of abbreviations and omission of vowels and/or consonants.

In **Annex 24**, we pinpoint all the digitised features and online practices that mark an (English) cyber-group identity by writing them in bold characters. Furthermore, as young cyber-authors aim to obtain social approval and they are in a quest for validation, we also marked the number of likes for each comment because they represent acts of validation, social approval and group identity. They give the digi-participants the sense of “we-ness” (Weber, 2007: 28) and of integration into the digital community formed. At the same time, the number of likes is important for young participants because “young people revisit their own web productions, not only to see how they might update them, but also to see what has happened to them in terms of “hits” or response messages and so on. They are their own audience. There is reflexivity to this process, a conscious looking, not only at

their production (themselves), but how others are looking at their productions” (idem: 27).

5.5. Partial Conclusions

The digital productions of English, Romanian, Guinean and French users proved that cyber-identity is a representation that changes according to the digital space involved.

The case of Salman Rushdie highlighted that cyber-communities/identities on Facebook are expected to be extensions of offline communities and individuals.

The LinkedIn platform represents a case of online professional identity construction. Users expose only the pieces of information which are related to their professional life and they try to make useful connections. Their discourse is written in standard language, they post a curriculum vitae on the platform, they receive recommendations from other users and write recommendations for other users, they are endorsed by other users and endorse other users, they upload a professional photo of themselves, and they are involved in groups of discussion focused on specific topics. They construct the dimension of professional identity and they try to present it in a very positive light. Hence, what they expose on this social network site is different in comparison to the content displayed on other social network sites where users participate in order to socialise, maintain friendships, make new friendships and/or find old friends.

The production of discourses on personal blogs (Romanian, French and English) revealed the process of constructing a narrative identity. In this digital space, users construct an identity by telling stories. Their cultural identity is salient though these stories as well. Unlike LinkedIn and other social network sites, on personal blogs there are no predefined patterns of telling the stories and bloggers can write about any topic. Bloggers can write one sentence in a post or 100 pages.

We scrutinised three blogs and we provided a diachronic perspective on them (2011→ 2013): the Romanian blog continued in the same vein, the French blog was deleted and the English blog changed its format and purpose. Hence, the empirical data supports our hypothesis that online identity is fluid and temporary.

Cyber-identity is multidimensional and all its dimensions are constructed by the content exposed and by the language used. On Facebook, cyber-identity is constructed on the Facebook profile page and through interaction with other users. Hence, users expose a social identity on two levels: individual identity and group identity. In the latter case, we demonstrated that users construct group identities in L1, but also in L2. At the same time, they construct a cyber-group identity through the use of digitised features and online practices.

CONCLUSIONS

As we announced in the beginning of the current work, we have established the following purposes for our research:

- (1) to conceptualise cyberspace and to explain how it creates a digital world and why it constitutes a new field for language and identity research;
- (2) to highlight that language and socialisation in cyberspace are characterised by digitized features and online practices; to highlight the fact that sometimes the language used online is a new variety: cyber-language;
- (3) to analyse the function of cybernames because they constitute the points of access to one's identity and they have a special nature online;
- (4) to scrutinise and explain the concept of *cyber-identity*. Related to cyber-identity, we enumerated different secondary objectives:
 - to demonstrate that cyber-identity is fluid and temporary;
 - to illustrate that identity is a blend between expression (input 1) and construction and play with identities (input 2). In face to face interactions, Input 1 prevails and in cyberspace, Input 2 prevails;
 - to highlight the fact that both in the digital world and in the physical world, identity is mainly a linguistic phenomenon (narrative and discursive phenomenon).

In what follows we present our conclusions on each of these aspects. All the affirmations and evaluations will be based on the theoretical framework, corpus analysis and partial conclusions to each chapter.

(1) Conclusions to the Conceptualisation of Cyberspace

Cyberspace creates a digital world and constitutes a new field of investigation for language and identity research.

Cyberspace contains information and the information is generated and organised by users. Thus, cyberspace is a discursive space. This discursive space is created

by the general affordances of new media (technical, structural and social) and the specific affordances of the Internet situations in which users participate and construct an identity seen as a representation.

In the discursive space of the digital world, users are spectators and participants, addressors and addressees, senders and receivers. In order to capture all these dimensions that users have in cyberspace, we introduced the term *digi-participants*. This concept is different from *netizens* in that the former refers to the users of the Internet, to the individuals in the physical world, external to cyberspace, while the latter describes the population/the inhabitants of the Internet, the representations *digi-participants* construct in cyberspace.

The best approach to describe the discourses in cyberspace is *Internet linguistics* because it highlights the fact we are dealing with a new domain of enquiry in which language and identity/representation are transposed to the digital environment.

In cyberspace, the different digital spaces (the online social networks, the blogs, the email services and the game platforms) are all different varieties because they have different affordances, different characteristics, different purposes, different interactional patterns and different identity representations.

In order to perform an identity in different digital spaces, users have to be digitally literate. This new kind of literacy is basic for online participation on various platforms and for the creation of one's online identity. The digital literacy includes the "literacies of the digital": *computer and IT and ICT literacy, technological literacy, information literacy, media literacy, visual literacy, communication literacy* (Martin, 2008: 156–164). At the same time, it involves critical thinking. Thus, it involves practical skills, but also reflexive processes.

When constructing one's representation online (for example on Facebook), users should be should be digitally literate. In this way, they can use the Facebook/ Couchsurfing affordances to make the process much more interesting, challenging and interactive.

(2) Conclusions to Language and Socialisation in Cyberspace

The language used online sometimes takes the form of cyber-language because online language and socialisation imply "digitised features" and online practices

which pinpoint the fact that discourses in cyberspace and the linguistic behaviour of individuals have to be analysed using the Internet linguistic framework. Hence, language in cyberspace constitutes a fourth medium, the first three being speaking, writing and signing (Crystal, 2006: 272). The digital productions of young individuals during casual conversations in cyberspace confirmed the fact that they are using computer-mediated language.

The co-operative principle and the politeness principle can be adapted to cyberspace and there are cyber-situations that can be accounted for very well through these principles or through the breaking of these principles. Moreover, these principles and the concept of *face* (Brown and Levinson, 1987) play a role in online self and other identity performance.

(3) Conclusions to Cybernames

Cybernames are part of users' online representations. They are not given automatically; digi-participants choose their own cybernames. This is why, they constitute the first element of their identity perceived by other users in every cyber-interaction.

The empirical data from the two game platforms, *Conquistador* and *Catan*, revealed the users' linguistic creativity and ingenuity in constructing a cyber-identity. Moreover, the fact that users on *Catan* use colours to address each other during the game proves that online practices involve idiosyncratic linguistic behaviour. In opposition to the game platforms, Facebook requires its members to use their real names and identity. However, we demonstrated that the Facebook policy does not always correspond to the naming practices on the social network site because the cybernames encountered belong to the three onymic categories: anthroponyms (proper names and nicknames), toponyms and chrematonyms.

Upon scrutinising our personal list of Facebook friends, we emphasised that the online medium and the online community change very fast, the data is always a draft, fluid.

Using the possible world semantics framework, we claimed that there is a dynamics of cybernames in terms of the rigid/non-rigid dichotomy. In addition, using Gregory Currie's account and concepts (1990), we distinguished between

Users/Digi-participants (individuals who use the Internet; the individuals in flesh and bones; those who are in the actual world; external to cyberspace, offline individuals) and Netizens (individuals in cyberspace/inhabitants of cyberspace).

We also drew a parallel between authors of fiction and users. We stated that, like authors of fiction, users sometimes create online profiles which refer to themselves even if these online representations are not exactly the same as their offline profiles. In this case, they create online representations of themselves that we called **Netizens-representations**. At others, users do not create representations that refer back to them, but different entities. They assume different identities. In this way, they create characters that we call **Netizens-characters**. For the Netizens-representations, the naming is external as the referent is placed in the offline world, while for the netizens-characters, the naming is internal as the referent is placed in cyberspace, a cyber-referent.

Whether we are dealing with an internal process of naming or an external one, in cyberspace, we could explain the naming process using Kripke's causal chain theory: the creation of the account in a digital space is equivalent to the initial rite of baptism. The relation between words and classes of objects is established and then accepted by the linguistic community on the online social network involved.

(4) Conclusions to the Concept of *Cyber-identity*

(Cyber-)identity contains multiple dimensions which are included in one another: sometimes expression of or parts of personal identity (inner identity), social identity (persona), professional identity, cultural identity, ethnic and national identity, etc. All these dimensions are revealed by:

- the narrative identity (the content exposed);
- the discursive identity (how the content is exposed, the language used).

We consider cyber-identity to be a representation (Netizens) that digi-participants/users construct in cyberspace. This representation is co-constituted within the interaction with other users. Hence, cyber-identity is the social identity manifested on two levels which contain the dimensions mentioned above:

- individual identity (what is unique to the user);
- group identity (what the user has in common with other members of a group).

On Facebook, individual identity is constructed on the Facebook profile page and group identity is performed through interaction with other users. In the latter case, we demonstrated that users construct group identities in L1 (native language), but also in L2 (second language, lingua Franca/bridge language). At the same time, they construct a cyber-group identity through the use of digitised features and online practices.

Cyber-identity is different from offline identity because digi-participants always operate selections, add and remove information, re-edit information, embellish their social image. Hence, even though identity is a blend between two inputs: input 1 – **expression** of identity and input 2 – **construction** and **play** with identities, in cyberspace, input 2 prevails. Thus, cyber-identity is the social image/persona exposed and constructed through narrative and discourse in cyberspace on two levels: individual identity and group identity. What is more, as we have underlined throughout this thesis, the content of cyber-identity includes linguistic behaviour, but also YouTube videos or other videos, links, images, avatars, photos and many other elements. That is why, cyber-identity is also a multimodal concept.

Identity in cyberspace changes very fast. Hence, we use the concept **fluid identity** or **fluid representation**. Cyber-identity is different from offline identity because the conditions are different. In the same vein, because each digital space contains different affordances, cyber-identity varies accordingly. Hence, on each digital space, users expose different representations (**identities-in-action**, Weber and Mitchell, 2007).

Cyber-identity is constructed through: the cybernames chosen, visual and audio-visual elements, and the digi-participants' discourse. All these elements are conditioned by the affordances of each digital space.

Cyber-identity is performed in a space where different cultural identities are intermingled and where users interact with other users within a global environment. As users come from different cultural backgrounds, they represent local spaces. However, because they participate in a global network, the digital spaces are **glocal** and their identity is **glocal** as well (simultaneously global and local). Furthermore, the cultural diversity of the digital world allows us to consider

cyberspace a Franca space. As a consequence, users very often interact with one another using a lingua franca, which is very often English. In this way, they construct a representation in a second language (L2), different from the representation they construct in their native language (L1).

Given that users interact with other users, we state that cyber-identity is built within a cyber-community which can take the form of a macro-cyber-community (the Facebook/Couchsurfing/LinkedIn/MySpace/BeWelcome/Catan community, etc.) or a micro-cyber-community (various online groups on the digital space mentioned). Further, we state that some cyber-communities are expected to be extensions of offline communities and users (e.g. Facebook).

The fact that cyber-identity is a representation that changes according to the digital space involved is demonstrated by the following cases scrutinised in our investigation:

- the LinkedIn platform represents a case of online professional identity construction. Users expose only the pieces of information which are related to their professional life and they try to make useful connections. They construct the dimension of professional identity and they try to present it in a very positive light. Hence, what they expose on this social network site is different in comparison to the content displayed on other social network sites where users participate in order to socialise, maintain friendships, make new friendships and/or find old friends;
- on MySpace, users construct a representation which contains mainly content related to music;
- on Facebook, users construct a social identity through socialisation with friends;
- on Couchsurfing, users construct a suitable representation for a traveller, host, guest, etc.
- the production of discourses on personal blogs (Romanian, French and English) revealed the process of constructing a narrative identity: users construct an identity by telling stories. Their cultural identity is salient through these stories as well. Unlike LinkedIn and other social network sites, on personal blogs there are no predefined patterns of telling the stories or predefined topics. There aren't any limits in terms of a post's length.

The diachronical perspective on Facebook and on the three personal blogs that we investigated maintains our hypothesis that online identity is fluid and temporary.

Cyber-identity is multidimensional, multimodal, fluid, temporary and in-action and all its dimensions are constructed by the content exposed and by the language used.

Using a multidisplinary approach, our thesis provides a close description of language and identity expression/construction in cyberspace, it presents useful accounts on the language-identity nexus in cyberspace and it explains the process of constructing a cyber-identity via the affordances and online resources available in each digital space.

The present thesis offers future research directions: the construction of identity by the same user in different digital spaces; identity construction on BeWelcome; a comparison between identity performance on Couchsurfing and identity performance on BeWelcome; the use of Romanian online; online code mixing; discursive English L2 group identity of YouTube fandom, discursive Romanian/English/French L1 group identity of YouTube fandom, and many others. Furthermore, many aspects surveyed in this thesis could be further developed. For instance: Netspeak, the relation between affordances and identity construction, online politeness in various digital spaces, the possible world account on cybernames, professional identity construction on LinkedIn.

Last but not least, given that new technologies change very fast, this thesis constitutes a useful theoretical background.

CYBERSPACE LINGO

The following list explains some of the basic words related to the digital world that we used in our dissertation:

Affordances – “the unique feature sets and characteristics of particular technologies [...]” (Burden, 2008: 122).

Avatar – “the extension of one’s sense of self in the form of an abstract representation” (Bailenson, and Beall, 2006: 16).

BeWelcome – an online social network that users access and where they are active members in order to travel the world, meet people, host and be hosted by people.

Blog – websites where users post content (text, pictures, sound files, etc.) on a regular basis. The content is displayed in reverse chronological order.

Bloggers – term used to describe digi-participants who write blogs.

Browse – 1. (Traditional paper world) to look through (a book, articles for sale in a shop, etc.) in a casual leisurely manner; 2. (Electronics & Computer Science / Communications & Information) to search for and read hypertext, especially on the World Wide Web.

Chat ‘room’ – “area of a website where visitors can exchange messages with other visitors; if a visitor types in a message, special software displays the name of the visitor and their messages to all the other visitors, allowing them to ‘talk’ and exchange messages, in real time.” (Collin, 2002: 69)

Check-in Feature on Facebook – allows Facebookers to use the GPS on their mobile phones to let friends know exactly where they are (<http://edition.cnn.com/2010/TECH/social.media/08/18/facebook.location/index.html>)

Click – “selecting a button or menu option on screen by moving the pointer over the object and pressing the mouse button” (Collin, 2002: 73).

Couchsurfing – an online social network which functions as a ‘hospitality exchange site’ (O’Regan, 2009: 179). On this virtual social network, users from

all around the world interact with one another in order to host other users, be hosted by other users (surf) or just meet for a drink or a guided tour of a place they do not know.

Couchsurfers – the Internet users who are Couchsurfing members.

Cybername – the names digi-participants use in cyberspace.

Cyberspace – the world of the Internet.

Cyber-identity/identities – the representation(s) constructed by users in the digital world.

Digital – which processes and presents data or physical quantity in numerical form, especially using a binary system in computer related devices (Collin, 2002: 115)

Emoticons – graphically-realised strategies; keyboard faces used in text to enhance emotional expression (Thimm, 2010: 339–340).

E-mail or email – “ELECTRONIC MAIL system of sending messages to and receiving messages from other users on a network or over the Internet” (Collin, 2002: 137)

Hashtags on Facebook – “Hashtags turn topics and phrases into clickable links in posts while helping people find conversations they’re interested in. Hashtags are searchable within Facebook, meaning that a post incorporating a hashtag can have extended life and value. Users can search for a specific hashtag from the Facebook search bar” (<http://www.text100.com/hypertext/2013/07/facebookhashtags/>).

Hyperlink – relational links which interconnect networks of information-containing nodes.

Hypertext – the interconnected piece of information that contains only text.

Hypermedia – the hypertext that allows other media (e.g. image, audio and video files).

Facebook Wall – the space on each user’s profile page where users could post messages, links to videos or sites. Users could post on their own Wall or on other users’ Wall. The Wall was like a time capsule that you could scroll to see more (see Kelsey, 2010: 32). The Facebook Wall was replaced by the Timeline in 2011.

Facebook Timeline – the digital space introduced in 2011, in which all the content of the Facebook users is organised and shown. It shows all the users’ activities in chronological order, scrolling down from the newest event to the oldest event.

Facebookers – the users who are members of Facebook.

Flames – messages which are aggressive, topic-oriented and directed at individual recipients.

High-tech or **high technology** – advanced technology, up to date technology.

Hypertext – system of organising information where certain words or objects in a document are linked to other documents when the word is selected (Collin, 2002: 186). For example: on this web page, click once on the word *monalisa* and you will see a new page with an article presenting other facts about the painting.

InBox – software that is used to manage electronic messages, including mail sent over the network, fax messages and email sent over the Internet (Collin, 2002: 192)

Interactive – that allows communication between the user and the computer (in conversational mode) (Collin, 2002: 199).

Internet – international wide area network that provides file and data transfer (e-mails) for millions of users around the world (Collin, 2002: 203).

Internet linguistics – the study of language on the Internet – or language@internet [...]” (Crystal, 2011: 3).

Like button on Facebook – “The Facebook “Like” button is a feature that allows users to show their support for specific comments, pictures, wall posts, statuses, or fan pages. Added in February 2009, the “like” button allows users to show their appreciation for content without having to make a written comment. While pages originally gave users the option to “become a fan” of them, Facebook replaced this option with a “like” button in April 2010. After a user “likes” something, their news feed is updated, letting their friends know what pages they “like.” Facebook has also made it possible for websites to add “like” buttons directly to their sites. If a user clicks a “like” button on a

web page, their news feed will be updated with a link to the web page (<http://whatis.techtarget.com/definition/Facebook-Like-button>).

Link – communication path or channel between two web pages.

LinkedIn – a social networking website for people in professional occupations; it is mainly used for professional networking. The site is available in various languages.

Lurk – visit profiles and groups of discussion, without posting anything on the site.

Mouse – “small hand-held input device moved on a flat surface to control the position of a cursor on a screen” (Collin, 2002: 253).

Netizens – inhabitants of cyberspace.

Network – interconnected computers or interconnected sites.

Newbie – “Slang term for someone who is a new user on an online service, particularly the Internet” (<http://www.webopedia.com/TERM/N/newbie.html>).

Offline – that is not connected to a network or peripheral connected but not available for use.

Online – actively connected to the Internet (Collin, 2002: 270).

Screen – display device capable of showing a quantity of information, a picture image, a film etc. (Collin, 2002: 341).

Scroll – to move displaced text vertically up or down on the screen, one line at a time by clicking the scroll bar (which is displayed along the side of a window).

Share button on Facebook – the button which permits users to share any web page on their Facebook Timeline.

Smurfs/smurfettes – users who post messages to a group without saying anything important or just repeating what has already been said.

Spam – unwanted messages usually of excessive size.

Tag (on Facebook) – the direct link to the profile of particular users.

Web or **www** or **World Wide Web** – collection of all the existing websites on the Internet.

Web cam – video camera linked to a web server that allows visitors to see live video images of a scene displayed on a website (Collin, 2002: 409).

Web page – file stored on a Web server that contains hyperlinks instructions to other texts.

Web Server – computer that stores the collection of Web pages that make up a Website.

Website – collection of Web pages created by companies or by individuals and are linked together by hyperlinks.

Window – (Electronics and Computer Science) Computing an area of a VDU display that may be manipulated separately from the rest of the display area; typically different files/Internet sites can be displayed simultaneously in different overlapping windows (see <http://www.thefreedictionary.com/window>).

ANNEXES

ANNEX 1.

Addressing Multiple Readers via e-mail Software on Gmail

New Message — ↗ ✕

To

Cc

Bcc |

Subject

Send Ⓐ | 📎 + Saved 🗑️ | ▾

ANNEX 2.

Be Welcome – “Recent Visitors on My Profile” Function Negotiated by Users

http://www.bewelcome.org/groups/362/forum/s2928-What_do_you_think_about_the_recent_visitors_on_my_profile_featue__

Mundana, posted 2012/09/23 09:40 Visibility: World

Hello to all,

there are discussions whether or not cancel this feature. For some members it is a violation of their privacy when it shows that they visited another profiles.

What do you think?

Should there be an “on/off-option” , should it be removed (and all members should be questioned about it) or do you find it useful to see who had a look at your profile??

For me: I can` t see where a person comes from, so I have to click on the name to see this. I appear as a profile visitor even I just wanted to get a basic info but was not really “interested” in this member.

But I don` t mind

For myself I even like this info and I always click on the people who had visited my profile.

What`s your opinion????

majaberstrom, posted 2012/09/23 10:26 Visibility: World

Since I'm new to the beWelcome community and also due to the fact that Couchsurfing is way bigger I would like to keep this function because I'd like to see how many people perhaps are active in the bW community.

I guess if there have been reactions to it one option could be an on/off option or that it just shows a number of how many people have visited your profile, just not who. But in my opinion if we want an open community where we trust each other and will be honest with one another it shouldn't matter that much.

If we want to spy on someone perhaps we can use Facebook for that :)

leoalone, posted 2012/09/23 12:58 Visibility: World

The phone analogy is a bit different: looking the phone is as doing a search, looking at your page is actually as calling you, listen to the autoresponder message, and then hang up.

So i think it is fine to keep it.

A nice option would be adding the possibility to people to set the profile as "hidden searcher" in this case when one does a read in someone's profile would not be recorded.

To compensate for this in the privacy options should be more levels

0: profile hidden to everyone

1: profile visible only to fully logged user that are not hidden searchers

2: profile partially visible (except comment and relations) to hidden searchers, full to others

3: profile visible to every logged user

4: profile partially visible (except comment and relations) to everyone

Uncle_Franek, posted 2012/09/23 13:31 Visibility: World

Funny, I wanted to start a thread about it, but thought that there were more urgent things to write about. But since I'm asked, here you go: I positively hate this feature. To the point that I have decided that I would not click on a picture unless I ABSOLUTELY HAVE TO. I don't care who's been visiting my profile (because there is no way to know if the person visited it just to have a glimpse, because they're in love with me, because they clicked on it by mistake, because they wanted to see who was behind such a horrible picture, etc.), and I do not want others to know that I have visited theirs.

In conclusion, as long as this feature is there, I won't use BW as it is intended to be used.

Jjcrossbatdrive, posted 2012/09/26 08:03 Visibility: World

If you take it away, I don't mind.

If you leave it, I don't mind.

Not sure if this is helpful, just letting the community know I am here.

Interfides, posted 2012/09/26 11:23 Visibility: World

I like it and believe that it should stay. We trying to be open community based on trust, right?

unique_indian, posted 2012/11/03 16:17 Visibility: World

I have voted just a while back, have you all voted? I also love the feature of profile visitors.

Now, one more nice feature has been added, which displays the profiles and their itinerary, if they are visitng your region :)

Whosoever wants to visit my profile, are most welcome to do so, i myself love checking different profiles

ANNEX 3.

Be Welcome – What about Gender?

http://www.bewelcome.org/forums/s1959-What_about_gender_

pablobd, posted 2011/12/26 16:17 Visibility: World by pablobd
last edited on 2013/03/15 09:11 by thorgal67

***UPDATE:** Message from thorgal67: Sorry for hijacking the first post of this thread, but in order to avoid a lengthy voting procedure, shevek suggested trying to go for a concensus once more. So could you please give a +1 at the end of this forum thread if you agree with the following proposal:*

- *Add a third option to the signup page ('other')*
- *Change the third option currently on edit my profile to 'other'*
- *Show gender on the profile as long as it is not hidden*
- *Add 'other' to the advanced search for 'Gender'*

Get it done till Sunday and close this discussion once and (hopefully) for all.

--- END OF UPDATE -----

Pablo's original post

We recently got a couple of e-mails from people trying to signup wich did not find apropiate to fill in the Gender profile field. The reason is they don't perceive themselves as being just male or female, but something else. The “I prefer not to tell” option didn't really work neither.

I think we should be open to acomodate any kind of gender identity, I want to have some debate so we can ask our beloved developers to make a change on this. What do you think, should we have something like a third gender option? (like “other”) or should we just drop the gender field? maybe not make it mandatory?

Cyborg, posted 2011/12/26 16:36 Visibility: World
i vote 4 the third gender option (like “other”).
cheers!!

Cyborg

crumbking, posted 2011/12/26 16:58 Visibility: World

But what does the people say that these options did not fit? I mean what would they like to have (not have) in such a field?

pablobd, posted 2011/12/26 17:17 Visibility: World

Well the critic focus on not having a binary based gender option. There are many other gender options, maybe “trans” could be an option, but this differs with each culture. I think we need a solution that gives the chance to fit every variation, maybe we can put a text field in gender and people can fill it as they please.

The search members tool offers the chance to search by gender (binary female-male options) but maybe we can just ditch that option or adapt it to a difrent approach...

polyglot, posted 2011/12/27 00:48 Visibility: World

You cannot get rid of the gender, it is too important a criterion when hosting or staying with another member. But the easy solution seems to be to add “other”, making sure people don't use it to sign up for “several people” profiles of undetermined gender.

deyoungster, posted 2011/12/27 14:24 Visibility: World

what about a third option that gives a blank space where people can self describe?

thorgal67, posted 2011/12/29 23:37 Visibility: World

Since “gender” is a box that allows users to search for hosts/guests based on their gender, I feel that we should offer the following :

1. have three options (one – and only one – should be compulsory) : Male – Female – Other

AND

2. provide a free text field with the “other” so that members can write about their particular situation. Since this is a free text field, you can write “i don't tell” or “i'm a transsexual” or “I don't believe in gender-discrimination” or whatever you want to say about your gender views.

This way members can still use the search function and those members who don't want to put their gender have a way of expressing that.

How does that sound?

demonika, posted 2012/10/08 15:21 Visibility: World by demonika

last edited on 2012/10/08 15:40 by demonika

male, female, gender-bender options

why gender-bender? it means anything wich includes more than just one main characteristic (contrary to just one wich is expressed in mostly male or mostly female gender)

don't confuse gender with expression of sexuality (ex: homo- vs hetero- vs bi- vs ...-sexuality), or with sex(physiological characteristics). gender is culturaly-sociologically created mostly during early years but sometimes also re-created after in life (when the protagonist sees that it's possible!oh the magic!). It's a given or self-made role.

*i wouldn't put **other**. cos as much as it's potentialy full of meaning, in writen form it is so empty, and standing next to precisely written male, female, it's put in a subordinate position.*

Uncle_Franek, posted 2012/10/09 23:35 Visibility: World

So then why not remove the whole field??? Anyone cares to comment?

guaka, posted 2012/10/15 21:32 Visibility: World

C\$ actually has 4 options:

blank

male

female

several people

It's probably the right way to do it.

guaka, posted 2012/10/15 21:34 Visibility: World

Oh wrong! When I try to save blank it tells me "You must specify your gender."

But here on BW we could just allow people to leave it blank. Best would be to add a little warning/reminder to this though. E.g. “Are you sure you don't want to specify your gender?”

octaviandavid, posted 2013/03/08 22:48 Visibility: World

@JOTTWEEDEE I agree, if a profile has no photo it's incomplete, immature, and I would reject to host/surf. same goes for specifying the gender. So my vote would go to:

- a mandatory field with “male/female/other” options for search and display on other site pages except profile page
- plus an optional text field for “amusing creative details of my gender” only displayed on the full profile page that should not necessarily be taken seriously.

ANNEX 4.

Facebook *About* Section

The image shows a screenshot of a Facebook profile's 'About' section. At the top, there is a blue navigation bar with the Facebook logo, a search bar, and the user's name 'Alexandra Cotoc'. Below this is a grey header with the word 'About' and a pencil icon for editing. The main content is organized into several sections, each with an 'Edit' button:

- Work and Education:** Lists 'University of Orléans' (Orléans, France) and 'Facultatea de Litere, UBB' (Add Location). It also features 'Universitatea Babeș - Bolyai, Cluj - Napoca' (Cluj-Napoca) and an 'Add a Job' button.
- Living:** Shows 'Cluj-Napoca' as the 'Current City' and 'Sighisoara, Romania' as the 'Hometown', each with a map icon.
- Basic Information:** Displays 'Birthday: April 21, 1986' and 'Gender: Female'. It includes options to 'Add Languages', 'Add Religious Views', and 'Add Political Views'.
- Contact Information:** Lists 'Address: Cluj-Napoca, Romania', 'Email: alecotoc@facebook.com', and 'Facebook: http://facebook.com/alecotoc'.
- Relationships and Family:** Features an 'Add Your Relationships' button with a heart icon.
- About You:** Includes a 'Write About Yourself' button.
- Favorite Quotations:** Includes an 'Add a Favorite Quotation' button.
- History by Year:** Shows '1986' with a calendar icon and the text 'Born on April 21, 1986', along with an 'Add a Life Event' button.

ANNEX 5. Facebook Timeline

Matt Brown Update Info View Activity

Communication Designer at Facebook
Studied English at Indiana University
Lives in San Francisco, California
Married to Tiffani Jones Brown

About Friends 439 Photos 173 Map 89 Likes 53

Status Photo Place What's on your mind?

Recent Activity

- Matt likes Mountain Biking.
- Matt subscribed to Tom Watson's updates.

Matt Brown August 29
Last Weekend / SF Moma (16 photos)

Matt Brown August 21
2nd Anniversary Backpacking — Point Reyes (3 photos)

Like - Comment

Matt Brown became friends with **Nicholas Felton**.
August 11

Nicholas Felton
Co-workers at Facebook
See friendship

Like - Comment

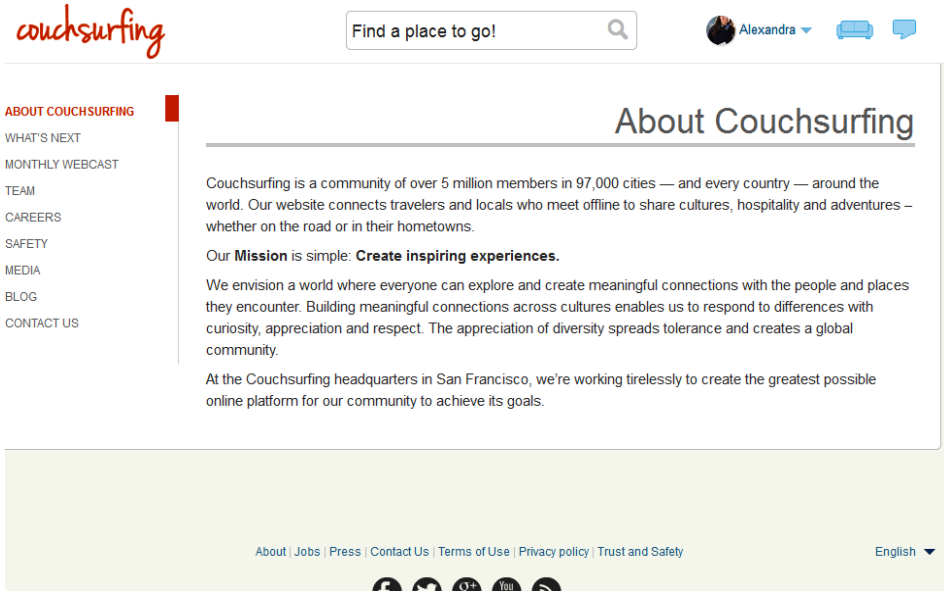
Tom Watson August 11
Fries well done. — with Matt Brown at In-N-Out Burger - Daly City.

The image shows a screenshot of a social media profile page, likely from Facebook, divided into several sections:

- Likes August:** A horizontal row of four small profile pictures with names below them: George Saunders, Mountain Biking, Brian Eno, and Christopher Walken.
- Friends August:** A section titled "Added 9 Friends" featuring a large profile picture of a man and a grid of nine smaller profile pictures. Below this is the text "Friends Added who work at Facebook" and a large heading "Nine" followed by "Josh Wiseman, Sam Lessin, Chris Cox and 6 others."
- Places September:** A map of San Francisco with three red location pins. The text "Visited 3 Places" is above the map. The map shows various neighborhoods like Soma, Mission District, and Potrero District.
- NetfliX August:** A small banner at the bottom right with the Netflix logo and the text "NetfliX August".

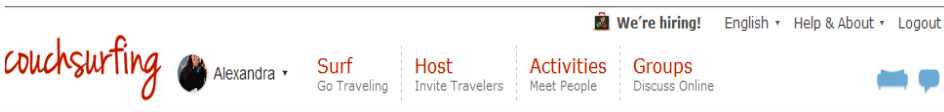
ANNEX 6.

a.



The screenshot shows the Couchsurfing website's 'About Couchsurfing' page. At the top left is the Couchsurfing logo. A search bar contains the text 'Find a place to go!'. To the right of the search bar is a user profile for 'Alexandra' with a dropdown arrow, and icons for a car and a speech bubble. On the left side, there is a navigation menu with links: ABOUT COUCHSURFING (highlighted), WHAT'S NEXT, MONTHLY WEBCAST, TEAM, CAREERS, SAFETY, MEDIA, BLOG, and CONTACT US. The main content area has the heading 'About Couchsurfing' and the following text: 'Couchsurfing is a community of over 5 million members in 97,000 cities — and every country — around the world. Our website connects travelers and locals who meet offline to share cultures, hospitality and adventures — whether on the road or in their hometowns. Our **Mission** is simple: **Create inspiring experiences.** We envision a world where everyone can explore and create meaningful connections with the people and places they encounter. Building meaningful connections across cultures enables us to respond to differences with curiosity, appreciation and respect. The appreciation of diversity spreads tolerance and creates a global community. At the Couchsurfing headquarters in San Francisco, we're working tirelessly to create the greatest possible online platform for our community to achieve its goals.' At the bottom of the page, there is a footer with links: About | Jobs | Press | Contact Us | Terms of Use | Privacy policy | Trust and Safety, and a language selector set to 'English'. Social media icons for Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube, and RSS are also present.

b. Trust and Safety on Couchsurfing



The screenshot shows the Couchsurfing website's navigation bar. On the left is the Couchsurfing logo. To its right is a user profile for 'Alexandra' with a dropdown arrow. Further right are navigation links: 'Surf' (Go Traveling), 'Host' (Invite Travelers), 'Activities' (Meet People), and 'Groups' (Discuss Online). On the far right, there is a 'We're hiring!' icon, a language selector set to 'English', and links for 'Help & About' and 'Logout'. There are also icons for a car and a speech bubble.

How do Couchsurfers stay safe?

Trust is the foundation of sharing and of Couchsurfing. Helping you stay safe is our top priority. Over the years, our safety team has built a system that fosters trust among our members and helps Couchsurfers make informed decisions and stay safe.

A cornerstone of our trust system is the public references that members leave for one another following any kind of in-person meeting. They rate their experiences as positive, negative or neutral. Besides the rating, we encourage our members to leave very detailed references of each other so that others can be fully informed before agreeing to host, surf or just meet.

We also offer an optional verification system that confirms individuals' names and addresses. Those who opt in are identified with a check mark icon and are featured higher up in Couchsurfing search results.

Another safety feature we offer is vouching, which is a way for members to publicly declare trust in each other.

Ultimately, taking the time to read member profiles very carefully to make sure they've been vetted and that there's a personality match is critical to safety and a positive experience.

More information on our trust system, plus advice for making safer decisions, can be found in our [Trust and Safety Center](#).

ANNEX 7. Couchsurfing – Find a Couch

The screenshot shows the Couchsurfing website's search interface. At the top left is the Couchsurfing logo. To its right is a user profile for 'Alexandra' with icons for a couch and a speech bubble. A navigation bar contains links for Home, Find a Couch, Host a Traveler, Discuss, and Help. Below the navigation bar is a 'Surf' button. The main search area is titled 'Where are you going?' and contains a text input field with 'Barcelona, Catalonia, Spain'. Below the input field are three location selection options: 'Everywhere', 'Current Location', and 'Browse Locations'. The next section is 'Find hosts with space for:' with a dropdown menu set to '2 surfers'. Below this is a link to 'Filter by age, gender, keyword, and more'. The filter section is divided into four columns: 'Age, Gender or Keyword', 'Your Network', 'Safety Features', and 'Advanced Options'. The 'Age, Gender or Keyword' column includes an age range dropdown (26 to 32), checkboxes for Male, Female, and Several people, and a 'Search by Keyword:' input field. The 'Your Network' column has checkboxes for My Friends, Friends of my Friends, and In my groups. The 'Safety Features' column has checkboxes for Has Photo, Verified, and Vouched. The 'Advanced Options' column has dropdowns for Language (English) and Last login (50 Days), and checkboxes for Ambassador and Wheelchair Accessible. A 'Search!' button is located at the bottom left of the filter section.

Where are you going?
Barcelona, Catalonia, Spain

Everywhere Current Location Browse Locations

Find hosts with space for:
2 surfers

Filter by age, gender, keyword, and more

Age, Gender or Keyword	Your Network	Safety Features	Advanced Options
Age: 26 to 32	<input type="checkbox"/> My Friends	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Has Photo	Language: English
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Male	<input type="checkbox"/> Friends of my Friends	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Verified	Last login: 50 Days
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Female	<input type="checkbox"/> In my groups	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Vouched	<input type="checkbox"/> Ambassador
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Several people			<input type="checkbox"/> Wheelchair Accessible
Search by Keyword:			

Search!

ANNEX 8.

The Settlers of Catan – Game Manager



ANNEX 9.

Casual Discussions on the Entertainment Community on Facebook

Dude...I was there....
Don't try to change the story.

Entertainment Timeline 2012

Like · Comment · Share 24,748 80 708

24,747 people like this.

Tyzor Greene I HATE when people do that
June 27, 2012 at 3:27am · Like · 5

Lauren Domian and then you just kinda go along with it because they make it sound cooler 😊
June 27, 2012 at 3:29am · Like · 6

Daniel Barajas LOL true story Bro!!!
June 27, 2012 at 3:29am · Like · 1

Jerry Starr jack n jill went up the hill
June 27, 2012 at 3:29am · Like

Miguel Franco LOL Very True!
June 27, 2012 at 3:31am · Like · 1

Kirra Doran <https://www.facebook.com/ImNotRihannaIDontLoveTheWayULie> Like this page

Im not Rihanna i don't love the way u lie
Dont lie to people it isn't good 4 anyone
Page: 23 like this

John Miller Ronald Zeak
June 27, 2012 at 3:38am · Like

Jerome Miguel Tuazon The exaggerated gossip boys! XD
June 27, 2012 at 3:42am · Like

Cody Claybrook no you wernt so keep riding brah
June 27, 2012 at 3:46am · Like · 2

Kayla Weber made me think somthing funny caitin if you get this reamember at camp
June 27, 2012 at 3:47am · Like

Raymond MuscleturntupGame Mazo Dont you hate that...I know I do!!!
June 27, 2012 at 3:50am · Like · 1

Vadim Tomak ANDREY PETRENKO.
June 27, 2012 at 4:02am via mobile · Like

Kylee-Star Hale Totally know that feeling!
June 27, 2012 at 4:06am · Like

Sunil Moond https://m.facebook.com/AapkeBinMenYeAdhuriLife?refid=7&m_sess=soB8FYps-XkrtIdUd&_ft_=qid.5758517389554161898%3Amf_story_key.453182478039097

-  **Tami Seitz** Love it !!!! ROTFL
June 27, 2012 at 4:18am · Like
-  **Maddie Krysciak** so true
June 27, 2012 at 4:20am · Like
-  **Elle Rose** Stella Helava Hanfakaga
June 27, 2012 at 4:21am · Like ·  1
-  **Toka Saad** i waz there too
June 27, 2012 at 4:44am · Like
-  **Toka Saad** jk
June 27, 2012 at 4:44am · Like
-  **Trey Nike'd Up Conway** dude, we no u gay, dont try to change the story XD
June 27, 2012 at 5:15am · Like
-  **Lupe Tinoco-Cerrillo** F. G
June 27, 2012 at 5:48am via mobile · Like ·  1
-  **Paula Gray** Are you talking about your Dad
June 27, 2012 at 5:53am · Like ·  1
-  **Rosie Good** Dude, I'm sorry you're not coming over. I will miss you.
June 27, 2012 at 6:00am · Like ·  2
-  **Janet Belcher** Omg whee are you?
June 27, 2012 at 6:14am · Like ·  1
-  **Jagjit Singh Bawa** http://m.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=259172140854823&id=100002861167520&set=a.102175266554512.2339.100002861167520&refid=20&_ft_=fbid.259172160854821
 **Mobile Uploads**
"Ever u miss me, never u cry!
For a drop of tear in ur eyes, is a day less in my life!!" "
By: Jagjit Singh Bawa
June 27, 2012 at 6:15am · Like
-  **Jagjit Singh Bawa** Bt i ws nt thr...hahaha
June 27, 2012 at 6:20am · Like
-  **Vickie Denton** wow i cannot tell you how many times i have wanted to say that to a few people...lol
June 27, 2012 at 6:32am · Like
-  **Jared Conrad Jones** You werent there maaan'
June 27, 2012 at 7:24am · Like

-  **James Cowdery** sooo many time, and still sooo annoying!
June 27, 2012 at 8:02am · Like ·  1
-  **Jiorjo Angelo Livara**
M
June 27, 2012 at 8:06am via mobile · Like ·  1
-  **Shaun McLean** wat if i do change the story hhhmmmm?
June 27, 2012 at 8:40am · Like
-  **Migue Lito** Just makin a boring story more iinteresting 😞
June 27, 2012 at 9:08am · Like ·  1
-  **Jake Gauger** lkr
June 27, 2012 at 10:01am via mobile · Like ·  1
-  **Rocky Nasran** I don't andesten
June 27, 2012 at 10:39am · Like
-  **Aiko Apidos** mga tsismosa!!!hahahaha
June 27, 2012 at 11:29am · Like ·  1
-  **Alejandro Munoz** PAAa
June 27, 2012 at 12:22pm via mobile · Like
-  **Marian Straka** Realy
-  **Emma Hansson** haha, happens all the time x)
June 27, 2012 at 2:27pm · Like ·  1
-  **Ashley Tollner** Ya!!
June 27, 2012 at 3:02pm · Like ·  1
-  **James Tabug** yee
June 27, 2012 at 3:41pm · Like ·  1
-  **Steph McInnes** So true
June 27, 2012 at 4:07pm via mobile · Like ·  1
-  **Prajakta Joshi** true
June 27, 2012 at 4:26pm · Like ·  1
-  **Shruthi Gowda** wont change story.. just change the charaters...lol
June 27, 2012 at 5:21pm · Like
-  **Sharon David** true
June 27, 2012 at 6:29pm · Like
-  **Rio Reekie** Know a few people how do that
June 27, 2012 at 11:59pm · Like
-  **Sierrabreeze Gray Hawk** yep... i was there bro why you change things!

- 

Herman Knight Jr. Ok I Got IT !!!!
June 28, 2012 at 1:17am · Like
- 

Stephanie Erwin lol
June 28, 2012 at 5:16am · Like ·  1
- 

Madelynn Jaymes Gowan SO TRUE!
June 28, 2012 at 5:50am · Like ·  1
- 

Erika Young OMG! That's sooo freaking true! Some ppl just say things to make themselves look like angels! I know the feeling.
June 28, 2012 at 5:53am · Like
- 

Judy Jimenez-Perez Love it...so true!!!
June 28, 2012 at 11:08am via mobile · Like ·  1
- 

Chris Pollock Jarrod Watts
June 28, 2012 at 2:54pm · Like
- 

Zack Britt Kali Smith i know alloboott of ppl like this lol haha
June 28, 2012 at 4:13pm · Like ·  1
- 

Tina Esparza I love it.
June 28, 2012 at 4:22pm · Like ·  1
- 

Selena Stewart Haha so true
- 

Monica Carvalho very true
June 28, 2012 at 5:48pm · Like ·  1
- 

Valerie Bettis lol
June 29, 2012 at 3:26am · Like ·  1
- 

Scharfy Scharf 0:4
June 29, 2012 at 5:22am · Like
- 

Gabriela Lazzara I hate when people try to change the facts in yor face,
Its so frustrated it's calling you moran and try to get away,just thinking in a few if those make me so mad
June 29, 2012 at 6:13am · Like ·  1
- 

Branden Niblett Can't stand when that happens. They act like you don't know the details
June 30, 2012 at 11:36am · Like
- 

Brett Shelton Dumb
June 30, 2012 at 1:21pm · Like
- 

Samie Faul i HATE when ppl do that crap
July 1, 2012 at 1:25am via mobile · Like



Udele Bodnar Omg I have heard u do that soo many time I think @ this point everyone just rolls their eyes unless they were too drunk to remember how it really went
July 2, 2012 at 12:09am · [Like](#)



Susan Jaime One of my favorite saying that I've said to someone.
July 3, 2012 at 9:16pm · [Like](#)



Jeremy Zupan "I was like, CHECK PLEASE!"
"Dude, I was there, you didn't"
July 12, 2012 at 9:56am via mobile · [Like](#)



Shazia Zaheen Alamgir uhuh
August 13, 2012 at 10:54am · [Like](#)










Garrett Liddiard all the time i hate it!
August 15, 2012 at 6:14pm · [Like](#)



ANNEX 10.

a. Facebook Privacy Settings in 2010

Privacy Settings ▶ Personal Information and Posts

← Back to Privacy		Preview
Bio and favorite quotations The Bio description and Favorite Quotations in the About Me section of your profile		Friends Only ▼
Birthday Birth date and Year		Friends Only ▼
Interested in and looking for		Everyone ▼
Religious and political views		Friends Only ▼
Photo Albums	Edit Settings	
Posts by me Default setting for Status Updates, Links, Notes, Photos, and Videos you post		Everyone ▼
Allow friends to post on my Wall	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Friends can post on my Wall
Posts by Friends Control who can see posts by your friends on your profile		Friends Only ▼
Comments on Posts Control who can comment on posts you create		Friends Only ▼

b. Facebook Privacy Settings in 2013

Privacy Settings and Tools

Who can see my stuff?	Who can see your future posts?	Friends	Edit
	Review all your posts and things you're tagged in		Use Activity Log
	Limit the audience for posts you've shared with friends of friends or Public?		Limit Past Posts
Who can look me up?	Who can look you up using the email address or phone number you provided?	Friends	Edit
	Who can look up your timeline by name?	Friends	Edit
	Do you want other search engines to link to your timeline?	Off	Edit

Timeline and Tagging Settings


Who can add things to my timeline?	Who can post on your timeline?	Friends	Edit
	Review posts friends tag you in before they appear on your timeline?	Off	Edit
Who can see things on my timeline?	Review what other people see on your timeline		View As
	Who can see posts you've been tagged in on your timeline?	Friends	Edit
	Who can see what others post on your timeline?	Friends	Edit
How can I manage tags people add and tagging suggestions?	Review tags people add to your own posts before the tags appear on Facebook?	Off	Edit
	When you're tagged in a post, who do you want to add to the audience if they aren't already in it?	Friends	Edit
	Who sees tag suggestions when photos that look like you are uploaded? (this is not yet available to you)	Unavailable	

Chat (Off)

ANNEX 11.

Scholarships for Belgrade Summer School Group

facebook
Search



Scholarships for the Belgrade Summer School

Respond to Group Invitation

Wall
Info
Photos
Video
Events

Basic Info

Name: Scholarships for the Belgrade Summer School

Category: Student Groups - General

Description: International Communication Fund will award 3 Facebook friends with the scholarships for the Belgrade Summer School (BSS) 2010. In order to be considered for the scholarship:

1. Join this group
2. Invite ALL your friends to join this group (the link is in the menu above)
3. We will award 3 scholarships but only to the members that have friends in this group!

Organizing Committee
Belgrade Summer School 2010

Privacy Type: Open: All content is public.

Contact Info

Website: <http://www.BelgradeSummer.org>

Office: International Communication Fund

Location: Misesevska 6
Belgrade, Serbia, 11000

Official BSS Website:
<http://www.BelgradeSummer.org/>

Facebook BSS Fan Page:
<http://goo.gl/WeMl>

Facebook BSS Scholarships:
<http://goo.gl/mQx7>

Facebook BSS ALUMNI:
<http://goo.gl/QVf8>

Information

Category:
Student Groups - General

Description:
International Communication Fund will award 3 Facebook friends with the scholarships for the Belgrade Summer School (BSS) 2010. In order to be considered for the scholarship:

1. Join this group
2. Invite ALL your friends to join this group (the link is in the menu above)
3. We will award 3 scholarships but only to the members that have friends in this group!

Organizing Committee
Belgrade Summer School 2010

Privacy Type:
Open: All content is public.

Recent News

News:

You also have the opportunity to spend 2 amazing weeks in Serbia's capital in an intensive language training environment (Serbian, English, French, Spanish, German, Italian, Greek, Russian, Chinese or Arabic), from 12 July to 8 August 2010 (12-25 July and 26 July-8 August) while enjoying the social and cultural programme in Belgrade and Serbia!

We have set up a Facebook group where you can join, invite all your friends and hope that you will be a lucky winner. The only condition is that you and two of your friends are the members of our group and also know each other, i.e. all three of you are the Facebook friends. All the rest is pure luck. Scholarship recipients can come from any country in the world and, if needed, the Organisational Committee will offer help as far as visa procedure is concerned.

The scholarship covers the following: Two-week language course, Course materials, Counsellor and tutor assistance, Refreshments during the course, Free Internet access at Concord Language Schools, Congress materials, T-shirt in your size, DVD with pictures, videos and digital material, SIM card with credit, BSS participation certificate, Welcome cocktail, Belgrade Orientation Tour, Belgrade Bicycle Tour, Workshops, Visit to the Royal Courts, Sport day at Ada Ciganlija, Danube Cruise and Closing ceremony. Please note that extra-curricular activities, accommodation, meals and travel expenses will not be subsidised.


For more details, please check the following page:
<http://belgradesummer.org/english/read-more.php>

We encourage you to apply for the scholarships but note that every year we have much more applications than scholarships. That is why we advise you to pay the fees so as to secure your place at BSS. If you choose to apply for the scholarship please join the FB group, or send us an email with the requested documents by 1st June. The decision will be reached by 10th June and successful candidates will be contacted by email.

335

ANNEX 12.

Volleyball Page on Facebook – Automatically Generated



The screenshot shows a Facebook page for 'Volleyball'. On the left is a photo of a volleyball game in progress, with players in blue and red uniforms jumping for a ball. The page title is 'About Volleyball' with a 'Sport' category. It features a 'Liked' button, an 'Edit' button, and a privacy icon. Engagement statistics show 73,734,673 likes and 50,992 people talking about the topic. A text snippet from Wikipedia describes volleyball as a team sport with two teams of six players separated by a net. Below the text is a 'Continue Reading' link and a 'From Wikipedia' attribution. At the bottom left, there is a section for 'Friends who like Volleyball and related Pages'. At the bottom right, a grey box contains the text: 'This Page is automatically generated based on what Facebook users are interested in and not'.

About Volleyball ✓ Liked Edit ⋮

Sport

Volleyball is a team sport in which two teams of six players are separated by a net. Each team tries to score points by grounding a ball on the other team's court under organized rules. It has been a part of the official program of the Summer Olympic Games since 1964.

The complete rules are extensive. But simply, play p...

[Continue Reading](#)

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia · [Edit on Wikipedia](#)

73,734,673 people like this topic

50,992 people are talking about this topic

Friends who like Volleyball and related Pages

This Page is automatically generated based on what Facebook users are interested in and not

ANNEX 13.**Spoken Language Criteria Applied to Netspeak (Crystal: 2006: 45)**

		Web	Blogging	e-mail	Chatgroups	Virtual worlds	Instant messaging
1.	time-bound	no	no	yes, but in different ways	yes, but in different ways	yes, but in different ways	yes
2.	spontaneous	no	yes, but with restrictions	variable	yes, but with restrictions	yes, but with restrictions	yes
3.	face-to-face	no	no	no	no	no	no, unless camera used
4.	loosely structure	variable	yes	variable	yes	yes	yes
5.	socially interactive	no, with increasing options	no, with increasing options	variable	yes, but with restrictions	yes, but with restrictions	yes
6.	immediately revisable	no	no	no	no	no	no
7.	prosodically rich	no	no	no	no	no	no

ANNEX 14.

Written Language Criteria Applied to Netspeak (Crystal, 2006: 47)

	Web	Blogging	e-mail	Chatgroups	Virtual Worlds	Instant messaging
space-bound	yes, with extra options	yes	yes, but routinely deleted	yes, but with restrictions	yes, but with restrictions	yes, but moves off-screen rapidly
contrived	yes	variable	variable	No, but with some adaptation	no, but with some adaptation	no
visually-decontextualized	yes, but with considerable adaptations	yes	yes	yes	yes, but with some adaptation	yes, unless camera used
elaborately structured	yes	variable	variable	no	no	no
factually communicative	yes	yes	Yes [we claim that this feature is variable]	variable	yes, but with some adaptation	variable
repeatedly revisable	yes	variable	variable	no	no	no
graphically risk	yes, but in different ways	No, with increasing options	no	no	yes, but in different ways	no

ANNEX 15. Spamming on Facebook

Example 1

Entertainment Timeline Now

8 people like this.

Ari Mayo Keep reading on, or die tonight a exactly 12:42. This is based on a TRUE STORY! Once there was a baby girl named Marry. Her mother couldnt take all the crying, so she decied it was time for her to go. She buried her baby alive in her back yard. After she buried her she could still hear Marry crying. So she dug her back up and stabbed her one time in the arm, and buried her again. Marry cried harder, but a few hours later it stopped. At exactly 12:42, Marry died. She bleded to death. Now her sprit hauntes the world. When your sleeping, she stabbes you in the arm and watches you bleed to death. And that's how she got the name "Bloody Marry" this is the true story of her. She wants everyone to feel her pain that she felt. Apperantly, if you repost thThis isn't fake. Apparently, if you copy and paste this to ten comments in the next ten minuets you will have the best day of your life tomorrow. You will either get kissed or asked out, if you brake this chain you will see a little dead girl in your room tonight. In the next 53 minuets someone will say I love you or I'm sorrys to 12 other comments you will have the best day of your life tomorrow. But if you break this chain you die at exactly 12:42 tonight by Bloody Marry. Don't believe
 Like · Reply · 7 hours ago via mobile

Example 2 (Alan Wolfy Nuttall's Comment and Gabby Luna's Comment)

Can I help you sir?
 No thanks, I'm just looking for movies to download later

Entertainment
 Liked · Monday

Like · Comment · Share

680 people like this.

30 shares

Alan Wolfy Nuttall DONT READ THIS. YOU WILL BE KISSED ON THE NEAREST POSSIBLE FRIDAY BY THE LOVE OF YOUR LIFE.TOMMOROW WILL BE THE BEST DAY OF YOUR LIFE. NOW YOU'VE STARTED READING THIS. DONT STOP. THIS IS SO FREAKY. 1. say your name ten times.2. say your mom's..... name five times.3. say your crushes three times 4. paste this to four other posts. If you do this, your crush will kiss you on the nearest Friday. But if you read this and do not paste this, then you will have very bad luck. POST THIS ON 5 COMMENTS IN 143 MINUTES. WHEN YOU'RE DONE PRESS F6 AND YOUR CRUSH'S NAME WILL APPEAR IN BIG LETTERS ON THE SCREEN
 Like · Reply · 1 · Monday at 12:28am

Gabby Luna TRY THIS!!!!!!! IT REALLY WORKS YOU HAVE TO READ THE WHOLE THING OR IT WON'T WORK!!!
 *
 *

ANNEX 16.

Thread of Comments among FB Friends – Randomness of the Topic and Topic-Shifts



[Unlike](#) · [Unfollow Post](#) · [12 hours ago](#) · [Seen by 5](#)

Jafar Ayaz: salut)

[12 hours ago](#) · [Like](#)

Ema Nan: salut, Elnur!

Eva Parloc: Salut! Jafar, ce faci?

Jafar Ayaz: bine. multumesc. i tu?

Ema Nan: OMG! Jafar speaks Romanian!

[12 hours ago](#) · [Like](#) · [1](#)

Eva Parloc: Si eu foarte bine!

[12 hours ago](#) · [Like](#) · [1](#)

Jafar Ayaz: haha. c'mon. I guess, for the first time in my life, I spelled it correctly))

Ema Nan: yes! You did! I was not sarcastic.

[12 hours ago](#) · [Unlike](#) · [1](#)

Ema Nan: I wish I could spell that in Turkish... but I cannot. So you are smart

[12 hours ago](#) · [Like](#) · [1](#)

Jafar Ayaz: I wish my Romanian was as good as yours, Ema. At least it's better than Eva's

Eva Parloc: :D

Ema Nan: haha... and I wish my Turkish was as good as yours Let's have a brain surgery

Eva Parloc: Jafar, when did you plan your visit to Romania?

[12 hours ago](#) · [Like](#) · [2](#)

Eva Parloc: So that I know how much time I have to improve my Romanian or Turkish, or both

Jafar Ayaz: *Ema, I'm afraid I will lose my cooking abilites after the brain exchange
xD Eva, I have my last exam tomorrow. Then I'm all free in terms of time. But
I have financial problems)) Let's say you have a month and a half. Work hard))*

Eva Parloc: *ok! Perfect!*

Ema Nan: *We are waiting for you!* [12 hours ago](#) · [Like](#) · [1](#)

Eva Parloc: *Do not make me go through difficult learning processes in vain!*

Eva Parloc: *I am counting on this*

Eva Parloc: *Put Jafar with red in my calendar*

Jafar Ayaz: *Red is cool)) don't worry we will compare our Romanian and Turkish
skills soon enough* [12 hours ago](#) · [Unlike](#) · [1](#)

Eva Parloc: *Romania is cheap, do not worry about the financial part*

Jafar Ayaz: *I still need to spend money on visa procedures. But thanx for the
motivation)*

Eva Parloc: *the part that Ana wrote is true*

Jafar Ayaz: *I sure as hell hope so)*

Fernando Desafina: *Daniel Nikitina, are you already drowned? I've heard that
is raining hard in Vienna* [12 hours ago](#) · [Unlike](#) · [1](#)

Maria Cabedo: *Hello!*

Ema Nan: *Neee, Mann! He can swim* [12 hours ago](#) · [Unlike](#) · [2](#)

Maria Cabedo: *(I didn't have anything more interesting to say, but I wanted to
take part into the conversation)* [12 hours ago](#) · [Like](#) · [1](#)

Eva Parloc: *:D*

Eva Parloc: *Maria Cabedo is awesome with this comment* [12 hours ago](#) · [Like](#) · [1](#)

Ema Nan: *Well...* [12 hours ago](#) · [Like](#) · [1](#)

Ema Nan: *:))))))))))))))*

Ema Nan: *this is funny indeed*

Maria Cabedo: *Writing about nothing, you mean?*

Ema Nan: *and interesting enough* [12 hours ago](#) · [Edited](#) · [Like](#) · [1](#)

Ema Nan: *the comment, your comment was funny*

Ema Nan: *and interesting*

Maria Cabedo: *Thank you! Though I don't think I should deserve credit for it,
I'm sure it was already invented*

Maria Cabedo: *I like your comments on it, though*

Eva Parloc: *:D*

Daniel Nikitina: *I drowned*

[12 hours ago](#) · [Like](#) · [2](#)

Ema Nan: *and we get to chat so rarely that everything we write here is interesting, at least for me*

Maria Cabedo: *Do you know what I am remembering now?*

Ema Nan: *what did you remeber?*

Maria Cabedo: *I remembered about that one time in museums quatier, in the back of some building, sitting, and chatting*

[12 hours ago](#) · [Like](#) · [1](#)

Eva Parloc: *what did you remember?*

Maria Cabedo: *do you remember?*

Eva Parloc: *yes*

Ema Nan: *Daniel, to you have a waterproof laptop, are you writing from the bottom of Donau?*

Maria Cabedo: *(Daniel, don't drawn!)*

[12 hours ago](#) · [Unlike](#) · [1](#)

Fernando Desafina: *hahahahah*

Daniel Nikitina: *I bought that Sony Experia Z, it's waterproof, and I can write on Facebook because it has internet*

Maria Cabedo: *You, girls, have to tell me about your research, I am missing so much interesting knowledge!!*

Daniel Nikitina: *since I still don't have a real internet :S*

Ema Nan: *ah sooo*

Maria Cabedo: *is your pone really waterproof???*

[12 hours ago](#) · [Edited](#) · [Like](#)

Eva Parloc: *We will tell you tomorrow on skype*

[12 hours ago](#) · [Like](#) · [1](#)

Ema Nan: *It is Eva's research*

Eva Parloc: *so that you can sleep well*

Fernando Desafina: *now I remember, that I just saved my computer and my playstation, the first time that the fire alarm sounded*

[12 hours ago](#) · [Like](#) · [1](#)

Ema Nan: *Daniel himself is waterproof*

Maria Cabedo: *I know, but I also want to know about yours,*

[Ema](#) [12 hours ago](#) · [Like](#)

Eva Parloc: *And left your girlfriend in the room*

Ema Nan: Oriol, you are amazing! :))) and famous in the Heim

Daniel Nikitina: I don't live in Pfeilgasse anymore [12 hours ago](#) · [Like](#) · [1](#)

Eva Parloc: I will tell you about Ema's, she is too modest.

Maria Cabedo: Thank you, Eva!

Ema Nan: Maria Cabedo, my research is not that interesting... I will explain

Eva Parloc: Did you move, Dr?

Maria Cabedo: ok..

Eva Parloc: SEE????

Ema Nan: Really? ooooo no more connections to Pfeilgasse?

Daniel Nikitina: yes, I moved, didn't pay for the june, and I don't have Internet

Ema Nan: let's skip the research part, I am on relaxing mode

Maria Cabedo: where are you living, Daniel?

Eva Parloc: He bought an awesome apartment

Maria Cabedo: let's skip it... for now!

Ema Nan: on... Karmarschgasse

Daniel Nikitina: on the bottom of the Donau

Maria Cabedo: no... I'm kidding, it's alright, we can talk about movies as well

Fernando Desafina: how will you survive without playing table tennis maaann

Ema Nan: yes... but the whole flat is waterproof

Maria Cabedo: hhahahahahahaha

Maria Cabedo: I want a flat like that....

Daniel Nikitina: actually, I have a certain room, with the certain table in it..

Ema Nan: leaving jokes aside, Drazen has a table tennis in the flat

Ema Nan: yes

Maria Cabedo: did you still the table from the dorm????? [Like](#) · [1](#)

Ema Nan: I confirm what he just said [Like](#) · [1](#)

Maria Cabedo: :))

Ema Nan: noooo

Daniel Nikitina: nah, but I should.. [Unlike](#) · [3](#)

Ema Nan: I stole it and gave it to Daniel as a present

Fernando Desafina: leaving jokes aside, why you didn't tell me??

Maria Cabedo: that's nice of you!

Emá Nan: :))

Fernando Desafina: *I would have taken the first flight*

Daniel Nikitina: *leaving jokes aside, I was expecting you in Vienna*

Emá Nan: *haha*

Emá Nan: *yes, me too, Oriol*

Fernando Desafina: *I was planning to, but mi boss didn't give me hollydays*

Emá Nan: *pf!*

Fernando Desafina: *he owes me 30 days of hollydays*

Daniel Nikitina: *damn boss*

Daniel Nikitina: *good that you told me, not to wait for you*

Emá Nan: *wow... 30 is good*

Emá Nan: :)))

Fernando Desafina: *we have not said an specific date Drazen*

Emá Nan: *was waiting for you this entire month in the airport*

Daniel Nikitina: *haha, you sure?*

Daniel Nikitina: *Oriol Soler Dazen, will you be in Wien on the 20th may??*

7. Mai um 18:41 · Gefällt mir

Emá Nan: *Oriol, you mentioned something about the 20th of May*

Emá Nan: *and I can read Drazen's mind*

Fernando Desafina: *I think he is waiting for me in the airport since he went there with me to say goodbye*

Emá Nan: *yes, yes*

Daniel Nikitina: *that was exactly what happened*

Fernando Desafina: *ok, you are right. I thought that I've never written that date, and that it was just in my mind* Like · 1

Emá Nan: *you could hardly convince him to come to see us in front of Rathaus*

Fernando Desafina: *es tut mir leid Danieeeeeel*

Emá Nan: *Fernando, even if it's in your mind... we can read your mind...*

Edited · Like

Daniel Nikitina: *macht nichts, Fernando*

Daniel Nikitina: *so, when can I expect you in Vienna than?*

Fernando Desafina: *ooooh mann, you were reading my mind when you were spying me through the window*

Ema Nan: yes [11 hours ago](#) · [Like](#)

Fernando Desafina: Ich weiss es nicht

Ema Nan: oooo, I really miss that... the spying part... and everything

Fernando Desafina: sobald ich Urlaub habe

Fernando Desafina: oder vielleicht reicht es mit einem Wochenende (3 Tage)

Daniel Nikitina: für mich schon

Daniel Nikitina: more that 3 days of your presence in less than 100 km..

Fernando Desafina: hahahah how many Km of water do you have around you man?

Daniel Nikitina: I'm on the 3rd floor

Fernando Desafina: verrater, wir gehören zu dem ersten Stock

Fernando Desafina: immer

Daniel Nikitina: hehe, I betrayed the saboteur code [11 hours ago](#) · [Like](#) · [1](#)

Fernando Desafina: das verdammte Mädchen, das die verdammte Schlüssel hatte, wohnte in dem dritten Stock. Wie du

Daniel Nikitina: no, she lives on the last floor 10th from 9

Daniel Nikitina: and where did the others go from this conversation?

[11 hours ago](#) · [Edited](#) · [Like](#)

Eva Parloc: I went to bed. Grandma could stay after midnight [3 hours ago](#) · [Like](#)

Maria Cabedo: I went to bed as well [2 hours ago](#) · [Like](#)

Maria Cabedo: And now I'll be leaving to work in 10 mins [2 hours ago](#) · [Like](#)

Ema Nan: I went to a party Have a gorgeous day! [2 hours ago](#) · [Like](#)

ANNEX 17.

Open-ended Interviews

Questions: What is cyber-identity on SNSs? Is it different from real identity?

A. Target Group: Ph.D. Candidates, Philological and Cultural Studies, The English Department of the University of Vienna, Vienna, Austria, 2012

Answers:

1. *Cyber-identity – identity in a different dimension of the real world (online) where the user offers information which only partially reflects his/her personality, but still part of his identity offline. Your activity on the FB wall is limited to the available possibilities of posting. If you are a sociable person in real life, you might (high possibility) have a large number of friends on FB. If you are a shy person you may have either very poor activity or be very communicative, but it all reduces to how you relate to other people.*
2. *What people choose to tell about themselves – their narrative.*
3. *In my view, cyber-identity is mostly an image of a person, may be, the one he/she wants to be or seem, but in reality lacks it; and can easily manipulate and change it. People may dare to write or communicate in a way (or with those people) what they might have fear of (or be shy) to do in real life.*
4. *Identity is a process of doing something contrary to an entity or having something or belonging to. I have never used the facebook – no idea what it is. But I think people are doing some identities there as well (a friend, an academic,...).*
5. *Identity on Facebook: the images one wants others to have about him/her; more or less close to the “real” identity, depending on the (character of the) person.*
6. *Presentation of socially constructed self as appropriate to the occasion.*
7. *A conscious construction of a self-image I want others to have of me.*

8. *There isn't much difference. I've lots of identities in "real" life and am seen differently by the people in different fields. I've had different identities throughout my life; e.g. Puppi when I was a child.*

9. *Cyber ID*

Different in degree, not in kind: also in my offline identity

- a. *I make some sort of selection on what I disclose depending on context;*
- b. *Online media simply increase our editing power;*
- c. *Share a range of identities (that clearly overlap) also in offline reality.*

10. *cyber identity: subjectively constructed/identity fluid.*

11. *My online identity is not elaboratory represented and it is not equivalent to my offline identity for several reasons. I rarely put anything on the wall, the pictures don't show my everyday attire; what people post about me is not always true or relevant; friends are nicer on facebook than on real life.*

12. *I assume that cyber-identity is different from real-identity;*

- *differences between different networks?*
- *purpose of the network;*
- *do the people in the network know the "real" me (e.g. as in Facebook)?*

B. Target Group: Students at the Master Program: *Current Trends in Linguistics*, Faculty of Letters, Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania, 2012

Student 1

1. *Cyber-identity: Dorință de comunicare, afirmare; laudă de sine; "spionaj" (a urmări ce se întâmplă cu o persoană), nu neapărat în sens negativ; umplerea timpului liber și puțină informare, dar mai rar ăsta e scopul.*
2. *Nu e nevoie de o cyberidentitate (falsă), pentru că oricum în viața de zi cu zi e la fel, arătăm doar ceea ce vrem ca alții să vadă. Nici în spațiul real, nici în cel virtual nu te „lauzi” cu defectele tale, normal că îți faci o reclamă mai bună. Oricum, cei care te cunosc în viața reală îți acumulează cyber-identitatea și te iau așa cum ești. Dar, per total, chiar dacă tinzi să "dai mai bine pe sticlă", ești ceea ce îți place (Adică un simplu like poate spune multe despre tine).*

[1. Cyber-identity: the desire to communicate and to be successful; self-praise; “spying” (to check on another person’s activity), not necessarily in a negative way; spending one’s free time and obtaining pieces of information, but this does not happen that often.

2. There is no need for a cyber-identity (false), because it is the same in everyday life, we only expose what we want others to see. Users do not “boast” about their flaws neither in the real space, nor in the virtual space; it is only obvious that they market themselves in a positive manner. Anyways, the people who know you in the real life accumulate the cyber-identity with the real identity and see you as you are. But, all in all, even if you have the tendency to “give a better impression on screen”, you are what you like (meaning a simply **like** can say a lot about you.)

Student 2

1. *Cyberidentity – o identitate adevărată sau falsă care acceptă sau permite cu ușurință derapaje în lumea ireală/imaginară.*
2. *Nu este același lucru din punct de vedere sociolingvistic. Nu, pentru că ne putem ascunde foarte bine în spatele „zidurilor” fără a fi judecați „direct” în lumea reală.*

[1. Cyberidentity – a true or false identity which accepts or easily permits side-slips in the unreal/imaginary world.

2. It is not the same thing from a sociolinguistic standpoint. No, because we can hide ourselves very well behind the “walls” without being judged “directly” in the real world.]

Student 3

1. *Cyber-identitatea: un construct, un dat \longrightarrow individul = constructor*



Proces de construcție și reconstrucție a unei imagini (existența unei preocupări din partea individului în acest sens); o altă mască a individului (dintr-aceeași piesă)

2. *Este cyberidentitatea unul și același lucru cu identitatea reală?*

Da, pentru că prin intermediul acestor profiluri de socializare, OMUL NU DOAR COMUNICĂ, CI, FĂRĂ SĂ ÎȘI DEA SEAMA, SE ȘI COMUNICĂ.

! Cum te comunică = ?; depinde de tine cum faci asta, dar și de interpretările pe care le fac ceilalți pe baza a ceea ce au văzut. / a ceea ce au „citit” în postările tale.

[1. Cyber-identity: a construct, something given \longrightarrow the individual = creator



The process of construction and reconstruction of an image (the individual's interest in this); another mask of the individual (from the same play)

2. Is cyber-identity the same with real identity?

Yes, because through these socializing profiles, THE INDIVIDUAL IS NOT ONLY COMMUNICATING, BUT ALSO, WITHOUT BEING CONSCIOUS ABOUT THIS, HE COMMUNICATES HIMSELF.

! You do you communicate yourself = ?; it depends on you, but also on the other people's interpretations of what they see/ "read" in your posts.]

Student 4

Identitatea cibernetică: reprezentarea pe internet a persoanelor, ideilor sau instituțiilor.

Nu este diferită de realitate prin informație; este diferită de realitate prin simțurile noastre și prin materialitate în primul rând.

Adresele de internet pentru oameni care se descriu, caută informație, interacționează, abordate din perspectiva sociolingvistică și psiholingvistică, ne-au oferit noi perspective către interior, introspecție, reverie și extroversie spre realitate.

[Cybernetic identity: the representation on the Internet of people, ideas and institutions.

It is not different from reality in what information is concerned; it is different from reality through our senses and through materiality in the first place.

The Internet addresses for the people who describe themselves, search for information, interact, approached from a sociolinguistic and psycholinguistic perspective, offered new perspectives towards the interior, introspection, reverie and extroversion towards reality.]

Student 5

Ciber identitatea ar putea fi identitatea pe care vrei să o livrezi celorlalți, care poate fi identică cu identitatea ta reală, de zi cu zi, sau poate fi “custom”, adică prezenți numai anumite lucruri despre tine, de regulă lucruri pozitive. Ce am observat este că de obicei persoanele mai extrovertite își expun identitatea lor reală pe Facebook de exemplu plus câteva lucruri în plus despre ei care sunt sau nu adevărate, iar de cealaltă parte am observat că persoanele mai introvertite preferă să keep private, nu vor să expună foarte mult din identitatea lor.

– de obicei identitatea de pe Facebook corespunde cu identitatea reală, la unele persoane fiind și adăugiri, adică dacă vrei să fii cool, hipster etc., te uiți la câteva profiles să vezi care e tendința în materie de muzică, filme, după care urmează să dai like și să îți creezi o imagine care nu corespunde identității tale, ci cerințelor celorlalți utilizatori.

[Cyber-identity could be the identity that you want to deliver to others. It can be identical to your real identity, everyday identity, or it can be “custom”, that is to say you present only certain things about yourself, usually positive things. What I realized is that, on the one hand, extroverts usually expose their real identity on Facebook. They also add some things about themselves which can be true or false. On the other hand, I realized that the introverts prefer to keep private, they do not want to expose too much of their identity.

– Facebook identity usually corresponds to the real identity, even if some people also add things to the online identity. That is to say, you can be cool, hipster etc., you look at some profiles to see what is the trend in terms of music, films, then you click like and you create an image which does not correspond to your identity, but to the requirement of other users.]

Student 6

1. „Ciberidentitatea” – *Identitate creată în spațiu virtual care nu este conformă identității reale (libera alegere de-a fi, vorbi diferit etc. decât în viața reală)*
2. *Diferită de cea din plan real sau nu?*

Reprezintă, oarecum, o transpunere a identității din plan real, dar nu în totalitate (în plan virtual, comunicăm puțin diferit față de cum comunicăm și interrelaționăm în realitate). Iar ceea ce se comunică din cauza modului în care se comunică) este înțeles și interpretat greșit sau nu. În spațiul virtual niciodată nu ne vom comporta la fel ca în realitate.

[1. “Cyberidentity” – Identity created in the virtual space. It does not correspond to the real identity (freedom to choose how to be, to talk in a different manner etc. from the real life)

2. Different from real identity or not?

In some ways, it represents an adaptation of the real identity, but not entirely (in the virtual space we communicate and interact in a slightly different manner in comparison to reality). And what is communicated because of the way in which it is communicated) is understood and interpreted in a wrong way or not. In the virtual space we will never behave like in reality.]

Student 7

1. *Identitatea în spațiul real: consider că este o combinație dintre real și imaginar. Identitatea virtuală ar putea fi o a doua mască a identității reale.*
2. *E diferită de real?*

– Cunosc cazuri reale (de pe Facebook) în care identitatea nu e una reală în totalitate. Dar, există și o a doua posibilitate în care identitatea să fie total diferită de real, o identitate „falsă” sau una reală în totalitate.

[1. Identity in the real space: I argue that it is a combination between real and imaginary. Virtual identity could be a second mask of real identity.

2. Is it different from the real one?

– I know Facebook profiles which display an identity which is not entirely real. However, there is also the possibility that the identity is totally different

from the real one, a “false” identity or one which is entirely the same with the true one.

Student 8

Cyber-identitatea

După părerea mea, acest tip de “ identitate ” este diferit față de identitatea din lumea reală (as opposed to the Internet World), în sensul că ea devine un “strat” în plus pe care-l atașăm individualității noastre.

Cyber-identitatea devine (pentru mine) echivalentul potențialității.

[Cyber-identity

In my opinion, this type of “identity” is different from the identity in the real world (as opposed to the Internet world), in the sense that it becomes an extra “layer” that we attach to our individuality.

Cyber-identity becomes (for me) the equivalent of potentiality.]

Student 9

Ce este cyber-identitatea?

1. *Consider că cyber-identitatea reprezintă o alternativă pozitivă a adevăratei noastre identități. De altfel, cred că cyber-identitatea este o posibilitate de ne a recrea pe noi înșine într-o manieră mult mai favorabilă nouă.*

2. *Este diferită identitatea cibernetică de identitatea reală sau e unul și același lucru?*

Nu cred că putem vorbi despre o suprapunere între cele două tipuri de identități. Cred, însă, că putem afirma faptul că identitatea cibernetică ajută și construiește identitatea noastră reală.

[What is cyber-identity?

1. I think that cyber-identity represents a positive alternative to our true identity. As a matter of fact, I think that cyber-identity is a possibility to recreate ourselves in our advantage.

2. Is cybernetic identity different from the real identity or is it the same?

I do not think that we can talk about an overlap between these two types of identity. But I think that cybernetic identity helps and constructs our real identity.]

ANNEX 18

A. Custom Avatars

Facebook



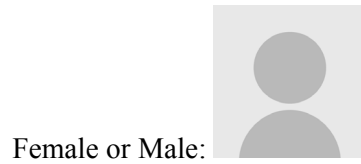
Couchsurfing



BeWelcome



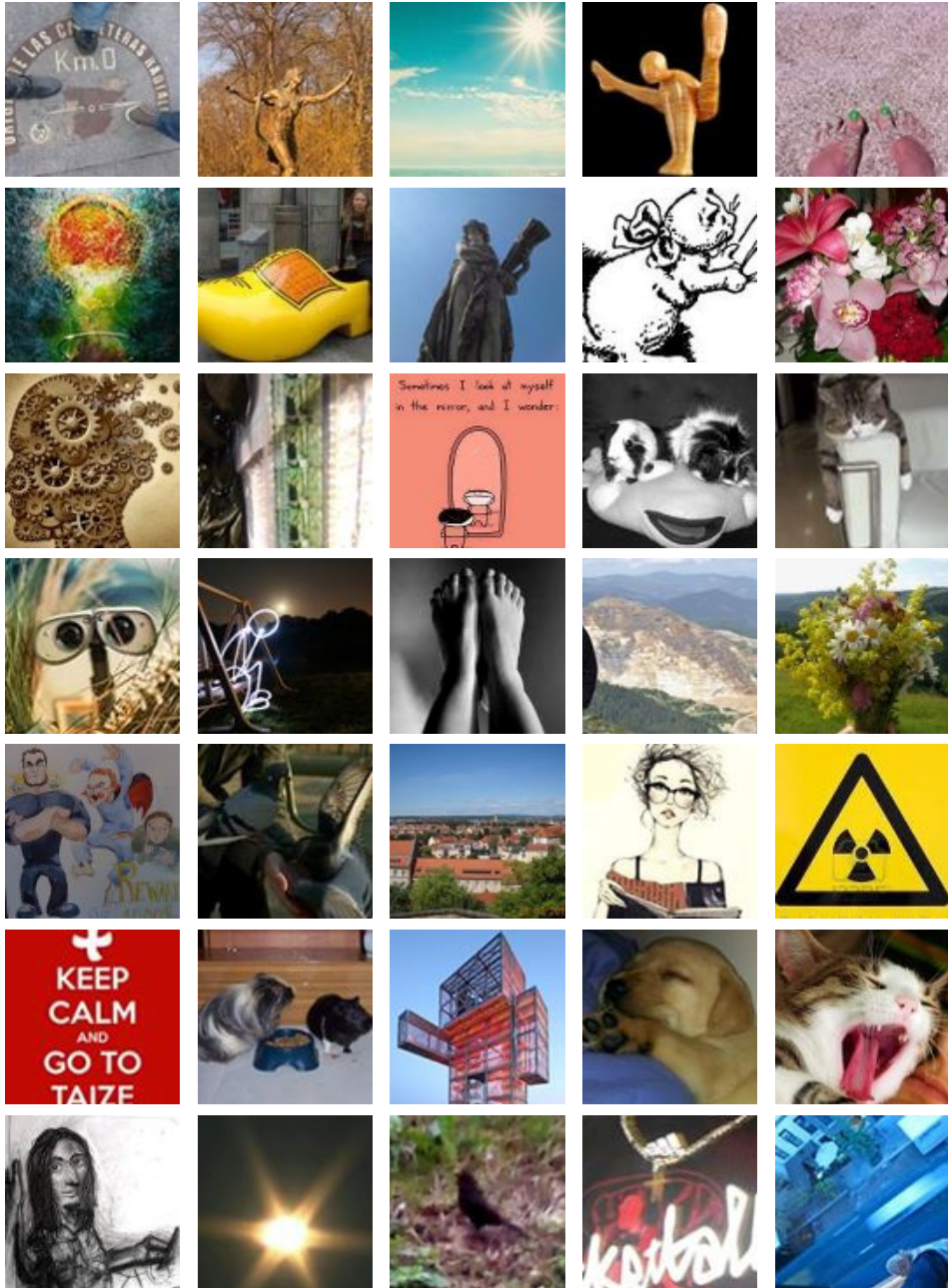
MySpace

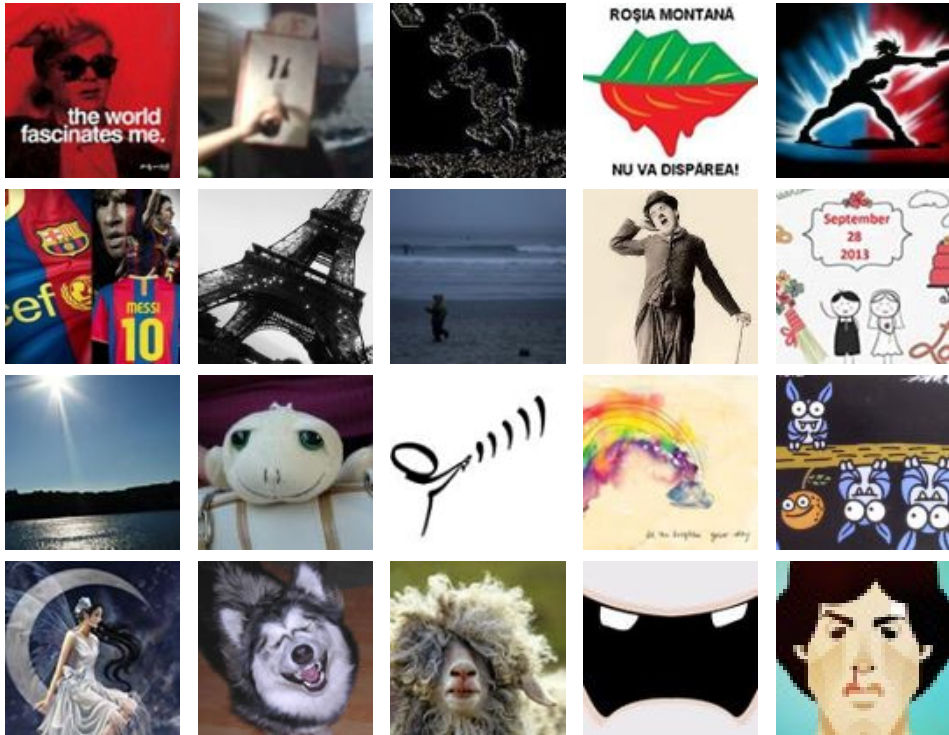


Twitter

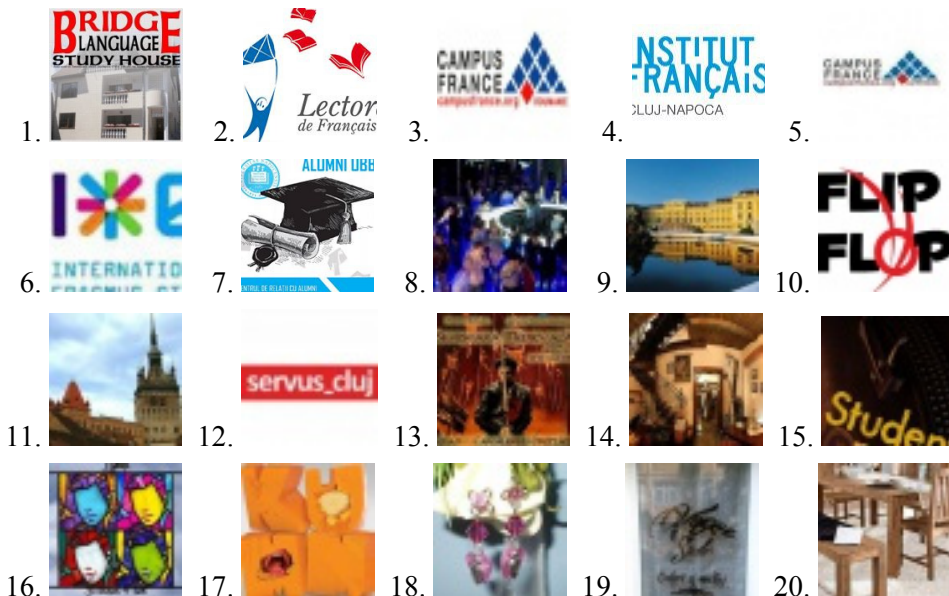


B. Facebook Avatars of Individual Users





C. Facebook Avatars of Institutions/Bands/Organizations/Places

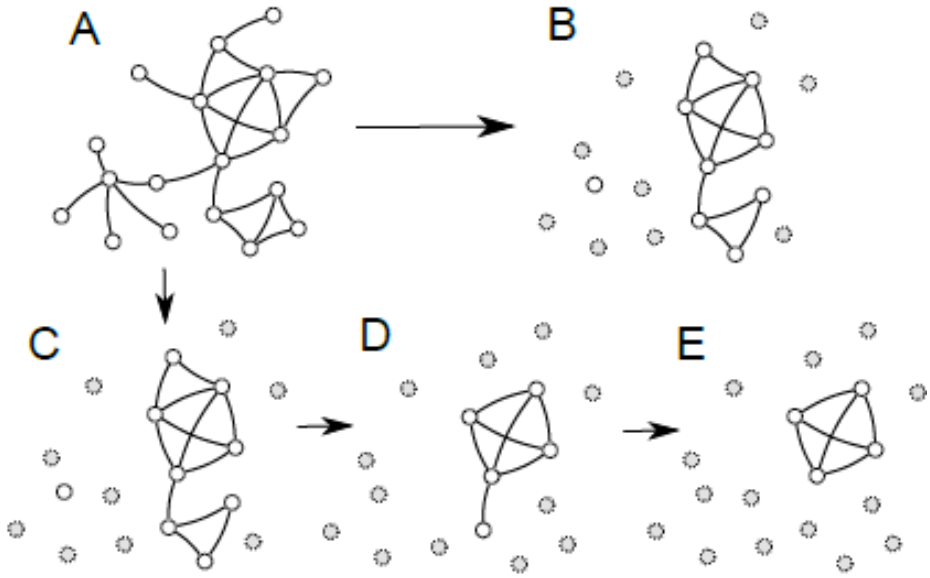


ANNEX 19.

Motivational Images on Facebook (Keep calm)



ANNEX 20.
Friendster Decomposition



Source: Garcia, Mavrodiev, Schweitzer, 2013: 5

ANNEX 21.

Barbara Jordon's Facebook Statuses. Some Highlights (February 2010 – August 2013)

February 15, 2010: according to my bank statement, on December 14th I spent something like \$44.50 at McDonalds. Does anyone have an explanation? "December 14th: Dear diary, today I went to McDonalds with Hannah and we bought one of everything. Then I put my sunglasses on and took out my neuralizer.."

April 14, 2010: **thinks** Chomsky could've rephrased "But we should not mistake truisms for substantive theses, and there is no place for dogmatism as to how the issues might move toward resolution" as "Let's not make shit up"

May 4, 2010: "Everyone engaged in research must have had the experience of working with feverish and prolonged intensity to write a paper which no one else will read or to solve a problem which no one else thinks important and which will bring no conceivable reward – which may only confirm a general opinion that the researcher is wasting his time on irrelevancies."

May 12, 2010: To Mr [...], remember when I was 12 and you gave us a Latin test where one of the questions relied upon us knowing the meaning of the English word "ancillary"? Well, it's been 10 years since then, and I just encountered the word for the second time in my entire life. It was in Truth and Method by Gadamer. The first time was in that test. I want a retake.

May 14, 2010: sometimes i imagine a parallel universe in which i save my endnote library on my usb, i sleep the right amount, i do things before the day they are due, and unicorns exist.

June 1, 2010: i cant move for all the brass instruments in my bedroom

October 4, 2010: It's hard to sleep when you're mad at your teddy bear

November 7, 2010: The only good thing about this Midnight Oil marathon playing in reception is the look on backpackers' faces when I get to tell them he's now a politician

December 12, 2010: *i am completely horrified i drank a glass of scotch at 5am this morning*

December 21, 2010 via mobile: *I love [user]*

January 7, 2011: *Best thing found so far while cleaning my room: a gross OzTurk wrapper with some guy's number on it*

February 6, 2011: *hopes [user] is having a lovely birthday*

April 9, 2011: *Just paid a \$270 library fine.*

April 25, 2011: *Yesterday I celebrated the end of Lent (and my vegan stint) by eating beef, pork, chicken, prawn, ham, chocolate, scrambled eggs, sour cream, strawberry milk, deep fried cheese on a stick, gozleme, and a bite of a dagwood dog. Horrified yet pleased*

July 15, 2011 via mobile: *Read my blog [http address]*

September 28, 2011 via mobile: *To Sydney[...] Love from Barbara*

September 28, 2011 via mobile: *To Melbourne Airport, I am way too drunk to be checking myself in at a 'kiosk'. A) what the fuck do you have staff for and if you're going to call it a kiosk it should sell icecreams, redskins and cans of passiona. Love from Barbara x*

October 1, 2011 via mobile: *I always knew ferris wheels were more dangerous than rollercoasters*

October 5, 2011 near Sydney, New South Wales: *For the first time in my life, listening to Shaggy's "Keep'n It Real" on repeat is not making me feel any better.*

October 13, 2011: *i never did a jumping photo before. they are as lame as i thought.*

October 15, 2011 near Petersham, New South Wales: *Pretty stoked I just bought a car for \$7.50. Now I just need to find an apartment charging 50 cents a week rent and I'm set..*

November 21, 2011 via mobile: *Life lesson learned: always do that ridiculous thing that you saw someone do in a movie.*

February 4, 2012 via mobile: *I love my eyeball*

March 2, 2012 via mobile: *Greering from teeth to teeth.*

April 21, 2012 via mobile: *To several random wrestling guys, I did not send you those messages, chill out.*

April 23, 2012 near Sydney, New South Wales: *I hate to sound like a trashbag, but did anyone find my phone last night? It's an iphone with a broken screen, case is shaped like a cassette tape. I have a tendency to put shit in other people's pockets. Please check.*

October 4, 2012 near Sydney, New South Wales: *Anyone who has been to Sydney as a backpacker / tourist: do you have a picture of you in front of the Sydney Harbour Bridge, and if so can I please use it for an assignment?*

In a Relationship with [user] November 27, 2012

In 2013 she did not post any status.

ANNEX 22.

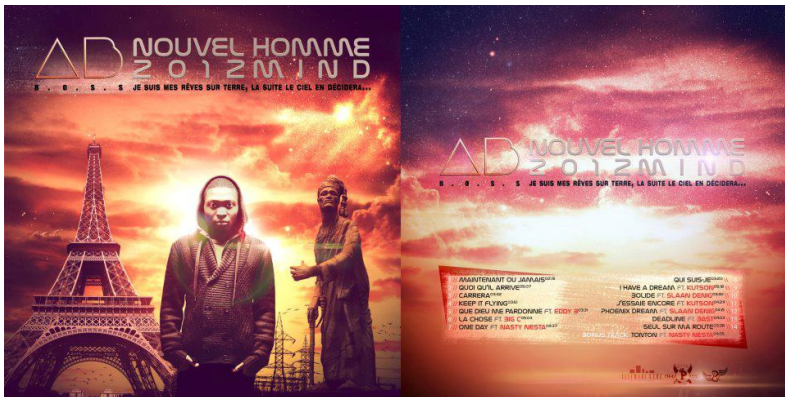
Yves' Wall in 2012 – Visuals and Audio-visuals



a.



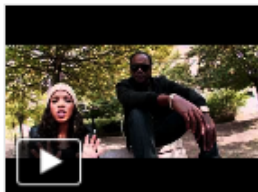
b.



c.

Les miens sont loin de moi, j'évite les embrouilles inutiles j'en profite au maximum quand je les ai au bout du fil ...


<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B1fx77-VUvo>



Brasco feat Isleym - On choisit pas sa Famille Clip Officiel

www.youtube.com

Clip Officiel : "On choisit pas sa famille" ft Isleym
extrait de "Kalabrezz project" de Brasco & Dany

Like · Comment · Share · February 27 at 8:33pm · 

 Mike Mt likes this.

d.

ANNEX 23

A. Yves Tounk's Statuses 2010 (Highlights)

Status 1: *Yves Tounk, January 2, 2010: Bonne année à tous... Je vous aime et j'ai pas honte de le dire!!! Pour cette année soyons tolérant les uns envers les autres... 5 people like this.*

Comments:

- *[user] si siii, Bonne année à toi aussi yves...
January 3, 2010 at 6:08am via mobile · Like*
- *[user] hey tonton mon idole! meilleurs voeux a vous aussi! je vous admire!!!
Januar 3, 2010 at 7:16pm via mobile · Like*
- *[user]: bonne année tu restera le delegué le plus pokeyenatrialement
incompetant!!!! January 4, 2010 at 2:14am via mobile · Like*
- *Yves Tounk: Wé Haricot ta raison, joré dû t dénoncé o proviseur pr tè bétiz,
mè tkt g m ratraprè a locaz... :))) January 4, 2010 at 2:22pm via mobile · Like*

Status 2: *Yves Tounk, January 4, 2010: Être Ecolo, c'est devenir Econom... Alors si vous le faites pas pour la planète et ses habitants alors faites-le pour votre porte-monnaie*

- *Fall Paradizz: Vas là-bas! Commences par vendre ta polluante bagnole et achete toi un cad!! mdr Sinon bonne année fils!!
January 4, 2010 at 10:43pm via mobile · Like*
- *Yves Tounk: Tu sé bien que ça fè plu d 5mois kel é garé et g pren l tram et le bus. G la garde en k d'urgence c tt... Jespèr k t'en fra otan. Et cela m fè d l'economie !!!
January 4, 2010 at 11:32pm via mobile · Like*
- *Yves Tounk: O fait meme mn chofage electrik g n lè tjrs pa alumé; jutiliz 2 couett et souven jalum d' bougies. Malgré l'hiver ma factur n'a pa changé...hourraaaa
January 4, 2010 at 11:38pm via mobile · Like*
- *Fall Paradizz: Arrètes de jouer avec mon esprit, moi je connais le type de chauffage que t'utilises!!!!!!
January 5, 2010 at 12:01am via mobile · Like*

- Yves Tounk: *G n voi pa c k tu ve dire . Sach k chui egalmen adepte d' énergie renouvelabl...* [January 5, 2010 at 12:22am via mobile](#) · [Like](#)
- Laura Mäkelä: **J'ai pas compris tout (:D) mais si tu ne rigoles pas Yves, c'est trop bien !! Je suis fière de toi !!! Ici, on a allumé le chauffage..... (-20 degrés ;))** [January 5, 2010 at 12:57am via mobile](#) · [Like](#)
- Yves Tounk: *Chui serieu Laura, même si g sé k ça arriv pa souven:)))* [January 5, 2010 at 1:16am via mobile](#) · [Like](#)
- Laura Mäkelä: *Troooooop bien =))* [January 5, 2010 at 1:22am via mobile](#) · [Like](#)
- Fodé Keita: *Pour une fois il ne tourne pas autour du pot... Je suis partant pour la second résolution, mais bon elle sont synergique...* [January 5, 2010 at 8:27pm via mobile](#) · [Like](#)

Status 3: Yves Tounk, February 15, 2010: *En mode BABYSITTER pour 3 jours.... Faire biberon, changer couches, endormir, jouer.... pour le moment c génial :)))*

- Adil Amar: bn couraj [February 15, 2010 at 1:47pm](#) · [Like](#)
- Yves Tounk: *Man pr le momen g gère ! ell pleurait taleur, g lui è doné le biberon mè ell en voulè pa; il ma fallu 10min pr m rendr compte kel avè fè ds sa couch. C pa mal pr 1 début* [February 15, 2010 at 3:22pm](#) · [Like](#)
- Yves Tounk: *Moi c pa Super Nanny mè Super Yves* [February 15, 2010 at 3:22pm](#) · [Like](#)
- Marjoo Rie: *Suuuperr Yveeeees!! si si !* [February 15, 2010 at 3:44pm](#) · [Like](#)
- Yves Tounk: *Heyy Marjo rest conecT com ça en cas d' ...k g puiss t fair sign :)))* [February 15, 2010 at 4:35pm via mobile](#) · [Like](#)
- Marjoo Rie: *no souci, jsuis là, fais signe seulement!* [February 15, 2010 at 4:38pm](#) · [Like](#)
- Adil Amar: *LOOOOOOOL* [February 15, 2010 at 4:46pm](#) · [Like](#)
- Fall Paradizz: *J'ai de la peine pour ta filleule, sa mère a fait une grosse bêtise!!!* [February 15, 2010 at 6:23pm](#) · [Like](#)
- Nfally Diatta: *surtout ne lui apprends pas à dire des bêtises en wolof lool* [February 15, 2010 at 6:55pm](#) · [Like](#)
- Yves Tounk: *Heyyles boys déguédaim, faites moins d bruit, ya ma puce ki dort :))))* [February 16, 2010 at 4:14pm](#) · [Like](#)

Status 4: Yves Tounk, March 7, 2010: Bonne fête Mamie, tu me manques grave surtout tes plats hummmmm. J'espère que ça se passe tranquille au paradis pour toi . Ps: Papi avait flirté avec ta copine qui te ramenait des feuilles d' acacia... je ne t'ai rien dit!! Rest in peace...

- Mike Mt: MDR!!! March 7, 2010 at 2:18pm via mobile · Like
- Maria Leci Brandao Astou: LooOOooL alors là tu as fais fort!! t'as trouvé ça tout seul dear? March 7, 2010 at 2:20pm via mobile · Like
- Fatima Diallo: Yves t'as parlé à Madhiou? March 7, 2010 at 3:04pm via mobile · Like
- Yves Tounk: G n pouvè pa le dénoncé à l'époque sinon... !! T'aimerais pa savoir si t cocu??? March 7, 2010 at 7:21pm via mobile · Like

Status 5: Yves Tounk, March 22, 2010: Retour en 2e classe, ac des sièges pouri pa confortabl, dè gens chelou, des bagages ds les allé, tt l monde entassé.... Dur retour auprès du bas peuple... La 1ère m mank déjà, on c revera ds kel tps :))

- Fatima Diallo: LOOL, sacré toi! March 22, 2010 at 7:29pm via mobile · Like
- Alpha Lhoual Bah: prochainement Magbana tongo!!!!!! loOl March 22, 2010 at 8:13pm via mobile · Like
- Yves Tounk: Falè m voir en 1ère javè l'air d'être parmi mes siens, mè en 2e jètè un intru :(March 22, 2010 at 9:33pm via mobile · Like
- Yves Tounk: Magbana mou fan :))) March 22, 2010 at 11:43pm via mobile · Like

Status 6: Yves Tounk, April 4, 2010 via mobile: Hommage au Pasteur Martin Luther King qui nous a quitté (on nous l'a pris) le 4 avril 1968... Nous ne t'oublions pas, et merci pour tout ce que tu as fait. Rest in Peace!

- Maria Leci Brandao Astou: yeah il est un des grands hommes qui a permis l'émencipation de l'esprit des HOMMES. rip et surtout merci à lui!! April 4, 2010 at 12:49pm · Like

Status 7: Yves Tounk, April 10, 2010 via LeMonde.fr: Rest in Peace... Toutes mes condéléances aux frères et sœurs polonais pour les familles. Des victimes Le président polonais meurt dans un accident d'avion

par LEMONDE.FR avec Reuters.

L'avion dans lequel se trouvait Lech Kaczynski ainsi que le président polonais de la Banque centrale, le vice-ministre des affaires étrangères et le chef d'état-major s'est écrasé, samedi, à l'aéroport de Smolensk. Selon le bilan rectifié du ministère russe des situations d'urgence, 96 personnes sont mortes.

- Laura Mäkelä: RIP... [April 10, 2010 at 4:26pm](#) · [Like](#)
- Ibrahim Camara: c pa pour ne rien ke tw tu présente des condoléance lol
[April 10, 2010 at 4:39pm](#) · [Like](#)
- Moh Assane: RIP [April 10, 2010 at 5:13pm](#) · [Like](#)
- Fifamè Zinsou: RIP [April 10, 2010 at 8:19pm](#) · [Like](#)

Status 8: Yves Tounk, May 10, 2010 via mobile: A une pensée pour tout le peuple noir: Victime de la traite négrière; aujourd'hui c'est la Journée de la COMEMORATION de le Traître Nègrière et j'espère que la télé marquera l'événement ou du moins plus que les années précédentes. RIP à tous ceux qui y ont périls!

- Mike Mt: Dommage l'ami, aucune TV française en parle pour le moment... normal, s'ils ont parlé pas dans les livres d'histoire, c pas a la télé que'ils vont commencer. [May 10, 2010 at 11:06am](#) via mobile · [Like](#)
- Brau Lord: on va juste faire un buzz pour marquer cette journée vu que tout passe mieux par le net!!! [May 10, 2010 at 11:16am](#) · [Like](#)
- Thierno Sow: La reconnaissance est la mémoire du coeur
[May 10, 2010 at 2:45pm](#) · [Like](#)

Status 9: Yves Tounk, May 25, 2010 via mobile: Papa, Maman, les gars désolé; G'ressen com une envie d' m'isoler...

- N'Dalaba Diallo: Non te suicides pas!...
C'est la seule et meilleur façon de t'isoler..... [May 26, 2010 at 1:02pm](#) · [Like](#)
- Yves Tounk: Moi aussi tu m mank bro... [May 26, 2010 at 1:33pm](#) via mobile · [Like](#)
- Tigui Condell: E jè du cotoyé le l'pavé
Pas à pas g me c pa vrè
Nnnn tro for, g kiff [May 27, 2010 at 10:17pm](#) · [Like](#)

- Yves Tounk: *Si si frangine, g voi k ta été prise D'Assaut par la Sexion...*
May 28, 2010 at 11:15am via mobile · Like
- Tigui Condell: *Zi zi lol*
May 29, 2010 at 9:28pm · Like

Status 10: Yves Tounk, *May 30, 2010 via mobile: En route, bourguignon pr 6 mois et plus si affinité. ! Désolé d' pas avoir pu vous dire au revoir, vous allez tous m manké... G vs adorrrr*

- Gilles Msscrd: *tu kitte orléans man? ta fais les pac boat cette année moi j'éte pas au courant, j'ai pas pu les suivres tampis*
May 30, 2010 at 2:45pm · Like
- Yves Tounk: *Wé man pr l stage, moi ossi aucun pac boat (fo savoir sareté kan c bon:-)!*
Moi ossi chui ma chou...
May 30, 2010 at 3:05pm via mobile · Like
- Gilles Msscrd: *prend soin de toi et montre a ces bourguignons de quel bois tu te chauffes ^^*
May 30, 2010 at 3:07pm · Like
- Yves Tounk: *Tu pe conT sur moi bro*
May 30, 2010 at 3:51pm via mobile · Like
- Luizman Muñoz Turay: *j'arrive!*
May 30, 2010 at 5:13pm · Like
- Alpha Lhoual Bah: *ohhhhh comment t'as pu oublié de nous dire tout çaaaaaa hier?????*
bon courage et surtout de la reussite pour le stage!!!
May 30, 2010 at 6:44pm · Like
- Aliou Konah: *bon courage et gook lock body*
May 30, 2010 at 7:56pm · Like
- Majda EL Garti: *coucou ben dommage qon n est pas vendredi et bonne chance a ton retour on fetera ta victoire!!!*
May 30, 2010 at 10:06pm · Like
- Yves Tounk: *Luiz jaten impatiemment*
Alpha javé pa oublié, c k g déteste lè aurevoir mè tkt g sré là pr l début d' saison Majda, on fetra ça com ça c doi obligé
Merci à tous
May 30, 2010 at 11:10pm via mobile · Like
- Yves Tounk: *Thks Aliou*
May 30, 2010 at 11:11pm via mobile · Like
- Julie Angonin: *hihi un ti bourguignon avec nou trooo bien !! tt va bien se passer c sur de tte facon si ta besoin tu sai ki appler hein lol groo bisou a toi et a tré biento*
May 30, 2010 at 11:41pm · Like

- Yves Tounk: *T la meilleure Julie ton num é celui d' Casi st ds mes favori lol, g sen k g vé m plair mm si pr ma lère soirée chui ds l noir: Pa D' Electricité*
May 31, 2010 at 12:26am via mobile · Like
- Julie Angonin: *mdrr c clair ke c pa drole ds le noir, on es con on aurai pu y penser avan mai jpense ke ds la jrné la ca va etre bon !! hate de venir te voir ds ton pti chez toi lol !!bisou*
May 31, 2010 at 11:26am · Like
- Yves Tounk: *Ça m rapel le bled il me l mettron 2m1 dc c soir rebelott ... Hâte d' vs recevoir*
May 31, 2010 at 4:05pm via mobile · Like
- Laura Mäkelä: **Oh là là le francais d'internet, je comprends pas beaucoup...**
Mais, tu habites maintenant en Bourgogne pour le stage? Et est-ce que tu as des vacances quand même pendant l'été?
June 3, 2010 at 9:50pm · Like
- Laura Mäkelä: *Et bon courage avec tout!!*
June 3, 2010 at 9:51pm · Like
- Yves Tounk: *Hey Laura cmt va? Oui je pourrai demander quelques jours de vacances en été normalement , mais je ne sais pas encore quand. Donne de tes nouvelles. Je ne sais pas lire finois donc ...lol*
June 3, 2010 at 10:28pm via mobile · Like
- Laura Mäkelä: **Merci pour le langage "officiel"** *Ca va bien, je vais passer 3 semaines à Brighton à partir de mardi! Et enseigner les jeunes... Ca va être super, j'espère!*
June 3, 2010 at 10:37pm · Like
- Yves Tounk: *C cool ça , tu pars plus à Cluj?*
June 3, 2010 at 10:58pm via mobile · Like
- Laura Mäkelä: *Si si, j'y pars si ca va avec Eva... On a pas encore décidé la date...*
June 3, 2010 at 11:15pm · Like
- Eva Parloc: *OUI ça va super bien patricia vous attend*
June 4, 2010 at 1:55am · Like
- Laura Mäkelä: **HUG**
June 4, 2010 at 1:58am · Like
- Yves Tounk: *Hey Eva cmt va? Vous me tiendrai au courant comme ça je verrai si je peux prendre des vacances*
June 4, 2010 at 9:18pm via mobile · Like
- Eva Parloc: *Ça va, ça va on va te tenir au courant, ou plutot c'est Laura qui doit le faire! J'espère que tu pourras prendre des vacances !!!!*
June 5, 2010 at 12:55am · Like

- Laura Mäkelä: *Mais noon, Eva, check your mails, je t'ai demandé quelque chose.* [June 5, 2010 at 1:22am](#) · [Like](#)

Status 11: Yves Tounk, June 13, 2010 via mobile: *Du jeu, du mouvement, de la solidarité, des buts... cette équipe d' Allemagne me fait penser à l'Entente Sourcienne celle des 4–0*

- Selly Ly: *ahhhhhhhhhhhhh* [June 14, 2010 at 7:13pm](#) · [Like](#)
- Yves Tounk: *En fait, on aurè dû faire 1 match “bye coachs” la 1 vs la 2 mais ac les compositions du début des championnats* [June 14, 2010 at 11:47pm](#) via mobile · [Like](#)
- Selly Ly: *1er match championnat, tu as joué en première* [June 15, 2010 at 12:15am](#) · [Like](#)
- Gaston Alexis Mankey: *si si.* [June 15, 2010 at 3:48pm](#) · [Like](#)
- Yves Tounk: *Selly laisse tomB ça, g fè plus d' match en 2 Ken 1* [June 15, 2010 at 5:54pm](#) via mobile · [Like](#)

Status 12: Yves Tounk, September 24, 2010 via mobile: *ORLINz ...*

- Mballou Kaloko *bonne chance pr ta soutenance!!!* [September 24, 2010 at 10:30am](#) · [Like](#)
- Yves Tounk *Merci grde! Heyy frère, auj cète hard, 200km d' route ac mon responsabl ac ki on a parlé d' zoukk zouïne , avt d' arrivé pr ma soutnance d' stage ...* [September 24, 2010 at 6:01pm](#) via mobile · [Like](#)

Status 13: Yves Tounk, October 11, 2010: *T'es le genre de mec qui préfère les voitures aux filles?... Je suis le genre qui aime les jolies courbes ou si je puis dire les belles carrosseries !!!*

- Don Carligh: *aie aie aie, c'est ça mon yves!!!!* [October 11, 2010 at 8:25pm](#) · [Like](#) · [1](#)
- Maria Leci Brandao Astou: *bah.....enfin je ne comprends pas.... courbes... carrosseries.... on dit ça pour les voitures aussi...et un peu vulgaire pour désigner “filles” donc toi la c'est quoi ta PREFERENCE?* [October 12, 2010 at 7:52am](#) · [Like](#)

- Yves Tounk: *Tu me connais assez pr savoir mes préférences... Mais, tu m'aurais posé la kestion je te dirai des conneries du style:Les femmes mais pas n'imp: Tt est ds le regard, elle doit etre capable d' voir au delà des mensonges et discerner le bien, mi ange et mi démon, sexy mais ne craignant pas d' se casser les ongles en travaillant ...* [October 12, 2010 at 7:24pm · Like](#)
- Maria Leci Brandao Astou: *hmm.....* [October 12, 2010 at 7:44pm · Like · 1](#)

Status 14: Yves Tounk, [October 16, 2010](#): *Ceux ki kiffe la zik comprendront: La mélodie c'est comme voir pour la lère fois quelqu'un, elle représente l'attrance physique: le sexe; mais si vous voulez connaître cette personne, là viens alors le texte ... c'est de la combinaison des deux que naît la vraie magie!!!*

- Emilie Charpentier: *g trouver la mienne* [October 16, 2010 at 10:59pm · Like · 1](#)
- Yves Tounk: *la melodie ou la personne* [October 16, 2010 at 11:30pm · Like](#)
- Emilie Charpentier: *la magie...donc la personne* [October 16, 2010 at 11:31pm · Like](#)
- Ashley Kinp: *Luiz si tu m'entends (enfin si tu me lis plutôt) cette phrase te parle nan?! for suuure!* [October 17, 2010 at 12:07am · Like](#)
- Maria Leci Brandao Astou: *pour une fois que tu dis quelque chose d'à peu près potable; c'est du bon* [October 17, 2010 at 12:36pm · Like](#)
- Yves Tounk: *Hey Maria, je sais que tu m'idéalises vu que je t'ai trop souvent habituer à l'excellence mais je suis comme tt le monde et je peux avoir d' moments d' non inspiration :-)))* [October 17, 2010 at 12:55pm · Like · 2](#)

Status 15: Yves Tounk, [November 24, 2010](#): *Je veux jouer les matchs de championnat au stade Maracana, pour les matchs amicaux Le stade Mailhan d'Arles-Avignon, pour les derbys rien de mieux que le stade de Stamford Bridge, et je rêve de jouer le dernier match de ma carrière au stade d' Anfield Road*

- Yves Tounk: *Hey oui, pr l mec qui aime le foot, jouer ds ces stades c'est ... je trouve pas les mots* [November 24, 2010 at 9:24pm · Like · 2](#)
- Yves Tounk: *Pour voir mes tablettes de chocolat :-); mais ici ce qui compte c'est le stade, l'ambiance des tribunes, les publics en furis ...* [November 24, 2010 at 9:36pm · Like](#)

- Moh Assane: *viva le football !* [November 24, 2010 at 10:40pm](#) · [Like](#)
- N'Dalaba Diallo: *Il te faudra 100 pour ça!!* [November 25, 2010 at 10:23am](#) · [Like](#)
- Sheryy Délicieux: *aufaiite mdrrr avec tn Vélo Yves!!! velo de chalon mdrrr!!!!*
biisou [November 25, 2010 at 8:52pm](#) · [Like](#) · [1](#)

Status 16: Yves Tounk, [December 24, 2010](#) via mobile: *Joyeux Noël à Tous mes amis, pour ceux qui ont rien à faire ce soir je vous conseille d' regarder "le Pere Noël est une ordure" parait que c'est pas mal; moi c'est le titre que j'adore*

- Ousmane Sanoh: *Tu ne connais pas ce film? C'est un film culte je promets, regarde tu m'as reparleras demain lol...*
[December 24, 2010 at 1:24pm](#) via mobile · [Like](#)
- Yves Tounk: *Okay, vs me faites passer pr 1 inculte dc je vais le voir demain après midi ... Si j'accroche pas bein vs devriez alrs me faire 1 cadeau car cette ordure d' Pere Noël m'as encore zappé*
[December 24, 2010 at 2:00pm](#) via mobile · [Like](#)
- Ousmane Sanoh: *C parceque t'as pas de cheminée aussi ou que t'as pas été sage lol..*
[December 24, 2010 at 2:17pm](#) via mobile · [Like](#)
- Guillaume Texier: *Merry Christmas Dude!!!!*
[December 24, 2010 at 2:23pm](#) via mobile · [Like](#)
- Yves Tounk: *Thks dude, you too and hope to see u .*
J'ai aplé ma mère et elle m'a qu'après mon frère j'étais le fils le plus sage qu'elle ait eu, alrs je mérite 1 cado [December 24, 2010 at 2:58pm](#) via mobile · [Like](#)
- Takenoko Bambou: *y a des chances que je regarde. Ma collègue vient juste de me conseiller ce film. je te souhaite un joyeux noel, Yves; bisous*
[December 24, 2010 at 3:08pm](#) via mobile · [Like](#) · [1](#)
- Nino Lobreglio: *meglio davanti a un bicchiere di champagne bune feste*
[December 24, 2010 at 3:15pm](#) via mobile · [Like](#) · [1](#)
- Mariétou Dembélé: *Joyeux noel à toi oci mon poumon!!!je tai laissé un message différé sr msn...bisouss*
[December 24, 2010 at 6:18pm](#) via mobile · [Like](#) · [1](#)

- Guillaume Texier: Yves! J'ai ajouté un post scriptum pour ton cas dans ma lettre au père Noël!! On va voir ce qu'il peut faire pour toi!!!!!!
December 24, 2010 at 6:21pm via mobile · Like · 1
- Cyril Joandel: joyeux noel aussi Yves
December 24, 2010 at 8:10pm via mobile · Like · 1
- Majda EL Garti: bon noel mon pote et au plaisir prend soin de toi enormes bises
December 25, 2010 at 1:21am via mobile · Like · 1
- Béébé Brune: joyeux noel chouchou gros bisous
December 25, 2010 at 3:26pm via mobile · Like · 1
- Yves Tounk: Merci kan même père Noël, car je sais que je pourrai passer un meilleur Noël l'année prochaine ... Pas d' cadeau (enfin pour le moment), mais onne petite soirée
December 25, 2010 at 5:28pm via mobile · Like · 2
- Sheryy DéliiciouSs: JOYEUX NOEL A MON YVES...
December 26, 2010 at 7:14am via mobile · Like · 1

B. Yves Tounk's Statuses 2011 (Highlights)

Status 1: Yves Tounk, January 2, 2011: Bonne et heureuse année à toutes et tous, pour 2011 je vous souhaite de recevoir beaucoup d'amour et d'en donner en retour. PS: Mon tél est en SAV, dc perdus certains contacts alors merci à ceux qui m'ont envoyés des sms, et comme le tel de prêt est une antiquité j'ai du mal à écrire ac. Je vous aime

- Nino Lobreglio: anche a te felice anno nuovo
January 2, 2011 at 5:29pm · Like · 1
- Yves Tounk: ringrazio il mio allenatore
January 2, 2011 at 5:32pm · Like
- Halimatou Diallo: merci a tw d mem!!!!!!!!!!!!!!
January 2, 2011 at 6:03pm · Like · 1
- Julie Angonin: bonne année a toi en esperan te revoir tré biento enorme bisou
January 2, 2011 at 10:34pm · Like · 1
- Mousto Keith Sano 10x a vs 2 mm
January 2, 2011 at 10:50pm · Like · 1
- Eva de la Vida moi aussi mi amor!! la meme pr toi...
January 4, 2011 at 5:55am · Like · 1

C. Yves Tounk's Statuses 2012 (Highlights)

Status 1: Yves Tounk, January 19, 2012: *MERCI à TOUS pour vos messages, sms, appel, biz ...*

- PimpSoul Six Miles: *vieux pere mdr* January 20, 2012 at 1:59am · Like · 1

Status 2: Yves Tounk, January 27, 2012: *Sera à ORLINZ ce wkd, mais j'ai pas de tél donc inbox !!!!!*

- Sophie Marceau: *Pas facile de se voir ou de prévoir de se voir sans t'avoir au tel...* January 27, 2012 at 7:24pm · Like · 1
- Sophie Marceau: *On ne t'a pas vu* January 29, 2012 at 10:13pm · Like
- Yves Tounk: *Heyyy Sosso, dsl j'avais pas pu me connecter normalement ma puce free arrive en fin de semaine, comme ça je pourrai emettre et recevoir des appels* January 31, 2012 at 7:59pm · Like

Status 3: Yves Tounk, February 14, 2012: *Bein voilà je voulais m debarasser d' mon livre de régime Dukan, tiens offre lui ça pr la St. Valentin! Tkt mon pote elle sera ravie à moins que tu préfères la balance...*

- Maria Leci Brandao Astou: *eh ben tout ceci servit avec beaucoup de tact et de sensualité comme à ton habitude* February 14, 2012 at 9:04pm · Like
- Yves Tounk: *J'aime faire les choses bien, faut kan mm k g dise le livre était emballé ac du rose, et la balance était bloquée à 56kg ... si ça c' pas du tact alrs lààààà* February 14, 2012 at 9:12pm · Like
- Maria Leci Brandao Astou: *ce serait en tous cas un bon moyen pour les fanas d'anorexiques de dire à leur moitié qu il faut qu elle maigrisse sans pour autant se risquer à le dire mot pour mot! j'ai dit pourquoi Luizman Muñoz Turay-Moryah met du tps à m'envoyer son numéro? tu sais toi Krote?* February 14, 2012 at 9:37pm · Like
- Maria Leci Brandao Astou: *Lool tu sais quand je regarde ma statue africaine j'ai la vision de toi en train de m'offrir ce spectacle indecend !!* February 14, 2012 at 9:39pm · Like · 1

- Yves Tounk: *Ac toi j'y serais allé ac encore plus d délicatesse : Heyy j'ai des réduc pr la salle d' sport à l'année, ça te dis qu'on en fasse ensble, en + c' moi ki paye . Luizman Muñoz Turay-Moryah a du monde a contenté , c' la seule explication k g trouve*

February 15, 2012 at 11:46am · Like · 1

- Maria Leci Brandao Astou: *j'adoorerai walaye en ce moment il y a pleins de trucs que j'ai envie d'essayer notamment des cours de danse mais je pense que c'est mort pour le sport vu que t'es sur paris...*

February 15, 2012 at 1:31pm · Like · 1

Status 4: Yves Tounk, March 31, 2012: *ça a mis du temps mais enfin ça y est je suis à nouveau joignable; j'ai mis 1 mois et demi avant d'avoir TOUT COMPRIS*

- Abira Maiga: *Free man...lol* *March 31, 2012 at 12:58pm · Like · 1*

- Yves Tounk: *Mec, j'arrive pas à te joindre t'as oublié que je suis chez Free...*

March 31, 2012 at 1:15pm · Like

- Lloyd Touré: *APL MOI*

March 31, 2012 at 1:25pm · Like

- Yoann Delarche: *C quoi ton num C un nouveau ou toujours l'ancien ?*

March 31, 2012 at 2:33pm · Like

- Ahmed Diallo: *t pa croyable mec .. c koi ton numero??*

March 31, 2012 at 2:55pm · Like

- Jlo Diallo: *I hope q tu as renoncer avt kil ne soit tro tard, car c une erreurrrr....*

March 31, 2012 at 3:43pm · Like · 1

- Mariétou Dembélé: *mdrrrrrrrrr!!!!!!en tt k tu as free tu as tt compris*

mdrrrrrrrrrrmdrrrrrrrrr!

April 1, 2012 at 10:58am · Like · 1

- Yves Tounk: *C l'ancien le 06 99 ...*

April 2, 2012 at 8:24pm · Like

D. Yves Tounk's Statuses 2013 (Highlights)

Status 1: Yves Tounk, January 20: *Merci à toutes et tous pour vos messages chaleureux qui m'ont profondément touchés. J'associe chacun à de bons moments passés ensemble et à venir. Je vous embrasse et vous souhaite tout le bonheur du monde*

- Dab's Chacha: Joyeux anniversaire mon cousoo plein de belles choses pour toi ,,gros bisous ,,sorry I'm late January 20 at 2:32pm via mobile · Like · 1
- Mohamed Aida Sarr: cheiky happy belated bday man !!!
January 20 at 2:43pm · Like · 1
- Abira Maiga: Joyeux anniversaire Yves désolée pour le retard ici la on a la tête ailleurs tmtc January 20 at 2:51pm via mobile · Like · 1
- Kdija Bellucci Navarette SweetMoryah: Joyeux annif tonton Yca. Tous mes voeux de bonheur. Bsus January 20 at 3:11pm via mobile · Like · 1
- Wati B Diallo: HBD koro January 20 at 6:27pm · Like · 1
- Fanta Fatim Kebe: Joyeux anniversaire en retard mon grand bisou
January 20 at 6:27pm via mobile · Like · 1
- Fatoumata Bah: joyeux annif Yves January 20 at 6:54pm · Like · 1

ANNEX 24.

Conversation Thread on the Facebook Page *Entertainment* (Topic: Laptop users, warning)

Entertainment, November 8, 2011: LAPTOP USERS: BE AWARE!

A couple lost their 25 year old son in a fire at home on June 4th. The son who had graduated with MBA from the University of Wisconsin-Madison two weeks earlier had come home for a while.

He had lunch with his dad at home and decided to go back to clean up his hostel room. His father told him to wait, to meet his mother, before he went back for a few days.

He decided to take a nap while waiting for his mom to come back home from work.

Some time later their neighbors called 911 when they saw black smoke coming out of the house. Unfortunately, the 25 years old died in the three year old house. It took several days of investigation to find out the cause of the fire.

It was determined that the fire was caused by the laptop resting on the bed. When the laptop was on the bed cooling fan did not get the air to cool the computer and that is what caused the fire. He did not even wake up to get out of the bed because he died of breathing in carbon monoxide.

The reason I am writing this to all of you is that I have seen many of us and also our sons & daughters using the laptop while in bed. Let us all decide and make it a practice not to do that. The risk is real. Let us make it a rule not to use the laptop on bed with blankets and pillows around. Please educate as many people as you can.

“Please pass to everyone you know, you might save one's life”



826 people like this, 181 comments, 764 shares

- Henry Chigariro: *thanx* [November 8, 2011 at 5:56pm](#) · [Like](#) · [1](#)
- Sandy Thao: **OMG i do this every single night!!!**
[November 9, 2011 at 8:03am](#) · [Like](#) · [8](#)
- Mohit Jena: **Thanks yar 4 awaring us...abt dis fact**
[November 9, 2011 at 11:36am](#) · [Like](#) · [1](#)
- Zelda Zombies: **i put it under my bed, an offering to the monsters ;3**
[November 9, 2011 at 2:04pm](#)
- Dana Abd Al Nabi: **ya 7araaaaaaaam keef 3amlen fee**
[November 9, 2011 at 2:06pm via mobile](#) · [Like](#) · [1](#)
- Imad Lodhi: **Thts a Dell laptop** [November 9, 2011 at 2:08pm](#) · [Like](#) · [1](#)
- Ali Rao: **not possible. and Syed Yasir Tahir ur computer student, tafree tu na kro yar** [November 9, 2011 at 2:13pm](#) · [Like](#)
- Entertainment: *Guys share this.* [November 9, 2011 at 2:14pm](#) · [Like](#)
- Ali Rao: **at 80 degree around the cpu restarts and show error**
[November 9, 2011 at 2:14pm](#) · [Like](#)
- Syed Yasir Tahir: **everything is possible yr** [November 9, 2011 at 2:14pm](#) · [Like](#) · [1](#)
- Ali Rao: **or it either turn-off automatic** [November 9, 2011 at 2:14pm](#) · [Like](#) · [1](#)
- Ali Rao: **the cause may b bcs of short circuit in charger or ani thing else**
[November 9, 2011 at 2:15pm](#) · [Like](#) · [2](#)
- Johnathon Swaggin Floto: **I already knew that this could happen**
[November 9, 2011 at 2:15pm](#)
- Muhammad Yasir Aslam: **Oh My God !!** [November 9, 2011 at 2:15pm](#) · [Like](#) · [1](#)
- Syed Yasir Tahir: **the story is lil controversial but the things mentioned in it can be true** [November 9, 2011 at 2:16pm](#) · [Like](#) · [1](#)
- Homa Mulisa: **Yes, this is what almost everyone do... Thanks for awaring.**
[November 9, 2011 at 2:19pm](#) · [Like](#) · [1](#)
- Syed Yasir Tahir Ali Rao: **If the laptop is on n it is placed on comforter or blanket, the area from where the hot air of the processor is thrown out by fan got stuck in the comforter or blanket n as a result that area of the blanket or comforter gets hotter n if it continues for around some hrs, then that comforter or blanket can easy catches fire bcz of that absorbed heat or a damn hot comforter or blanket its a true fact !!** [November 9, 2011 at 2:27pm](#) · [Like](#) · [1](#)

- *Ali Rao Syed Yasir Tahir: i will search for it, cus if the laptop is on, for hrs it wl go on sleep. or screan wl be off. and if its idl and still nt on sleep mode then processor wont get that hot. ani ways just chill*

November 9, 2011 at 3:52pm · Like · 1

- *Shahzaib Arshad: 1- the air inlet is not that big which can allow any peace of cloth to get in*

2- The air pressure is not so much that it would suck that much cloth in so that the fan stops

3- Every processor above 386 processor has a capability of turning off the processor when it reaches a specific temperature. Normally the temperature limit is kept below 100 degrees.

4- the place gets hotter if the laptop gets hotter. If the comp is at 90 degrees half of the heat will sink out with heat sink, the left over will be consumed by silicon the rest is now left to heat up the plastic cover and in the last it will heat up the surface it is kept on.

Other conditions such as type of fabric, supply of oxygen etc does not allow the surface to catch fire.

And as you said the surface keeps absorbing the heat, that's against the laws of physics. The heat wont stay on same area rather it will be spread over the surface. An area of bed getting hotter will spread the heat in all directions.

***Further more**, the circuitry on motherboard and processor itself is soldered with Lead wit minimum Flux which has melting point of 90 Degrees. If the processor reaches temp of 90 or more, its obvious the motherboard processor every soldered component will fall apart switching off the system*

Practically it is not possible. Short-Circuit is another thing but processors heat cannot burn surface or cause fire. November 9, 2011 at 4:25pm · Like · 4

- *Moiz Fareed: People who don't use anything flat beneath their laptops when placed on sagging surface are bloody **STUPID**...*

November 9, 2011 at 6:25pm · Like · 1

- *Jerry Joel: i use it on my **blanet..omg..** November 9, 2011 at 6:29pm · Like · 2*

- *Jerry Joel: **blanket*** November 9, 2011 at 6:29pm · Like · 1*

- *Entertainment: Share it guys. November 9, 2011 at 6:31pm · Like*

- Syed Yasir Tahir: **nhi nhi i** personally came across such cases or news **jis mn** laptop comfoter per **rkhne ki waja** se comfoter itna heat **hogya keh** it catches fire !!
[November 9, 2011 at 6:33pm](#)
- Shahzaib Arshad: **Thats** not possible with just heat of that **processor pther** factors might be involved. As **i** said **its** not possible practically with **processors** heat alone. It can melt down the comfoter creating hole **etc** but not lite it up
[November 9, 2011 at 6:44pm](#) · [Like](#) · [1](#)
- Syed Yasir Tahir: **yea** obviously other factors are also involved but this is one of the case as well
[November 9, 2011 at 6:46pm](#) · [Like](#) · [1](#)
- Yousef Alabbas: **OMG SO SCARY.. not** [November 9, 2011 at 8:25pm](#) · [Like](#) · [1](#)
- Syeda Ilma Amin: **thnx** for telling [November 9, 2011 at 8:32pm](#) · [Like](#) · [1](#)
- Bhanu Pratap: **thanxxxxx.....gg'** [November 9, 2011 at 8:43pm](#) · [Like](#) · [1](#)
- Qamar Iqbal: **ya** it's risky to use a laptop on the bed
[November 9, 2011 at 11:00pm](#) · [Like](#) · [2](#)
- Ali Shehzad: **one** of my old laptops got burned like this.... **i** left it on with the lid closed on the bed and it got so much **heated** that the motherboard and all the circuits over heated and burned. **well** it did not caught any fire but it was dead then.
[November 10, 2011 at 5:30am](#) · [Like](#) · [1](#)
- Ali Shehzad: **and well** just for the **Fact**, the laptops can never catch fire for **it self**. **they** are made this way. **the** material in it is to withstand such high temperatures without catching fire.... [November 10, 2011 at 5:31am](#) · [Like](#) · [1](#)
- Moon Morton Jerry Ashar: **avoid** using it while in bed **czn...** **its** dangerous. same incident **happend** here in our area as well..
[November 10, 2011 at 9:41am](#) · [Like](#) · [1](#)
- Shahzaib Arshad Muhammad Akram: **farigh aadmi mera comment hai ooper**
[November 10, 2011 at 2:28pm](#) · [Like](#) · [1](#)
- Muhammad Akram: **hahhaa pehle batata** [November 10, 2011 at 2:47pm](#) · [Like](#) · [1](#)
- Darshan Pradhan: **That** is a dell Inspiron 6400
[November 11, 2011 at 5:27pm via mobile](#) · [Like](#) · [1](#)
- Maria Silva: **Sad ...** [November 12, 2011 at 6:02pm](#) · [Like](#)
- Noemi Lopez: **Photoshopped!** [November 12, 2011 at 6:53pm via mobile](#) · [Like](#)

- Billie Singletary: *My prayers is the family*
November 12, 2011 at 8:49pm via mobile · Like
- Janna Hammoud: **omg** *November 13, 2011 at 1:12am via mobile · Like*
- Jobelle Ng: *I will pray* *November 13, 2011 at 4:50am via mobile · Like*
- Junaid Naeem: **lol hva skjedde** *November 13, 2011 at 10:47am · Like*
- Ejinaka Ngozi Rosemary: **Dis sad. But, GOD I** » – †ånKzü.
November 13, 2011 at 12:11pm · Like · 1
- Junaid Naeem: **efefefeefefefe** *November 13, 2011 at 12:12pm · Like*
- Junaid Naeem: **halla gris** *November 13, 2011 at 12:12pm · Like*
- Luke Shine: **Dont** worry **i gota** a Macbook **im** good *November 13, 2011 at 3:25pm · Like · 1*
- Alexander McCormac: **This is why I want a desktop/tower, I hate laptops essentially**
November 13, 2011 at 7:56pm · Like · 1
- Alexander McCormac: **Or Dell** *November 13, 2011 at 8:36pm · Like*
- Carl Whelan: **Nah** Dell is cool if your life revolves around Facebook + Youtube.
November 13, 2011 at 8:43pm · Like
- Alexander McCormac: **What kinda sad sap, has a life like that!?**
November 13, 2011 at 9:58pm
- Carl Whelan: **I don't know, but i heard you've got a Dell :trollface:**
November 13, 2011 at 9:59pm
- Alexander McCormac: **pfft**, I'd rather be dead, but no, I have Advent,
November 13, 2011 at 10:02pm · Like
- Carl Whelan: **Dell case with the makings of 5 different computers**
November 13, 2011 at 10:03pm
- Alexander McCormac: **well**, it's the insides that matter! **:L**
November 13, 2011 at 10:04pm · Like
- Shakeel Talat: **Whenever processor has the heat, it will turn off. Some stupid put this statement to get popularity** *November 20, 2011 at 7:32am · Like*
- Muhammad Areeb: **Hp** *December 8, 2011 at 6:05pm · Like*
- Zain Ali: **My laptop motherboard got burned due to overheating cause i was using it all the time in bed.** *December 9, 2011 at 8:11am · Like*
- Siah Xinyi: **sad** *December 23, 2011 at 7:15am · Like*

- Vansh Deswal: *teri bhn ki all d intelligntss guys r presnt here hello evr1*
January 9, 2012 at 7:00am
- Maeghan d'Argaville: *hahahah i have the same laptop as in the pic*
February 3, 2012 at 3:26pm
- Smithy Yanken McJohnson: *The thing about the 25 year old is fake. I like this pic **cause** of the burned laptop* *February 4, 2012 at 8:05am · Like*
- Watermelon San Fenty: ***thanks** to whomever posted that **cause** i always sleep with my laptop by my side* *February 4, 2012 at 5:39pm · Like · 1*
- Adrienne Truitt: ***i looooooove** how my laptop is on my bed currently and how this thing just made me all scared **an chiz****February 5, 2012 at 12:46am · Like · 2*
- Jacqueline Kemble: ***bit daft** leaving a hot laptop on a bed use a laptop tray like i do and when i put it aside for i while i **leve** it safe on a laptop table with plenty of air. common sense **really x please be safe x***
February 5, 2012 at 1:13am · Like
- Imran Hossain Ruman: ***virusa khaya falisa*** *February 5, 2012 at 9:44am · Like*
- Kimberly Manalansan: *yaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa ryyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyytttttttttttt*
February 7, 2012 at 11:39am · Like
- Niamh Thornton: *nice it **luks** brand new out of **da** box lol*
February 14, 2012 at 10:49pm · Like
- Alexander Kirkman: ***holy**** i ant gonna** do that*
February 15, 2012 at 11:17am · Like
- Maddy Quarm: *y would they take a **PHOTO!*** *February 15, 2012 at 12:31pm · Like*
- Zoey Teo Min Hui: ***WOW....*** *February 15, 2012 at 1:14pm · Like*
- Annie Claire Clemmer: *omg **tht** is the same exact computer **tht i** have*
February 16, 2012 at 3:14pm
- Marley Morgan Murcina: *[spam 1] June 4 is my **b-day***
February 17, 2012 at 12:05am
- Kyle Kacy Schmitt: *Haha* *February 17, 2012 at 10:58am via mobile · Like*
- Jimmy William Smith: *at first **i thoguht its** was like a spam then i saw the comments*
February 17, 2012 at 10:59am · Like · 2
- Annie Claire Clemmer: ***Yea*** *February 18, 2012 at 7:37pm via mobile · Like*
- David Tian: *[spam 2]* *February 19, 2012 at 7:21pm · Like*

- Seth Knox: **omg** [March 3, 2012 at 5:09am](#) · [Like](#) · [1](#)
- Garima Mehta: [spam 3] [March 4, 2012 at 4:05pm](#)
- Angelina Snitko: so **thats** why my dad **tell** me not to put my computer on my bed [March 11, 2012 at 8:25pm](#) · [Like](#)
- Raj Kumar Dhiman: thanks [March 12, 2012 at 7:14pm](#) · [Like](#)
- Apurva Bhayani: **rpi his soul**
- Rovie Nishi Raquid: **OVER** [March 15, 2012 at 3:37pm](#) · [Like](#)
- Donald Paul Treat: also, **its** a good idea not to use laptop while sitting in the **bathtub.lol** [March 16, 2012 at 6:01pm](#) · [Like](#)
- Donald Paul Treat: also, **its** a good idea not to use laptop while sitting in the **bathtub.lol** [March 16, 2012 at 8:13pm](#) · [Like](#)
- Tucker Longstroth: **WOW...** [March 19, 2012 at 4:03pm](#) · [Like](#)
- Nivene Yolanda Rolanda: How sad I use the laptop in bed but I **ALWAYS** shut it off [March 26, 2012 at 4:06am](#) · [Like](#) · [1](#)
- Nivene Yolanda Rolanda: **Pooor** computer waste of money..... [March 26, 2012 at 4:07am](#) · [Like](#)
- Ryan Le: no [April 2, 2012 at 5:40am](#) · [Like](#)
- Daysy Lopez: [spam 4] [April 3, 2012 at 5:30am](#) · [Like](#)
- Daniel Quitugua: [spam 2] [April 6, 2012 at 1:41pm](#) · [Like](#)
- Derek Gorish: [spam 5] [April 13, 2012 at 5:55am](#) · [Like](#) · [1](#)
- Elisabetta Frieztsche: **Um**, that's what I am doing at this exact moment.. **xD** [April 13, 2012 at 11:16pm](#) · [Like](#)
- Romario El Hayek: **7etlkon chi cd la nsm3o 3a ha lep** [April 16, 2012 at 6:36pm](#) · [Like](#)
- Simon Wishart: [spam 4] [April 17, 2012 at 7:51pm](#) · [Like](#)
- Natasha Bruce B: **imma** teenager... **idk** how to not use the laptop in bed [April 21, 2012 at 7:37am](#)
- Natasha Bruce B: and when **im** sleepy **i** put it under my pillow and leave it on [April 21, 2012 at 7:37am](#) · [Like](#)
- Mylene Cyra Baltazar Baetiong: [spam 6] [April 25, 2012 at 5:21am](#) · [Like](#)
- Mylene Cyra Baltazar Baetiong: [spam2] [April 25, 2012 at 5:37am](#) · [Like](#)
- Chad Dealwithit Cang: so the laptop was saved and the house was burned?? [April 29, 2012 at 8:40am](#) · [Like](#)

- Dustin Oconnor: *he said that he has seen children in bed with **there** laptops*
April 29, 2012 at 12:36pm · Like
- Subzero Slenderman Bro: [spam 4] *April 30, 2012 at 4:37am · Like*
- Arunscape Arunage: **MY NIGHTMARE RIGHT THERE**
May 1, 2012 at 12:47am · Like
- Kayla Paige Wagner-Coughlin *ive been putting my laptop on the floor and the bed ever since **i** got it in **november** and **i havent** started a fire yet*
May 1, 2012 at 5:14am · Like
- Angela Jones Cassandra Myers: **:D** *May 5, 2012 at 6:52am · Like*
- Devin Newport: *I've actually almost died from breathing in carbon monoxide back in October. Luckily my mom smelled it in the morning and went into my room only to find me passed out. I was rushed to York Hospital, then airlifted to University of Maryland where I was treated with carbon monoxide poisoning. If it weren't for my mom finding me and the technology at the University of Maryland, I wouldn't be where I was right now. This is my true story. (By the way I'm only 13)*
May 9, 2012 at 4:28am · Like · 5
- Kaylee Bonilla: *the story above is so **SAD*** *May 10, 2012 at 3:27am · Like · 3*
- Amanda Miller: [spam 4] *May 10, 2012 at 5:57am · Like*
- Mia Kristine Hembre: *its a dell... **xD*** *May 11, 2012 at 11:36am · Like*
- Andres Cruz: [spam 7] *May 13, 2012 at 3:11am · Like*
- Cole Alexander: ***thats y u** get a mac not a pc it his fault*
May 18, 2012 at 6:07am · Like · 1
- Connie-mae Ward: [spam 8]. *May 20, 2012 at 11:14am · Like*
- Sammi Luhvz Gummiebearz Dunker: *I flip my computer over so the top of the screen is on the floor so **i** can see where the batter goes*
June 4, 2012 at 8:10am via mobile · Like · 1
- Stefan Zafirovic: *True* *June 9, 2012 at 11:46am · Like*
- Zed C. Oswald: *Urban legend, the computer would fry and shut down before it could start a fire or cause CO poisoning.* *June 9, 2012 at 8:42pm · Like · 1*
- Adam Malave: *Rusty And Dusty* *June 11, 2012 at 2:18am · Like*
- Brooklyn Radomske: [spam 9] *June 13, 2012 at 6:56am · Like*
- Maryam Mammadova: [spam 10] *June 25, 2012 at 11:25am · Like · 1*

- Hermione Styles Malik: **UUUMMM.....** my laptop is on my bed right now.
[June 26, 2012 at 12:38am](#) · [Like](#) · [3](#)
- Loulou Doulabi: **moudel lsene**
[June 26, 2012 at 2:37pm](#) · [Like](#)
- Shuddho Ukil Sujana Sharmin: **eitar kotha koisilam**
[June 28, 2012 at 4:39pm](#) · [Like](#) · [1](#)
- Jake Mello: **i wish that was my laptop!!!!!!**
[July 2, 2012 at 2:36am](#) · [Like](#)
- Destin Martin: Most computers have a CPU heat sensor. [July 3, 2012 at 6:48am](#)
- Ezekekiel Zilyvlnrae: Chain mail much [July 3, 2012 at 9:58am](#) · [Like](#) · [1](#)
- Bai Z Tan: how was the laptop was that **OK???** [July 3, 2012 at 11:51am](#) · [Like](#) · [1](#)
- Akinsanmi Abayomi Temitope Yomex: **Gud** [July 11, 2012 at 8:51am](#) · [Like](#)
- Véronique Chauveau: How sad I'll keep that in mind ..
[July 23, 2012 at 10:37pm](#) · [Like](#)
- Mikaylah Chan: [spam 4] [August 5, 2012 at 9:30am](#) · [Like](#) · [1](#)
- Mahesh Thop: **supper dad supper lap top real top** [August 8, 2012 at 6:07pm](#)
- Joshua Tyler Zavattaro: **omg** scams everywhere [August 17, 2012 at 7:08am](#) · [Like](#)
- Mugiwara Luffy: This is a Real Story [August 17, 2012 at 8:01am](#) · [Like](#) · [1](#)
- Mugiwara Luffy: Once upon a time was a old man and he died. Please report this news to everyone
[August 17, 2012 at 8:02am](#) · [Like](#) · [3](#)
- Olivia Mcgarrity: poor laptop... [August 25, 2012 at 6:27pm](#) · [Like](#) · [7](#)
- Javier Villanueva: [spam 11] [September 9, 2012 at 5:21am](#) · [Like](#)
- Cera Myhr: **i leave my laptop on, on my bed all the timee...**
[October 6, 2012 at 2:45am](#) · [Like](#)
- Seth Daniel Tuglavina: [spam 12] [October 16, 2012 at 12:54am](#) · [Like](#)
- Alexes Callejas: [spam 11] [October 16, 2012 at 2:32am](#) · [Like](#)
- Victoria Larson: [spam 13] [October 21, 2012 at 4:42am](#) · [Like](#)
- Sopsop Fredson: **usa mna uie** [October 27, 2012 at 6:26pm](#) · [Like](#)
- Chathuri Dodampegamage: [spam 4] [December 2, 2012 at 10:31pm](#) · [Like](#)
- Naggi Koppad: true [December 2, 2012 at 11:19pm](#) · [Like](#)
- Hannah Dasargo: **thats no prettu** [December 18, 2012 at 11:28am](#) · [Like](#)
- Aye Moe: Lucky I never use laptops [December 29, 2012 at 7:49am](#) · [Like](#)
- Achieva SoLoved Day-foster: [spam 14] [January 10 at 4:27am](#) · [Like](#) · [1](#)

- Aderu-san Beitvashahi: **i wonder who would do that to a laptop**
January 24 at 4:56am · Like
- Tariq Yusuf: **its fake cuz i leave my laptop on overnight at times and it doesnt make my house catch on fire and when a laptop or desktop overheats it switches of as ive seen laptops overheat and it never caught on fire just fried up inside and turned of**
February 14 at 10:53pm · Like · 2
- Julia Charrow Wyatt: **I have it on my lap.....**
March 3 at 6:39am · Like
- Salman Awais: **if u have a cooler under it your fine and make your your laptop temp never goes higher then 80 thats bad it will burn stuff and it can cause fire like what happend.if it gets hotter then normal take of charger and turn it to low performance or battery performance and please for sakes do not overclock if it his on comfortable temp if hot buy cooler or turn if of fast JUST TRYING SAVE A LIFE.**
March 9 at 7:39am · Like
- Annalise Tyrrell: **thats so sad about te 25 year old**
March 21 at 7:36am · Like
- Branden Lalo Olascoaga: **or you can turn your laptop off after using it.**
April 24 at 8:35am · Like · 6
- Soukeina Shaymi: **this is my nightmare**
April 27 at 3:36pm · Like
- Alice Sharivker: **my birthday is june 4th**
May 26 at 10:00pm · Like
- Cameron Murtsley Hill: **Buy a Desktop, problem solved.**
May 29 at 2:30am · Like · 5
- Patrick Robinson: **Lol idiots**
June 4 at 4:24pm · Like
- Kevin Pun: **And my mom be like: "Your Ipod is on the couch! Its gonna burn the house down!!"**
June 5 at 5:32am · Like · 4
- Natasha Mackay: **reading this while sitting on my bed with my laptop on my lap...**
June 30 at 12:06pm · Like · 2
- Sam Sam: **im usually using the laptop while im in bed, but i never fall asleep with the laptop in bed, so there is not a risk in my case**
June 30 at 4:52pm · Like
- Ashely Chong: **Oh my gosh, wow. I used to use my laptop and rest it on my sofa! (That's why it broke the first time) But I use it on a table now, so no biggie C:**
July 18 at 2:01am · Like
- Rachel Ann Price: **i'm using a laptop like this now..**
August 1 at 4:34pm · Like

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Progress in technology is revolutionizing communication, and people are being transformed by their preference for communicating online. More than anyone else, it is young people who have transgressed the now obsolete cliché of citizens of the global village to become fully *networked* members of the world audience. Indeed, theirs is a symbiotic relationship with the social media, a virtuous circle lending them renewed or novel opportunities of (dis)playing (with) their identities. In her book, Alexandra Cotoc is making sense of this loop, by focusing her investigative research on the conceptualisation of the cyberspace as inhabited by the (arbitrary or deliberate) fluid identities of young people, which are no longer merely expressed, but alternately displayed, negotiated, or constructed, often jocularly, across the varied virtual communities. While setting Internet Linguistics as her focal theoretical framework, Alexandra Cotoc has elected to employ investigative approaches angling on Discourse Analysis, Philosophy of language, Sociolinguistics, and Pragmatics, for a comprehensive evaluation of a snapshot of digital communication in the early second decade of the noughties. By then, cultural reactivity had begun compounding communication, with language use closely mirroring the intercultural encounters afforded by the digital space.

A substantial start, presaging the even more dynamic times to come, this book is a generous and inspiring source for all the correlated domains researching individual and group identities as social discursive and narrative phenomenon, and digital communication with its technical, structural and social affordances.

Dr. Diana Cotrău, Babes-Bolyai University, Romania



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