Online and Offline Discourses.
New Worlds,
New Sociolinguistic Perspectives

Editors:
Diana Cotrău and **Alexandra Cotoc**

Presa Universitară Clujeană

ONLINE AND OFFLINE DISCOURSES

NEW WORLDS, NEW SOCIOLINGUISTIC PERSPECTIVES

UNIVERSITATEA BABEŞ-BOLYAI
TRADIŢIE ŞI EXCELENŢĂ

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NEW WORLDS,
NEW SOCIOLINGUISTIC PERSPECTIVES

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Acknowledgements

The preamble to the present endeavour has been our participation in the 2016 First International Conference on Sociolinguistics in Budapest, Hungary, followed by a scientific event entitled *Digital and Multimodal Self- and Other-Representations* organised at *Centrul de Pragmatici ale Comunicării* (The Center of Communication Pragmatics) at Babeș-Bolyai University, Cluj, Romania, in 2017. Eventually, our undertaking developed into a three-stage scientific project by structuring the convenors' contributions as a volume encapsulating a mutual research interest. At inception, an applied Internet (Socio)Linguistics and Computer Mediated Communication approach was the niche from within which we instrumented the project. On reflection, however, we determined that our epistemic intentions should also accommodate such topical paralanguage phenomena as superdiversity and de- and re-territorialisation and their seminal intercultural and multicultural consequences on the 'real' and the 'virtual' worlds now interconnected under the additional impact of communication technology especially where emerging adults are concerned. Archetypal trendsetters even in matters of language action and interaction, we considered that *Generation C* (The Connected Generation) – the actors whose socio-lingua-culture attitudes and performances are under scrutiny in the present volume – and their verbal plays and displays would be more pertinently approached by adding a theoretical survey of the recent turns in Sociolinguistics and identity construction, as reflecting our own inclinations. Consequently, we decided to supplement the proceedings of the 2017 event with an adequate introductory section that would expand the ground covered by the case studies debated, as well as providing a larger aperture for the volume title: *Online and Offline Discourses. New Worlds, New Sociolinguistic Perspectives*. We hope that, indeed, by broadening our scope, albeit the key approach remains Sociolinguistics, rather than informing a niche scientific community only, we will manage to stir some *multi*-disciplinary interest. Since Sociolinguistics itself has borrowed a fair number of analytical models and concepts from other fields (Sociology, Social Psychology, Ethnography, Anthropology, to name only a few), and as direct beneficiaries ourselves, we feel no opportunity should be missed to return the favour.

We wish to thank the authors who have contributed to this volume either auto-nomous inputs or versions of the doctoral projects they were engaged in at the time our scientific project was underway. Their trust and patience and the substance of

their papers/chapters and book reviews have been an incentive for our editorial work.

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Our mutual gratitude goes to Professors Liana Pop and Ștefan Oltean of Universitatea Babeș-Bolyai, for their relentless support of our combined scientific, academic and editorial endeavours over the years, and for their unwavering endorsement of this volume in their capacities of manager and, respectively, director of the aforementioned center.

We hope that the result of our teamwork will be of interest and benefit to all and any multi-disciplinary-related researchers.

This volume has been endorsed by *Centrul de Pragmatici ale Comunicării* and *Departamentul de Limbi Străine Specializate*, both of Universitatea Babeș-Bolyai, and has been subsidised by a Universitatea Babeș-Bolyai institutional grant.

Diana COTRĂU, Alexandra COTOC

Introduction

It is more than evident that given the current radical shifts in demographics across the globe, theorists need to relinquish the traditional totalising and globalising angle that has been itself until quite recently the preferred turn in the approach to language contact and communication within the real and the virtual/digital world(s). *Centrul de Pragmatici ale Comunicării* (Centre for Communication Pragmatics) at Universitatea Babeș-Bolyai has made a scientific point of the issue in its May, 2017 workshop. However, organisers and contributors then only probed what is an ongoing, in-depth cultural phenomenon aptly mirrored by language across the varied types of discourses criss-crossing all of communication today. The convenors' subsequent collaborative intention was to provide a follow-up to the presentations delivered and discussions that ensued in the form of a volume that captured the ideas then propounded as well as some scientific afterthoughts and ulterior research on the topic. Indeed, change is an omnipresent and perennial feature where the communication technologies are involved, even as it is echoed by the development of social media literacy, which should and does prompt researchers and theorists alike to rise to the inherent part challenge, part opportunity of reconfiguring some of the traditional linguistic paradigms.

With the *Online and Offline Discourses. New Worlds, New Sociolinguistic Perspectives* volume we intend to provide a further glimpse of the complexities engendered by Interculturality and Multiculturalism, assuredly not new, but continual and, now, accelerated lingua-culture phenomena impacting, indeed, all domains. The volume is meant to contribute insights into such topics as can be identified and diagnosed in terms of cultural (ethnic) identities and subjective cultures (inter-subjectivities), and are tangent to language and social media, language and education, and language and society. Our major issues for exploration can be subcategorised under two headings: on- and off-line linguistic and multimodal strategies of *self-* and *other*-representations and the communication of (sub)cultural values, beliefs and attitudes through interaction. In the process, we scrutinised, on the one hand, the linguistic construction of sociocultural identities through self-perceived contrast and/or comparison, reductive stereotyping, essentialism through *othering*, and on the other, the emergence and development of sociocultural sensitivity which, too, is reflected by and in language. We also delved into the apparently homogenous

monocultural communities riddled, nevertheless, by societal and generational divides, and their respective language attitudes and subcultural stances.

Online interactions have been undergoing a process of change ever since the advent of the digital era, and, in turn, have definitely impacted the offline. Technology has advanced at an extremely fast pace and now the world of computers encapsulates laptops, tablets, smartphones, i.e. a host of gadgets, apparels and applications, determining a change of pace, density, connectivity, indeed, of some of the *nature* of interpersonal communication. Communication technology evolution has caused such major shifts that, today, the majority of us have a sense of leading our lives from within the online medium and not just on a personal level, but on every other aspect, professional included. One of our colleagues stated he was disturbed to be informally told by one of his students: *If you are not on Facebook, you do not exist*. Thus, we now have to reconsider one of the prominent sociolinguistics dictums about our evaluation or positioning of the others (our interlocutors) through speech. Today, a critical volume of communication takes place online, which places extra pressure on what was deemed a fairly straightforward and intuitive process. With young people, the generational segment that engages ritually in digital communication, the part subconscious, part deliberate evaluation algorithm at play is a two-faceted resource: the one, for instrumenting their own fluid identity construction; the other, for locating the *other* on the sociocultural map in order to establish rapport. And if the Social Media have contributed to the members' of *Generation C* developing an unprecedented part narcissistic, part voyeuristic dimension of the (digital) self, they have also equipped them with the skill to spot the same in others and manage varied 'speech' situations they may not have experienced offline. Moreover, they have developed the social media literacy to establish connectivity by sidestepping the encumbrance of decoding a foreign language and deal with culture-determined communication, which, otherwise, would make them the prisoners of uniplexity and locality.

Today, the everyday lives of young people cannot be extricated from communication and technology with which they form a symbiotic connection as dictated by their intense online social presence as members of the networked public. Indeed, sociolinguistic research and theory must not only acknowledge the radical shifts in communication under the impact of the New Social Media affordances, hyperconnectivity and multimodal expression included, but also accelerate their integration of new scientific paradigms so as not to lag behind the social and verbal interaction changes that are underway even as we write.

In this respect, we are witnessing the emergence of corresponding new disciplines or the reformation of 'old' ones, which aim at explaining the complexity of digital interaction phenomena while never losing sight of the online and offline co-dependency. Whole disciplines, fields and activities can now be revisited and many theorists and researchers have responded to the beckoning. Alexandru-Brăduț Ulmanu (see the book review in this volume) claims that we are taking part in a revolution and, with regard to his own field, states that journalism needs to be reinvented. We can safely extrapolate the claim to all fields and recognise the eminence of the digital dimension: linguistics has developed a new strand – Internet Linguistics; the humanities – a counterpart: digital humanities, online identity apparently includes offline identity rather than the reverse, e-commerce is increasingly popular, many of us show a preference for reading e-books, administrative communication is conducted on all levels almost exclusively online, presidents have made a habit of tweeting incontinently, revolutions are ignited on Facebook and are then exported to the 'real' world. Indeed, the world is ruled by bits.

The online world offers alternatives that can improve and democratise its offline correspondent dimensions. Let us take the example of Social Media and how communication therein has transformed the traditional receptors into a networked public through their sustained ritual engagement consisting in more than merely receiving and consuming information but in actually co-producing it. Thus, prosumers are quite skilled at either authoring User Generated Content or contributing to collaborative and ongoing online projects and products: let's take the example of Wikipedia, where anyone can create entries or contribute to the already published wiki content. Subtle forms of online democracy are slowly trickling into the offline, with the potential to bring about concrete changes to a wide range of aspects, fom civil behaviour, political engagement and representation to individual and group empowerment, in general. However, the process has not been devoid of a negative impact as well, to mention only the critically disturbing ill-effects of contamination with fake news, hate speech, cyber-bullying, or dark web content.

Internet Linguistics

Given the syncretism between culture, communication technology and mediascapes where young people are concerned it is not surprising that we have made Internet (Socio)linguistics the hybrid scientific nexus of our volume. The internet and the new technologies have paved the way for Internet Linguistics to integrate theoretically and methodologically the new aspects of communication continually materialising

on the Internet. Internet Linguistics has lent a new depth to discourse analysis and has reconvened on some of the approaches, methodological frames and corpus analysis instrumentation. Speaking about language usage online, David Crystal writes of "an emerging language centaur – part speech, part writing" (Crystal, 2001: 48), which goes on to show that online interaction will never be completely divorced from offline speech and the two are symbiotic rather than osmotic.

In defining Internet Linguistics, we quote Gretchen McCullogh, the self-professed Internet linguist: "I'm an internet linguist: I explore the language of the internet, for the people of the internet". The first statement in the *About* section on her personal website, we find it to be of utmost relevance for the spirit of our volume. It defines the core transversal nature of Internet Linguistics which subsidiarily advocates for a replication in critical and theoretical work of the democracy, equality, open and easy access, collaborative and co-generated type of content characteristic of grass-roots net practice. Moreover, communication through the Internet gratifies people's wish of crossing borders and establishing contact free of space and time restrictions, with linguistic and multimodal 'consequences' that are central to Internet Linguistics. People will surpass, often intuitively, intercultural hindrances to gain synchronous membership of a multitude of often culturally-mixed, but motivationally homogenous, communities. Thus, digital communication is the facilitator, *par excellence*, of participatory cultures entailing intercultural communication that supersede national barriers, with the potential to remould offline sociocultural attitude, behaviour, action and interaction.

The term Internet Linguistics was coined by David Crystal (see Crystal's *Language and the Internet* of 2001 and *Internet Linguistics. A Student Guide* of 2011) in his endeavour to use adequate, distinct and specific terminology for online interaction. Crystal argued in the beginning that the terms *Internet Linguistics* or *Netlinguistics* are the most convenient names for the study of language in the electronic medium, which he introduced in his catchy, logo-like, newfangled manner: "language@internet" (Crystal, 2011: 2–3). Hence, Internet Linguistics is a branch of linguistics that investigates the new linguistic needs but also the affordances prompted by the digitisation of the contemporary world. It covers the panachronic (at once, diachronic and synchronic) analysis of language in all areas of Internet activity, focusing on the digital communication through the Internet and the New Social Media.

Internet Linguistics encompasses four perspectives: Sociolinguistics, Education, Stylistics, and Applied Internet Linguistics. Regardless of the research perspective embraced, the scope of Internet Linguistics covers the whole range of online production of discourse on sites, blogs, social networks sites, discussion forums, video-based

online services and channels. It started as a field which focused on the distinctive language of the internet, but the affordances of the new communication technologies have developed to a degree where a more complex analysis than just of language is satisfactory. Beyond text production, online communication is now conducted through multimodality via images, videos, podcasts, hyperlinks, hashtags, images, emojis, emoticons, *like* and *share* buttons, etc. Given the versatile and multifaceted features of online communication, Internet Linguistics needs to adopt a multidisciplinary approach, which can only be mutually beneficial due to the possibilities of exchange of theories, methodologies and analytic tools. Indeed, its object of study is so complex and changing, that the internet linguist needs to prepare in a multidisciplinary manner for the veritable cornucopia of ever fresh corpora.

Digital Humanities

A fundamental change of perspective, methods, objects and tools of study was hailed when the digital and the humanities embarked on an odyssey together. This was sett off by the observation, and admission, that computers are a prerequisite for humanities research, more than half a century ago: "The true nature of the machine is unknown to us, but it is neither a human brain nor a mechanical clerk. The computer has a logic of its own, one which the scholar must master if he is to benefit from his relations with it. Its intelligence and ours must be made complementary, not antagonistic or subservient to each other.... The computer can be made an extension of man only if it opens avenues we have not suspected the existence of" (Joseph Raben, 1966: 4, apud. McCarty, 2017: 5).

Digital Humanities (abbreviated to DH) constitute a new field of academic study and teaching, which establishes a link between the digital and the humanities, and is concerned with the application of computational tools and methods to tradi-tional humanities disciplines such as linguistics, literature, history, philosophy, etc. Nevertheless, DH is not just about using technology, but about bringing together researchers and using their expertise in different domains in collaborative projects. In this regard, our volume reflects the values of a digital humanities project in the sense that it is the product of collaborative work and it taps into several, albeit closely related, disciplines even while it provides a trigger for multidisciplinary discussion by informing on current trends in the analysis of online and offline dis-courses. The volume embraces in terms of heuristics and hermeneutics the broader DH spirit of fostering community building by borrowing and lending perspectives from and to several disciplines, albeit too closely related for the likes of true DH

practicians, such as linguistics, textual analysis, semiotics, social psychology, ethnography of (written) speech (*sic*) or communication theories in general.

One of the editor's five participations in the annual summer university in Digital Humanities entitled *"Culture & Technology" European Summer University in Digital Humanities* (http://www.culingtec.uni-leipzig.de/), which takes place at the University of Leipzig, Germany, have shown us yet again that research yields better results when specialists work as a team, forming a community of scientific interest while coming from different fields of study and with different expertise. On the site of the summer school, the *Mission* section familiarises visitors and participants with the aim of the event: "in bringing together young scholars from the Humanities, Engineering and Information Sciences, it [the summer school] creates the conditions for future project-oriented collaboration and networking across the borders of the individual disciplines". The organisers of the event, Professor Elisabeth Burr and her team, have taken their mission seriously and have formed a community of researchers who regularly attend the yearly editions, with the summer school providing an inspiringly democratic space for senior and young researchers to mingle and learn how to generate and carry through scientific projects. Hence, events like this summer school create and activate communities in which knowledge and expertise are shared and discussions in the field of Humanities take place not only to showcase final products, but also to find joint solutions to the problems encountered on the way. The concept of community building is based on the belief that every individual can bring something valuable to a discussion and that everyone can learn something from the others, academic ranks notwithstanding, as well as contributing to a friendly, relaxing and productive atmosphere. Thus, the Leipzig team, the workshop leaders, keynote speakers and participants in the summer school have managed to cross discipline, academic and theoretic borders, reach their objectives and offer examples of good practice from and for the Academia. The type of collaboration promoted by the community in Leipzig is quintessential of Digital Humanities groups and projects around the world. A random online browse, for instance, will direct one to the suggestive description of the Cambridge Digital Center: "CDH is a creative and collaborative space where students, researchers and international visitors can come together to engage in dialogue, experiment with technology and advance scholarship".

There are many projects in the field of Digital Humanities proving that research is always opportune to bringing people together. During the workshop attended in Leipzig in 2018 (*Hands on Humanities Data Workshop – Creation, Discovery and Analysis*), Carol Chiodo (Princeton University, USA) and Lauren Tilton (University

of Richmond, USA) introduced participants to many projects in order to showcase the end value of DH work and to familiarise the participants with DH projects. In what follows, we will briefly describe some of the projects presented in Leipzig, with the purpose of encouraging the same kind of collaboration and creativity in the Romanian research communities, be they in Digital Humanities or other related fields.

Goin' North (https://goinnorth.org/) is an excellent example of a research project which recruited students as valuable team members. The project produced an archive of oral histories based on interviews "conducted in the 1980s with African Americans who had migrated north during the 1910s and 1920s and with those in Philadelphia who witnessed their arrival – [which] reveal the complex struggles to overcome racism both in the South and in Philadelphia; the search for opportunities in the North; and the worlds of church, work, school, and entertainment which these individuals inhabited". Students curated the interviews, introduced images, GPS coordinates, descriptive terms. All the researchers involved in this project received credit for their work and the students' names are listed under headings such as "Class participants, Fall 2014", "Class participants, Spring 2016" etc.. Such projects are exemplary and aid in consolidating research teams for long term undertakings.

Mapping the Republic of Letters at Stanford University (http://republicofletters. stanford.edu/) is, too, a project which is based on the work of a community of international researchers. In the *About the Project* section, the researchers highlight the importance of networking across countries and continents, "the social networks created by scientific academies; and the physical networks brought about by travel". They emphasise the importance of dissemination, criticisms, "the circulation of people and objects".

The Roy Rosenzweig Center for History and New Media at George Mason University (https://rrchnm.org/what-we-do/) stands as an example of research centers which disseminate DH projects and emphasise the value of bringing together academia and professionals, undergraduates and postgraduates, from a range of disciplines and professions: "our team includes scholars, researchers, developers, programmers, designers, project managers, educators, multimedia producers, and graduate and undergraduate students. Our backgrounds include history, museum studies, computer science, graphic design, teaching, and journalism".

Computational methods and tools are a significant part of every DH project. They are meant to help researchers in their corpus compilation, analysis and storage. There are many DH tools with open access, some of which can be developed upon request, others in order to suit further needs. Below, we enumerate three such tools:

- **Voyant** (https://voyant-tools.org/), a text analysis tool, is "a web-based reading and analysis environment for digital texts";
- **TimelineJS** (https://timeline.knightlab.com/), a storytelling tool, "has been used by more than 250,000 people to tell stories seen hundreds of millions of times, and is available in more than sixty languages";
- **Lost Circles (**https://lostcircles.com/), a tool for visualising networks on the social network site *Facebook*.

In what follows, we provide a brief summary of the main chapters of the volume consisting in the papers delivered at the 2017 Babeș-Bolyai University scientific workshop, presenting study cases that were instrumented either traditionally or in a novel manner. All have focused on topical sociolingusitic issues pertaining to online and offline discourses under the impact of internationalisation of higher education, the need for a reconcepualisation of the notion of community (of speech) and for taking into consideration the radical changes in communication triggered by intense social presence in the Social Media and high engagement in participatory cultures.

An Overview of Contributions

Social Media Activism and Offline Transportability. A Sociolinguistic Case Study purports to explore from a threefold Cultural Sociolinguistics, Critical Discourse Analysis, and Social Media Studies perspective how discourse across generational groups may foster solidarity (or conflict) in Social Network Sites when engaging in activism. The authors point to the fact that the alternative positionings to the emotion-fraught media accounts of a dramatic incident correlate with linguistic displays of acceptance, negotiation or rejection of the dominant or preferred meanings embedded in interpersonal or peer communication. The infelicitous, local occurrence targeted was the accidental fire outbreak at a rock concert venue which caused a high number of fatalities and casualties, in Bucharest, Romania, on October 30, 2015, which triggered an almost unprecedented social media dynamism. The qualitative analysis conducted shows how a solidarity discourse of sorts took shape in the aftermath of the incident as facilitated by the medium's affordances and dynamics between two ideologically adversarial cohorts formed, the one, by post-communism nostalgic mature citizens and the other, by liberally-oriented Millennials. Since the analysis was retrospective and given the political outcomes of the episode, the authors hypothesised that active online participation rather than merely predicting civic involvement is actually conducive to offline political activism. The hypothesis was theoretically framed by the concept of *Networked public* (a public transformed by

the networked media, its properties and its potential) as, indeed, *Media convergence* and *Web 2.0* have changed the manner of reception, the social influence of sources, and consequently, some aspects of the communication process. Thus, it was expected that the SNS patterns of discussions around the national solidarity enhancing episode would be overriding such age-differentiated communication styles as have been theorised and that the SIDE effect characteristic of Computer Mediated Communication would be instrumental to social capital bridging. The corpus gathering instrument employed was the *hashtag* over the social media users' production time spanning October to November, 2015, and it was used to retrieve analytical material from three text types (as information sources): traditional (electronic) mass-media input and SNS users' comments; interpersonal conversations in the section 'comments' to user generated content; users' posts within homogeneous social media groups.

A Sociolinguistic Analysis of Digital Social Network User Identities: The *Instagram 'fitfam'* Community explores how a particularly homogeneous *Instagram* group aggregates digi-citizens who display a prolific social presence to account for an online collective identity. This is shown to be achieved mainly through a thematic sociolect and courtesy to the social platform's affordances. The multimodal material collected documents the actual linguistic strategies employed by users to negotiate membership of the community, with the subsidiary result of reinforcing the virtual community's specificity. The four sections of the contribution argue for the socio-linguistic approach to the topic, single out a generational group – Gen C/Generation C: natural born curators, quenching their thirst for connection by seeking out 'shareworthy' content which is used to elicit reactions and reinforce emotional connections within their community – and their propensity for fitness and wellness related activities, as well as the promotion of a fashionably healthy lifestyle. For this, the author sampled 31 young adults who share a passion for fitness/wellness related activities and use a tacitly agreed upon set of linguistic means to convey similar messages in six different languages: English, French, German, Hungarian, Italian and Spanish. Research-wise, the author makes a point of exploring the role of *hashtag* on *Instagram* as *the* instrument for growing one's account by displaying one's brand or field of interest to large targeted audiences. Ultimately, the question that it wishes to answer is whether, given the fact that a (sub)culture of electronic communication with norms, language and behaviour of its own has arisen, the virtual community can be regarded as any other 'real' community.

Language Use and Communication in Online Communities Centered on Video Games analyses the discourse patterns displayed by an online gamer community

whose constituency is ethnically diverse but has developed an English-based gaming jargon that ensures adequate in-group communication as well as functioning as a membership selection criterion. Noting that the conceptualisation of virtual community is still a bone of contention among theorists and researchers, the author's main intent is to provide evidence that online communities should be treated epistemologically as any and all communities in the 'real world', and to point to a welcome shift in emphasis from locality to the social dimension and the shared understanding of group identity as reflected through mutual goals, interests, and communicative strategies as the defining features of both online and offline communities. The author remarks on language use within virtual communities as an enabler of communication and interaction in a regular and meaningful way and as a cohesive tool in community forming.

Starting from the importance of language and communication where online communities are concerned, answers are provided to questions regarding the structure of online communities built around video games, the intrinsic properties of linguistic interaction between members of an online group using synchronous communication, the extent to which the communicative strategies employed by the community members reflect the social aspects of community life.

Languaging Practices Linking Young Speakers through Discontinuities and Otherness discusses the findings of a qualitative analysis of the interactional verbal patterns of English L1 and English Lx, second year Physiology students at Universitatea de Științe Agricole și Medicină Veterinară (University of Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine) in Cluj-Napoca. By employing a combined Conversation Analysis approach, the Markedness and Rational Choice models, the Membership Categorisation Theory and Zimmerman's situated, transportable and discourse identity model, the author focuses on the situated code-switching phenomena from an angle adopted by recent research on the didactic and cognitive benefits of using pluri-lingualism in higher education. The author's concluding remark is that the surveyed group employed a personalised variety of English as Lingua Franca and other languaging practices in order to successfully accomplish their seminar tasks. Their authentic collaborative work displayed polydirectionality, as well as creativity and fluidity in communication, as revealed by the more holistic and active approach to the linguistic phenomenon of code-switching adopted by the contributor of this chapter, very much aware as a practitioner herself of a lingering language purism in many educational environments. The author's preoccupation rests throughout the chapter with investigating the link between current multilingual theory, psycho- and sociolinguistics, and the

actual languaging practices put to use in a localised, particularised manner by emerging adult English Lx speakers.

Book Reviews

The choice of the books reviewed has been determined by the editorial intention of stepping outside the Sociolinguistics niche in order to prove that the field can, does and should benefit from multiple social science angles and can, does and should inform them in return. Thus, Alexandru-Brăduț Ulmanu, *Cartea Fețelor. Revoluția Facebook în spațiul social*, [The Book of Faces. Facebook in the Social Space], București: Humanitas, 2011 stretches out to a journalistic perspective of Facebook and social performance; Timothy Garton Ash. *Free Speech*. London: Atlantic Books, 2016 joins in the ranks with inputs from political philosophy and legislation on freedom of speech in the Internet era across the globe, straddled by authentic case studies; Fernando Jesús Plaza del Pino. *Comunicación, cuidado y vida en la diversidad: una propuesta de formación intercultural* [Communication, Care and Life in Diversity: A Proposal of Intercultural Training]. Editorial Universidad de Almería, 2017 is recommended, among other things, as an excellent hands-on textbook for developing Intercultural Communication Competence.

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We hope that the points we have made in our *Introduction* and such suggestions of useful updated bibliography as can be found in the *Reference* sections of the chapters in the volume and the three book reviews, as well as the brief summary of the chapters constituting this volume, will serve as an efficient guide to our book and to any current or germinating research ideas and scientific projects our readers may entertain.

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Social Media Activism and Offline Transportability. A Sociolinguistic Case Study

Diana Cotrău
Alexandra Cotoc

This contribution combines a joint Cultural Sociolinguistics, Critical Discourse Analysis, and Social Media Studies approach and the social psychology perspective to examine such linguistic strategies in online interpersonal communication as may foster solidarity on social networks sites over newsworthy incidents with large media coverage. Our topic choice was occasioned by a tragic incident – a fire in a local Romanian venue hosting a rock concert which resulted in a high number of casualties and fatalities. The dramatic episode triggered intense social and political positioning in the Social Media, which we analysed qualitatively in order to establish if and how the networked public may achieve solidarity through reactive digi-participation. Our assumption is that there co-occurs a deep-surface building of social identity concomitant with a deindividuation process (according to the SIDE effect characteristic of Computer Mediated Communication), as reflected by the correlated sociolinguistic patterns of online interaction in Social Network Sites (SNSs) between two significantly reactive, but opposing, social categories. We further hypothesise, based on the ensuing developments in terms of social and political activism in Romania, that this complex process reflected in and by language can be transported offline.

Our paper explores the textual displays in the Social Media Networks contingent on the national tragedy of October 30, 2015, at the *Colectiv* club in Bucharest, Romania. The *Good-bye to Gravity* concert launching a rock band's (indeed) last album employed pyrotechnics, whose misuse produced a fire. 64 people died and 147 suffered severe casualties. The incident triggered strong, but varied, reactions on the Social Media platforms from local users, members of the diasporic community, and internauts from around the world, following the domestic and international press accounts. The tragically newsworthy occurrence was debated in posts and comments typically displaying multimodal discourse (text, videos, images, emoticons, emoji). Our sociolinguistic excursion into the social media users' contributions intends to identify the emotional charge leading to social activism and its likelihood

to materialise into offline action. And, while in retrospect, the intensity of the social media activity surrounding the event is partially accountable to a then quasi-nationwide sociopolitical discontent, we wish to diagnose how the differentiated online linguistic positionings vis-à-vis the incident correlated with two particular social segments that we registered as displaying high engagement with the issue *and* each other.

Interpersonal Communication on Social Network Sites

Any exploration of linguistic displays in the Social Media cannot overlook the impact of the seminal changes in communication conjectured by the compound advance in technologies and media forms. By way of consequence, a sociolinguistic perspective thereof must refer to the status of the Social Media users and the affordances they enjoy. Indeed, convergence, hyperconnectivity and multimodality of expression (Boyd, 2011:39) have revolutionised digital communication in general which, needless to say, now begs readdressing.

To begin with, let us note that the networked technologies have reorganised how information flows and how people interact with information *and* each other. What has previously been defined as audiences (or, receptors) of the broadcast media have now been largely replaced by the *Networked publics*. The term conceptualises the digitally native people that have been transformed by the properties and the potential of the networked media and by their own growing engagement with the latter (Boyd, 2011:40). We cannot but remark on the impact of their ritualistic engagement with the Social Media, which has turned the members of the networked public into simultaneous "reactors, (re)makers and (re)distributors, engaged in shared culture and knowledge through discourse and social exchange as well as through acts of media reception". (Mizuko Ito cf. Boyd, 2011:41) Social Network Sites (SNSs) are, then, more than mere sites of discourse, opinion, and information but "arenas for the formation and enactment of social identities" (Nancy Fraser cf. Boyd, 2011:41).

Such syncretism can engender complex forms of online social engagement and participation (Johnson, 2011: 185), with attitudes and behaviours often radicalising around mutual goals. And, while no direct causality has so far been scientifically established between networked engagement and corresponding offline actions, the former has been seen, however, to have reconfigured beliefs and attitudes, with the potential to *influence* social practice. Indeed, studies have found social network use to be linked to civic participation, and, in what we are directly concerned, some

more recent studies (Johnson, 2011:186) have evidenced that there are actual political uses of SNSs which can predict offline political activity.

Our focal interest lies with how the online interaction – often under the influence of the SIDE (social identity model of deindividuation) effect as a characteristic of Computer Mediated Communication (Postmes, Spears & Lea, 1989) – between two distinct local demographics expressing dichotomic positions vis-à-vis the showcased incident can actually lead to social capital bridging which can, then, be exported offline and even generate political activism. The digital interactions we have scrutinised are in the shape of reactive comments to individual user posts or mass-media inputs that relate to or give accounts of the incident abovementioned. For, indeed, today, Timothy Garton Ash's (2016:180) claim that "We require uncensored, diverse, trustworthy media so we can make well-informed decisions and participate fully in political life" holds true not just for the advanced democracies but are an appendix of the emergent ones, too.

The local sociopolitical events in the aftermath of the *Colectiv* fire index *post-factum* a discernible overflowing of the online social militancy and political activism into the offline. We can venture to say that the process was augmented by media convergence (Walther et alia, 2011) and its averred potential for facilitating more than mere interactivity but actual co-creation of content by website visitors in addition to the original authors. Users are, thus, not just symbolically but literally empowered, and they can successfully negotiate collective identities (as every item of 'written speech,' or Netspeak, is an act of identity) even as they share information on and embrace a mutual motivation for a specific social cause from among the multitude lodged by and circulated in SNSs. Indeed, the networked public is comprised of *prosumers* (Fuchs, 2011): producers *and* consumers with social per-formance in the (New) Media, which generates the conditions for a more direct democracy (Jan van Dijk, 2006:95). And perhaps it is not too venturesome to assume that the default online democracy may be carried offline by reflex by the cybercitizens, if one practices or is exposed to it ritually. In conclusion, we hypo-thesise that high engagement in digital communication and intense social presence in SNSs can create a tendency to replicate in the 'real' world the accompanying digital brand of democracy.

An additional aspect intrinsic to our hypothesis is that the digital affordances have also been conducive to a shift from private to public opinion and that the SNSs, in turn, "reinforce the social affordances of online environments by fostering interaction that is primarily interpersonal… enabling both identity expression and community building" (Papacharissi, 2011:305). By participating online in interpersonal

discussions, SNS users can often be seen to enact a networked opinion through solidarity-marked participation often from within a community of motivational interest. This provides an important index of the participatory culture phenomenon, a generic potential of SNSs.

In what concerns the national incident that galvanised public opinion in Romania in 2015, we narrowed down our focus onto a particular social divide, as mentioned above. Given the nature of the incident and its particular social and political context, the victims involved and the social categories who reacted most impetuously to the mass media accounts, we singled out two categories of SNS users. The choice was based on what could and can still be perceived through 'the naked eye' as a divide between the Millennials (young adults in their late twenties and thirties with a markedly consistent socio-psychological and cultural profile due to their tendencies and attitudes towards technology and culture) and a mature adult social segment, with their respective, often emphatic, stereotyping of the *other*.

Our own experiences with the trending Social Media topics at around the time of the *Colectiv* incident and the generic social and psychological features of the two social demographics provided further scaffolding for our hypotheses. Our interest lay with establishing the probability for the digital discourse of these discrete and apparently antagonistic, demographic segments displaying accute social bias to manifest availability for reconciliation over the contextualised topic. If that was the case, however minimal, it could attest to social capital bridging, the acknowledgement by either party that some of their specific and defining values can reach consensus across some contexts. Given that SNSs are an arena where communication is often underpinned by group identity negotiation, they represent fertile ground for such research. Indeed, they are congenial to social performance, a medium where users can practice their linguistic identity repertoires even as they choose to embrace temporarily a situated collective identity.

Under the sociopolitical circumstances, we presumed that a pattern would emerge among the interpersonal comments to posts or mass media inputs on the *Colectiv* fire that would correlate with either of the sociocultural profiles of the two demographic segments aforementioned. However, given the magnitude of the *Colectiv* tragedy, our expectation was that the patterns of 'discussion' would override age-differentiated interactional styles (Coates, 1998). Therefore, rather than constituting fodder for conflict (as often is the case, reaching, at times even extreme forms such as cyberbullying and hatespeech), they will contribute to reaching a consensus through linguistic diplomacy and Net etiquette. Our presumption is grounded on the fact that people concerned with civic causes are generally resolution-oriented and often fulfil their interactional goals

by refraining from engaging in verbal conflict and observing, instead, the sociolinguistic *face* rules. We hope to identify the same in a particular SNS, that is, on Facebook which is high among the preferences of Romanians, where the *Colectiv* fire was fervently debated. Consequently, in terms of sociolinguistic presuppositions, we expect to identify linguistic markers of solidarity, of non-aggravating and *other*-inclusion verbal interaction, language indexing shared intersubjectivity, as well as linguistic instantiations of the social identification and deindividuation model, albeit the latter may cause, alternately, bridging or breaching of social capitals (Postmes, Spears & Lea).

We have, thus, analysed the discourse patterns displayed by the two targeted social segments in their reactive comments to information sourced from three types of texts: institutional reports/accounts by the traditional, national and international, electronic mass media, interpersonal digital communication or 'dialogic' comments relative to public figures' digital posts, and peer-related cyber-conversations within online groups forming communities of interests.

As for the field of our scrutiny, we have opted for Facebook as there is an apparent local preference for it to other SNSs. Its *Profiles* and *Walls* can be credited as *loci* of interaction where identities are dynamically negotiated in the presence of *Friends* as the imagined intended audience. And while many of the posts are mundane or instances of social grooming, they also lodge poignant statements about one's thoughts on what is going on online or offline. Thus, posting on *Friends' Walls* and the *Status* updates on one's own *Wall* can be regarded as forms of social performance, which, under specific circumstances, may cogenerate solidarity over mutual civic concerns and (re)distribute social allegiance and group affiliation.

Specificity of Corpus Gathering

Our corpus collecting tool was *Hashtag* (or #), which is also the instrument used by SNS users to create *hyper*-posts and *hyper*-comments. *Hashtag* has allowed us to retrieve specific *hyper*-multimodal content from the ocean of data available on the Net, an undertaking that would have been impossible otherwise. Indeed, *hashtag* is an essential, complex and versatile scientific tool where SNSs are concerned. When running a query, additional lexical items can be affixed to the initial one, which will help retrieve a semantic network around the focal topic. Conversely, it permits the narrowing down of the topic of interest and of data retrieval, through the creation of multiple hashtags. An example in our case is *#incendiul#Colectiv# tragedia*. [Engl.tr. *#fire#Colectiv#tragedy*]

Running the query *#Colectiv* in Facebook provided us with all the posts and threads of comments indexed with the corresponding tag. The posts retrieved were

either un-*linked* discourses, thoughts, opinions, or were *hyper*-connected and contained items of news with hyperlinks to other sites or social network sites. However, while *hashtag* allowed us to easily identify the posts and the comments on the dramatic incident, one drawback was that it offered a panachronic perspective on the events (Crystal, 2011:119). That has compounded our task, even more so as Facebook comments themselves are not necessarily chronologically linear. For instance, one comment dating back directly after the incident displayed reactions posted in different waves (6 months later, 4 months later, etc.). This may create a polyphony of voices that can be difficult to disentangle in terms of interactional sequences, in addition to the conversational discomfort to the SNS users themselves. Hence the reason why we did not focus on adjacent pairs (as in naturally occurring conversation) but rather on the macro-interactions tracked across the digital threads consistent with our topic.

We should also note that although the corpus we gathered was representative for the medium and displayed multimodality, we opted to focus solely on its linguistic facet. We also opted out of analysing the minimal reactions by Facebook users who wish to limit their participation to posting emoticons and emojis or sharing posts, for, although the *augmented Like button "Reactions"* (a fairly recent development) has been allowing users to show a 'diversified' set of emotions (six as compared to the original, single, *Like*), they still under-represent the emotional complexity of social bonding over civic causes.

A Qualitative Analysis and the Discussion of Findings

By using *hasthag* as our research tool, we retrieved a longitudinal corpus spanning one month: October 31 to November 30, 2015, comprising three categories of comments to posts/media inputs in terms of information source:
   a. reactive posts/comments to the electronic versions of traditional media – national and international news agency electronic inputs;
   b. interpersonal communication through comments to public figure posts;
   c. peer communication – comments and posts within public groups.

Our research objective was to identify and diagnose across the sociolinguistic interactions such patterns of reactive discourse to distinct types of information and linguistic markers of deindividuation in favor of social identification as correlating with the two sociocultural profiles of the two cohorts surveyed. We also tried to identify and diagnose traces, if any, of an overarching sense of solidarity and civic engagement.

The corpus gathered is both in Romanian and English, as the provenance of some data were the international news agencies, with comments made in English even when contributed by Romanian natives. The comments have been anonymised and English syntactic translations for the original Romanian texts are provided in square brackets in all the exemplifications below. The accompanying emoticons and emojis of the original comments or posts were omitted and consequently, also left out of our interpretation (for the reasons mentioned above).

a. Linguistic reactions to the electronic Traditional Media

Most comments posted by users directly after the announcement of the *Colectiv* fire (31 October – 3 November) made by the mass-media were found to employ lexical items in the semantic field of enhanced emotions and were structured as a discourse expressing synchronic shock, grief, denial, confusion, and sympathy for the aggrieved. For instance, a spot by *sputniknews.com* is followed by a string of comments attuned to the general consternation over the high death toll:

(1) *Wow! Shocking news! There are so many bad people out here! My prayers go out to the victims of this senseless crime!*
(2) *I heard about... i dont want to see nothing!!! R.I.P*
(3) *RIP my condolences to the families*

In contrast, a particular comment (4) to a national news post by a local Romanian TV channel: *#Colectiv | Noaptea cea mai lungă* [The longest night] (at http://bit.ly/1Mc1Y8d), some two weeks after the fire, triggered a string of antagonistic comments, which are assignable to either of the social segments surveyed. The message of comment (4) is reinforced a few posts on (8), and later linked to an attempt to drown counter-arguments and retorts (14) by suggesting that *they* (indexing young people) who cannot stop thinking about the victims of the fire are being unrealistic and unpragmatic, and that one should not be overwhelmed by the tragedy. The latter is perceived by the one party as mere statistics covering recent similar incidents across the globe, whereas the other is gradually converting it into a political issue, even while both are using it as a pretext, or justification, to reinforce an apparent sociocultural conflict.

(4) *Nu mai faceți nimic visați numai la colectiv tot timpul...* [You are not doing anything anymore you are dreaming of Colectiv all the time]
(5) *Dumnezeu să-i odihnească în liniște și pace.* [May God rest them in peace and quiet]
(6) *Vă folosiți și de creier atunci când citiți?* [Are you also using your brains when you read?]

(7) *Și mâine o să fie 2 săptămâni și o zi.* [And tomorrow it's going to be two weeks and a day…]

(8) I*arăși. Colectiv???* [Again. Colectiv???]

(9) *Iti dai seama cât de ciudat ar fi să nu mai zică nimeni nimic* [Do you realise how strange it would be if nobody said anything anymore?]

(10) *Ne scuzati ca va plictisim cu tragediile noastre* [Excuse us for bothering you with our tragedies]

(11) *Da, iar! Nu uitam si nu avem voie sa uitam!* [Yes, again! We don't forget and we are not allowed to forget!]

(12) *E bine la tine acolo in Suceava? Ramai acolo cel mai bine.* [Is it fine with you in Suceava? Best you stay there]

(13) [xxx], t*e rog respectos sa ai decenta de a nu mai posta comentarii de genul acesta,acolo au murit multi oameni iar altii vor suferi toata viata,daca articolele nu sunt pe placul tau nu citi.* [I am respectfully asking you to have the decency to no longer post comments of this this type, people have died there and others will be suffering for the rest of their lives, if the columns are not to your liking don't read]

(14) *repetand la infinit acelasi lucru credeti ca rezolvati ceva,,, tara asta mai are si alte probleme.sa fim realisti* [by repeating infinitely the same thing do you think you can solve anything,,, this country has other problems as well. Let's be realistic]

The reactions to the post, most of which are in fact addressing comment (4) rather than the content of the news spot, lexicalise a range of antagonistic emotions polarised between the two dichotomic social segments. The ones we ascribed to young adults[1] are prevalently structured as joint linguistic strategies for ousting the undesirable contributors of comments (4), (8) and (14), through expressing an apparently candid surprise at the suggestion that the topic has lost its newsworthiness (9), self-mocking apology for one's continued grief (10), determination to continue the grieving process (11), resent of the conspicuous lack of sympathy and empathy (of the mature citizens), equating the actual physical distance from Bucharest – the city of the fire, and, perhaps, the residence of the majority of the posters reacting negatively to comments (4) and (8) to Suceava, the location of one of the authors of the malevolent, instigating comments, with a difference in ethics and values, (13) a polite but firm invitation to refrain from reading and posting comments if one is underwhelmed by the general dismay. Permeating these comments is the emphatic deictic use of *noi*

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[1] While admittedly, visiting the *About* section of a contributor's Facebook *Profile* does not afford full certitude about the person's age (FB installed *Privacy Settings* that allow the account holder to select who may see their personal information). As well, fake FB accounts are known to have been created to the explicit purpose of posting online anonymous comments under mock names. This, however, is not the norm and the majority of the contributions are genuine.

[we] versus *you*, conventionalising the ideological gulf separating the young from the mature in general, and on the matter of the *Colectiv* fire, in particular.

As regards the contribution of comments, we noted their panachronic distribution, which while being an analytic hindrance, has actually lent more depth to our analysis. Comments do not follow linearly, late comments come as 'delayed' replies to early posts, disrupting the natural turntaking sequence characteristic of offline conversation. Nevertheless, they testify to the fact that *Colectiv*-related emotions pitched and then dwindled only to be alternately rekindled or dismissed depending on the social appurtenance of the two social segments embracing them.

An interesting example is supplied by a local radio station post on its own Facebook page. Assuming a leadership role, as conveyed by the motto-like half rhetorical question, half genuine invitation at civic engagement (15), the youth-directed niche radio appears to be patronising a grass-roots initiative at public protest (16). While fulfilling its main function of informing people, it is concomitantly urging its avowed 2 million Facebook followers to join the offline actions of protest as well as directly encouraging negative reactions to the incident and to how its aftermath was managed by the officials (local administration, central government politicians, emergency health institutions, the church in its relief function capacity, etc.). By using the first person pronoun in the plural *noi* [*we*] as an inclusive subject but also as an assertive claim to leadership, and the second person pronoun in the singular *tu* [*you*] in the directly following summons for one to decline one's stance vis-à-vis the tragic fire, is tantamount to distributing the Romanian population attitudes into either condemning what is perceived as endemic corruption or being in collusion with it. Such reductive *otherisation* is emblematic for revolutionary impulses, and trademarked the radio station's broadcats and Social Media rhetoric for a fair amount of time.

(15) *Noi suntem colectiv! Tu?* [We are colectiv! You?]
(16) *Am ieşit în fiecare seară şi nu ne oprim. Punem poze ca să vadă 2 milioane de oameni, câţi ne urmăresc pe Facebook, ce se întâmplă în Bucureşti. Poate până la urmă vor ieşi toţi.* [We are out in the street every night and we won't stop. We are posting photos for our 2 million Facebook followers to see what is happening in Bucharest. Perhaps eventually everybody will come out]

Running parallel to the rallying discourse there were some instigating threads, too. The reactive comments to the possibly trolling posts reflect the subsidiary solidarities coalescing people around alternative ethics where the *Colectiv* fire is concerned. Thus, the generational divide is inferred again in comment (18), where the author of a provoking post is addressed (in a debatably sarcastic or genuine manner)

with the polite form of the second person pronoun: *dvs* [you]. The immediately following comment (19) *Dar de ce nu iesi sa le spui tu in fata?* [Why don't you go out and tell it to their face] does not, however, follow suit, displaying a blatant disrespect for someone intuited to be older by the young author of the retort. Social bias is directed at he, who is stereotypically perceived by young Romanian people as a middle-aged person seemingly clinging to a collective memory of past communist times. An odd conversational symmetry obtains, as politeness norms are transgressed with the young interlocutor using a form of the pronoun that despite its form is ostensibly disrespectful in the situated dialogue and under the local cultural norms. Subsequent comments use increasingly stronger language, expletives and deriding comparisons hinting at the sub-human condition of the 'provocateur' for desecrating what had become a public cause, and disdainful accusations for choosing to criticise the protests in the streets from the safety of one's home (25). In time, as substantiated by later contributions, the invitation at solidarity and unity over what is perceived to be a *national* tragedy becomes a digital local mantra: *toți pentru #colectiv* [all for#colectiv] (25).

(17) *Acasa, ma uit la prostii aia care protesteaza pe strazi si opresc circulatia* [Home, watching the fools protesting in the street and blocking the traffic]
(18) *Ei macar fac cv pt tara asta! Nu ca Dvs* [At least they are doing something for this country! Not like you]
(19) *Dar de ce nu iesi sa le spui tu in fata ?*[Why don't you go out and tell it to their face]
(20) *Big Like .bine spus* [Big Like. well said]
(21) *Cu mn vb?* [Are you talking to me]
(22) (xxx) *o să le mulțumești într-o bună zi* [one day you will thank them]
(23) (xxx)*, esti dobitoc ?* [are you dumb?]
(24) *Presupun ca tu esti un nevertebrat* [I suppose you are an invertebrate]
(25) *cat mai vrei sa doarma Romania?? Pana ne vom autodistruge?? Daca nu esti in stare sa faci ceva pentru tara ta, macar taci din gura si nu ii critica pe cei care vor o schimbare!! Toti pentru #colectiv* [how much longer do you want Romania in slumber?? Until we self-destroy?? If you are not capable of doing anything for your country, at least shut up and don't criticize those who want a change!! All for # colectiv]

The reiterating employment of *#colectiv*, and of its longer variant *Toți pentru #colectiv* [All for #colectiv], is emblematic of a sense of solidarity building up proportionally with the frequency of their use. It is paradigmatic of a constellation of attitudes, feelings and emotions referencing not just the tragic *Colectiv* fire but all the underlying public issues regarding national governance and representation.

b. Public figure posts

For the interpersonal communication category, we have opted to examine the comments to the posts authored by public figures. Even while fulfilling a public-opinion forming function, they also occasion alternative evaluations of the incident with the potential (and intention) of gathering a following. Our discourse scrutiny has found the syntax and semantics characteristic for passing judgement, playing ironical, making allegations, challenging truth values (27), and expressing bias (26). Solidarity, here, is achieved through an overarching tone favourable of the street movement. In contrast, however, we also noted a didactic tone in identifying the young people as the gullible victims of some conspiracy, which could be regarded as conducive to breaching rather than bridging social capital.

(26) *Nu vă mai folosiți de „colectiv"... ceea ce faceți acum o faceți pentru viitorul României... se pregătește o lovitură de stat pe „spatele" victimelor de la colectiv* [Stop using colectiv to your own ends… what you are doing now is for the future of Romania… a coup is being staged using the victims of colectiv.]

(27) *...e limpede ca e un plan politic ,si ca de obicei tinerii si populatia romaniei sunt victime colaterale!mi e sila de toti politicienii si personalitătile astea care vor sa para afectate si o tin sus si tare cu patriotismul si solidaritatea pentru poporul român !* [... it is clearly a political plot and as usual the young people and the population of Romania are the collateral victims… I'm sick of all the politicians and these VIP's who feign emotion and hail patriotism and solidarity for the entire nation]

Interestingly, across the 'conflict' talk and hate-speech featuring political labelling, challenging or questioning ideological leanings and generational mentalities, there runs a consensus over criticising the Romanian orthodox church leadership (29). Associating a luxury car with the head of the church is voicing a less-than-subtle condemnation of the lifestyle paraded by the top clergy and using it as an attack on the official position of the institution of the church relative to *Colectiv*. The official orthodox church has been known to have a history of villification of such sub-cultural activities as were associated with the audience at the *Colectiv* rock concert. (Cotrău, Cotoc, 2018) With Colectiv it was the excipient of some intempestive, unfortunate comments linking the toll of young deaths to a divine retribution of sorts. Later, the ill-conceived and rash official statements were retracted and amends were made.

Overall, several ironical statements are made about the mature social segment as a whole, although the comments apparently target individuals (29). Allusions to

the self-defeating attitude adopted by many during the previous (communist) regime in exchange for minor compensations, amplify the antagonism between the two generational categories. *Dacia*, the staple Romanian car (see comment (28)) is a metonymy for life during the communist, while the Mercedes captures the capitalist, social and economic aspirations of a population under long-term siege by a repressive regime. Contrasting the two car brands epitomises the emotional assessment of the political leap made from dictatorship to democracy, a disillusionment with some of its outcomes, particularly with the ensuing endemic corruption that had encroached even on the domain of spirituality.

(28) *Daca stati cuminti si obedienti, statul va da o Dacia la fiecare.* [If you are good and obedient, the State will give you each a Dacia]

(29) *Jos Din Mercedes, Daniel, preanefericitule!* [step out of your Mercedes, Daniel, alunhappy[2]]

The authorship of the disparaging comments vis-à-vis the revolutionary momentum, the ironical promise of unrealistic rewards for renouncing the street protest, and of the attacks against the clergy form a conundrum, and at face value all or any of them could have been posted by someone who has experienced the communist regime either first hand or second hand. The matter is partially disentangled in post (30), which predicts that such disillusion as was experienced in the aftermath of the 1989 Romanian liberation from communism is also likely to replace young people's current enthusiasm for pushing for a major civic protest. Refusal to re-experience the disappointment is given as an excuse for the majority of the mature citizens' self-predicted absence from the street protests. However, this is compensated for by expressions of well-wishing and of hoping that the Romanian young people will succeed where the mature adults have failed.

(30) *Bine zis ca nu mai avem nimic cu ce si cu cine vreti sa faceti a doua revolutie. V ati gandit. Bine de unde ancepeti. Si unde o sa ajungeti eu am fost la un pas de moarte cand a cazut ceausescu. Am fost la fel ca voi manipulata si cu iluzii de o viata mai usoara si ce am castigat. Nimic. Acum urmati voi* [well said because we have nothing left what and whom with do you want to start a second revolution. Did you think. Well where do you start. And where will you arrive I was one step away from death when ceausescu fell. I was as manipulated as you are feeding on the illusion of a better life and what did I gain. Nothing. Now you are next…]

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2   Pun playing on the form of address designated for the head or the Romanian Orthodox Church. The English equivalent for the Romanian *Preafericitul* is, roughly, *Alhappy* (after the model of *Almighty*). See Cotrău & Cotoc, 2018.

(31) *Oricum multi si au pierdut speranta dupa 25 de ani de hotie a clasei politice, si nu mai ies la proteste.* [Anyway many have lost all hope after 25 years of theft by politicians, and they no longer come out to protest]

The disappointment experienced by the one party and predicted for the other is in fact a hand reached out to help, as the two different generational categories are likely to share, if diachronically, a mutual emotion separated by some 25 critical years from the benchmarking change of regime in 1989 Romania.

Symbolic solidarity is also achieved through cross-referencing. A cover for one of the songs played by the rock band at *Colectiv* on the night of the tragedy was uploaded on Facebook and indexed with the following text and hashtags: *"The day we give in is the day we die." – Goodbye to gravity #colectiv #suntemcolectiv*. The second hashtag (#suntemcolectiv [we are colectiv]) is an intertext to the viral logo *Je suis Charlie* created by French art director Joachim Roncin and adopted across the globe by supporters of freedom of speech and of the press after the January 7, 2015 shooting at the offices of the French satirical weekly newspaper *Charlie Hebdo*.

The multivalent, yet polarised, discourse by individuals taking sides pro or con a wide-ranging category of officials (public administration, government, political parties, church, health organisations), public figures, subcultural/marginal members of society (rockers and *aficionados* forming the audience of the concert at *Colectiv*), or simply the *other* generational segment, bespeaks the undercurrent of a collective discontent. And if this was primarily and primordially vented online, it did escalate to a degree where it was acted upon offline.

c. Peer communication

Online closed groups generally nourish a strong sense of community and inter-subjectivity in a medium already highly equalitarian. The in-group interactions reflect a self-perceived sense of a close-knit community where uniplexity may be a defining trait (members are not offline acquaintances and are only Facebook *friends*). On Facebook, for instance, *friends* are in fact a list of digital connections, and Facebook groups can form around common interests, concerns, goals amongst people who are strangers offline. In such groups, which are often homogenous as dictated by their strong, mutual motivation, a language of consensus oriented to resolution is generally preferred to other styles. Such conflicts as might arise are likely to be defused by the group administrator or by some tacit understanding that they should not be pursued or otherwise should be taken to private chat.

In our research we have identified one such spontaneously formed group on Facebook, created with the explicit intent of transferring online civic engagement

to offline militancy: [We created this group together with … after our meeting on Tuesday evening at the first protest after the *Colectiv* fire. We met on the street and we gather there daily. We think that it is important to be on the street, to protest. We want the same things. We decided not to represent anyone, we represent ourselves.] The repetitive use of the first person in the plural – the clearly inclusive *we* – indexes a strong sense of solidarity underscored by the necessity to forsake one's individuality, as common goals are achieved through collective action. And while this is not exactly the core aspect of the SIDE effect in CMC, where one 'renounces' one's opinions and conversational conduct to embrace those of the 'significant others', it is nevertheless a form of deindividuation for a higher cause. Indeed, the collective elation of the moment is relayed by inspirational lexis and rhetoric. A sense of urgency to act on the newly found civic spirit is conveyed through a string of inclusive imperatives and directives. The prompts at offline political involvement reside in the minutely detailed organisational instructions.

(32) *Propun sa ne vedem deseara in piata universitatii (cati dintre noi putem ajunge si sa stam putin de vorba pe tema grupului – chestii de baza legate de organizare. xxx prieteneul nostru comun eu personal o sa il caut pe el in piata (daca vi xxx)* [I propose that we meet at the university square this evening (those of us who can come and talk a little bit about the topic of the group – basic things related to the organization. I will search for xxx because he is our mutual friend (if you are coming, xxx)]

(33) *iata, o noua revolutie de data asta suntem noi tinerii, care tre sa facem ceva, sa schimbam macar un guvern* [there, a new revolution this time it is us, the young people, who have to do something, to change one government at least]

(34) *Maine iesim cu totii pe strazi, si poimaine!* [Tomorrow we are all going out on the streets, the day after tomorrow as well]

(35) *Mergem la a doua revolutie.* [We are going to the second revolution]

(36) *Maine avem intalnire cu istoria.* [Tomorrow we have an appointment with history]

(37) *Daca nu cade Parlamentul, am esuat.* [If the Parliament doesn't fall, we have failed]

A discourse upcycling some of the past Romanian revolution slogans is swiftly conventionalised within the group. Unadultered identification of the social category of people urged or expected to embrace offline militancy is highly incidental (33): [us, the young people]. Uplifting comments liken the social momentum to the landmark year of 1989 (35). The then heroic, in retrospect, atmosphere is replicated by a string of emulating invitations at prolongated protests in the street (34), (36),

as an advanced democratic form of action meant to press for the dismantling of the corrupt institutions and officialdom. The topic, rhetoric, and semantics registered, all index a high degree of engagement and readiness to act, as characteristics of participatory cultures.

On an end note, we must remark on a particular hashtag that is now circulated across both the 'dominant' and 'subordinate' discourses: *#rezist*. It is a case where *hashtag* is more than a digital grapho-linguistic creation that has made it into the vernaculars across the globe, exceeding its twofold function as a a research tool for retrieving selective data and a Social Media user instrument for reaching narrow-targeted audiences. It, thus, surpasses its semantic value and concrete utility and moves into the symbolic realm of ideology, of self-empowerment and collective identity making. In Romania, in time, *#rezist* became an online logo and an offline icon denoting the core value of the social capital of people who take a stance, literally or symbolically, against political amorality.

Conclusions

Subject to the category of posts in SNSs referencing the *Colectiv* fire, the reactive comments are varied yet correlated with the sociocultural profile of the two local demographic segments we have targeted: young adults and mature citizens. An age-discriminating discourse emerges and opposition is evoked through the semantic conceptualisation of the fire episode as coupled with retrospective attitudes towards the seminal 1989 upheaval in Romania. Nonetheless, the hypothesised social bonding is effected through consensual discourse, other-inclusive invitations at action, revolutionary boosting slogans, and both innovative and reclaimed (intertextual) slogans. The attempts at social capital bridging are cued by overenthusiastic invitations for 'everyone' to join in the protests offline. However, the emphatic deictic use of the *we-you* dichotomic pair charting the young-mature citizenship divide indexes some lingering segregated attitudes towards the *Colectiv* fire.

Rather interestingly, on the other hand, some of the local niche media discourse on Facebook indicates their distancing from the dominant ideology and a contextualised newly-found allegiance to 'marginal' values. It would have been interesting, however, to compare the 'official' radio discourse to the one conveniently employed on Facebook, as non-dominant discourse is the unmarked, gratifying style in SNSs. Language accommodation and solidarity discourse employed on Facebook owe their incidence to the platform's affordability for expressing social attitude and political stance.

Overall, the interpersonal communication in the form of comments to posts in SNSs referencing the national tragic event as reported on by different information dissemination agencies and sources is proof of the correlation between the totalising sociocultural profiles of the targeted contributors and their discourse peculiarities, be they syntactic, semantic, structural or thematic. However, there rests some ambivalence as to whether their combined effects led to a 'real' world acting out. It is, then, difficult to establish whether the SIDE effect characteristic of CMC has led in this case to social capital bridging or breaching. Similarly, it is difficult to determine whether online civic engagement preceded and determined 'real-life' activism, if the prolific, highly engaged SNS users actually enacted offline their civic ideals, or whether the two ran parallel even while nurturing each other.

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2

A Sociolinguistic Analysis
of Digital Social Network User Identities:
The *Instagram 'fitfam'* Community

Bettina ENE

The study explores the role of Social Media Networks, Instagram in particular, in creating and shaping cyber communities that share not only attitudes and lifestyles, but also linguistic patterns even while negotiating a group identity. As research on the sociolinguistic behaviour of digital groups on Instagram has an ever increasing ground to cover, the focus of this study is to delve into the linguistic richness, originality and uniqueness typical of a specific virtual group: the #fitfam community, as it strives to build, maintain and promote membership.

> *"Language develops to meet the needs of those who use it. It has no independent power to flourish or decay apart from those who speak and write it."*[1]

The highly digitised society that we live in has transformed us into technology-driven individuals who share trends, attitudes, lifestyles, interests and even personal backgrounds with each other and the world at large via different social media networks. *Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Tumblr* or *Linkedin* are just a few of the popular social networking websites where millions of people from all over the world (can) connect, creating social groups and cyber-communities.

A virtual community is the perfect environment for many individuals to communicate with other individuals in different parts of the world, with whom they can share different opinions and points of view and approach various conversation topics such as politics, language, culture, personal stories, etc. All the communities created in the cyberspace form a community of practice, having a specific purpose: whether they create a business profile and intend to advertise or sell products to possible online customers, or simply seek to bring together people who share a mutual

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[1] Philip Howard, *The State of the Language*, Penguin Books, 1986.

passion for a specific activity, they are easily identifiable particularly due to their efforts at self-definition and group-identification.

The aim of the present study is to scrutinise one such self-delineated virtual social group on *Instagram*: the *#fitfam* community. The topic has been approached from a sociolinguistic perspective, which is indispensable to the study of language in relation to society. "*A very important function of speech is that it has a social function, both as a means of communication and also as a way of identifying social groups, and to study speech without reference to the society which uses it is to exclude the possibility of finding social explanations for the structures that are used.*"[2]

Consequently, the present research paper tries to provide satisfactory answers to many of the questions concerning communication in the cyberspace in general, and the correlative sociolinguistic patterns of social platforms, in particular. Our main aim is to validate the hypothesis that the members of our target networked group, the *Instagram '#fitfam'* community, communicate within the group in a *multimodal* manner given the affordances provided by this social media platform, even while delineating their digital group identity by displaying identifiable sociolinguistic normative patterns. Indeed, in order to become an accepted member of the group, one needs to comply with the tacit rules of the community, oriented to emphasising group identity, social belonging, and social presence.

The analytic material collected in the present study and the interpretation of our findings will hopefully satisfy queries and provide answers to general or more specific questions, such as: *'How does an individual become a member of a virtual community?'*; '*What are the tacit rules that the community members need to obey?'*; '*How does one connect or communicate with the other members of the community?'*; '*What do the emoji used within the community stand for?'*; *'What do* cardio bunny, gain city, liftagram, *or other fitness slang terms mean?'*; *'How does one interpret the use and meaning of fitness-related memes?'*, etc. To this effect, we wish to visit the concepts situated under the large umbrella of Internet Linguistics, such as *digital socio-linguistics, cyber-communication, cyber-communities,* and *linguistic creativity in the digital environment,* among others.

The present research paper is structured in four parts. The first part argues for a sociolinguistic analytical perspective and focuses on the corresponding phenomena in order to explain why we speak differently in different social contexts. Next, we narrow down our focus on speakers and communities and observe how they relate. We, then, discuss the importance of the individual speaker's linguistic behaviour,

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[2] Hudson, Richard Anthony, *Sociolinguistics*, Cambridge University Press, 1991, p.4.

as well as that of speech communities or social groupings as sociolinguistic concepts and present some of the definitions thereof. Lastly, we analyse the speakers' group memberships in general and how particular factors can influence people's speech in given contexts.

The second part of the paper focuses on the affordances of Internet*,* where we discuss the transition from mass society to networked society and the social presence phenomenon, on account of the effect telecommunications media has had on communication. In order to have a better understanding of how the user-members of Social Media communicate with each other, we introduce the term *network*, explaining it accordingly.

This is the point where we introduce our case study as well, starting with a short description of *Instagram* as a mobile application and describing its characteristics with relevant examples. We also discuss the existence of some *social groups* on *Instagram* and their appurtenance to *Gen C/Generation C*, the *Connected Generation,* and the seminal role of *hashtag* in *Instagram* communication. Lastly, we discuss the topics trending on *Instagram*, particularly the increasing interest in fitness and wellness related activities and the promotion of a currently fashionable lifestyle.

The third part of the present study presents our research methodology and puts forward a sociolinguistic perspective on *hashtag* as used on *Instagram*. The focus of this chapter is on the corpus selection/gathering, and we explain step by step how we collected all the relevant data for our study, along with examples and additional explanations. We also approach the topic of *multimodality*, specifically as pertaining to *Instagram*. We describe all the linguistic features/elements that enable the users of this social platform to communicate not solely through words (i.e. in mixed text types: narrative, descriptive, etc.), but also by using many other different tools, such as *hashtags, emoji,* content (pictures) or *memes.*

At the end of our investigation, we will present our findings and discuss the social and linguistic behaviour of our target group. In this sense, we describe who forms this target community and what are the aims of the individuals belonging to this community. We proceed to our objectives with an analysis of the message conveying means specific to the virtual group as a way of controlling and gate-keeping membership thereof.

Finally, we present the conclusions to the present work, the selected bibliography and online sources.

Arguing for the Sociolinguistic perspective

If given the task of providing a clear and appropriate definition of *sociolinguistics*, many may lean towards well-known concise generalisations, such as 'Sociolinguistics studies the relationship between language and society.' However, according to Spolsky (2015:3), one of the principal uses of language is to communicate meaning, but also to establish and to maintain social relationships*:* when you meet strangers, the way they talk informs you about their social and residential histories, and the way you talk may send subtle or blatant signals about what you think of them, all of which contribute to both eliciting information as well as establishing a particular rapport. These are some of the major aspects of language use that sociolinguistics studies in contrast to formal linguistics. By comparison, Hudson (1991:3) states that the difference between linguistics and sociolinguistics is that the former "takes account only of the *structure* of language, to the exclusion of the social contexts in which it is learned and used." The task of linguistics, in his view, is to "work out the rules of language X, after which sociolinguistics may enter the scene and study any points at which these rules make contact with society – such as where alternative ways of expressing the same thing are chosen by different social groups" (Hudson, 1991:3).

An important function of speech, according to Hudson, is that "it has a social function, both as means of communication and also as a way of identifying social groups, and to study speech without reference to the society which uses it is to exclude the possibility of finding social explanations for the structures that are used" (Hudson, 1991:4).

Equally importantly, we need to establish why we speak differently in different social contexts. Janet Holmes states that "examining the way people use language in different social contexts provides a wealth of information about the way language works, as well as about the social relationships in a community, and the way people signal aspects of their social identity through their language."[3]

Hudson (1991:6) argues that in order to analyse a completely homogeneous community, we need to find one, in the first place (which is impossible). It would be a case where no members of other communities join this one, bringing their own languages with them, and members of this community never leave it and take their language to another, thereby complicating the perfect coincidence between language and community. Hudson (1991:6) asserts that there are exact rules that a community

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[3] Holmes, Janet, *An introduction to Sociolinguistics*, Second Edition, Pearson Education Limited, 2001, p.1.

needs to obey in order to remain homogeneous: everybody in this society has exactly the same language, they have to know the same constructions and the same words, with the same pronunciation and the same range of meanings for every single word in the language they speak. Further on, Hudson claims that one of the consequences of the complete absence of any differences between members of this community is that language change is ruled out. He concludes that since change seems to affect every language, this makes the language of this particular community unique. He claims: "the only way to allow for change in a totally homogeneous community is to assume that every change affects every member of the community absolutely and simultaneously: one day, nobody has the new form, the next day, everybody has it." (Hudson, 1991:6)

Given that communities can never be perfectly homogenous, it is understandable that focusing on speakers and observing how they relate within a community is a complex undertaking. First and foremost, we should refer to Hudson (1991:12) according to whom society consists of individuals and it is essential to keep the individual firmly at the centre of interest and avoid losing sight of them while talking about large-scale abstractions and movements. He also states that "the individual speaker is important in sociolinguistics in much the same way as the individual cell is important in biology: if we don't understand how the individual works, we shan't be able to understand how collections of individuals behave either." Hudson considers that there is an even more important reason for focusing on the individual in sociolinguistics, which does not apply to the cell in biology. We can be sure that no two speakers have the same language, because no two speakers have the same experience of language (Hudson, 1991:12).

Furthermore, Hudson (1991:13) argues that "the particular model which the speaker constructs will reflect his own personal experience, so people with different sociolinguistic backgrounds will be led to construct correspondingly different models relevant to language and society." He concludes that "the individual *filters* his experience of new situations through his existing model, and two people could both hear the same person talking, but be affected by his speech in different ways."

Sociolinguistics is concerned with "language *in situ* and *in vivo*, alive in its geographical and social setting and space." (Spolsky, 2015:24) Yet, Spolski also states that for theory building we need a more flexible and abstract concept which refers to social groupings, and which is provided by the notion of speech community. A *speech community* in general linguistics represents "all the people who speak a single language (like English or French or Amharic) and so share notions of what is same or different in phonology or grammar. This would include any group of people,

wherever they might be, and however remote might be the possibility of their ever wanting or being able to communicate with each other, all using the same language." (Spolsky, 2015:24)

A simpler definition of *speech community,* however, is John Lyons' (1970:326): all the people who use a given language (or dialect), while a more complex one is provided by Charles Hockett (1958:8), according to whom "each language defines a speech community: the whole set of people who communicate with each other, either directly or indirectly, via the common language."

However, Spolsky (2015:24) argues that sociolinguists find it generally more fruitful to focus on the language practices of a group of people who do in fact have the opportunity to interact and who, it often turns out, share not just a single language but a repertoire of languages or varieties. Spolsky defines the speech community as "a complex interlocking network of communication whose members share knowledge about and attitudes towards the language use patterns of others as well as themselves." (Spolsky, 2015:25)

In what regards speaker's membership of different social groups in general and the factors that can influence people's speech in given contexts, Hudson (199:171) explains that according to the theory of acts of identity, "such factors will influence people's speech only to the extent that they represent social groups with which speakers can identify themselves – in other words, what counts is not so much one's experience of a particular variety of speech, but rather one's willingness to identify oneself with the kind of person who uses it." There are several social factors that can influence the speaker's linguistic choices, such as race, sex or age, but in the present paper, we are going to focus on the speaker's activities and interests that s/he shares with other members of a well-defined virtual group.

Affordances and Internet Sociolinguistics

As stated by van Dijk (2006:13), the oldest social-psychological approach when it comes to the objective characteristics of social media mainly stresses the limitations of all media and channels as compared with face-to-face communication. Williams Short (1976) developed the theory of *social presence* to explain the effect media telecommunication can have on communication. It emphasises the sociability, warmth, personal information and sensitivity of face-to-face communication that media are only able to transmit in a limited way, followed by the idea that all media and face-to-face communications produce a different experience of presence among communication partners (for example, the videophone offers more social presence than the audiophone (Dijk, 2006:13).

Daft and Lengel (1984) elaborated on the concept of *information richness*, which distinguishes four objective characteristics of media: *feedback capacity* (immediate, fast, slow), *channel used* (audio, visual), *nature of the source* (personal, impersonal) and *language richness* (spoken, written and/or body language). Indeed, there are many aspects of the social media that are in fact complex, and Van Dijk (2006:13) observes that "media which are lacking in social presence and information richness, i.e. email and SMS-messaging, are frequently used for social-emotional and even erotic communications. (…) Eventually there arises a (sub) culture of electronic communication with new norms, language and behaviour."

In order to have a better understanding of how the members of this (sub)culture act and how they communicate with each other, we need to introduce the term *network* and its definition as "a collection of links between elements of a unit. Networks are a mode of organization of complex systems in nature and society. (…) Every network approach in the natural and social sciences stresses the relations of elements." (van Dijk, 2006:24)

The present paper focuses on the relationship between social, technical and media networks which, together, shape the infrastructure of the network society. Throughout our analysis, we are going to focus our attention on: the level of *individual relations,* the level of g*roup and organisational relations* (individuals create groupings or collective agencies, some of them temporary and loose), the level of *societal relations* (individuals, groups and organisations shape a society that is built on, and linked by, social and media networks), and finally, the level of *global relations* in the world system of societies and international organisations (Slaughter, 2004; Urry, 2003).

Communication on Social Media. A Case Study of *Instagram*

Instagram has grown to be one of the most popular social networks for photo sharing on the mobile web. It is the ultimate social network for sharing real-time photos and short videos while on the go. *Instagram* was created in October 2010 by Kevin Systrom and Mike Kreiger. Within 2 months of its launch it had 1,000,000 accounts. Now it is a leading advertising platform for brands, too. The application had initially been available for the *iOS* platform for quite some time before expanding to *Android* and *Windows Phone*, and to the web. *Instagram* was bought by Facebook in 2012.[4]

In order to use *Instagram*, one needs to create an account by signing up via an existing Facebook account or by email, with a valid username and password. The

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[4] https://www.lifewire.com/top-social-networking-sites-people-are-using-3486554

Instagram profile can be customized by adding a name, a profile picture, a short biography and even a website link, if the user has one.

Instagram is based on a "Followers" and "Following" count, which represents how many people one follows and how many users follow them back. At the top of one's profile, there are featured the username (e.g. *christinajensenfitness*), a profile picture, a count of photos uploaded (i.e. *923 posts*), the number of followers the account has (e.g. *10.2K followers*), and the number of accounts followed (e.g. *4,432 following*).

When one follows someone on *Instagram*, other person's photos will show up in one's stream. One can *like* photos and *comment* on them and a prime characteristic of the *Instagram* discourse are *questions* in the comments, such as "where was this photo taken?", "where did you buy those shoes?" or "what app did you use for that?"[5], etc. Due to its features allowing for users to connect easily and share widely, *Instagram* is a friendly platform appreciated by millions.

Moreover, given its affordances and the fact that SNSs are interconnected, users can easily form social groups. *Instagram* enables its users to see if *Twitter* and *Facebook* friends use the application, so that they can start following them should they wish to. *Instagram* displays an "Invite Friends" feature and suggests users for friends automatically. In addition, there is the "popular page" option, too, which indicates the photos that register most *likes*. One can click on a photo on the popular page and see all the other photos posted by the same who posted it originally.[6]

Individuals belonging to specific social groups can be identified on *Instagram* by perusing their photos often accompanied by comments that we may find interesting or as reflecting attitudes and beliefs similar to our own. If this is the case, one is prone to become a follower of those individuals. A strategy for finding 'interesting' people to follow on *Instagram* is to browse users' names: e.g. *letsblenditfresh, better_than_bread, f.o.o.d.p.o.r.n*, etc.[7] The selection of people whom one opts to follow on *Instagram* turns to be quite important, because their photos will appear in the follower's feed, and if one is not interested in a particular domain, for instance, landscape, wedding or architecture photography, they may need to be selective.[8] This is an issue that can also be solved through *hashtag*.

According to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, *hashtag* /ˈhash-ˌtag/, noun, is a word or phrase preceded by the symbol # that classifies or categorizes the

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[5] https://ischool.syr.edu/infospace/2011/12/15/what-is-instagram-and-why-is-it-so-popular/
[6] https://ischool.syr.edu/infospace/2011/12/15/what-is-instagram-and-why-is-it-so-popular/
[7] https://ischool.syr.edu/infospace/2011/12/15/what-is-instagram-and-why-is-it-so-popular/
[8] https://ischool.syr.edu/infospace/2011/12/15/what-is-instagram-and-why-is-it-so-popular/

accompanying text (such as a *tweet*)[9]. But how powerful is it? Hashtag is simple, ubiquitous and iconic. It is, without doubt, a sign of our data-driven and digitalised times. In the last few years, it has become more than just a word or phrase that is a *Twitter* feature. It has evolved into a multifaceted tool to *tag* and *track* content, emphasise a point of view or galvanise public support through a host of social media platforms. The *hashtag* is part of our contemporary vernacular, alongside our latest *Instagram* upload or within our everyday conversation.[10]

Moreover, *Instagram* hashtags are one of the best ways to grow one's *Instagram* account. Using the right hashtag or even a combination of hashtags can help one display one's brand or field of interest to large targeted audiences. In fact, the chances of attracting new followers, getting more likes are vastly increased through the use of hashtags. In addition, hashtags help organise and categorise photos and video content, which aids the process of content discovery and optimisation.[11] For example, a mountain climbing enthusiast may post a picture of a beautiful scenery followed by the hashtags *#climbinglovers #liveclimbrepeat #womenthatclimb #rockclimbing,* etc.

Corpus Selection and Compilation

The aim of the present research was to determine whether the theories mentioned above are valid for *Instagram*, and specifically for the *fitfam community*. Therefore, we analysed 31 young people's sociolinguistic behaviour (20 females and 11 males) within a three-month period (February 1, 2017 – April 30, 2017).

The individuals that we selected for our research are a particular cohort of young adults that are more likely than others to be active Instagram users: *Generation C.* or *Gen C* is a powerful sociocultural segment targeted by culture and marketing. It is another label to define the 18-to-34-year-olds, empowered by technology to search out authentic content that they consume across all platforms and all screens, whenever and wherever they want.[12] They thrive on *Connection*, *Community* and *Creation*, and the 'C' in question stands for *Connected Collective Consumer.*

Gen C is not a generation in the traditional sense, because regardless of how old the members of this generation are, they are mavens who shape opinion and lead thought. Put together, *Gen C* is not about when and where one was born – it is

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[9] https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/hashtag
[10] http://www.siegelgale.com/considering-the-power-and-purpose-of-hashtags/
[11] https://later.com/blog/ultimate-guide-to-using-instagram-hashtags/
[12] https://www.thinkwithgoogle.com/intl/en-gb/articles/meet-gen-c-youtube-generation-in-own-words.html

a way of life, a mindset[13]: *The three things my generation would be synonymous with are worldly interests, personal development, and searching for meaning. It's all about communication and learning from each other.*[14]

The ultimate interest of this generation is technology which is seamlessly integrated in *Gen C* life. They live in the present tense, connecting across all screens, all the time, everywhere. *Gen C* feels an urgent need to engage with the world, satisfying that hunger via community – both the real community of select friends and family and the virtual community of followers, fans and acquaintances: *I feel like I can't go anywhere without my phone… I didn't have a phone for a day or so because it was stolen, and it felt like I was on another planet.*[15] *People that aren't connected with the internet, they can't function the same way in society that a lot of other people do.*[16]

To conclude, *Gen C* are natural born curators, quenching their thirst for connection by seeking out 'shareworthy' content, including content from advertisers, which they can use to provoke a reaction and reinforce emotional connections within their community: *If I just read an article that made me think differently about an issue or made me question something or is, like, really blowing me away, I want to post that.*[17]

In some cases we made an estimate of the users' ages based on their Instagram bio-profiles, but we took into account some of the seminal details that were clearly stated: their *Instagram* name choice, profession, and the languages they used for their captions. Hence, we chose 31 individuals who, generally, opted for a representative fitness related nickname (i.e. *laurenfitness, lillafitt, building_muscles, taniathemachine, food_fitness_flora, ruben_lifestart, thebodycoach*, etc). In several cases, the individuals' *Instagram* name supplied rich information about him/her when including professional or vocational details: e.g. great_*teacher*_fit, zsuzsa_*personaltrainer*, fit_*nurse*_lina, etc.

In order to make our research more relevant, we decided to analyse individuals who use more than one language. Given the fact that English is the prevalent language used on *Instagram*, especially among fitness-oriented individuals, at first, we analysed solely English speakers. However, we soon realised that the members of this community can convey the same message in varied other languages. Consequently, we started focusing on the *fitfam* members who were also using languages other than

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[13] https://www.thinkwithgoogle.com/intl/en-gb/articles/meet-gen-c-youtube-generation-in-own-words.html
[14] https://www.thinkwithgoogle.com/intl/en-gb/articles/meet-gen-c-youtube-generation-in-own-words.html
[15] https://www.thinkwithgoogle.com/intl/en-gb/articles/meet-gen-c-youtube-generation-in-own-words.html
[16] https://www.thinkwithgoogle.com/intl/en-gb/articles/meet-gen-c-youtube-generation-in-own-words.html
[17] https://www.thinkwithgoogle.com/intl/en-gb/articles/meet-gen-c-youtube-generation-in-own-words.html

English, such as French, Italian, Hungarian, German and Spanish. Thus, we noticed that both the English captions and the ones in other languages contained the same linguistic features/elements (i.e. similar, if identical, *slang words, themed vocabulary, communication framing – greetings, rhetorical questions*, etc.), leading us to the conclusion that regardless of the different languages used for the texts accompanying the uploaded contents, the style was the same.

The actual gathering of our corpus required minimal effort. The first step was to set up an active *Instagram* account, identify and 'follow' the active members of the *Instagram fitfam* community. The individuals, both males and females, were selected gradually, according to the hashtags they used or the count of *likes*. For example, when we decided to follow an individual called *fit_nurse_lina* on *Instagram* and this person's photos were *liked* by individuals with fitness-related nicknames, we would follow those people, too, so that by enlarging the network of users under focus we could ensure the complexity and reliability of our corpus. When nicknames were not helpful, we tried to identify fitness-oriented individuals through *hashtag*, which led us to thousands of other pictures, *Instagram* fitness accounts and *fitfam* members.

The next step was to follow these individuals' activities, posts, contents, etc., and since *Instagram* does not have a 'save picture' option like *Facebook* does, our solution was to take screenshots of all the contents that we considered relevant for our research. This seemed to be a quick and effortless solution, however we did encounter a technical inconvenience. Screenshots can capture only one half of the content; therefore, we took two separate screenshots of the same content: one screenshot of the picture and the second of everything featured below the picture (captions/texts, emoji, hashtags, comments, etc.).

According to Carey Jewitt[18], screen-based texts are complex multimodal ensembles of image, sound, animated movement, and other modes of representation and communication (…). Different modes offer specific resources for meaning making, and the ways in which these modes contribute to people's meaning making vary. (Jewitt, 2005:316) Jewitt claims writing is not always the central meaning making resource (…). In some texts writing is dominant, while in others there may be little or no writing. The particular design of image and word relations in a text impacts on its potential shape of meaning. (Jewitt, 2005:316)

Instagram is no different. The affordances of the application enable its users to manipulate or design the visual and written elements for their captions with ease. The

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[18] Jewitt, Carey (September 2005), *Discourse studies in the cultural politics of education*, University of London, UK, Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, pp. 315-331.

members of the virtual community that we have analysed generally write descriptive or narrative texts below their contents, use certain types of emoji (fitness and healthy lifestyle related), share certain type of pictures or selfies and use well-chosen hashtags in order to be identified quickly and easily. Indeed, the multimodal aspect of the platform "serves to reference the social function of language as a maker of identity, belonging, and difference." (Jewitt, 2015:320)

Findings analysis

In our case study, we identified a well-defined *Instagram* group, with a particular type of discourse, and analysed its members' social and linguistic behaviours. We focused particularly on young adults who share the same passion for fitness/wellness related activities and make use of a common set of linguistic means in order to convey similar or identical messages in six different languages: English, French, German, Hungarian, Italian and Spanish. Our target community consisted of 31 individuals who share the same passion for an active lifestyle and use similar, if not the same, linguistic features for their captions, conveying clear and precise fitness/wellness-oriented messages on *Instagram*. The objective of our paper was to discover a critical amount of content on *Instagram* that was being shared by young individuals, aiming at fitness related *self-presentation*, *social attention* and *group identity*/*belonging* in order to attract the interest of like-oriented people.

In order for us to track down individuals and their fitness related contents eligible for our corpus, we took into consideration all the *multimodal aspects* of the social platform. We learnt that the affordances of *Instagram* enable its users to manipulate or design the visual and written elements for their captions with ease. This leads us to the assumption that in order to convey a particular message or to display a certain type of lifestyle, one does not necessarily need to use words or complex phrases. Moreover, in comparison with other social platforms, *Instagram* has many options that enable its users to share content, communicate and thus help create well-defined social communities with particular goals and interests. Below, we categorise, illustrate and explain briefly the message conveying means specific to our target community, which make its members eligible for membership (see Figure 1).

Like with other social media platform or applications, emojis have gained popularity on *Instagram*, too. Moreover, the '*#fitfam*' community has created its own preferred emoji, from among those that can be seen as fitness/healthy lifestyle related, under the 'activity' or 'food' categories (see Figure 2).
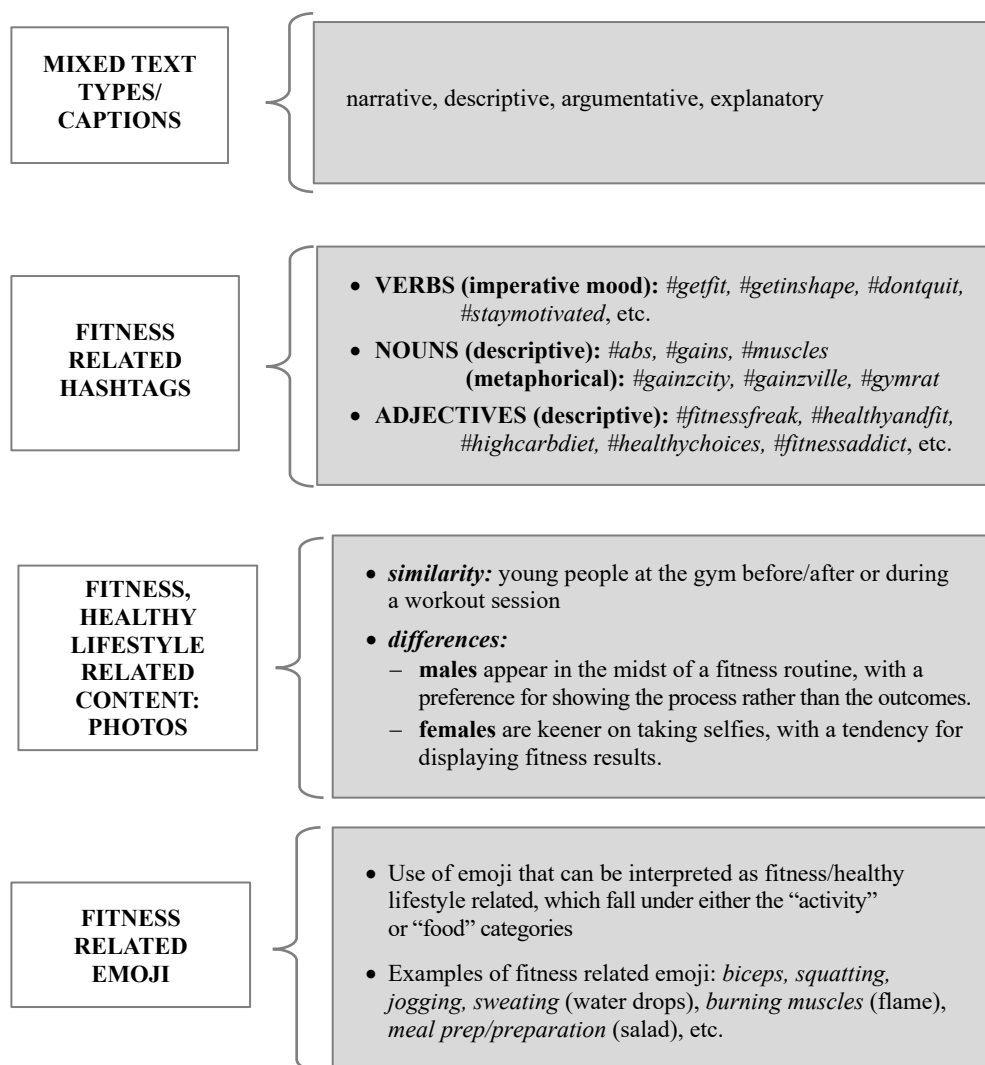
MIXED TEXT TYPES/ CAPTIONS	narrative, descriptive, argumentative, explanatory

FITNESS RELATED HASHTAGS	• **VERBS (imperative mood):** *#getfit, #getinshape, #dontquit, #staymotivated*, etc. • **NOUNS (descriptive):** *#abs, #gains, #muscles* **(metaphorical):** *#gainzcity, #gainzville, #gymrat* • **ADJECTIVES (descriptive):** *#fitnessfreak, #healthyandfit, #highcarbdiet, #healthychoices, #fitnessaddict*, etc.

FITNESS, HEALTHY LIFESTYLE RELATED CONTENT: PHOTOS	• *similarity:* young people at the gym before/after or during a workout session
	• *differences:*
	  – **males** appear in the midst of a fitness routine, with a preference for showing the process rather than the outcomes.
	  – **females** are keener on taking selfies, with a tendency for displaying fitness results.

FITNESS RELATED EMOJI	• Use of emoji that can be interpreted as fitness/healthy lifestyle related, which fall under either the "activity" or "food" categories • Examples of fitness related emoji: *biceps, squatting, jogging, sweating* (water drops), *burning muscles* (flame), *meal prep/preparation* (salad), etc.

Figure 1. *Meaning conveying means within the* **#fitfam** *Instagram community*

Our research has evidenced that the members of the *#fitfam* community have a tendency to use fitness related nicknames, rather than their real names and surnames. Even more interestingly, most *#fitfam* nicknames are very similar, displaying identical lexical elements: *lauren**fitness**, food_**fitness**_flora, ruben_**lifestart**, foxy**fit**, lilla**fitt**, **building_muscles**,* etc. The fitness nicknames chosen are both complex and revealing, with many of them comprising the bearer's profession/occupation, a feature that made our target community easily identifiable (see Figure 3).

🍑	Emoji used for *buttocks/ booty workout*	💪	Emoji used for *biceps/strength/ results, etc.*	🔥	Emoji used for fat *burning/ burning muscles/ sore muscles*
Emoji used for *sweat/sweating/ physical effort*	💧	Emoji used for *lifting/squatting*	🏋️	Emoji used for *meal prep (meal preparation)/ healthy eating*	🥗
⏰	Emoji used for *workout time*	🏃	Emoji used for *jogging*	👊	Emoji used for showing *accomplishment/ encouragement*

Figure 2. *Fitness/healthy lifestyle related emoji employed by the* **#fitfam** *Instagram community*

INSTAGRAM NICKNAME CHOICE

- Preference for fitness-related nicknames.
- High similarity: e.g. *lauren**fitness**, food_**fitness**_flora, ruben_**lifestart**, foxy**fit**, lilla**fitt**, **fit**withdeniza*.
- Complex and revealing (profession related): *great_**teacher**_fit, zsuzsa_**personaltrainer**, fit_**nurse**_lina, thebody**coach**,* etc.
- Original, theme-related and short.

GREETINGS

- **General/Basic greetings**: *Hello Instagram!; Ciao piccoline!; Hello la team!; Sziasztok!,* etc.
- **Slang**: *What's up #fitfam!; Waaaaaaass geht leeeeuuuude?; Hello LALALAND!*, etc.
- **Community specific greetings**: *Happy #motivationmonday!; "Schönen Mittwoch ihr Lieben!" (*En: *Happy Wednesday my dears!); Happy Flex Friday loves!; Happy Monday instapeople!*, etc.
- **Holiday greetings**: *Happy WELTFRAUENTAG!* (En: *Happy International Women's Day!*); *Happy Easter #fitfam!; Happy Memorial Weekend FitFam!; Happy Thanksgiving; Happy Valentine's Day everyone!*, etc.
- **Goodbyes**: *Bonne semaine la #fitfam!; Habt einen schönen Tag!* (En. *Have a nice day!*); *Buon inizio Febbraio a tutti!* (En. *Kick off your February well you all!*), etc.
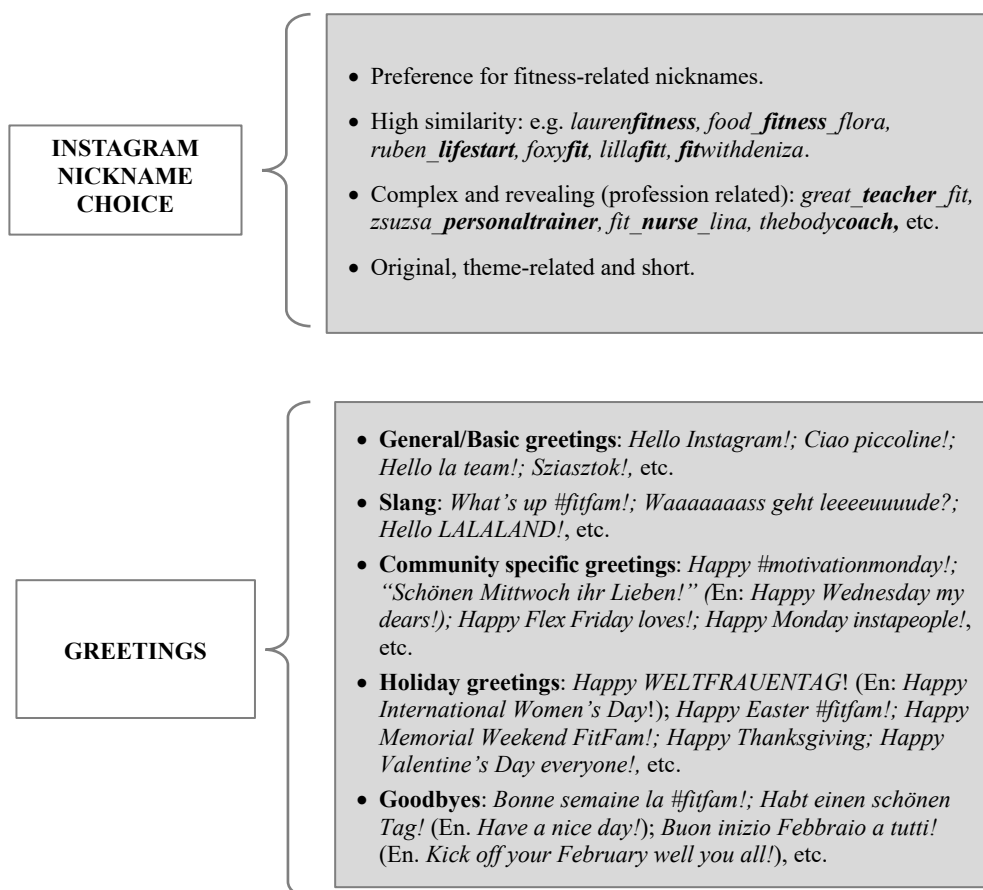
Figure 3. *Name choice and greetings characteristic of the* **#fitfam** *Instagram community*

The *'fitfam' community* has other recognisable features that single it out on the social platform in addition to the use of specific hashtags, emoji, text types, etc.: the way they initiate dialogue with their followers. Greeting someone in an informal/colloquial way generally means that there is a casual or close relationship between the addresser and addressee, and both sides feel comfortable enough with each other to use a relaxed, spontaneous, unconventional language, as one can observe in the classification below. In our case, it also signals group affiliation.

All these particularly linguistic, and generally multimodal, features index group membership, indicate allegiance to a virtual community displaying a particular mindset and preference for a way of life, as well as functioning as a means of selecting membership thereof. And while English is all too readily regarded as the *lingua franca* of the Internet and Social Media connecting people across the globe, with our community (and, perhaps, others as well) other languages appear to be equally well equipped to convey narrow-targeted messages with the intent of preserving the highly specific identity of a homogenous digital group.

Conclusions

The technologically-driven individual feels the urge to spend a considerable amount of time navigating on the Internet, accessing different social networking websites, logging in different applications, creating profiles and spending time with maintaining and updating news feeds on a regular/continuous basis. Yet, while social platforms enable their users to create well-defined social groups/communities based on their fields of interest, in order for users displaying a high tendency to socialize and create relationships/friendships/bonds in the cyberspace to be accepted by the members of a particular community, one needs to observe and analyse their behavioural systems, comply with the community norms, and last but not least, accommodate their language. Consequently, we have focused on the linguistic patterns recurrent in the digital environment in general, and in the *Instagram "#fitfam"* community, in particular. Our close observations have led us to the discovery of sociolinguistic correlative multimodal patterns that the members of our target community display consistently, an actual multimodal repertoire which includes technologically creative ways for conveying narrow-themed messages.

In conclusion, the collected data in the present study confirm that our target community meet the criteria of a close-knit networked group, as reflected by the multimodal creativity and originality that make the *Instagram #fitfam* community uniquely recognizable.

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3

Language Use and Communication
in Online Communities Centred on Video Games

Borbála NEMES

In the era of digital communication and of the widespread use of English as *lingua franca*, new forms of social interaction and new communication patterns have emerged. This has especially been the case with online communities, subject to intense scrutiny in the course of the past few decades. After offering a brief theoretical overview of the controversies surrounding the notion of online community, in the current study we wish to highlight a few peculiarities of the communicative practices of an online community whose members engage in playing video games. Starting from the assumption that having a common, mutually understood set of symbols, a shared language being one of the defining properties of any community both offline and online, in the present study we wish to argue that where (sub)cultures emerge across ethnic and national boundaries and their respective 'languages' make contact, online communities can indeed be treated on par with their traditional, offline counterparts.

In the age of new digital media, the widespread use of the internet and the ongoing globalisation process which resulted in English becoming a *lingua franca* of intercultural communication, linguistic interest in the ways in which online communities function and communicate has grown exponentially. While literature on the topic is extensive both in quantity and scope, one cannot help being amazed at the fact that despite the long history of research conducted within the area, defining the term *online community* is still a challenge. What is more, we still tend to view these communities as being somewhat less complex when compared to the traditionally understood *community*.

In this paper we wish to present a case study of an online community built around a video game, and argue for a treatment of online communities along the social perspective rather than concentrating on the local aspect characteristic of traditional communities, showing that the way members of the online community interact with each other closely resembles the way traditional communities do, especially as far as the creative use of language and communicative practices are

concerned. The claim seems to be even more pronounced in the case of online interactions, such as the one we wish to discuss here, where members of the community 'talk' to each other in real-time, as compared to communities whose main form of interaction consists of written exchanges between their members, be it in the form of forum discussions, bulletin board conversation or comments on social media websites.

In this sense, we wish to align with the body of researchers according to whom it is the social aspect and a mutually shared understanding of group identity as reflected through shared goals and interests, a common language and communicative strategies that are the major aspects which need considering when defining both online and offline communities. In consequence, we wish to argue that the widespread use of new digital media, allowing ever more people with "a shared method of making sense of the world around them by using a mutually understood set of symbols" (Mitra 2010, p. 49) to connect and form *online communities*, entails the need to continuously readdress and redefine the notion of community in such a way as to accommodate the rapid changes that are underway.

Problems of conceptualisation

In starting our discussions on the way in which the selected online community works, it seems beneficial to dwell on the notion of *online*, or otherwise known as *virtual* or *cyber, community.* Even though there have been numerous attempts at neither too restrictive nor too broad a conceptualisation of the term, from 1980 onwards, there still is considerable controversy surrounding the concept, both as far as its defining properties as well as the appropriateness of the term is concerned (cf. Yuan 2012; Fernback 2007; Watson 1997; Bakardjieva, 2003; et al.).

At the core of the controversy there stands the apparent opposition between our conventional knowledge regarding the notion of community in the offline, physical world and its actualisation in cyberspace. In fact, several early attempts at conceptualising the term have been made to identify the key characteristics and properties of offline communities and identifying them in the online ones (Preece and Maloney-Krichmar, 2005). Defined mostly along the local perspective, traditional communities at the time were taken to denote a homogenous group of people who live in close geographical or local proximity, sharing a common interest or goal, with shared cultural and linguistic backgrounds, who sustain a form of face-to-face interaction on a regular basis in the real, physical world. Such a conceptualisation of the term '*community'*, however, did not only render it difficult to carry the notion

over to the virtual world, but it also made it extremely hard to recognise and appreciate the intricacies characterising the interactions of various groups across the internet.

Indeed, if one decides to use the term 'community' to designate a group who entertain forms of social interaction on a regular basis "depends on the notion of community one is operating with." (Bakardjieva, 2003:291) Translating the notion of community into concrete, palpable terms is, nonetheless, more difficult and complex than one might expect it to be at first sight. As aptly noted by Fernback (2007:49), not only do we have a highly idealised notion of what the concept entails, but the concept itself is also abstract at its very core and diverse enough in its realization that it has become almost impossible to truly grasp all that it involves, irrespective of whether one uses it for the online or offline world:

> Community is a political, cultural, economic, and technical buzzword. Community is descriptive and prescriptive, local and global, spatially bound and boundaryless, public or private, organic or mechanical, intentional or accidental, purposive or aimless, oppressive or liberating, functional or dysfunctional. It can be a shared interest, shared kinship or shared space. It can be physical locality or collective interest or collective memory or crisis constituencies or marketing devices. Community can be gangs, terrorists, anarchists, or racists. The concept of community, online or offline, has become increasingly hollow as it evolves into a pastiche of elements that ostensibly 'signify' community.

Under these considerations, as associated with the constantly changing landscape of the internet, the evolution and change of the interactions that are carried out online, there has been a constant shift towards redefining the notion of community along the social perspective. Shifting the emphasis from geographical proximity towards social closeness and a shared sense insofar as the goal and purpose of the group is concerned, grants us more confidence in using the term 'community' to refer to online groups of various sorts. Seen from this perspective, then, online communities have been defined as "social aggregations that emerge from the Net when enough people carry on those public discussions long enough, with sufficient human feeling, to form webs of personal relationships in cyberspace" (Rheingold, 1999:5), or more comprehensively, as "groups of people with common interests and practices that communicate regularly and for some duration in an organized way over the Internet through a common location mechanism" (Ridings, Grefen & Arinze, 2002:273). Amongst the most important and most commonly accepted properties that characterise these regular social interactions in the cyberspace, then, are the commonly shared interests and goals of the individual members, common discourse norms along with a uniform use of language, emotional and informational

support amongst members and a shared feeling of membership and attachment (Blanchard, 2007; Machackova, 2015; Mitra, 2010; et al.).

While none of the properties highlighted above can be treated as being either superior or inferior to the others, given the aims of the present study we wish to discuss several aspects pertaining to language use as a cohesive tool in the formation and workings of online groups. In this sense, one must recognise that communication and interaction in a regular and meaningful way is one, if not the most important, community forming forces. Therefore, in order for members of an online group to feel that they are part of a community, their questions, concerns and needs have to be answered on a regular basis and in a reciprocal way (Carey, 1989; Arguello et al., 2006). These regular interactions, together with the shared interest that often characterises group members, as well as the context within which they communicate help facilitate the creation of commonly shared, mutually understood discourse norms. In Machackova's (2015:66) words, "every online community has a specific discursive framework and it is an open question as to how the newcomer will fit in, even when the attributes are not immediately recognizable."

Nevertheless, we need to bear in mind that, as Watson (1999:104) observes:

> […] the technological ability to communicate does not in itself create the conditions of community. Community depends not only upon communication and shared interests, but also upon "communion." The term is used most in a discourse of religious ritual, but even in non-religious contexts the term is often chosen to describe a spiritual, emotional, or, as Rheingold (1993: 5) names it, "human" feeling that comes from the communicative coordination of oneself with others and the environment.

Along with the various views insofar as its conceptualisation is concerned, the idea of community in cyberspace has been widely debated. While for some it meant that individuals were finally able to connect with like-minded individuals without boundaries, i.e., time and space restrictions, for others it meant that people became less and less involved in sustaining their offline, real-world communities (cf. Rheingold, 1993; Wellman 1999; Jones 1998). Still, research shows that online communities need to be seen as neither alternative versions nor a substitute for engagement in offline, traditional communities. In fact, many online communities facilitate the creation of real, offline connections and relationships, and there are online communities which are in place to help strengthen the ties between members of an online community by facilitating communication and providing support (Wellman, 1997; Wellman & Gulia, 1999; Machackova 2015).

In the course of the present section we have tried to briefly sketch the main issues that have been raised in the literature while trying to conceptualise and

concretise the notion of 'online community'. For the purpose of the present study, we will analyse an online community along the social axis, understanding it to denote a group of people who engage in a form of computer-mediated communication (CMC), on a regular basis in cyberspace, sharing common discourse norms, goals and interests.

Research aims and objectives

Due to the fact that studies concerned with forms of synchronous oral interactions in cyberspace amongst members of a particular community are underrepresented in the literature (*but see* Williams et al., 2007; Williams, 2009; et al.) and taking into consideration the technological advancements made in the past few decades, allowing, in turn, an ever greater number of people with diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds to communicate and interact with each other online, the main aim of the present study is to offer a brief insight into how language is used in online communities who engage in playing video games.

In more concrete terms, the main questions we wish to address in the present study are the following:

1. How are online communities built around video games structured and how do they compare to our traditional notion of community?
2. What are some of the intrinsic properties that characterise the types of interaction and language use amongst members of an online group using a synchronous, oral form of communication?
3. To what extent does language use and the communicative strategies employed by members reflect the social aspects of community life, insofar as the shared interest of members and common discourse norms are concerned?

Clan data and structure

The present study reports on findings regarding a virtual online game called *World of Tanks*, concentrating on the way language is used in a culturally diverse community of gamers. The data reported on were sampled in May 2016 and consist of two recordings of free play between members of the community in platoons, as well as one recording in which members come together to discuss game tactics in preparation of a forthcoming battle.

The gaming platform used by the community is a free online downloadable *massively multiplayer online game (MMOG)* software application based on a war-

simulation idea, where teams of about fifteen players fight against each other to either destroy all of the opposing team's tanks or to win the match through occupying the opponent's team-base.

Players of the game can either play individually, often referred to as *random*, since in this case the teams are composed of randomly selected players using the same server or entering battles in *platoons* (where players team up with one or two other players and enter a randomly selected team), or in *teams*, where community members all connect, prepare for the battle and play according to a previously established strategy, with one lead member instructing other members on their actions and the type of strategy to follow.

Online communities within the game are officially called *clans* and are acknowledged as such. Consequently, people can use the game's official website to create clans and manage them, with the possibility of assigning various positions to their members, creating and defining a minimum of requirements in order for someone to enter a clan, etc. Each clan consists of a maximum number of 100 members, and each member is identified in the game as being part of the clan through displaying the clan acronym in square brackets after their online name.

In the case of the clan investigated here, members wishing to join the clan are either required to fill in an application form, which is then matched against the criteria for eligibility, or can obtain membership on the basis of an invitation sent by *clan recruiters*, whose main job is to look for players with outstanding skills and good in-game statistics. The recruitment process usually starts with the invitation to the clan's private community chat room, an independent push-to-talk software application, where members of the community share their experiences within the clan and occasionally play individual games with the applicant requesting membership.

The recruitment process is quite similar to real-world recruitment protocols, where applicants must be able to demonstrate that they possess the necessary qualities that enable them to become full members of the clan. The majority of clans have a well-established set of requirements that prospective members need to consult before applying to join the clan, and which usually specify the necessary and mandatory skills and game statistics one must possess, the names and types of tanks that must be owned by the applicants, as well as the number of playing hours per week during which an applicant is expected to be available online in order to take part in the clan's team battles and meetings. Language is also an important part of the recruitment process, in the sense that players are generally required to understand the jargon used by the members of the community, which except for local or national clans, is usually English-based, as it is in our case.

As far as the individual members of the clan under analysis are concerned, the number of players at the time of sampling was 76, with the majority of the members being male as opposed to only 1 female member. The average age of the clan members was 22, with the youngest player 13 and the oldest 38 at the time of the sampling. The members of the community come from geographically distant locations, as shown in Table 1 below, with a substantial number of players coming either from the United Kingdom or Germany.

Table 1. *Geographical distribution of clan members*

Country of origin	Percentage reported to total number of clan members	Country of origin	Percentage reported to total number of clan members
United Kingdom	28%	France	1%
Germany	23%	Norway	1%
The Netherlands	7%	Portugal	1%
Romania	5%	Slovakia	1%
Croatia	4%	Switzerland	1%
Sweden	4%	Bulgaria	1%
Ireland	3%	Belgium	1%
Italy	3%	Czech Republic	1%
Denmark	3%	N/A	11%

The members of the clan are hierarchically organised, having various military ranks assigned to them which include:
- *recruiter* (responsible for finding possible new members to join the community, conducting interviews with the applicants, verifying their statistics and playing games with them in order to decide whether they display the necessary skills to be accepted in the clan);
- *field commander* (responsible for making tactical decisions and leading the clan in battles);
- *executive officer* (responsible for making various types of minor decisions, solving members' personal problems, keeping track of player activity, etc.)*,*
- *diplomat* (responsible for keeping in touch with other clans within the game, especially when it comes to negotiating a deal);
- *commander* (the leader of the clan, whose main responsibility is to make the most important decisions, the highest rank within the clan);

- *reservist* (a player who does not play regularly enough to become a full member of the community, somebody who is rarely available);
- *recruit* (somebody who has only recently joined the clan, a new member of the community);
- *private* (a regular member without specific responsibilities except for the ones that have been defined in the clan requirements).

Furthermore, all clan members are expected to abide by a set of well-defined rules that govern not only the behaviour of the individual members within the community, but some of which are also expected to be followed when members play or interact with people outside the community. In this sense, players are required to avoid insulting other players, especially as far as discrimination of and hate towards sexual orientation, race, religion, gender, or national or ethnic identity are concerned. Members should try to avoid killing team members at all costs, except when provoked, and they should not strive towards creating fail platoons, they should not try to drown themselves on purpose and they should always try to play fair, using common sense and following the basic rules of the game. As far as communication within the community is concerned, members are expected to join the appropriate chat room of the clan on *TeamSpeak* and to greet members whenever they are online and playing the game.

A peculiarity of the communication characterising the members of the community lies in the fact that the platforms used for communication among the members are multi-layered and varied in both context and purpose. The most commonly used form of communication involves the use of a third-party software called *TeamSpeak*, which allows users to entertain a form of synchronous, oral communication using their own microphones and a push-to-talk method to activate voice-transmission. Although *TeamSpeak* provides an opportunity for members to interact with each other in written form, voice-communication is generally preferred. The use of the *TeamSpeak* software is almost obligatory, all members being expected to be logged in whenever they are online and playing the game, as it provides the basic method of communication during battles, meetings and recruitment processes. The team also has a private forum, which members of the community have access to, and which allows them to communicate with each other in written form, creating their own threads and displaying announcements that are relevant for the whole community. Although the abovementioned platforms are the ones that are the most frequently used among clan members, there are further options provided by the game software for interaction. Consequently, clan members can interact with each other as well as

with members outside the community using features such as general chat, team chat, group chat or clan chat, depending on the type of game played by the members.

Communicative practices amongst players

It is natural that given our non-active involvement in the game *per se*, access to the linguistic data was somewhat limited. Nonetheless, we have been able to identify the key aspects of the language used amongst members of the community. Thus, we have been able to detect the strong influence of a number of features, such as the contextual setting of the game itself, the interactional frame-sets – i.e., platoon games as opposed to team battles or 'official' meetings online – as well as the discernible impact of the wider community of internet users and of internet pop-culture in general.

As far as the vocabulary used by members of the community is concerned, this seems to be highly influenced by the contexts in which the game is set. In this sense, we found a significant number of technical nouns relating to tanks – the vehicles used in the game – and other weapons: *gun depression, gun elevation, turret armour, gun mantle, gun line, gun marks, gun arc*, as well as verbs relating to military attack or defense operations, such as *flank.* To this lexical list we should add a number of acronyms referring to the type of ammunition used – as the players have the possibility to select the type of ammunition they wish to use in battles for each tank: *acpr (armour-piercing composite rigid), heat (high-explosive tank warhead), ap (armour-piercing), he (high explosive squash head).*

Besides the wide-ranging use of the abovementioned technical borrowings from the actual world, the players' discourse also contains a number of coined words and expressions, which are commonly agreed upon and understood by the members of the community. These words are not only reflective of the language use of the particular clan under investigation here, but they also attest to the creativity of the players as these are words which are commonly understood by the player community at large. Thus, we find expressions such as *'to arty someone'*, used as a transitive verb in expressions such as *'he artied me', 'I artied him'*, etc. meaning to hit/shoot another tank with artillery. This category includes the expression *'to permatrack someone',* meaning that the player managed to take down an opponent player's tank beyond repair, and thus immobilizing it permanently. A similar expression to the one mentioned above is the verb *'permaspot'*, which means that a player managed to expose the location of a tank on the map, so that the latter becomes an easy target for everyone.

The third type of vocabulary items consists of words whose meanings in the game differ from the ones they are commonly associated with in real life. A typical term is *'assault',* which according to its dictionary definition means "a sudden violent attack; onslaught" (Webster's College Dictionary, 1991: 82). In contrast, the term is used by the game community to refer to a type of game play where two teams battle for one base as opposed to either team having its own base, and where one of the teams is attacking while the other is defending the common base. More generally used words that have a different meaning amongst the community members, though they are neither particular to the community at hand, nor to the wider community of gamers, but rather representative of the entire internet culture, include the following: *'salt'* or *'salty',* the former meaning anger, while the latter is used as an adjective with the same meaning, i.e. '*angry'.*

Members of the community also use a set of 'ordinary' words, most of which are nouns in their basic meanings, as adjectives to describe players as far as their skills and game statistics are concerned, and which are illustrated in an ascending order in the following list:

e.g. *'tomato' < 'orange' < 'potato' <'melon' < 'blunicum' < '(super)unicum'*

'Tomato' is used to describe a player who is seen as having very poor playing skills and generally very bad game statistics; an *'orange'* player is someone who has poor gaming skills, *'potato'* refers to average skills, *'melon'* refers to someone who has good game statistics, but who does something inappropriate or is incompetent at a game, *'blunicum'* indicates a good or skilled player, while *(super)unicum* is a term reserved for a very good or highly skilled player. The colours are in line with the colours used on the websites that offer graphical statistical representation of a player's skills, taking into consideration various criteria, such as average damage per tier, average number of kills per tier, survival rate, etc. These 'official' statistics display a player's ability using the following spectrum in an ascending order of skill:

e.g. *black > red > orange > yellow > mild green > deep green > blue > mild purple > deep purple.*

Although it is evident that not all colours from the above list have a matching counterpart in the discourse of the players, nonetheless, the colours to which the nouns in our list above make reference to seem to correlate with the colours used to graphically display player statistics online.

At the same time, there are certain complex phrases which are exclusively used within the community of *World of Tanks* players, and which allude to the context of the game as well. These include the various phrases which make reference to the

famed late dictator of the Soviet Union, Stalin. Particular examples contain verbal expressions such as *'shells are guided by Stalin in Russian tanks'*, used when a Russian tank hits another tank from afar with no vision or proper vantage point and still manages to penetrate the latter's armor. Other phrases including the name *Stalin* are: '*the side of the IS7 is made of Stalin's moustache'*, or similarly, *'the frontal plate of Russian tanks is made of the coffin of Stalin',* which both make reference to tanks having too thick an armor. One final example would be the utterance *'If you send enough dissidence to the gulag, Stalin will guide your shells',* used mostly in a joking way when somebody's shot misses the target.

Another distinctive feature of the players' discourse concerns the use of a large number of abbreviations and acronyms, which include terms such as: *'pen'*, used as a verb in such expressions as *'he penned me',* which is an abbreviation of the verb *'to penetrate'* (an armor); *'op'*, meaning *'overpowered',* generally used to describe tanks that have technical specifications above average tanks, as in having too thick an armor for a four-tier tank, making it hard for other tanks to penetrate it; *'gg'* which is an acronym widely used within the gamer community, usually at the end of a match, meaning *'great game'.* Another specific acronym used within the community is *'wotRNG'*, which stands for *'World of Tanks Random Number Generator'*, which is used mostly with a negative connotation in situations where given the statistics a different outcome was expected. A particular example of the latter situation is when a tank manages to hit an opponent's tank in a particular spot, where, based on statistics, the damage caused should be within a certain range, but the actual damage is comparably smaller.

In addition to the complex ways in which gamers of the community use words to convey various types of meanings, we also find specific discourse markers which are often used in their oral interactions. Some of these discourse markers are not specifically stemming from the community at hand, but rather have been adapted into their language either from the internet culture or have been generated through activities that are commonly performed amongst community members, such as watching online streams of players who display outstanding skills. A commonly used discourse marker of this type is *'kappa',* adopted from *Twitch*, the popular online streaming platform, described as the main chat emote on the platform. *'Kappa'* is used at the end of an utterance to signify that what has been said should be taken as ironic or sarcastic and not at face value. A similarly widely used term of this type is *'lel'*, which comes from the equally widely used acronym *'lol'* (*'laughing out loud'*) with an enriched meaning. Therefore, *'lel'* is used mostly in a sarcastic or ironic way to express that something is funny in a weird, yet stupid way.

Yet it is not only the context of the general gaming community and the internet pop-culture that have a major influence on the way in which people communicate within the clan. As mentioned in the previous section, members of the community hold different ranks, and there are certain social norms that are to be followed by each member of the community. As part of the inner workings of the particular clan under analysis here, apart from the communication carried out amongst players of the same rank or friends who play in a platoon, there are occasional meetings which players are expected to take part in. The meetings generally revolve around strategies that are to be used in an upcoming clan battle or are simply exchanges of experience amongst the players and are generally led by one of the high-ranking members of the community. Meetings in this sense are more formal in context and style, which is reflected by the language use of the members. In this sense, we see fewer digressions than are common to the exchanges between players, the language used in the meetings contains a significantly smaller portion of obscene words (0.55% compared to 2.19% used in platoons or team battles, i.e. in more informal settings).

On the whole, the discourse of the players reflects in many regards the discursive strategies normally found in speech interactions between individuals in the off-line world, containing frequent reformulations, digressions and overlap. The language used by the members is characterised by irony, sarcasm, puns and inside jokes, some of which make reference to the shared experiences of the community members online, outside of the clan setting, which are hard to understand for someone outside the community.

Contrasting the above-mentioned peculiarities of the communication amongst members of a clan, we find many of the distinctive properties that stay at the very heart of our definition of *'online communities'*. The whole community has been born out of the interest players had with regard to the game at hand, using common discursive strategies and having regular interaction with one another in an online environment, and providing constant support and understanding to community members.

Discussion of Results

Although in the course of the present study we have tried to consistently argue for the possibility of seeing online communities as similar, on the social axis, to traditional, offline ones, allowing people with diverse social, cultural and linguistic backgrounds to form close-knit communities, we need to recognise, first and foremost, that not all online communities can be treated in the same way. The actual realisations

of online communities in cyberspace show great diversity both as regards the interaction patterns, the channel used for communication and the particular context in which these communities are set. Therefore, one must admit that the findings of the present study might neither be extrapolated to all online communities, nor are they supposed to be understood as universal.

While the communicative practices observed in the interaction amongst players suggest a uniform use of language, featuring common discourse norms, which we have taken as reflective of the group identity, we nevertheless need to recognize that the significance of the study has been greatly limited due to the fact that we have only focused on a single online community, consisting of little more than 70 players, relying solely on a limited number of recordings and informal accounts given by the members of the community. Therefore, a more in-depth analysis, with a larger set of data complete with interviews conducted with members of various online gamer communities is definitely needed for a more insightful perspective of the inner workings of these communities and their impact on discourse.

It must also be mentioned that, although members of the community analysed do, indeed, come from a wide geographical area, with various cultural and linguistic backgrounds, they are from within the boundaries of the European continent. In this regard, one might then talk about a geographical or continental bond, assuming a common, partially-shared European culture. Although this limitation is somewhat difficult to overcome, because the gaming platform in itself is divided amongst a few larger servers located in Europe, Russia, North America, Asia, China and Korea, it would nevertheless be interesting to see what differences, if any, can be observed in terms of the inner workings of communities based on different servers around the world, and to see how the larger, offline community and culture influences the game-embedded community.

Last but not least, online communities have often been 'disregarded' given the ease with which they are created and dissolved, and in this regard, a longitudinal study concentrating not only on the lifecycle of several gamer communities in terms of their creation, evolution and eventual dissolution, but also as far as the longevity of the interpersonal connections existing amongst members is concerned would most definitely be a welcomed addition.

Given these considerations, we believe that the topic explored provides a plethora of opportunities for further research, having the potential to help us reach a better understanding of what it means to be (part of) a community in our constantly changing, globalized world.

Despite the fact that we do recognise the importance of taking all these aspects into consideration, unfortunately, given the various types of limitations of the present study, we did not manage to address them in such a way as to fully uncover all the complexities and intricacies of the topic at hand, leaving them subject to further study and scrutiny. Nevertheless, we hope and believe that the data collected and presented in the above sections provide enough support to claim that online communities, especially the ones similar to the community evaluated at hand, do indeed allow people to form ever stronger communities online that successfully bridge social, cultural, linguistic and geographical distances between their individual members. Moreover, we believe that the hierarchical organisation, the shared discourse norms together with the types of interactions and language use adapted to the communicative context, the mutual and individual responsibilities characterising the online community discussed herein, allow us to claim that there is indeed a possibility to treat them on par with their offline counterparts.

Conclusions

In the present study we wished to offer a brief, but meaningful, insight into how online communities built around video games function, emphasizing the importance of language use and communication as a reflective tool of the inner workings of such groups. Although the notion of online community is somewhat hard to grasp and define, having to be addressed from a multilateral perspective, we hope that we have managed to convincingly show that once we place emphasis on the importance of the social aspects of community life, online communities are not inferior to, or less complex than, their offline counterparts. The digital revolution and especially the widespread use of the internet have provided a great opportunity for people to form close-knit communities, bridging over the combined geographical, local, cultural and linguistic distance on the basis of their shared beliefs, attitudes and interests.

Although we need to recognise that the present analysis has its own limitations both in terms of the complexity of the data we have worked with as well as in its scope, we hope that we have managed to uncover some of the intricacies charac-terising online communities in cyberspace. As far as the structural makeup of the community discussed at hand is concerned, we have seen that members of the group are hierarchically organised, with various types of internal social roles that come with their own responsibilities. Entering the community is also more complex than in the case of newsgroups, mailing lists or discussion forums, requiring people to possess certain skills and be able to demonstrate their capacity to become integral

members of the community, and ultimately enhance their homogeneity. The social norms and laws regulating offline interactions are also found in the form of community guidelines and rules in the case of the online community investigated, with community members under obligation to abide by them at all times.

Insofar as the language use and communication within the community is concerned, we hope that we have managed to show that members tend to use language uniformly in accordance with commonly shared discourse norms and rules. Due to the fact that players communicate mainly through a form of synchronous, oral interaction, their communication closely resembles speech interactions taking place in the offline world, with frequent interruptions, reformulations, overlaps, etc.

Moreover, community members show a great degree of linguistic creativity, evidenced by the significant number of coined words, through assigning novel meanings to common, everyday terms. As an important feature of a subculture subsidiary to other subcultures that exist in cyberspace, the language used by the players contains a significant number of words and expressions borrowed either from the youth culture of the internet or the internet pop-culture, as well as from websites other than the community's own which provide content closely related to the shared interest of the members. The socio-cultural context provided by the game itself is, too, of utmost importance, as reflected in turn by the large number of technical terms related to tanks, military personnel and operations. Taking all these into consideration, we concur with Rheingold's (1993:3) claim that "There is no such thing as a single, monolithic, online subculture; it's more like an ecosystem of subcultures, some frivolous, others serious."

Finally, we hope that in the course of the present analysis we have managed to pinpoint some of the aspects along which online communities as the one presented here can be assimilated to a certain degree to traditional communities, therefore providing evidence that "people in virtual communities do just about everything people do in real life, but we leave our bodies behind." (Rheingold, 1993:3). We are aware that it would be inappropriate to draw far-reaching conclusions on the basis of such a limited set of data analysis, but we, nevertheless, hope that we have at least managed to highlight some of the peculiarities of online communities built around video games and the plethora of opportunities for further research on the topic at hand.

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4

Languaging Practices Linking Young Speakers through Discontinuities and Otherness

Oana PAPUC

The present paper aims to uncover the preliminary findings of a qualitative analysis performed on the audio-video recorded interactions of a multicultural blend of undergraduate English L1 and English Lx, second year Physiology students at Universitatea de Științe Agricole și Medicină Veterinară (University of Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine) in Cluj-Napoca. The personalised, local use of languaging practices and self-reported attitudes to multilingualism point to a variety of code-switching phenomena, polydirectionality, as well as creativity and fluidity in communication. These are revealed through combining the Conversation Analysis approach, the Markedness and Rational Choice models, and the Membership Categorization Theory and Zimmerman's situated, transportable and discourse identity markers into an analytical framework. Recent research on the observed didactic and cognitive benefits of using plurilingualism in higher educational settings substantiate current findings.

In light of the recent change in paradigm observable at the intersection of multilingual studies, psycholinguistics and sociolinguistics research, what stands out as inherently crucial to, but mostly overlooked up until now, are the links between multilinguals' sense of identity and degree of emotionality felt in cases of switches from unmarked to marked codes in interactions. In other words, what has become gradually understood as being at the forefront of speakers' strategies in relation to other multilinguals in interaction, are not only the intentionality and goals of the communicative instances, but the complex intertwinement of the social roles, scripts and degree of emotional attachment to specific linguistic features as part of one's linguistic baggage, that play out in the form of code-switching instances.

Such is the case of the participants in this study, a part of a doctoral thesis whose main aim is that of investigating the link between current multilingual theory, psycho- and sociolinguistics, and the actual languaging practices put to use in a localised, particularised manner by emerging adult English Lx speakers. The surveyed group were seen to employ a personalised variety of English as Lingua Franca as well as resorting to a range of other languaging practices in order to successfully and

fully accomplish the task requirements set out at the beginning of their Physiology seminars. In other words, the main phenomenon under observation is the influence of code-switching on the various activities taking place in an academic environment and its effects on the relationships within the micro-community under investigation.

Although the research is focusing on a limited sample of participants (two groups of 15 students each), taking into account the recent shift in focus to a more holistic approach to studying learners' enjoyment, rather than just anxiety in the foreign language classroom (Dewaele, 2016), and looking to supplement the existing body of studies on the CLIL classroom format, the qualitative results obtained so far attest to the need for a reconfiguration of related terminology in the literature. Integrating a more holistic with a more active approach to the linguistic phenomenon of code-switching will also address the remnants of monolingual ideologies of language purism that are still prevalent in current educational environments. Aneta Pavlenko (2017) encapsulates these changes in the reconfiguration of the linguistic computational process as entailing more than just the computation of meaning, while the concepts of hypersubjectivity and superdiversity (Hall, 2014) are pointing to the outcomes of the various processes of deterritorialization and reterritorialization we are witnesses to today (Jacquemet, 2005).

Indeed, Jørgensen's attempt to revitalise discussion on the complex issues of pluri-/multi-/and other lingualisms to name just a few, simplifies the terminology and comprehension of what makes a multilingual a 'multilingual', and what his/her linguistic practices add up to, especially given the proliferation of these terms in the literature. Thus, it is rather difficult for a more thorough understanding of the phenomenon to take place, especially when it has been the object of many decades of controversy. In fact, it is Jørgensen's theory that highlights the difficulty of talking about the fluidity of discourse, and implicitly of the fluidity of code-switching instances, when the discussions about the speakers are still stuck in ideologies of fixity and language purism, a point taken upon by other linguists as well. In order to proceed with a discussion on the findings emerging from the recorded data and the analytical perspective, a clearer definition of the term 'multilingual' and 'multilingual practices' is in order.

Definition of concepts used

A multilingual speaker is regarded, according to languaging theory, as an individual who is endowed with a linguistic baggage that is under continuous formation throughout their lifetime, and which is comprised of a multitude of linguistic features,

some more similar in structure to others, in which case they form clusters of different degrees. The level of development is determined by years of use, age of acquisition, degree of emotionality to specific types of features, frequency of use, intentionality of the intended message, the social, cultural and psychological cues they become indexed to according to both individual preferences and socio-culturally constructed scripts, which, in time, may become attached to specific 'personas' that individuals may feel as representing them, or wish to become, or be seen by other speakers as embodying. Then, what also become highly significant in determining the choice to use one particular feature rather than another, are the perceived circumstances of each interaction, the self-perceived available roles to be taken up at discursive and situational levels, as well as those that match up with one's current sense of self-identity (markers of Zimmerman's transportable identity). However, since interactions involve at least one other speaker, what are equally crucial in determining the choice of linguistic strategies, are also the perception of the roles assumed by the interlocutor during the interaction and the degree of social distance or social closeness between the speakers, all of which are subject to change and co-negotiation and creation during speech production.

Thus, multilingual practices become the expression of the usage of these features regardless of their level of development at a certain moment in time, and regardless of how other speakers may interpret their output as being comprised of linguistic features that 'belong together'. In other words, the main focus of my data was to see how code-switching instances are put to use by a variety of multilinguals for the purpose of accomplishing tasks during their Physiology seminar, in the confines of an educational setting. By using Myers-Scotton's Markedness and Rational Choice Models to analyse the types of switches occurring and the factors directing their occurrence, her definition of code-switching was adapted to accommodate this study's view of multilingual speakers to: "the use of" at least "two language varieties in the same conversation. It can occur between speakers, or between sentences in the same speaker's turn, or within a sentence" (2006:161). In other words, these switches are made in the context of a 'languaging environment' in which speakers intentionally make use of these switches as they see fit, taking into account the specifics of each interaction and the overlapping dimensions of the interlocutor(s)' linguistic baggage, during the joint negotiation of the Rules and Obligations (R-O) set that each com-municational act necessarily brings with itself, so that communication may occur in the first place. As emerging from the data, it can be said that a macro-imposed R-O set was determined by the seminar professor and the requirements of the CLIL format seminar: students were expected to use English as their unmarked code whenever

interacting with the seminar professor. However, each work group in turn could, and did, establish a micro R-O set based on the number of speakers in the group and the shared linguistic baggages, with the unmarked code not necessarily being comprised of English features. Below, a short description of the case study participants is offered.

Case study sample

The two groups of second year students whose conversations were recorded in both audio and video format are comprised of 15 speakers each, the two seminars surveyed being scheduled back to back and consequently, coinciding with the data recording sessions. The two groups were expected to perform the same task requirements, the seminars having identical formats, the circumstances of the speakers' environments being, thus, the same, and the macro-imposed R-O set coinciding. The only structural difference between the format of the two groups was that of the time the respective seminars were scheduled.

The participants' linguistic backgrounds range from Canada, Romania, France, Italy, Greece, to Egypt, Mauritius, Israel, Germany, Switzerland and South Africa. Consequently, the majority of the participants were English Lx speakers, one English L1 speaker, one English–Romanian bilingual and one Romanian–Hungarian bilingual, with English as the code mutually intelligible to all participants in the micro-community (including the seminar professor and student staff).

The data recording sessions were three in number, the researcher reasoning that meaningful variables can only occur after a careful scrutiny of the similarities and differences arising between at least two seminar meetings. As mentioned previously, the macro-imposed R-O set is comprised of English features, pertaining to both *English for Science* (in particular, the field of Veterinary Medicine/Physiology), but also to general English features employed by a high number of speakers as a result of consistent use of online social media, and the varieties of schooling EFL (English as a Foreign Language), and ESAP (English for Specific Academic Purposes). Lastly, the educational medium in which the participants were recorded was that provided by the University of Agricultural Studies and Veterinary Medicine, in Cluj-Napoca (the Physiology Laboratory).

Methodology & theoretical background

The participants in the study were recorded during their usual interactions in Physiology seminars, and field-notes were carefully made of the various stages of each seminar, the students' and professor's conduct and actions throughout the

respective seminars within 'the confines' of the physical space of a Physiology laboratory. During the in-depth observation of the emerging patterns in behavior, paired with the transcription and analysis of the sequences of turns-at-talk, it became clear that certain activities were habitually enacted and accompanied by a specific discourse, in the presence of a specific audience and interlocutors. Consequently, the combined regular activities, Membership Categorization strategies – with a focus on types and frequency of code-switching instances – supplied scripts resorted to on a habitual basis and helped set roles in an environment where content-related tasks are accomplished through the medium of English as Lingua Franca. Such roles can become desired scripts in an environment where frequently, the 'diligent, competent student' Membership Category was regarded as an aspirational step towards the socially desirable persona of a professional with 'expertise', in addition to the other recurring personas and MCs constructed or oriented to within the social hierarchy of the micro-community.

Therefore, in addition to the methods listed above, we also applied the conversation analysis approach to the turns-at-talk between participants interacting one-to-one or in various other group configurations. A sketch of the seminar sequences was mapped out after a scrutiny of the field-notes and recorded behaviours, in order to determine whether changes in topic and speaker configuration coincided with shifts from the macro R-O set to various other marked codes, by following Myers-Scotton's Markedness Model. By applying the Rational Choice Model (also by Myers-Scotton), in addition to Membership Categorization Theory (considering the three different levels of speaker identity: discursive, situational and transportable), the participants' reasons behind switches to marked codes was assessed, in an effort to determine the driving factors behind the occurrence of the phenomenon under observation.

The factors and effects identified among this diverse group of multilinguals interacting in a languaging background have also been analysed through reference to recent literature on psycholinguistics and positive psychology. The results of this body of research points to what has been already termed in Jørgensen's theory as the stripped-down version of 'languaging practices' and his inclusive definition of multilingual speakers. In fact, the division between native and non-native speakers is slowly being discarded from the literature, on account of its nationalist and exclusionary connotations. In fact, the research done on CLIL type courses also indicate the advantages related to course material comprehension of using pluri-lingual practices during peer-to-peer interactions while solving tasks. Thus, the conclusions of these various research areas seem to come together, throwing light on an identical outcome: the use of code-switching is a highly effective strategy

coming to every speaker's aid, regardless of their command of the respective linguistic varieties.

Furthermore, researchers have only recently started adopting a more holistic approach to the interactionist perspective, considering students' enjoyment too, rather than just the anxiety felt when interacting in the foreign language classroom in the Lx language. Findings are pointing to the correlation between a positive classroom atmosphere and professors' number of years of teaching experience in successfully constructing an environment in which the students feel safe to express themselves and, even more so, actively participate in class activities, despite the fact that their level of linguistic competence in the target language might not be adequate (which often produces an anxiety which, in turn, will trigger students' reluctance to use and practice the language and, eventually, reach their goals). Thus, a point was made of capturing in the transcripts the palpably positive seminar ambience and the linguistically tolerant nature of the environment. Thus, the factors and effects of multilinguals languaging in an educational setting will be discussed in detail in the following pages.

Discussion of findings

There have been noted two categories of outcomes of multilingual speakers engaging in a languaging environment, which will be detailed below.

1. Frequent code-switching

In the context of a languaging environment, the first visible effect is that of frequent code-switching occurrences as a result of the context's flexible, adaptable, tolerant nature. We, thus, identified several types of factors determining the choice of marked linguistic codes (code-switches).

Functional factors

In a setting such as that under observation, it becomes clear that multilingual speakers coming from such a wide range of linguistic backgrounds will resort to code-switches in order to deal more easily with the difficulties of integrating recently discussed content knowledge information with previously taught and discussed content knowledge, in addition to having to transfer this knowledge to practical steps in order to accomplish the seminar tasks. During the data recording sessions, the main tasks to be performed by the students were those of identifying and subsequently counting the type of cells observable under microscope, in order to determine the leukocytary formula of blood smears belonging to different types of mammals. These

numbers were then to be converted into percentages and declared either 'healthy' or 'diseased' in relation to the blood samples under investigation, the normal references and charts of healthy appearing cells made available to the students by slide projection.

Interestingly, the observed mixing of at least two linguistic features (belonging to at least two different linguistic codes) occurred not only in bidirectional or polydirectional instances, but in unidirectional ones as well. In one case, a female student was recorded switching from unmarked English features to marked Italian, Romanian, French and then back to Romanian features in one utterance, when counting identified cells (Voce 011, 21.11.2016, Group 2, 1h 30 min.: "oh, okay, so numero uno două, trei, patru (.) ok trois, quatre, cinq (.) bine↓").

Emotional factors

Code-switches are also indicative of the linguistic expression of individual idiosyncrasy. Instances of student interaction where speakers see themselves as belonging to the same in-group also translate to a use of their preferred linguistic choices and frequency of preferred switches, these highlighting a co-constructed discourse aiming at reaching or expressing convergence. However, instances expressing emotions situated at the opposite side of the spectrum, that is, emotions classifiable under the umbrella term of 'divergence', have also been observed in both peer-to-peer communicative instances and student-professor interactions, when dissatisfaction with previous turns at talk or refusals to follow-up requests are expressed not overtly, but through code-switching as detailed below:

a. Topically (MC) influenced: the frequency of changes in marked choices is also accompanied by frequent changes in topic, more precisely students (and in far fewer instances, the professor herself) swiftly shift from seminar related topics (coded 'formal' topics) to topics pertaining to individual, personal issues (coded 'informal'). These changes are made with the purpose of either reinforcing the membership status among speakers, or as an attempt to alter it. If the latter is the case, then these changes are visible at the level of shifts in the Rules and Obligations set as well. Thus, three different situations of R-O maintenance and R-O alterations have been observed:
    – instances of reinforcing shared membership within the group;
    – attempts to enter already formed in-groups;
    – attempts to shift power dynamics in group where access has already been granted.

b. Signalling content knowledge comprehension: transitions from the macro-level imposed R-O set to particular micro-level negotiated sets are signalled via changes in marked code choices, and not expressed overtly. The driving factor behind

these changes is students communicating to their professor that assistance is no longer needed either in task performance or in explanations of content knowledge to be applied in the steps leading to the successful accomplishment of seminar requirements.

c. Occasioned by physical movement in the space of the laboratory: students' movement across the space created within the laboratory environment, delineated into work stations where they are allowed to choose the format of group organizations (pair or multiple-member group formations), requires them to switch from their initially negotiated micro R-O set and adapt to various other micro R-O sets, taking into account that transitions from the macro-level imposed R-O set to their initial set are also available at all times. Two major types of movements, intertwined with assumed MCs, can be noted in the context of the individuals whose behaviours and activities seem to become habitual within the micro-community:

– based on in-group relationships, comfort, and familiarity of repeated reassignment of roles in group work, students exhibiting more signs of extraversion (comfortable with the idea of being recorded, frequent instances of 'camera performances' for assumed audience, and frequent initiators of code-switching instances and/or directive and elicitation speech acts) regularly take up the role of 'leaders' within groups, while those exhibiting fewer signs of extraversion appear content with merely adopting a more passive role within said group. This literally translates in 'leaders' and 'followers' of physical movements in the physical space of the laboratory.

– in cases of obstacles of seminar task performance, students then swiftly hop from their original work group to other groups, in search of peer mediated assistance, or student-staff, respectively, professor aid. What this translates into is the quick formation and equally rapid dissolution of ad-hoc work groups, where members seem to be at ease with taking up whatever roles are available in that specific interaction, for that specific purpose, meaning that there also occur departures from habitual roles assumed and enacted in communication, and in some cases, even instances of role reversal.

The first type of movement was prevalent in the first two instances of data recording sessions, or in other words, in cases where the seminar format was 'regular', that is, the students were aware of the sequences that they would be engaging in and were, therefore, prone to re-assuming habitual MCs and behaviours. 'Regular' seminars either start with a brief lecturing sequence in order to enable students' content knowledge information to be activated for specific seminar tasks fulfilment, which are re-explained

if necessary, or consist of an upfront introduction to the task requirements. The last occasion on which data was recorded was of an atypical format, the objective of the seminar being to facilitate the recreation/performance by students of tasks presented throughout the semester, in view of the forthcoming exam. Hence, members of the micro-community were given enough leeway to choose their group configurations and to individually focus on their topics of choice, in order to prepare for the practical part of the examination. In this latter instance, the changes in environment and seminar format were reflected in members' choice of atypical MCs, causing a change of their R-O sets as well.

2. No/rare occurrences of code-switching

Contrary to the frequent occurrences of code-switching observed in interaction, there were also cases of no or very few such instantiations observed. What was instrumental in turn-at-talk management and negotiating communication are speakers' MCs and assessment of perceived roles:

– in groups where interlocutors saw themselves as sharing similar MCs and attributes, in addition to sharing identical L1s. This status was also evident in speakers' MC-related activities and resulting behaviour, that is, the R-O set was observed by all participants in interaction;

– in groups where interlocutors came from different linguistic backgrounds (dissimilar L1s), but also perceived one another as not sharing enough similar MCs and attributes. Their behaviour and mode of interaction were specific of an environment reflective of no co-construction in terms of in-group dynamics. This occurrence was noticed in interactions between both native and non-native speakers of English, the predominance of code-switching instances being much less frequent than in groups where members engaged in a closer relationship. The familiarity of members' roles can be, thus, deduced from: frequency of code-switching, types of preferred code-switches, and the level of formality or informality of the interactional topics.

Languaging outcomes

When multilingual speakers engage on a regular basis in polylingual practices, interesting linguistic phenomena emerge: the juxtaposition of standard content morphemes of one linguistic code onto standard features of another code, or alternately, the juxtaposition of standard onto non-standard features of the same variety. This leads to the emergence of non-standard and unclassifiable linguistic features:

e.g.
- "ungar" (uttered by a fluent Romanian and English speaker)
- "vacuums" (professor's utterance)
- "lymphophile" (the combination of content morphemes 'lymphocyte' and 'neutrophile' – Physiology specific terminology)
- "neutrocyle" (a combination of content morphemes 'neutrophile' and 'eosinophile')
- "numer" (juxtaposition of the Romanian feature 'număr' onto English 'number').

Therefore, what is evident is multilinguals' linguistic creativity visible in interactions, unclassifiable features emerging in conversations, which continue naturally despite the unexpected occurrence of such markers, from, one could say, the opposite ends of the spectrum of the speakers' linguistic baggage.

The presence and use of marked choices in communication are indicative of the Membership Categories relevant to the speakers at a specific moment, under the particularities of a specific communicative instance. Due to speakers assuming and enacting MCs across interactions, the activities and social persona markers and the indexed scripts that stand out as more frequent than others showcase the members' implicit values, a parameter rather difficult to assess. However, the habitual emergence of some MCs rather than others does not stand in contradiction with the fact that these identity markers are not fixed or rigid in any sense. As evidenced in cases where the environment conditions were modified, or the seminar routine was changed, due to variation in requirements and the unpredictability of interactions, members' situational, transportable and discursive identities overlap, are susceptible to changes, or are simply replaced by alternative ones. It is specifically the resulting fluidity of assumed roles (and identities, implicitly) that paint the picture of the unique ins-and-outs of this co-constructed micro-community, many of which are indexed in the code-switching occurrences.

In the context of a visibly linguistically tolerant setting, which provides the space for students to freely assume different MCs and to keep moving back-and-forth between the macro-established R-O set and negotiated micro-R-O sets, some students have also been observed to assume teacher-like roles to their peers. These unexpected occurrences fall into two distinct categories, coded as content-related peer-teaching and code-related peer-teaching instances:

i. *Content-related peer-teaching* phenomena occur when one member of a group encounters difficulties in the task performance at hand, due to content knowledge being unassimilated or not entirely comprehended. Therefore, information is sought via inquiry directed at either the seminar professor and student staff,

or to peers. The following turn-at-talk may be taken up by the professor in an unmarked (positive) response to the request, or via one peer quickly assuming 'teacher' attributes and teaching related strategies (such as explanations, repetitions, repeated feedback elicitations, as well as management of turns-at-talk) in a manner resembling 'authority'-bound activities and behaviour. Once again, depending on the goals of the interaction and the relationship between the speakers, code-switching instances facilitate peer assistance.

ii. *Code-related peer-teaching* phenomena occur in cases where members of groups do not share identical L1s, but are actively engaged in a process of co-constructing personalized varieties of ELF, and through its medium actively express an interest in the specifics of the interlocutor's L1, usually a code in which the student inquirer is not proficient in. These newly acquired Lx features have also been observed to be then promptly used in aiding content knowledge scaffolding in the task performance at hand, alongside existing content knowledge.

The tolerant, comfortable and adjustable nature of a linguistically flexible environment and student-centered academic setting seem to foster a situation that has been dubbed in literature as a process of 'bringing the outside in' and coded within this research as 'informalizing the institutional setting'. As evidenced in this case study, the informal nature of the micro-community interactions in an institutional setting are favored by:

a. topical transitions from seminar-related topics to informal topic embedded islands;
b. frequent code-switches.

The informal interactions are visible as:

– verbal and paraverbal markers of informality such as vulgarisms, informal terms of address, instances of rapping, laughing, meowing, barking, performing 'skits', and recurring jokes;
– nonverbal markers of informality in the form of dancing, jumping, acting out 'skits', directing gestures specifically towards the recording device, and play-fighting.

As regards this particular outcome, one should note that the presence of the recording devices was fully acknowledged by the members of the micro-community and did not impede natural occurring conversation, as it was considered to be an unavoidable aspect, to which the multilingual speakers swiftly adjusted, again by code-switching and changing the perceived R-O attributes. These were 'enacted' through hyperbolized roles such as 'classroom sequence narrators' or 'peer activity

evaluators'. The result was the hyperbolization of the strategies used by the students for their communicative purposes, also called the 'theatricality of identity performance', a condition that sets the stage for emerging MCs in the context of an until then routinized environment (such as 'camera awareness instigator', 'prankster'), as well as for recurring MCs ('extravert', especially in relation to the perceived social hierarchy of the seminar setting). All these join the recurrent attributes and values indicating an individual's sensitivity to how they want to be perceived, and, therefore, will influence linguistic behaviours and strategies.

More than half of the participants in the study apparently developed the tendency to use as marked choices features of the linguistic code 'native' to the temporary country of immersion (Romania) regardless of their levels of proficiency or linguistic backgrounds and histories. Extensive Romanian embedded language islands and code-switching between English (target language) and Romanian (immersion language) were recorded in both audio and video formats. This type of linguistic strategy suggests once again the importance of code-switching and assumed MCs as indicators of a sense of identification with attributes and behaviours associated with the notion of 'Romanian'. These types of code-switching, then, also become shared attributes among the speakers of the micro-community that create a sub-group of their own, who are specifically using these marked features to reinforce shared membership status, or to have higher chances of specific requests being fulfilled by like members. Indeed, these multilingual speakers *are* goal-oriented, driven by the particulars of each interaction and perceived attributes of the group members, and therefore intentionally and rationally make use of creative linguistic strategies, regardless of whether they are seen by the other members as 'belonging'.

All members of the micro-community resorting to such diverse strategies for the purpose of accomplishing their tasks and getting their messages across, stand as proof that every individual speaker is endowed with metalinguistic awareness that both shapes the environment and is a product of it. This metalinguistic awareness is evident in three major markers:

1. Code-switching among most members of the micro-community (peer-to-peer, as well as professor-to-peer).
2. Speakers' emphasis on their perceived, assumed and enacted linguistic identities (significant MC directing speaker interaction – 28.11.2016, group 1, 09:53 min.: "01:06 W: me too↓ (.) Tunisian Arabic not Arabic↓).
3. Self-corrections triggered by speakers' awareness of having uttered non-standard features of English, which are promptly remedied through turn-repairs. However, these corrections are never peer to peer, nor professor to peer, but always self-

directed (professor – 28.11.2016, 15:15 min.: "more mm..stronger↓ it's not more stronger↓ it's stronger (.) not more stronger↓ I know ok↓", and student – 21.11.2016, Card 2 , 23:09 min.: "17: 09 H. L: my English is very bad (.) so (0.2) ((looks down, away from the camera)) but it's very hard for me↓").

Frequent one-word switches are produced in spoken communication and mostly in filler-positions at the beginning of a turn, regardless of the speaker's L1 and level of development of one's linguistic baggage. This specific instance of code-switching stands as proof of Jørgensen's languaging theory and description of multilingual speakers' behaviour. This languaging outcome also seems to support Myers–Scotton's theory according to which speakers make use of whatever linguistic codes are most readily available, at a specific moment in time and according to the specific requirements deemed necessary for the communicative instance to suit individual goals. This is done regardless of the level of development of the codes to which the features belong to, and regardless of the interlocutors' perception of these features as fitting together. This usage of features can also be said to be indicative of Blommaert's notion of 'mobility' as a direct result of the processes of deterritorialization and reterritorialization mentioned by Jacquemet, within a superdiversity that fosters hypersubjectivities as manifest in languaging and code-switching.

Conclusions

To sum up, the qualitative findings discussed so far are the result of the conversation analysis approach and Membership Category, Markedness and Rational Choice models used to determine what prompts code-switching instances in an academic micro-community, and the effects of multilinguals resorting to languaging practices in the confines of a university setting. To determine a more accurate understanding of, and give validity to, these findings, a quantitative analysis should be performed on the code-switching instances observed and questionnaires should be administered to the participants in this study. What has become visible so far is the fact that code-switching instances are a preferred linguistic strategy used by speakers to successfully accomplish their tasks, practice their ELF and different Lxs, adding additional features to their linguistic baggage, and lastly, as a means to navigate the complex interactions and relationships emerging on a seminar-to-seminar basis between students and their seminar professor, as well as a handy instrument for creating one's desired social persona(s).

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5

Book Reviews

Alexandru-Brăduț Ulmanu,
Cartea Feţelor. Revoluţia Facebook în spaţiul social,
[The Book of Faces. Facebook in the Social Space],
Bucureşti: Humanitas, 2011, 276 p.
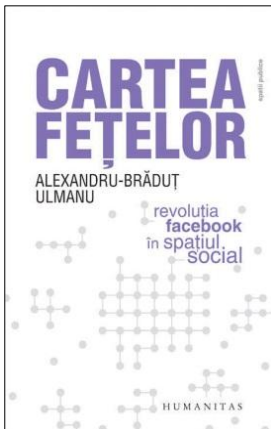
The volume presents the work of a fully-fledged researcher, journalist, trainer and instructor of online journalism, communication and social media. Written in a reader-friendly, creative and playful style, the volume contains a preface and three main chapters (1. *Social Media, a (r)evolution. History, Characteristics and Successful Mechanisms*; 2. *Relations, Connections, Impact*; 3. *The Changes of the Public Space in the Era of Social Media. Successful Mechanisms*), which offer the author's insight into the world of online social networks, rendering it useful to anyone interested in updates on the topic, specialists and non-specialists alike.

The first chapter of the book contains a concise history of social media, combined with various face-to-face scenarios and their digital counterparts. The chapter starts with the presentation of a user's hilarious digital experience: as a temporary resident of the UK he created a video in which he presented his expensive car and sent it to his Romanian friends apparently, measuring his swift, huge personal success in a host country. The video was uploaded on YouTube, where it quickly became viral. So much so, that it became a news item in the mass media. This case was presented by the author in order to highlight the audience's power and impact in the era of social media, the fact that the technological evolution has brought about a more democratic production and distribution of news. As an aside, the video is relevant to the complex and dramatic socio-cultural phenomenon of current Romanian migration.

Besides being a channel for information distribution, the author points out that the social media constitute an excellent medium for social interactions, where one-to-one communication characteristic of mass media is replaced by a set of communication

technologies that use the Internet to facilitate communication amongst at least three people. The author, then, provides an overview of technologies starting with the advent of the Internet, the *Bulletin Board Systems* (*BBS*), on to the *World Wide Web* (1990), *Open Diary* (the 90s), and finally, the social media and Web 2.0, and *User Generated Content*. The author embraces Kaplan and Haenlin's definition of social media: the group of Internet applications developed on the basis of the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, which allow for the creation and the exchange of user generated content. The author also presents the varied types of social media: collaboration projects (*Wikipedia*, *WikiLeak* – a platform created for the distribution of classified documents with the aim to increase governmental and institutional transparency, or bookmarking services, such as *Delicious*), blogs (*Twitter* as an example of microblogging), communities dedicated to content production, online social networks, virtual worlds/games (*World of Warcraft*), virtual societies (*Second Life* – an example of offline and online world overlap where users construct a virtual character/an avatar for themselves and lead a fictional life), *Yahoo Messenger*, email, and eventually, *Facebook*.

The author surveys the history of *Facebook* and discusses some of the relevant Mark Zuckerberg bio-information. *Facebook* is defined here as a network of human networks and the the basic mechanisms of the social network site (SNS) are explained. According to the author, *Facebook* promotes voyeurism rather than narcissism, as often claimed. An interesting section in this chapter illustrates the collaborative nature of the social media with a collective story started by a *Facebook* post on a user's *Status* delivering a couple of lines on his *Facebook* addiction. This was followed by 40 other users' comments writing about their own experiences with *Facebook*. One of the users even underlines the dichotomy between our everyday life and our *Facebook* activity, the latter seen as less restrictive.

Next, the author provides explanations for *Facebook*'s popularity and defines the SNS as an interactive map of our social relations which contains stories about others. Among other things, he mentions that *Facebook* contains applications, it offers freedom of choice, it constitutes a Web 2.0 world of mouth, it gives its users the possibility to recreate themselves in a digital context, it allows the manifestation of homophily, it is simple, stable and it is characterised by a uniform design and a militant function. Last but not least, the author discusses the importance of the *Like* function.

The author considers that social media are forms of action and interaction, evolution and revolution, allowing everyone to communicate in the social space. However, he also enumerates some of the social media problems: hyperconnectivity, multitasking

and its negative effects on mental activity, exhibition of personal information, uniformisation, and the fake accounts used, at times, as instruments of oppression.

The chapter *Relations, Connections, Impact* starts with a question: *How virtual is a virtual friendship?* As in the first chapter, the author exemplifies with a user's experience in order to highlight some of the *Facebook* features. He argues that the SNS uses our social interactions and transposes them into the digital context, as well as labelling *Friends* all of our acquaintances. He talks about virtual friendship and surrogate-interaction. The author exemplifies with the *Facebook* birthday wishes and claims that we sometimes act like robots, which are designed to interact automatically. He also draws the reader's attention to the meaning of 'virtual' and its common misconception as something that does not exist in reality, something that is not actual. Thus, he advises us not to identify the online world with virtual reality because the digital context is a dimension of real life.

Regarding the *Friends* label, the author explains its use and meaning within the online network. He goes on to introduce the concept of group and explains its function in the digital environment. He claims that *Facebook* is a sort of memory extension, a time and space machine which offers not only a map of our real social life, but also a map of our past social life, which it reactivates. He also explains the "mammoth accounts": they contain new contacts, they reflect social professions, and lists of all the people we 'know'. Eventually, *Facebook friends* are to be understood as contacts.

Starting from the theory of six degrees of separation, the author explains the internal mechanism of SNSs, and rejects Sherry Turkle's idea that if we are *alone together* it is due to the new communication technologies, by claiming that the public space extends into the virtual world and vice versa. The author also writes about strong and weak ties, new friends, online dating, *Facebook* marriages and divorces, myths and misconceptions. He considers that there are two fundamental aspects of SNSs: connectivity (the structure) and contagion (the function). He mentions Christakis and Fowler's five principles of SNSs: users create the network (homophily, density, transitivity), the networks create us (centrality, connectivity), our friends influence us, our friends' friends influence us, the network runs a life of its own.

The last chapter of the book focuses on successful mechanisms and social changes in the era of social media. The author supplies an overview of lists of discussion, groups and forums. He shows that the Internet has always placed emphasis on the concept of *community* and he explains the importance of *user generated content* and gives the example of the *Coca-Cola* official *Facebook* page co-created with fans. He, thus, underlines that social media can be more efficient than the mass media.

The author also makes a comparison between past and current social networks. He mentions some crucial events: the 1989 Timișoara (Romania) revolt, the 2011 Cairo (Egypt) revolt, the 1987 Brașov revolt (Romania), and uses the term *cave Internet* to define the interaction between groups of people and communities in the proto-Internet era. Furthermore, he considers *Facebook* functions to be catalysts, for instance, instruments for coordination and conspiracy in the Egypt and Tunisia events, but also underlines that technology facilitates collective action. In order to highlight the militant function of Facebook, he provides many concrete examples: helping people in need through Facebook, economy and social media, business and social media.

He states that the emergence of the social media has caused a shift in mentalities: consumers have gained control and trust their friends more than they do brands. Through other concrete examples, he shows that stories told online have a great impact on other users and social media are great instruments for the promotion of everything and anything that exists offline: the campaigns of the *Cărturești* Romanian bookshop chain, the Romanian TV show *Cârcotașii*, *OpenTable*, *Amazon*, *Trip Advisor*, *Gap*, or *Rom*, the Romanian staple chocolate bar. He dedicates a special section to politics and social media (the political campaigns and online presence of former presidents of the US and Romania, respectively, Barack Obama and Traian Băsescu), underlining the need for a change in perception: politicians should take into consideration that people can no longer be regarded as a collection of individuals forming an audience, but as users/participants who produce or co-create content.

In what follows, he presents the process through which mass media become social media and he underlines the necessity for a new type of journalism with a change of status: everyone has a voice in social media, it is no longer a matter of transmitting information, but one of involving people in the information production process, interactivity, crowd publishing, PR, immediate and honest interaction, the culture of social networking. In this sense, he gives the example of various famous publications with Facebook pages and accounts: *The Guardian*, *Huffington Post*, *New York Times,* and claims that, ultimately, economy based on atoms has been replaced by one based on bits, so that journalism needs to be reinvented.

The volume concludes with the adagio *Everything is conversation,* where the author emphasises that *social media change things*. He claims that in the era of social media, the public decides what is important in business and commerce, in politics, etc. We live in an interconnected world where we are no longer alone and where collaboration and collective action come in as useful at all times. We are integrated in networks and communities that are connected to other networks and communities.

Last but not least, he claims that the Internet is based on people, because we are built to live in communities, and that *Facebook* creates maps of our social relations.

The volume ends with a list of useful bibliographic references, comprising brief descriptions of the items enumerated.

Cartea Feţelor. Revoluţia Facebook în spaţiul social is useful for internet linguists, sociolinguists and sociocultural linguists because it offers an insight into the internal functions and mechanisms of Social Network Sites, with ideas and corpora worth exploiting. Moreover, it clarifies several concepts and it presents the vast context of the digital medium: where and what type of corpora is available for researchers interested in social media/Internet linguistics. The book contains a large array of online and offline scenarios, which makes it a captivating, anchored in reality, and easy to follow read.

Alexandra COTOC

Timothy Garton Ash. *Free Speech*.
London: Atlantic Books. 2016, 492 p.
An attempted review in the form of an Imaginary Discussion
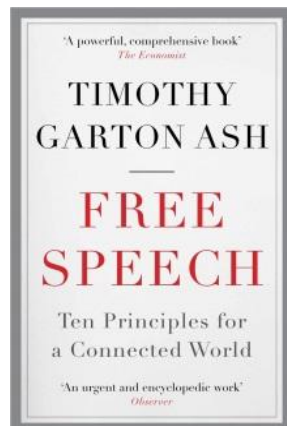
The text of this particular review starts with the explanation of the rules of the game. It is meant to be a simulated discussion between two imaginary friends on various topics of social philosophy. The roles are simple and static: one friend suggests a topic, the other expresses his somewhat informed but decidedly rash opinions, which are then tempered with a more conventional discourse by the former. The first discussion is the sequence of a few thoughts about the flow of the lifeblood of a society. It presents ideas about the limitations of societies which are countered by ideas about human potential and its development.

The second discussion is an attempt to reveal some of the underlying reasons behind violence. The first view is that of the complexity of human personality, which explains violence. The theoretical approach is opposed by the practical idea of moving towards non-violent conflicts.

The third discussion is a story about ignorance and knowledge. The first character tries to present development and progress as a result of the interaction between completely ignorant and less ignorant people. The second character counters with his genuine belief in true knowledge and the necessity to disseminate it.

The fourth discussion is meant to be an exchange of ideas on different styles of journalism. The first character makes it extremely clear that one does not believe in styles, but rather in honest journalistic responsibility. The second character expresses the need for the freedom of media in order for them to truly inform the public.

The fifth discussion is envisaged as a rather unique approach to the idea of diversity. One view is that true diversity can be assessed only when comparing members of different societies. The other view, however, extols the virtues of civility, i.e. of tolerant civilisation.

The sixth discussion is focused on some beliefs about religion. The first character shows some affinity to religion and professes that it has been instrumentalised for political purposes. On the other hand, the second character seems more objective and speaks about religious feelings.

The seventh discussion on the matter of privacy is the backdrop of yet another dialectic. One view is based on the idea that there is no real privacy, since there is no real isolation. The second view is based on the idea of building and protecting one's reputation despite attacks on one's private life.

The eighth discussion is meant to present the latest news about secrecy. The first view is that of the friend who sees the dark reasons behind secrecy. The other friend, though, believes in the necessity for keeping some things secret.

The ninth discussion focuses on parts of the world which seem to be in the pathway of icebergs. The first perspective equates the idea of icebergs with insurmountable odds. The second perspective uses the icebergs to name the trappings of modern communication.

The tenth discussion delves into the fear of courage. According to one of the friends, people are able to make choices, but in order to avoid possible consequences they will simply make any choice whatsoever. The other friend professes quite the opposite, namely that people are brave enough to make choices.

The end of the text is marked by a complete lack of ultimate conclusions on the matter. There are only some subjective observations made by the second friend about the attitude and the effects, both positive and negative, of the words of the former.

Introduction

One has recently had the good fortune of meeting an old acquaintance. It was going to be an interesting meeting to say the least. Over a cup of tea, a most enjoyable conversation started. The conversation had two parts. The first part was a brief, but obligatory attempt at chatting about the current affairs. As expected, this did not prove to be much in the way of shifting to a more lively tone and subject. The second part

fortunately set out to be a welcome relief from artificial constructs. It seems that people have an intense propensity towards reminiscing. It is perhaps one of the best ways to connect with someone by mentioning deeds and situations of the past. It gives them a certain degree of a decidedly subtle pleasure. Thus was the situation, that one recalled ye Oldie Goldie days of upper secondary school. The nature of the discussion was, for all intents and purposes, liberal. One poured one's soul about former classmates and teachers. Inevitably, this led to mentioning the subjects one had studied and their topic content. The focus was, in this case, on philosophy. This may be because it had, indeed, been a surreal experience: a well-written classical textbook taught in a rigid manner, as dictated by the then curriculum and methodology. The main idea was to play a game which came under the guise of a lively discussion. One was invited to imagine an alternate reality. It could be circumscribed as a utopian vision in which one would have studied in a different manner. This game went on for a while until an idea derived therefrom gained a life of its own. One suggested the alternate reality of studying other topics than the ones featured in the classical textbook.

Having said that, there ensued what seemed like an interesting set of discussions on a variety of topics.

I. On lifeblood

The first topic suggested for discussion was lifeblood. One started by describing the idea of blood. Blood is presented, biologically speaking, as a type of tissue. It is said to be red only because of the haematides, also called red blood cells because of the iron-rich haemoglobin, a biomolecule in their make-up. This biomolecule has an important function for it binds with oxygen in the lungs to form oxyhaemoglobin, which is carried through the arteries to the capillaries where it is released to bind to the carbon dioxide to form carboxyhaemoglobin which, in turn, is carried through the veins back to the lungs to be released, and the cycle starts all over again. Without haemoglobin, therefore, without haematides and hence, without blood, there would be no exchange of gases and life itself would not be possible.

In the same manner, everything in the world needs a vital principle, some form of lifeblood. A society is made up of individuals who interact and develop close bonds in a networking system which they use to survive. But there isn't only the obverse of the great seal. There is a reverse as well. The political system takes hold of the society and models it, because it has to rely on it for its existence and perpetuation. As the system relies on society and society relies on the individuals, the system will be as successful as the individuals.

The friend grinned and explained that he had meant something else. He said that the ability to do something is never enough. One ought to try and do something with it. He said that he meant an attempt to get out of one's comfort zone and explore, looking for everything and nothing in particular, that is to say, with an open mind and an open heart. It is the only imaginable manner of finding one's own way in life. Once one has found one's way one needs to pursue it, immerse oneself in it and try to comprehend it as much as possible. Once comprehension has been achieved, one ought to find willing learners of that accumulation of knowledge. Spreading one's knowledge should not stop here, creating a following with a few disciples. The disciples should be willing not just to immerse themselves in it but spread it even further. As such, the knowledge and the system around it would transcend geographical and cultural boundaries.

II. On violence

Then one moved to another topic which seemed to interest him. He mentioned the idea of violence and invited the other to give some reasons for the existence of violence. Thus, one started with the opposite of violence.

The ideal of civilisation is expressed by two gender-specific words in the English vocabulary. These two words are lady or gentleman. If this weren't enough, this ideal is meant to have a number of attributes.

The first aspect that comes to mind is external aesthetics. Falling within this category would be attributes such as good-looking or smartly-dressed. Accordingly, a good-looking person may be somebody having a physique which falls within an ideal of beauty. A smartly-dressed person could be someone who owns a wardrobe considered elegant, but not too elegant, and wears its items on a daily basis.

The second aspect that one may think of is oriented inwards and towards more intangible concepts. These concepts are expressed by attributes such as intelligent, educated and cultured. As such, an intelligent person might be somebody who possesses certain intellectual abilities. This potential is meant to be groomed in order to produce an educated person who is perceived as somebody who was formally taught several subjects throughout one's formative years. Ultimately, this process of education is meant to give rise to a cultured person who is supposed to be somebody who reads and travels a lot and is able and willing to enjoy cultural events.

The third and, probably, the most interesting aspect of this ideal has more to do with one's work and achievements. When speaking about occupations, one is bound to encounter attributes such as skilled and successful. To elaborate on the matter, a skilled person may be somebody who has acquired and possesses a practical or

intellectual skill. However, to round up the occupational aspect, one needs to become a successful person, that is to say somebody who has achieved fame and fortune and, thus, a certain social status.

However, on closer scrutiny, one is bound to find Achilles' heel in this ideal. The problem with this ideal is just that: it is an ideal, or rather an idealised ideal. This means that it is a very simplified and simplistic view of the development of a human being throughout one's lifetime. It sees one in a positive light. It creates an almost perfect image of the latter.

Perhaps a more honest approach is to admit the fact that human life is by its very nature extremely complex and displays many overlapping layers. The civilised version of it, however one may understand it, is just a layer.

When in doubt, one should always return to the basic concepts. A human being is very much part of the world it dwells in and shares its characteristics. Biologically, humans can be classified as members of the animal realm. They share the same problems and behaviours with the other members of this realm, and biology may be seen to be another layer of human life.

If one keeps in mind the fact that as stated beforehand, there are different layers of the human life and they overlap, that is to say, their borders are transitional, one can easily assume that one can express or live out any layer including the civilised and the primitive ones. Moreover, one can deduce that one can switch between expressing one or another. This may explain why there is a very fine line between a cultured personality and the behaviour akin to a male gorilla beating its chest.

As soon as one stopped the presentation, the friend started speaking. He said that he had expected a more down-to-earth approach. That meant giving examples of important issues. He started with the problem of people threatening to kill or actually killing the people who have expressed views which could be perceived as insulting to the way they lived. That had been called the *Assassin's Veto*. Another problem he mentioned was how to determine if there were grounds for limiting the right to free speech. For instance, when it was misused to incite somebody to break the law in a violent manner. This problem is called the *Brandenburg Test*. Yet another problem he mentioned was the situation when a member of the public produces and communicates a message which may elicit a violent verbal or physical reaction from other members of the public which may be directed against their peers. This bears the name of *Dangerous Speech*. He admitted that, ideally, there would be no conflicts. But, since this prospect is unrealistic, a more practical solution would be to avoid violence and defuse conflicts.

III. On knowledge

After a few quick sips of tea, the discussion continued with a new topic: knowledge. One's argumentation started with the idea that there are two types of people: the ignorant and the knowledgeable. This observation is, however, irrelevant since no one will actually be able to piece all clues together and thus will never know the joy and, indeed, the satisfaction of knowing. Ultimately, they can all just play along and that is the beauty of it: watch the players put on a good show.

The first type is comprised of people who form the functional part of society. They are the ignorant. They are born, grow up by following the mores more or less, work more or less, marry or not, have children of their own or not, then fade away. Then the cycle repeats. They may have some insight, they may even explode at times, but they do not change anything in a fundamental manner about their own behaviour.

The second type is even more interesting. The knowledgeable people are the ones who are tempted to believe that they have understood a phenomenon. Better yet, one is tempted to believe an explanation or another. Though, the truth is that, if one genuinely believes to know the essence of something, one should, probably, at the very least, spare a moment for a second thought about it. Still, credit where credit is due. While they're cut from the same cloth as the former type of people, they do seem to exhibit more openness towards knowledge and as a result, they may also have a thing or two to teach the others.

The interaction between the two types is important, because in the short run it gives the impression of development while in the short run it endorses the idea of progress.

It seems that the friend was unable and unwilling to agree with one's view. The first argument for knowledge was science and the scientific method. Then he mentioned the merits of the academic environment. He then moved on to mention the need for a legislative framework that would enable and encourage the spread of knowledge. He went on to explain that only a society of knowledgeable individuals can truly make progress. He also issued a warning that in trying to understand the world, one may easily get sidetracked by details of secondary importance.

IV. On journalism

The friend then remarked that one ought to always be thirsty for knowledge and that, in order to quench that thirst, one ought to choose carefully one's sources of information. As such, he proposed a new discussion on the topic of journalism.

One started by explaining that style is a loaded word. Any loaded word is a complicated construction and, as such, gives a false feeling of security, in the sense of an almost blind belief in the alleged main meaning of the word.

One has identified two basic forms of journalism. The one is objective, and the other is so far removed from objectivity that one will politely call it subjective. Objective journalism, which relies heavily on research and investigation, based on the Latin legal principle *audiatur et altera pars,* which roughly translates to *listen to the other part* (as well). Subjective journalism, regardless of how educated the journalist is, still exhibits biases towards particular topics.

The modern tendency towards tabloidisation shows that the second type of journalism is prevailing. Having said that, it is not that journalism is increasingly unprofessional. It is far worse than that. Journalism is part of this world and it suffers from the same tendencies as the rest of the world. In other words, fair journalism, as well as all the other fields of human endeavour, is sliding towards a superficial approach. And this is exactly the problem. A job can be done right or not. Ultimately, there are no styles of doing something. There is just interest followed by the corresponding input or not.

On listening to one's words, the friend made a sign of distrust and said something about the important service the media provide. It is all about informing the public. He explained that in order to be effective, the media ought not to be censored from within or from without, but rather follow a professional code of ethics which should prevent abuse. He then explained the diversity of the media and its relationship with other influential fields like, for example, the financial sector and politics. He went on to describe the paradigm shift from a very specific target public to a more comprehensive public, which made it more open and more democratic. Then he spoke about more sensitive topics related to the media. He discussed the requirements for a person practising the journalistic profession as well as the purpose of journalism and how its produce should be assessed. Then he moved on to make some predictions about the future in that he explained that the trend towards a larger audience would only increase and eventually include the human population of the entire planet.

V. On diversity

The friend looked one in the eyes and asked one about one's level of bigotry. One sadly agreed that he would have to admit to some deficiencies. It wasn't pretty but it was the truth. The friend stopped one and said that all he wanted to do was to discuss a new topic. This discussion would centre on the idea of diversity.

One started by using the artifice of classification as a means of introducing one's ideas. If one were to take a look at any society, one can distinguish between two types of diversity. There is apparent diversity and then there is true diversity.

Apparent diversity seems interesting and fun and colourful. It is also a very useful tool for anyone wanting to write a book but being at a loss of ideas. (As a joke, one

only needs to pick up a word and insert it in the tried and tested formula *How… I am*. Stitch together a dozen stories on the topic, commission a set of colourful covers, find some sponsors to cover the costs and… Voila! one has become a published author).

In terms of numbers one speaks of a majority as opposed to minorities. There are various minorities one can speak about. There are the religious minorities, ethnic minorities, sexual minorities, etc.

In terms of cultures one may speak of the mainstream and a variety of subcultures. And, while subcultures are place-specific, one can still make a few simplifications and generalisations useful to make a point. Subcultures refer to a lifestyle which involves preferences for a certain fashion, a certain type of music, a certain occupation and embracing certain ethical or moral values.

In terms of religion one may embrace system of beliefs like an Abrahamic religion (Judaism, Christianity, Islam), an Asian Religion like Zoroastrianism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Shintoism, be an animist, be a member of a religious belief which originated in the United States like the Mormon Church or the Church of Scientology. One may embrace no religion whatsoever in which case one would speak about a free thinker or an atheist. Or one may be in a position to claim that one is unsure what to believe in, being sometimes referred to as an Agnostic. And the list could go on and on.

When speaking about true diversity within a society, the motto ought to be *unity in diversity*. Within any given group, there is literally nobody who is essentially different but rather all share any number of common features. In order to exist, a polity, i.e. a state, grooms, supports and pressures into existence and submission exactly such a group which it calls a class, a nation, the subjects, the citizens, the taxpayer or simply the ordinary citizens. True diversity can only be observed when comparing individuals from two radically different groups of people who have been and are living according to different rules and mores.

The friend knew one well and was surprised neither at the bluntness nor the rigidity of his speech. Nonetheless, he nodded before giving his input. He spoke about the idea of civility which at best permeates all societies. He explained that civility is based on an openness to embrace different sides of an argument, and that, in doing so, one embraces the other individuals who are by their very nature different to oneself. He then went on to speak about the need to educate everyone in the spirit of civility. He did concede that this process would be complicated and lengthy. He did note the fact that a forceful imposition of civility may have had some benefits at inception, but mere enactment of legislation to prevent hate speech would

not do. In fact, a civil and civilised society needs to have a place for all lives and for all aspects of these lives. There has to be a place for art as well as for the caricatures. Only when such a state of affairs has come to be, can a state really manage its affairs.

VI. On religion

After a brief break, the friend returned to resume the conversation. His words revealed a new topic for discussion. It would be one which is extremely sensitive. The discussion would be focused on religion.

One had a desire to set the stage by noting that religion is a powerful matter. So powerful, in fact, that there is literally no society without a form of religious expression. It is one of the features that distinguishes human beings from beasts. Animals have been known to be self-aware, possess a high degree of intelligence and be able to learn, show sympathy, form complicated but functional social structures, and even keep other animals as pets.

Theologians may point to etimology as the key to its meaning. *Re-* translates from Latin by *again*, while *-ligion* means *connecting*. They would probably explain that it means trying to seek a relationship with God, and that if one makes such an attempt, God will help the individual. One must keep in mind, though, that religion usually refers to this world as a stage towards the afterlife, and to life as something transient.

A problem may arise when religion is used as a political tool. In all fairness, it has to be said it isn't just religion that may fall prey to such a destructive drive. In fact any idea may be, and often is used as a cover for actions with a completely different purpose than the one stated by the idea itself. Both history and philosophical systems have been misused for political gain.

For this instrumentalization to work, the architects thereof need to take into account the cultural disposition of people. Eastern cultures are more observant of their beliefs. It has to be said though that, while the eastern cultures are more conservative, this is not always the case and even where applicable, it is slowly changing. Western cultures are less observant, but obviously, one cannot generalise, for this isn't always the case. Western cultures are extremely open and inclusive and tend to naturally form a mosaic of subcultures with different values and beliefs.

For the first time, the friend agreed with some of one's ideas. He confirmed the special status religion enjoys. He also tried to explain the idea of religion, admittedly with more success. Then, he spoke about the kinds of reverence towards religion. He explained that reverence may be internalised or may be formalised. To explain

this difference, one has given the example of Islam in various areas. And, last but not least, there was the idea of tolerance.

VII. On privacy

The friend asked one what one knew about him. One was tempted to answer using the word *plenty*. But one recognised that this was, without a shadow of a doubt, an academic question. The friend wanted to propose a new topic for discussion. This topic would be the matter of privacy.

One started by explaining that people like to cling on to the idea of having a space which belongs to oneself and oneself alone. It's most likely due to the need for a comfort zone, a place where one feels in control and, thus, where one can relieve or mitigate stress. People like having private spaces both at home as well as outside their homes.

While homes may be perceived as people's private spaces par excellence, things aren't as simple as that, since there are levels of privacy even within a home. According to this logic, the living room would be more open than a bedroom. And even within the more private spaces there are places of exclusive privacy. A cliché might be a good example in this case. It does not take much to imagine an in-built and hidden safety box. For, whosoever is the proud owner of one, it goes without saying that alongside valuables such as money or jewellery, one will also keep personal effects with high emotional value, like old photographs of family members, under lock and key.

When leaving the house, things are not very different. People mingling among their peers in the outside world, go out of their way to retain not just an immediate private space but also the system of different levels of privacy. A typical example would be a person taking the bus to work. Not only would one try to avoid staring at someone, but every element of one's wardrobe as well as the accessories are strictly off limits.

And then there is an even more intimate space. That is the human mind. People don't merely think, but they are biologically bound to think. The same is true for communication. People have to communicate. And yet they would like to keep some or most of the content of their thoughts private. The typical example for such a situation is keeping a diary.

It seems as though the private sphere is a literally a no-go area. One cannot enter a private sphere. One should not even try to enter a private sphere. The reason is simple. There is no private sphere in an absolute sense. There may be spaces of comfort which maintain the illusion of being completely isolated, but they really

aren't and cannot even be, for there is nothing in this world that exists in perfect isolation. It is probably said that people lie in order to keep a secret, but the secret is that people lie to themselves when they believe in privacy.

The friend was struck by such an extreme point of view. And he wasn't shy about expressing his disapproval. Of course, he kept calm and was as always soft-spoken. He tried to explain that everything a person does builds up one's reputation and this reputation being so important it cannot be built on an intricate web of lies. Hence, he suggested that a healthy society is made of individuals with a reputation. Then he seemed, even though for a brief moment, to become increasingly philosophical. He asked about the possibility and feasibility of genuine separation from the rest of the public. Apparently, he was paving the way for an attempt at explaining the relationship between building an individual reputation and public interest. One was led to believe that building a reputation is not only meaningless outside the public sphere, but also impossible, for reputation is at once a public and a private matter. Once one has reached the public limelight for the right reasons, one is bound to engage other reputable people, as interaction is a must. These interactions seem to move more and more into the arena of the social media, where one will try to groom one's own or others' images. However, due to the open-ended system of the social media, nobody's image is safe from attacks at any given time from anyone and from anywhere across the network, or even beyond it. One will just have to be prepared to defend one's own public image. In doing so, one will avoid damage to one's reputation.

He also pointed out that this isn't even the most problematic part. Another issue stems from the nature of social media, for while the perceptions of somebody may change, people who have once come into the limelight, rarely, if ever, can stop being public persons. And this isn't even the worse part. That is yet to come. The worst part is that literally all the data about somebody are stored by the software of that social media and may even sold by the organisation behind it to other organisations. The solution to this problem would be, as he put it, in the implementation of algorithms which make one's persona as anonymous as possible.

VIII. On secrecy

The friend jokingly asked one about the secrets that one may harbour. There was method to the madness, though. Apparently, for some unknown reason, this would be the new topic for discussion.

One has tried to present one's view, which is that any political system, that is, a polity, that is, a state, is based on fundamental lies called myths. The contents of

these myths vary according to the system. Accordingly, it could be anything, from misusing religion to promoting historical events.

However, people get bored easily, so new parts of societal mythology have too be invented, developed and fed to the public on a daily basis. Usually it's just the daily occurrences reported. They may be indeed true, but may also be taken out of context or simply blown out of proportion. From time to time, more complicated constructs are released in order to elicit certain feelings and create an adequate atmosphere: positive (atmosphere of normality, feeling of belonging, support, pride) or negative (fear, resignation, indignation, hatred).

All of the above have an ultimate purpose: to hide the truth. For it to work, all members of the public need to be kept in this atmosphere of secrecy. However, when speaking about secrecy, there is some good news. Keeping a secret is hard work. One may imagine that if two people share a secret, it ceases being a secret.

The friend smiled subtly yet again. He started to say that there is a need for security and achieving it is undoubtedly a challenge. He observed that keeping a veil of secrecy has its price. He moved on to say that secrecy needs to be carefully regulated and controlled. He then made a point of mentioning the people who reveal secrets to the public, in other words the whistleblowers. He went on to mention the idea of sources of information and discussed their reliability. In the end he spoke about anonymity.

IX. On icebergs

The friend took a good hard look at the sugar cubes and softly whispered: "icebergs!" He believed that this discussion should focus on the topic of icebergs. One was a bit lost at what to say but, in principle, agreed.

With that introduction, one tried to make one's point by starting from the term itself. Speaking about the origins of the word, their name is most likely a loan of the Dutch word, *ijsberg* which translates quite literally to *ice mountain*. And this name is not haphazard.

The first thing anyone notices about icebergs is their size. They are huge. In fact, they are so big they can provoke tidal waves, cool waters, and sink ships without taking much damage. They start their existence as the outermost parts of Artic and Antarctic ice shelves which break off and start drifting into the sea.

But, alas, they are an important, crucial even, part of the natural water cycle. Icebergs are also used as living space by animals such as birds and marine mammals. Icebergs have been and are used for scientific experiments which usually are connected to the environmental science.

As far as their make-up is concerned, there are different perspectives on the subject. One can look at them from a geological, chemical or hydrological perspective. They are, geologically speaking, a huge crystal. Chemically, icebergs are a huge molecule of water. From a hydrological perspective, icebergs constitute a source of freshwater.

Now, let us think about the meaning of the word *metaphor*. The word *metaphor* is made up of two parts. They are both Greek. The first part *meta-* means across, while the second part *-phor* means bear. This means that the metaphor has the property to transcend a meaning. One can easily understand why an iceberg is the perfect metaphor for almost insurmountable problems, or to rephrase, for huge difficulties.

The friend explained yet again that perhaps one has misunderstood the main idea, as the arguments one has presented seem to have taken a particular turn. He went on to say that icebergs in this case refer to the traps which one may fall victim to when using modern means of mass communication. He tried to discuss the present and future of the internet. He mentioned the fact that all the online data has to be treated equally, an idea known as *Net Neutrality*. He asked questions of the ethics behind writing and using the various software. And then he issued a caveat regarding the mercantile interests which may corrupt and permeate the various online initiatives.

X. On courage

The friend gathered up his strength and mentioned the last topic. This would be the most serene of all. The discussion would be about courage.

One argued that all modal defective verbs have plagued and are likely to plague the daily life of any diligent student of grammar. However, the one that truly cuts the mustard must be *must* itself. *Must* is indeed a truly horrible word. It doesn't' just morph into a different expression like all other modal verbs, but that expression is just as unforgiving as the original word. That expression is *have to*, as in the legendary last words of Mozart "Does it have to be?" where the answer can only be a quick "Yes, it has to be!". And this is exactly its problem: it's supposed to be used for an implacable situation where one is not the true master of one's destiny, but must bow down to some higher force which rules over the individual and coerces one to do one's bidding. In reality, this not only is not true, it is far worse, because it is an affront to the intelligence of any decent person. Lest there be any doubt, people are still endowed with free will, which means that they can choose and they have the means to do so.

But people choose not to choose. It's both a very primitive feeling and solution to a perceived problem. People are afraid of the consequences brought about by

their actions. Unsurprisingly, they instinctively avoid taking sides; and they can, and often develop rather intricate strategies in this pursuit.

The friend was slowly running out of energy. Nonetheless, he felt confident that he had something to say about the topic that was different in nature from one's perspective. Firstly, he tried to define and explain courage. Secondly and lastly, he explained that it is the truly brave that make a real change and gave some examples thereof.

XI. Conclusions

Finally, one added that he felt like a bit of a fraud. When confronted about it, he said that he had not been entirely honest. He admitted that he had been using somebody else's ideas. According to him, he had read them in a book. His story was that he had been having a hard time. However, there was a happy turn of events and he met an old acquaintance who had helped him out. After they went over the situation, that person gave him a book to read. He told his acquaintance what he thought of the book. He found it extremely coherent and very well-articulated. The subject matter was factual and objective. Moreover, it had influenced his thought to a certain degree. He felt that it helped him advance his ideas about the world in the direction he desired.

At this point, one is bound to say that what he did in the beginning cannot be excused under any conceivable circumstances. When one is claiming other people's ideas as his own was very wrong indeed. Such a deed is simply called theft, and thus morally destitute. Still, this discussion was not a waste of one's precious time. Instead, one considered it rather helpful. On closer scrutiny, one may easily understand that it served as an instrument to open one's eyes and mind. If one is to remember his previously mentioned nonchalant ways, one might also, in all likelihood, imagine with ease that it may not have been the first time he was talking about these topics and that one hasn't been his exclusive conversation partner on the matter. Therefore, one may assume that the ideas have spread around in the aforementioned manner and have become internalised by any number of people.

Cătălin DEHELEAN

Fernando Jesús Plaza del Pino.
Comunicación, cuidado y vida en la diversidad:
una propuesta de formación intercultural.
[Communication, Care and Life in Diversity:
A Proposal of Intercultural Training]
Editorial Universidad de Almería, 2017, 309 p.
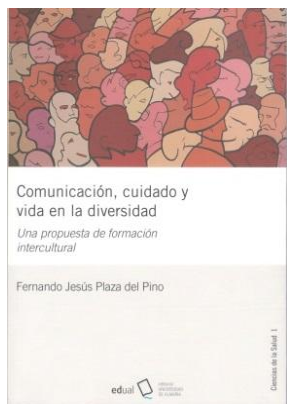
"Aquí soy extranjero porque nadie me entiende." (Ovidio)
"Here I am the barbarian because no one understands me."
(Ovid)

Acknowledging the importance of understanding and embracing multiculturalism in a society which is at the same time increasingly diverse and problematic, the current volume focuses on understanding the problems regarding this type of society and particularly those regarding professional intercultural communication. The work is concerned with designing and suggesting practical solutions for the training of professionals in order to acquire intercultural communication skills. The volume is interdisciplinary, as it combines two theoretical sections – approaching cultural diversity and stereotypes, language and intercultural communication and professional ethics, as well as conflict avoidance – with a practical section designed as a support for health professionals in order to enforce their intercultural communication skills.

The author is an expert in intercultural communication in relation to healthcare and migration, having a medical background, with a PhD and teaching experience in nursing (he is an instructor at the Faculty of Health Sciences of University of Almeria, UAL). Fernando Jesús Plaza del Pino departs in this volume from his expertise in both research and hospital practice (to which he adds activist involvement) regarding intercultural communication and cultural diversity. Based on this experience, he emphasises the need for reflection on the limits and social conditioning which determine the life and communication within diverse communities, as well as on the solutions that need to be found in order to overcome the negative perception and lack of tolerance concerning otherness. The book proposes, besides a theoretical component – which is meant to raise awareness concerning the prejudice and stereotypes regarding the Other in today's society (with special focus on Spain and,

even more particularly, the healthcare environment in Andalucía) – a practical section, to which many examples from hospital experience and surveys are added. This final segment contains, under the title *Propuesta de formación intercultural,* a workshop or course support focused on intercultural training.

The first and most substantial theoretical section, *Vivir en una sociedad diversa,* acknowledges the need for reflection on finding solutions to the challenges and concerns in a society characterised by cultural diversity, especially in the professional environments. For any non-specialist in healthcare, and for all readers interested in intercultural communication and cultural diversity, as well as the stereotypes and challenges related to the perception of otherness, the theoretical chapters are, perhaps, the most compelling. An interesting idea introduced from the very beginning is that "we are all migrants" (24), directly or indirectly, at one level or another. We could add that at least at some point in our lives and particularly in the European Union societies, study and work mobilities, exchanges or migration experiences are significant and almost generalised. Plaza del Pino discusses this diversity and migration in contrast to the need for belonging, as well as the anxiety and reluctance which the difference and lack of information about diversity can lead to. It is, we may add, the archetypal fear towards the Stranger (which, despite the current unprecedented access to information, still persists, centuries later after the times described by Jean Delumeau in his famous anatomy of Western fears, *La peur en Occident (XIVe–XVIIIe siècles). Une cité assiégée,* (1979).

In his search for identifying the problems and their solutions concerning intercultural communication (especially within the professional environments and, more particularly, in the healthcare area), the author approaches the prejudice and negative stereotypes directed at the Other, offering examples from his professional area and emphasising that language can be, and is, discriminating. He discusses the labelling of patients of non-Spanish origin on account of their ethnicity or skin colour, as well as the use (or lack) of diminutives with reference to some of these labels (38–39). Useful emphasis is laid on the role of the media as perpetuating these labelling practices, when emphasising the nationality, ethnicity or race of the people involved in varied events or crimes, even when such information is not relevant. Together, these processes result in generalising and creating stereotypes and hostility that can only affect negatively the cohabitation within multicultural communities. The author attempts to question precisely the most stable sets of prejudice and stereotypes, quoting Ortega y Gasset's reflection on the deepest, most ingrained and indubitable beliefs, which the latter considers as dubious and confining: "Nuestras convicciones más arraigadas,

más indubitables, son las más sospechosas. Ellas constituyen nuestro límite, nuestros confines, nuestra prisión" (47).

In his quest for identifying problems and solutions, the author refers to several advertising campaigns organised in Spain with the purpose to fight discrimination, as well as to some studies he has conducted, especially with a focus on the Muslim patients and the cultural and intercultural communication related to them in the healthcare environment in which he activated. The conclusions of such a study (54–55) emphasises a significant difference between expectations (and stereotypes) and the results, as the respondents (all Muslims) and their answers displayed diversity rather than the homogeneity expected. Moreover, the study revealed cultural similitudes and identification with the Andalusian or Mediterranean culture(s). In discussing this diversity, the author emphasises the need to approach the person separate from his/her belonging to a community and while doing it, question the stereotypes and intolerant or explicitly xenophobic ideas.

In a chapter dedicated to cultural diversity, the author relies on Hofstede's classification of patterns that can characterise and help assess culture in different degrees: *Power Distance, Individualism, Masculinity, Uncertainty Avoidance and Long-Term Pragmatic.* He also uses other definitions of culture, either seen as a set of values, knowledge, products, etc. or rather as a dynamic and instrumental approach (66). Nonetheless, what he values as primordial is the understanding of culture as related to identity and belonging, because this would be, the author argues, relevant for the interpersonal relations and differences between "us" and "them" (67). What characterises the book is the reinforcement of its theoretical and conceptual structure with examples from and references to practice. Thus, in terms of practical comparisons, Plaza del Pino employs a positive example related to Canada, where less emphasis is laid on ethnic or racial belonging as compared to other states, Spain among them, a country which, in his opinion, finds itself rather far from a positive acceptance of a multicultural society, an aspect which is considered to be a source of social conflict rather than a positive characteristic ("en España estamos aún muy lejos de una positiva valoración de nuestra sociedad multicultural, más bien todo lo contrario, aún se considera como un foco de conflicto social.", 70).

Less extended than, and in a way anticipated by, the first part, the second theoretical section, *La comunicación en la diversidad,* focuses, as the title suggests, on the issue of communication and the different forms it can take (at the verbal and non-verbal levels), as well as the communication styles and skills required in a multicultural social and professional environment. In this section focusing on cultural diversity and communication, the author argues that we cannot ignore other versions

of looking at the world, as this would eventually – and undoubtedly – lead to an erroneous perception. He compares this cultural perception to an optic prism reflecting and decomposing light, a metaphor which refers to the interpretation of reality in a particular way. Cultural diversity, the author states, forces us to become aware and interpret, or decode, the cultural codes, a first step being that of identifying and acknowledging difference and searching for strategies to incorporate it into the inter-cultural relation (78). Another concept the book works with it is cultural permeability, somewhat of a negotiation in terms of allowing ourselves to come into contact with other worldviews.

Finally, one more concept the book employs is intercultural competence in the context of intercultural contact and experience. The book also discusses the conceptual *multicultural–intercultural–transcultural* compound and the dynamics of the relations between its three elements.

However, the acknowledged purpose of the volume is to make use of these conceptual tools in order to discuss and question the current problems of a society that, while characterised by diversity is, as quoted before, far from having solved the issues related to diversity. The author discusses this as a work in progress or a process. In terms of the practical application of this conceptual apparatus in the field of health, the volume attempts to give, if not formulas, at least elements for raising awareness in medical practitioners and of solutions for acknowledging the vulnerable spots of cultural interaction. And in order to do this, the author finds the information and awareness of certain aspects related to cultural and linguistic barriers to be essential and offers examples of research projects, studies, surveys or even separate experiences that might be useful to professionals. Just as he offered an approach to dealing with Muslim patients (to whom he has dedicated another volume), the author now focuses on the example of the Roma as patients treated in Spain, alongside the prejudice and stereotypes (extensively discussed in the volume) associated with this community, as a good example of dealing with identity and otherness.

Communication is, therefore, seen as essential, and the book also contains a section dedicated to the classification of different problems and difficulties related to linguistic and cultural communication between medical practitioners and patients. The author offers recommendations for providing both with the tools to communicate. Another form of communication discussed by the book is the non-verbal one, combined with other elements of cultural norms (such as those related to personal space or physical contact) and, last but not least, the conflicts that may arise from problematic communication on one or more of these levels.

Finally, the third, practical section contains, as anticipated above, a course support designed by the author, who describes the approach as a progressive introduction to concepts and practical activities both for individual students and groups of students. The final section, in the form of a course support for intercultural formation workshops, is placed under the sign of an "indispensable" training in what the book reiterates as a societal project: "building an intercultural society is something more complex, because we have to analyse the causes of inequality and of cultural mismatches and work towards solving them" ("construir una sociedad intercultural es algo más complejo porque tendremos que analizar las causas de desigualdades y de los desencuentros culturales y trabajar para resolverlas", 211).

The book also contains a call to action on different levels, comprising an element of activism which is apparent despite the theoretical aspects of the book. All in all, the volume attempts to be at once a tool for raising awareness and a theoretical reflection on the aspects of intercultural communication, as well as a course support for future professionals and a reference to elements of good practice, and research combined with activism and practical efforts, all contributing to the understanding of the real significance and impact of intercultural communication in today's society and professional environments.

Andrada FĂTU-TUTOVEANU

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Borbála NEMES – currently pursuing a PhD degree in linguistics at Babeș-Bolyai University in Cluj-Napoca, as well as teaching English for Specific Purposes to computer science undergraduates. Her main research areas include generative grammar and formal semantics, with a particular interest in the syntax-semantics interface and the nominal domain. The paper submitted to the current volume, although outside of the main research interests mentioned afore, was born out of a personal interest and fascination with the way(s) in which players of an online video game interact and communicate with each other in a virtual world, within the boundaries of an artificially created online/virtual community while overcoming at the same time social, cultural, linguistic and geographic distances. The main question addressed by her paper was whether and to what extent the patterns of interactions and the social rules governing the online behaviour of these players mirror those found in offline communities.

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Online and Offline Discourses. New Worlds, New Sociolinguistic Perspectives presents some new work on digital communication, online identities, multilingualism and interculturality from an interdisciplinary perspective – sociolinguistics, discourse analysis, identity studies, digital humanities and Internet linguistics. The authors are faculty members or doctoral students at the Babeș-Bolyai University and members of the *The Center of Pragmatics for Communication.* They originally presented the published essays at the *First International Conference on Sociolinguistics* (Budapest, 2016), as well as at a scientific event titled *Digital and Multimodal Self- and Other-Representations* organised by the *Center* (2017).

The four papers are connected through their approach and inform one another. They tackle such topics as *Social Media Activism and Offline Transportability. A Sociolinguistic Case Study*, from Diana Cotrău and Alexandra Cotoc; *A Sociolinguistic Analysis of Digital Social Network User Identities: The Instagram 'fitfam' Community,* from Bettina Ene; *Language Use and Communication in Online Communities Centered on Video Games,* from Borbála Nemes; and *Languaging Practices Linking Young Speakers through Discontinuities and Otherness,* from Oana Papuc. These are of great relevance for the description and understanding of a fragment of language and of discourses practiced today on *Facebook, Instagram*, in videogames, as well as in multilingual environments, which fascinate linguists and nonlinguists alike. They are language practices that challenge the traditional relation between language and culture, the traditional styles and identities, and contradict the rigors of normative philological thinking by proposing a dramatic expansion of linguistic variation and, thus, of linguistic creativity.

Online and offline language in the contemporary era has undergone radical changes in an effort to align itself to the new communication requirements. It has transgressd norms, created fluid identities and incorporated change and creativity as elements that maintain the cohesion of the ensemble.

The collection of essays will be of interest to anyone wanting to understand the specifics of online and offline communication in the digital era, the new discourses, language practices, multilingualism, languaging and identities.

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