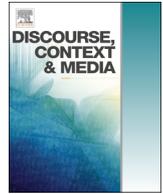




ELSEVIER

Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Discourse, Context and Media

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/dcm

Langaging when contexts collapse: Audience design in social networking

Jannis Androutsopoulos*

University of Hamburg, Institute of German Studies, Von-Melle-Park 6, D-20146 Hamburg, Germany



ARTICLE INFO

Available online 16 September 2014

Keywords:

Social networking sites
Multilingualism
Audience design
Context collapse
Language choice
Langaging

ABSTRACT

This paper examines strategies of language choice in social networking interactions among multilingual young people on Facebook. In media studies the term “context collapse” describes the process by which online social networks bring together people from various social contexts, thereby creating a diverse networked audience. In online social networks that involve participants from different countries and language communities, language choice becomes a pertinent issue. This paper draws on empirical data from social networks among young multilingual people on Facebook to examine strategies of language choice and negotiation. Drawing on the sociolinguistic framework of audience design, the sociolinguistics of multilingualism and computer-mediated discourse analysis, the analysis examines language choice in initiating and responding contributions, metapragmatic negotiations of language style and the role of English as a resource among networked writers.

© 2014 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

1. Introduction

The term “context collapse” was coined in media studies by Marwick and Boyd (2011) in a study of communication on Twitter, and is defined there as a process by which technologies of social media “collapse diverse social contexts into one” (Marwick and Boyd, 2011: 10). In context collapse, people who originate in social contexts that usually remain distinct in everyday life become part of an online social network in which they “must contend with groups of people they do not normally bring together, such as acquaintances, friends, co-workers, and family” (Marwick and Boyd, 2011: 9). This paper examines the implications of context collapse for language style, and in particular language choice, based on a study of online interactions among multilingual young people on Facebook whose online social networks collate participants from different countries and language communities.

In a nutshell, this paper is organized as follows. Section 2 outlines some basic notions in the study of social networking sites and introduces the notion of context collapse. Section 3 draws on the sociolinguistic framework of audience design (Bell, 1984), scholarship on language and superdiversity (Blommaert and Rampton, 2011) and research on computer-mediated discourse to develop a theoretical perspective on context collapse as a sociolinguistic issue. Section 4 presents the data and methods of analysis, and Sections 5–7 discuss strategies and negotiations of language style in the data. I discuss how initiating contributions can “maximize” or “partition” their audience

by means of language choice (Section 5), how responding members of the audience align or disalign with initiative language choices (Section 6), and how language style is commented upon or even resisted by members of the audience (Section 7). Throughout the analysis, the relevance of English as a resource for audience design in social networking is also examined. In concluding (Section 8), the generalizability of the findings and the implications of context collapse in social networking for our understanding of audience design in general are discussed.

2. Context collapse in online social networking

An important distinction in the study of social networking is between a social network, defined here as a set of semiotically materialized, interactive connections among human participants, and a social networking site, defined as a bounded communication system that enables the formation of social networks among registered participants and affords them various tools for representation and interaction (Boyd, 2011; Boyd and Ellison, 2007). Social networking activities are carried out on a site such as Facebook by individuals (“users”) who compile a network of connections to other users (“friends”).¹ Each registered user is owner of a social network (“ego” in network analysis parlance) and is provided by the site with two main spaces of online engagement: a profile page (“timeline”), which

¹ The quotation marks indicate that the descriptor “friend” refers to people who share a connection on Facebook. They do not imply a value judgement on the quality of this relationship.

* Tel.: +49 40 42838 7461; fax: +49 40 42838 4785.

E-mail address: jannis.androutsopoulos@uni-hamburg.de

displays ego's own activities and their "friends" responses to these, and an overview page ("newsfeed"), which displays on-going activities by all "friends" in reverse chronological order. Communicating on a social networking site comprises a range of private (dyadic) and public practices unfolding in a pace that is determined by the size of a network and the frequency of activities by its members. Besides posting their own contributions, users traverse their newsfeed, browse and comment on recent postings by their "friends", visit profile page by "friends", etc.

Unlike earlier modes of computer-mediated communication such as discussion forums or chat channels, which provide public space for communication about a shared interest or purpose, an online social network is compiled by an individual user and includes members who are personally known to ego, the network owner, though usually not exhaustively known to one another.² Whereas forums and chats tend to bring together users who do not share a previous offline connection and often remain anonymous, social networking sites "tend to give online expression to existing offline communities" (Sergeant et al., 2012: 514; see also Schmidt (2013)). Social networks on Facebook can display density, i.e. include clusters of users who also share an independent relationship to one another and whose relationship to ego shows similar traits in a certain respect, e.g. former schoolmates or professional colleagues. However, social networks can also include "friends" who only share a connection to ego but not to any other "friends" within this network. Regardless of the density of their ties, all members of a social network can be thought of as comprising a "networked audience" (Marwick and Boyd, 2011) for ego's contributions and their subsequent communicative exchanges.³ This is an "imagined audience" (Marwick and Boyd, 2011) in the sense that participants cannot be certain about which members of their audience will read and/or comment their contributions, and whether an exchange will unfold at all. However, a networked audience on Facebook consists of a limited number of members and is therefore not imagined in the same way as the large, anonymous audiences of broadcasting.

The notion of context collapse aims to capture what happens when a networked audience comprises "friends" with different socio-demographic features and types of social relationship to ego (Boyd, 2011; Marwick and Boyd, 2011). Context collapse occurs when the members of an online social network "reflect different social contexts and have different expectations as to what is appropriate" (Boyd, 2011: 30). For example, network members can differ in terms of their country of origin and residence, their education and professional affiliations, their length and degree of acquaintance to ego, their shared cultural knowledge and semiotic repertoires, etc. It seems important to emphasize that context collapse is not limited to social networking sites but operates in other public spaces of computer-mediated communication, such as discussion forums. It is not even limited to online communication but also occurs in offline settings, for example ritual events such as weddings or graduation ceremonies, which bring together different groups of people who all share a connection to the host, e.g. family members, old friends, professional colleagues, etc. (cf. Boyd, 2011: 51).⁴ However, I suggest that context collapse is particularly pertinent to social networking sites, because it results

from one of their basic design features, i.e. the formation of ego-centred, translocal networks. As Marwick and Boyd (2011: 17) point out, "In sites like Twitter and Facebook, social contexts we used to imagine as separate co-exist as parts of the network". In this sense, context collapse in social networking can be regarded as a test bed for a wider problem of human communication in general.

Social media researchers discuss the issues arising from context collapse in terms of content selection and relationship management. Marwick and Boyd (2011: 1, 10) point out that context collapse makes it "difficult for people to use the same techniques online that they do to handle multiplicity in face-to-face conversation" and "to engage in the complex negotiations needed to vary identity presentation, manage impressions, and save face". They also suggest that faced with context collapse, users "learn how to manage tensions between public and private, insider and outsider, and frontstage and backstage performances". Language use is hardly discussed in this literature. Boyd (2011: 51) brings up the examples of language choice ("bilingual speakers choose different language depending on context") and language style in general (speakers "describe events differently when talking to different audiences") to support her argument that people manage their online performances in order to suit or separate social contexts. However, no empirical analysis of language or discourse is provided in this literature.

3. Context collapse as a sociolinguistic problem

As far as multilingual settings are concerned, context collapse gives rise to a communicative situation of partially overlapping linguistic repertoires (Franziskus and Gilles, 2012), where members of a social network share some, but not all of their linguistic resources. By definition, the network owner must share at least one linguistic resource with each of their "friends", and certain clusters of "friends" within a network often share more than one linguistic resource. However, no individual can be in command of all the different languages that circulate through an international network on Facebook, and some of the communicative exchanges that flow through the network will be carried out in a language beyond their own linguistic repertoire. To illustrate this with a couple of examples from the data presented below (Section 4), Ingo can draw on German, English and Chinese to communicate with different parts of his Facebook audience, but his German "friends" do not, as a rule, understand his Chinese contributions; likewise, Dema's Greek "friends" do not understand her contributions in German. As a consequence, we need to clearly distinguish the linguistic repertoires individual users bring along to social networking from the linguistic resources that circulate through a social network. The more linguistically heterogeneous a networked audience, the more persistent the problem of addressing this audience in terms of content and linguistic form.

Given the presumable spread of online context collapse worldwide, there is a striking lack of relevant research, which the difficulties of obtaining access to social networking data presumably aggravates (but see Androutsopoulos (2013a, 2014), Lee (2011), Sharma (2012)). One of very few exceptions is the study by Sergeant et al. (2012) on language choice in Facebook interactions among a group of female Thai speakers who live or have lived in Anglophone countries. They too draw on the notion of context collapse, defined there as "the conflation of many different friendship groups into one online network" (Sergeant et al., 2012: 515), and on Bell's framework of audience design. This study discusses the complex process of addressivity in social networking, whereby initial posts are addressed to all members of the social network and subsequent comments are "generally directed

² The following analysis assumes a semi-public social network with the following settings: posts by ego are available to all their "friends", but not to "friends" of "friends". A discussion of customized settings is outside the paper's scope.

³ In practice, participants do not see all posts by their "friends", but only a selection, which is determined by their own degree of attentiveness to the activities of their "friends" and by Facebook's algorithms, which filter the displayed contributions in non-transparent ways.

⁴ I thank both reviewers for offering examples of context collapse in offline communication.

either at the initial poster or to others who have contributed to the exchange” (Seargeant et al., 2012: 514–515). The authors emphasize that while no English would be expected in the group’s offline conversational exchanges, their online talk displays “a great complexity of code-switching into English” (514). They conclude that social networking encourages “the acceptance of very diverse language choices” as participants tend to respond to initial posts rather than to a common theme, yet at the same time also shows a “tendency towards the expression of a distinct group identity” (528), with patterns of Thai-English code-switching being tailored to specific interactional contexts. The present study too examines Facebook interactions among multilingual participants, but instead of focusing on a small cluster of interconnected users, it examines data from four different social networks where English is part of larger linguistic repertoires.

This paper examines responses to context collapse in terms of language style, and more specifically language choice in multilingual settings, thereby adapting Allan Bell’s theory of language style (Bell, 1984, 1991, 2001) to the conditions of social networking. Set against earlier, notably Labovian conceptions of language style as a function of attention paid to speech, Bell’s framework posits that the audience in a particular communicative occasion is the primary factor influencing a speaker’s language style (cf. Coupland, 2007; Schilling-Estes, 2002). Even though his own empirical analysis focuses on phonological and morphological variables, Bell emphasizes that audience design manifests in all aspects of language that are stylistically relevant (that is, in which speakers can make situated choices), including language choice in settings of social multilingualism. Drawing on speech accommodation theory, Bell distinguishes responsive from initiative style. Responsive style converges to expectations by the audience (hence “audience design”), whereas initiative style diverges from audience expectations and draws instead on a language style associated with an absent third-party (a referee, hence “referee design”). Bell considers responsiveness the “basic dimension” of style, with “speakers primarily responding to their audience” (Bell, 1991: 105). By contrast, he associates initiative style with stylization and metaphorical code-switching and interprets it as an attempt to redefine the communicative situation. However, I argue in this paper that our understanding of initiative style is in need of reconceptualization to suit the conditions of social networking. Bell’s model also draws on Goffman’s (1981) reception formats to define audience roles and predicts that, other things being equal, speakers orient their language style primarily to their addressee, followed by an orientation to auditors (bystanders) and overhearers. I discuss in the next section how these reception roles can be adapted to social networking interaction. Topic is also potentially influential on language style, by virtue of the association of certain topics with certain social groups, though to a lesser degree than the audience.

I propose an adaptation of the audience design framework to social networking that departs from two assumptions. First, language style has simultaneously responsive and initiative qualities. In his original study of radio language in New Zealand, Bell (1984) theorized media language as a combination of responsive and initiative style. Since mass-media texts are tailored to an anonymous imagined audience, their design is by necessity initiative. Journalists and other media professionals take the initiative in selecting a specific language style deemed adequate to their imagined target audience, which however is not identical to the effective audience and does not provide any immediate feedback. The design of media language has responsive aspects, too, because it is guided by previous experience, informed assumptions about audience expectations, and professional norms. But the responsive dimension of media language obviously becomes prevalent in media talk, where each contribution is contextualized with regard to the interlocutor’s style. If we accept

that any instance of human communication potentially is a combination of responsive and initiative style, then it is a task for the analyst to establish how this combination plays out with respect to different modes, media and audiences in specific communicative situations. Second, social networking sites create a novel type of audience that differs from both small-scale, co-present conversational audiences and large-scale, mass-mediated ones. Online social networks of the semi-public type are limited in size, usually to a few hundred members, and consist of individuals that are personally known to ego, the network owner, though not exhaustively to each other. Networked audiences are capable to offer direct interactional feedback, possibly influencing subsequent linguistic choices of other network members. Due to context collapse, however, networked audiences diversify in terms of their linguistic repertoires. As a consequence, context collapse complicates audience design. While a user’s language style can draw on shared interactional experience derived from previous encounters on and offline, the heterogeneous composition of the network makes it impossible to orient to all of its members at the same time. I elaborate on this issue in the analysis.

To conclude this theoretical introduction, I briefly discuss my understanding of context and this study’s relation to language and superdiversity research. The sociolinguistic approach to context collapse proposed here goes beyond the rather static understanding of context that predominates the media studies literature, where “context” basically refers to the social group(s) who come together in a social network and are simultaneously addressed by a writer’s contributions. I propose to complement this with a dynamic understanding of context as an interactional accomplishment, a view firmly established in interactional sociolinguistics (Günthner, 2008). Boyd argues that “context helps people properly contextualize their performance” (Boyd, 2011: 51), meaning that social media writers select the content and form of their contributions depending on their perception of the relevant social context of their audience. From a sociolinguistic viewpoint, I argue it is more productive to assume that participants construct context interactively as they design their audience anew by means of language style in each communicative exchange. The analysis therefore focuses not on presumed expectations of appropriate language style by specific parts of the audience but on observable, interactively shifting contextualizations of audience by means of linguistic choices.

I further propose that conditions of superdiversity – a cover term for a range of social variables that interact in the diversification of society in the context of globalized migration and mobility (cf. Arnaut, 2012; Androutsopoulos and Juffermans, 2014) – aggravate context collapse. The Facebook users examined in this study are young people who are well familiar with transnational ties and trajectories in their families, due to their parents’ migration, and their own lives. They have friends in the countries of their parents’ origin and move themselves between countries and linguistic communities. The transnational structure of their social ties is reflected in the composition of their social networks on Facebook and shapes their online interactions even more than offline ones, which evolve around school and leisure activities in their city of residence, Hamburg. As the analysis will show, the linguistic resources that circulate through the social networks under study exceed the linguistic repertoires of individual participants, giving rise to linguistic choices that “maximize” or “partition” the audience for each new exchange (Section 5), to negotiations of and even resistance to others’ linguistic choices (Sections 6 and 7). A second consequence of context collapse in social networking is the open-ended character of communicative encounters. The base language of networked interaction is in principle open to perpetual negotiation throughout an exchange. Context collapse therefore leads to a destabilization of language

style and a proliferation of metalinguistic negotiations among participants. It thus increases the unpredictability of language choices, which characterizes interaction in late-modern, super-diverse settings in general (Blommaert and Rampton, 2011).

4. Research context

The findings presented in this paper are part of a larger research project on language practices in social networking, which draws on data collected from 2010 to 2012 among multilingual young people in the German city of Hamburg (Androutsopoulos, 2013a, 2014; Androutsopoulos et al., 2013). This research is informed by sociolinguistic scholarship on computer-mediated discourse and social multilingualism such as polylingual languaging, translanguaging, and networked languaging (Jørgensen et al., 2011; Li, 2011; Androutsopoulos, 2013a). I approach networked language practices as neither determined by communications technologies nor by participants' face-to-face conversational usage, but as constrained in three main ways: First, they are written language practices which rely on the digital materialization of linguistic signs as their main resource for meaning-making. Second, they emerge in a space of semiotic resources, which participants engage with and draw on in the fabrication of their own contributions. Third, they orient to a networked audience that actively participates in the negotiation of meaning in online interaction, the latter point being the focus of this paper.

The data analyzed in this research originates in two small groups of secondary school students who were either born in Germany to migrant parents or migrated there themselves in an early age. The first consists of four female and three male participants of Greek background, aged 17–19, who were recruited in a local community school. The second comprises six male and two female participants of Taiwanese background, aged 13–18, who were recruited through personal contact to their families.⁵ Data collection follows an ethnographically informed, mixed-methods approach (Androutsopoulos, 2013b). The primary data consists of screen data and is complemented by systematic observation of participants' Facebook activities, diaries of digital media use and semi-structured individual or group interviews. The screen data includes each user's public profile page on Facebook over a period of two years (private dyadic exchanges via Facebook messenger or chat are not included). This data was collected independently for each individual, resulting in the elicitation of $N=15$ different social networks. The analysis focuses on contributions by the respective owner, but inevitably takes into account contributions by other participants for whom ethnographic information is sometimes available. The combination of screen and user data is important for building up interpretive context with respect to the participants' own perspective on their audiences, their linguistic repertoires and the indexical values of the linguistic resources they deploy in their networked language practices.

For the purpose of this paper, the analysis focuses on data from two participants from each group. They were selected for various reasons: regular participation and therefore rich screen data, good interview data (for all except Dema) and transnational mobility during fieldwork, especially for the Greek background users (cf. Androutsopoulos, 2014). They are briefly presented as follows:

- Dema: female, aged 17 during fieldwork, born and raised in Greece; moved from Greece to Hamburg in 2009 and visited a Greek community school there; the analysis draws on data for the entire year 2011.
- Zach: male, 19, born and raised in Hamburg to a Greek-background family; visited the same Greek community school as Dema and is fluent in both languages, though with better written skills in German; relocated for three months to Greece during fieldwork; his data are from the entire year 2011.
- Ingo: male, 15, born and raised in Hamburg to Taiwanese parents; visits a German secondary school; speaks fluent Chinese but has difficulties in writing and reading it, and understands Taiwanese but cannot speak or write it; his data are from May 2011 to April 2012.
- Ju: male, 16, born and raised in Hamburg to a German-Taiwanese family; visits a German secondary school; speaks good Chinese but writes it rarely (and with the help of Google Translate), and writes in English to his friends and cousins from Taiwan; his data are data from August 2011 to July 2012.

Previous analyses of this data (cf. Androutsopoulos, 2013a, 2014; Androutsopoulos et al., 2013) suggests that speakers from both groups regularly draw on a linguistic repertoire which involves the majority language (German), the respective heritage language (Greek and Chinese), and English, which is not an L1 for any of them. The share of these resources varies considerably across and within groups, correlating with individual sociolinguistic biographies and the participation roles afforded by the social networking site (more on this below). We also found that most contributions to Facebook exchanges draw on features from just one language, and that some contributions defy straightforward classification to one particular language because they only consist of semiotic material such as emoticons, laughter expressions, and non-lexicalized written expressions. I return to some of these points in the analysis below. In addition, this paper also draws on a few anecdotal examples from my personal Facebook archive, which support the paper's theoretical aims.

My analysis brings together Bell's distinction between initiative and responsive design (cf. Section 3) and the two participation roles that social networking on Facebook affords, i.e. initiating and responding contributions. Initiating contributions, usually called "status updates", are posts that start off a new communicative event (or "wall event", a term proposed in Androutsopoulos (2013a) on a Facebook timeline; they can include linguistic, pictorial or multimedia content such as photos, embedded videos, location tags etc. Responding contributions are placed by "friends" and/or the initiator in the comment field which follows up on a status update. They too can include embedded pictorial, graphic or multimedia content. I adopt Bell's differentiation of audience roles (based on Goffman's (1981) participation formats), thereby assuming that the main influence on a speaker's audience design is the addressee. In the Facebook data, addressees are those members of the networked audience who are directly addressed in a contribution by means of grammatical deixis, proper names or other lexis. I define bystanders as those members of the networked audience who are actively engaged in a particular wall exchange, on the assumption that by having already contributed, they remain interested in, and relevant for, the further course of this exchange; indeed, Facebook's default setting is to notify users when others contribute to an event they have already contributed to. Finally, the entire social network constitutes an overhearing audience.⁶ The relevance of these reception roles for audience design in social networking is not

⁵ For the sake of simplicity, I refer below to data by Greek and Taiwanese-background students, respectively. Fieldwork with the Greek-background students was carried out by Joanna Kouzina and with the Taiwanese-background ones by Ying-Fen Hsieh. Our ethics policy includes the elicitation of informed consent from informants, parents and (where applicable) local educational authorities as well as the anonymization of all personal information (see discussion in Androutsopoulos et al. (2013)).

⁶ This framework is used in the study of media talk, where mass-media interactions are viewed as tailored to an overhearing audience (cf. Hutchby, 2006). The role of eavesdropper is not discussed here, because I assume that online social networks are limited to personally ratified members and are not accessible to "friends" of "friends".

determined by the site itself or the social contexts that make up the audience, but depends on the interactive unfolding of each new wall event.

The analysis assumes that initiating contributions are in principle initiative in style, because the writer must make a choice in terms of language style, thereby designing the audience of this contribution. However, initiating contributions can show a lesser or higher degree of stylistic responsiveness, for example by using the same language style as in previous contributions with a similar topic, thereby anticipating interactively established expectations by parts of their audience. Unlike large-scale broadcast audiences, semi-public networked audiences enable a higher degree of personalized orientation in style. Nonetheless, what makes initiating contributions initiative in terms of style is the fact that they inevitably set a choice, which contextualizes the further exchange. The analysis below (Section 5) examines initiating contributions in terms of whether their language style indexes an attempt to “maximize” or “partition” the audience. For the analysis of responding contributions I operationalize audience design in terms of orientation to the linguistic choices of interactionally relevant preceding posts. Responders already have a local point of reference against which to design their own style. Depending on the order of a comment in the sequential structure of a wall event, this reference point can be either the initiating post or the immediately preceding post or even another previous contribution that is made interactionally relevant by a responder (cf. Bou-Franch et al., 2012). The language style of a responding contribution, including its choice of language(s), is classified as responsive when it aligns with the style of its interactionally relevant point of reference, and initiative when it diverges from it. This is consonant with speech accommodation theory and the analysis of conversational alignment, by which the uptake of the interlocutor’s linguistic choices signals acceptance of these choices and by extension the interlocutor’s stance towards the propositional content of their utterance, whereas a non-uptake indexes lack of alignment with the interlocutor or an attempt to negotiate their language choice.⁷ With regard to multilingual exchanges, my analysis draws also on Auer’s (1995) framework for the study of bilingual interaction, which positions code-switching as a strategy of negotiation of language of interaction (see also Androutsopoulos (2013c)). In Facebook interactions, this negotiation is in principle not concluded until an exchange has eventually come to an end, which may be very soon in some cases but can last considerably longer in others. For practical reasons, my analysis focuses on the first response to an initiative post and examines the further sequential development of a Facebook event only marginally (Section 6).

It is worth emphasizing here that the analysis that follows draws intensively on ethnographic knowledge about the participants, which allows the analyst to compare their language choices on Facebook to the choices that would be expected in offline interactions (cf. also Seargeant et al. (2012)). Consider this example from my personal data archive: A Greek male speaker who lives in Germany posts a status update – a kind of “I learned my lesson” statement – in English. A German acquaintance of his from the same city responds, also in English. There follow two more adjacency pairs between the two users, entirely in English. In the sixth and last turn of this exchange, the initiator offers a “good night” sort of conclusion, this time phrased in German. The ethnographically established fact that face-to-face conversation between these two users is by default carried out in German sets a bottom line of interpretation with regard to how they, and other members of their social network, deploy English in social networking. Lack of this knowledge could lead to entirely different

conclusions on the relation between off and online language choices in social networking.

5. Designing the audience: initiating contributions

Marwick and Boyd (2011: 9) suggest that “large audiences for sites like Facebook or MySpace may create a lowest-common denominator effect, as individuals only post things they believe their broadest group of acquaintances will find non-offensive”. A linguistic analogy to this common denominator effect is to style an initiating contribution in a way that makes it accessible to as many members of a user’s network as possible. The outcome of this solution is to “maximize the audience” for a given contribution. Three techniques of maximizing the audience in initiating contributions are distinguished: choice of a common-denominator language; replication of a given propositional content in two or more languages; and refraining from linguistic resources altogether.

In theory, any linguistic choice that is available, from the writer’s viewpoint, to as large a share of their social network as possible can serve as lowest-common denominator. In practice, the *lingua franca* of choice in the available data is English, more specifically English deployed by Facebook users whose L1 is other than English. All four users examined here have international Facebook “friends”, including L1 English speakers. Even though it is impossible to verify empirically that English is available to all members of these networks, there is no evidence to the contrary in the data. Participants may resist the use of English as a strategy to maximize the audience (see Section 7), but nothing indicates that English is not deemed generally available. All four users draw on English for initiating contributions, though it is not their most frequent choice.⁸ Their contributions in English are usually short, formulaic and intertextually saturated (Androutsopoulos, 2013a; Androutsopoulos et al., 2013; see also Sharma (2012) and Seargeant et al. (2012)). Nothing indicates that initiating posts that draw on English are generally directed to international parts of the networked audiences. Rather, the topics phrased in English can be of very “local” interest, and those who respond often come from the writer’s local speech community and style their response in the linguistic choice of their local conversational exchanges, i.e. German. Consider Examples 1 and 2, from the Greek–German and the Taiwanese–German data set, respectively, both of which refer to weather conditions in the same winter.

Example (1) Zach’s wall, December 2010⁹

1.	Zach	16.48	IT’S SO COLD!
2.	F1	16.49	hä, findest du? <i>ah, do you think so?</i>

Example (2) Ingo’s wall, December 2010

1.	Ingo	n/a	Tones of snow in Hamburg!!!! I think it’s enough but if we get school off?!..... keep snowing!☺
2.	F1	16:19	Das ware ein bisschen toll :) Wann und wo wird das eig bestimmt? <i>That would be quite cool :) When and where is it being decided?</i>

⁸ The amount of contributions that draw on English, either exclusively or in combination with resources from other languages, varies by user and participation role. For initiating posts, it ranges from 34% (Zach) to 5% (Dema), for responding posts from 28.5% (Dema) to 12% (Ingo) (Androutsopoulos et al., 2013).

⁹ Conventions of representation: the examples are truncated to the relevant parts; time-stamps are maintained; names of informants are pseudonyms, those of “friends” fully anonymized; contextual information is provided as necessary. My English translations (in italics) primarily convey propositional content and do not attempt to replicate all semiotic details of the original.

⁷ For an application of these distinctions to the analysis of e-mail data see Georgakopoulou (1997), for scripted TV series dialogs see Babel (2011).

Example (1) continues with six more responding posts, including two by the initiator himself, and extends until the evening of the next day. All responses come from the initiator's local peer group and are in German. Example (2), also in German, includes three more responding posts by the same interlocutors who happen to be classmates. In these and other similar cases, English is selected for initiating contributions that effectively speak to a very “local” Facebook audience, and their contributions revert the initial choice to a language style that indexes a part of the audience that entertains frequent offline interaction. This pattern of “localizing the audience” is further discussed in Section 6.

A second strategy for maximizing the audience is to replicate the propositional content that is to be conveyed in more than one language. The outcome is a post that features a sequence of usually short, semantically equivalent clauses in two, sometimes more languages. This strategy is often pursued on an ad-hoc basis for posts with ritual character, such as good wishes or thanksgivings. A typical case is with birthday wishes: A long list of wishes in different languages can accumulate on ego's wall on their birthday, and ego's expression of thanks is sometimes phrased in several languages too. Doing so instead of just writing in English seems motivated by positive politeness in the sense that addressing as many segments of the networked audience in their “own” language is a semiotic effort by which addressees are symbolically individuated and thereby honored by the poster (on positive politeness in computer-mediated communication, see Planchenault (2010)). This strategy can be regularized for a certain period of time, its pragmatic scope of application thereby extended to a broader range of speech acts and its frequency increased. An example in the data is Zach who relocated to Greece to do his compulsory military service during fieldwork. During this time he draws on this replication strategy for his diary-style updates (cf. Androutsopoulos, 2014). A sample is given in (3).

Example (3) Zach's wall, October and November 2011

- (3.1) 27 & σήμερα! Η ημέρες περνάνε και μένουν η στιγμής. / 27 & heute! Die tage vergehen & es bleiben die erinnerungen. 27 to go! Days go by, memories remain.
- (3.2) Ο σκοπευτής έτοιμος, ακουστικά, μουσικόλα κ πάμε.. / Der scharfschütze ist fertig, kopfhörer auf, musik an & los gehts..!! The gunman is ready, earphones, music on and let's go!
- (3.3) Mögen die prüfungen beginnen.. / Ας αρχίσει η εξέταση..!! Let the examinations begin!

Zach is not systematic as to the order of languages in these posts, nor is he normatively correct in both of them, especially in Greek. However, he is quite aware of his style strategies for different segments of his audience and views these dual-language updates as outcome of his wish to include “Greeks from Greece” whom he describes as “my family or friends who do not speak German and cannot understand German status updates” (interview excerpt, November 2012). An additional motivation may have his own aim to better his Greek while in Greece, which he achieved not the least by writing on Facebook (cf. Androutsopoulos et al., 2013; Androutsopoulos, 2014).

The complement to maximizing is “partitioning the audience”. Any initiating contribution that cannot be assumed to be accessible to as many audience members as possible can be viewed as limiting the audience to those who are competent in the selected language(s). In the present data, the participants partition their networked audiences by choosing either German or Greek or Chinese or combinations of these. Each option selects a different, differently large and subjectively important, part of their audience. For example, Dema tends to select German for updates about her everyday routines in her new social environment in Hamburg, and Greek for updates directed to female best friends in Greece or

Hamburg (Androutsopoulos, 2014). Further analysis on audience partitioning could examine how often each partial audience is selected, its responsiveness (i.e. whether a networked interaction is continued on the same style choice), the topical correlates of these choices and their relation to participants' mobility and life trajectories. For example, we see in this data that bilingual Greek–German exchanges are only carried out among young users of Greek background in Hamburg, and that the very few instances of Chinese by the Taiwanese-background students are limited to exchanges with their relatives or acquaintances from Taiwan (cf. Androutsopoulos et al., 2013). Audience partitioning also draws on addressee selection. Besides directly addressing a “friend” (see Examples 4, 7, 8), Facebook enables networked writers to tag the profile names of “friends” in a contribution (Example 11), thereby alerting them to their being addressed. Partitioning thus operates at both addressee and overhearer level, i.e. by tailoring language style to a particular addressee who is contextualized as such or by tailoring language style to a specific segment of the network. (The option of switching to private mode is not considered here as the available data is limited to the public profile pages.)

In the larger context of regular Facebook engagement, participants in context collapse develop regularities of maximizing or partitioning their audiences. Some writers orient the bulk of their initiating posts to a specific partial audience, while others alternate between distinct partial audiences. Besides language style, the targeted slice of audience can be indexed by contextualization cues such as terms of address, non-dialogic reference or types of content that are by implication relevant to a specific subpart of the audience. For example, some of Zach's status updates during his three-month military service refer to members of his local peer-group in his native Hamburg and are cast in German: *wichtige leute* “important people” (dated 28 August), *freunde, familie & der rest* “friends, family and the rest” (20 September).

Initiating contributions of a third type do not index a preferred audience with linguistic means. Some simply refrain from using any linguistic signs, for example by just posting a photograph or using signs which are analytically not assignable to any particular language, such as emoticons, punctuation marks (e.g. “!!!”) or graphic signs (e.g. “♥”). This defers the selection of a base language of interaction to the first responding contribution, and the choice can be deferred even further in case the first response follows the same styling strategy. Example 4 shows an exchange initiated by a “friend” on Dema's wall. The initiating and first responding contribution just consist of heart signs, before the initiator eventually draws on Greek in turn 3, thereby setting a base language for subsequent interaction.

Example (4) Dema's wall, October 2011

1	F1	21:37	♥♥♥
2	Dema	21:37	♥♥
3	F1	21:38	ante tsakisou kai ella edo well get over here
4	Dema	21:40	tha erthw tha erthw...:) I'll come I'll come
5	F1	00:36	ante ela well come then

A second type of initiating posts that do not specify their audience involves embedded content that comes with its own linguistic signs, examples including photographs with embedded captions, videos that feature speech in song or other genres, or geo-location tags which deploy the profile owner's preferred language as determined in their Facebook settings. While these linguistic means are not produced by the initiator of the post but come as part of the embedded content, they intermingle with the user's own linguistic resources in various ways. For example, embedded

video clips can be clicked open and played while the observer continues browsing through a timeline or newsfeed. Furthermore, the initiating contribution can revoice some linguistic elements of the embedded content, giving rise to a dialog between network resources and networked languages (Androutsopoulos, 2013a), which, however, is not forcibly followed by responding members of the audience. Examples (5) and (6), both from the Greek–German data set, are initiated by a user who posts a music video clip and adds a caption of their own that repeats or modifies the embedded song's title. Example (5) is reproduced here in full, whereas (6) includes three more posts by the same interlocutors in the Greek language, in a total timespan of seven minutes.

Example (5) Zach's wall, February 2010

- | | | |
|---|-------------|---|
| 1 | Video title | T-Pain feat. Ne-Yo – Turn All the Lights ON |
| | Zach n/a | Gib ihm & δώσε, Turn all the lights on!!
[German] Give him & [Greek] give it, Turn all the lights on!! |
| 2 | F1 | 21:44 Hast du dich vom We noch nicht erholt mit party machen ☺
Haven't you yet recovered from partying over the weekend? |
| 3 | Zach | 22:35 Du kennst mich, bei mir heißt es non-stop all night long ☺
You know me, with me it's like non-stop all night long |

Example (6) Dema's wall, December 2010

- | | | |
|---|-------------|--|
| 1 | Video title | Like A G6 – Far East Movement |
| | Dema | 20.34 now I'm feeling so fly like a g6!!!! |
| 2 | F1 | 20.38 diko m einai auto -.- pfff
that's mine -.- pfff |

Both exchanges have in common not just the revoicing of the videoclip title in the initiating post, but also the way responders recontextualize this input as a resource to negotiate local relationships. In Example (6) all responders fantasize about dancing on this particular song in their next nightclub visit. In Example (5) the initiating post draws on features of three languages with the song title being preceded by two chunks, in German (*Gib ihm*) and Greek (*δώσε*), both of which represent the kind of boosting cry a crowd would shout to a DJ in a club. The response by a male “friend” comments on Zach's eagerness to party and does so in German, a language these interlocutors share offline. Zach's response in turn 3 sticks to this choice and continues with an English chunk (*non-stop all night long*), which is inserted as an intrasentential switch (it is grammatically equivalent to a non-finite verbal phrase in German). While this inserted chunk does not reclaim the language of interaction, as it is unlikely that a face-to-face exchange between the two would draw on English as a base language, it indexically links Zach's self-referential comment to discourses about dance music and clubbing lifestyle, thereby reacting to the potential face threat that the question in turn 2 represents. It can therefore be viewed as an instance of initiative style choice.

6. Audience responses: responsive and initiative design

I now examine language choice in responding contributions, focusing on the first responding comment. As mentioned in Section 4, what counts as responsive style in social networking interaction does not forcibly mirror conversational style by the same participants. For example, an initiating choice of English that is sustained over several responding posts by participants who converse offline in German or Greek is just as responsive in terms

of audience design as an exchange that is carried out entirely in a language style that participants would prefer in offline conversation too. Responsiveness in social networking does not presuppose conversational authenticity. What is decisive is a user's orientation to the style choice of an interactionally relevant antecedent. Examples (7) and (8) are two cases of responsive first comments from the Greek-background data.

Example (7) Dema's wall, October 2011

- | | | | |
|---|------|-------|---|
| 1 | F1 | 6:13 | pou eisai skatiara?? ♥
Where are you, little bugger? |
| 2 | Dema | 9.19 | germania eimai esu p eisai?? ♥
I'm in Germany, where are you? |
| 3 | F1 | 19.25 | elladaaa :D! xwrio eimai baby! Pote erxesai? Greece! I'm in the village baby! When are you coming? |
| 4 | Dema | 19.35 | dn xerw akoma...tha deixei...esu t nea apo ellada??
I don't know yet... We'll see... What's your news in Greece? |

Example (7) is initiated on Dema's wall by a female “friend” who lives in Greece. Carried out in Greek (the item *baby* in turn 3 can be treated as conventionalized loanword), this exchange features two more posts by the same interlocutors and is completed on the same evening. Its topic is the transnational distance between the two friends, but their language style and aspects of propositional content converge in indexing intimacy and shared experience. Note to this effect the friend's reference in turn 3 to “the village” where they both grew up; the playfully rude term of address in the initiating turn; and the uptake of the turn-final paralinguistic cues, <?? ♥>, in the first responding comment. This is a good example of translocal responsive style. The exchange in (8) is an example for bilingual responsive style. A “friend” congratulates Zach on his birthday, and he responds.

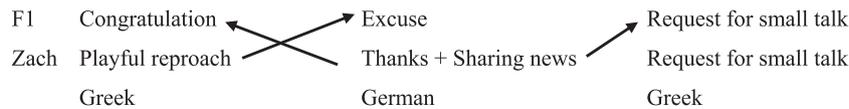
Example (8) Zach's wall, October 2011

- | | | | |
|---|------|-------|---|
| 1 | F1 | n/a | Xroniaaa pollaaaaaa mitzooooo haha spät aber noch zu retten :D pos pai mikree
[Greek] Happy birthday Zach haha [German] late but still managed
:D [Greek] how are you boy? |
| 2 | Zach | 02:20 | Hahaha ti mou ta fernis mpagiatika.. danke danke, alles bestens schiebe gerade wache, werde in 40 min. abgelöst & dann für 3½ std. schlafen :D schichten schichten schichten..sind aber nur noch 32 tage
:P ti leei se sena?
[Greek] Hahaha you are bringing these out of date.. [German] thanks
thanks, all is well I'm on guard duty right now, will be replaced in 40 mins and then sleep for 3½ hours :D shifts shifts shifts... but it's still only 32 days :P [Greek] how about you? |

Both contributions share the same order of languages, creating sequential alignment; but the adjacency pairs that are collated in the contributions contrast in terms of language choice. More specifically, the initiating post consists of three acts, which are separated by a laughter expression and an emoticon. These are a birthday wish, phrased in Greek and expressively contextualized with grapheme iterations; an excuse for coming late with the good wish, which is phrased in German; and a request for small talk, again phrased in Greek. In an interactional approach to code-

switching (Auer, 1995; Androutsopoulos, 2013c), this is a clear case of discourse-functional code-switching, by which the distinct speech acts that comprise the message are set apart. In his turn Zach maintains the order of languages but responds to the first two moves of the initiating post with the respectively other language. He counters the initial excuse with a playful reproach phrased in Greek (its playfulness indexed by the initial laughter expression), then tells his news in German and concludes by echoing the initiator's request for small talk, phrased in a different Greek expression. Zach's response is thus responsive in terms of the selected languages and their sequential order, but initiative at the level of adjacency pairs. This is a schematic representation of the two contributions:

In the interview we conducted as part of the fieldwork, Zach describes this bilingual style as “spontaneous” and points out, “it



comes automatically as if it were a language in its own”, and “it's a habit, it's normal among bilinguals”. This supports the interpretation that the responsive addressee design in this example is grounded on (and perhaps performatively stylizes) everyday interaction in the local bilingual peer group. The Greek-background data includes many similar instances of code-switching among peers, which never raise any metalinguistic comment or protest (cf. Androutsopoulos, 2013a)

Besides such uptake of offline language practices, code-switching in social networking is also a resource to index the other-language-ness of offline settings, i.e. to highlight the very difference between audience design on and offline. Consider the following example from my personal archive, an exchange between two L1 German speakers. The initiating contribution shares a photograph that is location-tagged with the name of a German railway station. Its caption comes in English and reads: *early morning sunset* [sic], the point being that the depicted sunrise actually looks more like sunset. The single response to this reads: *Great, sunrise at my heimatstadt* ☺. Here the responder takes up the initiating choice of English and adds a local linguistic hint with his choice of the German word for “hometown”, *heimatstadt*. He could respond entirely in English or German, the latter being the shared conversational language between these two users. However, choosing German and thus contesting the base language of interaction could perhaps be understood as not aligning with the initiating contribution or its writer at some level of socio-pragmatic meaning-making. With this bilingual solution, the responder maintains the base language of online exchange and at the same time indexes the default language of offline interaction.

Several examples so far (cf. Examples 1, 2, 5, 6) suggest that initiative style in the first responding comment is fairly common in this data. The direction of shift is in principle open. In the most frequent case, an initiating post in English is followed by a responding post in German, the language initiator and responder jointly prefer for offline conversation. In the following Example (10), Dema's initiating post in German is followed almost immediately by a response in Greek.

Example (9) Dema's wall, April 2011

1. Dema 12:05 ich bin in der schule :D
[GER] I'm at school'

2. F1 12:05 ema8a oi erxesai ellada...pote me to kalo?
[GRE] I heard you're coming to Greece, when about?'

Contextualized within Dema's sociolinguistic biography, this exchange occurs as she progressively familiarizes herself with Germany and the German language, which she increasingly adopts as her own voice for status updates (Androutsopoulos, 2014). Here Dema is located in Hamburg and the responder is a female “friend” from Greece. The exchange continues for five more contributions by these two and one more interlocutor, all cast in Greek except for a formulaic phrase in English. The switch to Greek in turn 2 constitutes initiative design and coincides to this effect with a topical shift and a shift in personal deixis (from the initiator's ego-centred statement to the responder's dialogic question) as well as local deixis (note the verb phrase, “coming to Greece”). We see

here how initiative style establishes a new situational frame: The choice of Greek is not just a repertoire necessity due to the fact that the responder does not speak German, but contextualizes the exchange anew by claiming a social relationship and space which differ from those indexed by the initial post.

Another instance of initiative style in the first responding contribution is Example (10) from the Taiwanese–German data. It occurs on Ingo's wall when a “friend” from Taiwan congratulates him on his birthday.

Example (10) Ingo's wall, February 2012

- 1 F1 n/a Hey Ingo, Alles Gute zum Geburtstag~!! Have a blast~! :)
Hey Ingo, [German] happy birthday !! [English]
Have a blast!
- 2 Ingo 18:09 hihhi 我明天才生日,可是你在臺灣吧 时見跑的比这里快
时見跑的比这里快 謝謝 \widehat{\widehat} Und ja ich werd schön feiern xD
Hihhi [Chinese] my birthday is tomorrow but you are in Taiwan, right\widehat{\widehat} the hour there is ahead :D Thanks\widehat{\widehat}
[German] And yes, I'll surely celebrate xD

F1 phrases the wish in German and extends it in English. Background knowledge suggests that F1's usual conversational choice with Ingo would be Chinese in spoken, English in written discourse. F1 seems to be crossing here into the addressee's L1 in what can, once again, be regarded as a gesture of positive politeness. Ingo returns the gesture by phrasing his thanks and a clarification on time zone in Chinese, which is not his strongest language. He then moves into German to respond to the second part of the initiating post, which was in English. While this exchange resembles the previous Example (9) in that the first response departs from the initial language choice, it differs in that the divergence is only partial, with both interlocutors drawing on German and reciprocally using their interlocutor's preferred conversational language.

As responding comments unfold in a social networking exchange, language choice remains open to perpetual negotiation. An interactively achieved agreement on language style may tilt if a

subsequent contribution diverges from it, and such shift can index varying degrees of pragmatic contrast between the turns. Example (11) shows a switch from Greek to German in an exchange initiated by Dema who cheerfully announces her return to Hamburg. Her initiating post tags her three best friends from the city's Greek–German community, all of whom participate in this exchange. The first two responses come in Greek, the remaining three in German (the last one is left out for reasons of space). F2 contributes twice, first in Greek following up on the first couple of contributions, then in German, taking up the initiative style choice by F3 in line 4.

Example (11) Dema's wall, September 2011

- | | | | |
|----|-------|-------|---|
| 1. | 16:08 | Dema | sas erxomaiiii seee 3 merouless agapouless mouuu ♥♥
<i>coming to you in 3 days my dearest ones!</i> |
| 2. | F1 | 16:10 | Se perimenoooo kouklaa mm!!!!!!!
<i>Waiting for you my beauty!</i> |
| 3. | F2 | 16:22 | Uch epitelous kardia m ♥
<i>Oh at last love</i> |
| 4. | F3 | 20:57 | Ich hol schon mal den Sekt
<i>I'll fetch the sparkling</i> |
| 5. | F2 | 21:06 | Also ich bin eher für vodka aber sekt geht auch :D
<i>Well I'd rather have vodka but sparkling is still okay</i> |

In sequential terms, the switch to German in line 4 is an instance of initiative style and the subsequent uptake of German in line 5 constitutes responsive style. Compared to Example (9) above, this switch redefines the communicative situation in a more subtle way. Since both Greek and German are equally likely and legitimate choices in this social context, this instance of initiative style lacks the heteroglossic contrast that shapes other cases of responsive divergence, e.g. Examples (9) and (13). Note, however, that F3 elaborates the topic of the exchange by alluding to a scenario of celebration. Moreover, while the turns in Greek address the initiator with expressive terms of endearment and paralinguistic cues of emotional engagement, F3's contribution is phrased in the first person and devoid of emotional cues. The subsequent post (line 5) aligns to F3 not just at the level of language choice but also in these more subtle aspects of linguistic styling as well as in topical coherence. As this example indicates, the negotiation of language style in the unfolding of Facebook events becomes increasingly complex, idiosyncratic, and difficult to typify. An emerging pattern in my data is this: An initiating contribution attracts a number of responses cast in different languages, the writers thereby knowing that the initiator is able to maintain conversation in the respective language. The initiator eventually participates in the exchange by collating multiple responsive moves into a single, multi-addressed and multilingual contribution, which accommodates each preceding responder in their own language choice.

7. Negotiating audience design

Given that context collapse in multilingual social networks confronts participants with a range of linguistic resources beyond their own repertoire, one could have expected a high degree of metapragmatic activity; surprisingly, perhaps, this is not the case. The young writers in my data seem to tacitly accept that some interactions that involve multilingual members from their social network are cast in a language they themselves do not understand. The data contains only a few instances of explicit metapragmatic negotiation, usually referring to language choice by the initiator of a wall exchange. These instances vary in the sequential position in

which they occur and the stances they express towards language style. The following examples illustrate three different cases.

In the first case, lack of comprehension is mentioned but tacitly accepted. A member of the networked audience thematizes their failure to understand (a part of) the preceding exchange, though without requesting from the initiator to converge to the responder's preferred language. In Example (12) Dema posts in German a status update on her current location, and the first couple of responses come in Greek. Male "friend" F1 who belongs to Dema's local peer group in Hamburg requests follow-up communication, and her female "friend" F2 from Greece thematizes her failure to understand the initial post with the exception of the iconic sign.¹⁰

Example (12) Dema's wall, January 2011

- | | | | |
|----|------|-------|--|
| 1. | Dema | 10:59 | Ich bin bei Mir zu Hause mit meinem schatzz ♥
[German] <i>I'm at home with my darling ♥</i> |
| 2. | F1 | 11:38 | ey parte me telefono sto kinito
[Greek] <i>hey call me on the mobile</i> |
| 3. | F2 | 13:57 | ???? Από όλο αυτό μόνο την καρδιά κατάλαβα!
[Greek] <i>?? From all this, I just got the little heart!</i> |

In a similar example from Ju's wall in the Taiwanese–German data (dated July 2011), Ju's Facebook name is tagged in the announcement, in Chinese language, of an event located in Taiwan. There follows a thread of approximately 30 responses, all in Chinese. The last post is by a German "friend" from Ju's peer group in Hamburg, saying in German:....*wenn ich bloss das lesen könnte....*))) ("if I only could read all this").

A second type of metapragmatic negotiation is an explicit request for convergence into the responder's preferred language. Consider Example (13) from the Taiwanese–German data.

Example (13) Ju's wall, September 2010¹¹

- | | | | |
|-----|--------|----|---|
| 1. | n/a | Ju | Kommt gerade aus dem Kino zurück & findet AVATAR einch nur geil!!!
<i>Is just back from the movies and thinks Avatar's just great!</i> |
| 2. | 07:25 | F1 | now what is this in English |
| 3. | 08:38 | Ju | just came back from the movie theater & AVATAR is just awesome!!! |
| 4. | 22:14 | F1 | oh nice! |
| 5. | +20:32 | F2 | Ich nicht Avatar ist voll gammlig!!!
<i>Not me, Avatar is just awkward!</i> |
| 6. | 21:36 | Ju | shut up and write stupid things about you :) |
| 7. | 21:52 | F2 | Redest Du mit mir?
<i>Are you talking to me?</i> |
| 8. | 21:52 | F2 | :D |
| 9. | +08:23 | Ju | jup |
| 10. | 14:43 | F2 | Mir kannst auch ruhig deutsch schreiben
<i>You can also write German to me</i> |

This is a rare instance of two separate negotiations of language choice in one Facebook event. Ju's initial contribution constructs its audience as German-speaking. The first response requests a translation in English (line 2), which the initiator is quick to provide (line 3), with the requesting "friend" ratifying Ju's

¹⁰ Regarding the responders' choice of script, F1 uses a vernacular Latinized form of Greek that is very common on the Internet among young members of the Greek–German community, whereas F2 uses the Greek script, which tends to be the norm for public digital language in Greece.

¹¹ This exchange unfolds over three days. A cross before the timestamp indicates that this response comes on the following day.

compliance on the same evening (line 4). So far, the exchange features a negotiation of language choice that leads to a new language of interaction. Post 5 is by a local “friend” (a schoolmate of Ju’s) who reopens the exchange in the evening of the next day. He engages with Ju’s initiating statement on the film and circumvents the intermediate exchange in lines 2–4, as indicated by this post’s elliptical syntax that indexes its intended cohesion to the initiating post (the initial clause, *Ich nicht*, has a verbal complement in the initial post’s *findet*). At the level of language style, this is an attempt to re-localize its language of the exchange from English back to German. In line 6 the initiator responds with a rather face-threatening request, which is only hedged by a turn-final emoticon, and reverts the language of interaction back to English. In his reply (line 7) F2 sticks to German and requests a clarification on the addressee of Ju’s request, then adds an emoticon (line 8) which matches the turn-final smiley of the previous turn. Ju’s reply (line 9) ratifies the addressivity of his previous post with a single-word utterance that seems to hesitate to position itself in terms of language choice: his *Jup* looks like a Germanized spelling of the affirmative particle that is usually spelt *yup* in English. It could be interpreted as a bivalent linguistic form (Woolard, 1999) that is deployed strategically in order to keep the on-going negotiation of language choice open. In the final post (line 10), F2 repeats his wish to be addressed in German, the language he shares with Ju in offline conversation. This exchange clearly illustrates how language choice becomes a power resource in social networking. Ju’s readiness to respond to a linguistic choice requested by a trans-local “friend” is in stark contrast with his refusal to return to German towards an interlocutor from his local peer-group.

A third type of metapragmatic negotiation is explicit resistance to language style. I illustrate this with an example from my personal archive. The initiator, a male native speaker of German in his 30s, posts a video clip of electronic dance music and adds the following caption: *Can't get tired of this shit*. This is cast in a vernacular style of English that can be understood as indexing some sort of affiliation to music and club culture. Just one minute later a “friend”, apparently a relative to the initiator, comments in German: *Hi NAME sprich doch deutsch mit uns* (“Hi NAME, do speak German to us”). One more comment follows, topically related to the video, and phrased in German. This differs from the request illustrated by the previous example in two ways. Its deictic reference to “us” indexes a claim to speak in the name of an unidentified, larger audience, and the formulaic phrasing of the request evokes an on-going discourse of linguistic purism in German (there are thousands of Google search hits for this particular phrase with plural or singular personal deixis). Resistance to audience design, then, is not primarily motivated by a lack of comprehension. It is likely that the protesting responder in this example had no trouble understanding the message the initiator wanted to convey. Rather, resistance is a strategy of language policing (cf. Pietikäinen and Piirainen-Marsh, 2009) that transfers ideologies of legitimate linguistic expression from the offline speech community to online language practice. It is a normative call to the contributor to act their expected national identity in terms of language style. Remarkably, no exchange of this sort occurs in the social networking data of the four multilingual youth.

8. Discussion and conclusions

Context collapse is a communicative process that occurs whenever a social occasion brings together people who would normally not be simultaneously addressed. In social networking sites such as Facebook, context collapse evolves from a rare, undesirable occasion to an everyday experience that shapes the

structure and interaction of a vast number of social networks worldwide. This paper draws attention to linguistic consequences of context collapse when the people collated into one social network originate in different linguistic backgrounds. I argue that in such heterogeneous networks with partially overlapping repertoires, language style, and more specifically language choice, becomes a key resource by which to bring together or separate various parts of the networked audience. This claim was illustrated with findings of a study of language choice in social networking interactions among multilingual young people who do not share English as their first language. The empirical findings and theoretical implications of this study are now briefly discussed.

This paper develops an analysis of audience design in social networking, which brings together Bell’s distinction between initiative and responsive language style on the one hand and the distinction between initiating and responding contributions on Facebook on the other. Adapting the basic dimensions of audience design to social networking interaction, the analysis distinguishes between more inclusive (“maximizing”) and exclusive (“partitioning”) initial contributions as well as aligning (responsive) and disaligning (initiative) responding ones. The analysis sheds light on how participants in social networks construct their audiences in an on-going process of style choices. Though the specific linguistic choices in the data are contingent on the participants’ communicative histories and trajectories, the paper offers a typification of language style strategies at a level of abstraction that enables generalizability or at least testing on data from other social networks with a transnational collation of members. The sociolinguistic approach to context collapse proposed here operates on two distinct but interrelated levels of context: It complements social context in the media studies sense with the interactional context that participants construct by means of language style to design their audience for each new communicative event.

The findings allow a number of implications that contribute to our understanding of online language practices as a historically new, rapidly evolving type of human communication. One conclusion is that language practices in a public, yet informal virtual space like Facebook do not by default mirror offline conversational usage. Indeed, one implication of context collapse is that participants are confronted with multiple expectations of usage by various parts of their audience, which cannot be accommodated to simultaneously. The aim to maximize the networked audience may lead to a disentanglement of online language from offline conversational norms, and to the extent this is ratified and aligned to by responders, online dialogs diverge from offline language practices, the latter being merely alluded to as in the example of *heimatstadt* (Section 5).

The findings further suggest that language style in social networking is shaped by a tension between intimacy and publicness, which reminds of Marwick and Boyd’s (2011) account of strategies of content dissemination in social media. In terms of language style, social networking enables intimate dialog at the same time as addressing a public audience. Recent research has shown that the shared communicative experiences that characterize semi-public social networks promote the reproduction of group-specific language practices in online interactions among networked peers (Androutsopoulos, 2013a; Seargeant et al., 2012; Sharma, 2012). However, as the analytical perspective shifts from dialog in small clusters of networked peers to practices of addressing (and performing in front of) a heterogeneous social network, the effect of context collapse leads to multiple, co-existing intimacies, which are impossible to orient to simultaneously in terms of language style. I suggest that an effect of these tensions might be a heightened metalinguistic awareness of available options for and limits of audience design. Taking this line of analysis further would require a focus on the

contrast between responding and not responding members of the audience, and to the meanings of non-responsiveness as they are experienced by networked writers and readers; however, this is not afforded by the data available for this study.

Some of the findings illustrate the link between transnational mobility and negotiation of language style. Mobility creates opportunities to contribute posts from foreign places and to develop an international networked audience, potentially leading to more instances of unknown languages circulating in the social network. Transnational mobility can also lead to a pattern of context collapse by which large subparts of the network who represent social ties in different communities, become aware of new linguistic choices which index a member's new biographical orientation. This applies in particular to Dema who was in the process of settling to Germany during fieldwork and had to balance distinct parts of her audience: her new network of Greek–German bilingual “friends” (Example 11) and her existing “friends” from Greece who have no command of German and occasionally feel excluded from Dema's new audience design (Example 12) or even challenge her choice of language and topic (Example 9).

English emerges in the findings as an important resource for audience design in a community where it is not an everyday spoken language. I join recent research (cf. Sharma, 2012; Seargeant et al., 2012) in rejecting the assumption that English would be reserved to “international” as opposed to “local” communication. English is clearly a local resource among German youth, though its use is shaped by certain limitations.¹² In the social networking data examined here, English is deployed on the one hand as a strategy for maximizing the audience and on the other as a resource for converging to, or sometimes diverging from, individual interlocutors. While the findings support the assumption that social networking promotes the use of and familiarity with English even where it is not an offline community language, they also suggest that English is not necessarily responsively taken up by the audience of a contribution. In fact, a responding turn in German, the locally relevant conversational choice, is much more typical in the data than the uptake of English in online conversation. Therefore this study does not support a straightforward conclusion that social networking promotes a global dominance of English. However, it gives support to the assumption that transnational social networks increase the importance of multilingual communicative events, and perhaps the expectation that initiating contributions are carried out in English.

I conclude with two points on the framework of audience design and its adaptation to the study of social networking. The first is the suggestion that in people's digital language practices, audiences still matter. One could have thought that online communication is a realm of speaker design (cf. Schilling-Estes, 2002), that is, a linguistic and semiotic construction of speaker identity that is largely detached from community norms and compiles a wide range of linguistic resources into a late-modern, stylistic patchwork. To be sure, elements of individual linguistic creativity are visible in social networking data, where language practices are individualized to a high degree and unexpected semiotic resources are symbolically valued (cf. Androutsopoulos, 2013a; Jonsson and Muhonen, 2014). Yet this study shows that individualization in social networking does not amount to a detachment from

community expectations. Social networking is oriented to audiences, albeit heterogeneous, collapsed ones, and understanding these orientations provides a backdrop against which individuality in digital language practice gains its meaning. Second, the capacity of members of the “invisible” networked audience to speak back and shape language style in the course of a Facebook event leads to revising the initiative dimension of Bell's framework. The main orientation of initiative style in social networking is not an absent “referee”, but a different slice of the collapsed audience. Its effect is therefore not to stylize an absent linguistic model but to redefine the audience for a particular exchange.

Acknowledgments

The research reported in this paper was carried out in the project “Superdiversity and digital language practices”, funded from 2011 to 2012 as part of the research cluster ‘Linguistic Diversity Management in Urban Areas’ at the University of Hamburg (www.lima.uni-hamburg.de). I am grateful to project associates, Joanna Kouzina, Ying Fen Hsieh and Kasper Juffermans. I also thank academic audiences at Open University UK, the University of the Western Cape in Cape Town and the University of Stellenbosch as well as the two reviewers of this paper and Greg Myers for helpful suggestions and feedback. Any errors or shortcomings are my own responsibility.

References

- Androutsopoulos, Jannis, 2013a. Networked multilingualism: some language practices on Facebook and their implications. *Int. J. Biling.*, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1367006913489198> (Published online).
- Androutsopoulos, Jannis, 2013b. Online data collection. In: Mallinson, C., Childs, B., Herk, G.V. (Eds.), *Data Collection in Sociolinguistics: Methods and Applications*. Routledge, New York, pp. 236–249.
- Androutsopoulos, Jannis, 2013c. Code-switching in computer-mediated communication. In: Herring, S.C., Stein, D., Virtanen, T. (Eds.), *Pragmatics of Computer-mediated Communication*. de Gruyter Mouton, Berlin/Boston, pp. 667–694.
- Androutsopoulos, Jannis, 2014. Moments of sharing: entextualization and linguistic repertoires in social networking. *J. Pragmat.* <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2014.07.013> (Published online ahead of print).
- Androutsopoulos, Jannis, Juffermans, Kasper, 2014. Digital language practices in superdiversity: introduction. *Discourse Context and Media* 4-5, 1-6, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.dcm.2014.08.002> (Published online ahead of print).
- Arnaut, Karel, 2012. Super-diversity: elements of an emerging perspective. *Diversities* 14 (2), 1–16.
- Auer, Peter, 1995. The pragmatics of code-switching: a sequential approach. In: Milroy, L., Muysken, P. (Eds.), *One Speaker, Two Languages*. University Press, Cambridge, pp. 115–135.
- Bell, Allan, 1984. Language style as audience design. *Lang. Soc.* 13, 145–204.
- Bell, Allan, 1991. *The Language of News Media*. Blackwell, Oxford.
- Bell, Allan, 2001. Back in style: reworking audience design. In: Eckert, P., Rickford, J.R. (Eds.), *Style and Sociolinguistic Variation*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, pp. 139–169.
- Blommaert, Jan, Rampton, Ben, 2011. Language and superdiversity. *Diversities* 13 (2), 1–21.
- Böttcher, Maria, 2011. *Language Choice on Facebook: Self-presentation, Audience Design, Discourse Negotiation. A Case Study on German Social Network Users* (Unpublished MA thesis). University of Hamburg.
- Bou-Franch, Patricia, Lorenzo-Dus, Nuria, Garcés-Conejos Blitvich, Pilar, 2012. Social interaction in YouTube text-based polylogues: a study of coherence. *J. Comput.-Mediat. Commun.* 17, 501–521 (<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/enhanced/doi/10.1111/j.1083-6101.2012.01579.x/>).
- Boyd, Danah, Ellison, Nicole B., 2007. Social network sites: definition, history, and scholarship. *J. Comput.-Mediat. Commun.* 13 (1), 210–230 (<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/enhanced/doi/10.1111/j.1083-6101.2007.00393.x/>).
- Boyd, Danah, 2011. Social network sites as networked publics: affordances, dynamics, and implications. In: Papacharissi, Z. (Ed.), *A Networked Self. Identity, Community, and Culture on Social Network Sites*. Routledge, New York/London, pp. 39–58.
- Bubel, Claudia, 2011. Relationship impression formation: How viewers know people on the screen are friends. In: Piazza, R., Bednarek, M., Rossi, Fabio (Eds.), *Telecinematic Discourse: Approaches to the Language of Films and Television Series*. Benjamins, Amsterdam, Philadelphia, pp. 225–248.
- Coupland, Nikolas, 2007. *Style: Language Variation and Identity*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

¹² Additional evidence for this is offered by a graduate thesis (Böttcher, 2011), which compares the use of English in two groups of social networks by German students: one with international “friends” and one with German-language only “friends”. This study found that English status updates are also used in social networks of the second kind, albeit an English that is more “chunky” and intertextually saturated; social networks of the first type use English in free, idiomatic contributions.

- Franziskus, Anne, Gilles, Peter, 2012. 'Et le präis direct etikett?' Non-overlapping repertoires in workplace communication in Luxembourg. *Sociolinguistica* 26, 58–71.
- Georgakopoulou, Alexandra, 1997. Self-presentation and interactional alignments in e-mail discourse: the style- and code switches of Greek messages. *Int. J. Appl. Linguist.* 7 (2), 141–164.
- Goffman, Erving, 1981. *Forms of Talk*. University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia.
- Günthner, Susanne, 2008. Interactional sociolinguistics. In: Gerd, Antos, Eija, Ventola, Tilo, Weber (Eds.), *Handbook of Interpersonal Communication*, vol. 2. Mouton de Gruyter, Berlin & New York, pp. 53–76.
- Hutchby, Ian, 2006. *Media Talk: Conversation Analysis and the Study of Broadcasting*. Open University Press, Maidenhead.
- Jonsson, Carla, Muhonen, Anu, 2014. Multilingual repertoires and the relocalization of manga in digital media. *Discourse, Context and Media*, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.dcm.2014.05.002> (Published online ahead of print).
- Lee, Carmen, 2011. Texts and practices of micro-blogging: status updates on Facebook. In: Thurlow, C., Mroczek, K. (Eds.), *Digital Discourse: Language in New Media*. Oxford University Press, Oxford.
- Li, Wei, 2011. Moment analysis and translanguaging space: discursive construction of identities by multilingual Chinese youth in Britain. *J. Pragmat.* 43, 1222–1235.
- Marwick, Alice, Boyd, Danah, 2011. "I tweet honestly, I tweet passionately": Twitter users, context collapse, and the imagined audience. *New Media Soc.* 13, 96–113.
- Pietikäinen, Sari, Piirainen-Marsh, Arja, (Eds.), 2009. *Media, multilingualism and language policing*. Special issue, *Lang. Policy* 8 (3).
- Planchenault, Gaele, 2010. Virtual community and politeness: the use of female markers of identity and solidarity in a transvestites' website. *Multilingua* 6, 83–103.
- Seargeant, P., Tagg, C., Ngampramuan, W., 2012. Language choice and addressivity strategies in Thai-English social network interactions. *J. Sociolinguist.* 16 (4), 510–531.
- Schilling-Estes, Nathalie, 2002. Investigating stylistic variation. In: Chambers, J.K., Trudgill, P., Schilling-Estes, N. (Eds.), *The Handbook of Language Variation and Change*. Blackwell, Oxford, pp. 375–401.
- Schmidt, Jan-Hinrik, 2013. *Social Media*. Springer VS, Wiesbaden.
- Sharma, Bal Krishna, 2012. Beyond social networking: performing global Englishes in Facebook by college youth in Nepal. *J. Sociolinguist.* 16 (4), 483–509.
- Woolard, Kathryn A., 1999. Simultaneity and bivalency as strategies in bilingualism. *J. Linguist. Anthropol.* 8 (1), 3–29.