

# 1 Multilingualism in the digital sphere: the diverse practices of youth online

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What can people do with multiple languages that they cannot do with one? What kinds of practices does multilingualism enable and how does it shape communication in the digital sphere among young people? These questions have motivated the volume *Multilingual Youth Practices in Computer Mediated Communication* (CMC). This volume was inspired by some of the work now emerging in sociolinguistics on the multilingual digital practices of people in a globalizing world (e.g. Androutsopoulos 2015; Barton & Lee 2013; Danet & Herring 2007a; Deumert 2014a; Spilioti & Georgakopoulou 2015; Jones et al. 2015; Lee 2017; Thurlow & Mroczek 2011a). In contrast with these volumes however, the present work aims a spotlight on the multilingual practices of young people who have taken up the affordances of digital communication more fervently than any other age group (Beheshti & Large 2013; Buckingham & Willett 2013). More specifically, we examine how the “digital generation” in different parts of the world makes use of multilingual repertoires and the social meanings they attach to various linguistic features in their digital communications with others.

The purpose of the volume is not to make definitive claims about multilingual CMC practices among young people, but rather to describe the state of the art based on what a select group of researchers have observed in particular settings around the world. In the process, we hope to document where the field is at this moment in time, and provide a window onto the nature of the debates and unanswered questions that exist within it pertaining to multilingual youth practices in CMC. This book assembles the work of twelve scholars from sociolinguistics and linguistic anthropology to understand the multilingual digital practices that young people engage in and what these hybrid interactions help them to achieve. With data from youth in South Africa, Senegal, Norway, the US, France, Germany, the Jamaican and Andean diasporas, and global fans of K-pop<sup>1</sup>, the authors explore how young people use their multilingual repertoires when interacting with one another online.

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<sup>1</sup> K-pop is a pop cultural genre originating in South Korea.

Following Deumert (2014a), the chapters place a great deal of emphasis on the playful, creative, reflexive, and self-conscious ways that many young people interact with one another in digital spaces (see also Vandegriff 2010). This contrasts with the focus on language as a bounded entity and the systematic, rule-governed aspects of language production that typifies what Eckert (2012: 87) calls “first” and “second” wave sociolinguistic studies. This “third wave” approach opens up the field of inquiry to speaker-generated, creative, spontaneous data in contrast to strictly researcher-driven forms of data (Blommaert & Rampton 2012). Our approach also contrasts with approaches to CMC organized by genre (e.g. Baron 2008; Crystal 2006), and the analysis of specific linguistic variables via “coding and counting methods” (Androutsopoulos 2011: 277). Nor do we focus on the distribution of languages, or language choice within websites or across linguistic settings (e.g. Danet & Herring 2007a). Rather, we explore how communication technologies are “locally appropriated to enact a variety of discourse genres” (Androutsopoulos 2006: 421), and what kinds of social and semiotic work multilingual practices accomplish in online discourse.

Increasingly, scholars are turning to examinations of how people interact across languages, geographical boundaries, diasporas, and in far-flung places around the world as opposed to geographically bounded speech communities. And as Lee (2017) points out, despite the dominance of English in the Internet Age, the presence of other languages is rising and even monolingual web users find that using more than one language can be an important resource for interacting with others or doing things online (Danet & Herring 2003; Wright 2004). Furthermore, recent work has shown that CMC offers people the ability to interact in minority languages or varieties that have no written standard, opening up new possible meanings and domains of use for hitherto marginalized codes (e.g. Deumert & Masinyana 2008; Deumert & Lexander 2013).

This volume aims its sights on individuals who live in specific places around the world, but reach beyond the confines of the local to “hang out” and “share” with others, in many cases with others whom they have never met or physically interacted with. Often, they are drawn together by a common interest (e.g. K-pop, indigenous Aymara rap music, or becoming a more pious Muslim); in other instances, they are interacting with intimate friends, lovers, or family in proximal geographical locations. The point is that digital interaction brings people into common virtual spaces and helps overcome the physical separation between them – whether great or small (Androutsopoulos 2014; Deumert 2014a).

Multilinguals make strategic use of their linguistic resources, and the pragmatic and social functions and alternating codes are important resource for self-presentation and identity performance (chapters in this volume by Hinrichs, Bock, Dalwai & Stroud, Swinehart, and Røyneland). Some use international languages like English, French, Arabic, or Spanish to mark urbanity and cosmopolitanism or to signal alignments with certain groups as opposed to others (chapters in this volume by Evers, Garley, Lexander, and Cutler). The physical distances and language boundaries that separate individuals can be bridged by various forms of polylinguistic practices or the ways in which speakers use features associated with different “languages” – even when they know very little of them (Shinhee Lee this volume). Thus, we observe how multilingualism takes many forms and serves many functions, from rudimentary attempts to engage with another community to hybrid practices that illustrate a high degree of metapragmatic and metalinguistic awareness of multiple codes. Using another language allows people to project local as well as translocal orientations, signal shifts in frame, mitigate face-threatening acts, and engage in humorous, sarcastic play, etc. (Androutsopoulos 2007; Jonsson & Muhonen 2014). There is also great subversive and transgressive potential in the freedom that writing and interacting in more than one language affords and young people exploit this potential in their hybrid linguistic and orthographic practices, flouting spelling rules, contesting standard language ideologies, and “talking back” to colonial languages (Deumert & Lexander 2013; Hooks 1989).

### **What do we mean by “multilingualism”?**

Before venturing any further, we need a working definition of multilingualism, both in terms of individual and societal multilingualism. There are very strict and specific psycholinguistic definitions, such as the one proposed by Bloomfield (1933) who posited that a bilingual should possess “native-like control of two or more languages” (“perfect bilinguals”). On the other hand, there are rather loose definitions like: Anyone who possesses a minimum of competence in one of the four language skills: listening comprehension, speaking, reading, writing (Macnamara 1967: 59). Others, such as Weinreich (1953) and Grosjean (1997; 2008; 2010) propose definitions that are based on language use rather than language competence: A bi-/multilingual is a person who uses, or can use, more than one language in daily life or in particular situations. Linguists’ definitions have been shifting in recent years towards these more inclusive interpretations so as to include all people who function in more than one language regardless of proficiency. Multilinguals exist on a continuum with varying levels of

proficiency in terms of speaking, oral comprehension, reading and writing: it is common for people to be able to read in a second language, but not speak it or, alternatively, to be able to speak and understand a language, but lack literacy skills. With respect to CMC, people may use languages online that they do not use in “body-to-body” interaction (Deumert 2014a: 9, 12) so multilingual CMC practices are not exclusive to highly competent multilinguals.<sup>2</sup> Framing individual multilingualism in an open and inclusive way acknowledges the variable language competencies of individuals and the achievement that functioning in a second or other language entails. It also makes us as researchers more attuned to what people can do with their linguistic repertoires and what sorts of multilingual communicative practices they engage in in CMC contexts.

Societal multilingualism pertains to the ways in which languages are dealt with at the institutional level, which is contingent in many ways upon the status and relationship between languages in a given society; this involves attitudes towards languages, potential determinants of language choice, the symbolic practices, and the correlations between language use and social factors such as ethnicity, religion, and class (Sridhar 1996: 47). Societal multilingualism does not entail that all individual group members are multilingual; some countries such as Canada have an official policy of French-English bilingualism, yet most Canadians are monolingual. In other settings, there may be an official policy of monolingualism while most people speak at least two languages.

Thus, we consider multilingual practices among individuals with varying levels of language proficiency, but also individuals living in societies with different types of multilingualism (i.e. Germany vs. South Africa vs. Bolivia). In some instances, we observe people interacting with others who share norms of societal multilingualism (e.g. educated young people in Dakar who routinely mingle French and Wolof in Alexander’s chapter); in other cases, we observe individuals interacting who have very different patterns of individual and societal multilingualism (e.g. Malaysian vs. Korean youth in Shinhee Lee’s chapter on K-pop fans). As noted above, just because someone uses more than one language in their CMC interactions does not entail that they use more than one language in their everyday communication. Without ethnographic corroboration, we simply cannot know this about all subjects. The important point is that it is very common for people to employ their multilingual repertoires in CMC, raising questions about the degree to which CMC affords people more opportunities to engage in multilingual practices, and what new practices are emerging as a

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<sup>2</sup> e.g. Deumert (2014a) notes how people tend to orient towards bodies not only to faces, thus motivating the use of the term “body-to-body” over “face-to-face.”

result (cf. Lee 2017). Other questions include whether CMC practices are helping to revitalize dying, minority, and/or endangered languages and dialects by establishing written norms and creating new domains for their use. Does online multilingual interaction trigger shifts in language attitudes and ideologies? Additionally, we ask whether multilingual practices are transforming the way ordinary people view language itself and whether these practices contribute to a less delineated, more unified conception of a “language repertoire”.

An important point we wish to make is that multilingualism in CMC can refer to many different phenomena: it can be the *gestalt* co-existence of many languages on different websites or channels in their entirety (e.g. Internet Relay Chat, flickr, blogger.com, which are “massively multilingual”) (Androutsopoulos 2013b: 671-672). These can be viewed as multilingual or heteroglossic discourse spaces held together by their spatial coexistence in product and reception rather than their dialogic orientation to each other. In other words, there is a qualitative difference between the juxtaposition of codes within static, non-dialogic websites and interactive modalities that involve participants’ code choices and the multilingual practices that emerge in dialogic exchanges between individuals as showcased in this volume. Following Androutsopoulos (2013b), we can imagine a model that orders various forms of interaction in CMC from the least to the most interactive and “speech-like”, bearing in mind that the code choices made by specific individuals in a corpus of comments or microblogs are not necessarily sequentially related to one another.

### **What do we mean by Computer Mediated Communication?**

This volume embraces a broad definition of *Computer Mediated Communication* (CMC), including any communicative transactions that occur through the use of two or more electronic devices such as mobile phones, tablets, PCs, etc. The older, umbrella term for this was *Electronically Mediated Communication* or EMC, which comprised both the study of CMC as well as the communicative technologies themselves (computer, PDAs, mobile phones, etc.). *New Media* is another commonly used term in studies of online discourse (e.g. Danesi 2015; Tannen & Trester 2013; Thurlow & Mrozcek 2011a). Whereas CMC entails some form of interaction or transaction, *New Media* usually pertains to online content that is available on-demand and visible to anyone in any place with internet access and that offers the possibility of interactive user feedback and creative participation (i.e. online newspapers, websites, blogs, online games, etc.). Thus, we can think of New Media as the

content itself and CMC as online engagement – oftentimes, but not always – in response to New Media content.

Very commonly, CMC entails communication between two or more individuals posting comments, links, tweets, and sending messages asynchronously or synchronously with their mobile phones or tablets. The various analyses of multilingual CMC practices in the volume focus on real-time generation of new, unregulated interaction. We view these as forms of CMC because of their transactional nature. Furthermore, we claim that including these stylized, reflexive, self-conscious forms of language use within the larger scope of routine unselfconscious language practices gives a much richer and empirically more sound understanding of multilingual language practices than strictly examining speech data (Blommaert & Rampton 2012).

### **What can the organization of the chapters reveal?**

This volume could have been organized in several possible ways. Several chapters feature practices associated with popular music fandom and/or hip-hop culture (Cutler, Garley, Shinhee Lee, Røyneland, and Swinehart). The ease of creating and sharing music video content (e.g. YouTube) and participating in online forms of fandom (microblogs, Facebook and Twitter) have created a core set of practices among young people. However, these practices do not characterize all of the contributions in the volume, the remainder of which are rather heterogeneous in terms of their interactional purposes and functions. Hence, we have chosen to organize the chapters in terms of the type of data collected by the authors – online vs. blended online and offline data (Androutsopoulos 2013a; Spilioti 2011).

Among CMC scholars, there has been a tendency to view data collection methods on a continuum from screen-based (analyses of user-generated online data, but no systematic online observation) to user-based (data prompted by researchers who are in direct contact with users about their practices, but no online data) (Androutsopoulos 2013a: 241). In between these two poles, researchers may have differing degrees of contact with users and rely on different types of data: only online data, blended data (offline and online), or only offline data.

The data and methods in the present volume do not fit neatly into this model given that the authors are coming from a more sociolinguistic perspective in which contact with the community is the starting point. The chapters in the volume illustrate a number of different approaches reflecting the disciplinary backgrounds and interests of the authors. Early work on CMC was carried out mainly

by scholars in media studies and communication rather than sociolinguistics (e.g. Herring 1996). Over the years, media and communication scholars have increasingly moved *offline* to enrich their investigations of online CMC phenomena. In contrast, most of the contributors in the present volume are sociolinguists and linguistic anthropologists by training who have moved *online* to further their ethnographic, fieldwork-based research in variationist sociolinguistics, dialectology, language ideologies, discourse analysis, and other fields. The merger of scholars from these various fields has generated greater interest in contextually rich data that combines online ethnographic approaches with analysis of offline communicative practices. Building on the model above but with the important caveat that our investigations generally begin offline and move online, we have organized the ten chapters into two sections as shown below:

**Part 1:** Evers (chapter 2), Bock, Dalwai and Stroud (chapter 3), Lexander (chapter 4), Garley (chapter 5)

**Part 2:** Deumert (chapter 6), Cutler (chapter 7), Røyneland (chapter 8), Swinehart (chapter 9), Hinrichs (chapter 10), Shinhee Lee (chapter 11)

Part 1 is made up of chapters that explore youth identities through offline and online multilingual practices. Part 2 consists of chapters that stem from long-term researcher engagement in various communities but which analyze how the concerns and interests of community members are played out online.

**What kinds of data are showcased in the volume and how is it useful for sociolinguists?**

A significant tendency within recent youth language research has been the focus on particular speech styles developing in urban multicultural communities. These heteroglossic linguistic practices, dubbed “multiethnolectal youth language” (Nortier 2008; Quist & Svendsen 2010), “polylingual languaging” (Jørgensen 2008) or “late modern urban youth style” (Madsen, Møller & Jørgensen 2010) may involve overt evaluative language use such as commentary, crossing and stylization (Rampton 2014; Coupland 2007). Studies of these aspects of enregisterment and, indeed, any analysis of youth language can be complemented substantially by including analyses of multilingual practices in CMC because they allow us to examine self-generated video, music and speech as well as

appropriations and recontextualizations of media material in local codes for local audiences (Cutler & Røyneland 2015; Deumert 2014a; Lexander 2011a, b; Terkourafi 2010; Swinehart 2012a). Importantly, these recontextualizations can be a key way in which various registers, local dialects and speech varieties become culturally noticed or enregistered (Agha 2005).

Most of the data analyzed in the volume is written, but strongly oral and visual in its style. This “digital orality” (Soffer 2012) entails a great deal of non-standard writing, including deliberate misspellings, the use of initialisms, rebus spellings, and onomatopoeia (Crystal 2006; Danet 2001). It includes personal texts and SMS messages between friends and family members (chapters by Bock, Dalwai & Stroud, Lexander, and Evers), posts on an online forum (Garley), YouTube video content and comments (chapters by Swinehart, Røyneland, and Cutler), Facebook updates and posts (Evers), blogs (Hinrichs), and microblogging (Shinhee Lee). The degree of orality in each of these genres is slightly different (more or less speech-like) as is the directionality (synchronous/asynchronous, one-to-one vs. one-to-many, many-to-many) and purpose of the communication (flirting, greeting a friend, expressing opinions, performing fandom, etc.). As is true of speech data, digital writing contains all kinds of hybrid language use, mixing, polylinguaging, metalinguistic and metapragmatic commentary, and language policing. We can observe and identify emerging sociolinguistic, discourse, and pragmatic norms and see how these norms are negotiated, played with, and contested. Multilingual CMC data can help us understand how users construct their ethnolinguistic identities and alignments and how they maintain boundaries and define who is part of the group and who is not.

The data in the volume are also characterized by a wealth of language play, crossing (Blommaert & Rampton 2012), and the enregisterment of ways of talking and of languages and styles (Stæhr 2014), all of which show that these forms of data are increasingly playing a role in the spread of language attitudes and ideologies as well as the spread of multilingual practices themselves. The value of this kind of data for sociolinguists is that it is spontaneous and user-generated and avoids some of the problems associated with the Observer’s Paradox, since in most cases the CMC data itself were created without the involvement of the researcher. As such, it gives us a snapshot of users’ social worlds and written online practices. This kind of data can therefore greatly complement traditional ethnographic and sociolinguistic methods by showing us how individuals interact across more than one event, and across various modalities and channels both online and off. However, this does not imply that CMC data are strictly “complementary”; these data are of course valuable and



interesting in their own right and are in no way inferior to “traditional” forms of sociolinguistic data, but as sociolinguists, we deem it necessary to make this claim explicit given the preference for speech data in the field.

Of course, there are things you cannot do with written CMC data; the most obvious is fine-grained phonetic analysis since there is no speech signal (see discussion in De Decker & Nycz 2011 regarding speech data in YouTube). However, there is a lot of “dialectal” and phonemic writing that can give us clues to a people’s ways of speaking, their language attitudes, or stances they wish to project. As noted earlier, CMC data are not necessarily well suited to “coding and counting methods” (Androutsopoulos 2011) and lend themselves more to qualitative approaches in which even a single token may have social significance and quite nuanced, socially-situated meanings. Thus, this kind of data does not allow for quantitative analysis of sound changes, or intra-speaker phonological variation because written CMC data is not categorically representative of how people talk although it is in many ways more speech-like and relaxed than formal writing (Deumert 2014a; McWhorter 2013).

One additional type of multilingual practice includes the use of two or more languages across different modes and platforms at the same time. Though not explored in this volume, it is common for youth who engage in online gaming (e.g. in Scandinavia) to talk in English, then Skype at the same time with their peers in the home language (e.g. Norwegian or Danish), send SMS in the home language and chat on Facebook in both English and the home language (for other examples see Jonsson & Muhonen 2014; Kytölä & Westinen 2015; Leppänen et al 2009; Stæhr 2015). Switching modes and languages – speaking and writing in more than one language at the same time on different platforms – is undoubtedly common practice for many people and deserves future investigation.

### **How do the authors conceptualize multilingualism and the juxtaposition of different codes in their data?**

The authors embrace a range of concepts to describe the mixing of codes that reflect developments in sociolinguistics challenging the boundedness of distinct languages. Generally, they adopt a more fluid conception of linguistic repertoires as sets of resources that may come from disparate sources (Agha 2008; García 2009). Though no one goes so far as to wholly reject the idea that discrete languages can be identified, most are focused on the social meanings and indexical references of various codes rather than the boundaries between them. This allows for a more socially informed

analysis of how multilingual digital interaction allows people to challenge, play with, and reevaluate the social-indexical values of speech-forms (Agha 2008). While only one author (Hinrichs) deploys codeswitching explicitly as an analytical frame implying the boundedness of specific codes, others refer to “mixed codes”, “mixed vernaculars”, or “code mixing” (Bock, Dalwai & Stroud, Deumert, Swinehart, Lexander, and Cutler). Several authors use the term heteroglossia (Bakhtin 1981) to describe the coexistence, combination, alternation, and juxtaposition of contrasting codes within a discourse (Hinrichs, Lexander, Garley, Cutler, and Røyneland). Swinehart uses the term “voicing effects” for the use of different registers within a stretch of Spanish whereas Cutler uses “polyphony” for similar blending of voices, accents and codes. In using these terms, the authors still rely on the idea that multiple codes are being used, but are not necessarily invested in identifying specific codes within an interaction. The two exceptions are Lexander, who engages in quantitative analysis of which codes are used by her multilingual Senegalese informants, and Hinrichs, whose analysis of Jamaican bloggers hinges on a conception of code-switching.

### **What do we mean by “Multilingual CMC Practices?”**

Gee (2015) describes practices as the concrete, situated interactions people perform with particular mediational means in order to enact membership in social groups. However, in reference to the digital realm, Jones et al. (2015: 2) observe that it is difficult to speak of the “practice of social networking” or “video gaming” without considering how such practices are performed by real people in real situations. Tagging, for instance, can have different functions and meanings on Twitter versus Flickr (Barton 2015), and most digital practices are “nested” within offline, non-digital practices such as shopping, gardening, dieting, story-sharing (Jones et al. 2015: 3).

Jones et al. (2015: 3) define digital practices as “assemblages’ of actions involving tools associated with digital technologies, which have come to be recognized by specific groups of people as ways of attaining particular social goals, enacting specific social identities, and reproducing certain sets of social relationships”. In other words, digital practices are simply new ways to connect with other people, telling them who we are, and signaling where we fit in the social order. By making possible new ways of behaving and being, digital practices alter how people engage in “traditional” non-digital practices like writing letters, shopping for shoes, choosing a restaurant or house hunting (Jones et al. 2015). Thus, we may read not only a newspaper article online, but also the comments of other readers and follow hyperlinks to related content. In some ways, our online practices duplicate

or replace older offline practices (we have digital address books, we maintain digital correspondence with friends and colleagues, and send e-vites for parties). Yet in other ways, digital practices depart from our offline practices: celebrities and even heads of state tweet messages to millions of followers; homeowners swap houses with strangers thousands of miles away; polyglots perform their linguistic prowess on YouTube for a global audience, and obscure individuals achieve overnight fame and lucrative corporate deals on the basis of their online activities (Leland 2012; Squires 2014; Tolson 2010).

Within studies of multilingual CMC, the analytical focus on which language dominates within a platform or how users code-switch in interaction has shifted; we are now examining how people act differently given the affordances offered by the chance to engage with others in different languages in CMC and what kinds of “translingual” practices emerge from these new opportunities (Lee 2017: 126). The emphasis in this volume is on the “communicative practices across groups and communities” rather than within a specific geographically defined group (Lee 2017: 126).

Androutsopoulos (2013c: 4) has dubbed the term “networked multilingualism” as a cover term for these kinds of practices which include everything language users do with the entire range of linguistic resources constrained by mediation of written language, access to network resources, and orientation to networked audiences. Networked multilingualism encompasses how language resources are “appropriated, combined, juxtaposed and displayed to a networked audience ‘for fun’ and ‘for show’ ... in playful and poetic ways, which both replicate and transcend ordinary conversational practices” (Androutsopoulos 2013c: 7).

Following Blommaert and Rampton (2012: 16), we believe that a focus on multilingual practices allows us to observe how polylingual, heteroglossic, translingual norms are “being manufactured, interrogated or altered” and to identify the “social, cultural and/or political stakes” involved. Multilingual CMC practices entail the use of more than one language, register, or style either at the individual level (e.g. within a stretch of discourse written or uttered by a single person) or between speakers in a larger set of data such as a set of comments posted in response to a video or newspaper article. Rather than strictly attuning to the switching itself or the distribution of one language versus another, we are interested in how individuals use their full linguistic repertoires (languages, styles, registers, etc.) in communicating with each other and what these interactions can tell us about evolving linguistic norms and ideologies.

The multilingual CMC practices analyzed in this volume include multilingual texting and SMS messaging among friends (Bock, Dalwai & Stroud, and Lexander), posting metalinguistic and metapragmatic commentary on YouTube (Cutler, Røyneland, and Swinehart), teaching and learning a resistance vernacular (Deumert), posting, linking, and commenting in multiple languages and scripts on Facebook (Evers), ritualized use of emblematic Korean on fan microblogs (Shinhee Lee), blending orthographies in online hip-hop fora (Garley), and blogging by and for a Jamaican diasporic community (Hinrichs).

### **What do we mean by “youth” and what are the ethical considerations of studying youth practices online?**

Who is considered “young” has changed considerably over the centuries and differs from one society to another. Antonio Gramsci (1891–1937), the Italian political theorist, described the human life cycle as consisting of just two periods: pre-puberty (childhood) and post-puberty (adulthood). In his view, childhood ended with the onset of puberty, marking one’s entrance into adulthood and adult responsibilities (Gramsci 1994). However, in late modern, industrialized, middle class society, definitions of what part of life constitutes youth have continually expanded to include a larger segment of individuals as people live longer and affluence allows for the postponement of adulthood (Danesi 2003). For example, US based institutions including the Society for Adolescent Medicine and the MacArthur Foundation view people as old as 34 as part of the adolescent generation. Few people in contemporary Europe or North America would consider fourteen-year-olds to be adults, but in other parts of the world, fourteen-year-olds can legally marry. In general, many people living in developing economies and/or people with limited financial resources and social capital take on “adult” responsibilities at a younger age than more affluent individuals or those living in more affluent societies although this simplistic division may cut across national and class boundaries.

As our volume brings together data from a wide range of countries and cultures, we have chosen to define youth rather loosely, encompassing people in their teens to about age 30. However, when it comes to digital interaction, we do not always know the exact age of most of the people we observe because we do not always have access to their personal information. As Jones and Schieffelin (2009) point out, we never actually know the true identity of anyone who communicates online. Iorio (2009: 129) uses the term “demographically lean” to refer to this kind of data in contrast to social media spaces like Facebook where users are encouraged to represent themselves accurately.

Much online writing between strangers is anonymous with few clues as a person's identity aside from their usernames or the use of particular registers and stylistic features. In the absence of "offline" ethnographic data about a given individual, we can only speculate about the age range of the young people who created the content we analyze in the volume.

We are interested in young people in part because they are the most likely to be engaging in online/digital/computer-mediated practices of any group. A study by the Pew Research Center (2016a) showed that in all 40 countries tracked across all continents so-called developed and developing economies, people from 18 to 34 were more likely to own a smartphone and use the Internet than adults over the age of 34. In the US, 18 to 29-year-olds have the highest rates of internet and smartphone use than any group, and roughly three-quarters of Americans own a smartphone (Pew Research 2016a)<sup>3</sup>. Eurostat's survey on Information Communications Technology (ICT) usage in households and by individuals in 28 European countries shows that a far higher proportion of young people made use of a computer and the Internet on a daily basis than the rest of the population.<sup>4</sup> This is also true of China, the so-called "developing" world (Pew Research 2016b). Smartphone use is highest among the 18–29 year olds in South Africa compared with any other group (Vermeulen 2011). The Pew Research Center (2016b) also reports that in a number of African countries including South Africa, Nigeria, Senegal, Ghana, Uganda, Tanzania, and Kenya, 18 to 34-year-olds were statistically more likely to send text messages and take pictures with their cell phones than people 35 and older. Worldwide, 18 to 34-year-olds are also the most active users of social media (Pew Research 2016c).

In sum, people under the age of 34 are on average more likely to own a smartphone, check their phones, send text messages, use social media, and use their smartphones to access the Internet than people 35 and over. Consequently, they play a disproportionately large role in the development

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<sup>3</sup> According to the Pew Research (2016a), in the USA, the average teen sends and receives five times more text messages a day than a typical adult. On average, a teen in the USA typically sends or receives 50 text messages a day, while the average adult sends or receives 10. Fully 31% of teens send more than 100 texts a day and 15% send more than 200 a day, while just 8% and 5% of adults send that many, respectively.

<sup>4</sup> Across the 28 European countries surveyed, four out of every five or 80% of young people ages 16-29 used a computer on a daily basis in 2014, nearly 20 percentage points higher than among the whole population (63%). In 2014, over half (51%) of the population used a mobile device such as a portable computer (includes laptops and tablets) or a handheld device to the Internet when away from home or work and this proportion reached four fifths (80%) of all young people aged 16–29 (EuroStat 2016).

of written norms and in the creation of online multilingual practices than older people, making them an important demographic to study.

Internet and cellphone technology allow for a great deal more contact with people who speak other languages than ever before. Thus, young people who are the most active users of smartphone technology, the Internet, and social media are also more likely to encounter digital opportunities to read and interact with others using more than one language than any other age group. Furthermore, due to the fact that youth is a “liminal stage” in life, young people are perhaps more likely to use their multilingual and multistylistic repertoires in playful, experimental ways although these practices are clearly not limited to young people (Deumert 2014a; Rampton 2011). Androutsopoulos (2015) notes that playfulness and performance are considered key dimensions of convivial social practice in social media and that poetic and playful uses of language characterize multilingual talk online. They are also central dimensions of metrolingualism, polylinguaging and language crossing (Boyd 2011; Papacharissi 2011; Otsuji & Pennycook 2010).

As noted above, one of the challenges in working with CMC data is that we often lack information about users’ ages, ethnicities, educational levels, and national origins because data are not always readily apparent nor do all users represent themselves the same way as they do offline. However, it is also possible to glean a great deal of information from a close reading of the usernames, writing styles, the use of grammatical gender marking, and the comments themselves (providing that these data are indeed indicative of a person’s real identity). Thus, we can often speculate about the approximate age, gender, language proficiency, country of origin, interests, and ideologies of a portion of the individuals who post comments, blogs, text messages, and Facebook pages, enabling us to make generalizations about how young people engage with one another online and the nature of their multilingual CMC practices.

The inability to know users’ exact ages raises important ethical considerations, particularly as it pertains to the use of data from potentially underage individuals who may not be aware of the ramifications of posting data about themselves or comments online. Research carried out by the project *EU Kids Online* of 25,000 children (9–16-year-olds) in 25 European countries, show that age restrictions are only partially effective (Livingstone, Ólafsson & Staksrud 2013: 308–311). For instance, more than one third of 9–12-year-olds have a social network site profile (like Facebook), even though the network in most countries sets a minimum age of 13 to join. A quarter of 9–16 year olds on social networking sites across Europe have their profile set to ‘public’. Staksrud (2016) shows

that teenagers publish sensitive photos of themselves online, considering these private while in reality they can be publicly accessible. Sharing one's information online has become much more common since the early days of the Internet (Berezkina 2016). We are currently witnessing the evolution of norms regarding the use of online, digital data for research purposes. Traditionally, the degree to which data were of a public or private nature guided ethical considerations regarding informed consent; where a reasonable expectation of privacy exists, researchers were and are expected to obtain consent. However, as Bolander and Locher (2014) point out, the division between public and private is becoming increasingly blurred and should be conceived of as gradable rather than absolute (Bolander & Locher 2014: 17). Furthermore, it is entirely possible for a media text to combine public and private aspects; “[digital texts] may be public in the sense that they are within the public space and can be read by a large and anonymous audience, while at the same time discussing topics which we think of as ‘private’ and using language which is associated with informal and private conversations” (Landert & Jucker 2011: 1423). The fact that online data is public and possible to retrieve via different sorts of scraping tools, should, of course, not misguide us into thinking that it is freely available for download. By comparison, it would for instance be considered highly unethical to make clandestine recordings of people's conversations in public space even if we have the technology to do so. Regardless of where an oral conversation is taking place, informed consent is expected to be obtained – also from third parties. This poses considerable challenge to online data collection – and to our conceptualizations of what is private and public for whom.

The Association of Internet Researchers has published two documents with guidelines for conducting research in computer-mediated settings (Ess 2002; Markham & Buchanan 2012) as well as a wiki (AOIR ethics wiki 2002).<sup>5</sup> The emphasis in these documents is on guidelines as opposed to rules, given the need for flexibility and the fact that technologies and practices are constantly evolving (Bolander & Locher 2014: 17). These guidelines include several principles for scholars doing research online (Markham & Buchanan 2012: 4–5): weighing the vulnerability of the subjects with the obligation to minimize harm, following human research guidelines, and consulting with

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<sup>5</sup> Recommendations from the AOIR ethics working committee can be viewed at: [www.aoir.org/reports/ethics.pdf](http://www.aoir.org/reports/ethics.pdf)

experts and colleagues about how best to resolve ethical issues as they arise at different stages of the research.

The guidelines suggest, rather than dictate, a path how best to present data from young subjects, prompting each contributing author to consider whether or not to include online usernames or substitute pseudonyms and how best to protect their subjects' privacy. Some have elected to obscure usernames even when the data are from quite "public" spaces like YouTube and despite the fact that, in many cases, the user's online identity can be reconstructed by entering a string in a search engine. Others treat usernames as public data and include some analysis of the names people choose to represent themselves online.

### **Online Affordances: What does CMC allow young people to do?**

What do multilingual CMC practices allow individuals to do? What are they able to do in CMC beyond what they can do in what Deumert (2014a) calls "body-to-body" interactions? Affordances in CMC are usually understood as the range of what forms of communication are made possible by digital technologies as opposed to practices, which are what people do with digital options (Androutsopoulos 2015). Building on this, we briefly discuss the forms of social and psychological connections that are made possible by CMC as they pertain to this volume. One obvious affordance of CMC practices is the possibility of engaging in culture from a distance or connecting with co-ethnics or like-minded in far-flung places. Platforms like Skype and Viber allow immigrants to experience a degree of connectedness to their families and friends in the homeland, never before possible. Yet even when people do not live that far from their families, social media is a vital way in which they keep tabs on one another (Deumert 2014a). Several chapters in the volume illustrate this. Swinehart and Hinrichs write about the Bolivian and Jamaican diasporas and how young people use YouTube and blogs to connect with others from their respective communities. Multilingual practices like code-switching between Jamaican Patois, Standard Jamaican, and stylized Rasta talk index local Jamaican repertoires and recreate a sense of collective identity. A similar pattern has emerged in response to Aymara rap, which draws youth in the Andean diaspora together around a linguistically defined cultural object – the Aymara language. K-pop is a global phenomenon with fans in every continent. Shinhee Lee illustrates how fans engage in K-pop fandom through the practice of micro-blogging and using emblematic Korean in a low stakes environment to express kinship with their fellow fans.



A second possibility afforded in these kinds of online encounters includes imagining another identity, networking, dreaming about being someone or somewhere else, identifying with others (Evers, Shinhee Lee). Evers describes how social media, SMS, and online phone calling allow young women in Marseilles to use their multilingual repertoires to express their disaffection with life in France and fantasize about life in the Gulf with others who feel the same way. The digital networks that they access through mastery of Modern Standard Arabic and Standard French offer them possibilities to relocate and find work abroad.

The long-distance communicative possibilities illustrated by the CMC practices of diasporic Andean and Jamaican youth, K-pop fans and disaffected Muslim girls in France contrast with the more local motivations of socialization and negotiation of belonging in the remaining chapters. Contributing to online hip-hop forums, German fans socialize each other into the use of an English hip-hop leave-taking expression – *peace* – while experimenting with various ways to write it (Garley). Multilingual SMS messaging gives young people in Senegal (Lexander) and South Africa (Bock, Dalwai & Stroud) a way to enhance local ties and challenge the hegemonic status of colonial languages through the blending and manipulation of local and colonial languages and registers. Deumert's chapter also focuses on the highly local practice of teaching and learning how to use an historical South African register – Tsotsitaal – to bespeak the modern experience.

Another local set of CMC affordances centers around negotiating group belonging and challenging ideologies of language and identity. Immigrant youth in Norway (Røyneland) and Mexican-American youth in the USA (Cutler) find in YouTube a space where they can express and navigate belonging in societies that do not fully accept them. The fact that these youth use elements from a multiethnolectal repertoire in the case of Norway, and Spanish in the US, is often used against them in YouTube discussions, but youth themselves use these linguistic resources in conjunction with other local registers to legitimize their bi-/multicultural identities.

### **Technology: how does technology shape the data? The practices?**

How different are multilingual CMC practices in different parts of the world? How does access to high-speed digital networks and the newest gadgets shape practices? How are practices different when these resources are not available? The chapters in our volume explore digital practices in economically and socially diverse settings where people have differential access to technology and

bandwidth and the kind of data each author examines very much reflects current distribution of digital resources around the world.

Deumert (2014a) argues that a particular discourse in the North sees the Internet as the great hope, a new public sphere, a space of participation and creativity, yet more than half of the world's population is still excluded from this space. She observes that the digital has a particular shape in different parts of the world and that we should not see the South as lagging behind the North or as playing catch-up. Rather, the experience of modernity – including digital modernity – is just different, and thus, we need to start thinking more about alternative versions of the world rather than keeping with the idea that there is one version everyone aspires to.

The following chart illustrates the huge differences in internet use as a percentage of the population (Figure 1.1): Among the countries featured in this volume, Norway is way on top with internet penetration in 97% of households. The remaining countries include South Korea at 90%, Germany and France at 85-87%, the USA at 75%, South Africa just over 50%, Bolivia and Jamaica around 45%, and Senegal just above 20%. Large disparities are also found within continents where we see gaps between relatively more prosperous countries like South Africa or Argentina with much higher rates than some of their neighbors.

<Place Figure 1.1. here>

Figure 1.1: Internet use as a percentage of the population (Google Public Data, World Development Indicator)

There are large disparities in smartphone ownership among adults in the US (72%), Europe (60%) and the Middle East (57%) versus Latin America (43%) Asia/Pacific (37%) and Africa (19%), indicating by extension the kinds of practices people can engage in on the go (Pew Research 2016a). Smartphones enable users to replicate pre-digital practices like navigating with a map, listening to the radio, watching TV, shooting photos and movies, recording sounds, setting alarms, etc. Now they increasingly duplicate many of the practices associated with desktop/laptop computers: sending emails and text/SMS messages, video conferencing, streaming content, and sharing digital content

with other users/followers. As new platforms appear on the market, new practices emerge, giving people an increasing number of ways to engage in, and interact with, others digitally.

In Africa, the most common devices are not smartphones, but older types of phones and those who access social media do so exclusively on their phones because they lack access to broadband and computers. As a result of these fundamental differences, SMS is perhaps only one truly global social media application (Deumert 2016), although Twitter and Facebook have made significant inroads in the past five years because they allow easy access via phones. Yet, contrary to what one might assume, the poor in the developing world as well as immigrants and refugees are often some of the most prevalent users of cellphone technology, which is a lifeline to support networks of friends and family (Deumert 2014a; Graham 2015; Sabaté i Dalmau 2012).

Access to various social media platforms is also highly related to socioeconomic conditions. Jenkins (2006: 274) describes YouTube “as a key site for the production and distribution of grassroots media”, but many people in countries like South Africa and Senegal cannot access it because they do not have an internet connection at home and do not own internet enabled smart phones. People in Norway, Germany, the US, and Korea, in contrast, are extremely likely to have broadband internet and smartphone access allowing for access to all forms of social media, streaming audio, video, as well as SMS at home and wherever they go. Thus, social media and other forms of digital networking are much more a part of everyday practice in some places as opposed to others.

As can be gathered from the foregoing discussion, the practices described in this volume are shaped by monetary, technological and infrastructural disparities. The differences in access described above also illustrate how difficult it is to make sweeping generalization with respect to data coming from one platform. For example, Hinrichs, Shinhee Lee, and Swinehart write about young people who converge in particular digital spaces from many different places in the world with very different rates of access to the Internet. We know very little about their individual circumstances and the kinds of digital access they have and can only extrapolate that based on rates of internet penetration and smartphone use for the countries from which they are writing.

We can make more conclusive generalizations about the kinds of practices young people engage in based on the kinds of technological affordances that characterize the societies in which they live. Young people whose digital communication is limited to SMS tend to use local languages in interaction with one or more colonial language to interact with local friends and family. This pattern characterizes the chapters by Bock, Dalwai and Stroud, and Alexander on South African and

Senegalese youth who interact in locally relevant languages (English, Kaaps, Afrikaans, and Zulu in South Africa; French, Wolof, and English in Senegal).

In contrast, the young devout Muslim women described in Evers' chapter have extensive international networks in France, North Africa, and the Gulf States and interact via Skype, Viber, Facebook, and SMS in Modern Standard Arabic, Gulf Arabic dialects, and French. Three of the chapters deal exclusively with data from YouTube (Røyneland, Cutler, and Swinehart), a platform that allows for multilingual interaction, but often tends to generate interest among those who can understand the language of the video. Consequently, most of the comments in their respective chapters are in Spanish (Cutler, Swinehart) and Norwegian (Røyneland).

The German hip-hop forum described in Garley's chapter is similarly dominated by German with significant influence from American hip-hop orthography and lexis as is typical of global hip hop (Alim et al. 2009; Cutler 2014; Pennycook 2007a; Terkourafi 2010). The diasporic blogs written by Jamaicans described by Hinrichs allow for highly nuanced heteroglossic mixing of varieties (Patois, AAVE, and Rasta talk) in ways that reflect the collective language ideologies and practices of diasporic Jamaicans. At the extreme end of multilingual practice are the young K-pop fans described by Shinhee Lee who are keen to use the little Korean they know to connect with other K-pop performers and other fans. The microblogging interface provides a low stakes platform for practicing and performing a language one is learning (i.e. Korean). In sum, the chapters show how access to various digital platforms, mediated by local digital infrastructure (primarily bandwidth) and monetary resources, shape the nature of young people's multilingual practices.

At the same time, these practices are constantly evolving: With the introduction of Twitter across the African continent in 2011, young people have for the first time been able to engage with people in neighboring countries and explore a common identity. Similarly, we see how diaspora communities around the world are increasingly connecting with each other in ways that reflect their sense of common identity as well as their local situatedness (see Heyd & Honkanen 2015; Lee 2017).

### **Language Status: Can you do anything in any language in CMC?**

The work in this volume illustrates how international languages like English, French, and Arabic have different meanings for different people (e.g. bilinguals in post-colonial societies, minority language speakers, hip-hop fans, etc.), and that they are utilized in different ways and for diverse reasons by various individuals. In contrast, indigenous, minority, and non-native languages,

previously limited to oral communication or to second languages classrooms, are entering written communication and may fulfill unique functions in CMC. In order to explore these developments in specific contexts, we now turn to a brief, nonsequential overview of each chapter, how it illustrates what multilingual youth do with specific languages in CMC, what social meanings the youth attach to different languages, and how they deploy languages in their repertoires in CMC.

Digital varieties of English in Africa show higher frequencies of abbreviations than those reported for the USA and the UK. As an international language, English is seen as belonging to everyone and can thus be a site for contestation and play. As Alexander points out in chapter 4, each language has a special resonance and fulfills a different function in CMC: English is also starting to challenge French in Senegal as the language that represents communication with the outside world. Wolof and other indigenous codes, previously only used in the oral domain, have entered the written realm, and are mixed with French, English, Arabic, and Spanish in the text messages of young people.

Mixing languages is conventional practice in CMC in many contexts, signaling stances and orientations to the local social order. In chapter 3, Bock, Dalwai and Stroud write that in Cape Town, South Africa, young people mix Afrikaans, isiXhosa, Kaaps, and English in their texts; Afrikaans, as the language of the former apartheid regime, is associated with ‘white’ political conservatism, but local (spoken) varieties of Afrikaans, such as Kaaps and mixed English-Afrikaans carry strongly positive values of colored identity, community solidarity and local belonging. Similarly, complex attitudes exist in relation to isiXhosa. While varieties based on the codified standard are often perceived as pure, correct and carriers of the culture, young black urban speakers tend to stigmatize this deep Xhosa as rural and old-fashioned. For them, urban mixed varieties, while commonly seen as ‘slang’ or ‘incorrect’, also index cool, sophisticated urbanity.

The social meanings of particular codes are rooted in historical events and carried on in the collective memory of the community. Deumert (chapter 6) explores the revival of Afrikaans-based Tsotsitaal online, a linguistically hybrid code which evokes a particular time and place in South Africa’s history (1950s Sophiatown). The term *tsotsi* refers to a small-scale criminal, and *taal* is Afrikaans for ‘language’ so Tsotsitaal literally means thug language or language of criminals; however, it also evokes streetwise urbanity, resistance to oppression, youth, and masculinity, and is linked to “performative displays of linguistic virtuosity”. Afrikaans-based Tsotsitaal is fairly common on

Facebook and Twitter, yet writing in Tsotsitaal online is not habitual practice and is thus experienced self-consciously as marked, as exploring a different and unfamiliar voice.

In other instances, a code can fulfill an aspirational function linked to fandom. Although many global K-pop oriented youth contribute to fan sites mainly in English, Shinhee Lee's exploration of global K-pop microblogs in chapter 11 illustrates how young fans attempt to use rudimentary and often incorrect Korean kinship terms and short popular Korean informal expressions to establish solidarity and "linguistic fellowship" and "imagined closeness" with K-pop artists. For K-pop fans who have very little proficiency in Korean the Korean language serves as a connector – a relationship-building device and tool for social bonding.

The interplay between global hip-hop English and local languages characteristic of so many settings (e.g. Alim et al. 2009; Cutler 2014; Pennycook 2007a; Terkourafi 2010) is illustrated in Garley's piece (chapter 5) which explores how German hip-hop youth engage in intensive linguistic borrowing from English and stylization of English borrowings in ways that involve the complex application of morphological, phonological, and orthographic knowledge from multiple linguistic systems. In the German-language Internet hip-hop discussion forum MZEE.com, participants' use of variant orthography is a marker of sociocultural identity while also signaling engagement in both global and local subcultural hip-hop practices.

For diasporic Jamaicans, described by Hinrichs in chapter 1, blogs written in Patois, and Standard Jamaican English serve as important points of contact for sharing information, opinions, folk knowledge, nostalgia, group belonging, and national identity, yet, online writers may also engage in double-voicing using the "Rasta" voice in a humorous way to align with a worldview about black oppression pervading every aspect of life. In chapter 9, Swinehart shows how posting Aymara rap songs on YouTube serves a similar function for indigenous Andeans, and Aymaras from the city of El Alto for communicating with their counterparts abroad, with other hip-hop artists and fans through the musical genre of hip hop. Swinehart also shows how YouTube provides a space where non-indigenous advocates for indigenous cultural and political rights, and migrants from the Andean republics of Bolivia, Peru, and Ecuador to countries like Argentina, Spain and the USA can encounter contemporary indigenous Andean cultural production like Wayna Rap, and engage with other speakers of indigenous Andean languages. Among the Mexican heritage bilinguals in the USA described by Cutler in chapter 7, Spanish at times symbolizes ethnic authenticity and ties to the homeland (Mexico) and in others, an anti-colonial anti-racist stance vis-à-vis the US. However, it is

also common for YouTube comments to contain some mixing with English and hybrid, highly inventive forms of orthography that index knowledge of English and American (US) culture and stances of belonging.

Despite the fact that hip-hop youth with an immigrant origin rap in Norwegian, they are rejected by some for not using the “right” kind of Norwegian. Røyneland’s contribution (chapter 8) explores how young people in Norway navigate linguistic ownership and belonging on YouTube. Following a rap video posted by a Peruvian-Colombian-Norwegian rapper “Pumba”, some YouTubers contest while others affirm and align with the rapper’s claim to a mixed identity and to be part of a new multicultural multiethnolectal Norway on the basis of language. Moreover, as Evers shows in her in-depth ethnographic study in chapter 2, young Muslim women in Marseille with cultural ties to North Africa make special efforts to learn Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) and use Standard Parisian French (as opposed to the local Marseillais dialect or immigrant “project” Marseillais French they grew up with) as important symbolic resources (along with adopting Muslim dress, i.e. jilbab, hijab, etc.) for signaling an ideological commitment to greater religious piety; using MSA and Gulf Arabic on social media are thus vital resources for connecting with the larger Muslim community or *ummah* outside of France and particularly the Arab Gulf states (Saudi Arabia, Oman, etc.) where many of them aspire to live one day.

The chapters collectively show that for many (but not all) young people around the world, the ordinary everyday way to interact is to draw on a large variety of linguistic resources at many levels: within a turn, at the lexical level, but also within and across morpheme boundaries using hybrid orthographies. In fact, using a single code or standard written norms in CMC is often highly marked except in very particular circumstances. Code choice is also highly indexical; former colonial languages have the expected social and academic resonances in post-colonial settings, but in CMC, playing with them and mixing them can be a resource for challenging their current or former hegemonic status or for signaling global cosmopolitan alignments.

Using standard orthography is also unusual (although not necessarily for every language); CMC is a place where standard written norms are flouted (McSweeney 2016) and where writers have a great deal of freedom to be funny and creative (Deumert 2014a). This kind of play, however, may be more rampant in some languages than others as alluded to earlier (e.g. English in post-colonial settings versus indigenous ones like Zulu or Wolof or institutionalized standard languages like MSA in Islamic communities).

### **Overarching generalization about multilingual youth practices in CMC**

This volume, following in a now robust tradition of CMC research, focuses quite squarely on the affordances of text-based communication (Androutsopoulos 2013a) using discourse analytic methods. Rather than exploring the distribution of languages or language variation in CMC, the object of investigation is focused on the creative, identity-constructing, and metapragmatic dimensions of personal expression and interpersonal communication. Now that the field has moved beyond the question of whether online/digital communication is more like speech or writing (McSweeney 2016), we can engage in a more nuanced understanding of digital writing as something unique and distinct unto itself with elements of orality and standard writing, but not simply a blending of the two. Rather than simply an impoverished or informal, speech-like form of written communication, digital online writing is presented as a new form with its own evolving written and visual conventions for expressing affect, stance, and illocutionary force (Sebba 2007; Thompson & Filik 2016; Darics 2013; Iorio 2009; Diego & Lage 2013; Soffer 2012; Sabaté i Dalmau 2012). This is not to say that the speech-like norms that are emerging online go uncontested. In the absence of official policies and institutional control online, individuals often feel the urge to engage in their own “folk linguistic policing” and linguisticism (Back & Zepeda 2013; Heyd 2014).

The studies in this volume illustrate how global youth engage in a range of visual affective textual practices with the added dimension of multilingualism. The mixing of languages in digital writing often reflects oral practices (Deumert, Bock, Dalwai & Stroud, Evers, Lexander, Cutler, and Hinrichs), but it can also reflect users’ attempts to test out their language skills in a low-stakes environment (Shinhee Lee, Evers) or assert linguistic rights (Cutler, Røyneland). The written mode also gives writers a much larger range of orthographic and graphemic options, allowing them to experiment with different interlingual variants (Garley, Lexander, Evers, Cutler). Thus, it is possible to see digital writing, not just as a unique form of expression, but also one that gives writers a whole range of written *and* oral resources from any and all languages in their repertoires. A key dimension of these practices is their creativity and playfulness (e.g. Deumert 2014a; Jones & Schieffelin 2009), drawing on insider knowledge about language variation and ideologies of language. It is in these interactions that we observe how speakers reevaluate the indexical values of speech forms (Agha 2008), instilling them with new meanings, but also at times discussing, policing, and contesting these practices (Cutler, Røyneland, and Swinehart). Thus, observing the multilingual practices of global



youth is a window into how speech styles, dialects, and languages are being reevaluated at the local and the global level, reflecting ongoing social shifts in the indexical values of these various codes (Alexander, Evers, Shinhee Lee, Deumert, Bock, and Dalwai & Stroud).

The chapters in the volume illustrate how speakers themselves often freely mix language forms and writing systems as if their repertoires were consolidated and unified rather than compartmentalized. Thus, online multilingual communication appears to be contributing to the blurring of boundaries between languages as young people routinely draw from their multilingual, competencies to construct heteroglossic, polylingual, and polyphonous utterances (Agha 2008; Jørgensen et. al. 2015). One final question is whether CMC is paving the way for local, indigenous, and minority language literacy practices (Alexander 2011a, b) versus ever-greater linguistic homogenization (Belling & de Bres 2014; Berezkina 2016). While we do not have a definitive answer to this question, the studies presented here illustrate that multilingual interaction is quite common and increasingly part of the way youth around the world communicate with each other. We see that young people are actively writing in minority, indigenous, or marginalized youth languages with a mainly oral tradition (e.g. Wolof, isiXhosa, Kaaps, Tsostitaal, Iscamtho, Aymara). But we also know that despite these highly heteroglossic practices, it is also increasingly common for people to use English in their daily CMC interactions (Belling & de Bres 2015; Durham 2003; Wodak & Wright 2004; Wright 2004) so the effects of the digital dominance of English on multilingualism and minority/indigenous languages in CMC will need to be examined for many years to come before we know the answer.

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