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Relational Work and the Display of Multilingualism in Two Facebook Groups

1. Introduction

In this paper on data taken from the social network site Facebook in 2008 and 2009, we explore the research interface between politeness theory and identity construction within interpersonal pragmatics (Locher/Graham 2010: 2). Our aim is to understand better how two particular groups of Facebook users employ language in status updates (SU) and responses to status updates (RSU) when creating a persona online. Lee (2011) for Facebook and Zappavigna (2012) for Twitter speak of status updates or tweets as instances of micro-blogging, i.e. “short messages on the web designed for self-reporting about what one is doing, thinking, or feeling at any moment” (Lee 2011: 111), and consider them as contributing to “an ongoing performance of identity” (Zappavigna 2012: 38; cf. also Jones/Schieffelin/Smith 2011: 2012). Building on previous research (Bolander/Locher 2010; in press), our special focus lies on the use of more than one language code in Facebook status updates. In particular, we wish to explore how code-switching, as one means through which multilingualism is performed, is displayed in the SUs and RSUs and where we can find

links to relational work and identity construction. Example (1) is a case in point:

- (1) SU: E Peter is full of sunshine, euphoria and bliss. yay!
RSU1: SG “chani o eini ha? ;)” [posted by Manuel]
RSU2: SG muesch aber z’erscht e bitz durch d’höll damit sie iifahrt :) [posted by Peter]
RSU3: SG chönnti gloubs grad mithaute...samstag umher? sind im x [posted by Manuel]
RSU4: G wir im presswerk bei toni rios, kommt doch nachher [posted by Peter]
RSU5: G klingt nicht mal so übel, mal sehen [posted by Manuel]
RSU1: SG ‘can I also have one? ;)’ [posted by Manuel]
RSU2: SG ‘first you need to go through hell a bit so that it can kick in properly :) [posted by Peter]
RSU3: SG ‘I think I qualify...around on Saturday? we’re at the x’ [posted by Manuel]
RSU4: G ‘we’ll be in the [restaurant name and singer], why don’t you come by afterwards’ [posted by Peter]
RSU5: G ‘doesn’t sound bad, we’ll see’ [posted by Manuel]

In (1), the Swiss German¹ (SG) and Standard German (G) speaking Facebooker Peter shares his state of happiness with his Facebook friends in a status update composed in English, thus projecting a happy persona. This status update triggers five responses which make up a conversation between Peter and his friend Manuel. RSU1 is written in Swiss German and humorously (as indicated by the smiley ;)) implies that Peter’s feeling of bliss must be drug/cigarette induced. Peter responds – in Swiss German – that

¹ We use the term ‘Swiss German’ as an umbrella term to refer to the many Swiss dialects. It does not denote a single variety of German.

Manuel first has to go through hell so that the effect can take proper hold (RSU2). This is followed by a comment by Manuel, in Swiss German, who confirms that he qualifies. Switching to Standard German, he then asks whether Peter is available to meet offline on Saturday. The final two RSUs in (1) are written in Standard German and negotiate a potential meeting at the weekend.

Depicted in (1) is a brief interaction in Standard German and Swiss German, triggered by a status update in English. We argue that we not only see several languages employed here, but that this display of multilingualism can also be exploited for identity construction. In order to explore this interface, the paper begins by positioning our project within theoretical approaches to the relational aspect of language use, and then reports on previous findings with respect to Facebook and our project in particular. We then proceed to discuss the occurrence and functions of code-switching before linking this question back to identity construction and theory building.

2. Relational work, politeness theory and identity construction

The theoretical interest we take in this paper is embedded within 'interpersonal pragmatics'. The term is "used to designate examinations of interactions between people that both affect and are affected by their understandings of culture, society, and their own and others' interpretations" with the aim of shedding light on the interpersonal/relational side of linguistic interaction (Locher/Graham 2010: 2). Interpersonal pragmatics aims at better understanding how people create relational effects in their situated contexts by engaging in 'relational work', i.e. "all aspects of the work in-

vested by individuals in the construction, maintenance, reproduction and transformation of interpersonal relationships among those engaged in social practice” (Locher/Watts 2008: 96).

The fact that there is a relational side to communication is well-established. Early research by Watzlawick/Beavin/Jackson (1967) highlights that there is a relational side in addition to an ideational side of language, and work in systemic functional linguistics by Halliday (e.g. 1978) has made the interpersonal side one of its pillars (next to the ideational and textual). Politeness research has also made the relational aspect of communication its central focus by introducing the notion of *face* and *face work* (cf. Goffman 1967; Brown/Levinson 1987; for overviews of the development of politeness research cf. Locher 2012; 2013). Goffman’s work (e.g., 1967) in particular deals with how people interact with each other, how they form in-groups and out-groups, and how they thus position themselves vis-à-vis each other. Politeness research and work on identity construction thus share the fundamental interest in the relational side of language use.

By following Bucholtz and Hall (2005: 587), who claim that identity “is intersubjectively rather than individually produced and interactionally emergent rather than assigned in an a priori fashion”, we pursue an understanding of identity that perceives it as fundamentally in flux and shaped in interaction (cf. also Mendoza-Denton 2002; Joseph 2004; Locher 2008). While many variables, such as age, ethnicity, socio-economic background, sex, schooling and appearance are important for identity construction, language is a central resource. A concept that helps us to pinpoint aspects of this identity construction is ‘positioning’, drawn from Davies and Harré’s (1990) work on narratives: “Positioning [...] is the discursive process whereby selves are located in conversations as observably and subjectively coherent participants in jointly produced story lines” (Davies/Harré 1990: 46). Creating an identity

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thus involves “the social positioning of self and other” (Bucholtz/Hall 2005: 586) in a particular situated context. This positioning can be explicit or implicit, and is fundamentally relational since ties between interactants are created and recreated, shaped, challenged and confirmed. Thurlow and Mroczek (2011: xxxiv) observe that “[n]o identity work happens outside of, or without a view to, relationships; acts of identity are also always acts of comparison, social distinction, and othering.” This latter point best brings home the connection between relational work and identity construction (Locher 2008).

In studying relational work and identity construction in data taken from computer-mediated communication (CMC), more specifically from the social network site Facebook, we are forced to ask ourselves whether we need to draw on different research tools. Androutsopoulos (2006: 420-421) points out that research on CMC has undergone several research stages already. In early literature, researchers attempted to find *the* language of the Internet (e.g. Crystal 2006), and they highlighted the influence of the technical medium on language use, thereby largely neglecting its social components. This important early research has now been refined and is complemented by taking into account “the interplay of technological, social, and contextual factors in the shaping of computer-mediated language practices, and the role of linguistic variability in the formation of social interaction and social identities on the Internet” (Androutsopoulos 2006: 421). The focus has thus shifted from large “listings of ‘prototypical’ features” of particular practices to a “user and community-centered approach” (Androutsopoulos 2006: 430; cf. also Herring 2007 and 2013; Thurlow/Mroczek 2011).

By concentrating on two focus groups of Facebook users, we are interested in exploring the particularities of their language use in this specific medium. While acknowledging that the computer-

mediated environment might shape interaction and that it affords interactants a novel means of communication, we also believe that it is legitimate to draw on established linguistic tools derived from research on ‘offline settings’ in order to grasp interaction online. This understanding also highlights that it has become difficult to separate the creation of offline and online identities in a clear-cut way (cf. e.g., Donath 1999; Turkle 1995 and 1996; Lee 2011). Especially in the case of social networks sites such as Facebook, we can indeed often speak of “anchored relationships” (Zhao/Grasmuck/Martin 2008), which are grounded in offline social realities (cf. also Ellison/Steinfeld/Lampe 2007; Lewis et al. 2008; Mayer/Puller 2008; Lee 2011).² These “anchored relationships” are important for the multilingual language practices we observed in our data. We also believe that face concerns are never suspended in interaction – no matter what communicative channel is used – and that relational work is hence also at play in interactions where no face-to-face interaction takes place. Before presenting results demonstrating this, we will first describe our data and the acts of positioning we established therein in previous work.

3. Identity construction and positioning in two Facebook focus groups

Facebook can be defined as a social network site (SNS). Following Boyd and Ellison (2007), SNSs are

² However, nowadays it is also possible and common to join interest groups in social network sites such as Facebook. These group members do not necessarily know each other offline.

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web-based services that allow individuals to

- 1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system,
- 2) articulate a list of other users ['friends'] with whom they share a connection, and
- 3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system. (Boyd/Ellison 2007)

On Facebook, account holders construct a public or semi-public profile and they become 'friends' with other Facebook users, an act which generally enables them to view and navigate one another's personal profiles and walls. Although we are now (in 2012) witnessing an increase in Facebook pages run by organisations and in practices based on participation in interest groups, generally it is still fair to claim that "SNSs are primarily organised around people, not interests"; in creating a Facebook account, an individual constructs a "personal (or 'egocentric') network" (Boyd/Ellison 2007).

Facebook can be considered a multi-modal SNS, which offers users the opportunity for both synchronous (e.g., chat) and asynchronous (e.g., writing an SU or RSU) communication. In this paper, we are interested in two asynchronous strongly text-based activities, the authoring of SUs and RSUs, although we acknowledge the importance of taking multi-modal data into account (Thurlow/Mroczek 2011: xxv) and discuss aspects thereof elsewhere (Bolander/Locher 2010). In our analysis of these activities, we worked with two focus groups: FG-S and FG-UK. FG-S is constituted by a group of ten individuals who are living in Switzerland, mainly students and young professionals; FG-UK is a group of ten students who were studying in the UK at the time of data collection (December 2008-January 2009). While the focus groups are labelled according to the interlocutors' place of residence, we do not treat nationality as a variable.

Our selection of these two groups was motivated by our access to them (the Swiss group is constituted by our own friends and we managed to get into contact with the UK group through a public post to a mailing list run by a university in the north of England) and our aim to have comparable data (students and young professionals). For ethical reasons, we obtained permission to use the information posted by our informants on their personal profile pages and Facebook walls and used pseudonyms for all participants (cf. Herring 1996; Eysenbach/Till 2001; Ess/AoIR ethics working committee 2002; Bolander/Locher 2013). In selecting data that was posted prior to our contact with our informants we managed to avoid the observer's paradox. To choose the two groups we work with in this paper (overall we have 74 participants in the Swiss data set and 58 in the UK data set) we focused on one anchor person from each of the two larger data sets and then selected nine of their friends. These nine other individuals were chosen on the basis of the number of mutual friends they had with the anchor person. By proceeding in this manner we were able to locate a (loose) community of practice (Eckert/McConnell-Ginet 1992).

Although we downloaded all information posted on the individuals' personal profile pages and their walls, in this paper we focus on status updates (N=474) and reactions to status updates (N=795). At the time of data collection, the SUs were triggered with the prompt 'What are you doing now?' and the name of the updater was already provided in the entry field. Our motivation to analyse SUs is based on the fact that they are the most prominent type of action performed by the Facebook account holders on their own walls. As outlined in Bolander/Locher (2010; in press), individuals execute twelve different action types on their walls, including, for example, accepting gifts, uploading photos and creating groups. In our previous research, we managed to identify a total of 481

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actions in FG-S and 673 in FG-UK. Out of these 227 (47%, FG-S) and 247 (37%, FG-UK) were SUs. While not all of the twenty participants were active authors of SUs (two participants in FG-S did not write any at all), we kept all twenty individuals in our study. Ties between participants were seen as more important than the number of SUs each participant wrote, and, in addition, all participants, whether they author SUs or not, are part of the 'audience' for whom the SUs are written. Since our analysis of the data made manifest that reacting to a status update also constitutes an important practice on Facebook, we decided to include an analysis of the RSUs. In doing so, we were able to explore emergent interactions and to reflect upon these in light of identity construction.

Before turning to the results of our analysis of the display of code-switching and potential ties to relational work and identity work, it is worth briefly summarising what we previously researched with regard to identity construction in Facebook. Our earlier research, presented in Bolander/Locher (2010) and Bolander/Locher (in press), constitutes the foundation on which the current study rests. To research identity construction in SUs, we started out with a bottom-up qualitative analysis of the 474 status updates. On the basis of a close content analysis, we developed second order labels of acts of positioning.³ Examples (2) and (3) show two such second order labels: 'Work' and 'relationship'.

(2) Lauren has finally finished semester one ... woop woop!

(3) Sarah is engaged to John! yay!

The act of positioning in (2) was labelled as 'work', since the SU foregrounds Lauren's identity as that of a student and the one in (3) as 'relationship', since Sarah emphasises her engagement to

³ The coder agreement was at 80 percent and any remaining problems were resolved after discussion between the two authors.

John. As the examples show, the acts can be explicit (as in 3) or implicit (as in 2). Work and relationship are two of five main categories of acts of positioning. In addition to work, which includes SUs in which an individual indexes their employment or studies, and 'relationship' in which interlocutors reference relationships with other parties, we identified 'pastime', i.e., references to things someone does in their free time, like reading, shopping, going out, 'personality', i.e., references to an individual's state of mind or character traits like being sad or happy, and 'humour'. In the case of the latter, we argued that in authoring a humorous SU an individual positions themselves as humorous. Although humour could have been subsumed under the broader heading of personality, its salience in the data warranted treating it as a separate category. In coding the SUs, we allowed for double labelling. Thus, in the case of (2) above, in addition to being labelled as 'work', the SU is also coded as 'personality', since the exclamation *woop woop* at the end of the SU signals the interlocutor's happiness at this particular moment in time. The same is true for Example (3), as the first statement is followed with the exclamation *yay!*.

Although there were certain idiosyncratic differences (cf. Bolander/Locher in press for a discussion), the systematic coding of the data showed that personality acts of positioning were the most prominent, followed by pastime, humour, work and relationship. For both focus groups the order was the same as was, strikingly, the frequencies of the acts. Thus, in FG-S (N=451), 45% of the SUs contained identity claims about personality; in FG-UK (N=649) the frequency was 46%. Similarly, pastime was 27% in FG-S and 25% in FG-UK, humour was 10% in both focus groups, work 8% in FG-S and 10% in FG-UK and relationship was 9% in both. For both groups, highlighting components of one's personality emerges as a

particularly important act which individuals perform through the authoring of SUs.

As a second step, we analysed how the RSUs respond to the identity claims made in the SUs. We thereby aimed to explore the *co*-construction of identity in accordance with our understanding of identity as intersubjectively produced (Bucholtz/Hall 2005: 587). We only focused on the first RSU (N=224). This methodological decision was motivated by the fact that the first RSU (in instances where there are more than one) creates an immediate link to the SU, whereas further RSUs are not necessarily tied to the original SU, but can instead take up issues raised in preceding RSUs.

In analysing the relationship between the SUs and the RSUs, we coded for four possibilities: 1) the SU receives no response, 2) the RSU confirms the identity claims made in the SU, 3) the RSU challenges the identity claims made in the SU, and 4) the RSU neither confirms nor challenges but makes other, further or new identity claims about the writer of the SU. The last category could also contain cases which were unclear with regard to identity claims. The results of this analysis made manifest that in 51% (FG-S, N=227)⁴ and 49% (FG-UK, N=247) of all cases the SU receives no response at all. Where an SU does receive a response, the tendency is for the RSU to confirm identity claims made by SU writers. This was the case for 33% of the RSUs in FG-S and 38% in FG-UK; again the frequencies are similar. In only 5% (FG-S) and 3% (FG-UK) of all instances did RSU authors challenge identity claims made by SU writers. Finally, 10% of the RSUs for both groups can be categorised as other. The strong presence of confirmations in both FG-S and FG-UK relative to challenges warrants concluding that individuals writing RSUs predominantly perform supportive relational work. The fact that 10% of the RSUs do something else than

⁴ As we recall, more than one act of positioning can be performed within a single SU.

confirm or challenge identity claims made in the SUs suggests that further more fine-grained research on the ‘other’ category is needed.

Overall, our theoretical approach (post-structuralist understanding of identity as co-constructed) and methodological approach (qualitative and quantitative analysis of SUs and RSUs) allowed us to develop a catalogue of acts of positioning, to identify tendencies with regard to the types of identity claims made, and to observe that supportive relational work is more prominent than challenges and other types of claims in RSUs in the case of our two focus groups.⁵ What we did not take into account in this study though was the languages interlocutors drew on when performing identity; nor did we consider potential links between code-switching and relational work and identity construction. We have now added to the original study by incorporating this new angle, which we will discuss in the following section.

⁵ In Bolander/Locher 2010, we also established what the status updates achieved from a more general perspective. In sequence of importance, the resulting categories were: State of mind (happy, angry, ...); Reference to action in progress; Reference to future action; Reflection on past events; Report on state of body; Report on location (S is in ...); Reference to completed action; Reference to likes; Expression of desire; Identity claim; Request for help/advice; Offer recommendations/advice; Send wishes; Quotation; Response; Metacomment on SU; Advertising something; Express thanks/gratification; Apologise; Reference to dislikes. This is comparable to Lee’s 2011 study which found that her 20 bilingual English-Cantonese Facebook friends also engaged in the following acts: “What are you doing right now?”; Everyday life; Opinion and judgment; Reporting mood; Away message; Initiating discourse; Addressing target audience; Quotation; Silence and interjection; Humour. While this paper is not the place to go into an in-depth comparison, it is nevertheless striking that many categories overlap.

4. Multilingual language display and code-switching in the two Facebook focus groups

The topic of code-switching (CS), understood as the “juxtaposition within the same speech exchange of passages of speech belonging to two different grammatical systems or subsystems” (Gumperz 1982: 59), is the newest area of research we have focused on in connection with our study of language use in SUs and RSUs. To a large extent, this research on code-switching is exploratory, since there is paucity of studies on code-switching in CMC. As Androutsopoulos (2013: 667) maintains, however, “[t]his marginalisation of CS bears no relation to the spread of the practice itself”. Indeed, “[g]iven the importance of multilingualism and the pervasiveness of digital media worldwide, it seems safe to assume that digitally-mediated communication [...] offers opportunities for written CS at an unprecedented scale” (Androutsopoulos 2013: 667).

In reviewing existing literature on the various discourse functions of code-switching in different modes of CMC, Androutsopoulos (2013: 681) identifies eight:

- a) switching for formulaic discourse purposes, including greetings, farewells, and good wishes;
- b) switching in order to perform culturally-specific genres such as poetry or joketelling;
- c) switching to convey reported speech (as opposed to the writer’s own speech);
- d) switching with repetition of an utterance for emphatic purposes;
- e) switching to index one particular addressee, to respond to language choices by preceding contributions, or to challenge other participants’ language choices;

- f) switching to contextualise a shift of topic or perspective, to distinguish between facts and opinion, information and affect, and so on;
- g) switching to mark what is being said as jocular or serious, and to mitigate potential face-threatening acts, for example through humorous CS in a dispreferred response or a request;
- h) switching to or from the interlocutor's code to index consent or dissent, agreement and conflict, alignment and distancing, and so on. (Androutsopoulos 2013: 681)

In addition to the identification of these central functions, Androutsopoulos (2013: 683) highlights the importance of code-switching in connection with identity construction, noting thereby that through a “pragmatically informed micro-analysis of CS in CMC” we can “identify how different codes in a group’s usage take on pragmatic functions and identity values, which cannot be assumed *a priori* based on the wider cultural associations of these languages”. This is in line with the approach to relational work and identity outlined in Section 2, where we also emphasise the importance of locally made judgments in social practice.

In this paper, we are interested in both the performance of code-switching in SUs and RSUs, and in potential links between code-switching and relational work and identity construction. This dual interest is reflected in our research questions: How is code-switching displayed in the SUs and RSUs? Where can we find links to relational work and identity construction?

To answer these questions we conducted an analysis of the 474 SUs and 795 RSUs. For each SU and RSU we coded for the presence/absence of different languages. In addition, we coded for switches between SUs and RSUs. This decision was data driven, as we recognised that there are many cases in which the switch does not occur within an SU or an RSU but between the two turns. This finding (which we will discuss below) highlights the need to conceptualise code-switching in Facebook as both individually pro-

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duced and co-constructed. In this sense, code-switching can be considered a form of ‘joint action’ in the sense of Clark (1996: 3), i.e., as “one that is carried out by an ensemble of people acting in coordination with each other”. In what follows we will present the quantitative findings with respect to the occurrence of multilingualism and code-switching to better glean central tendencies. We will illustrate these tendencies with examples that allow us to also discuss the functions of these displays of language competence.

We started by focusing on the languages used in the status updates, so as to have an overview of the first part, or initial ‘turn’ of the interaction. While we considered dialects in the German data, and distinguished between Swiss German and Standard German (we also found an instance of Bavarian), we did not differentiate between ‘dialects’ or ‘registers’ in the English data. This decision is based on the fact that we were not able to pick up dialect features in English writing in a reliable way since at times we might be merely dealing with non-standard spelling rather than the use of dialects. In the case of the distinction between Swiss German and Standard German,⁶ we could draw on spelling, lexicon and syntax, and the long tradition of writing in the different Swiss German dialects. Table 1 shows the various languages contained in the 227 FG-S and 247 FG-UK SUs.

As shown in Table 1, code-switching is predominantly used by individuals in the Swiss focus group. While English and German are the most frequently occurring varieties, these ten interlocutors draw on other languages too, a finding which likely reflects their language competence. In connection with identity construction,

⁶ All Swiss German speakers have Standard German available as a written and oral communication form. Standard German is learnt in kindergarten and at school (or picked up in the media before this) and is used in official contexts such as the school or parliament. Friends would usually address each other in dialect in face-to-face contexts, while it is customary to write in Standard German. There is, however, a long tradition of dialect writing for personal communication, poetry or literature.

the results show that the Swiss focus group projects a more multi-lingual group identity than the UK focus group.

Language	FG-S (n=227)	%	FG-UK (n=247)	%
English (EN)	186	81.9	245	99.2
Standard German	34	15		
Swiss German dialect	1	0.4		
EN + Standard German	2	0.9		
EN + Latin	1	0.4		
French + Spanish	1	0.4		
EN + French	1	0.4	1	0.4
EN + Asian language	1	0.4		
Gaelic			1	0.4
Total	227	99.8	247	100

Table 1: The languages contained in a status update

It is striking that the Swiss use English in 82 per cent of SUs, despite the fact that this is not the first language for the majority; two of the ten are bilingual (Swiss German, English),⁷ five have Swiss German as their first language but a high command of English; one is a native speaker of Swiss German with near native speaker competence in English and one is a native speaker of English with a high command of Swiss German (personal knowledge of the focus group members). This may reflect the relatively high level of English of many Swiss who go to university or complete higher education, coupled with the prestige English generally enjoys in Switzerland (Watts/Murray 2001), and the role of English as an

⁷ One of the two has English as her mother tongue, and learnt German as an L2 from a young age; the other was raised as a bilingual.

international *lingua franca*, which enables individuals with different linguistic repertoires to interact with one another (cf. Durham 2007 on English *lingua franca* use on a Swiss mailing list and Herring 2011: 342, who comments on “the use of English as a *lingua franca*, second language, or marker of (elite) social identities” as being “the ‘elephant in the room’”, which studies on CMC rarely discuss).

In contrast to our findings, Lee reports that the SUs of 20 bilingual English-Cantonese Facebookers showed that only 60 per cent wrote SUs predominantly in English. After “Facebook changed the prompt to ‘What’s on your mind’”, even “more Chinese and mixed-code messages were identified” (2011: 118-19). Lee (2011: 119) hypothesises that this might be due to the medium being perceived as more multilingual in the period after the prompt changed.⁸ Our Swiss focus group, eight of which do not have English as their first language, seems to pursue the ideology of English as a *lingua franca* in the SUs, while showing more language diversity in the RSUs, as we will show below.

As a second step, we analysed what languages appear in the reactions to status updates (Table 2). Since there are select instances in which the responses were solely performed through emoticons, we have included this category, but will not discuss it further here. As Table 2 demonstrates, there are striking differences between the two focus groups in terms of the variety and mix of languages. The UK-focus group predominantly answers in English (96.8%), so we are dealing with a group that does not draw on other languages for identity construction. There are only minor exceptions involving five instances of RSUs performed in both English and French and one in French alone. In the case of FG-S, we find a

⁸ As Lenihan 2011: 57 found in her study of the translation application of the Facebook *interface*, the base language of the platform interface of Facebook is still English, despite its ideological dedication to multilingualism.

wide range of languages. The RSUs are authored in English (alone or in combination with other language varieties), French, Standard German (alone or in combination with other language varieties), and Swiss German. The display of knowledge of a variety of different languages thus emerges as part of the set of acts of positioning that the Swiss focus group draws on regularly.

Language	RSUs FG-S (n=363)	%	RSUs FG-UK (n=432)	%
Emoticons only	7	1.9	8	1.9
English (EN)	190	52.3	418	96.8
EN + Afrikaans	2	0.6		
EN + French	1	0.3	5	1.2
EN + Standard German (G)	20	5.5		
EN + Italian	1	0.3		
EN + Spanish	1	0.3		
EN + Swiss German (SG)	9	2.5		
EN + SG + G	2	0.6		
French			1	0.2
Standard German (G)	75	20.7		
G + Bavarian	1	0.3		
G + French	1	0.3		
G + SG + Italian	1	0.3		
G + SG dialect	8	2.2		
Swiss German	44	12.1		
Total	363	100	432	100

Table 2: The languages used in RSUs (ordered alphabetically, N=795)

This language variation does not only stand out when we compare the two focus groups, but also when we compare the SUs and RSUs. Whereas 81.9% of all SUs in FG-S were in English, the figure

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for English-only RSUs has dropped to 52.3%. Paralleling this decrease in English-only entries, we find an increase in the use of other languages and varieties. English is combined with Afrikaans, French, Italian, Standard Spanish, Swiss German and Standard German in a total of 10.1% of the RSUs; German-only RSUs account for 20.7% of the total, and combinations of Standard German with other varieties for 3.1%; and 12.1% of all RSUs are Swiss German only. If we think back to the percentages of Standard German SUs (15%) and Swiss German SUs (0.4%), it is evident that that both have gained ground.

The close analysis of both the SUs and the RSUs provides insight into the display of multilingualism, and shows that whereas SUs tend to be monolingual, RSUs are often multilingual. It also shows that we frequently find code-switching within the RSUs (cf. the combination of languages in Table 2 above). However, code-switching not only occurs within the RSU, but also between the SU and the RSU. In analysing code-switching we thus coded for a) instances in which the SU is written in one language and the RSU in another, and b) instances in which the language changes within the RSU turn itself. In the case of the second option, we are by default also dealing with cases where there is a code-switch between the SU and the RSU. Code-switching was not explored in the SUs because of the tendency for them to be English-only. Results are presented in Table 3.

While Table 2 merely shows the presence of different languages in the 795 RSUs, Table 3 lists the 124 cases (16%) in which code-switching occurs (n=118, FG-S and n=6, FG-UK) between SUs and RSUs, or within RSUs. This means that in 84% of all RSUs there is in fact a match of the language in the SU with the language used in the RSU. Thus, overall code-switching is not as prominent a practice in these two related Facebook activities as one might expect from previous research (Androutsopoulos 2013). At the same time,

there is evidently no necessary connection between high frequency and degree of importance, and thus no reason for precluding analysis of these different types of code-switching and reflecting upon links to relational work and identity construction.

	FG-S	%	FG-UK	%
SU in one L – RSU entirely in another L in first position	24	20.3		
SU in one L – RSU entirely in another L in following position	47	39.8	1	16.7
L change within the RSU turn	47	39.8	5	83.3
Presence overall	118	99.9	6	100

Table 3: The presence of code-switching between SUs and RSUs and within RSUs (N=124)

In Table 3 we see that 71 RSUs (60.1% of the 118 in FG-S) are written entirely in a different language than the SU that triggered the comments in FG-S (we will not consider FG-UK here as the numbers are so small). 24 of these occur directly after the SU (i.e. in first position in a sequence of RSUs), while 47 appear in a later position and could thus be influenced by the language choice in the RSUs that precede them rather than by the language in the SU. Furthermore, 47 RSUs (39.8%) in first or subsequent position contain code-switching within the RSU text. Example (4) shows an SU authored in Standard German, followed by one RSU entirely in Swiss German and one in a mixture of Standard German and Swiss German.

- (4) SU: G Stefanie “und Nietzsche weinte..” ..
 RSU1: SG wägedäm mueschdu nid truurig si
 wägedämwägedäm rädäbäng... [posted by
 Adrian]

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- RSU2: G/SG sag das im Nietzsche., oder em Herr Dr. Breuer?
.. oder dr Anna O. oderoderoder em Freud?..
[posted by Stefanie]
- SU: G 'Stefanie "and Nietzsche wept"'
- RSU1: SG 'you don't have to be sad because of that because of
that <nonce word>' [posted by Adrian]
- RSU2: G/SG 'tell this to Nietzsche., or Dr. Breuer? ... or Anna O.
or or or or Freud? ..' [posted by Stefanie]

In the SU in (4), Stefanie uses the conjunction *and* to create an association between herself and the book *And Nietzsche Wept* (written by the American author and professor of psychiatry Yalom, in 1994). The Swiss-German reaction to the status update in RSU1 depicts part of a Swiss-German song (titled *O Susanna*). Since the song is about being sad (as a result of a break-up), it plays on the grief mentioned in the book title referred to by Stefanie in the SU. If we think back to the functions of code-switching mentioned above, we can argue that the code-switching in this example can be linked to the performance of a culturally-specific genre; here a Swiss-German song. We can further claim that in drawing on his cultural knowledge, the author of the RSU positions himself as having a Swiss-German identity. In RSU2, Stefanie responds in German and refers to the characters in the book. Her use of articles (*im, em, dr*) and the repetition of *oderoderoder* – a typical Swiss terminator of sentences in spoken interaction – give the RSU a Swiss German non-standard flavour. Stefanie thus accommodates to Adrian's language choice and thereby demonstrates alignment.

A closer look at the RSUs that contain code-switching *within* the RSU shows that in FG-S 39% of the code-switches are of this kind (n=47), and in FG-UK, 83.3% (n=5). For the UK focus group, all five instances are code-switches between English and French (see (7) below for an example). For the Swiss focus group, there is greater variation. To recapitulate from Table 2 above, the central code-

switches are as follows. English is combined with other varieties in 76% of the instances. The most frequently occurring combinations are with Standard German (43%) and Swiss German (19%). English, Swiss German and Standard German account for an additional 4%, as does English and Afrikaans; English and French, English and Italian, and English and Spanish account for a further 2% in each instance. Combinations of Standard German with other varieties make up the remaining 23%. The most frequently occurring code-switch is between Standard German and Swiss German (17%). There are also instances of code-switching between Standard German, Swiss German and Italian (2%), Standard German and Bavarian (a German dialect) (2%) and Standard German and French (2%). While highlighting the prominence of English on the Facebook walls of both of our focus groups, these results draw attention to the increase in importance of Standard German and Swiss German in the RSUs of FG-S – a point we will return to shortly.

Direction of switch in FG-S	n=	%
SU English – RSU entirely in Standard German	33	46
SU English – RSU entirely in Swiss German dialect	26	37
SU English – RSU entirely in Spanish	1	1
SU Standard German – RSU entirely in English	2	3
SU Standard German – RSU entirely in SG dialect	9	13
Total	71	100

Table 4: SU written in one language – RSU entirely written in another (n=71)

A closer look at the 71 code-switches *between* SUs and RSUs in Table 4 also shows that both Standard German and Swiss German

gain in importance.⁹ This means that some English status updates prompt Standard German or Swiss German responses. Methodologically, this finding shows the importance of going beyond an analysis of “single turns or posts and examin[ing] the sequential organisation of codeswitching within threads of dialogically related posts or messages” (Androutsopoulos 2013: 683). As stated above, it also warrants conceptualising code-switching as co-constructed by different parties in interaction.

As Table 4 highlights, the direction of the switch when comparing SUs and RSUs is mainly from English to Standard German (46%) and Swiss German (37%). What we clearly see is that Swiss German has gained ground in the RSUs, which regularly developed into small conversations.¹⁰ The prominence of English in the SUs suggests that posters may be addressing a readership with mixed language background, i.e. it is likely that some of their Facebook friends have little Standard German and/or Swiss German competence. They may even be attempting to reach the entire public and thus opt to use English as a *lingua franca*. However, once addressivity is less broad, they switch to the variety they usually use when interacting with one another. In many cases the prime language of these relationships “anchored” in offline settings is Standard German (predominantly in written

⁹ Here we no longer distinguish between the first and subsequent RSUs. What is of primary interest are linguistic differences between the two main activity types: SUs and RSUs.

¹⁰ Earlier research on multilingualism and code-switching has also pointed to the use of both Swiss German and Standard German in written CMC. In his study of Swiss-German Internet Relay Chat (IRC), Siebenhaar 2006 discusses the role played by these varieties and compares the frequency of use in regional (n=6) versus supra-regional (n=7) Swiss chats. His analysis shows that Standard German is more prominent in the supra-regional chats in which adults participate, while Swiss German gains in importance in the regional chats preferred by teenagers. The tendency to use a *lingua franca*, like German in the case of Siebenhaar’s 2006 data, in contexts in which one is addressing a broader audience, is corroborated by our data for the Swiss focus group, which uses English as a *lingua franca* for this purpose.

communication) or Swiss German (predominantly in oral communication) (cf. Zhao/Grasmuck/Martin 2008 for a discussion of anchored relationships and identity construction; cf. also Bolander/Locher 2010; Bolander/Locher in press). An illustration of this can be seen in Example (1) presented at the beginning of the paper, where two friends discuss the possibility of meeting up at the weekend. As the example shows, while the SU is in English, the ensuing dialogue between Peter and Manuel is in Swiss German and Standard German. In drawing on a combination of English (as a lingua franca and as the language of the initial ‘turn’) and Standard German or Swiss German (as the common code), an RSU author directs their contribution at a more specific group of addressees. Evidently, they are only likely to switch codes in the RSU if their target audience has access to the codes in question. In opting to author an RSU in a code which is accessible to their target audience, the RSU writer simultaneously creates an in-group and an out-group. The former is made up of those who are explicitly identified as target recipients, for example, through naming, or quoting (cf. Bolander 2012 and 2013 for a discussion of ways of creating responsiveness in the genre of personal/diary blogs), or implicitly become potential recipients, by virtue of their command of the varieties in question. The out-group consists of those who do not have access to the varieties in question and can thus no longer follow and become actively involved in the discussion which ensues. That this practice of using the lingua franca in the SU and switching to in-group languages in the RSUs is common was confirmed in an informal discussion with students of a course on computer-mediated communication in 2008, who were asked whether and why they switched languages in RSUs. What we seldom find (as indicated in Table 4) are English responses to Standard German or Swiss-German SUs. Presumably, in such contexts RSU authors choose not to respond with a language (English) that would index a move away from the

language or variety they regularly communicate in (Swiss German or Standard German).

If we reflect upon this finding in light of the functions of code-switching mentioned above, we can argue that such code-switching serves to index closeness between interlocutors. To this we can add that these switches evidence friendship identity claims. We also see this in Example (5) where the SU triggered one RSU.

- (5) SU: E Marina is coughing like hell.
RSU: I/G/SG oh poverina! Ich bin auch so was von verpfnüselt. hass es. nase schon ganz rot vom schütze. bist am mi nachmittag in zb? gute besserung principessa! [posted by Luisa]
'ahh poor little thing. I also have such a terrible cold. hate it. my nose is already totally red from blowing it. will you be at the university library on Wednesday afternoon? get well princess!'

Whereas Marina's SU is in English (addressed to her Facebook friends as a whole and thus to an unspecified group of addressees), Luisa, who is also a close friend offline, self-selects and responds with a creative RSU in Standard German that contains Swiss German (*verpfnüselt*, *sch[n]ütze*) and Italian (*poverina*, *principessa*) words. This RSU is specifically addressed to Marina, rather than to the readership at large (although it is witnessed by this very readership), and creates common ground between the two friends since both have a cold. Furthermore, the RSU is written in the language that the two use to communicate offline (mainly Swiss-German in spoken interaction and Standard German in written interaction), a factor which is also made manifest by the content. Next to displaying multilingual language skills, the RSU thus also serves to make a public friendship claim.

A further example of alignment is presented in (6), an example from the UK focus group.

- (6) SU: E Gemma will be in Paris with Mrs [NAME] this time tomorrow! Happy Honeymoon!
- RSU1: E/F urgh as if. you sicken me Gemma I will be in a presentation sweating and shaking haha have a tres belle time! X [posted by Caroline]
- ...
- RSU4: F bonjour bon voyage [posted by Anna]

The SU is written in English and triggers seven RSUs. In RSU1 “have a *tres belle* time” contains an alignment to the travel destination Paris, that Gemma mentions for her honeymoon (this is a case of code-switching within an RSU). RSU2-3 and 5-7 are written in English. In RSU4, however, the author writes entirely in French to align with Gemma. The words *bonjour* and *bon voyage* are generally known French words so that we can speak of an instance of language evocation (cf. Bleichenbacher 2007). French is also stereotypically considered the language of love, so the author of the RSU may additionally be performing supportive relational work with regard to Gemma’s marriage. As our previous research showed, we commonly find supportive relational work in reactions to status updates; the current research of our data makes manifest that such supportive relational work or acts of alignment is one of the most prominent functions of code-switching.

Finally, it is worth drawing attention to two further functions of code-switching in our Facebook data, which were also mentioned by Androutsopoulos (2013: 681): “switching for formulaic discourse purposes” (7) and switching to index humour (8).

- (7) SU: E Marina had a wonderful day.
- RSU: G/SG/E **war wirklich ein toller tag. hoffe kommst voran mit schreiben!! bis gli, kiss** [posted by Sandra]
- ‘[It] really was a great day. hope you are progressing well with writing!! until soon, kiss’*

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(8) SU: E Jan macht heut nachmittag eine kinderkrrippe
auf.via Twitter

[two people jokingly offer to bring their kids along]

RSU6: kein problem für supernanno (oder was ist die
männliche form einer nanny?) [posted by Jan]

SU: G *'This afternoon Jan is opening a crèche. via Twitter'*

[two people jokingly offer to bring their kids along]

RSU6: *'no problem for supernanno (or what is the male form
of a nanny?)' [posted by Jan]*

In (7), the SU is in English, yet the reaction is in Standard German (bold), Swiss German (underlined) and English (italics). The presence of the code-switching in the closings at the end of the RSU indicates that it is used for formulaic discourse purposes. In (8), there is code-switching in the RSU, as the author uses the English term *nanny* in a response which is otherwise written in Standard German. In addition, he creates the form *supernanno*, which could be argued to be the Italian male derivative of the word *nanny*. In showing his knowledge of the TV show *Supernanny* he plays with the possible masculine and feminine forms of the word *nanny*, while simultaneously referencing the cultural stereotype that nannies tend to be female. In producing this humorous RSU, Jan constructs his identity as that of a humorous and multilingual individual. As these examples indicate, the analysis of Facebook SUs and RSUs provide fruitful grounds for the study of code-switching and for reflecting upon links between code-switching and identity construction.

5. Conclusion and outlook

In our analysis of code-switching presented in this paper, we were interested firstly in how code-switching is displayed in the SUs and RSUs, and secondly in where we can find links to relational work and identity construction. To address these two issues, we analysed 474 SUs and 795 RSUs. The data was selected from two focus groups (FG-S and FG-UK), each made up of ten participants.

Overall English was prominent in the SUs and RSUs authored by both FG-S and FG-UK participants, a finding which is striking for the FG-S group, since the majority of them do not have English as a first language. At the same time, the Swiss focus group also makes use of a variety of other languages when authoring SUs and particularly RSUs. In using a range of languages, the FG-S participants position themselves as multilingual individuals who have an assortment of linguistic resources they can draw on.

In addition to our discussion of multilingualism, we focused on code-switching. It was analysed both between SUs and RSUs, and within RSUs. Through our analysis we underlined associations between activity type (SU or RSU) and audience. Whereas SUs are addressed to a more public group (of one's Facebook friends) and hence authored in English as a *lingua franca*, RSUs are more often directed at a specific addressee or group of addressees and written in the first languages of these individuals. In singling out an intended audience, the RSU author adjusts their code accordingly (code-switch between SU and RSU); they may also thereby draw on other languages and switch within the RSU. In doing so, they construct an in-group and an out-group. This finding draws attention to a) the importance of going beyond an analysis of only single turns to emergent interactions between two or more parties, and, related to this, b) the need to conceptualise code-switching as a form of joint action, which is co-constructed, a finding which is

compatible with our understanding of identity construction as intersubjectively emergent.

In analysing code-switching both within and between SUs and RSUs we also highlighted a series of functions: the use of code-switching for the enactment of culturally-specific genres; to index a particular addressee and connected with this one's alignment towards them; for formulaic discourse purposes; and to mark that the SU or RSU is humorous. This shows that the functions identified by Androutsopoulos (2013) in connection with the research conducted on code-switching in CMC thus far can also be applied to the social network site Facebook. In addition, we underlined ties to identity construction and relational work. We thereby pointed to the performance of cultural identities, the positioning of friends and the construction of a humorous identity, and to the supportive relational work enacted through alignment. The display of multilingual language competence can thus be argued to be multifunctional with respect to identity construction and can be added to the acts of positioning we identified in previous work (Bolander/Locher, in press).

While our paper clearly highlights that the functions of code-switching outlined for other modes of CMD are indeed applicable to Facebook and that there are links between code-switching and identity work and relational work, the analysis of these functions and ties is still preliminary. More systematic work on this subject matter needs to be done. In light of the clear importance of the analysis of emergent "polylogues" (Marcoccia 2004) in connection with a view of code-switching as co-constructed, more attention needs to be paid to the interactions in responses to status updates, where we not only find RSUs respond to SUs but also to other RSUs. A series of smaller case studies on particular interactions would likely shed more light on the intricacies of code-switching in Facebook and its various functions.

Opening the scope again and moving beyond our text-based analysis of code-switching in the SUs and RSUs and the link to positioning, we should stress the multimodal nature of Facebook once more. In performing activities interlocutors do not solely rely on text (cf. Bolander/Locher 2010). The multimodality of Facebook and other computer-mediated settings raises new questions for researchers and poses new challenges. While scholars are increasingly pointing to the importance of going beyond text-based analysis to an incorporation of other modes, as yet there is a paucity of guidelines and literature which problematises the topic of multimodality. In tackling the topics of multilingualism and code-switching, and potential ties to relational work and identity construction, we opted to focus on text. While this was warranted by the fact that the SUs and RSUs are predominantly text-based, our study will be enriched once we take the other activity types, such as accepting gifts, posting of pictures and videos, creating groups, etc., into account as well.

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