Multilingualism, Facebook and the Iranian diaspora

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by

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Chapter 1
Introduction

1. Introduction

I have closely observed the multilingual life of my Iranian friend Kevin, who moved to Belgium three years ago on a student visa. Kevin was born in an Azeri[1] speaking city located in the north-west part of Iran. Unlike the residents of Azerbaijan provinces in Iran, people in Kevin's city are not of chauvinist nationalism. Kevin asserts that Farsi, the only official language of Iran, is his first language. To support his claim, he repeatedly refers to the fact that his spoken Farsi is not characterized by an ethnic minority accent, a sign that is normally perceived to carry less prestige within Iranian society. During the three years since he migrated, Kevin has improved his English proficiency at university, yet, his Dutch competence which was acquired by following only a few Dutch courses remained at a basic level. Kevin's fragmented multilingual repertoire in the highly diverse environment of Ghent (a city in the Flemish region of Belgium) is intriguing. While Kevin deploys his Azeri competence to ascertain whether the Turkish neighbourhood in Ghent provides his desired local food products, he carefully distances himself from the Turkish population which - in Kevin's subjective perception- connotes deprivation, social exclusion and low social status within the social hierarchy of Belgium. The medium of communication in the university is English and Kevin uses Farsi with his Iranian friends; however, Dutch is only drawn upon in communicative situations where the Flemish/Belgian interlocutor does not have sufficient command of English. Kevin's multilingual repertoire is also reflected in his social media practices as he makes translocal connections and interacts with others in the linguistically diverse context of Facebook.

Kevin's fragmented multilingualism and the structure of his repertoire in use exemplify the domain-dependant language competences of a diasporic community in Belgium. In fact, the communicative dynamics across language boundaries within the multilingual Belgian society inspired this research project and drove it further to explore patterns of language use of members of the Iranian diasporia in the super diverse context of social media which allows many different options for the construction of communities, expression of self and management of interpersonal relations.

2. Sociolinguistics in relation to globalization

Against the background of Fairclough's (2006) adoption of a critical discourse analysis for the analysis of discourses of globalization with respect to the changing relations between different local and global scales of social interactions, Blommaert (2010) stresses that understanding globalization is first and foremost a historical process and the study of globalization should be accomplished through adopting a perspective on longitudinal processes. Blommaert adopts a historical approach that places sociolinguistic encounters in temporal trajectories and emphasises the significance of

[1] Azeri or Azerbaijani is a language spoken by a Turkic ethnic group; the largest number live in Iran, then followed by the Republic of Azerbaijan.

understanding mobility in order to perceive language within the context of globalization. In Blommaert's work, mobility and inequality are associated with the notion of globalization and languages are considered as resources which are mobile in time and space. Furthermore, he takes up the concept of scale[2] and argues that language needs to be seen as it occurs at different scale levels and mobility across such levels leads to shifts in function, meaning and structure. Blommaert's argumentation about the multilingual repertoire of immigrants emphasises its truncated nature in the super-diverse contexts. He defines multilingualism not as a collection of languages but as "a complex of specific semiotic resources, some of which belong to a conventionally defined language, while others belong to another language" (p.102).

Drawing on theories of performativity and transculturation, Pennycook (2007) takes a different view on the sociolinguistic studies of globalization. He explores the relationship between local and transcultural practices in the sense that the use of English which is embedded in the language of hip-hop becomes part of localized subcultural groups around the world. Pennycook (2007:96) shows that while hip-hop globally functions as a code, it generates a sense of locality and adds "a global spread of authenticity". Pennycook's work calls for different methodological tools to study sociolinguistics in the condition of contemporary globalization. He argues that the established concepts of place, language and culture do not adequately analyse hybrid, dynamic and delocalized objects. Pennycook views global languages and cultures in terms of flows, circulating and mixing with other languages and cultures in the new places. The global flow of hip-hop (and its associated language) then, contains overlapping and mixing in other contexts. In this respect, multiple overlapping centres for hip-hop around the world reflect a polycentric environment (Blommaert, Collins and Slembrouck 2005b) where multiple forms and modes can circulate and be meaningful in the diversity of contemporary context of communication.

In line with what Blommaert argues about the sociolinguistics of mobile resources, this dissertation takes a quantitative approach to the movement of languages framed in terms of transnational networks and migration flows. The theoretical approach to the study of language mobility in an immigrant community is therefore a theory of changing language in a changing society. This study examines the patterns of language use in relation to the migration trajectories of immigrants from the third world to the more globalized and sociolinguistically diverse European context. As immigrants move around, their linguistic repertoire becomes deterritorialized and mobile in time and space. In this study, the sociocultural and historical migration trajectories to the European urban centres are considered as influential forces which change the face of multilingual practices. Furthermore, the

[2] Scale is a theoretical sociolinguistic concept which is inherently spatial in nature and suggests that the processes of distributions and trajectories of sociolinguistic phenomena are accompanied by processes of hierarchical ranking in which phenomena (e.g. the patterns of language use) are organized (and interpreted) on different scales from 'the body' to 'the global' (Slembrouck and Vandenbroucke, 2019).

new forms of communication promoted by the emergence of online spaces in our current globalized era significantly affect the patterns of language use within society. In this dissertation, the social medium of Facebook functions as a key site of communication within which immigrants' multilingual discourse is monitored and examined. Facebook is not a neutral container through which messages are transmitted; it is a multimodal platform which makes the process of mobility more complex and adds an online dimension to the diversity of the globalized world. This study aims to show how the interface of local and global factors is affected by the participatory culture and connected communities that Facebook brings forth and how these forces are reflected in the sociolinguistic practices of multilingual Facebook users and their discursive identifications.

In the following section the structural characteristics and the architecture of Facebook are briefly described to help understand the specifics of the interactional platform from which the data has been collected.

3. Social network sites and Facebook

Based on Boyd and Ellison's (2007) definition, social network sites are the web-based platforms that enable users to make a personal profile, have a friend list and move across channels of connection. Social network websites provide users with a kind of connection that allows them to cross paths and articulate their social networks, make new relations and above all, extend their already existing offline links (Boyd et al.,2008). The first fully-fledged social media networking site was Six Degrees.com, which was introduced in 1998 (Hura, 2014). Later, other social network sites were generated to provide a sense of community among users within large organisations. Facebook, which was initially designed to support a college network in 2004, expanded later to include every user with a Facebook account. Facebook mainly connects people with common history, experience and language, and it affords the possibilities of leaving comments on people's profiles/posts, liking and reacting, private/group chats, phone/video calls and photo/video sharing even from external sources. The notion of friendship on Facebook has been redefined in the sense that friends are not physically co-present but are presented in the form of imagined audiences who mainly establish the norms of online interaction (Boyd, 2006). While virtual friends are selected and ratified by the Facebook user, the level of access to a certain user's profile may vary among the networked people depending on the user's preferences (Androutsopoulos, 2015). Boyd et al. (2008) point out that what makes social network sites different from each other is mainly the degree of variation around visibility and access. In this respect, Facebook allows friends to have access to each other's profiles unless a user decides to customize the network's privacy to the extent that an uploaded post can be visible only to the poster. Facebook features News Feeds in the middle of users' homepages as an updating list of posts which can be customized based on the user's preference. A News Feed displays the details of any activity that people in the network of friends do: their comments, likes, pages they follow, groups

they join, people they befriend, change of their profile information, etc. In other words, the News Feed facilitates tracking the activities of others by making a collection of updated content accessible in one spot. On the other hand, Facebook users can manage the privacy of their account in the sense that they are able to control who can view their status and access their private details. That explains why the Facebook space is recognized as a *semi-public* social network site. In this respect, Boyd (2008) argues that, although the data are already public and accessible to friends, users' privacy concerns have something to do with a sense of exposure and vulnerability that users experience as they perform Facebook practices and transfer data within the network of friends.

The participatory and semi-public context of Facebook complicates the practices of language selection/switching in the sense that multiple audiences and various offline networks converge in a single interactional platform where any contribution is seen by the entire network of friends. Facebook users creatively draw on various linguistic/semiotic resources to compensate for the reduction of communicative cues and achieve different communicative purposes in the complex architecture of online space (e.g. by selecting a specific addressee, raising culture-specific topics, etc.). Facebook users' situated orientations towards different languages and the dynamics of language mixing in Facebook exchanges are explored in this dissertation.

New possibilities for interaction on Facebook open new ways for negotiating and presenting an image of self. Facebook is one of the largest interaction hubs in the world and so affects people's everyday communications and social relations. The participatory and interactive nature of Facebook and its affordances which enable the Facebook user to draw on a wide range of multimodal resources and make contact with a large number of virtually present audiences, change the way people stage their identity online. Multifaceted community-based identity can be shaped on Facebook through the use of various online resources ranging from creative profile names/nicknames to non-standard forms of spelling in Facebook-mediated practices. This dissertation empirically examines the presentational culture of Facebook as well as the ways in which people project their online selves to be negotiated with different audiences in the network of friends.

4. Outline of the chapters

The aim of this dissertation is to help broaden our understanding of the sociolinguistic aspects of multilingualism online. The social medium of Facebook which provides one of the primary means through which individuals of common ethnic or national descent keep in touch with each other in a host community, was selected as a privileged site for studying the transnational immigrant experience and its multilingual dimensions. Through four case studies, a central research question is addressed: how do multilingual Iranian migrants in Belgium use languages on Facebook? This overarching question is approached from different sociolinguistic perspectives.

Following the introductory chapter on sociolinguistics in relation to globalization and migration, chapter 2 presents facts and figures about migration across the world and particularly in relation to two contexts of Iran and Belgium. Chapter 3 provides an overview of the frameworks which are partially adopted in this dissertation and contribute to theorizing in the studies of digitally mediated communication. Chapter 4 has a three-fold methodological focus: digital ethnography, quantitative inventory of code choices and switches and qualitative analysis of the sequentially-unfolding dynamics in Facebook conversations. The first case study in chapter 5 describes the distribution of linguistic resources used on Facebook and maps the type of Facebook activity/mode with which users are linguistically engaged. The chapter provides a broad overview of the patterns of language use among the immigrants whose networks both online and offline are super-diverse and extremely multilingual. The second case study in chapter 6 focuses on language mobility in the context of migration and aims to track the diachronic development of language use on Facebook over time. The trends of language use development help us understand the shifting multilayered identity construction of immigrants in relation to different frames of time and space. With the use of insights derived from the quantitative method, the third case study in chapter 7 and chapter 8 presents a detailed qualitative description of conversational patterns in Facebook interactions. Both chapters of the third case study shed light on the understanding of the functional principles which govern the dynamics of selecting one code over the others and show in detail how the Facebook users' multilingual experience is tied to the construction of particular immigrant-related identities. Two Facebook threads are selected for the fine-grained content analysis as they are particularly relevant for understanding the ways in which the social meaning is accomplished through the sequential dynamics of Facebook. The fourth case study in chapter 9 revolves around non-standard Farsi orthographic practices on Facebook. The chapter addresses the underlying ideologies and aspirations associated with particular non-standard spellings and indicates how these spelling choices carry social meaning and index users' particular subcultural stances. Finally, the concluding chapter provides an overall picture of the findings and discusses the results per case study.

Chapter 2
Facts and figures about migration worldwide, in Iran and in Belgium

1. Introduction

This chapter of the dissertation sketches out global statistics on migration and brings the demographic and geographical features of Belgium, Iran and the Middle East into focus. In doing so, statistical data is used in order to provide a better understanding of the facts. As this dissertation particularly focuses on the community of Iranian migrants in Belgium and takes a sociolinguistic approach to study their transnational mobility and multilingual repertoire in the current era of globalization, this chapter aims to situate Iran and Belgium in the world perspective. Nevertheless, comparable figures are not always available and the data related to one context is not necessarily mapped into the statistics of another context.

Researchers have reached no consensus on a single definition of a migrant. Anderson & Blinder (2011) define a migrant as a person of foreign birth who moves into a new country to stay temporarily or for the long-term. In general terms, the international organization for migration defines an international migrant as any person who has moved across international borders regardless of legal status, the voluntary/involuntary nature of movement, the causes of movement and the length of stay.

This chapter provides a statistical overview of global migration, and then focuses on statistical information about the Iranian diaspora in terms of its relationship with the receiving countries and Belgium in particular. Subsequently, the linguistic composition of Iran is briefly described.

2. Migration and migrant population statistics

Migration is a growing phenomenon in our increasingly interconnected world. People move across the globe in search of opportunities, jobs, education and a better quality of life. Migration can contribute to economic growth and development of both origin and destination countries if it is supported by appropriate migration policies. Remittances that are sent to the home country as a source of income for a household or in the form of investment substantially affect the socioeconomic situation and improve people's livelihoods in the country of origin. In the host country, immigrants fill the labour gap and pay taxes. Furthermore, migrants carry a new range of perspectives and skills which contribute to scientific advancements as well as cultural and linguistic diversity. An international migration report published by the United Nations states that in 2017, the number of international migrants reached 258 million, of whom 64% live in high-income countries (figure 1).

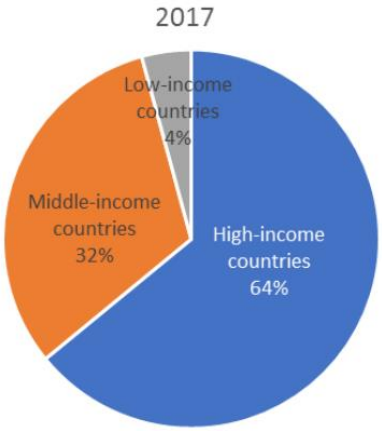


Figure 1. Percentage of international migrants by income group
Source: United Nations (2017a). The classification of countries by income level in based on 2016 gross national income

As seen in figure 2, in 2017, Asia hosts 80 million international migrants followed by Europe (78 million), Northern America (58 million), Africa (25 million), Latin America (10 million) and Oceania (8 million).

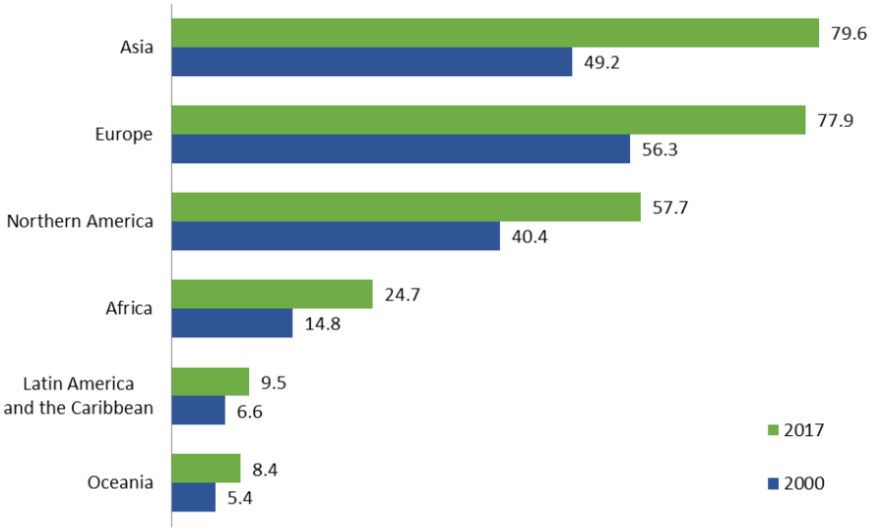


Figure 2. Number of international migrants by region of destination in 2000 and 2017
Source: United Nations (2017a)

Asia has gained more international migrants between 2000 and 2017 (almost 30 million) than any other continent. However, international immigrants comprise only 2% of Asia's population. In contrast, international migrants in Europe, North America and Oceania accounted for at least 10 percent of the total population.

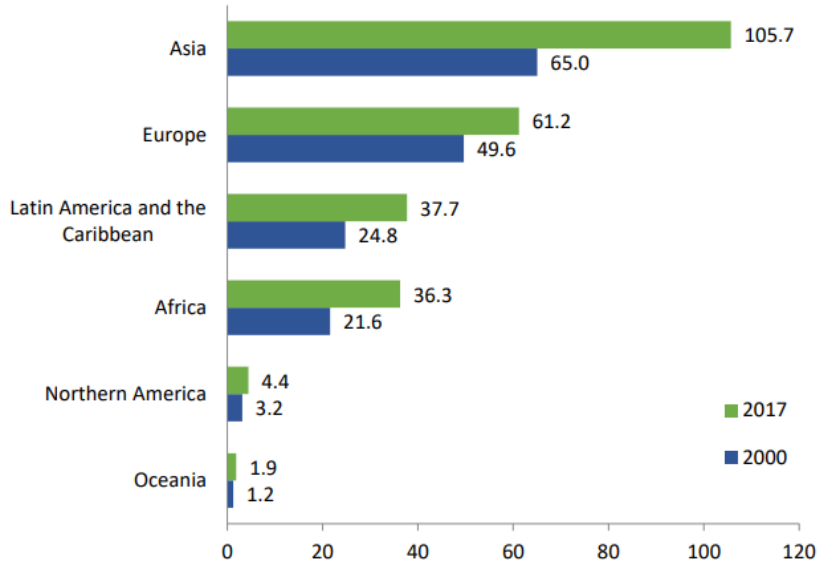


Figure 3. Number of international migrants by region of origin in 2000 and 2017
Source: United Nations (2017a)

Compared to the largest number of international migrants who were born in Asia (106 million), relatively few migrants were born in North America or Oceania (4 and 2 million respectively). The immigrant population born in Asia recorded the largest increase between 2000 and 2017 (40.7 million) followed by African-born immigrants (14.7 million), Latin Americans (12.9 million), Europeans (11.6 million), North Americans (1.2 million) and Oceanians (700,000)(figure 3). Clearly, the value of statistical data represented here is relative to both the population and population density.

According to the international migration report, most of the world's migrants (more than 50%) reside in a relatively small number of countries (10 countries). The United States hosts the world's largest number of international migrants (19% of the total population of migrants) and this rate has remained unchanged from 2000 to 2017 (figure 4).

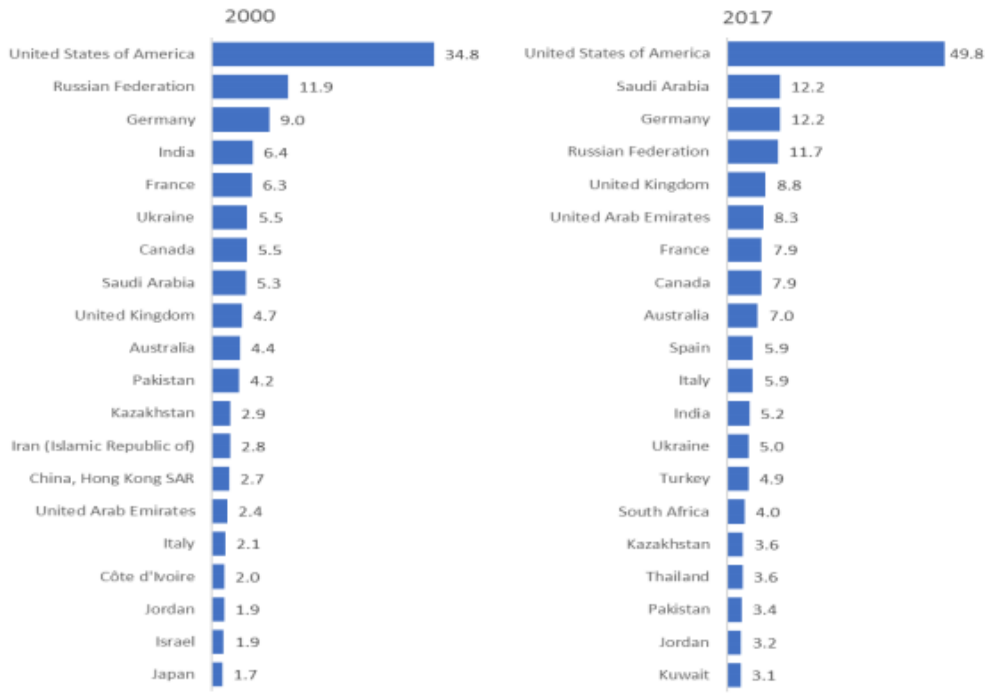


Figure 4. Twenty countries hosting the largest international immigrants
Source: United Nations (2017a)

The twenty largest countries of origin constitute almost half of all international migrants (49%). In 2017, India had the largest number of its population living abroad (16.6 million), followed by Mexico, Russia and China.

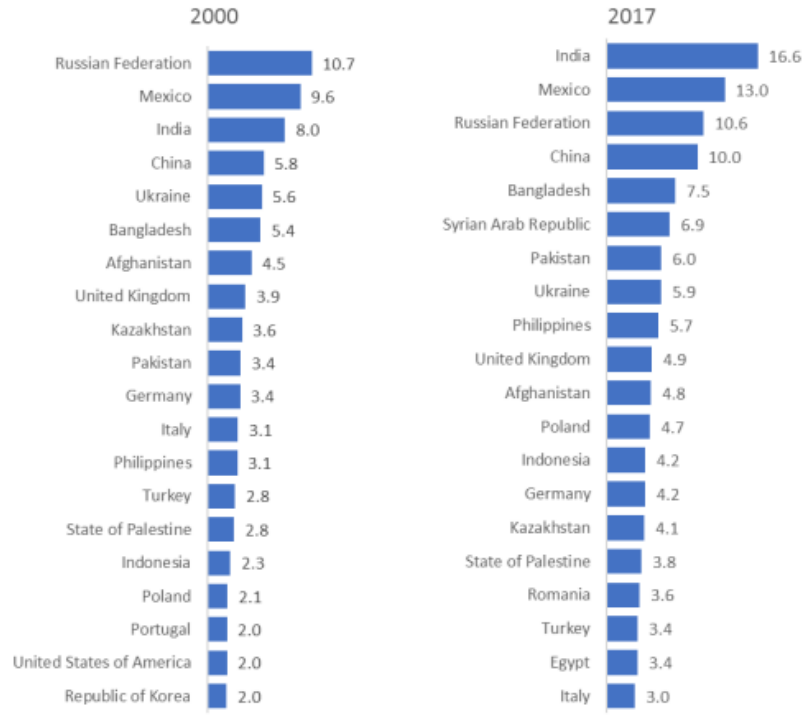


Figure 5. Twenty largest countries of origin of international migrants in 2000 and 2017
Source: United Nations (2017a)

3. Belgium

Located in Western Europe and sharing borders with the Netherlands, Germany, Luxembourg, France and the North Sea, Belgium is known as the crossroads of Western Europe and hosts several international organizations including the EU and NATO. Belgium is divided into the Dutch-speaking Flanders in the north and the French-speaking Wallonia in the south. The capital city of Brussels is officially a bilingual Dutch-French speaking region. Based on the United Nation's estimate, Belgium's population in 2018 is 11,507,760 , equal to 0.15% of the world total population. The total land area is 30,278 sq km (worldometers.info).

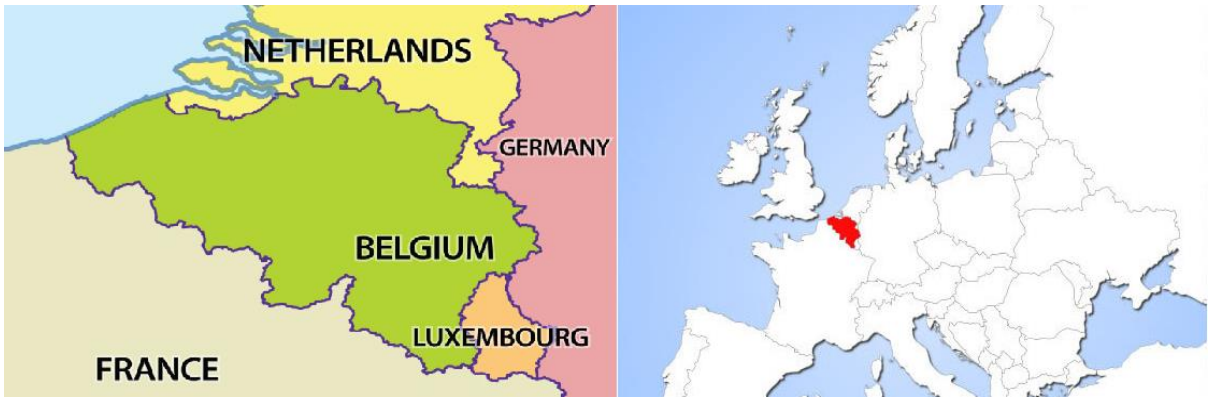


Figure 6. Belgium's neighboring countries on the left, Belgium's location within Europe on the right

According to the international migration outlook 2018, Belgium received 106,000 immigrants in 2016. This number is 18% fewer than in 2015. EU nationals almost comprise half of the population who moved to Belgium in 2016 of whom French (11%), Romanian (10%) and Dutch (7%) are the leading three nationalities amongst foreign immigrants (Table 2). Due to the increasing number of refugees in recent years, Syria, followed by Morocco, became the first country of origin of non-EU migrants; both countries comprised 4% of total immigration (Table 2). In January 2017, the total foreign-born[3] population in Belgium was 1.9 million (17% of the population). The top two original countries of foreign-born nationals living in Belgium were Morocco (214,000) and France (185,000). According to OECD (2018) statistics, in 2016, four non-EU countries (India, the US, Japan and China) accounted for almost half of labour migrants in Belgium. Morocco, India and Syria were the main non-EU countries of origin for family migration, while International (non-EU) students in Belgium mainly came from Cameron and China, each comprising 12% of the international students. Regarding the number of asylum seekers in 2017, one third of all asylum seekers are from Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq. These three countries also accounted for three quarters

[3] The foreign-born population represents first generation migrants and may consist of both foreign and national citizens. However, the foreign population may include people who born abroad but also second and third generations born in the host country.

of humanitarian migrants. Table 1 displays the general rates regarding the inflows of migrants to Belgium in 2016.

While there are many Iranian migrants in Belgium, years of war and conflicts in some other countries of the Middle East such as Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq have forced further migration and affected the ranking of the sending countries in the sense that Iran's name is not seen on the list of top 15 countries with the largest inflows to Belgium.

Table 1. Belgium's trends in flows and stocks of migrants in 2016

Migration inflows (per 1000 inhabitants)	9.1
Migration outflows (per 1000 inhabitants)	4.3
Residence permit for work (Thousands)	2.6
Residence permit for education (Thousands)	27.0
Residence permit for family reunification (Thousands)	5.7
Inflows of asylum seekers (per 1000 inhabitants)	1.3
Foreign-born population (percentage of the total population)	16.5
Foreign population (percentage of the total population)	11.7

Source: Directorate for Statistics and Economic Information (DGSEI) and Ministry of Justice

Table 2. Inflows of foreign population to Belgium within 10 years

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
France	11.6	12.3	14.1	12.3	13.5	13.8	13.3	13.6	12.0	12.0	11.1
Romania	3.1	5.5	6.8	6.1	8.0	10.9	11.2	10.0	11.3	10.6	10.3
Netherlands	11.5	11.4	11.7	8.8	9.3	9.5	9.1	9.0	8.1	8.1	7.5
Italy	2.6	2.7	3.7	3.6	4.3	4.7	5.2	5.7	5.3	5.1	4.8
Syria	..	..	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.9	1.0	2.8	10.4	4.4
Poland	6.7	9.4	9.0	9.9	8.9	9.3	8.6	7.5	5.8	5.3	4.4
Morocco	7.5	7.8	8.2	9.1	9.8	8.5	5.9	4.7	4.7	4.8	4.4
Spain	1.8	1.9	2.8	3.6	4.6	5.3	6.0	6.1	5.0	4.1	3.7
Bulgaria	0.8	2.6	3.9	3.3	4.2	4.3	4.5	3.9	4.2	3.8	3.3
Portugal	2.0	2.3	3.2	2.9	2.7	3.1	4.2	4.3	3.0	2.9	2.9
Afghanistan	..	..	0.1	0.2	0.2	0.3	2.8	1.3	1.1	7.5	2.5
Germany	3.3	3.4	3.8	3.4	3.3	3.1	2.9	2.9	2.5	2.5	2.4
India	1.5	1.6	2.1	1.8	2.3	2.3	2.3	2.6	1.9	2.2	2.4
United States	2.6	2.5	2.6	2.7	2.7	2.6	2.5	2.6	2.0	2.2	2.1
Turkey	3.0	3.2	3.2	3.1	3.2	2.9	2.4	2.0	1.6	1.7	1.7
Other countries	25.5	26.8	30.8	32.0	36.3	37.2	47.0	40.3	35.0	45.6	35.3
Total	**83.4**	**93.4**	**106.0**	**102.7**	**113.6**	**117.9**	**128.9**	**117.6**	**106.3**	**128.8**	**103.2**

Source: Directorate for Statistics and Economic Information (DGSEI) and Ministry of Justice

4. Iran

Iran is located in Western Asia, in the Middle East. Iran is bordered to the north by the Caspian Sea and three former Soviet states: Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Turkmenistan; to the west by Afghanistan and Pakistan; to the south by the Gulf of Oman and the Persian Gulf; to the west by Iraq and Turkey. With a land area of 1,531,595 sq km, Iran is the 19th largest country in the world and is divided into 31 provinces (the world fact book). The capital city, Tehran, is the second largest metropolitan area in the Middle East with 8.3 million residents in 2014. Tehran is the major communication and transport hub of the country and the number of people living in Tehran Province is over 13 million (worldpopulationreview.com). In 2018, Iran's population is 82,131,275 (Wordometers.info) which is mainly concentrated in the north, northwest and west parts of the country and reflects the location of the two main mountain ranges in the north and the west which have shaped the main urban settlements (the brown parts of the map). In other words, the population is mainly concentrated in the areas where the mountains are located. The interior land-locked basin of the Iranian plateau has a very dry climate and the population density in the vast dry areas in the centre is much lower (the

yellow parts of the map). Iran is home to the largest supply of natural gas in the world and the fourth largest supply of oil reserves.

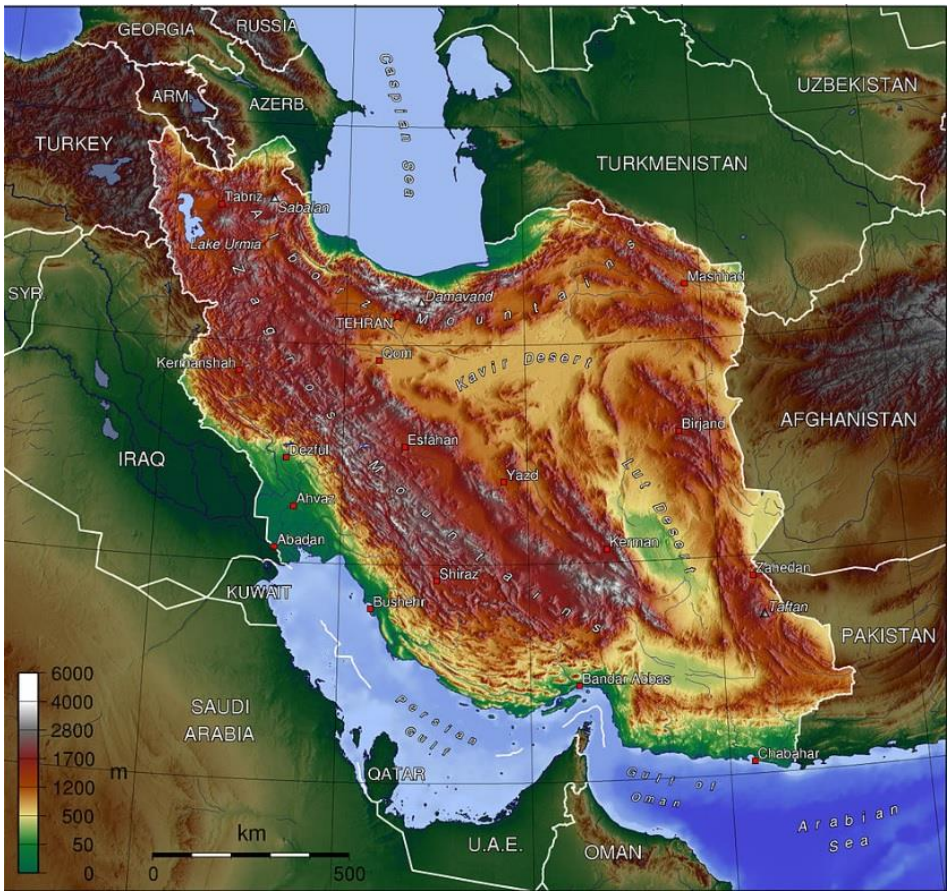


Figure 7. Iran's neighbouring countries, mountain ranges and deserts
From Wikimedia Commons, the free media repository

5. Middle East

Located in the Middle East, Iran is the second largest country of the Middle East after Saudi Arabia. The Middle East diaspora is described as being concentrated primarily in English-speaking first world countries. Due to selective immigration policies with respect to educational attainments, migration from Middle East to these countries tends to be highly skilled and study-related (OEDC, 2015:307-318). Almost 14% of all migrants from the Middle East reside in the US. Canada is another popular destination for 500,000 Middle Eastern migrants. Statistics shows that the number of emigrants from the Middle East living in Spain, Germany, Finland, Ireland and the UK doubled in the 10 years from 2000/01 to 2010/11 reflecting fast growing Middle Eastern migration (OECD, 2015). This may well also be true for Belgium but the relevant figures are not available.

Educational attainment is rising in the world in general and this also holds true for the immigrants originating in the Middle East although the increasing rate of education is still below the average

increase in the rest of the world. According to the global profile of diasporas in 2015, almost one quarter of all highly skilled migrants from the Middle East are from Iran in 2010/11. In addition, more than half of the immigrants from Iran, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain and Qatar had a high level of education. International students contribute significantly to the stock of highly skilled migrants. The main countries of origin of international students from the Middle East are Saudi Arabia and Iran. The rising rate of highly skilled emigration has its effect on the productivity, economic growth and critical sectors such as health and education especially in the developing countries of the Middle East. At the top of the list, Iran lost almost 20% of its educated labour force in 2010/11. Years of war, economic and political instability poverty and unemployment led people in the Middle East to leave their home country in search of a better life; however, migrants from the Middle East and North Africa face the highest unemployment rates (21% in 2010/11) compared to other migrant groups in the Global North.

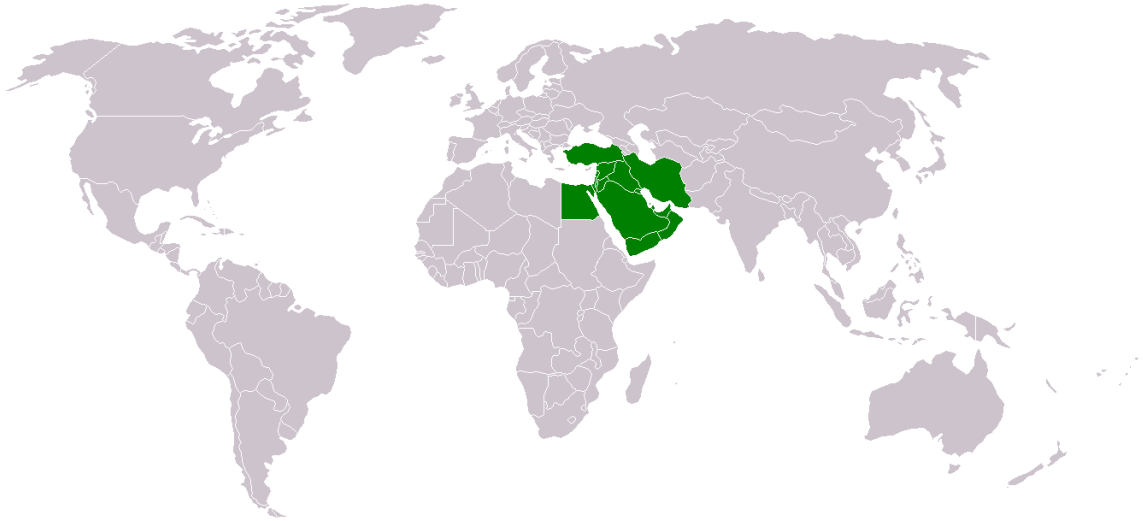


Figure 8. Middle East in the world map
From Wikimedia Commons, the free media repository

6. The Iranian diaspora

The status of Iranian migrants in the world has never been officially reported by the Iranian authorities. This section draws on several sources to briefly outline the role and position of the Iranian diaspora around the world. One database on immigrants in OECD countries[4] (The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) which was released in 2010/11, reports that Iran has been leading the migrant flows originating in the Middle East. In 2010/11, Iranian diaspora (people aged 15+) in the Global North comprised almost 1 million (table 3). According to the international migrant report of the United Nations, in 2017, the total size of the Iranian diaspora

[4] See Members and partners for the members of OECD.

was 2,699,000 which accounts for 1% of all international migrants (n=257,715,000) (Table 4). Iranians living abroad constituted 3.3% of the total population of Iran in 2017; of whom 47% were female international migrants (Table 4). This indicates that unlike other countries of the Middle East, Iran has more of a proportional gender balance between male and female in migration.

Table 3. Emigrant population in 2010/11: persons born in Iran living abroad

	All countries of destination			First world destinations		
Population 15+ (thousands)	Men	women	Total	men	women	Total
Emigrant population	518.2	440.6	958.8	503.5	430.5	934.0
15-24 (%)	8.3	7.9	8.1	8.2	8.0	8.1
25-64 (%)	78.4	76.7	77.6	78.6	77.0	77.8
65+ (%)	13.4	15.3	14.3	13.2	15.0	14.0
Low educated (%)	15.7	17.7	16.6	15.6	17.7	16.6
Highly educated (%)	53.4	48.4	51.1	53.8	48.8	51.5
Total emigration rates (%)	1.8	1.5	1.7	1.7	1.5	1.6
Emigration rates of highly educated (%)	4.7	4.3	4.5	4.7	4.2	4.4

Source: OECD 2015, Iran

Table 4. Contribution of Iran to the world migration

	Number of international migrants (thousands)		International migrants as percentage of total population		Female among international migrants (%)		Medium age of international migrants (%)	
	2000	2017	2000	2017	2000	2017	2000	2017
Iran	2804	2699	4.2	3.3	40.7	47.0	29.1	30.2
World	172604	257715	2.8	3.4	49.3	48.4	38.0	39.2

Source: United Nations, 2017a

According to statistics, the three countries of United States, Canada and Germany constitute the main destinations of Iranian migrants in descending order of population (Table 5).

67.4% of the Iranian migrants residing in Canada are highly educated (table 5). Due to Canada's skilled worker visa program, most Iranian people who migrate to Canada are selected based on their education, work experience and language knowledge in order to obtain permanent residence in Canada prior to departure.

It is worth mentioning that while the figures for Belgium are not available, Belgium's rate in terms of the main destinations of Iranian immigrants may well be comparable to the Netherlands.

Table 5. Main destinations of Iranian emigrants in 2010/11

Total			Women	Highly educated
Population 15+	Thousands	%	%	%
United States	344.2	35.9	48.1	57.9
Canada	120.0	12.5	48.5	67.4
Germany	110.1	11.5	42.7	36.7
United Kingdom	81.6	8.5	39.9	55.1
Sweden	59.9	6.2	47.3	36.9
Israel	45.0	4.7	51.5	22.2
Australia	32.1	3.3	46.4	48.8
Netherlands	29.7	3.1	42.1	38.8
France	21.2	2.2	47.7	65.0
Austria	13.7	1.4	48.8	40.3

Source: OECD 2015, Iran

Although Iran's outflow of educated and skilled migrants ranks first in the Middle East, Iran holds the 16th place among all the counties of origin of highly educated migrants around the world (table 6). If other criteria (e.g. the share of educated migrants from the total population or the population of Iran's educated people) are taken into account, the ranking would be even lower.

Table 6 also shows that the departure of skilled and educated people is not specific to developing countries as many developed countries are listed in the top twenty original countries of the educated migrants across the world.

Table 6. Top 20 counties of origin of highly educated migrants 2010/11

Rank	Country of origin	Population (15+)
1	India	2238100
2	Philippines	1545200
3	China	1530600
4	United kingdom	1470600
5	Germany	1219500
6	Poland	999900
7	Russian Federation	890800
8	Mexico	885500
9	Korea	809400
10	Ukraine	657900
11	France	596600
12	United States	596000
13	Canada	560700
14	Romania	557100
15	Viet Nam	539100
16	Iran	471200
17	Pakistan	451600
18	Italy	429200
19	Morocco	424900
20	Colombia	375200

Source: Database on migrants DIOC

The United States is shown to be the main destination of Iranian immigrants overall, in Table 5. The US is also the main destination of educated migrants originating from Iran. Of 344,200 Iranian migrants residing in the US (15+), 199,400 are skilled and highly educated. After the US, Canada and the UK have the largest number of skilled Iranian migrants (table 7).

Table 7. Main destinations by education level in 2010/11 (population 15+)

Highly educated emigrants (thousands)		Change since 2000/01 (%)
United states	199.4	+30.6
Canada	80.9	+124.0
United Kingdom	44.9	+128.8
Germany	40.4	+80.0
Sweden	22.1	+54.9
Total	471.2	+62.6

Source: OECD 2015, Iran

The United States is also the main destination of international students coming from Iran[5] who can stay in the US on a temporary visa that allows for an academic stay (Table 8). While in terms of absolute frequency the US, UK and Canada are the top destinations of Iranian educated migrants/students, the proportion of migrants in relation to the population of these countries reveals some relative frequencies which might change the ordering of destinations and add some other countries to the picture. For example, if we take the absolute numbers of Iranian students in the US and the UK (table 8), the number of students is roughly double in the US; yet, the proportion of Iranian students in the US (2.1) is smaller in comparison to that of the UK (5.1).

Table 8. International students from Iran

Five main destinations	2012
United States	6763
United Kingdom	3372
Italy	2975
Canada	2805
Germany	2571
Total	32758

[5] Immigrants choose to move to the US for various reasons, for instance, people who seek political and religious freedom as well as fortune seekers who make their way to the US. As a general rule of thumb, the mainstream view among Iranians is that the US is the land of prosperity where chances are equal, no matter who you are. This view can be partially substantiated with respect to the higher employment rate of foreign-born men in the US comparing to that of the native-born Americans (Table 9). In addition, the United States has always been an attractive destination for educated immigrants and international students as the US is home to the top higher education institutes in the world university ranking. The third reason for immigrants choosing the US as the main destination is that it is seen as a kaleidoscope of cultures and ethnicities. Immigrants might believe they will feel less excluded in a country which has been built up by the immigrants from the very beginning.

			2005	2010	2015	2017
Employment/population rate	men	Native-born	74.9	68.2	70.9	72.2
		Foreign-born	82.7	77.4	81.3	82.6
	women	Native-born	65.8	62.2	63.6	64.9
		Foreign-born	57.7	57.4	57.4	59.6

Table 9, Labour market outcomes
International migration outlook 2018, OECD 2018, Source: OECD 2015, Iran

Attempts have been made to make a connection between Iran and Belgium and put the migration-related statistical data of the two contexts into perspective; yet there is little relevant statistical information from any reliable sources and the figures of the two countries in relation to each other have not been displayed in a big picture. There are reasons to believe that Belgium is amongst the main destinations of educated Iranian migrants and Iranian students; however, it is not clear to what extent this holds true. Home to almost 10 universities, Belgium has registered 298 Iranian student at its universities in 2010 (Report on migration of international students to Belgium, 2000-2012). In addition, 8361 doctoral or postdoctoral students from third countries have been registered in Flanders between 2008 and 2011, of whom almost 500 are Iranians (Report on migration of international students to Belgium, 2000-2012). In relation to the relatively small population of Belgium, this statistical review suggests Belgium may be amongst the top destinations of Iranian students/educated migrants.

The global level of forced displacement always has been rising. According to the UN refugee Agency (UNHCR) the world is currently witnessing the highest level of displacement on record. In 2018 the number of refugees and asylum seekers around the world reached 28.5 million, representing almost 10% of all international migrants. According to United Nations' statistics, 85% of the world's displaced people reside in developing countries in 2018. After Turkey, Pakistan and Uganda, Iran hosts the largest number of refugees and asylum seekers (979,400). Belgium ranks 46 in hosting the population of concern in the global perspective. UNHCR statistics state that in 2018, 57% of refugees worldwide came from three countries of Syria (6.3 million), Afghanistan (2.6 million) and South Sudan (204 million). People have been forced to leave their home countries due to various political, social, ethnical, religious conflicts, war, persecution and insecurity. Regarding Iran's position in the Middle East and its geographical proximity to Afghanistan and Iraq, Iran has always been one of the main destinations for refugees in the world over recent decades. The large number of unregistered refugees and asylum seekers residing in Iran might actually change the rates and figures of the United Nations to a great extent.

Taking European countries into account, the top European destinations for refugees and asylum seekers are shown in Table 10. Furthermore, the main countries of origin for asylum seekers and refugees are also displayed in table 10.

Table 10. main European countries of destination for asylum seekers and refugees in 2017 and the main countries of origin

Top countries of origin	Syria (15.8%)	Iraq (7%)	Afghanistan (7%)	Nigeria (6%)	Pakistan (6%)
Top countries of destination	Germany (31%)	Italy (20%)	France (14%)	Greece (9%)	UK (5%)

Belgium, with 18,340 asylum seekers and refugees in 2017, is home to 2.5% of asylum seekers and refugees in Europe and takes 10th place among the European countries.

7. Linguistic composition of Iran

Iran is a large country with a wide ethnolinguistic diversity. Farsi (or Persian) is the only official language of Iran and the lingua franca of all ethnicities in the country. However, the use of Farsi extends beyond Iran's national borders as the two varieties of Farsi, i.e. Dari and Tajik, are the official languages in Afghanistan and Tajikistan respectively. The diverse population of Iran speaks languages including a variety of Indo-European (e.g. Farsi, Kurdish, Luri, Baluchi, Gilaki, Mazandarani, Taleshi, etc.), Semitic (Arabic, Armenian, Assyrian, etc.) and Turkic languages (Azerbaijani, Turkmeni, Qashqai, etc.). Although ethnic minorities use their languages in the local mass media in Iran, the monolingual language policy of Iran underlines the use of Farsi as the only language of all governmental, administrative and educational settings[6]. Due to frequent displacement and migration within the country (e.g. tribes' migration or exodus of rural population to urban areas), linguistic boundaries have become fuzzy. Figure 9 shows the linguistic composition of Iran.

[6]Article 15 of Iranian constitution reflects the monolingual policy of educational settings in Iran:

> "The official language and script of Iran, the lingua franca of its people, is Persian. Official documents, correspondence, and texts, as well as text-books, must be in this language and script. However, the use of regional and tribal languages in the press and mass media, as well as for teaching of their literature in schools, is allowed in addition to Persian".
>
> Therefore, the medium of instruction is Farsi and the educational settings have a monolingual policy. This claim is confirmed in a recent literature (Mirvahedi, 2019).

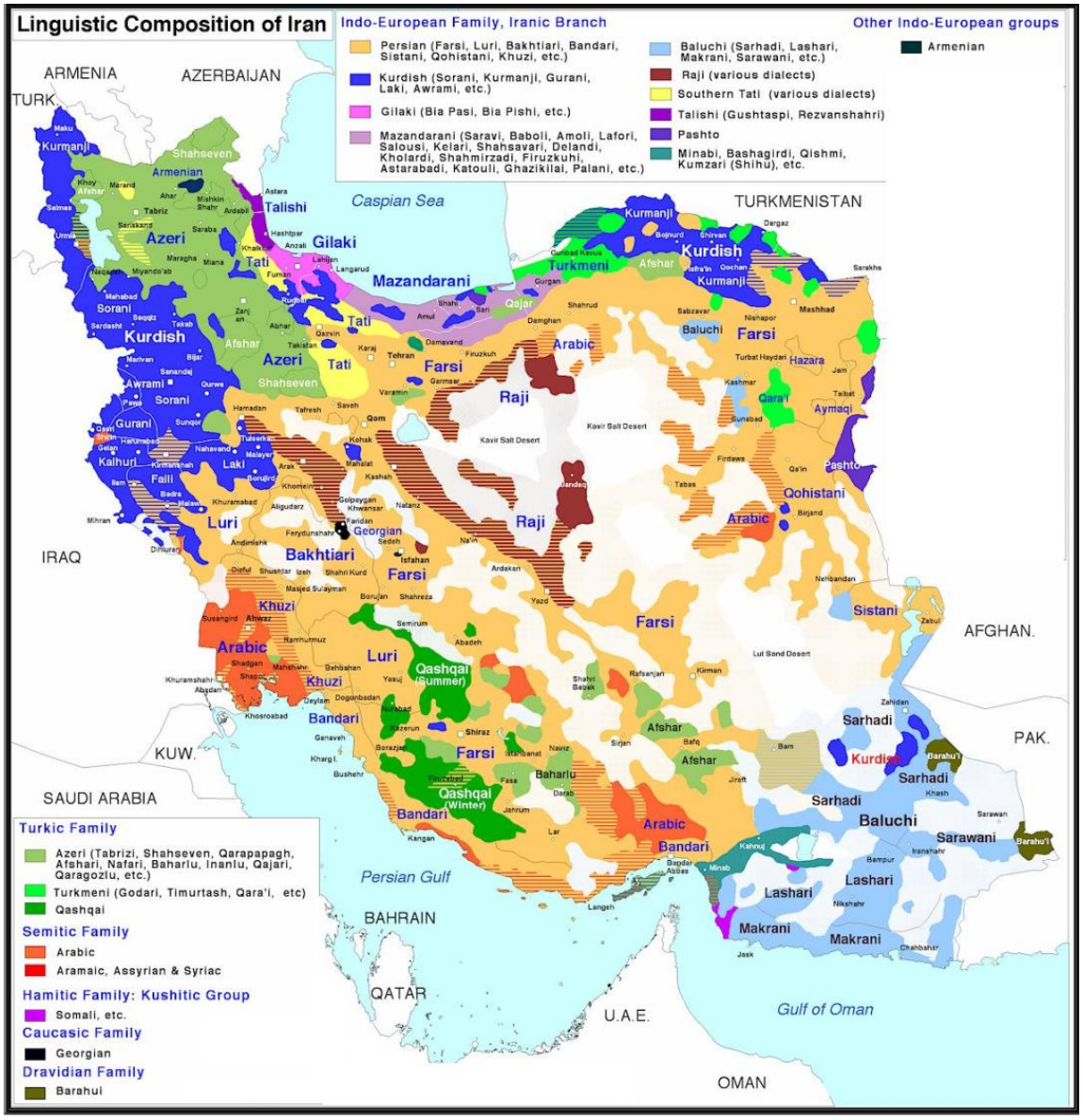


Figure 9. The linguistic composition of Iran
Source: Largely S. Bruk and V. Apenchenko, Atlas Narodov Mira (Moscow, 1964)

The spread of languages is not always based on the geographical boundaries which historically defined different ethnic groups. In other words, a single province may consist of different ethnic and linguistic groups. For example, Hamedan province in the western part of Iran comprises 9 counties and four main languages are spoken by its residents (i.e. Farsi, Azerbaijani, Kurdish and Luri). In the city of Hamedan at the centre of the province, 70% of people are Persian, 22% are Azeri and 8% are Lur, Kurd and Lak (Selected Findings of National Population and Housing Census, 2011).

According to the official census of 2016 of the ethnic composition of Iranian nations, the population of Persians (the largest ethnicity in Iran whose mother tongue is Farsi) was estimated to account for

75% of the total population. The census data shows that while 86% of the population understands Farsi, only 83% of the population has speaking competence.

There is not a general consensus on the detailed statistics of speakers of different languages in Iran. Since there is no reliable national survey in Iran, a US-based organization with a margin of error of +/- 3.1 percent *(Terrorfreetomorrow.org)* released the results of a nationwide survey of Iran in 2009. Based on the survey (*"Executive Summary"*), the population of Iran consists of 50.5% Farsi-speaking people, while speakers of other languages are as follows: 21.6% Azerbaijani, 7.6% Kurdish, 6.9% Gilaki and Mazenderani, 5.9% Luri, 2.7% Arabic, 1.4% Baluchi, 1.2% Tati and Taleshi, 0.9% Torkman and 1.3% others (incl. Armenian, Georgian, Circassian, Assyrian, Hebrew, Mandaic). Figure 10 schematically represents the language distribution in Iran. Farsi-speaking regions are marked in green in the map.

Figure 10. General pattern of Iran's language distributions
Source: soileiragusgonta.com

In 2012, a research paper about the Socio-Geographical Study of the Distribution of Major Language Communities in Iran was presented at an international conference and this seems to provide a set of relatively rare but reliable statistical data (Aliakbari and Darabi, 2012 cited in Aliakbari & Khosravian, 2014). The distribution of the 7 largest and most frequently spoken varieties in Iran was examined and the results almost confirm the findings of 2009 survey about the percentage of the

Farsi-speaking population inside Iran. According to this study, the use of other varieties slightly varies: Farsi is the most frequently spoken language in Iran (51%). The second most spoken language of Iran is Azerbaijani (25.4%) followed by Kurdish (8%), Gilaki and Mazandarani (7.4%), Luri and Balochi (4%), Arabic (3%), and Laki (1.2%).

In 2016, Ethnologue reported that the population of Farsi-speaking people in Iran comprises more than 62% of the total population (50,400,000). The population of speakers of other languages in Iran is shown in table 11.

Table 11. Languages of Iran

Language	Population (thousands)	Percentage
Iranian languages		
Farsi	50400	62.74
Kurdish	5590	6.95
Luri	1700	2.11
Gilaki	2400	2.98
Mazandarani	2340	2.91
Baluchi	1920	3.39
Laki	1000	1.24
Tati	400	0.4
Others	limited	0.04
Iranian languages in total	65350	81.36
Non-Iranian languages		
Azerbaijani	10900	13.57
Torkman	790	0.98
Torkic-Qashqai	'959	1.19
Torkic-Khorasan	886	1.10
Arabic	1320	1.64
Armenian	100	0.12
Assyrian	15	0.02
Others	Limited	0.02
Non-Iranian languages in total	14970	18.64

Source: Ethnologue, 2016

Chapter 3
Theoretical approach

1. Introduction

This chapter of the dissertation comprises two sections. The first part provides some background on the field of sociolinguistics in relation to code selection and code switching in multilingual communities . Next, the language user and the construction of identity through the use of language are discussed. This preliminary discussion prepares the ground for presenting the sociolinguistic approaches which are adopted in this dissertation. In the second part of this chapter, conversation analysis, its historical position, principles and key concepts are addressed. Then, the methodological frameworks for the study of computer mediated communication and Facebook in particular are overviewed. Next, the adequacy of a traditional framework for conversation analysis as a methodological approach for examining Facebook data is questioned. Responding to some inadequacies, Goffman's social dramaturgy is presented as a compatible and complementary sociolinguistic approach, including its implications for the analysis of Facebook-mediated communications.

2. Multilingual practices, communities, users

2.1 A sociolinguistic view on language choice

Members of each speech community acquire knowledge of different varieties to appropriately employ them in different contexts of communication. In selecting a particular word, style, dialect or language, special social factors are relevant; for example, the participants, social context and function/topic of the interaction (Blom & Gumperz, 1972; Gumperz, 1982). In general terms, linguistic choices in both spoken and written communications imply a community's awareness of the impact of social factors. Sociolinguistics aims to formulate an account of the linguistic choices that people make and the triggering social (or non-linguistic) factors which lead to such choices. In a multilingual community where different languages are involved, choice of language and the context of communication are more distinctively related. Among the most significant social factors which are influential in choice of language, the concept of domain (participants, setting and topic) is specifically useful to map the patterns of language use in a multilingual community (first proposed by Fishman, 1965). In a multilingual setting where people share more than one variety, domain seems to be too rudimentary as an explanatory category and thus other social factors can also contribute to the choice of code they use. Social distance between the participants as well as their status in the society can influence the variety speakers choose. In addition, the formality of the context and the aim of the conversation are relevant. Thus, in describing the pattern of language use by a community of practice, other social dimensions should be added and other considerations (e.g. whether diglossia is a relevant concept in the community under study) should be given attention in order for the sociolinguist to accurately trace/understand the general pattern of language use in a community.

2.2 A sociolinguistic view on code switching

Code switching in a social situation might be explained in terms of group solidarity and shared ethnicity with the addressee. For example an interaction between two minority ethnic group members may include switching to the ethnic language to signal their shared ethnic background (Sebba and Wootton, 1998, Kroskrity, 2000). While this kind of switching can bring the members of ethnic minorities together, it can increase the social distance in another communicative situation. For example, in a rural setting, use of a variety recognised as belonging to youths living in urban areas can signal a user's alignment with modernity and urbanism. A switch may also occur along with a change in the topic of interaction. Multilingual people often find it easier to discuss a specific topic in one language rather than another (Blom & Gumperz, 1972). For example, two PhD students who share the same first language might switch to English to discuss their projects as the switch corresponds to the language in which their research (the topic of discussion) has been conducted. Code switching may also serve affective functions as multilingual people creatively employ the rhetorical possibilities of their language repertoire. For example, the dramatic effect of switching to the ethnic language to make a joke in a situation where members of the host society are present can express an affective meaning rather than a referential function.

Although recent literature offers a more interdisciplinary perspective towards the study of code switching (e.g. Clyne, 2003), research on code switching/selection has a long tradition within linguistics, sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics, etc. (Isurin, Winford & De Bot, 2009). Looking at different linguistic traditions which are not all mutually compatible, the following section sketches the key moments in the development of linguistic studies of code switching/selection.

2.3 An overview of code switching and code selection studies

In linguistic studies of multilingualism and language choice, different approaches and perspectives can be found. The macro social view assumes that the language behaviour and activities of individuals are framed by social context; hence, language choices are governed by social structures. Researchers' first attempts to create a model for distribution of language choice focused on the functional differentiation of co-existing languages. (e.g. Weinreich, 1953; Ferguson, 1959). In this view, the possibility of random and frequent choices in an interaction is eliminated and language choices are assumed to be dictated by sets of social norms. The early distribution model was modified to account for different types of multilingualism and language choice practices. The concept of domain emerged to specify different sets of situations associated with various social norms including language choice. (e.g. Fishman, 1965 reprinted in 2003). Domain analysis overlooked different perceptions of domain based on the different backgrounds and social status of individuals. Apart from the interactive effect of variables such as topic and setting on language choice, the variable of interlocutor was argued to be the key influential factor (e.g. Gal, 1979; Bell,

1984, Li Wei, 1994) while other variables are functional only when associated with the variable of addressee. Another distribution model of language choice questions the social equality of languages in a bilingual setting. One language is standard, administrative and powerful in terms of its political and economic status while the other is devalued and restricted. (e.g. Eckert, 1980). In this perspective, the functional differentiation of languages reflects the social, political and economic opposition of linguistic systems. Both models in the macro social view share the assumption that an individual's language choice is shaped and determined by social structures and norms. However, the view that language choice and code switching are rule-governed is not shared by all the sociolinguists. While some believe that there are universal syntactic rules for all switching forms regardless of the languages involved, others criticise the complexity of the rules and indicate a significant number of exceptions. Some language contact frameworks such as the equivalence constraint model advanced by Poplack (1980) predict that switches occur at points where the surface structures of two codes coincide. Another framework first introduced by Myers-Scotton (1993a) posits that a matrix language frame can explain intra-sentential switches. As code switching occurs, the less dominant language (the embedded language) is inserted into the frame of the more dominant language (matrix language) and the grammatical procedures are only matrix language-based. Mahootian (1993) presents another rule-based model which sintactically accounts for the intrasentential code switchting. In her model, Mahootian suggests that the language of a head determines the order of its complements. In contrast to the rule-based sociolinguistic views, the micro interactional perspective in studies of multilingualism emphasises the ongoing interactional process which shapes the pattern of choices and switches.

In the 1970s, the shift to an interactive perspective of language choice and code switching changed the focus of literature from the level of compliance that an individual's behaviour has towards social structures and norms, to the degree of freedom that the speaker has in choosing a language. Research on the interactional aspect of multilingualism was pioneered by Gumperz's (1971,1982) work which focused not only on the individual's perception of setting and interlocutor, but also on people's ability to deploy the available linguistic resources and create social relations. Through the observation of language users' behaviour, he pinpointed two types of code switching practices: situational (changes in situation such as participant, setting and activity concurs with the change of language) and metaphorical (change of language aims at achieving a special communicative effect). Gumperz elaborated on the symbolism of metaphorical code switching by suggesting two distinct codes: we code and they code; associated respectively with minority language and informal activities and majority language and formal activities. Such a distinction is not imposed on language users by the social structure but is the product of interactional process in which the language user decides on the language choice. A great body of literature has built upon Gumperz's approach to codes switching, of which the Markedness theory of Myers-Scotten and Auers' conversational code

switching are the most substantial ones. Myers-Scotten (1993) argues that multilingual speakers use language choice in a framework to negotiate interpersonal relationships. The negotiation leads the speaker to choose a language that symbolises a set of rights and obligations between the interlocutors in a communicative exchange. Attempting to link the social symbolism of languages and discourse strategies of language users, the markedness model has deficiencies in confirming all the claims empirically (e.g. how languages become marked / unmarked). From the micro interaction perspective, the conversational analysis of Auer was a development in the study of multilingualism and codes choices/switches. Auer's view was in conflict with Gumperz's classification of discourse functions of code switching. The notion of contextualisation (processes whereby the interlocutors in a conversation interpret the context to carry out their linguistic/non-linguistic activities) and contextualization cues (participants in a conversation use cues to signal contextual presuppositions) which were first proposed by Gumperz (1982). It was later underlined in Auer's (1998, 1999) argumentation that code switching works like a contextualisation cue, yet it has its own features. Auer identifies a set of sequential patterns of language choice which can provide a frame for the interpretation of function in conversational code switching. Auer makes a distinction between two types of code switching: discourse related (the function of code switching in some patterns is interpreted as contextualising the features of conversation) and participant related (code switching in some patterns indicates participants' preferred choices). The analytical approach with its focus on sequential development of interaction is necessary to study code switching as a contextualisation cue since its meaning is interpreted through the interactive process and in the context of conversation. Conversational analysis has advantages in Auer's (1984) view: first, the participants' language choice has an influence on the subsequent language choices even by another speaker and second, the interpretation is only related to the mutual understanding of participants in the conversation. Focusing on both the concrete linguistic behaviour of the participants in a conversation and their social relations/organizations, some scholars (L.Molroy and J.Milroy, 1985; 1992; Li Wei, 1994) take both perspectives into account to investigate the process of an interaction through which the language users employ the available linguistic resources. Regarding the conversational code switching view, Gardner-Chloros, (2009) refers to the varied and diverse ways in which multilinguals manipulate different languages and extract particular uses from code switching in their conversations and therefor suggests that there is no limit to the ways multilinguals combine languages for their communicative ends.

2.4 Code switching or code mixing?

The bi/multilingual speaker/writer rapidly switches between codes to effectively draw on different associations of the languages. This kind of switching is sometimes called code-mixing. If no obvious reason accounts for rapid switching from one code to another, the occurrence of switches can be the result of lack of competence or an unintentional selection of languages. In this sense, even when

language alternation is systematically motivated, one must still allow some mariginal room for alternations that cannot be clearly explained through the frameworks. Code mixing implies that no symbolic meaning is associated with the switch as the two codes are simply being mixed up. Linguistic studies of code switching sometimes do not distinguish different types of language alternations such as code mixing, fused lect, code meshing, lexical borrowing, etc.

Research on code switching reflects a range of terms to describe various aspects of choices and switches. While a particular term may be used differently by different researchers, the referential points of a set of terms may overlap (Milroy and Muysken, 1995, cited in Gardner-Chloros, 2009).

Scholars distinguish code switching from code mixing in different ways. Code switching is distinguished by Muysken (2000) if the characteristics of each language system in a language contact situation are maintained; by Sridhar and Sridhar (1980) if the alternation is intersentential, by Meisel (1989) if the social factors motivate intentional switching; by Kachru (1983) if the alternation is influential on social context; by Auer (1990, 1998) if a language is preferred to communicate sequential meaning. While some scholars use the umbrella term code switching to refer to all instances of alternation (McClure, 2001), others may deploy code mixing as an umbrella term (Mufwene, 1994). There is a great deal of controversy as to what extent a clear defining line can divide the terminologies. However, "the general tendency is to regard 'code-switching' as the generic category of language contact" (Clyne, 2003, 71). In this respect, Gardner-Chloros (2009:167) argues that code switching often encourages the view that alternation occurs between discrete language systems due to the more appealing findings based on clear rule-based approaches towards code switching (e.g. Matrix language frame). She suggests that researchers need to "think outside the box", "acknowledge fuzziness" of the borders between different types of contact languages and adopt a "common sense approach" in the studies of code switching. This implies that code switching should be regarded as a multidimensional phenomenon and theories of different disciplines should be reviewed to see how they can stand the test of being applied to the practices of language alternation and to what extent the findings can be generalized to other instances.

While the boundaries between code switching and code mixing are usually defined based on whether or not the mixing of two languages is clearly functionally related to specific conversational goals, this study is not concerned with whether code alternation is always rhetorically motivated or not. Nor does this study make a structural distinction between intersentential (code switching) and intrasentential (code mixing). The focal centre of interest in this dissertation rather, is the minute interactional dynamics which will be examined in two chapters. The central contribution of this dissertation is not to theories of code switching but to understanding the multilingual polyphony which comes across on Facebook. This dissertation adopts a general term to cover all instances of alternation. Code switching in this study is considered as a neutral umbrella term which indexes the

complex processes of transition between languages and the not-so-neat/straightforward language borders.

Orienting to a single integrated system, more recent research literature (particularly research on globalization and migration in relation to Western Europe) tends to name the practices of language alternation as code mixing or code meshing to be able to account for the rhetorical purposes of multilingual practices as attempts to embrace superdiversity and cultural differences of our modern globalized era. While language contact phenomena might be easily treated as intentional and functionally motivated practices when occurring among highly educated users, the examples of alternation among people who habitually pick and combine languages may quickly appear unintentional. In this respect, research seems to run the risk of being distracted from the dynamics of convergence and the underlying complexities of language contact phenomenon. The clear-cut classification of intentional code switching and unintentional code mixing undermines the dynamic and fluid practices of multilingualism which have been conceptualized through notions such as translanguaging, crossing, transidiomatic practices, polylingualism, metrolingualism, multivocality, codemeshing, bilanguaging, etc. Translanguaging as defined in the work of Garcia and Li Wei (2014) suggests that multilinguals strategically select features of their single linguistic repertoire for their communication goals. Translanguaging emphasises that there are no clear boundaries in complex and interdependent multilingual practices which are mostly subject to the social definitions of what is an appropriate language but sometimes produce new practices flexibly and freely.

Using an umbrella term of code switching to refer to all instances of language alternation, this dissertation subscribes more to the view that identifying the point at which switching occurs will vary depending on different social factors and dimensions: the languages which are involved, language competency of the participants, switching functions, etc. This dissertation explores how the choice of language is made among the migrant minorities whose linguistic resources might be of less use in the host community, how the code selection is being influenced by political and socioeconomic factors and how the code switching in an interaction signifies the moment to moment accomplishment of identities.

2.5 Language shift in migrant communities

Use of a minority language in a predominantly monolingual community generally leads to a displacement process over time. In general terms, migrant families' patterns of language use illustrate a shifting process from using one language to using a different one. Shokuh is an Iranian 57 year old woman who lives in the Flemish-speaking part of Belgium. She moved to Belgium with her husband and two children in 2002. Shokuh's linguistic repertoire was limited to her first language (Farsi) and an understanding knowledge of her ancestral language (Kurdish). Since her linguistic resources did not have a high communicative value in Flanders, Shokuh started to learn Dutch to

only drop Dutch learning after 2 levels. She got a job in a restaurant kitchen in an entry-level position; yet, except for her Iranian manager, she barely communicates with the co-workers in the work domain. She always used Farsi at home with her family; however, as her children learned Dutch at school and brought the language home, Shokuh started taking Dutch course again although she has partially learned the language of the street over her years of living in Flanders. In 2018, in addition to Dutch, she has a good command of English and she now always uses Dutch at home to communicate with her children who are incompetent Farsi speakers. Use of Farsi is restricted to communication with her Iranian friends in Belgium and family members in Iran. Over a span of 16 years, the Farsi language has gradually been de-centred and Dutch is deployed for most purposes. Dutch infiltrated the home through the children who were not allowed to practice their home language at school due to the monolingual education policy of Flanders. In addition, the dominant society strongly urges long-term international migrants to show signs of assimilation and conform to social norms including the use of dominant language. Change of language may also occur for reasons other than migration. For example, the Iranian authorities seek to maintain their position in the balance of power by preventing the diffusion of power in particularly non-Persian ethnical regions of Iran. Attempts are made to avert any possible opposition from the ethnic minorities. Ethnic minorities' languages are not taught in schools and the street signs of their regions are deliberately made in Farsi (the official language). In addition, speakers of minority languages frequently switch to dominant ones in various domains. Therefore, the social and political changes of the country signal the symbolic significance of the official language and result in the language shift from ethnic languages to the official one (Mirvahedi & Nasjian,2010). It is worth mentioning that the direction of transition is mostly from the minority language towards the powerful language of the dominant community which is often associated with prestige and social progress. The lure of prestigious language can seemingly justify the abandonment of the heritage language by the next generations of migrants. Another factor contributing to the shift of a language is the economic factor which plays a central role in finding jobs in the host country. Furthermore, as was the case in Shokuh's code selection, the prospect of migrant children's competence in the ethnic language is not advantageous enough for the migrant parents to keep using the language at home. In general, depending on the individuals' social networks and their socioeconomic aims in the dominant society, the process of language shift accelerates. Minority communities in rural settings can resist language shift to a greater extent due to their relative social isolation from the urban centres. The size of the migrant community also contributes to the maintenance of ethnic language. For example the large number of Turkish migrants living in Turkish communities within the city of Ghent (East Flanders-Belgium) makes Turkish the predominant language of communication in the neighbourhood where varieties of local shops meet the social needs of the inhabitants. The degree of attachment to the homeland and heritage language substantially affects the maintenance of a minority language through generations. Unlike Shokuh, there are many Iranian migrants in Belgium who consciously

try to pass on Farsi to their children. They regularly travel to Iran and keep regular contact with family members back home. The advancement of the internet significantly increases the possibility of frequent and regular contacts with Farsi speaking people in Iran. Despite the relatively low status of Farsi in the international context and the non-positive attitude of the host society towards the maintenance of minority languages, Farsi is highly valued by some Iranian immigrants as the symbol of ethnic identity. In general, it has been argued that language shift and language death are not completely predictable because similar variables lead to a stable bilingual situation in some contexts and to language change in other communities (Holmes & Wilson, 2017).

2.6 Language variation, the language user

Linguistic varieties have differentiating functions among the individual speakers as well as the linguistic groups. Speech characteristics can give a rough estimate of the speakers' social status, economic/educational background and regional origin. The distinguishing speaking features of people from different regions can be identified despite the geographical proximity. For example, the relatively small region of Flanders in the northern part of Belgium has 4 main dialect groups which sometimes become so distinct that mutual intelligibility might be disrupted. Although some identifying speech features such as pronunciation are absent in literacy practices, choice of vocabulary and grammatical structure can still serve a unifying function to affiliate the writer with a certain ethnolinguistic group. For example, the ethnicity and educational level of a commenter on Instagram has been simply identified by another commenter in the example below.

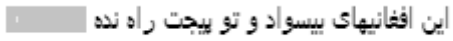


Figure 11. Screenshot from the Instagram of a Vlogger

Translation:
block the illiterate Afghans

When a popular Iranian vlogger received a rude remark (in Farsi) on her Instagram post, a follower determines the Afghan ethnicity of the inconsiderate commenter based on his choice of words and the formality of the utterance which is often associated with the Afghan variety of Farsi. Furthermore, due to two obvious misspellings, the likely poor educational background of the commenter is overstated as illiterate.

While the non-standard dialects/varieties of Farsi are linguistically just other forms of the language, standard Farsi is socially the most prestigious variety in all Farsi speaking regions. In other words, speech differences reflect social distinctions. Other than the choice of words, the particular

combination of linguistic forms in a specific communicative situation and with a certain addressee contributes to the indication of the speaker's social class (i.e. people's prestige, education, wealth, family background, etc.). However, the barriers between social groups are not too large or impenetrable and language users can move up the status hierarchy. Although a particular pronunciation can function as an indicator of social class, various regions define different class-associated pronunciations for a single form (See Labov's experiment on social stratification of English, 1966).

2.7 Ethnic community

While some linguistic features index people's social class, some correlate with a particular community's membership in a stable and predictable way. In other words, sociolinguistic patterning in an ethnic community can be reflected through the use of linguistic features. People may draw on a distinctive language or a language variety to signal their ethnicity where a code choice is available. As an ethnic language disappears in the process of adoption of a dominant language, some distinctive linguistic features still symbolize the minorities' distinct ethnicity (e.g. omission of verb to be in African American Vernacular in the US, as shown in Cargile, Takai & Rodríguez, 2006). However, such varieties can function as a symbol of opposition to the mainstream norms of the dominant society which exclude minority languages and cultures (e.g. Multicultural London English, a variety in inner city London, in Cheshire, Kerswill, Fox & Torgersen, 2011). The differences in speech may also be accounted for by a person's social network. It means that, in addition to the language user's social features, features of the interaction are relevant for explaining the pattern of language use. Members of a network influence the speech of other members in the interaction in the sense that each member tends to communicate in the same way as the rest of the group in order to show group solidarity (e.g. black people produce a speech which indicate the extent to which they mix with other black people, see Labov, 1972b). As the number of interactive networks grows, people change their speech from one communicative context to the next. A student for example, may use the standard form of a language at university and speak the local vernacular form at home. Her pattern may shift as she chats in an adolescent gang variety with her friends. In fact, this is the pattern of social interaction which indicates people's linguistic preferences (Gal, 1979). Sociolinguists use the notion of a 'community of practice' to address social categories and define in concrete terms what it means to belong to a social group such as 'class clowns' or 'nerds' in schools (Eckert and McConnell, 1995). People's affiliations and values are indicated through their language choices in specific situations or even at specific moments of an interaction.

While in a macro-level analysis linguistic patterns are sociolinguistically described by social factors such as class, ethnicity, gender, etc., the in-depth complexities of everyday interactional dynamics are addressed through the use of concepts such as social network and communities of practice

(Wenger, 1998). They allow sociolinguistic studies to investigate the ways in which different aspects of people's social identity are dynamically performed through the moment to moment language choices.

2.8 Identity

As discussed earlier, by choosing to use a certain code in a specific communicative situation, a language user can be identified in terms of their ethnic, national or regional identity. Since language use varies across a range of factors such as social status, ethnicity, age, gender and social subgroups and networks, multiple identities are interactionally constructed in relation to these social factors (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005). The way a linguistic variable is perceived or produced might be differently interpreted by different people. The addressee associates the produced linguistic features with certain social experiences and stances (which often reflect the sociolinguistic patterns of variation) to construct the language producer's perceived identity. Therefore, drawing on the interactional strategies, language attitudes, the selected linguistic features and the way they are produced, the addressee presumes a context to interpret the utterance and construct the producers' identity regardless of what kind of identity the language user intends to show. For example, the use of a non-standard variety of a language by a young man who is trying to impress a young lady might be the sign of being cool; yet, the young lady may perceive the use of variety as an index of poor education and low social class. Thus, the intended identity is portrayed if both the producer and the interlocutor share an understanding of what the language indexes (Kiesling, 2006).

3. Discourse analysis

Research in the field of discourse analysis exists in numerous and different academic disciplines (Tannen, Hamilton & Schiffrin, 2015). This diversity of disciplines reflects a broad array of definitions of discourse analysis (see Jaworski and coupland, 2006). While the structural definition of discourse analysis addresses the analysis of language beyond sentence boundaries (Stubbs, 1983) and in relation to its social context (Ulrych, 1992), the functional definition emphasises the analysis of language in use (Brown and Yule, 1983). Also, research frequently indicates that naturally accruing discourse should be the object of study (McEnery and Wilson, 1996). In general, it seems that a large number of definitions focus on the use of language beyond the sentence level in the social context of practice. (Tannen, et al., 2015; Johnstone, 2018; Renkema & Schubert, 2018).

Drawing on a discourse analysis approach, sociolinguistic research identifies sociocultural norms of different groups in different conversational contexts and accounts for the linguistic resources that are deployed in constructing different aspects of identities in conversation. Meaning is pragmatically analysed in terms of the participants' relations and knowledge of the situation. Meaning in the interaction can be analysed through Grice's (1967) conversational maxims (i.e. quantity, quality,

relation and manner) suggesting that the participants of interaction follow a cooperative principle. However, the universality of Grice's rules is questioned as for many reasons, people do not always follow the rules. For example, some cultures may tend to interact uninformatively in general or some politeness considerations might be involved. Linguistic politeness devices are relevant in the analysis of discourse. Nevertheless, polite language is largely a matter of participants' negotiations in a specific sociocultural setting which may result in the construction of a specific identity. For example, the use of endearment terms such as "love" in the Iranian context is limited to a very specific intimate context and is most likely perceived as an insulting comment when used by a stranger; yet the same term in Britain can be appropriately deployed as a sign of casual friendly greeting which may occur in an interaction as a shopkeeper addresses a customer. Ethnography of communication, first introduced by Hymes (1962), largely contributes to the development of awareness about cultural norms and presuppositions and helps sociolinguistic researchers to analyse communicative events which occur in particularly unfamiliar cultures. Components of communication (i.e. participants, topic, context, function, social distance/status, tone, ordering of speech acts, rules of interaction, interpretation norms) should be identified to underline the contrasting features of different cultures. For example, the cultural description of *tarof*, a communicative ritual in the Iranian context, is relevant in understanding the cultural assumptions behind the analysis of Iranian-related interactions. The concept of tarof is associated with a large number of speech acts, and encompasses "ostensible offers and invitations, repeated rejections of offers, repeated instances of offer, hesitation in making request, and frequent giving of compliments"(Sharifian, 2016:510). In Iranian society where social distance, status and differences are emphasised, the very culture-specific concept of tarof is largely related to respect and the shared commitment of the interlocutors to behave respectfully through the use of language. A common example of tarof is an offer to share food with others while expecting others to refuse the offer (eating in front of others without offering to share is considered inappropriate). The complexities of Iranians' interactions, therefore, are highlighted through the use of an ethnographic approach which has been devised to clarify how people in an interaction construct a network of social relations and define their image as they deploy a communicative tool which is shared by all members of a speech community. Drawing on the contextualisation cues which interlocutors provide in a conversation, interactional sociolinguistics (Gumperz, 1972, originated in Gumperz and Hymes' early efforts towards sociolinguistic theorizing) interprets a conversational interaction in an ethnographic context. Employing the conversation analysis tools (which are clearly subject to constraints of conversation analysis), interactional sociolinguistics widens its view to incorporate particular details of the sociocultural context of interaction. In other words, familiarity with the preceding discourse and the broader social context (background knowledge of the community and its conventions) contributes to the sociolinguist's understanding of what goes on in a conversation. While laughter after a teasing tone, strong stress, facial expressions, and head nods can all function as contextualisation cues in

spoken conversation, in internet mediated communication, actions such as liking of an online comment can signal a cue[7]. The following conversation extracted from Facebook Messenger interestingly displays how a participant of an interaction can manage to communicate with the other participant just through the use of like button on Facebook.

Figure 12. Screenshot from Facebook Messenger

The first two turns have been reacted to through liking, a thumbs up sign emoji which indicates approval. In the third turn the commenter infers that she is designated to buy both the cake and the gift of a third friend's surprise birthday party. As the example illustrates, liking functions as a signalling tool and indicates what the user means. A proper interpretation of liking is largely a matter of being familiar with the culture of Facebook and its underlying conventions.

Interactional sociolinguistics then relies on the background assumptions for interactional interpretations. Unlike the ethnography of communication and interactional sociolinguistics, conversation analysis has nothing to do with preconceived ideas about the interaction or its participants. The evidence for interpretation is found in the interaction and the conversation analyst examines in detail what precedes and what follows an utterance (Schegloff and Sacks, 1973). The aim is to pinpoint what is significant to the interactants as manifested by their interactional behaviour.

Before discussing the aims and principles of conversation analysis, the historical position of conversation analysis in relation to ethnomethodology and its link to code switching practices are briefly explained in the following parts. After outlining the basic principles, the interactional organizations underlying conversation analytical approach will be discussed.

4. Conversational analysis, a historical overview

In the 1960s, Sacks pioneered an approach to social interaction which significantly contributes to how we conceive language and interaction. Drawing on the details of conversation, Sacks' new perspective aimed to describe the organization and order of social action in a rigorous, empirical and

[7] It is worth mentioning that different methodological approaches to digital media practices adopt different analytical perspectives towards the function of the like button.

formal way (Schegloff and Sacks, 1973). Lerner (2004) argues that the clarity of Sacks' method and goal set the scene for his new discipline to emerge and endure. The legacy of Sacks and his research group is found in the way they approached empirical data: Schegloff's data work and Jefferson's innovation in providing a set of transcription conventions for the recorded talk crucially contributed to the development of conversation analysis as a distinct approach. Inspired by Goffman's sociological view on how people interact, conversation analysis provides an influential framework for the linguistic studies of talk in interaction. Goffman (1983:2) notes that the organization of people's interaction or interaction order can be treated as a distinct unit of analysis in contexts where people are "physically in one another's response presence". In other words, co-present interaction represents its own social institution. Goffman's interaction order reflects a set of standards, rules and expectations in spoken interaction which define appropriate social behaviour in a given situation. To avoid the possibility of "uneasiness upon the interaction", participants are obliged to balance their involvement in an interaction in the sense that they play their part by doing the right thing at the right time and with the right degree of involvement (Goffman, 1957:47). Garfinkel's (1974) critique of an accepted sociological theory also yields some insights into the development of Sacks' approach. Garfinkel's practical reasoning questions the mainstream view that pre-defines the orders of social life. Garfinkel's alternative way of addressing the problem of social order inspired conversation analysis in the sense that he suggests that the orders of social life are the result of moment-to-moment social action/interaction of the members of society. Garfinkel's ethnomethodological principles are implicit in the principles of conversation analysis which are discussed later in this chapter. Furthermore, the advancement of a formalist movement which coincides with the emergence of conversation analysis, particularly emphasises the significance of recording and transcribing the conversations to make detailed and repeated analytical consideration possible (Slembrouck, 2008).

Conversation analysis has always had connections with anthropology from its early days (Sidnell, 2009; 2010). Evans-Pritchard's (1937) close observation of people's actions in everyday life and his approach to showing how irrational behaviour makes sense in an appropriate context gave Sacks an insight into the rationality of people's social practice. Furthermore, anthropological studies emphasised the significance of language use analysis as part of the sociocultural world. Ethnography of communication, developed by Gumperz and Hymes (1972) resonates with conversation analysis in the sense that both account for the particular ways people use language within the context of the sociocultural practices of a specific speech community.

While the mainstream view attributes the publicly displayed understanding of a situation to the extent people rely on the same procedures to form their knowledge of the world (Herritage, 1984), conversation analysis takes an alternative account to explain the intersubjective knowledge of people in an interactional situation: the turn-by-turn organisation of a conversation provides people with a

continuously changing context of understanding. A conversational turn shows an analysis of a previous turn and is subject to repair in the light of what happens subsequently. In other words, meaning emerges contextually over the course of interaction as the participants actively draw on the method of displayed understanding across the turns. Conversation analysts use the participants' method and perspective in organising their talk to avert indeterminate interpretations. This emic viewpoint reflects an ethnomethodologic interpretation which prioritises a participant's inner perspective over the sociologist's external knowledge of the situation.

4.1 Conversational code switching

Earlier work on code switching focused mostly on explaining the consecutive and simultaneous occurrence of lexico-grammatical ingredients from different languages in specific utterances (e.g. Muysken 2004). While observations about function were expressed by reference to macro-social conditions of diglossia and exclusively expressed in terms of whole communities of language users (e.g. Myers-Scotton 1993), the functions of code switching in a specific dialogic context of use remained unexplored. The growth of sociolinguistics offered a locus for the social analysis of language use which goes beyond structural foci to the sociocultural functions and meanings of language use. Interest in code switching studies shifted towards the description of the motivations for or effect of a particular switch within its broader social context. The history of sociolinguistic research on choices and switches often goes back to Blom and Gumperz's (1972) study of social meaning of choices and the introduction of situational and metaphorical switching. Inspired by Gumperz's description of code switching, Goffman's (1979) concept of footing refers to some functional aspects of code switching in an interaction. Footing shifts for Goffman can be manifested in a number of ways including code switching and other linguistic markers. In general, Blom and Gumperz's (1972) research was a touchstone in code switching studies as it suggested that social factors including the participants, setting and topic are influential in the choice of linguistic variables. In this sense, some language forms are more appropriate than others at a particular social event. The type of switch in which a shift of language form redefines a social situation is called situational switching. In metaphorical code switching, when two linguistic varieties (e.g. local and standard) are deployed in a social event, each code represents a set of social values and some connotative meanings. Later, in 1982, Gumperz recognized the difficulty in identifying a particular choice as situational or metaphorical because the relations between choices and the social factors can be highly variable and dynamic. Gumperz (1982) introduced the notion of conversational code switching and argued that exchanges of talk should be analysed in detail in order to identify the switches' functions and hence, listed common but not necessarily comprehensive functions of conversational code switching. Closely related to the functions, Gumperz described switches as contextualization cues which can help to decode the content and provide contextual information. While the list of functions may contribute to the further understanding of conversational code

switching, it was criticized by some scholars including Auer (1995) and described as an ill-defined method of categorization which does not provide a sufficient or acceptable response to the question of why code switching occurs. Since a switch in an interaction may serve multiple or any of the functions, making preconceived assumptions in the form of a finite list of switching effects was replaced by a tendency to observe the actual interaction. Largely inspired by conversation analysis, the practice of studying the effect of code switching on talk in an interaction was mainly developed in the work of Peter Auer (1984). While addressing the problem of making the distinction between situational and metaphorical switching in Blom & Gumperz's (1972) work, Auer (1984:4) argues:

> One would either have to conclude that (in the situational case) code-switching is without social meaning because it is a necessary consequence of certain situational parameters, or that (in the metaphorical case) it is dependent on an (almost) one-to-one-relationship between language choice and situational parameters which can be purposefully violated.

Instead of focusing on the pre-determined social meaning of different varieties in the user's repertoire, conversational code switching defines the values of codes as the transitions between the codes are used for different functions. Auer's (1984:93) approach is "essentially sequential" in nature and the function of code switching is not solely derived from the "decontextualized meanings of the two languages" but is "embedded in the sequential development of the conversation". Referring to the work of Gumperz and Goffman, Auer argues that the proper analysis of code switching as a contextualization cue which initiates new footings can only be accomplished through a sequential approach to language alternation. Auer puts forward the procedural analysis of code switching in conversational terms over analyses based on the external perspective of the analyst in defining a situation or macro-social approaches which overlook the actual language use and the unfolding interactional situation in defining the meaning of choices and switches.

Based on Auer's approach, the sequential and interactional functions of choices and switches have been analysed by other conversational analysts, e.g. Li Wei, 1998, 2005; Sebba and Wooten 1998; Gafaranga 2001 and many others. The conversational code switching model indicates how code switching is organized conversationally and how the selection of a code itself is interactionally relevant and imbued with conversational meaning. For instance, Nilep (2006) observes how code switching may enhance turn selection, soften refusals, accomplish repair or be instrumental in the expression of dispreferred responses. The conversation analysis view to code switching accounts for the particular choices and switching into another codes through a combination of features: first, speaker features including the speaker's preferences which are also influenced by the anticipation of potential addressees and their language proficiency; second, situational features such as the topic of conversation, the type of the activity in which the participants are engaged and the interactants'

alignment in the conversation; third, a particular code choice in a conversation needs to be understood in sequential terms. In this sense, the selection of a particular code anticipates subsequent choices and serves as a response to previous choices. That is to say, the meaning of choices and switches is sequentially described in relation to what happened before and anticipating what will happen after the point of speaking (Heritage, 1997).

4.2 Conversation analysis' principles

Seedhouse (2004) defines four main principles of conversation analysis: first, talk in interaction is systematically and structurally organized (as indicated by Hutchby and Woffitt, 1998). This principle licences conversation as an ordered organization which is well worth being studied. The second principle which is closely related to the first one is that "no order of detail can be dismissed a priori as disorderly, accidental, or irrelevant" (Heritage, 1984b cited in Seedhouse, 2004:14). Third, contributions to interaction are only understood with reference to the sequential context in which they occur and of which they constitute some parts. In other words, context is built, invoked and managed though the participants' interaction (Heritage, 2005). Fourth, analysis is bottom-up, data-driven and should be approached with no a priori theoretical assumption. This principle narrows the scope of analysis only to the background or contextual details which are supported by conversational data. In this respect, Slembrouck (2008:74) critically remarks:

> It is somewhat self-descriptive and even Spartan to claim that no theoretical notions are brought to the inquiry from the outside or that background assumptions about the recorded interaction will not enter the analysis. For some, doing conversation analysis implies that the researcher can only take into account that which participants attend to, as revealed in the verbal data, and this forms the basis for claiming that the interactional organization which is revealed through careful analysis and study, i.e. the analyst's construct, coincides with the participant's construct. While this particular equation can be said to be indicative of ethnomethodological reasoning (e.g. it is one way of stressing that sociological observation is premised on the ordinary competencies of participants), the restrictedness which is implied by it amounts to an untenable, and probably also undesirable, purism.

Conversation analysis is different from other anthropological, psychological and sociological approaches to language and interaction. Analysis of interaction in relation to culture and the ways people represent and enact cultural norms does not throw light upon the details of an interaction organization. Thus, drawing on conversation analysis principles, linguistic anthropology deploys

ethnography along with the structural analysis of talk to explore the dynamics of an interaction in its wider sociocultural context (Sidnell, 2010). Another way of approaching talk in interaction is through psychological analysis of talk in interaction in order to account for the speaker's state of mind or to study the cognitive accomplishments in an interaction derived from a particular way of speaking. Conversation analysis acknowledges the significance of psychological accomplishments; yet, analysis rather focuses on exploring the details of interaction on its own terms. The sociological view which underlines the external features of the participants of an interaction (e.g. their gender, age and social status) is another divergent approach. Conversation analysis supports different dimensions of the participants' social life; however, there is still uncertainty regarding the way in which multiple structures of their social life should be analysed. Also, the contextual dimension of the structured social world requires a particular social feature to be relevant at a time. In other words, in a particular situation, one external social characteristic might be more relevant than others. Conversation analysis takes the view that the realization of a correlation between an interaction and the social factors of the context does not illuminate the organization of talk. According to Goffman, a social situation constitutes its own reality and needs to be analysed in its own right (Goffman, 1964). In this respect, Seedhouse (2004) notes that conversation analysis considers the contextual details only when the analysis indicates participants' orientation to those details.

In practice, conversation analysis is more than close observation of the social life. In order to collect, structure and examine the patterns of conversational data, conversation analysis draws on a set of methods. First, the significance of recording talk in an interaction has been emphasised in the sense that recording of conversations provides the analyst with actual happenings rather than imagined hypothetical examples of talk (Sacks, 1984b:25):

> We will be using observation as a basis for theorizing. Thus we start with things that are not currently imaginable, by showing that they happened. We can then come to see that a base for using close looking at the world for theorizing about it is that from close looking at the world we can find things that we could not, by imagination, assert were there.

Sacks argues that recording of what actually happens in real world events offers the audience a set of reasonable and acceptable resources which can be replayed and checked on as well as providing the opportunity to reveal any unnoticed points of the analysis. This is a way to share access to the conversations at hand. Video-recording of interaction adds further shades of meaning to the analysis of talk as it makes possible the analysis of communicative devices such as physical gestures. Nevertheless, conversation analysis principles somehow downplay the underlying physical actions accompanying the verbal interactions. The primary focus is on hearing and in the process of hearing the conversational data, conversation analysts should rely on their knowledge and sense of what is

happening for the participants (Sacks, 1995a). Second, the recorded talk should be transcribed through carefully listening and paying attention to details of its production as all details might be relevant and influential in the analysis. Stressing the essentiality of transcription, Jefferson (1985) emphasizes that it is not only about the transcription, it is more about what it is that the analyst wants to note and transcribe. Third, as was just mentioned in Sacks' quotation, close observation of data is central in describing people's social actions and the way in which people's social practices constitute larger organizations such as turn taking, sequencing, repair, etc.

4.3 Interactional organizations of conversation analysis

The following section discusses the interactional organizations in conversation analysis which are used by the participants to produce their social actions and used by the analyst to interpret participants' actions.

4.3.1 Turn taking

As a form of coordinated activity, a conversation requires some way of organizing and managing the contributions which are distributed through a turn taking system. The organization of turn taking as an obvious and fundamental feature of a conversation has been described in Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson (1974); yet, the primary rule of a conversation is the preservation of one party talking at a time (Sacks, 2004). The bases of turn taking system are turn constructional units which illustrate the distinct attitude of conversation analysis towards language (Seedhouse, 2004). A turn constructional unit is a social action which can be represented in various linguistic forms (e.g. word, clause or sentence) as well as non-verbal forms. Following Wooffitt (1998), Seedhouse argues that this social action which is performed in a sequential turn reflects an emic analytical focus (i.e. the analysis that CA makes of the sequential turns reflects the participants' perspectives as opposed to the linguistic etic perspective). In other words, turn constructional units are emically examined as social actions although they might take the shape of heterogeneous linguistic forms. Therefore, unlike descriptive linguistics, the turns of a conversation cannot be analysed in isolation; rather, "a holistic system of analysis" is used by both the participants and the analyst (Seedhouse, 2004:33). Social actors recognise turn constructional units in an interaction and project when they are going to end. Transition of speakers and exchange of turns happen at transition relevant places. It is the place towards which the participants are oriented in sequencing their turns and the point where the speaker change may occur. In the words of Sacks et al. (1974:703), "transfer of speakership is coordinated by reference to such transition-relevance places". At the possible completion of a turn unit, both the speaker and the potential next speaker might orient to the transition relevance place. Sidnell (2010) argues that the participants monitor the pragmatic features of the current turn to find out when it starts, continues and comes to an end. In other words, participants monitor the unfolding course of a

turn to locate and project the points of unit completion and anticipate these before they actually occur in the dynamic and sensitive system of turn taking.

The system of turn taking is characterised by three normative principles in relation to turn allocation and speaker transition in a conversation (Sacks et al. 1974:704): i) the speaker selects the next speaker in the current turn; ii) if the speaker does not select a next speaker, the first participant who speaks at the transition relevance place is self-selected as the next speaker; iii) if a next speaker is not selected either by the speaker or by another participant through self-selection, the current speaker may continue.

Comments in Facebook conversations are similar to turns in face to face interactions in the sense that Facebook conversations contain transition relevant places where a commenter stops and another commenter starts a contribution. Yet, in Facebook threads, it is the poster instead of the speaker who changes. The poster change commonly occurs in Facebook conversations containing multiple interdependent comments; however, poster changes are not "interactionally achieved" by the Facebook users in their interactions (Farina, 2018:39). That is to say, unlike spoken conversations, the Facebook users cannot monitor each other's comments and anticipate the occurrence of a turn constructional unit and a poster change. Although Facebook users contributing to the same conversation might be online simultaneously at the time of interaction, a user cannot know whether the other user is reading/typing a comment until after the user finishes the comment and posts it. Thus, unlike the turns at talk, the Facebook users do not have access to each other's contributions in progress (Farina, 2018). While, as in spoken conversations, a commenter can select the next commenter with the use of Facebook affordances (e.g. tagging the user's name), Facebook users cannot be certain that the selected addressee will read/respond. Also, the selection does not necessarily stop other users from posting a reply. In sum, like the speakers of interactions, Facebook users can draw on turn allocation components to select their intended target and project the next action in a Facebook conversation. Nevertheless, this does not exclude the unintended audience from active participation in threads. The contributions of those who have not been selected are normally considered as a product of the turn-taking organization of Facebook rather than a violation to the system. This can be influential in designing a post as all of a person's Facebook contacts can be potential readers. In general, producing the next comment in a comment thread is a matter of timing on Facebook. When a commenter is typing, there is always a possibility that another comment will appear on the screen before the comment has been posted. In this sense, the positionings of the comments in a Facebook conversation are not defined by the users, but by the Facebook system. Facebook presents the contributions of the users based on the time of posting. Comments which are posted at the same time do not overlap, they are simply presented one after another in the conversation with the same timestamp. Although overlap (i.e. simultaneous talk by conversational participants) as a component of turn-taking organization does not occur on Facebook in the same

way it occurs in face-to-face conversations, the sense of the notion of overlap is needed for the analysis of conversational threads of Facebook because one post may almost simultaneously (quasi-simultaneously) be responded to with more than one reply and this may result in the construction of simultaneously unfolding contributions which are mostly related and interdependent.

4.3.2 Adjacency pairs

"The basic building blocks of intersubjectivity" across the conversational turns are adjacency pairs (Heritage, 1984b:256) because the participants of a conversation use adjacency pairs to indicate their understanding of each other's alignments in the sense that the first turn production sets an interpretive frame for the first speaker to make sense of the second speaker's action, while the second adjacent utterance chooses from the range of possibilities projected by the first action. Action sequence in an interaction is clearly illustrated through adjacency pairs. The pairs are not always adjacent; yet, the second pair part remains relevant in spite of an interruption or an inserted sequence. For example, in the following conversation, a question-answer pair is embedded into another:

A) May I have a bottle of Mich? (Q1)
B) Are you twenty-one? (Q2)
A) No (A2)
B) No (A1)
Merritt 1976: 333, cited by Levinson (1984: 304)

The organization of adjacency pairs defines a norm to which the participants are held accountable. Pairs collaboratively promote mutual understanding as they refer to a normative point of reference. The first part provides normative expectations for the next action and at the same time serves as a guide to the analyst's interpretation (c.f. ethnomethodological principle of reflexivity). Complying with the norm is encouraged by the fact that the participant who deviates from the norm may face social sanction. For example, if a question is not answered by the second speaker, the normatively called-for action is not accomplished. If there is not any account of the absence then negative evaluation by the questioner may arise and a sanction may be imposed on the second speaker. Some conversation analysts however, suggest that the issue is more of an inference rather than a sanction (Levinson, 1983; Sidnell, 2010)

The second part of the adjacent pair might take the form of preferred or dispreferred action. While a preferred response to actions is the normative way of social behaviour which is immediately performed and is said to be socially affiliative, dispreferred responses which violate customary norms of behaviour are often delivered with hesitation and accompanied by accounts and excuses

(Heritage, 1984b). Preference organisation is argued to be related to the intrinsic tendency of the participants to maintain the solidarity and avoid dispute with others. (Heritage, 1984b).

The presence of adjacency pairs on Facebook is evident as the comments of a Facebook conversation cannot be interpreted separately. As in spoken conversation, adjacency pairs on Facebook are displayed in the form of coherently organized pairs which are not always adjacent but make sense only when treated as part of a sequence in relation to the actions performed in the earlier comments within the same conversation. Since posting a comment on Facebook is like performing an action which can make other actions relevant, a comment on Facebook produces other successive comments which are interdependent and sequentially ordered in a meaningful and coherent way.

4.3.3 Repair

The interactional problems, breakdowns and misunderstandings which disrupt the talk-in-progress can be rectified by the use of repair mechanism. Repair has various types: self-initiated repair (the speaker notices the mistake and initiates the repair) is different from other-initiated repair (someone else invites the repair), while self-repair (the same person who has made a mistake corrects the mistake) is distinguished from other-repair (someone else corrects the speaker's mistake). While the most preferred trajectory of repair is self-initiated self-repair, other-initiated other-repair is the least preferred one (Schegloff, Jefferson and Sacks, 1977). According to Schegloff, Jefferson and Sacks (1977), the preference for self-repair derives from the preceding position of self-repair in a repair space. In other words, opportunities which are structurally placed in the speakers' own turn construction unit and the next transition relevance place precede those of the next speaker; in general, turns are organizationally designed to facilitate self-repair. Furthermore, others often initiate the repair and leave it for the self-repair. In addition, even if other-repair occurs, it is often accompanied by modulations. However, if an unmodulated other-repair occurs, it usually results in disagreement from other participants. Repair mechanisms substantially contribute to the maintenance of intersubjectivity (See Schegloff, 1992) in the sense that when a speaker anticipates a problem of understanding, the speaker avoids the problem by modifying the talk with the use of same turn self-repair to display how to make sense of the talk. If the addressee does not have adequate understanding of the preceding turn, the speaker invites the repair in the subsequent turn. When the addressee's next turn indicates a misunderstanding of the previous turn, the speaker initiates repair in the third turn. Schegloff (1992:1338) argues that repair is established and maintained through a "procedural" means in the hands of the participants. Repair is assessed by the participants themselves and is hence "party administered". Also, it is "locally managed, locally adapted, and recipient designed". This means that mutual understanding is achieved by the participants in a local context as they interactionally and sequentially coordinate the practices to achieve intersubjectivity and an understanding of how the activities might have been misunderstood.

While a type of repair on Facebook is visible to the participants of a Facebook conversation, another type of repair can only be seen by the poster. Since the production and transmission of a comment are separate stages of its development (Garcia and Jacobs, 1999), the reformulation of comment is invisible to the audience. Yet, as in spoken conversation, Facebook users contribute to the construction of sequentially organized actions and maintain intersubjectivity (Stokoe, 2013). Unlike in spoken conversations, potential trouble can be found and managed on Facebook when the message is being typed prior to posting. There is also the possibility of editing the posted contribution to Facebook conversations. However, the affordances of the medium minimize the recipient's awareness of the repair in the sense that while both the edited and the repairable original versions are available to the reader, viewing the 'edit history' is not transparent/automatic and requires following further steps. Previously, Facebook allowed the audience to clearly see an 'edited' label besides the timestamp. In this respect, a repair on Facebook is more similar to repair in spoken conversation as the recipient of the message easily notices that there has been some sort of repair although the repaired content in Facebook interactions is not quickly identifiable in comparison with the repaired talk. While the repair on Facebook can be distinguished from the repair at talk in some ways, self-initiated self-repair is common in online interactions and is normally accomplished as a preferred action to deal with the written troubles and errors which arise during and after publishing materials on Facebook.

4.4 A conversation analysis perspective on context

The conversation analytical approach to the study of language and social interaction views the concept of context as it is established by the structures of preceding talk (e.g. a question generates a context of what happens next). In this respect, the particular type of interaction in which the interactants are involved constitutes a component of context (e.g. a friendly chat). The other view refers to the macro dimension of social life such as social stratification and social institution. Although context in this way can be formulated in many ways, it should be relevant to the participants (Schegloff, 1992c). It is the actual orientation of the participants which invokes one aspect of context rather than the others. Thus, drawing on the details of talk, the analyst should only consider those aspects of context that are relevant to the participants themselves. Moreover, the analyst should indicate that some aspects of context have "procedural consequentiality" (Schegloff, 1991:53). That is to say that the talk in a particular context is influential in the shape, trajectory and content of the conversation conducted among the participants. Addressing the problem of context, Heritage (1984) argues that although interactants draw on their contextual knowledge to interpret the talk, the context of interpretation is not external to the conversation (c.f. Levinson, 1979); rather, it emerges within the talk. Heritage (1984:289) remarks: "participants routinely assure and reassure one another that it is 'this' and not some 'other' sense of context that is operative for the local organization of 'this segment' of interaction". According to conversation analysis, it is the

coordinated engagement of all the participants in some sequences which shapes the whole trajectory of the conversation and results in the co-construction of a context. While the sequentially organized context of turns creates an interpretive setting, conversation analysis is criticised for overlooking the larger context of talk and for its disinterest in what happens at the time and place. This issue will be further discussed in section 3.5.1.

Before addressing the strengths and weaknesses of applying the conversation analytic approach to Facebook practices, the following sections provide a brief history of the analytical approaches adopted/created for the study of computer-mediated communication and give an overview of previous linguistic studies of Facebook in particular.

5. Methodological frameworks for the study of computer mediated communication

The emergence of the new communication technologies which gave rise to the computer mediated communication caught the attention of researchers working on the interactional analysis of spoken talk. Early studies of online communication mostly applied conversation analysis to synchronous and conversation-like forms of online communication such as internet Relay chat (Garcia and Jacobs, 1999) with the focus mostly on its turn taking patterns and repair organization. Research on asynchronous internet communication such as email is found in the work of Herring (2004, 2007) who coined a classificatory method for the analysis of asynchronous online data. During the 2000s, computer mediated communication research shifted focus from microanalysis of online interaction at the local level to the social networking contexts, the general configuration of media and larger scale studies of internet use as a situated social activity (Baym, 2011). An analytical approach is needed to account for the complexities of online interactions; yet it is a matter of debate whether the existing frameworks can be uncritically deployed or whether new methods which address various modes and types of digital data should be developed. A glance through publications shows that researchers mostly digitise the existing analytical methods of spoken interaction in order to address online data though some new innovations have provided valuable analytical tools. Examples here include quantitative analysis such as data mining (Lin et al., 2009) and digital ethnography (Hine, 2000) or qualitative methods of email interviewing (Meho, 2006) and visual focus group (Rezabek, 2000). Nevertheless, developing a customised version of conversation analysis in order to adequately study the interactional dynamics of digital data requires for the conversation analytic principles to be revised and the affordances and constraints of the electronic environment to be considered.

5.1 How does research approach Facebook data

Like any other social network website, Facebook affords personal profiles, networks of friends and means of communicating with them (Boyd and Ellison, 2007). Facebook practices which are initiated by creating a biographical profile, are accomplished through a timeline where the page

owner and the network of friends post their updates. Users contributions to Facebook are mediated by the platform's affordances such as liking, commenting, sharing and tagging practices. The multimodal medium of Facebook provides a dynamic sociocultural arena where the unfolding of discursive and semiotic practices provide opportunities for self-presentation and shape and maintain a Facebook user's affiliations in relation to a relatively large audience. The adjustment of privacy setting can widely change the level of accessibility of a user's timeline and newsfeed. Hence, Facebook is known as a semi-public space where "users must negotiate the multiple levels of audience within widely broadcast posts and related threads" (Warner and Chen, 2017:122).

In order to analyse the sequential dynamics which unfold on Facebook threads, this dissertation draws on some refined tenets of conversation analysis and makes an effort to address the online data while considering the challenges that the complex, fast growing digital context poses for conversation analysis. Before discussing the compelling reasons behind the deployment of conversation analysis as the theoretical framework, a brief overview of the previous linguistic studies of Facebook is provided.

5.2 Linguistic research on Facebook

Recently, research has paid special attention to Facebook in different fields such as sociology (Westlake, 2008; Harper, 2011; Castells, 2013), anthropology (Miller, 2011, Horst and Miller, 2013), communication (boyd and Ellison, 2007; Papacharissi, 2010; Baym, 2015), education (Sheldon, 2008; Davies, 2011) and second language acquisition (Godwin-Jones, 2008; Milles, 2009). Linguistic studies of Facebook, which are mainly concerned with the analysis of status updates, mostly report that status updates reflect narratives, small stories and tellings. The findings indicate that: a status update is a significant narrative activity for positioning and self-presentation (Georgakopoulou, 2013); the normativity of status updates is influenced by the online discourse situation as recent updates are favoured and characterized by use of present tense for breaking news (Page, 2010); status updates can be categorized into five different sorts of tellings (Frina, 2015); status updates are microblogging practices which have significant social implications and hybrid new media genres (Lee, 2011). Linguistic research on Facebook also examines the contributions which a status update initiates, such as the comments following a photo sharing on Facebook (Placencia and Lower, 2013; Maize-Arevalo, 2013; Hille and Bakker, 2014). Research indicates that the contributions after pictures posted on Facebook, include compliments in the form of adjacency pairs (Placencia and Lower, 2013). Also, the affordance of Facebook such as the like button is suggested to facilitate the responding process and functions as a sort of compliment (Maize-Arevalo, 2013). Other uses of the like button such as supportive reactions and acknowledgements of both the main post and the comments have been examined in research (Gerolimos, 2011; West, 2015). Another study focuses on the statistical description of comments in relation to different variables

such as gender and topic choice. The findings indicate that women's contributions to Facebook receive more responses than the posted practices of men (Wang, Burke and Kraut, 2013). Moreover, language use in comments has been investigated in linguistic research. For example, Sharma (2012) investigates the use of English and Nepali on the Facebook pages of three undergraduate student groups in Nepal. These findings suggest that the students extensively embed the use of English within Nepali texts to recontextualize the local and global content of the social media and shape their relationships with others. A study by Tagg and Seargeant (2012) explores the use of language among multilingual Facebook users and shows how the users accommodate to their perceived image of audience on Facebook as they construct their global communities in social media. Androutsopoulos' (2014a) empirical research on the use of language by two young Facebook users focuses on the relationship between their linguistic repertoire and sharing practices. The results indicate that the users mobilise their linguistic resources to share the experience of their transnational mobility on Facebook. In another study, Androutsopoulos (2014b) focuses on the linguistically diverse space of Facebook and examines the strategies of language choice as multilingual people face audiences from various social contexts and the role of English as an international resource among the networked users. The findings of the linguistic studies of language use generally indicate that Facebook users often choose one language over the other to target a particular audience and/or address a particular topic. Identity construction through the use of language has also been discussed in research on Facebook (Papacharissi, 2010; boyd, 2011; Tagg and Seargeant, 2012; Georgalou, 2017). Furthermore, the impact of the spatiotemporal aspect of the posted comments on the organization of the subsequent comments on Facebook has been addressed (Frobenius and Harper, 2015).

Inspired by some of the linguistic studies of Facebook (Maiz-Arevalo, 2013; Placencia and Lower, 2013; Farina, 2015), the present research draws on a conversation analysis-informed method to examine the interactional dynamics of the Facebook members' digital practices. The following argumentation accounts for the rationale behind using the conversational analytic approach in this dissertation.

6. Adoption of conversation analysis as the methodological approach

Online interaction constitutes a large part of daily social interaction as people extensively send and receive messages, emails, notifications, etc. by means of digital devices. The widespread use of Facebook as one of the most popular social networking websites, is clearly indicated as Facebook hit 2 billion users in 2017 (Facebook.com). This significant milestone displays the power of Facebook in connecting the world on the basis of a common ground. The multimodal context of Facebook is characterised by social interaction which is performed through threads often containing an initial update and the following comments.

Boyd and Ellison (2007) indicate that Facebook is the locus of social interaction and engagement with other users from around the globe and as it was mentioned before, social interaction is the primary focus of conversation analysis (Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson, 1974; Heritage, 1984; Goodwin and Heritage, 1990; Schegloff, 1993; ten Have, 1999). In fact, conversation analysis describes "the underlying social organization-conceived as an institutionalized substratum of interactional rules, procedures, and conventions- through which orderly and intelligible social interaction is made possible" (Goodwin and Heritage 1990:283).

In addition to the analysis of organization of social interactions which helps understand the assumptions underlying a computer mediated talk, conversation analysis is an apt conceptual framework for the description of naturally occurring talk; the kind of talk "which would have happened anyway, not one which has been contrived by the researcher for the purpose of doing research" (Liddicoat, 2011:14). In other words, conversation analysis works with a kind of data which was not designed for the purpose of research. Facebook data also exemplifies naturally occurring interaction which has not been pre-arranged for the analyst. Although Facebook threads are vast, dynamic, not exclusively verbal and asynchronous, they emerge as a result of Facebook users' natural dialogic exchanges.

Conversation analysis is mainly concerned with the description of conversational turns which are structurally and meaningfully ordered (Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson, 1974). It brings out the idea of sequence organization (Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson, 1974) which deals with the interdependency of social actions in a conversation in the sense that each action makes another, next action relevant (e.g. question-answer sequence). In other words, sequence organization suggests that conversational turns are structured in pairs and the first pair part's action subsequently makes the action of the second pair part relevant. Therefore turns are sequentially organized because of the actions they accomplish. Likewise, when a comment is posted on Facebook, a social action is performed. Uploading a status update is basically a response to the typical default question on Facebook's homepage: 'What's on your mind?'. Similarly, commenting in a thread functions as a reply to either the initial status update or the preceding comment. Thus, sequence organisation is identifiable in both communication systems: spoken conversations and Facebook interactions. Conversational turns on Facebook meaningfully unfold although they are different from spoken conversations in terms of both their form (digital written vs. oral) and the spatiotemporal aspect of online practices (i.e. asynchronicity of Facebook exchanges and geographically dispersed users vs. synchronicity of oral conversation and co-present speakers).

Moreover, previous research has shown the sequence organization enacted in the online communication channels (Garcia and Jacobs, 1998; Reed, 2001; Antaki et al., 2005; Tudini, 2010); yet it has been indicated that the organization of online interaction is influenced by the affordances

and constraints of the digital platform where the interaction occurs. For example, in Facebook-mediated interaction the organization of turn taking is interrupted as pairs are not necessarily adjacent; yet, a sense of focused interaction is maintained. Warner and Chen (2017) argue that in spite of the absence of tightly interrelated pairs, Facebook users orient towards the preceding turns. Adjacency pairs are actually considered as conversational affordances which enable a shared conversation that is sequentially meaningful. However, if Facebook turns sequentially unfold without disruption, turns can still be divided in time. In such situations where turns are performed with delay, the texture of a conversation is maintained as the participants display that they orient in relation to each other's contributions through the completion of adjacency pairs. Mere non-verbal signals such as liking can also function as an indicator that a conversational sequence is going on. Nevertheless, the shifting, emergent and multilingual context of Facebook as well as the complexity of participation structure resulting from the technological/discursive affordances of Facebook might disrupt the sequences.

To sum up, it seems that conversation analysis can be partially adopted to study the sequential dynamics of Facebook threads which are in many ways different from spoken interactions; yet, like oral conversation, interactional meaning is sequentially constructed on Facebook. The conversation analysis view of language as a social action, its focus on the participants' perception of each other's social behaviour as well as its perspective on the interactional relations across naturally occurring turns of talk make it a valuable contribution for the development of a mode of analysis which is particularly crafted for the micro analysis of Facebook's conversational threads. The refinements in the principles of conversational analysis that are needed as well as the medium-related challenges that are imposed on conversation analysis will be illustrated with empirical data in the qualitative chapters of this dissertation.

6.1 Is conversation analysis adequate?

Although the conversation analytic approach has informed other studies of online data, conversation analysis in its traditional version seems to require further developments to address the web-based culture of Facebook where different modes of communication converge in a single setting and discourse is jointly produced to address multiple audiences. In general, communicative practices of the digital age have been completely reformed as people move increasingly across geographical spaces through migration and shift across digital spaces through electronic channels. Complex Facebook-mediated interactions occur among a dynamic network of people who have different sociocultural backgrounds and various linguistic repertoires and who may therefore understand the social reality of life in different ways (Kramsch and Whiteside, 2008). Although research has indicated that computer mediated communication is a new way of speaking (Herring, 1999), Facebook mediated communication transcends the context of the physical proximity which is

emphasised in conversation analysis. Facebook conversations and social network site-mediated interactions more generally, should be analysed with a model which is capable of addressing the dynamic ways in which the geographically dispersed participants are connected in the online world (Androutsopoulos, 2014).

Equally importantly, the identity of the internet users who contribute to online threads is of little interest in conversation analysis. The nature of the large number of participants who take part in online conversations as well as that of the silent audience who witness the interactions and occasionally drop in and out is only relevant within the limits of individual dataset. In other words, the identity of online interactants, according to conversation analysis approach, is restricted to its influential effect on the dynamics of interaction.

Furthermore, Facebook conversations, which occur on the users' timeline and newsfeed, face analytical issues if understood as local interactional episodes in conversation analysis framework. A major challenge posed by the Facebook space deals with the specific location of each piece of data in the Facebook context and the related application or software which frame the online practice within the particular technological setting of Facebook. Facebook data therefore cannot be extracted from its related context to be analysed on its own. Giles, Stommel, Paulus, Lester and Reed (2015:48) argue that digital data in general, cannot be abstracted from its digital context:

> An exchange in a discussion thread is part of a specific named thread within a thematically-oriented forum that is linked to a specific website. Twitter and Facebook exchanges are looser in this respect but still bound by the norms and conventions of their specific online environment (a tweet would not necessarily accomplish the same discursive actions in any context other than Twitter).

Therefore, other than the context which is generated within the talk and in relation to which the interactants are oriented, the interactive medium itself, the software-related contextual features and the discursive norms of an online space partially shape online interactions and should be examined along with the linguistic features.

A conversation analysis-informed method can be constructed on the basis of the existing conversation analysis approach and further adapted to the specific implications of the interactional channel of Facebook in which the online exchanges are practiced.

Goffman (1981:32) criticizes the conversation analytical approach for "the assumption that bits of conversation can be analysed in their own right in some independence of what was occurring at the time and place". Drawing on the idea that meaning of an interaction is context-bound and certain background assumptions which are embedded in people's verbal/non-verbal behaviours are only

available through context, Goffman developed context-related models and techniques. In addition to conversation analysis, Goffman's dramaturgical theory (micro-interactional analysis of people's action by condition of co-presence) is a method of studying human interaction in relation to time, place and audience.

Since Goffman's theoretical model is compatible with the conversation analytic framework, the combination of both approaches lays a theoretical foundation upon which Facebook interactions can be adequately examined. As the interactional meaning on Facebook unfolds sequentially, a conversation analytic approach is seemingly a good choice of methodology; however, as the notion of co-presence assumes central significance on Facebook, conversation analysis needs to be complemented by Goffman's dramaturgical model. That is to say the co-presence of active participants in a Facebook thread who contribute to the co-construction of a conversation is accompanied by the co-presence of silent observers or the bystanders who witness the flow of conversation and never interrupt. It seems that Goffman's view can be adopted and extended to the contemporary social life which is intertwined with the technological advancements and new ways of communication.

For a comprehensive study of people's social interaction online, this dissertation draws on two congruent approaches to be applied to Facebook data. However, both theoretical frameworks are adopted with careful consideration towards the affordances and constraints of the Facebook context. In this respect, the conversation analytic principles should be modified to be deployed in Facebook interactional analysis. Also, Facebook affordances, the complex condition of copresence and a large context of analysis are attended when Facebook platform is regarded as a 'stage' and Facebook users as 'performers' who exercise impression management.

Before discussing Goffman's model on Facebook, it seems essential to provide a broad overview of the theory and the pertinent concepts.

7. Goffman's model

Drawing on the phenomenological view of philosophers such as Schutz, Goffman's methodological framework systematically describes different ways in which social experiences are structurally perceived by social actors, and has informed studies of sociology, discourse, communication and policy since 1980s. Addressing the concept of 'frame', Goffman does not explore the social structure (c.f. ethnomethodological analysis) but the structure of people's experience in their social life. Goffman's frame refers to the multi-layered schemes of interpretation by which individual actors make sense of what happens in social situations. Goffman (1974:10) argues: "Definitions of situations are built up in accordance with principles of organization which govern events-at least social ones-and our subjective involvement in them; frame is the word I use to refer to such of these

basic elements as I am able to identify". Multiple frames of social relations which are built upon each other are easily managed by the participants in their everyday lives as a primary frame is 'keyed' or transformed into another interdependent framework which might be seen as a different activity by the participants (Goffman, 1974). Keying is actually the transformation of similar actions as their meaning is reconsidered. Goffman draws an analogy between keying and transcribing music from one key (mode) to another.

Frame analysis indicates how participants orient themselves in relation to the multiple realities at the same time. Goffman's argumentation distinguishes the reality of a situation from its misrepresentation. This is the difference between the real and staged social activity. Goffman's social dramaturgy explores the metaphor of life as theatre and analyses the realness of social scenes. For example, the rehearsal for a performance is less real than the performance and if the actors make jokes in the rehearsal, the event is even less real. The performance or rehearsal or joke represents different levels of realness which are acknowledged by the frame as the logic of the situation. Goffman's method expands its scope to study the interactional dynamics of external social relations to the scene (e.g. the relations of actors with the audience in a scene of a play as the actors do not display their recognition of the audience's presence yet pause to let them laugh during the play). Therefore, in Goffman's view, while the structure of social world is internally shaped, the recognition of its external relations partially forms the social event itself. This becomes particularly important when applied to the online context as the perception of (imagined) audiences significantly shapes Facebook practices.

Goffman's sociology rests on the condition of physical co-presence "where individuals become accessible, available, and subject to one another" (1963:22). The orientation in relation to the condition of co-presence accounts for Goffman's interest in the following range of phenomena: unusual/particular settings, the performance of self-maintaining behaviour (e.g. focused interaction) and non-communicative polite public behaviour (e.g. civil inattention), public behaviour in situations of embarrassment or face-saving behaviour, public displays of competence (e.g. response cries or self-talk which seemingly does not address anyone), the role of spatio-temporal boundaries resulting in exclusion from or inclusion in an activity (Slembrouck, 2008:36). Although an encounter is basically conducted through talk, it only emerges in the condition of co-presence because of the central role of body display in communication. Goodwin (2000:1491, cited in Slembrouck, 2008:36) emphasises the significance of examining "the public visibility of the body as a dynamically unfolding, interactively organised locus for the production and display of meaning and action"[8].

[8] The section on 'dramaturgical perspective in the studies of mediated interactions' will discuss how the condition of co-presence can be different on Facebook.

According to Goffman (1981:84) the social situation is defined based on the condition of physical co-presence:

> By a social situation I mean any physical area anywhere within which two or more persons find themselves in visual or aural range of one another. The term "gathering" can be used to refer to the bodies that are thus present. No restriction is implied about the relationship of those in the situation: they may all be involved in the same conversational encounter, in the sense of being ratified participants of the same state of talk; some may be in an encounter while others are not, or are, but in a different one; or no talk may be occurring.

Thus, other than the social actors in the focal frame and the main audience, the relationships with non-ratified people who are co-present outside the frame should be taken into account. Once the boundaries expand, multiple parties contributing to the talk are examined in terms of the social roles they take to be able to interact. The distinction between the ratified primary addressee and the non-ratified addressee (overhearer) is made in relation to the concept of 'footing' as a moment-to-moment change of the speaker's position in relation to what occurs in a situation through the course of a discourse (Goffman, 1981). In other words, the speaker conducts different roles as the alignment towards the ongoing event changes. Thus a pre-defined space which is associated with typical conventions and activities is connected through the concept of frame with an interactional dynamic space which is appropriated by the participants for the purpose of activity. In other words, in addition to the structure of the physical space as a pre-situational frame, frame analysis examines the sequentially-produced frame which is used as a frame of interpretation. Goffman's concept of footing contributes to the understanding of turn taking organization of spoken interaction in the sense that the participants (in the spatial frame and for the purpose of the activity) situationally and sequentially design their turns in relation to the constantly changing positioning of themselves and the co-present others in a talk (Goffman, 1981).

7.1 Goffman's facework

Goffman's (1967) notion of 'face' or self-image in social interaction, which significantly informed politeness theory (Brown and Levinson, 1987), varies depending on the particular sociocultural values and the context of an interaction. Face reflects how an individual wishes to be perceived by others in the society. All parties in a social interaction are mutually sensitive to face. In other words, the speaker is well aware of the image of self as well as the face of others. Hence, the interactional patterns of the participants display verbal/non-verbal modifications to sustain face (i.e. face-saving act). To avoid misleading of face (i.e. being in the 'wrong face' or being 'out of face') or to restore the threatened face, one must ensure that an expressive order is maintained. This is an order which

regulates the flow of events so that anything which is expressed should be consistent with the positive social values that the individual claims.

Goffman's (1955:226) facework is "the actions taken by a person to make whatever he is doing consistent with face. Face-work serves to counteract "incidents" – that is, events whose effective symbolic implications threaten face". When an anticipated threat to a face might be about to occur, the avoidance process of facework is enacted. This type of facework comprises a few strategies: i) topics which seem to be inappropriate for a situated context of talk are avoided in defensive strategy. ii) a protecting strategy is employed when polite conduct modifies the talk to an audience. iii) a preventing strategy is deployed when an incident cannot be prevented; yet, the explanation of any potential threat prior to the occurrence prevents the offensive effect. iv) tactful overlooking is practiced when the ignorance of incident promotes the desired flow of activity. A corrective process as a different type of facework is enacted when the participants of an encounter cannot avoid the event which is incompatible with the social values and expectations. The event is regarded as a threat and the participant proceeds to re-establish a correct ritual state through the expressive order to maintain the face.

Facework might be aggressively used when an encounter becomes more a scene of a match than that of considerateness in which a face-saving act paves the way for the threat to be safely deployed (e.g. the offender relies on the previous overlooking of an affront to safely offend the person who does the facework). In this respect, Goffman (1955:233) notes: "the purpose of the game is to preserve everyone's line from an inexcusable contradiction, while scoring as many points as possible against one's adversaries and making as many gains as possible for oneself".

Face-work can be initiated by the individual whose face is threatened or by the offender or a witness to the scene. Facework is a cooperative task in which people should compensate for the lack of effort on the part of other parties. In other words, if a person fails to save his/her own face, others would protect him/her through requiring a few facework-related considerations such as "resolution of the situation to everyone's apparent satisfaction" and "correct appointment of blame" (Goffman 1955: 235).

7.2 The dramaturgical perspective in the studies of mediated interaction

Although sociological analysis of new mediated interactions has been relatively overlooked, a number of studies have deployed Goffman's theorising in examining mediated interactions. Early research focused on the irrelevance of physical space in mediated context (Meyrowitz, 1985) and efficiency of interaction under the copresence condition (Boden and Molotch, 1994). The sense of copresence has also been studied in the audio/video mediated context (Ackerman et al., 1997). Also, Goffman's participants' roles have been applied in the study of turn-taking organization of a

computer mediated setting (Jirotka et al., 1991). Later research has shown how norms and social connections structure the mediated interactions (Bolton and Houlihan, 2005) and how facework is enacted in controlling emotions in mediated service work (Strudy and Finemen, 2011). The interplay of emotion and asynchronous internet interaction has also been analysed in research (Gilmore and Warren, 2007; Myers, 2007). The application of Goffman's concepts of front and back stage to mediated communication resulted in the mediated context being interpreted as the middle region (Ling, 1997), parallel front stage (Cooper, 2001), multiple front regions (Aoki, 2007) and blurred region (Geser, 2004).

In general terms, Goffman's interaction order is restricted to spoken conversation and the condition of copresence in physical social situations. Mediated interaction has been marginalized in Goffman's work (Meyrowitz, 1985, Giddens, 1984) because while in the immediate encounters "unique informational conditions prevail", the mediated interaction is "more attenuated with each participant line being gleaned from such things as written statements and word records" (Goffman, 1967:33). In addition, given off expressions in Goffman's argumentation, comprising subtle gestures and facial expressions, are not witnessed in mediated interaction. Equally importantly, it is under the condition of copresence that interactants mutually monitor each other's actions and react to those actions. This is the precondition for the "sustained, intimate, coordination of action" (Goffman, 1983:3).

Participants in a face-to-face conversation share a spatiotemporal frame and their impression management is structured through mutual monitoring and facework. In other words, in Goffman's interaction order, the mutual monitoring under the condition of copresence enables the participants to sustain the definition of the situation and socially interact with each other. If the definition of the situation is not shared by the participants, the social structure of the situation may collapse and the cohesion of social reality may be disrupted. Therefore in order to understand the interaction, Goffman offers the concept of frame which goes beyond an informative setting to an analytical tool and an integral part of the interactional experience.

An encounter occurs when the participants share a joint focus of attention and maintain focused interaction throughout a conversation (Goffman, 1963). Mediated communication can also entail focused interaction in almost the same way as a spoken encounter. Different levels of mutual monitoring, collaborative construction of a social situation and focused attention are afforded by different types of mediated conversations. For example Retie's (2009) study of phone calls reveals that synchronous mediated conversations enable mutual monitoring, shared time frames and collaborative mediated interactions. Retie (2009) argues that the participants in mediated interaction are not copresent physically, yet they collaboratively work together to sustain the coordination of action.

In contemporary society, the concept of copresence can be further developed to account for the new ways of human togetherness and communication. Copresence is a condition in which people become "accessible, available and subject to one another" (Goffman, 1963:22). According to Goffman (1963:17) under the full condition of co-presence "persons must sense that they are close enough to be perceived in whatever they are doing, including their experiencing of others, and close enough to be perceived in this sensing of being perceived." This sense of copresence which involves people's perceptions and feelings of being together is different from the mode of copresence which refers to people's spatiotemporal collocations with others (Zhao, 2004). In other words, people's sense of togetherness does not necessarily correspond to the real state of copresence. In fact, the copresence design of technology can form or affect the sense of copresence.

In addition to the traditional form of human copresence in which the conversation takes place in face to face form and interactants are within range of each other's immediate perceptions and can reach each other unmediatedly, another dimension of copresence has been defined in research. Zhao (2003, 2004) suggests telecopresence as another form of copresence which allows instant reciprocal communication between the individuals. In telecopresence condition people are in electronic proximity of each other and their perception is extended to a remote space. Telecopresence is therefore a kind of human-to-human interaction by means of a communication network and an interface device so that peoples' contacts can be instantly expanded all around the world. The sense of copresence in computer-mediated communication (under telecopresence condition) is affected by the lack of physical engagement; yet, "the belief that one is in contact with a real human being, although remotely, sustains the social suspense and excitement that underlie face-to-face interaction" (Zhao, 2004:451).

7.3 Facebook-mediated encounters

Goffman's (1981) concepts of ratified and unratified participants question the traditional definition of interactants as speaker-listener and seem to be able to account for the structure of participation on Facebook. Goffman defines ratified participants as recognized participants in an interaction who may or may not be directly addressed. The ratification does not always correspond to what is heard in the sense that a ratified participant may not listen to the interaction and the interaction may be heard by someone who is not a ratified participant. Hence, the co-present bystanders or the silent observers in Facebook's interactions can be addressed in Goffman's participation model. On the other hand, the central act of communication in Goffman's model; which has important implications for defining the recipient roles as ratified or unratified, is affected by the technological affordances of Facebook which allow a conversational byplay within a digital conversation. Study of decentering of digital communication indicates that the participants of an online community who are frequently present in the group can be characterized as favoured central addressees of any contribution

(Marcoccia, 2004). In this respect, the unratified eavesdroppers in Goffman's analytical framework take the recipient role in digital interactions since awareness of the presence of eavesdroppers forces the sender of a message to include them as recipients (Marcoccia, 2004). In this respect, Warner and Chen (2017) note that the like button in Facebook conversations can perform a communicative function as the message sender is able to identify the eavesdroppers. Nevertheless, the present study tends to hold the view that communicating through the use of the like button reveals the identity of the interlocutor and include them in the circle of active participants. Liking a Facebook post can function as a sort of attenuated conversational turn which can be regarded as a replacement/equivalence for the physical gestures in face-to-face conversations. The eavesdropper role on the other hand, is assigned to any online witness who only observes the communicative situation and does not disclose their identity.

In addition to ratified and unratified participants, the production roles (i.e. the animator, the author, the principal) or the participants' stance (i.e. footing) in Goffman's interactional model may vary in Facebook threads. For example, Facebook affordances such as sharing and commenting at the same time provide a dual role possibility and combine the two roles of animator (sharing) and author (commenting) as the person who produces the message is the one who chooses the content/form. The principalship in this example is assigned to the initial poster who is behind the utterance and whose post has been shared and commented on (Ling, 2010). The participation structure of Facebook is not only about producing a shared focused interaction by means of creating a local interactional setting, but also about making an effort to be heard in the constantly updating flow of newsfeed. Therefore, Facebook-mediated communication can be characterized with the co-construction of complex and dynamic patterns of interaction and the negotiation of conversational power in the shifting and emergent space of Facebook (Jacobsen, 2010).

Facebook, among other social network platforms, has changed many aspects of the social world and has had substantial influences on people's impression management and their negotiations of everyday life. The extensive interactional context of Facebook offers new possibilities for impression management in the sense that the significance of the social actor's specific location and real identity is marginalized and new ways for misdirection are provided. Virtual copresence on Facebook results in less restricted social conventions and increases the possibility of misbehaviour as the Facebook user who is sitting in front of the computer predicts no physical consequence in the potential anonymity that Facebook makes available.

If the Facebook world is a stage, the physical world of the Facebook user is backstage and the online space of Facebook is a front (Miller & Arnold, 2009; Rettie, 2009). However, there are customising options which can create an online backstage on Facebook and make the front narrow and more specific. Facebook affords the possibility to act in the multiple regions simultaneously. In this

respect, a person in pyjamas who is sitting in the comfort of their home (backstage), can upload a picture of themselves in fancy clothes on Facebook and go further to restrict the accessibility of the post to a certain group of Facebook friends (front stage). The temporal aspect of the performance however, has a central significance in controlling the flow of information in the front. Longer interaction on Facebook then results in a more challenging information management and a less flexible self-expression. Jenkins (2010:271) notes that the "Digitised interaction order" has changed the reality of self-presentation and the online self complies with a set of "digitised routines and rituals" which resemble the routines and rituals of face-to-face interaction. In general, impression management is facilitated on Facebook as the less strict routines and rituals safely allow for the change of roles and performance in different personas. Self on Facebook can be chosen and presented; it could be one self or multiple selves and the role can be played in one or multiple settings. This self is related to different 'faces', positive values or ideal images of the individual which appear before the audience in the front region of Facebook. Facebook's personal profile, profile name and picture, group of friends, life events, favourite movies, books, sports, etc. all express the images of self in the front stage which can be creative but not necessarily real.

Therefore, it seems safe to say that Goffman's sociology has the potential to be extended to Facebook interactional analysis; nevertheless, a comprehensive approach mush also realize the Facebook affordances' potentials in providing new opportunities for dramatic action and adding more dimensions to control the impression management.

Chapter 4
Methodological choice
Research questions

1. Choice of methodology

While a quantitative method can provide frequency statistics and shed light on the way a researcher decodes the linguistic/non-linguistic signs, a mere quantitative analysis cannot account for the situated meaning of a sign or the motivation behind using a particular resource at a particular moment. Drawing on a triangulated approach, comprising an interactional analysis which is supported by a quantitative approach along with online ethnographic insights, this dissertation attempts to examine heteroglossic Facebook practices and explicate the Facebook users' performed identities manifested through their social interactions online.

1.1 Online ethnography

With the shift of focus in the studies of computer mediated communication from linguistic features and strategies specific to the online context to the sociolinguistic and discourse studies of situated language use and linguistic diversity on the internet (Androutsopoulos, 2006), a growing need is felt for a complementary technique which transfers the principles of ethnography to the analysis of digital discourse. The systematic observation of the online context where digital interactions unfold as well as direct contact with the participants of the interaction constitute a method of analysis which has been called discourse-centred online ethnography (Androutsopoulos, 2008), virtual ethnography (Hine, 2000) or webnography (Puri, 2007). In order to understand the participants' patterns of language use, analysis of what is observable on the screen alone does not reveal people's intentions behind using particular linguistic/semiotic resources. Ethnographic knowledge can help an analyst to interpret linguistic choices and understand the interactional behaviour behind the choices (Hine, 2000).

Research has deployed ethnography to investigate the patterns of communication (Saville-Troike, 2008) and management of social relations through language (Rampton, 2006). The social meaning which is revealed through language use can be understood by drawing on ethnographic insights which relate language use to social categories and practices of the community under study. Although sociolinguistic research may focus on the detailed analysis of language variability, the participants' awareness and interpretation of their language use provide a backdrop for understanding the meaning of language use (Androutsopoulos, 2008). In this respect, ethnography foregrounds the social context of language use (Rampton, 2006) and this has implications for conversation analysis-informed studies of communication. Using ethnography along with conversation analysis provides the researcher with interpretive tools which transcend the scope of the recorded talk and its transcription, describe the feature of the wider social environment and shed light on our understanding of language use from the participants' perspective. While acknowledging the proximate discourse surroundings in which an utterance is embedded, conversation analysis can be complemented by the insights derived from an ethnographic approach which represents a "broader

social backdrop" of people's interaction (Hanks, 1996:2018, cited in Hesse-Biber et al., 2006). Since Goffman's frame analysis and the ways in which the interactants adopt different stances/footings in relation to utterances have been closely integrated with conversation analytic studies, notions such as Goffman's (1974) participation framework can usefully specify what is meant by "broader social backdrop".

While one type of online ethnography focuses on the combination of online and offline ethnography (e.g. Miller and Slater, 2000), the other type explores what happens on the internet with the focus on the culture and community of internet. Ethnographic studies, however, can serve both functions as they seek to explain the ways in which online interactions are integrated into people's lives through face-to-face interviews on one hand and attempt to analyse the content of the website on the other hand (e.g. Hine, 2000).

1.2 Observation

The online ethnographic method which informs the qualitative and quantitative analyses in this dissertation is a combination of analysis of online practices as well as considerations of offline dynamics. Systematic observation of Facebook interactions of the participants over the timespan of four years, from 2010 to 2014, provides insight into online practices and the patterns of language use on Facebook. The systematic observation of Facebook enables mapping the complex and multimodal structure of Facebook and helps make sense of the interplay among different modes and units of Facebook. Facebook affordances and constraints, and its architectural developments/changes over time, are understood through the systematic monitoring of the website. Different forms of discourse practices as well as the semiotic resources which are associated with Facebook space, the website's participation pattern, specific types of Facebook activities and the particular ways in which Facebook users are engaged with these activities/to other users, are illuminated through a systematic observation of Facebook over time. Furthermore, ethnographic observation can give a rough estimate of the type of Facebook activity with which an individual participant is frequently engaged with, the degree of participation in Facebook practices over time and individual linguistic preferences. This serves as an empirical basis for participant selection procedure and has major implications for qualitative interpretation of Facebook data. In other words, systematic observation of Facebook paves the way for selecting the participants for the interview and the samples of Facebook data for the purpose of analysis. For example, studies of multilingualism on Facebook may involve spotting topics which favour the use of a particular language and form the background upon which specific Facebook conversations can be selected for code switching analysis (e.g. Androutsopoulos, 2007b).

1.3 Participant selection

Ethnographic observation provides this research with potential participants who were non-randomly selected through snowball sampling. Snowball or chain sampling is a form of non-probability sampling in which the informants are appointed by the current informants from among their acquaintances. To qualify for participation in this research, people must satisfy certain criteria: i) the potential informant should be an active Facebook user who regularly visits the site and is frequently engaged in Facebook activities such as posting, commenting, sharing and liking. To define an active Facebook user, the analyst relied on her subjective judgment and her experience of being a Facebook member who logged in to Facebook many times per day in order to check her Facebook page and participate in the interactional exchanges. The individuals in the analyst's network of Facebook friends who gave the overall impression that they are often present on Facebook were considered as active users and therefore as potential informants. Those Facebook users who were not in the analyst's friend list and were introduced to the analyst as potential applicants, were considered as frequent users depending on the subjective observation of their Facebook page. ii) the potential informant should display multilingual practices in their Facebook activities. iii) the potential informant should be a migrant of Iranian descent who lives in Belgium (Brussels and Flanders). iv) the potential informant should deploy Farsi (the home language) in their Facebook practices. That is to say, the potential candidates who did not use Farsi on Facebook were ruled out in advance. This criterion is motivated by the significant role of Farsi in creating a sense of being Iranian and belonging to the Iranian community. While finding positive sentiment from Iranians towards Farsi is not difficult in Iran, finding positive ethnolinguistic beliefs and attitudes to Farsi – which can be manifested in people's general commitment to use of Farsi – is particularly remarkable in relation to the immigrants of Iranian descent who were born or raised outside the borders of Iran. The group of participants in the present study partially consists of Belgian-born/Belgium raised immigrants of Iranian descent who have never been in Iran or have little offline contact with Farsi-speaking Iranian people. Use of Farsi on Facebook distinguishes them from the rest of Iranian diasporic members in Belgium and can characterise them as Iranian immigrants who may have not experienced living in Iran but have carried Farsi through into social life and have shown feelings of ethnic affiliation. The symbolic or functional use of Farsi on Facebook of members of Iranian diaspora seemingly indexes their affiliated identity to Iran and reflects a sense of being Iranian.

In this research project, 37 participants were selected and contacted for face-to-face interviews. While the number of potential participants was considerably large in the first stages of selection procedure, the present study ended up with 37 active Facebook users who were willing to participate. The group of participants comprises people from a wide range of relationships to the researcher: friends, friends of friends, acquaintances and strangers. The group of participants has a roughly even gender balance, consists of 16 males and 21 females, ranging in age from 15 to 35 at

the time of interview in 2013-2014. The participation was accompanied by opt-out sampling strategy by which the participants can express their unwillingness to participate at any moment and hence, their data is excluded from the study. Fortunately, no one opted out. Table 12 displays a detailed color-coded representation of the 37 informants of this dissertation.

1.4 Researcher's role

As a member of community of Iranian migrants in Belgium, and also as a Facebook friend in the friend list of the participants, I have conducted sociolinguistic research as an insider. I share the same language and culture with most of the interviewees[9] and this gave me the advantage of having a greater understanding of the sociocultural aspect of the context being studied. A membership perspective allowed me to capture the dynamics of online multilingual practices from within the networked community. The common sociolinguistic background did not enable me to establish intimacy with the participants; however, I can say that through knowledge of our shared language, trust developed relatively fast and easily. In general terms, my insider perspective helped to convince the participants to cooperate, build rapport with them and consequently, gain access to their Facebook practices. Compared to an outsider, my accepted position in the community makes less impact on the natural flow of social interaction and is less likely to lead people to become self-aware of the process of performing their sociolinguistic behaviour which is being studied. To maximise the occurrence of natural interactions, I maintained a marginal position and did not take part in Facebook activities at the time of data collection.

1.5 Informed consent

The initial contact for the interview was particularly significant in the sense that the identity of the research and the researcher was disclosed to the informants and a sense of trust was shaped. Because of the invisible nature of internet audience/observer whose presence can be concealed, issues of research ethics in relation to internet observation and analysis are not straightforward (Androutsopoulos, 2008). This dissertation guaranteed the participants' anonymity in the sense that all personal information, names, pictures and any other resource of individuation are removed. The participants are given nicknames in the analysis to be recognizable in different chapters of the dissertation. While the semi-publicness of Facebook means that some posts are publically accessible depending on the poster's decision and shared posts can be seen by people outside the initial poster's network of friends, this does not necessarily mean that Facebook is a public database which can be automatically and readily used for research purposes. This research project uses/analyses Facebook

[9] While the Farsi language was shared by all of the participants, Iranian culture remains partially common to all participants of this research.

data with caution and adheres to the standards of privacy protection which has been defined in the informed consent (See appendix).

1.6 Three types of migrants

The three types of migrant groups which are discussed in this dissertation have been shaped based on the participants' migration trajectories and histories gleaned from the ethnography and interview sessions. Chapter 6 in particular, takes an analytic view to participants' language use development on Facebook as they move across spaces. In order to address the dynamics of linguistic mobility, chapter 6 carefully tracks the translocal movement of language users and their spatiotemporal trajectories. The immigrants of Iranian descent (n=37) are therefore categorized into three groups based on their spatio-temporal trajectory and their life stage at the time of migration (the division between the immigrant groups is reflected in the colour codes in table 12). The first group consists of 10 second generation, Belgium-raised participants who moved from Iran to Belgium as adolescents; of whom 2 participants were born in France and raised in Brussels, 2 participants were born in Denmark and raised in Flanders, 1 participants was born in Iran and raised in Flanders and later moved to Brussels, 5 other Belgium-raised participants were born in Iran, among them, 1 participants was raised in Brussels, and 4 participants were raised in Flanders. The second group consists of 11 second generation Belgian-born participants. The third group consists of 16 first-generation Iranian immigrants who moved from Iran to Belgium as adults. In the process of their transnational movement, 12 participants moved from Iran to Belgium (10 participants moved to Flanders and 2 participants moved to Brussels) and 4 other participants were involved in an indirect trajectory in their process of migration from Iran to Belgium: 1 participant moved from Brussels to Flanders, 1 from Germany to Flanders and 1 from Spain to Flanders. 1 participant moved from Finland to Brussels. The three groups are represented in the following colour-coded table.

Guide to the table:

Cells' background colour

Belgium-raised participants	Belgian-born participants	Iranian-born and Iran-raised participants who moved to Belgium

Text font in red specifies the participants whose profiles are particularly mentioned/described in different case studies:

- chapter 6: #6 (Hana), #7 (Nooshin), #26 (Bana), #31 (Am), #35 (Lily), #36 (Saba)
- chapter 7: #31 (Am)
- chapter 8: #1 (Se), #2 (Ze), #24 (Ni)
- chapter 9: #33 (Javid)

Table 12. Colour-coded representation of 37 participants

#	Gender	Name	Age	Place	Trajectory	Immigration status[10]	languages they are competent in
1	Male	Se	27	Flanders	Iran-Belgium	refugee	Dutch, French, English, Farsi
2	Female	Ze	22	Flanders	Iran-Belgium	refugee	Farsi, English, Dutch, French
3	Female	Nda	17	Flanders	Iran-Belgium	refugee	Farsi, Kurdish, English, Dutch
4	Male	Bab	28	Brussels	Iran-Belgium	refugee	French, Farsi, Kurdish
5	Female	Sara	19	Flanders	Denmark-Belgium	family	Farsi, Danish, Dutch, English
6	Female	Hana	26	Flanders	Denmark-Belgium	family	Farsi, Danish, Dutch, English, Hebrew
7	Female	Noshin	34	Flanders	Iran- Belgium	refugee	Farsi, French, Dutch, English
8	Female	Nav	18	Brussels	France- Belgium	family	Farsi, English, French
9	Female	Che	15	Brussels	France- Belgium	family	Farsi, English, French
10	Male	Sna	33	Flanders	Iran- Flanders-Brussels	refugee	Farsi, Dutch, English
11	Female	Arz	18	Flanders	Belgian-born	family	Dutch, Farsi, English, Azerbaijani
12	Female	Sor	17	Flanders	Belgian-Born	family	Farsi, Dutch, English
13	Male	Mo	19	Flanders	Belgian-Born	refugee	Dutch, French, English, Finnish
14	Male	Amm	28	Flanders	Belgian-Born	refugee	Azerbaijani, Farsi, English, Dutch
15	Male	Mor	33	Flanders	Belgian-born	refugee	Farsi, English, Dutch, French
16	Male	Arsh	17	Flanders	Belgian-Born	refugee	Farsi, English, Dutch, German

[10] Although the participants' migration type or status does not play a role in the analysis, it has been mentioned in the table as meta data. The present research has identified three migration types: i) family migrants refers to those who use family reunification as an entry channel and join family members who already reside legally in Belgium; ii) student migrants refers to people who move to Belgium through a student visa and seek higher education outside their country of birth or citizenship and iii) for the purpose of this study, refugee generally refers to all types of migrants who have left/fled their country of origin illegally, including forced displaced people, economic migrants, asylum seekers, etc.

17	Male	Nck	18	Flanders	Belgian-born	family	Farsi, English, Dutch
18	Female	Lya	24	Flanders	Belgian-Born	refugee	Azerbaijani, Farsi, English, Dutch
19	Female	Naz	19	Brussels	Belgian-Born	refugee	French, Farsi, English
20	Female	Zar	31	Flanders	Belgian-Born	family	Farsi, Dutch, English
21	Female	Mary	23	Brussels	Belgian-Born	family	Farsi, English, French
22	Male	Sol	35	Flanders	Iran-Belgium	refugee	Farsi, English, Dutch
23	Male	Ash	20	Flanders	Iran-Belgium	Student	Farsi, Dutch, English
24	Female	Ni	25	Flanders	Iran-Belgium	Family	Dutch, English, Farsi
25	Male	Nam	32	Flanders	Iran-Belgium	Student	Farsi, English, Dutch
26	Female	Bana	24	Brussels	Iran-Belgium	Family	Farsi, French, English
27	Female	Yasi	31	Flanders	Iran-Belgium	refugee	English, Farsi, Arabic
28	Female	Rsh	29	Flanders	Iran-Belgium	refugee	Farsi, Kurdish, Dutch
29	Male	Ssh	23	Flanders	Iran-Belgium	student	English, Farsi, Dutch
30	Female	Srh	35	Flanders	Iran-Belgium	student	Azerbaijani, Farsi, English
31	Male	Am	26	Flanders	Iran-Belgium	student	Farsi, Dutch, English
32	Male	Bhz	32	Flanders	Iran- Belgium	student	Gilaki, Farsi, Dutch
33	Male	Javid	19	Brussels	Iran-Belgium	refugee	Farsi, French, English
34	Male	Ahmd	30	Brussels	Iran-Finland-Brussels	student	French, Azerbaijani, Farsi, Finnish
35	Female	Lily	26	Flanders	Iran-Spain-Flanders	student	English, Farsi, Azerbaijani
36	Female	Saba	27	Flanders	Iran-Germany-Flanders	Family	Farsi, German, English
37	Female	Spd	25	Flanders	Iran- Brussels-Flanders	student	Farsi, English, French

1.7 Interview, questionnaire and logs

After formulating interview guidelines, face-to-face interviews were conducted in different settings, preferably in the interviewee's home or place of work, when feasible. In general terms, for understanding the conditions in which data has emerged, as much data context as possible was gathered during the process of data collection. Beyond the interview, another ethnographic technique in the form of a questionnaire was administered to the participants (see appendix for the interview and the questionnaire). It is believed that the interview and questionnaire can adequately lay the foundation for an online ethnographic study.

The formal interview sessions were held once for all 37 participants at the initial stages of this research project in 2013-2014. Most interview sessions - comprising the interview and the questionnaire inquiries– lasted between 45 minutes to one hour. Yet, depending on the participants and different situational factors, the time frame can range from 40 to 75 minutes. The interview was semi-structured in the sense that a set of questions in the form of a paper-based interview guide was prepared in advance to be covered in the interview session, however, the questions were mostly used as interview stimuli. That is to say, the interview guide was followed by the analyst, yet, when appropriate, the questions could diverge from the interview guide in order to provide additional information. Thus, to keep track of topical trajectories in the conversations, the interview sessions were tape-recorded. In addition to the formal semi-structured interviews, the analyst had informal follow-up conversations with a group of 15 participants (the circle of friends) on a regular basis. The conversations mostly concerned the questions of the interview guide and the questionnaire as well as the functional meaning of language choices made by the participants on Facebook. Furthermore, all the participants were contacted again in 2015 and were asked to keep a log of two days. The log, as an analytical tool, served to provide additional contextual information particularly in relation to the participants' linguistic repertoire and their language use in real life. In the course of the interactional analysis, certain participants were contacted several times mostly through Facebook Messenger. The conversations aimed to help the researcher to understand the motivations underlying the participants' particular use of language on Facebook.

The interview, as a means of qualitative inquiry, was used to tap into the stories people tell about themselves. People's narratives and personal experiences in the context of migration, as Baynham and de Fina (2005) put it, provide a more pluralistic understanding of migration and displacement. In addition, since online practices are embedded into offline settings, the insights provided by the interview helped to build a bridge between online and offline contexts in a meaningful way and provided valuable information about how the online interactions fit into the participants' daily lives. The first part of the interview raises questions about the general life story of the participants including their transnational migration experience. The second part deals with the participants'

migrant identity, their positioning in a transnational context and their sense of belonging to the homeland and home language. The final set of questions is related to the participants' multilingual repertoire, their self-reported proficiency and their repertoire in use in different stages of life (see appendix for the interview guide).

During the interview sessions, questionnaires were used with semi-structured interviews in a sort of mixed data collection method to create complementary results. Pairing interviews with questionnaires provided detail and clarification and therefore resulted in methodological richness. The paper-based questionnaires were filled in by the interviewer.

The questionnaire requires the participants to specify different languages they usually use when they interact with different interlocutors in various settings. The second part of the questionnaire requires the participants to identify different languages they usually use as they accomplish different activities in their daily life. The activities are categorized based on four essential language skills: speaking, listening, reading and writing. Particularly important is specifying the languages which are deployed in digital reading/writing and especially the languages which are used in online interactions on Facebook (see appendix for the questionnaire). The questionnaire helped to fill in the contextual data particularly in relation to the participants' linguistic repertoires and patterns of language choice in the community of Iranian immigrants in Belgium. The link between the online and offline code choices became clearer and such insights usefully informed the interpretation of Facebook interactions.

Although the ethnographic interview can be useful in a number of ways, the complexity of multilingual interactions when people switch and mix different codes in a specific online domain and with an online audience is oversimplified in this interview/questionnaire. Such complexities should be addressed in a more detailed interactional analysis which will be further discussed in the chapters of this dissertation. Also, the broad generalization which is achieved in relation to patterns of language use/selection does not get in the way of this research to examine the details of participants' language use and code switching practices in chapter 5.

After the data collection was completed, the degree of correlation between the informants' online and offline use of Farsi was questioned and it became evident that it was necessary to collect another set of data. Hence, the participants were contacted again in 2015 and asked to provide a two-day log about their use of Farsi in their daily routine (see appendix for a log sample). Such a demanding task requires the participant's full attention to different activities they do, the activities' precise timings and different languages they use for performing the activities. Despite the challenges in the process of persuading the participants to provide a two-day log, the prolonged and repeated contacts with the informants had its own benefits. For example, it was possible to inquire into any change appearing over time with practical implications for the development of the research: changes in the degree of

engagement in Facebook practices or changes regarding the development of linguistic repertoire. After the initial interview sessions, these follow-up contacts which aimed to encourage the participants to keep logs, with at least one year time lag, were especially fruitful as they gave a second chance to seek clarification about the motivations behind specific sociolinguistic behaviours manifested through Facebook interactions.

1.8 Data collection

Digital or written language on Facebook is remarkably heterogeneous as it is closely connected to online semiotic resources (including images, emojis and screen layout) as well as multiple modes of meaning making (Androutsopoulos, 2013). Facebook data collection then should be approached with some awareness of such complexities. After the initial contact to the potential participants (to gain their informed consent), the participants were selected, their Facebook activities were observed and the interviews were conducted. The finial stage prior to analysis concerned collecting samples. The participants' Facebook data were collected in the form of screenshots from Facebook pages. The collected screenshots were coded and categorized based on each individual participant's Facebook profile. The analysis of screen data is complemented and interpretively framed by user-based data elicited from direct contact to Facebook users. User-based data encompass offline aspects of users' lives and the social/situational context in which Facebook posts are embedded. Screenshots of Facebook posts were saved in JPG files. This helps to save and maintain the exact format of the posts and the layout of the screen. Screenshots also involve details and metadata, for example, in the flow of Facebook exchanges the time lag between different contributions or metadata such as 'edited' label have significant interpretive implications for the analysis. More importantly, the screenshots capture the sequential exchanges of Facebook and their configuration in the exact same way as they are on screen. This is also influential in the interactional analysis of Facebook posts which requires a holistic picture of sequences rather than a snapshot of isolated messages. It is worth mentioning that data which were produced as a direct outcome of analyst's own contribution were not collected/analysed.

2. Introduction to research questions

This dissertation integrates studies of multilingualism and Facebook-mediated communication and holds an analytical view on what a Facebook user can do with the linguistic resources within the scope of a digitally mediated context which affords access to a set of digital resources and triggers a distinct attitude towards the virtual audience. While Facebook provides a new corpus for different qualitative and quantitative approaches in sociolinguistics, Facebook interactions can draw on existing theories of sociolinguistics to indicate how the use of languages contributes to the construction of social identities and management of relationships on Facebook. A running theme through all chapters is the construction of (mostly migrant-related) discursive identities in negotiating everyday social relationships. Different case studies in this dissertation approach this theme from different methodological perspectives.

Chapter 5 uses a quantitative lens to look at multilingualism on Facebook at the macro-level. The main aim is to chart the distributional salience of various languages used and the frequency of code switching on Facebook. The quantitative analysis of linguistic diversity on Facebook aims to record the individual Facebook members' tendencies in how they hierarchize various resources in their repertoire in use. The central focus is on the distribution of 4 languages in a transnational context of migration: English as the lingua franca, Farsi as the ethnic minority language, Dutch and French as the official languages of the host society. Chapter 5 also looks at the patterns of code switching and the co-existence of linguistic resources across turns of Facebook threads as well as within a single turn. Furthermore, the multimodal context of Facebook is examined in relation to the use of codes. In this sense, the corpus is systematically coded and counted based on 5 Facebook modes: text, shared link, audio, video and image. This chapter seeks to show how the Facebook users of Iranian descent negotiate their choices and switches in the translocal space of Facebook while take into account a sort of discursive identity they wish to perform for their audience. Chapter 5 also aims to indicate how the participants' tendencies to use languages position them in the dynamic and diversified space of Facebook as embedded in the globalization-affected Belgian context of migration. The quantitative method which probes the big data on Facebook, provides a broad picture of an interactional network and a complementary analytical perspective for interactional analysis of localized Facebook exchanges which will be addressed in chapters 7 and 8.

Chapter 6 revolves around the matter of migration-related linguistic mobility and language diversity which are facilitated through the transnational and communicative context of Facebook. The interplay between the ideology of monolingualism (in both the homeland and the host society) and migration-induced multilingualism (which is enhanced through the multilingual environment of the internet) leads to a certain pattern of language use development on Facebook which is the focus of interest in chapter 6. While the participants in this dissertation are treated as a whole group in each

of the chapters, chapter 6 divides the multilingual Facebook users of Iranian descent into three groups based on their migration trajectories and life stage at the time of migration: 11 second generation Belgian-born participants; 10 second generation Belgium-raised participants who moved from Iran to Belgium as adolescents; 16 first generation Iranian participants who moved from Iran to Belgium as adults. In the last group, while 12 participants moved from Iran to Belgium in a direct transnational mobility, 4 other participants moved to Belgium via other countries. Chapter 6 adopts a diachronic perspective on the language choices made in Facebook posts of members of diaspora residing in Belgium and tracks the development of their language use over time (2010-2014). Drawing on ethnographic insights and the collected data from interview sessions this chapter maps the trends of language use (Farsi, English, Dutch and French) in relation to each group of participants. The aim is to show how the patterns of language use development represent the collective linguistic behaviour of the participants in each of the three groups as they navigate their linguistic identity in relation to their homeland and new host society in a transnational virtual online space. The chapter sheds light on the overall tendency of the Facebook users in relation to the construction of their national/international identities under the influence of the interplay between the local and global forces in our diverse contemporary world. Chapter 6 also adopts an analytic perspective to explore the interconnection between online and offline use of Farsi (the ethnic language) and indicates whether the choice of language on Facebook mirrors the participants' choices in their real life. For this purpose, data collected from the logs is examined and compared with the frequency of use of Farsi on Facebook to ascertain whether the values are positively correlated.

Chapter 7 and chapter 8 depart from the quantitative studies of new forms of communication on Facebook to a micro-level qualitative focus on the user and the community of practice on Facebook. Chapters 7 and 8 seeks to find out in what ways the multilingual dynamics which unfold on Facebook need to be understood as something which is interactionally negotiated, i.e. as sequential exchanges which unfold not as we speak, but as we post. Insights derived from the digital ethnography including systematic observations of Facebook practices and direct contacts with the participants during the interview sessions contribute to providing detailed situated account of sequential meaning in Facebook-mediated communications and offer contextual understanding of online communications and their particularities. Small-scale analyses of interactional patterns which are localized in Facebook threads are approached with the awareness that the interactional architecture of the social medium is not ordered in exactly the same way as in spoken interaction although the writing practices on Facebook show many characteristics of spoken conversational exchanges. Therefore, approaches to the studies of spoken interactions fall shorts in paying attention to a number of distinctive aspects associated with the written arenas of posted conversations on Facebook and its particular participation structure. While a conversation analytic perspective offers a

straightforward inroad into the description of the interactional practices of choices and switches, some adjustments are needed. In chapter 7, the conversation analysis- informed method is complemented with frame analysis to account for the Facebook users' social interactions in relation to time, place and audience. In this respect, frame analysis can be extended to the internet setting and modified to account for the 'non-physical' condition of copresence in a selected Facebook thread. In chapter 8, the conversation analysis- informed method is complemented with facework to describe the ongoing process of identity construction and impression management of people who are virtually engaged in an interaction on Facebook. In this regard, the dynamics of facework show how the Facebook users in a particular Facebook conversation deploy languages in interactions to foster the appropriate impression on the stage of Facebook and construct an online image which is compatible with the one they wish to project for their audience. The qualitative analyses in chapters 7 and 8 try to take on board the implications that follow from the changed sociolinguistic realities of heightened multilingualism in the contemporary era and explicates its connections with the identity-dynamics of transnational diasporic experiences.

Finally, **chapter 9** looks at the deviations from standard Farsi spelling on Facebook and adopts a mixed method approach to explore the sociocultural significance of non-standard Farsi orthographic practices. Chapter 9 addresses the frequency of occurrence of non-standard Farsi spelling and distinguishes between different types and variations of non-standardness (i.e. non-standard Farsi script, Romanised Farsi, Farsi script which is used to write in other languages). This chapter represents the most frequent instances of non-standard Farsi spelling found in the Facebook pages of participants and also makes a distinction between first and second generation Facebook user immigrants in terms of their orientations towards the use of non-standard Farsi orthography. Capturing the complexities of sociocultural and linguistic context of migration through an online ethnography, the micro analysis of a Facebook thread in chapter 9 addresses the social meaning underlying unconventional orthographic practices. Non-standard script choices on Facebook are considered as resources which can reflect the ideologies, attitudes and subculture stances of migrants in the online space. The chapter moves on to address the semiotic resources associated with the online setting of Facebook and takes an interpretive view towards various instances of visual communications which enrich the interactional exchanges and contribute to our understanding of sociocultural meaning.

The combination of systematic observation of Facebook practices date from 2010 to 2014, collection of Facebook data and data elicited from direct contact with the participants through the interview sessions informs an online ethnographic approach which together with the quantitative and qualitative analysis of Facebook data account for the online sociolinguistic practices of 37 multilingual participants of Iranian descent in this dissertation. Focusing on a range of ways in which

people use language on Facebook, this dissertation addresses a set of research questions which are subsequently discussed.

2.1 Research questions

First, I formulate the general question which this dissertation seeks to answer and then I detail how that plays out for each of the case studies.

Main research question: *how do multilingual Iranian migrants in Belgium use languages on Facebook?*

2.1.1 First case study:

While English as a lingua franca facilitates communications across cultures, the spread of online environment gives rise to the digital use of new languages. In addition, the operating systems of the internet and the development of technology which is mainly based on English disfavour language diversity. The linguistic/communicative situation of online space and its complexities sparked my interest to explore online practices of people in a mixed language group. The first case study of this dissertation seeks to answer the question of

whether members of a diasporic community in a multilingual country accommodate to learn/use English to address a larger number of audience in the Facebook space or whether they increasingly deploy their ancestral/national language which contributes to the development of linguistic diversity on Facebook.

Furthermore, the first case study tries to answer the question of

whether the migrant status of Facebook users favour the use of dominant language(s) of the host country which might pave the way for integration and construction of a more global identity.

Regarding the new online space of multilingual practices, the analysis of language selection and language alternation on Facebook opens a window to the linguistic repertoire of the multilingual Facebook users which are shaped through their life trajectory and migration history. The patterns of language use and code switching which are described in the first case study set the initial stage and provide valuable insight into the exploration of dynamic ways in which linguistic resources are drawn upon to provide interactional meaning through Facebook exchanges. Thus, the first case study's findings contribute not only to our understanding of linguistic diversity on Facebook but also to a clearer picture of language ideologies, domination and power on Facebook, as well as the social dynamics underlying the interplay of the global Facebook network and the local/global identity formation through the use of language. In order to achieve this aim, the frequency and direction of code switching in the Facebook use amongst a group of Iranian migrants in Belgium as

well as the frequency and distribution of languages used on different modes of communication on Facebook are quantitatively examined. Sketching the most dominant, understood, accepted language of Facebook, the first case study establishes its estimation based on the actual counts of languages deployed on Facebook to objectively backdrop further micro-interactional analysis of Facebook threads which is accomplished in the seventh chapter.

2.1.2 Second case study

The second case study, which has been partially submitted to an international refereed journal, concentrates on the migrant status of the Facebook users and their tendency in choice of codes as they move across spaces. The medium of Facebook affords virtual connections which transcend national borders and help diasporic members to maintain ties with their connections inside the homeland and create new connections across the global sphere of the internet. The case study holds a transnational perspective towards the positioning of migrants which is linked to technological developments. The second case study also aims to track the development of language use on Facebook of diasporic members over the timespan of four years to help understand the shifting diasporic positioning in relation to the online and offline transnational networks. The second case study tries to answer the questions of

how does the use of linguistic resources by Facebook users of Iranian descent change over time and which factors contribute to such changes? What does the development of language use online tell us about the patterns of identity construction as a changing process of negotiation in a transnational space?

In order to answer the research questions here, three contributing factors are defined and examined for their potential influence on the development of language use in the online context. Facebook users of Iranian descent were divided into three groups based on their geographical territory, migration trajectory and life stage at the time of migration. The quantitative findings will be the points of reference for comparing different groups of diaspora, defining different diasporic positionings and understanding the patterns of identity construction through the use of languages online. Furthermore, as an observer of Facebook users' choice of codes, I gain a sense of some tendencies and it seems intriguing to ask

whether there is a positive correlation between the online and offline use of the ancestral language of the diasporic community which is shared by all the informants participating in this study.

Any possible negative correlation would be unexpected and well worth further analysing. A negative correlation then would bring up the question of authenticity on Facebook and would require special attention to the multiple layers of affiliation in diasporas' dynamic transnational network. In order to

answer this question, a second set of data collection and data analysis were included in the second case study.

2.1.3 Third case study

With the methodological insight gained from the first and second case studies, I move on to address the sequential dynamics which unfold through Facebook exchanges. The third case study is particularly interesting as it exemplifies Facebook conversations at the intersection of theory and practice. The third case study is divided into two interrelated sections, and each embraces one Facebook conversation. While Facebook conversations are approached with different perspectives of the same sociological view, the two Facebook conversations are kept separate to facilitate following the track of the relatively long conversations.

The convergence of multiple invisible audiences from various social circles in the Facebook context affords new interactional opportunities for establishing social connections and performing self-presentation. Facebook's unique participation structure and its dynamic and shifting communicative setting pose questions about the sociolinguistic behaviours of the Facebook users. The third case study tries to answer the questions of

how do Facebook users draw on verbal and non-verbal resources to tailor their posts to the expectations of a particular audience? How do the sequential context of Facebook and its affordances/constraints affect the interactional meaning? How do Facebook users deploy digital communicative resources to manage their relationships with others and perform their discursive identities? and how do the potential diffusion of information in the Facebook space on one hand and the absence of physical co-presence and the relative anonymity of the Facebook users on the other hand affect people's impression management and relational goals.

Drawing on two congruent sociolinguistic frameworks which have been were originally developed for the study of spoken interaction, the third case study aims to account for the interactional meaning of code choices, analyse the sequential context of Facebook and indicate the ways in which Facebook's communicative dynamics are digitally co-constructed by diverse audiences who are merged in the space of Facebook but at the same time are not bound by time and space. This case study is particularly interesting as it explains/interprets the Facebook user's social interactions in the light of notions such as ethnicity, affiliation and social status on the one hand and ideology, power and dominance on the other hand.

The third case study offers an appealing combination of sociolinguistic theories (i.e. conversation analysis, dramaturgical model) which can be applied to Facebook practices. Two Facebook conversations are chosen to be qualitatively analysed in detail. The selected conversations are

particularly interesting because they clearly demonstrate elements of Facebook-mediated conversationality and are shown to be particularly relevant for our understanding how social meaning is negotiated through the interactional dynamics of Facebook.

2.1.4 Fourth case study:

The fourth case study holds a different perspective towards the Facebook data in the sense that the choice of orthography on Facebook is studied from a social point of view. The partially regulated Facebook context allows the strategic use of non-standard spelling which can create an alternative way for genre differentiation or identity formation. The fourth case study holds the view that while the choice of spelling and the rejection of orthographic norms have social meanings, the audience should be aware of the norm and the meaning of its violation. Case study four exclusively examines Farsi orthographic practices on Facebook of diaspora and tries to answer the question of

what are the patterns of script choice for non-standard Farsi (e.g. Finglish and Englisi)? and how are the spelling forms influenced by the peculiarities of Facebook space?

the question of language ideology and national identity is particularly raised due to the migrant positioning of the Facebook users and the role of non-standard spelling choices in the representation of local voices and diasporic group solidarity. Thus, the fourth case study also tries to answer the question of

how are the ideologies underlying digital literacy practices communicated through particular types of non-standard spelling and how does the choice of script index social relations and construct identities in the social context of Facebook?

Facebook holds appeal to be used as a corpus not only because it presents a large amount of non-standard scriptural data, but also because its affordances offer the possibility of visual communication which complements written language and facilitates the process of intercultural communication. Visuals such as emojis have universal meanings and great communicative potentials. Case study four is particularly interesting as it sketches out the characteristics and frequency of different types of non-standard Farsi orthography and at the same time explores the sociolinguistic implications of script choices as the sociocultural meanings are communicated among the Facebook users through the use of textual and semiotic resources.

Chapter 5
Case study 1
Quantitative analysis

1. Introduction

While online space globally connects diverse communities through the use of a lingua franca, it creates an arena for local language communications where other less dominant languages are also commonly practiced. This dual function of the internet is sometimes overlooked in computer mediated communication studies which largely focus on the use of English as the international language of the internet (Siebenhaar, 2006) . The interactive modes of online interaction seem to particularly foster language diversity on the internet. In this case study, the social medium of Facebook, which appears to promote intercultural connections and multilingual interactions, has been chosen as the corpus in which the patterns of language use by a migrant community in Belgium are examined.

In order to capture an in-depth analysis of language use online, this dissertation adopts an integrated methodology which combines the insights of online ethnography together with the quantification of actual occurrence of code selections and switches on Facebook. This combination serves as a backdrop for further qualitative accounts of language use in relation to the conversational dynamics on Facebook and sets the scene for identifying the saliency of social correlates which could lead certain linguistic choices being actualized in a given communicative situation.

As an integral part of a mixed approach, this chapter adopts a preliminary quantified method to account for the frequency and distribution of language selections/switches and leads to conclusions on the online use of various languages in this dissertation. In particular, this case study aims to chart the distributional salience of multilingual languages used in the Facebook practices of the community of Iranian migrants in Belgium.

Before discussing the distinctive features of the Facebook context as the research field, there is a brief overview of the online network of the focus group (i.e. Iranian diaspora) at hand.

2. The Iranian Diaspora on the internet

The landscape of the Iranian diaspora has been reshaped through the internet since the 1990s. (Khosravi, 2000). Considering the non-democratic medium of communication in Iran, the relative convenience of the public cyber-sphere makes communication possible across political, religious or national borders and allows Iranians in exile to develop their communicative network and strengthen their links with their connections inside Iran (McAuliffe, 2007). Despite their diversity in background and migration goals, the Iranian diaspora shares a common loss –"the lost home"- which is the main reason for construction of online communication spaces and increasing diasporic contributions in transnational virtual networks (Ghorashi and Boersma, 2009:675). As Khosravi (2000:13) puts it, "Iranians have found a homeland in the homepages".

The Iranian diaspora in Belgium is a less well-defined minority group (c.f. the Iranian community in California) which is mostly localized to the Brussels Capital region. The virtual community of Iranians in Belgium emerged with the advance of new media (websites including news, events and advertisements related to both the host community and the homeland, e.g. Iranian.be, established in 2003), and further developed on Facebook in 2010[11] when transnational interaction on the electronic network extended and a considerable number of Iranian expatriates (measured by the number of registered members) could actively contribute to online discursive production. Facebook pages as well as public and closed groups on Facebook[12] (e.g.بازارچه ایرانیان بلژیک - Bazarcheye Iranian Belgium, Persian and Iranian in Brussels and Belgium, ISAB (Iranian Students Association in Belgium), Iranians of Leuven, Cultural Association – ILCA, Iranians in Belgium | سایت جامع ایرانیان بلژیک) started to attract the attention of members of the computer literate Iranian diaspora in Belgium. The social medium of Facebook facilitates interactional transactions in the sense that it fosters both the relations between the diaspora and home country as well as relations among members of the diaspora through an online network which feeds the growth of online communities without borders. As with any diaspora group, Iranian immigrants get new opportunities through Facebook to articulate their voice/identity more creatively and vigorously and this creates community awareness with regard to the group's marginal/different status (Mitra, 2001). In this respect, Ghorashi and Boersma, (2009:687) argue that social network services can satisfy the diasporic need for locality, despite their "deteritorialised" nature which tend to remove the fixed links between identity, culture and place.

A number of studies have examined different aspects of the Iranian diaspora including its political and historical background (Ghorashi and Boersma, 2009; Graham and Khosravi, 2002; Khosravi, 2000; McAuliffe, 2007; van den Bos, 2006; Van Den Bos and Nell, 2006) yet no research has been conducted on the multilingual language use in relation to the digital practices of the Iranian diaspora. Moreover, in general terms, the study of multilingual practices in virtual minority contexts has been largely overlooked (Androutsopoulos, 2006; Sherma, 2012).

The next section briefly describes the affordances and features of Facebook as a globalized multilingual social venue which provides new opportunities for studying multilingual online discourse.

[11] Iranian.be on Facebook dates from 2010.

[12] While Facebook Pages were designed to be the official profiles for entities such as celebrities, brands, businesses and organizations, Facebook Groups are the place for small group communication and for people to share their common interests and express their opinion (Facebook.com).

3. Facebook.com

In earlier versions of the World Wide Web, users were limited to the passive consumption of web pages, whereas with the advent of Web 2.0, the internet has increasingly become a structured frame for registered users to post and exchange their own content. Social network sites are distinguished from other types of computer-mediated settings by the fact that they offer users a (semi) public profile, list of contacts and an access to other users' list of connections (boyd & Ellison, 2007). The semi-public structure of Facebook profiles in particular is characterized by status updates, photos, videos and links as the main components of both users' timeline (i.e. profile page) and the News Feed (i.e. updated stories which can be controlled by preferences). Facebook allows users to perform on the digital network, connect to friends and build social relations based on their shared background, interests, language or real life connection. As one of the most commonly used social networking services, Facebook can provide individuals of the same descent with an online diaspora community in the host country to keep in contact with others and make new connections. Such a collaborative medium can create a platform where members of the diasporic community "can meet others like themselves, where they can discuss with them and negotiate their we-ness" (Goel, 2004 cited in Danet and Herring, 2007:344).

Characterized as it is by the openness of linguistic resources (Androutsopoulos, 2015), the online community of Facebook has become increasingly multilingual (Belling and de Bres, 2014; Danet and Herring, 2007; Hynes, 2014; Lee, 2011) with 1.45 billion daily active users in 2018 (Facebook.com). Access to digital linguistic/semiotic resources on Facebook encourages the playful use of languages (boyd, 2010; Deumert, 2014) and facilitates spontaneous code switching (Androutsopoulos, 2015) according to the user's orientation towards a particular language or audience. Facebook therefore, provide us with a privileged site for studying the transnational immigrant experience and allows us to study in detail its multilingual dimensions.

In order to describe the general patterns of language alternation that have been observed in social media interactions, this chapter uses the terms code switching and code mixing interchangeably. Although there is little agreement in research on the nature of distinctions between code switching and code mixing, the following section gives an overview of some definitions and clarifies the primary aims of this case study.

4. Code switching or code mixing

Code switching is defined as the alternate use of two or more languages in discourse (Li, 2008), in the same conversation (Myres-Scotton, 1993), in a single utterance above the clause level (Fischer, 1982) or at the level of words, sentences or blocks of speech (Baker and Jones, 1998). On the other hand, code mixing refers to a general form of language contact, including cases of code switching,

when lexical/ grammatical features of two languages are used in one sentence (Muysken, 2000). Code mixing occurs as pieces of one language are used when another language is basically used by the speaker (Gumperz, 1982) or as two languages are used together in the course of a single utterance (Wardhaugh, 2000) or below clause level (Fischer, 1982). Previous research has defined criteria to distinguish code switching from code mixing. First, the insertion of foreign words and phrases in the base language indicates code mixing. Second, the grammar of the clause determines the language, in the sense that if two adjacent clauses are grammatically related to two different languages, code switching occurs (Fasold, 1996). Drawing on the more general definitions of code switching: "a common term for alternate use of two or more languages" (Hymes, 1971 cited in Mabule, 2015), "alternating use of two or more codes within one conversational episode" (Auer, 1998:1) and "use of two or more languages in the same conversation, usually within the same conversational turn, or even within the same sentence of that turn" (Myers-Scotton, 1993:47), this study deploys a broad definition of code switching which encompasses both types of language alternation. Code switching and code mixing are used interchangeably to acknowledge the fuzzy borders between different types of language alternation (Gardner-Chloros, 2009) and meet the aim of this research. The focus is not on the shift of distinct grammatical systems or the structural alignment of altered elements which distinguishes between inter-sentential code switching and intra-sentential code mixing. Nor is this study concerned with whether code alternation is always functionally motivated or not. This chapter intends to portray a broad picture of the frequency and distribution of distinct linguistic elements and explore the interactional dynamics of code choices in language contact situations. Although the quantitative analysis makes a distinction between code switching across turns of a conversation and code switching within a single turn of a conversation, the term 'code switching' is employed to generally describe all types of language alternation. While the mere quantitative analysis details the participants' patterns of language alternation, the interplay of switchings/selections and their pragmatic effects, discursive functions and associations with identity construction are addressed in the third case study which conducts a detailed interactional analysis of the sequential exchanges on Facebook. This case study then complements interactional and ethnographic foci and quantifies the frequencies of alternations regardless of the existence of a pragmatic meaning associated with the switchings. The quantitative analysis in this chapter illuminates the general tendencies of the participants' choice/use of languages and helps us understand the most frequent directions of alternations which occur on Facebook. The chapter provides background information and enables the present research to explore the dynamics of Facebook interactions without losing sight of the big picture.

4.1 Code selection and code switching online

Regarding the use of different approaches for the study of online code switching, it has been argued that the question of what patterns of code switching are attested to on the internet should be

answered with respect to the particular framework in which code switching is studied (Androutsopoulos, 2011). However, a comprehensive approach which takes into account all specific aspects of internet communications has not been developed and the existing approaches were originally designed for the study of spoken conversation. (Hinrich, 2006; Androutsopoulos, 2011). On the other hand, the assumptions underlying the study of internet communication do not always correspond with code switching studies (e.g. research considers the monolingual context as the best setting to study online communications or the study of code switching online emphasises the significance of media factors as mere classification criteria rather than the importance of interplay between the internet and social factors); furthermore, studying computer mediated communication offers possibilities which challenge the widespread assumption that spoken interaction is the fundamental area where code switching can be studied. (Androutsopoulos, 2011; Herring, 2007). Indeed, code selection/switching on the internet has been studied by linguists since 1990s and the classification of discursive functions of code switching (Gumperz, 1982 and Auer, 1999) was broadly used in literature (Androutsopoulos 2006, 2007; Sebba 2003; Paolillo, 1996, 2011). Gumperz' concept of the contextualisation cue was discussed within internet studies as early as 1997 by Georgakopoulou who argues that due to the lack of ordinary contextualisation cues in an online interaction, interlocutors frequently deploy code switching to accomplish pragmatic work. In Georgakopoulous' research, code switching functions in order to establish a link between language choice in the communication and affordances of internet (cited in Androutsopoulos, 2011).

Studies of code selection/ switching on the internet deploy different approaches to examine various modes of media in a wide range of social settings. Literature mostly deals with "pre-web" modes of communication such as Internet Relay Chat or email where written text is mainly involved in the production of meaning (Danet and Herring, 2007b). However, studies of code switching in social media where meaning is made through a multimodal interaction are limited in number. Drawing on Herring's (2007) classification scheme (i.e. factors which affect online language use are classified in terms of facets such as: participation structure, participants' features, purpose, topic, tone, activity, norms and code), Androutsopoulos (2011) reviews research on code switching in computer mediated communication in terms of different modes and methods. In his overview, studies which employ a quantitative approach to examine code switching in the online discourse are limited to three works (see Warschauer et al., 2007; Lee, 2007; Goldbarg, 2009). All three studies employ the same interactional mode (students' email writing), and all investigate the hegemony of English as compared to a local language and focus on the private participation framework. In addition to quantitative methods, a mixed approach has also been used in studies of email and Internet Relay Chat which examine the results of online ethnography as well as questionnaire data. (Paololi, 2001; Androutsopoulos and Ziegler, 2004; Hinrichs, 2006). Androutsopoulos (2011:12) argues that the qualitative approach to the analysis of code switching in computer mediated communication has

attracted more attention than quantitative analysis, and "it is therefore not surprising that the effect of different social variables on CS online has not been systematically examined". It has been noted that the traditional view which doubts the reliability and availability of participants' personal information and background history in anonymous online space explains the relatively low number of online code switching studies with a quantitative perspective (Herring, 2001). However, ethnographically informed studies of code alternation provide socio-demographic data and lay the foundation for conducting comprehensive research into code switching online (Androutsopoulos, 2006). The chapter on choice of methodology discussed in detail the importance of online ethnography to the mixed method approach which is adopted in this dissertation.

Regarding the significance of multilingualism and the global prevalence of social media platforms, it is seemingly safe to presume that Facebook-mediate communications provide the users with possibilities to practice digital code switching to a large extent.

5. Multilingualism on Facebook

Although the analysis of multilingual Facebook practices has recently attracted the attention of sociolinguists (Halim and Maros, 2014; Bolander and Locher, 2010; Lee, 2011), Androutsopoulos' (2014) insightful investigation on digital linguistic practices, informed by theories of multilingualism and computer mediated discourse analysis, substantially contributes to the development of research on social networking services, particularly Facebook. Drawing on a mixed method approach, Androutsopoulos systematically examines the Facebook practices of bi/multilingual users of migrant backgrounds for a variety of interactional purposes. In his study on sharing practices on Facebook, a descriptive framework for the analysis of sharing (conceptualised as an interactive and performed practice) is developed through a case study of two young Facebook users. In his framework, different features of social media constitute a performance (i.e. sharing) which is oriented towards a *network audience* and expects feedback from the audience who pays attention to the shared content as well as the style of sharing. In another study, Androutsopoulos (2014) examines data of the Facebook practices of an ethnic minority group in Germany. He characterizes the digital space of Facebook as a single context in which information and conventions from other contexts converge and where ethnically/socially heterogeneous people meet. The research focuses on how the participants select and use elements of their linguistic repertoire strategically to be either the initial poster or the responder in an online interaction (2014). Drawing on new concepts in theorising of multilingualism (i.e. translanguaging, polylingualism and metrolingualism), Androutsopoulos (2015) proposes the notion of *networked multilingualism* referring to multilingual practices which are both "being networked" and "being in the network". Through an online ethnography of participants' multilingual practices on Facebook, he examines the users' linguistic repertoires and their language choices with regard to various genres. The analysis provides support for the unpredictability of

online language use and suggests that the participants have asymmetrical preferences (i.e. irregular pattern of language use) as they orient from one code to another in a given communicative situation depending on the audience and online resources.

Drawing on the notions of "mediascape" (Appadurai, 1996) and "convergence culture" (Jenkins, 2006), the present study strives to quantitatively examine the dynamic practices unfolding on the modern mediascape space of Facebook. Diverse forms of communication, different activities, linguistic/non-linguistic resources and a vast number of invisible audiences on Facebook allow heterogeneous practices to occur in the new and diversified mediascape environment of Facebook. The convergence culture here refers to the flow of content across multiple media modes on Facebook. This concept can appropriately account for the heteroglossic context of Facebook where various linguistic resources and multiple cultures dynamically interact and a pattern of language use is created. This case study aims to map the hierarchical patterns of language distribution on the multiple modes of discursive practices.

Studies of multilingualism are likely to be particularly rewarding in a multilingual ethnic community located in a highly multilingual country where multiethnicity and diversity are encouraged through transnational migration. Quantification of online practices of Iranian Farsi-speaking descent in the super diverse city of Brussels (characterised with official Dutch and French bilingualism) and Dutch-speaking Flanders (where multilingualism is acknowledged and fostered) therefore not only sheds light on identifying patterns of language use in the multimodal context of Facebook, but also, by drawing on globalization theory, addresses the interplay of global and local forces in relation to linguistic diversity on Facebook. The sociolinguistic study of Facebook reflects a dichotomy: on one hand, the flexibility and multi-dimensional nature of social networking services lead to an increasing trend in linguistic diversity, and on the other hand, the global networking system lead to a linguistic uniformity (see work of Herring, 2002; Paolillo, 2007). Quantification seems to serve both perspectives: the relative status of codes used by the Facebook users of an ethnic community on the prevalence scale would indicate either their preference towards the use of the heritage language and promote online multilingualism or a tendency towards the use of a prestigious dominant language whereby linguistic homogeneity would be reinforced (e.g. hegemony of English as an international global language on the internet). The mediascape context of Facebook, where multisemiotic resources are available for the users' multilingual/multicultural practices, is considered to be a translocal setting in which users construct a local affiliation through developing and posting local language and culture and this expands into a global identity by providing online ties to the global popular language/culture. In the subsequent chapters (7 and 8), the interaction of such local and global forces and the construction of discursive identities will be discussed against the background of a language contact situation investigated in the current chapter where participants' practices of language alternation and use are explored. To examine the online linguistic practices of a peripheral

community in Belgium, a quantitative approach provides a general statement on the use of various codes and presents a contextual background which allows further qualitative interpretation of online users' communicative behaviour. Siebenhaar (2008:11) emphasises the significance of quantification in studies of online code selection/switching:

> A quantitative analysis can lay the groundwork for selecting a representative data extract for the purpose of qualitative analysis. More specifically, the quantitative analysis allows for selecting a part of a log file that is representative for the corpus with regard to the distribution of language varieties. it allows picking out certain users with a specific mix of varieties for an individual-centred analysis. When searching for passages containing language alternation for a qualitative analysis of code switching, the quantitative approach allows broadening a limited selection. Such qualitative analyses become more useful and convincing when they are embedded through quantitative means. On one hand, possible gaps in the analysis may be discovered and subsequently filled. On the other hand, the status of analysed parts within the whole data set can be described… Conversely, the qualitative results could serve as the basis for an interactional explanation of the quantitative results.

The sociolinguistic perspective on the study of code switching and language choice on the internet focuses mainly on the understanding of functional pragmatic aspects of language use through a qualitative analysis (Mahootian 2005, Georgakopoulou 2013, McClure 2001, Sebba 2003, Androutsopoulos 2004, Leppänen 2007). While a mere qualitative approach would give a rough impression of the status of linguistic varieties due to a limited (view of) database, this case study deploys a quantitative method to illuminate the general pattern of code switching and the relative positions of codes in a context of multimodal/ multilingual interaction. As part of a larger project the current chapter tries to quantify the prevalence of languages used on the internet to be able to draw wider conclusions and design a frame structure on which the qualitative approach can be constructed.

Androutsopoulos (2007:359) suggests a combination of approaches in the study of language choice and online multilingualism. Although a multilingual community is generally oriented towards the use of one language over others depending on the situational factors, the complexities in these relationships can only be addressed through a qualitative interpretation of online language use in interactions. He explains, "while sequential analysis is essential for understanding the pragmatics of code switching, the language choice approach provides the big picture and prepares the ground for analysis of particular online interactions. Often studied separately, their combination can contribute to a more coherent picture of the multilingual internet". Androutsopoulos emphasizes the

significance of quantitative study of language choice/alternation as this sheds light on both the composition of an online community's linguistic repertoire and the context of multilingual interaction. Therefore, in the context of a semi-public social network website, quantificational reporting of relative frequencies of code selection/switching allows for further interactional analysis and helps us understand the interactionally negotiated multilingual dynamics that will be qualitatively analysed later in this dissertation (chapters 7 and 8).

Adopting a social approach and understanding of language as a "social construct", Heller (2007:2) argues that identity and its "discursive constructions" are shifting dynamic processes that are associated with the relations of power in social interactions. In other words, "language and identity are embedded in local and global relations of power". Drawing on the concept of language ideology, Lytra and Barac (2008:18) indicate that the study of language practices in an ethnic minority community should investigate the "interface of peoples' language practices, power relations and identity negotiations", as language choice and alternation are socially linked to individuals' expatriate experiences, relations of power and social inequality. Iranian Facebook users in Belgium draw on different linguistic resources in the multilingual mediascape to attribute value or devalue their discursive practices in a situated context. Encouraged by the inherent multilingual nature of online space, the participants in this study might switch in their linguistic repertoire and show different preferences and directions based on the social recognition and authority of codes. In other words, the hierarchical distribution of languages used in Facebook conversations reflects not only a user's preference but also their awareness of the social status of different languages. The dominant languages in Belgium (i.e. French, Dutch, English) are employed widely in the powerful social discourses and such legitimacy is undoubtedly transmitted to the online diasporic context; however, language users might resist the social inequality which tends to marginalize their heritage identity. Deploying their language of origin while acknowledging the salience of their transnational ties, multilingual Iranian immigrants might redefine their social/linguistic affiliation and challenge their identity options. The dynamic process of identity construction in the online diasporic community of Iranian immigrants is shaped simultaneously by the shifting context of modern urban cultures and spaces on the one hand and their family history/migration trajectory on the other. Facebook users' choices and switching practices therefore, should not be regarded as being in opposition to their tendency to maintain their heritage language and culture (Suarez, 2002) but as an index of ongoing and complex identity work to negotiate their social relations in the society's value network.

In the multi-layered context of Facebook in a diaspora (Facebook of Iranian immigrants) situated in a western European country (Belgium), this chapter seeks to answers the following questions: 1. What is the number of occurrences and directions of code switching in literacy practices on Facebook with regard to the heritage/immigrant language (Farsi), locally dominant languages

(Dutch, French) and commonly used lingua franca (English). 2. What is the hierarchical ordering of deployed codes in terms of different modes of digital discourse on Facebook?

6. Methodology

The point of departure in this research is to extend the domain of studies of computer mediated discourse to a multidimensional, multimodal and vibrant electronic space which hosts intense linguistic/cultural diversity. However, this study restricts the scope of diversity to a multilingual immigrant group located in the dynamics of Belgium's linguistic ideologies. The polarity of language use in diasporic communities is more fluid in the setting of this study - the Dutch-speaking area in Belgium (Flanders) - where English (more recently) and French (mostly previously) perform lingua francas to maximise the potential audience participation in the transnational activities.

To answer the above research questions, this case study treats the group of participants who have been already introduced in chapter 4 (methodological choice) as a whole. The Facebook practices of 37 first/second generation migrants of Iranian descent in Flanders and Brussels were closely observed by the researcher who joined the community of users on Facebook and became a friend in the participants' contact list (see chapter 4 for the information regarding informed consent). Subsequently, the participants' multilingual digital literacy practices on Facebook from 2010 to 2014 were monitored and collected systematically over the course of one year and a half.The participants' posted practices develop into the interactional sequences of exchanges as an initial post is almost always followed by a comment/comment thread. The grouping of each initial post together with the following replies is called a *Facebook conversation* in this study. To exemplify the kind of data which was collected, the screenshot of a Facebook conversation is displayed in Figure 13.

Figure 13. Screenshot from the Facebook page of a participant: 25 years old, female, resident of Flanders for 3 years, student immigrant, multilingual in Farsi, English and French

Translation:

- I am jealous of that (in Dutch)
- I am in "kindergarten" and you are jealous!!! What kind of "seventh grade student" are you? (in Dutch, Romanized Farsi and English)
- Did the recipient understand anything? (in English)
- lol … hasn't answered yet, maybe hasn't understood :)) (in English and Romanized Farsi)

In this conversation on Facebook, the poster actively participates in the interaction and responds to two different audiences in turns 2 and 4 with the use of three different languages (i.e. English, Dutch and Farsi). The poster's comment in response to the first audience posting in Dutch (I am jealous of that) indicates a good example of a code switching practice which occurs repeatedly within a single turn of conversation (turn 2). The poster creatively and playfully deploys each of the three languages twice. The choice of codes creates a pattern in which the dominant language of the host country, the heritage language and the lingua franca are all employed in the production of a single turn:

Dutch (I am in) → Farsi (kindergarten) → Dutch (and you are jealous) → English (what kind of) → Farsi (seventh grade student) → English (are you)

Another switch which is accomplished in a single turn of conversation takes place in the last turn as the internet-related acronym 'LOL' (laugh out loud) starts a turn which is predominantly in Farsi. Interestingly, the last turn in Farsi is a reply to a question which has been posted in English (turn 3). The multiple switchings of different types which are represented in this Facebook thread can characterize the digital interactions of a multilingual diasporic community whose language behavior is analyzed in this dissertation.

The collected data comprises 506 written/digital conversations on Facebook. This amounts to a total of 2908 turns, mostly in the form of comments and status updates (i.e. one of the key interactive features on Facebook which allows posting a content of various forms on a person's homepage and tailoring the update for a particular group of audience). The corpus was coded systematically on the basis of 5 categories representing the co-existence of multiple modes of discursive production on Facebook: *text* (i.e. status updates and comments), *shared link* (i.e. a posted link), *audio* (i.e. a link to an audio fragment or its supplementary textual caption), *video* (i.e. a link to a video extract or its supplementary textual caption), and *image* (i.e. discourse embedded in a posted picture, advertisement, announcement). Corpus data was also coded in order to transform the screen data into a standardized form suitable for processing and quantification. Codes are manually assigned to four major and frequently used languages (Farsi, Dutch, French and English) as well as the language

category 'Others' containing less frequent languages: Finnish, Danish, Italian, Spanish, Arabic, Hebrew, Greek, German and three non-official Iranian languages (Azerbaijani, Kurdish, Gilaki). The corpus was counted and analysed for particular tendencies in terms of frequency/direction of code switches (per language pair) and frequency in selecting particular codes (per language and per type of post).

Following Auer's conversational analysis approach (1998), Androutsopolous (2006a; 2007a; 2011) defines online sequential exchanges as the equivalent of an interactional episode in which the determination of the base language indicates the directional of code switching. In this case study, the discourse unit of analysis is switching of a code in relation to a previous code even in the form of a single word switch. The switches which occur 'across turns of a conversation' as well as 'in a single turn of a conversation' were counted separately in relation to each language which was used in Facebook conversations. At the same time, the status of a specific language in both directions was closely observed in order to identify whether it is the source or the destination code, from/to which the alternation occurs.

7. Findings

The details of the frequency and direction of switches are displayed in Table 13.

Table 13. Frequency and direction of switching

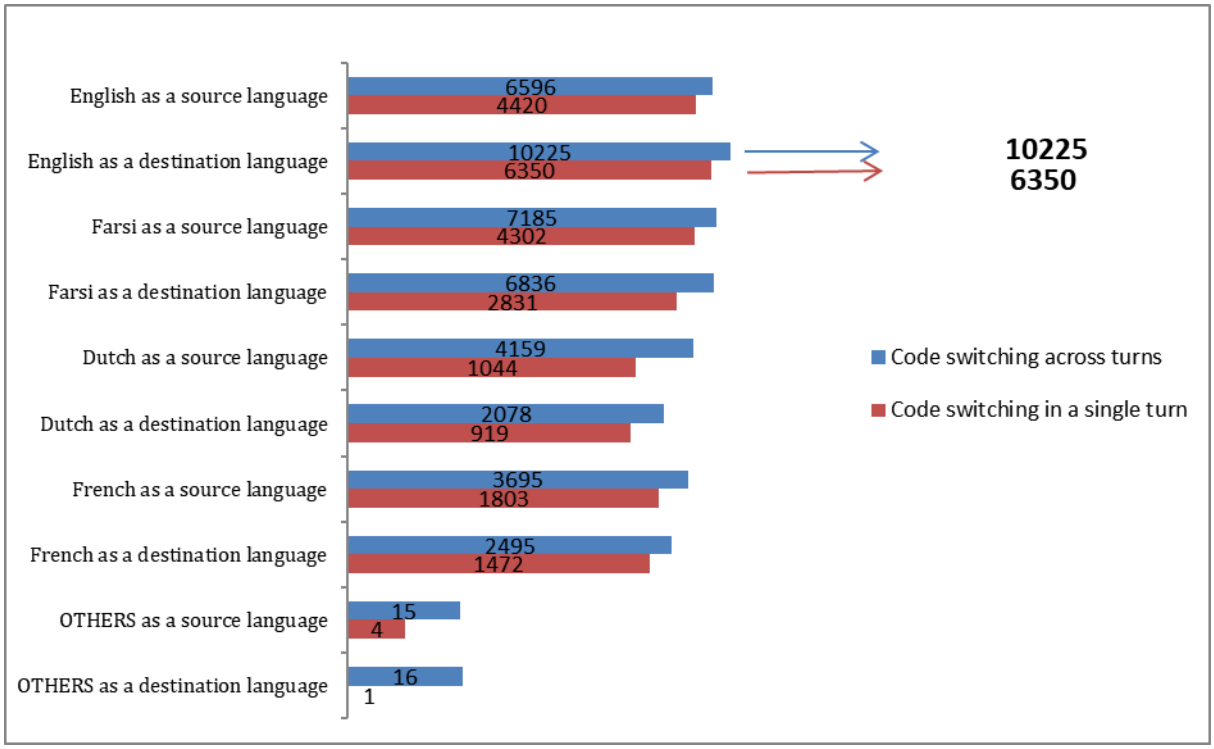
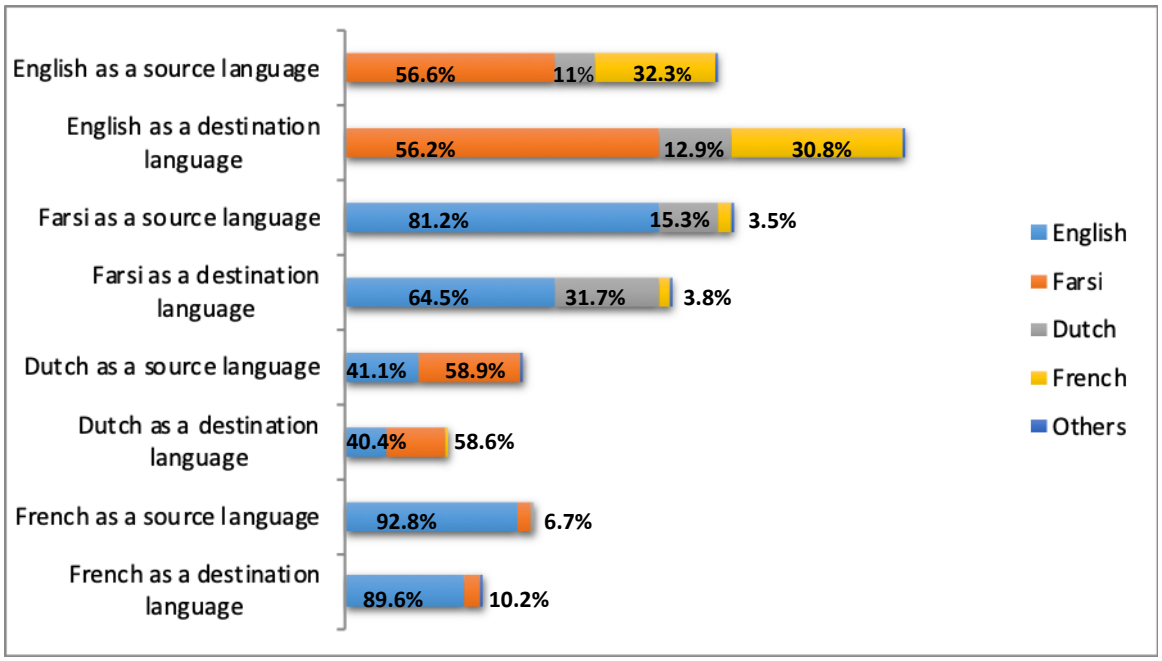


Table 13 represents the switching frequencies for the five different language categories, i.e. English, Farsi, Dutch, French and Others. Each language category is subsequently divided into two to distinguish between the frequency of switches when the language in question is a source or a destination language.

The main finding indicates that the number of switches from different languages to English is the largest on the scale. In other words, English as a destination language shows the highest rate of switching in relation to both code switching across turns of conversation (10225) or in a single turn (6350). As expected, language alternation in the category of 'Others' is indicated as the least frequent one. However, the distribution of switches per language pair reveals an organized pattern with respect to the status of each code as either a source or a destination language (table 14).

Table 14. Alignment of proportion of switching per language pair

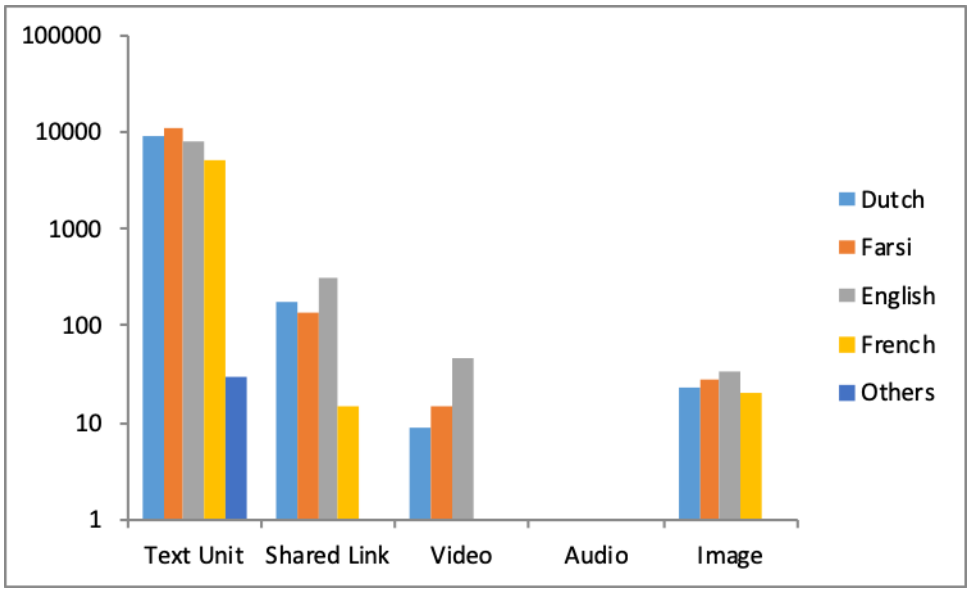


Regarding the category of English as a source language, a certain hierarchical ordering of language alternation is indicated; interestingly, the same language ranking holds true where English is a destination language. In both clusters, the frequency of switches to/from Farsi (red bars) is on the top and is followed by French (purple bars), Dutch (green bars) and Others. In other words, the relative proportion of each language in relation to both clusters (English as a source language and English as a destination language) is equal. The switching patterns of all four main language categories (English, Farsi, Dutch and French) show the same symmetrical balance in table 14. That is to say, there is a direct correlation between the number of switches per language pair when a certain language is considered the source language and number of switches when the language is considered

the destination language. The category of 'Others' (the less frequent languages used in the corpus) however, shows an irregular ordering in the clusters; the hierarchical arrangement of switches where "Others" is a source language (English-French-Farsi-Dutch) is different from that of "Others" as a destination language (English-Farsi-Dutch-French).

Table 15 displays the frequency of languages used in relation to different modes and compartments of Facebook. In a general view, Farsi is most frequently deployed on Facebook (32.9%) followed by Dutch (27.3%), English (24.6%), French (15%) and 'Others' (0.1%). Considering the multiple modes of posting on Facebook, 'text unit' and 'shared link' are the most and the next-most frequent modes of digital practices respectively and 'audio' is the least used category with regard to all languages chosen on Facebook of a migrant community. The mode of 'image' exceptionally ranks in second place in relation to the use of French language.

Table 15. Pattern of language choice, per language and per type of post



Thus, the quantitative analysis shows that linguistic resources in the multimodal space of Facebook are mostly used in the form of digitally posted texts and shared links. The co-existence of different modes and applications in a single setting of Facebook creates an alternative communication context in which multisemiotic communicative means, media content, external sources as well as linguistic resources all promote multilingual practices.

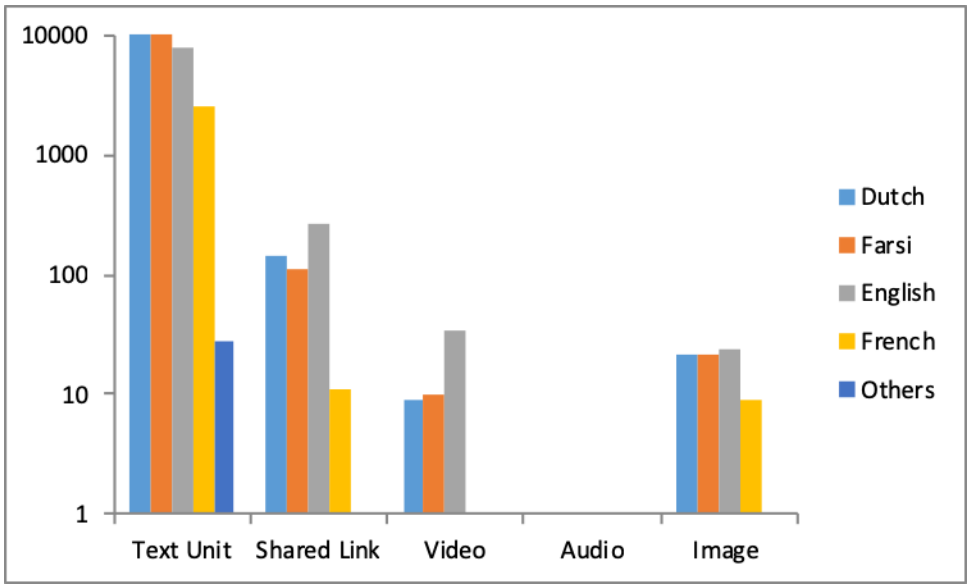
7.1 The Status of French

Dewaele (2005:119) argues that the ethnolinguistic status of French in Flanders decreased after the Second World War and that now the communicative network of Flanders favours the use of English as lingua franca over French (also argued by Blommaert, 2011). Although competence in French is

generally required in the Flemish job market, use of French can be interpreted as an indication of "ostentation and of disregard for Dutch". In the offline context of the Iranian diaspora in Belgium, while use of English is obviously associated with opportunity, popularity and transcultural connection, learning and using French is compulsory in order to survive in the French-speaking regions of Belgium. Iranian immigrants who are the inhabitants of French-speaking neighbourhoods in Brussels and constitute only a small percentage of the group of participants (21%); yet their contribution to Facebook practices is assumed to be influenced by the linguistic ideology of their offline location. To homogenize the group of participants in terms of their language-based geographical place of living, data related to the inhabitants of French-speaking regions in Brussels is therefore eliminated from the corpus. In this way, practices of code selection and switching in French are not influenced by the spatial variable.

Data related to 8 participants was eliminated from the corpus to unite the sample in terms of location and associated language ideology (see chapter 4 for the participants' information). The number of Facebook conversations decreased to 431 and data was re-counted and re-analysed. Table 16 shows the hierarchical ordering of languages used by the inhabitants of Flanders in the multimodal context of Facebook.

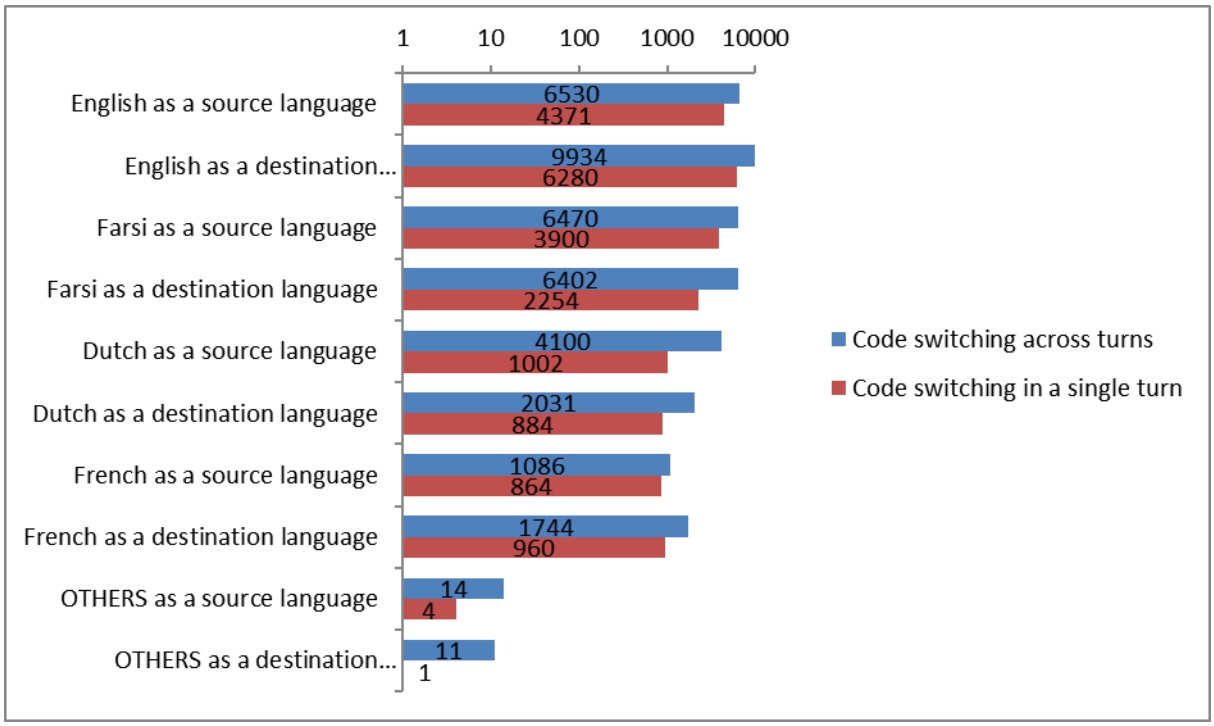
Table 16. Pattern of language choice, inhabitants of Flanders



The noticeable difference in the results here is the approximately equivalent frequency of the heritage language (Farsi=32.8%) and the dominant language of Flanders (Dutch= 32.5%). However, the ordering of languages on the scale remains the same: English (26.2%), French (8.3%) and Others (0.1%). Regarding the various types of posts on Facebook, 'text unit" and "shared link" rank first and second in the hierarchical structure of quantification and 'audio' ranks last; interestingly, this trend holds true for all 5 language categories in this chapter.

Regarding the inhabitants of Flanders only, the pattern of frequency and direction of code switching per language pair is illustrated in table 17.

Table 17. Frequency and direction of switching, inhabitants of Flanders



The renewed code switching analysis shows that English alternation occurs most frequently in both directions (i.e. English as a source language and English as a destination language) and in both types of switching (i.e. in a single turn and across turns) while the category of 'Others' still shows the least frequent alternation. However, the proportional alternation per language pair with regard to the status of languages as either source or destination language is not regular anymore (see table 14). In other words, as the dataset is narrowed down, the proportion of switching from, for example English as a source language, to all other languages does not correspond to the proportions where English is the destination language.

8. Discussion

In a globalized context of transnational exchange and migration, members of an ethnic group tend to maintain a sense of community and adhere to their shared cultural heritage, history and language (Ghorashi and Boersma, 2009). To that end, the social medium of Facebook provides a means through which individuals of common national keep in touch with each other in the host community and can be connected with members of the same ethnicity in other host contexts as well as the country of origin. Based on the findings of this case study, in the online network of Iranian diaspora in Flanders, the tendency to maintain ties to heritage culture/identity extends to the more adaptive

orientation to appreciate the novelty of the host language and culture. The predominance of Farsi and Dutch (more than 60% of the whole code selection practices) in Facebook activities of multilingual Iranian migrants in this chapter indicates the participants' tendency to prioritize both their heritage language and the dominant language of the host country. Such a fluid movement between languages and cultures redefines the boundaries and functions as an index "for both the affirmation and transcending of ethnicity" (Androtsoupolous, 2006b: 539).

While the influential variables such as the multimodal design of Facebook, the theme of the uploaded content, posters' affiliation to a particular type of popular culture and the pre-defined language of Facebook might privilege the use of one language over others, Facebook users of Iranian descent can perceive the dominant status of Dutch as the language of higher prestige in Flemish society. Moreover, the monolingual tendency of Dutch institutions in Flanders - where data was collected- reinforces the power differential between Dutch and minority languages. The status of Dutch as the primary language of education and workplace challenges that of other codes and gains the social hegemony; as a result, members of an ethnic community can increase their relations of equality and promote their social status through their adherence to the dominant Flemish language/culture. In a general view, the social value which is associated with Dutch as the prestigious language is not attributed to minority languages; however, Farsi as the primary language of home, might carry other values in the diasporic community. As they are aware of such a value system, Facebook users of the immigrant community draw on different linguistic resources in their repertoire based on the requirements of the ongoing communication. In this way, Facebook users can be part of both their ethnic heritage and the dominant culture at the same time and make connections with certain members of their audience in a given communicative situation.

Discursive production among the members of a virtual diasporic community is argued to contain a constant and simultaneous process of negotiation between hybrid identities and cultures (Sinclair and Cunningham, 2000). Multilingual Iranian Facebook users accomplish online situated practices of code selection using a set of linguistic resources to negotiate their social identity. Users frequently deploy Dutch - the valued and recognized language of society - to construct their transnational identities and shape their social relations in a powerful context of late modern European society. However, in order to respond to their affiliated ethno-linguistic group, Iranian Facebook users also deploy Farsi with equal frequency distribution to underline their marginalized heritage identity and voice their status difference or inequality.

While online spaces favour the marginalization of minority languages (Paolillo, 1996) and the use of heritage code is assumed to be associated with the users' ethnic identity, "a more fluid and dynamic understanding of language/identity relations" is needed to explain the pattern of language choice and code switching in an ethnic community (Androutsopoulos, 2013:683). This is because the contrast

between the minority and dominant languages in a society is locally constructed in a discursive interaction and the relations of power associated with the contextualized identity construction are not fixed. Androutsopoulos (2006a, 2006b) argues that language users might deploy the downgraded language of their homeland to dissociate themselves from the stigmatised traditional views or they may use the legitimate language to highlight their multicultural/multi-ethnic affiliation which supports the notion of linguistic hybridity. Therefore, the expatriate/migration experience on one hand and the dynamic context of western European cities on the other hand, simultaneously affect the identity options and redefine the linguistic/social identity of the Facebook users.

8.1 English alternation

Practices of code switching[13] by the same Facebook users; however, favour the use of English as lingua franca. Although this study is being conducted in a non-English speaking European country where English has a non-official status, the increasing interconnectedness in the current globalized era has implications in relation to the global spread of English. While English is widely used in Flanders and serves a variety of purposes, frequent online switches to/from English as an international code, maximize the number of interlocutors, enhance the effectiveness of online communications and provide a much more diverse sociolinguistic space in which shared interests and activities are more expressive. The high rank of English in the hierarchical pattern of code switching might indicate the symbolic value of English and connote positive concepts such as progress, future, success, leisure and modernity (Martin, 2007). However, drawing on the concept of "indexicality" and discussions of globalisation (Blommaert, 2010), English might also be selected to hint the interpretation of linguistic practices by creating a link between indexical choices and a certain social context/group. (Androutsopoulos, 2011).

In the contact zone of English and local ethnic/dominant languages, frequent code switching to/from English in Facebooked-mediated practices represents a transnational discursive strategy and complicates the process of associating the use of a specific language within the construction of a certain identity. The social identity of migrants which is shaped in performance through language alternations is constantly and dynamically negotiated in their interaction. The frequent use of English in the multilingual Belgian society does not reflect the fixed contrast between the dominant major language of internet and the marginalized heritage language of migrants which are, respectively, associated with the construction of powerful/hegemonic and minority diasporic identity. Rather, this

[13] It is worth mentioning that while analysing the meaning and rhetorical function of switches is not in the scope of this chapter, the switches which carry meaning and function as contextualisation cues in Facebook conversations are obviously accompanied by apparent random alternations both across turns and in a single turn. However, as it is the case in spoken code switching (Auer, 1998), the salience of such numerous random mixes is maintained to indicate the social identity of the participants in an interaction.

supports the trend towards increasing linguistic diversity on the internet and the construction of a transnational identity.

Regarding the interplay of global and local forces, it seems that English alternations in the global flow of the mediascape are localised in the Facebook pages of the participants which provides links to the global popular content on the internet and transcends geographical boundaries. At the same time, the local language and heritage culture (Farsi) as well as the local dominant language of the host society (Dutch) are globally reflected through the participants' Facebook pages where come into contact with English.

8.2 Other languages

The use of other, less frequent languages in practices of code selection/switching on Facebook is partially related to the use of non-official Iranian languages and indicates the users' tendency to voice their local ethnic identity and their sense of affiliation to their language of origin which is marginalized and downgraded even inside the borders of their homeland. The use of such languages in the global mediascape of Facebook tends to localize the media content and target a limited number of audiences[14]. Furthermore, the use of less frequent European/non-European languages might indicate the Facebook users' tendency to playfully and creatively draw on a wide variety of communicative resources including less commonly used/unfamiliar languages. Language use on Facebook does not necessarily reflect the linguistic repertoire or the language competence of the user; rather, it might be motivated by the unique interactional architecture and multimodal setting of Facebook which facilitates ludic expressivity and playful use of less frequent languages. Discursive creativity and its interactional functions are relevant in the following example (figure 14) as the visual effect and typographical shape in unfamiliar/foreign languages makes the Facebook posts distinctive and catches immediate attention of the reader.

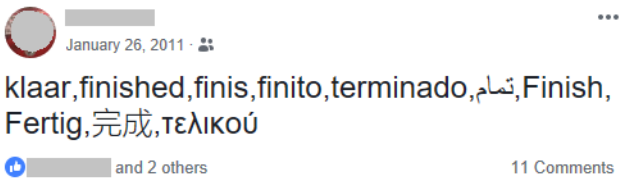


Figure 14. Screenshot from the Facebook page of a participant[15]

[14] Apart from non-official Iranian languages, other less frequently used languages might partially signal the users' multilingual/multicultural perspective.

[15] One-time occurrence of a language in the entire corpus is considered an extreme value and is removed from the dataset so that the statistical analysis is not skewed by the outlier.

9. Conclusion

To build up the broad picture of the dissertation, this case study quantitatively examines the practices of code selection and code switching among Facebook users of Iranian descent within the multilingual Belgian society. Multilingualism is encouraged in the interactional and heteroglossic context of Facebook which provides links to the linguistic/semiotic resources of the online world. Multilingual practices in the Facebook pages of Iranian migrants in the Dutch-speaking region of Belgium have been collected and analysed to represent patterns of language alternation and language use in terms of different types of digital discursive posts. Such an initial quantification serves as an underlying structure upon which the dynamics of sequential exchanges unfolding in Facebook conversations will be examined. The participants' multilingual practices equally privilege the use of the heritage language and the dominant official language of Belgium; such practices are represented most frequently through the units of text and hyperlinks on Facebook. In another set of analysis, patterns of code switching practices shows the predominance of English in both directions of alternation.[16]

Drawing on the concept of convergence culture, this chapter introduces Facebook as a modern mediascape context with a convergence setting in which the interplay of various modes and multiple cultures promotes linguistic hybridity and multilingual practices. It has been discussed that the predominance of ethnic language and the prestigious dominant language of the host country supports linguistic diversity and the fluid multilingual/multicultural movement which redefines the boundaries and shapes identities. It has been argued that while discourse productions in a minority community are associated with power relations, such relations are not fixed and sociolinguistic equality is locally constructed in an interaction.

To address the other research question, the frequency and direction of code switching which favour the use of English as an international language of internet index the participants' global identity and reflect their tendency to create ties to the global popular sources. However, the dynamic and shifting process of identity construction is more complex than pre-defined and linked directly with the use of a specific code.

Clearly, the findings of this study reflect the linguistic practices of a specific diasporic group and describe the social identities associated with a particular digital discursive context.

[16] In terms of the functional motivations underlying the choices and switches, convergence to adopt the language of another Facebook user seems to be an effective communicative strategy in order to make sense across the multilingual context of Facebook. However, such pragmatic and functional motivations behind the choices of language will be elaborated in the third case study which is presented in chapters 7 and 8.

10. Addendum: Triggered code switching

While sociolinguistics mainly focuses on the social motivations for code switching and use of different varieties/languages in different social situations, psycholinguistics mostly draws on the studies of code switching to describe the cognitive structure underlying bilingualism and seeks to capture the mechanisms behind the storing, processing, interpreting, remembering and representation of different codes in bilingual minds.

Code switching has been studied from the sociolinguistic perspective in this chapter; however, a worthwhile hypothesis in psycholinguistics may contribute to gaining deeper insight into the findings. In this section, the triggering hypothesis is applied to the Facebook data to determine to what extent this psycholinguistic theory holds true in the corpus and gives further illuminations of the data findings.

The triggering hypothesis was first introduced by Clyne (1967) who claims that words that are similar in form and meaning in two languages facilitate code switching from one language to the other. Clyne (2003:162) calls such words *trigger words*: "lexical items that can be identified as being part of more than one language for the speaker or for some section of, or the entire speech community''. In addition to lexical transfers, Clyne (2003) lists other types of trigger words such as *bilingual homophones* and *proper nouns.* In the analysis of patterns of language use in his review corpus, he concluded that all patterns of code switching regularly occur in the presence of trigger words. Broersma and De Bot (2006) argue that such a co-occurrence of trigger words and code switching might be a matter of coincidence. Therefore, they attempt to statistically test the triggering hypothesis and its predictive power. Broersma and De Bot's (2006) study discusses the triggering hypothesis in relation to the mental process underlying speech production. They argue that the assumption of triggering hypothesis that language choice occurs at the surface structure of utterances is not compatible with the underlying assumption of the bilingual production model. The bilingual speech model suggests that the surface structure is formed before language choice has taken place (language choice occurs along with lemma selection). Broersma and De Bot (2006) adjust the triggering theory to be in line with the psycholinguistic model of speech production. They propose a hypothesis which still maintains the general idea that trigger words facilitate code switching; yet, it assumes that triggering happens at the lemma selection, before the surface structure is formed. In the adjusted version, the selection of a trigger word is assumed to enhance the activation of lemmas of a non-selected available language and this therefore increases the chance of one of the lemmas being selected. In the adjusted theory, the surface structure no longer determines which elements are being code switched; nor can the exact ordering of lemma selection be determined. While the triggering hypothesis predicts that the adjacent words right before and after a trigger word have a higher chance of being code switched, the new theory extents the scope of triggering and argues that the most

likely candidates to be code switched are words in the same basic clause (i.e. a clause containing maximum one main verb) as the trigger word. It is worth emphasising that the adjusted triggering hypothesis does not suggest that the trigger word always leads to a code switch. Moreover, code switching might occur as a result of other sociolinguistic, structural factors. In other words, "the presence of a trigger word does not predict a code switch, it only predicts a greater chance of code switching" (Broersma and De Bot, 2006:12).

In another study, drawing on the concept of *self-organized criticality*[17], De Bot, Broersma and Isurin (2009) argue that languages in a code switching setting are always in a critical state in the sense that they can easily switch state (i.e. a switch to another language). Since the state is a critical one, a minor incident may lead to a phase change (i.e. switch). They use the metaphor of one grain of sand that may cause an unpredictable avalanche in a pile of sand (first used by Bak, 1996). In the bilingual language system, a grain of sand is analogous to the trigger and the switch to an avalanche (which is neither predictable nor random). De Bot et al. (2009) argue that in the bilingual system, switches may occur at different levels (e.g. levels of concepts, discourse, syntax, gestures, syllables, sounds) as different languages can be dominant at different subsystems and a minor change can lead to a change in dominance in each level. In addition, language subsets are connected at different levels and therefore a change in dominance at one level affects the dominance of other levels. Overlap of representations can lead to triggering and if languages share more overlap in representations, more triggering happens (for example, more triggering between languages that are typologically similar).

Broersma, Isurin, Bultena and de Bot (2009) provide further evidence of three speech corpora to prove that words that are in the same basic clause as a cognate or words that directly happen after a cognate are more often code switched than other words. While the amount of cognates in two Dutch-English corpora was shown to be 64% and 68%, this amount in Arabic-Dutch data and Russian-English data is 5% and 3% respectively. Therefore, both Arabic-Dutch and Russian-English data are typologically very different. However, the results confirm that cognates enhance the chance of switching and triggered code switching is a general concept applicable to all language pairs. The findings indicate that in Arabic-Dutch data in particular, all trigger words are nouns, mostly proper nouns. Broersma et al. (2009) accomplish four more investigations which lead to the following results: i) form overlap alone (i.e. a false friend) is sufficient for a triggered code switching. ii) the stem of a word actually causes the triggering. iii) the trigger word should be produced by the speaker to cause a code switch and iv) discourse connectors are often used along with and close to the code switches.

[17] Taken from dynamic system theory in physics which accounts for a sudden change in complex adaptive systems.

10.1 Data analysis

This study incorporates the contributions from psycholinguistics and aims to apply the triggering hypothesis, which has been tested before in natural speech corpora, to the multilingual digital discourse collected from the Facebook pages of Iranian migrants in Belgium. Drawing on a psycholinguistic approach, this part of the study examines the same Facebook data which was quantitatively analysed earlier in the chapter. The multilingual corpus comprises four main languages: Farsi, Dutch, English and French. Farsi and English data were coded and analysed by a native speaker of Farsi while the Dutch and French data were examined by a native speaker of Dutch who has a good command of French. In the analysis, the trigger words were determined and analysed at the word level to see whether they cause a code switch in the same basic clause or not.

The following Facebook conversation shows trigger words and code switching in Dutch and English both at the word and clause levels.

Figure 15. Triggered code switching in a Facebook conversation

Translation:

3. Super heavy cuts (the participant's first name)!! keep it up!!!
4. Thanks, That was a great pleasure with you!

In this Facebook post, the participant's first name (which is deleted to preserve anonymity) in the initial post is a trigger word which cause the next basic clause to be code switched to Dutch. For the word-level analysis, the participant's comment starts with English and continues in Dutch right after the trigger word "was" which reflects the same form and meaning in both languages.

Figure 16. Triggered code switching in a Facebook conversation

Translation:

4. Hey (the participant's first name in Dutch) your design for atlas is online!! That's supper pretty! congratulations!!
5. Thanks dear

The above Facebook conversations exemplifies triggered code switching at the clause level; yet, unlike the first conversation, the word "online" as an "adverb" triggers code switching from Dutch to English in the subsequent basic clause. Nevertheless, the noun "atlas" can be considered as a trigger word too. In broad terms, trigger words are more often represented in the form of nouns (both proper and common) in both levels of word and clause.

The number of trigger words which lead to code switching between Farsi and one of the three main languages (i.e. English, Dutch, and French) is considerably lower as Farsi is typologically distant from the other three languages[18]. Indeed, based on the analysis, in a general view, the amount of triggering is too low to draw any definite conclusion; however, this is not proof of non-triggering either. It is important not to jump to a conclusions and make certain statements about the data. Although the statistical analysis can be simply displayed by numbers and charts, the result would be underpowered and the real effect would be missed since the number of occurrences of the variable in question (trigger word) is too low in the review corpus to lead to a correct interpretation of the quantitative statistics.

[18] There is definitely potential for the occurrence of triggered code switching between Farsi and each of the other three languages. However, according the the results obtained in this study, the amount of trigger words in Farsi was extremely low.

Chapter 6
Case study 2
Spatiotemporal trajectories and language mobility

An explanatory note

This chapter has been published as an article in DiGeSt (the Journal of Diversity and Gender Studies) which is a bi-annual, peer-reviewed international journal. The article is reproduced here in the original form in which it has been published. Although the unintegrated form of this chapter may seems odd in the architecture of the dissertation as a whole, Ghent university requires transparency. In this sense, if part of the dissertation has already been submitted and published, it cannot be falsely presented as a chapter. Therefore, the original form of the article should be maintained in the dissertation.

Following the conclusion of the article, there is an additional section with an analytical perspective towards the online and offline use of Farsi. This section, which was originally part of the manuscript, was excluded from the article as a result of space constraints set by the journal.

The previous chapter which looks at the quantitative analysis of language use, is paired with this chapter which adopts a longitudinal perspective of how language use evolves. This combination provides sociolinguistic overviews of the primary data source and the subjects under study and offers helpful contextual data to orient the reader in this point of the dissertation. Insights derived from the quantitative method shed light on the frequency and distribution of languages used on Facebook as well as the development of language use over time.

1. Abstract

Globalization, increasing international transactions, technological developments and diversified migration flows characterize Belgium and its society with increasing multilingual/multicultural diversity and make the Belgian societal context to be particularly apt for the study of multilingual language use in a diasporic context. In an attempt to track the development of languages used by the community of Iranian migrants in Belgium, this article addresses the sociolinguistics of discursive mobility in the age of globalization. This study particularly focuses on Facebook. Facebook enables local/translocal connections among immigrants whose transnational network goes beyond territorial attachment and expands in alternative spaces. The findings indicate that the variables of trajectory, physical location and life stage at the time of migration are significantly influential in the development of language use over time. The research results help define diasporic positioning in a frame of time and space and shed light on diasporic identity construction as a changing process of negotiation in a transnational context.

Keywords: language use, migration, social media, identification

2. Virtual community of Iranian diaspora

Boundaries of nation states which continue to govern migration flows are becoming increasingly blurred in the age of globalization, as newly formed online and offline translocal/transnational communities are emerging (Castells 2001). The development of online transnational networks among immigrants is argued to be associated with the notions of identity and homeland (Gorashi and Boersma 2009), in the sense that the more social life is mediated by transnationally networked media, the more identities become detached from geographically defined spatio-temporal frame. Therefore, the concepts of territory and identity can be re-defined and *deterritorialized* in a transnational way (see the work of Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2002; Vertovec 2001). A transnational perspective sees the nation state as an adaptable, fluid point of departure; "as one of several points of reference within the transnational order of things" (Gorashi and Boersma 2009:668). This study supports the transnational view which defines global connections between immigrants in the modern world as "a form of connectedness that brings different lines and sites together"(Gorashi and Boersma 2009:687). Yet, the significance of national identity and national belonging is not being overlooked in the approach adopted in this study. Investigating Iranian's national affiliations, McAuliffe argues:

> I have not sought to deny the importance of national identities and the national scale, but to decentre them, bringing them into contact with different identities and scales. In order to better place dominant discourses of nationalism within a complex of alternative scales and identities, national discourses need to be positioned reflexively within a range of place relations from the local to the global, and also importantly, within a dynamic range of identity categorizations extending from religion to gender, to socio-economic position and to the various crosscutting associations that individuals construct for themselves and that others construct for them (McAuliffe 2007:323).

Empirically, this study focuses on the patterns of language choice and use among members of the Iranian diaspora in relation to their spatio-temporal trajectories. Drawing on the transnational view, this study attempts to show that the position of the diaspora transcends the fixed territories and it is more associated with the construction of new spaces where territories intersect. Although homeland is the point of connection for various diasporas to converge, in the new perspective, home is a point of "ambivalent attachment" (Nafisy 1993:17). In other words, the concept of homeland is proved to be more complicated than can be defined by referring to a specific space; instead it has been transnationally deterritorialized (Malkki 1995). The decentralized concepts of home and diasporic positioning are argued to be still rule-governed although the control over transnational migration becomes less tight and more "distributed and networked" (Gorashi and Boersma 2009:670).

Iran's revolution in 1979 and the war with Iraq in 1980 resulted in political oppression, underdeveloped sociocultural/technological growth, steady waves of migration and isolation from the rest of the world. Iranian diaspora mainly consists of intellectuals, leftists and religious minorities (McAuliffe 2008) and it is extremely diverse in terms of political orientation, ethnic background, education level, social class, religious affiliation and timing/motivation of migration. Such dissimilitude defines how diasporic members are positioned in relation to Iran or in the transnational context. Gorashi and Boersma (2009) argue that the shared pain for loss of a homeland tied Iranian migrants together. They indicate that such common loss is the key element in the formation of virtual diasporic networks which provide the Iranian diaspora with an alternative territory, a transnational democratic space where they can maintain and reinforce their links with each other and expand their interactions to be connected to people in Iran (as also argued by Van den Bos 2006). Internet provides an interactive means to facilitate communication between first and second generations of diaspora; it is equally a tool for first generation Iranian immigrants to pass on their cultural heritage to the next generation (Khosravi 2000). The use of various languages displayed in the online practices of the Iranian diasporic community indicates how the members of diaspora perceive their position in relation to both the transnational world and their connections inside Iran. In the context of internet, a typical user will have multiple audiences, people they know from their home country, family, friends from work or study in the new country and friends they met elsewhere on their journey. There is a set of choices to be made, and one might expect them to vary over time as people adapt to new situations.

Being influenced by the power of the legitimate language(s) of the host society and the global hegemony of English, diasporic members tend to deploy other linguistic recourses in addition to their national language. Such a tendency is highly encouraged in the multimodal/multilingual context of social media where online content often addresses multiple audiences with different linguistic/ethnic backgrounds.

Considering the interplay of local and global forces in the development of linguistic diversity in both the online context and the offline diasporic community, this study aims to answer the question of how online language use develops over time after the migration and how trajectory, geographical location and the point in life at the time of transnational movement affect the development of language use among the immigrants of Iranian descent in Belgium.

3. Participants of the study

As part of a larger project this study addresses the multilingual practices of an ethnically-defined community in Belgian society and investigates developments in their language use as they move across territorial and virtual spaces. The social medium of Facebook, which hosts diverse multilingual literacy practices, was selected as a platform where the use of linguistic resources by

active users of Iranian descent could be tracked over time. First and second generation Iranian immigrants in Flanders and Brussels were contacted through snowball sampling and were added to the researcher's friend list on Facebook after gaining informed consent. The key criteria for selection of the participants were: their active involvement in posting texts on Facebook and the use of Farsi in their online multilingual practices. The community of Iranian immigrants who participated in this study (n = 37) consists of 16 refugees, followed by 12 family migrants and 9 students. The participants range in age from 15 to 35. They were categorized into three groups based on their spatio-temporal trajectory as well as their life stage at the time of migration.

I. 16 first generation, Iranian-raised participants
II. 10 second generation, Belgium-raised participants
III. 11 second generation, Belgian-born participants

The first group of 16 first generation Iranian-raised participants moved from Iran to Belgium as adults. In the process of their national/transnational movement, 12 participants moved from Iran to Belgium (10 participants moved to Flanders and 2 participants moved to Brussels) and 4 other participants were involved in an indirect trajectory; 1 via Brussels, 1 via Germany, 1 via Spain and 1 via Finland.

The second group of 10 second generation, Belgium-raised participants moved from Iran to Belgium as adolescents. Of them 2 participants were born in France and raised in Brussels, 2 participants were born in Denmark and raised in Flanders, 1 participants was born in Iran and raised in Flanders and later moved to Brussels. 5 other Belgium-raised participants were born in Iran; among them, 1 was raised in Brussels and 4 participants in Flanders.

4. Data collection, analysis and results

In our globalised era and increasingly more (super)diverse societies (Vertovec 2007) in which linguistic resources of diverse ancestry are mobilized and the boundaries become more flexible, an individual's repertoire is defined in relation to the dynamic spatio-temporal or "biographical" trajectories of the immigrants rather than in the terms of the more static spaces of national origin (Blommaert 2010:171). In other words, the linguistic repertoire indicates a life in an evolving historical and social space rather than a place of birth. Accordingly, 37 multilingual Iranian immigrants who participated in this study were queried in an interview not only about their multilingual repertoires but also about their biographical trajectory and transnational experience (e.g. the reasons for living abroad, how long they expect to stay abroad). In addition to the interview, a questionnaire was used to map the details of situated use of languages (i.e. the informants specified which languages they use in particular settings with specific interlocutors). As a result, an insider

perspective on how a multilingual population of users account for their code choices, their linguistic attitudes and life trajectories was developed. The emphasis has not been on the number of subjects, but on the number of posts over a long period of time. This is enough to provide a broad overview of tendencies, as a basis for understanding some of the cases discussed on the basis of the interview data.

Data was collected through an online ethnography of Facebook,[19] in which the use of particular languages by multilingual participants was monitored from 2010 to 2014 in relation to their movements across transnational borders. The use of different languages in digital literacy practices was systematically counted, coded and categorized per calendar year. In a single conversational turn on Facebook, the occurrence of a certain language was counted manually as a one-time use of that language by a particular Facebook user. As a result, the frequency of use of each language by a single Facebook user per calendar year was obtained. Although the fluidity of language movement does not correspond to rigid delineations between different language units, a quantitative view on the development of language use entails discrete linguistic units as indispensable parts of the analysis. This study recognises the complexities of multilingual practices (e.g. code switching); yet, the part of the study reported here aims to map the proportional presence of languages online. It is worth mentioning that in case of an overlap between languages, the overlap is treated as being part of a language that it follows. If an overlap occurs between the languages which are not present in the given phrase or sentence, the dominant language of the conversation or of the user's repertoire is considered as the language which represents the overlap.

Scatter diagrams are used to show the use of linguistic resources by means of markers which, in turn, were developed into trendlines. Each diagram represents the frequency of use of a single language in the 3 groups of participants identified above (i.e. Iranian-raised, Belgian-born, Belgium-raised). The aim is to examine how different elements of life stage, space and trajectory affect the development of online language use among the immigrants of Iranian descent in Belgium.

Each time a graph is represented, the exemplary profiles of the participants complement the quantitative results. In order to facilitate the comparison of the results for one particular participant in each of the figures, the same numbers and colours are used to represent the same participants in the successive figures.

[19] Facebook data was collected only after the informed consent was gained from the participants of the study. Furthermore, pseudonyms were used for the participants to preserve anonymity and confidentiality.

4.1 Tendency to use different languages on Facebook by 12 multilingual Iranian participants who moved directly from Iran to Belgium

First, I describe the languages used by the 12 participants who moved directly from Iran to Belgium, including how they orient towards their use.

Figure 17 below represents the development of use of Farsi. These first generation Iranian-raised participants migrated to Belgium as adults. In the process of their mobility from Iran to Belgium, 10 participants moved to Flanders and 2 participants moved to Brussels (number 3 and 11). While the horizontal axis of Figure 17 displays the time span over which Facebook data was collected (from 2010 to 2014), the vertical axis shows the frequency of occurrence. Each trendline is numbered to specify the use of Farsi for every individual participant over time. Although the frequency of using Farsi for a few participants almost stayed constant over time (e.g. number 4 or number 10), the overall orientation of the 12 participants who moved to Belgium directly from Iran shows a decline in deployment of Farsi from 2010 to 2014.

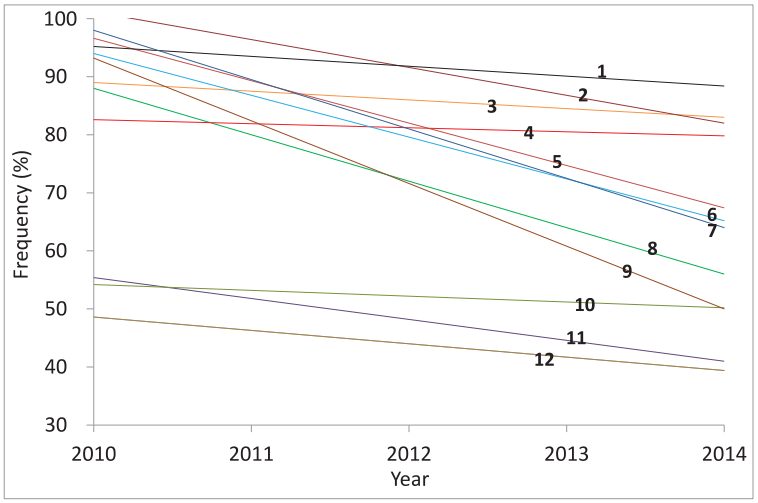


Figure 17. Proportion of use of FARSI language over time for 12 people who moved from Iran to Flanders and Brussels

The development of use of Dutch by the same 12 participants and in the same time span is represented in Figure 18. Dutch as the official language of Flanders was used in the Facebook practices of all 10 participants who moved directly from Iran to the region of Flanders. The 2 other participants who moved directly from Iran to Brussels (number 3 and 11) did not use Dutch on Facebook. 10 trendlines in Figure 18 indicate the tendency of 10 multilingual participants to deploy the Dutch language on their Facebook page. Despite the marked differences in the starting year of Facebook participation, the participants' overall tendency to use Dutch as the legitimate language of Flanders increased from 2010 to 2014.

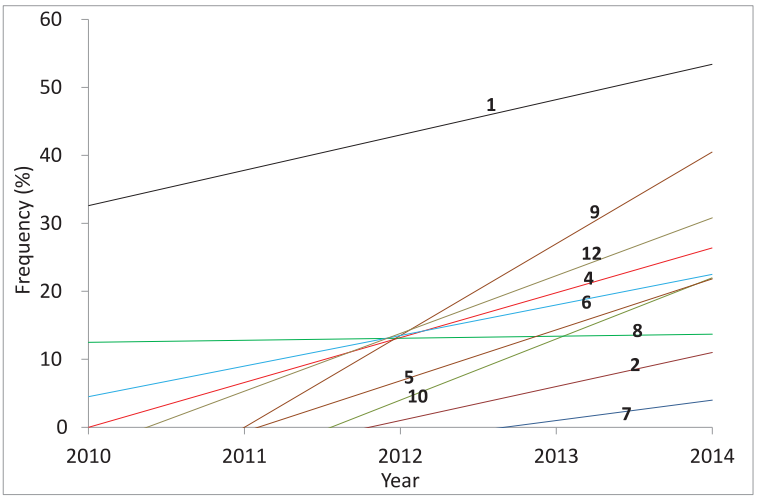


Figure 18. Proportion of use of DUTCH language over time for 10 people who moved from Iran to Flanders

Figure 19 shows the proportion of use of French on the Facebook pages of the same 12 participants. Only 4 participants made use of French. This graph particularly shows the continued reference of geographical territory in selecting a language of communication on the internet. The two participants who reside in the majority French speaking Brussels-Capital region choose the use of French instead of Dutch on Facebook. The 4 trendlines in Figure 19 represent the tendencies of 4 participants in use of French from 2010 to 2014. 2 trendlines are related to the 2 participants who moved from Iran to Brussels (numbers 3 and 11) and the 2 other trendlines show the orientation of 2 participants who moved from Iran to Flanders (numbers 8 and 4). Despite the low frequency of French use overall, the participants' orientations towards the use of French broadly increase over time.

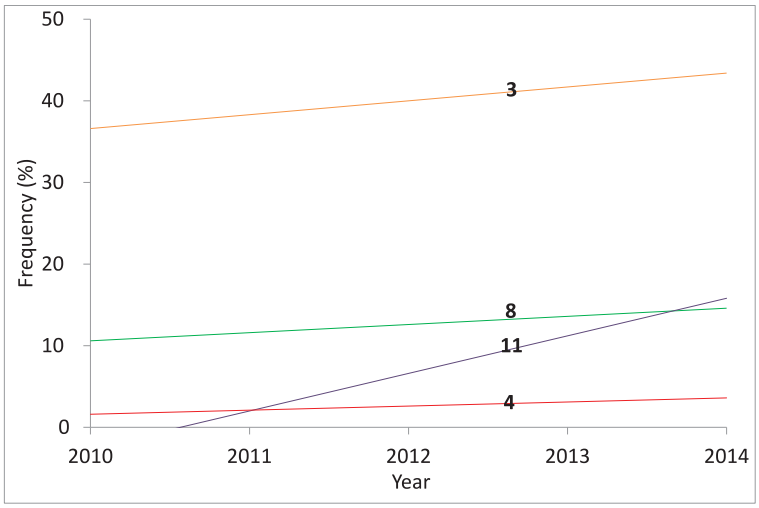


Figure 19. Proportion of use of FRENCH language over time for 4 out of 12 people who moved from Iran to Flanders and Brussels

The use of English in the digital practices of the 12 first-generation Iranian-raised participants of this study who migrated from Iran to Flanders and Brussels did not show a regular pattern on the scatter plot (Figure 20).

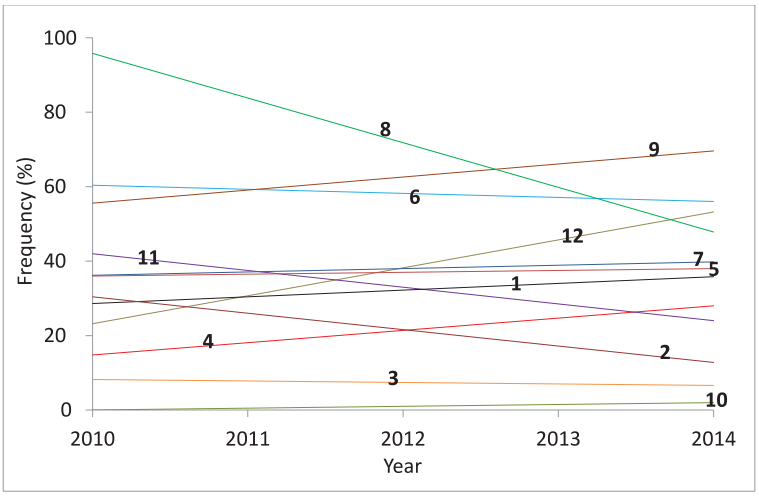


Figure 20. Proportion of use of ENGLISH language over time for 12 people who moved from Iran to Flanders and Brussels

The participants choose other codes than Farsi, Dutch, French and English (for example, Finnish, Danish, Italian, Spanish, Arabic, Hebrew, Greek, German and three non-official Iranian languages). However, this study concentrates only on the participants' tendency to use the official language of the country of origin (Farsi) and the locally dominant languages in the host country (Dutch and French). In addition, the analysis concentrates on English as a prominent language which is used internationally both in the Iranian and the Belgian contexts.

The results are as expected: while use of the official languages of the host society increases, use of the heritage language decreases over time. Yet, use of Farsi continues both for establishing (new) contacts within the diasporic community and for maintaining ties with the country of origin. The findings signify a transnational orientation in the community of Iranian immigrants in Belgium. Members of the diaspora redefine their identity from local to global in the new spatio-temporal frame. Their national language and identity is not replaced by the Belgian languages, but their language choices are considerably influenced by the diverse and globalized context of a western European country.

In the next section, the migration trajectory and the multilingual repertoire of two representative participants are described in detail. The aim is to offer a description of individual profiles behind the trendlines that have been noted.

4.1.1 Two Representatives for the group of participants who migrated directly from Iran to Belgium: Am and Bana

The pattern of languages used on Facebook described so far is complemented by the exemplary profile of a male (Am) and a female participant (Bana). The participants are under assumed names.

Am: Trendline 'No 9' displays Am's orientation towards the use of Farsi, Dutch and English in each of the three figures. He is represented by brown colour throughout.

Am moved to Flanders in 2011 when he was 26 years old. Born and raised in Iran, Am was admitted for a doctoral position at Ghent University. Am and his wife followed Dutch courses almost from the first days of arrival and after two years they both could communicate in Dutch. Am is social and takes the initiative in conversations. In the interview he remarked: 'I am never afraid of taking part in a conversation in a language I am not really good at'. Am considered language incompetence as the only barrier in his career which might preclude his future success/promotion. He is connected to a vast number of virtual friends with diverse backgrounds on Facebook and his online practices can be characterized by creative and playful use of languages. This has mostly resulted in complex code mixing patterns. At the time of interview, he had an excellent command of English he brought from Iran as well as an acceptable level of proficiency in Dutch. From the very first moments of migration his Facebook posts show literacy practices in Dutch (Figure 21: 'I have just arrived in Belgium'). It seems that using Dutch straight after his arrival was part of an eager attempt to integrate in the new sociolinguistic space. He is a good representative of the participants of this study in the sense that his use of Farsi dramatically decreased after migration and his use of Dutch as the dominant local language of Ghent increased over time.

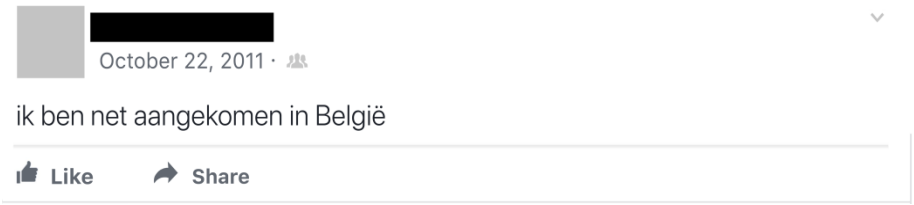


Figure 21. Screenshot from the Facebook page of Am

Bana: Bana's orientations in using Farsi, French and English are shown by means of trendline 'No 11' displayed in dark purple colour in each of the three figures.

Bana accompanied her husband to Brussels as his application as an immigrant worker was admitted in Belgium. After acquiring a basic proficiency level of French in Iran, Bana improved her knowledge of French in a language institute in Brussels. She used French frequently on Facebook

while her use of Farsi considerably decreased in the post-migration context (starting from 2011). At the time of interview, Bana and her husband were still challenged by their unstable residence status in Belgium and she regretted leaving Iran for 'the brighter future' which happened to be blurry. Regarding the use of languages, she considered the use of French inevitable: 'I know that Iranians (Iranian Facebook audience) do not appreciate posting in non-Farsi languages from the first day of migration, but I need to be understandable for my (Facebook) friends here'.

4.2 Tendency to use different languages on Facebook by 4 multilingual Iranian participants who moved indirectly from Iran to Belgium

The 4 other first generation Iranian-raised participants in this study migrated to Belgium indirectly. Their trajectory started from Iran, included movements across other European countries and ended in Belgium. Since mobility across the language-based regions of Belgium (Flemish community in Flanders and Flemish-Francophone community in Brussels) may affect the linguistic competence of the immigrants, the trajectory of the last participant is categorized as indirect, although the mobility is contained within two different regions of Belgium (i.e. another European country is not included in the flow of migration).

In the following part, first the orientation of 4 participants towards language use on Facebook is demonstrated through scatter plots and then the profiles of two representative participants are described in detail.

As indicated in figure 22, all 4 trendlines illustrate a steep decrease in the use of Farsi from 2010 to 2014.

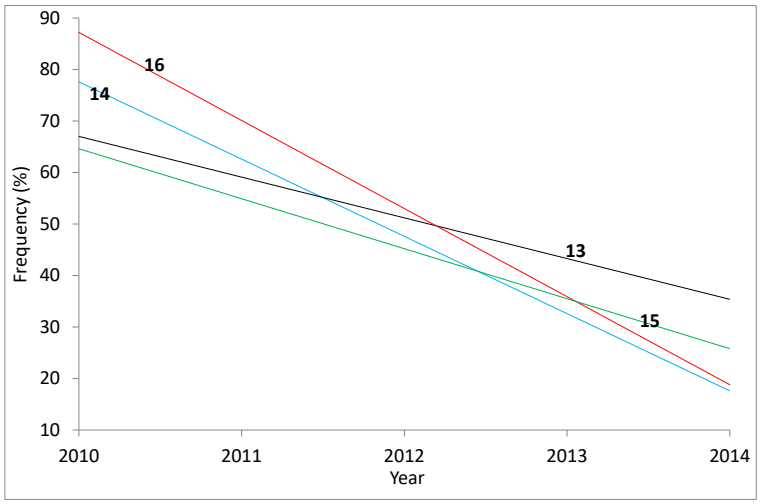


Figure 22. Proportion of use of FARSI language over time for 4 people who moved indirectly from Iran to Belgium

Use of English in the literacy practices of the same 4 participants who moved from Iran via other European countries to Belgium is displayed in Figure 23. Trendlines represent an increase in the participants' tendency in the use of English in the same time span (from 2010 to 2014).

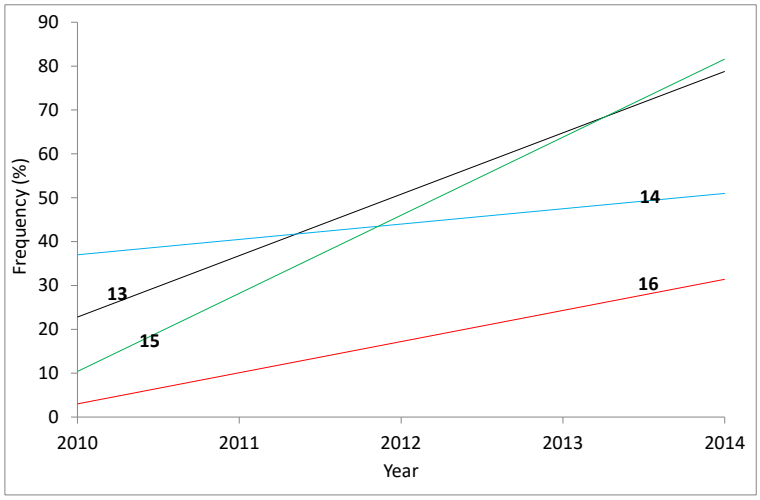


Figure 23. Proportion of use of ENGLISH language over time for 4 people who moved indirectly from Iran to Belgium

Use of the locally dominant languages of the host context (Dutch and French) by the 4 participants did not show a regular pattern (Figures 24 and 25). Equally important to note is that, the frequency of use of Dutch and French is considerably low.

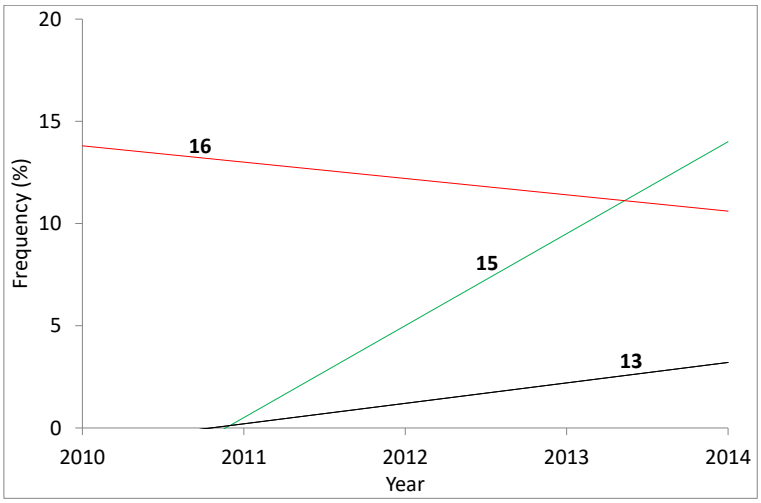


Figure 24. Proportion of use of DUTCH language for 3 out of 4 people who moved indirectly from Iran to Belgium

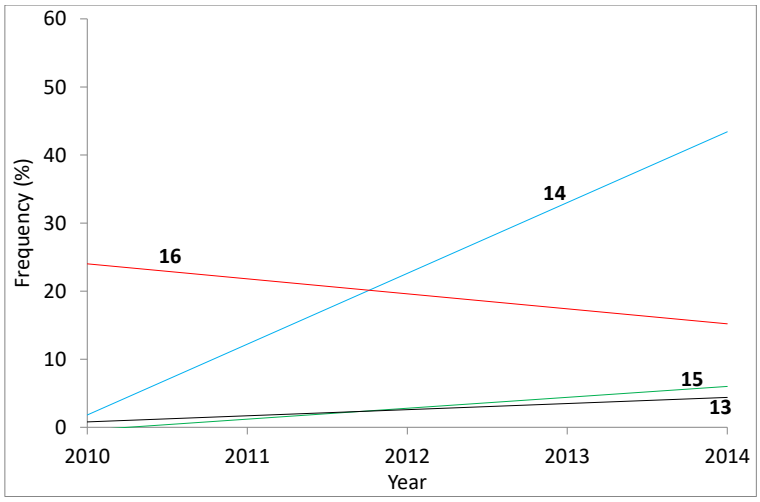


Figure 25. Proportion of use of FRENCH language for 4 people who moved indirectly from Iran to Belgium

Both the first (n=12) and the second (n=4) groups of participants who moved to Belgium as adults orient in almost the same way towards the use of Farsi; yet, while the first group deploys the languages of the host society increasingly over time, the second group more relies on the use of English. The communicative value of Farsi in the post-migration setting drops sharply. The users orient to other linguistic resources which comply with the new place and its language regimes. Lack of competence to communicate in the dominant languages of Belgium (Dutch and French) makes the second group (n=4) deploy the lingua franca English more often, as it functions adequately in the Flemish speaking region of Belgium especially.

4.2.1 Two Representatives of 4 participants who migrated indirectly from Iran to Belgium: Lily and Saba

Lily: Trendline 'No 15' in Figures 22, 23, 24 and 25 represents Lily's orientation to use Farsi, English, Dutch and French on Facebook. Her tendencies are shown in green.

Lily migrated to Spain when she was 22 years old to complete her master program in Mathematics and 3 years later in 2012 she moved to Flanders to undertake a doctoral project. At the time of interview she already took the first level of Dutch course and dropped it after a month. Then she started learning French, only to withdraw from the course in the first week. She seemed to persist longer with Spanish learning, however, as stated during the interview, her proficiency in Spanish is not adequate to survive a conversation in Spanish. Lily believed that she is not talented in language learning and with the exception of English (her professional language), other languages are too difficult to learn. Although Lily's life can be characterized as one of social isolation in Belgium, her virtual social network on Facebook is remarkably dynamic. Lily is not only engaged actively in commenting and sharing practices, she frequently uploads status updates. Although her digital

literacy practices are mostly done in English, her Facebook displays the use of languages in which she is not very proficient, e.g. Dutch. Following English, Azerbaijani (her first local language) and Farsi were ranked as second and third languages used on Facebook. Lily's intensive digital practices are marked by frequent occurrence of language alternation.

Saba: the tendency of Saba in using Farsi, English, Dutch and French is displayed by trendline 'No 13' in black colour in each of the four figures.

Saba moved to Germany through marriage when she was 20 years old in 2004. She moved to Flanders in 2010 to work for a well-known company after earning a master's degree and getting a divorce from her German husband. Saba did not try to learn Dutch in Flanders, despite her advanced level of competence in German and some striking similarities between the two languages. The language at work was English and she 'never felt the urge to use Dutch in her daily life'. Although her Facebook shows a wide number of German speaking friends, Saba prioritizes the use of English on Facebook over any other language. In particular, from 2010 onwards her use of English increased, while her use of Farsi and German decreased.

Unlike the first group, this small group of participants who migrated indirectly to Belgium hardly uses the locally dominant languages of the host country (French and Dutch). The participants mainly practice in English to address a larger group of Facebook audiences who are seemingly more heterogeneous in terms of language and ethnicity. Due to the participants' indirect mobility, a more international orientation is adopted as the contexts collapse[20] on social media (Marwick and Boyd 2011) and digital practices are displayed for a network of diverse audience from a wide range of social contexts. Research supports the predominance of English as an important resource for maximizing the networked audience in a linguistically heterogeneous context of use. The digital literacy practices of German (Androutsopoulos 2014), Nepali (Sharma 2012) and Thai (Seargeant, Tagg and Ngampramuan 2012) social media users have been shown to prioritize the use of English as a strategy to appropriate the disclosure for all types of virtual interlocutors in converging contexts.

4.3 Tendency to use different languages on Facebook by 11 multilingual Iranian participants who were born in Belgium

The orientation to use languages on Facebook among 11 second generation Belgian-born participants was analysed over the same time span of four years, from 2010 to 2014. Four different scatter plots are devoted to the four most frequent languages (Farsi, Dutch, French and English). The

[20] A characteristics of social network sites which brings together multiple context and commonly distinct and multiple audiences into a single context of social media.

aim is to develop the trendlines for the participants' use of various languages. Figures 26, 27, 28 and 29 demonstrate their online uses of Farsi, English, Dutch and French. None of the scatter plots displays a regular pattern and the lines both slope up and down in a single chart.

The participants' code choices were also reviewed at the individual level to detect a meaningful pattern exclusive of the group's collective behaviour. Nevertheless, no pattern was detected. Depending on varying contexts of communication, multilingual people in this group make use of different languages. Various languages in their repertoire influence and interact with each other like liquid in communicating vessels. Regarding the language use and development in the context of Facebook, communicating vessels metaphor tilts to one side, then the other. It means that multiple languages in a user's repertoire exist in a common space and an increase in the use of one language lead to a decrease in the use of the other languages, but no pattern emerges systematically echoes the group's participants.

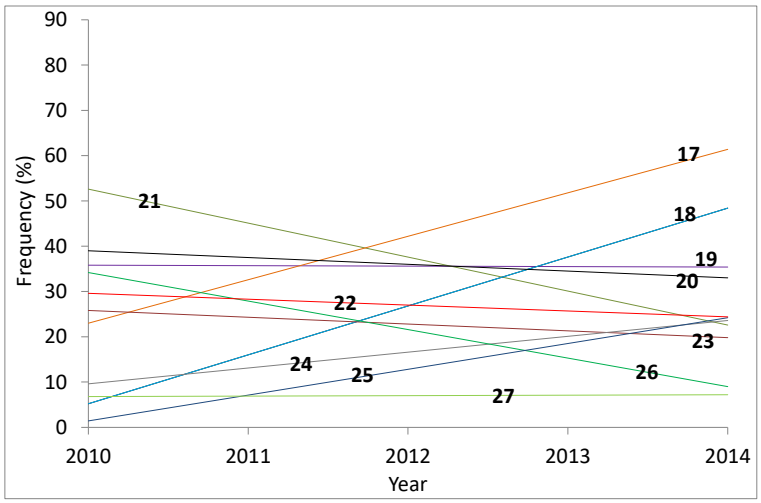


Figure 26. Proportion of use of FARSI language for 11 Belgian-born participants

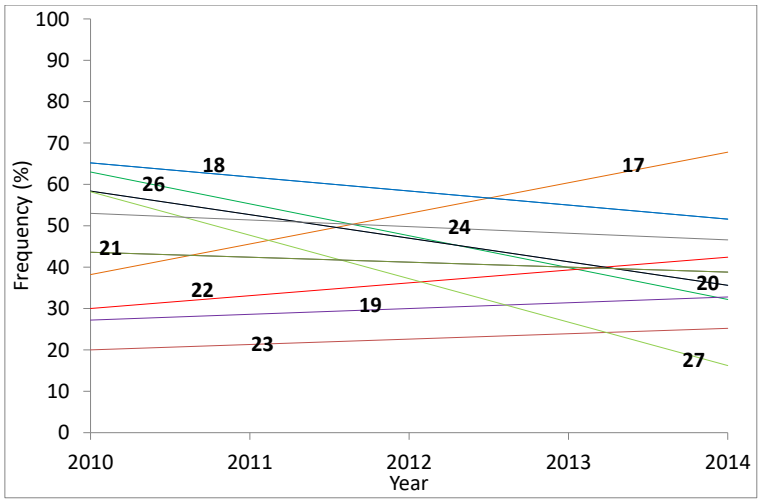


Figure 27. Proportion of use of ENGLISH language for 10 out of 11 Belgian-born participants

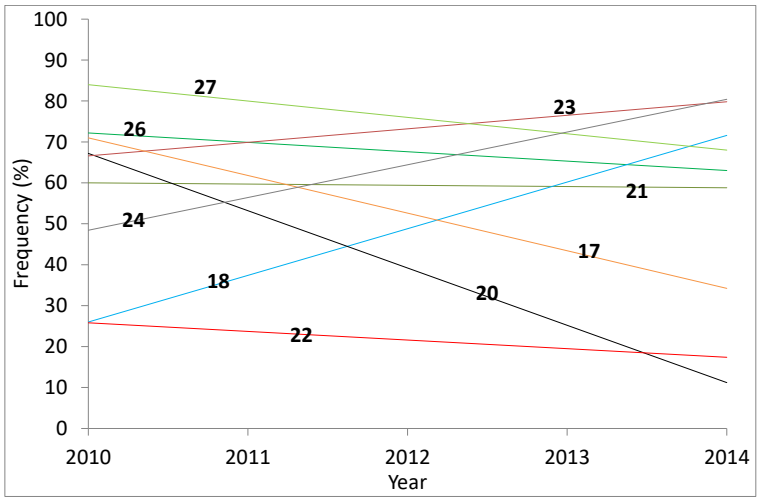


Figure 28. Proportion of use of DUTCH language for 9 out of 11 Belgian-born participants

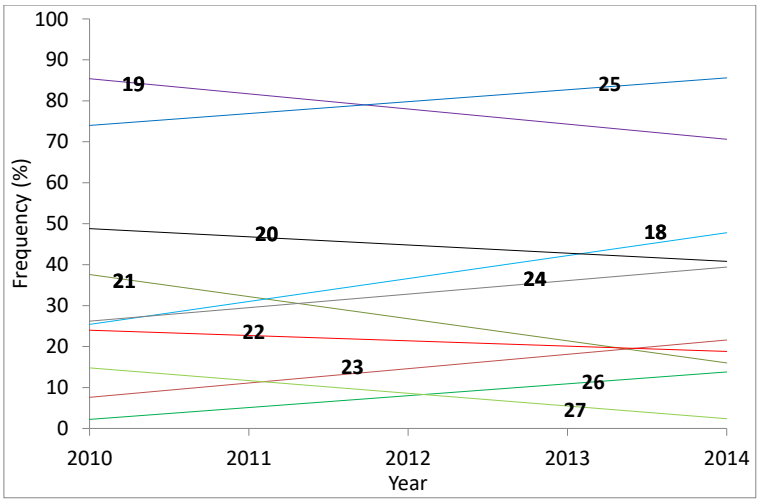


Figure 29. Proportion of use of FRENCH language for 10 out of 11 Belgian-born participants

4.4 Tendency to use different languages on Facebook by 10 multilingual Iranian participants who were raised in Belgium

The tendency to use the same four languages on Facebook was analysed among 10 second generation Belgium-raised participants of whom 3 participants have been raised in Brussels and 6 in Flanders. 1 participant was raised in both regions.

The resulting scatter diagrams (Figures 30, 31, 32 and 33) illustrate irregular patterns of lines. In other words, a line of best fit cannot be drawn for any of the following plots and the participants' general trends in choice of codes are not definite.

As was the case in the group of Belgian-born participants, the varying proportions of languages used on Facebook of Belgium-raised diasporic members can be seen as a movement comparable to that of liquid in communicating vessels.

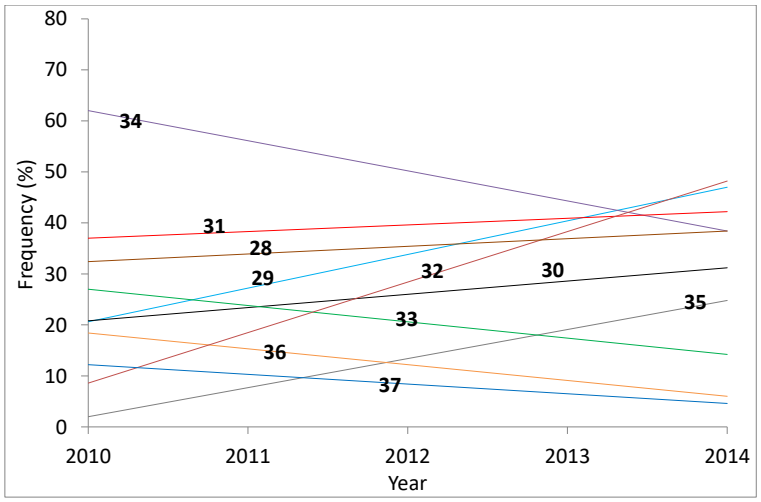


Figure 30. Proportion of use of FARSI language for 10 Belgium-raised participants

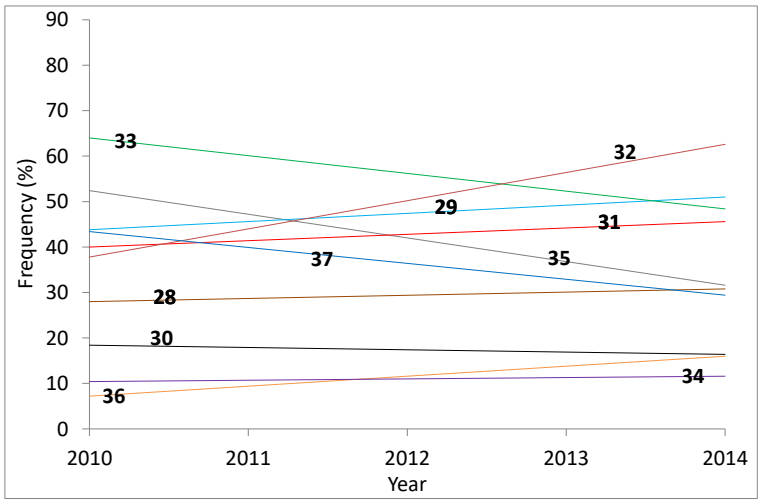


Figure 31. Proportion of use of ENGLISH language for 10 Belgium-raised participants

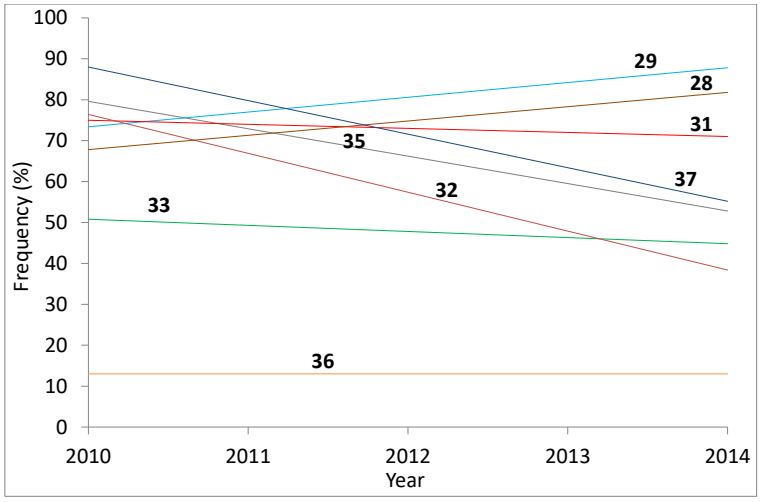


Figure 32. Proportion of use of DUTCH language for 8 out of 10 Belgium-raised participants

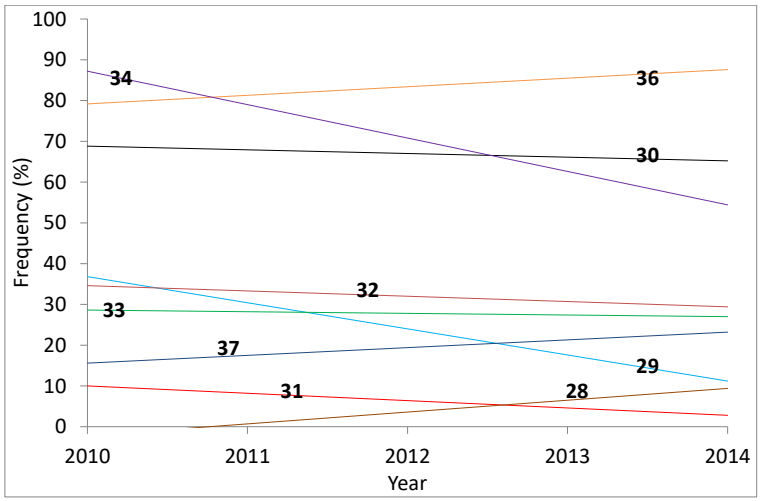


Figure 33. Proportion of use of FRENCH language for 9 out of 10 Belgium-raised participants

The representative participants of each group are selected based on the degree of resemblance of their language use tendency to the general trend of the whole group. Therefore, the exemplary profiles of the representative participants of both groups of Belgian-born and Belgium-raised participants (i.e. second generation immigrants) are not being presented due to the lack of collective agreement in their patterns of language use.

In general, second generation immigrants of Iranian descent adopt more of a transnational identity to define their diasporic positioning. They share fewer memories of homeland and their heritage profile (including the heritage language) is mostly retained through parental encouragement and the possibility of ethnic peer contact. Due to the different transnational orientations that they acquire and

different patterns of adaptation that they follow in the host context, second generation immigrants as a group, irregularly choose languages from their often wide linguistic repertoire. It's worth mentioning that while there is not any general agreement in the use of codes among the participants, the choices might be systematic. In other words, individual participants' orientations to different languages may lead to a pattern while their group behaviour in code selection shows irregularities.

5. Discussion

An essentialist approach in studying diasporic identity construction splits the positioning of diasporic members bilaterally in the sense that the construction of identity is mainly defined through a direct link with ethnic origin and homeland. Such 'dual' positioning is questioned by studies which assume that the notion of homeland goes beyond a static and fixed original territory (Appadurai 1988; Malkki 1995). The shift in defining identity places emphasis on the multi-layered positioning of immigrants in society and a *de-territorialized* concept of homeland. It implies that home does not remain in the past; instead it serves as a background upon which dynamic negotiations occur and multiple connections and identifications are constructed (Ghorashi 2004). Following Hall (1997), Ghorashi (2004:330) argues that the (Iranian) diasporic experience encompasses a "past-oriented identity", however; this identity is embedded in the context of a host society in the present. The spatio-temporal duality of host society in the present time and country of origin in the past does not hold in this study. We cannot think of identity in the age of globalization and superdiverse societies as attached to one specific place, either returning to the past and origin or complete assimilation in the host context. Members of a diaspora maintain strong connections with their homeland while they are able to detach from it and may not think of a return; in other words, they belong to several homes at the same time. Hall (1992:302) describes the dynamics of diasporic identity: "National identity remains strong…but local, regional and community identities have become more significant. Above the level of the national culture, global identifications begin to displace, and sometimes override, national ones".

The community of Iranian immigrants in this study is also involved in such a process of identity transformation and re-positioning. Compared to the other two groups of participants who were raised and born in Belgium, Iranian immigrants who moved to Belgium as adults, formed a stronger national identity due to their longer life history in Iran and their age of migration. However, the results of the analysis illustrate a decreasing inclination to use the heritage language over time. This first-generation group of Iranian immigrants makes effort to detach from the national identity and reconstruct a transnational one to minimize the feeling of being out of place in Belgian society. While the use of Farsi which reinforces the sense of exclusion is gradually downplayed, use of the locally dominant languages in Belgium which opens the doors of socio-economic opportunity, prestige and social inclusion increases. In general, increasing deployment of Dutch, French and

English among the Iranian immigrants who moved to Belgium as adults signifies their orientation towards enhancing their transnational communications and increasing their chances for further integration in the global network. Furthermore, these first generation immigrants have a relatively clear image of home and its connotations in the western host society. Their decreasing use of the national language in the post-migration context may also be triggered by an attempt to distance themselves from the negative image of the Iranian nation state which draws widespread opposition from the world.

The analysis in this study equally demonstrates the irregular code selection patterns (see Sections 4.3 and 4.4 in Data collection, analysis and results) in the online practices of the immigrants of Iranian descent who were born and/or raised in Belgium. Although the participants of this study were primarily classified into three groups of Iranian- raised, Belgian-born and Belgium-raised, the results obtained from the analysis of participants' language preference on Facebook distinguished between regular and irregular pattern of language use. Accordingly, the participants are re-defined in two groups of first generation (with a general consensus on the use of languages) and second generation (with interpersonal variation in selection of the codes) Iranian immigrants in Belgium.

The ethnic identity of these second generation immigrants may not be as deep-seated as that of first generation immigrants; yet, it enables Belgium-born/Belgium-raised immigrants to feel Iranian. Depending on different patterns of adaptation and status of their immigrant parents in the hierarchy of acculturation, second generation immigrants acquire different levels of second culture and identity (Zhou 1997). They constantly re-evaluate their sense of belonging and position themselves differently in the transnational social space, where they currently live. Second generation immigrants develop a kind of transnational identity which is called "free-floating" in Hall's (1992:303) term. That is to say, they draw on different languages to choose among a range of identification possibilities which correspond to second generation immigrants' cultural patterns, family relations, values and social connections that are reconstructed in the process of adaptation to living interculturally (Berry et al. 2006).

Different patterns of psychological and sociocultural adaptation as well as the growing transnational identity mainly account for the resulting irregularity in the linguistic preference and code selection of Belgian-born/Belgium-raised immigrant. In addition, as the linguistic repertoire of the Facebook users expands, they might tend to use all different languages in their repertoire for both identificatory and communication purposes on the internet. This might increase the occurrence of irregularity in their patterns of language use. Compared to first generation immigrants of this study, a wider collection of linguistic resources inform second generation immigrants' linguistically determined identity. For example, Hana (a Belgium-raised participant in this study) defines different dimensions of her identity using multiple languages in her repertoire. Hana was born in Denmark and Danish as

her national language is used frequently in her online practices to symbolize her national identity; however; she voices her strong religious affiliation with the use of Hebrew. In addition, Farsi is the only means which can help her being connected to her paternal ancestral background in Iran. Compared to the first-generation Iranian immigrants who mostly use different languages to enhance their global connections and increase their sociocultural inclusion in the host country, Hana seems to use various languages on Facebook mainly to define her multidimensional/transnational identity constructed in relation to different places.

Therefore, differences in age and life stage at the time of migration distinguish between (first and second) generational cohorts and remarkably affect language use longitudinally in the post migration setting. The findings indicate the significance of looking at the differences between people who migrate as adults as opposed to people who move at an earlier point of life. It is not only about the longer length of exposure to western European life, but also about the experience of a qualitatively different life stage. Development of linguistic repertoires following the move is definitely informed by variables such as physical/geographical locations and trajectory; yet, multilingualism is also a matter of point in life at the time of arrival in the receiving society. In this regard, making distinction between different patterns of language use by first generation adult immigrants and second generation immigrant-origin group is particularly prominent for our understanding of multilingualism and diversity in the dynamics of how language choices develop.

Undoubtedly, the existing trends hold true for the online use of languages on social media. To what extent the findings can be extrapolated to the offline communicative contexts is uncertain.

5.1 Use of Dutch/French

Members of Iranian diaspora who moved to Belgium as adults, all demonstrated a tendency to use the dominant language(s) of Belgium and/or lingua franca's increasingly in their migration trajectory. Code selection influenced by the normative aspects of processes of social inclusion/exclusion can define the position of diasporic members at the intersection of spaces. Conforming to the dominant language/norm, individuals gain personal/relational empowerment which enables them to project their own voice. Although the participants are diverse in socioeconomic background and life history, they relatively complied with an expected level of achievement (mainly through education and work) to be considered successful in Belgium; yet, they share a sense of instability in the host country. Am expresses his concern about his incompetence in Dutch (despite the fact that he is actually competent in Dutch) as a barrier to future success and Bana regrets leaving Iran in the first place, because she cannot foresee a bright future in front of her. Despite their vulnerable status as migrants because of temporary residency permission, they mostly do not think of a return and try to build their future in Belgium. Although Bana regrets her displacement, she constantly indicates her transnational positioning in her online practices as she

considers French the ‘inevitable’ language for her literacy practices and clarifies her French posts for the majority of non-French speaking audience in comments. Code selection by this group of participants is directly associated with their changing configuration of multiple identities. The participants’ identification is shaped through unstable and dynamic processes of negotiation in relation to different spaces at various moments of time. Their ancestry as Iranian is influenced by the dynamics of creating home in a new space. Complying with Belgian sociolinguistic norms and deploying Belgium’s dominant languages, Iranian immigrants look for an alternative image of home and reconstruct their attachments. However, it has been argued that the sense of belonging to Iran and the nostalgic past always accompany Iranian immigrants (Ghorashi 2004). In the post-migration context, the diasporic awareness of belonging to different spaces keeps immigrants within their diasporic community, while they attempt to assimilate in the dominant society.

As mentioned earlier, the results are only valid for digital use of language on Facebook. This study exclusively reflects the linguistic practices of a community of Iranian migrants on social media and attempting to generalize the findings to any written/spoken interactions performed offline by the same group of participants should be made carefully.

5.2 Use of English

Especially, the group of participants who moved indirectly to Belgium tend to prioritize the use of English over any other language. Their indirect transnational trajectory in the flow of migration may have affected their increasing tendency to use English language over time. This trend reflects the diversity in the community of Iranian diaspora in Belgium. Although English is the professional language of the workplace for both Lily and Saba, they also use English in their daily life in Belgium. Lily finds Dutch and French ‘too difficult to learn’ and Saba ‘never feels the urge to use Dutch’ in Flanders. Residing in other European countries before ending up in Belgium, Lily and Saba are connected to many non-Iranian/non-Belgian Facebook friends (i.e. there is a significant number of Spanish and German Facebook fiends in Lily’s and Saba’s friend lists respectively) and they mainly communicate to their virtual transnational audience in English. Since they are involved in more of an internationalization process, they may be equipped with a truncated, probably more multilingual repertoire comprising various pieces of language being used in specific sociolinguistic domains (see Blommaert et al. 2005). For example, Lily uses bits and pieces of Dutch, French and Spanish on her Facebook page, despite her limited competence in these languages.

In general, the dramatic increase in the tendency of the participants in this group to use English and the sharp decrease in their orientation to use the home language (Farsi) over the course of four years are noteworthy. National language strongly supports and symbolizes national identity since it is rooted in peoples’ shared cultural values and history. However, the communicative value of Farsi seems to be insufficient for multilingual members of a diasporic group in Belgium who want to

remain connected to others beyond their local circle. To enhance their intercultural and mutual understanding, English is rescaled and increasingly used for communicative purposes in the context of Belgian society. As English is mobilized by the first generation immigrants who were indirectly relocated (e.g. Lily and Saba), its connotation with prestige, popularity and modernity in the Iranian context is rescaled in the host country. English is not an official language in Belgium; however, its high status at the scale of Belgian society seems to be linked more to its instrumental capacity to connect people to the globalized world. Therefore, the power of English in Belgium cannot not be framed only as the outcome of globalization. It should also be understood as a local practice of immigrants in everyday communication as well as a global process.

In the case of Iranian immigrants who moved to Belgium (indirectly) in their adulthood, English may serve an identificatory purpose (e.g. professional identity). However, in addition to English, their linguistic related identity is transnationally shaped through a wider range of space relations in their indirect and many-faceted migration trajectory. The hegemony of English as a lingua franca unifies their links to people and places in various moments of time.

The specific migration trajectory of first generation immigrants who moved indirectly to Belgium predominantly influences the developments in their language use. The intricate patterns of mobility across different spaces increases the chances of having Facebook audiences of various ethnic/national background with different linguistic repertoires. Such diversity tends to be responded to by the use of lingua franca English. Therefore, it is important to look at the specific dynamics of people who moved straight from Iran to Belgium as opposed to people who first resided in another European country. In addition to the migration trajectory (indirectly from Iran to Flanders or Brussels) and the life stage at the time of migration (first generation adult immigrants), geographical location is clearly influential in developing the pattern of language use among the immigrants. Apart from the effects of the static places of origin and destination, different regions of the target country might play a leading role. For example, the language-based regions of Belgium attribute different values to the social mobility of English. While Lily and Saba effectively deploy English for both online and offline communicative purposes in Flanders, English does not function and circulate so adequately in the francophone communities of Belgium. Thus, diverse patterns of mobility, physical spaces and life stages at arrival are all considered as influential variables in the development of language choice by immigrants of Iranian descent in Belgium.

6. Conclusion

The findings reported in this study indicate that the use of Farsi as the original language of homeland decreased in the literacy practices of Iranian immigrants following their move to Belgium. However, use of Farsi in the online practices of Belgian-born and Belgium-raised immigrants of Iranian descent does not illustrate a regular orientation. Addressing the spatio-temporal trajectory of Iranian

diaspora, this study shows how the use of languages in the virtual diasporic community is associated with a new intermediary space and the construction of a translocal identity. More importantly, all three variables of trajectory, geographical territory and life stage at the time of migration are shown to affect the pattern of language use development among the members of diasporic community in Belgium.

Although the transformation of identity from local/national to global/transnational is relative, the pattern of language choice among the Iranian immigrants in Belgium indicates their overall tendency to reconstruct their national identity under the influence of hybridity and diversity of the globalized world. The pluralizing effect of globalization on the identity of immigrants makes identities more positional and diverse and less fixed and united. The defensive reaction of an ethnic minority group to the experience of sociocultural exclusion might be an attempt to strengthen the national identity and culture which can construct a symbolic identification for the second generation immigrants. Nevertheless, the results of this study indicate a more transnational re-identification in the community of Iranian immigrants in Belgium. Their Iranian cultural heritage and Farsi as their original language are partially displaced by the locally dominant language and culture. However, the meaning of homeland becomes subjective and the construction of national identity becomes dynamic and shifting. Although the use of Farsi in Facebook practices shows a desire for locality, the increasing use of dominant local languages in the host society symbolizes the participants' glocal[21] identities in the new frame of time and space.

[21] "Glocaliztion" has been defined by Wellman (2002:13) as "the combination of intense local and extensive global interaction"

7. Online and offline use of Farsi

During fieldwork, it emerged that a few participants appeared to be using Farsi extensively on Facebook while they barely seemed to use any Farsi language offline. Further details were thus needed to see how the online and offline uses of Farsi, as the heritage language, are related. This part of the study intends to show whether code selection in the semi-public online space of Facebook always mirrors participants' choice of codes offline. The result contributes to our understanding of online language practices as a new way of communication which allows the possibility of connecting to a large number of audiences from various sociolinguistic backgrounds. Therefore, it seems necessary to ask whether the online use of Farsi correlates with offline use and whether the affordances and constraints of online space lead participants to make different choices of codes from their offline use. Furthermore, it seems interesting to look at the choice of Farsi on Facebook as it is related to the participants' stage in life at the time of migration as well as the trajectory.

To answer these questions, another set of data were collected whereby participants were asked to keep a log of the languages they use in two days (weekday and weekend) from early in the morning to late in the evening. A template containing a detailed schedule was sent to the informants to model the expected log. The collected logs were carefully observed to measure the hours of offline Farsi language deployment in the participants' everyday life. The analysis showed that the frequency of use of Farsi on Facebook as the only common language among the participants and the offline use of Farsi are not always correlated positively. In other words, the correlation is positive for all except in two cases (Hana and Nooshin) whose profiles will be described in detail.

The participants in this part of the study were divided into the same three groups of 11 Belgian-born participants, 10 Belgium-raised participants and 16 participants who moved to Belgium as adults. In each of the three groups, each participant's annual use of Farsi on Facebook was systematically counted over the course of four years (2010-2014). The mean as the measure of central tendency for each participant is marked with a blue marker in Figures 34, 35 and 36. The collected logs in two days were also coded for the use of offline Farsi and the mean value of the two-day logs was measured for each participant and indicated with a red marker on the scatter plots (Figures 34, 35 and 36). On average, each participant roughly spent 70 minutes online over a span of two days (MIN=15 minutes, MAX= 240 minutes).

Bearing in mind that we are comparing two sets of data collected in two significantly different time spans (i.e. the average of online language use frequency in four years versus the average of offline language use frequency in two days), this study showed some remarkable results. In Figures 34, 35 and 36, all of the participants are numbered on the horizontal axis while the vertical axis represents the frequency of language use.

In Figures 34 and 35, the small vertical distance between blue markers (online use of Farsi) and red markers (offline use of Farsi) for every single participant is noticeable; such an agreement in both sets of data indicates a positive correlation. Thus, as a general observation we can conclude that the correlation between offline (red markers) and online (blue markers) use of Farsi for all 16 participants who moved from Iran to Belgium is positive (Figure 34). Likewise, the correlation between offline and online use of Farsi among all 11 participants who were born in Belgium is positive (Figure 35).

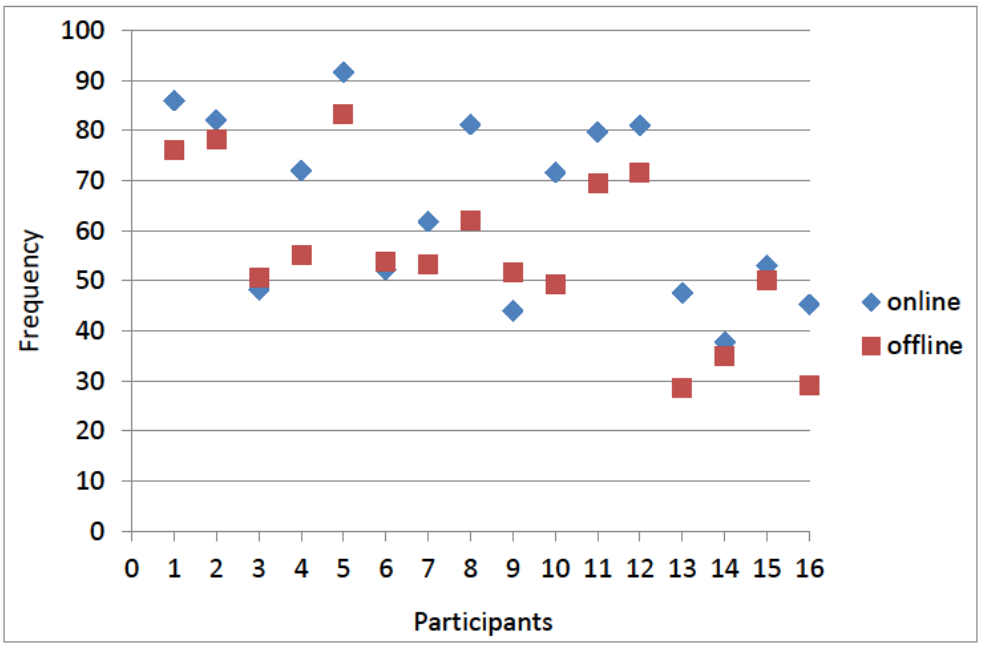


Figure 34. Positive correlation between online/offline use of Farsi for 16 participants who moved to Belgium as adults. r=0.87

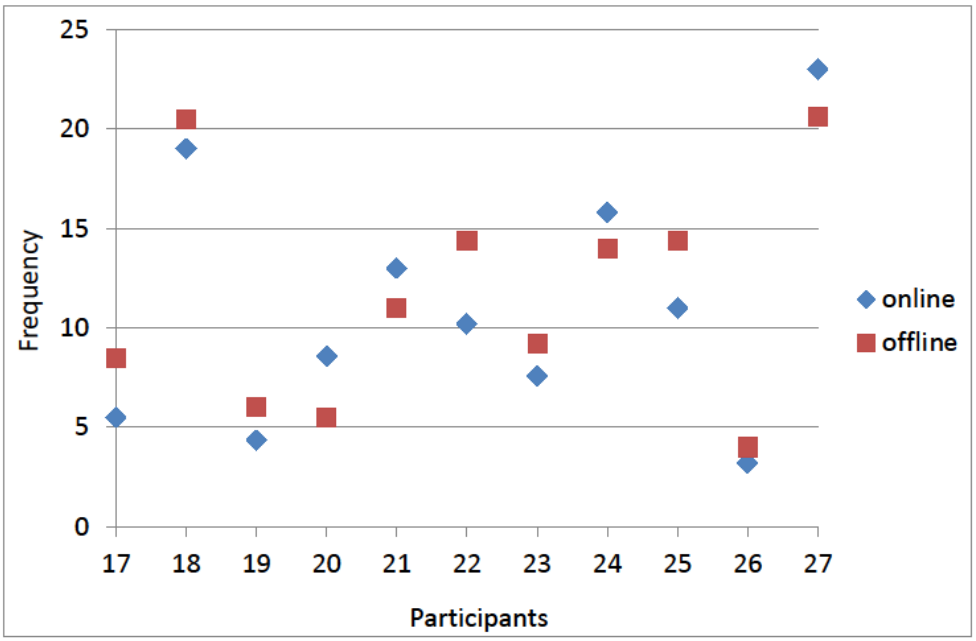


Figure 35. Positive correlation between online/offline use of Farsi for 11 Belgian-born participants. r=0.91

Figure 36 gives the scatter plot for the group of 10 Belgium-raised participants. The uncorrelated dots in the figure are specifically marked. In particular, the logs related to two participants (Hana and Nooshin) who were raised in Belgium represent little usage of offline Farsi, despite the frequent deployment of Farsi in their literacy practices on Facebook. Hana is participant 'No 29' and Nooshin is participant 'No 31'. Admitting that Farsi practices are absent in her offline life, Hana says: 'I consider myself as part of the community (of Iranian immigrants in Belgium), why not? I speak the language. we post and tweet instead of talk though'.

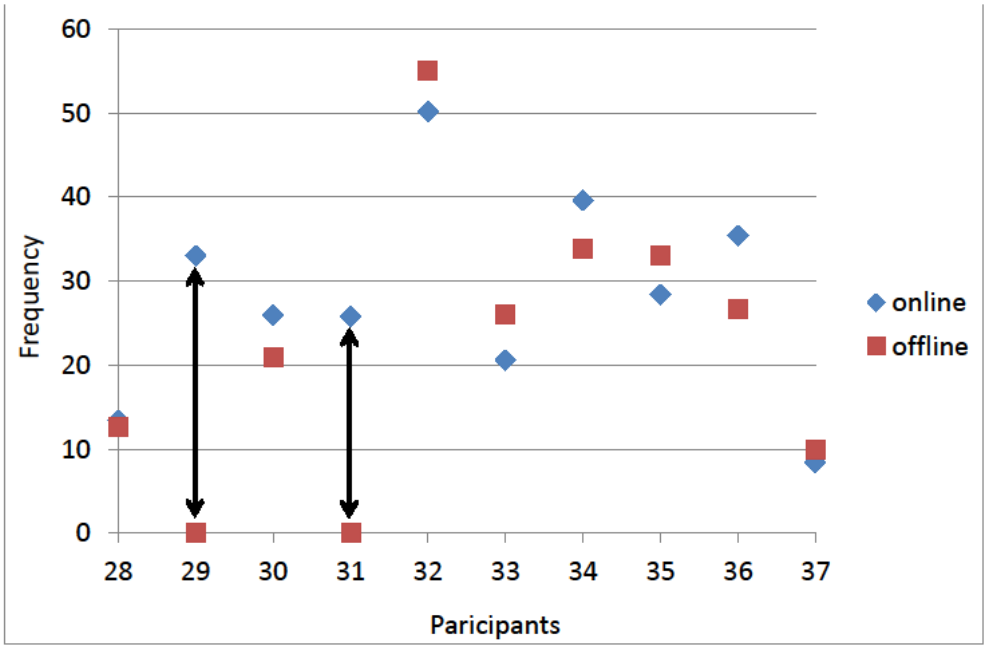


Figure 36. Online/offline use of Farsi for 10 Belgium-raised participants. r=0.63

We can conclude that apart from a few exceptions (the cases of Hana and Nooshin), online and offline uses of Farsi among the participants of this study positively correlate with each other. In other words, each individual user's attitude towards the deployment of heritage language and maintenance of Iranian culture and identity is relatively the same in the context of everyday life and on Facebook.

Although the two non-corresponding results (the cases of Hana and Nooshin) resemble each other in the sense that they are both related to the group of people who were raised in Belgium, the two participants' trajectories are remarkably different.

7.1 The migration history of Hana and Nooshin

In sections 4.1.1 and 4.2.1, details of 5 participants' sociolinguistic profiles, as representative of the group of participants in this study, were described. However, it appears that some participants are

marked by a more complex and multi-layered spatio-temporal trajectory. Hana is an example; her life history and multilingual repertoire is described in the following section:

Hana is 26 years old at the time of interview and is multilingual in Danish, Dutch, English, Farsi and Hebrew. Although she has learned French and Italian at some point, she does not consider herself competent in these languages. Hana and her younger sister are both among the participants in this study. Hana was born in Denmark to a Muslim Iranian father and a Jewish Danish mother. When Hana was 5 years old her father left the family due to a mental health condition which had been triggered a long time ago when he had to fled post-revolutionary Iran and made his way to Denmark as a political refugee. Hana's father still suffers from the illness and the severe anxiety forced him to stay away from any kind of human contact. Hana vaguely remembers that her father tried to teach her some Farsi words; however, her Farsi competence has more roots in the Farsi courses she followed for almost two years, motivated by a Danish-Iranian friend at school. At the age of 12, Hana, her mother and her sister migrated to Antwerp, the second-largest Flemish city in Belgium where they have family relations and found links to the Jewish community. Hana went to school in Flanders and learned Dutch. In her own words, 'Dutch learning was easy and fun'. Hana's religious identity, mediated by the Jewish community, led her to join the military service in Israel at the age of 22. Her competence in Hebrew improved in Israel to a great extent. With the advance of social media, Hana started to make connections with some family members in Iran However, their connection was limited to the status of friends on Facebook and did not expand any further. Although Hana's Farsi is characterized by a strong foreign accent and noticeable grammatical errors, her frequent use of Romanised Farsi in digital literacy practices on Facebook is more efficient and competent. More significantly, she mostly overlooks her audiences' incompetence in understanding her Farsi practices and actively continues the conversation in Farsi. The log that she was required to keep for two days shows a negative correlation between her online and offline use of Farsi. Hana is participant 'No 29' in Figure 36 and the negative correlation between her online and offline use of Farsi is demonstrated by means of a vertical arrow accentuating the difference in frequency of language use. (Hana is represented by trendline number 29 and blue colour in Figures 30, 31, 32 and 33).

Figure 37 demonstrates Hana's use of Farsi in a Facebook conversation. She uploaded her picture along with a description in Romanised Farsi: 'finally I'm done' which is assumed to indicate the end of her military service in Israel. Although the automatic translation as an affordance of Facebook helps an audience to make sense of the posted content, the posted text which is written in non-standard Romanised Farsi can obviously not be translated. In such circumstances, the audience/commenter usually either interprets/misinterprets the text (e.g. 4th and 5th turns of conversation) or simply asks for more clarification (e.g. first and last turns).

Figure 37. Screenshot of the comments following Hana's Facebook post

Translation:

'Good job… but what does it say?'

(in Danish)

'Hey gorgeous'

(in Danish)

'I'm finished… I'm finished'

(Hana's comment in Romanized Farsi)

Are you coming to Tel Aviv today or tonight?

(in English)

'Enjoy it'

(in Dutch)

Kiss emoticon

(Hana's comment)

'I don't understand all the words'

(in Danish)

Nooshin's log also points to a negative correlation between online and offline language use. She is participant 'No 31' in Figure 36 and the difference between her online and offline use of Farsi is highlighted by a vertical arrow. Nooshin is 34 years old at the time of interview; she lives in Ghent (a city in Flemish region of Belgium) and works as a head nurse at a hospital. Nooshin considers both Dutch and Farsi as her first languages; however, the foreign accent in her spoken Farsi is

noticeable. In addition to Farsi and Dutch, she has a good command of English and intermediate proficiency in French. In the 1980s, when Nooshin was 8 years old, she migrated to Europe with her parents. They were both politically active and were repressed by the post-revolutionary regime in Iran. Using their illegal exit/entry documents, their asylum claim was accepted in the Netherlands and after a few years they were sent to Belgium. The language at home was always Farsi and Nooshin learned Dutch and English at school. At the age of 19 she got married to her 44 year old Belgian husband despite her family's disapproval. A few years later, Nooshin's father died and her mother moved to the United States to join a small community of close friends she knew from her days of political activism in Iran. During these years of exile, Nooshin once travelled to Iran where she and her husband visited family members; however, their connection was lost as time passed. Although the collected log of Nooshin demonstrates little use of Farsi in her offline life and Nooshin's friend list on Facebook shows a limited number of Iranian names, Facebook conversations initiated by Nooshin are mostly in Farsi. (Nooshin is represented by trendline number 31 and red colour in Figures 30, 31, 32 and 33).

The use of Farsi appeals to other Facebook users and draws their attention to the distinctive flavour of Hana and Nooshin's posts. They consciously choose to frequently use a language on Facebook which has little communicative value in the context of their everyday life. Textual mobility of Farsi in online space can also be associated with Hana and Nooshin's desire to practice and improve a linguistic resource in their repertoire. Furthermore, use of Farsi on Facebook allow them to make connections with other Farsi-speaking users, members of the community of Iranian immigrants and their family members in Iran. Farsi is also intrinsic to an expression of cultural and ethnic identity which is not solely attached to the country of origin but can be dynamically re-constructed in a virtual space.

7.1.1 Hana's trajectory

The analysis of participants' code choices is sometimes part of a more complex process due to their specific migration trajectory. Hana's multilingual repertoire and complicated life history were described above in detail; seemingly her intention behind the choice of languages needs a more complex, multidimensional analysis. Hana's religious identity and her search for authenticity define her frequent mobility through time and space. Hana's migration from Denmark to Belgium and from Belgium to Israel was motivated by her Jewish affiliation. Claiming her authenticity, Hana also pays attention to her paternal ancestral background as she frequently used Farsi in her Facebook practices. The ambiguity derived from her collected log which resulted in a negative correlation in her online/offline use of Farsi led to follow-up questioning in Facebook Messenger. In the casual but long follow-up conversations, attempt was made to explicate her actual motivations underlying her use of Farsi on Facebook while she has few encounters with Farsi speakers in her real offline life.

Hana's response reflects her desire to actively make use of all the languages that she has in her repertoire. She enjoys being connected to different people with different languages that she knows and considers her linguistic repertoire a 'fortune' which has been mostly learned rather than inherited. Hana makes linguistic choices actively; yet, she passively submits to the sociolinguistic regimes of others. Different sociolinguistic ideologies converge in the online space to underpin Hana's language selection and index who she wishes to be in a particular context of language use and with a specific (sometimes imaginary) audience.

The frequent use of Farsi on Hana's Facebook has roots in her sense of belonging to Iran despite the disconnection from her Farsi speaking father (see Hana's life history) and her mere virtual relationship to family members in Iran: 'I live in Antwerpen (in Belgium) and I was born in Copenhagen but I find my background in Tel Aviv (her religiously informed maternal homeland), I speak Hebrew … and I love there (Tel Aviv) so much and I think Farsi has the same value'. She mentions that Farsi is something which draws her to a place where she comes from. Hana is not concerned about her audience's (in)competence in Farsi because she believes that her family members in Iran who are also her Facebook friends 'can see' her. Hana's identity is particularly constructed in relation to more than two places (country of birth and country of residence). In fact the ancestral homeland(s) seems to have significant impact in shaping Hana's authentic sense of self. Her spatio-temporal trajectory is more complex than that of most people in the diasporic community due to her multiple attachments in relation to different territories. The sense of duality in her diasporic experience expands to a more complicated hybrid positioning as she has found her background in Israel and Iran in addition to her place of birth (Denmark) and the country of residence (Belgium). Judging Hana's authenticity is a complex process, given the multiple layers of affiliation in her shifting and dynamic transnational network. Hana links a language (Farsi) to a specific space where she has never been (Iran); yet, she claims authenticity for this imaginary homeland. It seems that she is not authentically bound enough to a particular space but still feels she belongs to many places.

Chapter 7
Case study 3, Part 1
Qualitative analysis

1. Introduction

The interactive writing spaces of social media give rise to the development of a different, more complex form of social interaction than those of traditional spoken conversation or written practices. Many attempts have been made to formulate a new and specific analytical framework for the study of digital interaction and the literacy practices of social media (for example the work of Herring 2007; Androutsopoulos, 2011). However, the wide range of social practices related to online discourse and fast changing technological advancements make it difficult to design a framework that can thoroughly address the complex relations between discourse and digital practices. Drawing on the methodological approaches originally developed for the analysis of traditional spoken conversations and adapting them to the shifting dynamics of online spaces, this chapter aims to qualitatively examine the multimodal online discourse which involves a combination of semiotic modes that are interactively linked to each other. The conversational analysis informed-method which is used in this study pays special attention to the local detail of digital practice and turn-per-turn interactions are examined with regard to contextual particulars outside the conversation when needed. This analysis predominantly focuses on details of the context of communication, design of audience and choice of language as influential variables in understanding how interactional dynamics unfold on Facebook.

This chapter first discusses different aspects of computer-mediated literacy practices which are largely taken into account in employing different approaches for the analysis of online discourse. Next, regarding the unique possibilities, recourses and constrains of the online context, a *conversation analysis*[22] informed method is suggested and its differences with the traditional analytic framework are emphasized. Then, the suggested model goes into specifics about the ways in which code selection is interactionally associated with conversational meaning and is partially organized based on the participants' orientations towards imagined audiences. In the last part of this chapter, *frame analysis* is adopted to analyse the new forms of discourse in relation to its social structure and unpack the idea of the technologically-mediated context.

2. Digital conversation analysis

Particular configurations of modes and specific affordances and constraints associated with the online space pose challenges to the analysis of different aspects of online discourse. In order to examine digital discourse, we need to approach differently to new forms of social actions which the discourse represents and the new ways in which people pursue specific social aims and represent specific social identities. Digital technology calls for the re-evaluation of traditional

[22] Conversation analysis has been defined extensively in chapter 3 (the theoretical approach). Chapter 3 also clarifies why a conversation analytic framework provides a good starting point for this research.

frameworks/tools in order to achieve adequate interpretation of the sequential organisation of turns in the new circumstances. In addition to digital text, the interactive context of the use will be discussed in the following parts. First we briefly take a look at different aspects of digital text.

2.1 Digital text

Digital practices are in many ways different from the traditional written practices. Different sorts of coherence, intertextuality, dialogism and multimodality are associated with the online written texts.

Although parts of digital literacy practices might appear to be disconnected or loosely connected comparing to spoken conversation or traditional written text, research shows that digital texts are characterized by texture and coherence (see the work of Herring, 1999 on chat; Barton, 2015 on Flicker; and Benson, 2015 on YouTube). However, it has been argued that some digital texts are featured by the algorithms of computer programs providing internet users with abilities/inabilities to perform actions, construct certain social relations or identities (Jones, 2015). Such tight algorithmic texture provides a different type of coherence as it constrains users' options in relation to connection or sequencing different parts of the online texts. Intertextuality is another concept which is originally associated to written text analysis; yet, recent work on digital practices has documented the social process of intertextuality in all forms of online discourses (Myers, 2010; lam, 2013; Vasquez, 2015). Affordance of digital media for linking and mixing the discourse (e.g. hyperlinks) makes all sorts of "relationality, interconnectedness and interdependence" much probable on the online writing sphere (Allen, 2011:5). Not only intertextuality functions to provide coherence between different parts of the digital text, it also forms a linkage between the users of the text and symbolizes their membership to particular communities (Vasquez, 2015). According to Jones, Chik and Hafner (2015:30), digital discourse is also dialogic in a more dynamic way than the traditional written text. Such dialogic character is argued to be manifested not only in the interactional practices of reader and writer, but also in the connection between the online user and computer algorithm. That is to say, computer algorithm reads and processes the produced digital practices, identifies the areas of interest and exposes the producers to a version of their interest or action. In this sense digital text reads and writes the producers back and a sort of dialogue is established (Jones et al., 2015). The fourth aspect of digitally mediated written text is multimodalilty. Online text involves a combination of semiotic modes which are dynamically linked to each other. Online modes connect to each other and to other texts in various, multiple and layered ways. Following Iedema (2001), Jones (2015:37) uses the term "resemiotisation" to refer to the process in which meaning changes as it travels across different semiotic modes and textual materials. For example through the process of resemiotisation a posted picture on Facebook becomes the original source of a written Facebook conversation.

2.2 Context of digital interaction

Different aspects of context should also be taken into consideration for the analysis of digital discourse in the sense that discourse analysts should investigate the ways online and offline spaces, temporal aspect and a wider set of cultural norms interact with each other. In approaching digital practices, analysts should come up with a framework to trace the situated discourse practices, its associated meaning and social relations. Jones et al. (2015:10) emphasises the significance of considering "the broader, global contexts in which technologies and information are produced, circulated and valued". The context is not simply pre-existed but it can be developed through people's social relations and interactions. These virtual interactions underline the role of people in relation to the use of digital text in order to perform social activities. Interactivity in the online context is sketched out:

i) The analysis of internet interaction is challenging for conversation analysts and concepts such as turn taking and adjacency pairs are differently dealt with since the new/asynchronous ways of interaction in digital media partially change the original methods of conversation analysis. Digital technology also provides new forms of communication tools (e.g. emoticons or like button) which enhance the interactional competence and have universal implications across languages and cultures ii) Furthermore, internet interaction is involved in an "ambient intimacy" (Miller, 2011:10): a kind of constant co-presence and a sense of awareness that interlocutors are always accessible despite their noticeable spatio-temporal distance. In such an intimacy the participants' role is different and new forms of participation are created. Participation framework in the online space will be elaborately discussed later in this chapter. iii) Benson (2015) made two assumptions in terms of interactivity of digital discourse: first, interactional moves occur between digital media and users (interactive function of self-tracking apps) and second, digital media facilitates interactional moves among users (replacement of text with a smiley in response to a posted message). This brings out the discussion of affordances which is believed to be more than what technology allow users to do, it is a form of communication between users and designers (Gee, 2015) and in some cases designers underestimate what users can actually do with the site (Barton, 2015). Then, the effectiveness of the designed technology depends on how users interact with them. In this respect, Jones et al. (2015:11) argues:

> Digital technologies (like all cultural tools) are not determinative of their use. Although they influence what we can do in many ways, amplifying or diminishing different aspects of our perception and action, people also regularly adapt technologies to different circumstances or different goals, appropriate them into different context modify them and mix them with other tools in ways that alter the affordances we can find in them.

3. Code switching and code selection on social media

Studies in digital code switching have found similarities in forms and functions of spoken and internet conversation (Deumert and Masinyana, 2008; Lexander, 2011) in the sense that digital switches occurs for the same reason as in spoken conversation: construction of identity, showing affiliations, social positions and emotions (Fung and Carter, 2007). Androutsopoulos (2011) argues that both spoken and digital interactions are dialogic, informal and multimodal and therefore code switching on theses modes can be alike in many ways. Peuronen (2011) emphasizes the synchronous modes of digital practices (e.g. online chat) as channels which more probably reflect the features of spoken code switching. This is what Androutsoupolos (2011) calls conversational code switching of online practices which is associated with the properties of spoken code switching.

The conversational model of code selection/switching in spoken interaction (Auer 1984, 1998; Wei 1998) shows how choice of language is conversationally organized in a specific dialogic context and how this selection is interactionally relevant to the meaning of conversation. The selection of code is understood in relation to the participants of the conversation as well as the situational factors such as topic or the activity in which the participants are involved. In addition, code is selected in terms of interactional establishment of conversation in the sense that the selected code is a response to the preceding selection while it involves an anticipation of the following choice. The conversation analysis framework examines the meaning of code switches/selections in the sequential turns of conversation (Heritage 1997) and describes them in relation to what is currently happening in the speech, what happened before and what is anticipated to happen next.

Although the conversation analytical framework for the study of language choice and code switching has been largely developed to account for spoken interactions, it offers a systematic approach for the description of the interactional architecture of practices of code switching/selection on Facebook. Yet, some theoretical considerations are missing as the model is applied to the posted conversations on Facebook rather than to spoken data. Facebook conversations show conversational features of face to face interaction to some extent (e.g. turn talking, adjacency pairs, repair, etc.); yet, they are different in some other aspects and the interactional structure of the social medium is not ordered in exactly the same way as in spoken interaction. For example, the principle of turn taking might be delayed or overlap, adjacent turns can be disrupted and repair can be invisible to other participants of a conversation (due to the possibility of editing prior to posting). In addition, Facebook posts remain largely open to be replied to and Facebook users can be involved with more than one conversation at one time. Regarding the interactional features, bodily gestures and prosody are replaced by social network unique characteristics (e.g. emoticons, liking, tagging, etc.); nevertheless, facial expressions and smilies are mostly equivalent. Similarly, liking on Facebook which is expressed through an icon/emoji, can function as a conversational turn or an equivalent of an offline gesture . Although

there might be a sort of slippage, interactional features and emoticons of social media are closely connected.

In sum, although conversational analysis model - which is both participant and situated-oriented - takes the specifics of conversational code switching into account, patterns of code switching/selection on Facebook are explained by several departures from its principles.

3.1 Conversation analysis-informed method for examining conversation-like online data

While the study of sequential dynamics on Facebook is informed by existing models of analysis, adjustments are required since Facebook practices are mainly posted/typed practices and the organisation of the interactional turns displayed on Facebook only partially resembles those of spoken conversation. The following section discusses how the methodological approach crafted for the study of Facebook conversations represents challenges and is different from the traditional method of spoken conversation analysis.

An issue with which traditional conversation analysis deals is the distinction that in online writing there is the option of editing a post[23]. This means that the text can be repaired before it appears online as well as after being uploaded. The editing of posted content is sometimes visible to the audience (e.g. the editing of Facebook comments) and sometimes not (e.g. the editing of status updates on Facebook). Yet the synchrony of oral interaction causes even self-initiated self-repair to be actually heard by other participant(s) of a face-to-face conversation. Next, Facebook exchanges can unfold asynchronously and as a result, turn taking might be disrupted in the sense that a turn is either ignored or replied to with overlapped/delayed responses or reacted to by emojis and liking. Due to the specific organization of online turn taking, many turns can run concurrently and a targeted message for a particular audience might not reach the intended addressee. Sequential turns on Facebook can also occur in a quasi-synchronous mode since even in the case of online chat on Facebook, which has a lot in common with synchronous spoken interaction, the production and transmission of messages are separate processes. Third, pieces of online data are closely connected to different frames or locations on the internet in a way that the data cannot be extracted and analysed out of that context. For example, Facebook data is bound within Facebook space and its features cannot be generalized to all online data. Spoken data on the other hand can be traditionally abstracted from its interactive and situated context for the purpose of analysis. Another aspect of online data to which a digitised conversation analysis should pay a careful attention is the use of emoticons in the online space. While interactional features in oral conversation (e.g. non-verbal,

[23] At the time of data collection, when a Facebook post has been updated from the original, an *edited* label appeared next to the timestamp. Now, when users edit a post, it looks as though the post was originally written that way. However, the option to view the edit history is still available through clicking the dropdown menu on the top right corner of post. Facebook displays the original as well as the updated post.

bodily behaviour, prosodic aspects, etc.) are taken as equivalent to emojis in online exchanges, such a comparison can be argued to be oversimplified in the sense that the use of emojis can be different across the range of various online data, modes and spaces and consequently they have different interactional effects (Giles, Stommel, Paulus, Lester and Reed, 2015). For example, Ong (2011) discusses the difference between the function/effect of ellipsis marks in online interaction (…) and silence in spoken conversation. Giles et al. (2015) also underline the use of online devices such as hashtags and hyperlinks as having a rhetorical effect and therefore suggest that they should be analysed with regard to the discursive conventions of the specific space on the internet. Fifth, the conditions of embodied co-presence which are central to a successful face-to-face interaction, is different on Facebook. Conversation analysis, which is primarily concerned with the details of information transferred in a communicative situation, misses micro behaviour data such as tone, eye gaze or gesture in an online interaction. This is the problem of a different form of co-presence on Facebook in both spatial and temporal aspects; in the sense that Facebook users normally do not share the same physical space and their interactions are not necessarily synchronous. However, the condition of co-presence positions Facebook users to be mutually accessible for contact and makes asynchronous communication possible across long distances. Technology-mediated interactions undermine the significance of place and physical co-presence yet they provide qualities which invoke the experience of co-presence and a sense of engagement and intimacy (Boyns & Loprieno, 2014). This sort of co-presence allows Facebooked collaborative interactions anywhere at anytime. Finally, perceiving the identity of participants of a spoken interaction is not a central part of conversation analysis since it is primarily the study of talk rather than people. Membership is actually different in the online context: unlike offline participants, people who contribute to the online conversations might frequently join, leave or re-join the conversation. In addition, the online context of contribution is normally designed for a wide number of participants (unlimited in public interactions) whose membership is often monitored by an administrator. In this regard, the participants' identity should be analysed in the broader context where spatiotemporal, sociocultural and ideological aspects are considered as influential factors in how participants align/present themselves interactionally.

Therefore, while the application of conversation analysis for the study of face to face interaction can be refined to study online data, the ways in which Facebook conversations are different from offline data (and other types of online data) should be taken on board carefully in digitalised conversation analysis. As attempts are made to develop an advanced conversation analytic method, it remains important to understand the relative characteristics of online and offline conversation. Evaluating the implications of digital channel use and analysing the specifics of online context seem to be crucial in refining the application of existing methods to analyse online conversations. The following section discusses the affordances of Facebook, used in order to address the intended audience.

4. Facebook affordances and targeting the audience

With regard to the fact that new technology is increasingly growing and the new ways of using it are rapidly evolving, the definition of affordances may transcend the possibilities that social media offers; it actually comprises what the users perceived and experienced by various resources. Lee (2007:226) calls this aspect of new media possibilities "perceived affordances". Therefore, in addition to what a website designs as possibilities and constrains, the users' perception, knowledge and technical competence affect the ways in which they shape the conversations on Facebook and choose among various linguistic/semiotic resources.

Members create their own profile or 'Timeline' on Facebook and are exposed to all sorts of activities from friends, pages and groups that are followed in the constantly updating 'News Feed'. The network of people that each user chooses to be friends with on Facebook can see that user's activities in the 'News Feed', yet the option of privacy control and the possibility of customizing the audience applies to all sorts of activities on Facebook. Facebook users choose their circle of friends and define their type of access. By using friend lists (i.e. organized lists of people in relation to different parts of a user's life), Facebook members can see updates from, and share posts with, the intended audience. Although users choose their Facebook friends, their exact audience is not guaranteed (Boyd and Marwick, 2011). They are not sure about their readership on the semi-public space of Facebook because for example, if a user comments on a friend's post, a friend of friend can also see the user's comment and respond to that. In addition, the original content can be copied and pasted elsewhere in the online network and reach an unintended audience. Thus, the audience of Facebook is described as invisible and unseen in social media research (Boyd and Marwick, 2011).

In assigning roles to audience on Facebook, some resources might be different from spoken conversation (e.g. physical gestures). Affordance of Facebook however can provide users with some social and linguistic strategies to compensate for the shortage of resources. The comment link for instance, specifies the next turn by creating a link to a specific Facebook user's profile and notifies the user that someone has just mentioned them. This feature was originally developed to tag people in photos (i.e. label faces in pictures with people's names). Later, tagging extended beyond photos to include updates and comments in order to send notifications to people, attract their attention and probably encourage them to respond. Tagg (2015:157) argues that users of social media not only target their audience but also construct it from among a wider network of potential audience through the use of strategies. She categorizes strategies for 'audience design on social network sites' as follows: direct address strategies (e.g. use of @sign or hashtag); structural affordances (e.g. parts of one message can be separated into different posts); content (e.g. topic of the post); and style (e.g. formality or choice of language).

4.1 Audience design and code selection

A related concept here is Bell's (1984:145) 'audience design'[24] in face to face conversation which can account for the perception of language choice in the online context as well. In designing audience, Bell argues that "speakers accommodate primarily to their addressee". "Addressees" are directly addressed in an interaction by the speaker and they are the most likely to respond. Other types of audience in a spoken conversation are, in Bell's (1984:172) terms, "third persons" comprising "auditors" (unaddressed but ratified participants) and "overhearers" (unratified participants) who also affect the choice of language in a spoken conversation but to a lesser degree. The speaker does not directly address the auditors but is aware of their potential participation in a conversation. Such participants are called "ratified" (Goffman, 1981). Overhearers are the third type of audience who do not take part in a conversation, yet might form conjectures about what the speaker says. It has been pointed out that the speaker can even design the overhearer role by leading them to develop an assumption about the utterance. In audience design, speakers cannot predict all possible reactions and pre-determine the audience; however, they can dynamically construct and answer the audiences at the same time. Likewise, in the context of Facebook a certain definite audience who reads and responds cannot be assured. Consequently, posts are tailored to the expectations of a potential/imagined audience and the notion of privacy is reconceptualised as something that is negotiated through the conversation. Bell suggests that audience design might not always be 'responsive'; in addition, speakers also accommodate to the third parties (auditors and overhearers) to a lesser degree through shaping the context by transferring meaning from other situations (Bell, 1984; 2001). This may happen in the context of Facebook where posts are shaped by the users rather than being answered to.

One significant aim of the present study is to understand how languages are chosen in the multilingual Facebook exchanges and consider how these choices shape the audiences, encourage them to react or exclude them. Choice of language in targeting an intended audience is one of the main addressivity techniques whereby Facebook users maintain control over their private content while engaging in self-disclosure. In other words, the reconceptualization of privacy in the multilingual environment of Facebook can be managed through code selection. Bell's audience design model for face to face conversations has obvious implications for the online space of Facebook; however, Taag and Seargeant (2014:172) categorize types of audience on social media differently: the speaker, addressee, auditor and overhearer of spoken conversation are replaced with 1. poster, 2. addressee, 3. active friends, 4. wider network of friends and 5. the internet as a whole. Taag and Seargeant argue that the participants of an online conversation can be related simultaneously to different groups of audience (e.g. a participant can be both an active friend and an

[24] builds on Goffman (1981)

addressee at the same time) and a specific participant's role can be changed depending on what happens in the course of conversation (i.e. which people join, leave or re-join the conversation, what they say, how they say it, etc.).

Bell's audience design can be particularly applied to analysis of Facebook interactions since a single post on Facebook can be shaped to address different groups of audience at the same time. This phenomenon called 'context collapse' has been widely used in social media research (Marwick and Boyd, 2011; Vitak, 2012; Androutsopoulos, 2014; Blommaert and Szabla, 2017) and suggests that various categories of unseen audience are all exposed to a single digital post. For example, a Facebook user's friend list might comprise old friends from school, family members, colleagues, etc. Uploading a status update, the user addresses a heterogeneous group of potential audience from different contexts. Such convergence is said to result in confusion among the users. Context collapse is assumed to be problematic since the affordances and constraints of social network services have changed the transparent audience of a spoken conversation to an imaginary non-transparent one on Facebook. The affordances of social media provide digital communications with features transcending the context of spoken interaction; they are "persistent, replicable, scalable, searchable and sharable" (Boyd, 2008). In the assumption of context collapse, persistent and stable audience and group membership create the context which collapses due to the indeterminacy in addressee selection. This concept has been challenged by other analytical frameworks for the study of interaction on social media. For example, Blommaert and Szable's (2017) frame focuses on the analysis of the communication practice and its attributed values rather than the nature of audience. The group in this model is argued to be derived from a set of communicative behaviours and social relations. In other words, the patterns of interaction create the audiences and change them because each act of communication comprises different forms of relations between the participants.

The changed sociolinguistic realities of multilingualism in the age of technology have implications which should be taken into consideration when designing a refined method for examining Facebook practices. Thus, the theoretical modelling for the analysis of digital discourse should also take account of the identity dynamics of multilingual/transnational Facebook users.

5. Digital Identity

The emergence of social network sites offered alternative methods of interaction which occur through different interactive dynamics and structures (Seargeant and Tagg, 2014). Consequently, patterns of social relations and communications changed. Many studies on social media (Mandiberg, 2012; O'Reilly, 2012; Androutsopoulos, 2010; Jenkins; 2006) have addressed these changes from different perspectives. They all agreed on the social nature of communications and the social dynamics occurring in the use of social networked platforms which are mostly manifested through self-presentation and creating group relations.

The present study aims to examine the Facebook user's identity not only based on the information embedded in their Facebook profiles, but also by investigating the dynamics in which identities are performed discursively as the sequences on Facebook unfold. While the emphasis on the user's profile restricts the analysis of an individual's online identity to the categories of relevant information decided by the websites designers (Marwick, 2005 cited in Vasquez, 2014), people can perform online identity discursively and dialogically drawing on much wider resources in presenting themselves. In addition to digital text which is the central resource for the analysis of online identity performance, the multimodality of social media expands the options for the internet users to present themselves (Vasquez, 2014). The anonymity of the internet space allows users to some extent to express specific aspects of their identities more prominently using affordance of social media (see the work of Jones, 2011; Page, 2012). Deumert (2014:39) argues that Facebook users put on a mask to enact a specific persona and connect to "the joy of change, of stepping out of the everyday, of being someone else, and even, avoiding taking responsibility for one's actions". Related to the concept of online anonymity is the use of nicknames or second selves that internet users choose to construct their second, imagined identity. However, the notion of authenticity is highly associated with the online representation of identity due to its crucial role in the way people communicate with each other (Page, 2014). Page clarifies that people agree to be engaged in an online interaction and make some sort of self-disclosure simply because the interlocutors are assumed to comply with certain interactional conventions. If the sense of authenticity is violated and the user behind an online profile is seen as inauthentic persona, communication can be disrupted (e.g. through online scams). Likewise, the nature of online audience alters the performance of online identity (Seargeant and Tagg, 2014). In this regard, Boyed (2008) first used the notion of 'context collapse' occurring on social network platforms when various categories of one's online audience are exposed with the same digital practices. Context collapse is challenging in terms of self-presentation since the user of social media should simultaneously address diverse groups of audience and portray him/herself in the same way. Nevertheless, as has been mentioned before, people on social networking sites usually develop strategies to target a certain group of audience and manage context collapse in a way that the authenticity of their self-presentation is verified by the intended audience.

In their study of social media, Leppänen, Kytölä, Jousmäki, Peuronen and Westinen (2014:114) define identity as "a dynamic and multifaceted process involving affinity, alignment, emotional attachment and ideological notions of togetherness". In this sense, alignment with other groups and connections is part of identity performance. The affordance of social media facilitates the process of creating online networks and communities through alternative ways of showing awareness about such connections (e.g. the use of hashtags is a dynamic way of converging around specific themes or concepts). These interactively constructed communities of social networking sites are shaped differently compared to offline social communities. Use of multiple modes and diverse formats for

social interaction on the same social networking platform and the increasing accessibility of various digital devices which, in turn, increase the extent of access to social networking practices are some of the factors which facilitate online communications and change the ways people shape virtual communities and networked connections. Furthermore, Baron (2008) argues that the significance of concepts such as space and time has changed in the online context in the sense that geographical distance is no longer an issue for communication and instantaneous communication is almost always possible[25]. Thus, the types of communities that people form have changed. The new social relations encompass people who are not necessarily tied to each other in the offline context or may not share the same history or location but rather share the same interest, activity or experience. Therefore, social networking sites are broadly characterized by how they facilitate the creation of social communities based on common interests or affiliation. Virtual diasporic communities on Facebook create networks where users who share cultural affiliation and expatriate experience meet and exchange views. As the analysis in this study illustrates, immigrant identity is partially performed by aligning with such an online community.

In addition to the analysis of identity dynamics, relations of power are also associated with digitally mediated discourse (work of Herring, 1993). New media are argued to facilitate the construction of social relations and identities based on dominant ideologies and values (Marsh, 2015). Digital discourse analysis becomes more complicated concerning the analysis of power relations because in addition to digital text, small online practices such as pushing the 'like' button, clicking or even hovering on links can direct users towards complying with ideological assumptions. The conversation analytic method deployed in this study explores how relations of power among the participants of a conversation are accomplished through dynamic interplay of immigrants in relation to each other in the context of Facebook and how the development of class solidarity and immigrants' individual or collective behaviour are understood with regard to their ethnic identities and involvement in the ethnic organizational network.

6. Data collection and participants

The Facebook conversation that is examined in this case study is taken from the timeline of a participant whose profile is described subsequently in this section. This particular Facebook thread has been selected as it captures the characteristics of digital conversationality that are perceived as

[25] The idea is closely connected to space-time compression (distantiation) which has been theorized by Anthony Giddens. In the condition of late modernity, space-time compression refers to the disembedding of time and space so that their relations "stretch" and no longer connect to a local context. In our modern globalized era, as a result of technological innovation and internet, time and space are restructured to "connect presence and absence" (Giddens, 1990:14) across spaces. Therefore, in the time of fast growing electronic transmission, presence is not only physical but also virtual. Space-time compression increases connectivity and makes social interactions possible across long distances.

particularly relevant for studying Facebooked-mediated communication. The interactional practice here contains elements which are emblematic of sociolinguistic interactions online and clearly reflects the underlying reality being studied. The patterns of social behaviour which are observed in this Facebook data extract are of special interest in understanding how social interaction works in the online context. Nonetheless, this qualitative analysis of a Facebook conversation does not claim to represent a generalizable picture of Facebooked-mediated communication.

Detailed content analysis of conversations on Facebook shows how meaning is interactionally constructed in Facebook sequences and how Facebook users present themselves and manage multiplicity in online conversations through the choice of language. Qualitative analysis displays the details of social transactions on Facebook which are associated with the ways multilingual Facebook users match their posts to the expectations of a particular audience and select the language of interaction from a range of linguistic resources in their repertoire.

The sequential exchanges in this Facebook conversation are related to people who are based in Belgium; yet, they are heterogeneous in terms of nationality and sociolinguistic background. The interaction starts with the main participant's status update which precipitates a serious of 17 comments[26] and 13 likes over almost 6 hours (from 5:45 pm to 11:50 pm) on June 9, 2014. In total, 7 people take part in this conversation and the initial status update is followed by 17 turns of interaction in the form of comments. Except for the initial poster, who is a participant of this study, other Facebook users who contribute to this conversation are either acquaintances (Iranian contributors) or strangers (non-Iranian contributors) to the researcher.

The screenshot of the whole conversation is represented in Figure 38 and the transcripts are presented in the text to facilitate reading (see appendix 5 for the enlarged reproduction of the screenshot).

The initial post is related to a male participant of this study who is called 'Am' here. Am is a member of the Iranian diasporic community in Belgium whose multilingual practices on Facebook have been charted for the purpose of the initial quantitative analysis. Am moved to Flanders in 2011 when he was 26 years old. Am was doing his PhD project in Flanders at the time he uploaded his status update. During working hours, he actively contributes to online discussions on Facebook. He mentioned in the interview that he always keeps his Facebook page open while he works. With a seemingly high level of general knowledge, Am mostly tends to participate in (among others) intellectual pursuits and political forums on Facebook. As a committed member of many online communities, Am mainly shares knowledge and challenges other users for further participation in Facebook threads. He invests a lot of time and effort in contributing to Facebook practices, probably

[26] Facebook did not afford the feature of 'Reply to comments' at the time of data collection in 2014.

to pursue his personal interests, be connected to certain people/communities and use the affordances of social media playfully for the purpose of entertainment. Deploying three main languages (English, Farsi and Dutch), Am often writes lengthy comments in the form of opinions, feedbacks or editorials and he embeds external links to validate his words. In the Facebook threads, he has an expressive multi-dimensional attitude in articulating his ideas; however, he is not easily offended and doesn't contentiously argue with people.

In the following section, audience design, sequential distribution of code selections and participants' self-presentation will be discussed in terms of conversational "turn-per-turn" dynamics.

7. Data analysis

Am chooses English as the language of his update. The international language creates the proper context where a trans-local community of people is encouraged to react or respond to this initial post. Choosing English as a lingua franca, Am uses a universal code selection strategy to invite a lot of his Facebook friends to participate in the conversation. Furthermore, he chooses to make the post public[27] (The audience selector let users to determine the level of their post's privacy). Public status allows everyone with a Facebook account to see and contribute to the post.

(1) Am: I was having lunch in the common kitchen of our department, and a random guy, who was passing by me, smiled at me and said "bon appétit"… I think he is a serial killer.

Although the post is not signalling a joke, it is evidently meant to be a joke. Grasping the joke in the post or not, 13 people like it[28]. Facebook interactions can be reacted to by clicking the thumbs up icon (like button) rather than an actual response in the comments. The like button offers audiences an alternative option to express themselves through the universal and popular icon, to show that they like the content of the post. Moreover, Facebook audiences can express their virtual existence by clicking the like button, signalling that their status on Facebook is online and they can see the post. Regarding Am's post, all 13 people who liked the post do not necessarily understand the meaning of it or perceive its hidden joke; yet they all indicate their virtual presence. Although commenting might show a different sort of response or have a different rhetorical impact, leaving a shorthand feedback by means of pressing the like button can be a quick way to contribute easily to the post. It can function as a non-verbal cue to convey meaning in an online interaction.

[27] The privacy of the post was changed from public to private (making the post visible only to Facebook friends) in 2017 after the poster was asked about the details of the post.

[28] Facebook did not afford the 'animated like emoji' or the 'Reactions' at the time of data collection in 2014. Reactions are animated emotive icons meant to convey different feelings or emotions. Reactions are accessible by long pressing or hovering over the like button.

The following two transactions are related to the first commenter who addresses Am (2) and Am's response after 20 minutes (3).

(2) Ar: if so, have a nice journey ☺

(3) Am: he was probably a fellow intj type ☺

Ar is also an Iranian immigrant who lives in Flanders. Am and Ar are offline friends who share sociolinguistic backgrounds and histories; however, Ar's comment does not make it clear if Ar understands why Am thinks that the "guy" is a serial killer. Ar's family nickname on Facebook is 'Irani'; a very popular family nickname among Iranian immigrants all over the world. 'i' at the end of 'Irani' is called the attributive 'i' functioning as an adjective suffix and attribute people to places or things. Therefore, 'Irani' means someone from Iran. The name implies the sense of belonging to Iran as a homeland. Representing himself as someone from Iran in the semi-public context of Facebook, Ar signifies his strong attachment to his county and underlines his national identity.

Ar, as an active friend, directly addresses Am and then Am, as an addressee, responds. 'intj' in Am's post is an abbreviation referring to a personality/psychological type which generally represents the 'mastermind'. Am uses intj to refer to the 'criminal mastermind' or a highly intelligent murderer; it is widely believed that this type of personality reflects the classical description of a psychopath.

Both comments are accompanied by smiling faces. Danesi (2017:15) calls the smiley emoji a meaning enhancing device which enhances the "friendliness of tone" or adds "humorous tinges" to the message. Thus, in the second and third turns of this conversation, smileys soften the words and imply that the participants are not serious about what they say.

Be is another participant of this conversation who takes the fourth turn. She enters the conversation asking the major question (why does Am think that the guy is a serial killer). Just like Ar, Be is an Iranian immigrant in Flanders and an offline friend of Am. However, she chooses Farsi to comment on a post written originally in English. Although Be is not a participant of this study, her Facebook exchanges with Am were carefully observed and reviewed to see if Be's use of Farsi in this particular comment is a systematic sociolinguistic strategy following a specific purpose. It can be concluded that Be mostly communicates in Farsi, yet she occasionally posts in English. Her Facebook practices accomplished in English do not seem to share a specific theme or topic and she apparently switches to Farsi in turn 4 through an arbitrary decision.

(4) Be: چرا آخه، فقط با ادبه خو بنده خدا ☺

(5) Am: چه معنی داره تو دانشکده مهندسی کسی با کسی حرف بزنه!

ما رسم داریم سرمون رو بندازیم پائین که با هم چشم تو چشم نشیم ☺

Translation:

(4) Be: Why, poor guy only tries to be polite ☺

(5) Am: what does it mean that in the engineering department someone talks to someone else!

We have a tradition to keep our head down to avoid any eye contact ☺

Be obviously expects Am to answer her question and Am replies in Farsi to specify Be as his audience. Reacting to Am's comment, Be likes Am's response to acknowledge his notice, his clarification and perhaps his matching choice of language.

Language choice is an audience design strategy in the exchanges between Be and Am. While Am clarifies the real meaning of his joke for Be (and most likely for auditors and overhearers whom we can call 'wider Facebook friends' and 'people on the internet as a whole'), he ignores his international audiences' lack of competence in Farsi. This conversation dynamic shows context collapse on Facebook; later, the subsequent comments in the conversation will demonstrate how confusion is created as a result of context collapse.

Although it seems that Be has not initially perceived the real meaning of Am's status update, she uses a smiley face in her comment to signal that she has some understanding of the subtle joke in the update. In turn 5, Am's first three words 'what it means' are a figure of speech in Farsi which implies a humorous tone. 'What it means' at the beginning of the sentence figuratively means that Am is not serious about what is mentioned in the rest of the sentence. Am also uses a smiling face emoji in the second sentence of the same comment to suggest that what he says about their tradition in the department is a joke too. Again, non-Farsi speaking audiences would not recognize Am's humorous tone in Farsi even if they used the language translation option afforded by Facebook to consume the post in their preferred language.

Switching to English in turn 6, Ra takes part in the interaction. Ra is a Spanish research assistant working in the same department with Am[29]. Ra and Am share more than one community; they are both immigrants and colleagues. Although Ra is not competent in Farsi, she is aware of the inside joke as a result of shared knowledge and experiences which are formed in the communities (of colleagues for example) and bond the members with each other.

[29] The information related to the people who participate in this conversation is public on their Facebook profile.

(6) Ra: It's sunny since already 3 days … I'm having more random chat with Belgians today than in the previous 6 months!

Ra knows about the rule in the department that people do not habitually talk to each other and she refers to her random chat with Belgians as a way to break with tradition. Am reacts to Ra's comment in turn 7 with a kind of positive answer which highlights the role of sun in lightening Ra's mood following the unpleasant weather for the previous six months.

(7) Am: hah … nice observation!
The sun does boost up your mood!

Ra and Am like each other's comments in turns 6 and 7. Although Ra does not address Am directly, she comments on Am's update and receives a reply from Am in turn 7. Therefore, in addition to comments they are given the thumbs up to acknowledge the reaction/response. Ra's comment in turn 6 is also liked by Ar, the first commenter of this conversation.

Mi joins the thread in turn 8.

(8) Mi: Did you ask him if he'd been inspired by the movie Silence of the Lambs? Lol!

Mi is a British psychotherapist who lives in Flanders and belongs to the group of active Facebook friends. *The silence of the lambs* is a horror movie which features Dr. Hannibal Lecter; a brilliant psychiatrist and cannibalistic serial killer. Apparently, Mi mentions *The silence of the lambs* to refer to Am's assumption that the guy in the department is likely to be a serial killer. Being a psychotherapist, Mi is perhaps interested in people's profiling; yet she softens her description with lol, an acronym for laugh(ing) out load, to indicate that she is playing to the joke. In the movie *The silence of the lambs*, in the cage scene, there is a copy of Bon Appétit magazine on Hannibal's table to symbolize his exquisite skills as a master chef. In this respect, the movie shares some other features with Am's post when the passing guy says Bon Appétit to him. What is not clear is whether Mi is aware of such a particular correlation or not.

Am is obviously the addressee in Mi's comment; however, he only reacts with a like rather than a response.

So far, all of the participants in this conversation seem to take Am's initial post as a joke and that is what they all seem to agree on. However, the turning point of this Facebook conversation appears in turn 9 where a participant does not take the joke.

(9) Bier Beir: if people tend to stay away and not talk to you, it doesn't make them psychopaths! get used to the standards here or get the fuck out to your WARM shitty land…

The Facebook name and the profile picture of this commenter are both anonymous. ‘Bier’ in Dutch or Flemish (the variety of Dutch spoken in Flanders) means beer and ‘Beir’ as a west-Flemish dialect word means male swine. Etymologically, Bier refers to bear or a large predatory mammal of the family and it figuratively represents a person who is physically impressive and/or crude (Wiktionary.org). The Facebook name ‘Bier Beir’ generally represents a stereotypical brawny male, a bragging beer-drinking male chauvinist. It is interesting how the name ‘Beir’ matches both the Facebook user’s chauvinistic viewpoint as well as his profile picture which demonstrates a swine. Bier Beir’s cover photo (i.e. a large public picture above the profile picture of every Facebook user) shows a picture of one of the popular Belgian beers. Bier selects a second identity through deploying an anonymous name and picture. There are no public posts on his Facebook page and such anonymity provides him with a private space where he can express his (sometimes overtly xenophobic) thoughts and perspectives.

Am’s initial post is targeting a wide range of audience due to its public status on Facebook. The group of audience reacting to the post is also heterogeneous, comprising Iranian immigrants in Belgium, colleagues, immigrants of other nationalities in Belgium, and Belgians. Bier Beir is neither an online friend nor an offline acquaintance of Am. He is a total stranger who picks the post up and protests against it. In categorizing the type of audience on Facebook he is a member of internet as a whole. He plays the overhearer who reads the whole conversation and comments while sharing no common ground with the poster. Being a stranger to all the participants in the conversation, Bier does not perceive the intention of the poster and he does not collaborate with the poster to reach a mutual understanding either. He rather projects himself definitely and offensively targeting who seems to be Am. Admitting to the role of addressee, Am responds in turn 10.

(10) Am: I didn’t call anyone psychopath. it was just a joke referring to the weird fact that people in our department do not usually talk to each other.

Figure 38. Screenshot from the Facebook page of Am (see paaendix 5 for the enlarged reproduction of the screenshot)

Am explains the real intention of the post and clarifies the in-joke in the same way he explained it in Farsi earlier in the conversation (turn 5). The initial post's humour is only understandable to members of an in-group who share background knowledge and previous joint experiences (e.g. Am and Ra as colleagues); yet Am also defined the meaning of the joke and the content of the post to the Farsi-speaking group of audience in turn 5 (e.g. Be). Audiences of other social contexts were overlooked in the sense that, on the one hand, they are all exposed to a post which is not understandable against their accumulating common ground. On the other hand, his selection of Farsi as the language of clarification kept the audience of diverse ethnics, nationals, languages and cultures unacquainted with the real intention of the poster. Here is where different contexts collapse and Bier's comment clearly exemplifies the confusion created as a result of context collapse.

In turn 11 Bier defines his particular audiences with the use of Facebook affordances. Bier uses the comment link[30] to target both Ra and Mi. Comment links send notifications to the profiles of Ra and Mi to specify them as direct addressees in the exchanges. The use of a comment link is a kind of strategy to address the audience and prevent context collapse. As a poster, Bier allocates the roles but the range of Bier's intended targets is apparently wider than what Am assumed. Bier mentions Ra and Mi at 9:39 pm and only after 5 minutes Mi responds:

(12) Mi: Gent is my lovely adopted city and for your information I'm British. My land is neither warm nor shitty ☺

Bier targets Mi because Mi indicates that the guy in the department is inspired by the movie *The silence of the lambs* featuring a psychopath/serial killer (turn 8). In Bier's view, Mi closely associates criminal psychopaths with people in the department who are mostly assumed to be Belgians. Mi's response does not reflect a denial of the connection she made (as Am did in turn 10); rather, it shows a defensive strategy against Bier's offensive comment.

One minute later, Ra answers to the comment link:

(13) Ra: The myth that all Flemish people are cold and closed up, isn't true. but you're for sure stupid!

Bier's use of upper case in WARM might be triggered by Ra's indirect statement that in Belgium the weather was not sunny for a long time (turn 6). Ra answers the insulting comment with an insult while making definite, certain claims (e.g. the myth is not true or you're for sure stupid).

The immigrants' identities are discursively constructed in the context of this conversation as they project themselves in terms of their social positioning in the host country. In turn 12, Mi's word

[30] A comment link is created by typing an @ before a Facebook user's name.

choice, "Gent[31] is *my* lovely *adopted* city", indicates her strong voice as an immigrant in Belgium. As a British citizen in Ghent, Mi has adopted this city to be hers. Likewise, Ra is in the position of power in turn 13. While she does not generalize about all Flemish people based on her experience of Belgian people who do not often talk to each other in the department, she addresses Bier Beir and trades insults. In comparison, Am took the initiative in turn 10 and accepted the blame, before Bier determines who the addressee is. Yet Am does not defend his land as Mi does in turn 12, nor does he insult Bier as Ra does in turn 13. As a highly educated immigrant in Flanders who is equipped with a good level of general knowledge and is competent in English and Dutch, Am does not speak/post from a powerful immigrant position. Ar adopts the same attitude in turn 14.

(14) Ar: I can't agree more,

While obviously offended by the Bier Beir's comment, Ar stays on the safe side and does not become directly involved. He expresses his support but avoids any direct engagement with Bier as he realizes Bier's potential to post deeply offensive comments. Seemingly Am and Ar are vulnerable to feeling disrespected and they do not have sufficient self-esteem to represent themselves as high status immigrants in the host society. The type of immigrant identity that people actively construct for themselves goes hand in hand with the level of self-esteem they achieve in the host society (Loue and Sajatovic, 2011). Although immigrants construct their own identity by "brokering the social and psychological boundaries", the social context plays a significant role in supporting the retention of immigrants' ethnic identity which promote their self-esteem or alienating immigrants which results in poorer self-esteem. (Massey and Sánchez, 2010:26). Immigrants who are viewed negatively by the majority group in the host country (due to their ethnic/racial background, their socioeconomic standing, etc.) are confronted with a dilemma by choosing between in or out group. In such a conflict, different outcomes are expected. If immigrants have a stronger ethnic identity they are more likely to choose the out-group either by overcoming the problems of belonging to the out-group and gaining higher self-esteem or by internalizing the devaluation of their out-group which results in lower self-esteem. In another case, they may choose the in-group and adopt the in-group identity. Members of the last group mostly experience issues regarding their sense of belonging and their self-esteem (Loue and Sajatovic, 2011).

Facebook users who comment on a Facebook friend's status update mainly tend to be engaged in a conversation with the friend who initiates the update. Nevertheless, this Facebook conversation transcends the one to one communication between the poster and each of the commenters. Bier Beir addresses two participants (turn 11) and they reply one after another with 1 minute time gap (turns

[31] Ghent: A city in Flanders (the largest city in East Flanders province) where some of the participants in this conversation reside

12 and 13). Another participant joins the interaction in turn 14 while the main poster still does not interfere. However Am does not play the overhearer either. While staying silent, he dynamically reacts and supports his friends' comments by liking all the turns (except Bier's comment in turn 11). Am then gets involved in turn 15.

(15) Am[32]: sorry guys… the post is public and I don't know our fellow commenter; none of us is holding threatening views that undermine the Flemish way of life. To me, Flanders is a great place to live and Belgians are nice 👍

Initiating a conversation in which Facebook friends converge, Am holds himself responsible for what happened. Am addresses all friends to explain that the offender is a stranger and the public status of the post affords access to the conversation; deploying such a strategy might help to shift the blame onto Bier Beir. Furthermore, Am indirectly addresses Bier Beir to explain his (and probably his friends') unthreatening views and appreciation of the standard way of life in Belgium. He positively expresses his viewpoint towards the host context and its people, hoping that Bier will play the overhearer. Am further approves his own statement by a thumbs up emoji at the end.

Once again Ar expresses his agreement (as he did in turn 14) and likes Am's post.

(16) Ar: Agree… only if we exclude Mr. pepe the frog!

'Pepe the frog' is a cartoon character who later became a popular internet meme and the symbol of hate and racism (Wikipedia). Although Ar uses a symbol to convey his message, he is not staying on the sidelines anymore. Ar actually addresses Am; yet, he assumes that Bier is the overhearer and that he would understand the insult that the symbol represents. Being proud of his Iranian/immigrant identity (as his family nickname implies), Ar fuels the fire to further incense the offended participants of the conversation.

Almost an hour later, a new participant enters the conversation and switches to Dutch.

(17) Da: is dat niet wat overdreven ☺?

Translation:

(17) Da: isn't it exaggerated ☺?

Da's comment does not address a particular audience. Adjacent pairs suggest that Ar is the addressee, yet, the comment might target Am for his initial status update. Interestingly, in the next and final turn of this conversation Bier Beir responds.

[32] Turn 15 has been edited by Am. The original version is slightly different in terms of punctuation and two misspellings.

(18) Bier Beir: In mijn geval niet. Ik zit aan mijn limiet.

Translation:

(18) Bier Beir: not in my case. I am at my limit.

Turn 16 happens at 10:54 pm as Ar strongly attacks Bier and accuses him of racism through the use of a symbol. Almost an hour later at 11:49 pm, Da (turn 17) intervenes in the discussion and invites everyone to cool down. Within the next minute Bier replies at 11:50 pm (turn 18). Time lag here plays a significant role in understanding the extent that a post can trigger the participants to contribute further to the conversation. People may have abandoned the conversation after Ar's comment because either they have not perceived the meaning that the symbol represents or they are simply overwhelmed and no longer willing to pursue the conversation. Posting an hour later, Da encourages the participants to re-join the conversation and respond. However, answering Da's comment might be challenging for non-Dutch speakers despite the translation service that Facebook affords. Also, participants might not feel like replying to this comment since Da indicates that his (non-transparent) audience is exaggerating. Being an audience to this comment is like taking the blame for having overreacted. In spite of such challenges, within a minute, Bier Beir responds. Although Am and Ar can be potential audience for Da' post, the choice of Dutch here seems to function as an invitation for Bier Beir. In other words, the role of audience is allocated by Da through the choice of language. The role is not pre-determined; however, Dutch is more directed to Bier Beir rather than the other participants.

Bier is unwilling to believe that it was a joke. His anonymous identity on Facebook provides him with an expressive voice to project his feelings towards foreigners in such a public space. Bier seems to be riddled with anger and distaste for all non-Belgian nationals. His anger might have been motivated by what Glavey (2016) defines as the sense of vulnerability of Europe nationals to immigration which is caused by the presumption that immigration endangers Europeans' economic prospects, cultural identity and physical safety.

8. Discussion

A detailed qualitative description of conversational patterns in the context of Facebook indicates how the accomplishment of interactional meaning is associated with particular code choices and how the language is strategically selected to target the intended addressee(s). The combination of factors such as audience design and language choice form interactional dynamics which are specific to the ways in which Facebook users manage their relationships online. Such factors contribute to the ways the context of conversation is constructed.

8.1 Context

Quantitative analysis of Facebook conversation is the analysis of decontextualized online messages which mostly overlooks both the virtual setting and the physical environment of the internet users who create typed words with digital devices (e.g. computer, smart phone, etc.). The social/ physical situation in which Facebook exchanges happen influences how the interaction is performed and such performance can have significant effects on how activities in the physical world are carried out (e.g. a student who exchanges messages with online Facebook friends during a lecture at the university might suspend the chat thread while the lecturer walks down the aisles of the class; on the other hand, the student's online practice disturbs the course of lecture as it is discovered by the lecturer). Qualitative examining of Facebook interactions integrates the notion of 'context' into the analysis although the controversial issue of what counts as context is difficult to deal with (Jones, 2004).

8.1.1 Goffman's view

The most influential approach which defines context in relation to what participants dynamically create in a conversation rather than the environment in which the conversation exists, is that of Goffman (1974). Goffman's "framing" focuses on the participants' constant negotiation of alignment within interaction. Frame consists of layers of reality whereby the participants indicate what they do or who they are. Goffman's framing is especially influential in the area of conversation analysis as the micro-level context is produced through interactional tern-per-turn dynamics. Such approaches inform Facebook interaction studies as context is tied up with "an environment of mutual monitoring possibilities, anywhere within which an individual will find himself accessible to the naked senses of all others who are present, and similarly find them accessible to him" (Goffman, 1964:135). Facebook affords "mutual monitoring possibilities"; yet, the ways in which Facebook users enact their presence and monitor the presence of others is different. Rodney Jones (2004) discusses the most significant aspects of context of talk (which Goffman calls social situation, social occasion and social gathering) and suggests how these can be changed to better adapt to the properties of online interaction. According to Jones i) a virtual situation should not be considered as a new and separate space of communication but as an alternation or enhancement of already existing interactional possibilities of the physical environment. In other words, the actual and virtual realities are dynamically interacting in digital conversations in the form of overlapping (not separate) layers of realities. ii) the participants of online communication usually do not have "primary or secondary involvement" (Goffman, 1963) in the frame; rather, they are more engaged with multiple figures against multiple backgrounds at the same time. Although such "polyfocal" communication is not limited to online space, interactants' simultaneous involvement in several online activities does not show the inappropriate effect defined by the situation (Jones, 2004:15). iii) new ways of being present in computer mediated communication are defined in relation to a user's contact list and a

"social gathering" which is immediately shaped as users go online. In such online social gatherings the distinction between participant and non-participant blurs and users are provided with alternative ways to control both their own level of participation and others' level of awareness of their presence[33].

Jones (2004:21) argues that a shift of focus from traditional separation of text and context to social actions and identities is required in order to fully understand computer mediated contexts:

> To truly capture the dynamic display of involvement and identity in which text and context are continually negotiated in interaction, analysts need to themselves adopt a polyfocal perspective. They need to 'burst the bonds of mere linguistics' (Malinowski,1947:306), to experiment with new 'ways of seeing' (Goodwin 1994) social interaction, ways which encompass multiple modes and make use of multiple methods, ways which begin not with texts but with people's actions and experiences around texts. Through this wider perspective we might finally come to understand what we have always 'known', that text and context are 'aspects of the same process' (Halliday and Hasan 1985:5).

Drawing on Goffman's frame analysis, the following section reviews the sequential exchanges of the Facebook conversation which was analysed earlier in this chapter (Figure 38).

8.1.2 Goffman's view applied to Facebook

If we take the example of Am's status update, we can assume the activity of writing and posting the update as the focal activity with which the participants of the conversation align. The opening post activates sequences of interactional dynamics involving a combination of words, symbols and emojis. Yet due to the virtual nature of internet activities, features of spoken conversation such as prosody or bodily gesture are missing. Although Am's update does not clearly address an intended audience, its immediate result is Ar's answer in the first comment/turn of conversation. The public post is clearly seen by many audiences on Facebook, however, audiences position themselves differently and play different roles as they either take part in the activity or watch how the

[33] This is directly linked to Goffman's (1963) argumentation about the dynamics of participation frameworks in his "communication boundaries": People present in an engagement are divided into participants and bystanders depending on their position as the official members of that interaction and their degree of involvement. Both the participants and bystanders have to conduct appropriately in order to sustain the boundaries of an engagement. Therefore, regardless of their participation status, they all need to cooperate to protect the gathering and maintain the integrity of the encounter in the sense that the ratified participants sustain a mutual interaction which can exclude the non-participants who are present and the bystanders are obliged to show that they focus their attention somewhere other than the focused interaction. However, directly involved participants in the boundary of focal interaction may become bystanders and on the other hand, potential bystanders are open to participation if called upon.

conversation unfolds. Am's update addresses the whole space of internet in the sense that every Facebook user can be a ratified addressee. Therefore, we can assume that both Ra who has a high awareness of the situated context of post (the in-joke in the department) and Bier Beir who overhears and jumps into the conversation with a diverting remark are both ratified addressees of a public Facebook post. However, close observation of details suggests a clear distinction between Am's audiences. When Am tells his story in the opening post and addresses a large number of Facebook audiences, Ar replies the post in the first comment and subsequently addresses Am ("if so, have a nice journey☺"). As Am answers in the next turn ("he was probably a fellow intj type ☺"), it is quite definite who the ratified addressee is (Ar), although theoretically a lot of Facebook users have the right to play the role of the intended audience. Likewise, the post provides Bier Beir with the right to contribute to the post; yet as a stranger who also happens to have an indelicate comment, his contribution in turn 9 is not acknowledged/appreciated. Bier Beir is actually considered an accidental overhearer or eavesdropper who surfs and searches for the right moment to voice his disquiet.

The frame in which the action is performed can be changed into a frame which is situationally produced as the participants dynamically and constantly position themselves and others in the course of conversation. Change in the alignment of the participants and arrangement of turns (change in footing in Goffman's words) occurs in our Facebook conversation. For example, while Bier Beir maintains his stance over the course of the activity, Am changes his positioning according to his/other's contributions to the conversation: from a storyteller addressing a group of audience (turn 1) to a defender who tries to justify himself/his post (turn 10), to an embarrassed owner of a Facebook page in which some friends are getting offended (turn 15). Changes in footing on Facebook are not always signalled by words; the like button, emojis and stickers can be equally functional[34].

Online disputes can easily arise in digital exchanges (specifically if the thread is public and accessible to everyone) most likely because the people involved are not physically present in the battle field and their (physical) safety is guaranteed. For example, turn 9 would be less likely to have occurred in a real life spoken conversation. A bystander rarely jumps into a face-to-face conversation between friends expressing offensive comments. As Bier Beir suddenly becomes involved in the frame, incoherence happens in the course of events and the participants are engrossed in the unrefined statement. The sudden involvement of Bier Beir "breaks" the frame, "flooding in" happens (Goffman, 1974:358) and the topic of conversation entirely changes. The frame of 'talking about the in-group joke' which was shared by all of the participants, broke since the experience was transformed. Instead, another frame was formed which seemed to offer potential for provoking a

[34] Facebook did not afford use of GIFs (image files of animated or static format) at the time of data collection.

strong online argument; yet, the conversation never really turned into a dispute in spite of the triggering function of Ar's comments in turns 14 (" I can't agree more") and 16 ("agree… only if we exclude Mr. pepe the frog!"). The transgressive turn 9 threatens the continuity of the first frame and despite Am's attempt to repair the damage in turns 10 and 15, Bier Beir's frame break seems to be strongly consequential as the first frame never revived. Goffman (1959: 238-239) uses the metaphor of social interaction being a stage performance to describe human behaviour: "Performers, audience and outsiders all utilize techniques for saving the show whether by avoiding likely disruptions or by correcting for unavoided ones." Bier Beir's indelicate comment in turn 11 overlooks Am's strategy of decoding the opening post, taking no offense and staying in peace to re-establish the frame of 'joke' and correct the 'unavoided disruption'. Bier Beir inconsiderately addresses two other participants of the conversation (turn 11). The frame was transformed in a way such that the emerging frame requires the participants to meet the demanding situation. The crisis is diffused as the intended interlocutors of Bier's comment (Mi and Ra) reply with one minute time difference in turns 12 and 13 at 9:45 pm and 9:46 pm respectively. Frames are arranged hierarchically in the sense that commitment to the new layer of activity is underlined by the immediate answers of the initial poster (Am) who plays the role of mediator and two ratified addressees (Mi and Ra) who attempt to defend their bruised egos and resolve the crisis. If the friction was not so serious, the use of an emoji might even compensate for the damage (e.g. a thumbs down emoji indicating disapproval). However, in the case of Bier Beir's comment, Am's attempts (turns 10 and 15) could not ease the tension caused by the departure from the normativity which governs the online setting of Facebook. The misframing and uncertainty of real life situations might also happen in the context of Facebook. Bier Beir's contribution to a closed group conversation is risky in the sense that his participation might be a mismatch in the frame. Yet, his success in changing the frame was almost guaranteed due to the strength of the insult. Therefore, while Bier is subject to the concept of misframing, he could be certain that the frame is substantially changed.

8.1.3 Participants' immigrant status

Goffman argues that self-presentation is a strategy individuals pursue to create an impressive image in the mind of others. Participants of a social interaction take roles, act and perform their identity to impress others, just like the actors of a stage play who perform their roles to impress the audience and receive their acceptance: "What is important is the sense he provides them through his dealing with them of what sort of person he is behind the role he is in" (Goffman, 1974:298).

While Bier Beir's comment in turn 9 treats the immigrant people of different nationalities as members of the same group, and addresses them either directly or indirectly, ratified addressees rather reply individually (turns 10, 12, 13) to defend themselves against the insult or indicate their differences. For example, Mi responds to the insult as she separates herself from other addresses and

emphasizes her nationality ("I'm British. My land is neither warm nor shitty"). Yet, the last comment of the conversation indicates Bier's willingness to maintain his generalizing orientation as he mentions he is at his limit due to the residency of immigrants in his country. Whiteley (2003:715) defines this attitude using the term "reflexivised collectivities" implying that in case of high difference between the participants of an interaction, the collective meaning is increased and people are considered as representatives of the community they belong to.

Participants change their alignment to what is being said in the spoken conversation. Likewise, the participants of a Facebook thread position themselves in accordance with the content of the exchanges and the hierarchical ranking of authority. Although the participants of the conversation we are analysing do not know the stranger who eavesdrops on their conversation and projects his voice, they (presumably unconsciously) estimate his status in terms of his nationality. The participants signal their authority with the use of words which somehow represent their ethnic background. Along the continuum of authority Mi clearly asserts her high status as she expresses that the host city is in her possession ("Ghent is my lovely adopted city") and informs her inconsiderate addressee of his mistake: ("for your information I'm British"). Likewise, Ra indicates her dominant immigrant position within the frame as she indirectly suggests that unlike Flemish people, Spanish people are warm and open, although she does not agree with that in the literal sense: "(the myth that all Flemish people are cold and closed up isn't true"). Mi and Ra distinguish themselves as immigrants of high status who do not constitute the category of immigrants from "WARM shitty land". Change of alignment happens as the sequences of interactional dynamics unfold and the matter of hierarchy becomes significant in the second frame. In other words, as the frame shifts, participants are addressed differently and the positions they take up are changed according to the dynamics of the new frame and are expressed through the process of message production/reception. All of the participants who contribute in both frames change their alignments in relation to Bier Beir's inflammatory remark in the second frame.

While Mi and Ra adopt an individualistic approach and emphasize their different ethnic backgrounds, the Iranian participants (e.g. Am and Ar) view the participants of this Facebook conversation as members of the immigrants' community in Belgium. Their holistic approach is expressed through plural pronouns when Am says ("none of *us* is holding threatening views that undermine the Flemish way of life") in turn 15 or when Ar mentions his agreement in turn 16: ("Agree… only if *we* exclude Mr. pepe the frog!"). One explanation is that although Bier Beir does not address any specific audience of Iranian descent in his offensive remark (turn 9), considering the content of comment (get the fuck out to your WARM shitty land), Iranian immigrants might more likely assume the role of victim to a racist comment against the background of other immigrants from European countries (e.g. Mi or Ra). Naturally they seek the support of other people to probably evoke their sympathy or make an accusation against the offender. Goffman's remark about human

behaviour in an offensive circumstance somehow confirms this view: "Often when an individual is interacting with a second individual who is offensive in some way, he will try to catch the eye of a third individual - one who is defined as an outsider to the interaction - and in this way confirm that he is not to be held responsible for the character or behavior of the second individual". (Goffman, 1959: 189). Apart from adopting the holistic approach, Am implies that he is not responsible for the offender's comment in turn 15 ("sorry guys… the post is public and I don't know our fellow commenter").

At this point of conversation where actions go too far and the performers fail to reach a consensus, no one seems to be inclined to participate anymore and "flooding out" happens (i.e. involvement in the frame is ended and the frame is broken out) at 10:54 pm. (Goffman, 1974:350). It seems that in the digital world the possibility of frame breaking is higher than a face to face interaction because the shift is more about the participants' attention rather than presence. The asynchronous/ quasi-synchronous mode of online conversation provides temporal gaps in the sequences of turns, making it easier for the participants to detach from/attach to the conversation. Markers of beginning and ending in online interaction are more loosely formed and co-presence in the virtual context is more like tele-presence. All these factors facilitates frame breaking in a digital conversation where users can join, leave and re-join the online thread more flexibly. Nevertheless, almost an hour after the complete loss of involvement, someone re-opens the frame at 11:49 pm. Seemingly, the time gap means that while the conversation is already closed for most of the participants it is still open for a few. The sense of closure is not the same for everyone in an online conversation because it is not determined by co-presence (not in the sense of physically being co-present). In addition, the conversation lacks a firm ending marker to signal the end of the thread although unlike spoken interaction, a Facebook conversation can be largely re-opened even if there is not any available (online) audience in the frame.

In the following section, the two final turns of the conversation will be discussed in order to illustrate how the selection of a particular code addresses a particular audience or is perceived by a particular audience as being addressed.

8.1.4 Code selection and audience design

The choice of language in turn 18 is a systematic deviation from the language of the conversation. Since the participants of this conversation are ethnically heterogeneous, the use of a specific language other than English might draw distinctions and exclude the incompetent others. (As was the case with Farsi in turns 4 and 5). The choice of Dutch by Da in turn 17 ("is dat niet wat overdreven ☺?") signals Da's position as a legitimate witness of the conversation who chooses to involve himself in the focal activity when everyone else abandons the conversation. Da deliberately plays the role of a mediator who tries to end a quarrel and soften his interference with a smile emoji.

His choice of language is also influential in the shift of alignment of another participant in the frame as he re-invites Bier Beir (the only Flemish participant) to contribute to the conversation (code selection indicates changes in footing). The interactional dynamics which are particularly related to the way Facebook users establish and maintain their relationships are produced as users choose their specific language and target their intended audience. Da uses the inclusion strategy to change Bier's relation to the frame to a non-complaining voice. Dutch as a code of unity segregates Da from the non-Dutch speaking group of foreigners with whom Bier lost his patience. Da switches to Dutch to emphasise their similarities and appear more persuasive to Bier; to imply that 'I am from the same world represented by Dutch language, I am at your side but haven't you gone too far'? The legitimacy of Dutch changes Bier's stance to a closer involvement in the frame in the sense that he distances himself from the frame after the transgressive behaviour happens in turn 9 and immediately takes the role of addressee as Dutch was used. Within one minute Bier re-joins the frame and functions as the actual addressee. The way in which Da customizes his turn through the use of Dutch underlines code differences in terms of function and legitimacy which are specific to the ways languages are situationally employed in the evolving context of use.

Before drawing a conclusion at this point of qualitative analysis, first, the second part of interactional analysis will be discussed and subsequently, a concluding remark connects the two chapters. The conclusion will highlight the main points so far in relation to the dynamics of online communication and also illuminate the subtle differences between two particular participants who have made highly critical remarks.

Chapter 8
Case study 3, Part 2
Qualitative analysis

1. Introduction

Facebook affords a multimodal context in which users articulate their social networks, create and maintain connections with others and dynamically construct their identities. (DiMicco & Millen, 2007; Ellison, Steinfield & Lampe, 2007; Zhao, Grasmuck & Martin, 2008; Ellis, 2010; Van Dijck, 2013; Young, 2013). In this chapter, aspects of self-presentation manifested through the discursive practices of Facebook users are explored in accordance with Goffman's view on the presentation of self and interaction rituals in face-to-face conversation. Compared to spoken interaction, on Facebook the conventions of social relations are different and the depth of information is limited[35] , yet nonetheless the electronic self is developed and presented for the purpose of interacting with others through the use of linguistic/non-linguistic resources. Facebook is a different social context and an alternative channel of interaction where users shade their self-presentation to the positive and minimise some undesired aspects of offline self[36]. Research shows that the character that is displayed on Facebook is not necessarily a false self (Back, Stopfer, Vazire, Gaddis, Schmukle & Egloff, 2011; Gosling, Gaddis & Vazire, 2007). It can be an idealised image of the user who performs his/her social role in a polished manner. Discursive (re)construction of identity on Facebook is directly linked to the ways members dynamically select and practice multiple languages to write themselves into existence to be able to convey and maintain the intended impression.

Goffman's work on impression management is discussed in the following section as a backdrop to the analysis of the projected online personae that are represented linguistically and visually through Facebook interfaces.

2. Framework

Goffman (1959:231) defines a social establishment as a "place surrounded by fixed barriers to perception in which a particular kind of activity regularly takes place" and suggests that any social establishment might be best studied in terms of impression management. Goffman theorizes that in a social establishment a group of performers cooperatively present a definition of a situation to an audience. While the show is presented in the front region, access to the backstage (where routine is performed) is controlled to prevent the audience from seeing what is not meant for them. Team members bond with each other through bonds of mutual familiarity to collectively maintain a definition of the situation. Goffman argues that this dramaturgical cooperation is a device whereby

[35] In the online context, users cannot rely on the rich sources of cues which are transferred via physical co-presence in spoken interaction. Virtual users can control the disclosure of information about themselves due to their physical absence and the anonymity associated with the internet use.

[36] Online self-presentation is not always positive. The option of staying anonymous online, enables users to hide behind a false identity and feel comfortable performing many roles that they could not play in real life without fear of persecution.

the performers convey the communication out of character when the audience is present to maintain a given impression. This suggested framework for examining social interactions also indicates that disruptions might occur in the expressive coherence of the reality that the show presents, in the sense that there is "destructive information" about the situation of which the audience/outsider should not be informed so that the impression that the performance fosters will be maintained (Goffman,1959:141). Disruption discredits the definition of the situation and happens through what Goffman calls "unmeant gestures, inopportune intrusions, faux pas and sense". (Goffman,1959:.206). As reality is threatened by such disruptions, the individuals who are present (or not present) in the show try to save the show through the use of particular techniques. They either avoid disruptions or correct the unavoided disruptions. This framework is further supported by Goffman's argumentation about the sociological concept of face.

2.1 Face-work

Goffman's (1967) study on the ritual elements of social interaction discusses the fact that when people are in contact with other participants of a social interaction, they tend to experience an emotional response to the image of self, which is described in terms of approved social attributes. Goffman calls this public self-image, *face* and argues that face is maintained in the social encounter if the individual's pattern of verbal/non-verbal acts present an image which is consistent with the definition of the situation and is supported by the judgment of other participants in the interaction. Once a person enters a situation and takes on a self-image, he or she is expected to live up to it and sustain an expressive order that will be consistent with his or her face. An individual's social face can be withdrawn by the society if social values are not reflected in the way a person behaves. Therefore, once a person acts in a particular way (i.e. presents a particular line), mutual acceptance occurs and other participants build their responses on it in the sense that everyone accepts the social acts of others to maintain his/her own face as well as the face of the other participants.

Goffman argues that a person may be confronted by a threat to face in different ways and therefore he/she conducts different types of face-saving practices for possible relations to threat. One type of face-work to prevent threat is to avoid the potential face-threatening situations (avoidance process) and to keep away from activities that are not consistent with the line the person tries to maintain. Another type of face-work (corrective process) occurs when the participants fail to prevent the threatening event which is expressively incompatible with the social values that are expected to be maintained. Goffman introduces four classic moves for a corrective process such as an apology: i) challenge: the participants take responsibility for their misconduct. ii) offering: the offender is given a chance to correct the offence. iii) acceptance: the offended person accepts the offering to re-establish the expressive order. iv) thanks: the forgiven person sends a sign of gratitude. Although the sequence of moves in corrective processes provides a model for the analysis of interpersonal

behaviour, Goffman emphasizes the fact that a ritual behaviour can depart from the suggested model in significant ways.

2.2 Applicability of Goffman's view on Facebook

Drawing on Goffman's work on the presentation of self and face-work, this study attempts to analyse the ongoing process of identity construction and impression management of people who are virtually engaged in an interaction on Facebook. This study indicates that Facebook users perform with expressive responsibility which is required for a performance to successfully project a desirable situation in the front stage. In this analysis, Facebook space would be regarded as the front stage and the offline context as the backstage. Online performers act for their Facebook audience to convey impressions appropriate at the time and avoid any disruption which might discredit their performance, as failing to do this means constructing an online image which is not compatible with the one they wish to project and therefore, losing face. Choosing what to bring to the front or hide in the back stage is easier when designing the self on Facebook since the participants are not physically co-present in an interaction. Facebook users can decide more flexibly which aspect of self they want to emphasize and what aspects they want to downplay. Facebook affords adopting a completely different online persona to mask the identity and stay anonymous in order to avoid losing face. This raises the question of online legitimacy and the establishment of trust in the internet context. In fact, the idea of authenticity (i.e. the extent to which an actual person behind the profile is seen to relate to the presented public image) and its associated social value are key concepts in Facebook identity management. However, Bullingham and Vasconcelos (2013) argue that the interactional practices of internet users make the re-creation of participants' offline self, more probable in the sense that editing facets of self occurs more frequently compared to being engaged with the process of whole persona adoption. This study views the distinct possibility of self-editing on Facebook as an opportunity that further extends Goffman's explanatory framework for understanding self-presentation in social interaction.

In comparison with a face-to-face conversation, Goffman (1983:2) considers telephone conversations as "reduced versions of the primordial real thing". Later, electronic communication established an alternative form of social interaction. Miller (1995:1) argues that computer mediated communication is "apparently more limited and less rich than the interaction in which the participants are physically present, it also provides new problems and new opportunities in the presentation of self". Jenkins (2010) indicates that the online environment displays highly complicated and detailed instances of impression management. In line with this statement, Miller and Arnold (2009) argue that technology affords the management of a multifaceted and dynamic self and the online exchange of information helps internet users to discuss their ideas more freely among people of similar interest and avoid losing face. Lee, Im and Taylor's study (2008:698) reveals that

the online self is often presented by "repressing personal information and supplanting it with modified or fabricated details for a more congruent desired self" and Papacharissi (2010) suggests that Goffman's self-presentation framework is applicable to the analysis of internet homepages as internet users are able to control how their public image on the internet is displayed. In general, a broad consensus has been reached that internet interactions create a new and alternative context for exploring impression management and identity construction (Boyed, 2007; Dywer, 2007; Gosling, Augustine, Vazire, 2011; Dahiya, 2016). Thus, it seems fair to assume that Facebook users are also expected to maintain their face by sustaining the initial impression that they made on their Facebook friends (or the whole internet) and building further responses upon it.

3. Participants

This chapter investigates the discursive interactions of a Belgium-based diasporic group on Facebook. Facebook conversations were reviewed to see what is of possible interest in the data and one Facebook thread in particular was chosen to be examined through the chapter as it represents interesting interactional strategies and patterns of behaviour in an online context. An observable phenomenon of interest in this Facebook conversation is how people present their public self-image and protect their face against virtual threats within social interaction. This particular Facebook conversation is perceived to be a representative and accurate source for understanding the dynamics of face-work online.

The Facebook conversation that is analysed in this part of the study is taken from the Facebook page of a participant who moved to Belgium as an Iranian immigrant in 2012 through family reunification. The participant (here called 'Ni') managed to complete her masters program at Ghent University and a few days after graduation, on May 27, 2014, when she was 24 years old, she posted a status update. The update triggers a conversation comprising 27 turns and 10 participants (figure 39. See appendix 5 for the enlarged reproduction of screenshot). The first commenter posts at 10:49 am and after almost 8 hours at 7:03 pm the conversation ends. The participants who contribute to Ni's update are heterogeneous in terms of their ethnic background and migration experience. The participants consist of 3 Iranian immigrants who moved to Belgium (Sa, Am, Ma), 3 Belgium-raised Iranian immigrants (Ze, Ne, Se) and 3 non-Iranian participants, of whom 1 is a British immigrant (Ol) and 2 are Belgians (So, Mi). Three different languages of Dutch, Farsi and English are used in this conversation and the original status update receives 17 likes in total.

4. Analysis

Ni initiates the conversation by sharing how she is feeling in the form of a status update. She selects "feeling hopeless" from the list of the suggested labels and adds a sleeping face emoji which might be chosen as a result of misunderstanding the code that the pictorial character is designed to convey.

While “feeling hopeless” is displayed in English (Ni has set English as the language of her Facebook account), the main part of her status update is written in Farsi.

(1) Ni: بازم یه شغل یه ساله دیگه، که به خاطر نداشتن اجازه کار کنسل شد.
چه حس خوبی وقتی که طرف ok رو بت میده ولی چه حس بدیه که میگه پس هیچی، تا می‌شنوه اجازه کار نداری...

Translation:

(1) Ni: again another one year job, which was cancelled due to not having a work permit.
What a good feeling when they give you ok but what a bad feeling when they tell you no, as they hear that you don’t have a work permit…

Ni writes her post in Farsi because Farsi is the shared language among the members of community of Iranian immigrants who mainly deal with the same issue. She exclusively addresses her Iranian immigrant Facebook friends who feel or understand the in-group problem. However, the strategy of code selection for targeting the intended audience on Facebook (which has been mentioned earlier in this chapter) does not seem to function effectively here.

The first commenter is a member of Iranian diaspora in Belgium who employs the common language of the community (Farsi) to sympathize with Ni; yet, her comment does not receive any reply or reaction (e.g. liking).

(2) Sa: امیدت رو از دست نده بالاخره درست می‌شه

Translation:

(2) Sa: Don’t lose your hope it will be finally alright

The next turn is from a Facebook friend who is neither Iranian nor immigrant.

(3) SO: wat is er, Ni ☹?

Translation:

(3) SO: what’s up, Ni ☹?

SO is a Belgian Facebook friend of Ni who seems to be concerned about her problem. She might know about the problem through either Ni’s feeling sharing in English or the use of Facebook translation service. However, it seems that the initial post is still not clear for her. There seems to be a more reasonable assumption about the motivation behind the question in turn 3 (what’s up?): SO projects interactionally as if she does not know what’s going on because she is not willing to go on

record that she knows. She positions herself more tentatively in the sense that she refrains from making an interpretation.

SO asks her question in Dutch since she knows of Ni's competency in this language.

The selection of Farsi in the status update does not keep SO out of the conversation. SO includes herself and asks for clarification. Ni answers in Dutch within minutes.

(4) Ni: Er gebeurt vaak dat een bedrijf mij wil, maar zodra zij horen dat ik geen werkvergunning heb, veranderen ze hun antwoord en ze zeggen nee!!!:(

Translation:

(4) Ni: It often happens that a company wants me, but as soon as they hear that I do not have a work permit, they change their answer and they say no!!!:(

Ze joins the conversation in turn 5. She is a Belgium-raised participant of this study who contributes to Ni's conversation using the Dutch language. Ze changes the topic of the conversation and compliments Ni on her Dutch competence.

(5) Ze: Amaai, je kan goed Nederlands…

Translation:

(5) Ze: Wow, you can speak Dutch well…

Ni appreciates the compliment in turn 6 and uses a comment link (i.e. a notification which is sent to an intended audience' profile) to address Ze in particular.

(6) Ni: Bedankt Ze :)))
Ik ben nu in niveau 9 met Ma ☺

Translation:

(6) Ni: Thank you Ze :)))
I am now in level 9 with Ma ☺

In the second part of turn 6, Ni tags another Facebook friend (Ma) by means of a comment link to draw her attention to the conversation and include her in the discussion about language proficiency. In other words, Ni deploys the affordance of Facebook and specifies two addressees in order to receive responses/reactions from them. Although Ze answers in turn 7, Ma joins the conversation in the very last turn (27) only to reply to Ni's status update.

(7) Ze: Echt chapeau

Translation:

(7) Ze: Really fantastic

In addition to code selection, deployment of tagging or a comment link has been seen to be a widely-used technique to address the audience and specify the next contributor on social media. Yet, neither of these strategies can guarantee the occurrence of adjacent pairs on Facebook since the participants are not physically co-present and sequential dynamics on Facebook do not always unfold as they do in spoken conversations (See section about conversation analysis-informed method). In turn 6, Ma is tagged and invited to join the conversation about Dutch competency. Ma is informed of being tagged, however she seems only to become aware of the notification 7 hours later. Furthermore, she does not pay attention to the content of the comment in which she has been tagged. Ma participates in turn 27:

(27) Ma: ای بابا... ادامه بده عزیزم ناامید نشو 😟

Translation:

(27) Ma: Gosh…keep going dear, don't lose hope 😟

It is only a matter of time before Ma would answer Ni's status update about the work permit and sympathise with her in Farsi. Apparently Ni fails to control the conduct of others to act in accordance to her plans. Since the participants of a Facebook conversation are virtually present in an online space, the kind of impression that the performer tries to convey might go unnoticed as the conversational turns proceed. When a Facebook user defines a situation, the cooperative activity or the specific response that he/she expects from the other participants can remain unfulfilled. However, such disruptions in computer mediated interactions are usually not as discrediting as they are in spoken conversations.

Figure 39. Screenshot from the Facebook page of Ni (see appendix 5 for the enlarged reproduction of the screenshot).

In turn 8 the topic of the conversation is changed back to the question of getting a work permit when an Iranian Immigrant (a Belgium-raised Facebook friend of Ni) asks Ni for further information and clarification. The question answering exchanges proceed until turn 11.

(8) Ne: jammer! Waarom je geen werkvergunning hebt?
(9) Ni: Want ik ben een iraans. Je of jouw echtgenoot moet een europese burger zijn om een jobvergunning te hebben!
(10) Ne: Schande, dus je moet eerst belg worden?
(11) Ni: Ik moet een belg worden als ik een job wil. En ik moet een job vinden om een belg te worden 😊

Translation:

(8) Ne: too bad! Why you do not have a work permit?
(9) Ni: Because I am an Iranian. You or your spouse must be a European citizen to have a work permit!
(10) Ne: Shame, so you must first become Belgian?
(11) Ni: I must become a Belgian if I want a job. And I have to find a job to become a Belgian 😊

Thus, while the issue is still dealt with in the community of Iranian immigrants, the language of communication has been changed into Dutch. Deployment of Farsi for the initial post was intended to include Iranian immigrants and exclude the other participants who do not experience or perceive immigration-related problems; however, a non-Iranian, non-immigrant audience takes part in the conversation (e.g. turn 3) and the subject does not seems to be familiar to an Iranian immigrant audience who is supposed to share Ni's concern (turn 8).

This Facebook conversation indicates the construction of the different models of dyadic structure which sometimes occur within a single Facebook thread. In fact, Goffman's (1981) distinction between dominate and subordinate communications applies to this interaction as every Facebook user addresses the centre of the page (Facebook page owner) and the page owner is the primarily addressee. Yet, a subordinate communication of a subset of Facebook interactants forms a different interactional pattern and the page owner becomes a bystander or a ratified overhearer who observes the course of events within the conversation (e.g. an interesting example is shown in turn 19 as Am addresses Mi).

In turn 12, Ol joins the conversation to simultaneously sympathize and compliment in English.

(12) Ol: :(I'm sorry you're still having problems with work. You're so skilled and deserve a chance. They're losing out just because of a permit. Idiots!

Most probably Ol has a kind of background knowledge about Ni's problem of being out of a job (due to the use of 'still' in his turn). Ol's biography on Facebook shows that he is a British immigrant in Belgium and an exclusive English language speaker. Translation likely provides him with enough information to understand the subject at issue.

It seems that Ni is looking for precisely such a response as she really appreciates Ol's comment in turn 13:

(13) Ni: your words warm my heart all the time dear ☺ Thanks a lot 😯

The target of self-presentation seems to be different from what initially appeared to be. Ni's status update gives the impression that she aims to evoke sympathy in her Facebook audience; yet, as the sequences unfold, Ni's responses and reactions to audiences' comments reveal a different presentation goal. Ni does not reply to or like the commenters' sympathetic attitudes (turns 1 and 27) while she appreciates the compliments (turns 6 and 13). Seemingly, her aim of self-presentation is to be perceived as a qualified and skilled person. Although Ni does not claim to be competent and qualified, she indirectly creates her desired impression not as someone who is looking for help but as someone whose qualifications are overlooked. Ni succeeds to evoke a favourable response from Ol who values her projected definition of the situation in turn 12: you are so skilled and those idiots are losing out.

In turn 14, Se joins the conversation and makes a joke.

(14) Se: behesh gofti ke doste mani !? Welcome to BELGIUM !

Translation:

(14) Se: did you tell them that you are my friend!? Welcome to BELGIUM!

Se is also a participant of this study who has been raised in Belgium. He posts his comment in Romanized Farsi and later edits the post and adds "welcome to BELGIUM!" in English. Se's comment is not reacted or responded to.

In turn 15 Mi asks about the content of the post through the use of 5 question marks. Mi is a Belgian Facebook friend who does not make the effort to refer back to the preceding comments in order to find out what the status update is about.

In response to Mi's ambiguity, Ni copies and pastes the answer she provided for So in turn 4.

(15) Mi: ?????

(16) Ni: Er gebeurt vaak dat een bedrijf mij wil, maar zodra zij horen dat ik geen werkvergunning heb, veranderen ze hun antwoord en ze zeggen nee!!! ☹

Translation:

(16) Ni: It often happens that a company wants me, but as soon as they hear that I do not have a work permit, they change their answer and they say no!!! ☹

Mi shows her dislike of the situation in Dutch (turn 17) and she switches to English in the subsequent turn.

(17) Mi: Boe!!! ☹

Translation:

(17) Mi: Boo!!! ☹

(18) Mi: There is a solution to get an extended VISA in Belgium for work though. Contact me if you want more info

Although Ni responded to Mi in Dutch (turn 16), Mi apparently does not know about Ni's (extent of) competency in Dutch and offers a solution in English.

Ni does not reply to Mi's solution but her husband (Am) who is also a participant of this study does. Am and clarifies the situation:

(19) Am: tnx Mi, but she doesn't have visa problem …job permit is another story

Ni addresses Mi in turn 20 through the use of a comment link and changes the topic back into language competency. Apparently, she is no longer concerned about the work permit.

(20) Ni: Ik begrijp Nederlands Mi

Translation:

(20) Ni: I understand Dutch Mi

Mi non-verbally responds by liking the comment and as Ni does not receive any response, she elaborates on her Dutch competence.

(21) Ik ben in Niveau 9!

Translation:

(21) I am in level 9!

Ni attempts to create a qualified image of self for her Facebook audience and use of different languages (Dutch in particular) credits her with this claim.

In turn 22, Se re-joins the conversation and posts in Romanized Farsi:

(22) Se: fekr konam age holandit behtar bud kar peida mikardi, job permit onghardi tasir nadare..

Translation:

(22) Se: I think if your Dutch was better, you would find a job, work permit is not that effective.

Se's comment combines both topics of work permit and language skill together. He uses Farsi to decrease the number of audience members to Farsi speaking Facebook friends because he is aware that his comment jeopardizes the authenticity of Ni's claim about being a qualified jobseeker and a competent Dutch speaker.

Although Se's choice of language restricts the size of the audience, his background conversation is still face-threatening. Ni tries to save her face in turn 23 and she uses Dutch as an evidence to prove her authentic self; to show that her offline and online selfs are the same.

(23) Ni: Ik denk het niet. Ik ben in nieveau 9 Se

Translation:

(23) Ni: I do not think so. I am in level 9 Se

In turn 24 Se replies in English:

(24) Se: well, last time I checked your Dutch is crap ☺

Se uses English and addresses the whole group of audience. This time, Se does not seem to be concerned about his readership and the winking face emoji at the end of his comment does not seem to compensate for his offensive remark. Ni, at the other end of this conversation dynamic, fails to control the impression that others receive of the situation. She has claimed who she is and signified that she has specific social characteristics; consequently, based on the principles that society is organized upon, Ni has a right to expect the others to treat her in the way that is compatible with the situation that she defines and the impression that she tries to sustain.

In turn 25, Ni attempts to maintain her threatened face and keep the initial impression that she made on her audience. She uses English to target all members of audience and defend her online authentic identity against the offence. Ni adopts a defensive orientation to save her face:

(25) Ni: Really? When was the last time you checked??? I haven't seen you for quite a while! And it's NOT for you to judge…

Ni could not avoid the embarrassment caused by the discrediting occurrence and loses the initiative in the conversation. In order to save the definition of the situation that Ni projects, Se starts practicing a protective tact.

(26) Se: just looked crap up and was shocked 😯 I use this every day! Language problem ☹☹☹

Apparently, the belated recognition of the offensive situation makes Se to use the corrective process in order to restore the desired expressive order. He takes the responsibility for the offence and shifts the blame onto himself. His message implies that you do not have language problem (as he suggested earlier in turn 22 and 24) but I do. He does face-work through the use of a combination of linguistic and visual resources. He deploys emojis to represent concepts and shows that he is shocked by his mistake (through using a face with open mouth) and he is sorry for the offence he caused (by using three crying faces).

5. Discussion

Central to Goffman's dramaturgical model is the front stage control in the sense that the performers are motivated to control the impression that other participants receive of a situation. Goffman (1959:28) argues "when an individual plays a part he implicitly requests his observers to take seriously the impression that is fostered before them. They are asked to believe that the character they see actually possesses the attributes he appears to possess, that the task he performs will have the consequences that are implicitly claimed for it, and that, in general, matters are what they appear to be." Compared to offline interactional settings, the social establishment of Facebook hosts online performances which seem to be more successful in presenting an idealized view of a situation. Facebook users tend to maintain a front that incorporates social values and at the same time avoid any performance which represents a different reality from the fostered appearance. The virtual nature of interactions provides the Facebook members with a greater chance of managing their desired appearance and concealing some aspects of reality. As has been suggested in Goffman's framework, the cooperative activities of individuals in a performance are the fundamental points of reference in the study of impression management. Performance on Facebook can also be analysed in terms of team performance and team impression. There is a mutual dependency that connects the team

members together and forces them to rely on the each other's good conduct to maintain the definition of the situation. Participants of a Facebook conversation interact and cooperate to sustain a given impression; yet, disagreement between them in front of the audience embarrasses the reality they are trying to represent and provide the audience with a view to the backstage. As happens in spoken interaction, Facebook interactants stage a united front and follow rules of respect before a Facebook audience.

5.1 Directing the show

Goffman argues that a person who dominates the show is also a director whose function is to bring back into line any unsuitable performance through corrective processes of soothing and sanctioning. In this chapter, the selected Facebook conversation was initiated by Ni. Ni is a director of her status update who corrects the improper appearance, assigns the roles and determines how the participants take the conversational turns through choosing a specific language (e.g. use of Farsi in the status update to exclude non-Iranians) or using the affordances of Facebook (e.g. use of comment link in turns 6 and 20). Other participants of the conversation have a different attitude towards Ni than their team-mates and together with the audience, they hold Ni more responsible for the success of the display. Thus, she accentuates some aspects of the performance in the presence of Facebook friends (e.g. her language competence) and hides some other aspects which might discredit the impression she is trying to maintain in the front region (e.g. deficiency in Dutch language). Ni's performance on Facebook represents certain standards of politeness in the way she treats her Facebook audience. In other words, her act in the front stage does not allow any disrespectful or offensive behaviour. The front region does not allow the disclosure of secrets either. The secrets which are visible in the backstage become threatening to the performance as they are revealed in the front.

5.2 Disclosure of the backstage secret

In turn 24, Se bring Ni's secret to light when he reveals that the last time he checked, Ni's Dutch competency was "crap". Such a secret which Goffman terms "dark secret" (Goffman, 1959:145) is incompatible with the qualified image of Ni that the whole group of participants in the conversation try to maintain (e.g. turn 6 as Ze says you can speak Dutch well or turn 12 as Ol emphasises that Ni is so skilled). The interactional interplay between Ni and Se indicates that Se has been an offline witness to Ni's weakness in Dutch. Ni's online performance occurs in the front region and the image that she portrays on Facebook likely contradicts the one that Se observed in the back stage. Se is supposed to be an entrusted team member; yet, he does not keep the secret and is not loyal to the team although he is aware of the impression that the team fosters. Goffman argues that there is a correlation in a performance between function, information and region of access. This means that since Se accesses the secrets of backstage, his role is that of a team-mate who performs in accordance with the team's goal. Yet, he plays a "discrepant role" and he is called a "traitor"

(Goffman, 1959:145): as an informer, Se pretends to be a loyal team-mate and he is allowed to come to the backstage and become informed about the "destructive information' but he openly or secretly sells out the show to the audience (p.141). Although Se as a performer has to act with expressive responsibility in order to convey an appropriate impression, his disruptions in turns 22 and 24 weaken the claim that Ni and the group of her Facebook friends try to foster as part of the definition of the situation. The backstage secret about Ni's deficiency in Dutch is intentionally introduced during the performance and the significance of the consequent embarrassment does not seem to be acknowledged by Se. Such disruption of projection is called a "faux pas" by Goffman (1959:204). Se acts in such a way as to threaten the polite appearance of the mutual agreement between the team-mates. Although he may not mean to cause any embarrassment or disagreement, he can most likely predict the result of his disruption.

The interplay between team members (Ni and Se) stops as they can no longer endure each other's performances and dramaturgical cooperation is replaced by open criticism in front of the audience. The incapable performance of Se seriously destroys the show in the front and polite interaction is no longer carried out. Goffman (1959:206) argues that the performer creates a scene to prevent the rejection of an assumption: "He knowingly lowers his defences in their presence, throwing himself, as we say, on their mercy. By such an act the individual makes a plea to the audience to treat themselves as part of his team or to allow him to treat himself as part of their team. This sort of thing is embarrassing enough, but when the unguarded request is refused to the individual's face, he suffers from what is called humiliation." As Se suggests that Ni could have had better Dutch proficiency in turn 22, the reality that is supported by Ni and by other Facebook participants, is threatened. In such a critical situation, first, Ni relies on Se's self-correcting attempt to support her image of self around which she has built emotional attachments. Yet, Se does not treat Ni as a team-mate and embarrasses her in turn 24: "last time I checked your Dutch is crap". Ni feels ashamed because of what happened to the show on her account and what happened to her reputation. Thus, in the next turn, Ni throws herself on the audience's mercy to approve her claim. To prevent the occurrence of such scenes, the participants of a conversation should save both the show and the image of self (face) by practicing certain defensive or protective attributes.

In Goffman's (1967:14) categorization of levels of responsibility that a person has in terms of his or her face-threatening act, Se's comment in turn 24 can be classified as an "incidental offence" which "arises as an unplanned but sometimes anticipated by-product of action - action the offender performs in spite of its offensive consequences, although not out of spite"[37]. Although Se's offence seems to be unintended, he is not entirely innocent. First, he carries on a background conversation in Farsi (turn 22: "if your Dutch was better, you would find a job") then he openly expresses his remark

[37] This means that the offence is given unintentionally

in English (turn 24: “last time I checked your Dutch is crap”) and puts Ni down. Se does not withdraw after turn 22, before a serious threat to face had a chance to occur. In fact, he insists on showing a different front from the one that Ni tries to maintain.

5.3 Defensive and protective practices

Face-works is defined as a kind of standardized practice habitually accomplished to counteract face threatening events (Goffman, 1967). Se could have chosen from a set of face-work possibilities in order to save Ni’ image of self which has been threatened as a result of his action/comment. He could use a tactful strategy of overlooking the incident and not saying anything. Instead of openly expressing his negative viewpoint, Se could have left facts unstated. Even if he could not anticipate the significance of the threat that turn 22 carries, he could modify his judgment and re-define the situation when Ni explicitly defends her claim in turn 23 (“I am in level 9”). Although Se uses a winking face emoji in turn 24 to show that his claim is not serious, the joking manner that he employs is not strong enough to counteract the threat. In other words, the use of a mere winking face emoticon does not neutralize the negative impact of the word ‘crap’ deployed to describe the professional self that Ni presents to her Facebook audience.

Goffman (1967) argues that when it is difficult to overlook the event or when participants fail to prevent the occurrence of the face-threatening event, the participants of a conversation proceed to correct its effects. A sequence of exchanges unfolds in order to correct the process of an apology; yet, the order of face-saving interchanges that occurred in Ni’s Facebook post, departs from the suggested classic moves in Goffman’s work: *challenge, offering, acceptance* and *thanks*.

5.3.1 Moves towards offering an apology

The interactional exchanges between Se and Ni unfold in such a way that the offended person (Ni) gives the offender (Se) a chance to correct the offence before a challenge is made: “I don’t think so, I am in level 9, Se”. Thus, the corrective process starts with the *offering* (in which the offender is given a chance to correct the expressive order). Nevertheless, Se ignores the warning and the offensive behaviour continues and even intensifies in turn 24 when Ni’s language skill is pronounced ‘crap’. Use of English as the hegemonic language of internet makes the announcement more distinct in the sense that all members of audience are considered potential addressees. The turn in the corrective cycle shifts back to the first step (*challenge*). In this respect, Goffman (1967:23) describes the “untenable position” of the offended person as she/he obliges to resort to “desperate measures” to save face:

> They can resort to tactless, violent retaliation, destroying either themselves or the person who had refused to heed their warning. Or they can withdraw from the undertaking in a visible huff-righteously indignant, outraged but confident of

> ultimate vindication. Both tacks provide a way of denying the offender his status as an interactant, and hence denying the reality of the offensive judgment he has made. Both strategies are ways of salvaging face, but for all concerned the costs are usually high. It is partly to forestall such scenes that the offender is usually quick to offer apologies.

In response to the offence Ni ratifies the insult as an incident and becomes destructively assertive in turn 25: "Really? When was the last time you checked? I haven't seen you for quite a while and it's NOT for you to judge." Ni clearly expresses her anger because of the damage that is done to her face. Lack of effort on the part of Se demands Ni to do the face-work and assign the blame correctly. Ni introduces unfavourable information about Se and selects English as the language of communication to globally indicate his incapability to judge. The participants create a scene of mutual inconsiderateness where the expressive rituals are broken and the performers no longer practice dramaturgical discipline. The participants are engaged in what Goffman (1967:25) calls an "aggressive interchange" in which they fail to conceal the actual affective responses in favour of appropriate reactions. The performers' tactful tendency to save the show, their own face and the face of the others in front of the audience starts to fade as their anguish and anger grow and consequently, the events of back region are entirely disclosed to the audience.

In response to Ni's complain, Se re-defines his offensive act and provides compensation through emphasising his total lack of knowledge about the offensive meaning that the English word represents: "just looked crap up and was shocked 😯 I use this every day! Language problem 😟😟😟". Se tends to show that the threatening expression is an unintentional act which does not aim to injure the feelings/public images of a team-mate. He takes the responsibility for his misconduct against the expressive order and shifts the blame onto himself in the sense that he deflects criticism from Ni's language proficiency to his incompetent self. However, it could be argued that he does not jeopardise his own image:

> When a person is responsible for introducing a threat to another's face, he apparently has a right, within limits, to wriggle out of the difficulty by means of self-abasement. When performed voluntarily these indignities do not seem to profane his own image. It is as if he had the right of insulation and could castigate himself qua actor without injuring himself qua object of ultimate worth. By token of the same insulation he can belittle himself and modestly underplay his positive qualities, with the understanding that no one will take his statements as a fair representation of his sacred self (Goffman 1967:32).

Se depreciates himself because he can anticipate that the other participants, including Ni, might cooperate in the face-work and employ some face-saving practices to protect him. He relies on the social skills and face-work knowledge of the other participants while he did not consider in advance the loss of face that his action would entail for the others. Although his explanation indicates his tendency to avoid offence if he had known the offensive meaning of the word 'crap', his relation to a threat to face is not completely innocent. It seems that he could not predict the offensive consequence; yet, he was aware of the ritual factors, system of practices and procedural rules which organise the flow of messages. Se discredits the assumption of mutual approval in an interaction and cannot control his emotional involvement. He was not committed to the necessity of using a protective strategy to save the face of the others; nevertheless, he initiates a corrective move to accomplish the process of apology in order to save his own face. In fact, apology is implicit in Se's comment. His remark is actually an attempt to belittle himself and his qualification (e.g. highlight his English incompetency) in order for his team-mates to indulge him. This type of "aggressive" face-work that Se as an offender uses to save the image of self is explained in Goffman's (1967:24) work: "he can arrange for the others to hurt his feelings, thus forcing them to feel guilt, remorse, and sustained ritual disequilibrium". Se hopes that the participants will overlook the affront because he pays for his action and provides punishment for himself.

The ritual interchange in a face-to-face conversation is likely to follow the suggested classic sequences and the offended person would probably contribute further to the conversation to accept the apology. Yet here Ni withdraws and terminates her conversation with Se after turn 26. Her move might be motivated by a few possibilities: i) the expressive rituals in computer mediated communication are less strict and the virtual nature of Facebook provides Ni with a kind of flexibility to leave the conversation at her convenience. ii) Ni withdraws from the conversation to convey her indignation toward someone who breaks the ritual codes. She might feel that Se's indirect apology does not completely heal the wounds and thus she cannot accept the apology. iii) Ni's withdrawal might be triggered as a result of recognition that Se is an undisciplined and inconsiderate performer who does not perceive the principles of face-work and gives the show away by revealing its secrets. Ni does not indicate her acceptance of his apology because she thinks of any further contribution to the conversation as a pointless move. In other words, Se's failure in staging a united front disappoints Ni's expectation in relation to a team-mate who is supposed to be reliable and cooperative in fostering the projected definition of the situation.

5.3.2 Use of emoji in face-work

Goffman's dramaturgical theory assumes that individuals act to express themselves in a communicative situation and in return others have to be impressed by them. In Facebook conversations both the performer and the audience may use liking and emoticons to impress others

and show that they are being impressed. In other words, the reciprocal influence of individuals on one another's online activities can be indicated through the use of emojis. Therefore, a post which does not receive a reaction such as liking or a response in the form of linguistic and/or visual features fails to impress the audience. The second and the last turns of the Facebook conversation taken from Ni's timeline indicate sympathies in Farsi to Ni's work permit problem. Neither turn is answered or liked by Ni. This probably means that Ni is not impressed by the commenters' performance because the remarks (turns 2 and 27) are not shaped in accordance with Ni's plan to define her desired self.[38]

Emojis are strategically used by Se in his last contribution to the face-work (turn 26). The location of emojis in a post is important (Danesi, 2017). Se uses an open mount-face emoji right after the word "shocked" to emphasise his state of being surprised by his mistake/ignorance. In the same turn, three crying-face emojis which constitute a sad reaction are used to convey his point of view about having language problem or hurting someone's feelings. The discursive function of a crying emoji becomes stronger as it repeatedly occurs in the same post. Furthermore, the use of emoticons is a technique whereby Se controls the emotional features of discourse in the sense that the visual language of his apology makes the outcome of the apology less threatening. He demonstrates his regretful state of mind through three crying faces because he is uncertain about the reaction to his apology. Emojis partially shield him from the probable shame or embarrassment that the rejection to an apology can cause.

6. Conclusion

Drawing on Goffman's framework, the first section of qualitative analysis in chapter 7 explains how 'Bier Beir' is a mismatch to the frame. Bier Beir can be understood in terms of frame break, he is an alien element that comes into a conversation and threatens the coherence in the course of events. He is also a threat to the definition of the situation that the team members cooperatively try to present. On the contrary, in the case of 'Se' in the second chapter of qualitative analysis, the frame is not at stake. Se's contribution does not result in a frame break but results in spoiling the front stage performance. While the participants' digital conversations can be successfully examined in terms of frame analysis, Goffman's sociology is seemingly less effective/precise in providing insights about the participants' relationship to the group based on their contributions to the Facebook sequences.

Goffman's sociology is concerned with the spatial and temporal state of co-presence rather than with social groups (Giddens, 1998). Above the group conflict, Bier Beir's conversation raises the question

[38] It is assumed that Ni as the initiator of the conversation, monitors the flow of messages and every single comment is being observed by her. Her active presence in the conversation can be approved through focusing on the small gaps between Ni's responses and the audience's comments. The average rate of her replies is 2 minutes and 44 seconds.

of dealing with the grouping of people according to political beliefs. In that sense, the sociology of groups is foregrounded and Goffman does not seem to have anything much to say about it. In relation to the collaboration of participants as a team, the place of Bier Beir is not quite definite then, according to Goffman's framework. Is Bier Beir an eavesdropper who is not part of the team? Or is he a team member? It seems that Bier Beir is someone who is co-present but threatening to the team performance. The same attribute holds true in relation to the participation role of Se. Under the assumption of team-based stage behaviour, the public display of Se as a team member is not in accordance with the team's goal. Both Bier Beir and Se contribute to the Facebook interactions threateningly in the sense that the definition of the situation is not collectively maintained. They both break with group solidarity; however, their membership differs. While Bier Beir is co-present in the course of events, Se is actually part of the team and ought to be loyal to the impression that the team wishes to foster. Se reveals a backstage secret and gives the show away; however, he makes a last-ditch attempt to save face as he moves towards correcting the misconduct and re-establishing the expressive order. Likewise, Bier Beir's contribution is not compatible with the social values that are expected to be maintained in the interaction, yet; he does not make effort to perform face-work. Instead, he stays upfront and refrain to collaborate with others in building his line on the general consensus that is mutually emerged among the participants. In other words, by performing the social acts which are not accepted by the other participants, he does not maintain his public image nor the public image of others[39].

Two different endings of confrontations (i.e. Bier Beir's persistence in moving against the social norms of an interaction as opposed to Se's apology in his last conversational turn) seem to be largely related to the degree of identity disclosure on Facebook. As a team member, Se is supposed to contribute to the construction of a united front on Facebook. As he reveals the team's secret and threats the face of his team mates, he initiates a correcting process to save face. This is deeply rooted in his known offline status as a friend/acquaintance of the initial poster (Ni). Se's betrayal on Facebook has consequences in the real world where the network of Iranian people is narrowed down to the community of Iranian people in Belgium and hence, the chance of confrontation in offline life is increased. Another motive behind Se's apology is related to the real Facebook profile name and picture which he has adopted, as well as the detailed personal information displayed on his Facebook profile. Such a disclosure of offline identity in an online space makes him vulnerable to any sort of unconventional tactless self-presentation on Facebook.

Contrary to what is defined as the rule of self-presentation before the audience, Bier Beir does not show his positive aspect of self on the stage and nor does he avoid the kind of performance which

[39] Bier Beir could also be seen as performing face-work in a wider sense by upholding norms in his own racist / reactionary context, e.g. on other online forums which are less polite / mainstream than Facebook.

represents a different reality from what the team fosters. As someone who is not part of the team but is able to witness the team's display, Bier Beir indicates that his contribution does not incorporate the values and the good social conduct upon which the team can rely in order to sustain a given impression. He adopts different roles throughout the conversation: a by-stander, a speaker and a primary addressee. Nevertheless, he does not cooperate in staging a united front despite his co-presence in the front. Deploying the potential of the online setting for anonymity, Bier Beir takes the liberty to speak/type about sensitive subjects which he might consider avoiding in real life. While Bier Beir is so bold as to show his true beliefs, he conceals his true self on Facebook as he uses a pseudonym and an avatar to present himself. Regarding his real identity, Bier Beir does not give any information to the audience; yet, his adopted identity which is projected through the pseudonym and avatar, gives off some information (see Data analysis, turn 9). However, there is mystification in relation to his identity. The reckless abandon and immoderation which characterize Bier's remarks cannot be attributed to his real world identity due to the anonymous condition of the virtual context. While Bier Beir's conversation threatens the face of his team members who try to maintain the definition of the situation, his own public image is masked on stage and his anonymous offline persona enjoys the freedom of expression and high level of protection from being divulged.

Given the built-in feature of social media which enables the users to play with their public image, different patterns of self-presentation can be formed on Facebook. That is to say, while individuals mostly emphasize the presentable aspects of their identity in Facebook's virtual front, some users limit the distance between their online image and offline life in order to create trust and project an authentic persona. There is also the possibility that Facebook users (such as Bier Beir) overlook the normative constraints of social interactions in the real world and avoid self-censorship. Bier Beir presents a different persona who does not intend to stage the positive facets of self but displays an unrestrained overt voice from a covert profile.

Chapter 9
Case study 4
Orthographic practices on Facebook

1. Introduction

Early orthographic studies in computer mediated communication were documented mainly with a view towards playful performance in English (Cherny; 1999; Werry, 1996; Danet, 1995) and in other languages: playful email exchanges in Greek between people who are well-acquainted (Georgakopoulos, 1997); playful practices in web chat discourse in Swedish: (Sveningsson, 2001) and playful performance of electronic texts in German (Durscheid, 2000). In parallel with the online studies, research on the sociology of scripts and orthographies started to grow rapidly in 1990s (Sebba, 2012) with studies on language ideologies and choices in the writing system of Haitian Creole (Schieffelin and Doucet, 1994), Portuguese (Garcez 1995), Dutch (Jacobs 1997) and Jamaican Creole (Sebba 1998). Language ideology and identity are linked to each other in many studies. For example, national identity is under scrutiny in the study of Haitian Creole (Schieffelin and Doucet, 1994) as well as different sorts of spelling in a Canadian context (Heffernan et al. 2010). Other types of identity have been studied as they are constructed through orthographic systems including subcultural identities (Androutsopoulos 2000) and online identities (Sebba, 2007).

In general, research agrees that choice of script in both offline and online contexts has social meaning; equally importantly, divergence from the conventional correspondence between characters and sounds potentially produces social meaning (Sebba, 2012). This study aims to show how the social context of Facebook influences the forms which orthography takes and how different ideologies lead to the promotion of digital practices supported by a particular type of spelling. The informal and multimodal space of Facebook which encourages deviation from the orthographic norms and promotes speech-like informality is considered to be a rich source of data in order to study (non-standard) choices of spelling. In addition, the diasporic positioning of Facebook users in this study may add more layers to the complexity of orthographic practices. This study predominantly focuses on the non-standard Farsi spelling practices performed in the global communication network of Facebook. Before discussing the sociolinguistics of Farsi orthography and its spelling variations, the historical development of Farsi spelling is briefly explained.

2. Farsi Orthography, history and development

Farsi or New Persian is a subdivision of the Indo-Iranian (Aryan) languages, the largest branch of the Indo-European language family. Indo-Iranian languages were derived from Indo-European languages around 1500 B.C.E. (Khanlari, 1997). In 551 B.C.E. Old Persian was developed and exclusively written in cuneiform script (Figure 40). Regarding the two main authentic sources of Old Persian cuneiform inscription, Meade (1974:7) notes:

> Persepolis, one of the four capitals of the Achaemenids, was built by Darius the Great (522-486 B.C) between 513 and 497 B.C. On the cliffs behind the great

> palace are the inscriptions of Darius and his son Xerxes (486-465 B.C.), carved out of the solid rock. These inscriptions are in Old Persian, Elamite and Akkadian. The other major site of the cuneiform inscriptions is at Behistun, located about twenty-two miles west of Kermanshah. Here on the sheer wall of an escapement were copied the feats of Darius. Each text is written in Old Persian, Elamite, and Akkadian.

By the fall of Achaemenid Empire, knowledge of Old Persian cuneiform (which was mainly restricted to royal use) was lost. Several European travellers reported back to Europe the description of a wedge-shaped script they saw in Persepolis and Behistun. The script was deciphered for the first time by Niebuhr in the seventeenth century. He discovered that Old Persian contains 42 distinct signs which are read from left to right and the characters are not to be read perpendicularly (Budge, 1925:22). Old Persian has 36 phonetic characters and 8 logograms for commonly used words such as king, god or land. Since there is no clear correspondence between graphic and phonemic units, the complicated Old Persian writing system provides a set of possible interpretations for a single word (Schmitt, 2008).

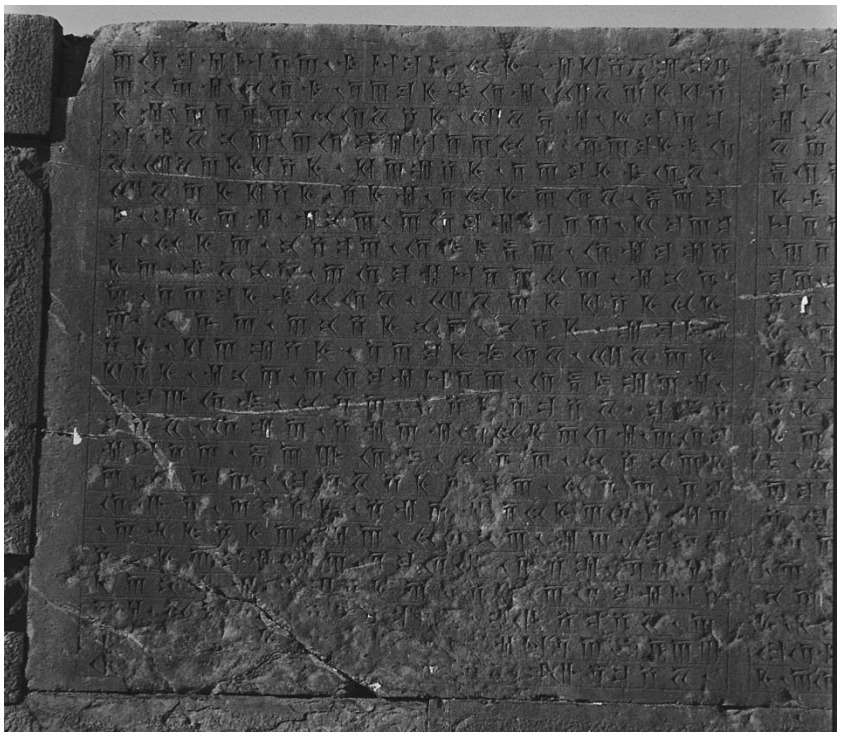


Figure 40. Old Persian, Inscribed on the Southern Wall of Terrace Complex, Persepolis
Source: Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery Archives, Smithsonian Institution

Around 331 B.C.E. Middle Persian descended from Old Persian during Sasanian Empire and remained in use until the Islamic conquest of Persia in the seventh century A.D. (Baluch, 2006). The Middle Persian or Pahlavi script covers a long temporal span and a broad geographical region; however, despite the variation in phonology, the writing system remained quite stable. Unlike Old

Persian, use of Pahlavi extended from the language of royal family to the standard language of Sasanian realms and its corpus included texts in a broad range of genres (Hale, 2008). The Pahlavi writing system runs from right to left using 14 letters and the language became more analytic compared to Old Persian. Since vowels are not written and some symbols carry multiple values, Pahlavi orthography is remarkably ambiguous (Hale, 2008).

The transition from middle to New Persian occurred gradually and in the eighth century New Persian became an independent literary language. Johanson (2006) puts into perspective the reasons behind the New Persian development: some scholars see this as an effort to recreate the magnificent cultural and political era in Sasanid Empire; another viewpoint deals with the acceptance of hegemony of Islam in Persia and creation of a language which acquires the essential linguistic resources for the use of Islam in various social contexts.

However, Middle Persian remained in use by Zoroastrians into the Islamic period and it is still (as a dialect of Middle Persian) used by Zoroastrians who live mostly in the central parts of Iran. Furthermore, several attempts were made during the tenth century to enable the Persian language and Iran's pre-Islamic heritage to survive the expansion of Arabic. Shah-Nameh (Book of Kings) is the greatest and the most successful national epic poem consisting of about 50,000 verses (written by Ferdowsi, 940-1020 D.C.). Shah-Nameh describes Iran's history from the creation of the world up to the Arabs' conquest of Persia. Ferdowsi consciously avoids the use of Arabic loan-words and his work has a crucial impact on the persistence of the Persian language (Browne, 1998). Ferdowsi considers himself a language nationalist who has brought Persian to life.

Johanson (2006:4) argues that New Persian was developed through the adaptation of Middle Persian language in a highly heterogeneous linguistic area. New Persian was used in an area spanning from Eastern Iran (Bukhara, present day Uzbekistan) to Western Iran and central Asia and functioned as a lingua franca for the advance of Islam. Although New Persian was developed based on Middle Persian, it is not the direct, linear descendant of Middle Persian. New Persian involves a vocabulary of mixed origins and structural simplifications. Yet it soon became a standard written language and remained the main means of communication in Iran, Western, Central, Southern Asia and Indian subcontinent for more than one thousand years.

In the nineteenth century, the Qajar dynasty privileged the use of the capital city dialect. Beeman (2005) argues that the Persian of the dialect of Tehran is seen by all speech communities as a prestige standard, while Tajik (a dialect spoken in Tajikistan and written in Cyrillic script) and Dari (a dialect spoken in Afghanistan) regarded as colloquial forms. Today, Persian is the mother tongue of more than 54 million people around the world (Hashabeiky, 2005).

While the name of the country was officially changed to Iran in 1935 (Baum and O'Gorman, 2010), the name of language had become Farsi (the Arabic version of Parsi) after the Arab conquest in the middle of the 7th century (Spooner, 2012). Modern Persian or Farsi script is a modified version of the Arabic script; yet, there is a widespread concern about the inadequacy of the Arabic alphabet for representing spoken Farsi, as the Semitic consonantal writing system with an inflectional structure is not suitable for the analytical, non-inflectional structure of an Indo-European language (Hashabeiky, 2005).

The Academy of Persian Language and Literature"ویژگی‌های خطّ فارسی" has developed a comprehensive description of the characteristics of Farsi orthography: Farsi orthography is phonemic (i.e. one letter represents one sound) and adds four more letters to the Arabic script giving a total of 32 letters, in order to represent sounds that do not exist in Arabic (/g/, /ʧ/, /p/ and /ʒ/). While graphemes represent all consonants and long vowels, short vowels are underrepresented in the writing system. As it was the case in Middle Persian, Farsi is written from right to left and the word order remained subject-object-verb. In general, the orthography has two types of letters, letters which can be written bound to the left and letters that cannot. Therefore, in many cases, the shape of a letter changes depending on its position in a word; for example, /h/ is represented in 4 different shapes: initial (ﻫ), medial (ﻬ), final (ﻪ) and independent (ه).

Hashabeiky (2005:73) argues that Farsi orthography identifies a word based on phonological, morphological and syntactical criteria. She emphasises that the word stress which is always placed on the last syllable is not a definite strategy to define a word's boundaries; yet, in Farsi orthography "it is possible to mark off a word regardless of whether it is simple, derived, or complex… the main instrument for marking off the words in orthography is the blank space". However, in addition to the blank space, the framework of the analyst can distinctively influence the identification of word boundaries.

3. A modern view towards literacy and orthography

In early literacy research, literacy was perceived as a universal and predictable process which can be treated independently of any particular society and culture (Tagg, 2015). It was assumed that the ability to read and write changes the way people think; yet, the effect of literacy as an interactive process was overlooked. Street (1984) reacted against this view by suggesting an *ideological* model of literacy which underlines the specific social practices of literacy and the cultural/ideological nature of such practices. In the non-traditional assumption, literacy is viewed as being shaped by the values and practices of sociocultural context in which it occurs (Sebba, 2007). Therefore, reading and writing practices are assumed to vary according to contextual factors in terms of how literacy is socially perceived, used and valued. The traditional meaning of literacy (i.e. the ability to read and write) has evolved in the modern world to mean "the ability to creatively engage in particular social

practices, to assume appropriate social identities and to form or maintain various social relationships" (Jones and Hafner, 2012:12). Therefore, depending on the context, reading and writing require different skills because literacy is not just about meaning making, it is more about creating different types of relations and constructing different kinds of social identities.

Sebba (2007:13) treats orthography as one aspect of literacy:

> Orthography is part of the 'technology of a writing system' but that writing system is itself a symbolic system embedded in a culture, shaping and yet also shaped by a set of cultural practices to which it gives, and by which it is given, meaning. While 'orthography' and 'literacy' are by no means synonymous, orthography is a fundamental element of written language; therefore, orthography too is situated in social practice. Orthography, too, needs and deserves a 'practice account'.

Sebba (2007) argues that the possibility of variation is a prerequisite for social meaning . Thus, in order for orthography to carry social meaning there should be potential choices involved. Nevertheless, most languages have a highly rule-governed and standardised orthographic system and there is little room for licenced/unlicensed orthographic deviation. Yet, spaces such as the internet create a context where orthographic variation can occur. Sebba specifies two roles that such deviations can take: the variation may be central to the construction of identity or contextualisation of the text. In this respect, Androutsopoulos' (2000) study of non-standard spelling in German fanzines indicates that unconventional spelling is an indicator of deviation from the norms of the dominant culture. Use of non-standard spelling expresses a significant sociocultural identity as the dominant culture is neglected by a sub-cultural group which adopts an oppositional stance in relation to the established and accepted norms.

The current study supports the sociocultural model of orthography as opposed to the autonomous model which defines orthography as a culturally neutral technology detached from specific social contexts or promoting a single ideal alphabetic writing system (Street, 1984:1). The sociocultural practices of orthography indicate the attributed social values to linguistic variations in particular contexts of use and the social positioning of a speech community which is expressed in writing practices.

4. Sociolinguistics of Farsi Orthography

In Farsi orthography, script variations which are linguistically interpreted as similar alternatives may also reflect different sociocultural meanings. For example, the word 'towel', in Farsi [ho:lə], can be officially written in two different ways using two different letters («ﻩ» and «ﻫ») that represent the same sound /h/. The more traditional spelling makes use of the borrowed- Arabic letter «ﻩ» while the

modern/nationalistic attitude towards the writing system is associated with the tendency to purify Farsi from loanwords. Iranian nationalism challenges the hegemony of Islam and emphasises a kind of identity which is associated with Iran's pre-Islamic history and culture as well as the rich literacy heritage of Persian language. With regards to Iranian nationalism, Kia (1998:10) argues:

> According to the nationalist discourse, the Persian language had preserved the cultural independence and the authentic national identity of the Iranian people. Throughout the 'dark centuries' of foreign domination, despite a religion forced on them by Arabs and prolonged political rule in foreign languages such as Arabic and Turkish, Iranians had preserved 'their' culture and national consciousness by keeping 'their' literary language alive. However, Persian was losing its independence because of the large number of borrowed Arabic words. Compounding that, new scientific and technological words were being imported from European languages. In order to preserve their national identity, the people of Iran had to purge Persian of foreign words and terminologies.

Choice of spelling (حوله or هوله) in writing a single word reflects different social meanings and different language ideologies in the sense that «ه» indexes the national identity while choosing «ح» is associated with a different sociocultural perspective (Islamic ideologies and conservatism). In relation to this, a member of Iranian diaspora in Belgium (who is in the researcher's circle of friends) indicates his strong national identity by replacing the Arabic letter «ح» (/h/) with the phonetically similar letter «ه» in spelling his first name: [**h**amed]. He adopts a non-standard and relatively unrecognizable spelling to de-arabicize his name. Thus, writing is seen as a social, cultural and historical practice (Sebba, 2012) as words are spelled in the alternative un-Arabic forms in Farsi or when computer mediated discourse is written with the use of Romanized/non-standard Farsi spelling. Therefore, decisions about orthography are viewed as indicators of values that writers attribute to the representation of language as well as the identity which a writer desires to voice.

5. Digital literacy

Literacy involves encoding and decoding both linguistic and semiotic resources such as using and analysing images, page layouts and text structures. Although literacy practices accomplished on pen and paper are multidimensional, the emergence of digital technologies added to the ways in which people can communicate meaning (Tagg, 2015).

Research on new literacy practices started to grow in the 1980s with the work of scholars such as Street (1984) and Scollon & Scollon (1981). Jones and Hafner (2012:13) define digital literacies as "the practices of communicating, relating, thinking and being associated with digital media". Through the use of new technology people develop digital literacies as they make connections

socially to others and enact their identities in various contexts. This may involve the ability to understand the impact of digital tools on the literacy practices in the sense that understanding the affordances and constraints of digital tools and the ability to adapt the affordances and constraints to specific situations is part of being digitally literate in the age of technology.

Compared to the traditionally defined literacy practices, Jones and Hafner (2012) argue that some boundaries are breaking through the use of digital technology. They believe that i) digital literacy practices are not restricted to particular times and spaces; ii) digital media affordances make writing more interactive and conversation-like; iii) barriers between the producer and consumer of digital tools are breaking down; iv) users can be engaged in many practices at the same time and v) digital tools have the capacity to be modified and mixed to create new meanings and activities in different situations. We may conclude that digital literacies are not just about new ways of reading and writing but also about new ways of thinking, meaning making and being related to others. People have to acquire and develop new abilities to understand the dynamics of mediation and appropriate the digital tools to accomplish social practices.

5.1 Digital spelling variation

Spelling variations on the internet, or what Tagg (2015) calls *textisms*, are rule-based patterns which are better described as *re-spellings*. English examples include phonetic re-spelling such as 4U (for you), colloquial re-spelling such as yep (yes) and consonant re-spelling such as plz (please). It has been argued that respelled words are short, common non-complex words which are easily recognizable in terms of meaning so that the users tend to repeat the same re-spellings (Tagg, 2015). Likewise, Shorties (2007) points out that re-spelling is regulated by a finite set of orthographic principles. Spelling variants actually reflect an internet user's strong literacy skill since playing with spelling requires a good understanding of the (fairly tight) parameters within which spelling in alternative ways is possible.

The assumption that views instances of unconventional digital spelling as re-spelling instead of misspelling allows spelling variation to be meaningful. In other words, the potential for the emergence of meaning arises where the conventional norms allow for a specific choice of spelling but it is still possible to deviate from codified norms and spell the words in variant ways (particularly in the unregulated space of the internet). Yet deviation from the regularities should be recognizable and the word should be respelled in a way that the sound-letter correspondence of the language is respected (Tagg, 2015; Sebba, 2007). In this way, the original meaning is conveyed and at the same time additional social meaning is created through the unconventional spelling. Therefore, re-spelling or non-standard spelling on the internet is not a matter of random choices but is selected from a scope of possible variation. Also, re-spelling is formed according to the principles and some degree

of closeness to the standard; it then reflects the original purpose of communication and at the same time functions as a meaning-making resource.

5.2 Emergence of non-standard Farsi orthography on the internet

The digital revolution and its underlying system of global interconnection radically changed methods of communication around the world while the advent of microcomputers in the 1980s brought the evolution of technology into everyday life. When the computer eventually found its way to Iran, an urgent need for a new orthographic convention was felt. In 1993, a software programmer raised the idea for the first time of creating a convention which was compatible with the computer word processor as Arabic script-based orthography was not supported by the early versions of electronic devices (Atarsharghi, 2016). Eurofarsi, an independent centre for initiating cultural transformation, attempted to reform the Arabic-based Farsi alphabet and change the script to Latin. However, Eurofarsi was viewed with scepticism as it implied a threat both to the preservation of the script/language and to the Islamic state which enjoyed considerable advantages through the use of a script which is widely employed across all Muslim countries in the Middle East. While Eurofarsi's effort did not result in an official reformation of Farsi script, it initiated the development of a non-standard and non-official Latin-based orthography which was compatible with the computerized preparation of the text. The invented writing system which is called *Finglish* or *Pinglish* (a portmanteau of Farsi or Persian with English), was extensively employed by the early users of mobile phone text messaging, email and the World Wide Web in Iran. The phonetic equivalent of Farsi letters was used in the process of transliteration while those letters which did not have phonetic equivalents in Latin alphabet were transcribed by multigraphs. For example, the letter "ق" denotes the voiced velar fricative (IPA: /ɣ/) and is absent from the Latin alphabet. The phoneme is typed as /gh/ in Romanized Farsi. Due to the unsystematic process of Romanization, there is no one single correct way of writing and internet users may write the same word using different letters. For example, "where are you" in Farsi is transcribed as [koja:i:]; but it might be Romanised with different endings: "kojaee", "kojayi", "koja'i" or "kojaei".[40]

To sum up, the text transmission protocol on the internet is based on ACSII which contains a set of characters shaped based on Roman alphabet and English sounds. As a result, speakers of languages other than English who want to communicate online, encounter different degrees of difficulty depending on how close their language is to English (Danet and Herring, 2007). Internet users in Iran immediately adopt Finglish as an orthographic convention which is able to work with the technological devices. Today, universal character encoding (the Unicode Standard) which establishes the basis for text data processing in any language (Danet and Herring, 2007) equips most

[40] These four different spelling choices are examples found in the corpus.

computers and mobile phones with the Farsi keyboard; nevertheless, many Iranians still use Finglish to communicate with each other on the internet. (e.g. Finglish has its advocates among second generation Iranians in exile who find Farsi spelling very difficult). Although changing the language of a mobile phone virtual keyboard is accomplished by the touch of one button (the button is market by an arrow in Figure 41), the keyboard layout of PCs and laptops needs to be manually labelled with Farsi alphabet stickers (Figure 42). Both the stickers and the procedure of changing the language on a computer screen might be influential for users' preference to type in Finglish on a computer.

Figure 41. iphone’s virtual keyboard for text messaging in Farsi script

Figure 42. Labelled laptop keyboard with Farsi keyboard stickers; white lettering on transparent background

Another divergence from the orthographic norms which occurs in computer mediated discourse is the use of the Farsi script to write in other languages (I call this type of spelling *Englisi*, a portmanteau of English with Farsi). Users normally deploy this strategy to perform a playful move in highly informal communication settings such as texting apps, Facebook, etc.

Figure 43. Screenshot from the Facebook page of a participant, using Farsi script to write in English

Figure 43 shows a status update of a participant who repeats her supervisor's English words in her update. The post is written in Farsi and she keeps writing in Farsi script as she quotes from her supervisor (underlined in red).

Translation:

The only thing that I never expected was that one day my supervisor tells me «you have a good pen» and «this is well-written».

The use of non-standard Englisi in particular requires a careful process of transcription as Englisi easily appears to be inconsistent and illegible due to lack of transliteration norms. This issue will be elaborated further in the quantitative analysis section of this chapter.

5.3 Farsi orthography on Facebook

As a social media website, Facebook forms a global network where interactive written discourse among members of different speech communities is performed. Depending on the type/mode of Facebook activity, the type of relation with the intended audience and the topic of digital discourse, features of both spoken and written languages appear in the construction of digital discourse. However, in general terms, Farsi literacy practices on Facebook (compared to other modes of online discourse such as email) are more associated with speech-like spelling, enriched with emojis, phonetic reduction, reduplication of letters (e.g. خیلییی زیاد / soooo much) and rebus writing[41] (i.e. a particular configuration of letters or graphic symbols to indicate words or sounds. For example,

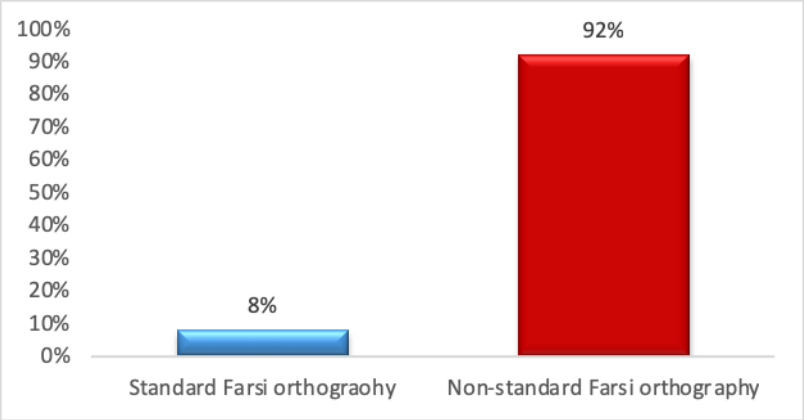
[41] Rebus writing is an old practice that existed long before internet. Rebuses have inspired the development of some ancient languages such as Egyptian hieroglyph as pictures represent words/sounds. Many forms of rebus are found in the modern wordplays puzzles. One of the most popular examples is "👁 ♥ U" which represents "I love you". Today, the constantly evolving emoji keyboards which are available in most of digital devices make rebus writing a kind of straightforward practice which can transfer meaning creatively and quickly.

‘2R2R’ [dordor] in Finglish, represents ‘ driving aimlessly’ as ‘2’ is pronounced [do] in Farsi. The accent spoken by people in the capital city (Tehran) is considered particularly prestigious and is widely deployed on Facebook. The non-standard digital writing system attributes different values to the standard characters of the Farsi alphabet in the sense that the symbolic and/or indexical value of a particular letter is emphasised by duplication and minimised by deletion or substitution (e.g. the word ‘kiss’ in Farsi [bu:s] is frequently written as ‘بووووس’ [bu:u:u:u:s] at the end of messages to symbolically signify a gesture of affection. The number of ‘U’s seemingly correlates with the degree of affection). As a result, Facebook audiences are invited to make use of their linguistic and contextual knowledge to interpret the message. Some motivations lie behind the tendency to deviate from the codified orthographic norms in Facebook practices: i) to be able to type as fast and efficiently as possible (to comply with the orthographic-related restrictions of cyberspace), ii) to creatively play with the language and iii) to express an online identity, stance or group solidarity. The last factor will be extensively discussed and exemplified in the qualitative analysis section.

6. Participants, data and quantitative analysis

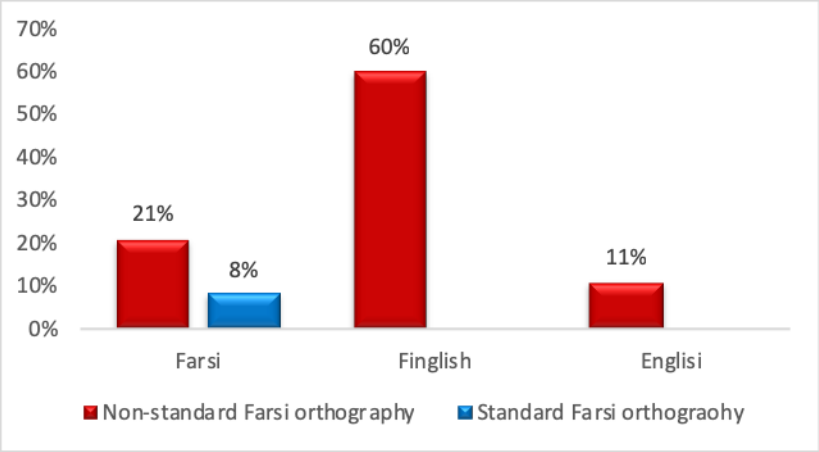
This case study concentrates on the digital orthographic practices in Farsi which have been found in the corpus. The quantitative analysis charts the proportion of use of standard Farsi spelling as well as the different types of non-standard Farsi spelling on Facebook of first and second generation migrants in order to create a general picture which can then be analysed further. The qualitative approach aims to examine how different types of non-standard Farsi spelling are used in the context of Facebook in a diasporic community and how these spellings are selected to communicate a particular ideology and express a certain sociocultural identity. The Facebook practices of 37 Belgium-based participants of Iranian descent were monitored over the time span of 4 years (from 2010 to 2014). The different types of Farsi orthography used by the participants on Facebook were systematically quantified. The unit of counting was words; however, some non-standard colloquial expressions were counted as a single unit because the non-standardness is sometimes attributed to the combination of words in an expression (this will be exemplified later in this chapter). The result of this quantitative analysis is charted in table 18. The table generally indicates the proportion of use of standard and non-standard Farsi spelling on Facebook of participants. According to the table, only 8% of the whole Farsi practices on Facebook are related to standard Farsi orthography and the other 92% is the proportion of non-standard Farsi spelling use on Facebook.

Table 18. proportion of use of standard and non-standard Farsi orthography



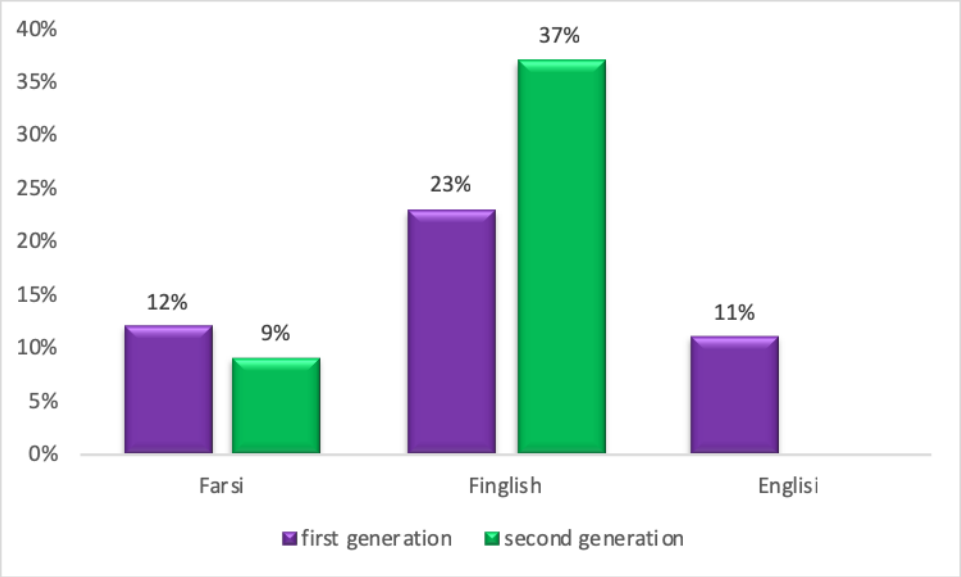
In a more detailed picture, the non-standard orthographic practices in Farsi are presented in three forms: non-standard Farsi script (21%), Finglish (60%) and Englisi (11%).

Table 19. Proportion of use of standard and non-standard Farsi orthography



The proportion of use of standard Farsi script (8%) is entirely belonged to first-generation immigrants' contribution to Facebook writing practices. A comparative analysis of use of the non-standard Farsi spelling between two groups of first (n=16) and second generation Iranian immigrants (n= 21) is shown in Table 20. The results report that the use of Finglish in both groups of first and second generation immigrants is at the top of the hierarchy of spelling choice. In addition, the use of the Farsi script (in both Farsi and Englisi columns) is remarkably higher in the first generation immigrants' orthographic practices. The last finding indicates that second generation immigrants in this corpus never use Englisi in their digital literacy practices.

Table 20. Proportion of use of non-standard Farsi spelling in two groups of first and second generation immigrants



The results confirm that strong literacy skills are required for the Facebook users to play with the spelling and/or project a ludic identity. This can be particularly represented in Englisi practices which are exclusively performed by the (more Farsi-literate) first generation immigrants. Englisi seems to involve a careful transliteration/transcription of non-Farsi words. For the Englisi spelling to be recognizable for the audience, users should make effort to write as legibly as possible and avoid any complication, letter reduction or duplication. Use of diacritics often facilitates the process of Englisi reading comprehension[42]. Interestingly, the use of Finglish in the community of more Farsi-literate first-generation immigrants still overtakes use of Farsi script. Such a preference might be explained by the fact that typing in Farsi script on a computer keyboard requires a demanding procedure. The computer user needs to be aware of the exact place of Farsi letters on a computer keyboard and should change the language of a computer to standard Farsi. In addition, use of non-Farsi words in a Farsi text, lack of knowledge about the correct Farsi spelling and underrepresentation of short vowels in Farsi script are among the factors which encourage the use of Finglish on Facebook. The most frequent patterns of non-standard Farsi orthography in the review corpus are listed and exemplified in Table 21.

[42] In Englisi writing, there are unlicensed conventions which people mostly follow. Internet users, in particular Facebook users, agree on the deployment of specific phonetic equivalents of Latin characters which do not exist in Farsi. For example, Farsi lacks the voiced and voiceless dental fricative (/ð/ and /θ/) sounds which are usually represented through the use of symbol <th>. In the process of transliteration and writing of non-Farsi words using the Farsi alphabet (Englisi), Facebook data shows that people choose the Arabic loan letter /ث/ in the Farsi alphabet which, together with two other alphabetic letters, is pronounced equivalently as /s/ in Farsi (Arabic pronunciation however distinguished among three different letters). For example, "birt**h**day girl" is used most frequently in the corpus: Englisi: برثدی گرل

Table 21. Typology of non-standard spellings found in Facebook data

Finglish	Romanization of Farsi **(Table 22)**
Englisi	Representation of other languages with Farsi scripts
Colloquial orthography	Representation of colloquial speech (Table 5)
Sound-spelling correlation based on the standard pronunciation (eye dialect)	خاب [xab] instead of خواب [xab] (sleep) the silent letter «و» is deleted in the spelling.
Reduction of the word to the first letter	ج [ʤ] instead of جواب [ʤævab] (answer)
Reduplication of vowels	سلاااام [sælaaam] instead of سلام [sælam] (Hello) The vowel «ا» is repeated in the spelling.
Replacement of an Arabic letter with a Farsi character of the same sound	لطفن [lotfæn] instead of لطفاً [lotfæn] (please)
Addition of a phonetically redundant letter to the beginning of the word	عافرین[afærin] instead of افرین [afærin] The letter «ع» is added to the beginning.
Girlish talk	عجق [ɛʤɣ] instead of عشق [ɛʃɣ] (love) Replacement of the voiceless palato-alveolar fricative with the voiced palato-alveolar affricate
Use of Non-standard catchphrases	خوفی [xu:fi] instead of خوبی [xu:bi] (are you fine)
Insertion of numerals	باره۲ instead of دوباره [dobare] (again) Farsi «۲» is English 2 and is pronounced [do]
Contraction of a compound verb to a non-standard simple verb	زنگیدن [Zængidæn] (to call) instead of زنگ زدن [zæng zædæn] (to make a phone call)

Table 22 shows the most frequent internet-only patterns of Finglish spelling in the Facebook data. I call the instances in table 22, internet-only orthographic practices, as I identify these Finglish spelling patterns on the internet but have never come across them anywhere else. I rely on my own subjective judgement to report my perception of non-standard orthographic practices which are limited to the context of the internet. While the recognition of internet-only orthographic patterns seems to be a matter of evidence rather than intuition, native speakers can clearly hold different opinions.

Even an unlicensed deviation such as Finglish is constrained to a large extent by conventional norms. In other words, users adhere to a set of norms to spell the most widely used kind of non-standard digital literacy practice in Farsi. Within the ill-defined scheme of Finglish orthography, the 5 most frequent examples of deviation from the agreed conventions are displayed in Table 22.

Table 22. Typology of Finglish orthography found in Facebook data

Consonant writing (a feature of standard Farsi spelling)	bhm instead of behem [bɛhɛm] (to me)
Consonant writing and reduction of word ending (typical feature of colloquial language)	fk instead of fekr [fɛkr] (thought)
Reduplication of vowels	aziiiizam instead of azizam [æzi:zæm] (My dear)
Insertion of numerals	ho3le [hosele] instead of hosele (mood) Farsi 3 is pronounced [se]
Insertion of English numerals	2si instead of tusi [tu:si] (gray)

The degree to which a digital text represents the features of spoken or written language depends on its communicative situation as well as the communicative nearness and distance. Re-spelling or non-standard spelling on the Facebook of diaspora in this study mainly reflects the features of spoken language. Colloquial speech in digital Farsi practices is often associated with the informal and regional pronunciation of the Tehran metropolitan area. Colloquial speech not only mirrors pronunciation but more importantly indexes sociocultural identity, background, education, etc. Likewise, eye dialect, the non-standard spelling which does not change the pronunciation, signals a user's particular social stance or subculture (Tagg, 2015). In Table 23, the most frequent types of colloquial Farsi spelling are charted.

Table 23. Typology of colloquial orthography found in Facebook data

Reduction of the word ending as it is pronounced in colloquial language	مث [mes] instead of مثل [mesl] (such as, like) The letter «ل» is deleted in the end.
Contraction of verbs and their implied personal pronouns in all tenses	برم [beræm] instead of بروم [berævæm] (I go)
Contraction of a definite direct object with its following case marker	کتابوبرمیدارم [ketabo bærmidaræm] instead of کتاب را برمیدارم [ketab ra bærmidaræm] (I take the book)
Contraction of plural suffix [ha] with nouns	کتابا [ketaba] instead of کتابها [ketabha] (books)
Substitution of 'is' /æst/ with <e> /ə/	خوبه [xu:bə] (it is good) instead of خوباست [xu:b æst]

Since the regional pronunciation of Tehran is widely considered as standard and frequently used by the Facebook users across various geographical areas, other regional re-spellings rarely occur on Facebook. Among the users who have origins in regions other than Tehran, a small number do not follow the typical transformation of < آ >/a/ to <او > /u:/ in Tehran accent.

Regarding the multilingual participants in the corpus whose first language is French, choices of spelling in Finglish sometimes deviate from the (non-standard) convention that Farsi-speaking internet users usually adopt. For example, the French diaphonemes /ch/ is 'unconventionally' chosen to represent /ʃ/ in the Finglish practices of the participants of this study. Since such a departure makes the text totally illegible, some people might treat it as a mistake. However, given the nature of

non-standardness, such a judgment would be disputable. In fact, as the guidelines for Finglish spelling are not clearly delineated, there is more room for manoeuvre or being more non-standard. Being influenced by French spelling rules, even non-standard Finglish spelling is a multilingual matter.

In another example, the word 'shal' written in Finglish, is open to two potential interpretations: the word can be read in Finglish as [ʃal] (shawl) or it may refer to the combination of /s/ in English and 'hal' in Farsi which can be read as [ɛshal] (diarrhoea). Therefore, the lack of well-established orthographic rules for Finglish spelling might result in non-standardness shading over into illegibility, misinterpretation and miscommunication. The online context of Facebook (where the physical absence of interlocutors predominantly places constraints on the way that the message is communicated and perceived) adds further complexity to the picture[43].

7. Orthographic decisions and subcultural identity construction

This part of the chapter concentrates on a more qualitative discussion and particularly discusses how certain spelling choices are connected to the construction of particular identity on Facebook.

[43] As an unsystematic non-standard Romanized orthographic system, Finglish is generally difficult to be read by Farsi speakers. Although Finglish is non-standard, it still follows some spelling norms. The influence of French disrupts the norms and results in potential illegibility and miscommunications. The influence of French might have a different degree of difficulty for the speakers of other languages (e.g. English speakers).

Figure 44. Screenshot from Javid's Facebook page

The uploaded picture contains a sentence in colloquial Farsi: 'friendship is like a moustache, it doesn't suit everyone'. The image shows a figure with a top hat, French moustache, pipe and a monocle which together imply a western gentleman's look in the nineteenth century. The written text embedded in the image as well as the comments following the post reflects a kind of lexical and spelling choice associated with a social group of people in Iran called *Lutis*. Traditionally, Luti refers to people characterized with drinkers, thieves and cheaters in financial matters. They are roughs and knife-wielders known for their untrustworthiness and their central roles in organizing spontaneous demonstration and chaos (Floor, 2010). Lutis dress distinctively in white shirts, over the shoulder black jackets and hats; they carry objects such as knives, chains and handkerchiefs and grow long moustaches. In the wide scope of meaning, the term Luti is positively used to describe rival street gangs who are more of chivalrous and truthful type of people who hold to their promises and strongly maintain their connections (brotherhood) with other members in the gang. Today, Lutis still adhere to a number of features: a moustache, particular choices of words and use of specific prosodic features in their speech. The picture in the post shares a few elements with the typical features of a

Luti including the hat and the moustache. The text in the picture compares friendship with a moustache suggesting that people must exhibit defining characteristics to be called true friends. Despite the resemblance between the classic examples of a western gentleman and a Luti of the nineteenth century (Figure 45 displays a Luti figure), it is believed that the picture has been 'wrongly chosen' to complement the text. However, deploying the picture of a Western gentleman to represent Lutiness, might be explained in terms of the 're-invention of tradition' in the context of migration. In this respect, a person with Luti aspirations who wishes to project his Luti identity in social media, uploads a corresponding picture which he has at his disposal. The picture which is reshaped in the context of displacement, reflects a tradition which has been re-invented in order to inform modern identity on Facebook.

Figure 45. The classic example of a Luti

The posted picture belongs to Javid[44], a participant of this study who moved to Belgium as a refugee when he was 19 years old. It seems that Javid did not complete secondary education before leaving Iran, although he didn't openly admit that in the interview. Upon his arrival in Belgium, Javid learned French and finished secondary school. At the time of interview, four years after his arrival, Javid was neither studying, nor working; instead, he spent plenty of time surfing on the internet and particularly on Facebook. Javid's Facebook posts predominantly feature subjects such as friendship, broken heart, and respect for family and friends in the form of written texts or texts embedded in pictures[45]. A large number of posts are characterized with particular word choices and prosodic features associated with Luti speech. Figure 44 displays an example: Translation of the status update:

[44] The participant's name is a pseudonym

[45] It is worth mentioning that in 2018, 4 years after the original interview, Javid's posts are no longer written on the same subjects and the number of posts uploaded is much less frequent.

- Friendship is like a moustache, it doesn't suit everyone (in Farsi)

Translation of the comments following the status update:

- We are menials (in Farsi)
- What's the insistence for? (in Finglish/Romanised Farsi)
- We are nothing you are the centerpiece dude (Javid's comment in Farsi)

Figuratively the first commenter says 'your humble servant'. The first commenter symbolically expresses his inferior status to show his respect to the poster and represent himself as a loyal member in the circle of true friends of Javid. Moreover, the commenter deploys a subject pronoun which signals a kind of respect for himself. Use of the royal we (i.e. first person plural pronoun to refer to a single person) is the typical representation of Luti speech. The history of Luti indicates that respect is one of the central concepts in the frame of Luti language interpretation in the sense that while members of the Luti 'mafia' support and protect each other, they command great respect (Floor, 2010). In this discursive environment, the commenter treats both the poster and himself with a kind of respect which is reflected through the choice of words. In addition to the word selection which shows the adherence of members to the in-group values and ideologies, the use of non-standard orthography here also signals a subcultural distinction. The first commenter deviates from standard spelling as he uses two <ک> (/k/) and three <ر> (/r/) in writing [ɣaʃakerim] (we are menials). In this example, particularly, duplication and placing the stress on /k/ simulates Luti language to a large extent. Therefore, a Luti voice is constructed not only through word choices but also through spelling choices. In this sense, the use of unconventional spelling involves a change in referential meaning and contextualizes a particular subcultural stance and identity.

While the poster and the first commenter seemingly share the same values, the second comment implies a different ideology and attitude towards the status update. The second commenter's remark ('what's the insistence for' followed by a question mark) is not transparent in the context of the post; yet it suggests disquiet and disagreement between the poster and the commenter. It can be assumed that the writer is asking about Javid's insistence on the frequent use of Luti theme, language, prosodic features or, more generally, that he is posting too many status updates. On the other hand, while Luti ideology is associated with tradition, heritage and long-established conventional practices, use of non-standard Finglish (as opposed to Farsi script) contextualizes a difference in the

commenter's sociocultural status as well as in the value that is allocated to the Farsi script. Finglish functions as a means whereby the writer distances himself from the Luti subcultural group[46].

Javid, the initial poster, re-joins the conversation in the last turn to ironically answer the disapproval by taking the lower stance and praising the commenter. Javid's reply ('we are nothing you are the centrepiece dude') refers to the Up Jenkins game[47] which is called 'centrepiece or nothing' in Farsi. Javid sneers at the second commenter as he figuratively says that he, Javid, knows nothing and the commenter knows everything so that the objection about articulating the Luti voice has been properly raised. At the same time, Javid's response reflects Luti language in many ways: as in the previous turns of the conversation, respect plays a major role in understanding the purpose of communication in Luti speech. By positioning himself in an inferior status, Javid shows (false) respect to his Facebook friend. In addition, the use of royal we (first person plural pronoun in order to refer to himself) and the use of word 'haji'[48] at the end of the phrase (figuratively meaning dude) both index typical features of Luti speech. Furthermore, addressing an interlocutor would be respectful if the second person plural [ʃoma] were employed instead of the second person singular [to]. Therefore, a context-bound analysis based on the concept of contextualization cues shows how Javid adheres to Luti attitudes and embeds respect in his literacy practices to ironically make a point in his communication with a Facebook friend through word choices. Again, the non-standard orthography functions as cues of subcultural positioning: the unconventional spelling of the word <شوما> [ʃu:ma] (you) instead of <شما> [ʃoma] is exclusively associated with Luti language and context. Non-standard spelling is viewed as an identity marker of a specific sociocultural subgroup and indexes the social stance of the internet users. Javid is a member of the community of Iranian immigrants in Belgium; at the same time, he adopts a subcultural Luti voice in the online space. His stance is multi-layered in the sense that his heritage or ethnic minority identity in the social context of Belgium interacts with his subcultural identity which reflects the presumed life style of Lutis[49].

[46] Use of Finglish can be simply attributed to the commenter's posting habits or to his Latin-based keyboard which favours the use of Latin characters. To provide further clarification, the commenter's Facebook page was viewed to check the frequency of use of Finglish. In total, 7 posts are open to the public view including two profile pictures, four cover photos and one textual status update. The language of communication in all 7 Facebook posts is Farsi. The commenter's contribution to his posts comprises 11 turns in total and all 11 turns are written in Farsi script.

[47] A game in which a player hides a small object in his/her palm/fist. The other player wins if he/she correctly identifies which hand contains the object.

[48] Haji literally refers to a Muslim male person who has been to Mecca as a pilgrim. (*The Oxford Pocket Dictionary of Current English*). In colloquial speech haji is a title to address almost any male person; yet, the use of the word is mostly associated with a specific social group.

[49] Javid found a follow-up inquiry about his Luti aspiration too intrusive and hence no follow-up conversation was made.

The online context of Facebook affords the space where unconventional orthographic practices transcend cultural bounds and gain value and power in certain mediated communications. Facebook users can claim group solidarity and inclusion through spelling choices (the first commenter) as well as exclusion and subcultural detachment (the second commenter). In other words, orthographic variants in this example obtain their meaning from a cultural knowledge and contextualise the users' affiliation or distance to/from a subcultural group.

The discursive space of Facebook provides a platform for exploring the orthographic choices. Non-standard spellings occurring on Facebook might be seen as illiterate in other online discursive domains (e.g. email) or even in the context of other social networking sites. In this respect, Androutsopoulos (2000) argues that the social and symbolic value of spelling selection is defined in relation to its interplay with other types of spelling as well as the design and discourse of the media platform where the literacy practices are accomplished. The observations in this study suggest that in the context of Facebook, deviation from standard Farsi spelling is becoming a norm for the family of Facebook users to the extent that even new members adopt unconventional spelling choices to show their adherence to the community of users. In other words, non-standard orthography functions as a sign of identification with the Facebook community. The value of conventional spelling is re-defined among Facebook users and a kind of in-group prestige is allocated to the orthographic deviations.

8. Emojis

In the ever-evolving world of digital communication, emojis and emoticons are visual cues which give rise to the new ways of communication and add extra layers of meaning to the written text. This section concentrates on emojis and emoticons as significant components of internet communication.

ASCII (The American Standard Code for Information Interchange) which was originally developed from telegraphic codes, is a character-encoding scheme based on the ordering of the English alphabet. The design of Unicode Standard (the most modern character-transmission schemes) is based on ASCII but supports many more characters than ASCII. While ASCII is limited to the encoding of only the Latin alphabet, Unicode Standard encodes and interprets all the characters available in the world's written languages. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, before the character encoding system was extended beyond ASCII to Unicode standard, Finglish emerged to make digital communication in the Farsi language possible (as the Farsi script was not supported by ASCII). In addition to encompassing all characters of the languages in the world, Unicode Standard includes more punctuation, symbols and emojis as compared to the limited capacity of ASCII. Therefore, early emoticons were handled by the ASCII-based computers of the day in the early 1980s almost at the same time when text message functionality added to mobile phones in 1984 when emoticons were widely used in mobile devices. It was only with the advent of text messaging and email in the1990s that emoticons gained widespread popularity.

Emoticons or text-only emotional icons are simply formed through a combination of punctuation, letters and numbers, and mostly represent facial expressions. They are used in text messaging, email or other types of computer-mediated communications. Slight variations to basic forms of emoticons can give a new definition and express a new feeling. For example, a sad face :(can be made very sad :((or eyes in grin :D can be replaced by crinkled eyes XD to show further amusement. While it is widely suggested that emoticons or ASCII-based emoticons were first used by Scott Fahlman in 1982, the history of emoticon use goes further back to a decade prior when PLATO (a computer system for education designed by the university of Illinois) users had been employing emoticons as early as 1972. However, the introduction of internet ASCII emoticons provoked their commonly acknowledged/universal use in early 1980s.

On the basis of text-only emoticons, a mobile phone operator in Japan created a set of emoticon-like cartoon characters in the form of images in 1999 and called them emoji (meaning "picture character" in Japanese). In 2010, the Unicode standard officially adopted emojis and provided an extended set of emoji as menu choice to enable people around the world to use the small images which are easily inserted into the text. In 2015, emojis got a diversity update in relation to skin tones and same sex couples (Facebook.com). In the past few years, every update in the operating systems of computers, mobile phones and tablets brings new emojis into use and hence the language of emojis continues to evolve cross-culturally.

Emoticons which are produced by keyboard characters and indicate tone or emotion have been mostly replaced by emojis. With the advent of social media, more images and visual elements have been incorporated into digital writing system and therefore, the pictographic colourful equivalent of the emoticon which is produced with less effort and time quickly found its way into text messages, emails and electronic practices in social media. Although the function of emojis and emoticons seems to be almost the same, research describes emojis as symbols with a greater effect on how the commitment and mood of the emoji user is perceived (Ganster, Eimler and Kramer, 2012).

Emojis (come from Japanese e 'picture' and moji 'character') are widely used across various social media and instant messaging platforms and have fundamentally changed the way in which people communicate in the informal online space. Danesi (2017) argues that the main function of emoji is to create / maintain friendly connections between the interlocutors and leave open the line of communication. He defines the three most common applications of emojis as utterance opener, utterance ending and silence avoidance in digital messages exchanged mainly among friends and family members. Research has defined multiple functions for emojis used in computer mediated communication: expression of emotion (Dresner and Herring, 2010); digital non-verbal signalling (Lo, 2008) meaning enhancement (Lim, 2015) and tone modification (Herring and Dainas, 2017).

Herring and Dainas's (2017) study of Graphicons in Facebook threads reports that emojis are most prevalent and favoured over other types of graphical means of communication on Facebook. Herring and Dainas argue that emojis are most commonly used because they are relatively small, static and not too detailed. In addition, Facebook emoji sets are relatively similar and well-established on different digital devices compared to other graphicons (e.g. Facebook memes). The automatic conversion of text to emoji is perhaps influential in the frequent use of emojis on Facebook. When typing shorthand, using abbreviations or emoticons, text substitutions suggest a corresponding emoji to be inserted in the text.

Facebook emojis are available in different types ranging from smileys & people to animals & nature, food & drink, activity, travel & places, objects, symbols and flags. Emojis visually describe concepts, feelings, situations and objects in a fast efficient way. Although most emojis on Facebook are culturally neutral, 6 options of choosing among different skin tones were added to the Facebook emoji menu in 2015. A particular skin tone can be selected by hovering on the default yellow-coloured emoji. Therefore, racial and ethnic considerations have been involved in the process of emoji design (Figure 46).

Figure 46. Skin colour alternatives, Facebook App

Just like gestures in spoken interactions, emojis in digital communications play at different levels of meaning making. i) An emoji can represent a stance and make a pragmatic/argumentative comment on the language. For example, an smiley at the end of a textual message can imply an affective state, an evaluative stance, etc. ii) An emoji can appear iconic and symbolize a concept or a word. For example a birthday cake emoji can be used to send a happy birthday message. iii) An emoji can also help to convey the main aspect of what the user intends to say. In fact the emoji can function to represent a complete utterance. for example a thumbs up emoji alone, can signify 'I wish you success in your exam'. Seemingly, the function of emoji in digital conversation is

comparable to that of gesture in the condition of co-presence. In this respect, the inspiration for the interpretation of emoji is similar to the signal that drives members of a spoken conversation in their analysis as they try to perceive the meaning of a gesture used in the conversation. In sum, as the functions of emojis seem to be increasingly conventionalized, they can perform different communicative roles depicting physical gestures.

8.1 Emoji interpretation

The Facebook posts of participants in this study show interesting examples of emoji-only constructed messages which are relatively difficult for the audience to decode and translate. The meaning of emoji texts, or what is called rebus writing, is mainly queried by the audience and the writer often clarifies the cluster of emojis through words. Figure 47 displays an example.

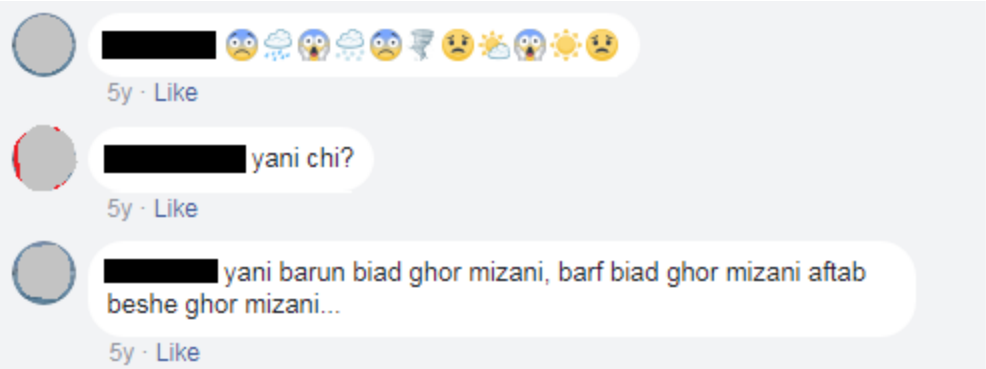


Figure 47. Rebus writing

This Facebook conversation starts with a photo uploaded by the husband of a participant in this study. The picture shows a close-up of the participant's face, frowning at the camera as the sunlight streams into her eyes. The husband posts the photograph on the participant's timeline and leaves a message entirely made by emojis. The first comment shows 6 smilies (fearful face, face screaming in fear and worried face) and 5 weather condition emojis (rainy, snowy, hurricane, partly claudy and sunny). In the second comment the participant asks for the clarification of emoji codes and in the third comment the husband deciphers the codes and spells out the meaning.

Translation:

5. What does it mean? (the participant's comment in Finglish)

6. It means that you keep nagging if it is rainy, snowy, sunny … (husband's comment in Finglish)

In general, emojis facilitate the comprehension of the message and create another mode of writing system as it is used along with the text; however, emoji writing as the only means of meaning making does not function as a meaning-enhancing tool. On the contrary, emoji-only writing creates a puzzle which has to be deciphered by the reader. In order to interpret the ambiguous emoji-only text in the above example, the relations of concepts with each other (emotionally-based and weather condition emojis) and with the outside setting (the uploaded picture of the participant) should be apparent for the interlocutor to be able to translate the text. Therefore, a specific frame of mind and a referential background knowledge are required for the meaning of non-verbal cues to be properly conveyed.

Nevertheless, some rebuses which represent expressions or proverbs might be figured out effortlessly. In the following Facebook conversation, the combination of two emoji characters of "horse face" and "money bag" in a Facebook comment is translated correctly by the audience.

Figure 48. Rebus interpretation

Translation:

6. Very rich
7. Yes being very rich is also a condition (in Farsi)

This Facebook conversation is initiated by a participant's status update defining the characteristics of a happy couple. Facebook audiences extensively discuss the subject through the comments. At some point in the stream of comments, people start mentioning some important features of happy couples which have not been pointed out in the status update. A Facebook audience uses emoji-only writing to convey the concept of being rich. In Farsi, the combination of [xær] (donkey) with certain nouns creates compound adjectives which imply the intensity of the nouns. [xær + pu:l] (Donkey + money) negatively suggests a very rich person or the state of being very rich[50]. A verbal counterpart of the

[50] Here in fact, the horse face emoji is used instead of a donkey due to the lack of a donkey face symbol in the Facebook emoji set.

emoji set might be ‘couples should be wealthy to be happy’ or some similar translation. A visual code can actually imply many possible paraphrases and maybe even more multiple distinct meanings than a verbal code. This kind of emoji translation is called “calquing” in Danesi’s (2017:78-79) work. Calquing is a transliteral process in which verbal codes are converted to emojis in a conceptual system. In order to decode the emoji, the audience requires more than a knowledge of semantic possibilities of the symbols; they need a knowledge of how to make an association between two concepts of an animal (donkey) and a moneybag. Such knowledge is embedded in a particular sociocultural/linguistic domain where young Iranian Farsi-speaking people informally communicate with each other. Although emoji has a “pictorial-conceptual” grammar, the syntax of Farsi verbal sentences still has its small impact in the sense that the two emoji forms follow the right-to-left writing system of Farsi.

Although the above comment is almost easily translated by a third party audience and the two symbols effortlessly and efficiently deliver the meaning, the emoji-only texts are often difficult to decipher. Danesi (2017) argues that the communication system including writing practices tends to minimize the effort required for interpretation and understanding of the message, therefore the emoji-only writing system will not survive. Although emoji characters represent concepts rather than sounds and the number of symbols used is considerably reduced in an emoji texts compared to a written text, the great effort required for comprehension of emoji-only writing would gradually cease its use.

Emoji use has spread from the realm of digital communication to all areas of social interaction such as advertisements. Emojis have evolved from simple digital icons (i.e. emoticons) which are comprehensible across cultures and languages to more complicated characters which are constantly being redesigned and expanding in shape and number across different apps and computer mediated platforms. An underlying knowledge for using emojis and an ability to correctly place them in combination with verbal and non-verbal cues in a message is required for the outcome to be meaningful and understandable. Such knowledge emerges as internet users communicate through the use of emojis. However, Facebook data exemplifies the displacement and mis-selection of emojis.

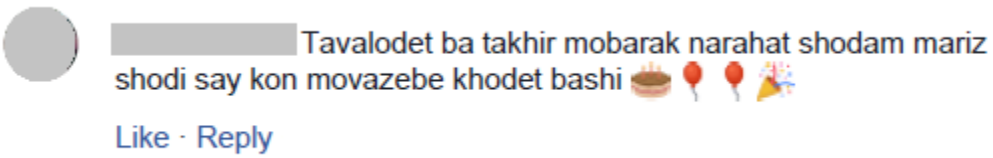


Figure 49. Emoji displacement

Translation:

Happy belated birthday sorry you got sick try to take care (in Finglish)

In this Facebook comment, emojis are correctly chosen to represent the concepts associated with a birthday such as a birthday cake, balloons and a party popper. Yet, the location of birthday emojis in the comment would be correct if they followed the happy birthday message. The commenter starts his remark with a happy birthday wish which is followed by the change of subject in the same comment. He expresses his sympathy for the fact that the Facebook participant is sick, and this is subsequently followed by the birthday emojis. Emoji language competence requires knowledge of how to appropriately code switch between two modes of verbal and non-verbal system. This is what Danesi (2017:98) calls "hybrid competence".

Another Facebook conversation displays the mis-selection of an emoji as an exchange unfolds between a participant and her mother.

Figure 50. Emoji mis-selection

Translation:

One year has passed without you my beautiful granny (in Farsi)
She is always in our heart rest in peace (in Farsi)

The participant uploads a picture of her passed away grandmother and adds a description for the picture. The participant's mother expresses her condolences in the first comment; however, the emoji at the end of the comment implies a happy and joyful feeling. The symbol is called 'face with tears of joy' which is seemingly deployed in place of a 'crying face' or similar emojis representing a sorrowful tone and intensifying the verbal acknowledgment of grandmother's death. The emoji may also be translated as a sign of sarcasm so that the commenter expresses the opposite of what she has mentioned in the comment: the grandmother's memory is not alive in our hearts and her soul does not rest in peace. However the second assumption is very unlikely to be true since the sensibility and

social awareness of both the participant and her mother are evident from other posts in the corpus. Moreover, the same wrong selection can be observed three times in the review corpus as tears of joy are inappropriately chosen to visually show sadness. Thus, the meaning of this particular emoji may be misinterpreted or mistranslated by many users as the distinction between tears of joy and tears of sorrow is not so clear.

The Unicode standard, the character coding system which supports languages worldwide, defines a universal and standard emoji character set in 2010 to be used in almost all languages. The set of standard emojis has been designed to meet the needs of culturally and linguistically heterogeneous group of internet users; for example, while the jack-o'-lantern emoji is most likely used by American Facebook users more often than others, Carp Streamer[51] emoji has its uses in Japan. Therefore, despite the universality of codes, some emojis are associated with a specific culture or tradition to the extent that the symbol might be confusing for users from other nations. This raises a controversy in the term "universal". Danesi (2017) re-defines the concept and argues that there is a *universality scale* for emojis and some emojis are higher on the scale than others and therefore have higher scale comprehensibility. For example a happy face emoji is most likely a universal emoji character among various cultures and places higher on the scale and is interpreted correctly worldwide.

Quantitatively, Facebook participants use the heart, smiling face with heart-eyes and face with tears of joy considerably more frequently than other symbols. In general, emojis are multifunctional on Facebook: i) emojis are easy to use when it is difficult to articulate concepts through words (e.g. apologizing); ii) emojis create fun, humorous, friendly and colourful effect; iii) they may help smooth the edges of harsh words; emojis save time and facilitate communication as they replace verbal characters or abbreviations (e.g. lol)

9. Conclusion

This chapter discussed how the sociocultural context of practice defines the choice of spelling on the internet and how Facebook particularly affords a communicative context where informal/non-standard spelling choices are used as resources to transfer social meaning.

The Facebook practices of the participants were monitored and the most frequent instances of non-standard Farsi scripts were identified and mapped in three categories: non-standard Farsi spellings, Finglish practices and colloquial orthography. Quantitatively, this chapter charts the proportions of use of standard and non-standard Farsi orthographic practices. The findings indicate that only 8% of all Farsi spellings in the corpus are related to the use of standard Farsi spelling on Facebook. The non-standard Farsi spelling use (92%) can be seen in the form of Farsi script (21%), Finglish (60%)

[51] carp-shaped wind socks flown in Japan to celebrate Children's Day

and Englishi (11%). In addition, the participants were divided into two groups of first and second generation migrants. While the whole standard Farsi orthographic practices as well as the non-standard Englisi are exclusively used by first generation migrants, Finglish is mostly deployed by second generation migrants (37%). Coincidentally, the proportion of use of non-standard Farsi orthography (92%) is evenly distributed between first and second generation migrants (46% per group).

Drawing on the framework that argues that orthography carries social meaning, a qualitative approach was also adopted to examine if people connect (non-standard) orthography to social identities/voices and project their sociocultural stances through the use of a particular spelling pattern. The interpretive approach revealed that the non-standard Farsi spelling practices can reflect a subcultural affiliation and the participants who contribute to a Facebook conversation may demonstrate their degree of affiliation as they take different distances towards the non-standard script associated with that specific subcultural aspiration. The ideological and symbolic analysis of use of non-standard Farsi orthography within Facebook of Iranian diasporic community showed that deviation from conventional spelling in Farsi is associated with users' orientation to deploy features of spoken language and their tendencies to represent particular attitudes, ideology and subcultural identity. That is to say, the participants' orthographic decisions on Facebook strategically manage audience design and create connections and group solidarity.

Chapter 10
Conclusion

1. General picture

Regarding the fast growing nature of technological developments and the increasing rate at which connections develop and data is shared in the online context, the need for an incorporation of foci of questions with respect to sociolinguistic research on the internet is felt. This dissertation brought together a collection of chapters which contributed to providing a sociolinguistic overview of discourse and social interactions on Facebook. As there was no existing consensus on the best methodological tool or theoretical framework for the analysis of language of social media, existing approaches were extended when appropriate, or adapted to move away from the established concepts and unidimensional analysis. In this sense, the chapters of this book moved towards the development of a contextualized approach which is compatible with the complexities of the online space and tends to use the conceptual and analytical insights yielded from digital ethnography and multimodal analytic methods. The perspectives adopted focused on the users and their migrant status as well as their multiple forms of co-presence rather than the online/real clear-cut duality. Online ethnographic analysis was combined with quantitative and qualitative methods to overcome the limitations of single-method approaches and allow a more comprehensive study of a relatively large Facebook data set in a frame of macro and micro analytic foci. The mixed-approach also attended systematically to the social analysis of various communicative resources which are available on Facebook for meaning making. Thus, in addition to language, other modes of communication were considered as having potential to contribute to meaning in a digital interaction. In this dissertation, an overarching theme is the question of how individuals perform their linguistic identities though their digitally mediated conversations and was covered by each of the chapters. The construction of discursive identity on Facebook was discussed in terms of both its expressiveness in the relatively democratic context of Facebook as well as its embeddedness in the social interactions of real life. This dissertation adopted a complementary approach to the interpretation of identity developed within online interactions. While the focus on the big Facebook data set provided a contextual picture of the posts and posters, the micro analytical perspective emphasized the content of posts in relation to the turn-by-turn negotiation of identities. Such an approach provided a comprehensive account of the discursive identities which are localized in Facebook interactions while being embedded in a wider conversational context.

Revisiting the initial research questions, the next section in this final chapter of the dissertation discusses the conclusions reached by each case study. Then it is explained how this study's insights can contribute to the existing research on literacy practices in social media. The chapter is rounded off by some thoughts on future research and the limitations of the current study.

2. General conclusions per case-study

2.1 First case study

The research questions which were raised in the first case study revolved around linguistic diversity on the internet and the status of English in relation to other languages in the online context of intercultural communication. At the macro level, the quantitative analysis of language use on Facebook measured and mapped the code selection and code-switching practices of multilingual users of Iranian descent in Belgium. The central concern was to understand the distributional salience of codes and the direction of switches used by multilingual Facebook members. In addition, given the multimodality of the Facebook platform which includes a multitude of resources that are contextually combined, the language choice for the construction of different types of posts was an object of inquiry. To answer the research questions, the number of switches per language pair, was quantified and the patterns of the languages used on multiple discursive posts were mapped quantitatively. After gaining the preliminary results, the corpus was narrowed down to the data related to the participants residing in Flanders. In this way, the selected code could be studied in a homogeneous context, independent of the linguistically defined regions of Belgium which might create a tendency to choose a code based on the place of residence. The findings indicated that all users most frequently switch to/from English. Regarding the distribution of languages on different Facebook modes, the proportion of use of Farsi and Dutch on Facebook was almost even. As expected, Facebook posts were predominantly uploaded in the form of digital text. The quantitative analysis showed how the participants negotiate their choices when communicating on Facebook. It was argued that the English as a lingua franca was deployed among people who do not share a first language in order to increase mutual intelligibility and ensure the global status of English in the transcultural space of Facebook. However, the findings did not confirm the growth of linguistic imperialism; rather, they represented a rise in the co-existence of multiple languages in the digital context and supported linguistic diversity on Facebook. The quantification of actual instances of codes used on the Facebook of Iranian migrants indicated a tendency to deploy the international language of the internet (English), the national language of the homeland (Farsi) and the dominant language of the host society (Dutch). This is the result of the users' actions on the perceived possibilities of different languages as enacted with the affordances/constraints of social media. Relying on the results of quantitative analysis, the first case study discussed how Facebook users negotiate their code choices and switches to manage the impression they wish to make on others. Language selection and alternation help them perform a particular identity and manage a particular relationship with the virtual audience. While the dominance of English in the Facebook practices of a migrant community is associated with a tendency to address a larger number of audiences in the global context of Facebook and shows their transcultural identity, use of Farsi as the ancestral language underlines the heterogeneity of languages and cultures in the online context and indexes

their local identities which are enacted in the globalized Facebook community. While a user's choice of Dutch as the legitimate language of Flanders did not necessarily reflect their proficiency in that language, the use of Dutch along with English and Farsi, projected a multicultural and cosmopolitan identity. Deploying the three languages, English, Farsi and Dutch, multilingual Iranian Facebook users asserted how glocalness includes "a dynamic negotiation between the global and the local, with the local appropriating elements of the global that it finds useful, at the same time employing strategies to retain its identity" (Koutsogiannis and Mitsikopoulou 2007: 143). Regarding the status of other languages on Facebook, the first case study discussed how the participants may playfully use linguistic resources to perform an international identity and create a fun participatory interactional experience which is facilitated through the translation services incorporated into Facebook. The quantification of actual instances of languages used on Facebook which was complemented by the ethnographic insights, described the big picture and served as a supportive underpinning for the further micro-analysis of Facebook interactions accomplished in the third case study.

2.2 Second case sudy

The second case study revolved around the core sociolinguistic concepts of globalization, translocal mobility and identity which are reconceptualized in the online context of Facebook. This case study aimed to answer the question of how online language use develops over time after migration, and also how trajectory, geographical location and the point in life at the time of transnational movement affect the development of language use among immigrants of Iranian descent in Belgium. Adopting a transnational perspective, the chapter theorized that the global connections between immigrants are reshaped with the emergence of new forms of digital communications in the age of globalization and the concepts of identity and territory are re-defined. In this sense, as social life is mediated by the translocal context of Facebook, identities become detached from and attached to a new spatiotemporal frame (e.g. diasporic online discourse may reflect the sense of belonging to an ongoing global network rather than to the homeland and the past). In this case study, the transnational view was deployed to study the sociolinguistic discursive mobility of the participants and their diasporic identity construction in a new intermediary space. For data analysis, the participants were divided into three groups based on their life stage at the time of migration (i.e. Belgian-born, Belgium-raised and Iranian migrants who moved to Belgium in their adulthood). The use of particular languages by the multilingual participants was monitored, collected and mapped from 2010 to 2014 in relation to their movements across transnational borders. The findings did not indicate a regular pattern in relation to the development of language use among the Belgian-born and Belgium-raised Facebook users of Iranian descent. However, the proportional presence of languages online in relation to Iranian-raised migrants showed a pattern: while use of the official languages of the host society increases, use of the heritage language decreases over time. The results reported a

different tendency in online language use among the Iranian-raised Facebook users who indirectly moved to Belgium: the predominance of English as an international resource for maximizing the networked audience in the linguistically-diverse context of Belgium was supported. The findings indicated that the variables of trajectory, physical location and life stage at the time of migration have a significant influence on the development of language use over time. The research results helped define the diasporic positioning in a frame of time and space while shedding light on diasporic identity construction as a changing process of negotiation in a transnational context. Considering the interplay of local and global forces in the development of linguistic diversity in both the online context and the offline diasporic community, the chapter foregrounded an important aspect of translocality. It was argued that the decreasing use of national language does not marginalize the local but emphasizes the interconnection between local and global leading to a more transnational re-identification in the community of Iranian migrants in Belgium. In this respect, the increasing use of local legitimate languages of Belgium index the participants' glocal identities in the new frame of time and space. In addition, the rise in the use of English was discussed in relation to the global spread of English as lingua franca; yet global English is practiced locally to serve the needs of speech communities at the intersections of borders and places. This case study particularly discussed the significance of studying transnational mobility of linguistic resources through the lens of sociolinguistic analysis. In this sense, language as the primary means of communication serves as a resource for the construction of dynamic and shifting identities and informs both local and global social experiences. As it appeared that the participants do not always deploy the Farsi language correlatively in online and the offline contexts of use, in another stage of analysis, the second case study intended to explore if the choice of Farsi in the online space of Facebook always mirrors the use of Farsi in the offline setting. The participants were asked to keep a two-day log of the languages they use and the collected data was quantitatively examined to chart the number of hours Farsi was deployed in the participants' life offline. The findings demonstrated a positive correlation between online and offline use of Farsi for all of the participants. However, data related to two Belgium-raised participants did not display a correlated trend. The results indicated that they use Farsi extensively on Facebook while they hardly use any Farsi in their offline settings. The profiles of the divergent cases were described and the frequent use of Farsi on Facebook was interpreted in terms of the participants' tendency to practice their Farsi competence and make connections within the digital network of Farsi users which circulates worldwide. The chapter discussed the fact that the extensive use of Farsi online can be also linked to the multiples layers of affiliation within the global Facebook network and the linguistic construction of ethnic identity which seems to be suppressed by the constraints of the physical setting but now finds a chance to emerge and manifest itself with the use of digitally mediating means. This can be explained in terms of the participants' mobility, which is a trajectory through different stratified local, translocal, online and offline scale levels. In this respect,

as the participants move they connect different linguistic resources to dynamics of mobility in order to make sense across spaces (Blommaert et al., 2005).

2.3 Third case study

The third case study in this dissertation provided a micro-level analysis of multilingualism on Facebook and helped us understand how a language is strategically selected to target the intended addressee and how the users draw on the resources to manage their social relations and construct their virtual identities. Drawing on two congruent theories of interactional analysis (i.e. conversation analysis and dramaturgical analysis), the third case study attempted to examine the interactional meaning of Facebook exchanges which was revealed contextually and sequentially. The principles of the conversation analytic approach which were originally developed for the linguistic study of talk in interaction were fine-tuned and adapted to fit the complexities of online conversations. Grasping the significance of conditions of co-presence in the online context where the interactants appear to be virtually present as well as the importance of examining digital interactional practices as embedded into the online users' wider social context (i.e. the relevant context which is created within and outside the social action), the third case study adopted Goffman's micro-sociological theory in order to examine social interactions on Facebook. Two Facebook conversations which clearly indicated the conversationality of online practices and the participatory culture of Facebook were chosen to be analysed. The selected Facebook threads were examined in two interrelated sections, each focusing on a particular aspect of analysis. After studying the fine-grained details of turn-by-turn Facebook-mediated interactions, the first section in chapter 7 discussed the frame of interaction which is jointly created by the Facebook interactants as they dynamically display their interactional positioning towards each other and towards the content of conversation. The identities which were constructed within the frames of interaction were explored in detail. The analysis demonstrated how the participants of a Facebook conversation constantly change their alignments as they take on different roles by either participating in the course of interaction or witnessing how the conversation unfolds. The focal frame in which the moment-by-moment sequential moves ware performed turned into a situationally produced frame including a different pattern of participant positioning, role assignment and turn taking. The threat to frame continuity which was initiated from outside the boundaries of the frame was interpreted as strongly consequential and hence inevitably resulted in the real breakdown of the frame despite the repair work which was largely accomplished by the main poster. Since the individual responsible for the frame break did not take the blame and nor did he initiate for a repair, the frame was never re-established. The frame transgressive behaviour which originated with an external and relatively anonymous element, reflects a particular identity performance on Facebook which was discussed from a comparative analytic perspective in the concluding section of next chapter (chapter 8).

The third case study continued in chapter 8 to examine the negotiation of identity in the Facebook community. Offering an unconstrained freedom from the conventions of reality, Facebook was regarded as an ideal site to exercise what one wishes to do and be with no impediment. Anonymity, spatiotemporal indeterminacy and absence of physical co-presence provide a range of possibilities for users to communicate, present their selves and manage their interpersonal relationships. It was argued that the discursive construction of identity on Facebook is built on the interactions with others. In other words, Facebook users draw on linguistic/semiotic resources to express themselves through social interactions with other Facebook users. The co-constructed selves which are dialogically and dynamically presented on Facebook were explored using Goffman's view on the presentation of self. Drawing on Goffman's dramaturgical sociology (i.e. the idea that people's social interactions can be understood as resembling performers in action on a theatre stage where actors try to persuade others of their definition of the situation), chapter 8 discussed Facebook interaction in terms of a theatrical performance where a presentation of self emerges on the stage. The chapter then raised the main theoretical concepts underlying this view: i) the identities are performed through roles and the roles have to be accepted by the judgments of the audience; ii) the performers in a team cooperate with each other on the stage to sustain the definition of the situation and make an effort to present in a certain way and disclose to the audience only the information that they should know; iii) any information that contradicts the image that the team fosters is considered a secret and the secrets should be kept in the back stage in order to maintain the intended impression. Since Facebook users are able to control how their public image is displayed online, Goffman's dramaturgical model was seen to be applicable to the analysis of Facebook exchanges. Subsequently the notion of face-work (Goffman, 1955) was described and it was argued that any inconsistency in the way that the positive public self-image is projected and maintained in an interaction would be discrediting. In other words, if the face is not presented as based on society's approved social values, it will not be supported by the judgement of audience and this may result in losing face. Based on this theoretical framework, chapter 8 studied the dynamic and shifting process of Facebook-mediated self-presentation. The analysis indicated that the way Facebook users express themselves in the front stage does not necessarily reflect a desirable situation or a positive aspect of self. Although the process of selecting the pleasant side of a performed identity is easier on Facebook due to the absence of spatial and temporal co-presence, the analysis demonstrated how the linguistic behaviour of a performer in the front region of Facebook, revealed the secret of back stage, and thereby threatened the face and endangered the consistency of the performance. Since the face-threatening act was initiated by a virtual but authentic persona who was also present in the offline network of Iranian migrants in Belgium, a corrective process in the form of an apology was accomplished to compensate for the threat and its consequential confrontation which was performed as a face-saving act. A concluding remark discussed how the difference between the two threats and the concomitant reactions is partially related to the difference in the degree of self-disclosure on Facebook. While the threatening

Facebook user in the first interaction adopted a completely anonymous identity and masked the real persona to be able to voice his sentiment and avoid losing face, the face-threatening act in the second conversation was performed by someone who seemed to offend another user without really considering the possible consequences. In fact, his real identity on Facebook left him in an exposed position to lose face. In general, the sequential analysis in the third case study indicated that Facebook users who are engaged in an online interaction, actively co-construct and negotiate their identity by practicing multiple languages and, based on the contextual situations, convey and maintain the intended impression in different ways.

2.4 Fourth case study

The final case study raised the research questions which were concerned with the non-standard orthographic choices in Farsi and considered how these inform the construction of social relations and subcultural affiliations of Iranian immigrants. Drawing on an approach which views spelling choices as resources that carry social meaning, this case study adopted a mixed method to study Farsi orthography in the Facebook use of participants. A quantitative description of non-standard Farsi scripts on Facebook was combined with a qualitative analysis of a Facebook post to explore the complicated contextual embeddings of online orthographies and extend the line of inquiry to encompass a multitude of semiotic resources which are widely used as meaning-making means of communication in social media. The proportion of use of standard and non-standard Farsi spelling on Facebook was mapped quantitatively and the findings demonstrated that non-standard spelling practices in Farsi constitute 92% of all Farsi orthographies. The non-standard Farsi spellings used on Facebook included non-standard Farsi script (21%), Finglish, i.e. Romanized Farsi (60%) and Englisi, i.e. the use of the Farsi alphabet to write in other languages (11%). The difference in the tendencies of the first and second generation Iranian migrants regarding the use of non-standard Farsi orthography on Facebook showed that Farsi scripts and Englisi are exclusively related to use by first generation immigrants. However, compared to the first generation (23%), Romanized Farsi (i.e. a converted writing system which represents Farsi in the Roman/Latin script) was shown to be more widely practiced by the second generation migrants (37%). The patterns of distribution of Farsi orthographic practices set the scene and provided insights into the ways in which writers deploy non-standard spellings to convey the features of spoken language, transfer authenticity into their digital discourse or project their identity, aspiration, ideology, affiliation, etc. The qualitative analysis of a Facebook post demonstrated that a particular ideology was communicated through the use of non-standardness and showed how one particular Facebook user contextualized his aspirations and expressed his subcultural affiliations as he distanced himself from the orthographic norms. The literacy practices of the participants in the Facebook post also indicated that using a non-standard spelling variety is not always a rebellion against the standard orthography and conventions, but it may reflect a rebellion against another form of non-standardness which represents an undesirable

sociocultural ideology or group affiliation. Adopting a sociolinguistic perspective, the chapter attempted to address the ever growing domain of non-standard spelling practices on the internet and provide evidence to support the idea that the choice of script and particularly non-standard orthography are socially embedded meaningful practices.

3. Scholarly contributions

This dissertation draws on theories of sociolinguistics of mobile resources in a globalization-affected Belgian context of migration (Blommaert et al., 2005; Collins, Slembrouck & Baynham, 2009). Stratified distribution patterns of linguistic resources used on the Facebook of diasporic members were studied in relation to a new spatiotemporal frame which indexes new norms and expectations and defines different power regime for the interaction. This dissertation showed how migration to the global north is associated with the sociolinguistic forces which stretch the migrants' linguistic repertoires in the new frame of time and space and how complex patterns of language use occur in response to the dynamics of spatiotemporal trajectories. The present research indicated that the mobility potential of the ethnic language in the globalized and sociolinguistically diverse European context is little, yet its situated use by the diasporic members can be empowering when the ethnic language defines the senses of belonging to the homeland or specifies identities and roles in relation to the diaspora or the wider sociocultural context of host society.

The main contribution of this dissertation into the existing body of research on multilingualism online is that it adopts a diachronic perspective on the language choices made in Facebook posts of Iranian diasporic members residing in Belgium as they navigate and mediate their identity linguistically in relation to their homeland and new host society in a transnational virtual online space. By tracking the development of the instances of multilingual language use in Farsi, Dutch, French and English over the course of a four-year timespan (2010-2014), this study distinguishes between participants who moved directly from Iran to Belgium, participants who moved from Iran to Belgium indirectly via other countries, and participants who were born/raised in Belgium. To qualify the observations of redefined post-immigration sociolinguistic identities, excerpts from interview data with four participants is used to elucidate the motivation and explanation behind the development of the trends of language use. The findings indicated that variables such as migration trajectory, physical location and life stage shape the multilingual language practices of Iranian migrants in Belgium as they communicate through the social medium of Facebook. As the first sociolinguistic inquiry into the Iranian diasporic community in Belgium, this dissertation provides insight into how communication within a transnational diasporic community on a social media platform changes over time as diasporic Facebook users balance their desire to maintain their belonging to the Iranian community with a need to integrate into a new host societal context and to participate in the global setting with the use of English as the international language of internet.

It seems safe to say that this dissertation, the first time of its kind, initiates a line of inquiry in relation to the use of non-standard Farsi orthographic practices in the digital space. This dissertation addresses the technologically-driven non-standard spelling choices which emerge as a result of Facebook affordances/constraints embedded in a particular sociocultural setting. The analysis of the ever growing use of non-standard de facto Farsi spelling on Facebook asserts that orthographic choices are socially meaningful phenomena which can function as signs of identity and differentiation. The analysis distinguishes between different types of Farsi spelling on Facebook and provides a quantitative report on their use and distribution. This dissertation also contributes insights into the fine-grained analysis of ideologically-motivated orthographic decisions in Facebook conversations. Furthermore, it addresses the role of visual cues as alternative meaning-making choices which add more depth and dimensions to our understanding of online orthographic practices and together with the non-standard use of Farsi scripts, display a complex multilayered context for communicating sociocultural meaning.

In terms of methodology, this dissertation deploys two lenses to look at multilingual practices online. While using a mixed-method approach is not new to the field, research on digital discourse would perhaps still benefit from more diversity of methods. Combining a macro-analysis of code choices on Facebook with a content analysis of the interactional meaning which sequentially unfolds in Facebook posts broadens the scope of exploration of the same data set and provides a nuanced understanding of multilingual language use online. Different chapters of this dissertation approach the question of online construction of discursive identity from different analytical perspectives. As Facebook's semiotic resources are also engaged in the process of identity construction, this dissertation attempts to combine the analysis of language together with the semiotic system in order to account for the kind of online self-image that Facebook users create in their practices. Moreover, this dissertation draws on the wider interactional context of Facebook posts - including the meta data (such as timstamp of posts) and digital ethnographic insights - to provide complementary perspectives on a more detailed exploration of how different languages are used to project digital identities on the internet. Clearly, this analytical view of online identity construction has been already acknowledged/adopted in the existing research on linguistic identity and digital communication. Page (2016:421) argues:

> As we strive for a fuller picture of how interactions are used to negotiate ambiguous and elusive identities, no doubt we will find many further ways of integrating methods associated with probing 'big' data and those used for scrutinizing localized contexts. Even more certain is that our efforts to explore the intricacies of identity work will benefit from cross-disciplinary and cross-methodological collaborations.

4. Limitations and future perspectives

While this dissertation touched upon the issue of ethics in research, the analytical approach adopted here is challenged by the semi-publicness of the Facebook context in the sense that posts might be private but are subject to being shared elsewhere. Although the methodology chapter addresses ethical issues in relation to data collection/analysis, and the universities' ethical committee approved this research project, this online study could benefit from the development of more clear-cut formulations of ethically-concerned instructions in relation to the analysis of technologically-mediated communities of practice.

While the methodological approach in this work addresses the multiple modes of Facebook interactions, the extent to which this study attends the multimodal analysis is limited due to the risk of overlooking the main channels of communication. Although multimodal analysis is still at its early stages of development in the study of digital communication (Jewitt, 2016), a more multimodal focus could have supported a detailed analysis of meaning in relation to the discourse and the architecture of Facebook. In other words, Facebook-mediated communication is integrated into visually organized contexts and interactional sequences are more fragmented and reliant on the multiple modes (Androutsopoulos 2011, Georgalou, 2017) and hence, the interpretation of Facebook exchanges and the constructed identities associated with Facebook discourse are closely related to the understanding of such a multimodal environment.

While a few data sessions have informed the mico-analysis of turn-by-turn Facebook conversations and inspired the researcher's understanding of data, the selection of an episode for analysis was basically based on observation and was motivated by what the researcher found interesting. In other words, the Facebook conversations in the corpus were initially observed to see what content is of possible interest to the researcher. A more unmotivated data review and data selection could be more compatible with the principles of conversation analysis which encourage random choice of data to see what is represented.

Although a discourse-based online ethnography informs the analysis of online language use and accounts for participants' motivations behind their choices, a follow-up interview could have supported the results with emic insights derived from the informants' perceptions of their choices and switches. While the participants' reflections on their Facebook practices could have provided some perspectives on the analysis, the motivations underlying their use of language would still remain a matter subject to the analyst's subjective inference. Follow-up interviews have not been conducted, mainly due to the participants' obvious disinclinations to be questioned about their online practices. While their declared consent to be monitored and examined on Facebook gave the analyst permission to look, read, analyse and write about the posts, they rarely consent to be interviewed about the posts. The participants may find the post-questions too intrusive/personal or they may feel

vulnerable as their not-always-pleasant migrant experience or refugee background is being brought up by the questions of the follow-up interview.

The relatively new field of digital communication leaves ample lines of inquiry for future research on digital language, language users and the vast communicative resources of the internet and Facebook in particular.

The increasing development of digital technologies which provide new forms of communication and new functionalities, contributes to the growth of multimodal interactions. New methodological views are needed to address these multimodal innovations. In addition to multimodality, people are engaged with multitasking, meaning that their online mediated communications are performed though various interconnected channels and networked platforms. Instead of looking at one type of communication through one channel at one point in time, future research trends with a holistic view might analyse online multilingualism as it is carried over across different digital platforms. Further appropriation of theoretical frameworks and methodological tools in relation to the holistic analysis of language, media, sociocultural context, identification and online/offline practices seems necessary to accommodate the inadequacies of the present research for accomplishing sociolinguistic analysis of a communicative medium such as Facebook where users are separated in time and space and the written discourse is practiced in multiple conversational dynamics in relation to multiple (imagined) audiences.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: The interview guide

The following guide displays a set of questions raised in the semi-structured interviews. The interview sessions are held in 2013-2014, prior to any data collection or analysis in this PhD project. The more general questions are followed by the more specific ones.

The interviewee is informed to feel free to declare his or her disinterest in answering the questions.

I) General life-story background

1) What is your name?
2) How old are you?
3) What is your educational history (if you have any)?
4) What do you do? What is your occupational history?
5) Where is your current place of living?
6) Where are you from?
7) Where were you born and where did you grow up?
8) At what age are you out of Iran?
9) At what age are you in Belgium?
10) Have you stayed in other countries than Iran before you come to Belgium?
11) Why and how did you come to Belgium?
12) Why did you choose Belgium as the target country? was it part of a plan or a coincidence?
13) How long do you expect to stay in Belgium? How long would you like to stay?

II) Affiliation questions

14) Do you consider yourself Iranian? Do you feel the sense of belonging to Iran?
15) Do you consider yourself a member of Iranian community in Belgium?
16) To what extent have you been integrated in the Belgian society?
17) If choice of language is available in a communicative situation, to what extent do you use Farsi?
18) What is your general attitude towards the use of non-Farsi words/phrases/tags in your Farsi utterances? How does your attitude change in your online practices?
19) Are you willing to pass on Farsi to your (future) children?

III) Language-oriented questions

1) What is your mother tongue? Are you a born bilingual?
2) How many languages do you know? What languages specifically?
3) What languages did you grow up with?
4) Where and when did you learn each language?
5) What is your proficiency level in each language?
6) Which languages do you use for speech? for writing?
7) Which languages do you use for which genre in writing? and why?
8) Is it important to you to learn one or more of the official languages of Belgium? why?

Appendix 2: The questionnaire

The questionnaire is shown to the interviewee; yet, the blanks are filled in by the researcher. The informants' additional thoughts and experiences are appreciated.

1. Specify particular language(s) you use in different settings while encountering different interlocutors: (extra columns and rows can be added to the chart)

	partner	parents	siblings	Friends	Relatives	Colleagues/ Classmates	teachers
at home							
at school							
at work							
at sport							

2. Identify the particular language(s) associated with each of the following activities:

Digital reading and writing

- Online chat
- social networking sites
- Facebook (in particular)
- Email
- Blog
- SMS message

Reading

- Newspaper/magazine
- Book

Writing

- Diary
- Note
- Shopping list
- Homework

Speaking and listening

- Phone call/ video call
- Television
- Radio
- Cinema
- Music

Appendix 3: The informed consent in English and Farsi

Informed consent for participation in a PhD research project on multilingualism

Title: Multilingualism and the social media when used in the diaspora

Researcher: Azadeh Elmianvari

Institute: Ghent University – Department of Linguistics

Dear participant,

Regarding our earlier talk about your participation in my project, I am asking for your re-confirmation. Please read the following information carefully and mention your agreement to participate in your answer to this text (in case you accept all terms and conditions).

My research project:

My participants are multilingual Facebook users of Iranian descent who live in Belgium and my study investigates written conversations on Facebook including status updates, comments, shared video/audio/ links, images and events. The focus of my research will be on the use of different languages on Facebook. I will analyse your Facebook activities both quantitatively (counting the number of languages used on Facebook) and qualitatively (examining the interactive dynamics of conversational turns on Facebook).

How you can participate:

If you decide to take part in the study, you will be asked to be my Facebook friend (if you are not yet); it will take your time for about an hour for filling out a questionnaire and an interview. The questions are mainly about your personal information and your language practices/preferences. If you wish, the result of analysis will be shared with you.

Confidentiality:

I will use your data in my PhD dissertation, academic articles as well as my presentations. I ensure you that your privacy will be protected. Your name, pictures and information will be anonymized and I will not include any information that would identify you. Only I, the researcher, have access to your data that will be protected by a password.

Your participation is voluntary and you can stop your participation in my research at any time. You do not benefit from your participation; however, you may feel like helping this study to progress.

If you would like to confirm your participation please provide your preferred time and place for the appointment.

I thank you in advance for your participation.

Azadeh Elmianvari

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Blandijnberg 2 - B-9000 GENT

Email: azadeh.elmianvari@ugent.be

Mobile phone: 0[redacted]

اعلام رضایت برای مشارکت در پروژه دکتری در ارتباط با چند زبانگی
عنوان: چند زبانگی و رسانه اجتماعی در مهاجران

محقق: آزاده علمی انواری
مرکز تحقیقاتی: دانشگاه گنت، دانشکده زبانشناسی

دوست عزیز

همانطور که قبلا توافق کردیم، این ایمیل تائید شما در شرکت در تحقیقِ من است. لطفا مطالب زیر را به دقت بخوانید و شرکت خود را اعلام کنید (چنانچه همه شرایط را پذیرفتید).

افراد مورد مطالعه:

افراد مورد مطالعه چند زبان‌های ایرانی تبارِ مقیم بلژیک هستند که در فیسبوک می‌نویسند. تحقیق من برررسی مکالمات نوشتاری در فیسبوک شامل همه فعالیتهای فیس‌بوکی از جمله پست ها، نظرات، ویدئوها، فایل‌های صوتی و تصاویر است این تحقیق به استفاده زبانهای مختلف در فیسبوک میپردازد و داده ها هم به صورت کمی (شمارش زبانهای استفاده شده) و هم به صورت کیفی (بررسی رابطه طرفهای متفاوت در یک مکالمه) تحلیل میشوند.

چگونه مشارکت کنید:

در صورتی که مایلید به این تحقیق کمک کنید، در فیسبوک پیام دوستی دهید، یک پرسشنامه و مصاحبه هست که یک ساعت طول می‌کشد و بیشتر در مورد ترجیح زبانیِ شماست. در پایان پروژه مصاحبه دیگری هست که در مورد نتایج نظر می‌دهید.

محرمانه بودن:

من از داده‌های شما در پروژه دکتری، مقالات علمی و ارائه مطلب استفاده می‌کنم، و خاطر نشان می‌کنم که اطلاعات شخصی شما هرگز در داده‌ها شامل نمی‌شود. و اسامی، عکسها و اطلاعات شما محرمانه میماند. این داده‌ها فقط توسط اینجانب قابل دسترسی است.

مشارکت شما داوطلبانه و قابل حذف می‌باشد و شخصاً منفعتی از آن نمیبرید مگر اینکه بخواهید به پیشرفت تحقیقاتی کمک نمائید.

اگر علاقمند به مشارکت هستید، مکان و زمانِ دلخواه را در پاسخ خود متذکر شوید.

سپاس فراوان از شرکت شما،

آزاده علمی انواری

گنت، مطالعات انگلیسی، دانشکده زبان شناسی

azadeh.elmianvari@ugent.be

تلفن: [redacted]

Appendix 4: A log example

The participant information: “Ze”, female, 22 years old , master’s student, Belgium-raised participant who migrated with her family as social refugee in 2008 in the age of 16.

Sunday, Oct 25

7:00	
8:00	
9:00	Call to BF+koffie
10:00	Tamrine faranse anjam dadam, ensha nevisi
11:00	Zarfa to shostam, khune tamiz kardam…
12:00	Zarfa to shostam, khune tamiz kardam
13:00	Going to kortrijk for lunch, everyone’s there+skyping ba mamanbozorg in Iran
14:00	Cjit chat…
15:00	Chit chat…
16:00	Chit chat…
17:00	Coming back from Kortrijk + photoshoot
18:00	Photoshoot
19:00	Hamsaye va duste samimi irani vase sham amad
20:00	
21:00	
22:00	
23:00	
24:00	

Dutch spoken conversation

French reading and writing

Farsi and Dutch spoken conversation

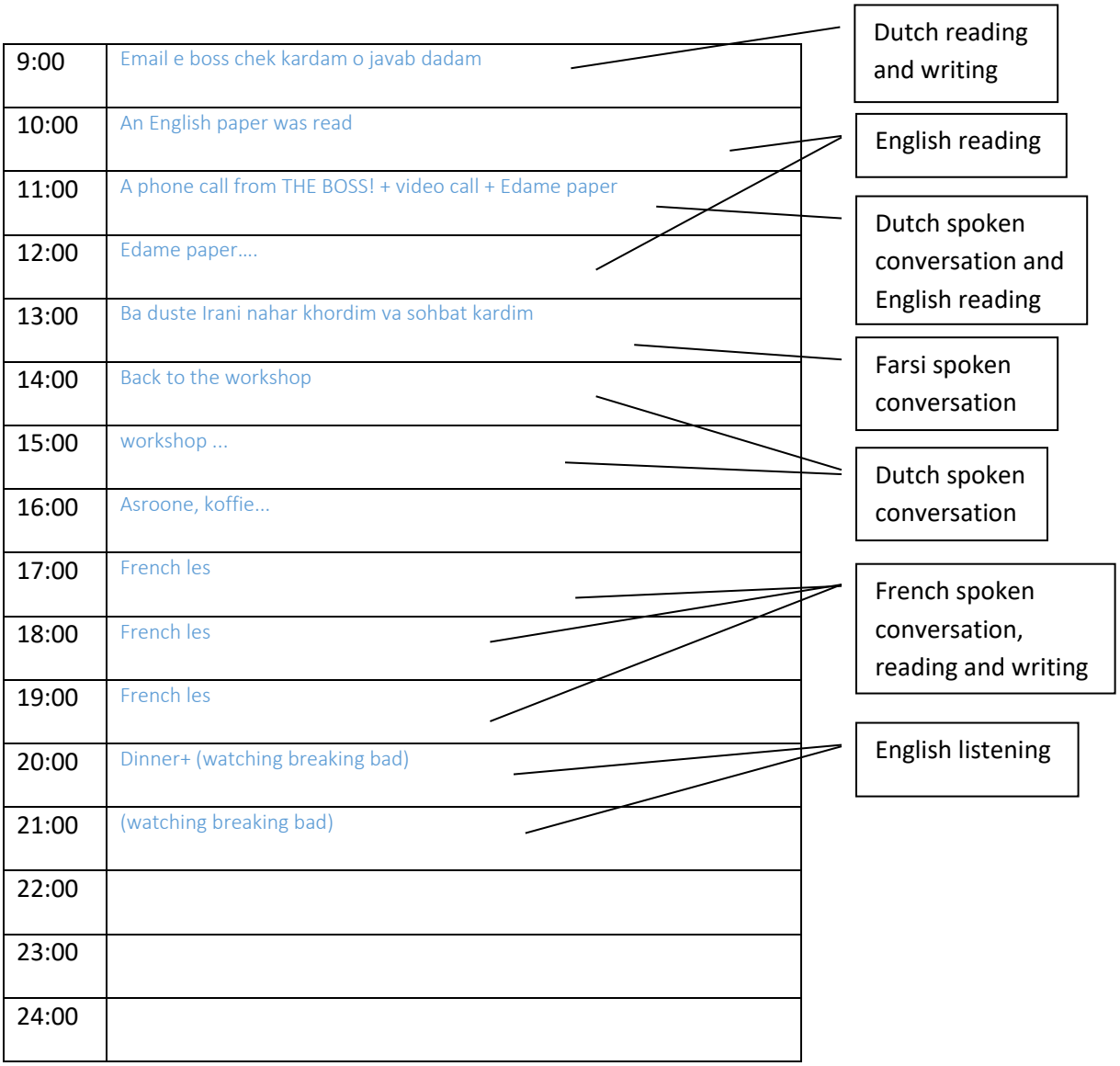
Farsi spoken conversation

Monday, Oct 26

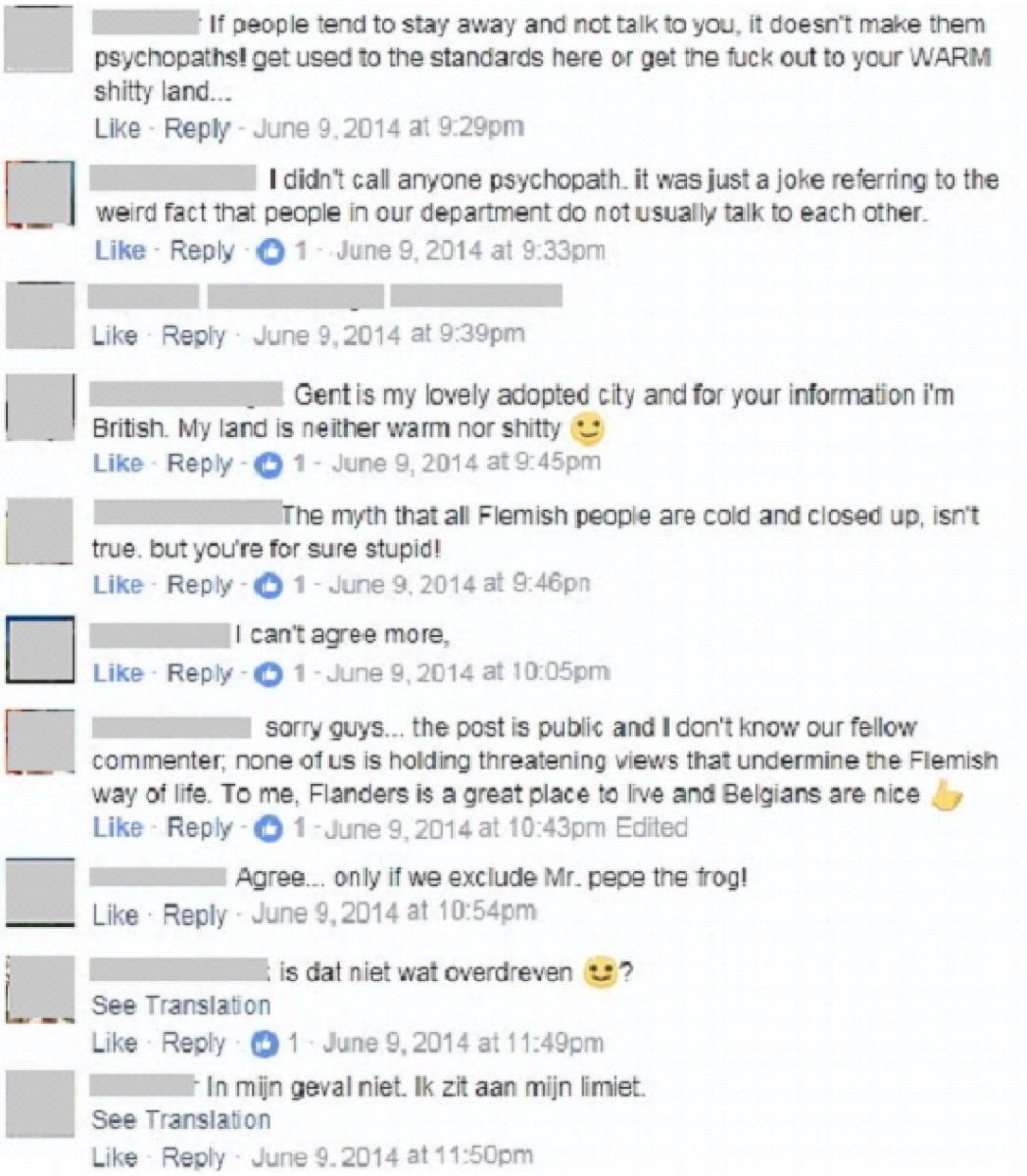
7:00	Az khab bidam shodam+dush gereftam
8:00	Ba B.F am ba telefon harfidam+koffie

Dutch spoken conversation

9:00	Email e boss chek kardam o javab dadam
10:00	An English paper was read
11:00	A phone call from THE BOSS! + video call + Edame paper
12:00	Edame paper….
13:00	Ba duste Irani nahar khordim va sohbat kardim
14:00	Back to the workshop
15:00	workshop …
16:00	Asroone, koffie…
17:00	French les
18:00	French les
19:00	French les
20:00	Dinner+ (watching breaking bad)
21:00	(watching breaking bad)
22:00	
23:00	
24:00	



Appendix 5: Enlarged reproduction of the screenshots



[redacted] If people tend to stay away and not talk to you, it doesn't make them psychopaths! get used to the standards here or get the fuck out to your WARM shitty land...
Like · Reply · June 9, 2014 at 9:29pm

[redacted] I didn't call anyone psychopath. it was just a joke referring to the weird fact that people in our department do not usually talk to each other.
Like · Reply · 1 · June 9, 2014 at 9:33pm

[redacted]
Like · Reply · June 9, 2014 at 9:39pm

[redacted] Gent is my lovely adopted city and for your information i'm British. My land is neither warm nor shitty
Like · Reply · 1 · June 9, 2014 at 9:45pm

[redacted] The myth that all Flemish people are cold and closed up, isn't true. but you're for sure stupid!
Like · Reply · 1 · June 9, 2014 at 9:46pm

[redacted] I can't agree more,
Like · Reply · 1 · June 9, 2014 at 10:05pm

[redacted] sorry guys... the post is public and I don't know our fellow commenter; none of us is holding threatening views that undermine the Flemish way of life. To me, Flanders is a great place to live and Belgians are nice
Like · Reply · 1 · June 9, 2014 at 10:43pm Edited

[redacted] Agree... only if we exclude Mr. pepe the frog!
Like · Reply · June 9, 2014 at 10:54pm

[redacted] is dat niet wat overdreven ?
See Translation
Like · Reply · 1 · June 9, 2014 at 11:49pm

[redacted] In mijn geval niet. Ik zit aan mijn limiet.
See Translation
Like · Reply · June 9, 2014 at 11:50pm

[redacted] was feeling hopeless.
May 27, 2014 ·

بازم یه شغل یه ساله ی دیگه، که به خاطر نداشتن اجازه کار کنسل شد.
چه حس خوبیه وقتی که طرف ok رو بت میده ولی چه حس بدیه که میگه پس هیچی ، تا میتونه اجازه کار نداری...

Like Comment

[redacted] and 15 others

[redacted]
امیدت رو از دست نده بالاخره درست میشه
Like · Reply · May 27, 2014 at 10:49am

[redacted] wat is er, [redacted] ?
See Translation
Like · Reply · 1 · May 27, 2014 at 10:53am · Edited

[redacted] Er gebeurt vaak dat een bedrijf mij wil, maar zodra zij horen dat ik geen werkvergunning heb, veranderen ze hun antwoord en ze zeggen nee!!!:(
See Translation
Like · Reply · 2 · May 27, 2014 at 10:57am

[redacted] Amaai, je kan goed Nederlands...
See Translation
Like · Reply · May 27, 2014 at 12:04pm

[redacted] Bedankt [redacted] :)))
Ik ben nu in Niveau 9 met [redacted]
See Translation
Like · Reply · 2 · May 27, 2014 at 12:05pm

[redacted] Echt chapeau
See Translation
Like · Reply · 1 · May 27, 2014 at 12:10pm

[redacted] jammer! waarom je geen werkvergunning hebt?
See Translation
Like · Reply · May 27, 2014 at 3:33pm

[redacted] Want ik ben een iraans. Je of jouw echtgenoot moet een europese burger zijn om een jobvergunning te hebben!
See Translation
Like · Reply · May 27, 2014 at 3:34pm · Edited

[redacted] Schande, dus je moet eerst belg worden?
See Translation
Like · Reply · May 27, 2014 at 3:37pm

[redacted] Ik moet een belg worden als ik een job wil. En ik moet een job vinden om een belg te worden
See Translation
Like · Reply · 1 · May 27, 2014 at 3:39pm

:(I'm so sorry you're still having problems with work. You're so skilled and deserve a chance. They're losing out just because of a permit. Idiots!!
Like · Reply · May 27, 2014 at 6:17pm

Your words warm my heart all the time dear
Thanks a lot
Like · Reply · 1 · May 27, 2014 at 6:19pm

Behesh gofti ke doste mani !? Welcome to BELGIUM !
Like · Reply · May 27, 2014 at 6:29pm · Edited

?????
Like · Reply · May 27, 2014 at 6:30pm

Er gebeurt vaak dat een bedrijf mij wil, maar zodra zij horen dat ik geen werkvergunning heb, veranderen ze hun antwoord en ze zeggen nee!!!
See Translation
Like · Reply · May 27, 2014 at 6:31pm

Boe!!!
Like · Reply · 1 · May 27, 2014 at 6:32pm

There is a solution to get an extended VISA in Belgium for work though. Contact me if you want more info
Like · Reply · May 27, 2014 at 6:33pm

tnx , but she doesn't have visa problem ... job permit is another story
Like · Reply · May 27, 2014 at 6:37pm

Ik begrijp Nederlands
See Translation
Like · Reply · 1 · May 27, 2014 at 6:40pm

Ik ben in Niveau 9!
See Translation
Like · Reply · May 27, 2014 at 6:41pm

fekr konam age holandit behtar bud kar peida mikardi, job permit onghadri tasir nadare..
Like · Reply · May 27, 2014 at 6:47pm

Ik denk het niet. Ik ben in niveau 9
See Translation
Like · Reply · 1 · May 27, 2014 at 6:49pm

well, last time I checked your Dutch is crap
Like · Reply · May 27, 2014 at 6:55pm

Really? When was the last time you checked??? I haven't seen you for quite a while! and it's NOT for you to judge...
Like · Reply · May 27, 2014 at 6:57pm

just looked crap up and was shocked I use this everyday! language problem
Like · Reply · May 27, 2014 at 7:00pm

اي بابا... ادامه بده عزيزم، ناااميد نشو
Like · Reply · May 27, 2014 at 7:03pm

Summary

This dissertation investigates the sociolinguistic aspects of the multilingual practice on Facebook of Iranian users in a globalization-affected Belgian context of migration. This research offers an understanding of the distributional salience of the various languages used, the connections with the construction of a diasporic space with dispersed identities and their functional role in the interactional architecture of social media. The Facebook practices of 37 active Facebook users of Iranian descent were monitored and Facebook data related to the time span of four years (2010-2014) has been collected. Data collection follows an online ethnography approach, which combines systematic observation of online activities, collection of screen data, and data elicited through direct contact with users in a face-to-face interview. In the interview, a questionnaire is used focusing on details of personal background, multilingual repertoire, transnational experience and affiliation. The researcher joined the community of users on Facebook and acquired Facebook friend status. All subjects expressed agreement for their posted data to be used for research purposes. The sociolinguistic analysis of the collected data is accomplished with the use of a mixed method approach. A quantitative inventory of selections and switches reports that the collected data corpus consists of 506 written conversations on Facebook. This amounts to a total of 2908 turns, mostly in the form of status updates and comments. The corpus has been coded systematically on the basis of 5 categories: “texts” (i.e. status updates, comments and events), “shared links” (i.e. a posted link), “audio” (i.e. a link to an audio fragment), “video” (i.e. a link to a video extract), and “image” (i.e. a written text embedded in an image/picture). All instances have been coded and counted and the corpus is analysed for particular tendencies in terms of frequency in selecting particular codes and frequency/direction of code switches. The quantitative analysis provides a detailed charting of tendencies in how Iranian Farsi-speaking migrants hierarchizes the various languages in their multilingual repertories. Such patterning of language use on Facebook provides a general background for further detailed analysis of dialogic interactions on Facebook. The qualitative analysis shows how decisions on the use of codes are the result of a combination of factors (the languages available in a person’s multilingual repertoire as well as the interactional features such as topic, audience and activity). While the study of language use on Facebook is informed by existing models for explaining conversational code switching/selection, adjustments are needed because Facebook practices are largely written and the interactional structures displayed on Facebook only partially resemble those of spoken conversation. In this dissertation, conversational analysis complemented by dramaturgical analysis contributes to sociolinguistic theorizing in the area of multilingualism online. The detailed content analysis of two Facebook threads shows how shifts in the selection and negotiation of linguistic resources address participants’ transnational trajectories and their orientation to particular groups of their audience. The detailed qualitative description of conversational patterns sheds light on understanding the accomplishment of interactional meaning in Facebook threads which goes together with particular code choices and switches. In another case study the focal interest is on the sociolinguistics of discursive mobility in the multilingual/

multicultural diverse context of Belgium. The social medium of Facebook is selected as a corpus, based on which the development of languages used by the community of Iranian migrants in Belgium is tracked over time. Facebook allows for new forms of global connections and transnational interactions among the migrants whose network transcends territorial attachments and develops in a virtual communicative context. The analysis distinguishes between the patterns of language use based on people's life stage at the time of migration. The trends of language use development are mapped in three groups of Belgian-born, Belgium-raised and Iran-raised participants. The regular trends are related to the Facebook practices of the last group of migrants who moved to Belgium in adulthood. In this sense, while their use of Farsi decreases over time, use of English and the dominant official languages of Belgium (Dutch and French) is on rise following their move to Belgium. Addressing the spatio-temporal trajectory of Iranian immigrants, this case study shows how the use of languages in a virtual diasporic community is associated with a new intermediary space and construction of a translocal identity. The findings support linguistic diversity on social media, help to define the diasporic positioning in a spatiotemporal frame and indicate that the variables of trajectory, physical location and life stage at the time of migration are significantly influential in the development of language use over time. The last case study is concerned with non-standard Farsi orthographic practices as displayed in the Facebook practices of the participants. A preliminary statistical description reports on the frequency of different types of non-standard Farsi spelling practices: i) non-standard Farsi script, ii) Romanized Farsi or Finglish and iii) Farsi script used to write in other languages (Englisi). The quantitative analysis shows that while Finglish is extensively deployed by second-generation migrants, standard Farsi spelling and Englisi are related to the first generation's use only. Typologies of non-standard Farsi spelling, Finglish and colloquial orthography which are frequently found in the Facebook usage of participants represent a broad picture of how non-standard Farsi orthographic practices look on Facebook. A detailed content analysis of a Facebook post is concerned with the social meaning embedded in orthographic practices. In this respect, Facebook users can project their sociocultural positionings through the use of a particular (non-standard) orthographic pattern. The spelling-oriented analysis of a Facebook conversation shows that the non-standardness is associated with the Facebook users' tendency to voice their particular ideology and sub-cultural identity. The choices of orthography are strategic decisions used to create connections with the audience and maintain group solidarity. The analysis also illustrates how audiences take an active role in deviating from spelling conventions and negotiating the meanings of their choices within Facebook exchanges.

Nederlandse Samenvatting

Dit proefschrift onderzoekt de sociolinguïstische aspecten van meertalige Facebook-communicatie bij Iraanse gebruikers in een door globalisatie beïnvloede Belgische migratie-context. Dit onderzoek biedt een kijk op de opvallende verdeling van de verscheidene gebruikte talen, de connecties die kunnen worden gemaakt met de constructie van een diasporische ruimte met versnipperde identiteiten en hun praktische rol in de conversatie-stijl typisch aan sociale media. Hierbij werden de Facebook praktijken van 37 actieve Facebook-gebruikers van Iraanse afkomst gecontroleerd, alsook Facebook-data over een tijdspanne van vier jaar (2010-2014) verzameld. De verzameling van deze data verliep op basis van een online etnografie-methode die een systematische observatie van online activiteiten combineert met de verzameling van beeldschermdata en data verkregen door rechtstreeks contact met de gebruikers via persoonlijke gesprekken. Tijdens deze gesprekken werd gebruik gemaakt van een questionnaire die zich focust op details rond persoonlijke achtergrond, het meertalige repertoire, transnationale ervaringen en affiliatie. De onderzoeker sloot zich aan bij de online gemeenschap van Facebook-gebruikers en werd door hen toegevoegd als vriend. Alle onderzochte personen waren akkoord met het feit dat hun geposte berichten zouden worden gebruikt voor wetenschappelijke doeleinden. De sociolinguïstische analyse van de verzamelde data werd uitgevoerd door middel van een *mixed method*-benadering. Een kwantitatieve inventaris van selecties en switches geeft aan dat het corpus van verzamelde data uit 506 geschreven conversaties op Facebook bestaat. Dit resulteert uiteindelijk in een totaal van 2908 beurten, waarbij het vooral gaat om status updates en commentaren. Voorts is het corpus systematisch gecodeerd op basis van vijf categorieën: “teksten” (i.e. status updates, commentaren en gebeurtenissen), “gedeelde linken” (i.e. een geposte link), “audio” (i.e. een link naar een audio fragment), “video” (i.e. een link naar een video fragment), en “beeld” (i.e. een geschreven tekst als onderdeel van een foto). Alle voorbeelden werden gecodeerd en geteld en het corpus werd geanalyseerd op bepaalde tendensen met betrekking tot, enerzijds, frequentie in de selectie van bepaalde codes en, anderzijds, frequentie/richting van code switches. De kwantitatieve analyse brengt de tendensen in kaart die aantonen in hoeverre Iraanse, Farsi-sprekende migranten de verschillende talen in hun meertalig repertoire rangschikken van meest gebruikte naar minst gebruikte taal. Dit modelleren van taalgebruik op Facebook biedt een algemene basis voor een verdere gedetailleerde analyse van dialogische Facebook-interacties. Voorts toont de kwantitatieve analyse aan hoe beslissingen die worden gemaakt betreffende het gebruik van codes het resultaat zijn van een combinatie van factoren (de beschikbare talen in het meertalige repertoire van een persoon, alsook de interactie-eigenschappen zoals onderwerp, publiek en handeling). Hoewel de studie rond taalgebruik op Facebook aangedreven is door bestaande modellen in het uitleggen van code switching/selectie in conversatie, zijn er aanpassingen vereist omwille van de grotendeels geschreven aard van Facebook praktijken. Bovendien lijken de interactie-structuren op Facebook slechts deels op die van gesproken conversatie. In dit proefschrift, draagt de conversatie analyse – die gecomplementeerd word door een dramaturgische analyse – bij tot het sociolinguïstisch theoretiseren op het gebied van meertaligheid in een online context. De

gedetailleerde inhoudelijke analyse van twee Facebook threads toont aan hoe veranderingen in de selectie en negotiatie van linguïstische middelen zich richten tot de transnationale trajecten van de participanten en hun gerichtheid op bepaalde groepen binnen hun publiek. De gedetailleerde kwalitatieve beschrijving van conversatie-patronen werpt een blik op hoe we de uitvoering van interactie-betekenis in Facebook threads moeten opvatten. Deze threads gaan gepaard met switches en bepaalde keuzes op vlak van code. In een andere casestudy ligt de centrale belangstelling op het sociolinguïstische aspect van discursieve mobiliteit in de meertalige/multiculturele context van België. Het sociale medium Facebook werd hierbij als corpus gekozen. Aan de hand hiervan werd vervolgens de ontwikkeling van de talen die gebruikt worden door de Iraanse migrantengemeenschap in België over een langere tijd opgevolgd. Facebook laat toe nieuwe vormen van globale verbintenissen en transnationale interacties aan te gaan tussen de migranten wiens netwerk territoriale getrouwheid overstijgt en dewelke zich ontwikkelt in een virtuele, communicatieve context. De analyse maakt een onderscheid tussen de patronen van taalgebruik op basis van de levensloop van de personen op het moment van hun migratie. De tendensen in de ontwikkeling van taalgebruik werden in kaart gebracht aan de hand van drie groepen deelnemers, namelijk zij die zijn geboren in België, zij die zijn opgegroeid in België en zij die zijn opgegroeid in Iran. De vaste tendensen zijn gerelateerd aan de Facebook praktijken van de laatstgenoemde groep die pas als volwassenen naar België zijn verhuisd. Hierin zien we dat, hoewel hun gebruik van Farsi in de loop der tijd afneemt, het gebruik van Engels, alsook het gebruik van de officiële landstalen van België (Nederlands en Frans), toeneemt in navolging van hun verhuis naar België. Deze case study, die kijkt naar het spatio-temporale traject van Iraanse migranten, demonstreert hoe het gebruik van talen in een virtuele, diasporische gemeenschap wordt geassocieerd met een soort van nieuwe tussenruimte, alsook met de constructie van een translokale identiteit. De bevindingen staven een linguïstische diversiteit op sociale media en dragen bij tot het definiëren van de diasporische positionering binnen een spatio-temporaal kader. Voorts geven ze aan dat de variabelen met betrekking tot traject, fysieke locatie, en levensloop op het moment van migratie een beduidende invloed hebben op de ontwikkeling van taalgebruik in de loop der tijd. De laatste casestudy betreft atypische, orthografische Farsi-praktijken zoals wordt weergegeven in de Facebook praktijken van de deelnemers. Een preliminaire statistische beschrijving geeft de frequentie weer van verschillende vormen van atypische spellingsmanieren in het Farsi: i) atypisch Farsi geschrift, ii) geromaniseerde Farsi of Finglish, iii) Farsi geschrift dat bij het schrijven van andere talen gebruikt wordt (Englisi). De kwantitatieve analyse toont aan dat een gestandaardiseerde Farsi spelling zich samen met het Englisi enkel tot de eerste generatie verhoudt, terwijl Finglish veel voorkomt bij tweede-generatie migranten. Typologieën van zowel atypische Farsi spelling, Finglish, als een spreektalige spelling, die alle drie vaak naar voren komen in het Facebook-gebruik van de deelnemers, geven een breed zicht op hoe atypische spellingspraktijken in het Farsi eruitzien op Facebook. Een gedetailleerde inhoudelijke analyse van een Facebook post betreft de sociale betekenis die ingebed zit in

spellingspraktijken. In dit opzicht kunnen Facebook gebruikers hun socio-culturele positionering projecteren door het gebruik van een bepaald (atypisch) spellingspatroon. De spellings-georiënteerde analyse van een Facebook gesprek toont aan dat het atypische karakter relateert aan de neiging van de Facebook gebruikers om zowel hun specifieke ideologie als hun subculturele identiteit te uiten. De keuzes met betrekking tot orthografie zijn strategische beslissingen die worden genomen om verbindingen te creëren met het publiek en een solidariteit in de groep te handhaven. De analyse illustreert ook hoe het publiek een actieve rol speelt in de afwijking van spellingsconventies en de negotiatie van de betekenissen achter hun keuzes die plaatsvinden in hun uitwisselingen op Facebook.

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