Multilingual repertoires and the relocalization of manga in digital media

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to analyze multilingual repertoires of young adolescents and the relocalization of manga on Facebook. The focal points of our analysis are: how young adolescents relocalize manga in digital media, the multilingual repertoires these adolescents use in the relocalization of manga, and the manner in which the relocalization of manga and the multilingual repertoires in digital media contribute to indexing the identity of these adolescents.

The results show that digital media opens up for and encourages dialogue through which the identity performances of young adolescents are invigorated. Through their repertoires, the adolescents perform local, global and glocal identities that reflect superdiverse conditions. The participants' choice of, e.g., Japanese screen names highlights their indexing of identities in which local and global aspects are blended and where Japanese aspects are highlighted, whereas other heritage cultures are backgrounded. From the adolescents' engagement in a global and transnational manga culture, we learn that, in superdiverse conditions, global transcultural flows can affect the lives of adolescents to the extent that these become a central part of their identity performance.

In the article, we propose a sociolinguistic online ethnography approach in which we combine (socio) linguistic ethnography with online ethnography. The study shows how the ethnographic data supports, deepens and nuances the analysis. Sociolinguistic online ethnography thus offers a lens through which we as researchers can access not only multilingual repertoires per se but also the participants' voices and interpretations.

1. Introduction

In this article, we propose a *sociolinguistic online ethnography approach* in which we combine (socio)linguistic ethnography (see Creese, 2008; Rampton et al., 2004) with online ethnography (e.g. Boyd, in press; Hine, 2000; Howard, 2002; Kozinets, 2010; Puri, 2007). In such a sociolinguistic online ethnography approach, the observation, collection and analysis of multilingual repertoires on Facebook is combined with an overall ethnographic approach that includes, for instance, interviewing participants, observing participants at school and during their leisure-time activities, and triangulating our analysis by interviewing the participants (see also Boyd, in press; Leander and McKim, 2003).

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– How young adolescents relocalize manga in digital media.
– The multilingual repertoires these adolescents use in the relocalization of manga.

– The manner in which the relocalization of manga and the multilingual repertoires in digital media contribute to the indexing of the identity of these adolescents.

Our microanalysis of young adolescents' multilingual repertoires on Facebook will be combined with other sociolinguistic ethnographic data regarding their language practices outside the context of Facebook, e.g. at school, during their leisure-time activities and in their home environments. We focus in this paper on a theme that emerged as significant in the life-worlds of our participants in both online and offline interactions, i.e. the world of manga.

The data for the present study derives from the research project "Investigating discourses of inheritance and identity in four multilingual European settings" (IDII4MES). Our data specifically originated in the Swedish case study that is part of the project, for which we have conducted a sociolinguistic ethnography among Spanish-speaking students attending a bilingual Spanish-Swedish school and students of Finnish heritage attending bilingual Sweden Finnish schools.

The focal areas of the study are intertwined and are, as a result, discussed together in the analysis. In the analysis, we also investigate the social and cultural construction of the meaning of images, photos, drawings and other semiotic resources used to

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relocalize manga by multimodal means (see 'semiotization' Varis and Wang, 2011; 'resemiotization' Iedema, 2003; Kress and van Leeuwen, 1996: 1–43; Rymes, 2012; cf. Bezemer and Jewitt, 2010). As Sebba (2012): 17 notes, there is a "need to understand it [i.e. multilingual written texts] as a complex written whole, taking into account its visual and material construction. Furthermore, we need to have an understanding of the literacy practices which surround its composition and reading in order to understand fully the role played by each language".

Despite the fact that social networking sites are "important sites of contemporary multilingual practice in a globalised and mediatised world" (Androutsopoulos, forthcoming: 18), multilingual and multimodal repertoires on Facebook constitute an under-explored area of research (see Varis and Spotti, 2011). The same applies to research on multilingual language practices in writing more generally, where such practices have often been neglected altogether or studied from the perspective of oral code-switching (Sebba, 2012: 1–2). Androutsopoulos, forthcoming: 18 argues that viewing "language use in CMC [computer mediated communication] as a reflection of spoken language choices is limiting with regard to multilingual practices." Recent research has increasingly turned to ethnographic approaches in studying digital language practices (e.g. Androutsopoulos, 2006, 2007; Boyd, in press; Cora Garcia et al., 2009; Hinrichs, 2006; Leppänen et al., 2013; Sif Karrebæk et al., submitted for publication).

Social networking sites are popular among European adolescents, as 59% of Internet users aged 9–16 in Europe have a social networking profile (Livingstone et al., 2011). In Sweden, the percentage of 13- to 16-year-old Internet users with their own social networking profile exceeds the European average at 81%. Among different social online activities, networking on Facebook is, by far, the most popular: 57% of Europeans aged 9–16 years old use Facebook as their most used, and sometimes only, social media; Twitter, Flickr and MySpace are also popular. In 2013, Facebook had over one billion users worldwide and was available in more than 70 languages (Facebook statistics, 2013). These numbers reflect a growing use of languages other than English on Facebook, as the Internet evolves into "an indispensable network for global communication" (Lee and Barton, 2011: 39). The demand for social media to accommodate languages other than English is increasing, as the Internet becomes increasingly multilingual (ibid).

As a multilingual and superdiverse space; therefore, Facebook provides a space conducive to the study of multilingual repertoires online. As such, Facebook is part of a larger Internet that offers "seemingly endless possibilities for self-expression and community formation" (Varis and Wang, 2011: 71). In addition, social media and "the Internet can be seen as a major mechanism in globalization processes, and in the creation of superdiversity" (Varis and Wang, 2011: 71; Vertovec, 2010). As our analysis shows, the young adolescents in this study – whose locally relevant and authentic offline location is Stockholm in Sweden – engage with other manga enthusiasts through global superdiverse virtual spaces and relocalize global manga in significant local manga practices on their Facebook walls (see Figs. 3 and 4) as well as in their offline practices (see Excerpt 2 and Fig. 5). The explorations of social media relate closely to explorations of superdiversity. As Varis and Wang (2011) pointed out, these discussions on super-diversity "should take into account the significance of the Internet in complexifying the nature of human communication and engagement with others, of transnational movements and migration, and of social and cultural life" (71).

Manga, a type of Japanese comic art, is very popular in Japan. The comic art of manga includes "caricature, cartoon, editorial cartoon" and also includes stories and animation known as "anime" (Ito, 2005: 456). Manga is widespread in the world today and has influenced popular cultures, particularly youth cultures, worldwide (Ito, 2005: 456). Manga can thus be regarded as a global transnational phenomenon and as an activity that is mobile and popular among adolescents throughout the world.

We begin this paper by outlining the theoretical perspectives that inform our study. This is followed by a discussion of the methodology and analytical framework, focusing especially on sociolinguistic online ethnography. The last sections each focus on different aspects of the relocalization of manga: Section 4 deals with the sources and resources of manga, e.g. libraries, books and online sources; Section 5 illustrates different aspects that are highlighted and performed in the participants' identity repertoires through their multilingual and multimodal repertoires; and Section 6 shows how multilingual and multimodal repertoires are used to transform features of manga culture into locally significant and recognizable practices.

2. Theoretical perspectives

In order to account for our multifaceted data, we draw on different theoretical perspectives. In what follows, we first discuss the notion of *superdiversity*, linking it to the local Swedish context of the participants. We then briefly describe *relocalization*, which is central to our analysis of how the participants use manga in different localities. Finally, we tie the linguistic aspects of this study together by discussing *linguistic repertoires*, *multilingual literacies* and *indexicality*. These concepts are necessary to account for the participants' use of multilingual repertoires.

2.1. Superdiversity

Historically, Sweden has commonly been regarded as a mono-lingual and monocultural country. However, as Hyltenstam (1999): 11 writes, languages other than Swedish have continuously been spoken in the territory that today constitutes Sweden. Since the 1980s, many social changes have occurred in Sweden, and today it is regarded as a 'country of immigration.' Migration to the country is now extensive, and this has brought a greater number of people from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds to Sweden (Lainio, forthcoming). Within a few decades, Sweden has thus changed from a more monolingually oriented society into a multilingual one (Lainio, forthcoming).

The young adolescents in this study live in Stockholm, which, as the capital of Sweden, is one of the major multilingual and multi-cultural cities in Sweden and meets the criteria of 'superdiversity' (Vertovec, 2007a, 2007b; Blommaert and Rampton, 2011). Super-diversity is described as a "dynamic interplay of variables among an increased number of new, small and scattered, multiple-origin, transnationally connected, socio-economically differentiated and legally stratified immigrants" (Vertovec, 2007a: 1024), in terms of, for example, nationality, ethnicity, language and religion, but also with respect to the motives for migration, as well as the patterns and itineraries of migration (Vertovec, 2007a, 2007b: 1024). The adolescents in this study are multilingual and have experiences from different cultures, both through their personal family trajectories and histories, and through their interest in manga and digital media. Superdiversity intertwines in their lives in multiple ways and is indexed in their digital practices. As Blommaert (2010): xi writes, there is a need to "rethink linguistic communication in a world that has become increasingly interconnected" and marked with mobility (see also Blommaert and Rampton, 2011: 4). Real (offline) life encounters and practices "in virtual context," as well as the connections between these life-worlds are important in understanding what superdiverse societies are like (Blommaert and Varis, 2011: 2).

Our paper investigates multilingual and multimodal repertoires used by these young adolescents in superdiverse localities, such as digital media, to relocalize manga and to index identities. In