



Arts & Humanities
Research Council



Translation and Translanguaging

Investigating Linguistic and Cultural Transformations in Superdiverse Wards in Four UK Cities

Working Papers in Translanguaging and Translation

Paper 6

Language, Business and Superdiversity: A Report on Social Media across Case Studies

Caroline Tagg

A report on Phase One of the four case studies of AHRC-funded *Translating Cultures* project, 'Translation and Translanguaging: Investigating Linguistic and Cultural Transformations in Superdiverse Wards in Four UK Cities'. (AH/L007096/1)

Please reference as:

Tagg, C. (2015). Language, Business and Superdiversity in London: A Report on Social Media across Case Studies. *Working Papers in Translanguaging and Translation* (WP. 6).

(<http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/generic/tlang/index.aspx>)

1. Introduction

This paper reports on the findings from the social media data collected in three ethnically-diverse UK contexts in Birmingham, Leeds and London, as part of a wider linguistic ethnography exploring translanguaging and translation within different ‘business’ contexts. I start by situating the report in the wider literature on business and social media use and giving a summary of the research sites, before providing an overview and interpretation of the main patterns across the data under two broad headings: ‘Types of contact’ and ‘Communicative resources’. In the conclusion and elsewhere, I discuss the findings in relation to themes and ideas in the social media literature, including affordances, virtual spaces, the ‘doubling of context’ and context design, as well as superdiversity.

Although a variety of social media use was reported, participants across the four sites tended primarily to use mobile technology (phones) rather than laptop or computers, and to favour various forms of instant or mobile messaging platforms (SMS, WhatsApp, Viber) to a greater extent than, say, semi-public Facebook status-updating or public microblogging on Twitter (although some of these are also used). I focus on this data in the report and therefore use the term ‘mobile messaging’. Evident across the data are the wide variety of ways in which one mobile device (and sometimes one platform, such as WeChat) is appropriated by our participants for a variety of their own purposes: not only to micro-coordinate their social and personal lives (Ling and Yttri 2002) and to maintain transnational links, but more innovatively to create opportunities for informal language learning, to carry out daily business tasks and to foster business relationships. Partly as a result of this, their social media use challenges distinctions often assumed in scholarly accounts of society and communication, between: a) home and work, or the personal and the professional; b) the local and the geographically distant; c) the private, parochial and public spheres; and d) the offline and the online. As elaborated on later in this report, the blurring of these distinctions draws attention away from the importance of physical space and other pre-determined factors in shaping social relations and highlights the way in which relationships are constructed through situated performances of sameness and difference. In terms of language, we see how language use is shaped not only by the technology (e.g. the availability of emojis and stickers) and by features of participants’ local contexts (which might shape patterns of translanguaging, for example), but also by the wider relations and interactional histories of participants, their beliefs, values and attitudes, and their individual repertoires. In this paper, I detail these general trends. However, a final point must be made about the heterogeneity of the practices observed – generalisations across the case studies must be tempered by acknowledgement of difference and individual choice.

2. Social media in business contexts

The use of mobile technology by small business owners and freelance or self-employed workers remains a neglected area. Mobile messaging apps used by participants in our study such as WhatsApp, WeChat, Viber and Skype remain under-researched due to their relative novelty. Research into SMS text messaging in the fields of applied linguistics (Tagg 2012; Thurlow 2003), psychology (Wood et al 2014) and other socially-oriented work (Ling and

Donner 2009; Ling and Yttri 2002) is in comparison extensive, but its focus (as Darics forthcoming also points out) is on messages sent between family and friends in non-business contexts and frequently between students (e.g. Thurlow 2003). It is thus not surprising that such studies comment on the highly interpersonal, intimate, 'speech-like' nature of texting, characterised by orthographic abbreviation, situational ellipsis, and language play (Tagg 2012; Tagg 2013).

Nor has the topic been fully addressed within the business literature. Firstly, with a few exceptions (Maier and Deluliis 2015), business discourse research has focused on *computer-mediated communication* accessed from an office desk rather than mobile technology and on email and IM rather than messaging apps such as WeChat, Viber and WhatsApp (see Darics forthcoming). This is likely due in part to a time-lag between usage and academic attention because of the relatively recent rise of the smartphone, but it neglects consideration of the implications of the smartphone for *mobility*, as a result of which online activities occur alongside, and are embedded into, offline activities (Tagg and Seargeant forthcoming) and for increasing digital *convergence* 'between formerly separate applications, modes, activities' (Androutsopoulos 2010, p. 208) on one device or platform. The implications of mobility and convergence resonate throughout the report.

Secondly, the focus in business communication research has tended to be on the use of social media by and within large corporations. Studies have looked at the validity of using social media in screening potential employees (Brown and Daly 2011; Davison et al 2012; Pate 2013; Saunders 2012); the use of digital technologies by employees, focusing particularly on monitoring employees' online activities with a view to protecting information security (Mikkelsen 2010; Sánchez et al 2012; Vayrynen et al 2013), preventing 'cyberloafing' (Ugrin and Pearson 2012) and discouraging the online extension of workplace harassment (Mainiero and Jones 2013); and the use of digital technology by virtual teams within larger organisations (Daim et al 2012; Cascio and Shurygailo 2002). With few exceptions, the above literature tends to assume a distinction between people's personal or social use of social media and their working lives, portraying social media as a problem to be managed and, as Darics (forthcoming, p. 199) points out, focusing on the 'outcomes' for the corporation. These tendencies are also evident in studies of business discourse which focus on the need for awareness of new communicative norms (Reinsch et al 2008; Rintel et al 2003).

One exception to much of the above is the growing body of research looking at the use of mobile technology in the 'global south', chiefly Africa and the Indian subcontinent. These are regions of the world where communication channels have generally been poor, with negative implications for people's vulnerability and for economic and social development. This body of literature explores the way in which farmers, rural workers and urban migrants use the mobile phone for communication purposes and to access information in supporting their livelihoods, alongside personal or social uses. Some recent studies attempt to document in greater depth the situated use of the mobile technology (Furuholt and Matotay 2011; Jagun et al 2008; Jensen 2007; Ling and Horst 2011). These studies show that mobile phone use is not the result of a planned initiative but that it emerges from below, as people appropriate elements of the technology that they see as helpful for meeting immediate needs (Sey 2011); thus, the mobile phone has not been revolutionary but has instead 'adjusted and reshaped' existing activities (Ling and Horst 2011: 370). The studies see little sense in distinguishing

between social and economic uses, with social networks drawn upon for business expertise, opportunities and support (Chib and Chen 2011; Sey 2011; Wallis 2011). Finally, the studies shows how mobile phone access can be a double-edged sword, particularly for women: on the one hand, mobile technology is described as liberating, opening up channels of communication and changing local power dynamics; on the other, mobile devices can be used as an instrument of control, particularly where its use contrasts with traditional ideas about social position (Ling and Horst 2011). Most of the other research, however, has focused on the uptake of mobile phones and immediate outputs (Duncombe 2010) rather than their wider social impact. The research tends to focus on voice calls, rather than mobile messaging and, with few exceptions (Lexander 2011), there has been little focus on the role of language.

Otherwise, research into business discourse and language has tended to focus on the texts produced, taking a ‘pragmatic-discursive’ approach (Darics forthcoming: 2006), rather than exploring the situated use of technologies as part of people’s working and social lives. Topics studied include the synchronous and asynchronous uses of social media (Darics 2014), practices of ‘intertextuality’ in email correspondence (Warren 2013), message function and style (Isaacs et al 2002), levels of formality (Skovholt and Svennevig 2006), discourse strategies (Berry 2011), politeness (Darics 2010a; Kong 2006), and the use of written non-verbal cues (Darics 2010b; Luor et al 2010). As Darics (forthcoming: 2005) points out, these studies tend not to account very well for the ‘highly context-dependent nature’ of language choices in various business-related communications or to situate them in wider practices and norms. The dearth of ethnographic studies into social media interactions is not limited to business contexts but has been raised as an issue into all language and social media research (Thurlow and Poff 2013), as mentioned in the Leeds report.

Our research, then, addresses a number of gaps in the research literature with its focus on how mobile technology is appropriated by small business owners and other workers into their working and social lives, situated within the context of superdiverse cities in the UK. In particular, our research highlights the role of digital literacy resources in the construction of social relationships and realities.

3. The research sites

This report draws on three reports from case studies in three UK cities. The contexts are described briefly below. Throughout this report, I refer to the three case study reports as the Birmingham Business Report, London Business Report and Leeds Business Report. When reproducing social media examples, the report adopts the different conventions used by the three reports, which explains the inconsistency.

3.1 Birmingham

The Birmingham case study involves a married couple who run a butcher’s stall in Birmingham Bullring market and who live in Birmingham with their two small children. KC is from mainland China and his wife MYC is from Malaysia; both speak Mandarin, as well as Cantonese, Hakka, and English (KC also speaks Fujian dialect). The data comprise 445 messages, mainly from the WeChat platform on their mobile phones, which they use to liaise with business partners, maintain relations with colleagues, make arrangements with friends, and interact with KC’s brother in China. Their messages are overwhelming in Mandarin, written in Chinese script.

3.2 Leeds

The Leeds case study centres around Z, a casually-employed Czech-English community interpreter based in Harehills, Leeds, who has two daughters (and a young son not yet using social media). The data comprise around 46 SMS interactions which include the micro-coordination of daily life by Z and her daughters (39 interactions); transnational interactions with Z's mother in the Czech Republic through Skype chat; social interactions with her colleagues; and (informal) work-related interactions with her manager. Also captured in the data are Z's web-browsing activities in which she engages during Skype conversations, although these are not discussed at length here.

3.3 London

The London case study involves a married couple, E and T, who run a Polish shop in Newham, East London and who live in London with their daughter, Z. Both E and T are from Poland. The data comprise 280 messages from E's phone, mainly from SMS (125), Viber (79) and Facebook Messenger (64), which E uses to coordinate professional and personal matters with her husband; keep in touch with her daughter; and communicate with suppliers and customers. E's messages are overwhelming in Polish, with some 'basic' English words and phrases, and a more confident use of English-language stickers. Also included in the London data are 35 screenshots from E's Facebook wall.


4. Types of contact

Across the case studies we see mobile messaging apps being used to facilitate business transactions, maintain social relations with colleagues, make arrangements with friends, coordinate activities and keep in touch with immediate family members, and interact with family abroad. These are discussed below in turn, although it is evident throughout that clear boundaries do not exist between these categories and that the interactions disrupt typical distinctions between, for example, home and work, public and private, local and global.


4.1 Business-oriented transactions

Mobile messaging, rather than phone calls for example, is used to carry out business transactions because of the participants' busy, mobile lives and the fact that it is awkward to carry out phone calls whilst engaged in other work activities (London Business Report). The business transactions from the Birmingham and London data share some general characteristics: they are oriented towards the efficient conveying and eliciting of information and, as such, are brief, to-the-point and devoid of many interpersonal elements beyond 'ok' and 'thanks', as these examples show. Replies and/or acknowledgements of replies are not always given and seem not to be obligatory.

Example 1. Exchange between KC and Chinese Fine Cuisine restaurant, Birmingham

	<p>Chinese Fine Cuisine (CFC)</p> <p>we'll send you the pork belly this morning but the beef belly has to wait till the afternoon when we get the delivery. is that OK. thanks.</p> <p>OK</p> <p>Hong Keen, send us a box of pork steak on Wednesday, and remember to reserve 80 kg beef belly for us on Thursday. many thanks</p> <p>Hong Keen, today send us 10 pieces of pork belly many thanks</p> <p>OK thanks</p>
---	---

Example 2. Exchange between E and a supplier, London

	<p>E: Do you know what time the delivery is coming</p> <p>R: In 3 hours</p> <p>E: Ok Thanks and have you put in these two extra ducks for me?</p> <p>R: The meat is coming to us today and we're distributing it at the weekend</p> <p>E: Slaska AND glogowska¹ till 21 Meat also fresh and when will we get uszka²?</p> <p>R: Tomorrow</p> <p>(LonBusSM_20141219_SMS_032)</p>
--	--

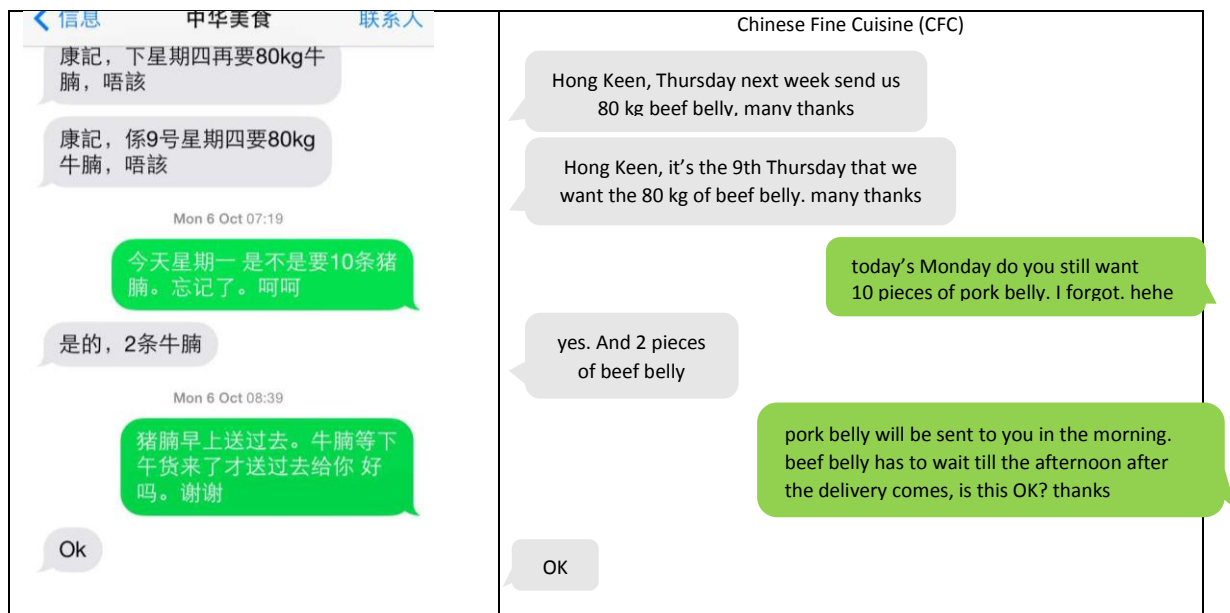
The messages contrast with descriptions of text messaging in the literature as including vague language, abbreviations, and a relative lack of noun phrases (Biber and Conrad, 2009; Tagg

¹ Types of sausage.

² Uszka (meaning "little ears" in Polish) are small dumplings.

2012); and it is interesting, given the concern noted elsewhere about the ambiguity of ‘impoverished’ texted language (Baron 2009), to note the use of mobile messaging here in the clarification and confirmation of orders and requests (Birmingham Business Report), where specific detail and clear understanding are paramount. Clearly, technological affordances can be perceived and exploited in different ways, depending on the kinds of interactions for which people use the technology. At the same time, the language is relatively informal throughout (interactions with some customers in the London data appear friendlier than others, according to the London Business Report) and appears to index familiar and casual relations, in the sense that these are people who work together closely and have a sustained working relationship. In the following message, KC admits he has forgotten his client’s order and then follows up his confession with an expression of laughter associated with informal digital communication, ‘hehe’.

Example 3. Informality of business transactions in Birmingham



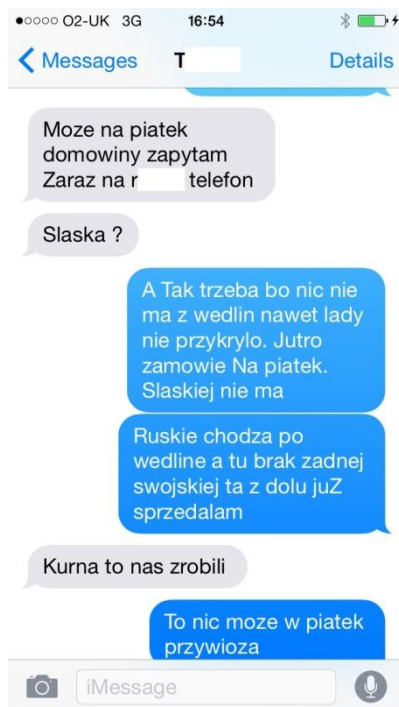
This combining of the transactional and the interpersonal is also evident in Z’s message to her employer, where in an otherwise work-oriented and formulaic exchange, she picks up on her employer’s typo (‘cooking’) to create humour, signalling her amusement with emoticons (Leeds Business Report). We can also see her employer’s use of the informal ‘ok ta’ in an earlier message.

Example 4. Exchange between Z and her employer, Leeds



It is interesting to compare the message structure in Z's message with that in messages across the Birmingham business-oriented messages, both characterised by: brief greeting + message body + brief sign off, e.g. 'Hong Keen, tomorrow send us ten piece of port belly, many thanks'. It is tempting to speculate on the emergence of a new genre here, of 'mobile messaging business transactions', although in fact the new medium is likely an extension of similar forms of communication carried out by other means, including email, fax, answer phone messages, and scribbled notes. The business orders and transactions are also, as evident at least in the 'friendlier' messages, not always indistinguishable from more socially-oriented messages. Evidence of this is particularly striking in messages between E and her husband/business partner who, as well as discussing domestic issues, also use SMS text messaging to discuss business matters such as stock availability and future orders (London Business Report). At the same time, in the following example, their personal relationship enables T to exclaim 'Kurna to nas zrobili' ('Damn, they've screwed us over').

Example 5. Exchange between E and her husband/business partner (T), London



T: Maybe we'll order more for Friday. I'll ask on r____'s phone in a moment

T: Śląska-NOM/ACC ?

E: Ah yes we need some because there are no cold meats it hasn't even covered the counter. I'll order For Friday tomorrow. There is no śląska-GEN³

E: Russians are coming for cold meat and there isn't any no farmers [sausage] I've already sold the one from underneath

T: Damn, they've screwed us over

E: Not to worry maybe they'll bring some on Friday

(LonBusSM_no-date_SMS_056)

4.2 Socially-oriented interactions with workplace associates

It is probably unsurprising that socially-oriented interactions take place via mobile messaging between people who know each other from the workplace: between colleagues (Leeds), between business owner and customers (London) and other people encountered at work (Birmingham), and between employer and employee (Birmingham, Leeds), but again it is not something captured in the previous literature with its focus on students, young people, and messages sent between friends and family.

E does not claim to be friends with her customers, but her interactions with some go beyond just business (London Business Report), one example being a reference to the customer's child, who E clearly knows.

³ Śląska and later swojska are types of sausage.

Example 6. Socially-oriented exchange between E and a customer, London



E: Cake ordered. Greetings Merry Christmas [visual]

EL: Thanks E____-NOM.DIM. I'll pop in 31th around 1pm. Merry Christmas!!

E: Ok bye bye .

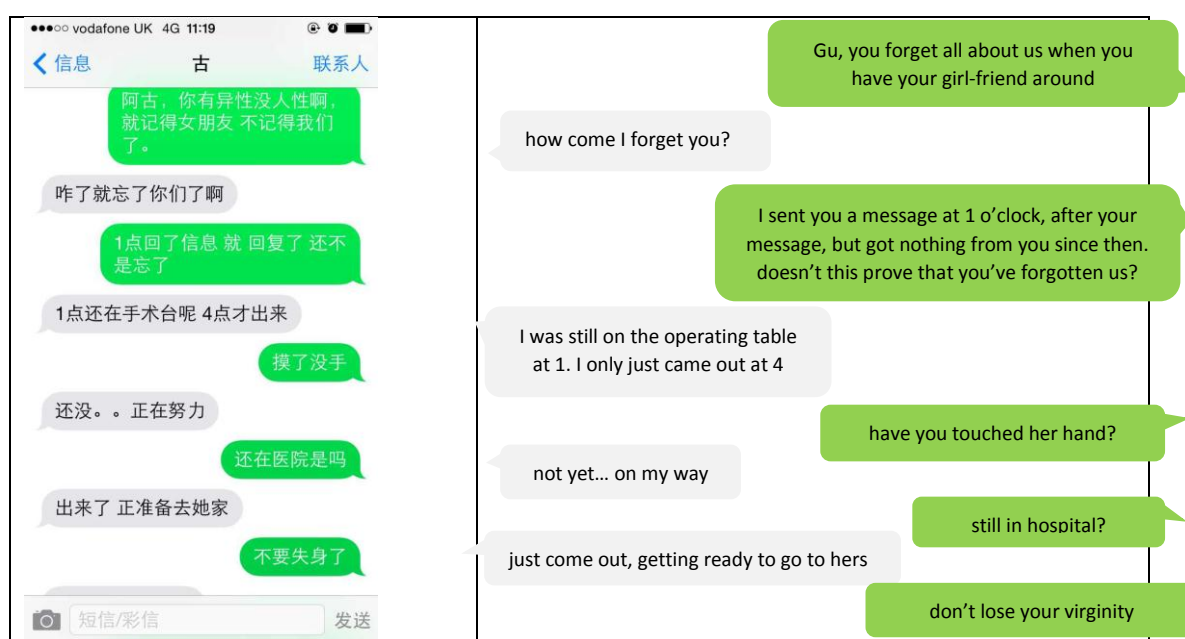
E: Son super handsome and what a good [boy]

EL: Resembles his father hahaha

(LonBusSM_20141223_FBMMSG_039)

In Birmingham, an interesting sequence of messages is exchanged between KC and YG, an employee who had just had an injury at work which required him to undergo surgery. The following is an extract from their exchange.

Example 7. Exchange between KC and his employee YG, Birmingham:



The exchange is interesting for the way in which KC moves between three discourses: his concern for YG, a more playful and teasing discourse, and his eagerness for gossip about YG's girlfriend (Birmingham Business Report). Some similarities can be drawn with a study by North (2007), in which two chatroom participants intersperse a serious conversation about money with a jokey one about vegetables (p.549) in which 'Far from closing down the discussion of 'money', the humour around 'turnips' seems to keep it alive, allowing

participants to move back and forth between seriousness and humour' (North 2007: 550). KC's teasing banter may serve to cover up any social awkwardness, as he hides his expression of genuine concern behind a parallel discourse of sexual banter. The interactions appear to be an extension of the marketplace context, both in the sense of the somewhat sexist banter (which is reminiscent of the coarse, gendered banter often heard in the market Birmingham Business Report) and the complex power relations between KC and YG: KC is the boss and sets the tone of the exchange, which YG goes along with (sometimes accommodating and sometimes deflecting KC's teasing, Birmingham Business Report); while KC's enquiries seem to constitute a genuine desire for information about YG's situation, probably because KC feels real concern and/or a sense of responsibility for his young employee, who after all sustained his injury at the market stall. It is interesting to note that this conversation takes place in the relative 'privacy' of a WhatsApp interaction, rather than constituting a more public performance as it might if carried out at the market: the public performance is extended or re-enacted in a closed space.

Turning to KC's wife, it is not always possible to distinguish work from other domains in MYC's social media interactions, and it is evident that the market stall plays a central role in the establishing of her personal network. Two exchanges in particular illustrate the different roles which the market stall plays. The first is an exchange in which MYC contacts a hairdresser whom she appears to have met at the market stall – at least, she introduces herself as 'MYC, Hong Keen butcher stall, you know who I am right?' and the Birmingham Business Report describes it as just one of many instances in which the market stall became a meeting place for local Chinese people. MYC then proceeds to make an appointment to have her hair straightened. The exchange again mixes work-related arrangements with social discussion around cultural issues: MYC tells the hairdresser that she has just given birth to a girl, and the hairdresser responds by changing their appointment, telling MYC that she must 'wait till you are out of your yeuzi' (a traditional Chinese practice of remaining at home after a birth). The hairdresser makes a lighthearted comment about the gender of the baby and they go on (in another screenshot) to chat about her job.

Example 8. Exchange between MYC and a hairdresser, Birmingham

<p>你好</p> <p>我是阿美。康记肉铺:-知道我是谁吗</p> <p>我想你帮我拉直头发</p> <p>知道啊！你想那一天啊？</p> <p>你现在住哪里呀？几路巴士可以到啊？</p> <p>61或63 到northfield</p>	<p>hello</p> <p>I'm Meiyen. Hong Keen butcher stall, you know who I am, right?</p> <p>I want you to help me straighten my hair</p> <p>I know, which day do you prefer?</p> <p>where do you live now? which bus can take me there?</p> <p>61 or 63 to Northfield</p>
<p>大概从市中心来要25分钟</p> <p>女儿</p> <p>那等你坐完月子再约时间吧，女儿好啊！以后有很多东西吃啦！</p> <p>呵呵</p> <p>那你好好休息吧！等你坐完月子再约吧！😊</p> <p>9/12/14 10:42 AM</p> <p>那就10月多</p>	<p>about 25 minutes from the city centre</p> <p>a girl</p> <p>wait till you are out of your yuezi. girl is good and you will be treated by her as she can cook</p> <p>hehe</p> <p>resting well! and see you after you are out of your yuezi 😊</p> <p>then it will be October</p>

The second exchange takes place between MYC and a friend, for whose birthday party MYC is providing the meat. So, this is someone MYC knows on a more intimate, personal level, but who is nonetheless now involved in what to MYC must constitute a business-related transaction. Their exchange revolves around two topics as the party is set up and the food delivered: firstly, the problems that the friend is having in getting hold of her husband (who MYC has offered to give a lift home), and secondly, her gratitude to MYC for the discounted food and for bearing with her while she located her husband.

Example 9. Exchange between MYC and her friend, Birmingham (1)

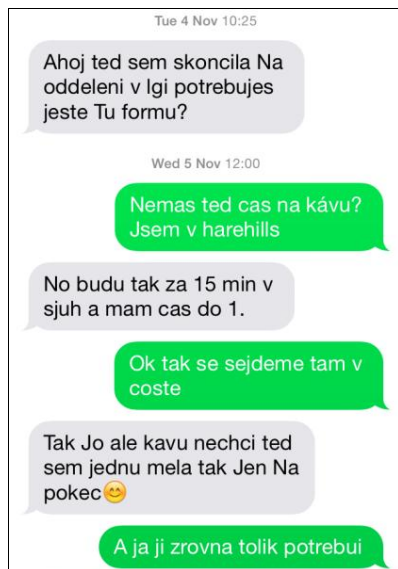
	<p>give him another ring</p> <p>he's just finished working</p> <p>finally</p> <p>20 calls already</p> <p>12/05/2014 5:10pm</p> <p>I want to cry</p> <p>no need to worry, relax</p>
--	--

Example 10. Exchange between MYC and her friend, Birmingham (2)

	<p>you didn't charge me for the beef?</p> <p>thank you a lot for today</p> <p>no worries I know how to handle oyster</p> <p>many, many thanks to you today</p> <p>beef steak is so delicious thanks ever so much</p> <p>I got a cheaper deal for the oyster and beef steak at cost price</p> <p>no wonder you charge us so little. tomorrow or some other time I will bake some biscuits for you to try</p>
--	---

Finally, one or two of Z's colleagues are also personal friends of hers and her interactions suggest no clear distinction between work and home (Leeds Business Report). The following exchange illustrates how she interacts with colleagues about work (in the first message) and social matters (in the rest of the exchange), and how colleagues snatch moments to relax in their respectively busy working days; the Leeds Business Report suggests that Z coordinates activities with her colleagues through SMS much as she does with her daughters.

Example 11. Exchange between Z and a colleague, M1, Leeds



M2: Hi I've just finished at the department in LGI do you still need that form?

Z: Do you have time for a coffee? I'm in Harehills

Well I will be in about 15 min in sjuh and I have time until 1. [sjuh – St James hosp.]

Ok so we'll meet there in Costa

All right but I don't want a coffee, I've just had one so just for a chat :)

And I need one so much!

4.3 Co-ordinating activities and keeping in touch with immediate family members

As mentioned above, E uses SMS to communicate with her husband on topics that range from their business to life-related matters such as arrangements to collect their daughter from school, picking up food from the shop for evening meals or school lunches, or general updates on the day (London Business Report).

Example 12. Domestically-oriented exchange between E and her husband, London

... O2-UK 3G 14:33

< Messages T Details

I co u was ? Jak M _____
niewyspana ? Jak
Karpie zyja jeszcze ?
Cium

T: How are you? How is M____-DIM sleepy ? How are the carps still alive ?
Mwah

I nas ok M _____ ok
karpie tez

E: We are ok M____-DIM ok carps too

Tue 23 Dec 18:40

Bede za 15 min w domu
przyjechac do was ?

T: I will be home in 15 min shall I come to you ?

Nie no co Ty nie ma po
co my juZ sprzatamy i
Jedziemy do domu

E: No don't be silly there is no need we are already tidying up and Going
home

A u Kota byles Moze
wczoraj

E: And did you go to the cat yesterday By any chance

Mial sucha l wode to
przezvie do iutra

T: It had dry [food] and water so it will survive till tomorrow

Send

(LonBusSM_20141223_SMS_041)

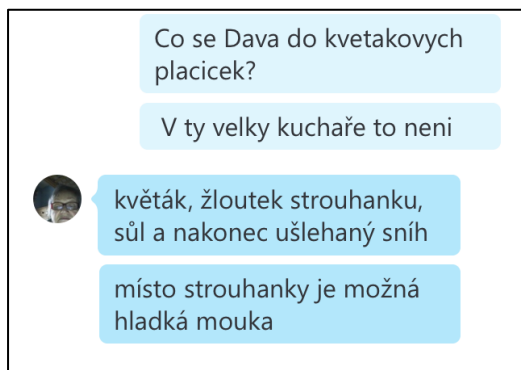
Both E (London) and Z (Leeds) also use mobile messaging to keep in touch with their daughters. Z's online exchanges with her two daughters, aged 12 and 14, constitute the bulk of the social media data collected in Leeds (39 SMS interactions) and the report suggests that Z and her daughters communicate with each other in this way 'a lot' (Leeds Business Report). In general, their interactions can be described as acts of 'micro-coordination' (Ling and Yttri 2002): coordinating movements, letting each other know where they are, asking for lifts, making requests, and announcing meal times. While Z and her daughters use SMS, E and her daughter tend to use Viber, a free messaging app that affords the use of stickers and emoticons. The pair communicate in the afternoon when the daughter has finished school (she is not allowed to take her phone to school) and E is still in the shop. E appears to use Viber to check how her daughter is doing, and to organise everyday activities. These mother-daughter interactions are discussed at greater length in Section 5.1 on language, as they are particularly interesting in relation to differences in language choice and the use of multimodal communication.

4.5 Transnational communication with family and friends

The anthropology of migration has increasingly focused on the maintaining of transnational ties (Vertovec 2010), a practice facilitated by digital technology. Our social media data suggest that all participants kept in touch with people in their home country and the exchanges often document an apparent closeness between people in very different geographical locations. Z, for example, uses written Skype chat to contact her mother. In many of their interactions, Z appears to be 'comfortably immersed in day-to-day Czech

culture' and 'confidently trans-national'. In the following exchange, for example, Z asks for details of a recipe, showing both her familiarity with the Czech dish and a direct, informal style with her mother.

Example 13. Transnational exchange between Z and her mother, Leeds



Z: What do you put in květákové placičky [cauliflower cakes]

Z: I can't find it in the big cookbook

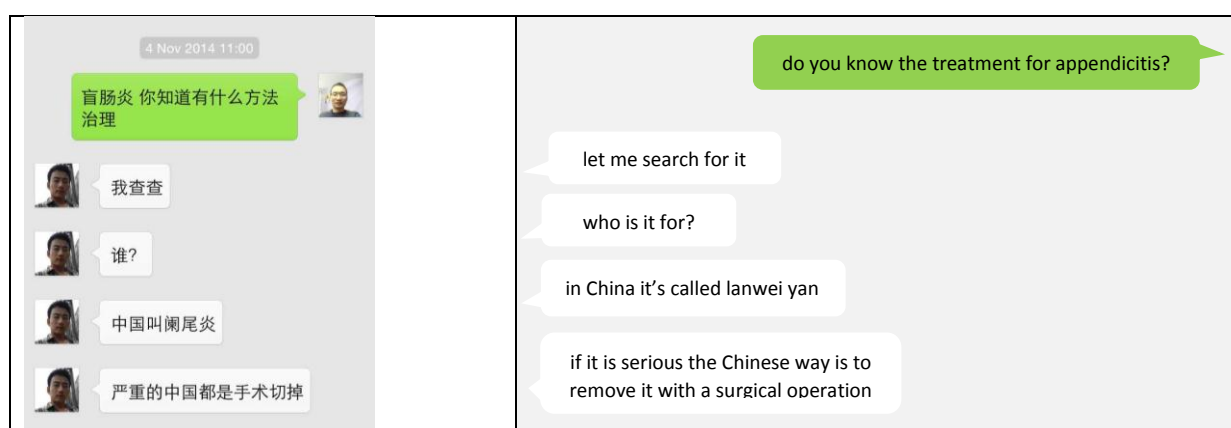
M: Cauliflower, egg yolk, bread crumbs, salt and finally whipped egg white

M: Instead of bread crumbs you can use flour

E carries out some conversations with friends in Poland through Viber and also uses Facebook to keep in touch with around 240 Polish people based in the UK or Poland. This contact usually takes the form of comments and Likes in response to E's posts about her family and her family trips. Some of these posts index a shared childhood, a shared understanding of Polish customs, and background knowledge surrounding E's family. However, despite the seemingly interactive nature of E's Facebook wall, it needs to be interpreted in light of the insight that E was not even aware of some of the posts on her Facebook wall when asked about them by the researcher (London Business Report).

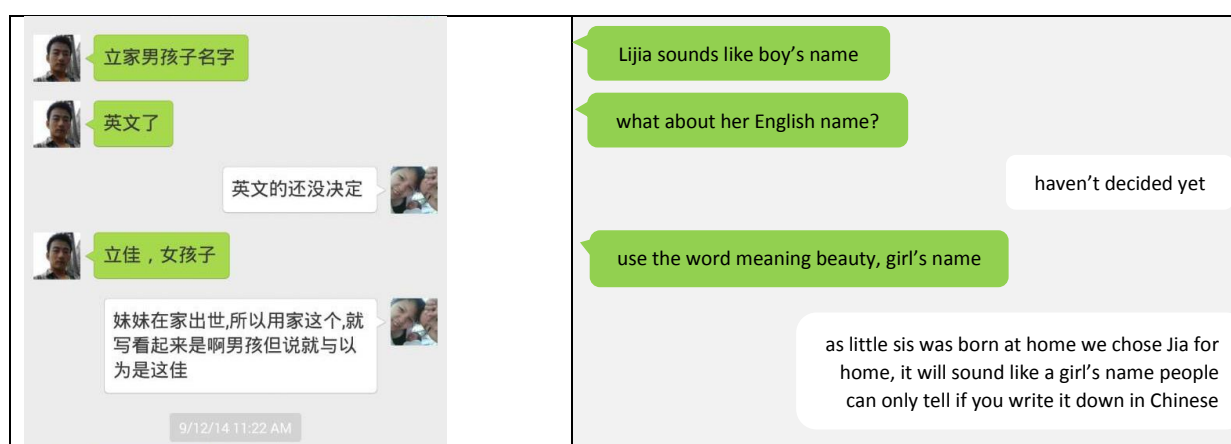
In Birmingham, KC uses QQ to talk to his mother in Fujian, and both he and MYC also use WeChat to interact with KC's brother in China. In one exchange between KC and his brother, KC asks for information regarding a problem at work (his employee has stomach pains), motivated by his distrust for British doctors. His brother's location in China appears to give him some authority (or at least easier access to Chinese websites). The two appear to share a great deal of understanding, both over the cure for his employee's problem and over the task itself: his brother responds quickly by searching for information; interestingly, they then switch to a voice call for a more in-depth conversation before his brother sends him some web links.

Example 14. Transnational exchange between KC and his brother, Birmingham



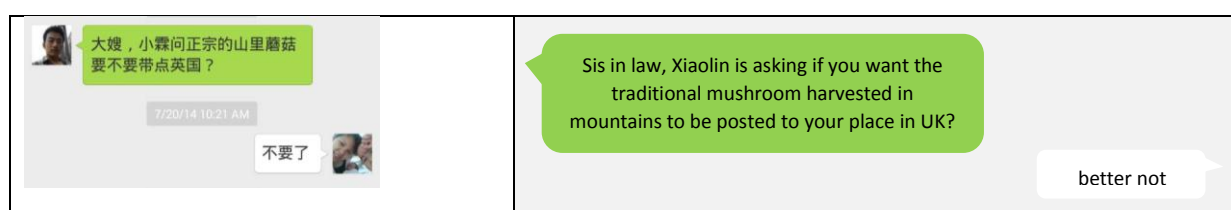
In contrast, however, exchanges between MYC and her brother-in-law often involve a somewhat less smooth negotiation of cultural norms and traditions. In this first exchange, MYC challenges her brother-in-law's claim that she has given her daughter a boy's name, by pointing out that this is only relevant to the Chinese character, which is not how people will encounter the name in Birmingham (where the name will be written down in Roman script).

Example 15. Exchange between MYC and her brother-in-law, Birmingham



In a second exchange, her brother-in-law's request to send mushrooms from the mountains is met by concern about sending such a package through the post, tinged with 'some regret' (Birmingham Business Report), but nonetheless indicating a difference in opinion as to how the postal system can be used.

Example 16. Exchange between MYC and her brother-in-law, Birmingham (2)



These transnational interactions highlight the relevance of Moore's (2004) notion of the 'doubling of context' – or more accurately a 'multiplying of context' – also mentioned in the London report, by which 'people who communicate through social media are located both in their physical location and context and in the context created by electronically mediated exchange that they are part of' (London Business Report). In the London data, this is illustrated with reference to an exchange highlighting the continuing relevance of the participants' respective contexts: E is too busy to reply, while her friend has just returned from class and is ready to talk. Other examples from the above discussion are as follows. Z, for example, is firmly located in the physical reality of her kitchen and in the physical activity of preparing to cook food for her family. Furthermore, she is preparing to cook a dish she knows from home, presumably with some kind of significance for her family living in the UK context. Her mother's knowledge is firmly grounded in a different context, that of the Czech Republic with all the associations of family and home cooking that that may have for Z. Her mother's response is mindful of Z's circumstances, pointing out that 'Instead of bread crumbs you can use flour'. Through their exchange on Skype, they also co-construct a more immediate context involving a brief, direct, informal, quasi-synchronous exchange of information, drawing on some of the communicative norms of such exchanges, such that utterances are chunked into smaller turns. For MYC, the disjunction between her immediate context and that of her brother-in-law's is more problematic, in the sense that the two must use the virtual space to negotiate values associated with distinct contexts. The exchange is grounded in discussion of MYC's family in Birmingham, which her brother-in-law interprets in relation to local family-naming norms in China.

Although particularly evident in interactions bringing together different national contexts, in many of the interactions described throughout this report, we see participants responding to the values and ideologies associated with different physical contexts brought together through the mobile messaging interaction, as well as the affordances, communicative demands and social expectations of the virtual context. In KC's banter with YG, for example, we see the relevance of the marketplace in the coarse sexist discourse and in KC's ability as 'boss' to dictate the nature of their interaction, but the exchange is also grounded in KC's concern for YG's immediate circumstances in the hospital as well as his romantic situation, whilst also shaped by the communicative expectations that have built up around mobile messaging communications; the expectation of a quick reply may justify KC's impatient 'I sent you a message at 1 o'clock, after your message, but got nothing from you since then, doesn't this prove that you've forgotten us?' This communicative norm is also evident in the example from the London data above.

5. Communicative resources

5.1 Language

Across the case studies, the preferred language of communication via mobile technology is the respective heritage language, Chinese, Polish or Czech. This reflects participants' offline practices and is unsurprising, given each individual's personal background, life trajectory and communicative repertoire (the participants were born in countries where these languages are

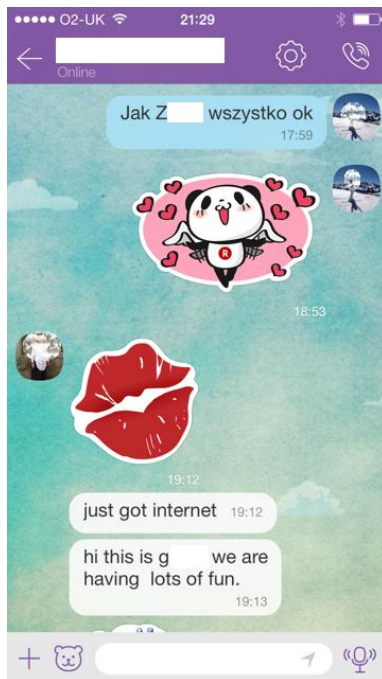
spoken, speak the heritage language at home, and maintain language-based communities in the UK). However, it is interesting, given the superdiverse UK context in which each participant lives and works, to note how social media appears to be used to establish and extend social networks based around shared language background. To take the Birmingham case study as an example, the Mandarin-speaking stall-owners use WhatsApp to interact with local Cantonese-speaking restaurant owners, to engage in banter with a Chinese employee (and not, it seems, with their British-born employee), to exploit relationships formed at their stall (with, for example, a local Chinese hairdresser) and make business arrangements with local Mandarin-speaking friends, whilst maintaining transnational relationships with family in China and Malaysia. This network is not confined to geographical place, but it is grounded in the immediate local context and in the couple's migratory trajectory. This contradicts the general assumption that digital communications technology fosters superdiversity (Varis and Wang 2011). Instead, the particular communicative affordances of WhatsApp in this context – its ability to connect people regardless of geographical location and to facilitate parochial or business interactions in a private space – result in the apparent carving out of a Chinese-speaking network within the wider superdiverse contexts of the market and the surrounding city.

Language choice is also influenced by individual value judgements and beliefs about the heritage language, particularly when it comes to children's language learning. Z, for example, writes to her daughter, 'Ok, honey, you make me very happy when you write me in Czech' and points out 'There was just one mistake – the spelling is *když* and not *gdyz*'. However, in other cases, the technology and features of the UK context appear to impact on traditional ideas about the value of heritage language. In most of the Polish language messages collected in London, for example, diacritics are avoided in order to cut costs, save time and effort, and/or because they are not supported by older mobile devices. Here we see a typical response to the constraints of the technology which has also been described as encouraging practices of respelling and grammatical ellipsis (Tagg 2012). In the Birmingham data, as we saw earlier, MYC justifies her choice of name for her new baby – which is written with a character meaning 'home' usually associated with boys – with reference to the fact that in the UK, it is unlikely ever to be written down in Chinese script and so can be mistaken for the girl's name, 'beauty'. Here we see the impact of the local context on traditional language-related norms. In both cases, language choices are made against a background of diverse and competing language ideologies.

The only other language used across the data is English. At times, the use of English is driven by communicative demands, such as when an interlocutor is English-speaking – this occurs with some business orders in the Birmingham and London data and in Z's interactions with her employer. Z's and E's interactions with their daughters are of particular interest. E reports that as a rule she communicates with her daughter in Polish (although her daughter was born and brought up in the UK and attends a mainstream school). However, her daughter's written Polish is limited and for varying reasons will sometimes write in English. On one occasion in the data when her daughter is messaging from a friend's house, the English-speaking context and the fact that her daughter is interacting in English with her friend (and includes her in the

online exchange) triggers a change in her daughter's language choice to which E eventually accommodates: 'Ok.byee bye have a nice watching the film'.

Example 17. E's interaction with her daughter, London



E: How are things Z__-VOC everything ok

E: [visual]

Z: [visual]

Z: just got internet

G: hi this is g__ we are having lots of fun.

(LonBusSM_20141127_VIB_021)



Z: thanks I will u to

Z: we are watching an action film at the moment

Z: enjoy your glass of wine

Z: [visual]

Z: got to get back to the film

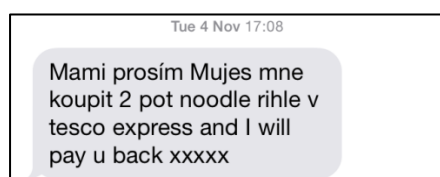
E: Ok.byee bye have a nice watching the film

(LonBusSM_20141127_VIB_025)

Z's interactions with her daughters draw more fluidly on the two languages available to them, with Z typically but not always using Czech to initiate exchanges but her daughters often using English. Interestingly, Z's younger daughter uses more Czech than we might expect

from her face-to-face language use, where she can be resistant to her mother's attempts to get her to use the language (Leeds Business Report).

Example 18. Exchange between Z and her younger daughter (R)



R: Mum please can you buy me 2 pot noodle quick in tesco express and I will pay you back.

At other times, English-related resources are used as a convenient short-cut, such as when KC and his restaurant-owning interlocutors pepper their business discussions with Arabic numerals, abbreviations such as ‘kg’ and the discourse marker ‘Ok’. Other times, English is embedded into the infrastructure or technological features of the platform: within the messaging apps, elements such as the time and date of messages, automated messages, and commands like Send are in English. More interesting is E’s frequent use of English-language stickers (i.e. little images with captions), which constitutes her most confident use of English. Her use of stickers in this way can be explained by her self-reported good passive knowledge of English, evidenced also by the fact that she listens to the English news in her car (London Business Report). E’s use of English in the social media data is otherwise ‘limited to a few words and fixed phrases’ and sometimes ‘ungrammatical’, as in the aforementioned message to her daughter, ‘Ok.bye bye have a nice watching the film’.

As some of the above suggests, use of English is shaped in part by each participant’s level of comfort with English (and other languages). Z and her Czech-speaking colleagues switch comfortably between English and Czech. In contrast, observational data from the marketplace suggests that KC’s English is limited and this may influence his choice of interlocutor in WhatsApp interactions (Birmingham Business Report). However, it appears that social media can provide opportunities for a scaffolded use of language and literacy practices, as documented in Blommaert and Velghe’s (2014) account of the way in which a South African woman with dyslexia manages to communicate using Mixit. In relation to second language acquisition, ‘minimal bilingualism’ – the use of emblematic code-switches (Poplack 1980) involving high-frequency nouns and formulaic sequences – is thought to be encouraged by the technological affordances of social media (Androutsopoulos 2011), such as the availability of networked resources (e.g. stickers), the potential for planning or editing time, and the distance between participants.

Translanguaging practices in the sense of mixed linguistic resources occur in a handful of Z’s messages to her daughters and her colleagues, as already evidenced, and in E’s messages to her daughter and in her use of stickers. The fact that both Z and her colleague, M1, have been living in the UK for over 15 years, since early adulthood, leads us to interpret exchanges such as the following in terms of ‘interlingual fluidity’ (a term used by the Leeds team) signalling a certain comfort with both languages and a shared language background.

Example 19. Translanguaging in an exchange between Z and colleague, Leeds



*M1: Hi Z! I'm really sorry, but just now I've realized your last **message**. Too late!!! :(I know. :D sorry but my Whatsup didn't work.*

Z: nevermind! :-)

Z: I have finally finished! They signed a piece of paper I gave them, so hopefully they'll accept it :-)


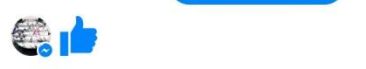
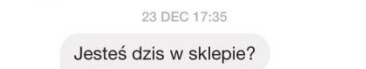
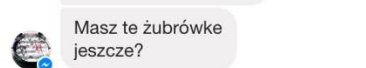
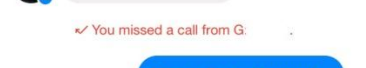


*M1: That will be **fine**, you'll see. I think I've once done it this way too. Have a nice evening!*

Also interesting are the ways in which other communicative resources associated with different languages are mixed. In the Birmingham data, for example, the Mandarin-speaking KC from mainland China responds frequently to meat orders from Cantonese restaurant owners. In spoken interactions, Cantonese and Mandarin, despite being officially classed as Chinese dialects, would be mutually unintelligible, and KC would likely switch to Mandarin in face-to-face interactions with his clients. Both languages, however, can be written using the same script, or different versions of it, as in our data. Difference in the WhatsApp interactions manifests itself in KC's use of simplified Chinese script (widely taught in mainland China) and the restaurant owners' use of traditional or 'complicated' script, as used in Hong Kong, both clearly intelligible to all participants. The difference, although unremarked-upon in the interactions we accessed, presumably enables an indexing of two different backgrounds and identities with whatever significance this might have for the participants.

In the London data, as we saw earlier, Polish is most often written without the diacritics with which it is traditionally accompanied, probably for reasons of cost and effort, perhaps creating a kind of 'digital Polish' (akin to English textese, Arabizi, Greeklish or Thai *pasa karaoke*). As a literacy practice, the choice to avoid or reject the use of diacritics has the

potential for social meaning-making. While the avoidance of diacritics may do little more than act as a marker of register, the choice to retain them (which occurs in only 8 screenshots) may serve an indexical function, particularly as diacritics are likely to suggest both that a particular effort has been made and an adherence to traditional norms. In the following message it appears that E's customer has made a particular choice to use diacritics, despite the fact that his/her interlocutor (E) typically and consistently does not.

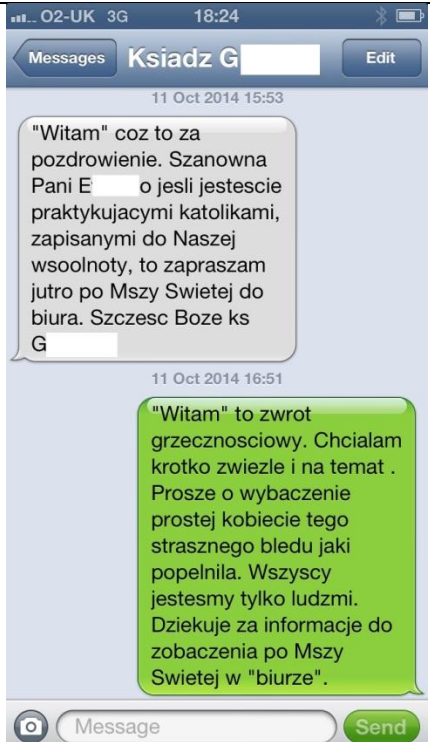
Example 20. Polish with diacritics, London

Ps	Social media example (Facebook messenger)	Standard Polish writing (with diacritics)	Translation
E		Zobaczę czy mam	I'll check iF I have [any]
G		[like]	[like]
G		Jesteś dziś w sklepie?	Are you at the shop today?
G		Masz tę Żubrówkę jeszcze?	Have you got that żubrówka still?
E		[automatic message]	[automatic message]
E		Mam tylko cytrynowkę	I only have cytrynówka
G		[visual]	[visual]
			(LonBusSM_20141223_FBMSG_040)

In three cases in the London data, Polish is accompanied by quotation marks usually used by English speakers in the UK (the 'high 9 quote') rather than that which the Polish speakers would have learnt in Poland ('the low 9 quote'). Although likely motivated by the unavailability of the Polish language on the interlocutors' mobile phones (London Business Report), it is also likely that the high quote mark is both understood by the Polish speakers and that it carries some association with the English language or with the UK context. This practice can therefore be seen as an example of translanguaging, albeit one that does not seem very salient to participants.

Example 21. Exchange between E and her priest, London

Ps	Social media example (SMS)	Standard Polish writing (with diacritics)	Translation
	<p>Participants: E, FrG</p> <p>Context: FrG is a priest at E's parish. E had texted him to arrange a meeting about E's application to a Catholic school. E greeted FrG with 'Witam' in a previous message.</p>		

FrG		<p>„Witam” cóż to za pozdrowienie. Szanowna Pani E__-VOC jeśli jesteście praktykującymi katolikami, zapisanymi do naszej wspólnoty, to zapraszam jutro po Mszy Świętej do biura. Szczęść Boże ks G__</p>	<p>“Witam” what kind of greeting is that. Dear Ms E__-VOC if you are practising Catholics and members of Our community, come tomorrow after the Holy Mass to the office. God bless fr G__</p>
E		<p>„Witam” to zwrot grzecznościowy. Chciałam krótko zwięzle i na temat. Proszę o wybaczenie prostej kobiecie tego straszego błędu jaki popełniła. Wszyscy jesteśmy tylko ludźmi. Dziękuję za informację do zobaczenia po Mszy Świętej w „biurze”.</p>	<p>“Witam” is a polite expression. I wanted [it] short and to the point. Please forgive a simple woman this horrific mistake she has made. We are all only human. Thank you for the information see you after the Holy Mass in “the office”.</p> <p>(LonBusSM_20141011_SMS_006)</p>

The above exchange is also interesting for its display of metalinguistic awareness. In it, E departs from her normally brief, casual style and becomes both wordy and somewhat sarcastic in tone. The metalinguistic commentary here involves the priest remarking on E’s inappropriate use of the greeting ‘Wittam’ (‘hello’) which he deems as overly informal – perhaps the word is appropriate for a text message but not for an exchange with your priest, a role in which the priest clearly positions himself in the rest of his message. (Here we see an issue arising because a word is appropriate in one context generated by the exchange but not in another.) E adopts some of the formality of this language and seems to draw on religious discourse when she positions herself as a ‘simple woman’ and asks for forgiveness for her sins (her ‘horrific mistake’). Her tone then appears to change as she switches to a more pragmatic ‘Thank you for the information see you after the Holy Mass’, with ‘the office’ flagged up with quotation marks as referring back to the priest’s use of the word. Here, an exchange with an apparently functional purpose is conducted with great attention to the interpersonal aspects and with a heightened awareness of the language used.

In other acts of metalinguistic awareness taking place on both E’s and Z’s phones, predictive texting mistakes and typos are picked up on and exploited for interpersonal purposes. This happened ‘on a few occasions’ in the London data. In one example, E’s interlocutor notices that her phone has changed ‘esemesa’ (SMS) to ‘farmera’ (farmer) producing the utterance, ‘Sorry I’ve only now seen the farmer’ and corrects it, but E nonetheless turns it in to a joke: ‘And I’ve already thought you saw some nice “farmer” and invited him to the party’. In the Leeds data, we saw earlier how Z picks up on a typo made by her manager (‘cooking’), using emoticons to signal her amusement. In both examples, participants explicitly comment on an earlier part of the interaction, repositioning a mistake into a resource for interpersonal meaning-making. Similarly, in the aforementioned message to a local restaurant, ‘today’s

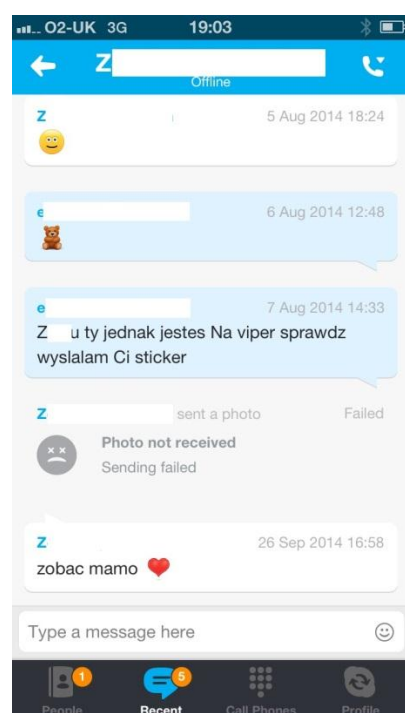
Monday do you still want 10 pieces of pork belly. I forgot. Hehe', KC's representation of laughter 'hehe' following his confession ('I forgot') reflexively draws attention to the earlier part of his messages, acknowledging his forgetfulness or disorganisation on this occasion.

5.2 Multimodality

Although in some ways the online language practices reflect the participants' practices elsewhere, social media affords a set of resources distinct from those available in speech and characterised by networked resources – resources which can be accessed from elsewhere 'in the network' (Androutsopoulos 2013) – and a particular set of multimodal and graphic elements (what Androutsopoulos calls a 'digital literacy repertoire'), thus extending the possibilities for communication.

Of the three key participants, E appears to make most use of other semiotic modes, at least when it comes to stickers. E and her daughter use Viber (which E also uses with some friends in Poland), probably because of its various affordances: it can be freely used over the internet (unlike SMS) and it provides location data, but most obviously because of its 'sticker' function. As pointed out in the London Business Report, 'The vast majority of messages sent through Viber [by E and interlocutors] includes communication in the form of stickers', and recognition of this affordance can be seen in the following exchange, where the pair switch from Skype to Viber to facilitate the sharing of a sticker.

Example 22. Exchange between E and her daughter, London



[visual]

[visual]

Z___-VOC you are On viber after all check I've sent you a *sticker*

[automated message]

look mum-VOC [visual]

(LonBusSM_20140926_SKY_003)

Stickers in Viber are used both by themselves to convey a message and alongside other semiotic modes, chiefly language, and can be used to fulfil a range of functions: to add an element of fun, convey emotion, or make a point as in this following exchange, where the

sticker serves as a ‘nudge’ to prompt a response (London Business Report). The image may perhaps be seen as less direct and confrontational, more playful and emotive, than a written nudge might be.

Example 23. Exchange using a sticker as a communication nudge, London



E: It was nice, and what’s up with you

A: [visual]

A: Winter

A: And laziness

A: [visual]

(LonBusSM_20150106_FBMSG_050)

As this Facebook Messenger exchange shows, mobile messaging platforms other than Viber also afford the embedding of stickers or icons, emojis and photos within texted interactions although, as suggested in the London report, in a less elaborate form. Z and her interlocutors (daughters and colleagues) in Leeds use emojis more often than E, mainly faces expressing various emotions, although other images such as hearts and, on one occasion coffee and cake icons, are also present. Arguably, the juxtaposition of the coffee and cake icons next to the statement ‘I’ll provide everything’ serves as an ironic reflection on what constitutes ‘everything’ they need for a social visit, and therefore conveys greater intimacy through humour and shared understanding.

Example 24. Exchange between Z and her daughter in which they use emojis, Leeds



Example 25. Exchange between Z and a colleague, featuring creative emojis, Leeds



Z: Oh so you're already in the new one! Cool! You need to show it off to me sometime :) the two of you work like robots, don't you? I am now XXX [typo] the door, but in the evening we are planning to go to Ikea to buy a new bed, so we'll have dinner there as well. At least I don't need to cook for a change, hooray

M1: :) come anytime!

M1: [coffee, cake] I'll provide everything :)

As the examples suggest, emojis (like stickers) appear to do a great deal of interpersonal work. Their meaning, in each case, is dependent on the surrounding text and on the

participants' shared knowledge and background, against which emojis, like emoticons and other visual cues, will be interpreted and evaluated (Knaś 2014) and thus they tend to heighten intimacy and strengthen interpersonal bonds. Structurally, they appear fairly flexible – they usually occur at the end of a sentence or phrase, although they can occur at the start of a message, and they can occur before, after or instead of punctuation. They can occur singly or in sequences of two or three. Their use varies across the case studies, used most frequently by Z, less so by E, and sparingly in the Birmingham data. Emojis are not attested in KC's business-oriented encounters or MYC's interactions with her brother-in-law and only used once in KC's banter with his employee (with an image of lips). The motivation here is hard to fathom, but may have something to do with the crudeness and informality of the message, with the cheeky red emoji standing in parallel to the slang word 'dick' in 'the cast is not on your dick, nor is it on your [emoji-lips], how come it's not easy'. In one exchange in the Birmingham data they are used extensively, by MYC's friend in response to MYC's provision of food for her party and a fraught conversation about the whereabouts of her friend's husband, where the emojis signal enthusiasm for the food as well as gratitude for MYC's help (Birmingham Business Report). This is unsurprising in a situation where MYC is doing a friend a favour, although the practice seems also to be an individual preference, as her friend uses them throughout the conversation.

Photos can be embedded into most of the platforms used, although E appears to prefer Facebook Messenger for this purpose. In this example, E's photo appears to serve the double-function of identifying the particular newspaper and revealing that E has it in stock (thus pointing simultaneously to the general category of 'Komputer' magazine and to the specific one that her interlocutor seems about to buy).

Example 26. Photo sent by E to a potential customer, London

[visual]

Czy to Ta gazeta

Is it This newspaper

[visual]

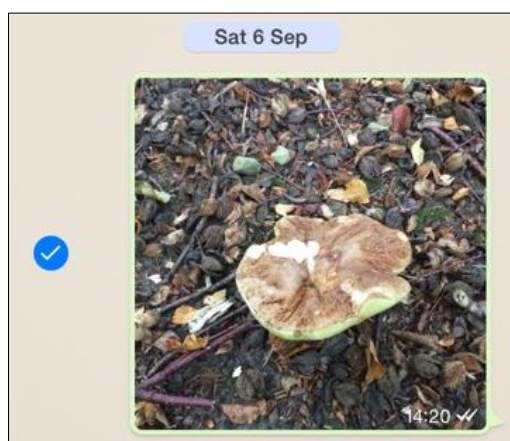
Tak dzięki jutro po nią bede

Yes thanks I'll come to get it tomorrow

(LonBusSM_nodate_FBMSG_053)

Z appears to send few photos, but in one example she uses a photo of a mushroom to ‘open up the interaction with M1 [her colleague], to begin the exchange with a turn not in words but in pictures’ which the Leeds report goes on to describe as ‘translation across modes’. The photo seems to serve to catch M1’s attention in an eye-catching, intriguing and relevant way (M1 shares her interest in mushrooming), before Z goes on to elaborate, ‘Tak jsme dnes opet houbarili:-)’ (‘we’ve been mushrooming again today’). Of course, as with the photo of the magazine, the choice of photo followed by text may be a technologically-driven one.

Example 27. Photo sent by Z to a colleague, Leeds



However, photos are generally infrequent across the mobile messaging data and not apparent in the Birmingham data. (They are more frequent on E’s Facebook page.)

Finally, E’s conversations via Facebook Messenger involve the use of a ‘thumbs-up’ image to represent approval, appreciation or a simple acknowledgement. This affordance seems to have been extended from the practice of ‘Liking’ a Facebook status update or post. Emoticons (faces constructed through punctuation marks) are used sparingly throughout the data, although they occur in a couple of Z’s exchanges.

5.3 Discourse structure

As well as various semiotic modes, participants across the data also draw on the affordances of the digital technology in constructing and exploiting particular kinds of discourse structure. In relation to this, Baron (2010) reports on the practice of ‘utterance breaks’ in instant messaging, by which American teens ‘chunk’ or divide their message into two or more posts. She compares them to typical ‘intonation units’ in speech. Baron was interested predominantly in a syntactic definition of utterance break as involving the chunking of a meaningful whole which occurred very infrequently in our data (and which would not include many of the categories in the framework below), but her study is interesting for pointing out differences between IM and spoken utterance chunks, which she uses to argue that IM is more than just an attempt to reconstruct a spoken conversation. Her study is also useful in highlighting the impact on discourse structure of ‘temporal pacing’. Although IM, like mobile messaging, can be used quasi-synchronously (Garcia and Jacob 1999), interactions are often embedded in other activities and therefore proceed more asynchronously (Darics 2014; de

Siqueira and Herring 2009). The different discourse structures identified in our data similarly highlight the different ways in which similar media are being used, and different ways in which they are being integrated into busy lives.

The distinct discourse structures in the data can be described as follows:

1. **Turn-taking:** many exchanges show a back-and-forth distribution of turns, including 2-part sequences, as with some of the Birmingham restaurant orders, where questions are asked and answered.
2. **Announcements:** other messages receive no reply, which can often result in one person sending a sequence of messages over time, characteristic of many of the restaurant orders (Birmingham).
3. **Multi-turn sequence** (where one participant sends more than one message)
 - a) **Postscripts:** where participants appear to have just thought of an additional point: ‘And did you go to the cat yesterday by any chance’ (E, London); ‘By the way are you planning to go to St Nicholas 7.12?’ (Z, Leeds).
 - b) **Message qualification** (Gumperz 1982)
 - ‘Cooking? :-)))’ followed by ‘I know what you meant’ (comment) (Leeds)
 - ‘This week Mr Shas died, the one who was training you, he had a stroke’ followed by ‘He was 71’ (comment) (Leeds)
 - ‘Cauliflower, egg yolk, breadcrumbs, salt and finally whipped egg white’ – ‘Instead of bread crumbs you can use flour’ (reflection) (Leeds)
 - ‘don’t show your face without one!’ (comment) (Leeds)
 - ‘Can you still use your Paypal?’ – ‘I want to transfer some money’ (explanation) (Birmingham)
 - ‘What do you put in cauliflower cakes?’ – ‘I can’t find it in the big cookbook’ (elaboration/explanation) (Leeds)
 - c) **Corrections:** Z’s ‘Well so he was not that staj’ followed by ‘starj’ (‘old’) (Leeds)
 - d) **Visuals:** where a photo is followed in the next turn by text (London, Leeds).
 - e) **Distinguishing of ‘moves’**
 - Dividing feedback and eliciting moves: ‘Lijia sounds like boy’s name’ – ‘What about her English name?’ (Birmingham);
 - Separating message body from closing: ‘yay’ – ‘we’ll have fun now bye’ (London);
 - Dividing response from elicitation: ‘oh’ – ‘yea, roughly how much do you charge’ (Birmingham);
 - Dividing intro from request: ‘I’m Meiyen, Hong Kong butcher stall, you know who I am, right?’ followed by ‘I want you to help me straighten my hair’ (Birmingham).
 - f) **Chunking to reflect the pace of thought**
 - ‘He’s just finished working’ – ‘finally’ – ‘20 calls already’ – ‘I want to cry’ and other examples in MYC’s conversation with her friend (Birmingham)
 - Breaking up a long topic, posting as think – conversation about Liwen between MYC and brother (Birmingham)

- ‘Come anytime!’ – ‘coffee, cake’ (Leeds)
- g) **Multitasking:** KC’s brother sending information and asking questions as he accesses the web (Birmingham);
- h) **Responding to discourse structure set up by interlocutor:** for example, GY responds to KC’s chunking by splitting ‘no no once my bed was sorted they went’ and ‘it’s true that fortunately we had bread here’ (Birmingham).

Language use online has typically been explained with reference to affordances, whereby people’s use of social media is seen as being determined by their perceptions of the possibilities or opportunities provided by a technology, shaped in turn by their previous use of technologies, their communicative purposes and awareness, their digital literacy skills, individual communicative repertoires and technological competence, and the use they see being made of the same technology around them (Lee 2007). ‘Affordances’ are useful because they shift attention from the technology to its usage, to the extent that Miller and Sinanan (2014: 139) question whether affordances can be linked to a technology at all: ‘often the key elements of media usage come more from happenstance than anything that could be called given propensities of that media’. For example, one ‘affordance’ of Skype is that it is free at the point of use. Yet, Miller and Sinanan argue, it makes little sense for an enriched channel of communication – with visual as well as audio – to cost less than a more limited technology such as the phone. The difference in cost has little to do with the technology itself and more to do with the wider social situation. The different discourse structures above suggest various ways in which our participants perceived and exploited the affordances of mobile messaging differently, at different times and in different places, in order to fulfil different communicative purposes within distinct communicative contexts. In support of Miller and Sinanan’s observations, ‘affordances’ are often perceived in contrasting ways: for example, mobile messaging can be used in the daily organisation of everyday activities and it can be used to keep in touch across vast geographical distances; it can afford immediate, quick interactions and it can enable people to leave messages for interlocutors to pick up later; and it can facilitate the concise conveying of information but it also affords an array of semiotic modes for expressing emotion and closeness.

6. Discussion and conclusion

At first glance, the social media data reveals an intriguing degree of ethnic and linguistic homogeneity, with most interactions being carried out in the respective heritage language of the key participant (Mandarin, Polish, Czech) and most participants likely to affiliate to some extent around a shared ethnic, national or family identity. Difference emerges from the use of two scripts, indexing two different backgrounds (mainland China and Hong Kong), but it is not made salient in the business-oriented interactions between KC and the restaurant owners; instead, the interlocutors converge around shared business interests, purposes and goals and do not seem to remark on the different scripts. A sense of shared sameness is also constructed by participants over the geographical distances that separate them from family back home, as in Z’s conversations with her mother and KC’s with his brother, drawing on shared background, knowledge and cultural assumptions: Z, for example, may not remember how to make *kvěťákové placičky* (‘cauliflower cakes’) but she demonstrates her knowledge of a shared culinary tradition. The participants appear to use social media to establish and

maintain a remarkably homogenous network, in terms at least of ethnicity and language, in the otherwise superdiverse contexts in which they live and work. This portrait of mobile use contrasts with the assumption in the literature that the internet encourages superdiverse contexts (Varis and Wang 2011; Androutsopoulos and Juffermans 2014). This may reflect a difference between typically ‘public’ internet-based communication and the closed channels possible through mobile apps (Ito and Okabe 2005); however, as Ling and Horst (2011: 366) point out in relation to networks in the global south, ‘establishing a dichotomy’ here may be less useful than an approach which looks at how affordances are exploited in situated instances of use and the underlying motivations for different usages (see in this regard Miller and Madinou 2011 for their theory of *polymedia*). It is also worth noting what has been said about many social network sites (such as Facebook) regarding their role in making visible existing social networks rather than facilitating new links (boyd and Ellison 2007). The internet can foster superdiversity, but it does not inevitably do so.

Despite the apparent ethnic homogeneity of the mobile networks, sources of diversity and difference are evident. In MYC’s exchanges with her brother-in-law, for example, difference in local cultural traditions and practices must be negotiated: MYC is aware of Chinese name-giving traditions, but they are not necessarily relevant in Birmingham. With digital technology, geographical space is no longer an issue in terms of the possibility of communication, and in that practical sense the distinction between situated local encounters and global, transnational communication blurs. But this is not to say that digital technology can bridge gaps in relational or cultural proximity that emerge when people are physically apart. For example, Miller and Madinou (2011) describe how Filipina mothers use social media as a way of maintaining contact with, and parental authority over, their children while living and working in the US. For the children, however, the social media connection did not compensate for the physical presence of their mothers and they reacted as such on their mothers’ return. In MYC’s case, geographical distance and the more immediate demands of her local context appear to lead to differences in perspective between her and her husband’s family. The interactions remain ‘translocal’ in Blommaert’s (2010: 79) sense that communication ‘always involves issues of transporting the signs or objects attached to one place into those of other places, where they can be reinterpreted otherwise’.

Age and place of birth are also significant as sources of difference, as seen in the different language choices made by E and Z, on the one hand, and their respective daughters on the other. (Z’s daughters also orient differently towards national and linguistic identities, the older considering herself ‘Czech’ and the younger ‘British’.) The mothers orient differently towards Polish/Czech and English than their daughters do, because of their distinct language learning experiences and the subsequent value they thus place on the different languages. This difference is addressed through a shift by Z to a mothering or pedagogical role; and, by E, through an eventual accommodation to her daughter’s language choices. Age and social status may well play a role in shaping the teasing discourse between KC and his young student employee, as well as education, gender, and workplace power relations: potential difference here must be carefully managed by both, as YG goes along to some extent with the older man’s sexist remarks. Differential power relations might also play in role in Z’s

exchange with her employer: jokingly teasing her with ‘Cooking? :-))), Z quickly follows up with ‘I know what you meant’, as if aware that she is not in a position to set up the play frame she appears to do in her previous turn. And difference can also become salient as a result of personal aspirations or outlook. In a conversation with her (Chinese speaking) hairdresser, MYC makes a ‘slight faux pas’ when she seems to disregard hairdressing as a job, asking ‘do you have a job now?’, to which her interlocutor replies ‘hairdressing is my job!’. In this case, the difference in perception does not become an issue; the hairdresser ‘aligns herself with MYC’ by making light of her own work: ‘hairdressing at home, haha!’. The diversity present in each network cannot be described in terms of superdiversity but rather as a kind of ‘intradiversity’ (Tagg et al forthcoming), meant here not so much as ‘intra-ethnicity’ diversity but as that which emerges through the construction of an online network primarily based not around shared membership of particular social categories, but around a mutual orientation to a ‘node’ user (Tagg and Seargeant 2014): a constrained kind of diversity.

As well as challenging assumptions about time and space (and local and global), the mobile messaging interactions also challenge distinctions often assumed between public, parochial and private spaces, usually defined in terms of the nature of the space itself and the type of relationships and interactions which occur there (e.g. repeated interactions between customer and stall-owner within the marketplace may be considered parochial). If we consider mobile messaging interactions in terms of virtual *space*, it makes little sense to categorise the mobile messaging interactions in terms of ‘public’ or ‘private’ when they all take place in the same, ostensibly private (one-to-one, closed) channel of communication and when interactions can be physically grounded in any offline space – as noted in the Leeds report, ‘conversations about work using mobile phone-mediated SMS takes place outside the workplace (e.g. in the home) and outside working hours (e.g. in the evening or early morning’). Indeed, we have already seen that social media makes various contexts or spaces relevant (Moore 2004). If we categorise the data in terms of participant relationships, it is immediately evident that none of the participants are strangers to each other; excluded from these interactions are the passing encounters in crowded places that characterise much ‘public’ interaction in superdiverse urban spaces (Wessendorf 2014). However, nor do interlocutors easily fall into other relationship categories: Z is friends with her colleagues, E’s husband is her business partner, KC’s colleague the butt of his intimate teasing banter. Again, the participants’ working and personal lives overlap.

Social media has often been described as disembodied (a point made by Lyons 2014), and there is a long line of research exploring how people can deconstruct and reconstruct identity online. While early research was characterised by an assumption that internet users were free to be who they wanted to be (Danet et al 1995; Reid 1991), more recent research focuses on the increased ability for users to be selective in how they portray themselves and to do so with a new or reconfigured set of resources (Vaisman 2011; Leppänen et al 2014; Jonsson and Muhonen 2014). But this is not to say that internet interactions are decontextualised or ‘devoid of place’, a point also made in the London report. Such an assumption ignores the various ‘discursive tools’ which internet users employ to reconstruct context (Lyons 2014). In danah boyd’s words, people on the internet must ‘write themselves into being’ (boyd 2008:

121) and, on semi-public social network sites like Facebook for example, where the exact audience for any one post is unknowable, users have to recreate a context with (and for) every status update or post they write (boyd 2006; Marwick and boyd 2014). We must also take into account the continued relevance of users' physical locations and offline activities, as described in Moore's concept of the 'doubling of contexts'. Elsewhere, I have used the concept of 'context design' to explain the process by which social media users are seen as imagining particularly complex (or multiple) contexts to which they respond as they construct their online posts (Tagg et al forthcoming). In 'context design', participants are seen as taking on board a range of considerations in imagining the various ways in which their online posts may be interpreted and recontextualised, and how this awareness shapes and constrains what they write and how they write it. In other words, people do not only respond to multiple contexts when interacting online, they actively co-construct, negotiate and challenge them.

Rather than approaching the data in terms of delimited spaces or pre-determined relationship categories, then, we can argue that the particular context for any one interaction must be co-constructed in the course of a particular interaction, according to the participants' immediate purposes; their values, knowledge and expectations; and their perceptions of each other and the expectations, knowledge and values that the other brings to the interaction. Time and again in the data, we saw how relationships were constructed and reconfigured through performances of sameness and difference. KC and his restaurant interlocutors downplay differences in script (and the cultural background it indexed) and instead focus on their shared business purposes, in interactions which reveal mutual understanding and shared goals; while, in discussing intimate family matters, MYC and her brother-in-law negotiate their differences in orientation to Chinese cultural norms and thus make very salient the geographical distance between them. Z's first message to her employer constructs their relationship as polite and formal, which she then recontextualises as informal and teasing. In E's interactions with her daughter and her daughter's friend, E's 'private', family-oriented enquiry as to her daughter's wellbeing 'Jak Z, wsystko ok' is repositioned by her daughter into a multi-party, English-language event, to which E eventually acquiesces: 'Ok. bye bye have a nice time'. Thus we might explore how WhatsApp and other mobile messaging conversations are discursively co-constructed and continually reconstructed as more or less parochial, social or intimate/domestic; or, in terms of purpose, as more or less informational, instrumental and interpersonal.

In terms of shedding light on how mobile messaging is used by business people, we can see a use not only for making informal, social arrangements but also for conveying precise information for business purposes, resulting in a very different kind of language to that normally reported in linguistic studies of text messaging. We can see how mobile devices are embedded into a range of activities, spanning and blurring typical – but likely never very clearly defined – boundaries between work and home. There is a sense of the phone as liberating, as documented in studies of the Global South (Ling and Horst 2011), allowing business people to conduct their business when and where they like, without the same concerns for the constraints of time and space that must have characterised earlier interactions: communication can be instantaneous across distances or it can be deliberately delayed.

Mobile messaging enables people to build up their own networks of support from among the same-language community within other superdiverse contexts, and we have also seen how the mobile can be used to exploit transnational family networks for business purposes: as when KC contacts his brother about his problem at work. One thing we did not focus on in this report is the extent to which mobiles can be used to harass or repress workers. In the business literature, employees' feeling of 'connected time' (Reinsch et al 2008) – the sense of being constantly available and that the boundaries between work and home are blurring – is seen as perpetuating the stress caused by mobile phones: employees come to rely on their phones and seek to alleviate their stress through them, which in turn increases the communicative pressures they feel (Ivarsson and Larsson 2011; Maier and Deluliis 2015). Perhaps we saw the potential for this in KC's messages to his employee, who appears to some extent obliged to respond from his hospital bed to his employer's insistent messages.

References

- Androutsopoulos, J. (2010) 'Localising the global on the participatory web' in Coupland, N. (ed.) *The Handbook of Language and Globalisation*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, pp. 203-231.
- Baron, N. (2009) 'The myth of impoverished signal: dispelling the spoken-language fallacy for emoticons in online communication' in Vincent, J. and L. Fortunati (eds) *Electronic Emotion: the mediation of emotion via information and communication technologies*. London: Peter Lang, pp. 107-136.
- Baron, N. (2010) 'Discourse structures in instant messaging: the case of utterance breaks' *Language@Internet* 7.
- Berry, G. R. (2011) 'Enhancing effectiveness on virtual teams: understanding why traditional team skills are insufficient' *Journal of Business Communication*, 48/2: 186-206.
- boyd, d.m. (2006) 'Friends, friendsters, and Top 8: writing community into being on social network sites' *First Monday* 11/12.
- Brown, V.R. and V.E. Daly (2011) 'The writing on the (Facebook) wall: the use of social networking sites in hiring decisions' *Journal of Business and Psychology*, 26/2: 219-225.
- Bohnert, D. and W.H. Ross (2010) 'The influence of social networking web sites on the evaluation of job candidates' *Cyberpsychology, Behavior and Social Networking* 13(3): 341-347.
- Cascio W. F. and Shurygailo, S. (2002) 'E-leadership and virtual teams', *Organizational Dynamics* 31/4: 362-376.
- Chib, A. and V.H.-H. Chen (2011) 'Midwives with mobiles: a dialectal perspective on gender arising from technology introduction in rural Indonesia' *New Media & Society* 13: 486-501.
- Daim, T. U., Ha, A., Reutiman, S., Hughes, B., Pathak, U., Bynum, W. and Bathla, A. (2012) 'Exploring the communication breakdown in global virtual teams' *International Journal of Project Management* 30/2: 199-212.
- Darics, E. (2010a) 'Politeness in computer-mediated discourse of a virtual team' *Journal of Politeness Research* 6/1: 129-150.
- Darics, E. (2010b) 'Relational work in synchronous text-based CMC of virtual Teams' in Taiwo, R. (ed.), *Handbook of Research on Discourse Behavior and Digital Communication: language structures and social interaction*, IGI Global: Hershey, PA, pp. 830-851.
- Darics, E. (2014) 'The blurring boundaries between synchronicity and asynchronicity: new communicative situations in work-related instant messaging', *International Journal of Business Communication* 51/4: 337-358.
- Darics, E. (forthcoming) Digital media in workplace interactions In: Georgakopoulou A., Spilioti T., eds. *The Routledge Handbook of Language and Digital Communication*, London: Routledge, pp. 197-211.
- Davison, H. K., C.C. Maraist, R.H. Hamilton and M.N. Bing (2012) 'To screen nor not to screen? Using the internet for selection decisions' *Employee Responsibilities and Rights Journal* 24/1: 1-21.

- Duncombe, R. (2010) *Mobiles for Development Research: Quality and Impact. The 2nd International Conference on M4D - Mobile Communication Technology for Development*, November 10-11, 2010, Kampala, Uganda.
- Furuholt, B. and E. Matotay (2011) 'The developmental contribution form mobile phones across the agricultural value chain in rural Africa' *Electronic Journal on Information Systems in Developing Countries* 48/7: 1-16.
- Garcia, A.C. and J.B. Jacobs (1999) 'The eyes of the beholder: understanding the turn-taking system in quasi-synchronous computer-mediated communication' *Research on Language & Social Interaction* 32/4: 337-367.
- Herbert, W.A. (2011) 'Workplace consequences of electronic exhibitionism and voyeurism' *Technology and Society Magazine* 30/2.
- Isaacs, E., Walendowski, A., Whittaker, S., Schiano, D. J. and Kamm, C. (2002) 'The character, functions, and styles of instant messaging in the workplace' *Proceedings of the 2002 ACM Conference on Computer Supported Cooperative Work*, ACM, New York.
- Ivarsson, L. and P. Larsson (2011) 'Personal internet usage at work: a source of recovery' *Journal of Workplace Rights* 16/1: 63-81.
- Jagun, A., R. Heeks and J. Whalley (2008) 'The impact of mobile telephony on developing country micro-enterprise: a Nigerian case study' *Information Technologies and International Development* 4:47-65.
- Jensen, R. (2007) 'The digital provide: information (technology), market performance and welfare in the South Indian fisheries sector' *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 122: 879-924.
- Lexander, V.K. (2011) 'Texting and African language literacy' *New Media & Society* 13: 427-443.
- Ling, R. and H. Horst (2011) 'Mobile communication in the global south' *New Media & Society* 13: 363-374.
- Luor, T., Wu, L., Lu, H. & Tao, Y. 2010, 'The effect of emoticons in simplex and complex task-oriented communication: an empirical study of instant messaging' *Computers in Human Behavior* 26/5: 889-895.
- Lyons, A. (2014) *Self-presentation and self-positioning in text-messages: embedded multimodality, deixis, and reference frame*. Unpublished PhD thesis, School of Languages, Linguistics & Film, Queen Mary University of London.
- Madinou, M. and D. Miller (2012) 'Mobile phone parenting: reconfiguring relationships between Filipina migrant mothers and their left-behind children' *New Media & Society* 13: 457-470.
- Maier, C.T and D. Deluliis (2015) Recovering the human in the network: exploring communicology in digital business discourse. In Darics, E. (ed.) *Digital Business Discourse*, Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 208-225.
- Mainiero, L. and K. Jones (2013) 'Sexual harassment versus workplace romance: social media spillover and textual harassment in the workplace' *Academy of Management Perspectives* 27/1: 187-203.
- Marwick, A. and d.m. boyd (2014) 'Networked privacy: how teenagers negotiate context in social media' *New Media & Society* 16/7: 1051-1067.

- Mikkelsen, Katherine. (2010) 'Cybervetting and monitoring employees' online activities: assessing the legal risks for employers' *The Public Lawyer* 18/2.
- Moore, S. (2004) 'The doubling of place: electronic media, time-space arrangements and social relationships' in Couldry, N. and A. McCarthy (eds) *MediaSpace: Place, Scale and Culture in a Media Age*. London: Routledge, pp. 21-36.
- Pate, Richard L. (2013) 'Invisible discrimination: employers, social media sites and passwords in the U.S.' *International Journal of Discrimination and the Law* 12/3: 33-46.
- Purvanova, R. K. & Bono, J. E. 2009, 'Transformational leadership in context: face-to-face and virtual teams', *The Leadership Quarterly* 20/3: 343-357.
- Reinsch, N. L., Turner, J. W. and Tinsley, C. H. (2008) 'Multicommunicating: a practice whose time has come?' *The Academy of Management Review* 33/2: 391-403.
- Rintel, E. S., Pittam, J. and Mulholland, J. (2003) 'Time will tell: ambiguous non-responses on Internet Relay Chat' *The Electronic Journal of Communication* 13/1, available at: <http://www.cios.org/Ejcpublish/013/1/01312.HTML>. Saunders et al 2012
- Sánchez A.P, A. Levin and A. Del Riego (2012) 'Blurred boundaries: social media privacy and the twenty-first-century employee' *American Business Law Journal*: 49/1: 63-124.
- Saunders, S.D. (2012) 'Privacy is dead: the birth of social media background checks' *Southern University Law Review*, March 2012.
- Sey, A. (2011) "'We use it different, different': making sense of trends in mobile phone use in Ghana' *New Media & Society* 13: 375-390.
- Skovholt, K. and Svennevig, J. (2013) 'Responses and non-responses in e-mail interaction', in S. Herring, D. Stein and T. Virtanen (eds.) *The Pragmatics of Computer-mediated Communication*, Mouton De Gruyter: Berlin, pp. 589-612.
- Tagg, C. and P. Seargeant (forthcoming 2015) 'Facebook and the discursive construction of the social network' in Georgakopoulou A., Spilioti T. (eds.) *The Routledge Handbook of Language and Digital Communication*, London: Routledge, pp. 339-353.
- Tagg, C., P. Seargeant and A. Aisha-Brown (in prep) 'Causing offence and being offended on Facebook: intradiversity and the management of online conviviality'.
- Thurlow, C. (2003) 'Generation Txt? Exposing the sociolinguistics of young people's text-messaging' *Discourse Analysis Online* 1/1.
- Thurlow, C. and M. Poff (2013) Text messaging. In S. Herring, D. Stein and T. Virtanen (eds.) *The Pragmatics of Computer-Mediated Communication*. Berlin: Mouton.
- Ugrin, Joseph C. and J.M. Pearson (2013) 'The effects of sanctions and stigmas on cyberloafing' *Computers in Human Behavior*: 29/3: 812-820.
- Vayrynen, K., R. Hekkala and T. Liias (2013) 'Knowledge protection challenges of social media encountered by organisation' *Journal of Organizational Computing and Electronic Commerce*: 23/1-2: 34-55.
- Wallis, C. (2011) 'Mobile phones without guarantees: the promises of technology and the contingencies of culture' *New Media & Society* 13: 471-485.
- Warren, M. (2013) "'Just spoke to . . .": the types and directionality of intertextuality in professional discourse', *English for Specific Purposes* 32: 12-24.