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### Multilingualism and mixed-mode communication

*Sociolinguistic insights into the German-Namibian diaspora*

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## Chapter 7 | Multilingualism, urbanity and rurality in social media

### Abstract

This chapter strives to extend the focus on urban multilingual practices by applying them to rural multilingualism through an analysis of data from computer-mediated communication (CMC). The chapter argues that urban and rural areas are not necessarily isolated phenomena. In many cases, they are interconnected through Networks of Exchange (NoE). How does the notion of urbanhood unfold in these networks? Do individuals of urban background deploy different forms of multilingual practices than individuals of rural background? To what extent does the place of origin affect the individual's linguistic choices in CMC? This chapter addresses these questions through the example of the German-Namibian diaspora and their multilingual practices. Therefore, it draws on Speech Act Theory to unveil the role and function of multilingual patterns in both urban and rural CMC. In doing so, it captures the unique linguistic repertoire of German Namibians which includes (Namibian) German, Afrikaans, English and to a lesser extent indigenous languages.

### 7.1 Introduction

Urban areas are an interesting starting point for research on multilingualism since they constitute 'sociolinguistic systems in their own right' (Smakman and Heinrich 2017: 1). Smakman and Heinrich conclude that '[t]he city is more diverse than mainstream sociolinguistic theories have portrayed it to be (ibid. 2015: 186).' Recent research reflects the potential of contemporary urban settings for the understanding of multilingual practices. To give an example, studies on the urban variety of *Kiezdeutsch* have shown the sociolinguistic interplay between migrant languages and older German varieties in cities such as Berlin (Freywald et al. 2011; Wiese 2012; Wiese et al. 2014). They allow for a comparison with other recent and historical vernaculars in urban (youth) culture such as *Straattaal* in the Netherlands. Observations on such multilingual practices in urban settings are reflected in the notion of metrolinguism which 'posits the contemporary city as a key site of creative and "fluid" language practices' (Androutsopoulos 2015: 186). However, multilingual practices are not exclusively limited to urban settings and can be found in rural areas as well. Two examples from Europe: the majority of individuals who live in the rural Dutch province of Friesland are bilingual speakers of Frisian and Dutch (Breuker 2001; Bosma et al. 2017: 3). Some rural areas within the German federal states of Brandenburg and Saxony are bilingual and provide spaces for

individuals to use both the Sorbian and the German language in their daily life. In fact, rural multilingualism is a global phenomenon and should therefore also be approached by novel perspectives on linguistic in-group speech. In many postcolonial African countries, rural multilingualism is a rule rather than an exception. However, Di Carlo, Good and Ojong Diba (2017: 1) note that ‘sociolinguistic research on this topic has concentrated mostly on urbanized areas, even though [...] rural multilingualism is clearly of much older provenance than its urban counterpart’.

This chapter strives to extend the focus on urban multilingual practices by applying them to rural multilingualism. It argues that urban and rural areas are not necessarily isolated phenomena. In many cases, they are interconnected through what I call *Networks of Exchange* (NoE). This term is usually used in the context of trade history and focusses on the ‘the rich networks of people, goods, and ideas that were exchanged’ across continents and oceans throughout history (Galavan 2019: 90). In some cases, these exchanges led to the evolution of new, multilingual societies, especially during the colonial era. The German-speaking minority in Namibia is just one of many examples of such a community. Within this context, the term NoE receives a special connotation: it emphasizes the interactional processes between dyads and triads in social contexts and, therefore, focusses on in-group interaction. The size and focus of a NoE is highly individual. It often includes family, friends, colleagues and others. Sometimes, NoE are locally limited. In other cases, they extend across rural areas, towns and cities. They can unfold various forms of face-to-face communication (FTF), as well as forms of computer-mediated communication (CMC). This chapter focusses on NoE, in which multilingual individuals of both urban and rural backgrounds meet. It addresses the following questions:

- What are the similarities and the differences between rural and urban language practices in multilingual societies when they meet virtually in CMC?
- Is there a sharp dichotomy between the city and the countryside in CMC-based NoE?
- How do multilingual individuals of both urban and rural backgrounds negotiate their linguistic practices in CMC environments?

These questions serve as the core focus of this chapter. It therefore draws on Speech Act Theory by Austin (1975) and Searle (1976, 1979) to unveil the role and function of multilingual patterns in both urban and rural CMC. Today, speech acts are increasingly performed in CMC due to the rise in use of social media.

German-speaking Namibians are a particularly interesting case, enabling us to study different forms of multilingualism, since their NoE connect both (smaller)

urban and rural areas between and within Namibia<sup>90</sup> and Germany, as many (younger) German Namibians go to study or work abroad. Zimmer notes that German Namibians deploy ‘more or less stable sociolinguistic variation’ (in press: 14) among all age categories, including ‘a cross-generational use of Namibia-specific loan words’ (in press: 22). Due to the relatively small size of about 20,000 individuals, their NoE are particularly well developed (Wiese et al. 2014: 20; see Pütz 1991). According to Zappen-Thomson, they extend across rural areas, towns and cities. It is likely that only a small percentage of (mainly elderly) German-speaking individuals have (almost) no contact to other German-speaking Namibians in either urban or rural areas.<sup>91</sup> With such regional, transnational and trans-urban NoE all intertwined, CMC becomes an important means of communication as it is, by definition, not located in a geographical place.

For these reasons, this study uses CMC as an empirical source to analyze German-Namibian speech acts (see Section 7.4.2). Qadir and Riloff (2011: 749) note that there is ‘relatively little work on applying Speech Act Theory to written text genres, and most of the previous work has focused on email classification.’ This study contributes to bridging this gap. It uses the broad term *multilingual language practices* to indicate a wide range of contact phenomena, including inter- and intrasentential code-switching, borrowing and the Namibia-specific variety of *Namdeutsch*, which is ‘eine durch Sprachkontakt entstandene Nonstandardvarietät der deutschen Sprache in Namibia, die durch zahlreiche Entlehnungen von sprachlichen Einheiten und Strukturen aus dem Englischen und Afrikaans gekennzeichnet ist’ (a non-standard contact variety of the German language in Namibia shaped by various borrowings of linguistic units and structures from Afrikaans and English) (Kellermeier-Rehbein 2016: 228). In other words, *Namdeutsch* reflects the ongoing contact situation in which urban and rural individuals of German background find themselves.

## 7.2 Individuals from urban and rural areas in Namibia

Bhattacharya (2010: 45) notes that there are ‘no universal criteria applicable for determining urbanhood’, which makes it rather challenging for scientists to compare

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<sup>90</sup> According to the 2011 census by the Namibia Statistics Agency, Namibia had a population of 2,113,077 (p. 8). 43% lived in urban areas (ibid.) and 1,6% of the urban population had German as their first language (p. 172). Hence, the following calculation applies:  $2,113,077 * 0.43 * 0.016 = 14,538$  German-speakers in urban areas. 57% of Namibia’s population lived in rural areas (p. 8). 0.3% of the rural population is German-speaking (p. 172). Hence, the following calculation applies:  $2,113,077 * 0.57 * 0.003 = 3,613$  German-speakers in rural areas.

<sup>91</sup> Extracted from an online interview with Prof. Marianne Zappen-Thomson, German Section at the University of Namibia, 27–29 August 2019.

urban settings in different world regions or even among neighboring countries.<sup>92</sup> Hence, it is necessary to define the two notions of *urbanhood* and *rurality* within the Namibian context for the purpose of this research.

The Republic of Namibia is essentially rural in nature. With about 2.3 million inhabitants populating an area of 823,988 km<sup>2</sup>, it has ‘the second-lowest population density in the world after Mongolia’ (Gray 2017: 147). The capital of Windhoek is the administrative, political and cultural center of Namibia. The latest sociodemographic data for Windhoek date back to 2011, when the city (incl. its peri-urban environment) had a population of about 340,000 inhabitants and an annual growth rate of 5% (Pendleton, Crush and Nickanor 2014: 193). If growth remained the same, Windhoek was projected to reach 500,000 inhabitants by 2020 (ibid. 2014: 193). On a global scale, it may therefore be considered a city of a smaller size. In the Namibian context, it is by far the largest urban hub of the entire region. The nearest cities, which outnumber the population size of Windhoek, are the city of Menongue in Angola (880 km to the north of Windhoek<sup>93</sup>) and the city of Cape Town in South Africa (1,271 km to the south<sup>94</sup>). Windhoek can therefore be considered the largest urban area on a north–south axis of about 2,000 km. The nearest bigger city to the east is Bulawayo in Zimbabwe with a distance of about 1,220 km.<sup>95</sup>

Windhoek itself is home to many languages.<sup>96</sup> Notwithstanding English being the sole official language of the country, Afrikaans has maintained a strong position as a lingua franca in Windhoek and Southern Namibia. In 1971, about 18% of Windhoek’s population spoke German at home.<sup>97</sup> However, this number has dropped significantly and is currently about 3%.<sup>98</sup> Furthermore, the coastal town of Swakopmund is also home to a considerable number of German speakers. With its 44,000 inhabitants (Pendleton, Crush and Nickanor 2014: 193), Swakopmund is the

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<sup>92</sup> Bhattacharya calls the lack of universal criteria ‘rather annoying’ (p. 45) which is certainly an unambiguous way to describe the situation.

<sup>93</sup> See [www.distance.to/Windhoek/Menongue,Cuando-Cubango,AGO](http://www.distance.to/Windhoek/Menongue,Cuando-Cubango,AGO) (27 August 2019).

<sup>94</sup> See [www.distance.to/Windhoek/Cape-Town,Western-Cape,ZAF](http://www.distance.to/Windhoek/Cape-Town,Western-Cape,ZAF) (27 August 2019).

<sup>95</sup> See [www.distance.to/Windhoek/Bulawayo,ZWE](http://www.distance.to/Windhoek/Bulawayo,ZWE) (27 August 2019).

<sup>96</sup> Languages of European descent include Afrikaans and English. Indigenous languages include Oshiwambo, Khoekhoegowab and Otjiherero, amongst others (cf. Stell 2016: 331).

<sup>97</sup> Based on the numbers published by the Reading Eagle on 18 July 1971, p. 61: ‘[...] in Windhoek there are 26,000 whites to 24,000 blacks. The 9,000 Germans among the whites give Windhoek a thoroughly Teutonic atmosphere.’

<https://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1955&dat=19710718&id=9gorAAAIBAJ&sjid=YJoFAAAIBAJ&pg=2800,3519162> (31 August 2019).

<sup>98</sup> German is the first language of about 20,000 Namibians in Namibia or 0.9% of the total population with the Khomas region having the second highest proportion of German speakers (2.6%, Namibia Statistics Agency 2011: 172). Since Windhoek is part of Khomas and accounts for 95% of its inhabitants (Namibia Statistics Agency 2011: 14), an estimated 3% of Windhoek’s population have German as their first language.

second largest urban area in Namibia with a significant German-speaking minority. It is situated 30 km to the north of Walvis Bay. Together, they form a common high-growth agglomeration (OECD and AfDB 2007: 417) of more than 100,000 inhabitants (Pendleton, Crush and Nickanor 2014: 193). In the following, it is therefore listed as a separate category alongside Windhoek and the category of smaller urban and rural areas (see Table 7.1, Table 7.3 and Table 7.4).

In this study, four individuals are part of a micro-analysis of urban and rural language practices (see Section 7.4). All individuals have a biographical link to Germany, as they have migrated there for study or work. Hence, they are no longer in day-to-day contact with the multilingual settings of Namibia but are rather exposed to regional linguistic settings within Germany. With limited exposure to English and the absence of Afrikaans in daily life, (multi-)linguistic settings in Germany differ considerably from Namibian settings. All individuals in this study use CMC, which serves as the empirical basis of this study.

### 7.3 Dataset

The data analyzed in this study was collected from social media, and automatically extracted and exported to a spread sheet using the add-on program *Web Scraper*.<sup>99</sup> The resulting corpus contains both the original linguistic output as well as sociodemographic data, such as place of origin and place of living. Subsequently, they were ranked, categorized and counted. Correlation analyses between metadata and linguistic output served to reveal socio-linguistic patterns from both a quantitative and qualitative perspective to analyze multilingual utterances and their pragmatic functions within CMC discourse. The structure of the analysis is twofold: a qualitative description of four selected participants and their linguistic behavior leads to a quantitative analysis of the linguistic behavior of the group as a whole. The four participants were chosen because they have an active history of participation in German-Namibian CMC and come from areas with different degrees of urbanization. All data were published in Facebook groups within a period of seven years ranging from 2011 – 2018. These Facebook groups center around the Namibian diaspora in Germany. The overwhelming majority of active members are indeed German-speaking Namibians living in Germany. A minority of members is of a similar background: Namibians who once lived in Germany and have returned to Namibia, Namibians who have always lived in Namibia, and Germans with a link to Namibia. This study focusses on individuals of Namibian background who live in Germany.

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<sup>99</sup> <https://chrome.google.com/webstore/detail/web-scraper-free-web-scr/jnhgnonknehpejjnehehllklipmbmhn> (6 February 2021).

### 7.3.1 Discourse on Facebook

Comments are perhaps the most important units to structure discourse on Facebook. They are highlighted as separate fields with written information posted by a user in reaction to a piece of content. They indicate the name of the author as well as the time and date of publication. This makes them an important unit to measure and quantify interaction on Facebook. Depending on its content and structure, a comment can contain one or several speech acts at the same time. For this reason, Section 7.4.2 also focusses on the relationship between comments and speech acts in CMC. The corpus used in the context of this study consists of 2,178 comments of which 1,451 comments (67%) were exclusively published in Standard German (SG). 727 comments (33%) include Namibia-specific language practices on the orthographic, lexical or morphosyntactic level. Comments posted by German speakers from Europe were not included in the corpus.

*Table 7.1: Distribution of place of origin among users and their comments*

<i>Place</i>	<i>Users</i>		<i>Comments</i>		<i>Comments per user on average</i>
Swakopmund	63	23%	514	24%	8.2
Windhoek	158	58%	1,423	65%	9.0
Other areas	52	19%	241	11%	4.6
<i>Total</i>	<i>273</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>2,178</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>8.0</i>

Table 7.1 shows the distribution of comments and users with respect to their place of origin. As Windhoek and Swakopmund are the largest urbanized areas in Namibia, being home to a significant German-speaking minority, they are listed as separate categories in the context of this study. Users from Windhoek are the majority and the most active group within the corpus: they published 65% of the comments, although they only account for 58% of all users. With an average of 9 comments per user, they clearly surpass the overall average of 8.0 comments. The second largest group comes from Swakopmund and represents 23% of all users. With an average of 8.2 comments per user, the group deploys an activity rate that almost meets the overall average of 8.0. Users from other (smaller urban and rural) areas represent 19% of the participants and account for 11% of the linguistic output in the corpus. Their activity rate is below average. Hence, the German-Namibian CMC used in the context of this study can be described as primarily urban. At the same time, it includes linguistic output from rural users.

## 7.4 Results of the analysis

### 7.4.1 Intra-individual language choices displayed in CMC

This section focusses on four Namibian users who express intra-individual language variation to different degrees. Their sociodemographic background is a cross-section of the entire group: one male individual from the city of Windhoek, one female individual from the town of Otjiwarongo and two individuals (one male and one female) from rural environments. Table 7.2 provides an overview of the sociodemographic data and mono- and multilingual practices within CMC.

Table 7.2: The four participants

Sociodemographic data				Comments		
Name <sup>100</sup>	Gender	Grew up in	Lives in	total	German-only	
Alex	M	Windhoek	Germany	149	97	61.5%
Laura	F	Otjiwarongo	Germany	107	95	88.8%
Mark	M	Farm	Germany	108	73	67.6%
Marie	F	Farm	Germany	11	5	45.5%

The table shows that two participants use comments in Standard German (SG-only comments) to a similar degree (61.5% and 67.6%) whereas the practice of the other two participants deviates on both ends of the spectrum (88.8% and 45.5%). Comments were counted as German-only when the entire comment did not contain any Namibia-specific language practice on any linguistic level. The remaining comments did include at least one Namibia-specific language practice.<sup>101</sup>

Alex lives in the German state of Saxony and grew up in the capital Windhoek, by far the largest urban environment in Namibia. The degree to which Alex uses Namibian language practices in CMC differs greatly, as can be seen in (43) – (46). Namibia-specific language practices are underlined.

(43) Hab Fahrrad fahren auch nicht verlernt  
'I haven't forgotten how to ride a bike.'

(44) Komm net Donnerstag dann Sitz ich nicht alleine  
'Come around on Thursday then I won't be sitting around alone.'

<sup>100</sup> All names were changed.

<sup>101</sup> A small number of comments was written in English or Afrikaans only. They were part of multilingual discourses. As code-switching between languages is a typical feature of Namibian multilingualism, such comments were also counted as Namibia-specific language practices.



(45) Daarsy boys

‘There you are, boys!’

(46) Bra da war dicker fock op... bin ja Straight von Namsa nach Bulgarien geflogen da hab ich dann alle Bilder auf mein bru sei laptop gecooied das ich plek hab um da fotos zu machen...toe mein bru mir n Brief schickt mit usb drin kommt der Brief aufgeschnitten und leer an

‘Dude, it was a big mess... I flew straight from Namsa to Bulgaria. There, I downloaded all photos on my brother’s laptop. Then I had space to take pictures. When my brother sent me a letter with the flash drive, the letter arrived opened and empty.’

## 7.4.1.1 Utterance acts: Lexical and syntactic implications

(43) – (46) show that the degree to which Alex uses Namibia-specific language practices differs remarkably: it ranges from comments in Standard German only (SG-only) in (43) to comments with well-established Namibian loanwords like *net* (only) in (44) and comments displaying a variety of Namibia-specific language practices. Some of them affect the syntactic structure of a phrase, as can be seen in the syntagmatic construction *mein bru sei laptop* (46).<sup>102</sup> Here, the possessor (*mein bru*) precedes the head noun (*laptop*), which is in the reverse order of the corresponding SG phrase.

(47) Original	<b>mein bru</b> sei laptop German
German (Genitive case)	der Laptop <b>meines Bruders</b>
German (Dative case)	der Laptop <b>von meinem Bruder</b>

Both examples,<sup>103</sup> the genitivus possessivus and its dative substitute consisting of a *von*-PP (Eng.: *of*-PP) require the head noun to be followed by its possessor in SG (*head first*).<sup>104</sup> Hence, they show the reverse order of the *head second* construction in the original phrase. However, *head second* is also subject to nonstandard language use in German, as well as to standard possessive constructions in Afrikaans, as can be seen (48).

<sup>102</sup> For more examples of this sort, see Shah (2007: 28) and Wiese et al. (2017: 4).

<sup>103</sup> Both are frequent constructions in SG with the dative case generally considered to be slightly more informal than the genitive case.

<sup>104</sup> The alternative *meines Bruders Laptop* is considered to be archaic in European SG varieties. While it can be found in (contemporary) poetry, it would be highly marked as part of a CMC comment.

(48) Original	<b>mein bru</b> sei laptop
Non-Standard German	<b>mein Bruder</b> sein Laptop
Standard Afrikaans	<b>my broer</b> se laptop

#### 7.4.1.2 Users of urban and rural backgrounds

(43) – (48) show the variability of intra-individual language choices ranging from SG-only to a high degree of Namibia-specific language practices. With 149 published comments, Alex is the most active user among the group. Laura and Mark come second with 107 and 108 comments, respectively. Although Marie is remarkably less active with only 11 published comments, the majority of her comments contain Namibia-typical speech deploying both ad-hoc and well-established borrowings. All four users know each other in person and sometimes directly interact with one another within the CMC group. (49) shows a SG comment from Mark on an advertisement for clothing. Alex reacts to it. In addition, they both indicate a positive attitude towards one another's comments by marking them with the *like* button. Namibia-typical language practices are underlined.

(49) Mark	<u>Bar</u> <sup>105</sup> bring welche nach Namsa will eine kaufen! 'Bro, bring some of them to Namsa. Want to buy one!'
Alex	<u>Same</u>

(49) shows how NoE are being maintained in CMC. It is a good example of how individuals from both urban and rural areas interact in a transnational space: Mark grew up on a Namibian farm and Alex was born and raised in Windhoek. They both live in Germany now. They plan to meet at NAMSA, an annual event for Namibians held in Germany. How do such individual interactions shape the general linguistic practices within German-Namibian CMC? The next section addresses this question.

#### 7.4.1.3 Multilingual speech in comparison

Table 7.3 is based on 2,178 comments posted by 273 German-Namibian users in CMC. It shows the frequency of SG-only comments and its distribution among Windhoek, Swakopmund and less urbanized areas.

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<sup>105</sup> Most likely meant to be *bra*.

Table 7.3: Standard German in German Namibian CMC (n = 2,178)

Total	Windhoek	Swakopmund	Other
67%	69%	65%	56%

There is a consistent tendency throughout all categories: users from rural areas tend to use SG-only comments less frequently than their counterparts from the urban areas of Windhoek and Swakopmund. This result is in line with the general impression among German-speaking Namibians, who often state that Namibia-specific language practices are more frequent in rural areas. Furthermore, it shows that multilingualism among German-speaking Namibians stretches from (sub)urban settings well into rural areas and vice versa. As a result, in-group speech between individuals of both backgrounds unfolds Namibia-typical patterns of multilingualism in CMC. A micro-analysis on the individual level seems to confirm this impression: the multilingual speech patterns of Mark (coming from a Namibian farm) and Laura (originally from Otjiwarongo) are as diverse as those of Alex from Windhoek. The patterns range from SG-only comments to comments with Namibia-typical phenomena on the lexical and syntactic level. However, it is important to note that individual language choices can differ from these macro-level tendencies. Laura, for example, has published a high number of English-only comments as a reaction to a prior comment that is almost entirely written in English. Otherwise, she rather sticks to SG and uses Namibia-typical language practices less frequently. To capture the different degrees of multilingual practices, this chapter includes a micro-perspective on individual language choices. The analysis entails a speech act classification of all four participants to unveil the pragmatic functions of Namibia-specific language practices. We will therefore turn back to (43).

#### 7.4.2 Roles and functions of Namibia-specific language practices

(43) Hab Fahrrad fahren auch nicht verlernt  
 'I didn't forget how to write a bike.'

(43) is a good example of a comment that entails a single speech act. In this case, it can be classified as a *Representative*, which 'commit[s] a speaker to the truth of an expressed proposition' such as in 'asserting, stating, concluding (...)' (Hidayah 2019: 3). This category was first described by Searle (1976), who built on Austin's Speech Act Theory (1975). Searle (1976) developed five main categories of speech acts. In addition to Representatives, he introduced Commissives, which 'commit a speaker to some future action', such as in 'promising, pledging, threatening' (Hidayah 2019: 3). The third category is Directives, which a speaker uses in an attempt to get the

addressee ‘to carry out an action’. This can be done by ‘advising, commanding, challenging’ (Hidayah 2019: 3). The fourth category is Declarations, which affect an immediate change of affairs, such as in ‘declaring, resigning, arresting’ (Hidayah 2019: 3). The fifth category is Expressives, which express a psychological state, such as in greeting, thanking or congratulating (Searle 1976: 355–7; Hidayah 2019: 3). By applying Speech Act Theory to the data gathered, the roles and functions of Namibia-specific language practices in CMC become obvious. I will therefore turn back to the examples (43) – (48). Subsequently, I will clarify whether users of both urban and rural backgrounds use Namibia-specific language practices with similar pragmatic effects when communicating in CMC.

#### 7.4.2.1 German-Namibian speech acts in CMC: Users of urban backgrounds

The representative speech act in (43) exclusively entails language practices that are identical to European German, whereas the directive speech act in (44) and the expressive speech act in (45) also contain Namibia-specific language practices. In (44), the borrowed item *net* emphasizes the inviting character of the speech act as a whole to strengthen its perlocutionary effect, that is to convince Alex’s chat partner to join him. This invitation gains additional strength by the use of the Afrikaans-based loanword *net* and turns it into a friendly yet demanding request. In (45), the Afrikaans-based borrowing *daarsy* (originally from Afrikaans *daar is hy* = ‘there he is’)<sup>106</sup> stresses Alex’s agreement with a previous comment and serves to positively reassure social bonds with his chat partner. Since it is published in a CMC group, it also invites other users to leave comments with a similar high degree of consensus. (46) is not only longer than the previous examples; it also bears a narrative character, making it different to the short comments in (43) – (45). It contains a single Representative and proves that Namibia-specific language choices also occur in this sort of speech acts (*da hab ich dann alle Bilder auf mein bru sei laptop gechooid*). Therefore, (43) – (46) show that Alex uses a wide range of speech acts. He deploys pragmatic variation and flexibility in SG-only speech acts as well as in multilingual speech acts. His linguistic behavior is in line with the general trend of the group coming from Windhoek: in this group, Representatives, Commissives, Directives and Expressives can be found for all of the three languages and a combination thereof. An exception to this finding are declarative speech acts, which do not occur in the corpus at all. This observation is in line with the findings of Qadir and Riloff (2011: 780), who subsequently omitted Declarations from their study on digital message board posts ‘because we virtually never saw declarative speech acts in our data set.’.

<sup>106</sup> See <https://afrikaans.livejournal.com/4027.html#/4027.html> (4 November 2019).

The absence of this category may be due to the nature of many CMC groups, in which users rarely communicate to ‘affect an immediate change of affairs’ (Hidayah 2019: 3). Paradigm cases that prompt Declarations include resigning, firing or hiring, for which CMC groups are usually not a suitable medium. Therefore, Declarations will not be further discussed in this chapter.

#### 7.4.2.2 German-Namibian speech acts in CMC: Users of smaller urban and rural backgrounds

Even though Laura uses Namibia-specific speech less frequently than Alex does, her multilingual choices still cover various speech acts covering Representatives, Commissives and Expressives, as can be seen in (50) – (52). Contrary to Alex, Laura frequently uses Namibia-specific speech to express politeness.

- |                     |  |
|---------------------|--|
| (50) Representative | München ist leider <u>bietjie</u> weit weg<br>‘Munich is a bit far, unfortunately.’  |
| (51) Expressive     | <u>Plesier</u> !:) Da hab ich meine Wohnung auch<br>gefunden.:)<br>‘You’re welcome. That’s where I’ve found my<br>apartment, too.’ |
| (52) Commissive     | <u>Awesome</u> !!: D wir checken definitiv!<br>‘Awesome! We will definitely check it out.’   |

In (50), Laura states that the city of Munich is too far to go visit. She also uses the Afrikaans downtoner *bietjie* (a bit) to soften her statement. By using a representative speech act, she thus rejects the offer of her chat partner and chooses Namibia-specific language to make her rejection sound friendlier. Another politeness marker is the Afrikaans-based borrowing *plesier* (lit. ‘pleasure’ for ‘you’re welcome’), which is followed by an exclamation mark in (51). As a typically Namibian (and South African) response to acknowledgements, *plesier* stresses the common identity and local background among the chat partners, especially when used within a SG-only conversation. It can be classified as an Expressive, indicating sympathy, and is followed by a Representative to convey further information. Both speech acts are part of the same comment. They indicate how users can convey multiple pragmatic purposes within a single CMC-based comment. The same strategy applies to (52), which also consists of two speech acts within a single comment. Here, the Commissive entails the Namibia-typical, intransitive use of the verb *checken* (‘wir checken definitiv’), which can only be used as a transitive verb in SG (e.g.: wir

checken das definitiv). This Commissive is preceded by an Expressive for which Laura uses the English borrowing *awesome* to value and positively reinforce the prior comment of her chat partner. Laura's Namibia-typical language practices thus include strategies of politeness to establish bonds with other users. Coming from the small town of Otjiwarongo, she contributes to the cohesion of the CMC-based NoE by using Namibia-specific speech acts.

Unlike Laura, Mark and Marie come from a rural environment. However, they are part of the same NoE and deploy a wide range of multilingual practices, too:

- (53) Mark            Was ist net los mit den namboys  
*Just what is going on with the namboys?*
- (54) Mark            du musst recht kommen check in deinem kopferraum [sic]  
*You'll have to manage. Check your boot.*
- (55) Marie            Kak ou...du hast die [den] ganzen abend getragen  
*Shit, man. You've been carrying it for the whole night.*
- (56) Marie            Danke dein bru hat die von dir und dann war se gone  
*[!] guess your brother got it from you and then it was gone.*

In (53), Mark uses Namibia-specific language to emphasize the expressive nature of his speech act. Here, the Afrikaans-based borrowing *net* serves as an intensifier (German: 'nur'; English: 'only'). In combination with the neologism *namboys*, both loanwords are used as a vocative to address the in-group (for more information on the interplay between vocatives and in-groups see 77Chapter 5 and Chapter 6). (54) shows how Mark utilizes Namibia-specific language as a Directive in an attempt to get the addressee 'to carry out an action' (Hidayah 2019: 3). Therefore, he advises the addressee to finally manage the situation, which he expresses through the loan translation *recht kommen* (Afrikaans: 'regkom'; SG: 'hinbekommen, sich zurechtfinden'). Marie shows a similar range of pragmatic variation in (55) and (56). Both comments are extracted from a discourse in which she is looking for her Namibian flag that has disappeared. Her initial question about the whereabouts of the flag remains unanswered since the addressee cannot help her. She then reacts by using the Afrikaans-based swear word *kak* (55) to emphasize the expressive nature of her speech act. Subsequently, she turns her comments into a more directive speech to prompt the addressee to provide her with more information ('du hast die [den] ganzen abend getragen'). In (56), she revises this strategy and uses a Representative by referring to the addressee's brother as *bru*. She then uses the ad-hoc borrowing *gone* (SG: 'weg, verschwunden') to indicate her disappointment with

the disappearance of her flag. The informality of the speech act is further emphasized by the personal pronoun *se*, an informal variant of *sie* (English: ‘she’), which also exists in European German varieties.

An analysis of all users coming from smaller urban and rural areas in Namibia unveils the pragmatic variation of rural multilingual practices among this group. Like urban users, they make wide use of the four speech act classes. The only difference to the urban subgroup are Commissives in Afrikaans-only utterances, which do not occur in the corpus. A possible explanation for the missing evidence is probably the size of the data set, which may simply be too small. Since Afrikaans is an important source language amongst the smaller urban and rural subgroup, it seems plausible that a larger corpus would capture Commissives in Afrikaans-only utterances. In the current data set, users of rural backgrounds draw on Afrikaans quite extensively in their multilingual comments, as can be seen in (57).

(57) Eish.kla gevat / Tah wie ein Jakkals / Malles ding  
 ‘Ouch, it’s done / Well, like a jackal / crazy you’

Therefore, it does not seem unlikely that a larger corpus of German-Namibian CMC would also cover Afrikaans-only Commissives. But even with this type of speech act missing in Afrikaans-only comments, it indicates the high degree of pragmatic variation in Namibia-specific language practices amongst the smaller urban and rural subgroup. Their multilingual speech acts cover a broad pragmatic paradigm and are thus similar to the utterances of individuals coming from urban environments.

## 7.5 Urban, rural or CMC practices?

The analysis raises the question as to how these multilingual practices can be classified. Are there separate urban and rural practices that are digitally transmitted? The frequency analysis in Table 7.3 suggests that there is at least a quantitative difference in Namibia-specific language practices between users of urban backgrounds with a more frequent use of SG-only comments and users of rural backgrounds with a less frequent use of SG-only comments, even though the pragmatic range of their multilingual behavior is similar. This observation raised the question as to whether there is a correlation between the population size of a given area and the frequency by which German speakers from that area use Namibia-specific language practices. To answer this question, I performed a logistic regression.<sup>107</sup> The null hypothesis predicts that the two variables (population size

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<sup>107</sup> For the analysis I used <https://statpages.info/logistic.html> (1 September 2020). I owe many thanks to my supervisor Prof. Arjen Versloot for his advice.

and frequency of SG or Namibia-specific comments) are independent and not associated. The alternative hypothesis claims that the linguistic behavior of their German-speaking inhabitants is the dependent variable, which is technically predicted by the population size of Namibian areas the speakers live in. In that case, the null hypothesis is to be rejected. Table 7.4 contains the data that were used to perform the logistic regression. The results are shown in Appendix B. The p-value equals 0.0001 and shows that the result is statistically significant; there is a statistically significant correlation between the population size of an area German-Namibian speakers originate from and the frequency rates of Namibia-specific language practices among these speakers in CMC: individuals originating from larger urban areas tend to use Namibia-specific language practices less frequently than individuals from smaller urban or rural areas. In other words, there is an inverse association between the size of population and the frequency by which German-speakers use Namibia-specific language practices in CMC. The chance that non-city dwellers will use Namibia-specific utterances is 1.75 times bigger (Odds Ratio) than for inhabitants of Windhoek. This result is in line with the general perception of many German Namibians which is reflected in the frequently used advice: ‘If you want to hear more Namdeutsch, you should pay a visit to the farms.’<sup>108</sup>

Table 7.4: Population size and frequency of Namibia-specific comments

	<i>logarithmic population size<sup>109</sup></i>	<i>Namibia-specific comments</i>	<i>SG-only comments</i>
Windhoek	5.70	442	981
Swakopmund	4.78	178	336
Other areas	3.00	107	134

Although the size of population proves to be a statistically significant independent variable, one has to ask which causal relation there may exist, which finds its expression in this correlation. Population size reflects social and economic structures, which in turn affect the use of non-standard language practices among minority groups. Areas with a higher population size usually provide tighter networks of institutions such as schools, churches or associations for minorities. These

<sup>108</sup> Often heard during fieldwork in Namibia, April–May 2018.

<sup>109</sup> To harmonize the different population sizes from Zipfian to linear, I applied a logarithmic transformation of population size with base 10. The following calculations apply: Windhoek:  $\log_{10}(500,000) = 5.7$ ; Swakopmund:  $\log_{10}(60,000) = 4.78$ ; smaller urban and rural areas:  $\log_{10}(1,000) = 3.0$ . The population size of 1,000 is an estimated number to indicate that the local networks of German speakers in smaller urban and rural areas are smaller than in Windhoek and Swakopmund.



institutions often provide spaces in which the use of standard-near registers is encouraged while counteracting non-standard language practices. Hence, the size of population may just reflect the degree of institutional effects on linguistic choices.

The association between population size and linguistic behavior is further supported by the fact that all data are taken from the same type of source: CMC. Therefore, a bias based on different language modes can be excluded, as all data consistently represent digital language practices. From that perspective, CMC is not only a medium but also a stable stratification that affects linguistic practices. These effects are well-discussed in literature, pointing out the emergence of written speech, a hybrid form of oral and written language styles (Weininger 2001: 89). Hence, CMC is likely to be a defining factor, for which Androutsopoulos (2015) introduced the notion of *networked multilingualism*. This term ‘encompasses everything language users do with the entire range of linguistic resources within three sets of constraints: mediation of written language by digital technologies, access to network resources, and orientation to networked audiences’ (Androutsopoulos 2015: 185). Furthermore, CMC can trigger Namibia-specific language use, when a given social media group is labelled as such. Are the language practices investigated in this chapter predominantly CMC-influenced? This assumption was supported by the reactions of the German-Namibian audience during a 2018 public evening lecture in Windhoek.<sup>110</sup> When presented with selected material from CMC, the German-Namibian audience stated that not all but at least some of the multilingual language practices seemed somewhat ‘exaggerated’ due to a high frequency of borrowed expressions: ‘Die Wortwahl und das viele *Namdeutsch* scheinen etwas übertrieben zu sein’ (The choice of words and the highly frequent use of *Namdeutsch* seem to be a bit exaggerated). Since the investigated CMC groups have as many as 1,200 members each, it seems likely that this potential reach affects the user’s linguistic behavior and occasionally prompts a stylized language use amongst participants. Therefore, the CMC setup is an influential and defining factor for triggering Namibia-specific language practices.

This stance still leaves out an important fact: social media brings together individuals from both urban and rural areas and creates a geographically independent space for communication. In this perspective, isolated urban language practices do not exist, as the city itself is not only interconnected with its surrounding countryside but is also digitally linked to any group of individuals through digital media. Hence, CMC creates an environment for a hybrid form of German-Namibian language practices melting together influences from their personal linguistic settings in urban or rural areas as well as influences from digital media, which result in the

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<sup>110</sup> The evening lecture entitled *Die deutsche Sprache in Namibia und das Internet* took place at Namibia Scientific Society on 17 April 2018. I owe many thanks to Prof. Julia Augart from the University of Namibia for organizing this event.

emergence of German-Namibian written speech. This perspective emphasizes both the influence of CMC as a genre and the sociodemographic background of the individual user (e.g. their place of origin). In case of the German-Namibian community with multilingual practices being part of their daily life in both urban and rural areas, CMC serves to further connect the multilingual networks between the city and the countryside. Even when Namibians from rural areas migrate to Windhoek, Munich or any other city, they are likely to stay connected with their friends through social media. Hence, a comprehensive view on postmodern individuals in urban settings should go beyond the administrative borders of the city. It should therefore take into account the individual NoE, which are likely to combine rural and urban linguistic practice.

## 7.6 Summary and outlook

This chapter shows how closely intertwined urban and rural multilingual practices can be. Especially in CMC, in which geographical distances and boundaries vanish. CMC is an online-performing type of NoE with an increasing importance for the German-Namibian community (cf. Chapter 4). It can be divided into different subtypes, such as peer and family networks, networks of common interests or a hybrid form thereof. However, some of those networks do not exclusively communicate online but also meet face-to-face. They have the potential to serve as a link between urban and rural environments. In doing so, they affect exchange and multilingual communication in real life. In an online interview, Prof. Marianne Zappen-Thomson<sup>111</sup> describes the case of a German-speaking female, who lives in a rural area south of Windhoek. In her day-to-day life, she almost exclusively uses Afrikaans. However, whenever she visits her family in the city of Windhoek, she is not only exposed to German but also engages in conversations using *Namdeutsch*. This example shows how NoE not only connect urban and rural settings but also stimulate the use of different varieties within their networks.

Furthermore, I have analyzed CMC-based NoE in correlation to the individual's place of origin. This chapter has shown that multilingualism among German Namibians is a trans-urban phenomenon fulfilling a wide range of pragmatic purposes: Representatives, Commissives, Directives and Expressives can be found in speech originating from individuals of both urban and rural origin. There are two exceptions: Afrikaans-only Commissives could be found among urban users but were absent among rural users. This lack may be due to the size of the corpus. Since Afrikaans is an important source language for Namibia-specific language practices

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<sup>111</sup> Extracted from an online interview with Prof. Marianne Zappen-Thomson, German Section at the University of Namibia, 27–29 August 2019.

among German-speaking Namibians, it seems likely that Afrikaans-only Commissives are also used by rural individuals. The second exception, the complete lack of Declaratives throughout all categories, is likely due to the inherent feature of social media providing a rather non-declarative mode for communication. It became clear that urban and rural multilingualism in German-Namibian CMC seem similar from a pragmatic point of view. However, further research is necessary to zoom in on the full range of pragmatic purposes, e.g. by a fine-grained analysis of politeness strategies. Moreover, the current data only account for CMC-based speech. There are clear signs that the speech used in CMC is (partially) stylized, since CMC serves as a publication tool to reach a greater audience. It remains to be clarified whether pragmatic speech patterns in private CMC and in face-to-face communication show similar patterns in (trans-)urban and rural areas.

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