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Multilingualism and mixed-mode communication

Sociolinguistic insights into the German-Namibian diaspora

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Chapter 8 | Discussion

8.1 Methodological triangulation and sociolinguistics

This dissertation focusses on the value of methodological triangulation for sociolinguistics as a discipline. As described in 1.1, sociolinguistics is not a homogenous field but rather comes in three waves: first-wave research is embedded in probabilistic and deterministic types of theory leading to questions about effects and causalities. As a result, these questions are tackled by quantitative methods employing inferential statistics. Second-wave research handles a constructivist approach (Levon & Mendes 2015: 4). It uses inferential statistics in combination with ethnographic methods such as participant observation to tackle linguistic variation within local networks and stresses speaker agency. Third-wave research can be described as the *emergentist approach* (Levon & Mendes 2015: 6). It usually uses qualitative methods such as discourse analysis but quantitative approaches can apply, too (see Hall-Lew et al. 2021). Hence, methodological triangulation has been applied within different waves. How can it be used to integrate the three waves of sociolinguistics? This question takes center stage in this dissertation.

Therefore, it presented five case studies applying different types of mixed methods (Chapters 3 - 7). In 8.2, I will summarize the main findings of each individual study and discuss the additional value that triangulated methods have. Thereby, I will address the circular relationship between theoretical frameworks, research questions, methodological choices and research findings. I will then move on to discuss the wider implications of mixed methods for sociolinguistics in 8.3. and address the strengths and limitations of methodological triangulation in 8.4. I argue that triangulation offers an opportunity to add new perspectives to already established constructs. 8.5 illustrates this argument by showing how triangulated sociolinguistic research on the German-Namibian diaspora adds the notion of translocalization to the field of German(ic) *Sprachinselforschung* (research on German-language exclaves). In doing so, it paves the way to restructure the field into two subbranches that complement each other: the traditional local/regional *Sprachinselforschung* on the one hand and a new translocal/transregional *Sprachinselforschung* on the other hand. 8.5.1 – 8.5.3 illustrate the potential of such a new subbranch by discussing three examples of transnational German-speaking minorities living on different continents. 8.5.4 finalizes the dissertation with a short conclusion.

8.2 The value of mixed-methods approaches

In this section, I will summarize the findings for each chapter and assess the additional value that methodological triangulation provides for the quality of these findings. The central research questions subsuming the empirical part of research are as follows:

What varieties of Namdeutsch exist in online communication and what functions do they fulfill for Namibians within Namibia and abroad?

To answer this question, Chapter 3 starts off by investigating the role of *Namdeutsch* and Namibia-specific language practices in the online edition of the *Allgemeine Zeitung* newspaper (AZ). The chapter thus approaches a hybrid form of traditional and digital media, as the AZ represents a formerly paper-based medium which is now being digitized and made accessible for an online audience. Based on a self-compiled corpus, the chapter analyses lexical elements of Namdeutsch in the digital newspaper. Subsequently, it approaches online comments published by its readers. These comments are either written in Namdeutsch or refer to this variety as a meta-linguistic topic. This way, the chapter combines an analysis of actual language use in a digital newspaper with (meta-)linguistic comments published by its online readership. It thus offers two-dimensional insights into the topic combining linguistic structure and perception at the intersection of print and online media. The findings suggest that there is a stylized variety of Namdeutsch used exclusively in the AZ newspaper. The forms of Afrikaans and English borrowings being used for the newspaper are similar to the forms in non-AZ Namdeutsch. However, the composition of the lexical material differs: AZ-based Namdeutsch includes a high amount of indigenous loan words (12%) as opposed to non-AZ Namdeutsch. According to Böhm (2003: 568), earlier studies indicate a proportion ranging from 1.8% (Pütz 2001) and 3.0% (Pütz 1984) to 10.4% (Nöckler 1963). Furthermore, indigenous words in AZ-related Namdeutsch cover the semantic fields of *state* and *transport* and are predominantly re-borrowings, i.e. they were once borrowed from German into different indigenous languages such as Oshiwambo and Otjiherero and are now being re-borrowed by the author to create a stylized and mediatized form of Namdeutsch. This form is intended to be an easy-to-read variety for the German audience who does not speak Namdeutsch. Meta-linguistic comments confirm this intention (see Chapter 3, Section 3.10). They reveal that this choice was deliberately made by the editors to increase the readability of their text products. However, they also face criticism from a part of their German-Namibian readership as at least some readers feel that stylized Namdeutsch is not authentic and opt for either using *real* Namdeutsch or for dropping it in favor of *real* Standard German (see Section 3.10).

These comments thus indicate normative attitudes towards a non-standard variety among its speaker community. Hence, stylized Namdeutsch in online print media is not only subject to artistic freedom. It is also limited by prescriptive expectations of its (Namibian) readership on the one hand and by the need to be accessible for an international, German-speaking audience on the other hand. This interplay would have hardly been visible if the chapter had applied a single-method approach: the combination of structure- and perception-targeting methods enables the research to determine the basic, sociolinguistic dynamics of Namdeutsch in the digital space. At the same time, it became clear that AZ-Namdeutsch is somewhat stylized. These findings set the course for further research as they raise the following question:

To what extent does the use of Namdeutsch in social media differ from the use of Namdeutsch in the online newspaper?

Chapter 4 approaches this question by shifting the focus from online editions of print media to social media. It raises the question of how computer-mediated communication (CMC) is used by the German-Namibian diaspora and how it influences their linguistic behavior. The findings show that different sorts of Namibia-typical features are being mediated through CMC: borrowings (both ad-hoc and established ones), multilingual compounds and loan translations occur. Furthermore, intra- and intersentential code-switching play a crucial role as well as monolingual comments in English or Afrikaans (cf. Chapter 4, Section 4.6). The findings suggest that Namibia-typical practices are a diasporic type of networked multilingualism, which is defined by Androutsopoulos as “language resources [that] can be appropriated, combined, juxtaposed and displayed to a networked audience ,for fun‘ and ,for show‘, that is, in playful and poetic ways, which both replicate and transcend ordinary conversational practices” (2015: 191). These functions are shown by a discourse analysis focusing on the interactional role of Namibia-typical speech. The analysis shows how Namibian identity is constructed and performed in social media through multilingual speech events. These events are characterized by concrete discourse functions such as criticism, acknowledgment and agreement. However, a quantitative analysis reveals that the most commonly used variety in German-Namibian CMC is Standard German.¹¹² Multilingual discourse is less common but regularly occurs and shows features of metrolingualism, i.e., urban language practices focusing on ‘fluidity and fixity’ (vgl. Androutsopoulos 2015: 201). At the same time, it draws parallels to the notion language crossing, which emphasizes language change as a means of negotiating ethnic and class relationships (Rampton 1995; vgl. Blommaert 2010; Androutsopoulos 2015: 186, cf. Chapter 4, Section 4.5).

¹¹² including CMC features such as lower cases and lack of punctuation

Using a sociographic metadata analysis, the chapter shows the increasing importance that CMC had for the German-Namibian diaspora during the first decades of the 21st century. Not only does CMC serve as a communication platform, but it is also used to organize diasporic events in face-to-face settings (FTF). In doing so, the members of the German-Namibian diaspora who use online media maintain and strengthen their group cohesion. Therefore, Namibia-typical language practices in diasporic settings co-occur in FTF and CMC mode. Due to the mixed-methods approach it was possible to lay bare structural features of Namibia-specific language practices in social media while proving that these features co-exist in two different modes. These findings lead to the following question:

How are multilingual slang items resemiotized from FTF to CMC and from oral to written mode?

This question took center stage in Chapter 5. It was hypothesized that the mixed-mode group NAMSAs would deploy a higher degree of multilingual slang than single-mode group NiDs which exists in CMC only. The findings suggest that this is true for identical users who are active in both groups: they, indeed, use a higher number of Standard German-only comments (SG-only) in the single-mode group NiD than in the mixed-mode group NAMSAs. The results were less clear when analyzing both groups as a whole: in contrast to the prediction, NAMSAs recorded an increase of SG-only comments in the first four years. The given question of whether a mixed-mode status prompts the use of multilingual slang over an extended period of time remains to be answered by future research. The qualitative analysis suggests that multilingual slang items can serve as an identity marker in CMC. Their frequency is subject to genre-unspecific and genre-specific factors. The first refers to the notion of flexibility: a high degree of grammatical flexibility and the link to a broad semantic niche contribute to the frequency of a given item, as could be shown for the nominal vocative *oukie* ('dude'). Genre-specific factors meet the communicative needs of users in a CMC environment: vocatives (to structure discourse) and expressives are leading categories in this group, as could be shown for the most frequently used Afrikaans words. In FTF, diasporic Namdeutsch is usually limited to in-group specific events such as the annual NAMSAs event which takes place once a year. Chapter 5 showed how the diasporic networks are set up during NAMSAs. It unveiled that in-group members use a high rate of Namibia-specific language practices as NAMSAs is an informal in-group event par excellence. Multilingual practices are tied to implicit norms during the event such as the no-public-display-of-dispute norm. The chapter showed that the event triggers a multilingual mode among the in-group members. This mode is usually 'switched off' in case German Germans get involved in a speech event. Switching becomes more difficult as the FTF event progresses and Namibia-specific features may even occur in out-group speech. Before, during and after the

event, many members use CMC to mediate an image of NAMSA and communicate with those community members who are absent. In such a case, FTF speech events are being digitally transmitted through CMC using in-group-specific slang. Since we now understand the process of resemiotization better, we can turn to actual language choices in both modes. Therefore, the following question took center stage:

Are language choices subject to gender- and mode-specific effects?

Chapter 6 thus addresses the question of how men and women deploy their multilingual repertoire among multiple modes ('multimulti environments'). Gender- and mode-specific effects are in line with first-wave research and were measured by means of a multiple regression analysis. This analysis includes three independent variables, all of which were operationalized as binary categories: mode, type, and gender. The word type category consists of function words (FW) and content words (CW), while the mode category distinguishes between NAMSA (mixed mode) and NiD (single mode). The independent variables were combined to calculate the odds ratio of the dependent language variable (cf. Section 6.4.1). The findings suggest that German-Namibian CMC is subject to two types of multilingual practices: one type is defined by Afrikaans and includes a strong overrepresentation of content words in relation to all Afrikaans words (especially among male users in NAMSA) while the other type is defined by English and includes a more balanced, relative representation between content words and function words (especially among women in NiD). In other words: English is more often used on a phrasal level, i.e., in inter- and intrasentential code-switching while Afrikaans rather occurs in semantic single-word constructions, expressive insertions and short chunks (cf. Section 6.4.2). Note that the findings are relative to the word count of each language. English outnumbers Afrikaans in absolute terms. Hence, both languages contribute differently to German-Namibian CMC.

The findings were interpreted as the result of historical language contact: Afrikaans and German share a history of mutual language contact starting in the second half of the 19th century. This time span has been long enough for (expressive) content words to become part of the lexicon of Namdeutsch. English has become a widely used language after 1990 when Namibia became independent, opting for English as its sole official language. Today, it is extensively used in formal domains such as politics and business. Switching back and forth between a Namibian language (including German and Namdeutsch) and English is a common language practice among different ethnic groups. This broader linguistic ecology is reflected in the data, although the data is mode-filtered and covers one ethnic group only. This result shows that locally bound linguistic patterns can apply to diasporic settings, too.

With respect to gender, the findings suggest that male users in mixed-mode groups make frequent use of multilingual *brocatives*, an informal type of vocatives. These results served as the starting point to further investigate gender-specific practices from a discursive perspective. In doing so, Chapter 6 applies the reverse order of methodological choices as compared to Chapter 5. While Chapter 5 uses an ethnographic point of departure to develop arguments based on statistical analysis, Chapter 6 just starts off by investigating statistical effects of the variables in question. Based on the results provided through the multiple regression analysis, it moves forward by choosing the statistically most salient category, i.e., *brocatives*, to further develop a qualitative analysis. This approach enables the study to interpret *brocatives* as social emblems reflecting personal attitudes of group members in in-group structures and enabling them to take stances in discourse (third-wave research). The emblems are often combined with referential claims between the FTF and CMC mode. The interaction between these claims serves as the bottom line for a new, extended definition of the concept of referential multimodality, i.e., the use of one or more claims referring to a mode different to the mode in which the claims occur (cf. Section 6.1). Hence, the notion of multimodality is not defined by the nature of the data (e.g., data combining auditive and visual features) but rather by the references emerging from discourse and the social structure of the community. Based on concrete examples taken from the corpus, Chapter 6 illustrates the properties of the concept, ranging from explicitness to implicitness and from future-to past-relatedness (see Section 6.5.1). Chapter 6 thus shows how quantitative research paves the way for qualitative research to extend the definition of current terminology. Hence, it enables us to move between existing theoretical frameworks.

Chapters 3-6 have illustrated how intertwined FTF and CMC are. This observation serves as the starting point for Chapter 7, i.e., the final case study of this dissertation. It builds on the fact that there is a constant exchange between the two modes, especially in mixed-mode groups. Therefore, it should be possible to draw conclusions about the one mode while using data from the other. To illustrate the idea, Chapter 7 uses translocal CMC data to shed more light on FTF-based variation in urban and rural areas of Namibia. Subsequently, the linguistic output in CMC was correlated with metadata stating the place of birth and other places of living per user. All data had been made publicly available on social media by the users themselves. Hence, Chapter 7 did not only treat CMC as a research object, but it also used it as a research tool to gain insight into the rural and urban ecology of Namibia-specific language practices. This methodological choice was based on the following assumption: whenever members of the German-Namibian diaspora communicate online with fellow in-group members, they would fall back into the way they used to speak in Namibia – even if they actually live in a diasporic setting. This way, one can use CMC to trace back FTF signs of urban and rural language patterns – if they actually exist. These considerations lead to the following question:

What are the similarities and the differences between rural and urban language practices in multilingual societies when they meet virtually in CMC?

This includes the question of whether there is a sharp dichotomy between the city and the countryside in CMC-based Networks of Exchange (NoE). It also examines how multilingual individuals of both backgrounds negotiate their linguistic practices. The findings suggest that users originating from bigger urban areas tend to apply Namibia-specific language practices less often than users from rural and smaller urban areas. Hence, there is an inverse relationship between the population size of a place and the frequency with which German speakers of this place use Namibia-specific language practices in CMC. The probability that non-city dwellers use Namibia-specific utterances is 1.75 times greater (Odds Ratio) than for residents of the Namibian capital city of Windhoek. A higher population size is interpreted as a marker indicating tighter institutional networks such as churches, schools and associations. These institutions prompt the use of registers close to the standard language. Therefore, a higher degree of urbanization potentially leads the individual more often to normative spaces. This is reflected in the actual language output in CMC. Although most of the users have relocated to Germany, they still adhere to the habits they have acquired in Namibia.

While the quantitative findings provide clear evidence for the existence of rural and urban multilingualism, the qualitative analysis showed opposite results. It revealed that the pragmatic range of Namibia-specific language practices is similar - irrespective of the user's background: multilingual practices can cover representative, commissive, directive and expressive speech acts published by users of urban and rural background. Two exceptions were found: first, Afrikaans-only Commissives were absent among rural users which is probably due to the limited size of the corpus. Second, the data did not contain any declarative speech acts at all. This is probably due to the non-declarative nature of CMC. It is evident that the two exceptions do not contradict the overall picture which shows how similar urban and rural multilingualism are from a pragmatic point of view. The differences between both types of multilingualism are mainly a matter of frequency, i.e., they are quantitative in nature (first-wave approach). Hence, methodological triangulation provided a more fine-grained analysis of the difference and similarities between city dwellers and non-city dwellers in the Namibian context. It showed that the question of whether there is a specific type of urban Namdeutsch cannot simply be answered by *yes* or *no*. Instead, the answer has a quantitative as well as a qualitative dimension.

The discussion based on the five case studies shows how essential mixed-methods approaches are for the multi-perspectivity of empirically based conclusions. Mixed methods can lead to a more detailed picture of the phenomena in question, as illustrated in Chapter 3 – Chapter 7. This is especially valuable since

sociolinguistics deals with the social dimension of language, as illustrated in the next paragraph.

8.3 Integrated approaches and sociolinguistics

This dissertation gave insight into different mediatized varieties of Namdeutsch and their interplay with FTF and CMC. It investigated the effects of socio-demographic variables, e.g. gender and place of birth, on the use of Namibia-specific language practices (first wave) among different modes. It gave ethnographic insight into the translocal networks between German Namibians in Europe and Africa (second wave) and showed how individuals use Namibia-specific language practices to take stances and index belonging (third wave). By combining different research methods across the three waves of sociolinguistics, it created a multidimensional image of the social function of an extraterritorial variety of German with respect to media, networks and modes. In doing so, it showed that methodological triangulation can lead to the integration of the three sociolinguistic waves. This implies an integration of different, theoretical frameworks: the first and second wave saw fixed variables as the thriving force of linguistic variation and change while the third wave focusses on individual styles and their indexicality. According to Eckert (2012: 93–96), the third wave emphasizes the individual's agency as they use linguistic features to take stances in discourse and index belonging to a social group. These features are subject to indexical mutability, i.e., they bear different social meanings depending on the context and therefore create a (volatile) indexical field. Repetitive usage of such a (salient) linguistic feature can lead to its conventionalization. It then becomes generally recognizable among a wider group of people. This process is referred to as enregisterment and can take on the form of iconization or sound symbolism. Once a linguistic feature is enregistered, it can become part of a new register and style (2012: 96) with which individuals can position themselves in discourse through stance taking. The circle closes here. Eckert describes the theoretical differences between the third wave and its two predecessors as follows:

For years, the study of variation was dominated by a definition of style as 'different ways of saying the same thing' (Labov, 1972: 323). This definition was compatible with linguists' focus on denotational meaning, with a view of variation as marking social address and with a popular view of style as artifice. But style is at its foundation ideological, and the stylistic form of propositions is very much a part of their meaning. The third wave locates ideology in language itself, in the construction of meaning, with potentially important consequences for linguistic theory more generally.

(Eckert 2012: 98)

I agree with the point raised by Eckert but would argue that individuals are only able to do so *because* they have a quasi-statistical sense enabling them to draw on (salient) linguistic features typically used by social groups of any size. This is the point where the second and first wave come into the picture again: researching linguistic variability among networks and groups enables us to understand the social forces that drive linguistic variation and change, be it in a local network (second wave) or within and among major demographic groups (first wave). Whenever individuals use linguistic features to take stances and index group belonging, they draw on these (alleged) correlations. Hence, first- and second-wave research provide reference points for third-wave studies.

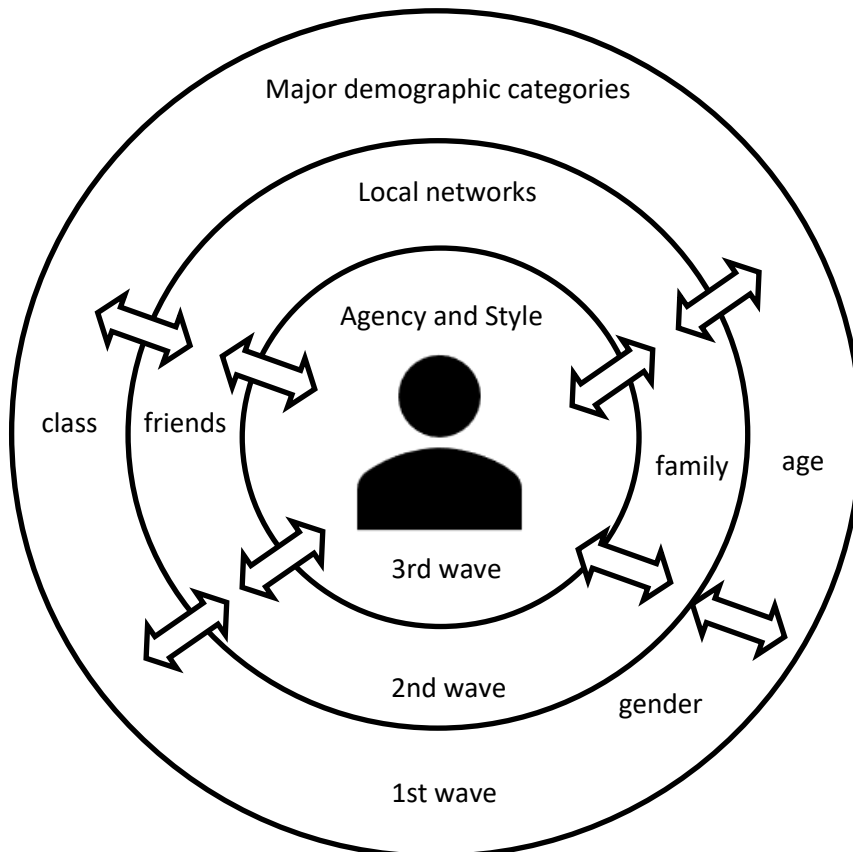


Figure 8.1: *The interplay between social agency and sociolinguistic variables*

All the three waves are interconnected – theoretically and methodologically. Therefore, I suggest an integrative approach, i.e., the integration of realist, constructivist and emergentist frameworks. In that case, the research focus would neither be on the “fixed meaning of variables” nor on “the individual’s agency

expressed by linguistic styles". Instead, it would focus on the interplay between both individual agency and social group forces.

An individual possesses agency and can call upon different linguistic styles to navigate through social space. At the same time, it is subject to social norms governed by its first-order network, from which it cannot simply detach without social repercussions. This dissertation makes a case for shifting the focus to the interplay between individual agency and norm-enforcing categories that influence linguistic behavior. This shift automatically leads to the use of mixed methods. Thereby, it is important to note that single-method approaches can be as useful to sociolinguistic research as mixed-methods approaches. In some cases, it would make more sense to start off a research project using a single-method approach. In others, it might not be possible to use mixed methods due to limitations in recourses. The aim of this dissertation is to show that sociolinguistic research *can* benefit from methodological triangulation. Using methodological triangulation is one option. It has advantages as well as limitations.

8.4 Advantages and limitations of triangulation

Mixed methods are not without controversy. Heath refers to triangulation as a "magical, near-talismanic, perhaps meaningless thing" (2015: 639) pointing out two extreme views on mixed-methods approaches. The first implies that triangulation can solve *all* methodological problems while the latter indicates that it may lead to nowhere (2015: 639). The truth may lay somewhere in the middle. So, what are the advantages and disadvantages that apply to triangulated research?

Methodological triangulation bears the possibility to bring us closer to reality and provide different perspectives on the research object (ibid. 2015: 642). It entails the acknowledgment that one method cannot capture the whole spectrum of a given research object (Heath 2015: 639). Moreover, it captures "more adequately [...] the essence of the construct under consideration" (Heath 2015: 640) and reduces "mono-operation bias" (2015: 639). Therefore, triangulation is a tool to validate research results: mixed methods that lead to the same result deliver strong and convincing findings. At the same time, they can identify methodological errors. One way to do so is by applying single-method triangulation.

Within a single method, such as a telephone survey, multiple items that are intended to tap the same construct can provide much clearer measures of the construct under consideration. Multiple items can be combined via a wide assortment of scaling techniques, ranging from simple additive scales to elaborate factor analytic scales.

(Denzin 1978; Heath 2015: 641).

If a given error is not shared among the items, within-method triangulation is a sufficient means to identify and remove this error. However, this sort of triangulation will not identify errors that are shared among the items.¹¹³ Therefore, a “more powerful” way is needed, i.e. between-method triangulation (Heath 2015: 640). This approach is “used across types of measures instead of within one method of measurement” (2015: 640). It can be found in Chapters 3-7 combining quantitative and qualitative methods to tackle the research object from different angles (see 8.1 for a detailed description of methods and findings). Irrespective of the triangulation design, researchers have to make a selection of what methods they triangulate.

One can easily imagine how attempting to triangulate on theoretical orientations, research designs, and measurement strategies could lead quickly to a program of research that could never produce a single result, because it never could be completed. The successful researcher must therefore choose where to invest his or her triangulation resources, and the soundness and usefulness of the research outcomes depend to a large extent on the wisdom of those choices during the research design phase.

(Heath 2015: 642)

Heath suggests to focus on the investigation of the crucial variable under consideration (e.g. age, place of birth etc.). Otherwise, the amount of resources invested to triangulate all possible variables would become unbearable and the research would lose its focus (2015: 642). After all, it is up to the researcher(s) to make a careful selection (Heath 2015: 642). In sum, methodological triangulation will not solve all the challenges that sociolinguistic research faces. However, it provides a powerful means to reduce errors. While this quality is a valuable one for any scientific discipline, the benefits for sociolinguistics are particularly profound. After all, this discipline investigates the evolution, perception and judgment of language in use, i.e., externalized language. Therefore, a more coherent access to sociolinguistic research potentially bears profound social implications. At the same time, triangulation can be an effective means to add multidimensional perspectives on established constructs. One example from this dissertation is the answer that Chapter 5 provides for its main research question:

¹¹³ Heath uses the following example as an illustration: “[...] items that all cause the respondent to respond in a socially desirable manner will not allow the researcher to separate out social desirability components from components that actually tap the construct under consideration. But if some of the items have a response set bias and others do not, the use of multiple measures will allow the response set bias to be identified (within limits) (2015: 641).

How are multilingual slang items resemiotized from FTF to CMC and from oral to written mode?

The phrasing of the question already implies a mixed-methods approach since it includes the comparison between two different modes: one being oral (FTF) and the other being written (CMC). Therefore, the chosen angle of the question is inherently tied to the methodological choice and thus addresses the circular relationship between both. I decided to approach the FTF mode by participant observation and to analyze the CMC mode by means of correlation analysis. In doing so, I established a one-to-one relationship between the two comparative parts of the research question and the methods used. Of course, it would have been possible to apply only one of the methods. This approach would have provided an opportunity for a more in-depth analysis with respect to the given method. However, such methodological choice would have also changed the setup of the research question. Two types of changes are possible: first, the study could have maintained the comparative character of the research question (FTF versus CMC) but exclusively focus on either ethnographic or correlative aspects. Second, it could have left out any comparison, and instead focus on one mode only. Both types of alternative research designs promise to deliver interesting insights. However, they would not have covered the interplay between the two defining features of each mode: FTF draws on the interaction of verbal and non-verbal communication in dyads and triads. These dynamics become increasingly complex the bigger a given group is. Participant observation is in line with second-wave research and provides the tools to gain an on-site impression of in-group speech practices, of their beliefs, attitudes and the resulting norms. In contrast, CMC serves as an archive of speech events covering extended periods. Correlation analysis allows to gain a broader picture of slang interaction using this archive. It can also provide insight into long-term developments and communicative strategies that are being used due to the lack of visual contact. The interplay between ethnographic results and the corresponding quantitative observations ultimately leads to both, statistically significant insights and an in-depth analysis addressing the social meaning of the linguistic features in question. Such multidimensional findings can only be obtained by applying a mixed-methods approach.

8.5 Towards a new research field: translocal

Sprachinselforschung

8.2 has shown that shifting the focus from local to translocal dynamics adds a new and valuable perspective to research on linguistic islands of German (*Sprachinselforschung*) - even more so since the German-Namibian diaspora in

Europe is just one of several diasporic communities using translocalized networks in CMC and FTF. In this section, I want to provide three similar examples of German-based networks. To my knowledge, none of them have yet been studied through the perspective of translocalization. Hence, their existence gives rise to the question of whether the traditional perspective on local dynamics within *Sprachinseln* can - and possibly should - be complemented by a translocal branch of *Sprachinselforschung* in order to move beyond existing theoretical frameworks in this field. I will address this question in 8.5.4.

8.5.1 The German-Namibian Diaspora in South(ern) Africa

Taking the German-Namibian diaspora in Europe as a starting point, one can shift the geographical focus and investigate its multilingual networks in South Africa. In doing so, research could study how (trans-)local contexts in Southern Africa shape multilingual practices and compare them to its European counterparts like NAMSA. Such a comparison would lead to a map of regional specificities within translocal networks and, therefore, put the notion of networked multilingualism in the center of mixed-mode perspectives. How does the degree of (non-)normativity in the offline environment interact with CMC-governed norms in multilingual and digital speech acts? A comparison between both German-Namibian groups is particularly suited to address this question as one part of them has migrated towards the normative center of their L1, i.e., Germany, where their first language is used as the sole *Dachsprache*. The other part has moved to South Africa where German does not fulfill such a prominent function. In the following, I want to briefly set out the group's sociolinguistic features that serve as the base for further research.

The university town of Stellenbosch plays a central role for the German-Namibian diaspora in South Africa. Stellenbosch is home to two German-Namibian associations: DASUS and MatieKa. The first stands for *Deutsch-Afrikanischer Studentenbund der Universität Stellenbosch* (German-African Student Association of Stellenbosch University) and is open to all German-speaking students studying in Stellenbosch and the Western Cape. In 2010, DASUS alone had 187 members, most of whom had a German-Namibian background.¹¹⁴ Rafaela Höpker, DASUS chair from 2014-15, estimates that DASUS counted 88 active members in the academic year 2014/15 and that 85% of its members are of Namibian origin while 10% have a South African background and 5% are German-speaking exchange students from Europe or non-German speakers who wish to learn the language.¹¹⁵ DASUS thus serves to connect Namibian, South African and European students who have a common

¹¹⁴ List of members was distributed as an email attachment on 10 July 2010.

¹¹⁵ Taken from an interview conducted on 15 February 2022.

interest in the German language and culture¹¹⁶. They all use various social media platforms to communicate and organize themselves as a group. Figure 8.2 shows the places where African DASUS members come from. Most South African DASUS members have attended one of the German schools before coming to Stellenbosch and joining DASUS.

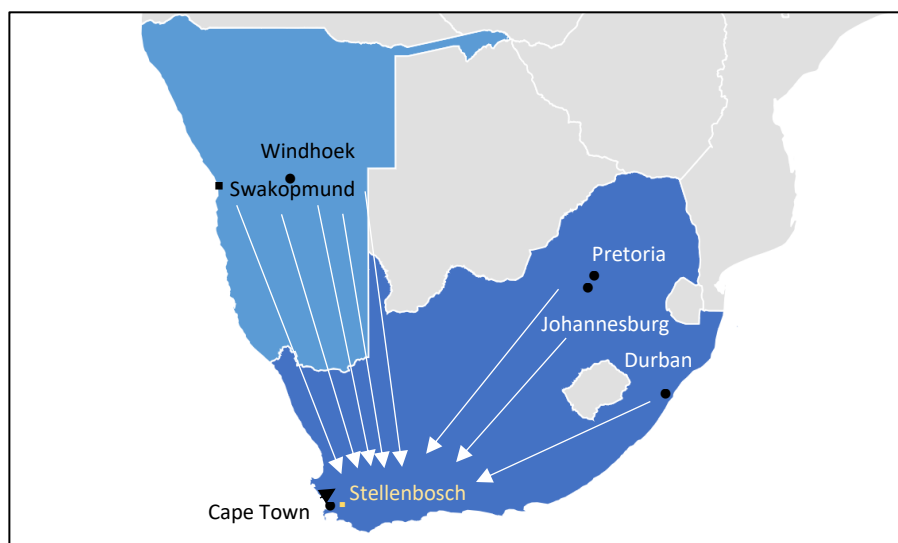


Figure 8.2: DASUS: Translocal networks among the German-Namibian diaspora in South Africa

The second platform organized by the German-Namibian diaspora in Stellenbosch is MatieKa¹¹⁷, an association that has been promoting the German-Namibian carnival since 1974. As MatieKA focusses on organizing cultural events rather than on using a particular language, it uses both English and German for its public relations. However, culture-specific terms such as *Glühwein-Abend* (an evening dedicated to mulled wine), or *Damen-und-Herren-Abend* (an evening for ladies and gents) are not translated into English. MatieKa is well known among students and residents of Stellenbosch and thus provides cultural activities organized by German Namibians abroad. Volleyball tournaments and beer festivals are part of its activities as well.

Both, MatieKa and DASUS are mixed-mode groups using CMC and FTF interaction. Like NAMSA, they not only connect to their local diasporic members but

¹¹⁶ There are also members interested in learning German. They would join a DASUS subgroup in which Standard German is spoken rather than Namdeutsch to facilitate the acquisition process.

¹¹⁷ Note that the subtitle of the association is *Deutscher Karneval in Stellenbosch* ('German carnival in Stellenbosch'). Hence, it does not include any references to Namibia.

also to a broader network in Namibia and abroad. For example, MatieKa is linked to its partner organizations WIKA (Windhoeker Karneval) and DCV (Deutscher Carnevals Verein Pretoria) and thus offers more branches of translocal networks. DASUS is used by Namibians in Stellenbosch but also by members who carpool between Namibia and South Africa. Although both associations are linked to Stellenbosch, they do have a clearly translocal side, too. For this reason, the German-Namibian diaspora in South Africa is particularly suited to address the question of regional specificities within translocal networks.

On the linguistic side, the South African branch of the diaspora is an interesting case as its members can continue to speak Afrikaans and English, two of the main languages spoken in Namibia. At the same time, the use of both German and Namdeutsch can drastically reduce in frequency – even more so if community members do not connect with each other.¹¹⁸ Höpker mentions that her life in Namibia had predominantly been German. She only occasionally used English and Afrikaans. Her language use shifted drastically when she moved to Stellenbosch choosing the English-speaking track at the University. Spending more time in mixed groups, English became the dominant language in Stellenbosch while the use of Afrikaans increased, too. DASUS served as a platform to continue to speak Standard German and Namdeutsch. In this sense, South Africa provides a converse environment to Germany where the use of (standard) German increases due to German being the sole *Dachsprache* and the use of Afrikaans and English decreases. A comparison between both environments thus provides an ideal case¹¹⁹ to research the interplay between networked multilingualism and mixed-mode communication within the field of *Sprachinselforschung*.

¹¹⁸ Taken from an interview with Rafaela Höpker conducted on 15 February 2022.

¹¹⁹ Another recent example of translocal network building is the lounge of the *Forum Deutschsprachiger Namibier* (FDN) which was established in 2020. They also use digital media and Facebook as a means of communication, see their Facebook page: https://www.facebook.com/ForumDeutschsprachigerNamibier/videos/?ref=page_internal (16 July 2022). In contrast to the aforementioned associations and groups, FDN focusses on domestic political issues in Namibia. However, it also reaches out to the German-speaking diaspora in Europe and intends to establish *Regionalgruppen* (regional groups) of the FND in Europe connecting German-speaking Namibians in Germany, Austria and Switzerland, amongst others (source: <https://youtu.be/lczxu1BN0qc?t=1157>, 1 March 2022). Contacts of the FDN Europe Team can be found here: https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/e/2PACX-1vS5XjbJVLvzEYV-vBpBuGNfq6j7SOEm5IKk0Sc2rLkieCe7NCKr_ayV8I6I0P0i8lxWS3WMVW8h-gvw/pub?start=false&loop=false&delayms=3000&fbclid=IwAR3jyEYDbZKQBkBMfN0wyqNkYeCX_ZvKuUVajJXEro57gt5i_myp_9_DyrY&slide=id.gefa81627ce_0_172 (16 July 2022).

8.5.2 Volga Germans between Europe and the Americas

The second example concerns the translocal networks of Volga Germans and their descendants. These networks stretch from Germany to the USA and South America. Like German-speaking Namibians, Volga Germans thus draw on intercontinental CMC-networks in which they use several languages. Apart from German, English and Spanish are the most prominent languages. Russian is used to a much lesser extent but occasionally occurs, too. The history of Volga Germans itself is an example of translocalization par excellence. It involves several migration events on four continents. They provide a perfect case to analyze the influence of technological change on translocal communication and the diversification of (multi)lingual speech.

From 1763 onwards, many Germans came to the Volga Region following a call by Catherine the Great. She had issued a manifesto to invite foreigners to settle in Russia and promised them “auspicious benefits” (Kloberdanz 1975: 210). In the first 10 years after their arrival, “104 mother colonies were established on both sides of the lower Volga” (Kloberdanz 1975: 210).¹²⁰ The Volga Germans maintained their language and culture or as Kloberdanz puts it: “Separated from any semblance of their homeland, the Volga Germans stubbornly clung to the traditional ways and language of their forefathers” (Kloberdanz 1975: 210). This cultural independence came under threat when Czar Alexander II revoked “[t]he eternal exemption from military service promised in 1763” as part of a Russification process in 1871 (Kloberdanz 1975: 211). The risk of losing their rights of self-determination prompted many Volga Germans to leave. Unlike many German Namibians of today, Volga Germans did not mainly remigrate to Germany but instead chose the USA and Canada. Those who were catholic mostly went to Argentina and Brazil. From 1871 onwards, “a steady stream of Volga German emigration flowed to the American Plains and continued up to 1914” (Kloberdanz 1975: 211). The first generation mostly settled in Colorado, Nebraska, Kansas, and California (Kloberdanz 1975: 214/15) and the first settlement in Argentina started in January 1878 (Hipperdinger 2015: 8). In the beginning, they managed to maintain their culture and language since they usually remained in rural areas but after a few decades many of them were forced to move to urban settings to look for work. After World War II, the Argentinian government prohibited teaching German in schools. So, the community lost the ‘ceiling’ of the German standard language and Spanish grew increasingly more important in their lives leading to internal and external diglossia (Hipperdinger 2015: 8). Hipperdinger describes the current linguistic situation as recessive social bilingualism (“un bilingüismo social recesivo”) in favor of Spanish (2015: 8).

¹²⁰ Kloberdanz (1975: 210) notices: “Long after the Volga German colonies were firmly established, a number of similar, organized German emigrations to Russia ensued. Beginning in 1884, German peasants founded colonies in the Black Sea region near Odessa, as well as in the Crimea, Bessarabia, and the South Caucasus. However, the most compact group of ethnic Germans in pre-revolution Russia remained along the Volga.”

Con independencia del acusado desplazamiento lingüístico señalado, existen numerosas manifestaciones de que en la comunidad está operándose un *ethnic revival*, que ha surgido como un fenómeno principalmente urbano y que utiliza las posibilidades ofrecidas por la actual comunicación tecnológicamente mediada.

Regardless of the pronounced linguistic displacement mentioned, there are numerous manifestations that an ethnic revival is taking place in the community, that it has emerged as a mainly urban phenomenon and that it uses the possibilities offered by the current technologically mediated communication.

(Hipperdinger 2015: 8)

Today, elderly members of the community still actively speak Volga German as a marked variety „to create situative meaning“ while most of the younger members only have passive knowledge of the variety (Ladilova 2013: 200). However, they would still use Volga-German words and phrases in Spanish discourse to mark their belonging (Ladilova 2013: 200). With respect to the USA, Kloberdanz comes to a similar conclusion stating that “the Rhenish Franconian dialect commonly spoken by most Volga Germans is rarely used by those under fifty today, although there are notable exceptions in some of the more isolated areas where Volga Germans settled” (1975: 217).

The migration wave to the Americas came to a halt in 1914 (Kloberdanz 1975: 211). On 18th October 1918, the Volga Region was officially recognized as autonomous and became a Soviet Republic in 1924 providing autonomy for the Volga Germans (Eichinger et al. 2008: 21). This autonomy ended in 1941 when Nazi Germany started the war against the Soviet Union (cf. Eichinger et al. 2008: 22). Almost all of the remaining German-speaking inhabitants of the Volga Region were expelled and forced to move to Siberia or Kazakhstan (cf. Eichinger et al. 2008: 22). In the 1980s and 1990s most of those who were expelled, migrated to Germany and never returned to the Volga Region.¹²¹ Today (descendants of the) Volga Germans can be found on four continents: North America, South America, Europa and central Asia. Like German Namibians, they use social media groups to connect with each other. Some of these groups are dedicated to language-specific themes such as the group entitled *Wolgadeutsche unbekante Wörter und mehr* ('Volga German unknown Words and more'). Others center around family- and ancestry-related topics like the *Volga Germans* group or the *Black Sea German Research* group. They are usually private, and one must answer a couple of questions before being

¹²¹ <https://www.srf.ch/kultur/gesellschaft-religion/vertrieben-und-vergessen-was-von-den-wolgadeutschen-uebrig-blieb> (13 June 2022)

admitted as a member. Ladilova also mentions the trilingual Facebook group *Russian Germans International* (in German, English, Russian) and refers to an Argentinian mailing list. The latter is used to inform about activities and Volga-German-specific discussions (Ladilova 2013: 18). A short analysis unveils more than 20 groups on Facebook alone. They most likely reflect just a part of the Volga German networks as a result of their multi-layered migration history. Therefore, they constitute a truly translocal community. Although the use of German among Volga Germans is fairly limited, their networks can serve as a second starting point to establish the field of translocal *Sprachinselforschung*.

8.5.3 Unserdeutsch Speakers between Papua New Guinea and Australia

Unserdeutsch serves as the third example involving translocalization of an extraterritorial German variety. Maitz (2017: 5ff) describes the variety as a relexified creole language and provides a brief overview of its social history: Unserdeutsch evolved around the turn of the 19th and 20th century among children at a German catholic missionary school (Herz-Jesu-Missionare, MSC) in the village of Vunapope, Papua New Guinea. It is a “linguistic ‘byproduct’ of a Christian educational project shaped by the contemporary colonial-racist zeitgeist” (2017: 5). The main goal of this project was to raise and educate children and young adults according to Christian values (cf. 2017: 5). Most of the children spoke Tok Pisin (Melanesian Pidgin English) as L1; others spoke Chinese, Japanese, Malay or Tagalog. They all were of a mixed-race background. Many of them had a European or Asian father and an indigenous mother and were adopted by the school as orphans. Those whose mothers were alive were denied contact. The children lived in geographical and social isolation learning German as a second language or, in case of infants, even as a first language. The use of Tok Pisin was prohibited at the missionary school. Hence, German was the only lingua franca between the children and the missionaries (2017: 7).

It was this social and linguistic setting that gave ground to the evolution of Unserdeutsch “als pidginisierte Kontaktvarietät mit Tok Pisin Substrat und deutschem Superstrat” (as a pidginized contact variety with Tok Pisin substrate and German superstrate) (Maitz 2017: 7–8). The result was triglossic multilingualism: the children spoke Standard German with the missionaries in day-to-day conversations, Tok Pisin with people outside the school and Unserdeutsch among themselves (2017: 8). Hence, Unserdeutsch did apparently not evolve out of communicative necessity with the out-group, which makes it a rare case among creole languages (2017: 8). After the children had reached their full age, they got married amongst each other or were forced to do so by the missionary school to prevent mixed marriages with indigenous inhabitants (2017: 8). In doing so, Unserdeutsch

maintained its status as an in-group language among the community. It became a creole language around and after 1930 when the second generation started to learn it as their first language (2017: 9). Nowadays, all speakers are trilingual speaking Unserdeutsch, English and Tok Pisin. Those born before 1930 also speak Standard German (2017: 9).

Maitz stresses that the boundaries between the in- and out-group remained intact even after German stopped being the language of instruction at the missionary school. Unserdeutsch, however, played a major key role in maintaining the internal group cohesion among its speakers (2017: 8). It thus initially carried a strongly local connotation before the majority of the speakers gradually started to migrate to Australia after Papua New Guinea gained independence in 1975 (Maitz 2017: 9). Since then, most Unserdeutsch speakers left their home village of Vunapope and now live in various places along the east coast of Australia (Maitz 2017: 5). Since they do not pass on the language to the next generation, Unserdeutsch “will soon be the first language of Papua New Guinea to become extinct” (Maitz et al. in press: 1). Migration dynamics have thus amplified the language shift within the community.

CMC-based data of Unserdeutsch do exist, although the speakers did initially not use CMC to remain in contact as a group. This changed when linguist Péter Maitz introduced a private Facebook group to the community as part of a project entitled *Unserdeutsch (Rabaul Creole German): Dokumentation einer stark gefährdeten Kreolsprache in Papua-Neuguinea* ('A documentation of a critically endangered Creole language in Papua New Guinea').¹²² “In a closed group set up by the project team, the Unserdeutsch speakers, separated by long distances since their exodus from the island, have joined together in a large network. The group shares news relating to the project and the language community” (Maitz et al. 2018: 33). Since then, CMC has increased the use of Unserdeutsch among the remaining speakers.

One interesting development has been the recent wave of enthusiasm among both actual speakers and their descendants for a Facebook group page developed by the University of Augsburg Unserdeutsch Research Project. Initially thought of as a way for Project researchers in Europe to communicate their findings to the Unserdeutsch community, it has become a forum for people to share stories and old photos and is now entirely driven by discussions among members of the Unserdeutsch community. Given the age of most speakers, their enthusiasm for this new medium is surprising. In fact, there are elderly speakers who said that they specifically learned how to get a Facebook account so they could take part in online conversations with old friends living in other cities in Australia.

(Maitz & Volker 2017: 389)

¹²² He also organized various on-site meetings.

This observation shows that CMC can prompt a partial revitalization of a soon-to-be-extinct variety. Most conversations take place in English but Unserdeutsch is used in “a few phrases or words, especially names for family relations, greetings, and formulaic expressions, usually written in an ad-hoc English-based orthography” (Maitz & Volker 2017: 389). The influence of CMC is of a temporary nature as it does not prompt the remaining speakers to pass it on to younger generations. “[N]o one has expressed any actual need for their grandchildren to learn Unserdeutsch or even Standard German, and no fluent speakers have made an active effort to speak it on a regular basis to their children or grandchildren” (Maitz & Volker 2017: 391). Yet, for the first time ever, Unserdeutsch is being put in writing on a regular basis due to CMC¹²³. These dynamics have made it possible to start developing an own orthography of Unserdeutsch that takes into consideration both the contact-induced influences on the graphematic level and the mental representation of words within the remaining speakers (cf. Lindenfelser 2021a: 71). Translocalized CMC thus allows the researchers to develop a community-centered spelling “based on the grapheme-phoneme correspondences intuitively used by the writers of Unserdeutsch”.

Although Unserdeutsch is a dying language, translocal CMC helps to preserve this variety not only in its oral but also in its written form. The latter almost exclusively originates from members of the Unserdeutsch diaspora. Therefore, this example provides yet another reason to start thinking about a new, translocal subbranch within the research field of German-language islands.

8.5.4 Translocal Sprachinselforschung

The observations described in 8.5 give rise to the question of how to grasp research on extraterritorial varieties of the German language. Given the extent and variation of CMC used by German(-speaking) minorities, I suggest to structurally include the notion of translocalization into the field of *Sprachinselforschung*. In doing so, one would reach a more holistic and integral view on extraterritorial varieties. This view consists of two complementing branches: local/regional *Sprachinselforschung* on the one hand and translocal/transregional *Sprachinselforschung* on the other hand. It is important to note that both branches are not seen as mutually exclusive but rather as beneficial to each other. The first can be described as the traditional branch focusing on any grammatical and sociolinguistic aspect in the local environment (e.g. Transylvanian Saxon in Romania) whereas the latter researches extraterritorial

¹²³ Lindenfelser collected about “180 spontaneously written expressions” (2021a: 71) thanks to an Unserdeutsch Facebook group with more than 300 members and private communication on Facebook, Whatsapp and per email (Lindenfelser 2021b: 8;223). Maitz et al. (2018: 33) mention that this group is part of the reason why they were able to locate “virtually all of the surviving speakers [...] during the course of the project”.

varieties of German ‘on the go’ and ‘in motion’ (*extraterritoriale Varietäten des Deutschen auf Reisen*) (e.g. Transylvanian Saxon between Germany and Romania or (descendants of) Russian Germans in Germany keeping their (linguistic) heritage alive through social media).¹²⁴ This approach adds a new perspective to the field, as it focusses on the linguistic dynamics within *global ethnoscapes* (Appadurai 1998; cf. Ladilova 2013: 39), i.e., „Räume, die von spezifischen Gruppenidentitäten geprägt werden, Erfahrungsräume, die in der Diaspora entstehen, welche trotz Deterritorialisierung und ‚displacement‘ verstreute Migrantengruppen zusammenhalten“ (spaces that are shaped by specific group identities, spaces of experience that arise in the diaspora, which hold together scattered migrant groups despite deterritorialization and ‘displacement’) (Bachmann-Medick 2014: 297; cf. Ladilova 2013: 39). CMC is a global ethnoscape par excellence creating an imagined community and fostering group consciousness (Ladilova 2013: 39). This dissertation on Namdeutsch in European CMC networks is one example of it.

At the same time, global ethnoscapes add a translocal perspective to the traditional definition of *Sprachinseln* as “geographical speech and settlement communities that are relatively small and closed [...]”. („Sprachinseln sind punktuell oder areal auftretende, relativ kleine geschlossene Sprach- und Siedlungsgemeinschaften [...]“) (Wiesinger 1983: 901). Following this definition, Mattheier (1996: 817) states that the main objective of theoretical *Sprachinselforschung* is local and regional in nature, i.e., to “describe the delayed process of assimilation in its inner-linguistic, regional and socio-situational dimensions”. He, therefore, puts the focus on “the relationship between the *Sprachinsel* society and the [...] surrounding society” (1996: 817).

I agree with Mattheier in the sense that the given question is highly relevant. However, I would advocate a broader view on *Sprachinselforschung* by assigning variational-linguistic and contact-linguistic questions an equally important status and putting them on the same level as Mattheier’s delayed-assimilation perspective. After all, language contact, (accelerated) change and variation are inherent features of each *Sprachinsel*, too. In addition, I would conceptualize a *Sprachinsel* as a

¹²⁴ In fact, translocalized networks are not limited to extraterritorial *Sprachinsel* communities but can also occur within a given sprachraum (e.g. intra-territorial networks such the Facebook group *Exil-Franken in Berlin* for Franconians living in the German capital) or between different sprachräume (cross-territorial networks such as the Facebook group *Nederlanders in Berlijn* dedicated to Dutchmen living in Berlin). For the sake of demarcation, the discussion is limited to *Sprachinselforschung* since the research object central to this dissertation is indeed a German *Sprachinsel* (or rather an Archipelago if one wants to account for the scattered distribution of German-speaking communities throughout Namibia). For German-speaking Namibians, moving to Germany means to migrate towards the normative center that has shaped the educational ideal of their L1 in its standard form. This is not the case for intra- and cross-territorial networks. The first just migrates within the normative center whereas the latter crosses the boundaries to a normative center of another standard language.

dynamic network (or community) of people and include those community members who live in the diaspora. They constitute an extension of this network and add their own experience to the group by creating CMC-based ethnoscares. Only if we take on such a holistic perspective and acknowledge the spreading of *Sprachinsel* members beyond geographical boundaries, only then will we be able to really grasp how *Sprachinseln* function as a whole – or at least we will have the chance to come closer to such an understanding. In that sense, local and translocal *Sprachinsel-forschung* form one unit and complement each other.

I hope to have shown that the translocal perspective is an important factor worthy of being included in existing research approaches. Our linguistic and sociological understanding of how minority languages or *Sprachinsel* varieties function, as they interact with one another, can be enriched by using CMC as a research object and as a research method at the same time. In that sense, CMC becomes a powerful phenomenon to understand the dynamics of extraterritorial varieties in motion. In fact, it is a suitable starting point for methodological triangulation integrating first-, second- and third-wave research.

8.6 References

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