Referential Multimodality, Multilingualism and Gender
*How German Namibians use Afrikaans and English Brocatives in their CMC*

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8 Referential Multimodality, Multilingualism and Gender

How German Namibians Use Afrikaans and English Brocatives in their Computer-Mediated Communication

Henning Radke and Arjen Versloot

8.1 Introduction

One of the most striking principles quantitative linguistic research has unveiled, is the Gender Effect. The term indicates that “in stable sociolinguistic stratification, men tend to use more non-standard forms than women do,” although, they are “the innovators in linguistic change” (Peersman et al. 2016; cf. also Labov 1990). Scientific discussion about the effect has been long and extensive starting, in the 1960s with the rise of variationist sociolinguistics (Tagliamonte 2012, 32; cf. also Peersman et al. 2016: 2) and more recently with a focus on gender as an identity marker (Smakman and Heinrich 2017: 1 ff). However, little research has been done on the Gender Effect within multimodal and multilingual (multimulti) environments. How do men and women deploy their multilingual repertoires among different modes? Does the type of communicative mode have an effect on the gender-related use of borrowings in multilingual settings? And if so, what are the underlying pragmatic and sociolinguistic functions that drive such differences? This chapter tackles these questions by investigating multilingual practices among the German-Namibian diaspora in Germany.1 Their main linguistic repertoire includes German, Afrikaans, English and Namdeutsch, a non-standard variety of German that has evolved through language contact in Namibia and draws on borrowings and structures from Afrikaans and English as donor languages (Kellermeier-Rehbein 2016: 228; cf. also for the linguistic characteristics of German in Namibia Böhm 2003; Dück 2018; Kellermeier-Rehbein 2015; Nöckler 1963; Pütz 1991; Wiese and Bracke 2021; Wiese et al. 2014, 2017; Zimmer 2019, in press). While English enjoys a high degree of overt prestige in Namibian society, Afrikaans is ascribed a high degree of covert prestige (Stell and Groenewald 2016: 1138).
The scope of this study is two-fold: first, it investigates the proportion of Afrikaans and English terms among male and female users in mixed-mode and single-mode groups. Mixed-mode groups exist in both computer-mediated communication (CMC) and face-to-face (FTF) communication whereas single-mode groups only exist in CMC. Hence, members of the latter mode do not have the opportunity to meet and interact in FTF as a group. The mixed-mode group analysed in this chapter is called NAMSA and exists as both a Facebook group and an annual FTF event. The single-mode group is called Namibianer in Deutschland (NiD) and only exists in CMC. Both groups focus on the German-Namibian diaspora in Germany. Two hypotheses were tested based on these data: the first hypothesis states that Afrikaans and English contribute asynchronously to German-Namibian CMC. Afrikaans is expected to often occur in the form of semantic single-word insertions and short chunks, especially among male users in the mixed-mode group. English is predicted to be used at a phrasal level, i.e., in code-switching (CS) or English-only comments, especially in the single-mode group. These patterns would reflect the history of language contact in Namibia. Afrikaans and German have been in contact for over 120 years – long enough for (expressive) borrowings to become part of a German-Namibian variety. In addition, the hypothesis addresses the contemporary linguistic landscape of Namibia. Alternating between English and a given L1 has become common practice since Namibian independence in 1990 (Stell 2014: 233).

In a second step, the analysis investigates vocatives borrowed from Afrikaans and English (hereafter referred to as brocatives in reference to the male familiariser bro\(^2\) (Urichuk and Loureiro-Rodriguez 2019)). The second hypothesis states that communication in mixed-mode groups prompts the use of multilingual brocatives. Therefore, male and female users deploy a higher degree of other-language brocatives compared to users of single-mode groups. One reason can be that members of mixed-mode groups potentially develop a high degree of group cohesiveness. The Gender Effect is expected to remain intact in both mixed-mode groups and single-mode groups, from which follows the prediction that males use more CS than females do, and as an expression of non-standard language.

To capture the interaction between FTF and CMC, this chapter draws on the notion of referential multimodality and proposes an extension of its current definition. Sachs-Hombach and Thon (2019: 185) defined this term as “the communication of different referential claims.” We propose to focus on the discursive perspective and define referential multimodality as the use of one or more claims referring to a mode different from the mode in which the claims occur (see Subsection 8.5.1). Hence, one form of referential multimodality are direct and indirect quotes published in CMC and originating from an earlier FTF conversation or vice versa. As a consequence, referential multimodality occurs frequently in CMC with a high degree of group cohesion as individuals refer to prior or future shared FTF events in CMC and vice versa. Referential multimodality is
tackled from a culture-inclusive perspective. In doing so, it contrasts traditional research on multimodality that “leaves aside aspects of a culture which are of supreme importance for an understanding of that culture” (Maxwell 2015: 359).

The chapter uses a mixed-methods approach combining multiple regression analysis with a discursive perspective on brocatives. The multiple regression is used to investigate the proportion of Afrikaans and English items in relation to items of German origin. In doing so, it unveils whether the variables mode, gender and word type, i.e. content and function words, have an effect on the use of non-German language practices. The findings are complemented with a semantic analysis of the most frequently used words of non-German origin in German-Namibian CMC. The qualitative part of this study concerns the discursive function of brocatives. It accounts for the critique that quantitative approaches tend to “treat gender as an established given and treatable as one of several categories” (Smakman and Heinrich 2017: 1 ff), and therefore shifts focus to the performative side of gender in a multimulti environment. Using a combination of Conversation and Discourse Analysis, this chapter aims to show how members of the German-Namibian diaspora in Germany constitute and express stances towards one another by the multimulti use of brocatives. They are then analysed as transmodal social emblems to index FTF events through language use in CMC. This intra-group approach extends the inter-group approach on German-Namibian CMC, focusing on the pragmatic functions of multilingual practices among in-group members to create and maintain an ‘us’ versus ‘them’ (Radke 2021: 155 ff).

The structure of the chapter is as follows: Section 8.2 outlines the methodology and the dataset. Section 8.3 adds some theoretical remarks on gender as a variable (8.3.1) and the concepts of code-switching and nonce borrowing (8.3.2). Section 8.4 presents the results of the multiple regression analysis and the tendencies within multilingual practices. Note that this section is divided into four subsections: Subsection 8.4.1 focuses on the interplay between mode, gender and word type while 8.4.2. presents a typology of multilingual strategies in German-Namibian CMC. Subsection 8.4.3 takes on a semantic perspective on the most frequently used words in English and Afrikaans. The findings are complemented in 8.4.4, which presents a frequency analysis of non-German brocatives. In 8.5.1, we develop the expanded definition of referential multimodality before analysing the discursive use of brocatives in 8.5.2. Section 8.6 draws an overall conclusion and adds points for discussion.

8.2 Methodology

The data originate from the Facebook groups ‘NAMSA’ and ‘NiD’, each group comprising more than 1,300 members and covering German-Namibian CMC from 2011–2018. The data were collected using the
Webscraper programme and inserted into a spreadsheet. The resulting corpus covers all comments and posts and contains 89,425 words, of which 59,089 originate from male users and 30,336 were written by female users, as can be seen in Table 8.1. Note that the table contains all non-German words, including those in Afrikaans-only and English-only comments, to cover the full range of multilingual practices.

Table 8.1 shows that the absolute amount of English-based tokens outnumbers Afrikaans-based tokens among both male and female users. This observation is in line with Bracke’s findings (2021: 121) indicating that English is the preferred language and Afrikaans only comes second. Looking at the relative numbers of each language across gender as a proportion of all utterances, it turns out that male users tend to use Afrikaans-based tokens about twice as often as female users (2.4% versus 1.2%). In contrast, female users tend to use more English-based tokens than male users (12.2% versus 9.3%). Given the high amount of English-based tokens overall, the relative amount of non-German tokens is higher among female users than among male users (13.5% versus 11.7%). Therefore, Subsections 8.4.1 and 8.4.2 investigate the nature of English practices and compare them to the use of Afrikaans tokens. Note that Table 8.1 contains all multilingual practices in German-Namibian CMC, including comments in English-only and Afrikaans-only. This includes the relative frequent use of English-based words at the phrasal level, i.e. CS) and English-only comments.

This study uses a triangulated approach combining quantitative and qualitative research on a subset of loanwords, i.e. vocatives borrowed from Afrikaans and English. In doing so, it complements Bracke’s holistic approach of analysing the entire set of transferred lexical items. The CMC-based corpus covers sociodemographic data such as usernames, gender, place of birth and place of living. The age variable is not among them since the data presented in Table 8.1 originate mostly from young people. Another excluded variable is social class. The reason is of a practical nature: the method used in this chapter does not allow us for the drawing of comprehensive conclusions on class as it only collects metadata that are publicly accessible. It is worth noting that social class can have an effect on salience or markedness; e.g., Labov (1990: 224)
showed that upward mobility restricts the use of non-standard forms. Since the corpus only covers a very short period, a profound shift in social class is not expected. The same expectation applies to the school variable in the German-Namibian context. According to Bracke, it does not account for significant gender differences (Bracke 2021: 120).

All names were anonymised for the analysis. The linguistic output was manually annotated resulting in a frequency list of words of English and Afrikaans origin which occur in each of the two Facebook groups. The words were graphematically harmonised and lemmatised. This method allows us to treat all inflected forms of a given word as a single item. Both lists were linked to the gender variable making it possible to tackle gender-related language use in both the mixed-mode group NAMSA and the single-mode group NiD. This method ultimately led to the set-up of eight word-lists, each containing its own triptych of variables on the intersection between gender, multilingualism and multimodality.

The annotated wordlists illustrated in Table 8.2 can be combined, compared or analysed separately. They served as the empirical foundation for the findings presented in sections to follow.

### 8.3 Theoretical Remarks

#### 8.3.1 Gender as a Variable

This chapter is about gender-related practices in a multimulti environment. Therefore, we want to start off with a few theoretical remarks on gender as this concept is strongly reflected in the scientific debate on the dichotomy between quantitative and qualitative research designs. While quantitative studies have repeatedly unveiled and described the Gender Effect as “the clearest and most consistent one [...] of all the sociolinguistic principles” (Tagliamonte 2012: 32; cf. also Peersman et al. 2016: 1 Smakman and Heinrich 2017: 1 ff), qualitative researchers have criticised this numeric approach for “viewing gender as a fixed social category” and rather opt to theorise it “as a dynamic, performative social construct” (Gormley 2015: 256). The mixed-methods approach used in this study incorporates both views. In doing so, on the one hand it provides insight into general tendencies from the multi perspective on gender-related language practices.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Afrikaans</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mixed-mode</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wordlist 1</td>
<td>wordlist 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wordlist 2</td>
<td>wordlist 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>single-mode</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wordlist 5</td>
<td>wordlist 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wordlist 6</td>
<td>wordlist 8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8.2 Illustration of the wordlists and their position within the variable matrix
On the other hand, it sheds more light on how borrowings and CS are used to construct meaning and identity through discourse. Therefore, it is important to define the notion of gender.

We suggest operationalising gender as consisting of several aspects, which can be divided into the four main facets of: (a) physiological/bodily aspects (sex); (b) gender identity or self-defined gender; (c) legal gender; and (d) social gender in terms of norm-related behaviours and gender expressions (the American Psychological Association refers to this aspect as “sex role” (APA, 2015).

(Lindqvist et al. 2020: 5)

Section 8.5 focuses on (d) and redefines this perspective as digital gender roles referring to the performatave side of gender within the social media context. Section 8.4 is based on self-reported gender information that users have made public on Facebook. The social media platform offers three categories: männlich (‘male’), weiblich (‘female’) and divers (‘diverse’). None of the users in the corpus registered themselves as divers. However, it is still possible that some users identify as such but chose not indicate it. This could be because they did not wish to semi-publicly announce their personal gender identity on social media and deliberately chose one of the binary options. Revealing a non-binary gender identity on a social network like Facebook would possibly have a profound impact on the user’s private life, as the German-Namibian community is a relatively small community with close-knit networks of transnational dimensions. It is possible that all gender variables used for quantitative analysis equal the gender identity of the respective user, but it is not for certain. Since self-reported gender information is linked to both the user profiles on Facebook and their linguistic output, it is worthwhile taking it into consideration.

8.3.2 Code-Switching and Nonce Borrowing

Namibian-specific practices among German Namibians have mostly been shaped by Afrikaans and English. To determine the status of these items, we distinguish three categories: loanwords, nonce borrowings and CS. Scholars widely agree on the definition and nature of loanwords (Bracke 2021: 99). They “have become part of a recipient language’s lexicon […], are integrated into its grammatical system, and […] are also used by monolingual speakers in the community” (Bracke 2021: 99). However, if a single other-language item is not integrated, the question of how to classify it becomes more difficult. Some scholars have introduced the notion of single-word CS to describe these items that are less frequently used (Poplack 2004: 2018; Poplack et al. 1988; cf. also Bracke 2021: 99). The term CS refers to “the ’juxtaposition’ of two or more languages” (Bracke 2021: 99) and implies that both linguistic systems are activated in the
mind of the speaker. This is certainly true for multi-word CS but has been questioned for single-word CS.

Even if all single unintegrated other-language items were referred to as CS, they are arguably different from multi-word CS in some ways. In terms of psycholinguistic activation, a longer sequence [of Afrikaans or English] likely leads to a stronger activation of the other language, while German would stay most activated during short sequences.

(Bracke 2021: 100)

We follow this argument and classify unintegrated other-language items as a form of ad hoc borrowing, i.e., nonce borrowing. They combine typical features of loanwords and multi-word CS.

Like its established counterpart, the nonce borrowing tends to involve lone lexical items, generally major-class content words, and to assume the morphological, syntactic, and optionally, phonological identity of the recipient language. Like CS, on the other hand, particular nonce borrowings are neither recurrent nor widespread, and nonce borrowing necessarily requires a certain level of bilingual competence.

(Poplack 2004: 590; cf. Bracke 2021: 100)

8.4 Results

8.4.1 Mode, Word Type and Gender

How do multilingual practices manifest in German-Namibian CMC? Are they subject to gender-specific and mode-specific effects? To answer these questions, we conducted a multiple regression analysis including three independent variables: mode, word type, and gender—all of which were operationalised as binary categories. Word type consists of function words (FW) and content words (CW). Content words comprise the following lexical categories, i.e., nouns, verbs (except auxiliary and modal verbs), adverbs, demonstrative pronouns, negatives and question words; whereas mode includes NAMSA (as a mixed-mode group) and NiD (as a single-mode group). Gender covers male users (M) and female users (F). The independent variables were combined and used to calculate the Odds Ratio of the dependent language variable, i.e., the chance of whether a token originates from German or another language, i.e., Afrikaans or English (non-German). Established loanwords such as “internet” were counted as German unless they were part of a multi-word phrase in English, as such cases would clearly indicate a cognitive activation of English in the mind of the writer. In cases of doubt, the German-language dictionary Duden (www.duden.de) served as a reference to determine the loanword status. The proportion of FW and CW in German is based
Table 8.3 Inclination towards non-German language practices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mode</th>
<th>Word Type</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>German word count</th>
<th>non-German word count</th>
<th>% non-German</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NAMSA</td>
<td>FW</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>6,802</td>
<td>454</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAMSA</td>
<td>CW</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>9,394</td>
<td>1,645</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAMSA</td>
<td>FW</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>2,251</td>
<td>248</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAMSA</td>
<td>CW</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>3,109</td>
<td>421</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NiD</td>
<td>FW</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>17,268</td>
<td>1,737</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NiD</td>
<td>CW</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>18,708</td>
<td>3,081</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NiD</td>
<td>FW</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>10,029</td>
<td>1,590</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NiD</td>
<td>CW</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>10,865</td>
<td>1,823</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

on a sample from either mode corpus. Table 8.3 illustrates the dependent variables, the word count for German- and non-German tokens as well as their proportion relative to the remaining word count (% non-German).

Table 8.3 shows that non-German practices (i.e. Afrikaans and English) are deployed more often in the single-mode (NiD) than in the mixed-mode (NAMSA); namely 13% NiD vs 11% NAMSA. The chance for them to be used in the single-mode group is 1.14 times greater than in the mixed-mode group (Odds Ratio). Non-German practices are more likely to contain content words (Odds Ratio: 1.51) and they are more likely to occur among female users (Odds Ratio: 1.17). These findings contradict the first hypothesis that males use more CS as an expression of non-standard language. Hence, it is important to determine what the use of non-German items actually means. Is there a homogenous way to use them or can we define gender-specific practices in German-Namibian CMC? To answer this question, we split the non-German category into an Afrikaans and English category and analysed both in two separate steps. In doing so, we were able to obtain a more fine-grained picture of the dynamics between multilingual practices and multimodality.

Table 8.4 shows that English-based practices occur more often in the single-mode group NiD (11%) than in the mixed-mode group NAMSA (8%). The chance for English to occur in the single-mode group is 1.41 times greater than in the mixed-mode group. English practices have a slightly higher chance of containing more CWs than FWs (Odds Ratio: 1.28) and they are more frequently used by female users than by male users (Odds Ratio: 1.31). These findings comply with the results shown in Table 8.3. The results are plausible since the majority of the non-German word count contains English words (88%; see Table 8.1 for an overview of the overall distribution between Afrikaans- and English-based tokens) and, therefore, the patterns of English words dominate the overall figures.

Table 8.5 shows that Afrikaans-based practices only constitute a small proportion of the overall word count with ratios ranging between
1% and 5% across all categories. In contrast to English, Afrikaans occurs more often in NAMSA (3%) than in NiD (1%). The chance of Afrikaans occurring in mixed mode is 2.01 times greater than in single-mode. Furthermore, Afrikaans-based practices are more likely to contain CWs than FWs. With an Odds Ratio of 3.78, this chance is clearly above average and will be further discussed in Subsection 8.4.2. In general, one can say that Afrikaans often comes in the form of a single-word insertion or a short chunk. Alternation on the phrasal level is less common. Furthermore, Afrikaans is more likely to be used by males (Odds Ratio: 1.76).^{15}

### 8.4.2 Two Types of Multilingual Practices

Tables 8.4 and 8.5 suggest that there are two types of multilingual practices in German-Namibian CMC. One type is Afrikaans-based and includes a relative over-representation of content words while the other type is English-based and includes a more balanced, relative representation between content words and function words. This is illustrated in Table 8.6.

---

**Table 8.4** Inclination towards English-based practices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mode</th>
<th>Word Type</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>non-English word count</th>
<th>English word count</th>
<th>% non-English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NAMSA</td>
<td>FW</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>6,900</td>
<td>356</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAMSA</td>
<td>CW</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>9,997</td>
<td>1,042</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAMSA</td>
<td>FW</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>2,281</td>
<td>218</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAMSA</td>
<td>CW</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>3,189</td>
<td>341</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NiD</td>
<td>FW</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>17,378</td>
<td>1,627</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NiD</td>
<td>CW</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>19,300</td>
<td>2,489</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NiD</td>
<td>FW</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>10,101</td>
<td>1,518</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NiD</td>
<td>CW</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>11,055</td>
<td>1,633</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 8.5** Inclination towards Afrikaans-based practices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mode</th>
<th>Word Type</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>non-Afrikaans word count</th>
<th>Afrikaans word count</th>
<th>% non-Afrikaans</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NAMSA</td>
<td>FW</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>7,158</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAMSA</td>
<td>CW</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>10,436</td>
<td>603</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAMSA</td>
<td>FW</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>2,469</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAMSA</td>
<td>CW</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>3,450</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NiD</td>
<td>FW</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>18,895</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NiD</td>
<td>CW</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>21,197</td>
<td>592</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NiD</td>
<td>FW</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>11,547</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NiD</td>
<td>CW</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>12,498</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
For German, it is assumed (based on a sample from the full dataset) that a running text consists of 45% of FWs. The English profile of female users comes very close to this level (47%), followed by the English profile of male users (36%). It can, therefore, be concluded that, relatively, English often occurs at the multi-word level in the form of inter- and intra-sentential CS. In contrast, Afrikaans behaves differently: FWs occur less frequently among female users (27%) and even less among male users (14%) stressing the relative over-representation of Afrikaans CWs. This result confirms the finding that Afrikaans occurs relatively often in the form of semantic nonce borrowings, loanwords and chunks. The two types of multilingual practices become even more apparent when adding the mode variable to the analysis. Table 8.7 shows the results by outlining the relative representations between CWs and FWs across language and mode.16

In relative numbers, Table 8.7 shows that English CWs and FWs are over-represented among female users in single-mode group NiD (+27% and +25%) while Afrikaans CWs are strongly over-represented among male users in NAMSA (+175%). Apparently, communicating in an informal mixed-mode group triggers a frequent use of CWs among male users when using Afrikaans. This effect also exists among male users in the single-mode group. However, it is less clearly pronounced (+37%). In contrast to Afrikaans, English FWs and CWs are more balanced among male users, in particular in NiD, although less so.

---

16 For German, it is assumed (based on a sample from the full dataset) that a running text consists of 45% of FWs. The English profile of female users comes very close to this level (47%), followed by the English profile of male users (36%). It can, therefore, be concluded that, relatively, English often occurs at the multi-word level in the form of inter- and intra-sentential CS. In contrast, Afrikaans behaves differently: FWs occur less frequently among female users (27%) and even less among male users (14%) stressing the relative over-representation of Afrikaans CWs. This result confirms the finding that Afrikaans occurs relatively often in the form of semantic nonce borrowings, loanwords and chunks. The two types of multilingual practices become even more apparent when adding the mode variable to the analysis. Table 8.7 shows the results by outlining the relative representations between CWs and FWs across language and mode.
than among female users. The finding is in line with Stell’s observation which states “that language alternation between English into L1s or into L2 Afrikaans can occur in every ingroup’s usage” (Stell 2014: 233). This may be due to the fact that English is the sole official language of Namibia and thus enjoys a high degree of overt prestige (cf. Stell and Groenewald 2016: 1129).

Stell refers to English as “‘n onmisbare hoë-status taal in die Namibiese samelewing […] en as sodanig word sy oorwig in die openbare lewe en in die opvoedkundige sisteem meestal as legitiem beskou ” [an indispensable high-status language in Namibian society [...] and as such its predominance in public life and in the educational system is mostly considered legitimate] (2016: 1183). Therefore, switching between English and other languages at the sentence or phrase level has become a common practice in Namibian society. This practice is reflected in German-Namibian CMC. On the other hand, English has been enjoying its sole status only since Namibia became independent in 1990 whereas the history of Afrikaans being in close contact with German dates back to the second half of the 19th century. This tradition would explain the findings illustrated in Table 8.7 as it has apparently led to a number of Afrikaans words becoming an inherent part of German-Namibian (in)formal language use (cf. Wiese and Bracke 2021). The continuing use of Afrikaans borrowings is further prompted by its status as a language of covert prestige which exceeds the degree of covert prestige that English has (Stell and Groenewald 2016: 1138). Notwithstanding the fact that the data used for this study is selective, community-specific and mode-filtered, it confirms the patterns of a more general language usage within Namibian society. Therefore, it reflects the complex interplay between (the history of) language contact and prestige and their impact on the emergence of multilingual language practices.

8.4.3 Semantics and Gender in Multilingual Word Choice

This subsection shifts the focus to the semantic perspective on multilingual practices in German-Namibian CMC. In what respect do male and female users cover different semantic fields and to what extent do they differ? To tackle these questions, we discuss the ten most frequently used words originating from Afrikaans and English (henceforward referred to as keywords). The keywords for each language are presented in gender-specific lists: one containing word choices by male users (m-list) and the other by female users (f-list). Based on the findings in Subsection 8.4.2, it is expected that the majority of Afrikaans keywords are CWs while the majority of English keywords are predicted to be FWs. This is because language practices at the phrasal level inevitably prompt the use of highly frequent FWs such as articles, pronouns and prepositions. For this reason, both gender lists for English are expected to resemble each other to a great extent since they are predicted to be part of the morphosyntactic frame
of English sentence construction rather than to be part of gender-specific word choices. In contrast, the top-11 lists for Afrikaans\(^\text{17}\) are expected to show gender-specific variation at the semantic level.

Subsection 8.4.3.1 discusses the top 11 lists for Afrikaans while 8.4.3.2 moves on to investigate English. Note that in absolute numbers, Afrikaans is always outnumbered by English across all categories, since 88% of the non-German word count is of English origin. However, over- and under-representations for each language do occur in relation to the language-specific word count. Therefore, tendencies in Afrikaans will be discussed in relation to the overall Afrikaans word count while tendencies in English will be discussed in relation to the overall English word count. Ambiguous words that belong to more than just one language were manually annotated to make sure they were counted for the correct language.

### 8.4.3.1 Afrikaans

Table 8.8 presents the Afrikaans keywords in the m-list and the f-list. It indicates the absolute and the relative token frequency in relation the overall, gender-specific word count for Afrikaans. Words occurring in both lists are coloured grey.

Table 8.8 shows that five out of eleven keywords co-occur. Gender-specific words in the m-list are *oukie/s* (‘dude’), *plek* (‘place’, ‘venue’), *jerre/jerre* (interjection) and *gees* (‘mood’, ‘spirit’). With the exception of *plek*,\(^\text{18}\) they clearly denote strategies to create social relationships with the recipient(s) of the message. These strategies contrast gender-specific strategies in the f-list such as *dankie* (‘thanks’) and *ons* (‘we’, ‘us’, ‘our’).\(^\text{19}\) Note that *ons* is one of four FWs occurring in the f-list (along with *ek*, *die* and *in*) while the m-list does not contain a single FW.\(^\text{20}\) Thus, the top-11 lists include a fair amount of gender-specific variation with respect to word types.

There are also differences in frequency: the four most frequently used keywords in the m-list come with a relative frequency of more than 5.0% in relation to all Afrikaans words used by male users (*oukie/s*: 8.3%, *net*: 6.0%, *biltong*: 5.6%, *mooi*: 5.2%) whereas the f-list only contains two such keywords, that is *biltong* (8.3%) and *lekker* (6.5%). *Biltong* is a culture-specific term denoting a form of dried meat commonly produced in southern Africa. *Lekker* is an expressive adjective/adverb that can be translated as ‘delicious’, ‘nice’, ‘fun’ or ‘good’ in a general sense. By using *lekker*, the writer thus indicates a positive attitude towards the object described. All other Afrikaans keywords in the f-list come with a relative proportion well under 5.0%. This observation further supports the analysis that male users tend to use isolated Afrikaans loanwords more often than female users, whereas female users exhibit relatively more language shifts on the phrasal level than male users on the fewer occasions that they actually use Afrikaans at all (see 8.4.1 and 8.4.2).\(^\text{21}\)
### Table 8.8 Afrikaans keywords among male and female users

**m-list (Afrikaans tokens = 1,403)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Afrikaans</th>
<th>Translation</th>
<th>tokens</th>
<th>prop. All Afr.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>oukie/s</td>
<td>dude/s</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>net</td>
<td>just</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>6.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>biltong</td>
<td>dried meat</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mooi</td>
<td>beautiful</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>5.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bikkie</td>
<td>(a) bit</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>3.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lekker</td>
<td>delicious, nice</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>plek</td>
<td>place</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kak</td>
<td>shit</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jerre/jirre</td>
<td>interjection</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mos</td>
<td>particle</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gees</td>
<td>mood, spirit</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**f-list (Afrikaans tokens = 372)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>biltong</td>
<td>dried meat</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lekker</td>
<td>delicious, nice</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>6.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>net</td>
<td>just</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dankie</td>
<td>thanks</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kak</td>
<td>shit</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mooi</td>
<td>beautiful</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ek</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>die</td>
<td>the</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ons</td>
<td>we, us, our</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in</td>
<td>in</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bikkie</td>
<td>a bit</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
There are also interesting similarities between the m-list and the f-list. With the exception of *biltong*, all co-occurring words can be categorised into two groups: intensifiers and expressives, e.g., *lekker* (‘delicious’, ‘pleasant’, ‘nice’), *mooi* (‘beautiful’, ‘nice’), *kak* (‘shit’) and qualifiers, e.g., *net* (‘just’, ‘only’) and *bikkie* (‘a bit’, ‘a little’). This is interesting as both sets of words are degree modifiers with a complementary discourse function: qualifiers decrease the effect of another word or phrase whereas intensifiers emphasise the modified items. Therefore, users use them to provide clues about their personal stance and to give an idea of how the recipient should think about a given topic according the speaker’s view. This seems to be an important discourse function of Namibia-specific lexical items in CMC, as illustrated in extract (1). Lexical items originating from Afrikaans are marked in bold; lexical items from English are underlined.

(1) **Thanx oukies**, das war ne **lekkre** Party. Beste **Location**, **mooi** organisiert, und der **Gees**...den kann man auf den Fotos sehen!

Thanks oukies, it was a great party. Best location, well organised and such a good spirit ... you can see it on the photos!

Extract (1) shows that the words *lekker* (‘nice’, ‘delicious’, here: ‘great’), *mooi* (‘beautiful’, here: ‘well’) index the user’s positive stance towards the event in question. They are part of both top-11 lists. *Gees* (‘mood’, ‘spirit’, here ‘vibe’) and *oukie* (‘dudes’, ‘guys’) only occur in the m-list. The latter serves as a brocative to address fellow group members and is by far the most frequently used Afrikaans word among male users. However, with an absolute token frequency of only four, it is not even among the top keywords in the f-list.

8.4.3.2 English

The most frequently used words in English are almost exclusively FWs and co-occur in both lists to a great extent, as illustrated in Table 8.9. This result is in stark contrast to Afrikaans. English keywords thus represent parts of the morphosyntactic frame used by male and female users in German-Namibian CMC to construct phrases.

The level of similarity is striking: eight out of eleven keywords appear in both gender-specific lists. The three words that only occur in the m-list are ‘it’, ‘yes’ and ‘please’. However, ‘it’ also enjoys a high frequency among female users, occupying rank 12 (36 occurrences). This is not too different from the m-list where it stands at rank 8 (73 occurrences). The remaining two words with a gender-specific frequency are ‘yes’ and ‘please’. Both are CWs that have a clear semantic value. They show gaps between the gender lists: ‘please’ occupies rank 11 in the m-list (58 occurrences) while ranking 23rd in the f-list (16 occurrences) and ‘yes’
occupies rank 9 in the m-list (71 occurrences) while ranking 30th in the f-list (9 occurrences). This finding is plausible as ‘yes’ is a content word. Therefore, it has a clear semantic value and is often used as an interjection. Occasionally it comes in the form of a tautology yes-ja (‘yes-yes’). This chunk is a typical term used by EES, a German-Namibian rapper who is known for using a stylised version of Namdeutsch. Hence, yes-ja is an example of gender-specific word choice inspired by pop culture.

The f-list also contains one CW, i.e., ‘have’, and its ranks are subject to a noticeable gap, too. ‘Have’ ranks 11th in the f-list (37 occurrences) while occupying rank 26 in the m-list (26 occurrences). This is unlike the two FWs that only occur in the f-list top 11, i.e., ‘you’ and ‘I’. As expected, they occupy similar ranks in the m-list. ‘You’ ranks 8th in the f-list (56 occurrences) while occupying rank 12 in the m-list (51 occurrences) and ‘I’ stands at rank 9 in the f-list (54 occurrences) while ranking 15th in the m-list (45 occurrences). In sum, the variation in the top-11 list of English largely represents the morphosyntactic frame to construct sentences while the top-11 list of Afrikaans rather indicate a combination of overlapping semantic categories and gender-specific word choices.

### 8.4.4 Non-German Brocatives

This section focuses on the use of other-language brocatives, which are a subset of vocatives such as bra and bro (English: ‘brother’), dude (English: ‘dude’) and man (Afrikaans/English/German: ‘man’). Oukie is the most frequently used brocative in German-Namibian CMC with a token frequency of 117 and no other brocative appears in the lists in Table 8.9. It is predominantly used by male users, implying a pronounced
Gender Effect. It is expected that the use of brocatives in mixed-mode groups is higher than in single-mode groups. The reason might be that brocatives – a fairly informal form of vocatives – are triggered by personal contact, which is part of mixed-mode interaction but not (necessarily) of single-mode interaction. Figure 8.1 shows the numbers of all brocatives for NAMSA (mixed-mode) and NiD (single-mode) both in relative frequencies per 1,000 words.

Figure 8.1 shows that there is indeed a mode-related effect: German-Namibian users deploy a higher relative amount of other-language brocatives in the mixed-mode group NAMSA than they do in the single-mode group NiD. How can these dynamics be explained? We argue that a mixed-mode environment provides more opportunities for its members to strengthen social bonds as they meet in both FTF and CMC. This combination potentially leads to a higher degree of cohesiveness and triggers the use of informal other-language brocatives. We will argue that especially male users use these items to index camaraderie and express their stance towards one another (Section 8.6). Therefore, we apply a discursive approach and introduce the notion of referential multimodality to analyse brocatives in German-Namibian conversation.

8.5 Multimodal Multilingualism and Gender Construction

What epistemological gain does a discursive perspective on German-Namibian CMC provide? The answer to this question lies in the inherent nature of discourse itself. As Fairclough and Wodak phrase it: “discourse is socially constitutive as well as socially shaped: it constitutes situations,
objective knowledge, and the social identities of and relationships between people and groups of people” (Hülsse 1999: 5). Hülsse then adds the following observation:

By talking or writing people act, because what they do has consequences: They verbally create situations (and institutions and social structures), which are the basis of further verbal and non-verbal action. Thus the relationship between discourse and situations is one of mutual constitution, or as Fairclough and Wodak would have it: dialectical.

(1999: 6)

CMC further accelerates dialectical processes as it manifests a form of communication which is per se independent of time and place. It thus allows for trans-localised networked communication and provides a platform for the widespread exposure of multilingual practices and referential multimodality – a term we will set out in Subsection 8.5.1.

8.5.1 Referential Multimodality

Sachs-Hombach and Thon define referential multimodality as “the communication of different referential claims” and mention it as one of the key concepts necessary to be investigated “if we are to go beyond existing conceptualizations [of multimodality]” (2019: 185). While Thon (2019) applies referential multimodality to multimodal documentaries and post/documentaries, we aim to extend this notion to human interaction in mixed-mode versus single-mode groups – the first referring to individuals who communicate as a group in both FTF settings and CMC, the latter referring to groups that only exist as such either in CMC or FTF. Thereby, we extend the notion of referential multimodality and define it as the use of one or more claims referring to a mode different from the one in which the claims occur. Hence, 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. The most explicit form of referential multimodality in this definition are direct and indirect quotes published in CMC and originating from an earlier FTF conversation or vice versa. Although communicative asynchrony is not a necessary condition for applying referential multimodality, it is likely to occur since social media provide various tools for delayed communication. The individual is required to recall an event from the past or anticipate a future event and refer to it. These references can be of an explicit or implicit nature and are often followed by cross-modal commentary when occurring in social media, as illustrated in Excerpt 1 – Excerpt 3. Again, lexical items originating from Afrikaans are marked in bold; lexical items from English are underlined. Referential claims are written in italics.
Referential Multimodality, Multilingualism and Gender

Excerpt 1

ANJA: Ich suche pls meine namflag [...] ihr hattet die mos zuletzt
   ’I am looking for my Namibian flag, please. You guys were the last ones to have it.’
MARK:  Hab ihr gesagt das das nicht meine ist... Kann Tom miskin dir schicken.
   ’I told her it’s not mine ... Tom can maybe send it to you.’

Excerpt 2

MARIE: Wir haben alles mit der Wasserwacht besprochen, die supporten das Leute mit Schlauchbooten auf der Amper fahren, und ihr werdet genau so safe sein wie auf einem See
   ’We’ve discussed everything with the water rescue service. They allow people to sail a dinghy on the Amper river and you will be as safe as if you were on a lake.’

Excerpt 3

CHRIS: Hey guys, I found an Irish Pub that offers public viewing for die Bokke 2mr moring.
   Iemand keen to watch? Located in NRW! […] Cheers Chris
CHRIS: A few oukies are here 😊

In Excerpt 1, Anja refers to an FTF event during which she had lost her Namibian flag. Mark replies to her inquiry by applying referential multimodality: he first indirectly quotes one of his earlier statements from FTF (“I told her it’s not mine”). Next, he adds new information (“Tom can maybe send it to you”). This way, he extends the oral conversation that earlier took place in FTF by using CMC. His original statement crossed modes to be commented on in a different mode than was uttered in the first place. Mark combines his multimodal practice with a multilingual word choice. He uses the Afrikaans modifier misiken (’maybe’) to answer Anja’s multimulti inquiry. Switching from German into Afrikaans emphasises the fact that his declaration expresses a piece of personal advice without claiming the unconditional truth. Note that this piece of advice would still be pragmatically and grammatically accurate if it stood on its own without the preceding indirect speech. In that case, Mark’s comment would not contain any referential multimodality as all the information would have originated from CMC only. However, Mark apparently felt the need to briefly quote and position himself since Anja’s search for her flag had already prompted prior FTF conversation. This strategy avoids misunderstandings and provides for a smooth transition from earlier FTF conversation to his current CMC advice. Referential multimodality can therefore be inferred as
means of organising information on the one hand and to express politeness on the other hand. After all, a polite reply is a clearly structured reply. It is essential for frictionsless communication. It follows that referential multimodality can occur among members of cohesive mixed-mode groups who inherently have a need to comment on FTF speech in CMC and vice versa.

The same applies to Excerpt 2 in which Marie summarises an FTF conversation that she has had with the water rescue service. She therefore uses the English borrowing *supporten* (‘to support’) to indicate that the water rescue service agreed to her plan. Since their support is crucial, she uses an English borrowing to stress this main message. The English borrowing is part of the multimodal claim and therefore combines referential multimodality with internal multilingual practices. This is in contrast to Excerpt 1 in which the multilingual practice is part of a subsequent, monomodal comment and can therefore be classified as external with regard to the multimodal claim.

Excerpt 3 illustrates an example of both internal and external multilingual practices combined with implicit referential multimodality. It is implicit because the multimodal claim just refers to a concrete communicative setting in FTF (“A few oukies are here”) without explicitly quoting what is being said. Still, the claim implies FTF conversation since the gathering has a social character. Excerpt 1 – Excerpt 3 show a text-based form of referential multimodality combined with multilingual practices. The borrowings are produced in CMC. Extract (2) and Figure 8.2 are part of the same Facebook post and illustrates how borrowings can travel between modes, e.g., from FTF to CMC and constitute an integral part of referential, multimodal claims through the combined use of text and photo:

(2) Namsa war lekker! Thanks für das organisen und den gees

Namsa was great. Thanks for organising and for the good spirit.

Figure 8.2 shows a self-made destination board intended to help and entertain NAMSA participants. As they set up the sign, NAMSA members considered what words to write on it. *Gees* (‘good spirit’) is part of their social emblematic repertoire (see 8.5.2) and so they decided to set it as one of the destination words. The board itself is thus a written artefact of verbal conversation. It was then photographed and uploaded to a social media platform and therefore transferred from FTF into CMC mode. The user then mirrored the word choice in (1) by using *gees* again in her post to thank the organisers. Note that the referential claim in the post is implicit as the communicative setting is implied without directly quoting any statement. Subsection 8.5.2 will analyse the use of multilingual *brocatives* combined with referential multimodality. The conversation is taken from CMC and refers to a future FTF event.
This subsection analyses the discursive role of four brocatives in German-Namibian CMC, i.e., *bra* and *bro* (English: ‘brother’), *dude* (English: ‘dude’) and *man* (Afrikaans/English/German: ‘man’). In contrast to *oukie* which often indexes an in-group-out-group distinction (Radke 2021: 145 ff), these nominal male familiarisers mainly index ingroup-related stances in German-Namibian CMC. Kiesling argues that at least one of these brocatives, that is *dude*, “encodes the speaker’s stance to his or her current addressee(s)” (2004: 281). In particular, it “indexes a stance of cool solidarity, a stance which is especially valuable to young men as they navigate cultural discourses of young masculinity, which simultaneously demand masculine solidarity, strict heterosexuality and nonconformity” (2004: 281). Hereinafter, we will argue that this observation, in the context of German-Namibian CMC, does not only hold true for the use of *dude* but also applies to other multilingual brocatives such as *bra*, *bro* and *man*. Furthermore, we will argue that they are not just pure discourse markers to structure information within a given conversation
but instead fulfil a wide range of pragmatic functions associated with camaraderie, masculinity and friendship to construct and maintain digital gender roles. Excerpt 4 serves as an example. It shows how an illocution on a practical question evolves into a discourse shaped by nominal male familiarisers, i.e., brocatives. These familiarisers are enregistered, social emblems symbolising language use and social behaviour during the annual NAMSA meeting in FTF. Therefore, the discourse contains implicit, referential multimodality as the users involved anticipate a future NAMSA event in an FTF setting and mediate their thoughts through CMC. They use brocatives to create a male and Namibia-specific discourse of friendship/camaraderie and mediate an image of NAMSA as an informal in-group event. All brocatives, irrespective of their donor language, are marked in bold.

**Excerpt 4**

1. Charly  
   Yes alle. Fährt jemand am Freitag aus Köln und hat maybe noch platz für einen??  
   Hi to everyone. Does anyone depart from Cologne on Friday and has a free spot left for someone?

2. Hans  
   samstag könnt ich dir anbieten bra am erst so Abends den dreh  
   I could offer you (a lift on) Saturday, bra, around the evening.

3. Sven  
   Bra Hans, du willst mir nicht gerade sagen du kommst erst Samstag Abend oder??  
   Bra Hans, you’re not telling me that you’ll only arrive on Saturday night, are you?

4. Charly  
   thanks Hans, aber wie gesagt ich gehe schon Freitag  
   Thanks Hans, just as I said I’ll already go on Friday.

5. Hans  
   Ja kein kak bra I geh erst samstag .. Sven ich kom dann ja  
   Yes no kidding, bra. I’m only coming on Saturday. Sven, I’ll be there, no worries.

6. Sven  
   Neeee Dude, ich hab gedacht wir trinken frühstücksbierchen?!?!  
   Nooo dude, I thought we’d be drinking a beer for breakfast together.

7. Tom  
   Sven ich werd mit dor eins trinken und warten  
   Sven, I will drink one (a beer) and wait with you.

8. Sven  
   Haha, net so  
   Haha, alright

9. Charly  
   kak man, frühstücks brandy!!!!!!  
   great man, brandy for breakfast

In this excerpt, the function of other-language brocatives is threefold: they index masculine solidarity and mitigate hierarchical speech through playful language use. Furthermore, their repetitive occurrence in CMC mediates the idea of NAMSA as an FTF event. Brocatives are therefore
enregistered as a social emblem which indexes NAMSA for community members. In the following, we will explain the functions of brocatives in more detail by using Conversation Analysis and Speech Act Theory. Charly starts off a new conversation by addressing the community as a whole. He therefore uses a gender-neutral vocative consisting of the English-German collocation *Yes alle* (‘hi to everybody’). He then continues with an indirect speech act with which he intends to find somebody to give him a lift on Friday.

Hans is the first user to respond. He offers Charly a lift and adds that he will only drive on Saturday. At the same time, he introduces the gender-specific vocative *bra* (from English ‘brother’) to address Charly. Subsequently, Sven takes the turn through self-selection. He echoes Hans’s use of the gender-specific vocative *bra* to denote a similar relationship to Charly as Hans did in his prior comment. However, this time, *bra* introduces a shift of conversational focus leaving out Charly’s initial question and instead highlighting the fact that Hans will only join the group on Saturday instead of Friday. Subsequently, the gender-specific vocative is echoed by various users throughout the whole conversation as it reoccurs in three different forms: *bra*, *dude* and *man*. Such a repetitive pattern serves as a social practice to reinforce the notion of friendship, brotherhood and camaraderie. At the same time, it emphasises a range of illocutionary acts within the conversation: it stresses surprise and disappointment (turn 3), underlines confirmation (turn 5), casts doubt (turn 6) and emphasises joy (turn 9). In addition, Kiesling argues that one of these brocatives, that is *dude*, serves as a *confrontational stance attenuator*. He defines this term as follows:

*Dude* is often used when the speaker is taking a confrontational or a “one-up” stance to the addressee. Through its indexing of solidarity, *dude* can attenuate or ameliorate the confrontation, signaling that the competitive or hierarchical component of the utterance is not serious. [...] In the terms of Brown and Levinson’s (1987) politeness theory, this use is as a positive politeness strategy in situations of negative face threat.

(Kiesling 2004: 292)

One such potential confrontation is prompted by Sven who expresses disappointment about the late arrival of Hans (turn 6). Due to the lack of contextual clues such as gestures or intonation in written CMC, his question-framed illocation could very well be inferred as a sign of anger, especially since it includes several exclamation and question marks. However, Sven introduces his comment by using the vocative phrase *Neeee Dude* (‘Nooo, dude’) which indexes that his comment is not meant to be taken seriously. In addition, he uses the diminutive *-chen* in *Frühstücksbierchen* (lit.: ‘a ‘small’ beer for breakfast’) as a pragmatic sign to mitigate his confrontational stance. Kiesling argues that such
“representations suggest that dude’s first-order indexicality is one of cool solidarity [...]” (Kiesling 2004: 289).

However, Sven does not only use dude to attenuate confrontational speech but also applies the same function to bra (turn 3). In fact, this turn bears an even higher potential to be inferred as confrontational speech as it interrupts the three-part interchange between Charly and Hans (turns 1, 2 and 4) through self-selection. At the same time, it directly addresses Hans, shifts the focus to his absence on Friday, lacks any downtowners and ends with the question tag oder? (‘, are you?’) followed by three question marks. This way of framing a question accelerates its illocutionary force directed towards Hans to elicit confirmation or affirmation. Here, bra is the only sign that Sven’s confrontational stance is not meant to be taken seriously and thus turns his speech act into a playful way of addressing Hans. For this reason, it is in line with Kiesling’s definition of dude as a confrontational stance attenuator. Therefore, it reduces the need to use smileys and other contextual clues usually used to make up for the lack of gestures, intonation and pauses in written CMC. Not surprisingly, Hans responds to Sven’s question and a whole conversation around the late arrival of Hans unfolds (turns 5–9). Sven’s confrontational stance (turn 3), ameliorated by bra, thus serves as the thematic initiator for the discourse to follow. It is centred around the supposedly non-serious sentiment that Hans somewhat neglects the group due to his late arrival, which clashes with the idea of solidarity. A face-saving solution is offered by Tom who joins the conversation through self-selection (turn 7). He suggests having a beer with Sven. So both of them can wait for Hans to arrive. Not only does his speech act offer a solution to which everyone can agree, it also bears a clear sign of masculine solidarity. Hence, there is no need for Tom to use an additional familiariser to address Sven. He, therefore, simply uses the addressee’s name to introduce his comment (turn 7). Sven and Charly agree (turns 8–9). In a last turn, Charly uses the vocative phrase kak man (‘shit man’) to emphasise joy. By combining the vocative with a swear word, he also signals that he and his conversation partners are close enough to apply non-conforming language use and set social conventions aside.

What does this conversation stand for? First, the conversation constructs social identities and relationships: a couple of young men cooperating with each other. They use CMC to anticipate their future meeting in FTF. Their multimodal circle of friendship serves as the thriving force for the conversation to continue. The fact that familiarisers reoccur like a ping-pong disclose the bonds between the users and mediates them to a presumed audience through CMC – even if this audience does not actively participate in the conversation itself. The group in which Excerpt 4 was posted has 1,355 members (as of 19 November 2020). Thus, the audience ranges from close friends to users they may have never met. Therefore, the repetitive pattern of familiarisers symbolises: “when we meet face-to-face, we are having fun.”
Although the conversation took place right before NAMSA, it offers a glimpse into the sort of conversations and discourses that do take place during the FTF event. Therefore, it is enregistered as a social emblem which indexes NAMSA. With other words: male users constitute and enregister the idea of NAMSA to a broader audience through the discursive re-semiotisation of multilingual brocatives from FTF to CMC mode anticipating future FTF events. The CMC-based discourse becomes constitutive for future NAMSA events in FTF. At the same time, it has been shaped by former NAMSA events. It thus manifests the inherent dialectical relationship between discourse and culture through referential multimodality or, as Hülsse puts it: “[their] society and culture are constituted by discourse, but at the same time, they constitute discourse” (1999: 6). The mutual effect of referential multimodality becomes even stronger the more often a certain discourse (re)occurs and the more people it reaches. Therefore, it is important to note that emblematic conversations like Excerpt 4 are productive among male users and frequently occur in German-Namibian CMC. Excerpts 5, 6 and 7 illustrate the use of brocatives through bra:

**Excerpt 5**

FRANS Wie viele Leute sind den angemeldet dieses Jahr?  
RAIK mehr als letztes Jahr um die Zeit [...] Wird auf jeden Fall ne dicke Party. Ich seh da kein excuse dass du nicht kommst bra

How many people have registered for this year (so far)?  
More than last year at this time [...] Anyway, [it] will be an awesome party. I don’t see any excuse why you won’t join, bra.

**Excerpt 6**

FRANK Eskalation  
RAIK Jerre ich fühl dein Gees bis nach Hamburg bra

Escalation  
Wow, I can feel your spirit even here in Hamburg, bra

**Excerpt 7**

NICK [...] this new restaurant which is opening soon in Munich  
PAUL ata bra ou lass kappen, dalla mir deine nummer in meine inbox 😊 [...]  
PAUL bra ou lass freidag dahn gehn?? 😃

 [...] this new restaurant which is opening soon in Munich bra ou, let’s do it, leave me your number in my inbox [...]  
Bra ou, let’s go there on Friday??

Excerpt 5 shows bra in its function as confrontational stance attenuator. Raik uses it at the end of his claim to mitigate the risk of being perceived as hierarchical as he claims that there is no excuse for Frans not to join their event. Bra indexes a non-serious stance here and keeps
the conversation on a playful level. Apart from Excerpt 5, the use of *bra* or other familiarisers as confrontational stance attenuator is rare in German-Namibian CMC. Instead, familiarisers are rather used to index friendship and camaraderie, such as in Excerpts 6 and 7. In both cases, the initial speech act is greeted with a through and through positive response. This finding is in line with the no-public-dispute norm observed and reported during FTF meetings of NAMSA (Radke 2021: 136). The thematic focus and the use of familiarisers mediate the user’s stances, relationships and set the tone in which communication happens. They therefore create an in-group and an out-group. Individuals who prefer other ways of speech will be less likely to join the group. Their repetitive linguistic practices thus serve to maintain the in-group-related communicative habits through self-selection, as illustrated by Figure 8.3.

By contrast, repetitive patterns of camaraderie reinforcement strategies are less frequent among female users in German-Namibian CMC. However, they are not completely absent and are particularly used in combination with referential multimodality, as extracts (3) and (4) illustrate.

(3) Alexa matching shirt saves the day. Strength, buddy! X

(4) Anja: Kak ou...du hast die ganzen abend getragen
Shit man... you carried it for the whole night

*Figure 8.3* The reinforcement cycle of social emblems in German-Namibian CMC.
Ina: Hallo Nam Boys & Girls Wollt mal fragen ob welche von Euch in Berlin verbreitet sind? (-: Warme Grüesse aus Nam Hallo Nam Boys & Girls. Just wanted to ask if any of you stay in Berlin? Warm greetings from Namibia

Extract (3) shows the use of a brocative in a female-to-male dyad (F-M dyad). Alexa sympathises with her conversation partner who got involved in a car accident and has just posted a photo of his damaged car. By coincidence, his shirt colour matches the colour of his car. Alexa seeks to support him by calling him buddy. In extract (4), Anja is looking for her Namibian flag (see also Excerpt 1). She uses a referential claim by referring to a prior comment of a friend who claims that he does not know where the flag is. In addition, she uses the swear word *kak* (‘shit’) as an intensifier. The vocative *ou* (non-diminutive form of *oukie*) serves as a confrontational stance attenuator. This practice is similar to the way her fellow male users use *bra* in Excerpt 4 (turn 6) and Excerpt 5. Extract (5) shows how Ina addresses the community as a whole. Therefore, she uses the English expression *Boys & Girls* as a collective vocative. By adding the adjective NAM to it, she refers to the common Namibian roots of her fellow users. In addition, brocatives entail other functions. Excerpt 8 shows how a brocative can be used as an interpersonal and cognitive discourse marker to avoid ambiguity in a F-M triad. Again, referential multimodality is implicitly expressed by the anticipation of a future FTF event.

**Excerpt 8**

**INGE** Sehr gut!! NAMSA kommt nächstes Jahr doch 2x vor habe ich gehört!! 😜......

**MARK** stimmt.

**PAUL** 😔

**INGE** Okies !!!! das war ein Oukies! That was a joke – hint. Joke – hint.

Inge initialises the conversation and jokingly claims that the NAMSA event, which is usually held annually, will take place twice next year. She thus uses an implicit form of referential multimodality. Mark reacts and agrees but Paul is seemingly confused. To avoid any possible misunderstanding, Inge addresses both users by calling them okies (*oukies*) and adding four exclamation marks. The function of this word is twofold: she uses it as an interpersonal marker to catch the attention of her conversation partners and as a cognitive marker to reveal information about her thought processes. This way, she signals a realignment of the information flow. She explicitly states that her claim was not meant to be taken seriously and
ends her comment with the meta statement ‘hint’. These examples indicate how female users use multilingual brocatives to bond with fellow male users and structure and realign discourse in mixed-mode communication. The Strategies are similar to those of male users and usually occur in F-M dyads. It is still noteworthy that German-Namibian CMC remains to be predominantly shaped by male users. A fact that is reflected in NAMSA’s female-to-male ratio of roughly 30/70.

8.6 Discussion and Conclusion

This chapter showed that a multimulti approach to traditional variables opens up new perspectives for sociolinguistic research. How do men and women deploy their multilingual repertoire among different modes? This question took centre stage and was discussed through the example of the German-Namibian diaspora. Therefore, we applied a mixed-methods approach combining multiple regression analysis with discourse and conversation analysis. The goal of this chapter was twofold: first, to present a picture of how FTF and CMC interact by means of referential multimodality and second, to shed more light on interaction with multilingual practices.

The quantitative part of this chapter analysed the functions of Afrikaans and English in German-Namibian CMC. Both serve as donor languages for isolated lexical borrowings as well as for code-switching/mixing. However, findings suggest that there are two types of multilingual practices in German-Namibian CMC: one type is Afrikaans-based and includes a strong over-representation of content words in relation to all Afrikaans words (especially among male users in NAMSA) while the other type is English-based and includes a more balanced, relative representation between content words and function words (especially among women in NiD). This means that users tend to use English at a phrasal level, i.e., in inter- and intra-sentential CS, while Afrikaans rather occurs in semantic single-word constructions, expressive insertions and short chunks. The findings relate to the word count of the given language and are therefore relative. In absolute terms, English outnumbers Afrikaans across all categories as it makes up 88% of all non-German lexical items, which make up 12% of the entire corpus.

Based on these findings, the analysis in 8.4.3 confirmed that the majority of the most frequently used words in Afrikaans (top 11) are content words showing gender-specific variation at the semantic level while the majority of English keywords are function words being part of the morphosyntactic frame of English sentence construction. Therefore, English top 11 words show less gender-specific variation. These tendencies are in line with the history of language contact in Namibia where Afrikaans and German have been in contact for over 120 years – long enough for (expressive) borrowings to become part of a German-Namibian variety. English is also more often used than Afrikaans – a finding that is in line
with Bracke’s results (Bracke 2021: 120). Note that there were different research designs: while Bracke analyses data that was intended to include Namdeutsch, i.e., a German non-standard variety shaped by Afrikaans and English, this chapter includes all kinds of multilingual practices that occur in German-Namibian CMC. Monolingual comments in English are among them.

Subsection 8.4.4 shifted the focus to Afrikaans and English brocatives in German-Namibian CMC. It was hypothesised that communication in mixed-mode groups prompts the use of multilingual brocatives. Therefore, male and female users deploy a higher degree of other-language brocatives compared to users of single-mode groups. A mixed-mode group seems to provide more opportunities for its members to strengthen social bonds as they meet in both FTF and CMC. This combination potentially leads to a higher degree of cohesiveness and triggers the use of informal other-language brocatives to express referential multimodality. Brocatives are strongly over-represented among male users. Therefore, they can be considered a form of gender-specific language practice (cf. Urichuk and Loureiro-Rodriguez 2019). Section 8.5.2 moved on to illustrate how male and female users apply their multilingual repertoire in CMC while referring to past and future FTF events. It could be shown that brocatives in German-Namibian CMC are enregistered as a social emblem which indexes NAMSA as an FTF event – a fact that is stressed by referential claims from CMC to (future) NAMSA events in FTF. These practices create a dialectical circle and reinforce the interplay between referential multimodality and multilingual practices.

Putting more spotlight on the referentiality of multimodal practices enables researchers to analyse data that is considered monomodal from the traditional perspective on multimodality. The data used for this chapter is exclusively CMC- and text-based. A traditional approach would have overlooked the various referential claims that members of the community use to mediate between CMC and FTF speech. Here, 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. The questions to be answered by future research are twofold: at a theoretical level it seems useful to define the boundaries of this notion. Referential multimodality in its explicit form (e.g., by quoting speech that originates from a different mode) does not seem to be too difficult to determine. The implicit form, however, poses more of a challenge. As Excerpt 3 shows, we made the choice to include examples that implicitly imply social interaction and speech in a mode other than that in which the claim is issued. In many of these cases, one could only assume that actual speech takes place. How implicit may a claim be to still count as part of referential multimodality? We can anticipate opinions opting for a stricter approach to this question. That is why defining the boundaries on the implicitness
of referential multimodality remains a key task for future research, in our view.

On a more empirical level, it would be useful to analyse how the interplay between referential multimodality and multilingual practices unfolds in single-mode groups. By definition, single-mode groups only exist in one of the modes. Hence, their members have limited shared experiences in the other mode. How is referential multimodality applied under these circumstances, e.g., in CMC-only groups? It seems plausible that individual members know each other in FTF and would use referential claims in a similar way to how they occur in mixed-mode groups. However, what is the overall nature of referred FTF events in CMC-only groups? Are they more of a general nature so they still account for most of the group members? Would that mean that multilingual practices are rather external with regard to referential, multimodal claims? These questions could be the basis for follow-up research at the empirical level which, at the same time, would provide an opportunity to discuss the boundaries on the implicit side of this notion.

Notes

1 Since the late 19th century, people of German descent have settled in present-day Namibia (at that time German South-West Africa) creating a group of German-speaking inborn citizens of Namibia. Today there is a constant influx of German-speaking Namibians coming to Germany for study or work. Some of them settle while some of them stay for a couple of years before going back to Namibia.

2 Urichuk and Loureiro-Rodriguez refer to brocatives as “nominal vocatives that have been traditionally associated with male speakers and addresses” and add that they “may also occur in male-to-female and in female-to-female dyads” (Urichuk and Loureiro-Rodriguez 2019: 356). However, they exclusively subsume male vocatives such as “man, dude, bro” under brocatives (Urichuk and Loureiro-Rodriguez 2019: 356). Female vocatives such as “sister” or “sis” would therefore not be considered brocatives and constitute a separate group.

3 As of July 2021. In 2018, each group included around 1,200 members.

4 The list includes a number of set expressions and cultural-specific terms such as droëwors (‘dry sausage’, a typical South African snack) or sundowner (an alcoholic drink taken at sunset). For English-based tokens of this kind the following numbers apply: 137 tokens (male users) and 59 tokens (female users). For Afrikaans the numbers are: 128 tokens (male) and 42 tokens (female).

5 However, Zimmer’s data suggest the opposite and indicate that Afrikaans is the most dominant language across all age groups. Zimmer assumes that this result may be “an artefact of the design” as the data are based on translations from Wenker sentences into Namdeutsch (Zimmer in press; cf. Bracke 2021: 121). Therefore, participants might have been more aware of the task and may have produced a stylised version of Namdeutsch using Afrikaans as a prominent salient feature maker (Zimmer in press; cf. Bracke 2021: 121).

6 This difference is statistically significant (p < 0.001). Fisher’s Exact Test on the website www.langsrud.com/fisher.htm was used for this analysis.
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Note that Bracke uses the DNam corpus for his research while we draw on different CMC data. Therefore, a direct comparison without referring to the differences in methodological design is not advisable. Still, the results complement each other nicely as Bracke’s study gives insights into transferred lexical items in free conversation while this study sheds more light on a subset of these items, i.e., transferred vocatives, in a different mode, i.e., CMC (see Zimmer et al. 2020).

Bracke hints to an interesting pattern: in his data, young girls behave like adult men while boys behave like women when applying (Bracke 2021: 113, 120).

Some users indicated their profession but the data is too incomplete for drawing comprehensive conclusions.

Since gender is not the only defining variable for linguistic variation, it is also worthwhile to look beyond. In doing so, Bracke points to substantial intra-group differences between male and female speakers of Namdeutsch (2021: 120). He concludes that “researchers should not only look at aggregated totals but also at the individual behavior of all speakers” (2021: 122). This is a desideratum which cannot be addressed in the current study due to methodological reasons.

Note that the corpus contains data covering a period from 2011 to 2018. Words that entered the Duden after the year of 2018 were still counted. This applies to the word “nice”. It was only added to the Duden in 2020, see www.dw.com/de/der-duden-modernisiert-sich-und-mistet-aus/a-54559347 [03 October 2021].

The difference is statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 453.0312; p < .0001^{***})$.

The difference is statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 954.0916; p < .0001^{***})$. The following websites were used: vassarstats.net (Correlation & Regression > Basic multiple regression) and https://statpages.info/logistic.html, [19 October 2021].

The following calculation was applied: first, we calculated the expected frequencies for English and Afrikaans based on the observed frequencies in Tables 8.4 and 8.5. Next, we subtracted each expected frequency from the related observed frequency for all categories. Then, we divided the results by their related expected frequencies to obtain the relative representations for English and Afrikaans.

The frequency figures for the numbers 9, 10 and 11 on the ranking were the same in the f-list.

Plek is often used to discuss and organise possible venues for the annual NAMSA event.

The question of gender-specificity will be further discussed in Subsection 8.4.4 through the example of vocatives.

One could argue that mos is a candidate for an FW. Even if that were the case, mos is clearly of a different nature than ek, die, ons and in: it is a facultative part of a sentence and serves to stress the head of its phrase while ek, die, ons and in represent obligatory clauses and are of a more grammatical nature than mos.
Note that this effect only applies to keywords analysed from a broad corpus linguistic approach. Intra-group differences exist and range from users that use little to no keywords to users who regularly use them (cf. Bracke 2021: 113 ff).

In other contexts it can also be used as a reference (see Radke 2021).

The absolute numbers are 143 for NAMSA and 159 for NiD. The NAMSA corpus has an overall word count of 24,324 while the NiD corpus contains 65,101 words. Hence, the following calculation applied: NAMSA: (143/24,324)*1,000 and NiD: (159/65,101)*1,000.

Kiesling points out that masculine solidarity is not to be confused with heterosexism as it “implies closeness with other men, while heterosexism entails nonintimacy with other men.” At the same time, this closeness is characterised by a “casual stance that keeps some distance (thus satisfying heterosexism). [...] Masculine solidarity and heterosexism thus delimit a narrow range of ratified, dominant, and hegemonic relationships [...]” (2004: 283).

Note that this finding only applies to CMC-based speech. It does not automatically apply to communication that takes place in FTF settings.

References


