

DOING (BI)LINGUALISM: LANGUAGE ALTERNATION AS PERFORMATIVE CONSTRUCTION OF ONLINE IDENTITIES*

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to examine practices of language alternation in email communication among native speakers of Greek and to argue that such practices are a facet of the performative construction of an 'online' communicative identity. In the slowly-growing body of literature on linguistic practices in computer-mediated communication (CMC) or computer-mediated discourse (CMD) it is emerging that concomitant aspects of linguistic performance relate to the construction of particular sociolinguistic identities relevant to the medium, or, to adopt a less radical perspective, that sociolinguistic identities typical of face-to-face or written interaction are mediated by the social/communicative practices and norms relevant to, or accruing to, types of CMD. Language alternation features prominently among the mechanisms used in constructing such novel linguistic/social-performative identities. In this context, the research presented in this paper examines the performance of a group of six native speakers of Greek, who are also part of a relatively closely-knit social network. The analysis reveals extensive code-switching between Greek and English, both inter- and intra-sentential, with English covering around 20% of the total of words used. The qualitative analysis shows that expressions of affect and evaluative comments are mostly in English, while Greek is reserved for the transmission of factual/referential information. The data further reveal that extensive style- or register-shifting and mixing is a favored strategy among members of the group; such mixing includes shifting among dialects or sociolects of Greek, the use of other languages, and, notably, the use of constructed words and structures with humorous overtones. This complex type of language play is an overarching feature of the group's (socio)linguistic performance in asynchronous electronic communication, which may single them out as a localized community of practice. The data highlight the theoretical and methodological necessity for fine-grained accounts of specific types of CMD, which can be tackled not in terms of overarching macro-contextual linguistic and extralinguistic variables, but as dynamic reflexes both of specific participant constellations and of the negotiation of emerging generic norms within localized communities of practice. The paper also presents and discusses a quantitative study of views and attitudes on language alternation expressed by subjects who code-switch systematically on email, in an attempt to gauge the types of metalinguistic awareness involved. It emerges from the quantitative study that users abstract away from 'phobic' attitudes towards the use of English and that they treat language alternation as a manifestation of balanced or functional bilingualism, which is furthermore situation-specific and 'genre'-appropriate.

Keywords: Code-switching; Code-mixing; Language alternation; Computer mediated discourse; Performativity; Ingroup.

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1. Introduction

In their introduction to *The Multilingual Internet*, Danet & Herring (2003) noted the growing need for sociolinguistic research on how people actually communicate on the multilingual Internet; by now there is a substantial body of research on a broad range of issues including the effects of the English language and global “netspeak” on computer-mediated communication (CMC) in “local” languages (Crystal 2001), on the potential acceleration of the global spread of English via the Internet (Crystal 1998; Hawisher & Selfe 2000; Phillipson & Skutnabb-Kangas 1999) and on the overall reduction in linguistic diversity (Nettle & Romaine 2000; Herring 1996), or, alternatively, on the potential role of the Internet as an effective medium for the revitalization and preservation of ‘small’ languages (Buszard-Welcher 2001; Danet & Herring 2003; UNESCO Institute for Statistics 2005; Wright 2004). On the sociolinguistic and ethnographic side of things, there is a fast-growing body of research on topics such as social interpretations and attitudes towards typing and transliteration practices (Androutsopoulos 2001; Koutsogiannis & Mitsikopoulou 2007; Nishimura 2007; Tseliga 2007), language choice in multilingual contexts (Androutsopoulos 2006b; Paolillo 1996; Georgakopoulou 1997; Warschauer, El Said & Zohry 2002) and figurations of ethnicity (Androutsopoulos 2006b; Siebenhaar 2005), and gender and power dynamics in CMC (del-Teso-Craviotto 2006; Herring 1996; Matsuda 2002; de Oliveira 2007; cf. also Herring & Paolillo 2006).

Among the issues which have yet to receive much attention in studies of non-English speaking CMC, language choice, language alternation, code-switching/mixing and the development of novel CMC-related ‘genres’ feature most prominently. Code-switching and code-mixing, a major topic of research in bilingual and multilingual conversation analysis and second language acquisition (Auer 1998, 1999, 2005; Milroy & Muysken 1995; Muysken 2000; Myers-Scotton 2000; Poplack 2000), is clearly very common online, yet this is not reflected in the number of relevant studies (Paolillo 1996, 2001; Georgakopoulou 1997; Siebenhaar 2005; Androutsopoulos 2006b). Similarly, while the emergence of novel representational/discursive/generic/ textual conventions is frequently mentioned in the literature (Baron 1998, 2000; Crystal 2001; Danet 2001; Yates 1996), there is little research as yet on CMC-related ‘genres’; in fact, attempts to abstract away from a general notion of “netspeak” and set the conceptual premises for a meaningful discussion of genre in Computer-Mediated Discourse (CMD)¹ are few and very recent (Herring 2007; but cf. Georgakopoulou 2004; Goutsos 2005; McNeill 2005). It could be argued that this lag is partly due to the long-standing theoretical debate about how best to pin down the elusive construct of genre; cf., for example, the varying conceptualizations in the New Rhetoric tradition and in Australian genre theory (Bhatia 2004; Kress & van Leeuwen 2001; Martin 1997; Miller 1984, 1994; Swales 1990); another reason might be that genre is ultimately construed as a ‘buffer’ between sociocultural and linguistic practice (cf. Matsagouras & Tsiplakou 2008 for extensive discussion), and CMD involves a host of largely unexplored sociocultural norms (cf. Gruber 2000) within newly-established communities of practice (Bourdieu 1977), or even within emerging imagined communities (Anderson 1983; cf.

¹ On the distinction between computer-mediated communication (CMC) and computer-mediated discourse (CMD) see Herring 2007.

the discussion in Androutsopoulos 2006a); it follows that CMD-related ‘genres’ are still by and large uncharted territory (cf. Herring 2001, 2007; Georgakopoulou 2003).

This study can then be seen as a contribution towards understanding CMD through ethnographic observation and analysis of the (socio)linguistic and discursive/textual practices of a socioculturally situated, relatively close-knit social group; ethnographic tools serve to highlight the particular constellation of sociocultural profiles and interpersonal relationships within the network and the ways in which they inform linguistic practice as mediated through a specific facet of CMD (email). It will be shown that quasi-bilingual practice (code-switching and code-mixing) is one of the major manifestations of language alternation employed by the group, and that it serves both to carry out localized, participant- or discourse-related functions (cf. Auer 1999) and as an overarching linguistic strategy for indexing contextual aspects of the interaction. Whether such systematic linguistic practice can be construed as a (discourse) mode, and, ultimately, as a token of a CMD-related ‘genre’, must remain an open issue, given the situated and localized nature of the data; in a slightly different vein, however, the data and the ethnographic/ethnomethodological account proffered in this paper may be seen as a data-driven attempt to tackle CMD-related ‘genre(s)’ as abstractions from pieces of linguistic performance in conjunction with their social-contextual correlates (cf. Georgakopoulou 2004; Goutsos 2005 for a similar approach).

2. Theoretical background: Code-switching and code-mixing in face-to face interaction

2.1. Language alternation and degrees of bilingualism

The foci of studies of code-switching and/or code-mixing in face-to-face communication are often disparate, depending on theoretical concerns; ever since Poplack (1980, 2000) proposed the *equivalence constraint*, which roughly states that code-switching may occur only at points in the surface structure of a sentence where the (surface) grammatical properties of either language are not violated, there has been a significant amount of generative research into constraints on code-switching imposed by Universal Grammar, the processes of (second) language acquisition and the emergence of interlanguages (McSwan 1999; Muysken 2000; Myers-Scotton 2002). The sociolinguistic and/or discourse-analytic perspective focuses on distinctions such as intersentential and intrasentential code-switching (the latter is also known as code-mixing) and attempts to relate these distinctions to the linguistic, demographic and socioeconomic profiles of bilingual speakers (Myers-Scotton 2000, 2002; Poplack 1980, 2000).

Poplack’s seminal study showed, among other things, that the degree of bilingualism affects the degree of code-switching in conversation among peers, and, crucially, that the “balanced bilingual” will display a marked preference for what she calls the “more complex or ‘intimate’” type of code-switching (Poplack 2000: 230), which is the author’s cover term for the various types of intrasentential code-switching (or code-mixing). Non-balanced bilinguals (e.g. speakers who have acquired the second language later in life) purportedly prefer what Poplack (2000) terms “emblematic” code-switching, i.e. tag switches and single-noun switches (which are often hard to distinguish from lexical borrowings).

2.2. Sociolinguistic and ethnographic approaches

That code-switching is indexical of social negotiations (Myers-Scotton 2000) is a widely-accepted (and possibly trivially true) premise in relevant sociolinguistic and ethnographic work. What seems to be at stake in the analysis of different speech-communities or in-groups/social networks, and of varying types of face-to face interaction, is the particular, localized type of social negotiation involved and its correlation with particular types of code-switching. This type of intertwining is often particularly difficult to disentangle, especially in cases of informal interaction among peers or in-groups, where factors such as the constraints of *domain* (Fishman 2000) on patterns of linguistic choice are not relevant. Thus, studies of code-switching and code-mixing within a social networks approach (see, e.g., Wei, Milroy & Ching 2000; Milroy 1987; Milroy & Wei 1995) have demonstrated that the choice of language and type of switch involved may well represent shifting speaker perspectives on footing, face, status, politeness, interactional alliances and the alignment of each code with a particular end of the power-solidarity axis. The tension between macro- (or sociolinguistic) and micro- (or discourse-analytic) perspectives on code-switching is perhaps inevitable, given their differing foci, namely the discovery of broader patterns versus the unveiling of the intricacies inherent in localized communicative events (cf. the papers in Auer 1998).

This theoretical *caveat* is particularly relevant to the ongoing discussion on the correlation of particular types of code-switching to specific communicative/social functions. Following Gumperz (1982), Poplack (2000) argues that

code-switching may be used as a discourse strategy to achieve certain interactional effects at specific points during a conversation [...] this use is characteristic only of certain types of code-switching, which we call ‘emblematic’, including tags, interjections, idiomatic expressions, and even individual noun switches. On the other hand, a generalized use of intra-sentential code-switching may represent instead an overall discourse MODE. The very fact that a speaker makes alternate use of both codes itself has interactional motivations and implications beyond any particular effects of specific switches [...] More important, there is no need to require any social motivation for this type of code-switching, given that, as a discourse mode, it may itself form part of the repertoire of a speech community. It is then the choice (or not) of this mode which is of significance to participants rather than the choice of switch points.

(Poplack 2000: 254-255)

For the purposes of this discussion, we may treat this type of code-mixing and its associated unitary function of signaling an overarching discourse mode as equivalent to what Myers-Scotton (2000: 145ff) terms *overall switching*. Myers-Scotton suggests that overall switching more often than not constitutes the unmarked choice between bilingual peers; she notes that this type of code-switching “could be said to function as a type of interaction similar to monolingual language use”, and adds that

overall switching as an unmarked choice differs from other types of switching in that each switching is not socially meaningful of its own. (Rather, only the overall pattern has a discourse function).

(Myers-Scotton 2000: 148)

In a similar vein, Auer (1999) notes that code-switching is locally meaningful (to participants) as it indexes/contextualizes either some aspects of the situation (*discourse-related switching*) or some feature of the speaker (*participant-related switching*); it functions as a meta-pragmatic comment on the ongoing interaction (e.g. a repair, a topic change, a change of footing) etc. Code-mixing, on the other hand, has no such local meaning or function. It is mostly utterance- (or turn-)internal language juxtaposition, and it represents an overall discourse mode (usually the discourse mode of balanced bilinguals). The very fact of choosing a mixing mode from the speakers' repertoire (to the exclusion of other, more 'monolingual' modes), can of course be of social significance; it may, for example, signal group identity or the tenor of the interaction.²

As was mentioned above, the necessary *caveat* here concerns the underlying premise that the function of overall switching as indicative of a certain discourse mode (informal communication among bilingual peers) is mutually exclusive with assigning specific discourse functions to individual instances of switches. This issue lies at the heart of my analysis of code-switching/code-mixing and language alternation in general³ in email communication among Greek-speaking users. The question can then be stated as follows: is the particular type of code-switching/code-mixing merely indicative of the discourse mode in question, or does it also carry out more localized discourse functions? And, if the latter is the case, then is it theoretically legitimate to analyze these functions using discourse-analytic categories implemented for the analysis of face-to-face interaction? Another relevant question concerns the nature of the relationship is between the type of code-switching encountered in email communication and the conventions of email, assuming, of course, that such identifiable unitary generic conventions exist (cf. Gruber 2000).

2.3. Studies from the Greek context

The handful of relevant studies from the Greek context is briefly overviewed in this section. Greek-related literature is primarily concerned with issues of transliteration of the Greek alphabet in CMC and with the concomitant ideological debate as to whether transliteration of the Greek alphabet into variants of a quasi-romanized script (known as Greeklish) poses a threat to the Greek language or not (Androutsopoulos 2001; Koutsogiannis & Mitsikopoulou 2007; Tseliga 2007). This strand of research has provided ample evidence that the modes of transliteration of Greek adopted reflect user attitudes towards standardization and normativity.⁴ The only work on code-switching and code-mixing between Greek and English in email communication is

² Speakers may also contrast this mixing mode with other, mixing or monolingual modes within the repertoire; such alternation may of course also be *locally* meaningful (cf. Meeuwis & Bloomaert 1998).

³ In this paper 'language alternation' is used as a cover term to refer to phenomena that are arguably structurally distinct but may have similar pragmatic/discourse import (see papers in Auer 1998; Auer 1999, 2005; Auer & Wei 2007); on the more restricted use of 'language alternation' as a specific type of code-mixing which is structurally distinguishable from insertion and lexicalization see Muysken 2000.

⁴ Arguably such conflicting attitudes on transliteration reiterate the old debate on the 'Greek language question', a correlate of Greek diglossia (cf. Moschonas 2004).

Georgakopoulou 1997.⁵ The author adopts a micro-analytic perspective and examines code-switching into English along with style-shifting from Standard Greek into dialects or sociolects. She concludes (i) that code-switching can be viewed as an instantiation of the overall ‘playfulness’ and *bricolage* inherent in the ‘genre’ and (ii) that it can further be viewed as a strategy for framing footings of symmetrical alignments and intimacy between email participants. The switch into English as a face-enhancing or face-saving strategy is related to the preference for positive (rather than avoidance-based) politeness strategies in Greek culture (cf. Sifianou 1992) and to the informality implied or entailed by the use of English in this context.

Georgakopoulou (1997) argues that there are significant parallels between the function of code-switching into English in face-to-face interaction and its function in email communication. The only existing study of such code-switching (Goutsos 2001) focuses on Greek Cypriot speakers; however, the results are not directly comparable, as Goutsos concludes that (symmetrical?) interpersonal alignment is just one of the multiple functions of switches into English, others including the expression of argumentative concerns, of positive or negative evaluations or of an ironic/distancing stance.

3. The current project

As mentioned in the introduction, this paper presents a quantitative, questionnaire-based study examining Greek user attitudes towards code-switching on email and a corpus-based study examining actual linguistic practices. We shall begin by presenting the quantitative study, and then turn to the corpus analysis.

3.1. *The quantitative study*

The aim of the quantitative study was to examine metalinguistic awareness of the extent of the use of English on email as well as the reasons behind such linguistic choice; in effect, the survey attempted to gauge metalinguistic awareness of, and socioculturally determined positionings towards, language alternation on email (and in CMD at large) in the community in which the research took place, and of which the participants were members. One of the major challenges for ethnography is to relate findings from localized case-studies to aspects of the wider social-discursive context in which the participants and behaviors under investigation are embedded, as a more advanced stage in the interpretation of the findings. The quantitative study thus attempts to shed some light on relevant aspects of the sociocultural context which may inform the participants’ linguistic/discursive practices.

⁵ Partly relevant work (Androutsopoulos 2006b) examines code-switching on diaspora websites/discussion forums and relates code-switching patterns to “architectural” aspects of the medium and to facets of the negotiation of diasporic identities. Georgakopoulou (2004) and Goutsos (2005) look at story-telling on email and two-way e-chat between Greek-speaking participants respectively, and explore emerging generic conventions relevant to the respective ‘media’. In a different vein, Canakis (2008) looks at Greek gay men’s strategies for self-presentation and the linguistic indexing of masculinities in CMC.

More specific goals included identifying the variables which can predict code-switching on email; identifying the “external” and “internal” factors which influence code-switching on email (as described in Mackey 2000); identifying the main functions of code-switching, as perceived by email users; describing and comparing user attitudes towards code-switching on email.

3.1.1. Methodology

A questionnaire examining the above issues was distributed to a randomly sampled population of 77 email users aged 15-50; all participants were Standard or Cypriot Greek native speakers living in Cyprus at the time the research was carried out. Sixty-three of the participants reported that they always/frequently code-switch in email communication, while 14 of the participants reported that they code-switch sometimes or rarely. The questionnaire contained 16 questions, 7 of which were broken down into 48 sub-questions with potential answers presented on the Likert scale, while the remaining 9 were yes/no questions. The analysis was carried out on SPSS. Multiple Linear Regression was used to identify the variables predicting the value of the dependent variable ‘degree of code-switching’ (stepwise method). The t and F criteria of inductive statistics were used to examine possible influence of the independent variables (“external and internal factors influencing code-switching”; cf. Mackey 2000) on the dependent variable “degree of code-switching”; significance was set at 0.05. To examine the effects of variables such as “reasons for switching to English”, “functions of code-switching”, “attitudes towards code-switching on email”, “similarities between email discourse and speech/writing”, mean scores (x), frequencies (f) and percentages (%) were implemented.

3.1.2. Results and discussion

Multiple Linear Regression was implemented in order to identify the variables predicting the extent of code-switching on email. The variables involved were “gender”, “education”, “age”, “English language proficiency”, “manner of acquisition” (naturalistic vs. classroom/structured), “languages in which the speaker was educated”, “degree of exposure to English (frequency and duration)” and also “extent of the use of English as a means of personal expression”, (i.e. in praying, swearing, note-taking, dreaming, diary-writing etc.; cf. Mackey 2000).

The variables predicting the degree of code-switching on email (the dependent variable) turned out to be the extent to which English is used at home, the frequency of exposure to English, the number of languages in which the speaker was educated and use of English in the workplace. The above factors explain 35.4 % of the fluctuation of the dependent variable, which is statistically significant (p -value=.000). The Adjusted R Square equals 31.7 %. Table 1 below presents the Standardized Coefficients (Beta) for each variable:

Table 1: Multiple Linear Regression for the dependent variable “extent of code-switching on email”

Variable	Standardized Coefficients (Beta)
Extent to which English is used at home	0.368
Frequency of exposure to English	0.382
Number of languages in which the speaker was educated	-0.323
Use of English in the workplace	-0.297

The factor with the highest predictive power is “extent to which English is used at home”, at 16.7%.⁶

In order to identify the “internal” and “external” factors influencing code-switching, the population was divided into three sub-groups, a1, a2 and a3, a1 being the group of users who reported that they code-switch only rarely, a2 the group of users who reported that they code-switch frequently and a3 the group of users who reported that they always code-switch. T-tests and ANOVA analysis were run for each group in order to determine the possible influence of “internal” and “external” variables on the dependent variable “degree of code-switching on email”. As mentioned above, the internal variables involved were “gender”, “education”, “age”, “English language proficiency”, “manner of acquisition” (natural vs. structured), “languages in which the speaker was educated”, and also the “extent of the use of English as a means of personal expression”, (i.e. in praying, swearing, note-taking, dreaming, diary-writing etc.; cf. Mackey 2000); the external variables included “degree of exposure to English” (frequency and duration), “use of English in the workplace”, etc. Significance was set at 0.05. The ANOVA analysis revealed significant differences in the amount of code-switching among the three groups of users with regard to the variable “extent of the use of English as a means of personal expression”, as follows:

Table 2: Results of ANOVA analysis for variable “use of English as a means of personal expression”

Use of English	Group a1	Group a2	Group a3	F	p-value
in diary writing	68.39%	68%	92%	3.634	0.031
for note-taking	61.67%	76.36%	80%	6.953	0.005
when swearing	66%	73.33%	90%	4.909	0.010

⁶ The equation from the Multiple Regression Analysis (stepwise method) is:

$$y = 61.780 + 13.444 \text{ Exter5} + 12 \text{ Contact} - 7.751 \text{ Ledu} - 8.652 \text{ Exter1}$$

y= extent of code-switching on email

Exter5= extent to which English is used at home

Contact= frequency of exposure to English

Ledu= number of languages in which the speaker was educated

Exter1= use of English in the workplace

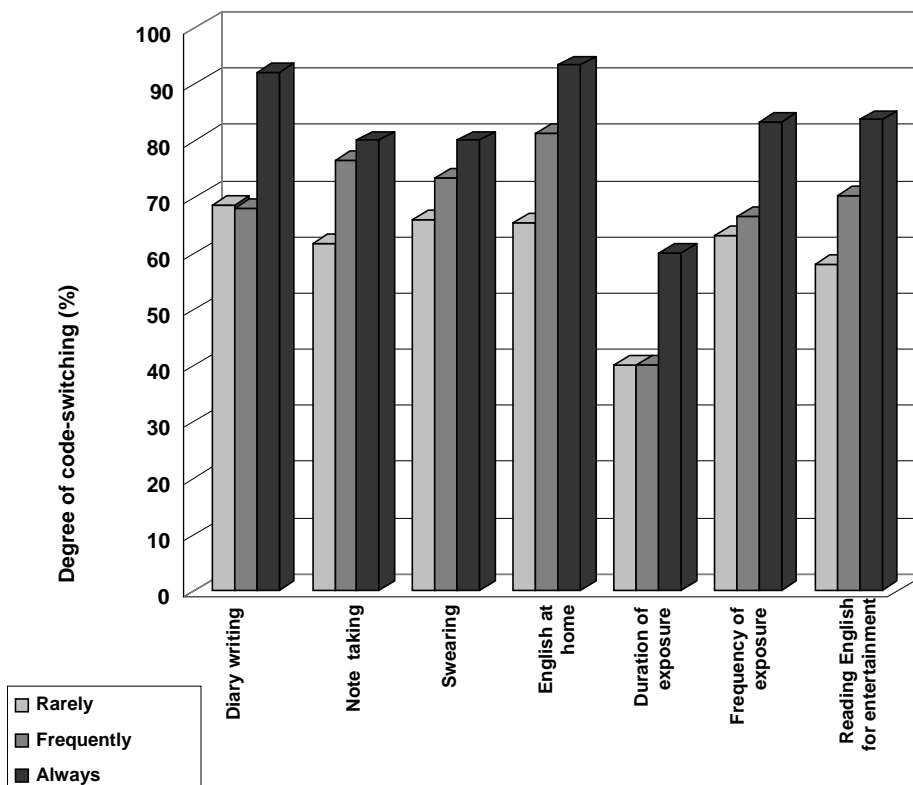
With regard to the influence of external factors, the ANOVA analysis revealed that the amount of code-switching in the three groups of users differed significantly with regard to the variables “use of English at home”, “duration of exposure to English” and “frequency of exposure to English”; the results are tabulated below:

Table 3: Results of ANOVA analysis for external factors affecting code-switching

External factors	Group a1	Group a2	Group a3	F	p-value
Use of English at home	65.36%	81.18%	93.33%	7.476	0.001
Duration of exposure to English	40%,	40%	60%	4.02	0.022
Frequency of exposure to English	63.08%	66.52%	83.33%	6.501	0.003

Figure 1 below summarizes these results.

Figure 1: Internal and external factors influencing the degree of code-switching for the three groups of users.



As can be seen in Figure 1, the most salient external factor is “use of English at home”, closely followed by the internal factor “diary-writing” (part of the variable “use of English as a means of personal expression”). Moreover, differences among the three groups of users are proportionate for all the independent variables. Interestingly, the variable “frequency of exposure to English” has a higher influence on code-switching than the variable “duration of exposure to English”.

One result of the t-test worth discussing in some detail was that there is a significant difference in the averages of the dependent variable “degree of code-switching” for the two groups of users defined on the basis of the variable “manner of acquisition”; the average for users who reported having learnt English naturalistically was 81.81%, while the average for users who reported having learned English in a classroom/structured environment was 67.81%; the t-value was 2.221 and the p-value was at 0.029.

The analysis of the reasons for, and functions of, code-switching focused on 63 of the 77 participants, namely those who reported that they code-switch frequently or always. Table 4 below summarizes the results:

Table 4: Frequencies and user percentages in relation to the functions of code-switching

Function	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Greetings frequently-always rarely-never	54 9	85.7 14.3
Terminology related to technology frequently-always rarely-never	54 9	85.7 14.3
Quoting frequently-always rarely-never	52 11	82.5 17.5
Markers/fillers frequently-always rarely-never	51 12	80.9 19.1
Expressions of affect frequently-always rarely-never	49 14	77.8 22.2

In contrast, fewer than 50% of the participants reported that they deploy English academic terminology or use the language for the purposes of factual descriptions and the transmission of referential information.

With regard to the reasons for code-switching, the participants reported that they do so mainly because (a) English is the language of CMC; (b) the ‘mixed’ variety is a specific code reserved for communication with the on-line addressee; (c) they code-switch in face-to-face interaction as well; (d) the ‘mixed’ code is instrumental in building a second, virtual identity; (e) Greek sounds more ‘formal’, ‘serious’ and ‘pompous’ on email; (f) the subject-matter of emails favors the use of English; (g) the

English words or expressions are easier to recall online than the corresponding Greek ones.⁷ Table 5 summarizes these results:

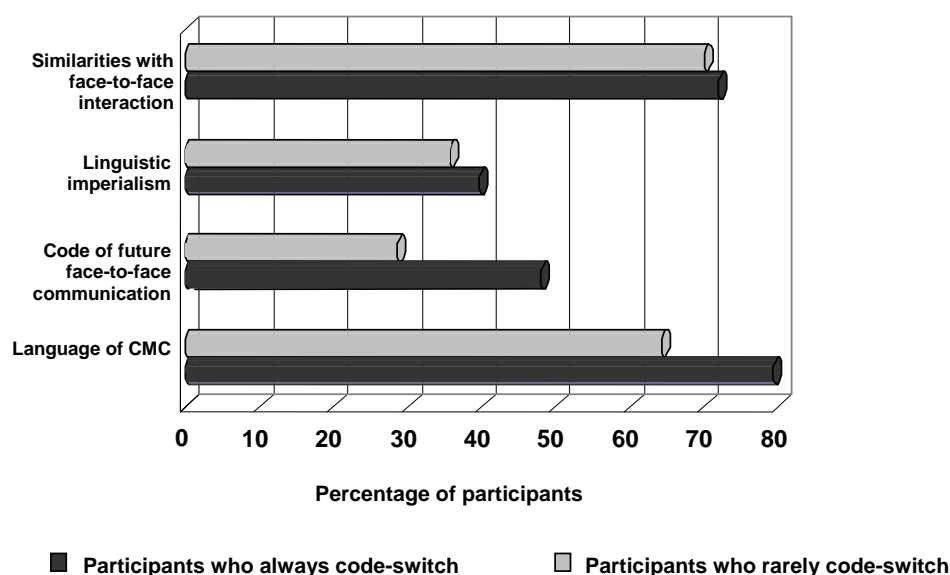
Table 5: Frequencies and user percentages in relation to reasons for code-switching

Reasons	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Code-switching in face-to-face communication	47	74.6
English is the language of CMC	63	71.4
The ‘mixed’ variety is a specific code reserved for communication with the on-line addressee	40	63.5
Greek sounds more formal, serious and pompous on email	38	60.3
English is easier to recall online	37	58.7
The ‘mixed’ code is instrumental in building a second, virtual identity	35	55.6
The subject-matter of emails favors the use of English	34	54

The majority of participants moreover reported that they do not use the ‘mixed’ variety in conventional writing (66.7%) or in formal face-to-face interaction (73%). The users further reported that they do *not* use English for reasons having to do with power or prestige (71.4%) or because it is “cooler” (74.6%).

As far as attitudes towards code-switching, were concerned, 79.3% of the users who code-switch frequently and 64.3% of the users who code-switch rarely reported that they think that the ‘mixed’ variety is the language of CMC. About half (48%) of the participants who code-switch frequently also agreed with the proposition that this ‘mixed’ variety will eventually prevail in face-to-face communication as well, as opposed to 28.6% of the participants who code-switch rarely. With regard to the proposition that the spread of English is a manifestation of linguistic and cultural imperialism and poses a threat to the Greek language, both groups agreed to an almost equal extent (39.7% and 35.7% respectively). Finally, both groups agreed that the mixed variety used in emails resembles the variety used in casual interaction among peers (70-72%). The results are put together in Figure 2 below.

⁷ These were prefabricated statements presented to participants, but they were based on codings of free answers provided by participants in a preliminary pilot study (semi-structured interviews).

Figure 2: Attitudes towards code-switching on email

To summarize, arguably the most striking results from the quantitative study relate to the users' awareness that email is a new 'genre' or mode of communication in which code-switching is the established and accepted practice; another significant finding is the relative lack of prescriptive or phobic attitudes regarding the spread of English as a manifestation of linguistic and cultural imperialism and as a threat to the Greek language. It is also worth noting that users are aware of similarities between code-switching on email and code-switching in informal conversation among peers and that they view code-switching as an integral part of the 'orality' and casualness of the mode/genre. This result is particularly important as it relates to the other major finding of the analysis, namely that the dependent variable, i.e. "degree of code-switching", relates to naturalistic acquisition, use of English at home and frequency of contact with English. In section 2.2 above I discussed approaches to overall code-switching as a manifestation both of particular discursive modes and of balanced bilingualism. Interestingly, participants in the study relate the degree of code-switching to naturalistic acquisition and use, i.e., effectively, to bilingual acquisition. This is also reflected in the predominant view that 'mixed' varieties such as that used on email will be the established norms in informal face-to-face communication in the future.⁸

In the next section I present findings from the qualitative analysis of a corpus of email messages with the aim of examining more closely the amount and types of code-switching involved; an attempt will be made to relate these findings to the quantitative findings presented above.

⁸ Cf. the analysis of Greek speakers' attitudes towards code-switching in face-to-face interaction in Makri-Tsilipakou 1999a.

3.2. The corpus analysis

3.2.1. Participants and methodology

This section presents and discusses data from a small corpus of 60 email messages produced by six subjects, three men and three women. The data from the email messages are supplemented by conversational data from face-to-face interaction among the participants, which serve as a backdrop for assessing differential linguistic production with regard to language alternation depending on the medium and type of communication (electronic/asynchronous vs. oral/face-to-face); participant comments on their linguistic practices on email, sampled through brief informal interviews and participant observation, provide additional background to the analysis.⁹

The participants' ages ranged from 28 to 39 at the time of the data collection; all are native speakers of Standard Greek, with the exception of two participants, one man and one woman, whose native variety is Cypriot Greek. All participants hold graduate degrees from English or North American Universities, with the exception of one, who holds a graduate degree from a German university and consequently reports that German is his second best language. Five of the six participants are academics, working in the humanities, and one is a highly specialized professional. The participants form a relatively close-knit social group or network (see Milroy 1987, Wei, Milroy & Ching 2000), which can be best described by the Greek emic term *paréa* 'company'. As is the case with most emic terms, *paréa* can be variously used to denote a host of social relations, ranging from socializing together to sharing social traits and attitudes to engaging in friendly relationships; being a *paréa* is usually associated with public visibility (e.g. going out together as a group).¹⁰ At the time of the data collection, the participants had known one another (and had been corresponding on email) for periods ranging from four to ten years. The group is a *paréa* in the senses mentioned above and some members of the group moreover work together and/or collaborate on academic projects.

The 60 messages examined here were randomly selected from a much larger set of missives, addressed both to the researcher, who is part of the *paréa*, and to other members of the group. The fact that the researcher is situated within the group provides a number of advantages for ethnographic research of the type undertaken here, namely first-hand knowledge of the social and linguistic profiles of the participants and, more importantly, the potential for comparison between the group's linguistic practices on email and in informal face-to-face interaction; the availability of such comparative data is crucial to any approach that attempts to tease apart facets of linguistic practice that are relevant or exclusive to CMD versus linguistic performance that is a function of contextual parameters such as participant roles and relations (see Gerogakopoulou 1997

⁹ It should be noted that these subjects also participated in the quantitative study presented in the previous sections. The constellation of data from different sources (participant comments, the quantitative survey and the participants' actual linguistic production) can also be seen as a means of triangulation, or, alternatively, of ensuring credibility and verisimilitude, these being among the theoretical and methodological desiderata of ethnography (cf. Ellis 2004: 124).

¹⁰ See Georgakopoulou 2002 for an account of emerging shared discursive practices among intimates. For anthropological accounts of *paréa* see Panopoulos 2005; Papataxiarchis 1991. I am grateful to Panos Panopoulos for sharing his ethnographic expertise on the subject with me.

for ample discussion; cf. also Baym 2000; Hine 2000). Also, much of CMD-related ethnography has been aptly termed “guerrilla” ethnography (Yang 2003) in the sense that, while linguistic data is freely available, the researcher is often forced to resort to a medley of strategies to ensure sound participant observation (cf. de-Teso-Craviotto 2006) and to gauge participant profiles; doing “guerrilla” ethnography’ is obviously not an issue in this project.

The tenor of the email messages is informal and friendly, and content-wise they include invitations, arrangements to meet, requests for small favors and responses to such requests, jokes, personal stories and anecdotes; in other words, they are largely the expected contents of face-to-face interaction among friends. The data were coded with regard to intersentential and intrasentential switching and between Greek and English on the basis of structural criteria (see 3.2.2 below), and an analysis of localized and overarching functions of language alternation was attempted (3.2.3 and 3.2.4 below).

3.2.2. *Degree and types of code-switching*

Before proceeding to figures, we provide a couple of brief examples from the corpus in order to give a flavor of the linguistic practices we will be investigating. English words in the messages appear in upper-case in the translation. Italics in the translation indicate a variety other than English or Standard Greek (Cypriot Greek in the examples below):

(1)

Ela kori! Poly kalo to antiantismoking alla to document tou yiatrou den pezete! Protino (opios /opia) kai na einai na tou dosoume honorary doctorate in English Language! Tha se paro to apogevma yia kafe. Diorthono ergasies kai den exoun telio! Sou stello to telefono tou Nikou yiatu to email mou trellathike kai den to vrisko to address tou tora.
A! Ksexasa to doro mou pou mou pirate me ton Apostoli!!!
Later!
P.
Hey, *girl!* The ANTIANTISMOKING was very good but the doctor’s DOCUMENT is far out! Whoever (he/she) is, we should give him an HONORARY DOCTORATE IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE!
Will call you in the afternoon to go for coffee. I am grading papers and the end is not in sight!
I’m *sending* you Nikos’ phone number because my EMAIL went nuts and I can’t find his ADDRESS now.
Oh! I left behind the present you and Apostolis got me!!!
LATER!
P.

(2)

Kumera mu, girisa ki ime ena rako...
Pos ta perasate sto Vermont, protathlites tu ski?
To Philly itan OK, to paper pige polla kala, ida ke two plays ke one exhibition. To ena play, gia to Gulf War, itan ligo pikra, to allo itan to Proof, pu to vrika very well-acted alla poly half-baked keimeno, typical Tony winner stuff.
Ti allo kanete, re xrisa mu?
xxx

Subject: back at UCy
 My best woman, I'm back and I'm a wreck...
 How was Vermont, you skiing champions, you?
 PHILLY was OK, the PAPER went *very well*, I also saw TWO PLAYS and ONE EXHIBITION. The first PLAY, about the GULF WAR, was a bit naff, the second one was PROOF, which I thought was VERY WELL-ACTED but quite a HALF-BAKED text, TYPICAL TONY WINNER STUFF.
 What else are you up to, sweethearts?
 xxx

This taster reveals not only the extent but also the types of language alternation involved: single-noun switches (e.g. DOCUMENT, ANTIANTISMOKING in (1), switches between V and complement (e.g. na tu dosume honorary doctorate in English Language 'we should give him an HONORARY DOCTORATE IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE' in (1)), switches within DPs (e.g. poly half-baked keimeno 'quite a HALF-BAKED text' in (2)), English in closings (e.g. LATER! in (1) and Cypriot Greek terms of address (*Kumera mu* 'my best woman' in (2), *kori* 'girl' in (1)). The taster indicates that language alternation is not only pervasive across a variety of syntactic structures (a far cry from mere inter-sentential switching or tag-switching) but also that it serves a variety of discourse functions, the precise nature of which needs to be further defined.

Table 6 below provides the raw figures and percentages of English and Standard Greek words, as well as words from other languages or varieties occurring in the corpus. Table 7 provides a breakdown per participant (the names have been changed).

Table 6: Percentage of Greek to English words

	Standard Greek	English	Other	Total
N	2,214	534	99	2,847
%	78	18.5	3.5	100

Table 7: Breakdown per participant

Participant	Standard Greek		English		Other		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Andreas	298	77	61	16	27	7	386	100
Pambos	404	82.5	81	16.5	5	1	490	100
Sofia	645	72.5	198	22.5	45	5	888	100
Eva	458	83	88	16	5	1	551	100
Takis	220	76.5	55	19	13	4.5	288	100
Aphrodite	189	77.5	51	21	4	1.5	244	100

The dominant or matrix language (see Muysken 2000) in the corpus is Standard Greek, as expected. Switches to English reach 18.5%, a percentage much higher than the 7% reported in Georgakopoulou 1997.

The next set of findings is striking, too, as it appears that intra-sentential code-switching also features in the corpus, along with inter-sentential switching, which is the expected pattern for monolingual speakers (Poplack 2000). In the method of coding adopted, switches between a matrix and a subordinate clause were coded as inter-sentential; switches in language between the subject header of the message and the language of the main text were not included. Single-noun switches were treated with caution, in order to exclude loan words from English which are by now assimilated into Greek (e.g. *sorry, bye, thanks*, but also *email, attachment* etc.).¹¹ Having excluded all of the above, it turns out that in the 390 sentences of the corpus there are a total of 60 inter-sentential switches and a total of 117 intra-sentential switches. The breakdown per participant is presented in Table 8 below:

Table 8: Breakdown of inter- and intra-sentential switches per participant

Participant	Intersentential switches	Intrasentential switches	Total sentences
Andreas	6	18	67
Pambos	15	11	99
Sofia	18	32	45
Eva	7	31	90
Takis	8	18	44
Aphrodite	6	7	45
Total switches	60	117	390

At this stage it is not possible to undertake a valid quantitative comparison of the figures, since the precise grammatical constraints on intra-sentential switching from Greek into English, which arise as a result of the grammatical properties of both systems, are far from fully understood; consequently, a quantitative analysis is not feasible as the parameters for establishing a metric (e.g. the possible permissible syntactic positions for switching from the matrix into the second language) are as yet unexplored. At first blush we can only observe that intra-sentential switching, which is considered unexpected for monolingual speakers, is definitely at work in this type of email communication. Relevant examples are presented below:

- (3)
- Switching within DPs*
- a. ta dire predictions ton giatron
the DIRE PREDICTIONS of the doctors
- b. ta tools tis filologias
the TOOLS of philology

¹¹ See Makri-Tsilipakou 1999b for detailed discussion.

- c. ta pithana pitfalls re deksiosis etc.
the possible PITFALLS RE receptions ETC.
- (4) *Switching within VPs*
a. vrikame a \$1mm mistake
we found A \$1MM MISTAKE
b. tha kanume practice gia to gig
we'll be doing PRACTICE for the gig
- (5) *Switching between subject DP and IP*
a. den ton afisane the powers that be na mou to afxisei
THE POWERS THAT BE didn't let him give me a raise
b. surprise party pu kanonise i mother-in-law #2
a SURPRSE PARTY that the MOTHER-IN-LAW #2 arranged
- (6) *Switching between copula and predicative noun or adjective*
a. afto ine definite malpractice
this is DEFINITE MALPRACTICE
b. το λεξικο ειναι fabulous
the dictionary is FABULOUS
- (7) *Switched PPs and adverbials*
a. alla meanwhile exume allaksi xilietia
but MEANWHILE we have moved to the next millennium
b. goneis on board ki etsi...
parents ON BOARD and all...
- (8) *Switching within small clauses*
to vrika very well-acted alla poly half-baked keimeno,
typical Tony winner stuff
I found it (to be) VERY WELL-ACTED but quite a HALF-BAKED text,
TYPICAL TONY WINNER STUFF

There is even intra-lexical switching; in (9) *αμπστρακτακι* or *abstract[áci]* 'ABSTRACTlet' is made up of 'abstract' and the Greek neuter diminutive ending [áci].¹²

- (9) το transmogrified *αμπστρακτακι* μας
our TRANSMOGRIFIED ABSTRACTlet

Examples of inter-sentential switching are presented in (10)–(13) below:

¹² Switches between Greek and Roman fonts, as well as (deliberate) misspellings, line changes, punctuation etc.) are presented as actually produced by participants. It is worth noting that in the data there is only one transfer error from Greek (THE NEWS ARE in example (10) above), and that there are almost no typos; moreover, participants follow very systematically their transliteration system of choice (be that orthographic or phonetic, see Androutopoulos 2001), and they are meticulous about capitalization, punctuation, line or paragraph changes etc. Note also that emoticons are used sparingly and "smileys" etc. are absent from the corpus; in discussions with the researcher, participants dismiss these as "internet kitsch" (cf. Danet 1995; Danet, Ruedenberg & Rosenbaum-Tamari 1998).

- (10) So the news are: teliosa to small world
SO THE NEWS ARE: I finished Small World
- (11) Polla filia kai thanks for the book!
Many kisses and THANKS FOR THE BOOK!
- (12) Ela, kori, pira afto to attachment simera apo ena filo gia tin Elliniki glossa.
I thought you might find it interesting...or not!
Filia!
Hey, *girl*, I got this attachment today from a friend about the Greek language.
I THOUGHT YOU MIGHT FIND IT INTERESTING...OR NOT!
Kisses!
- (13) Hi Stav! Profanos eisai grafeio manari mu. Alla den thymatai kaneis to telefono.
Call us!!
Filakia,
A etc.
Hi Stav! You're obviously in the office, baby. But nobody can remember the phone number.
CALL US!!
Kisses,
A ETC.

3.2.3. *On the function(s) of language alternation on email*

As has already been mentioned, one possible approach is to focus on the parallels between the generic indeterminacy of informal email communication and overall switching in informal communication among balanced bilingual peers and to view such generalized code-switching and code-mixing (or language alternation) as the unmarked choice (Myers Scotton 2000; Poplack 2000) for the particular constellation of participants and the 'medium', a medium-specific choice facilitated by the uncertainty regarding the relevant generic conventions. In other words, the sole function of language alternation may be the construction of a particular discourse mode (cf. Auer 1999). The findings from the quantitative study seem to point in both these directions, i.e. in the direction of balanced bilingualism as well as in the direction of the inherent hybridism of this type of CMD; recall that participants related this type of code-switching both to the naturalistic acquisition of English and to the unstated yet pervasive conventions of CMC.

At this point we need to reiterate the question posed in section 2.2 above: is this type of language alternation merely indicative of the particular discourse mode or even of an emerging 'genre', or does it also carry out more localized discourse functions?

The data can provide a tentative answer to this question. It seems to be the case that language alternation in informal email communication does carry out more specific or localized discourse functions, but the linguistic expression of these functions is mediated by the overarching hybrid nature of this type of CMD. More specifically, our data indicate that Greek seems to be reserved for the transmission of factual/referential

information, while expressions of affect and evaluative comments are mostly in English:

- (14) Kata t'alla prospathoume na doume kai na apoxairetisoume filous kai gnostous, afou tin kanoume ti Deftera. I am not looking forward to the 14 hour drive, let me tell you, but oh well...toulaxisto tha exo pareia;-)
Other than that, we're trying to see and say goodbye to friends and acquaintances as Monday we split. I AM NOT LOOKING FORWARD TO THE 14 HOUR DRIVE, LET ME TELL YOU, BUT OH WELL...at least I'll have company;-)
- (15) Sto kunisto na me telefoniseis vre hrisafi mu, kathoti tha eimai sto kaiki.
Miss you.
The pictures are fucking awesome.
Call me on the cell, treasure, seeing as I will be on the caique.
MISS YOU.
THE PICTURES ARE FUCKING AWESOME.
- (16) Lipon se afino tora, thanks again for the card! very sweet!
So, I have to go now, THANKS AGAIN FOR THE CARD! VERY SWEET!
- (17) Oste Amsterdam, e? Cool!!!
So, Amsterdam, eh? COOL!!!
- (18) Sounds interesting. M'aresun afta gia jenoglwssus mathites.
SOUNDS INTERESTING. I like that stuff about students who are not native speakers.
- (19) To exo riksi stin kinoniki zoi and it's all good.
I am socializing AND IT'S ALL GOOD.

Moreover, English seems to be used as the language of negotiation when asking favors, expressing disagreement, apologizing etc.:

- (20) Parousiazto to paper to Savvato 28 ke fevgo Kiriaki 29 to apogevma. I can spend Sat. nite in N.Y. if that works with you. Let me know, vre xriso mu!
xx
I am presenting the paper on Saturday the 28th and I leave Sunday the 29th in the afternoon. I CAN SPEND SAT. NITE IN N.Y. IF THAT WORKS WITH YOU. LET ME KNOW, dearie!
xx
- (21) Unfortunately, baby...
Savvaton en ginetai.
Sorry! It was a good aidea.
a.
UNFORTUNATELY, BABY...
Saturday is impossible.
SORRY! IT WAS A GOOD *IDEA*.
a.
- (22) mesa gia to lunch, an ke mporei na vgei ligo presumptuous

I'm up for the LUNCH, although it may look a bit PRESUMPTUOUS

The data contain a host of similar examples of switching to English (and of language play; see 3.2.4 below) as a means of mitigating potentially face-threatening acts. Ultimately, then, such switches can be viewed as tokens of overarching positive politeness strategies (cf. the discussion in Georgakopoulou 1997). It can further be argued that the informality of the mode of communication allows for such linguistic hybridism, or, conversely, that the particular brand of linguistic hybridism is a device for signaling emblematically the informality of the communicative situation and, by extension, a device for enhancing positive politeness in virtue of constructing/framing symmetrical alignments among participants.

3.2.4. *Localized performativities*

So far we have refrained from commenting on the italicized words and phrases in the examples, other than stating that they belong to varieties other than Standard Greek or English. The italicized expressions are mostly in Cypriot Greek (a sociolinguistically stigmatized geographical dialect), slang or mainland Greek dialectal (or quasi-dialectal) forms and French. The function of code-switching into these varieties seems to be twofold, i.e. both negotiation/affective evaluation and language play:

- (23) Kane tu ena prosektiko proof-reading (ego ekana) ke aide stilto stin efxi (esy ise i corresponding author, *n'est-ce pas?*)
Do a careful PROOF-READING (I already have) and go on and send it off and get it over and done with (you are the CORRESPONDING AUTHOR, *n'est-ce pas?*)

The context of (23) is easily deducible: Takis is trying to get Sofia, with whom he has co-authored a paper, to send it off herself (rather than doing it himself); while the switch to English in CORRESPONDING AUTHOR is of the 'single-noun switch' type, being a technical term (cf. Poplack 2000), the French tag (*n'est-ce pas?*) can be seen as a face-enhancing/face-saving strategy, i.e. as a positive politeness strategy (cf. 3.2.3 above). It is particularly interesting, however, that the tag is in French rather than in English. At first blush, the particular shift in language can be explained in view of the immediately preceding switch from Greek to English, but it is still puzzling that the participant chooses to switch to a third language rather than back to Greek. It can be argued that in such cases the macro-function of language alternation, i.e. generalized language play performed through the construction of a genuinely mixed, hybrid code, not only reflects the inherent hybridity of the discourse mode, but is further implemented locally to mediate in particular types of social negotiation in which the participants are socially aligned in virtue of sharing, and collectively constructing and performing, hybrid linguistic/discursive norms. This account can explain data such as (24) (= (21) above):

- (24) Unfortunately, baby...
Savvaton en ginetai.

Sorry! It was a good aidea.
 a.
 UNFORTUNATELY, BABY...
Saturday is out of the question.
 SORRY! IT WAS A GOOD AIDEA .
 a.

Here Andreas (a speaker of Standard Greek, who evaluates himself as the least proficient speaker of English in the group), is apologizing to Sofia, also a speaker of Standard Greek, for having to decline a dinner invitation. The apology is in English (UNFORTUNATELY, BABY... and SORRY! IT WAS A GOOD AIDEA), and the 'referential' part of the email is in Cypriot Greek (*Savvaton en ginetai*, 'Saturday is out of the question'), which is neither his nor the recipient's native variety. The message further contains a cross-linguistic pun, as the English word *idea* is deliberately spelt *aidea*, in order to emulate phonetically the Greek word for 'disgust'. Again, the playfulness inherent in the hybridity of the code is implemented at the micro-level to mediate in a particular kind of social negotiation, i.e. as linguistic signalling of symmetrical social alignment through language play, ultimately a 'positive' politeness strategy in virtue of its localized brand of informality. This can also be argued for examples such as (25),

- (25) Bonjour Korou,
 Ti kala pu se ida xtes.
Bonjour Girlie,
 So good to see you yesterday.

in which there is mixing of Standard Greek (*Ti kala pu se ida xtes*, 'So good to see you yesterday'), French (*Bonjour*) and Cypriot Greek (*korou*, 'girlie'), although the participant is not a native speaker of Cypriot Greek. It should be noted that in this corpus the native speakers of Cypriot Greek hardly use Cypriot Greek at all in the emails, with very few exceptions, such as *kori*, 'girl' and *stello* 'I am sending' in example (1) above, of which *kori* is emblematically Cypriot while *stello* is thought to be a Standard Greek form, as is evidenced by its occurrence in formal correspondence (see Tsiplakou 2009). So it is the speakers of Standard Greek who implement code-switching between Standard Greek and the Greek Cypriot dialect as a performative device of the type discussed above.¹³

¹³ This is an interesting side-issue, a full discussion of which is outside the scope of this paper, as the interplay of factors affecting linguistic choice appears to be particularly complex in this case. At this stage I would argue that the four participants who are speakers of Standard Greek use Cypriot Greek for the purposes of language play precisely because they are collectively constructing it as a sociolinguistically stigmatized variety; the situation in Cypriot Greek is much more complex, as there are registers of the dialect which are, indeed, marked as *varetá* 'heavy', but there is also an emerging acrolectal register (*evgeniká* 'polite' or *sistarisména* 'tidied-up' Cypriot Greek) which is by no means stigmatized (Tsiplakou 2006; Tsiplakou *et al* 2006); this acrolectal register displays heavy code-mixing between Cypriot and Standard Greek (Tsiplakou 2009). It could then be the case that the Cypriot participants avoid involving the dialect in language play of the kind displayed in the corpus, as (i) what is perceived as 'marked' and can therefore be used for language play is different for the Standard Greek and for the Cypriot Greek native speaker; (ii) there are issues of 'mutual intelligibility', albeit not of the linguistic differences between the two varieties, but of register variation within Cypriot Greek such that

This type of code-switching to a non-standard variety may be used performatively in very idiosyncratic ways:

- (26) Opou, you know, first self-conscious written narrative, *alla ullo logia, re koumbare*.
Where, YOU KNOW, FIRST SELF-CONSCIOUS WRITTEN NARRATIVE, *but it's all words, mate*.

Here Andreas is commenting on a piece of literary criticism (written in English), and trying to indicate that it is verbose and feeble. The phrase FIRST SELF-CONSCIOUS WRITTEN NARRATIVE is in English, as this is a more or less direct quote from the article in question. It is interesting that the quote is framed by YOU KNOW, which arguably has multiple functions: firstly, it has an overarching, identifiable function as a particular type of framing device, a mediating device pre-empting agreement on the part of the recipient; secondly, *you know* in this instance can be seen as a metalinguistic device signaling his acknowledgement of the fact that the recipient shares with him a common body of academic knowledge, a reflection of their common status as academics; thirdly, the use of a filler, and a code-switched one at that, can be seen as a device making mutually manifest the informality of the tenor, effectively a metalinguistic way of being dismissive of the purported *gravitas* of the quoted phrase FIRST SELF-CONSCIOUS WRITTEN NARRATIVE. The switch to broad Cypriot Greek in *alla ullo logia, re koumbare*, 'but it's all words, mate' tallies with the above, given its particular shade of performativity: Andreas is linguistically acting out a 'peasantry' identity (Cypriot Greek has long been collectively characterized as *xorkátika* 'peasantry' by its speakers, this being a by-product of the diglossia between Cypriot and Standard Greek, although the sociolinguistic situation is rapidly changing; cf. Tsiplakou *et al* 2006, and also note 13), effectively the identity of an uneducated person, or even of a blunt outspoken Cypriot (as opposed to the linguistically sophisticated yet glib *kalamarás* 'pen-pusher', the latter being the pejorative term used by Cypriot Greeks to describe speakers of the standard variety), but this in order to comment performatively on the 'hi-falutin'' content of the English utterance. This type of performativity in turn tallies with the hybridic nature of the tenor, field and mode of the interaction, in this case an academic discussion between friends, on email, in Greeklish.

A similar type of idiosyncratic linguistic bricolage is found in (27) (=15 above):

- (27) Sto kunisto na me telefoniseis vre hrisafi mu, kathoti tha eimai sto kaiki.
Miss you.
The pictures are fucking awesome.
Call me on the mobile, treasure, seeing as I will be on the caique.
MISS YOU.
THE PICTURES ARE FUCKING AWESOME.

could be deployed for purposeful language alternation and language play of the type discussed here (cf. the discussion of Cypriot hyperdialectism as language play in Tsiplakou 2003/in press). Note that the default code of face-to-face interaction within the *paréa* is Standard Greek; Cypriot participants and at least some of the Greek participants sometimes use a mixed code as an accommodation strategy, but not necessarily playfully. In contrast, in email communication, in the very rare instances when native speakers of Cypriot Greek switch to ('heavy') Cypriot Greek for the purposes of language play, the switch is painstakingly prefaced by the Standard Greek formal expression *epi to kypriakoteron* 'in more Cypriot terms'.

Here the expressions of evaluation and affect are in English, a consistent pattern in the data, as discussed in section 3.2.3. Moreover, the writer, Eva, opts for a mix of generic Northern Greek (an accusative object in *na me telefonisis* ‘call me’), malapropisms (*kunisto* ‘shaky’ for *kinito* ‘mobile’, *kunistos* being a pejorative slang word for ‘homosexual’), slangy morphophonetic distortions (*telefonisis* for *tilefonisis* ‘to call’), an old-fashioned term of endearment (*vre hrisafi mu* ‘treasure’), a hypercorrectively used connective (*kathoti* ‘seeing as’ instead of *jati* ‘because’) and a misnomer presumably intended as a ‘Mediterranean’ touch (*kaiki* ‘caique’ to refer to a sailing boat). This type of very idiosyncratic bricolage in the Greek part of the email is an attempt to -ironically- act out a “nouveau-riche” identity, as signaled by the mix of hypercorrections, malapropisms, slang and dialect elements.¹⁴ The directionality of the switch from Greek to English is also interesting, as it presumably indexes the fact that the writer has ceased to be humorous. A similar pattern occurs in (28), although the switch is in the reverse direction:

- (28) Stavros’ book launch.
 Queer Studies meets Edward Said.
 θα εχει και λαιβ ντιρινταχτα.
 Ελατε.
 Tau
 STAVROS’ BOOK LAUNCH.
 QUEER STUDIES MEETS EDWARD SAID.
 there will be LIVE *belly-dancing*, too.
 Come along.
 TAU

Here Takis is inviting the gang to a book-launch; the (award-winning) book in question is on belly-dancing within a cultural studies framework, and Takis is trying to indicate that there will be belly-dancing at the reception. Takis uses English to describe what will be happening, and in fairly academic terms at that (*Queer Studies meets Edward Said*), but switches to (code-switched) Greek to describe ironically what he presumably perceives as the funny or incongruent part of the book-launch, i.e. the live belly-dancing: *θα εχει και λαιβ ντιρινταχτα. Ελατε.* ‘there will be LIVE *belly-dancing*, too. Come along’. Note that within the Greek utterance there is subtle code-mixing at work as well: Takis juxtaposes *λαιβ*, a single-noun switch, as *λαιβ* is the English word ‘live’ transliterated into Greek, with the effectively untranslatable Greek slang expression *ντιρινταχτα*, an onomatopoeic form ironically referring to belly-dancing. The juxtaposition is not just one of English and (onomatopoeic, Turkish- or Arabic-sounding) Greek, but one of ‘westernness’ and ‘orientalism’. The linguistic bricolage itself thus becomes almost iconic of the cultural bricolage inherent in the particular cultural event. Arguably, at a meta-linguistic level, such bricolage also becomes iconic

¹⁴ On incongruity/“script opposition” in humor see Attardo 2001; cf. Archakis & Tsakona 2006 for a relevant analysis of humorous narratives by young Greeks, and also the account of humorous exchanges between young Greek adults as “a game, with interlocutors negotiating and co-constructing tacit rules involving a deliberate attack on social and linguistic conventions, while at the same time creating a new code pertaining to in-group members only” (Antonopoulou & Sifianou 2003: 741).

of the hybrid nature of the discourse mode, and, concomitantly, of the hybrid nature of the novel authorial identity of the email user.

That bilingual or multilingual bricolage of the kind described above serves to add this particular layer of ‘performativity’ is evidenced by the types of code-switching favored by the participants in this study in live interaction; the following two examples should suffice to show that in non-computer-mediated communication the speakers (a) code-switch to a much lesser extent and (b) favor intersentential switching rather than intrasentential switching or code-mixing:

- (29) sofia mu, éla, o adréas íme. ja apópse ipolojízo jíro stis eftámisi na zvisume ceráca. an thélete na érthete ja ta ceráca, you’re more than welcome. an páli thélete na érthete aryótera, páli you’re more than welcome. éla, ta léme.
 Hey, Sofia dear, it’s Andreas. Tonight I reckon we’ll be blowing out candles around seven thirty. If you want to come for the candles, YOU’RE MORE THAN WELCOME. If you want to come later, again YOU’RE MORE THAN WELCOME. OK, see you.
 (Andreas to Sofia, message on answering machine)

- (30) S: éla, se ti katastasi ise?
 T: éla, tóra mólis teliósame, [éxo psófisi.
 S: [ti tha jíni, tha páme stu adréa to vráði?]
 T: moré... ðen kséro ...tóra apokliete... tha páme ja [kafedáci.
 S: [kalá, océi=
 =c emís katá tis oxtó tha páme.
 T: alá, na su po, ípame to vráði na páme stin oktána.
 S: great, tha éρθo na sas vro, ti óra?
 emís tha tin kánume katá tis eniámisi.
 T: kséro γo, katá tis ðéka.
 S: ðéka, océi, sounds good...ópos ce náçi to práyma, tha se páro tiléfono.
 T: ne, páre me tiléfono de toute façon.
 S: ócei, milúmen.
 T: ja::
 S: bye.
 T: Hey, how are you doing?
 P: Hey, we’ve just finished, [I’m dead.
 T: [How about it, are we going to Andreas’ tonight?
 P: Gee... dunno ...right now is out of the question... we’re going for [coffee.
 T: [Right, OK=
 =we’re going around eight anyway.
 P: But, listen, we’re thinking of going to Oktana tonight.
 T: GREAT, I’ll come and find you, what time?
 We’ll split around nine thirty.
 P: Dunno, round ten.
 T: Ten, OK, SOUNDS GOOD...In any case, I’ll call you.
 P: Yes, call me *de toute façon*.
 T: Ok, *we’ll talk*.
 P: Bye::
 T: BYE.

(Sofia and Takis on the phone, discussing Andreas’ invitation in (30))

Finally, as can be seen from (29) and (30), code-switching is linked to very specific or localized social/discursive functions of the type described in section 3.2.3 above, rather than being the overall, all-pervasive marker of the specific (oral) genre or communicative event (cf. Goutsos 2001 for similar findings). In contrast, the (quasi-)bilingual language play in the electronic texts discussed in this paper becomes a means of constructing ‘voices’ specific to the discourse; these involve the linguistic acting-out of the online author as a competent (quasi-)bilingual (or multilingual) speaker whose multifaceted linguistic performance ultimately signals the licence to inscribe and circumscribe the mode, if not the tenor, of the communication. This is frequently evidenced in the conscious self-referentiality of these performatively (bi- or multi-)lingual voices:

- (31) Ok, sweetie pie (amerikanizo, amerikanizo)
See ya
Tau
OK, SWEETIE PIE (*americanizing, americanizing*)
SEE YA
TAU

4. Conclusions

The data examined in this paper and the analysis proffered can be seen as a detailed exploration of a localized instance of CMD, namely the informal exchange of emails among a small, well-defined set of participants forming a close-knit social network (*paréa*). Among the aims of the ethnographic approach followed in this paper was to obtain a “thick description” (Geertz 1973) of participants and of linguistic interaction and to attempt to draw links between the two. The analysis can then be seen as a contribution to a more fine-grained understanding of this type of email communication; it has been argued that the hybrid linguistic performance involved is partly a function of participant features and the particular constellation of role-relationships but also partly a function of emerging conventions of email communication among intimates (cf. Georgakopoulou 1997).

As has been shown, language alternation (code-switching, code-mixing and shifting among varieties as well as language play) is deployed as a means of mitigating potentially face-threatening acts; more broadly, language alternation is used emblematically (or meta-pragmatically, cf. Auer 1999) to signal (or construct) symmetrical participant alignments and ingroup solidarity, and, concomitantly, to index overarching in-group rapport; but this is only part of the picture. Arguably, the rapport in this case is of a particularly complex kind. Recall that the participants share an array of social features, major among which are a very high level of linguistic awareness and a strong engagement with literacy; these features form a large part of their public identities. Arguably, then, the hybridity of their linguistic performance on email, notably idiosyncratic bricolage and linguistic distortions of the type discussed above, performatively subverts the ‘highly literate’ facet of their public identities; but, as is evident from the data, such overt subversion crucially also involves consistent indexing

of the 'literate' identity-to-be-subverted, and of the linguistic strategies deployed as mechanisms of subversion. It seems that for these participants doing (bi)lingualism is the indexing mechanism *par excellence*. Such performance, or performativity, is strongly contextualized and hence eminently interpretable; cf. Bauman's (1975) classic premise that performance is predicated upon recognition of the intentional interpretive frame within which it is produced (see also Bauman & Briggs 1990). Such interpretive consensus (Baym 1998, 2000) is a means not only of generating group solidarity, but also of fostering identity-as-performance within localized communities of practice such as the one discussed here.

The fact that this particular aspect of performativity is 'medium'-related (as is evidenced by the participants' differential performance in non-computer-mediated interaction) merits further discussion. Email has long been treated as belonging somewhere in the grey area between 'oral' and 'written' (cf. Baron 2000), and its linguistic, textual and other incongruities have been sweepingly explained as a function of such generic mishmash. I would argue that the structural, linguistic and other systematic idiosyncracies of the data presented in this paper are not merely the result of such overarching generic fusion. I suggest treating the data as an instance of planned written discourse that is, moreover, electronic. The systematic deployment of oral-like conventions and of some unstated yet pervasive conventions of CMC (e.g. code-switching; cf. the results of the quantitative study) may then be seen as mechanisms for circumscribing and indexing a register and a mode that are 'medium-specific'. But 'medium-specific' does not mean 'medium-driven'; rather, the 'medium' and the ways it can inform linguistic and textual practices are creatively used as a means of encoding performativities of the type discussed above.

On another level, then, the analysis of linguistic performance in asynchronous electronic communication presented in this paper, especially in conjunction with an analysis of (dis)similar performance in face-to-face interaction, may serve to further highlight the necessity for contextualized approaches to CMD which explore the relationship between specific participant constellations and linguistic practices. Such attempts should be able to provide a better understanding of the precise role of the material, structural and social-semiotic import of the 'medium' as part of the textual ecology of computer-mediated discourse.

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