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As Part Of Learning English As A
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FLUCTUATING LINGUISTIC REPERTOIRES - UPPER SECONDARY STUDENTS' BLOGGING AS PART OF LEARNING ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

Rhonwen Bowen, Annika-Lantz Andersson and Sylvi Vigmo

Abstract: *This paper presents a case study in which the implications of using social media as part of English as a second language learning are explored. More specifically two principle questions are embraced: how does the institutional setting of a shared blog co-determine the framing of the activity by the students? And what does this framing of the activity imply for the textual interaction and linguistic repertoires that the students use? The empirical material comprise of community documentation of a blog that was created in an international collaboration between two upper secondary classes in Sweden and Thailand. The study is grounded in a sociocultural perspective and the analysis of the blog postings was informed using the conceptual distinctions of frame analysis. The findings show that the students' linguistic repertoires draw on both the language that is taught in school with rather cultured formulations corresponding to their imagined expectations of fulfilling a school task, but also to their out-of-school code-mixing vernacular and jargon which are prevalent in social media. The challenge for education is how to embrace social networking sites without diminishing students' digital vernacular yet encourage and inspire their parlance in ways that enhance second language learning that may be less present in their digital vernacular but useful in other communicative contexts.*

Keywords: English as second language learning, Social networking sites, Blog, frame analysis, linguistic repertoire, digital vernacular

Introduction

Participation in social networking sites (SNSs) can, without doubt, be argued to constitute a major part of young people's everyday communicative practices (e.g. Erstad & Sefton-Green, 2013; Kern, 2014). In SNSs, new modes of communication have developed in which typically written and oral practices are mixed and merged together with other semiotic resources to form a communicative hybridity of linguistic repertoires (Androutsopoulos, 2014). Characteristic of the linguistic repertoires in SNSs is that they range from formal interaction to spontaneous encounters with speakers of other languages. With the enormous development of the Internet since the 1990s, English has become a *lingua franca* in many parts of the world and in many areas, such as academic writing and, not least, social media. The number of users of English has increased rapidly (Graddol, 2006) entailing that approximately 80% of English speakers do not have English as their first language (Christison & Murrey, 2014). As a consequence of this increase in usage, English is no longer the exclusive domain of what was traditionally called the native speaker, e.g. people born in Australia, Canada, the U.S. and U.K.; this implies that the various Englishes that are used across the world as a convenient code of communication emerge as diverse and dynamic.

In the wake of this development, educators of English as a second language have tried to embrace the possibilities and challenges of using SNSs in language-learning activities. However, the ability to use English in Web 2.0 applications is not always considered as language competence from a more traditional viewpoint and schools have been criticized for not recognizing out-of-school language competence (Kern, 2014; Thorne, 2009). Advocates of using social media in language-learning contexts argue that the use of SNSs

supposedly facilitates new forms of communication using, for example, blogs as teaching and learning tools in the foreign language classroom to promote communicative competence (e.g. Baym & Boyd, 2012; Blattner & Lomicka, 2012; Yang, 2011). Other positive research findings refer to improvement of learners' autonomy and intercultural communication (Lee, 2011). Sceptics, on the other hand, maintain that the use of SNSs as part of schooling could compromise traditional literacies (e.g. Ziegler, 2007 and for an overview see Manca & Ranieri, 2013). However, an over-simplified focus of the usability of social media for language learning tends to neglect the tension that exists between practice logics of Web 2.0 and traditional educational practices and will not support our understanding of the multifaceted nature of communication on the social web (Bonderup Dohn, 2009; Selwyn, 2009). By utilizing SNSs as part of educational activities, students are able to bring experiences to the classroom. In turn, this implies that students are offered the possibility of becoming more apparent agents, which changes the power relations in the classroom as it "decentralizes the role of the language classroom" and opens up for a more student-empowered environment (Thomas, 2009, p. 21). It may be assumed, therefore, that the increased amount of research concerning the use of Web 2.0 tools in the language classroom must be indicative of the dynamic shift that is taking place among language educators towards an increased use of this continually evolving online environment (Wang & Vasquez, 2012). Consequently, there is a need to continue to explore the use of English in social media sites to further our understanding of the implications this use and competence might have for more institutional language-learning practices.

Aim and research questions

The overall aim of this case study is to explore how students communicate in English as a second language when blogging on *Blogger* (www.blogger.com) as part of educational language-learning activities. The case study was conducted in an upper secondary school class in Sweden in an international collaboration together with an upper secondary school class in Thailand. The study has a particular interest in how the contextual practice of SNS co-determines students' use of linguistic repertoires. Analytically, this is addressed by adopting a sociocultural perspective on learning, in which learning is understood as social processes that are embedded within activity, context and culture (Vygotsky, 1939; Wertsch, 2007). For the analysis of the text-based communicative blogging activities, the frame theory derived from Goffman's (1974) interactional perspective is applied. In Goffman's (1974) terms, people make sense of activities by *framing* or defining them by using their previous experience of similar situations, even if the present activity and contextual possibilities and constraints are new. In this study, the following research questions are embraced:

- How does the institutional setting of a shared blog co-determine the students' framing of the activity?
- What does the students' framing of the activity imply for the textual interaction and the linguistic repertoires utilized?

The use of SNS in the second language-learning classroom

Sweden with its population of approximately 10 million inhabitants is considered to have a high level of English proficiency; imported cultural media are always broadcast with Swedish subtitles and as the majority of the media are from the U.S. and U.K., people are subjected to a considerable amount of English on a regular basis. Furthermore, the Swedish Media Council (2013) in an investigation of 13 - 16 year olds states that 81% of these teenagers have a computer of their own and Internet access. However, the Swedish

Schools Inspectorate (2011) conducted an evaluation of English teaching in schools for 12 - 15 year olds and discovered that English lessons were very conservative and often based on traditional materials and the use of digital devices in the English classroom was rare. Even if the use of IT in the classroom has increased since this investigation was conducted, what remains is the fact that teachers are still faced with enormous challenges to provide learning opportunities with the use of social media to young people for whom English is an integral part in their daily lives.

Through the use of SNSs, young people of today are in touch with a wide range of speakers of different languages and different cultures and they continuously make use of whatever linguistic devices necessary in order to communicate. This implies a kind of *cultures-of-use* in which various linguistic activities are used for different pragmatic goals such as creating a picture of oneself as a multilingual communicator (Thorne, 2003). Various forms of linguistic repertoires can be conceptualised with what Thorne (2011) calls *living language use* where the participants utilize their *digital vernacular*. This may include the use of emoticons, various Web resources, such as Google Translate, the sharing of websites, music videos, photos etc. Furthermore, even if the communication is in the form of written language, it may embrace a spontaneous and informal style that is comparable to oral speech. (cf., Kern, 2014; Lantz-Andersson, Vigmo & Bowen, 2015). From a sociolinguistic perspective, this diversification is described as *code-mixing*, i.e. the close proximity of different linguistic codes in one and the same sentence lacking a pragmatic function (Androutsopoulos, 2013). Linguistic repertoires are, therefore here, in line with Androutsopoulos (2014), conceptualized as participants' individualized linguistic choices, linked to technologies of communication, which range from formal interaction to spontaneous encounters with speakers of other languages online. Such encounters are consequently more complex than traditional institutional language-learning contexts including "multiple language capacities and cultural imaginations, and different social and political memories" (Kramsch, 2008, p. 390).

As argued earlier, a growing global population in the western world use English as a *lingua franca* for various private interests as well as for work and study; young people's ubiquitous media use and interactions on SNS include, to a great extent, the use of English. Sundqvist and Sylvén (2012), for example, have studied Swedish students' English oral proficiency and vocabulary and the impact of out-of-school English. Their findings showed correlations between school test scores and the amount of out-of-school English the students were subjected to. Students are, therefore, exposed to a variation of linguistic repertoires with real global audiences and to a kind of language use that belongs to the unauthorized language of young people. This leads on to the question of what kind of linguistic repertoires do we find in online communication. In a discussion of linguistic behaviour and what actually constitutes a language, Normann Jörgensen (2008, p 164) states that language users could be described as "actors, and they act upon, and sometimes against, norms and standards" implying that language users employ whatever means they have at their disposal in order to communicate successfully. In addition, SNSs such as Blogs are inherently informal and as they are not subjected to censorship, bloggers "may take the liberty to freely use language as they wish" (Montes-Alcalá, 2007, p. 163). Furthermore, young language users become familiar with specific features of several different languages without actually knowing the languages in question; in addition, they are not usually inhibited by this fact. These emerging forms of utilizing language could be labelled as a type of *linguaging* to describe the diverse use of linguistic repertoires used by speakers to meet the communicative aims desired (Normann Jörgensen, 2008, p 169). Similarly, Gynne & Bagga-Gupta (2013) in a study of young people's linguaging and social positioning in a bilingual, Swedish-Finnish educational setting use the concept of *chaining* to describe the ways humans "connect oral, written and other semiotic resources including different modalities in the course of naturally occurring daily life" (p. 483).

Rather than focus on the alternation of various codes, this concept highlights “the meaning-making potentials of various settings where human beings use a range of communicative resources in both “oral” and “literacy” contexts”.

The linguistic repertoires utilized in SNSs by young people who are not native English speakers have also proven to establish translocal cultures in which the linguistic, social and cultural actions together merge both the local and the global in new ways (Leppänen et al., 2009). Thus, the use of new media offers opportunities of communication across linguistic and cultural boundaries. Studies focussing on enhanced intercultural dialogue have reported on not only improved language-learning outcomes (Ware & O’Dowd, 2008) but also increased pragmatic awareness (Chun, 2011; Stockwell & Stockwell, 2003) and intercultural competence among participants (Lee, 2011, 2012; Schenker, 2012).

Together with the arguments above concerning linguistic repertoires and opportunities for developed language awareness, a major premise to take into consideration is therefore that communication on SNSs is based on completely different interests and goals, in comparison with what has traditionally been regarded as learning and knowledge as part of second language schooling (see for example, Kern, 2014 and Bonderup Dohn, 2009 on learning).

Theoretical framework

This study is grounded in a sociocultural perspective in which learning is seen as situated, taking a particular interest in language as a mediational tool for communication and interaction (Vygotsky, 1939; Wertsch, 2007). This implies that the students’ interactions are seen as social practices both in relation to the local situated practice of schooling and in relation to the contextual practice of communicating on SNS. The conceptual distinctions of frame analysis (Goffman, 1974) have guided the research in analysing how the students frame the activity of blogging as part of schooling and how that co-determines their use of linguistic repertoires. The framing of activities relates to how participants define activities and adjust to their situational norms and the other participants. During the framing activity, participants deal with conflicts of framing and frame breaking and these lead to temporarily established frameworks. This becomes traceable in how the students express themselves and through their use of various linguistic repertoires. In both the sociocultural tradition and Goffman’s perspective on social interaction, the individuals are seen as active agents in understanding and shaping the world. This means that the individuals, the context and the physical tools create the learning practices and form an indivisible unit of description. The framing is seen as constituting the activity and the meaning of a textual utterance is dependent on how we have framed them in the specific activity; it helps us to determine how to continue with the activity. In light of the perspective adopted here, the framing of the textual interaction in a certain activity is crucial for the researcher to consider in order to try to understand how the activity is understood by the participants. A critical element of how we frame activities is that it is dependent on earlier experiences and how we relate these experiences to the activity at hand. These earlier experiences also support how we expect certain activities to be understood (cf. Tannen, 1979). This implies that the concept of framing is a useful analytical tool in analysing how students dynamically reframe classroom tasks into new activities in line with new contextual practices such as SNSs (cf., Hattem, 2007; Lantz-Andersson, Vigmo & Bowen, 2013; Vigmo, & Lantz-Andersson, 2014). The theoretical underpinnings in this study can thus be looked at as a starting point for understanding the use of SNSs in relation to the linguistic repertoires that are used.

Methods

The study is part of a research project called (blinded for review¹) with the objectives of exploring the implications of the merging of young people's second language use in social media contexts and second language-learning practices in school. This case study took place in an ordinary English lesson in an upper secondary class in Sweden. The 18 to 19 year-old students were introduced to the blog that they were to share together with an upper secondary class in Thailand. The blogging activity was thus introduced as part of an English as second language class and based on an agreement between the teachers in Sweden and Thailand and the researchers. When the class blog was completed three months later, the first step was to summarize the interaction in the groups, which was conducted by using Blogger's overview feature. This was done to obtain a general summary of the postings and comments in the groups and for the selection of the screen shots of postings and comments that would serve as illustrations for the further quantitative analyses of this case study. All the postings and the comments were also gathered by taking screenshots to enable different kinds of mapping and sorting. The mapping was done as a first analysis of the type of postings which received comments, the content of the postings, the language use etc., (see also Lantz-Andersson, 2016; Vigmo & Lantz-Andersson, 2014).

The blogging activity was initiated in Sweden with a one-hour classroom session. This session is also video documented, which is analysed elsewhere (Lantz-Andersson et al., 2013; Lantz-Andersson et al., 2015; Vigmo & Lantz-Andersson, 2014) the researchers participated and observed the classroom session, but the main focus of this study is the postings and comments in the blog. The analysis draws on Interactional Ethnography (Castanheira et al., 2001), with a focus on the postings and the comments of the students to explore how they made use of various linguistic repertoires to communicate. Scrutinizing the textual interaction, the analyses of the linguistic repertoires that were used aimed at interpreting how the students framed and re-framed the activity in accordance with their temporary definition of the situation (Goffman, 1974). Interactional Ethnography is also compatible with Goffman's theoretical stance in which interaction is seen as a job that participants in an activity do; this includes various layers of self-presentation, the wish to cooperate, the wish to complete a school task etc.

In this study, we have followed the ethical codes as required from the Swedish Research Council. In addition, the Regional Ethical University Board has approved the study before any fieldwork was conducted. The students involved were informed of the research project and it was made clear that participation was entirely voluntary. They were informed well in advance that the postings were not to be graded or assessed. Informed consent was collected before the study started and reports from the project were made confidential by using pseudonyms in order to prevent the identification of individuals. The class blog in this study was furthermore only made accessible to the students in the two classes, their teachers and the researchers.

The setting

This case study was undertaken during the spring term of 2012; the blog was established in March 2012 and completed in May 2012. In total, the blog consists of 34² published postings and 82 comments; 26 of the postings received at least one comment. The blog

¹ The project is funded by Marcus and Amalia Wallenberg Foundation and includes several studies on Blogger and Facebook when implemented as language learning activities in the subject English as second language.

² Two of the postings are prompts posted by the researchers.

was created as a collaboration project between a school class in Gothenburg, Sweden and a school class in Bangkok, Thailand. It was established through personal contacts and correspondence via email. The teachers' participation involved encouraging the students to be active in using English as a second language, but their texts were not part of any assessment or grading in English as a school subject. In the lesson, when the blogging activity was introduced in Sweden, the students were divided into groups consisting of 2-3 partners in each. The Swedish students were informed that the activity that was to take place in class was to start the blog, not to have the blog as a continued activity during lessons to come. Consequently, the students were given the option to continue with the blog themselves after this initial class session or refrain from participating. In Thailand, working on the blog was not given time in class but the teacher encouraged the students to blog during their spare time.

To start the process, the Swedish students were given an initial prompt from the researchers and also told to use whatever semiotic resources they wished. Giving them the freedom to choose a topic of their own, using the prompt as a point of departure, and allowing them the freedom to use other resources, enabled them to engage freely in the blog (cf. Lee & Markey, 2014). The following prompt was used to get the blogging activity started:

Table 1. Initial blog prompt

Initiator	Prompt
Researchers	The first blog should be about something that you would like to change. Write about why you think the “something” should be changed, and maybe with an alternative solution. Use images, links, videos etc. to support your “something” ☺. To get comments it is of course a good idea to point to something that is controversial and it could also be effective to end with questions. Remember that it is just as important that you give comments on the other blogs! Looking forward to interesting comments.

The request that they include open-ended questions and that they comment on other people's postings was included to enhance the reciprocity of the blog. Once the blog was set up and the initial prompt was given, the students were left to their own devices to write their postings in the blog. Their classroom teacher was, however, present throughout the session. The speed with which the students started varied considerably depending on the individual group dynamics; some groups started writing a draft immediately while other students discussed and negotiated amongst themselves as to the topic and content of the posting. As the session progressed, some students asked the teacher for advice concerning possible topics. The teacher's response was that they could possibly write something about Sweden or Swedish culture; this constituted a trigger from the teacher to stimulate the Swedish students, but the Thai students were obviously not privy to this trigger. Since the Swedish students posted culturally-related issues after their response to the first prompt, and since the design of Blogger displays the last postings first, the Thai students responded to the postings that related to Swedish culture by describing various Thai conditions in analogue ways.

To encourage more student participation, a second prompt was posted by the research team two weeks after the classroom session. This prompt elicited seven comments, which are discussed in connection with screenshot 5 in the blog data.

Table 2. Second blog prompt

Initiator	Prompt
Researchers	Please write a short note on when you have holidays, what your plans are or about anything on your mind! If you are curious about the differences and similarities of being young in Sweden and Thailand ask each other questions! Cheers

This prompt elicited seven comments, which are discussed in connection with screenshot 5 in the blog data.

The blog data

An overview of the students' topics as postings is given in Table 3. Six comments from the Thai students are included in this overview since they are direct responses to the second prompt and are considered comparable to postings; these are marked with *. The letter S in the table indicates that the posting is from a Swedish student and the letter T indicates that it is from a Thai student.

Table 3. Overview of students' topics as postings

Initiator					
Researchers					
	Students' topics as a response to prompt 1		Students' topics in between prompts		Students' topics as a response to prompt 2
S	More jobs for the youth	S	Just our class...	S	Mountain Hike :D
S	Somethang	T	Our school	T	my next holidayyyy
S	Xbox live gold	S	Cinnamon buns	T*	My next holiday will be in July.
S	2012: THE END OF THE WORLD	S	EY THAILAND!	T*	I'm curious that how was high school in Sweden was?
S	Hola Thailand!	S	THIS IS OUR AWESOME SCHOOL (NOT!) :	T*	My next holiday is in June
S	Vikings	S	What is it like in Taiwan?	T*	I think Asia and Europe have many differences about behavior.
S	Waffles	T	That was my friend's birthday party yesterday. Yummy!!!!...	T*	Hi! This is Katherine from Thailand.
S	Hi everybody! My and Shekina here!	S	THIS IS LISEBERG (OUR PRIDE)	T*	*./-*/-/-/-/* My next holiday *./-*/-/-/*
S	Summer holiday - too short	S	Loreen. OMG	S	This Is How I Feel When I'm Having Fun (Made by XXXXl)
S	The spring equinox	S	Greetings!	S	HEEEEEELLOOOOOO EVERYBODYYYYYYYY!!!!!!
S	#carpediem	S	What is it like in Taiwan?	S	Almost summer
S	RONM!	S	Lorem ibi, audivi te FARCIMEN , ego	S	Just hate when this happens...
S	I would like to change the attitude against the lyrics of the song Chacarron				
S	Crazy post!				

The overview of the activity in Blogger displays that the Swedish students were more active than the Thai students in posting. This could partly be due to the fact that during

the introductory class in Sweden the students submitted 20 of the postings and the Thai students were not given opportunities to blog during school hours but merely encouraged to blog in their spare time. The in-class session in Sweden generated a lot of activity and a lively discussion amongst the students; some of the groups started immediately working at the keyboard going into various Internet sites such as *Wikipedia*, *Youtube* and *Google* and used their mobile phones, while others took time to negotiate what to write about. Below is a selection of the screenshots to illustrate, on the one hand, the variation of the framing of the textual postings and comments in terms of the chosen linguistic repertoires and, on the other hand, to address our research questions.

Results

Students' framings as a response to prompt 1

Initially, the framing of the language-learning activities in Blogger does not challenge the prevailing framing of schooling (Goffman, 1974), which appears to be superior in relation to a framing more oriented to common language use in SNSs. The first screenshot of a posting and its comments that is selected serves as an illustration.

Screenshot 1. The spring equinox

The screenshot shows a Blogger post titled "The spring equinox". The post text discusses the spring equinox in Sweden, mentioning the "vårdagjämningen", and expresses a desire for longer days and more snow in winter. A small image of the Earth is included. Below the post, there are two comments: one from "Blogger" dated March 20, 2012, and another from "Blogger" dated March 27, 2012, both agreeing with the post.


The spring equinox

Today is the spring equinox (in Sweden we call it "vårdagjämningen"), and I am glad that the days are getting longer. I'm so tired of the darkness, 'cause in the winter it feels like it's dark all the time. (It is not, though, but approximately it's daylight only between 9 in the morning and half past 3 in the afternoon, during November, December and January.)

The darkness has it's advantages, of course, it can be cozy. And I think it's very nice at Christmas when all cities and houses are lit up with lots of lights and candles. But I still think I like the long days of summer (the days last from two in the morning until midnight) even better, I feel much less tired and much happier (at least when the sun is shining)!





Luckily I live in the south-west of Sweden: in the north it's even darker than here. Some days the sun barely rises over the horizon. I do not understand how the people up there survive the winter. But they have lots of snow as compensation, which we don't have much of here. I would like more snow in the winter, but it's not very practical since it results in total chaos on the roads, and buses get behind schedule (and I get late for school).

So I would like to have more snow in the winter, but longer days... Impossible dream?





Posted by [Blogger](#) at 2:39 AM


Reactions: funny (1) interesting (1) cool (1) crazy (2)


2 comments:     Recommend this on Google

2 Comments
1 – 2 of 2

 [Blogger](#) said...
Nothing is imposible, [Blogger](#)! Keep on dreaming :-D

March 20, 2012 at 2:44 AM 

 [Blogger](#) said...
I agree with [@Blogger](#).

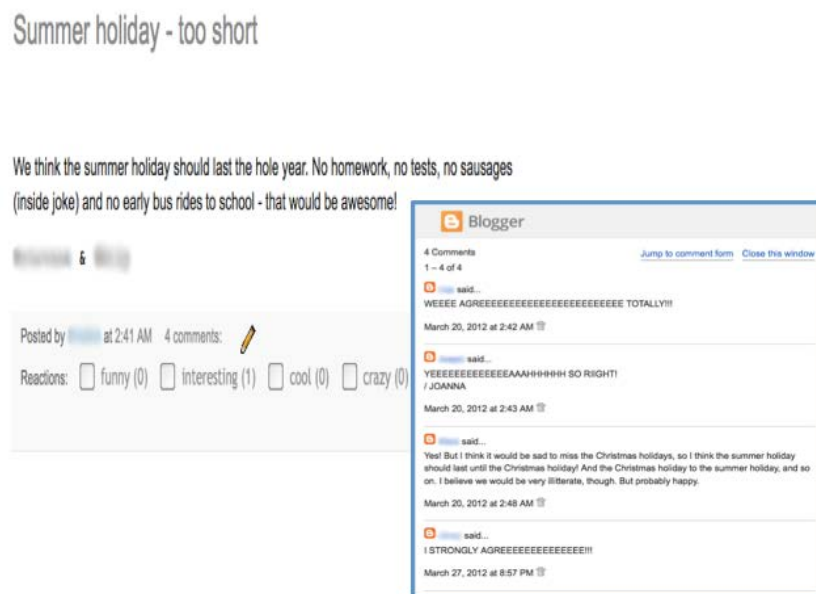
March 27, 2012 at 8:57 PM 

The posting illustrated in screenshot 1 and posted by one group of the Swedish students can be said to be representational of framing the blogging activity in line with solving a typical school task in language learning. It could, however, also be understood as framed with an awareness of the Thai students as addressees as, in a rather formal way, it explains the local conditions of the weather in Sweden. Furthermore, referring to the weather could be seen as a typical small talk topic with other young people that you do not know. The framing of the text in line with a school task rather than social media chat among friends is also seen in the way the writers adhere to traditional conventions such as complete grammatical sentences, use of brackets and paragraphing. The posting includes a scenic picture of the earth, which can be said to function as a decoration and interpreted as portraying a global voice, reaching out to the students in Thailand. Although the

posting is framed as a school activity according to the first prompt of discussing a wish to change something, it is a very personal narrative, typically including an excessive use of 1st person singular 'I'. The students try to portray something that they wish to change about the Swedish weather and climate. The posting ends with a direct question that triggers two short comments (as seen above) relating directly to the idea of “an impossible dream”. The hypothetical desire to change the weather is also taken up quite seriously by one Swedish classmate followed by a comment, a week later, from a Thai student who sympathizes with the desire.

As the interaction on Blogger continues, there are also some indications of reframing the activity, including a variation of linguistic repertoires (Androutsopoulos, 2014) to be more oriented to the *linguaging* (cf. Normann Jörgensen, 2008) of social media. An example of this is the more humoristic framing in Screenshot 2 below.

Screenshot 2. Summer holiday – too short



These conventionally written grammatical sentences constitute a rather informal posting that deals with a humoristic topic and includes a local joke about “sausages”. Analytically, this implies that the posting is aiming towards their classmates rather than the global audience (cf. Kern 2014). The framing is more in line with an out-of-school SNS-communication with already-known friends. This type of framing where the students make use of their *digital vernacular* (Thorne, 2011) becomes quite common after the initial phase in the class blog. This hybrid humoristic framing where the social media context intertwines with the performance of a school task becomes even more obvious by the uptake in the blog comments. Three of the four comments use a linguistic repertoire in which the framing is characterized by a playful use of exaggerations, exhibiting *linguaging* (Normann Jörgensen, 2008) and *chaining* (cf. Gynne & Bagga-Gupta, 2013) to mirror an oral exaggeration. These comments, embracing the convention of multiple capital letters, thus include the students’ linguistic choices that are common in social media chats and could be seen as norm-breaking from an educational language-learning perspective (cf. Davies & Merchant, 2007). The linguistic repertoires utilized constitute a style of mundane communication in social media, displaying a fairly simple written language that parallels talk (cf. Androutsopoulos, 2014; Black, 2009; Thorne, 2009). In the longer comment, the linguistic repertoire is more formal but the content of the message is very ironic, displaying a frame shift from a traditional school task (Goffman, 1974).

The third example below (Screenshot 3) also shows a humoristic and ironic framing which includes a particular cultural aspect by bringing in very local national food and the specific day when this food is traditionally eaten in Sweden.

Screenshot 3. Waffles

Waffles

We want to change the date of the waffleday, its every year on 25th March. It's a Swedish tradition, but we want to change the tradition to have it every Sunday instead. Do you know what a Swedish, awesome waffle is?
It should be topped with whipped creamed, rasberry jam and homemade chocholate sauce!!
Taste it, or die!
Don't you agree? *You won't regret it!!!*



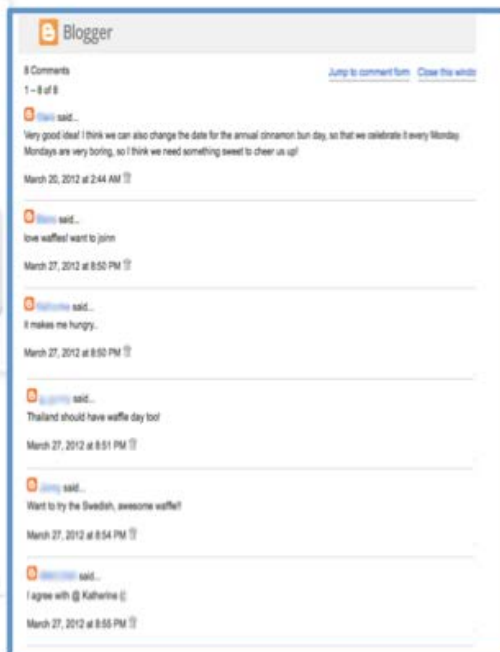
xoxo kisses&hugs & @m... & @m...

(Picture taken from Google.)

Posted by [profile picture] at 2:33 AM 1 comments

Recommend this on Google

Reactions: funny (2) interesting (2) cool (2) crazy (2)



The posting with the Swedish waffles is an ironic response to the first prompt about discussing the fact that they want to change the tradition of eating waffles from once a year to once a week. The posting is directed towards the Thai students asking them if they know what waffles are. Furthermore, the authors explain what a waffle is and also add an illustrative photo. The language used in the posting is informal as if they were addressing the other students in a chat, thus displaying some sort of distance in framing the task as an ordinary school task. The first comment is from a Swedish classmate referring to another Swedish delicacy, cinnamon buns, which also have a special day where they are celebrated once a year. The other comments are from Thai students who can easily associate with this thanks to the photo. Simple cultural traditions such as eating a certain food on a certain day could be seen as initial small talk in intercultural exchanges (cf. Lee, 2012). In these continuing comments, the linguistic repertoire is characterized by casual short sentences, politely agreeing that they like or would like to taste waffles, but without playing with the spelling as in Screenshot 2.

Students' topics in between prompts

The posting with the Waffles that was a response to the first prompt seemed to trigger the students to discuss food as a culturally specific issue and it is followed by another Swedish posting of a recipe for cinnamon buns. This posting is a done using *Google Translate*, which means that some of the words are still in Swedish since they were not part of the website

translator tool. The recipe posting is ended by another cut and paste from *Google Translate*; *Bon Appetite* in Thai as is shown in the screenshot below (Screenshot 4)

Screenshot 4. *Bon Appetite* in Thai

ทานให้อร่อยนะ !!!!!!!!!!!!!

The food topic was continued in the first posting from one of the Thai students. This posting consists of a series of 10 pictures of Thai food (Screenshot 5) with only a short explanatory caption at the bottom of the posting.

Screenshot 5. That was my friend's birthday party yesterday. Yummy!!!!...



This posting is framed to correspond with the interaction that is now common in the blog; thus, the Thai students frame the activity of blogging in line with how they understand the prevailing discourse on Blogger and do not consider the first prompt at all. Instead, they continue the food postings. The text is kept to a minimum; the pictures are not explained other than to say that they are different dishes served at the birthday party of one of the student's friends. The post elicited five comments from four of the authors' classmates and here the interaction is again framed in line with the living language and *digital vernacular* of young people that occurs in SNS (Thorne, 2011). The linguistic repertoire therefore includes spontaneous writing that resembles oral talk (cf. Gynne & Bagga-Gupta, 2013). Some of the comments referring to Screenshot 5 are probably hinting at a chain of restaurants in Thailand known as the Somboon restaurants that specialise in seafood. These comments are directed towards the Thai students, i.e. the local audience rather than the Swedish students. This is similar to much of the interaction in this blog and with previous research on communication in SNSs, namely, that the local

audience consisting of the classmates is often considered the most important audience (Boyd, 2010; Davies, 2012; Lantz-Andersson, 2016; Vigmo & Lantz-Andersson, 2014).

Students' topics as a response to prompt 2

The second prompt was also rather open in character, giving the students some suggestions such as writing about holidays but it also gave them the opportunity to post anything they wanted to present. The next screenshot below (Screenshot 6) is a response that is very close to the suggested topic in the prompt, as in the first example (Screenshot 1) implying a framing in line with solving a task in a language class.

Screenshot 6. Mountain hike :D

Mountain Hike :D

This summer, I will go mountain hiking with my family in Abisko, far up north. We will travel by train via Stockholm and this will take approximately 24 hours. Thus, we will sleep on the train the first night of our trip. I have slept on a train once before, it was a slightly odd feeling but it was nice at the same time. It felt like I was being rocked to sleep by the movement of the wagon.

Well in Abisko, we will spend a night at the tourist centre and in the morning we will set off on our hike. We will be walking in a "circle", bringing us back to the centre on day five (or maybe day six). We are already very busy preparing everything. We have bought an extra tent, new backpacks and boots for my sister. My mom has a food-drying project going on. So far, she is doing quite well but the dried yoghurt was kind of a failure. It tasted horrible! It was like chewing rubber with a slight taste of onion... I truly hope you will never have to experience that culinary specialty.

Now, to the reason behind the trip. My parents went on several hikes when they were younger, and on the last one before I was born, they got engaged. The following summer, they were married and mom was pregnant with me, thus they could not go hiking. All summers since, my siblings and I have been too young to walk about in the mountains for days on end. Now, finally, we are all old enough. Mom is thrilled, to say the least. I am really looking forward to this trip, especially since I have seen photographs of the beautiful nature up there. Take a look!



Posted by [S2016](#) at 1:01 AM. See comments.
 Reactions: Funny (0) Interesting (0) Cool (0) Crazy (0)

This posting is framed in rather a school-oriented manner, comprising a narrative description of the planning of a holiday that may be seen as a typical educational language-learning task; furthermore, the posting adheres to written language conventions. The narrative is a personal story about the preparation of a hiking trip up to the north of Sweden, flavoured with personal experiences such as the taste of some dried food that the student's mother is preparing for the trip. The author also includes a scenic picture of the area in question and a map including the Arctic Circle and Stockholm. The text almost resembles a diary and is full of personal pronouns when talking about her family, *I*, *my*, *we*, *our*, and *us*. Again, in the Swedish context, writing personal texts is often encouraged by language-learning teachers, which points to the educational framing of this blog posting. There are two direct references to the audience; after having explained how eating dried

yoghurt was not very tasty, the student writes: “I truly hope you will never have to experience that culinary speciality”, and the last sentence invites the audience to look at the pictures. This post received no comments or likes. Thus, as in Screenshot 1, the framing of this posting shows little of the online context, the linguistic repertoires of the digital vernacular of young people and code-mixing of SNSs (Androustopoulos, 2013; Kern, 2014; Thorne, 2011). Thus, this more proper framing adheres to the prompt in line with the educational language-learning context.

Below, the next screenshot displays the Thai students’ responses to the third prompt; they are written as comments to the second prompt but are considered comparable to postings in Table 3, since they include a variation of topics.

Screenshot 7. Six comments from the Thai students and a reply from a Swedish student

The screenshot shows a Blogger comment section with the following content:

7 Comments [Jump to comment form](#) [Close this window](#)
1 – 7 of 7

Comment 1: [User] said...
My next holiday will be in July. I am planing to look for my university because I almost finish the year13. I am also planning to hang out with my friends! And also on my birthday in June, I am planning to have a cocktail party at my house. Cant wait now!!
May 13, 2012 at 8:32 PM

Comment 2: [User] said...
I'm curious that how was high school in Sweden was?
How about education? It is hard to study English?
May 13, 2012 at 8:34 PM

Comment 3: [User] said...
My next holiday is in June and this will be the last holiday for my high school. I'm also planning for my university during my holiday. I still have to take IELTS...arrmgh! Wish me luck.. :(By the way, when are schools in Sweden having their holiday?
May 13, 2012 at 8:36 PM

Comment 4: [User] said...
Hi! This is [User] from Thailand. I am going to graduate in June.. so after graduation I'm planning to take exams for the university. It'll be a very busy summer this year :(How about you? what are you planing to do on your next holiday [User]?
May 13, 2012 at 8:38 PM

Comment 5: [User] said...
I think Asia and Europe have many differences about behavior.
So for example Thailand do "Wai" when people meet each other, but in europe (so Sweden too!) your guy do shake hands.
And also in Thailand when a friend meet, like a girl meet a boy. We didn't hug or kiss on the cheek. We just say "Sa-waa-dee" because if we do that. Our parent will rebuke us.
May 13, 2012 at 8:38 PM

Comment 6: [User] said...
-+*-*-* My next holiday *-*/*/*/*/*/*
I will go to the khaoyai with my friend. When we graduate at [User] international school . We will go for party and travel. We find some hotel at khaoyai that's Kensington English garden resort it's very beautiful and luxury hotel and find activity for this trip such ATV, amusement park and night party at the resort. I hope we will fun and enjoy this trip.
May 13, 2012 at 8:59 PM

Reply: [User] said...
[User]: We hope your cocktail-party will be the nicest cocktailparty evert
[User]: the education in Swden is very nice. In Sweden the school is free for everybody, is it the same in Thailand or does it cost?
[User]: Oh, good luck! The holiday begins the the 7th of Juni and ends in the middle of August. When do you guys have vacation?
[User]: Good luck with the test! Sounds tough. We are going to chillaxa with our friends, swim in the ocean, bbq, sail, work a bit, windsurf and celebrate midsummer.
[User]: What's wai? We just hug each othr, no kissing on the cheek!
[User]: Oh, sounds like a really nice trip! Have a good time!
May 22, 2012 at 1:25 AM

Four of the comments are closely framed in relation to the second prompt (whereas no Thai student framed a posting initially in relation to the first prompt). Three of the comments include direct questions to the Swedish students, about how hard it is to study English, about when the school holidays are in Sweden, and also a question about their plans about what to do on their vacation. One comment here directly involves habitual cultural differences. This posting discusses the differences in behaviour between Asia and Europe when greeting each other, writing about “Wai”, the Thai way of greeting people rather than shaking hands. However, this discussion does not continue since the Swedish student who replies does not know what the greeting “Wai” means; it consists of a slight bow, with the palms pressed together in a prayer-like fashion, quite different from the

hugging and kissing that are common in Europe. Thus, missing the chance to discuss such differences could be seen as a lost opportunity for intercultural exchange (cf. Lee, 2011, 2012; Schenker, 2012). Nor does the overall institutional framing here include linguistic repertoires of the chat-like SNS character as in one of the last postings in the blog, shown below (Screenshot 8).

Screenshot 8. HEEEEEEELLLOOOOOOO EVERYBODYYYYYYYY!!!!!!

HEEEEEELLLOOOOOOO EVERYBODYYYYYYYY!!!!!!
 Today on the bus we saw this really handsome, cute, nice, beautiful, beauteousbonny, bonnie, comely, fair, sightlydishyexquisitefine-looking, good-looking, better-looking, handsome, well-favored, well-favouredglorious, resplendent, splendid, splendiferousgorgeouslovelypicturesqueprettypretty-prettypulchritudinousravishingscenicstunning- looking guy. 9,45/10!!!!

Then I got off the bus. It was a reeeeaally nice day.

typical Swedish bus filled with splendiferousgorgeouslovelypicturesqueprettypretty-prettypulchritudinousravishingscenicstunning- looking guys.

Posted by [user] at 1:14 AM

Reactions: funny (0) interesting (0) cool (0) crazy (1)

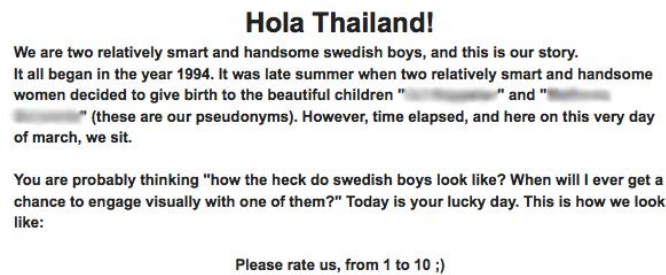
No comments: Recommend this on Google



Screenshot 8 above includes a typical Swedish bus. In this short narrative, the students frame the activity in a playful manner by describing how they saw a young man on the bus and they continue by rating him on a scale of 1-10. This posting is an uptake of a previous post in which two Swedish students described themselves in a humoristic framing as being very smart, handsome, beautiful and good looking. They end their posting with a request for the others to rate a photo of them on a scale of 1-10 that they have uploaded (see Screenshot 9 below). The framing here can thus be seen as very local, overlooking the Thai student context. The linguistic repertoire adheres to the living language use of young people, i.e. a digital vernacular comparable to oral speech (Kern, 2014; Thorne, 2011). This is seen in the use of capital letters, repetitive use of letters, the playing with the language and the invention of new words by writing them together. The hybridity between written and oral language in the linguistic repertoire is illustrated by the use of written language characteristics e.g. the use of hyphens and commas, and by characteristics of spoken communication e.g. *hello everybody*, *I got off the bus*. The text appears to have been cut and paste from various Internet sites supplying synonyms (e.g. *synonym.com*). There is also a mix of American and British spelling conventions (*well-favored* vs *well-favoured*). Whether or not the text is theirs or an example of cut-and-paste is difficult to determine from the data available. The authors of this posting simply list a number of adjectives to describe a young man and finish off by grading him 9.45 out of

10; this is also a response to the previous posting (see Screenshot 9 below), which is also a very local joke in the Swedish context. This screenshot shows a complete shift of framing away from the educational perspective of practicing English as a second language. This kind of communication acts like a continuation of a friendly chat between people who already know each other (Selwyn, 2009). Here the students are using the Blogger space for a nonsense language use that is playful and norm-breaking from an educational language-learning perspective.

Screenshot 9. Hola Thailand!



In summarising the overall findings of the framings and linguistic repertoires in this blog, it can be said to display a wide range of hybrid framings involving transformed frame shifts. The students' linguistic repertoire draws on both the language that is taught in school with rather cultured formulations corresponding to their imagined expectations of fulfilling a school task, but also to their out-of-school code-mixing vernacular and jargon which are prevalent in SNSs.

Conclusion

This exploration into a specific shared blog as part of an international collaboration has investigated how the students framed the activity, i.e. the interplay between the school setting and the students' performance on the SNS and the linguistic repertoires utilized by the students in the blog.

The findings show that the students continuously shift framings by using diverse linguistic repertoires in their textual representations of postings and comments in the blog. The overall institutional language-learning framing is represented in some postings but the linguistic repertoires are also framed more in line with the students' out-of-school social media vernacular into a kind of language play with humorous overtones comparable to mundane chatting (cf. e.g. Boyd, 2010; Kern, 2014; Thorne, 2011). The blog data reveal that the shifting of framing was sometimes done by the use of other languages (Latin, Swedish and Thai), which could be seen as a linguistic awareness entailing a certain amount of code-mixing (cf. Androutsopoulos, 2013). The postings and comments, therefore, show a continuous reframing of the activity with fluctuating linguistic repertoires illustrated by a cline from very institutional text types at one end of the scale to informal chat-inspired texts at the other end. Some students created a type of hybridity containing oral, written and sms conventions in one and the same post.

The postings that are characterized by language play in line with the students SNSs digital vernacular seem, from a student perspective, to be more interesting, triggering more comments. What is seen in such postings is not a traditional language competence from a school perspective but a communicative competence where the students practice an interaction of their everyday vernacular in a second language that becomes diverse and vigorous (cf., Christison & Murrey, 2014; Baym & Boyd, 2012; Blattner & Lomicka, 2012; Yang, 2011). We argue that SNSs as spaces to communicate are perhaps one of the few contexts that as part of a regular language learning class, logically and naturally, lend itself

to everyday communication in the targeted language. Currently, most students are used to social media communication in their native language (e.g., Erstad & Sefton-Green, 2013) and by implementing SNSs as spaces for practicing mundane communication in a second language, the students' out-of-school language competence become regarded as a valuable asset in the evolving forms of online interaction. Implementing SNSs can also contribute to opportunities for language teachers to engage in authentic linguistic discussions about language uses in various contexts, based on their students' digital vernacular.

In an international Blog as in this study it becomes natural and accepted to use English as a *lingua franca* even if the students' own classmates are the priority audience (cf., Lantz-Andersson, 2016). Thus, even if the students frame their interaction with a focus on their classmates as audience they adhere to the English language use. In this study it is shown by the comments that are generally from students of the same class since they often include culturally specific or local issues verging on a framing in line with out-of-school, SNS interaction. This finding is consistent with previous general research on social media practices, concluding that despite the potential for a larger audience, the interaction in SNS that is driven by friendship practices rather than special interests is usually done with people whom the users already know, as a way of acknowledging one another in a public space (Boyd, 2010; Davies, 2012; Lantz-Andersson, 2016; Lantz-Andersson et al., 2015; Vigmo & Lantz-Andersson, 2014). Thus, in this blog, both the Swedish students and Thai students use 'inside' jokes in their posts; this immediately generates the questions: who is their audience and who are they writing to? In this study, it appears that the students considered their peers as their primary audience, the local took precedence over the global aspect of the blog but the global is implicitly important for their continued use of English. The students' approaches to the local and contextual also led to some opportunities lost when it came to finding out more about each other. If this is one of the aims of connecting with other students in SNSs, the teacher has a role to play.

The playful languaging that takes place in the blog can be said to illustrate how the students see themselves as language brokers with both high stakes, as in an institutional context and low stakes where the non-educational use is where they are free to personalize their language. This living language use (Thorne, 2011) where the user employs fluctuating linguistic repertoires and vernacular challenge the traditional school language. This implies that the classroom use of English encounters the use of out-of-school English enabling the students to benefit from their digital vernacular and be more in charge of their learning (cf., Thomas, 2009). However, such language encounters are by no means seen as uncomplicated. Firstly, for students the tradition of schooling is strong and not easily challenged; students have learnt what is expected and act subsequently. Equally, it could not be taken for granted that students actually appreciate that their out-of-school contexts of SNSs move into schooling. Secondly, it is not easy for educators to keep up with the mutable, genre switching, code-mixing and fluctuating communicative repertoires on young people's SNSs; the online interactions are more complex and different from traditional classroom communication. However, it is important to keep in mind that teachers do not need to understand the full picture of the students' out-of-school digital vernacular but rather view such communication beyond traditional institutional language learning perspectives and appreciate the cultures-of-use in which certain repertoires are used for certain pragmatic goals; educators can embrace the possibilities of practicing mundane English (cf., Baym & Boyd, 2012; Blattner & Lomicka, 2012).

A further aspect is that the spontaneous and informal repertoires that the students use is often comparable to oral speech and by that quite linguistically simplistic from an educational language learning perspective. However, even though the language use might be informal including abbreviations, emoticons, links etc. it is often pragmatic and

displays a genre-sensitivity, even in a second language. Furthermore, and as already pointed out, previous research on students' out-of-school use of English in relation to their learning of English as a second language has shown that frequent out-of-school-users display an increased pragmatic awareness (e.g., Chun, 2011; Sundqvist & Sylvén, 2012; Ware & O'Dowd, 2008).

In sum, it can be said that the students framed the activity by using fluctuating communicative repertoires that were fluid and intertwined moving close to one another when engaging with the local, i.e. the peer audience and moving away to embrace the global. The challenges to the language educator concern on the one hand, not only questioning the pre-conceived notion that young people are interested in embracing social media in a school setting but also on the other hand, how this versatility can be used in a school setting and stimulated in ways that enhance their second language learning. In order to develop our understanding of what it means to be a learner of English as a second language and how education as an institution can relate to the powerful changes that the Internet and social media interaction imply, there is a need for further research that embraces the fact that the educational goals that are traditionally posed in institutional language-learning practices are significantly different from students' own activities on SNSs.

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