

## Building a multilingual niche: code-choice and code-alternation at the Day of Multilingual Blogging

### Construindo um nicho multilíngue: escolha e alternância de língua(s) no Dia do Blogue Multilíngue

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**ABSTRACT:** Blogging for the purpose of language learning is often done separately from existing blogging practices, in specialized and usually monolingual language-learning blogs. The integration of target language blogging into existing online practices needs to take into account a potential bias against multilingual online practices, as well as complications due to considerations of audience. Using the Day of Multilingual Blogging (DMB), a yearly event that encourages bloggers to use for one day a language not normally utilized for blogging, as a case study, this paper illuminates how bloggers achieve the introduction of new languages into their (often monolingual) pre-existing blogs. While DMB has no specific language learning agenda, an analysis of multilingual practices during DMB illustrates its potential for helping learners to create or extend a multilingual niche (ERARD, 2012), characterized as a context, (a) where multiple languages are used, (b) where multilingual practices are socially and materially rewarded, (c) where linguistic skills at any level have value, (d) and where language users can be ‘outsiders together’, which may benefit continued language practice. Participation in DMB will not automatically lead to the creation of a multilingual niche. Nonetheless, this case study illustrates important aspects of designing activities and events that support the development of such niches.

**RESUMO:** A utilização de blogues no ensino-aprendizagem de línguas é geralmente feita sem ter em conta práticas de uso de blogues já existentes, designadamente através do recurso a blogues de aprendizagem especializados e monolíngues. A integração do uso de blogues na língua-alvo em práticas pré-existentes necessita de ter em conta o potencial viés em relação a práticas on-line multilíngues, assim como considerações relacionadas com a audiência dos blogues. Usando o Dia do Blogue Multilíngue (DMB) – evento anual que encoraja os bloggers a usar uma língua diferente por um dia – como estudo de caso, esta contribuição ilustra as modalidades de introdução de novas línguas em blogues pré-existentes (e geralmente monolíngues). Se é verdade que o DMB não tem uma agenda específica de ensino-aprendizagem, uma análise das práticas plurilíngues desse dia evidencia o seu potencial em relação à criação e aumento de “niches multilíngues” (ERARD, 2012), caracterizados como contextos em que, (a) diversas línguas são usadas, (b) as práticas multilíngues são socialmente e materialmente valorizadas, (c) quaisquer competências linguísticas têm valor, e (d) os utilizadores se podem considerar “outsiders together”, favorecendo a continuidade das práticas multilíngues. A participação no DMB não conduz, porém, automaticamente à criação de “niches multilíngues”. No entanto, este estudo de caso ilustra aspetos importantes do desenho de actividades e de eventos que podem estimular o desenvolvimento desses “niches”.

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**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** Blogue multilíngue. *Code-switching*. Arranjos não-formais.

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## 1. Introduction

Blogs may be one of the most researched technologies in computer-assisted language learning (CALL) (GRGUROVIĆ; CHAPELLE; SHELLEY, 2013). Mostly, they are seen as writing (as opposed to reading, but cf. DUCATE; LOMICKA, 2008) spaces, where learners can write in the target language (rarely in the source language) and receive feedback on or encouragement for their writing through comments.

So far, research on blog-assisted language learning (BALL) mostly focuses on formal learning contexts, such as blogging as part of a university or school language course. In these settings, blogging usually takes place in a specialized blog – individual blog, group blog or class blog – that has been created specifically and exclusively for educational use. Furthermore, choice of language may be predetermined by the teacher.

Few studies look at non-formal (WERQUIN, 2007) settings such as activities accompanying a school-based exchange (DUCATE; LOMICKA, 2005), or a language-learning blogging community used outside of formal contexts (non-formal learning) (BUENDGENS-KOSTEN, 2016). Even here, though, blogging in the target language takes place in specialized blogs only used for this purpose.

Informal blogging practices, on the other hand, have been studied extensively, but not with an eye on language learning. Language choice, especially language alternation, is addressed in these contexts, but usually from a sociolinguistic rather than a language pedagogy or CALL perspective.

For other forms of social media, such as Facebook use (ALM, 2013) or fanfiction communities (BLACK, 2006) we have first results that suggest specific forms of informal use of these services might support language learning (also see SOCKETT, 2014, for a general consideration of online communities for online informal learning of English (OILE)). But opportunities of informal language learning via blogs, or inclusion of non-scholastically oriented blogs in considerations of BALL, remain understudied.

This paper argues that blogs, especially non-scholastically oriented blogs, have the potential to breach the formal vs. informal learning gap. The author argues that if this is done successfully, blogs can help create or extend a “multilingual niche” (ERARD, 2012). One

example of how this may be achieved – the Day of Multilingual Blogging – is presented and analyzed.

## **2. Theoretical overview**

### **2.1 Informal practices benefitting language learning & the role of multilingual niches**

In the context of discussing the linguistic practices of “hyperpolyglots”, individuals purposefully learning a large number of languages, often without imminent need, Erard (2012) names factors that support the development and maintenance of high degrees of multilingualism. As one supporting factor, he names the multilingual “niche”, a context “where multiple languages are used, and where learning and using them are socially and materially rewarded”, and where, potentially, “a ‘something and something’ view of languages—where one’s capacity in languages, at whatever level, is regarded as meaningful multilingualism” may hold (ERARD, 2012, p. 260f). These contexts allow individuals to “create a social inside”, where hyperpolyglots (and, as I argue, language learners more generally) “can all be outsiders together”.

It is well-known that informal practices outside of school – e.g. Sockett's (2014) “Online Informal Learning of English” (OILE) – can benefit language learners. Some of these informal out-of-school practices require only fundamental linguistic skills to get started, while others require fairly high levels of linguistic skill in the target language for participation. A multilingual niche, with its “something and something” view of language, is similar in this regard. The view of participants as “language users” rather than as “language learners”, common in both task-based language learning and OILE (SOCKETT, 2014, p. 14), also applies here.

It is not necessary, I would argue, to wait for multilingual niches to appear spontaneously. Multilingual niches can potentially be created intentionally, that is, constructed with the purpose of establishing an environment in which languages can be used. Some example in Erard’s book present individuals which found themselves in life circumstances that supported these multilingual niches. Other examples, though, show individuals intentionally building or joining communities of like-minded language learners. Definitely, a multilingual niche can be the outcome of intentional action, which might be initiated by a teacher, as long as the learner takes ownership over the activities and the multilingual niche itself. In that sense, any support in building a multilingual niche can be seen as a step towards increasing learner autonomy.

Blogs – just like any other form of social media – can be one of the tools for the construction of a multilingual niche.

## **2.2 Multilingual practices in informal online settings: code choice, code-alternation and the monolingual bias**

To understand the challenges to be overcome when developing a multilingual niche through blogs it is important to look at the norms governing non-scholastic blogging practice.

It is well-known that individuals with language skills in more than one language (regardless of the point in life at which they acquired or learned these skills) have a range of multilingual practices at their disposal. Code-alternation, “the cover term of all instances of locally functional language usage of two languages in an interactional episode” (AUER, 1984, p. 7) (by some authors also referred to as code-switching), is one of these. Code-alternation can happen in conversations, but it can also be used in a variety of written texts, from chat messages to letters to blog posts.

The default, it seems, is the association of one blog=one language, or at least one blogpost=one language, e.g. “Young bilingual writers seem to favour processes other than code-switching: either they have two blogs in parallel, each in one language, or they resort to translations” (LIENARD; PENLOUP, 2011), with violation of this norm primarily by “those without the linguistic resources to do otherwise or (sic!) else those doing so out of provocation, to assert their youth identity (...).” (LIENARD; PENLOUP, 2011, p. 83).

When multiple languages are used within a blog, they will often be kept symbolically or structurally distinct. In the language learning blogging community ‘Lang-8’, writing parallel texts, in which the exact same text is presented in the target language and in the source language, either as en bloc translations or, more rarely, interlinear translation (alternating each sentence in language A with its translation in language B), was so popular, that a later version of the online community added explicit affordances to include both source and target language in one blog post, yet keeping them structurally and symbolically separate (BUENDGENS-KOSTEN, 2016).

Not all bloggers or blog readers agree on the norms that should govern language choice on blogs, but there is evidence that opinions held in that regard can be quite strong. Montes-Alcalá (2007) mentions examples of the explicit negotiation in blogs of the acceptability of blogging in more than one language, ranging from strict opposition (except to changing

languages in between blog posts, as long as each language can be retrieved individually), to strong acceptance. In all cases, though, the preference is stated quite strongly, e.g. “Mixtures of languages in individual pages, no, that's not OK.” (FERNANDEZ, 2004, quoted in MONTES-ALCALÁLA, 2007, p. 163). The fact that some multilingual practices draw criticism does, of course, assume the existence of these practices.

Blogs differ in the degree of conceptual literacy/conceptual orality realized within them (konzeptionelle Varianz/conceptual variance, cf. KOCH; OESTERREICHER, 2007). Overall, blog communication tends to be less strongly connected to conceptual orality than e.g. chat communication, with many bloggers using a fairly formal register, paying attention to orthography, and practicing careful editing. The range of usage that can be observed on blogs is very broad, though, so this certainly does not apply to all blogs equally. The variance in the degree of conceptual literacy and formality of register observed may account for some variation in the acceptability of certain code-alternation (or alternation-avoidance) patterns.

Another aspect that will affect code-choice on blogs is certainly that of audience conceptualizations. Many social networks allow careful addressing of sub-audiences through means such as circles, or through the distinction between timeline posts and direct messaging, which has been shown to be used to maintain distinct spaces for different languages (ALM, 2013, p. 3). These options do not exist in the same way for blogs. If you post something on your blog, unless you protect it with a password shared only with specific individuals, everybody can access the same post. This, in turn, may mean that you cannot easily address only sub-parts of your audience, understood here as the conceptualized audience (audience on the mind of the blogger).

Audience conceptualizations contain assumptions about the linguistic skills and preferences of one's imagined audience. If bloggers assume that all of their readers are monolingual speakers of German, they will refrain from writing in English (cf. ALM, 2013, p. 3). On the other hand, if the audience is conceptualized as potentially multilingual or as consisting of groups with different linguistic skills, other choices may become possible.

### **2.3 Ownership & the multilingual niche**

Ownership, specifically psychological ownership, is a psychological state characterized, among other things, by a feeling that something is “mine” or “ours”. Many things can be objects of psychological ownership, including tools, tasks, people, and institutions. Many didactic

designs in computer-assisted learning contexts strive to design tasks or environments for which learners can develop ownership.

Pierce et al. discuss what factors help the development of ownership: “viable targets of ownership are those whose attributes can facilitate the acts of individuals controlling, coming to know, and investing the self into them” (PIERCE; KOSTOVA; DIRKS, 2003, p. 94).

Learners generally have psychological ownership over the tools, including the digital tools, they use every day outside of educational settings. If they are to be used for educational contexts, though, this can clash with feelings of ownership, or can undermine feelings of ownership, for example if control over an object such as a blog by the learner is strongly limited, and if the content and form of required blog posts are in contradiction to one’s preferred form of self-expression. Breaching the gap between formal and non-formal learning is attractive, but needs to be designed in ways that do not threaten perceived ownership in the digital tools used. Anecdotal evidence also shows that inclusion of out-of-school digital tools in educational settings can create resistance due to a perceived domain violation. Learners may prefer to keep school and non-school activities, relationships, or digital tools compartmentalized. As one student expressed in the study by Wang et al. on educational use of social networks: “Its use as a LMS adversely interferes with normal social interactions (e.g. Why would I want people to know that I responded to some posts on an educational topic when I just want them to see pictures of my kids playing around.)” (WANG; WOO; QUEK; YANG; LIU, 2012, p. 433). Jones et al., who interviewed 14 university students, also found that “they refuse to use social software for learning due to their separation of ‘life’ and ‘studying’ or ‘home’ and ‘lectures’” (JONES; BLACKKEY; FITZGIBBON; CHEW, 2010, p. 779).

Didactic designs that require using non-school digital tools such as personal blogs or Facebook accounts therefore need to be sensitive concerning ownership, and the individuals’ preferences regarding different life domains. This is even more the case when the intention is not just to use a specific online service for a short-term language learning project, but to support learners in building their very own multilingual niches – multilingual niches that are viable outside the classroom setting. Tasks that do not lend themselves to be adapted in such a way that they fit the learners’ preferences for their online lives (subject matter, style, posting frequency, choice of medium & choice of language(s)), can do more harm than good.

In the following sections I will argue that DMB, the Day of Multilingual Blogging, is an example of a language learning and language use-focused event that creates a multilingual space in previously monolingual areas of (online) life, preserving ownership by encouraging participation without overregulating, and that thereby functions as a step towards the development or extension of a multilingual niche.

### 3. Day of multilingual blogging

The DMB – Day of Multilingual Blogging<sup>1</sup> – has been organized since 2010 by the European Commission in the UK, London office. It was established in 2010 as an event co-occurring with the “European Day of Languages”<sup>2</sup>. In a European Commission press release on the “European Day of Languages 2010” event page it was described as follows: “People who blog on EU issues are invited to produce a blog in different languages for European Day of Languages” (European Commission, 2010, p. 17). It was organized through the European Commission in the UK Facebook page, where users could register for the virtual event, post links to their blogposts, and discuss the event. While the press release text focused on “People who blog on EU issues”, no such focus was included in the Facebook page’s 2010 event announcement: “Let’s highlight the importance of the European Day of Languages by blogging in another language. If you don’t feel comfortable writing in another language, why not find a guest? Or do a video?”

As stated above, in this early phase, the DMB took place on September 26, i.e. on the European Day of Languages. After a gap in 2011, it was moved to a separate day in November in 2012, and may be considered independent from the European Day of Languages since then. The last DMB took place in 2014.

Through all the years of DMB, the focus of announcement texts lay on blogging “in a language other than their usual”. The only categories explicitly listed are “native language” and “other language skills”. Anybody who speaks more than one language (or dialect) may feel included in this, which, in the European setting, may encompass language learners, heritage

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<sup>1</sup> The terminology used to refer to this event varies from year to year, and also between individuals: „Day of Multilingual Blogging”, “Multilingual Blogging Day”, “European Day of Multilingual Blogging”, “European Multilingual Blogging Day” have all been used as official labels. For this paper, the term “Day of Multilingual Blogging”/“DMB” has been adopted.

<sup>2</sup> The European Day of Languages is a yearly event declared by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, taking place each year since 2001 (i.e. since the European Year of Languages) on September 26 (Council of Europe, 2001).

language speakers, individuals from multilingual countries or areas, minority language speakers or anybody else with a plurilingual background or developing plurilingual skills, potentially including multidialectal individuals. The option to include guest bloggers, mentioned explicitly in 2010 and 2013, or even to embed media, as suggested in 2010, opens up this event for even larger population groups.

In addition to this official channel of organization via the EC/UK Facebook page, there has also been a strong factor of semi-official community organization. According to the European Commission in the UK [Facebook Account] (personal correspondence, September 1st 2014), “The EMBD was a semi-personal project by our colleague Antonia who has now left the European Commission.” Antonia Mochan, “Head of Media (subsequently head of Communication)” of the UK in EC representation, has organized DMB participation through her personal blog “Talking about the EU” (euonym.wordpress.com, later <http://euonym.eu/>) since 2010, and continued to do so, up until 2014, after leaving the EC in UK representation. This way, “Talking about the EU” can be viewed as a hub for blog-based interactions during DMB.

As discussed above, studies on BALL tend to focus on formal (rarely: non-formal) learning settings, i.e. language learning blogs specifically created for a language learning context, written with the expectation of being evaluated as course work, including prescribed language choice. DMB, on the other hand, encourages bloggers to use a language in a context where it is not usually employed, allowing learners to showcase their language skills and to reflect about their linguistic repertoire within their normal, non-language-learning-focused blogs. This way, DMB could serve as a means not only to celebrate multilingualism/plurilingualism, but to support the development of further language skills by building a multilingual niche.

#### **4. DMB & multilingual niche**

To study DMB as a case study of an event that potentially supports the development or extension of a multilingual niche, we will look at a corpus of blog posts created during DMB, which will be supplemented by close reading of these blogs, relevant documents, and considerations of blogosphere norms and traditions.

We will approach this data with four foci, based on the definition of multilingual niche provided above, looking at DMB as:



- a context where multiple languages are used
- a context where multilingual practices are socially and materially rewarded
- a context where linguistic skills at any level have value
- a context where language users can be ‘outsiders together’

#### 4.1 Data basis

Data collection was based on a list of blogs registered by bloggers for DMB 2013 by entering blog information on a Google Docs-based form linked to from the euonym.eu blog (<http://euonym.eu/day-of-multilingual-blogging-2/dmb2013/>). This list does not cover all bloggers that may have participated in DMB, but merely those who self-registered on a private blog. Self-registration in this context is important, as by self-registration participants expressed that they understood their blog post as a contribution to DMB rather than as an ‘accidentally’ multilingual/plurilingual blog post.

The euonym-blog list of participants – rather than e.g. the EC in UK event page on Facebook – was chosen as data basis since this blog (supported by a Facebook page and a Twitter account maintained by Antonia Mochan) functioned as an important hub in the 2013 and in several preceding DMBs. Compared to the EC in UK Facebook page, this data set is more extensive, with 53 compared to 26 (not all of which could be easily linked to the relevant blog) registrations.

All 53 blogs included in the publicly available Google Doc list were checked for DMB-related blog posts<sup>3</sup>. Relevant blog posts were all blog posts written on or close to November 15<sup>th</sup> and being a recognizable contribution to DMB, with recognizable contribution defined as:

- explicitly mentions “DMB“, “EMBD” or „babel13“ (or variant)
- or deviates in language use from customary language choice (e.g. Dutch blog post in an English-language-based blog),
- or demonstrates any multilingual practice, or form of code-alternation (beyond mentioning linguistic features or vocabulary as part of language instruction)<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> At the time of data collection, during the first half of 2014, some websites did no longer host blogs, and were consequently excluded from analysis.

<sup>4</sup> A blog posting regular target language vocabulary suggestions was not included in the data set.

If a blog contained multiple blog posts written on November 15<sup>th</sup> and at least one blog post was included, all other blog posts were also included. Also, blog posts providing a translation or alternative language version of any of the above, independently from the date on which they were posted, were included as well.

In a second step, corporate blogs were excluded from the sample. Corporate blogs are understood here as “as a (primarily textual) blog used in an institutional context to further organizational goals” (PUSCHMANN, 2010, p. 15). In this case study, a wide range of institutions, including project groups and NGOs, were considered ‘corporate’ and therefore excluded.

23 blogs were identifiable as personal blogs with valid (as defined above) DMB contributions. Several of these are represented in the dataset by multiple relevant blog posts, resulting in a total of 42 blogposts. Table 1 shows the number of DMB blogposts per blog.

Further blog posts, e.g. those specifically discussing plans for participating in DMB, were collected as supplementary material. Extensive reading of the blog overall supplements the in-depth analysis of the DMB blog posts identified.

Table 1– DMB blogposts per blog.

Number of posts	1	2	3	4	5	6
#	15	3	1	3	0	1
%	65.2%	13.0%	4.4%	13.0%	0%	4.4%

All blogs were available to the general public. The public nature of these texts makes it acceptable to use them without prior informed consent by the authors (RODHAM; GAVIN, 2006). The content of the blog posts studied was of a non-controversial nature, i.e. contained no discussion of criminal activity, controversial political topics or sexual preferences/activities, which might demand additional care on the side of the researcher. The age of most bloggers could not be established, the general impression (based e.g. on profile pictures, content, biographical information provided etc.) is that bloggers were 18 years or older. One blogger poses an exception here: He identified himself as aged 16 when starting to blog, and as aged 17 at the point of analysis (August 2014). His behaviour on the blog (e.g. actively engaging commenters) implies an understanding of the public nature of blogs and blogging. The blog was therefore maintained in the sample.

The resulting corpus includes 42 blog posts from 23 blogs, with an average length of posts of 682 words, with a minimum of 53 and a maximum of 1959.

All personal blogs were written by one blogger, i.e. none of them were group blogs. According to explicit statements of gender by the blogger, gender-specific first names used by the blogger, or pictures of the blogger that appeared to imply the expression of a specific gender, seven authors (30%) were male, 15 female (65%). For one blog (4%) no data concerning author gender is available. As stated above, bloggers do not usually specify their age, but all but one (discussed above) appeared to be adults at the time of posting, based on e.g. the content matter, author pictures or biographical information provided.

Blog-genres are often defined through the content of a blog e.g. war blogs (political blogs written post 9/11), travel blogs, or science blogs. What kind of blogs – based on content matter – are included in the sample?

Table 2 – Overview over topics (one blog can cover multiple topics).

Topic	No of Blogs
Language	9
Travel/culture	5
Europe/EU/EC	5
Hobbies/Crafts	4
Daily life	3
Social media	2
Other	4

Table 2 shows the core topics of the blogs analysed here. Blogs could combine more than one topic as long each of these topics was still identifiable as a recurrent theme throughout the blog by frequent blog posts on that topic, reference to the topic in the blog title or “About section”, etc. “Other” subsumes topics covered only by a single blog: libraries/library science, autobiographical, literature, and business/personal development.

Nine blogs had a language-related topic such as learning languages, teaching languages, translation, and multilingual families. DMB seems to be especially attractive for individuals that are interested in language or have an increased awareness of the societal role of language. Only five blogs had an explicit European focus, which might be considered a small number if the strong European focus of the original DMB-announcement, which invited “People who blog

on EU issues”, is taken into account. Indeed, DMB did *not* seem to function primarily as a platform for the ‘political’ Europe, e.g. EC or EU politics. Rather, many blogs had more implicit European undertones. For example, B023, a cooking blog by a person living in Brussels (seat of the European Commission, Council of the European Union, European Council and second seat of the European Parliament, sometimes considered the unofficial capital of Europe), does not merely present the recipes and cultural background information (e.g. explaining the role of kale dishes in some parts of Germany and the rituals associated with eating them), but also comments on where ingredients that are common in one European country can be found on the supermarket shelves in other countries. That is, cooking is embedded in a context of inner-European mobility. Generally speaking, inner-European mobility – while not an explicit topic in most blogs – seemed to be disproportionately often mentioned in passing in blogpost on a diverse range of topics. Personal connections – that influence how information about DMB flows from one blogger to the next – might have been influential here, as might be an increased interest in European events or language-related events by individuals who have lived or worked in multiple countries.

#### 4.2 A context where multiple languages are used

To see if DMB created a context in which multiple languages are used, it makes sense to check the language(s) in which DMB blog posts are written. Before DMB 2013 (and excluding blogs from previous DMB participations), the majority (20 blogs) were English-language based, one blog was in French, two blogs were multilingual (English + Dutch, English + French + Romanian).

During DMB, a wide range of languages and varieties were used, including Dutch, English, Finnish, Finland Swedish, French, Irish Gaelic, Galician, German, Italian, Lingua franca nova, Luxembourgish, Portuguese, Romanian, Spanish, and Swedish<sup>5</sup>.

While not every blogger provided enough information to create individual language profiles, based on explanations within the blogposts we can determine that the languages in this sample included native languages and local varieties, heritage languages, languages acquired through formal schooling, as well as languages currently being learned (including by independent study). Language skill in using these languages and varieties differed significantly,

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<sup>5</sup> The corporate blogs excluded from analysis had an even wider number of languages, either through guest bloggers, or by decorative language use, i.e. use of a long list of greetings/vocabulary items in different languages.

some bloggers commenting on this in a self-deprecating way: “et pas un mot dans mon accent français de *vache espagnol*” [and not a word on my awful French accent] (B018)

Considering the norms regarding language choice on blogs, including questions of audience conceptualization, it makes one wonder how bloggers achieved this feat: How they included additional languages in their mostly monolingual blogs? In the rest of this section, therefore, I will discuss language choice and language alternation patterns in the blog posts. This has not the function to serve sociolinguistic curiosity, but to identify the strategies that bloggers utilized to balance their use of more than one language with the norms and expectations outlined above.

To simplify discussion, the languages a blog has customarily been written in prior to DMB 2013 will be referred to “blog language(s)”, while those languages used during DMB that are not blog languages will be referred to as “DMB language(s)”.

Note that merely the blogposts, including all elements such as header, but excluding images, embedded video, metadata and comments on those blogposts (by readers or by the author(s)) were analyzed. Software-generated elements within the blogposts (e.g. statements about author, date, keywords) were excluded from analysis. This means that concerning these excluded dimensions, the overall complexity of code-choice and code-alternation is lost, and the overall extent of code-alternation may be slightly underreported.

Looking at the exact patterns of language choice and language alternation in the corpus, we find 7 basic types, falling into two major categories. Table 3 gives an overview over the arrangements identified, which will be explained in more detail below.

#### *A: One Blogpost = One Language*

In each blogpost, only one language is used. The totality of blogposts, though, can exhibit multilingual practices when viewed together. There are two types of this:

*Type 1: DMB language only.* Some blog posts (Nine blog posts in five blogs) were stand-alone posts entirely in the DMB language.

*Type 2: Translation set.* Translation sets were two or more blog posts of (mostly) identical content and wording, that were either created as set for DMB, or that came into existence as an older post was translated for DMB. Each blog post as seen isolated from other

posts may seem to be an example of Type 1, but in the context of the blog (e.g. the next day's blog post providing the translation) the difference becomes clear.

Five translation sets in five blogs (resulting in 13 blog posts) could be identified in the data. These tend to be monolingual, but, one translation set included a short explanation in the blog language, and another translation set featured some decorative code-alternation, where the links to other pages of the set were labelled with the names *of* the languages *in* the languages, e.g. "This post is also available en français, as gaeilge, en español o em galego."

### *B: One Blogpost = Multiple Languages*

In total, four ways to arrange more than one language in the same blogpost could be observed.

*Type 1: DMB-language + explanation.* Some blog posts were very similar to the One Blogpost = One Language Type 1 posts discussed above, but had short explanations in the blog-language(s) that supplied a context for the remaining text. Seven blog posts did this, among them all blog posts written by a single guest blogger, and many by guest translators. Notably, this category, combined with One Blogpost = One Language Type 1 can be found in half of all blogs (12 out of 23

These introductory or concluding remarks in the blog-language reflect concerns about audience. Bloggers who usually write in a specific language may conceptualize their readers as individuals speaking (at least, but possibly limited to) this language. Also, including a second language in a normally monolingual blog is a deviation from routine language use that many bloggers seem to perceive as requiring an explanation. This explanation, then, is often delivered in the customary blog language to address those readers who have come to expect this language as blog language. One may say that here the conflicting values of 'One Blogpost = One Language' and 'Writing in the language the audience understands' clashed and led to blog posts in a DMB language with an introduction in a blog language.

*Type 2: Parallel texts.* This type of 'compressed translation set' is very rare in the data, as most instances of translation work were realized as separate blog posts. Only one blogger used classic *en bloc* translation (BUENDGENS-KOSTEN, 2016), following a block of text in one language by a translation into the other language. Another blogger used a blog-language

introduction followed by a poem, followed by the translation of that poem. Interlinear translation (alternating each sentence in language A with its translation in language B) was not used at all.

Another type of translation work could be observed, but was counted as Type 1 monolingual blog post: the blogger had asked somebody to translate a text, and posted only the translation, resulting in a monolingual text.

*Type 3: Full use of two languages.*

It was exceedingly rare to find texts that used more than one language in a pattern that felt organic, reminiscent of conversational code-alternations. In conversations, after all, it would be rather atypical (in most settings) to announce and explain a code-alternation, or – except in rare settings – to do word-by-word translations of one’s utterances.

One blogger uses an intricate combination of Italian and English text parts in such a way that to follow her content completely, you need to be bilingual. In four blog posts, all centred on the notion of “secret language” and full of allusions to detectives/crime solving/mysteries (very fittingly, as, by using what may be a ‘secret language’ for some learners, she creates a riddle for them to solve), the author alternates between languages in units of paragraphs or larger. She may, for example, present the first part of an interview with a bilingual author in English, and the second part in Italian, or write about her daughter’s experience with being bilingual English-Italian in English, and then reflect about her own bilingualism in Italian.

Two other bloggers use intersentential (below the paragraph level) and intrasentential switches to a high degree. Both bloggers use strategies that may alleviate the perceived norm violation. B018 inoculates against charges of imperfect language skills (“mon accent francais de vache espagnol” [my awful French accent]), while B001b uses code-alternations in a blog post on code-switching, creating a union of form and content.

*Type 4: Portfolio.* Two blogposts contained multiple languages in a pattern that might be described as *language portfolio*: Short segments in different languages, constituting a list of languages spoken by a person, or within a group.

Note that all three contributions in this category are *reflections about language* that describe where languages were learned, when they are used, and what they mean to the person.

At the point of in-depth analysis, several more blog posts were excluded. One blogpost was posted on a blog together with that blog's DMB contribution, but did not, itself, appear to be a DMB contribution (B010). Another blog demonstrated the limits of the *blog language* – *DMB language* distinction for multilingual blogs. This blog customarily used three languages, often in translation sets. Among the five DMB blogposts, two (B008a, B008b) formed a translation set, two (008, 008c) were in one of the customary blog languages. The first two were counted as translation set (even though they did not differ notably from normal blog practices within this blog), the other two were not included as instances of code-alternation, as, strictly speaking, both were monolingual posts in blog languages (not DMB languages).

For a summary, see Table 3.

Table 3 – Summary of code-choice and code-alternation patterns (blogs could exhibit more than one pattern).

Category	Type	Number of blog posts	Number of blogs
One Blogpost = One Language	Type 1: DMB language only	9	5
	Type 1: translation set	13	5
One Blogpost = Multiple Languages	<b>Type 1: DMB-language + explanations</b>	7	7
	Type 2: Parallel texts	2	2
	Type 3: Full use of two languages	6	3
	Type 4: Portfolio	2	2

The patterns of code-alternation and code-choice outlined above are quite diverse, but three patterns emerge as dominant: blog posts written entirely in one DMB language, blog posts written in one DMB language with a short comment in a blog language, and blog posts that are part of a translation set, i.e. are monolingual in one DMB language or the blog language. In other words: While many texts include, strictly speaking, two languages, the second language sometimes does nothing more than announce a change in language choice. Ignoring introductory sections in the blog language, which serve to provide some context and explanation for long-time readers and may also have the function of justifying a deviation from normal language use, the norm of One Blogpost = One Language, in a less strict interpretation, appears to be influential here.



Some bloggers choose patterns that deviate from the ‘One Blogpost = One Language’ norm. In this data set one can notice that these more ‘adventurous’ patterns are often used in a content context that helps to legitimize these choices. Using two languages in a blog post in such a way that for complete comprehension one needs to understand both languages may meet resistance. Yet, in a context created by words such as “mystery”, “cloak and dagger”, “secret language” and “detective” (B014, B014b), content in a language not easily understood by every reader fits the theme: Language alternation provides a practical demonstration of “mystery”.

The same can be observed in portfolio-style blogs: Writing *about* the languages in your life *in* the languages in your life seems to be a legitimate rhetorical choice, just as to practice intersentential code-switching in a blogpost on the topic of code-switching. The level of controversy of code-choice and code-alternation patterns may depend on a number of factors, one of which may be the specific content of the blogpost.

Writing in a specific language does not only reveal something about the writers, but also about their imagined audience (ONG, 1975). Many bloggers who wrote entire articles in the DMB language nonetheless included short introductions in the blog language to accommodate their readership as they conceptualized it. Yet, an event like DMB might also change audience conceptualizations, for example, by letting bloggers notice that there are audiences attracted by e.g. a specific language or dialect. One blogger, who had posted during DMB in a range of languages, including in Finland-Swedish, noticed: “My dialect post had so many reads and comments that I decided to set up a separate blog for it (...) It’s a challenge as there are no rules for how to write the dialect, but I thoroughly enjoy it and it helps me keep in touch with people back home in Finland”. A food blogger posted her first recipe in her native German in addition to her customary English during DMB 2013 – and continued posting recipes in both languages one year later. At least for these two bloggers, DMB 2013 had an effect that went beyond being ‘Multilingual for a day’. Their audience conceptualizations have changed. Changing one’s audience conceptualizations, or developing strategies to insert content in another language while maintaining existing audience conceptualizations (DMB-language + explanation, uses of different types of translation work), can help a blogger to build a multilingual niche for themselves.

### 4.3 A context where multilingual practices are socially and materially rewarded

The two examples presented above where a permanently changed blogging behaviour occurred after DMB already imply that bloggers perceive rewards from their participation in DMB, rewards that can motivate them to continue this practice. One of them linked their changed practice specifically to “many reads and comments”. On the internet, attention (in the form of website visits or clicks, comments or links) is valuable, either literally, in the case of monetized blogs (more attention for the blog can lead to more advertising revenue), or figuratively, as a source of status, or simply a feeling of social embeddedness.

An analysis of explicit reasons bloggers provided for participating in DMB suggests two more needs that DMB-related practices can meet. The first one is the wish to express a positive evaluation – or even celebration – of linguistic diversity and/or multilingualism, either generally, or regarding specific languages<sup>6</sup>:

Blogger können diesen Tag nutzen, um auf die **wunderbare** Vielfalt der Sprachen im Web hinzuweisen, indem sie in einer anderen Sprache als üblich schreiben. (...) **Zur Feier des Tages** verfasse ich diesen Beitrag auf Deutsch, der Sprache, aus der ich sonst ins Englische übersetze. (B024)

[Bloggers can use this day to point out the **wonderful** diversity of languages on the web by writing in another language than customary. (...) **To celebrate this day**, I write this post in German, the language from which I usually translate into English.]

Since languages are a huge part of my life, my contribution will be **a reflection on the languages in my life and what they mean to me**, in the respective language of course. (B011)

“Deuxième article en français (dis-je en toute fierté). Quoi, seulement deux articles en français sur mon blog? À croire franchement que j’ai étudié les langues romanes en vain et je ne daigne même pas montrer mon amour envers celles-ci. Du grand n’importe quoi (grand changement de registre là, du coup)!

Bon, pour arranger tout ça et pour en même temps faire honneur à la Day of Multilingual Blogging (DMB), j’ai décidé d’écrire dans d’autres langues que l’anglais. Cette journée est en fait dédiée au multilinguisme et encourage les bloggeurs à écrire dans une langue autre que celle maternelle ou bien justement écrire dans leur langue maternelle si ce n’est pas le cas.” (B001b)

[Second article in French (I say proudly). What, just two French articles on my blog? One might believe that I have studied the romance languages in vain and do not even deign myself to show my love for them (sudden strong change in register)! Well, to take care of all this and to, at the same time, honour the Day of Multilingual

<sup>6</sup> In the following quotes, all emphasis mine.

Blogging (DMB), I have decided to write in another language than English. This day has in fact been dedicated to multilingualism and encourages bloggers to write in another language than their native language or to just write in their native language if that is not the case.]

Another aspect is the desire for opportunities to use/practice a DMB language in a meaningful setting:

I have been looking forward to blogging for the European Day for Multilingual Blogging **and trying out my French for a real purpose**. There is a French version of this blog post here if you are interested. Since I studied French (and German) many years ago, the times to use my French have been seldom and it is only since I have started visiting France regularly again that I have realised just how much I really love France. **To write in French once again is a pleasure, even if I do get some of the words wrong!** (B017a)

The blogger wants to use her French “for a real purpose”, echoing the notion of functional authenticity (BUENDGENS-KOSTEN, 2013). She notes that she rarely uses her French skills, even though she likes the language, perhaps indicating she is currently lacking a ‘niche’ for French, which DMB provided for her.

To summarize: In addition to potential monetary rewards and social/emotional rewards through an increase in attention to one’s blog, participation is seen as an opportunity to celebrate specific languages or languages in general, as a societal or personal phenomenon (akin to a “Linguistic Pride Parade”), and as a valuable opportunity to use them/practice them in a meaningful context.

#### 4.4 A context where linguistic skills at any level have value

The texts submitted for DMB reflect a wide range of linguistic skills, from basic to advanced. Several bloggers mention explicitly that their language skills in the DMB language are not perfect:

To write in French once again is a pleasure, even if I do get some of the words wrong! (B017a)

et pas un mot dans mon accent francais de *vache espagnol* [and not a word on my awful French accent] (B018)

For participation in DMB, strictly speaking *no* language skills in another language are needed: A post written in multiple languages can be either an expression of individual skills in more than one language, as well of the skills of different individuals. The same applies to a set of posts in complementary languages. In other words: A blogpost using multiple languages or a blog presenting monolingual posts in a wide range of languages can showcase the linguistic skills of one person, or it can demonstrate the diverse linguistic skills shared between different people. That is, the blogger of B008/B008a/B008b/B008c, who blogs in Romanian, French, and English, posits himself as a multilingual person. The author of B010e, whose text is also presented in four guest translations (B010a/B010b/B010c/B010d), demonstrates linguistic diversity across people: Each translation has a short introduction presenting the translator. The same can be observed in contexts where multiple languages were used in a single blogpost. 15 blogs drew their multilingualism exclusively from the individual's multilingual skills, 7 utilized a guest blogger, guest translator or used quotes to add another language. One blogger combined both approaches.

It may seem, at first, as if only the first approach carried potential for language learning. On the other hand, editing a text in another language, perhaps using receptive skills or intercomprehension skills to select a fitting quote, is also a part of the plurilingual skill set as envisioned by the Council of Europe (2001, p. 4f).

At DMB, the ability of individuals to contribute was not limited by an “all and all” view of language. Participation did not require any skills in another language, and even very basic skills, e.g. receptive skills or the ability to use individual phrases copied from a phrase book, could lead to legitimate DMB contributions. At the same time, even very advanced language users (including those that used their native language as DMB language) could contribute at their level and reap the same social and emotional rewards as all other participants.

#### **4.5 A context where language users can be ‘outsiders together’**

Much of today's instructional material –with the exception of ELF and some Business English materials –has a strong native speaker focus, reflecting a desire for cultural authenticity (BUENDGENS-KOSTEN, 2013, p. 278). Typically, the main characters in a textbook are native speakers, living in ‘the’ target language country. The implication being, that ‘real language’ spoken by ‘real native speakers’ is the norm that learners should aspire to. Sometimes, there is a variant of this, focusing on an exchange student or visitor interacting with

native speakers in ‘the’ target language country. There, again, it is the native speaker who is in the spotlight as the object of communication and arbiter of communicative effectiveness and correctness. Even though learners are in a classroom full of learners, they remain outsiders to the language.

Erard (2012, see also NILEP, 2009) describes a language learning club popular in Japan, the Hippo Family Club, as an example of how learners create a language-course-like situation in which they are all outsiders together, and in which each person’s contribution is valued as a legitimate piece of language use. Online – and increasingly offline – forums, blogs and meet-ups for competitive and/or repeat language learners (e.g. the How to learn any language community (<http://how-to-learn-any-language.com/>), or the Fluent in 3 months forum (<http://www.fluentin3months.com/forum>)) also tend towards building such communities, just with less of the explicit language practice element found in Hippo Club.

DMB is unlike such language clubs, or even virtual language learning communities. It is too transient, too peripheral, to make the formation of a true community of language users likely. If the event had not been discontinued after 2014, perhaps the fact that this was a yearly recurrent event may have, over time, led to a (virtual) community structure, with (a) active, self-sustaining participation around a core of regular participants, (b) evidence of shared history, culture, norms and values, (c) solidarity and support, as evidenced by, for instance, humour, positive politeness, and reciprocity, (d) criticism, conflict, and the emergence of means of conflict resolution, (e) self-awareness of the group as an entity that is distinct from other groups, and (f) emergence of roles, rituals, and hierarchies (HERRING, 2004, p. 355f).

Overall, DMB is more like an event, such as a neighbourhood party or a carnival, and as such, it creates a time and a space during which standards for appropriate behaviour change. Going to work wearing a pirate costume will usually draw negative responses. At just the right times and locations, on the other hand, this is not just acceptable, but will even be socially rewarded. DMB is a carnival for languages: If I suddenly start posting in *Lingua Franca Nova* on an English language blog, the audience reactions may be negative. During the Day of Multilingual Blogging (right time), if my readers are informed about this fact (right area of the internet), the rules change. Instead of being viewed as a breach of linguistic decorum, the *Lingua Franca Nova* blog post will be hailed as innovative, fun, interesting, or creative.

## 5. Results & Discussion

DMB is an event that provides a context where multiple languages are used, where multilingual practices are socially and materially rewarded, and where linguistic skills at any level possess value. The last feature of multilingual niches, that they are contexts where language users can be ‘outsiders together’, is probably not met, though. While DMB will therefore certainly not result in fully formed multilingual niches, it may be a step people take towards experiencing and developing such niches.

It is the event structure of DMB that makes this possible. DMB serves as a reason – and a kind of excuse – to do things linguistically that might normally violate audience conceptualizations – and lead to negative responses from the physical (i.e., not merely conceptualized) audience, possibly resulting in a withdrawal of social and material rewards.

The event structure, too, is what would make a concept such as DMB adaptable to other contexts, including language learning focused contexts. Schools already host different types of language events, often focusing on the celebration of linguistic diversity. For students at secondary school age or older, a multilingual event that integrates online practices might positively impact language learning on the long term. Encouraging students to not limit themselves to languages formally studied at school, but to use all their linguistic resources for communicative or expressive purposes, might put an additional plurilingual twist into such an event.

As blogs have long lost their status as the dominant medium of youth (eventhough they have maintained popularity as instructional media or school portfolios), any DMB-like event targeting teenage learners should consider extending the range of digital formats encompassed. Currently popular social media platforms, already used by many learners, would be an obvious extension.

Ideally, such an event could be coordinated between multiple schools on the same day, to increase the event factor – possibly even on a pre-existing meaningful date, such as the previous DMB date or the European Day of Languages.

A “Day of multilingual/plurilingual online communication” could then act, not merely as a public display of existing skills, space and occasion for the practice of skills, and celebration of linguistic diversity, but also as a stepping stone towards a broader integration of (formally studied) languages in students’ online lives in an OILE-like, but not limited to English, framework. Creating such an event would then constitute something that has so far

been disregarded in much of language teaching practice and language teaching research: The design of multilingual niches as spaces of language learning and acquisition.

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