

## **Heteroglossia in text-messaging: performing identity and negotiating relationships in a digital space**

### **ABSTRACT**

This article uses Bakhtin's concept of heteroglossia to explore how linguistic repertoires are exploited in the performance of identity and management of relationships through text-messaging. The study focuses on text-messages sent and received by 'Laura', a middle-class woman who has returned from university to her family home in rural England. Qualitative analysis of Laura's texted exchanges, informed by quantitative corpus data and ethnographic interview, details the role of heteroglossia as Laura and her interlocutors position themselves in relation to each other and negotiate differences in gender, class, education, past experience, and personal aspiration. The study shows how heteroglossia can emerge even in interactions between individuals from similar backgrounds with largely shared language resources, and highlights the need for sociolinguistic studies of linguistic repertoire to consider the part that digitally-mediated linguistic resources play in individuals' wider identity projects.

**Keywords:** corpus linguistics; ethnography; heteroglossia; linguistic repertoire; text-messaging

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## INTRODUCTION

In this article, I explore the role that text-messaging plays in the wider identity project of one individual, a middle-class woman in rural England who I call 'Laura'. Starting with her linguistic 'repertoire-in-use' (Androutsopoulos 2014: 7), I use Bakhtin's (1981) concept of heteroglossia to understand how communicative resources convey particular meanings in the context of her texted interactions, and how Laura and her interlocutors find their own voices through exploiting, contesting and re-accentuating the ideological stances that accompany the signs they use. As well as providing a rich description of a linguistic repertoire and a detailed analysis of the way in which Laura's voice is shaped by her life trajectory and those of her interlocutors, the study makes several contributions to current understanding of social interactions within sociolinguistics.

Firstly, unlike previous sociolinguistic discussions of heteroglossia, I look not only at the explicitly performative co-construction of others' voices, but also at the implicit ways in which all linguistic resources resonate with the meanings accrued through previous usages, thus operationalising Bakhtin's (1981: 293) contention that 'there are no "neutral" words'. Secondly, my study focuses on a context not typically considered in recent sociolinguistic studies which use heteroglossia to investigate socially-diverse, multilingual communities (Blackledge and Creese 2014). My study shows that interactions between individuals from similar backgrounds with overlapping communicative resources can also be described as heteroglossic. Thirdly, I show how texted interactions can be subject to the close analysis usually reserved for spoken conversations. Texting involves a particular subset of

communicative resources, shaped by affordances of the digital space, and this is one of the first sociolinguistic studies to take an ethnographic perspective in exploring how text-messaging is embedded into people's lives (although see Velghe 2012). Through detailing interactional negotiations of social difference as they occur in texted rather than spoken exchanges, the article makes a case for treating digital and written resources as valid objects of study within sociolinguistics (Lillis 2013). Finally, my study highlights the benefits of combining ethnographic principles with quantitative analysis in exploring heteroglossia.

## LINGUISTIC REPERTOIRE

Sociolinguists now recognise that people have biographically-ordered repertoires of linguistic resources dynamically shaped by complex life trajectories. These repertoires do not map onto existing language categorisations (such as 'language' or 'dialect') but constitute resources drawn from across formal and informal learning spaces. As Blommaert and Backus (2013) explain, individual repertoires are thus 'indexical biographies' in that resources point to aspects of one's life and identity, and these associations come into play when resources are drawn on. Individually-structured repertoires can be seen as intersecting with 'spatial repertoires' (Pennycook and Otsuji 2015), which emerge as a result of communicative practices between participants in particular spaces such as a market or, in the current study, a digital space. As we shall see, studies of digital spaces must take into account the impact of affordances such as synchronicity on how resources are selected and deployed.

The concept of spatial repertoires helps to explain how individuals select resources from their repertoires in any one situation, and suggests that individual repertoires cannot be understood in isolation; as Rymes (2014) argues, repertoires constantly shift and develop to accommodate to interlocutors. As such, repertoires constitute ‘constraints and potentialities’ (Busch 2014a: 14) which are realised in interaction; in Busch’s words, they are ‘formed and deployed in intersubjective processes located on the border between the self and the other’ (p.7). The current study builds on this perspective by providing a detailed picture of an individual’s ‘repertoire-in-use’ (Androutsopoulos 2014: 7), as realised in texted interactions during one point of her life.

A large body of work has explored the complex ways in which individual linguistic repertoires are drawn on to index identity and signal alignment across contexts. This includes studies of stylisation and style-shifting (the active performance of identity through appropriating, and moving between, socially-recognised styles), which challenge straightforward correlations between linguistic variation and pre-existing social categories or participant roles (e.g. Podesva 2007). Such studies highlight how people use linguistic resources in dynamic, contextualised, purposeful processes of meaning-making in which ‘signs’ (Pierce 1953) – resources deployed in interaction to convey meaning – are co-constructed and temporarily shared but open to negotiation and change. One limitation of this research, as Lillis (2013) argues in her call for a ‘sociolinguistics of writing’, is that sociolinguists continue to prioritise speaking as authentic and natural. The present study details how the moment-by-moment negotiation of social difference in texted (written) interactions

shapes and is constructed by linguistic choices, much as it is in spoken interactions.

## HETEROGLOSSIA AND VOICING

This study also extends research into style and repertoire through the concept of heteroglossia in order to foreground the historically- and culturally-contingent nature of language use and to highlight how meaning emerges from social and ideological tensions. Bakhtin's (1981) concept developed as an explanation of voices within literary Russian: *raznorechie* or 'intralingual diversity'. Applied to everyday language use, a heteroglossic approach reveals how individual repertoires invariably comprise resources associated not only with different registers, genres, dialects, languages and styles, but with places, memories and 'expectations and desires linked to the future' (Busch 2014b: 35). As such, even utterances ostensibly in 'one language' are replete with various linguistic resources and thus resonate with past usages and connotations. In (re-)using signs, speakers engage with these resonances, confirming, challenging or extending the meaning of signs, and anticipating future responses (Bailey 2012: 499). In this sense, all languaging is dialogic: signs gain meaning through accumulation of past usages and change with subsequent use.

To Bakhtin, language is social and ideological, reflecting and constructing social relations. Meaning develops particularly through social and ideological tensions, as people use language to compete, argue and dissent. One tension realised in languaging is that between the imposition of uniformity (which Bakhtin refers to as centripetal forces) and the pull towards difference (centrifugal forces). If both are part of heteroglossia, as Bakhtin (1981: 272)

argues, then normativity and standardisation are one aspect of multivoicedness. Tensions between centrifugal and centripetal forces are evident in texters' non-standard spelling practices, where the use of respellings to index rebellion, playfulness, or informality relies on their divergence from the standard whilst maintaining socially-recognised orthographic conventions, so that <skool> is socially-meaningful where <zgüül> is not (Sebba 2007: 31). As discussed in the next section, heteroglossia may be useful for understanding interactions in digitally-mediated spaces where informality, rebelliousness, and playfulness are performed through manipulating standard writing conventions.

Bakhtin's (1981) notion of 'voicing' is central to his understanding of language use. Voices are recognised sets of discursive features which index individuals, registers, or social categories and which are available for speakers to voice or 'ventriloquise' as they find and articulate their own voice. In Creese and Blackledge's (2012: 310) words, voicing involves bringing these different voices together into a coherent stance. Sociolinguistic studies of heteroglossia (as in Blackledge and Creese 2014), have tended to focus on overt, 'double-voiced discourse' in which speakers playfully produce stylised voices obviously not their own, either with similar intentions to the original (unidirectional) or with different, often opposing, intentions (varidirectional) (Bakhtin 1981: 324). In a Bakhtinian definition, for example, 'parody' involves the explicit repetition of another's voice with the intention of challenging their stance. The focus of my analysis is also on the *implicit* ways in which people engage in acts of voicing through the adoption of everyday signs with complex sociohistorical trajectories and associated with distinct speech genres (Bakhtin 1981: 293). My focus on heteroglossia as a potential

property of all signs extends contemporary sociolinguistic work concerned with overt identity play or highly-mixed discourse.

## HETEROGLOSSIA AND DIGITAL DISCOURSE

Research into heteroglossia and digital discourse has tended to focus on public online spaces such as YouTube, and on the ways in which the internet makes possible the appropriation of globally-circulating resources and the integration of various semiotic modes, as well as facilitating linguistic diversity (Androutsopoulos 2011; Leppänen 2012). These studies draw attention to digital literacy resources as part of individuals' repertoires and identity performances. As Deumert (2014a: 121) suggests, they also show how heteroglossia can be a resource for creativity in digital spaces where interpersonal work is often carried out through linguistic playfulness and conscious stylisation.

There has been less focus on how private digitally-mediated conversations are implicitly shot through with different voices or on detailing how these conversations are embedded into individuals' social lives. One study that comes close to doing this is Deumert's (2014b) research into playful online communication between South Africans. Looking at the chat logs of speakers of English and either isiXhosa or Afrikaans, Deumert (2014b) interprets their language choices with reference to the social history of the languages; for example, when Afrikaans speaker <Bechari> produces a clumsy isiXhosa sentence, this is described not as an attempt to accommodate to his interlocutor but to invoke the colonisers' half-hearted attempts at the language, as confirmed by his interlocutor's admonishment, and she concludes that 'we are looking at disrespect and confrontation, deeply rooted in the voices of the

past' (p. 32). Such associations contribute to the stylisation of online personae, embedded through linguistic choices not only in the past but within contemporary popular culture: for example, Deumert (2014b) describes young South Africans' use of nicks (online nicknames) which index local gangs. My study builds on this work by exploring the associations of linguistic choices for one individual and the role that her texted conversations play in her wider identity project.

## DATA AND METHODS

Most linguistic studies of text-messaging draw on discourse analysis (Author 2012), and few adopt ethnographic principles in exploring how the medium is embedded into individuals' lives. One exception is Velghe's (2012) study of Linda, a dyslexic South African woman who uses Mixit messages (rather than text-messaging) to bolster her community networks, but the truncated, unproductive nature of Linda's written resources do not allow rich insights into her full repertoire. In addressing this research gap, the current study draws on interactional analysis informed not only by emic insights but by quantitative corpus methods which substantiate findings and allow generalisations (Heyd 2014). In this section, I introduce the key participant, 'Laura' (all names are anonymised), before describing the study's data and analytical approaches.

### Key Participant

Laura's background and her situation at the time (as elicited in interview) are central to the study. Laura self-identifies as middle-class and grew up in a village in southern England before leaving for university. The period 2004-2007 was a transitional time for Laura. The funding for her PhD ran out and

she returned to her family home in October 2003. She spent the winter writing her thesis and working local jobs. Between March 2004 and October 2006, she spent periods working abroad. Laura returned to her family home in October 2006, and stayed until July 2007. Most of the text-messages I collected date from this 9-month period (745 of 801 – the dataset is described in the following section). During this time, Laura was in her words ‘less in limbo’ and ‘happier to be in the UK’, in part because she was now confident about getting a permanent post. She reignited a friendship with a local childhood friend, Alison, and began socialising with young men living locally. The men had not gone to university but held good jobs or ran their own businesses; they had generally not travelled and lived in their hometown. Text-messaging was important to Laura at that time, ‘because of texting people like Alison who liked to text’.

## Data

My study of Laura’s text-messaging practices draws upon two data sets, corpus data and ethnographic interview. As well as conducting in-depth qualitative analysis of selected exchanges from the corpus, I also used the corpus data to identify patterns in Laura’s linguistic practices which informed the qualitative analysis. The interview complemented the corpus data by building a picture of Laura’s life and her sense of identity, so as to unpick the social and ideological tensions underlying the language choices made in her text-messages.

The text-message data comprise a subset from CorTxt, a large corpus of text-messages sent between 2004 and 2007 by speakers of British English based in the UK (Author 2012). The corpus contains 11,067 text messages (190,516 words). I compiled CorTxt by recruiting friends and family, who

contributed messages they had sent and those they had received (often from people I did not know personally), thus encompassing an interconnected set of social networks. The subset includes 801 text-messages sent by Laura (a contributor to CorTxt), as well as messages she received (n=738), making a total of 1539 text-messages. This study builds on my earlier corpus-based analyses of CorTxt (Author 2012) by combining quantitative and interactional analysis with ethnographic interview in situating Laura's text-messages within the context of her lived experiences.

The interview, conducted in a face-to-face setting and lasting 47 minutes, was informal and involved open-ended questions. I grew up with Laura and used our pre-existing relationship as a resource in eliciting her views (Chimbutane 2012: 288). The interview was preceded and followed by an email discussion comprising 87 turns, through which I provided a space for Laura's continued involvement in interpreting her language choices. Laura's reflections are not taken as a 'truthful' account of her communicative practices, but as post-hoc (co)constructions; how she accounted for them on this occasion. Nonetheless, retrospective interviews 'create a space for reflection' (Budach 2012: 32) which can shed light on interactional data.

Laura and her interlocutors gave informed consent for the use of their text-message data (Author 2012) and additional consent was gained from Laura for her interview data. Names and other personal details are anonymised throughout.

## Analytical approaches

The qualitative analysis of Laura's texted exchanges was informed by a quantitative analysis aimed at reconstructing her linguistic repertoire as realised in her text-messages at that time; that is, to recreate a repertoire-in-use which provides information on the typicality and meaning-making potential of any one linguistic feature. This was achieved by adopting two quantitative methods.

Firstly, words that occurred significantly frequently in Laura's 801 text-messages compared to the whole corpus and to her interlocutors' text-messages ('keywords') were identified using WordSmith Tools (Scott 2009). As we shall see, this keyword analysis revealed the centrality of certain respellings to Laura's texting practices. The limitation of a keyword analysis is that it focuses only on resources with recurring surface realisations (that is, where a particular form is repeated) but not on a practice such as g-dropping which is realised in various forms (such as <drinkin> and <dancin>).

Secondly, therefore, to explore categories of resources which do not show up in word frequency counts, I identified and coded non-standard or otherwise marked linguistic features across Laura's 801 text-messages (14,786 words), using WordSmith, Dexter Coder (Garrettson 2006) and Microsoft Excel. The forty categories listed in the Appendix were selected through:

1. existing analysis of CorTxt (Author 2012), which highlights non-standard features used to create meaning;

2. elicitation in interview of what was salient to Laura (e.g. she suggested that high-register vocabulary such as *immortalised* and *materialised* would be appreciated by her sister);
3. data-driven analysis of Laura's text-messages (e.g. I noticed she frequently used diminutives such as *meanie* and *dindins*).

Linguistic features were extracted using word-frequency lists generated by WordSmith, by searching in Dexter for recurrent forms, and by reading through the data to catch unique forms. They were tagged using Dexter. An Excel spreadsheet was compiled to record the frequency with which features occurred in each text-message, along with metadata (date, time, receiver, message length). By filtering and sorting the text-messages, I could explore how signs combined and contrasted within messages.

Corpus methods were also used to identify fixed expressions and idioms (FEIs) and high-register words. FEIs are recurring strings of words which have taken on more specific meanings than the composition of their parts (Moon 1998). In this study, candidate FEIs such as 'reserve the right' were identified intuitively and their frequency-of-use checked using the 650-million-word Bank of English (BoE) corpus ('reserve the right' occurred 623 times). The same method was used to distinguish manipulated FEIs (such as 'I will have a Nobby's nut [bar snack] on you' as a variant of 'have a drink on me'). Words were identified as high-register if they occurred fewer than 10 times per million words in the 100-million-word British National Corpus (BNC) (the threshold for inclusion in publically-available wordlists).<sup>1</sup>

The quantitative analyses described above were then drawn on in an interactional analysis of Laura's exchanges by text-message. Taking the text-messages that Laura had sent and received (n=1539), I discarded single messages and extracted 215 conversations, comprising 1040 text-messages (523 of which were sent by Laura). Drawing on Tannen's (2007) approach to charting repetition across conversational turns, it was possible to explore how emergent resources were taken up and recontextualised within conversational exchanges. As discussed, individual repertoires shaped by personal life trajectories and social space need also to be understood as interactively emergent: co-constructed in the moment and continually re-shaped through identity positionings vis-à-vis interlocutors. The interactional analysis was also informed by the ethnographic interview.

#### BROAD DESCRIPTION OF LAURA'S REPERTOIRE

This section draws on the quantitative analysis described above to provide a description of Laura's linguistic repertoire as realised in the text-message data (a repertoire-in-use). The description serves as background information that informs the subsequent qualitative analysis of selected excerpts.

My categorisation of linguistic features is inevitably partial and incomplete, but it nonetheless provides an indication of this digital subset of Laura's repertoire. We can see in the Appendix examples of resources that are more or less central to her texting repertoire at the time: for example, she frequently deploys punctuation expressively (... , ?! and !!) but rarely uses emoticons; she prefers the letter homophone <u> variant but not number homophones like <2> (which are largely restricted to alphanumeric sequences

such as ‘hope2come’); and she regularly shifts register but code-switches less frequently.

Of particular relevance for the qualitative analysis presented in this article is Laura’s distinctive use of certain respellings. The WordSmith key word analysis shows that <u>, <wot> and omitted apostrophes are significantly more frequent in Laura’s text-messages than in those sent by other contributors to CorTxt (see the table). The same variants are also key to Laura’s text-messages when compared only with the subset of text-messages sent by her interlocutors, albeit slightly reordered (this subset includes all messages sent by the interlocutors, not only those sent to Laura). The negative keywords (those that occur significantly infrequently in Laura’s text messages, shown in italics at the bottom of the table) confirm that Laura favours these non-standard variants over the standard form; that is, <you>, <what> and some contractions with apostrophes are significantly underused by Laura in comparison to other texters. These findings are also reflected in the Appendix, which reveals a frequent avoidance of apostrophes (which are omitted in 90.6% of cases); and preferential uses of <wot> (used in place of <what> in 85% of cases) and <u> (used rather than <you> or other non-standard variants in 55.9% of cases). Overall, the quantitative analysis suggests certain idiosyncratic tendencies in Laura’s respelling practices in comparison with the rest of the corpus, including her interlocutors.

## TABLE

In the qualitative analysis that follows, we see how this quantitative evidence of available and preferred forms informs our understanding of Laura’s situated meaning-making.

## HETEROGLOSSIC TEXTING PRACTICES

For the purposes of this article, I selected three sets of excerpts (comprising 16 of Laura's 801 text-messages) which represent tensions in Laura's relationships and the heteroglossia evident in the texters' practices. I start with an example of 'banter' between Laura and a local male friend, before looking at advice sent to two friends, and then three text-messages in which Laura delivers some bad news. Occurring within four months of each other in 2007, the excerpts illustrate how tension-filled signs, double-voicing, and respelling are used to perform multifaceted identities in negotiating everyday social relationships. As we shall see, these resources include those which appear highly salient to interlocutors – tension-filled signs and parodied voices, as well as references to interlocutors' interactional histories – and those which are likely less salient, for example the use of respellings such as <wot> alongside other resources in indexing styles, registers, and shifts in footing.

Tension-filled signs: *girl, cider and potatos*

Excerpt 1. *Banter with the lads (12<sup>th</sup> April 2007)*

Lines trace how signs are taken up in subsequent utterances.

- 1 18:08 Gary: Wot u doin
- 2 18:10 Laura: Hey stranger. **Workin'** unfortunately. You?
- 3 18:20 Gary: **Not working** when do you finish
- 4 18:22 Laura: Dont tell me, u were thinkin **potatos and cider** ...  
Love to, but **sis** is comin tonight,  
you'll have to hold that thought x
- 5 18:24 Gary: **Boring**
- 6 18:25 Laura: **Smelly**
- 7 18:26 Gary: **Fatty**
- 8 18:38 Laura: There. I have finished **Sulking** now
- 9 18:39 Gary: **You sulk like a girl**
- 10 18:41 Laura: **I am a girl.**
- 11 18:41 Gary: **A real girl would** come out tonight
- 12 18:43 Laura: **A real man would** offer more than **potatos and cider**
- 13 18:51 Gary: Dont under estimate the power of **spuds and apples**
- 14 18:53 Laura: I admire ur commitment. Save me some x
- 15 18:57 Gary: Have fun with **the sis**
- 

This exchange between Laura and local man Gary can be described as flirtatious 'banter' – fast-paced interaction with short turns and playful

orientation – in which Laura simultaneously constructs and maintains distance, performing what she describes as ‘aloofness’. Her performance must be understood in the context of their wider relationship. On the one hand, Laura responded to Gary’s advances with flirtatious behaviour and threw herself into her new social life. Laura says of Gary, ‘He was a friend and it was fun ... I probably did lots of flirting and leading him on’. On the other hand, Laura never took Gary seriously as a suitor, in part because of the elevated status she had constructed for herself as someone who had left their local roots behind. In Laura’s words, ‘I was kind of confident and felt kind of superior and interesting because I knew I’d been away and was going away again’. The tensions this creates for Laura and Gary are evident in Excerpt 1.

Central to their banter is the negotiation of locally-meaningful signs, whereby resources are made temporarily available for interpersonal meaning-making. The pair’s recycling of signs shows ‘listenership’ (Tannen 2007), signalling that they are paying attention to each other’s words and responding to what the other is saying: this is evident when Gary’s ‘Have fun with the sis’ (turn 15) picks up on Laura’s explanation that ‘sis is comin tonight’ (turn 4); and in the parallelism of ‘Boring’, ‘Smelly’, ‘Fatty’ (turns 5-7). Parallelism also serves as an interactional resource in highlighting where their views converge and diverge (Tannen 2007), as when Laura counters Gary’s ‘A real girl would ...’ (line 11) with ‘A real man would ...’, thus foregrounding the ‘sameness’ between them through structural parallelism even as they negotiate their differences. At the same time, by focusing overtly on manipulating the form and semantics of each other’s utterances, the pair strategically avoid engaging on a more intimate level; they hide behind the formal and semantic

constraints of their language play. The language play allows Laura to touch on immediately-relevant topics whilst giving little of herself away.

Two signs in particular do much of the interpersonal work within this exchange: *potatos and cider* (introduced in turn 4) and *girl* (line 9). In Bakhtinian terms, no sign is neutral, and both *girl* and *potatos and cider* enter this conversation as ideologically-loaded signs which enable Laura and Gary to negotiate the cultural roles and expectations framing their relationship. *Potatos and cider* has local significance, cider being a regional product and potatoes a staple in England; it is likely that the sign connotes for both participants ‘something very simple and cheap’ (as Laura phrased it to me) and that these associations infuse the way in which they use the sign to index their relationship. When Laura teases Gary with ‘Dont tell me, u were thinkin potatos and cider’ (turn 4) the sign has already become a private joke referring to Gary’s barbecue dinners, and by extension his ongoing attempts to seduce Laura (she said in interview that ‘he offered us potatoes and cider to entice me to go over there’). Given the associations of potatoes and cider with the local region and understood in the context of their wider relations, the joke serves to situate Gary in a particular place. It thus points to a mismatch between what Gary can offer (local culture; small-town lifestyle) and what Laura wants as an educated, well-travelled woman with career ambitions. Gary can be described as challenging Laura’s portrayal when he responds ‘Dont under estimate the power of spuds and apples’ (turn 13). His phrase *spuds and apples* is a clever reformulation of the original sign, *potatos and cider*, by which he draws attention to his local authenticity through the colloquialism *spuds* and his analysis of cider as *apples*. However, although he lends gravitas to his

assertion with the widely-circulating FEI, ‘never underestimate the power of’ (which occurs frequently [n=54] in the BoE and in well-known quotes), his ‘power’ remains tied to place and stays only locally significant, his assertion undermined by the juxtaposition of the FEI with a colloquial reference to simple food. Laura cuts him off with ‘I admire ur commitment’ and he fails to lure her out.

The pair’s negotiation of what *girl* means similarly constructs and reflects the tension in their relationship, tinged by their likely awareness of its status as a socially-contested label, considered degrading when applied to adult women despite being reclaimed in terms like ‘girl power’ (Hopkins 2002). Laura draws on this tension in her most flirtatious statement, ‘I am a girl’ (turn 10), which initially appears to place her in a vulnerable, submissive position but which, when compared with her use of *girl* elsewhere, becomes an act of defiance (Laura’s 10 uses of *girl* in CorTxt include ‘Bloody hell you go girl’). Again, however, Laura and Gary eventually position themselves around *girl* in respect to local expectations: ‘A real girl’, Gary claims, ‘would come out tonight’ (turn 11). The remark is (like the others) framed primarily as a joke but can be read as an ideological statement: a woman staying true to herself and her roots would put local commitments first. Laura’s ideas about a ‘real man’ (turn 12) contradict Gary’s worldview: a real man would offer more than what she sees as the limited opportunities of the small-town lifestyle (something, as Laura explained, ‘more fancy’ than *potatos and cider*).

In this exchange, we see the negotiation of social difference in terms of gender, class and education as well as personal experiences and aspirations. Heteroglossia emerges as the pair exploit their different understandings of *girl*

(as derogatory or empowering) and *potatos and cider* (as indexing local authenticity or a small-town lifestyle) as a way of skirting around the tensions in their relationship. The heteroglossic perspective thus reveals how social and ideological tensions can shape everyone's language use, even those whose linguistic repertoires overlap considerably, not only in the sense that linguistic resources bring to a conversation past competing voices, but that these divergent sociohistorical associations are then used in dynamic, collaborative ways to mark and negotiate social difference.

Ventriloquisation and parody: 'being a snake'

In Excerpts 2 and 4 below, Laura gives relationship advice to a university friend Meg and then to Alison. After exploring the ventriloquisation and parody evident in Excerpt 2, I compare the respellings used in that excerpt with those Laura uses in other excerpts (3 and 4). The quantitative analysis is revealed as crucial in exploring different associations that respellings have accrued for Laura in the context of her texted interactions.

*Excerpt 2. Showing support from afar (14<sup>th</sup> February 2007)*

1 Meg: Hello-sorry 2 have 2 do this 2 u over text but i need u 2 b completely honest with me. I am having massive problems with Sammy right now. Leah who has been trying 2 help us stay 2gether has been subjected 2 massive verbal attacks by Sammy yesterday and she is now leaving the country 4 Gd on sun, 3 wks early. He basically accused her of being a snake and turning me against him which was never the case. Sammy has apologised 2 her but the damage has been done and she will never forgive him

and think i am crazy 2 even think of being with him with all his issues. He admitted last night 2 being jealous of the time i spend with her. From the little time u spent out here i nd 2 know if Sammy is worth fighting 4 and will i b hapy or am i kidding myself. I love him and believe him when he says he loves me. He has gone 2 find a counsellor 2 help him with his issues. We r supposed 2 b coming 2 england in 2 wks!

- 2 Laura: Its so hard to advise in these situations. I only knew Sammy for 2 weeks and was on holiday but we both thought he was lovely. A little quiet sometimes, and not always as responsive as he could have been, but thats just his nature and partly because u r not quiet! I dont know how u can really know if someone loves u-eg after all i went through i still believe that Alex loved me in his own way. But when u were ill Sammy was SO loving and caring, really sweet. U r the only one that can be sure of wot to do, you need to really really have this out with Sammy, sort it out u 2. Were his issues just with Leah or deeper? Goingto counsellor is good-he wants is work. There will always b a culture diff and issues, sure u can work round them. Phone me if u wantx

In this exchange, Laura gives Meg advice on her fiancé, Sammy, who had allegedly been behaving aggressively towards Meg's friend, Leah (turn 1). Laura said in interview that she was not confident in expressing an opinion, given how little she knew of Meg's domestic situation since Meg had moved abroad. The sentiment may be common to many people who establish and

maintain translocal connections with those who have emigrated and whose lives, despite shared ethnic and language backgrounds, start to diverge.

To interpret Laura's explanation of this exchange from a Bakhtinian perspective, Meg's portrayal of her fiancé's behaviour resonates with Leah's account of events. In her account to Laura, Meg ventriloquises Leah's inflammatory words ('subjected to verbal attacks', 'accused', 'snake') and so aligns herself with Leah and distances herself from Sammy in an act of unidirectional double-voicing. In accepting Leah's assessment that Sammy has *issues*, Meg draws on an American euphemism which implies tolerance yet assigns personal responsibility for working through one's problems (Fulford 2002). As Laura explained in interview, *issues* was not likely a term that Sammy himself would recognise or use but 'may have been a term her friend [Leah] used, as she evidently had run-ins with Sammy and may have been labelling him and his problems in order to explain why he didn't like her'. The term *issues*, ventriloquised by Meg, serves to distance Leah and Meg from responsibility for Sammy's behaviour, whilst positioning them as non-condemnatory. Laura contests this assessment of Sammy's behaviour with 'Were his issues just with Leah or deeper?', an act of varidirectional double-voicing (or parody) in which she recontextualises *issues* as a short-term problem emerging from Sammy's relationship with Leah rather than Sammy's particular problem. In Bakhtinian terms, her message is a response to both Meg and Leah: she satisfies Meg's plea to affirm her relationship ('i nd 2 know if Sammy is worth fighting 4') by contesting Leah's account. As with the negotiation of social roles in Excerpt 1, the ventriloquisation and parody in this exchange reflects that identified in interactions between young multilingual

people from ethnic-minority groups (Madsen 2014), revealing similar practices across social groups.

Respellings as heteroglossia: ‘its fuckin hard’

Laura’s respellings emerge from these social tensions as she seeks to negotiate the complex encounter in Excerpt 2. The respellings in Excerpt 2 include homophones <u> (n=10) and <b>, omitted apostrophes in *Its*, *thats* and *dont*, and <wot>. As shown in the quantitative analysis presented earlier (and see Appendix), these respellings occur frequently in Laura’s text-messages and are preferred by Laura over the standard variants.

As revealed in the interview data, these signs have stabilised into what Laura describes as ‘practical spelling for a text-message’. Laura rationalises her choice with reference to technological constraints, saying about <u> that ‘It would just seem daft to me to write out the word *you* for all of those because it’s just not necessary’. As contextualisation cues (Gumperz 1982), these respellings signal for Laura and her regular interlocutors an informal texted exchange.

What is interesting is the corresponding *absence* of respellings related to speech, which Laura describes as ‘cheeky little happy slang words’ and which carry associations of casual speech, regional dialect and provincial character (Weber 1986). The quantitative analysis shows that Laura frequently g-drops (on 31.8% of possible occasions) but not here: ‘Sammy was SO loving and caring’ and ‘Goingto counsellor is good’. Similarly, *because* is written in full rather than being respelt as <cos>, although Laura uses <cos> 21 times compared to two uses of <because>. Nor are there speech-related lexical

features in Laura's response: no diminutives, vague language, discourse markers, response tokens, or slang (Appendix). The avoidance of these overtly conversational or intimate-register resources suggests that Laura is constructing a voice in this text-message which conveys gravitas through the contrast created with the tone of her other text-messages, of which 541 contain speech-related signs. For example, in another text-message to Meg, <u> and <wot> combine with g-dropping (<drinkin>, <dancin>, <eatin>) and discourse marker *Ok* to recreate conversational informality.

*Excerpt 3: 'drinkin, dancin, eatin' (28<sup>th</sup> March 2007)*

Ok that would b lovely, if u r sure. Think about wot u want to do, drinkin, dancin, eatin, cinema, in, out, about... Up to u! Wot about Sammy? X

The contrast suggests that respellings can mean differently to Laura: some have come to represent regular features of texting while others are more salient, indexing a degree of casualness which Laura does not always deem suitable. In this case, she said in interview that 'if you're discussing love issues and you're using textspeak it wouldn't have felt appropriate'. As contextualisation cues, the respellings point interlocutors towards different interpretations.

Laura's respellings in her advice to her locally-based friend are different again. Prior to the following extract, Alison had texted Laura to announce that a local man she had been dating had ended the relationship. Laura asks why.

*Excerpt 4. Advice nearer to home (21<sup>st</sup> January 2007)*

- 1 Alison: I don't know, same thing that's wrong everyso often, he panicks starts goin on bout not bein good enough, that sort of thing. I can't keep dealing wiv it, despite how much i want to be wiv him. I feel like such a failure.
- 2 Laura Its certainly not u thats failed- he admits himself that its him no good for u. Maybe u do need to think about urself more now. Its fuckin hard but if he needs to sort himself out before he can know wot he wants, maye u should give him that. Or at least just slow right down. He cant keep gettin pissed and treatin you like that

In turn 2, Laura employs the signs that regularly characterise her texting (homophones, omitted apostrophes, and <wot>) alongside what are to her more salient markers of emotion: g-dropping (<fuckin>, <gettin> and <treatin>) and slang (*pissed* meaning 'drunk', as well as *fuckin*). In his study of the spoken variable (ING), Kiesling (1998) notes the use of [In] and particularly *fuckin* in creating solidarity through indexing a working-class vernacular and tough physicality among male undergraduates. In Laura's case, her combination of word-choice and respelling contributes to a more forceful, emotionally-involved voice than that which she presents to Meg: the meaning conveyed here is indignant certainty. Laura writes this message in part because of her orientation to Alison's spelling choices (as in the message to Meg) but also because of her greater involvement in the interaction, which took place 'after an evening when I was there and he'd upset her and it wasn't the first time ... I was seeing her being hurt, it obviously wasn't good for her'. At the same time, Laura's language choices are shaped by her feeling that she is performing a

role as supportive friend which is ‘part and parcel’ of the friendship: if she wants a friend to socialise with, she has to take on her friend’s personal problems. In Laura’s words,

it felt a bit like I was obliged to respond and support her because we were sharing a social life ...I wouldn’t have done it begrudgingly but I wouldn’t have been completely involved in the way that some girls sometimes take each other’s problems and really live them.

Laura’s assertion that she was not playing the role ‘begrudgingly’ points to her nuanced understanding of her stance at the time. She was, as in Excerpt 1, ‘quite happy’ to be immersed in that social context, but she never saw it as an inherent part of her identity: ‘the whole kind of drinking thing was never me, I don’t think it was, I somehow had this group of friends that did go out drinking and it fitted just about’. Laura constructs and reflects this persona in part through her texting.

To return to the exchange with Meg (Excerpt 2), Laura is caught in the awkward social situation of addressing multiple voices – Leah’s portrayal of events, Meg’s conflicting views, the euphemistic assessment of Sammy’s behaviour – whilst being aware that, to be ‘completely honest’ (as Meg requests), she is not familiar enough with the situation to advise Meg. Her attempt to achieve the right voice highlights how respellings like <u> have become relatively neutral markers of register in this context. Other signs carry different associations for Laura and act as contextualisation cues in signalling other interpretations. In configuration with other resources, g-dropping as a contextualisation cue can index various stances, from conversational informality to emotional engagement and indignation. As such, g-dropping is

useful in responding to Alison's problems, but inappropriate for Meg's. The resulting texts are heteroglossic, both in combining resources with different sociohistorical trajectories and because of their integration of – and divergence from – various voices. Through aligning with and contesting these voices, Laura negotiates her stance towards her friends' problems.

As with Excerpt 1, Excerpts 2-4 reveal the heteroglossic approach as central to understanding encounters which involve negotiations of difference emerging from social categories such as gender or from individual life trajectories. Furthermore, by revealing the distinct associations accrued by specific signs (such as respellings), the exchanges show how heteroglossia emerges from implicit, often-subconscious linguistic choices as well as overt performance.

Signalling shifts in footing with <wot>

This last example involves three messages in which Laura passes on bad news to Meg, Alison, and her sister Jo. After looking at how Laura varies her voice in each text-message, I focus on her stylised use of <wot>, which shows how monolingual resources can function in ways similar to those described of code-switches between languages.

*Excerpts 5a,b,c. Three expressions of dismay (6<sup>th</sup> February 2007)*

a 11:30 to Meg Some bad and good news- i didnt get the job, so we can  
come to your wedding! X

b 11:35 to Alison dont know if its good or bad news for you but i didnt get the job, so you are stuck with me hanging around a bit longer yet!

c 11:39 to Jo You better pen in Megs wedding, cos we are def going- Bei are adamant that they dont want to employ me! Wot do they know

Laura's announcements concern an issue about which she feels very strongly: she has been unsuccessful in obtaining a post with the engineering firm I call 'BEI' (British Engineering International). In Laura's words, 'I did really want that job, I was really gutted that I didn't get it'. Her future career constituted an aspect of her identity that she felt was real and lasting but over which she experienced little control: 'for a while I was worried that the job wasn't coming or I'd get stuck there [in her home village] or have to decide what to do instead'. Given the significance of the rejection by BEI, it is notable that Laura deploys various resources to downplay the news in her messages to friends and family, framing it with jocular FEIs ('bad and good news') and drawing on the context of their interactional histories: to Meg and Jo, she confirms that she and Jo will be coming to Meg's wedding, while her message to Alison emphasises her continued presence in the village.

The message to Jo is distinctive in drawing on higher-register resources in Laura's repertoire (Appendix) – which, according to Laura, were appreciated by Jo – in a way that simultaneously alludes to Laura's history with the company. In 'Bei are adamant that they dont want to employ me', Laura uses *employ*, a more technical term than *get the job*, and the non-core word *adamant* (with only 3.78 occurrences per million words in the BNC). The phrase is also

transformed through the shift in agency: in her messages to Meg and Alison, Laura is the agent of not getting a job; in Jo's message, she becomes the object of not being employed. This resonates with Laura's feeling – at a time when she felt in control of her flirtatious encounters – that she was not 'particularly in control' of securing a post with BEI. In fact, the company is positioned as pursuing a targeted strategy against her. This narrative is part of her and Jo's interactional history.

*Excerpt 6: 'Don't let the bastards wind you up' (24<sup>th</sup> January 2007)*

Jo: Don't let the bastards wind you up. Or grind you down.

Laura: No no no. They want me to work for them, they just might not know it just yet...

In drawing on her ongoing struggle with BEI, Laura constructs an intimacy not so evident in her messages to Meg and Alison.

This reframing also makes salient her subsequent signalling of frustration, which she performs with 'Wot do they know'. As we have seen, in other contexts and in combination with other resources, <wot> is a regular feature of Laura's text-messages indexing informal texting (Appendix). However, with examples such as *potatos and cider*, we have also seen that resources can be made available for meaning within the context of unfolding interactions. In this case, <wot> contrasts with the high-register utterance ('Bei are adamant that they dont want to employ me') to mark a shift in footing (Goffman 1981), a function typically ascribed to code-switches and style-shifts (Gumperz 1982). In Goffman's (1981: 128) words, a shift in footing implies 'a change in the alignment we take to ourselves and the others present as expressed in the way

we manage the production or reception of an utterance'. In speech, this may be marked by intonation, pitch or tonal quality but, in texted interactions, pragmatic work is carried out through visual signs (Georgakopoulou 1997). In this case, <wot> can be read as signalling a shift from comment to metacomment, indexing Laura's stance towards the news (a function described by Gumperz as 'message qualification'). 'Wot do they know' reflects a stance that Laura experienced as genuine ('what I really felt'), but it is still couched in stylised language play achieved through the juxtaposition of voices.

The variant spelling <wot> signals shifts in footing throughout Laura's messages (on 10 occasions), either to provide metacommentary, signal changes in register or topic orientation, or indicate irony. In Excerpt 7, Laura texts Alison from the local pub.

*Excerpt 7. 'Wot can i get in for ya?' (15<sup>th</sup> December 2006)*

Laura: Actually do you fancy beers tonight or um now- i do and i just found myself drinking alone in the pub again! X

Alison: I'm on my way back from marston now. Give me 20 minutes!

Laura: Excellent! Wot can i get in for ya? X

Alison: Diet coke please! Xx

When Alison agrees to join her, Laura responds with 'Excellent!' before marking a shift in orientation with 'Wot can I get in for ya?'. This is a locally-relevant, contextualised phrase where *get in* means 'buy (a drink)'. It is marked as colloquial by <wot> as well as by the representation of schwa in <ya>, a marked respelling of *you* for Laura (she uses it 11 times compared to 348 uses of <u>) (see Appendix). The switch affirms Alison's decision to join her and

signals a change in mood; less directly, it reflects Laura's (temporary) engagement with the local drinking scene.

## Discussion

The analysis highlights the heteroglossia in this network's texting practices, which emerges from:

- exploitation of the divergent voices inherent in socially-salient signs such as *girl* and *issues*, as well as in resources made available for interpersonal meaning as interactions unfolded (*potatos and cider*);
- reported or parodied voices of others ('subjected 2 massive verbal attacks'), recontextualised for purposes of (dis)alignment;
- contextualisation of the current exchange within interlocutors' wider interactional histories ('we can come to your wedding!' reframed Laura's 'bad news' by positioning it within a positively-framed shared narrative);
- juxtaposition of signs associated with registers and styles:
  - signs indexing informal texting, including <wot>;
  - signs available for indexing emotive stances such as casualness or indignation (g-dropping, colloquial contractions, schwa-representations, combined with slang, discourse markers, informal lexis);
  - signs associated with other registers (such as high-register words in Excerpt 5c);
- localised use of resources (e.g. <wot>) to signal changes in footing ('Wot do they know?').

This list shows that heteroglossia is realised not only in overt stylisations of others' voices, but through the ideological associations which all linguistic signs and practices accrue, including (in this case) typography and orthography (apostrophe omission, lack of capitalisation, respellings), lexis (associated with higher and casual registers), syntax, and discourse (structural parallelism, allo-repetition, and informal discourse markers) (see Appendix). The implication is that all language use can be understood as heteroglossic; no word is neutral.

The analysis highlights the limitations of conceptualising repertoire as existing independently of a person's social encounters: meaning was instead seen to emerge dynamically as resources were jointly developed or reconstructed within the course of an interaction. For example, while Laura's linguistic repertoire was central to understanding her respellings in Excerpts 2-4, signs in Excerpt 1 emerged as meaningful when interlocutors picked up on each other's linguistic choices. The study thus supports Busch's (2014a: 14) contention that repertoires are not sets of tools but 'constraints and potentialities'.

We can also draw on this analysis of heteroglossia to contribute to a body of literature which challenges the distinction typically made between multilingual and monolingual practices (Gardner-Chloros, Charles and Cheshire 2000; Morel, Bucher, Pekarek and Siebenhaar 2014). For example, stylistic shifts appeared to operate in ways usually associated with code-switching. Not only does Laura regularly use <wot> to index a causal register but also to fulfil immediate functions in the unfolding discourse to mark changes in register or topic orientation ('Wot do they know') or to signal a local voice ('Wot can i get in for ya?'). These two uses – which

Androutsopoulos (2000) terms ‘regular’ and ‘exceptional’ – are analogous to code-mixing and code-switching in that the former conveys meaning through the mixed discourse as a whole, whereas with the latter each switch between languages is significant (Poplack 2000). This supports the argument, made elsewhere in the literature (e.g. Gardner-Chloros et al 2000), that socially-meaningful contrasts created through drawing on resources from what are considered distinct languages are to some extent no different from those created by style-shifting within one language.

Finally, the analysis shows that the resources which Laura employs in negotiating social difference are shaped not only by social factors such as gender, but by her personal life trajectory: her local roots, travels and university background, her attempts to fit in with the local community, and her fears and aspirations for the future. Importantly, the study highlights the centrality of Laura’s projected future – her understanding ‘that it wouldn’t be forever’ – in shaping her identity performance. Studies of aspiration often focus on links between aspirations and future outcomes (Blackledge, Creese and Takhi 2014). This study draws attention to the impact of aspiring on concurrent identity construction and thus illustrates the ‘diachronic dimension’ of linguistic repertoire (Busch 2014b: 35). Tensions emerge as Laura affirms and negotiates her aspirations in interactions with people she does not always see as part of her future but who are very much part of her present: Laura’s construction of a contrast between what she wants from life and what a local boy can offer (Excerpt 1); her negotiation of what she perceives as a transitory friendship with Alison (Excerpt 4); and her attempts to downplay her rejection by BEI (Excerpts 5a,b,c). Of interest is the fact that aspiration as a source of

difference does not emerge directly from fixed social categorisations, but from Laura's life trajectory and the way she positions herself in relation to others, highlighting the need for interactional analysis which goes beyond externally-imposed social labels.

The heteroglossia in Laura's texting practices thus simultaneously emerges from and enables her to construct and manage what she describes as a 'fragmented' identity. This hybrid performative identity emerges partially from her social interactions (Bucholtz and Hall 2005) and relates in complex ways to her sense of personal authenticity (Coupland 2003). In Laura's words, 'I was being myself but it wasn't really me'. Her sense of fragmentation may not be comparable to the dislocation experienced by migrants who have covered great geographical and cultural distances (Blackledge and Creese 2014), but it nonetheless prompts us to see social and linguistic diversity as a norm across human interactions.

## CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

In this article, close analysis of one individual's texted interactions highlighted the way in which text-messaging can be embedded into people's social lives and the role that the medium can play in performances of identity and the maintenance of personal relationships. The study showed that heteroglossia – both explicit double-voicing and more implicit dialogicality – can be useful in understanding processes of meaning-making and voicing even between individuals ostensibly from the same social and linguistic background, highlighting in particular the way that difference emerged from personal aspiration, and suggesting that such contexts should not be neglected in sociolinguistic studies of heteroglossia.

Unlike ethnographic research into heteroglossia (Blackledge and Creese 2014), this study operationalised heteroglossia using a triangulated approach in which quantitative methods were drawn on alongside ethnographic interview to support an interactional analysis. The quantitative element provides frequency information which can shape how a researcher might interpret any one sign. For example, quantitative methods provided support for the observation that respellings such as <wot> and g-dropping had accrued distinct meanings for Laura, thus enabling a richer understanding of their meaning-making potential in her advice to Meg (Excerpt 2) and Alison (Excerpt 4); and quantitative data were also useful in, for instance, highlighting the heteroglossic tensions between Gary's and Laura's understandings of 'girl' by providing information on how Laura employed the sign elsewhere (e.g. 'you go girl'). However, quantitative analysis alone cannot determine what a sign means in a situated act of meaning-making (that <wot>, for example, sometimes signals shifts in footing), and nor can it detail how and why particular resources are drawn on at any one moment. Thus, this study is important in delineating the potential of quantitative methods for informing interactional analyses of heteroglossia.

Finally, the study departs from other interactional analyses within sociolinguistics by focusing on texted, rather than spoken, interactions. Excerpt 1 in particular showed how text-messages can be analysed in much the same way as spoken conversations, with reference to structural parallelism and other forms of allo-repetition (Tannen 2007) as well as dynamic co-constructions of meaning (Podesva 2007). However, these similarities mask differences in how 'turns' are produced and processed, with implications for how identity is

performed. Digitally-mediated interactions are ‘quasi-synchronous’ (Garcia and Jacobs 1998) in that turns are delayed and message-receivers do not have access to the process of message production. Quasi-synchronicity enhances reflexivity on the part of the sender (Deumert 2014a: 121) and encourages the production of longer, more carefully-composed turns, as in Excerpt 2, thus facilitating creative, self-aware identity performances (Bauman 2011). In line with current perspectives that see strategic identity displays as no less ‘authentic’ than unrehearsed language use (Coupland 2003: 426), this study shows how carefully-crafted identity performances can be revealing of someone’s sense of their own authentic self. For example, through the strategic ways in which Laura downplays her bad news and reframes it in the context of narratives more relevant to her interlocutors (Excerpts 5a,b,c), we see how she evaluates and manages what she describes as her true feelings (‘what I really felt’) within the context of different personal relationships. In detailing the role of texted interactions in one individual’s identity project, the study responds to Lillis’s (2013) call for a sociolinguistics of writing.

## NOTES

- 1 BoE is the larger corpus and thus best suited for exploring FEIs, while BNC is a stable corpus with published word-frequency lists.

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## APPENDIX

Laura's linguistic 'repertoire-in-use' (Androutsopoulos 2014) as realised in her text-messages

	<b>Resource with realisations in brackets (exhaustive except where marked with e.g.)</b>	<b>No. of occurrences</b>	<b>Percentage of total possible occurrences<sup>1</sup></b>
	<b>Typographic</b>		
1	Missing capitals (e.g. <monday>, <i>)	575	90.1% <sup>2</sup>
2	Kisses	386	48.2% <sup>3</sup>
	- x	326	40.7%
	- xx	54	6.7%
	- xxx	6	0.7%
3	Expressive punctuation	152	
	- Ellipses (...)	136	
	- Multiple punctuation (?!)	15	
	- Multiple punctuation (!!)	1	
4	Parentheses (e.g. 'I'm in tonight, all day tomo and thurs (busy girl me), when can i ring?')	4	
5	All capitals (e.g. 'GO ON, Jonny!')	2	
6	Emoticons (:-xx)	1	
	<b>Orthographic</b>		
	<b>Non-speech-related respellings (Weber 1985)</b>		

7	Missing apostrophes (e.g. <im>, <dont>)	345	90.6%
8	Acronyms (e.g. <asap>, <eta>)	72	66.1%
9	Standard clippings (e.g. <thurs>, <mins>)	55	60.4%
10	Homophones – letter	540	53.5%
	- <u>	348	55.9%
	- Others (<r>, <c>, <b>, <ur>)	192	49.6%
11	Clippings (e.g. <hav>, <tomo>)	120	27.9%
12	Vowel deletion (e.g. <spk>, <gd>)	35	19.3%
13	Homophones – number	24	4.3%
	- 4 (for preposition ‘for’)	10	5.7%
	- 2 (for preposition and infinitive marker ‘to’)	14	3.7%
	<b>Speech-related respellings (Weber 1985)</b>		
14	Eye dialect	167	42.9%
	- <wot> or <wots>	96	85.0%
	- <tho>	42	87.5%
	- Others (e.g. <wud>, <thanx>, <nite>)	29	14.6%
15	Colloquial clippings (e.g. <cos>, <bout>)	83	39.7%
16	g-dropping (e.g. <doin>, <drinkin>)	130	31.8%
17	Schwa-representation (<ya>, <ye>, <fella>)	20	7.1% <sup>4</sup>
18	Th-fronting (<wiv>, <bruvver>)	8	9.6% <sup>4</sup>
19	Archaisms (<tis>, <twas>)	5	6.9%

20	Letter repetition (<sooo>, <ahhh>, <woo>, <whyyye>)	5	3.9% <sup>5</sup>
	<b>Intimate/conversational register</b>		
21	Response tokens (e.g. 'okay', 'nah')	294	
22	Informal/slang words (e.g. 'grub', 'quid')	151	
23	Discourse markers (e.g. 'so', 'oh')	126	
24	Vague language (e.g. 'kinda', 'ish')	55	
25	Vocatives (e.g. 'chick', 'hunney')	45	
26	Diminutives (e.g. 'dindins', 'postie')	35	
27	Interjections (e.g. 'yey', 'blimey')	32	
28	Regional dialect words (e.g. 'butchers', 'tother')	9	
29	Fixed tags (e.g. 'init', 'right')	7	
	<b>Language creativity</b>		
30	FEIs – conventional (e.g. 'penny dropped!')	77	
31	Self-repetition (e.g. 'I think this is your number. This is my number. I think.')	41	
32	FEIs – extended (e.g. 'I have everything crossed and waving in the air!')	35	
33	Metacommentary (e.g. 'Cor, had to teach my phone lots of new words there!')	17	
34	Word play (e.g. 'chish and fips')	11	

35	Predictive text mistakes (e.g. 'Circuits. I mean biscuits')	5	
36	Intertextual references (e.g. 'Figgy pudding all round then' in reference to a Christmas carol)	4	
	<b>Other</b>		
37	High register words (e.g. 'realisation', 'decrepit')	91	
38	Reported speech (e.g. 'Mum says he wants same old same old.')	52	
39	Foreign words and phrases (e.g. 'bien sur', 'bonne nuit')	14	
40	Other registers (e.g. 'poppet', 'perchance')	7	

1 Percentages are given where appropriate (that is, where the feature is a variant of a standard form). Note that it is not possible to calculate possible occurrences for conversational or creative features, or some typographical features such as punctuation.

2 Excludes occurrences where first letter is automatically capitalised (i.e. at start of message or sentence)

3 Kisses occur only once per message, so I have calculated their possible occurrence as a proportion of the number of total messages (that is, kisses occur in 48.2% (n=386) of the total 801 messages).

4 The possible occurrences of these respellings are calculated as a percentage of the total occurrence of those particular words rather than of the phoneme.

For example, the possible occurrences of th-fronting in <wiv> (7) and <bruvver> (8) are calculated as a percentage of the total occurrences of <with> and <brother> only, not as a proportion of all occurrences of <th> as a representation of the phoneme.

## TABLES

Table: Keywords and negative keywords in Laura's text-messages

	<b>Keyword/ *negative keyword</b>	<b>Frequency in Laura's text- messages (14,786 words)</b>	<b>Frequency in rest of CorTxt (175,730 words)</b>	<b>Keyness measure<sup>1</sup></b>
1	WOT	90	58	270
2	X	327	1835	130
3	DONT	62	136	92
4	OKAY	35	40	81
5	U	354	2689	54
6	DIDNT	21	21	52
7	THATS	37	92	49
8	MAYBE	37	97	46
9	THO	42	134	42
10	C	54	221	39
11	<i>*YOU</i>	263	4297	-30
12	<i>*DON'T</i>	9	460	-32
13	<i>*I'LL</i>	10	521	-37
14	<i>*HOPE</i>	19	725	-38
15	<i>*WHAT</i>	13	641	-43

<sup>1</sup>The keyness measure is a log-likelihood value reached by comparing the occurrences in Laura's subset with those in the rest of the corpus, taking into

account the respective size of both datasets. It is a statistical measure of the significance of the differences in word frequency between the two datasets.