

The appropriative use of English in Dutch social media discourse

Jennifer Dailey-O'Cain
University of Alberta, Alberta, Canada

1. Introduction

Spend time in any space (physical or virtual) in the Netherlands where young people also hang out, and it doesn't take long to realize that today's young Dutch speakers are coming of age in a world where English is playing an increasingly visible role. Not only is the media they consume (in the form of music, books, television, and film, as well as social media interactions online) overwhelmingly English, but the language has also become the primary language of many Dutch higher education institutions and business settings (Berns *et al.* 2007; Edwards 2014; Björkman 2016). However, such changing roles for English in Dutch society have also had an influence on the way Dutch-speaking young people use language with each other. While Dutch of course continues to be the main language of most of young Dutch people's communication, they often incorporate English alongside it, within the same conversation, in ways that serve particular communicative goals (Dailey-O'Cain 2017).

In order to shed light on the sociolinguistics of this interplay between Dutch and English among Dutch young people, this paper examines the *use of* and the *attitudes toward the use of* English in the back-and-forth interaction in one Dutch social media community. More specifically, its focus is on members' *appropriative* uses of such practices, or in other words the practice of borrowing bits of language that are seen as belonging to a group specifically formulated as 'other'. Such linguistic and cultural appropriation is obviously a potentially sensitive practice, especially when there is a clear racial or other power difference between the groups (Hewitt 2010, 226), and that aspect of this sort of appropriation of English definitely does deserve further consideration. In this paper, however, my aim is more simply to understand how and why different types of English may be appropriated by Dutch young people, whether there is a clear power difference between them and the culture they are appropriating language use from or not. For that reason, I define 'appropriation'

more neutrally, i.e., as the use of English in order to index – or strategically ‘point at’ – particular English-language cultures and subcultures.

In analyzing these strategic uses of English, I am interested in two things: the ways that members of a Dutch social media community use the language in their social media interaction, and the community-internal perceptions of this use. The qualitatively analyzed data are therefore drawn firstly from the social media interaction itself, focusing on excerpts in which English indexes specific Anglophone communities, and secondly from interviews with community members about these excerpts, focusing on the judgments that they make about the linguistic practices in question. In other words, this paper is concerned with both the ways in which members of the social media community appropriate trans-national English, and the community-internal perceptions of this appropriation.

2. Data and methods

The community of focus here is a general-purpose one that deals with the asking and answering – often at length – of all kinds of different questions coming from its members. It exists on a large hosting website with blogging and social networking functionalities called *livejournal.com*. As mentioned in the above section, however, the data in this paper is of two distinctly different types. The first type is written interactional data drawn from the social media community, and the second is a set of in-person oral interviews between myself and twelve of the participants. The social media data was collected from the 500 most recent (at the time the data was retrieved, in January of 2010) publicly available posts and each of the interactive conversations resulting from those posts. The participants in the interviews were chosen based on a combination of criteria: their participation in the community (for example whether it would be possible to ask them specific questions about their own practices, or whether I would be limited to asking them only about generalities), their availability during the period of time I had to do the interviews, and their willingness to participate in an interview.

The method used to analyze the data below is an approach to language attitudes in interaction that interprets expressed language attitudes within their interactional context as forms of ‘positioning’ (Liebscher & Dailey-O’Cain 2009). Positioning is a process by which interactants make their orientations toward social categories relevant (Harré & van Langenhove 1991). Interpreting language attitudes in light of it can reveal both the ways in which social categories are evoked in the expression of attitudes and the ways in which the conversational context affects their expression. While the surface meanings of the responses to the interview questions are of course taken into account, an analysis of language

attitudes in interaction is not limited to the direct expression of language attitudes, but is also able to analyze turn-internal semantic and pragmatic information (such as adjective choice or presuppositions) and interactional information (such as conversational laughter or the switch to a different language that another participant is already using), that allows indirect expressions of attitudes to be analyzed as well.

I will begin the analysis with excerpts of data from the social media interaction itself, focusing on excerpts where appropriative trans-national English occurs, and then move on at the end to two excerpts from face-to-face interviews that I carried out with community members about the social media excerpts, focusing on the judgments that they make about the practices in question. 'English' language items are defined here conservatively as any words that are not sufficiently integrated into monolingual language use that they appear in the leading Dutch-language dictionary *Van Dale groot woordenboek van de Nederlandse taal* (although the uses of English of interest in this particular paper are not generally of the sort that are likely to be mistaken for monolingual language use). In the analysis of both the social media interaction and the interview data, then, I will be using an interactional sociolinguistic analysis to look specifically at how these young people use linguistic resources to position themselves and others, and how they strategically index particular Anglophone groups in the process to achieve their own Dutch communicative ends.

3. Analysis

Excerpt 1 contains a simple single-turn example of a transidiomatic practice being used to index African-Americanness by community member *mfpim*. The original question as posted in the social media community appears first, while the English translation appears below it, with a line separating them.

Excerpt 1: Indexing African-Americanness (social media data)

mfpim: **yo**, ik ga met nieuwjaar naar **london (again)** 19-dec tot 3 jan. maar nu met ze 2tjes ik en me vriend, maar ik moet nu nog een hotelletje/**hostel** hebben
anyone een idee?
thanks

mfpim: **yo**, I'm going to **london** for new year's (**again**) Dec 29 to Jan 3. but there's only going to be two of us me and my boyfriend, but I still have to find a hotel/**hostel**
anyone got an idea?
thanks

I have bolded each of the places where *mfpim* uses English (and will do this with each of the other excerpts as well) but in the context of this paper about specifically appropriative uses of this language by community members, it is specifically the 'yo' at the beginning that I would like to zero in on. As is already known from work on transnational English in hip-hop (Pennycook 2007), this originally African-American English greeting has entered into the "soup" of "international English" through that musical style. But to what extent is *mfpim*, and the community she is a part of, aware of the African-American origins of this greeting, and deliberately using those origins to say something specific? To answer that we need to turn to an analysis of the interviews where I asked community members about their reactions to this excerpt.

In my interview with *mfpim* herself about her excerpt, I presented her with the conversation in its larger context and asked her to react to her uses of English within it. In her response, which can be seen in Excerpt 2, she immediately zeroes in on that 'yo' at the beginning of her post without being asked about it. For ease of reading by those not in my field, I have simplified the transcripts of the interview excerpts somewhat, but any interactional detail crucial to the analysis has been left in. Readers should keep in mind that, in general, and contrary to standard spelling, capital letters are used to indicate emphasis, and punctuation like question marks and periods are used to indicate intonation changes.

Excerpt 2: Indexing African-Americanness (interview data)

JD: en het volgende voorbeeld is van jou. {laughs}

mfpim: ja maar ik ben echt heel erg.

JD: {laughs}

mfpim: ja die **yo** is zeg maar ehm dat doe ik bij bepaalde groepen mensen. bijvoorbeeld eh kakkers of **skaters** of **hiphop**mensen. weet je wel? een beetje van die groepjes de meesten zeggen dan HOI of **YO** of eh HALLO?

JD: is dat engels of is dat nederlands?

mfpim: **nah** dat is ook wel nederlands geworden. het is natuurlijk van het engelse maar het is wel nederlands geworden.

JD: en is- hoort dat ook een- een beetje bij dezelfde groep?

mfpim: **yo?** ja.

JD: **skaters** enzovoort
mfpim: ja ik weet niet ik zie inderdaad niet heel veel meisjes die gebruiken **yo**? meer een beetje als je- ja een beetje **street** of best wel veel **hiphop** luistert. ik denk dat je het DAARvan overneemt.

JD: and the next example is from you. {laughs}
mfpim: yeah but i'm really totally bad.
 JD: {laughs}
mfpim: yeah the **yo** is like um i do that with certain groups of people. for example uh snobs or **skaters** or **hiphop** people. you know? it goes along with those little groups most of them then say HEY or **YO** or uh HELLO?
 JD: is that english or is that dutch?
mfpim: **nah** that's become dutch too really. of course it comes from english but it's become dutch.
 JD: and is- does it belong- a little bit to the same group?
mfpim: **yo**? yeah.
 JD: **skaters** et cetera
mfpim: yeah i don't know i don't actually see very many girls who use **yo**? more a little if you- yeah a little bit **street** or tend to listen to a lot of **hiphop**. i think that you take it over from THERE.

In this excerpt, *mfpim* positions her 'yo' greeting as a practice she reserves only for use "*bij bepaalde groepen mensen*", but 'the specific groups of people' she gives as examples are extremely different from each other. On the one hand, she mentions "*kakkers*" ('snobs'), which would seem to designate a group of people with a certain amount of money and clout, but on the other hand, she also talks about "*skaters*" and "*hiphop mensen*" ('hiphop people'), and these generally tend to be more economically disadvantaged and certainly culturally stigmatized groups. All of this suggests that for *mfpim*, the greeting 'yo' clearly indexes some sort of subculture, but it has become decoupled from its original African-Americanness and maybe even from its original status as part of a disadvantaged subculture. This indexing is decoupled even further by her characterization of 'yo' as "*een beetje van die groepjes de meesten zeggen dan HOI of YO of HALLO*" ('those little groups most of them then say HEY or YO or HELLO'), with a deepened voice. Interestingly, only one of these stereotyped greetings is English, the 'yo'. The others are Dutch, which suggests that she is positioning the kinds of people who would say 'yo' as the kinds of people who would also use these specifically Dutch greetings.

The indexing is decoupled further still when I ask her whether she thinks of 'yo' as English or Dutch, and she says that while it "*natuurlijk*" ('of course')

comes from English, it is “*Nederlands geworden*” (‘become Dutch’). However, when I ask directly whether she thinks of ‘yo’ as being associated with “*skaters enzovoort*” (‘et cetera’), she responds “*ja*” (‘yeah’), adding that you say ‘yo’ if you are “*een beetje street of best wel veel hiphop luistert*” (‘a little bit street or tend to listen to a lot of hiphop’), underscoring that it is those communities that have influenced its use. This brings things more in line with the greeting’s African-American origins, despite that language and community not being specifically named here. This seems to suggest that while there has in fact been a decoupling from the source culture, this decoupling is incomplete.

I also showed *mfpim*’s post to other community members. One example of the reaction of another community member, *bucket*, can be seen in Excerpt 3.

Excerpt 3: Indexing African-Americanness (interview data)

- JD: wat is **yo**.
- bucket*: **yo**. *YOOO*. ik denk dan eh **gangster** eeeeh
- JD: **gangster** ja
- bucket*: met zo’n handje. {*bucket* makes a sideways V-sign with her middle and index fingers, palm facing inward} in nederland HEB je geen **gangsters** dus of tenminste geen- zoals- ja.
- JD: en vind je dat-
- bucket*: nee. nee.
- JD: vind je dat- dat- vind je dat vervelend? of- of- of
- bucket*: nou wat het OOK een beetje is? ik doe dat- ik zeg OOK weleens **yo**?
- JD: **yo**? oké.
- bucket*: tegen vriendinnen? één speciFIEK maar dat is om een beetje AAN te geven- zij heeft wel vrienden WEL in een beetje **yo yo** sfeer en die super tof zijn en zo? en dan DOEN we altijd alsof we ook zo zijn?
- JD: mm-ké?
- bucket*: door dan een beetje dat TAALgebruik aan te nemen? maar eigenlijk is het ÉÉN grote **sketch**. want wij zijn helemaal niet **yo yo**? we zijn gewoon- we hebben een universitaire opleiding {laughing} en em we komen echt niet van de straat. ik bedoel zij komt uit WASSenaar dus umm? ja. dus dan doen we gewoon een beetje zo v- dat we dat sfeertje een beetje proeven? maar DIT
- JD: maar wie- wie zegt er wel **yo** in nederland?
{2-second pause}
- JD: ZONder zo te DOEN maar meent het
- bucket*: gewoon meer voor- het ECHT zeggen.
- JD: ja.

bucket: ja gewoon een beetje van die jongetjes van die gastjes wel een beetje van di- van die straat schoffies. denk ik. en dan vooral onderLING want mijn broertje is ook een straat schoffie? maar die zegt dat echt niet bij ons thuis? maar wel met vrienden en dan doet ie ook **yo** gast zoie- maar goed ja.

JD: what is **yo**.

bucket: **yo**. *YOOO*. i think then uh **gangster** eeeeh

JD: **gangster** yeah

bucket: with a hand gesture like this. {*bucket* makes a sideways V-sign with her middle and index fingers, palm facing inward} so in the netherlands you don't HAVE any **gangsters** or at least none- like- yeah.

JD: and do you think that's

bucket: no. no.

JD: do you think- you think that's annoying? or- or- or

bucket: well what it is a little bit TOO? i do that- i say **yo** sometimes TOO?

JD: **yo**? okay.

bucket: to my friends? one speCIFIC but that's a little bit to INDicate- she does have friends from a little bit the **yo yo** sphere and who are super cool and stuff like that? and then we ACT as if we were like that too?

JD: mm-kay?

bucket: by taking on a little bit of that LANGuage usage? but it's actually nothing but a **sketch**. because we're not like **yo yo**? we're just- we have a university degree {laughing} and um we really don't come from the street i mean she comes from WASSenaar ((a very upper-class western small town)) so umm? yeah. so then we just act a little like- that we get a taste of that sphere a bit? but THIS

JD: but who- who really does say **yo** in the netherlands?

{2-second pause}

JD: withOUT ACTing but who means it

bucket: yeah just more for- who says it for REAL.

JD: yeah.

bucket: yeah just a bit like those young boys- like those young guys it's more a little bit of those- of those street punks. i think. and then mostly among each OTHER because my brother is also a street punk? but he really doesn't say that at home with us? but he does with friends and then he does **yo** dude too like tha- but okay yeah.

In this interview excerpt, *bucket* juxtaposes 'yo' with her immediate association: "gangster", and the use of a particular hand-gesture associated with the hip-hop community. This serves to iconize these linguistic and cultural practices as essentially relevant to a particular group. After I ask her whether the use of 'yo' is a practice that she finds annoying, she positions it as something that she actually uses herself sometimes, specifically in order to index belonging to – or, in reality, pretending to belong to – a certain group of young people who are positioned as being "*in een beetje yo yo sfeer en die super tof zijn en zo*" ('a little bit in the yo yo sphere and who are super cool and stuff like that').

She positions herself and one friend as being able to index this group by "*dat taalgebruik aan te nemen*" ('taking on that language usage'), even though in reality it is nothing but "*één grote sketch*" ('nothing but a sketch') because she and her friend have university degrees and come from stereotypically wealthy Dutch places like Wassenaar. This positions the use of 'yo' as, in fact, associated with traits that are connected to African-American hip-hop culture, such as being "*super tof*" ('super cool') and coming from "the street", but with a twist: the group of people she and her friend are pretending to be a part of is not an American one but a Dutch one. The result is positioned as a way of getting to "*dat sfeertje een beetje proeven*" ('get a taste of that sphere a bit') without actually committing to it. Then, when I ask her to identify the groups that really do say 'yo' in the Netherlands, she identifies this group as "*straatschoffies*" ('street punks') like her brother who use this sort of language "*vooral onderling*" ('among each other'). So, to *bucket* and her friends – and maybe even to *bucket's* brother – 'yo' and its associated cultural practices are not primarily part of a distinct variety of English, but rather a part of a distinctly identifiable Dutch linguistic style that nonetheless still retains traces of its African-American origins.

Excerpt 4 contains an example of a transidiomatic practice being used specifically to index Londonness. Again, I will start with the social media excerpt I later presented to community members in the interviews.

Excerpt 4: Indexing Londonness (social media data)

aalt: Waar kan jij je echt aan ergeren?
telescope: mensen die links op de roltrap blijven staan, hallooooooo
echinacea: Ik ben ook voor een bordje: **please stand on the right!**

aalt: What really annoys you?
telescope: people who stand on the left on an escalator, hallooooooo
echinacea: I'm also in favour of a sign: **please stand on the right!**

In the initial post, community member *aalt* asks the question: “*Waar kan jij je echt aan ergeren?*” (‘What really annoys you?’). In response, *telescope* writes: “*mensen die links op de roltrap blijven staan, halloooooo*” (‘people who stand on the left on an escalator, helloooooo’). And following that, *echinacea* replies that she is “*ook voor een bordje: please stand on the right*” (‘also in favour of a sign:’). So, her “please stand on the right” is in English, which specifically indexes the London underground where these signs are ubiquitous.

To find out to what extent this indexing retains a one-to-one correspondence with its UK origin and to what extent it is ‘Dutchified’ in some way, we need to turn to the interview data.

Excerpt 5: Indexing Londonness (interview data)

- JD: DAT vond ik ook echt HEEL interessant van je. het gaat om- eh- ja. ja mensen die LINKS op de ROLtrap blijven staan. ja?
- echinacea*: ja.
- JD: en JIJ zegt *ik ben ook voor een bordje **please stand on the right***
- echinacea*: ja omdat je dat is dus in engeland heb je- heb je- in de **subway** en zo- heb je die bordjes van **please stand on the right.** en-
- JD: en dus- dus dit bordje als- als het er daadwerkelijk was- zou het in het engels zijn.
(5-second pause)
- echinacea*: nee die zou dan gewoon in het nederlands moeten maar omdat die bordjes er niet in- in het nederlands ZIJN weet je wel zo van- eh dat is iets typisch ENGels eigenlijk.

-
- JD: THIS is something that i also found VERY interesting from you. it’s about- um- yeah. yeah people who stay standing on the LEFT of an EScalator. yeah?
- echinacea*: yeah.
- JD: and YOU say *i’m also for a sign **please stand on the right***
- echinacea*: yeah because you so that’s in england you have- you have- like in the **subway**- you have those signs like **please stand on the right.** and-
- JD: and so- so this sign if- if it were really here- it should be in english.
(5-second pause)

echinacea: no then it should just be in normal dutch but because those signs aren't in- AREN'T in dutch you know like- oh that is typically ENGLISH actually.

I begin the interview excerpt by asking *echinacea* why, if the issue is Dutch people being irritated by other Dutch people standing on the left of Dutch escalators in Dutch train stations, she portrayed the sign that she wanted to put up as reading, in English, “please stand on the right”? Her response is to make reference to the signs that she is indexing in the London Underground. But when I ask her whether this means the hypothetical sign that she would like to see in Dutch train stations should therefore be in English, she is startled into silence for a full five seconds. When she finally does respond, she says that the signs, if they existed, would of course be in Dutch, but that she used English to refer to them when she talked about them in the community to say “*eh dat is iets typisch Engels eigenlijk*” (‘oh that is typically English actually’), or in other words to strategically and deliberately index the actual signs in the London Underground. So, as with the African-American example, this set of positionings serves to simultaneously index the Londonness of *echinacea*’s imagined sign while also fully localizing it to its immediate Dutch context.

My final set of excerpts involves an example of an entire set of ways of using English in order to index a different – and specifically Anglophone – social media community. It comes from this Dutch community’s “*vraagvrije vrijdag*” (‘free for all Friday’) post, which is made on a repeated basis every Friday. The practice of making these posts is inspired by the weekly “Free for All Friday” posts in the popular celebrity-gossip-related community *Oh No They Didn’t*, or *ONTD* for short, where they create a recurring weekly space for members of that community to post off-topic comments. So, the language for the post providing the space for “*vraagvrije vrijdag*” in the Dutch community is always the same, and this can be seen in *laviefantasque*’s first turn in Excerpt 6.

Excerpt 6: Indexing an Anglophone social media community (social media data)

laviefantasque: **Post** hier je **shit** die je wel wil delen maar niet in je eigen **LJ** wil **posten**, je **drama**, je anonieme vragen, je verzoekjes om nieuwe vriendjes, je **spam**, je leukste/stomste/grappigste **YouTube** filmpjes, je **omegle-convo’s**, je **lolcats**, je anonieme gezeikk op hoe gaar deze **community** wel niet geworden is, je frustraties over dat het vrijdag is, je jubilaties over dat het bijna weekend is (of toch al weekend voor de meesten), ennnn al het andere dat je maar kunt bedenken. **We welcome sparkly**

- fonts, gifs, big font, rage, anonymous, joy, squee, Chuck Bass, ANYTHING!**
- laviefantasque*: **let's start early**, het is ten minste ~vrijdag~ en ik ben overdag vast heel druk en **ONTD is bringing me so much lolz right now brb have to rehost pics.**
- laviefantasque*: {pictures} **man tswift can go away already plz ugh. ef rehosting, tinypic won't mind right. ahhh the lolz. they kill. now I sleep.**
- isolde*: **Twitter is down :(**
- oktobergoud*: **YAY FIRST PAGE!** en woow jij bent vroeg O_O IKK HEB ME VERSLAPEN want ik moet naar een bruiloft en kon gisteravond niet meer met de treinnn want er waren zoveel vertragingen lol
- geraldina*: **YAY IK STA OP DE WAITING LIST OM MEE TE DOEN AAN HET WINTERSCHOOL PROGRAMME!!!!** Duim allemaal dat ik uiteindelijk mee mag doen **please?** :D Oooh and lilirossol, luna_puella, sappho en wie dan ook- ik heb eindelijk gister maar een **feminist icon** gemaakt vanwege de **fuckery articles** op **ONTD** :D
- lilirossol*: Ohh heb ik **ontd drama** gemist? wat was er wat was er? en **yayyyy** haha. en **yayyy** ik heb zin in woensdag! ben heel benieuwd :) en ik ga duimen!

- laviefantasque*: **Post** here your **shit** that you want to share but don't want to **post** in your own **LJ**, your **drama**, your anonymous questions, your requests for more readers, your **spam**, your most awesome/dumbest/funniest **YouTube** videos, your **omgle-convo's**, your **lolcats**, your anonymous complaining about how tired and boring this **community** has or hasn't gotten, your frustrations about it being Friday, your jubilation about it being almost the weekend (or actually already is for most of you), annnnnnd everything else that you can think of. **We welcome sparkly fonts, gifs, big font, rage, anonymous, joy, squee, Chuck Bass, ANYTHING!**
- laviefantasque*: **let's start early**, at least it's ~Friday~ now and I think I'm going to be really busy during the day and **ONTD is bringing me so much lolz right now brb have to rehost pics.**
- laviefantasque*: {pictures} **man tswift can go away already plz ugh. ef rehosting, tinypic won't mind right. ahhh the lolz. they kill. now I sleep.**
- isolde*: **Twitter is down :(**

- oktobergoud*: **YAY FIRST PAGE!** and **woow** are you ever early O_O I OVERSLEPT because I have to go to a wedding and yesterday evening I couldn't catch a traaaaaain because everything was late **lol**
- geraldina*: **YAY I AM ON THE WAITING LIST TO PARTICIPATE IN THE WINTER SCHOOL PROGRAMME!!!!** Everybody cross your fingers that I finally get to participate **please?** :D Oooh and lilirossol, luna_puella, sappho and whoever else - I finally made a **feminist icon** because of the **fuckery articles** on **ONTD** :D
- lilirossol*: Ohh did I miss **ontd drama?** what was it what was it? and **yayyyy** haha. and **yayyy** I'm looking forward to wednesday! I'm reeeeeeeally curious :) and I'll cross my fingers!

The first part of the post is mostly in Dutch but there are also a large number of single-word switches to English (“shit”, “drama”, “lolcats”, “community”, etc.). This is followed by a single line, all in English: “We welcome sparkly fonts, gifs, big font, rage, anonymous, joy, squee, Chuck Bass, ANYTHING!” The first two comments that follow, also made by *laviefantasque*, are also indicative of this same mixture of a playful use of English, social-media-specific phrasing, over-the-top affect, and celebrity-related subject matter that is typical in “*vraagvrije vrijdag*” posts. “Let’s start early”, she begins in English, uses some Dutch but also a lot of English in the lines that follow, and finally ends by again using a version of English full of online-language expressions to communicate that she is going to leave and be back again in a subsequent comment, where she will post pictures. Then, there is more of the same in her next comment.

By this point it could be easy to assume that this sort of *ONTD*-inspired style is unique to *laviefantasque*, but the language used in the turns that follow, all of which are comments made by other participants, is similar. Due to space constraints I will not discuss each of the following turns in detail, but in general it can be said that the comments that follow all show a similar sort of pattern: almost as much English as Dutch, as well as an over-the-top affect indicated by a high degree of exclamation mark and smiley usage, ‘all caps’, a higher degree of social-media-inspired language use than is typical in other conversations, and the repetition of letters to indicate vowel or consonant length. The cumulative effect is a very specific style that is reserved exclusively for the “*vraagvrije vrijdag*” posts and its comments, and which strategically and deliberately indexes the *Oh No You Didn’t* community.

This analysis is not just confirmed, but actually underscored, by the interview data, as can be seen in Excerpt 7.

Excerpt 7: Indexing an Anglophone social media community (interview data)

- JD: en de LAATste ZIN? is altijd alleen maar in het engels?
gauwd: {laughs}
 JD: **we welcome sparkly fonts gifs big fonts rage anonymous joy squee chuck bass ANYthing.**
gauwd: hm.
 JD: waarom
geraldina: **oh no they didn't?**
gauwd: {laughs}
geraldina: **oh no they didn't? oh no they didn't?** ken- ken je die **com- community?**
 JD: ja? ja? jaja.
geraldina: daar heb je sowieso inderdaad **free for all friday**. en ik weet dat DIE groep ook heel veel op **oh no they didn't** zit? dus het komt daarvan OVER en- dus het is OvergeNomen en daar hebben ze ook altijd als laatste zin effe- eh- ehm- of een THEma te-
gauwd: ja.
geraldina: **reminder no porn no blablabla**. ehm dus eh- eh- je neemt de grap OVER zeg maar zij het bewust onbewust. maar als ik het zo ZIE dan relateer ik het automatisch aan dat ja.

- JD: and the LAST SENTence? is always just in english?
gauwd: {laughs}
 JD: **we welcome sparkly fonts gifs big fonts rage anonymous joy squee chuck bass ANYthing.**
gauwd: hm.
 JD: why
geraldina: **oh no they didn't?**
gauwd: {laughs}
geraldina: **oh no they didn't. oh no they didn't.** do you- do you know the **com- community?**
 JD: yeah? yeah? yeah yeah.
geraldina: you actually have **free for all friday** there anyway. and i know that THAT group also spends a lot of time on **oh no they didn't?** so it comes OVER from there- so it's been BORRowed and there you always have as the last sentence like- uh- um- like to set a TOPic or
gauwd: yeah.

geraldina: **reminder no porn no blablabla.** um so uh- uh- you like BORRrow the joke whether it's conscious or unconscious. but when i SEE that like that then i relate it automatically to that yeah.

Here, when I ask community participant *geraldina* why the last sentence of the “*vraagvrije vrijdag*” post is always entirely in English, she responds simply that it is a specific imitation of the style found in the *Oh No They Didn't* community and its own analogous *Free for All Friday* weekly post. This is further positioned as happening because the group of community members responsible for making the “*vraagvrije vrijdag*” posts “*ook heel veel op oh no they didn't zit*” (‘also spends a lot of time on *oh no they didn't*’), positioning them as making very specific reference to the style that is typical there. *geraldina* says that the purpose of this appropriation is “*je neemt de grap over*” (‘you borrow the joke’), but she leaves it open as to whether this borrowing is conscious or unconscious. In either case, the result for *geraldina* – and more likely than not other community members too – is “*als ik het zo zie, dan relateer ik het automatisch aan dat*” (‘when I see that like that then I relate it automatically to that’), constructing a direct relationship both in language and in culture between *Oh No They Didn't's Free for All Friday* and this Dutch community’s “*vraagvrije vrijdag*”. At the same time, however, this *ONTD* style and content is always juxtaposed with talk about Dutch things: shopping in Dutch stores, attending Dutch universities, riding Dutch trains.

4. Conclusion

In each of the above excerpts, there is a deliberate, strategic use of English to index some particular external Anglophone community. Sometimes there is more specificity regarding which precise community it is, and sometimes it is a little hazier, but it is always clear that some specific external community is intended. As such, this usage can legitimately be called ‘crossing’, following Rampton (2005), or the use of language belonging to a distinct ‘other’ cultural group. But what makes this more interesting is the fact that this indexing is always less straightforward than a one-to-one correspondence. In other words, among members of this Dutch social media community, both the transidiomatic practices and the indexing are always also relocalized in the sense that the practices in question are used to carry out some locally specific Dutch act, and often associated with specifically Dutch groups of people.

This analysis suggests that even in these clearly deliberate and strategic uses of English to index some specific ‘other’ culture, the use of English is always relocalized within the Dutch context. This type of usage gives rise to a complex

and creatively reterritorialized indexicality in which interactants do not just index the originating culture in a simplistic one-to-one correspondence, but instead retain bits of that culture while also semiotically rearranging those bits into something clearly locally Dutch. By complicating the indexing of the English in this way, we can say that it has been creatively reterritorialized, retaining bits of the cultures and groups that originally gave rise to them while also not losing any of their inherent Dutchness.

This has implications for a theory of transnational English, as it indicates that these Dutch young people are viewing the English language not merely as the property of English-speaking countries, but as a 'neutral' language belonging to everyone. Using English, even in these ways that specifically index Anglophone cultures, therefore does not make these young people any less Dutch. Instead, it is simply one ordinary part of the repertoire they have to express themselves.

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