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“Because here we live in the Netherlands”: Languagecultural politics of belonging in a supermarket

Abstract: This article unravels how people construct belonging to places through languagecultural practices (Cornips et al. 2012). The tactics of intersubjectivity (Bucholtz and Hall 2004) serve as analytical tools to explain how people justify their belonging through languagecultural ideologies while challenging other people’s belonging. Furthermore, the article scrutinises how *nativeness* and *new speakerness* (O’Rourke and Pujolar 2013) manifest themselves within daily practices. Rather than focusing on “old” and “new” speakers, this article perceives nativeness and new speakerness as constructs that can be given meaning by anyone. In this article, I analyse an interaction in a small supermarket that is illustrative of the construction of belonging to places and which in turn exemplifies the dynamicity of new speakerness.

Keywords: place, belonging, languageculture, new speakerness, tactics of intersubjectivity

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1 Introduction

This article examines how *languagecultural* practices and ideologies are used by people to construct *belonging* to places. Inspired by what Silverstein (1985) has referred to as the “total linguistic fact”, that is, the four aspects of language use that must be analysed to understand how linguistic signs have meaning in practice, namely, form, use, ideology and domain, Cornips et al. (2012) propose the term languageculture to refer to the insolvable knot of linguistic forms, social praxis, and ideologies. By exploring these languagecultural practices, we gain insight into how a place is constructed and appropriated through the

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politics of belonging that are attached to it: who is considered to belong or unbelong to a specific place and what is languageculturally needed for this.

This research goes some way towards explaining how people draw borders between each other in their daily lives. In other words, I give insights into the processes of constructing languagecultural differences and similarities. To do this, I propose to begin from “a place perspective” which draws on the ways that people give meanings to places. In this sense, places and their meanings are constructed by the practices observed in them and are, moreover, in constant transformation. For instance, instead of stating that inhabitants of the Dutch province of Limburg share “a regional identity”, one should explore how, when, and if ideas of *Limburgerness* (Thissen 2013) manifest within different places and over time. Similarly, instead of deciding beforehand who should be considered an “old” or “new” speaker, I show that *nativeness* and *new speakerness* are constructs that can be given meaning to by anyone, regardless of their actual background within a particular place.

The data discussed in this article were gathered during nine months of fieldwork in a small supermarket, located in the Limburgian city of Roermond in the southeastern part of the Netherlands. It is used here to demonstrate how issues of belonging come to the fore. From this, it becomes clear that the question of “who belongs” can be important to anyone, including people who, at first sight, might be considered to share a similar background. Moreover, the case study displays how people, in daily interactions, legitimise their own belonging, while at the same time challenging other people’s belonging through languagecultural practices.

2 A place perspective on belonging and new speakerness practices

2.1 A place perspective

In the globalised world in which we now live, people, cultures, languages, and economic resources circulate around the globe at a rapid pace (Inda and Rosaldo 2007). As a result, people increasingly produce and encounter hybridised linguistic and cultural forms. These contemporary hybridised forms challenge the academic use of static analytical categories that imagine “a language” or “a people” as fixed entities (see Quist 2010; Pennycook 2010). Statements like “the Dutch speak Dutch and share a Dutch culture” simplify the complex reality of modern societies and ignore their mixed and cross-connected realities. This has prompted different scholars to find new analytical concepts that are better

equipped to examine such hybrid languagecultural forms. Terms such as poly--linguaging (Jørgensen et al. 2011), translanguaging (García and Wei 2014), transidiomatic practices (Jacquemet 2005), and metrolingualism (Otsuji and Pennycook 2010) have been proposed to describe “language” as a process and to capture the ways in which people can use different linguistic resources that are at their disposal through the interaction they have with others. The processes of new speakerness, explored in this special issue, build on these and other such conceptualisations and focus our attention on the in-between, fuzzy spaces that they encapsulate (O’Rourke and Ramallo 2013). In an attempt to disconnect the fixed bond between language, place, and belonging and to recognise new contemporary hybridised realities, I propose a place perspective to study the hybrid languagecultural and new speakerness practices.

A place perspective begins from a particular space and the processes of place-making through which people attach cultural and linguistic elements to spaces that are thereby transformed into places (Feld and Basso 1996; Low 2003). Places are thus subject to construction through the practices witnessed in them and are, therefore, in constant transformation. The “place” in a “place perspective” can be considered as the starting point of any piece of research (the research site) from which the researcher works outwards. In other words, instead of labelling our research participants and sites, we need to carefully investigate which languagecultural practices and ideologies are deemed salient by the people within that place. By exploring this, we gain insights into how a place is appropriated and what politics of belonging are salient to people in that place.

2.2 The construction of belonging

The concept of *belonging* has been used across fields such as anthropology (Ghorashi 2002), sociology (Yuval-Davis 2006), and geography (Antonsich 2010). Increasingly, the concept is being used in the field of (socio-)linguistics. Antonsich (2010: 644) rightly claims that scholars take the notion of belonging for granted and equate it with identity and citizenship. Here I will briefly unpack the notion of belonging looking at what it means, why and how it emerged and developed.

Belonging is based on a shared perspective of people that imagine that they have something in common that others do not have: “that ‘something’ might be a common place of residence, a common occupation, or a common set of values” (Alborn 2001: 562). Languagecultural aspects can be imagined to reflect belonging and to show off a particular uniqueness in comparison with “others”. Antonsich emphasises the role of language, which plays a very powerful role inconstructing belonging by demarcating “us” from “them” (Antonsich 2010: 648).

The intersection of languagecultural aspects means that belonging naturally tends to shift between different positions and scales. Yuval-Davis points to the context-dependent nature of belonging: people may highlight different social locations, identifications, and emotional attachments depending on the place, time, and company they find themselves in (2006: 200). Others use the terms “modes of belonging” (Sicakkan and Lithman 2005) and “differential belonging” (Rowe 2005) to highlight “the endless variety of attachment to places, groups, and cultures” (Antonsich 2010: 645).

Two analytical levels of belonging have been distinguished (Antonsich 2010; Yuval-Davis 2006): belonging as a personal, intimate feeling of being at home in a place (place-belongingness) and belonging as a discursive resource which constructs, claims, justifies, or resists forms of socio-spatial inclusion and exclusion (politics of belonging). In the latter, it is not only about the legal aspect of belonging – citizenship – but also about the social matters of belonging – whether one is welcomed or rejected by the people who live in a particular place (Antonsich 2010: 649). Place-belongingness and the politics of belonging are closely intertwined, since the latter influences the place-belongingness of a person. This double-edged concept of belonging allows us, due to its inherent multiplicity, to capture the dynamicity and messiness, that is created by the intersection of different positions and categories with which people align themselves.

Constructing belonging to places and groups has gained renewed significance in the context of globalisation, since places have become hybrid meshes of different linguistic and cultural resources. As a result, ideas of “one language, one place, one identity” have become deconstructed as people relate to a variety of language practices and cultural traditions (Quist 2010). As a result “native-born citizens (...) claim to no longer feel at home in their “own” country”, a so-called crisis of “home” (Duyvendak 2011: 75). In general, immigrants living within a country are blamed for the natives’ feelings of estrangement that strengthens fixed ideas about belonging and unbelonging. Both flow and closure can thus be observed (Geschiere and Meyer 1999); on the one hand people, goods, and cultures circulate much faster than ever before while (flow), on the other hand, people try to protect themselves from these flows by searching for their roots and authenticity (closure). In reality, people may have multiple feelings of belonging that shift according to different times and contexts while, at the same time, they might try to root themselves in an “authentic” place. To do this, languagecultural resources are used as a means of attaching oneself to a particular place. Within these processes of place-making, groups are created based on ideas about who belongs to a place and who does not. In sum, one could say that due to this “crisis of home”, the discussion about “belonging” is increasingly raised. The case study explored in this article illustrates how

the politics of belonging are constructed in daily interaction. I argue that belonging is not only important to native-born citizens who feel threatened but also to people who would be considered as “newcomers”.

Belonging is a relational process that goes beyond the individual’s emotional attachment and involves power relations in which both “the Self” as “the Other” have a defining and evaluative role (Barth 1969). A person might identify with particular groups and places while at the same time another person will approve, challenge, or reject these constructed feelings of belonging (Ghorashi 2002: 28). When taking this aspect into account, belonging becomes an umbrella concept for both belonging (sameness of “Self” and “us”) as well as unbelonging (otherness of “Other” and “them”). It is here where the intimate individually constructed feelings of belonging meet the politics of belonging, also referred to as the “dirty work of boundary maintenance” (Crowley 1999: 30). The politics of belonging results in the division of groups that belong together and those who do not, for which there are languagecultural requirements.

The three pairs of intersubjective tactics, as proposed by Bucholtz and Hall (2004), are tools that can be used to examine how belonging is claimed, justified, and challenged, and can be used interchangeably. The first pair, adequation and distinction, is about the demarcation of similarities and differences, a principle found in almost any identity-construction study. Yet, Bucholtz and Hall take this a step further by including notions of authenticity and legitimacy in order to examine what is needed to belong to a place. The second pair of tactics, authentication and denaturalisation, specifically focuses on the languagecultural resources people perceive as required to belong to a place or group. While authentication is concerned with essentialist authenticities, denaturalisation is rather about non-essentialism (Bucholtz and Hall 2004: 386). In this sense, denaturalisation operates to destabilise the essential claims of authentication and thereby subvert the ideological expectations. The last pair, authority and illegitimation, refers to people’s efforts to appropriate authority to claim belonging to a particular place and to judge, or reject, others’ belonging. As a result, someone’s attempt to construct a particular feeling of belonging to a group or place may be illegitimised because he or she is judged to lack the required languagecultural resources, such as a particular accent. These tactics illuminate the possibilities people have to construct boundaries of (in)authenticity between themselves and “others” based on a variety of languagecultural resources (Bucholtz and Hall 2004: 370). The creation, mobilisation, challenge, and strengthening of particular languagecultural norms provide input into using these tactics in interaction. It is thus clear that languagecultural aspects cannot only be used to perform and put forward belonging, but also to claim, justify, contest, and challenge it.

2.3 New speakerness practices

The use of languagecultural practices in the politics of belonging is linked to ideas about who is considered a legitimate speaker in a particular place and who is considered an illegitimate speaker. O'Rourke and Pujolar (2013) argue that dominant language ideologies have conceptualised languages as bounded entities representing homogenous national collectivities (O'Rourke and Pujolar 2013: 50). As such, questions about the supremacy of "nativeness" are increasingly raised in situations where "new speakers" exist. O'Rourke and Pujolar define new speakers and new speakerness as the ways of speaking and the social and linguistic practices of speakers which exist outside of the traditional native-speaker communities (2013: 56). These issues of nativeness and new speakerness go hand in hand with issues of legitimacy, authority, and authenticity (O'Rourke and Pujolar 2013: 57).

Yet, as my case study of a small supermarket in the Dutch town of Roermond will show, the distinction between native and new speakers is not that clear-cut in daily practices and can even be regarded as arbitrary. Nativeness and new speakerness can therefore be understood as something that is constructed by people's languagecultural practices. Consequently, the two notions become constructs that can be given meaning through languagecultural practices and can change depending on the person, context, time, and place – and thus regardless of one's actual background. This allows us to move away from the dichotomy of "old" versus "new" speaker. As the case study will show, a person does not have to be native-born in order to challenge someone's belonging based on languagecultural grounds. As such, the construction of belonging as well as new speakerness can never correlate to someone's actual place of birth or residence.

3 Fieldwork in the supermarket

3.1 The supermarket

Because contextual background is crucial in a place perspective analysis, ethnographic methods are particularly useful in tapping into this. In July 2012, I asked the owners of a small supermarket in Roermond whether I could visit their shop to do research. Eventually this ended up in voluntarily working at the supermarket at least two days a week, while carrying an audio-recorder and taking field notes. A poster at the entrance of the supermarket informed customers about my presence and research and asked them to notify me if they did not wish to be part of the research.

The owners of the supermarket are Hezan and his younger brother Siyar, whose parents decided to move their family from East-Turkey to the Netherlands in the late 1980s. Both grew up for most of their lives in Roermond where they studied and had different jobs, until they decided to run a supermarket together. In June 2012, the supermarket was opened in a shopping mall located in the southeastern part of Roermond. Offering a multi-culinary assortment of products, the supermarket catered for the multicultural neighbourhood in which it was located. Besides the two brothers, a butcher and cashier worked daily at the supermarket.¹ In this article I will focus specifically on Siyar, who worked as the floor manager at the shop. I will examine discussions he had with a customer as a means of providing insights into the ways he claims and justifies his own belonging and challenges that of others.

3.2 The supermarket as a peripheral place

The city of Roermond is situated in Limburg, the southeastern province of the Netherlands. The province is considered as peripheral by most of its inhabitants since it is far away from the dominant centre in the western part of the country that evolves around cities like Amsterdam and The Hague. This centre-periphery dynamic within the Netherlands is also reflected in the status of linguistic varieties used in the most prestigious centre and those used in the much lesser prestigious periphery (cf. Pietikäinen and Kelly-Holmes 2013).

Besides this, the province is known for the regional dialects and accents of Dutch used by its inhabitants. These dialects and accents are enregistered (Agha 2008) or indexed (Johnstone 2010) as markers of a regional identity. Because there is a strong sense of linguistic awareness amongst inhabitants of Limburg (Cornips 2013), the use of local dialects and accents in Dutch within, as well as outside the province, points to belonging. For example, the pronunciation of “g” as [ɣ] – known as “soft g” – and the melodious pronunciation are perceived as indexing Limburgerness (Thissen 2013). This opposition between “hard” and “soft g” sounds can be regarded as a virtual shibboleth (Hagen and Giesbers 1988: 32). Other linguistic characteristics in dialect and accents in Dutch are:

“the maintenance of the difference between [f]/[v] and [s]/[z] (...) in the south, whereas many northern speakers do not have this phonological opposition, and the monophthongal realisation of [e.] and [o.] in the south versus a strong diphthongisation of these vowels with many northern speakers.” (Hagen and Giesbers 1988: 32)

¹ This reflects the situation at the time of doing my fieldwork at the supermarket. At the time of writing, some positions have since been filled by other people.

Besides the dialects and accents, there are other linguistic resources to be found in Roermond. The city has 56.832 inhabitants of which 27% have their origins outside of the Netherlands (CBS Statline 2013a, CBS Statline 2013b). Furthermore, Roermond attracts tourists from Belgium and Germany as well as tourists from outside of Europe (especially Asia) due to the location of a designer outlet centre in the inner-city (City Management Roermond 2014). The spatial language repertoires (Pennycook and Otsuji 2014) of Roermond's inhabitants do not only contain resources stemming from standard Dutch and Limburgian dialects, but can also include Moroccan-Arabic, Turkish, Kurdish, Chinese, Tamil, German, Polish, and many other languages. All these languages are influential for the language repertoires in this place. The following vignette illustrates the hybridity in daily interaction at the supermarket:

"*Mazyan*, isn't it? They are really fresh!" The butcher tried to sell his "nice" Moroccan pancakes to a customer. He then continued talking to his helper in what I presumed was Turkish. "Is there any 'nana' left?" a customer asked. "While you are going, can I have *kosbor*?" another customer quickly asked. The helper walked to the storage in the back of the supermarket. The butcher greeted a customer with a loud *kapusta*. A few weeks later I fetched mint and coriander from the storage myself and I was no longer surprised that the Polish word for "sauerkraut" was a greeting in this place. (Field notes, June 27, 2012)²

The supermarket can be perceived as a multilingual place. However, we should not think of the supermarket as a multilingual island in a generally standard Dutch and local language area. This means that the local dialects are also part of the linguistic resources at hand in the supermarket (see Section 4.4). Moreover, the use of Dutch, Turkish, Arabic, and Polish would not be found in the inner-city of Roermond where shops mainly use Dutch, Limburgian dialect, English and German. This exemplifies how centre-periphery dynamics can trickle down to regional and local scales and obtain linguistic meanings that are relevant for that particular scale (cf. Blommaert 2010).

Staff and customers regard the supermarket as a peripheral place where other practices are allowed that may not be permitted larger and more mainstream shops. When comparing his supermarket to big chain supermarkets (*Plus* and *Jan Linders*), Siyar observed:

The annoying thing about a "foreign" shop is that people always try to get discount. They would not do that at *Plus* or *Jan Linders*, because there they display the fixed price of the product. I do that too, nevertheless people suddenly say about something that costs 1,25 euro: "give me that for 1 euro". (Siyar, July 9, 2012)

² *Mazyan* is (Moroccan) Arabic for "nice" or "beautiful". *Nana* refers to "mint" whereas *kosbor* refers to "coriander". Both herbs are sold as fresh bundles, which are kept in the walk-in fridge in the shop's storage area. As mentioned, *kapusta* is Polish for "sauerkraut".

Siyar's quote shows that customers perceive his supermarket as a different place because of its peripherality and where these practices are allowed, Siyar's use of "foreign" deserves more attention here, since this category is salient within the supermarket (see Section 4.3 for the label "foreigner" and the notion of *foreignness*).

The case study introduces a woman (of Bosnian origin, as will become clear from the data) who tried to dispose of small eurocent coins of one and two eurocents. If people go to a bank to exchange them, they are required to pay for this service. The fact that the woman comes to this particular supermarket suggests that she perceives Siyar's supermarket as a place where she could try this but for free. The extracts in Section 4 below show what happened when this peripheral supermarket rejects the small coins.

4 Because here we live in the Netherlands

4.1 The discussion between Siyar and the woman

Extract 1

- 01 Woman: Jij mag geld niet weigeren.
You may not refuse money.
- 02 Siyar: Je mag hem wel weigeren, [im] je mag eigen policy [/im], mag je weigeren.
You may refuse it, you are allowed to have your own policy, you may refuse.
[Silence for (.3)]
- 03 Woman: Dan koop ik hier [im] niks [/im], dat verrek ik echt.
Then I do not buy anything here, I balk at that.
- 04 Siyar: Ja, dat kan.
Yes, that's possible.
- 05 Woman: Dat verrek ik.
I balk at that.
- 06 Siyar: Dat kan.
That's possible.
- 07 Woman: Want hier [ac]{wonen wij} in Nederland!
Because here [ac]{we live} in the Netherlands!
- 08 Siyar: = NEE WIJ WONEN IN NE/
= NO, WE LIVE IN THE NE/!
- 09 Woman: = DIT IS GEWOON [im] OFFICIËLE BETAALMIDDEL! [/im]
= THIS IS JUST OFFICIAL MEANS OF PAYMENT!

- 10 Siyar: [ac]{Wij wonen, ja wij wonen in Nederland, ik woon ook in Nederland, dat weet ik, = dat hoeft je me niet te vertellen, =}
[ac]{We live, yes we live in the Netherlands, I live in the Netherlands too, I know that, = you don't need to tell me that, =}
- 11 Woman: = Ja maar dat is [im] officiële betaalmiddel [/im], dan neem ik alles terug. =
= Yes but this is an = [im] official means of payment [/im], then I will take back everything. =
- 12 Siyar: Ja dat is geen probleem, dat moet u zelf weten.
Yes, that's not a problem, do it your own way.

The excerpt³ above outlines an event that took place on Thursday morning in January 2013. The atmosphere in the supermarket was peaceful, which gave Siyar the opportunity to rearrange the products on sale. While I helped customers to pack their groceries at the cash desk, the woman arrived to buy a few things. In order to pay the small sum, the woman dug up many coins and started to count. Nearing the total amount, she laid down coins of one and two euro-cents that the cashier refused to accept.

Extract 1 shows how the woman and Siyar get into a discussion about the coins. When the woman nearly decides to leave the store (in Lines 7 and 9), she claims that Siyar should accept the coins “because here we live in the Netherlands”. This statement is the immediate cause of Siyar’s continuous anger and frustration (which lingers on for more than half an hour afterwards). The woman tries to reprimand Siyar and is critical of the supermarket with this expression. In Line 7, the woman stresses “here” and “The Netherlands” while *wonen wij* “we live” is pronounced faster than the rest of the sentence. The woman thus stresses the geographical location: *here* in the Netherlands. The use of this specific word “here” implies the place where the woman and Siyar are at that exact moment, namely the Netherlands. It is as if the woman is pointing out to Siyar that “we do not live in the country you are coming from where you can get away with these kinds of practices maybe; we live in the Netherlands where you should conform to the Dutch rules”. By using languagecultural resources (“here” and a loud, authoritative voice), the woman takes on authority to judge the Siyar’s practices and those adopted in his supermarket. In doing so, Siyar sees his belonging as being questioned. This is displayed when he explicitly defends his belonging to the Netherlands in Line 10 *ik woon ook in Nederland* (“I live in the Netherlands too”). As other extracts will show later on in the

3 In the extract below, the English lines are translated rather than glossed and transcription conventions can be found at the end of the article.

article, he also identifies with other places and groups, thereby underlining the ambiguity of belonging (see Yuval-Davis 2006).

From the traditional and dominant language ideology that perceives languages as bounded entities, Siyar and the woman could be regarded as new speakers who fall outside of the group of “native” speakers (cf. O’Rourke and Pujolar 2013). However, Extract 1 shows that this does not necessarily mean that they are behaving as such: one could say that in reprimanding Siyar, the woman positions herself as the legitimate actor who is correcting his behaviour because “they live in the Netherlands”. This provides an example of where different forms of (in)authentic and (il)legitimate “nativeness” and “new speakerness” are constructed. In what follows, new speakerness and accompanying ideas about legitimacy, authority, and authenticity are indeed issues that come to the fore when Siyar starts claiming his belonging while at the same time challenging that of the woman. Drawing on Bucholtz and Hall (2004), the politics of belonging that are salient to Siyar can be unravelled. The following extracts display the conversations Siyar has with me and another customer following the discussion with the woman above. It will become clear how a seemingly innocent discussion about one and two euro-cents in a supermarket ends up in a dispute about belonging.

4.2 Siyar’s evaluation of the situation

After the woman left, I inform Siyar that she was likely to report the incident to the post office. His reaction to this is as follows:

Extract 2

- 01 Siyar: [ac] {Ja en dan? Wat gaat ze doen, naar Bosnië brengen? (.2)
[ac]{Yes and then what? What is she going to do, bring it to Bosnia?
(.2)
- 02 Gaat ze naar Bosnië, een notitie maken?
Is she going to Bosnia, make a report?
- 03 Wij leven in Nederland.
We live in the Netherlands.
- 04 Meid, wij leven in Nederland.
Girl, we live in the Netherlands.
- 05 Ik ben hier eh geboren, getogen en wat praat jij nou, jij bent net een
paar jaar hier.}
I was here err born, raised and what are you talking about, you have
been living here for just a few years.}

- 06 Serieus!
 Seriously!
- 07 [ac]{Weet je wat} zij ontkent ook nog eens waar ze vandaan komt, hè.
 [ac]{You know what}, she even denies where she's coming
 from, huh.
- 08 Dat is het ergste, ja (.) dat is het ergste wat je kunt doen, ontkennen.
 That's the worst, yes. (.) that's the worst thing you could do, deny it.

Extract 2 can be divided in two parts. In the first part (Lines 1 to 6), many things become clear for the outsider: just like Siyar, the woman has a migrant background, which makes the event even more painful for him since his belonging is questioned by someone with a similar background. In Line 5, he stresses the fact that he has been living in the Netherlands longer than she has, thereby authenticating and essentialising himself as genuine or “pure” Dutch (cf. Bucholtz and Hall 2004). While doing so, he symbolically addresses the woman with “girl” (Line 4) and uses “what are you talking about” (Line 5) to highlight her inferiority in a derogative manner, even though she is not present at the moment of this utterance. Antonsich (2010) affirms that the length of residence can be considered relevant to generate place-belongingness, which is exemplified by Siyar who uses his length of residence to legitimate his place-belongingness to the Netherlands. The self-repair in Line 5 about “being born and raised in the Netherlands” is interesting. Siyar was not born in the Netherlands, but moved here with his parents as a two-year-old boy. Although he wants to use the expression “to be born and raised”, he realises that this does not apply to him, even though it might feel that way. In addition to this, Siyar is challenging the woman's belonging to the Netherlands by stating that she has only been living here for a few years in Line 5. Extract 2 shows that, in addition to what O'Rourke and Pujolar argue, “nativeness” may thus very well be a very important aspect even among “new speakers”, which emphasises the arbitrariness of distinguishing between native and new speakers.

After first adequating himself with being born and raised in the Netherlands, Siyar adequates himself in the second part (Lines 7 and 8) with being from outside the Netherlands. From this stance, he criticises the woman because she is seen to be denying her own origins. He probably bases this on earlier experience with and knowledge about the woman, since there was no explicit evidence or reference to her denial on this particular day. However, according to Siyar, this is “the worst thing you could do”. Siyar uses the tactics of intersubjectivity (Bucholtz and Hall 2004) to nullify the woman's attempt to make an authoritative judgement like “because here we live in the Netherlands”. Through authority and authentication, Siyar establishes himself as being authentic Dutch

and “foreign” (mainly because he has been living in the Netherlands longer than the woman *and* that he probably stays true to where he is coming from originally). Besides that, he denaturalises and illegitimises the woman’s feelings of belonging by perceiving her as both artificially Dutch and “foreign” (since she has only been here for a few years *and* she denies where she is coming from). It is here that the influence of the politics of belonging on place-belongingness becomes clear. Through the woman’s challenge of Siyar’s belonging to the Netherlands, Siyar not only feels the need to assert his place-belongingness to both the Netherlands as well as to being “foreign” but also challenges the woman’s belonging. Extract 2 shows that Siyar highlights different emotional attachments depending on the context, which marks the intersectional nature of feelings of belonging, which makes them shifting and ambiguous (Yuval-Davis 2006). Siyar thus relates to different “modes of belonging” or “differential belonging” which shows the variety of attachments to different places, groups, and cultures (cf. Antonsich 2010; Rowe 2005; Sicakkan and Lithman 2005).

This extract shows how the intertwining of place-belongingness and the politics of belonging result in a narrative in which Siyar tries to defend and claim authentic belonging and legitimacy (ownership) on different scales while, at the same time, challenging the woman’s belonging. It is here that the messiness of belonging is most clearly exemplified. Moreover, Extract 2 confirms that the construction of belonging is always a relational process; the woman and Siyar need each other in order to construct, challenge, and claim their belonging – which, in Siyar’s case, is shifting and ambiguous. I will now clarify the label “foreign”, which was a pertinent term in the preceding discussion.

4.3 Foreignness

During my fieldwork, I recognised that the question of being *buitenlander* “foreigner” or not was highly important, as illustrated in the following quote:

Nearing closing time, I helped Daraz out at the butchery. While showing me how to clean the meat grinder, he said: “that’s how foreigners do it! Are you a foreigner too?” “Half.” “Half does not exist anymore, then you are a foreigner.” (Field notes, December 17, 2012)

This quote is one of many examples in which people use the label “foreigner” in order to figure out whether they share the feeling that others consider them as outsiders within the country. Generally, “foreigner” is used to talk in a pejorative way about “the Other”, but in the supermarket the label is used by “the Self” – those who are usually perceived as “the Other” – to refer to themselves. This means that staff as well as customers feel safe enough within this place to play

with this label which, from a national perspective, is an otherwise negative term. I propose to call this *foreignness*.⁴

Foreignness is an ideological construct based on the feeling that a group of people is considered by others as outsiders within a specific country due to their “origins”. Yet, these people may be born, raised, and/or living in that country. Foreignness reflects the need that people might have to decide whether the people they encounter and interact with are in the same position as they are: they are perceived by others to not belong in the country they live in because of their imagined otherness. Foreignness can be seen as a kind of belonging (through unbelonging), since it imagines that a group of people have something in common that is off-limit to others (cf. Alborn 2001). The notion of foreignness is based on the experiences I had in the supermarket and the oppositions and labels the people in that place found meaningful.

In the second part of Extract 2, it became clear that, according to Siyar, foreignness should not be denied and that one should stay true to the place one comes from originally. Denying where one is coming from, as the woman supposedly does, is therefore the worst thing one could do. It should be stressed that people deal with the category of foreignness in dynamic and shifting ways. This is exemplified by Siyar who, on the one hand, alludes to a form of shared foreignness which should be respected, but, on the other hand, clearly demarcates himself from the woman since he has been living in the Netherlands for a longer period of time than she has.

It is important to stress that this feeling of “unbelonging” is not only constructed within the context of the supermarket but also on a regional and national scale due to the political climate of many (West-European) countries. In the Netherlands, the influx of migrants and the accompanying feelings of estrangement lead to debates and policies about who belongs to the country and why, also referred to as the “crisis of home” (Duyvendak 2011).⁵ The “crisis of home”, processes of continuous othering (Ghorashi 2002), and the increasing popularity of anti-immigrant political parties has enforced the need for shared foreignness.

⁴ Initially, I used the term “foreignership” instead of “foreignness”. Thanks to the title of Joanna Kremer’s talk (2015) I was inspired to use the term foreignness which has a much more dynamic connotation. Foreignership assumes a static status, due to “ship”. Yet, the conceptualisation of foreignness is my own.

⁵ The preoccupation with and debates about roots and autochthony can also be found in other immigrant countries such as Luxembourg, Belgium, France, and Sweden (see Geschiere 2009 for European and African examples of discussions about belonging).

4.4 The evaluation by Siyar and a customer

Siyar is still agitated when an acquainted customer enters the shop. Siyar informs the man that “that woman” was in the supermarket and the customer guesses who Siyar is talking about.

Extract 3

- 01 Man: Die vrouw? Oh die Bosnische!
That woman? Oh the Bosnian one!
- 02 Siyar: Ja die Bosnische vrouw, luister, zij komt zo,
Yes that Bosnian woman, listen, she comes just like that,
- 03 Man: = Zij is helemaal geen Bosniër hè?
= She is not a Bosnian at all, right?
- 04 Siyar: = Ja ze is Hollands geworden!
= Yes she became Dutch!
- 05 Man: Zij is eh, Afrikaans.
She is err, African.
- 06 Siyar: Ja, Afrikaans ja, luister,
Yes, African yes, listen,
- 07 Man: Ja?
Yes?

In deciding whom Siyar is talking about, the men exchange labels in Extract 3. When Siyar uses “that Bosnian woman” in Line 2, the customer questions that label in Line 3 by stating, “she is not Bosnian at all”. Siyar immediately understands the man’s remark and corrects himself by ironically saying that she has become *Hollands* (Dutch) in Line 4. In addition to this, the customer refers to the woman as “African” in Line 5.

The label “African” seems to be an exotic and distant label with which the men denaturalise the woman’s attempt to be Dutch and emphasise that the woman behaves artificially. It seems as if they try to say that her feelings of belonging to the Netherlands are as artificial as if she would be claiming African belonging. The woman is denaturalised as being both artificial Dutch and foreign (cf. Bucholtz and Hall 2004). In doing so, the woman is (again) criticised for denying foreignness by conforming to the Dutch environment. In other words, she is doing too much, according to the men, to be Dutch (cf. Blommaert and Varis 2011). The men take up authority to judge and reject the woman’s efforts to be Dutch. Due to this denial, the woman is perceived by the men as not being a Bosnian anymore because she has become (too) Dutch. This, again, underlines that feelings of belonging are always constructed in a relational process and that place-belongingness goes hand in hand with the politics

of belonging (cf. Antonsich 2010; Barth 1969; Ghorashi 2002). This means that others have to acknowledge or accept one's performed feeling of belonging.

After calling the woman African, Siyar re-tells the discussion with the woman to the man. Unsurprisingly, the man reacts as agitated as Siyar and they start to discuss the linguistic reasons why they perceive the woman as artificial and denaturalised.

Extract 4

- 01 Siyar: Wij wonen in Nederland.
We live in the Netherlands.
- 02 Man: Ja ik kan wel [Limburgs dialect] *plat kalle* [/Limburgs dialect] hè!
[Turkish/Kurdish (.2)]
Yes but I do [in Limburgian dialect] *talk dialect/broad* [/in
Limburgian dialect], huh! [Turkish/Kurdish (.2)]
- 03 Siyar: Ja.
Yes.
- 04 Man: [Turks/Koerdisch (.1)]
[Turkish/Kurdish (.1)]
- 05 Siyar: Ja! Zij pr, zij praat e:h plat e:h, echt illegaal.
Yes! She talks e:rr dialect/broad e::rr, really illegal.
- 06 Man: xxx ja illegaal plat.
xxx yes illegal dialect.
- 07 Siyar: Echt, echt illie.
Really, really illegal.
- 08 Man: [Bosnisch] *Dobre komsji!* [Bosnisch]
[Bosnian] *Dobre komsji!* [/Bosnian]
- 09 Siyar: [Bosnisch] *Dobre komsji*, [Bosnisch] [Limburgs met Bosnisch accent]
ik kan ook *plat kallen* hè? [/Limburgs met Bosnisch accent] Ja
[Bosnisch] *nema para komsji!* [Bosnisch] Ouw-hoer man!
[Bosnian] *Dobre komsji* [/Bosnian], [Limburgian with Bosnian accent] I
can *talk dialect/broad*, right? [/Limburgian with Bosnian accent] Yes
[Bosnian] *nema para komsji!* [/Bosnian] Holy cow man!

While evaluating the woman's language practices and imitating them, the men give more information about the reasons why they perceive her as artificial. In Line 2, the man remarks that the woman talks "dialect", for which he uses the Limburgian words *plat kallen* "to talk dialect or broad". To make sure that I would hear this, he repeats this remark in Turkish or Kurdish⁶ to Siyar who then repeats this claim in Dutch. By using the Limburgian words *plat kallen*, the men

6 Since I do not understand Turkish or Kurdish, I cannot differentiate between the two.

authenticate themselves by showing that they, in contrast to the woman, know how to use the genuine dialect expressions, in Lines 2 and 9. This resembles what Johnstone and Baumgardt (2004: 115) have called “feature-dropping”: to display their knowledge of Limburgian dialect, the men use *plat kallen*, thereby claiming expertise and authenticity and proving to be a legitimate speaker of the dialect in comparison with the woman. They thus explicitly exploit the power of language by using a linguistic resource in order to underline their belonging (cf. Antonsich 2010).

As legitimate speakers, the men are permitted to evaluate the woman as *illegaal* (illegal) or – as they call it – *illie*, which they do in Lines 5 to 7. In that way, the men demarcate themselves from the woman, since they *do* know how to use dialect. “Illegal” or “illie” does not refer to the legality by law; rather, it is used as a symbolical label to characterise language practices that are out of line with normal or standard varieties. This resonates with what Jaspers (2011) found amongst youngsters in Antwerp. These youngsters used the label of “illegal talk” consciously to challenge and criticise existing stereotypes about their ethnic minority groups and to construct a hierarchy within the classroom. In these extracts, the labels “illegal” and “illie” are used to judge others’ language practices as artificial and denaturalised and consequently to judge their belonging to a particular place or group.

Finally, I want to point out how the men denaturalise the woman by using traditional and dominant language ideologies that fix language, place, and belonging together (cf. O’Rourke and Pujolar 2013; Quist 2010). In Lines 13 and 14, both men imitate the Bosnian words (which probably reflects the woman’s first language) *dobre komsji* “good neighbour” and *nema para komsji* “no money neighbour”.⁷ Moreover, when Siyar repeats the Limburgian sentence “I can talk dialect, right”, he uses an accent that can be interpreted as “Bosnian” to emphasise how illegal and artificial her language practices are, in his eyes, since her Bosnian probably comes through in her use of Limburgian. The men seem to think that, since the woman was born in Bosnia, she should therefore speak Bosnian, instead of excessively conforming to the place in which she now

7 In Extract 4, I transcribe the words exactly how the men said it (*komsji*: *komšija* in Bosnian, *dobre*: *dobro* in Bosnian). These words may be meaningful for people who drive from Western Europe to Turkey during holidays. On this route, they pass through Bulgaria, a country where the police and customs officers tend to ask for a lot of money for passing the border. If this amount of money is not paid, you run the risk of having to unpack your car or van completely so that the officers can check the luggage. In order to avoid these problems, the words *dobre komsji* and *nema para, komsji* can be used. It is unknown if Siyar and the man are aware of this context; it appears that they use the words to index a Bosnian person. Siyar uses these words more often to greet customers coming from the Balkan.

lives by speaking “the Limburgian dialect”. Yet, the woman seems to engage in language practices that subvert the ideological expectations of the men.

Even though the woman may be perfectly happy with her shifting belonging and hybrid language practices, the men are grafted in traditional and dominant language ideologies that constrain the use of a minority language by speakers who do not fit the native speaker criteria (O’Rourke and Pujolar 2013: 57). The languagecultural practices of Extract 4 exemplify how the notion of “new speakerness” gets shaped in terms of legitimacy, authority, and authenticity (O’Rourke and Pujolar 2013: 57). What becomes clear is that the woman’s attempt to be recognised as an authentic speaker of Limburgian dialect is perceived as being “illegal” and lacking nativeness (Pujolar 2007) by both men, who take up authority to evaluate her linguistic practices. This does not mean, however, that Siyar’s languagecultural practices correspond with these traditional language ideologies; his language use turns out to be very hybrid in his interactions with customers. An expressive example of this in Extract 4 is Siyar’s emotionally *ouw-hoer* (Line 9), the Limburgian equivalent of “holy cow”. Presumably, Siyar thought he was permitted to use such linguistic features legitimately, because he has been living in the Netherlands longer than the woman had and thus gained authority to do so.

The interaction in the supermarket shows how belonging can be constructed through languageculture and how tactics of intersubjectivity are used in the justification and challenge of belonging. Through these tactics, Siyar aligns with both being Dutch, foreign, and Limburgian, while the woman is illegitimated as being either of those due to her lack of nativeness on all these levels.

5 Concluding remarks

This article proposes a place perspective in order to examine the construction of belonging through languagecultural practices within daily places – instead of focusing on presupposed categories like “a language” or “a people”. This enables us to illuminate how people construct and appropriate places and the languagecultural practices and politics of belonging that are salient for them in these processes of place-making. The article has shown that a place can never be perceived as static: it very much resides within a larger context of local, regional, national, and global scales and relations – and is therefore in constant transformation.

The interaction that took place in the supermarket is illustrative of the languagecultural construction of belonging to place in daily situations. Moreover, the case study exemplifies how people can use the tactics of

intersubjectivity (Bucholtz and Hall 2004) to align with or draw boundaries between other people. Consequently, it became clear that belonging is manifested on different scales and can easily be shifting and ambiguous, depending on the context: Siyar aligned with being Dutch which shifted to aligning with foreignness and eventually included a local scale of Limburg.

Finally, the case study demonstrated that the meaning of “nativeness” and “new speakerness” (O’Rourke and Pujolar 2013) can be constructed by anyone, regardless of their background. Therefore, as I have tried to argue, a place perspective analysis of the languagecultural practices that construct belonging, legitimacy, and, thereby, ideas about nativeness and new speakerness, helps us move away from establishing arbitrary and top-down categories, such as “native” or “old” speakers and “new” speakers.

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Transcription conventions

((word))	transcriber interpretation of recording
[word]	transcriber’s comment or addition
[word (.1)]	comment on recording and duration of indicated comment in seconds
[/word]	end of occurrence or comment
xxx	transcriber could not hear what was said
<i>word</i>	other language
=word	latching; no time between turns
=word=	simultaneous speech
WORD	loud voice
<u>word</u>	stress on (part of) word

.	closing intonation
,	continuing intonation
?	questioning intonation
[dc]/[ac]	decelerated (slower) or accelerated (faster) speech
{word(s)}	words for which the [dc]/[ac] applies
[im]/[/im]	impossible words/sentences in Dutch pronunciation
wor/	interruption
wo:::rd	prolonged vowels
(.)	pauses less than a second
(.1)	pauses in seconds

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Bionote

Lotte Thissen

The PhD research of Lotte Thissen focuses on the connections between language practices, places, and politics of (un)belonging. She conducted fieldwork in the Dutch province of Limburg and ethnographically investigated how people use language in daily situations to construct place and ideologies of (un)belonging.