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Paper **66**

***'This isn't possible anymore': Indexical shifts in a white urban dialect***

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# **‘This isn’t possible anymore’: Indexical shifts in a white urban dialect.**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This paper argues that in interactions among teenagers at a secondary school in Antwerp one can find indications of a shift taking place in the connotation potential and usability of a traditionally ‘white’ urban dialect. Although multi-ethnic teenagers clearly distinguished between jocular uses of Antwerp dialect and their own, regular, voice, and although they explicitly associated the dialect with hostile ethnic others, in their interactional practices it was often hard to find evidence of an insider-outsider perspective. Instead, exaggerated uses of Antwerp dialect often highlighted (potential) incidents between pupils and teachers, while much more modest uses of it pervaded key informants’ personal, non-jocular and non-standard vernacular. So, even if ethnicity was much more speakable for interpreting local linguistic differences, teenagers’ actual use of Antwerp dialect features seemed to suggest they were actively engaging with processes of class stratification.

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Social class isn’t usually as speakable as ethnicity/race or gender in public discourse about urban youth nor in interactional sociolinguistic research on teenage language use. Some have argued, however, that the strong emphasis on ethnicity/race in interpreting and naming urban teenage language unduly constrains the range of other social dimensions that these practices may address. Assuming that linguistic varieties or features are essentially ethnic precludes the explanation of the processes of meaning assignment through which speakers in interaction come to understand the relation between verbal signs and socio-cultural meanings (such as ethnicity) and in accordance to which they style their own identities and speech (Benor 2010; Eckert 2008; Jaspers 2008; and see Chun 2011). Others have indicated, moreover, that there may be serious reasons for appreciating the social class foundation of many of the urban (multi-)ethnic speech practices that have been studied in the last two or three decades (Rampton 2011).

My goal here is to show how in the practical experience of multi-ethnic teenagers in Antwerp, Belgium, a traditionally white urban dialect can be subject to evolving sense-making, that is, to a process in which it is increasingly assigned class rather than ethnic meanings. More particularly, I shall in this paper show that although teenagers conventionally perceived Antwerp dialect as the voice of an older, white and hostile other, [1] they frequently stylised the dialect at school to tune into impending or increasing institutional rather than interethnic asymmetries; and [2] used it also authentically, i.e. in synchrony with the young, non-posh self-identities they maintained in their routine speech practices. I will argue that these data suggest a shift in the indexical valence of Antwerp dialect that corresponds with how these youngsters are positioning themselves in a socially stratified society.

## **2. ETHNOGRAPHIC CONTEXT**

The data for this paper come from a two-year ethnographic study at an urban multi-ethnic secondary school (henceforth: ‘City School’) around the turn of the century in Antwerp, Belgium, and more precisely of late teenagers (16 to 21) in a technical curriculum track<sup>1</sup>. I concentrated on two classrooms majoring in electro-mechanics which were dominated, both in number and amount of talk, by male students of Moroccan descent<sup>2</sup>. All students had working class backgrounds, and given their technical educational track they all seemed on their way to a similar position as their parents. None of these students was interested in getting good grades, but they generally liked going to

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school since it was a place where they said they enjoyed seeing their friends and where they could get more marketable qualifications than in an 'easier', vocational educational track. Relations between staff and students were relatively congenial, although the two classes I visited tended to have a reputation for being difficult to handle.

The school policy was explicitly multicultural, and so at the time at least it took an explicit stance against widespread hostility and racism vis-à-vis ethnic minorities in Flemish Belgium. Antwerp as a city stood out as a centre of such hostility given that from the early 1990s onwards, the extreme rightist party Flemish Bloc (*Vlaams Blok*, in Dutch<sup>3</sup>) managed to gain approval of almost a third of the Antwerpian electorate. There were (and still are) salient links in Flemish public discourse between young ethnic minority males and violence, crime, and language deficiency (see Blommaert and Verschueren 1998). Interethnic relations between students in class were not extremely good, however. Despite reports of earlier cross-ethnic friendships both in and out of school, white and ethnic minority students hung out at different places in the school playground and did not mingle apart from their time in class, where they mostly sat grouped apart from each other, with one or two exceptions. Moreover, white students were often the butt of jokes, and simplifyingly put, when ethnic minority students talked and made fun in class, white students were silent or barely self-selected in public.

Typical of ethnic minority students' wit and dominance in their classroom was that they complained, in echo of existing discourses on ethnic minorities, that their white classmates "didn't want to adapt". And when two years later relations had improved somewhat, albeit with other white classmates, the change was explained as "they're more like us now".<sup>4</sup> 'Being more like us' in fact meant participating in what was called 'doing ridiculous', which involved faking co-operative enthusiasm or giving confusing or inappropriate answers in class that sometimes considerably disturbed the rhythm and fluent organisation of what were seen as 'boring' or too 'serious' situations such as lessons or research interviews without being entirely unruly (cf. Foley 1990; Grahame and Jardine 1990; Jaspers 2005). How did these practices relate to existing discourses about the world these youngsters inhabited?

### 3. ESTABLISHED DISCOURSES

Given the tense inter-ethnic relations at a macro-level and the somewhat frosty relations at micro-level, racism and inter-ethnic (usually spoken of as intercultural) relations were an established topic of discussion. They were explicitly topicalised in social studies classes, and ethnic minority students easily reported being stereotyped as criminals, getting excluded from night clubs, receiving unequal and humiliating treatment from the police, or they told about experiencing racism in the schools they had attended before the City School. But regardless of the tensions at macro-level and their relations with white classmates, the ethnic minority students I observed felt at ease and unthreatened, and often brought racism and stereotyping self-mockingly *into* the daily proceedings. Thus, they wrote racist slurs next to a bad mark on a test they received back, and joked about asking for extra marks as a compensation for the teacher's supposed racism; they would shout 'HEY RACISTS' in the school corridor to see if anybody would turn around and so 'prove' to be one, or on one occasion Nordin suggested in class that my parents would be terrified that their son found himself daily "in a classroom full of foreigners" but would be relieved to find out these foreigners provided him "with everything", that is, with contraband. Joking about racism was out of bounds for white classmates, however.

Students were also well aware of educational hierarchies. The City School only offered technical and vocational education, which implied that a large part of its students had been failed in 'better' schools offering general (i.e., university destined) education ('ASO'). So, the students I followed often compared their subject matter to ASO, estimated how ASO it looked to decide if it was too difficult or to curb teacher enthusiasm (Nordin: "miss, slow down, we need to be able to *follow*, you know"). One student even said: "Jasper<sup>5</sup> is the only one who puts himself on our level",

while I was sanctioned on other occasions for using too difficult words and being a whiz-kid. At the same time, disparaging comments were regular about following vocational education.

Finally, it wasn't uncommon for teachers and students to engage in explicit metalinguistic comments about linguistic norms. The school policy was explicit that Standard Dutch was the only acceptable variety at school, and it prohibited the use of home languages on the grounds that this would exclude those who wouldn't be able to understand them. Some staff members indeed reminded students of classroom monolingualism (others did not care as long as other language use wasn't too noisy), and also corrected Dutch language use in class by pointing out dialectal forms and suggesting standard alternatives. Students sometimes invoked those roles to silence other classmates, and Moroccan-Flemish students often identified white classmates as speaking 'too dialectal' and thus 'bad' Dutch according to standard language expectations.

In interviews, Standard Dutch was consistently associated with politeness, professional futures and intellectual authority, but when pressed to answer why they didn't speak it more often students mentioned it was 'nerdy', 'standoffish', 'too perfect' and unnecessary in their current situation as a student (see Jaspers 2006 for more details). Antwerp dialect emerged in interviews as a variety that nobody spoke really well but enjoyed messing about with as it "sounded so funny". White students said they didn't speak 'the real dialect' anymore, that it was something of older speakers, "true Antwerpians" whom "you couldn't understand if they spoke real Antwerpian". Other students added that these older, authentic Antwerpians were "anti-social", "marginal", "farmer-like", and typified them as people "busy getting drunk in the pub", complaining "broadly" about having a lack of money or not having enough drink and encouraging each other in a laddish way. Clearly, both Standard Dutch and Antwerp dialect can be viewed as 'voices of the other', and both get attributed quite uncool social meanings that these teenagers seem to be putting themselves above. And in the eyes of Flemish-Moroccan students, Antwerp dialect was also related to racism:

### Example 1. This isn't possible anymore

Interview with Nordin, Mourad and Jamal, all of Moroccan descent. Simplified transcription.

Original	English translation
Nordin: meestal wordt da tegen ons gebruikt door ouwere mensen hé van Antwerpen	Nordin: mostly it's spoken to us by older people from Antwerp, init?
JJ: hoe da? Is da?	JJ: how so? Is it?
Mourad: ja	Mourad: yes
JJ: komde da tegen?	JJ: does that happen?
Nordin: snapte? nee vroeger as wij aan't voetballen waren tegen iemand zijn gevel of zo <b>"HEI SCHTOPT ERMEE"</b> [lacht] snapte? [lacht]	Nordin: d'y see?no before, when we were playing football against somebody's housefront or something like that <b>"HEY QUIT IT!"</b> [laughs] d'you see? [laughs]
JJ: [lacht]	JJ: [laughs]
Mourad: of zo eentje in ne reportage van 't Vlaams Blok zo	Mourad: or one like- in a documentary on the Flemish Bloc
Nordin: <b>"HEI KLOETZAKKEN"</b>	Nordin: <b>"HEY ASSHOLES!"</b>
JJ: [lacht]	JJ: [laughs]
Nordin: snapte, zo, en dan pakken wij dat over voor de grap hé	Nordin: d'you see, and then we take that on for fun eh
Jamal: <b>da kan naa niemeer hé</b>	Jamal: <b>this isn't possible anymore</b>
Mourad: of ne reportage van 't Vlaams Blok hé Nordin	Mourad: or a documentary on the Flemish Bloc eh Nordin
Nordin: of eh <b>da kan na niemeer hé</b>	Nordin: or uh <b>this isn't possible anymore</b>
Mourad: reportage van 't Vlaams Blok, zo'n oud madammeke: "da's schandalig! en ..." kende da?	Mourad: documentary on the Flemish Bloc ,comes an old little lady "it's a disgrace! and ...", D'you know?

Thus, in this fragment, and also on a number of other occasions<sup>6</sup>, 'older people' are identified as white, angry and extreme-rightist, who call names at children infringing on their territory and indignantly bemoan that their behaviour isn't possible or tolerable anymore. The conventional proximity in English between saying that things are 'a crime' or 'a disgrace' may perhaps capture some of the resonance or the criminalizing potential of these complaints, as also Mourad illustrates

at the end of the example. These negative meanings only add to the 'other' qualities of Antwerp dialect for ethnic minority students. Incidentally, the example above also illustrates that a variety that isn't normally seen as ethnic (since it is spoken by local whites, and since much sociolinguistic work has not tended to see ethnicity as an attribute of the white mainstream) can be viewed as such by those who are usually labeled as ethnic minorities (cf. Eckert 2008).

In sum, and in contrast to Cockney's status in a London inner-city school (Rampton 2006), Antwerp dialect does not only appear to get marginalized in official educational discourse, but is also pejorated by an influential group of students in my data as easily evoking the frame of racism or interethnic animosity. If these indexical meanings suggest that Antwerp dialect was quite unattractive and connotationally 'dirty', I will show in the next paragraphs that it was highly recruitable for messing about and 'doing ridiculous', and more in particular, for constructing passionate mock indignation and criticism. On many of these occasions, however, it is difficult to find allusions to an insider-outsider perspective, as the explicit commentary above on Antwerp dialect would seem to suggest. Instead, exaggerated, stylised Antwerp dialect often seems to flag an authority-subordinate relation.

#### 4. INTERACTIONAL PRACTICES

This paper draws on a data-set of 85 examples of stylised Antwerp dialect (compared to 31 examples of stylised Standard Dutch in the data), identified in 35 hours of audio-recordings. Stylisations are usually described as "metalinguistic episodes", or as "small pieces of secondary representation inserted into the flow of practical activity – moments of social commentary on some aspect of the activities on hand" (Rampton 2006: 218). These invite others to mobilise their background knowledge of language and society to work out what representation of someone else's voice is actually evoked, how it can be reconciled with current circumstances, and whether this verbal projectile is appropriate, funny, or not (Rampton 2006: 224-225; cf. also Coupland 2007). They are, in other words, eye-catching examples (although some are more modest) of what Cooren views as a core feature of all human interaction, viz., 'ventriloquism' or "the phenomenon by which an actor makes another actor [or actors, or things] speak through the production of a given utterance" (2010: 1). Characteristically, stylisations function as a cue for others to infer that its producer sees the act or event that induces the stylisation as typical of the social characteristics the stylisation evokes (what Goffman would describe as 'reading acts as symptoms' (1971: 97)). Did this definition apply to the stylisations in my data?

##### 4.1. Passionate mock indignation and criticism

To be sure, for a number of the examples in my data it was difficult to see what extra meaning a sudden switch to Antwerp dialect added to the ongoing proceedings, and it would probably make most sense to define these voice colourings as mere 'sound play'. There were echoes, too, of the old voices mentioned in the interviews. On two separate occasions Imran and Faisal both switched into an Antwerpian voice when they were imitating a persona making reference to 'the old days' and to how arduous the circumstances then were. But apart from how impressive their impersonation was and from how much it was appreciated after its production, these brief imitations were part of a narrative and would be difficult to reconcile with a perspective that sees them as an implicit comment on the activities on hand or on the narrative itself.

In a number of other cases, though, Antwerp dialect appeared to underline indignation about real or perceived improprieties. For a while at least, the complaint "**this (simply) isn't possible anymore**" served as a running gag, and whenever it was produced, it was often responded to with a chorus of approving echoes and slowly shaking heads, leaving others to find out whatever was commented on as an inappropriate event or behaviour – often it didn't seem to refer to any infraction at all or it was difficult to retrieve it from the audio recordings which particular act was focused on. In other examples the referent was unambiguous, as when Mourad mock-complained "**I've told you didn't I mate, those girls of today**" when he felt some girls nearby were chatting too

loudly while he was being interviewed, temporarily putting on and using linguistic material that all participants know doesn't belong to his 'real' voice but which allows him to be ironic at the same time as address some girls uninvitedly. A similar use of Antwerp dialect was made to produce mock criticism. On one occasion, Nordin, who wasn't exactly uninterested in girls, loudly held Johan (a white Flemish classmate) accountable for kissing his girlfriend on the playground (**HEY PERVERT! DO YOU HAVE TO DO THIS EVERYWHERE?**) and later on in the corridor ('**don't do so dirty, not in the corridor**') and on another, Karim warned Driss (both of Moroccan descent) to "**TAKE A BREATH MAN, HEY, STAY OFF THOSE CIGARETTES**" after Driss suddenly choked and had a coughing fit (but wasn't smoking). Typically, on these and on other occasions, there were no remedies provided, and the stylisation frequently served as a point of departure for shared laughter and more elaborate interaction (Johan grinningly replied 'yes' to Nordin's rhetorical question, the girls were amused by Mourad's mock complaint). So, other than imputing the social characteristics indexed by the stylised variety to those who are seen to commit the transgression (cf. Rampton's (1995: 142-148) discussion of critical Stylised Asian English), switches to a markedly Antwerp voice and critically homing in on a fake impropriety (kissing, coughing, chatting) appeared to invite a period of heightened access and shared laughter between criticizer and criticized.

Obviously, there can be much pleasure in seeing others trying to relate a bombastic reproach to their current circumstances and witnessing their temporary puzzlement before they realise it was all meant in jest. But it would also be hard to disregard the fact that angry, indignant or critical voices are typical of public statements at schools, where many pupils are frequently singled out for such addresses. And in a number of cases, mock-critical stylisations were *indeed* oriented to school business and to occasions when institutional control, classroom order, discipline and evaluation were at issue. Here, improprieties were often less fictive and criticism was almost always formulated within classroom walls rather than on the playground or in the cyberpub. Accordingly, I found stylisations as "**now you've gone too far**", "**YOU'RE TOO LATE**", and "**that was the last time**", "**last chance mate**" and a pseudo-permission as "**go ahead, write on the table**", which were all directed to classmates who had in fact been reproached already, who had indeed entered the class late or who were writing something on the table. Here is one example in full:

### Example 2. Being funny again?

*Participants:* Faisal [Moroccan-Flemish, 17, wearing a collar microphone], Erik [white Flemish, 19], Bülent [Turkish-Flemish, 17]. Drama class is about to start. Everybody's entering the party hall (where there is a podium). Mr DM has just ordered all students to go and sit down on the podium and form a circle. Antwerp dialect is in bold face, Arabic in italics.<sup>7</sup>

Original	English translation
1 Faisal: [ˈsmiːlæh] [.] ALL MY PEOPLE TOGETHER	1 Faisal: <i>In god's name</i> [.] ALL MY PEOPLE TOGETHER
2 ? : ( )	2 ? : ( )
3 [gerommel] [2.0]	3 [messing about] [2.0]
4 Faisal: HE	4 Faisal: HEY
5 [gerommel – iets valt van het podium]	5 [messing about, something falls off the stage]
6 Erik: ( ) allei joeng [al'æ: iuŋ]	6 Erik: ( ) oh come on
7 ? : [gelach]	7 ? : [laughs]
8 Faisal: <b>is't weeral plezANT ja?</b> [ist vɛ,ral plɛ'zant ja:]	8 Faisal: <b>are we being funNY AGain?</b>
9 Bülent: [lacht] ([ula] gij zij )	9 Bülent: [laughs] ( <i>really</i> you're )
10 Faisal: slijmbal echt zo (ja ja)	10 Faisal: slimeball really like (yeh yeh)
11 Bülent: [lacht]	11 Bülent: [laughs]

While all pupils are getting up the stage to sit down in a circle, Faisal's "all my people together" seems to comment on the circle formation, or perhaps on the fact that his friends are all sitting close to him or that Faisal wants them to. There is some messing about while everybody sits down (line 3), which invites a first reproach (line 4). The messing about continues and something (a satchel?), most

probably belonging to Erik, falls of the stage, leading up to Erik's complaint (line 6). Faisal expands his prime in line 4 and now formulates an 'interrogative challenge' (Goffman 1971: 154) in Antwerp dialect, in which he's not actually asking for information, but offering his addressees an opportunity to adjust their behaviour back in line with appropriate classroom conduct (in opposition to what is 'funny'). It's unclear if Faisal's addressees have in fact heard or accepted the challenge, but since there is no explicit reaction, the reproach can be called successful interactionally (cf. Macbeth 1991) – which may also be illustrated in Bülent's comment that Faisal appears to take as an approval of how successfully he has managed to do something teacher-like, reason why Faisal labels himself a 'slimeball'.

Clearly, it is the teacher's prerogative to call attention to misbehaviour in class, but Faisal here seems to get away with it.<sup>8</sup> The Antwerpian stylisation is notable however, as a typical teacher voice is arguably a Standard Dutch one (and there are examples of this in my data, cf. Jaspers 2006). In addition, teachers at the City School didn't speak Antwerp dialect in class (although some did in the teacher's room). Interpreting what Faisal does as stylising a 'teacher' voice might therefore appear somewhat hasty. But on the other hand, public reproaching chimes in with the reference to the angry older speakers and the tense relations that students referred to in interviews. And there did seem to be a direct connection between teachers' voices and Antwerp dialect, at least in the following two examples where teachers are caricatured through stylising Antwerp dialect.

### Example 3. Still here?

At the start of an interview with Imran, Faisal en Jamal, Imran asks why Mourad, Brahim and Yassin are still standing in the room. (A couple of minutes earlier, they had entered the room uninvited, trying to escape the start of French class and a test in particular).

Original version	English translation
1 Imran: [stil:] moeste gulle nie naar de klas?	1 Imran: [quietly:] didn't you have to go to class?
2 ?: [lacht]	2 ?: [laughs]
3 Jamal: <b>hei zitte gulle hier naa nog of wa?= [ei ,zɪtə ɣələnɪr næ: 'nɔx ɔfva]</b>	3 Jamal: <b>hey are you guys still here or wha?= [ei ,zɪtə ɣələnɪr næ: 'nɔx ɔfva]</b>
4 Faisal: <b>=ja zitte gulle hier naa nog of wa? [ja ,zɪtə ɣələnɪr næ: 'nɔx ɔfva]</b>	4 Faisal: <b>=yeh are you guys still here or wha?</b>
5 Mourad: [licht geërgerd:] ja-a.	5 Mourad: [slightly irritated:] yea-ah.
6 Faisal: na al die jaren praktijk seg	6 Faisal: after all these years of practise come on
7 JJ:   ik wil- ik wil ulle nie	7 JJ:   I do- don't want
8 wegjagen maar da ga een bitje zorgen da we	8 to shoo ya away but it's going to help us being
9 wa geconcentreerder eh	9 a bit more concentrated uh

Imran asks Mourad, Brahim and Yassin if they shouldn't be on their way to class, and sees his question recycled and stylised into Antwerp dialect by Jamal (line 3) and recompleted by Faisal (line 4). The latter's question, though is far less timid than Imran's and appears to express impatience (with a stress on *nog* (English: 'still')) that is reciprocated in Mourad's lightly irritated reply in line 5. In line 6 however, Faisal reconstructs his earlier question unmistakably as a teacher's reproach: he copies the intonation *and* the hardly dialectal speech style of Mr H, the technology teacher<sup>9</sup>, and propositionally recycles his own complaint about his classmates' presence in the room into a teacher's complaint about their continuing presence as pupils at school, who still have not seemed to learn much and keep failing their exams in spite of 'all these years of practise' (i.e., having practical lessons). In the next example, we find a sharp and repeated reproach in Antwerp dialect which is based on a preceding reprimand from the English teacher, Ms M:

### Example 4. Adnan!

In English class, Ms M is giving a quiz: she reads a number of statements on the Brits which the class has to point out as 'true' or 'false'. The answers are not formally evaluated. Right after statement 11 Adnan is singled out very loudly, which unleashes hilarity with the rest of the class (Adnan is a pseudonym, and is left untranscribed).

Original version	English translation
1 Mevr M: eleven [.]	1 Ms M: eleven [.]
2 THE BRITISH SPEAK ONLY ENGLISH	2 THE BRITISH SPEAK ONLY ENGLISH
3 Adnan:   ( )	3 Adnan:   ( )
4 Imran: ( )	4 Imran: ( )
5 Mevr M: AND EXPECT	5 Ms M: AND EXPECT
6 Adnan:   ( )	6 Adnan:   ( )
7 Mevr M: EVERYONE ELSE TO UNDERSTAND THEM	7 Ms M: EVERYONE ELSE TO UNDERSTAND THEM
8 ?: mevrouw ( )	8 ?: miss ( )
9 Mevr M:   ADNAN!!=	9 Ms M:   ADNAN!!=
10 Nordin =[LAUGHS]	10 Nordin =[LAUGHS]
11 [HELE KLAS LACHT, JOELT EN GILT] (5.0)	11 [WHOLE CLASS LAUGHS, CHEERS AND YELLS] (5.0)
12 ?:	12 ?:
13 Imran: ( )	13 Imran: ( )
14 [gelach]	14 [laughter]
15 Nordin: ADNAN	15 Nordin: ADNAN
16 ?:	16 ?:
17 ? [lachen]	17 ? [laughter]
18 Nordin: [lacht] <b>ADNAN</b> [lacht]	18 Nordin: [laughs] <b>ADNAN</b> [laughs]
19 ? SSSHT	19 ? SHUSH
20 Faisal: [lacht]	20 Faisal: [laugh]
21 Mevr M: kunnen we misschien nog een poging wagen om nog	21 Ms M: can we perhaps have another go at
22 Jamal: [Arabisch?] [gelach]	22 Jamal: [Arabic?] [laughter]
23 Mourad: herhaalt da eens [.] nummer elf ( )	23 Mourad: just repeat this [.] number eleven ( )
24 Nordin: <b>ADNANG</b>	24 Nordin: <b>ADNANG</b>
25 Mevr M: eleven [.]	25 Ms M: eleven [.]
26 Jamal: mevrouw da zijn kinderen 'k gaan hier weg van	26 Jamal: miss these are kids I'm going to leave this
27 dees school	27 school
28 Imran: [lacht]	28 Ms M: [hushed:] Nordin
29 Mevr M: da's misschien een goe gedacht	28 Imran: [laughs]
30 Adnan:   hé mannen komaan	29 Ms M: that's a good idea perhaps
	30 Adnan:   hey come one guys

Right after Ms M blows her top (she had already been reprimanding Adnan a couple of times already) and falls out of frame, she has to endure the seconds-long cheering and yelling of the whole class (line 11). Nordin moreover reproduces Ms M's named address in lines 15 and 18, in line 18 already producing a glottal stop at the start of Adnan's real name ('h'-dropping is a typical feature of Antwerp dialect, [De Schutter 1999]). In line 24 Nordin even changes the [ɲ] at the end of Adnan's name into an [ŋ], again a typical feature of Antwerp phonology. In line 18 as well as 24 he also produces a strong Antwerp [a]. A bit later, right before quiz question 14, we find this:

Original version	English translation
1 Youssef: ( )	1 Youssef: ( )
2 Nordin: <b>ADNAN</b>	2 Nordin: <b>ADNAN</b>
3 Mevr M: AND FOURTEEN	3 Ms M: AND FOURTEEN
4 Youssef: ( [Arabisch?] )	4 Youssef: ( [Arabic?] )
5 Nordin: <b>hei draaidaaw is oem joeng [.] Adnan</b> [ei drʌidəʊw iz'ʊm juŋ]	5 Nordin: <b>hey just turn around mate [.] Adnan</b>
6 Mevr M:   fourteen	6 Mevr M:   fourteen

In line 2 Nordin again produces Adnan's name with very strong Antwerp vowels and glottal stop up front, and in line 5 we find a typical teacher command ('turn around') in stylised Antwerpian: Nordin uses a bilabial [ʋ], preceded by a [æu]-diphthong which is typical in Antwerp dialect before a w-consonant at word-end (De Schutter 1999; Nuyts 1989).

It's relevant to know that Nordin had been publicly reproached by Ms M when he came in 10 minutes late, cheekily and mock-innocently humming a song while he knew very well that late-coming was severely frowned upon by teachers, and that the reproach didn't go down well with Nordin. He felt slighted, argued he had had business to take care of, and eventually sat down muttering he wasn't 8 years old anymore when Ms M qualified his account as 'rubbish'. Knowing this, it may be not be unreasonable to see Nordin's parodic recycling of Ms M's named address and its transformation into an Antwerpian stylisation as a late repartee or symbolic revenge for what happened earlier when he came in late. Since in doing so, he continues, albeit at a somewhat lower volume, to savour the moment of his teacher's outburst and the subsequent derision that he can be sure Ms M does not really want to be reminded of. One could argue in addition, given the interview report above where Antwerp dialect is related to white anger and indignation, that Nordin is portraying Ms M as an old racist bag and suggests institutional relations are reproductive of interethnic ones. Although this cannot be dismissed out of hand, we would have to overlook other parts of the data where:

- in interviews, racism was consistently situated elsewhere, and old people were mentioned much more often as typical speakers of Antwerp dialect (although admittedly, teachers can be 'old people' too in the eyes of their students);
- relations between students and teachers were generally congenial, and if conflicts arose, they never (to my knowledge) related to ethnic relations. In fact, even if some teachers in private expressed less than benign opinions on ethnic minorities, as a teacher they were sometimes preferred over those who were politically leftist; and
- it was very hard to find stylisations of Antwerp disambiguated (as with 'slimeball' above in example 2) with reference to race or racism (e.g., 'yeah that's really racist', or 'are you talking white?'), and only one stylisation contained an abuse term that could be related to race relations, whereas the one example in my data where students of Moroccan descent mock-complain in class about typically Moroccan behaviour ("it's one of those Moroccans again") is *not* produced in stylised Antwerp dialect.

Also,

- other than incompetent or highly accented Dutch (cf. Jaspers 2011, and see Rampton 1995), Antwerp dialect was not traditionally associated with ethnicity and race relations – only Moroccan-Flemish students regarded it as such in a couple of interview fragments; so, when it got stylised, it would have been very difficult for other students or teachers to discover 'what representation of someone else's voice was actually evoked' if the overtones were meant to be ethnic and take potential offence at them;
- in line with this, rather than evoking ethnicity or racism, Nordin's sardonic humour in the example above may be said to primarily reside in contrasting a typical 'high', and restrained, teacher voice with a 'low', out of control, and ineffective complainant's voice that does not get what it wants.

Finally, teacher-like stylisations of Antwerp dialect were not necessarily anti-teacher and sometimes supported the organisation of classroom conduct (cf. Rampton 2006: 280-283). This was clear in example 2; and at one point, when the technology teacher was ineffectively trying to address the whole class at the start of the lesson, Nordin succeeded in doing just that by saying "**when the big guys are talking, the little ones have to shut up**". This caused collective laughter, but it also paved the way for the teacher's first successful public turn, marking the actual beginning of the lesson. Therefore, and looking at the whole data-set, interpreting stylisations of Antwerp dialect as evoking or commenting on interethnic relations may be less useful than seeing them as typically produced at transitional moments where they underlined the changing interaction order, viz., they spotlighted an increasing asymmetry or emerging identity-hierarchy between students and authority figures on

moments such as: getting under teacher control at the start of the lesson (“when the big guys are talking...”, example 2), entering the classroom (“go ahead, write on the table”), being dressed down (example 4), being in a room where one shouldn’t be right before class (example 3), or being identified as below standards (example 3), or putting somebody lower by faking a patronizing permission to speak (“yes baby yes baby say it”, to a classmate).

Obviously, stylising Antwerp dialect on such occasions was enjoyable, since students were seemingly ‘contributing to classroom order’ and ‘deservedly complaining about others’ un-studentlike behaviour’ (talking, writing, messing about, still being there), while they were actually undermining classroom order in doing so, and spotlighted themselves, literally leaving a mark on the classroom transcript when student voices are ideally much more subdued. To be sure, a “walled-in organization” (Goffman 1961: 161-162) such as a school where one is constantly accountable for showing engrossment in officially ratified activity may have been particularly daunting for the not immensely school-minded young men that I observed. And producing loud but not entirely inappropriate criticism may have conveniently vacillated between legitimately policing student behaviour and enjoying the emotion, voice volume and attention one gets while doing so. Such enjoyment may well have inspired the mock indignant, critical and very emotional voices outside classroom walls (cf. ‘those girls of today’). Or differently put, in being mock-critical, students were safely ‘causing a commotion’ (cf. Kulick 1996) by “drawing on precisely the same attitudes and invoking precisely the same kinds of language that are continually drawn on and invoked by others” to police and curb their own actions (1996: 6). Conversely, when things got out of hand, they were often quick to provide remedial action (lines 23 and 26 in example 4). It might be argued too that in zooming in conspicuously on others’ presumed misbehaviour, students were briefly beclouding who had the moral authority to reprimand others and demand recompense, or at least were enhancing ambiguity at those moments authority figures usually reduce ambiguity and trim down the multitude of student voices so that it becomes one student cohort that can be addressed by the teacher as a whole. And clearly, in producing teacher-like voices with an Antwerpian accent, students were going against the conventional association between authority and standard variety, and in this way seemed to make these voices more emotional and hence less effective and authoritative.

Important for our purposes here is that Standard Dutch was stylised on similar occasions: when the different educational paths of informants and the researcher suddenly surfaced, when there was a perception of heightened evaluation, or when requests and reproaches were formulated (see Jaspers 2006 for more details). Therefore, given the traditional associations of dialect and standard language as pointing at ‘low’ and ‘high’ figures respectively (see the established discourses above), stylisations of Antwerp dialect and Standard Dutch “made the sociolinguistic structuring of everyday life more conspicuous” (Rampton 2006, 2010): they flagged the existence, intensification or installation of institutional hierarchies in daily life at school in using varieties that are conventionally recognized as high or low.

Summing up what I’ve discussed up till now, I’ve described that race/ethnicity was an important topic in explicit talk about social relations both within and outside school, and that Antwerp dialect seemed to have a lot of potential for evoking interethnic animosity. Nevertheless, in interactional practices where Antwerp dialect was stylised, it was difficult to lay finger on the evocation of an insider-outsider perspective, and it made more sense to see stylisations of Antwerp dialect as highlighting taken-for-granted differences between who is higher vs. lower, authoritative vs. deferent, in control/rational vs. out of control/emotional, as they are played out between insider participants. And in the following examples, where messing about with Antwerp dialect makes room for a more serious use of it, an insider-outsider perspective seems to be even further away when it becomes clear that dialect features can also merge with ethnic minority teenagers’ own voice.

#### **4.2. Antwerp dialect for the expression of self**

Looking at the data above, one could say that stylised Antwerp dialect (and Standard Dutch) hints at ‘vari-directional double-voicing’ (cf. Bakhtin 1984; Rampton 1995: 221-224; Chun 2009: 21), where a represented voice or social figure is sharply distinguished from one’s own voice and identity. But,

apart from the fact that a small-scale variationist analysis shows that Antwerp dialect and Standard Dutch features were an undeniable part of these teenagers' routine language use and inconspicuous style-shifting (Jaspers 2011), describing the use of Antwerp dialect in stylisation only as 'vari-directional' would be hard to reconcile with other stylisations where Antwerp dialect appeared to be 'uni-directionally double-voiced' or in synchrony with the utterer's own voice and self-presentation. In the following examples, stylisations of Antwerp dialect become harder to distinguish from speakers' ordinary, authentic ways of speaking, and whatever criticism or abuse is formulated tends to be more in relation to the actual impropriety, act or event that caused it. I will in turn discuss largely jocular abuse, less jocular abuse, and assertive retorts.

#### 4.2.1 Jocular abuse

Apart from stylisations of Antwerp dialect in a couple of 'sounding' or 'woofing' sessions (Labov 1972: 297; Heller 1999: 223; Rampton 1995: 172), equipping somebody with a collar microphone typically led to quite a few (mostly jocular) reactions when I had walked away and students had the microphone to themselves: "**GRASSER! Do you know what we do with grassers? We just take their clothes off in the middle of the playground mate**", "**I'm going to fuck you mate**", "**Hey look Jasper if you don't give me a 10 on 10, I'll fuck your mother**", "**you've been to the cops, I know where you live man, I'll just run you over**", "**I'll put my dick into your nose**", etc. It wasn't always clear whether stylisations addressed their microphone wearing classmate or myself; and even if they weren't all unambiguously mock, there was usually a lot of hilarity and peer-to-peer abuse too when they were produced, and they generally disappeared when everyone had gotten used to the presence of a microphone or forgot about it due to the lesson focus. Obviously, many of these threats are related to penetration, taking off clothes or being otherwise exposed, which may not be entirely inappropriate given the microphone-sporting classmate's or my own intrusion into their personal territory now that everything they said was being recorded. If all of the abuse above was still indirect (in the case I was the target), the following example was the only one where I was the direct addressee:

#### Example 5. Little asshole

Feedback interview with Faisal (20) and Rafik (18), both of Moroccan descent. We've just been discussing one example where Faisal very loudly utters "**little asshole**" walking down the corridor. Faisal is suddenly surprised that the whole interview is being recorded (the microphone is clearly visible on the table).

Original version	English translation
1 Faisal: g'hebt da OPGENOMEN WAT DA wij hebben	1 Faisal: you've been RECORDING WHAT WE've been
2 gezegd of wa?	2 saying or wha?
3 JJ: hé ja d-da wel ja	3 JJ: huh? Yeah I-I did so yeah
4 Faisal: amai ik had da nog geeneens door	4 Faisal: cor I didn't even realise
5 JJ   ja [. ] ja da kom-	5 JJ   yeh [. ] yeh that's bec-
6 Rafik:   <i>oulla</i> [lachend:] ja ik ook nie	6 Rafik:   <i>I swear</i> [laughing:] yeh me neither
7 JJ: ja sorry maar dat is omdakik anders echt nie	7 JJ: yeh sorry but that's coz I really can't write
8 alles kan opschrijven	8 everything down otherwise
9 Faisal: ja maar nee nee	9 Faisal: yeh but no no
10 JJ:   ik beloof dakik da aan niemand laat horen	10 JJ:   I promise I won't let anybody listen to it
11 Faisal: da's nu nog aan 't opnemen of wa?	11 Faisal: it's still recording now or wha?
12 JJ: jaja	12 JJ: yehyeh
13 Rafik: ja maar da's niks	13 Rafik: yeh but that's okay
14 Faisal:   <b>kloetzakske</b> [klu:ˀtsakskə]	14 Faisal:   <b>little asshole</b>
15 [gelach (3.0)]	15 [laughter (3.0)]
16 Rafik: 's geen probleem hé	16 Rafik: it's no problem init
17 JJ:   [smile voice:] wacht zene [. ] ik gaan is	17 JJ:   [smile voice:] just a sec [. ] I'm just going
18 zien of ik eh [. ] mag ik nog iets anders vragen?	18 to check if I uh [. ] can I ask something else?

40 minutes into the interview, Faisal suddenly notices my recording device (line 1) and says he wasn't aware the interview was being taped, which Rafik also confirms (line 6). I provide an apology in line 7, which Faisal doesn't seem to accept, and promise in line 10 I won't share the recording with anyone. However, in lines 11-12 Faisal finds out the device is still running – I could of course have turned it off immediately when they uttered their surprise and formally ask for permission – and now Faisal produces an abuse term that appears appropriately to compensate for the offence I have caused. Yet, a bit earlier in the interview, we had been explicitly discussing this term of abuse in one extract where Faisal uses it exaggeratedly, and at that point both teenagers explicitly qualified this term as typically white Flemish, overly civilized for Moroccan-Flemish youth and thus quite ineffective in any real conflict; here, though, the term is used in a much more subdued way, its humour residing more in its fitting use at that particular moment (in an appropriate interactional slot, and linking back to our discussion of the term), rather than in its ethnic overtones. In any case it unites all participants in laughter (line 15). Rafik's repeated relief (line 13 and line 16) also minimizes the harm done and allows the interviewer to take up the thread. In the next example we find Faisal in a less jocular mood.

#### 4.2.2 Less jocular abuse

##### Example 6. I'm fed up

Feedback interview with Faisal [M-F 19], Imran [M-F, 19], Jamal [M-F, 18]. Faisal would like the interview to last two lesson hours, but I only got permission to keep him out of class for one hour. Faisal called me 'Yuri' the whole interview.

Original version	English translation
1 JJ: [gaat met hand naar de knop	1 JJ: [moves hand to button
2 om tape verder te spoelen]	2 to fast forward the tape]
3 Faisal: NEENEENEENE	3 Faisal: NONONONO
4 JJ: ik ga een beetje verderspoelen .	4 JJ: I'm going to fast forward a bit
5 Faisal: neenee momentje momentje	5 Faisal: nono just a sec just a sec just a sec
6 Imran:   ( )	6 Imran:   ( )
7 JJ: jaja maar 't gaat efkes lang zijn dus eh	7 JJ: yehyeh but it's going to be a bit long now so uh
8 Faisal: ha ça va da's goe [..]	8 Faisal: oh okay that's cool [..]
9 maar wij hebben toch twee urekes	9 but we've got two hours anyway
10 dus da kan geen kwaad	10 so that's not a problem
11 JJ: jaa [.] ja dat hangt ervan af	11 JJ: yeah [.] yeh that depends
12 Faisal: jajajajajaja nee da ga allem-	12 Faisal: yehyehyehyehyehyeh no that's no prob-
13 agij da regelt mogen wij da ze	13 if you fix us up we're allowed you know
14 Imran:  twee urekes	14 Imran:  two hours
15 hebt gij na de speeltijd (ons nog) nodig?	15 do you need (us again) after breaktime?
16 Faisal: ja hier na de speeltijd efkes terug eh [..]	16 Faisal: yeh here after breaktime again a bit uh [..]
17 Joeri gij kunt da wel regelen hé Joeri	17 Yuri you can fix us up can't you Yuri
18 JJ: ja da weet ik niet zo goe	18 JJ: yeh well I'm not so sure
19 Faisal:   komaan Joe- g'hangt m'n voe- [kəmə:n iu: ɣɑŋt mən 'vʉ:]	19 Faisal:   come on Yu- I'm fe-
20 JJ:   maar ge	20 JJ:   but you've
21 moet ook een beetje proberen om ook wa goeie [.]	21 got to try a bit too to say some good [.]
22 dingies eh [.] te zeggen hé en nie eh	22 stuff uh [.] and not uh
23 Jamal: ja want eh	23 Jamal: yeah coz uh
24 Imran:   ah ja ( )	24 Imran:   of course ( )
25 Faisal:   OKEE 'K GA IETS GOE	25 Faisal:   OKAY I'M GOING TO SAY
26 ZEGGEN WACHT WACHT ik ga iets-	26 SOMETHING GOOD WAIT WAIT I'm going to-

When in line 9 Faisal says 'they've got two hours anyway', he confronts me with a fait accompli, suggesting that they have permission for two interview hours when in fact I had only asked for one, no doubt in order to escape an extra lesson. When I express doubts about this (line 11), Faisal points out that I'm well capable of fixing them up with an extra hour (lines 12-13 and 17). And while I again object to that Faisal puts in a stylised complaint ("I'm fe-", short for "I'm fed up with you" – the

Dutch full utterance would have been *g'hangt m'n voeten uit*). This complaint in its turn gets interrupted midway by my own request that Faisal should attempt to 'say some good stuff' (Faisal hadn't been particularly helpful earlier on in the interview). An utterance as "I'm fed up with you" is in fact quite similar to the complaints and indignant voices that we discussed above, but here it would be difficult to point at a dramatic voice or any other scare quoting action that would point at the utterance's theatrical character. Faisal's classmates are neither found laughing, but on the contrary seem to confirm my request at cooperation (lines 23-24), and Faisal is clearly not expressing his irritation with a fake impropriety but with a genuine obstacle on his way to another free hour. Consequently in this example, there is a much smaller gap between self and voice, or an "overlap of symbolic evocation and personal concern" (Rampton 1995: 123) which blurs the boundary between outgroup code and personal style. This boundary becomes even vaguer in the following example, where Antwerp dialect is used in protest against being dressed down.

#### 4.2.3 Assertiveness

##### Example 7. Not a small child

At the end of the English lesson (see example 4 above), Ms M calls Nordin aside to repeat that he won't be allowed in class again if he's late, and once more this gives rise to a discussion.

Original version	English translation
1 Mevr M: wat ik daarstraks gezegd heb [.]	1 Ms M: what I told you an hour ago [.]
2 da meen ik wel hé	2 I mean that you know
3 Nordin: wa?	3 Nordin: wha?
4 Mevr M: volgende keer kom jij nie na(ar) de les	4 Ms M: next time you won't be coming to class
5 Nordin:   NEENEE	5 Nordin:   NONO
6 hé meVROUW IK KOM HIER BINNEN [1.0]	6 hey MISS I COME IN HERE [1.0]
7 ik mag hier nie meer binnen of wa?	7 I'm not allowed to come in anymore or wha?
8 Mevr M:   ik zeg maar	8 Ms M:   I'm only saying
9 gewoon dat ik het meen en volgende	9 that I mean it and next time
10 keer ben je samen=	10 you're together=
11 Nordin:   allee mevrouw zie	11 Nordin:   come on miss look
12 Mevr M: =met de rest in de klas [.] ja?	12 Ms M: =with the rest of the class [.] okay?
13 Nordin:  en DAN? [.]	13 Nordin:  so WHAT? [.]
14 als er iemand anders nu te laat komt euh	14 if anybody else would come late uh
15 dan zoude <b>gewoon</b> niks zeggen	15 you'd be saying just nothing
[ɣevu <sup>3</sup> n]	
16 Mevr M:   euh Nordin [.]	16 Ms M:   uh Nordin [.]
17 de volgende keer ben je op tijd da's de vrijdag	17 next time you're on time that's this Friday
18 [.] ja?	18 [.] okay?
19 [2.0]	19 [2.0]
20 Nordin: [təz:] [.] 'k zen kik <b>geen klein kind</b> niemeer ze	20 Nordin: <i>shit</i> [.] I'm <b>not a small child</b> anymore
[ɣen klæ <sup>3</sup> n kint]	
21 [2.0]	21 [2.0]
22 [Nordin loopt naar buiten, JJ blijft in de klas]	22 [Nordin walks out, JJ stays in class]
23 Nordin: en nu achter de rug roddelen	23 Nordin: and now gossiping behind the back

When Ms M refers to her earlier reproach at the start of the lesson, Nordin indicates he doesn't get the point, and this introduces an interactional conflict in which Nordin interrupts Ms M several times (lines 5, 11 and 13) and so precludes the formulation of the reproach and the production of a deferent 'place for no talking' (Macbeth 1991) after it is formulated (also see Ms M's interruptions of Nordin's rebuttals). When in lines 16-18 Ms M finally manages to finish, Nordin surrenders and produces a silence which indicates he accepts the reproach. But as Ms M turns away and talks to somebody else, he produces a muttering afterburn (Goffman 1971: 152-153; 1981: 93), showing he feels patronized.<sup>10</sup> In line 15 and 20, Nordin uses typical Antwerp diphthongs that were not a usual part of his routine speech (viz., [u<sup>3</sup>] and [æ<sup>3</sup>]). As mentioned above, Antwerp dialect got stylised on

transitional moments and when hierarchical relations became more prominent, and Nordin's stylisations seem to contribute to that. But rather than producing a conspicuous performance in a voice that was (to be recognized as) distant to his own, Nordin is genuinely non-compliant vis-à-vis an institutional authority and uses features of Antwerp dialect to lend weight to what he says, to the extent that it becomes difficult to distinguish between what is stylised and what is not. In other words, this is a case where "uni-directional double-voicing shift[s] over into direct unmediated discourse" (Rampton 1995: 223). Even though not all students used Antwerp dialect in this way, in this and a number of other cases Antwerp dialect ceases to be a socially colourful object that is "loosened from [its] authenticating context and become[s] more performance-like" (cf. Coupland 2001: 18), but instead gets "adopted ... in the enunciation of [one's] own social identit[y]" (ibid., p.223).

The fact that the same variety or features of it could be used both in opposition to and in tune with one's routine identity has certainly been described before (see Rampton 1995 on Stylised Asian English), but it is striking in this case that a variety that bathes in such a pejorative indexical light can interweave to this degree with speakers' own words.<sup>11</sup> And to explain this we have to attend to the position of Antwerp dialect in an enduring socio-linguistic hierarchy.

## 5. ANTWERP DIALECT IN A CLASS BASED LINGUISTIC HIERARCHY

As others have already indicated, social personae, styles and the indexically meaningful resources they are made up of, are not free-floating but are part of a longer-standing, thoroughly hierarchized social world where socio-economic elites are distinguished from non-elites and semi-elites (see, e.g., Blommaert 2007; Jaspers 2010). These distinctions are made and legitimized according to widespread and ideologized standards of appropriateness, articulateness, educatedness and beauty which assign all available resources and their users a higher/lower, better/worse place vis-à-vis the standard. Bauman and Briggs (2003) have described in much detail how ideologies of language have played a fundamental role in the legitimation of these standards. In fact, one could draw up a list of binary opposites headed by 'standard' and 'dialect' that capture much of contemporary common-sense about key social distinctions: high vs. low, refined vs. vulgar/broad, sophisticated vs. uneducated, reason vs. emotion, formal vs. informal, power vs. solidarity, overt vs. covert norms, modern vs. traditional, female vs. male etc. (see Bourdieu 1991; Gal 1995: 172-173; Pujolar 2001: 137; Rampton 2006). Crucially, one dualism often helps to legitimate another, as much as taking up a position in one dualism often generates assumptions about an individual's position in the other symbolic hierarchies (Stallybrass and White 1986: 3).

In my data too, this cultural semantic was largely reproduced in the sense that Standard Dutch stylisations were predominantly associated with intellectualism, nerdiness, effeminacy, subdued emotions and a distance from one's body, whereas Antwerp dialect was accompanied by high emotions, being out of control, aggression, profanities, bodily fluids, sex, malodorosity, and the direct victims of physical aggression (eyes, ears, nose, teeth and eyebrows). The importance, for these students, of the difference between high and low was evident too in how students repeatedly oriented to these distinctions in the flow of everyday life by highlighting those occasions when social hierarchies were more prominently installed, and the common-sense nature of the high-low dichotomy in the evidence on routine style shifting mentioned above. Additionally, it is not irrelevant that students said that 'doing ridiculous' and using Antwerp dialect exaggeratedly was not really meant for girls, or at least when I asked about girls doing any exaggerated Antwerp dialect, this was denied or deplored if it happened: "it doesn't suit them", "they talk seriously" and preferably act cute and "cry every three seconds" – in agreement with widespread ideologies on language and gender and with variationist findings on the male-female dichotomy with regard to standard and vernacular (cf. Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 2003). Also, 'doing ridiculous' itself was frequently perceived as an activity that was hard to reconcile with a studious perspective: therefore, regardless of their actual socio-economic background and observable school fatigue, the (mostly white)

students who didn't participate in 'doing ridiculous' or were silent were usually seen as interested in school, liking 'serious' things or having experiences that were less emotional, more restrained.<sup>12</sup> It might therefore not be overstated to say that these working class students had acquired a practical mastery of their socially and linguistically stratified circumstances (cf. Gal 1995), and that despite their local conceptions of Antwerp dialect as old and racist, the more widespread and long-standing potential of dialectal language features in a stratified and linguistically standardized society was difficult to ignore or outweighed the potential 'ethnicisation' of the variety.

Also quantitatively, if we compare stylisations of Antwerp dialect in an insider-outsider problematic versus a subordinate/authoritative one and situations in which Antwerp supports the formulation of profanities and abuse (see table 1), it is clear that the latter are predominant in my data (although a fair number of examples remain ambiguous):

Table 1. Amount of stylisations of Antwerp dialect for different purposes

Insiders vs. outsiders	Subordinates vs. authorities	Profanities, abuse	Ambiguous
8	40	18	19

Another reason why the age-old meaning potential of Antwerp dialect was difficult to ignore and that it could fuse easily into speakers' daily vernacular was that it could serve as a badge of vernacular competence and born-and-bredness as opposed to speakers who had recently arrived in the country and who were typified and devalued as 'talking illegal', that is, talking broken Dutch as illegal refugees (Jaspers 2011; see also Chun 2009 for a similar case). Indeed, the vertical high-low contrast must be seen in relation to a horizontal and international axis that differentiates between locals and those who migrate into the country or city (Rampton 2011). Thus, in the following example, Antwerp dialect is used to *differentiate* from linguistically incompetent, recently arrived co-ethnics (rather than other-ethnics):

### Example 8. Bang some whores

Setting: april 2002. Interview with Mourad [Mo M 21], Nordin [Mo M 22], Faisal [Mo M 20] en Jamal [Mo M 20]. JJ asks why playful incompetent Dutch is called 'illegal'. Broken Dutch is in italics, Antwerp influences are in bold. (Simplified transcription)

Original version	English translation
JJ: waarom [...] waarom heet da zo?	JJ: why [...] why is it called that way?
Jamal: da's accent hé meneer	Jamal: that's accent eh sir
JJ: accent van wie?	JJ: whose accent?
Faisal: pakt bijvoorbeeld pakt bijvoorbeeld der komt nen-pakt bijvoorbeeld hé . 'k zal zeggen ne vluchteling van Marokko [...] die komt hier binnen [...] die's hier misschien een jaar [...] of een paar maanden en die wilt [...] iets uitleggen hé maar wij begrijpen die nie dus wa begint die [...] wilt zo'n beetje Nederlands [...] Arabisch praten dus die zegt zo: eeh [traag:] <i>ik wil zo naar gemeente gaan</i>	Faisal: take for example take for example there comes a take for example eh [...] let's say a refugee from Morocco [...] who comes in here [...] who's here for maybe a year [...] or a couple of months and he wants [...] to explain something eh but we don't understand him so what doeshe do [...] he wants to talk a bit of Dutch [...] Arabic so he says: [slowly] <i>uuuh I want to like this go town hall</i>
Jamal: [lacht]	Jamal: [laughs]
Faisal: <i>eh gemeente voor voor eh</i> [vrak] [...] [vrak] is papieren [...] weete d-da's illegaals want waarom da's nen illegaal die komt van buiten naar binnen [...]	Faisal: <i>uh town hall for for</i> [vrak], [vrak] that's documents [...] you know th-that's illegal coz' why? that's an illegal who comes from outside [and goes] inside [...]
Mourad: een allochtoon	Mourad: an 'allochthon'
Nordin: en een nieuwe taal meneer ge kunt nooit van in 't begin vervoegen	Nordin: and a new language sir you can never conjugate right from the start
Faisal: ah ja [...] da kan moeilijk zijn dat die ineens	Faisal: oh yeh [...] it would be difficult for him to suddenly

binnenkomt van [geeft klap, sneller] hé <b>mannen</b> wildegij mij eens de gemeente [mænə] laten zien [...] want eh [...] <b>ik kom wa papieren halen</b> [...] <b>kopiekes</b> maken [...] [ikom væ pæ'pɪ:rən v:lə]      [ko'pɪ:kəs] <b>faxen</b> ditte en datte [...] <b>nog wa hoeren poepen</b> ['fæksə]                      [noχ vɑ 'hu:rə pupə]	enter and [hits the table, faster] hey <b>guys</b> [...] can you show me the town hall [...]
JJ:            maar da kunnen er [lacht] ook zijn van eh vluchtelingen van Marokko dus[...]niet enkel Polen? Faisal:      zeker en vast Jamal:      da <u>zén</u> de vluchtelingen van Marokko hé	because uhm [...] <b>I'm coming to get some documents</b> [...] make some <b>little copies</b> [...] <b>fax</b> an' all [...] <b>bang some whores</b>
JJ:            but they can come [laughs] so they can also be uh refugees from Morocco [...] not just Poland? Faisal:      definitely Jamal:      those <u>are</u> the refugees from Morocco isn't it	

Faisal draws up a contrast between recent immigrants and themselves (“we don’t understand him”), and Mourad even calls them an “allochthon”, a label that typically applied to themselves in Flemish public discourse. Linguistically he underlines the contrast by presenting the immigrant as slow and stammering, using Arabic lexemes and talking Dutch with a heavy accent, and by presenting a competent persona as talking swifter, using appropriate lexemes in relation to documents (copies, faxing), with a typical diminutive (*kopiekes* instead of standard *kopietjes* [‘little copies’]) and a characteristic Antwerp lexeme (*poepen*, for banging). In all, this is far from a drastic shift, and not an entirely consistent one either (given that only parts of what Faisal’s competent persona says can be safely seen as typically Antwerp dialect), but it is clear that Antwerp dialect features here help to signal ‘integration’ into Flemish society or the end-point in a line of development (which apparently for Faisal also implies sexual competence). And the incomplete shift itself illustrates that the boundary between these students’ own routine speech and Antwerp dialect could become quite blurred.

The room for fusion was not unlimited, however. Although some typical dialect lexemes (such as *poepen*, above) were popular, there were several occasions in my data when the use of other typical lexemes was derided or deplored. Thus, at one point, Zacharia, of Moroccan descent, was severely derided for using the lexeme ‘gezjoep’t’ (*stolen*, in English), and in interviews, students of Moroccan descent *and* their white classmates in fact commented on ‘overdoing it’, thereby presenting a lexeme that was too dialectal and suggesting a ‘normal’, ‘everyday’, i.e. less dialectal and more standard, alternative for it. This is actually in keeping with variationist research on Flemish dialects (Vandekerckhove 2009) that shows that lexemes seem to bear the brunt in processes of dialect loss rather than phonological and morpho-syntactical elements. Another constraint to fusion with Antwerp dialect, as much as with any non-Antwerpian Dutch vernacular, came from ethnic minority students who commented on the amount of Arabic or Berber that would be a part of routine speech. Jamal, for example, complained that he was sometimes held to account for talking ‘like a Belgian’ and not including enough code-switches into his daily speech.

## 6. CONCLUSION

In sum, I have tried to show that in spite of the importance of ethnic relations in established discourse on the social world, and despite the at first blush quite negative meanings attributed to Antwerp dialect by students of Moroccan descent, the more widespread and long-standing potential of dialectal language features in a stratified and linguistically standardized society seemed to outweigh their earlier ethnicisation. Of course, re-ethnicisation of the dialect remains a possibility, depending on what larger-scale socio-political processes take place in Belgian society, but at least for the time being, the data above show that Antwerp dialect is increasingly owned by teenagers who are not usually seen as its typical speakers. Indeed, rather than merely crossing into it (cf. Rampton 1995), these data seem to indicate that Antwerp dialect is actually appropriated and recycled, albeit stripped of all too conspicuous lexemes, by teenagers who cannot claim to have inherited the variety or to have acquired it through early socialisation (all of my key informants came from Arabic and

Berber speaking homes). Consequently, even if a fusion of their own vernacular use of Dutch and Antwerp dialect was not unconstrained, ethnic minority students' uses of Antwerp dialect may actually point to how, against the backdrop of widespread dialect loss in Europe (cf. Vandekerckhove and Britain 2009), urban dialects may get reinvigorated as they give voice to the experiences of a new working class with roots in migration.

Next to this, although the above analysis points to the importance of attending to social stratification processes in the investigation of urban linguistic practices, in doing so it does not mean to say that ethnicity has now become irrelevant and that social class is the new, 'actual', dimension that should be taken into account. Instead, it highlights the necessity of attending to ground-level interaction as a level of organization in its own right (cf. Goffman 1983), a level where interactional tendencies, conventions, and socio-political relations can be found which may have to be described in their own terms before trying to pinpoint their connection to higher-level meanings ('gender', 'ethnicity'). Since clearly, although in their explicit commentary on Antwerp dialect the teenagers above were quick to mention race relations, at the level of interaction the stylisation of Antwerp dialect actually suggested a more complex set of socio-political relations which it would hard to see as closely in synch with race relations.

Finally, this analysis may show that local vernaculars can be one of the tools with which established ethnic minorities reposition themselves vis-à-vis the influx of recent and/or temporary arrivals in the wake of the emergence of 'superdiversity' (Fanshawe & Sriskandarajah 2010; Fong & Shibuya; Vertovec 2007). As the last example above shows, the teenagers in my data saw themselves as highly competent in contrast to recent immigrants, and one of the aspects of this competence was undoubtedly their ease and familiarity with the local vernacular. It is not unthinkable that as inner cities become increasingly diverse, the more will established residents seek ways of expressing a sense of local belonging or 'insiderness', although once inside, they will have to situate themselves, or find themselves situated, on a socio-economic and semiotic high-low axis. The data above show that in appropriating Antwerp dialect features, urban teenagers with a migration history tend to situate themselves at the lower end of this axis.

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## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Students have to attend school until 18 in Belgium, but it isn't uncommon that students who have to repeat a year (or two) still try to get their secondary school degree.

<sup>2</sup> 21 of the 35 students (in two classes) were Flemish-Moroccan, 10 of them were white, 3 were of Turkish descent; there was only one (white) girl, despite the school's explicit attempts at levelling gender thresholds with regard to a 'male' subject as electro-mechanics.

<sup>3</sup> In April 2004, some of Flemish Bloc's non-profit organizations were found in breach of the racism law by a Belgian appeals court, after which the party re-named itself 'Flemish Interest' (*Vlaams Belang*).

<sup>4</sup> Which illustrates that ethnic divisions in class were not insurmountable and that there was room for becoming a member. On another occasion it was said that "Belgians they really need a lot of time, they need years to loosen up", and when a couple of months into my fieldwork I interacted spontaneously with students of Moroccan descent this was greeted with comments such as "you've changed man!", and "hey, you're starting to learn from us!".

<sup>5</sup> One of my nicknames during the fieldwork.

<sup>6</sup> In another interview, Mourad explains that when Flemish-Moroccans would produce sloppy or bad Dutch, this would provoke racist utterances from white Belgians: "look, especially as a Moroccan, if you start talking to Belgians with a language like pam pam then they'll say then they'll think [Antwerp dialect:] **man, this wog doesn't know any Dutch** but, but when you're like us then- then they'll think [Antwerp dialect:] **freakin' hell! they speak better Dutch than us dash it how's this possible?** [laughter] (see also Jaspers 2005).

<sup>7</sup> Transcription conventions:

<b>Bold</b>	Stylisation
CAPITALS	Increased volume
?	Rising contour
.	Falling contour
[.]	short pause
[..]	longer pause
[text]	stage directions and details
( )	inaudible
(text)	analyst guess
Italics	emphasis, or translation from Arabic
	start of new turn

<sup>8</sup> Possibly because the teacher didn't hear it due to all the noise, or maybe decided not to comment on it explicitly since this would only encourage Faisal to do it again while it also comes in handy that he doesn't have to comment on the actual misbehaviour himself anymore.

<sup>9</sup> And this was not the only occasion on which Faisal imitated his technology teacher.

<sup>10</sup> This was in fact almost a copy of what happened at start of the lesson where after he was dressed down for entering the class late (see example 5), he also protested that 'he wasn't a small child anymore'.

<sup>11</sup> Rampton (1995) describes how a variety like Creole got interwoven with his informants' daily vernacular, but Creole was looked upon much more favourably than Antwerp dialect (it was regarded as the 'future language', and related to black music genres). Likewise, he describes how Stylised Asian English, which was predominantly stylised vari-directionally, could also function uni-directionally, but this was only in the frame of structured games, not in non-playful, regular interaction; and when SAE was used uni-directionally "there was not any movement towards a fusion of different voices" (1995: 224) which in contrast appears to be the case with Antwerp dialect in my data.

<sup>12</sup> In the meantime, those Moroccan-Flemish classmates who were less performance-minded or school-ambitious were happy that they were not in the verbal line of fire.