ADOLESCENTS INVOLVED IN THE FORMATION OF IDENTITY IN MULTICULTURAL SETTINGS*

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Introduction

This study is a follow-up study of previous work on politeness of adolescents (Huls 1991; Huls et al. 2003). It aims to correct a methodological shortcoming of these previous studies: it makes use of spontaneous language data, while in the previous studies questionnaire data were used. More specifically this study compares chat data from adolescents who live in the Dutch language area and have a background of migration from Turkey with chat data from adolescents in the same language area with no migration background. Although we started the study with a focus on politeness, during the study our attention shifted to language characteristics which play a role in the formation of identity.

Together the three studies fit in a line of research which shows that language change is taking place. Conventional social relationships are less important in determining language behavior, while individuality and identity play a bigger role.

Before we treat the spontaneous chat data in more detail, we will give the main results of the preceding questionnaire work on politeness.

Politeness of adolescents in urban multicultural settings

According to politeness theory (Brown and Levinson 1978, 1987), social interaction is characterized by the dilemma of being either too close or too distant to one′s interlocutor. The theory states that the details of language usage are the result of strategies that people follow in solving this dilemma.

The notion of 'face' (compare expressions such as 'To show one's face' or 'To lose one's face') is central to politeness theory. It covers 'positive face', which refers to the human need for sympathy and solidarity, and 'negative face', which refers to the need for distance and respect. All humans have positive and negative face wants. These can only be satisfied by social interaction. In general, it is in the mutual interest of interacting persons to maintain one another's face. Politeness is the notion that covers all communicative behavior that is directed at maintaining face.

Politeness theory considers human interaction as intrinsically face-threatening. The interactants will always wish to minimize threat. They can do this in many different ways, for example by 'embellishing' the communicative act with terms of endearment (*Close the door, my dear*), by paying attention to the addressee's need for not being intruded upon (*Would you mind closing the door?*) or simply by hinting, thereby offering the addressee a lot of possibilities for interpretation (*There is a draft here.*) In other words, one can minimize the potential threat of a communicative act by making use of politeness strategies.

Brown and Levinson propose a subtle classification of these politeness strategies, with 40 substrategies ordered in 5 main groups:

1   direct and without redress;
2   direct, but with redress aimed at creating solidarity;
3   direct, but with redress aimed at showing respect;
4   indirect;
5   abandoning the idea to say something.

Strategy choice is a delicate matter. Directness has the risk of being seen as rude. Indirect means are open for misunderstandings. Showing respect can be interpreted as 'stiff'. Being kind can slide down to being too kind and thus become embarrassing. Being polite is not simply a question of selecting an alternative out of the whole range of possibilities, but also a question of how to be sensitive to the social context and how to present oneself. According to Brown and Levinson, the selection of a politeness strategy is determined by three contextual variables:

1   The power relationship between the interactants. If the speaker has less power than the interlocutor, she or he will be relatively indirect. If the speaker holds a superior status, she or he can be relatively direct.

2   The imposition the act entails. When you ask someone if you can borrow a pen, the imposition is much smaller than when you ask for her car.

3   The social distance between the speaker and the addressee. When speaker and addressee meet each other regularly, they can choose for directness; with an unknown interlocutor, indirectness is more probable.

These three contextual variables together determine the weight of a verbal act as follows:
Weight = Power + Imposition + Social Distance.

People start their interactions with an assessment of W. Depending on this assessment, they will start to say something or abandon this idea. If they are going to say something, they can do this either directly or indirectly. If they choose to be direct, they can present the message as direct as possible or make use of 'embellishment'. In case of 'embellishment', they can choose between solidarity means or respectful means. Figure 1 presents politeness theory in a nutshell.

Figure 1: Politeness theory in a nutshell
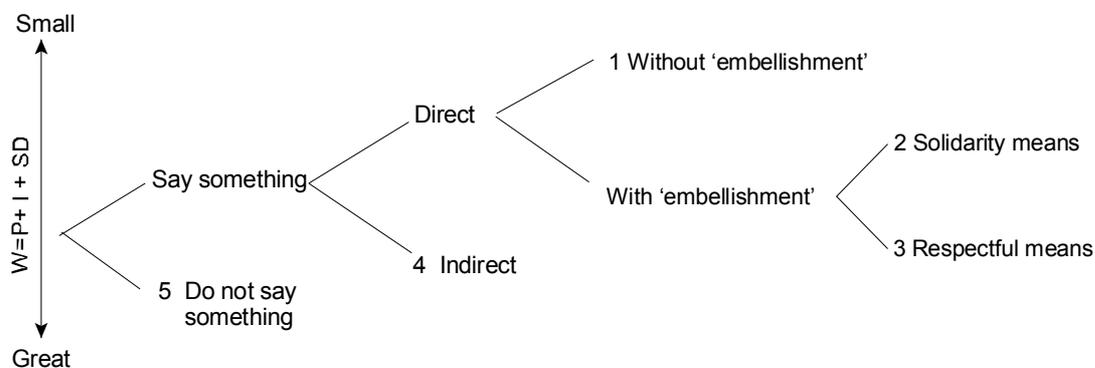
Politeness theory is - in accordance with sociolinguistic practice until quite recent - a deterministic model, i.e., social factors are supposed to determine language behavior. However, a small-scale empirical test of the theory will show that people do not let social differences determine all they say and do. Brown and Levinson (1978: 286) admit this. Their politeness theory focuses on regularities in patterns of language production and tries to explain these. At the same time it does not have the intention to fix people's language behavior firmly in social contexts. On the contrary, it allows individuals considerable freedom of choice.

With politeness theory and the discussion about determinism vs. individual choices as a

starting point, we conducted two empirical questionnaire studies of adolescents' request behavior.

In the 1991 study, data were collected in seven European countries: Belgium, Denmark, W-Germany, France, Italy, The Netherlands and The United Kingdom. In every country we worked with a group of approximately 40 adolescents.

In the 2003 study, data were collected in two urban multicultural settings: Rotterdam (The Netherlands) and Køge (Denmark). In both cities we worked with two groups of respondents: adolescents with a background of migration from Turkey (referred to as 'Turkish', although they were also Dutch respectively Danish) and adolescents without a migration background.

In both studies we collected data by means of a questionnaire – presented in the medium of communication on the spot - containing three sets of questions (see Hill et al.(1986)).

Part I contained a list of items one might use when one wants to borrow a pen such as:
- I wonder if I could borrow your pen for a minute.
- May I borrow your pen for a minute?
- Can you lend me your pen for a minute?
- Give me your pen for a minute.
- A pen.

We asked the respondents to rate the items with respect to carefulness on a five-point scale.

Part II consisted of a list of people and situations such as:
- A younger teacher sitting with you in the cafeteria.
- Your school principal at school.
- Your best friend in your own room.
- Your mother with whom you are talking at home.

Again, we asked the respondents to rate the items with respect to carefulness.

In part III, we asked the respondents to keep in mind a certain addressee in a specific context, and choose one or more items of the list for requesting a pen vis à vis this addressee.

The first and the second set of questions gave us insight into the hierarchies that the respondents observed in request forms respectively social environment. The answers to the third set show how the adolescents present themselves vis à vis others, along a cline of ascribed hierarchical positions.

Comparison of the answer patterns of the seven respectively four groups of respondents allows for conclusions about similarities and differences as to their linguistic expression of social relationships and politeness patterns.

According to a deterministic interpretation of politeness theory the adolescents will choose higher ranked request forms towards higher ranked addressees-in-situations, and lower ranked request forms towards lower ranked addressees, as visualized in Figure 2.

At the top, addressee/situation categories (the dots) have been ordered from most careful (left) to most uninhibited (right). At the left side of the figure, language forms (the scribbles) are ranked from most careful (top) to most straightforward (down). The diagonal in the figure represents the hypothesis.

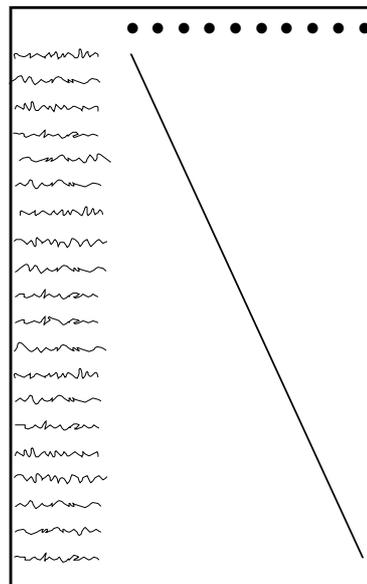Figure 2: A deterministic interpretation of the hypothesis in politeness theory
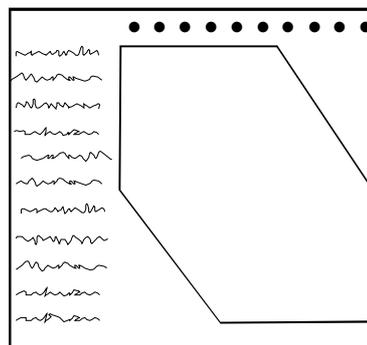

Figure 3 portrays an interpretation of the hypothesis with more freedom of choice for individual speakers.

Figure 3: A less deterministic version of the hypothesis

In this case, highly ranked addressee/situation combinations can receive a number of alternative, though highly ranked, request forms. The same holds for lowly ranked addressee/situation combinations.
While Figure 2 and 3, if found in actual data, both confirm politeness theory, Figure 4 does not.
Here, addressee/situation combinations are hierarchically ordered, just as request forms are, but, as the rectangle in the lower part of the Figure indicates, highly ranked addressee/situation combinations are approached in the same way as lowly ranked addressee/situation combinations. This means that language forms are used to level out a social hierarchy, an outcome that is at odds with politeness theory.
13 years ago, in the study with its focus on nationally defined groups, we found that all groups but one behaved in accordance with politeness theory. Most answering patterns were similar to Figure 3. The exception was the Danish group. This group showed the pattern of Figure 4.

Figure 4: A refutation of the hypothesis
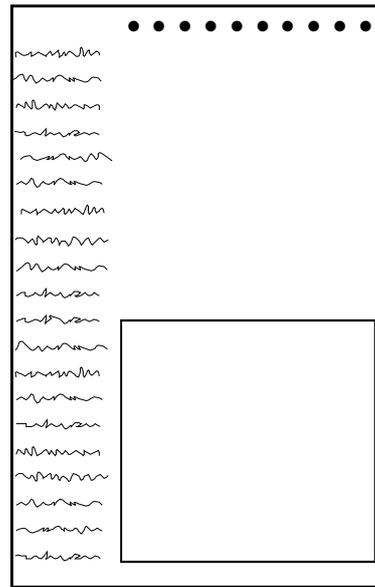
In 2003, three of the four groups of respondents refuted politeness theory. The Køge adolescents with no migration background were the most extreme. All request items but four obtain a 'neutral' ranking, which means that this group felt rather indifferent about the social meaning of request forms. Furthermore, this group is very different from the others in constructing the social order. They carve up their social environment into two groups, which have a relatively small hierarchical difference between them. The key word to characterize this group is: leveling. The social ladder no longer exists for this group.
These Køge adolescents show a strong preference for one request form. Four other forms are also chosen, though far less frequent. The statement 'everybody treats everybody equal', or 'we treat everyone as we treat our mother' describes this group well, more so than any of the other groups that took part in the study. This group falsifies politeness theory because they do not manipulate a variety of linguistic forms in the light of social relationships. Instead, they claim equality. Figure 5 visualizes their pattern, although one should be aware that the neutral ranking and the social leveling is not apparent in this simplified visualization.

The Turkish adolescents in Køge were also oriented towards the construction of equality. They differed from their compatriots who have no migration background in some respects (they constructed a social hierarchy, they differentiated language forms as to their social meanings, and they used more than one or a few request forms), but they aligned with them in not using politeness in request forms as a means for building relationships and for distinguishing oneself from the other.
The adolescents in Rotterdam with no migration background appeared to be involved in a process of leveling as well. They showed the pattern that was found previously among Danish adolescents (see Figure 4).

Figure 5: The adolescents with no migration background in Køge
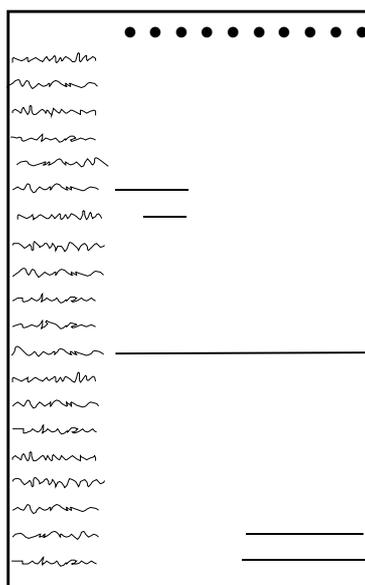
The only group in the 2003 study who showed an answering pattern in accordance with politeness theory was the group of Turkish respondents in Rotterdam. Their answering pattern was similar to Figure 3. They acknowledge the social hierarchy, and they have alternatives to deal with it.

What this collection of patterns appears to suggest, is that linguistic leveling (the process that was apparent in the Danish material from 13 years ago) precedes social leveling. Of the four groups investigated in 2003, the Køge adolescents with no migration background are the most progressive. For them, a social hierarchy is nearly nonexistent now, while linguistic leveling had already taken place. The other three groups are less innovative in the following order: the Turkish adolescents in Køge, the Rotterdam adolescents with no migration background and the Turkish adolescents in Rotterdam. This result fits in with an alternative sociolinguistic paradigm, which has only recently been articulated and which focuses on the role of language in creating and changing contexts.

At the same time, the data also appear to suggest that something is missing. To be sure, these adolescents are breaking down social hierarchies, and the reduction of the politeness repertoire to only a few alternatives reflects that. But, given this reduced linguistic repertoire, one wonders how these adolescents manage to distinguish themselves from one another, something which is claimed to be basic for identity formation (Van Bruggen 1974).

The idea that something is missing might be an artefact of the method. We offered closed questions focusing on respect politeness. Solidarity politeness fell beyond the scope. Also, we did not elicit and encourage language play and innovation. The conclusion that something is missing leaves us with the question: in the adolescents or in the method?

To find an answer to this question, we undertook a study of spontaneous instead of elicited material. We opted for language use on the internet because recent studies of that language (e.g., Crystal 2001; Danet 2001; Shortis 2001; Wyss 1999) show that a lot of linguistic innovation is taking place online. The keyboard is exploited to make new meaningful combinations of keystrokes. The users are polite, but not in the traditional sense of respect politeness, but in the sense of solidarity politeness. They exploit the internet as an agora for playing social games with language and for the formation of identity. A great variety of verbal

means is applied to create new in- and outgroups with dividing lines other than the traditional social class, gender and age.

More specifically, we collected data on discussion lists of Dutch adolescents with and without a background of migration from Turkey. The analysis is focused on 'socially relevant' language, i.e., language that is used for playing with social relationships, lingual phenomena that are creating solidarity and distance, lingual means that are used in creating in- and out-groups and the lingual expression and formation of identity. After a first global inspection of the material, we limited ourselves to a selection of language phenomena which can be grouped under the headings: solidarity politeness, self-presentation and code-switching.

The questions of our study of online communication can now be specified as follows:

1   Does an observational study of communication online show politeness patterns and patterns of self-presentation which are missed by questionnaire studies?

2   Is there a difference between Turkish and Dutch adolescents in their exploitation of the specific set of language phenomena that we chose for investigation?

3   Can we find more signs that language change is taking place? Previously language was used as a means for constructing and expressing social hierarchies. In the questionnaire studies we found a different reality. Did we find this by accident? Or did we tap into signs of an on-going change? Are conventional social relationships less important in determining language behavior, while individuality and identity play a bigger role?

Data collection

We collected data on two discussion lists: Lokum (www.lokum.nl) and FOK! (www.fok.forum.nl).

Lokum is an open website, oriented to Turkish adolescents. The medium of communication is Dutch. Moderators can edit and adjust contributions to the discussion. It is possible to make contact with the organizers of the list. Figure 6 shows a Lokum screen.

Figure 6: Lokum screen
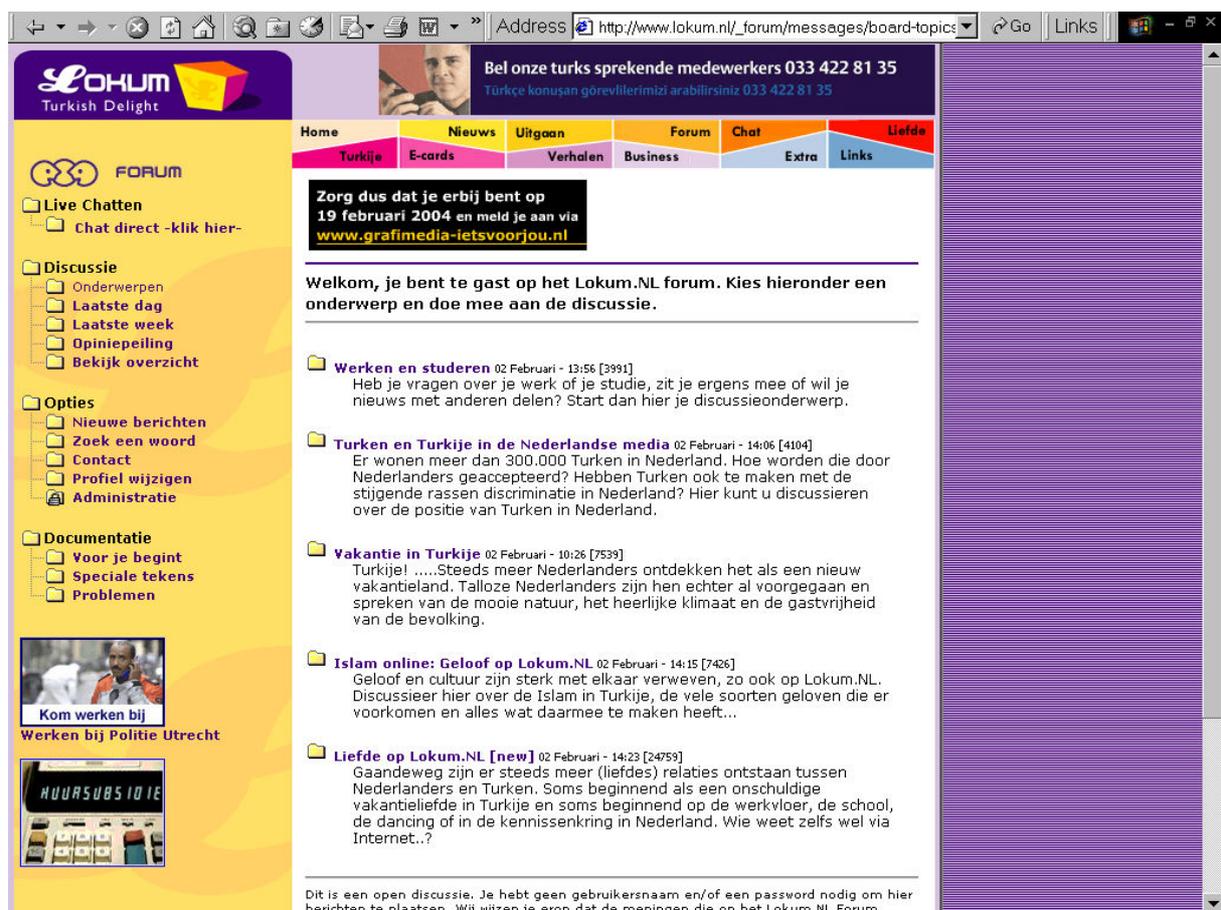
As can be seen in the white area, there are five discussion topics. The yellow bar on the left shows the four main folders.

It is not obligatory to register. Every time you take part, you provide your name. Although it is possible to change identity frequently, research has shown (Bechar-Israeli 1996) that this is not done. It is optional to provide a profile. The button 'Speciale tekens' (special signs) gives access to an instruction in HTML.

FOK! is a website oriented to Dutch adolescents. The discussion list is the only. The discussion is moderated. It is possible to make contact with the organizers of the site. Figure 7 shows a FOK! screen.

Figure 7: FOK! screen

The list offers seven topics of discussion with many subtopics. Access is free. Registration is obligatory (you have to provide your e-mail address) if you want to contribute to the discussion.

At the top there is a bar with many options. For example, there is an option to provide a profile with the following headings: age, sex, location, free time activities, job, picture/photograph. There are also options for the presentation of the posts. FAQ (frequently asked questions) gives access to a set of guidelines for behavior and policy. Emoticons are available with one key stroke.

A comparison of the lists and screens shows that FOK! is more embellished. It has more options and graphic features than Lokum.

We analyzed three topics of discussion: (1) Women are smarter than men, (2) Identity (nick

name vs. being from the countryside or living in a great urban area), and (3) Eating at McDonalds. Two of the three topics were derived from Lokum and introduced by the researchers on FOK!; the third topic (identity) was present on both lists. Per topic and per list we analyzed 110 contributions.

The participants in the discussions are, as far as we can know, 15-25 years of age. With respect to gender, on Lokum 45,5% is female, 24,5% is male and 30% is unknown. On FOK! 89% is male and 11% female.

Data analysis

The analysis was focused on language phenomena which are used in social play on the internet. Danet (2001) introduced a new term to refer to these phenomena: cyberpl@y. Other sources that we used to identify them were: Crystal (2001), Shortis (2001) and Wyss (1999). We also identified some phenomena bottom-up while analyzing the material. An overview of the phenomena, their form, their function and an example from the material is given in Table 1 at the end of this document. In the formal and functional circumscriptions we made use of Crystal (2001) and Renkema (2002).

The contributions to the discussions are described with respect to the presence and absence of the language phenomena listed in Table 1. Only in case of references to identity, 4 possibilities are distinguished: region, gender, ethnicity and not applicable.

The language phenomena are analyzed quantitatively with a multinomial logistic regression and chi-square tests.

The code switches were analyzed in more detail. In this context, using emoticons is considered as a code switch too: it is a change between a lingual and a pictural code. The three code switches - to emoticons, to Turkish and to English – are analyzed qualitatively with respect to function. The result of this analysis will be presented below in the form of classifications.

The switches to Turkish and English are further analyzed with respect to type: (1) Expressive, i.e.: the speaker wants to be effective in a certain way, he/she switches strategically, he/she wants to indicate that he\she belongs to a specific ethnicity or he/she wants to express him/herself emotionally, and (2) Referential or practical, i.e.: the meaning of a word does not exist in the language of the matrix sentence, or the speaker does not know it; what the speaker wants to say cannot be expressed in one language.

The data collection is not as controlled as in laboratory experiments. However, certain variables can be controlled for after data collection, rather than before, as in laboratory studies. The influence of the following extralinguistic variables can be traced:
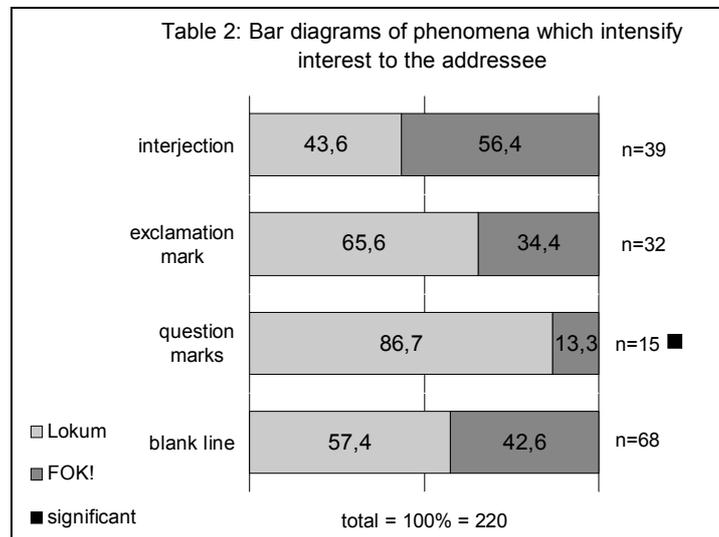
- Interactivity of the discussion
- Gender
- Number of participants
- Number of contributions per participant
- Topic of discussion.

Results: quantitative analysis

The multinomial logistic regression of the language phenomena in relation to discussion list was significant (Chi-square = 101,23; p<.001). The explained variance was 49%. This means that the answer to the second research question is positive: there is a difference between Turkish and Dutch adolescents in their exploitation of the specific set of language phenomena that we chose for investigation.

We will clarify this general result with bar diagrams of the phenomena. They are grouped under headings derived from politeness theory or under the heading 'phenomena used in presenting oneself on the internet'.

Table 2 concerns the phenomena which intensify the interest of the contribution to the discussion for the addressee. The use of an interjection, an exclamation mark, more than one question marks and blank lines are interpreted as extra efforts of the writer to attract the addressee's attention and to make an interesting contribution. This interpretation is in accordance with Brown and Levinson's (1987) delineation of solidarity strategy number 3, which they label as 'intensify interest to H' and clarify with phenomena in oral interaction such as a louder tone, rising voice, sociocentric sequences and - also - interjections.

Table 2: Bar diagrams of phenomena which intensify interest to the addressee

	Lokum	FOK!	n
interjection	43,6	56,4	n=39
exclamation mark	65,6	34,4	n=32
question marks	86,7	13,3	n=15 ■
blank line	57,4	42,6	n=68

☐ Lokum
◼ FOK!
■ significant

total = 100% = 220

The bars represent 100% of the respective phenomena in our material. Right of every bar the absolute frequency of every phenomenon is indicated. The left, light part of every bar represents Lokum's portion in the total; the right, dark part represents the portion of FOK! (in percentages). A vertical line in the middle of every bar marks the point of an even distribution. When Lokum and FOK! differ significantly, this is indicated by a small black square at the right.

The Turkish adolescents use more question marks than the Dutch adolescents. The groups do not differ with respect to the other three phenomena represented in Table 2.

Table 3 contains the phenomena which create an in-group. In line with Brown and Levinson (1987), the code switches belong to this solidarity strategy number 4. We also included dots, incomplete sentences, back slashes, missing punctuation marks, abbreviations and retorical questions. Brown and Levinson are not definite here: one can interpret these phenomena as indirect, because they give the addressee options, but when speaker and addressee know each other well and/or belong to the same subgroup, they signal solidarity politeness, because the speaker claims that the addressee will know what s/he means. We opted for the inclusion of these literally indirect communicative phenomena in solidarity politeness strategy number 4.

The Turkish adolescents surpass the Dutch adolescents with respect to code switches into Turkish (self-evident) and to the application of dots. The Dutch adolescents make more use of emoticons. With respect to the other phenomena listed in Table 3, the groups do not differ.

Table 3: Bar diagrams of phenomena which create an in-group

	Lokum	FOK!	n	significant
code switch Turkish	100		n=42	■
code switch English	50	50	n=18	
code switch emoticon	24,4	75,6	n=86	■
dots	63,5	36,5	n=74	■
incomplete sentences	45,1	54,9	n=71	
back slash	66,7	33,3	n=9	
missing punctuation marks	51	49	n=145	
abbreviation	50,7	49,3	n=75	
rethorical question	52,4	47,6	n=42	

□ Lokum
■ FOK!
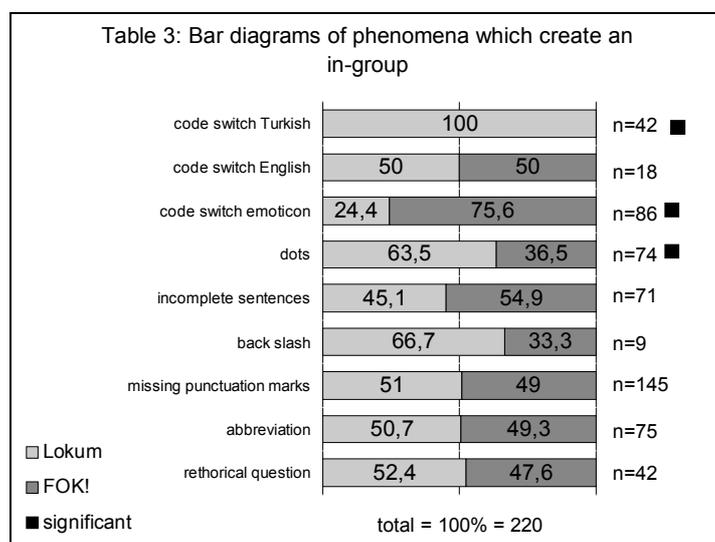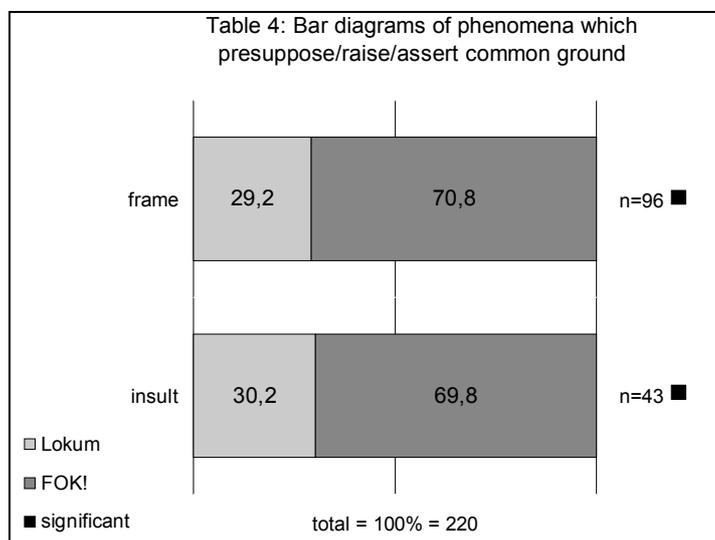■ significant

total = 100% = 220

Table 4 offers bar diagrams of phenomena which presuppose/raise/assert common ground, i.e., of phenomena which belong to Brown and Levinson's (1987) solidarity politeness strategy number 7. The frames are included because both writer and addressee have to know the frame indicating signs; the insults are included because they often bear a ritual character, i.e., they are not meant seriously and belong to the 'game'.

Table 4: Bar diagrams of phenomena which presuppose/raise/assert common ground

	Lokum	FOK!	n	significant
frame	29,2	70,8	n=96	■
insult	30,2	69,8	n=43	■

□ Lokum
■ FOK!
■ significant

total = 100% = 220

Both phenomena represented in Table 4 are more frequent on FOK! than on Lokum.
Table 5 gives insight in the phenomena that are used for presenting oneself on the internet. The adolescents on FOK! more often use a creative nick name. They add a subtitle to their nick name very often, while this is never done on Lokum. Character statements are also more frequent on FOK!. Creative closings are not very frequent in our material. The only place where we found some is on Lokum.

Table 5: Bar diagrams of phenomena used in presenting oneself on the internet

	Lokum	FOK!	
creative nick name	35	65	n=157 ■
subtitle to nick name		100	n=92
character statement	3,9	96,1	n=102 ■
creative closing	100		n=9

□ Lokum
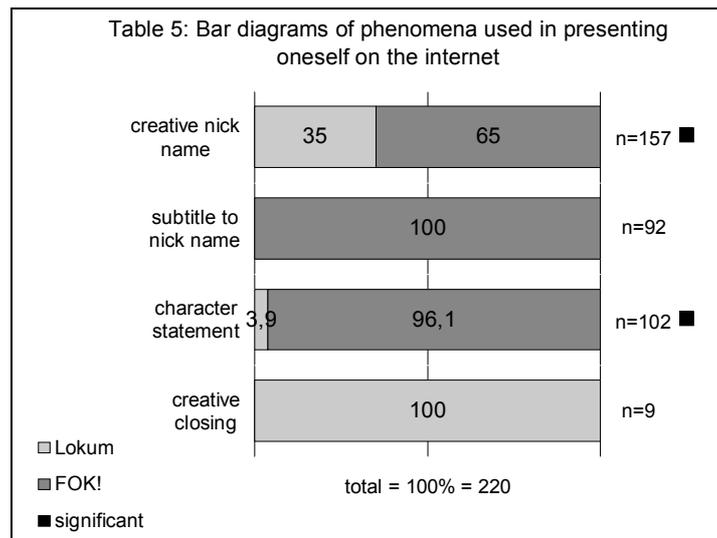■ FOK!
■ significant

total = 100% = 220

Table 6 concerns the references to identity on both discussion lists. These references are more frequent on Lokum than on FOK!. The adolescents on Lokum more often refer to an etnic identity than the adolescents on FOK!, while the latter more often refer to a regional identity. References to gender identity are equally frequent on both lists.

Table 6: References to identity in relation to discussion list (percentages)

	not applicable	region	gender	etnicity
Lokum (n=110)	37,3	0,9	19,1	42,7
FOK! (n=110)	52,7	26,4	19,1	1,8

Chi-square = 70,4; p < .001

A question that is awaiting further research is: To what extent are the differences determined by extralingual variables? An inspection of the effects of gender – the variable that was most likely to have impact – showed that it played only a role in the use of character statements. Men used them more than women. The finding that they are used more often on FOK! than on Lokum is related to the fact that FOK! has more male discussants than Lokum. The other differences that we found were not related to gender.

Tables 2 to 6 allow a conclusion about research question 1: Does an observational study of communication online show politeness patterns and patterns of self-presentation which are missed by questionnaire studies? The tables show that the adolescents make a frequent use of the various solidarity politeness phenomena that we selected for study, and also that they put a lot of effort in self-presentation and references to identity. They do play social games with language, although the games differ from the ones we were looking for with our previous questionnaire studies on politeness.

The question whether new hierarchies will show up in the social games we studied needs attention in future research.

Results – qualitative analysis

As said before, the code switches were analyzed more in-depth. With respect to type (expressive vs. referential), Lokum and FOK! do not differ. The Turkish and the English code switches do not differ either.

The code switches to English overwhelmingly appeared to be an insertion of a loan word or idiom ('crossing', Rampton 1995). These were not analyzed further.

For the switches from Dutch to Turkish we developed a more subtle functional classification, based on Myers-Scotton (1997) and Backus (2001), and complemented with conversational and pragmatic insights:

1   Creating an in-group vs. an out-group:
      1.1   Turkish – not-Turkish
      1.2   Woman vs. man
      1.3   We (speaker + addressee) vs. they
2   Expressive (emotions and/or identity of speaker)
3   Elicited by the topic of conversation
4   Insertion of a loan word, idiom, proverb or saying
5   Changing the role of the speaker ('footing'; Goffman (1984))

The switches from Dutch to Turkish often concerned idioms, but the other functions were also found.

We also tried to grasp the functions of emoticons. Three pragmatic sources were particularly important for this endeavor: Searle's (1976) classification of illocutionary acts, Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory, and Gumperz's (1982) work on contextualization cues. We found that emoticons can fulfill various functions in the interaction. A first – rather frequent – function is that they perform an expressive speech act, i.e., they are expressions of the sender's psychological state about something that has to do with either the sender or the recipient. Their sincerity condition is that the sender actually does have the psychological state expressed. They have no propositional content, but presuppose something in the world. They do not change or represent the world, but take an event, an object and so on for granted. When they have this function, they can be paraphrased by 'I feel happy', 'I feel sad', etc.

If they do not function as an expressive speech act, they function as a politeness strategy, which means that they embroider or embellish an assertive (a description of the world which the sender beliefs to be true), a directive (an attempt to steer the behavior of the addressee) or a commissive (a commitment of the speaker to some future behaviour). More specifically, the emoticons were found to fulfill the following politeness strategies:

- Create an in-group (solidarity strategy number 4).
- Make reference to a common perspective (solidarity strategy number 7).
- Give gifts (solidarity strategy number 15).
- Give hints (indirect strategy number 1).
- Give association clues (indirect strategy number 2).
- Be vague (indirect strategy number 12).

Apart from their function as an expressive speech act or politeness strategy, they can function as an interpretation cue or contextualization cue. This means that they connect the verbal message or part of that message with a context and activity. They can change a serious message into a joke; they can signal that the sender is arrogant on purpose; or they can convey indirectness (e.g., irony or sarcasm). An example of this function is:

All emoticons in our material could be classified as fulfilling one or more of the functions that we identified above.

A last result of our in-depth analysis of code switches is a new perspective on the classification of code switches. We found as the most general function of code switches that they change the participant structure (Clark 1996, Goffman 1981, Clark en Carlson 1982). In a simple model of an exchange, one can distinguish a speaker/sender, an utterance/message and an addressee. Goffman showed that one can distinguish at least three speaker/sender roles, which often collapse into one person, but which can also be spread over different participants: the inventor (the auctor intellectualis of the message), the formulator (the one who puts the message into words) and the speaker (the one who performs the locutionary act). Furthermore, two kinds of 'hearers' can be distinguished: the ones who are directly addressed by the message and who will have to react, and the ones who do not have to react or to continue the conversation, but who simply listen and look (the audience or the overhearers). An overhearer can fulfil the role of inventor and/or formulator, while s/he can also be excluded from the exchange. The category 'addressee' is also global and can be subdivided into several roles, for example a direct addressee (the overtly oriented to recipient of the message) and an indirect addressee (an overhearer who has to take notice of the content, has to carry out the requested act or who is the target of an offence). This elaborated model of the participant structure in face–to- face conversation is visualized in Figure 8.

Figure 8: Participant structure in face-to-face conversation
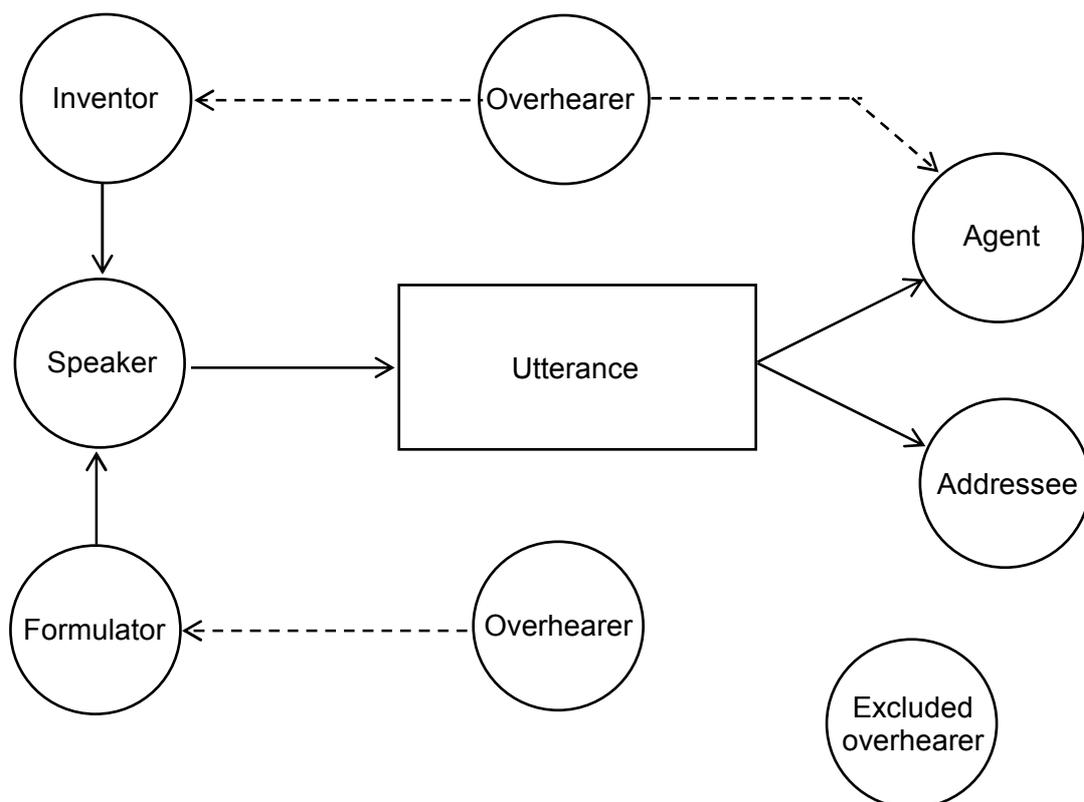
We modified this model to fit discussion lists (see Figure 9). The simple model of a discussion list is a speaker/sender who takes the three speaker/sender roles simultaneously, an utterance and an undifferentiated audience. Just as in face-to-face interaction, the speaker/sender can cast participants, overhearers or outsiders in the inventor or formulator role. Moreover, the speaker/sender can structure the audience, create subgroups, address someone indirectly, and select specific persons as addressee, while casting other members of the audience in the role of overhearer. Finally, the speakers/senders can manipulate parts of themselves. They can split themselves in a part which says something and a part which intends something, for example when they are making jokes or teasing. Another possibility is that a speaker/sender detaches emotions from the utterance, such as in sarcasm or irony. In fact, these intrapsychic manipulations were rather frequent in our material.

Figure 9: Participant structure in discussion list
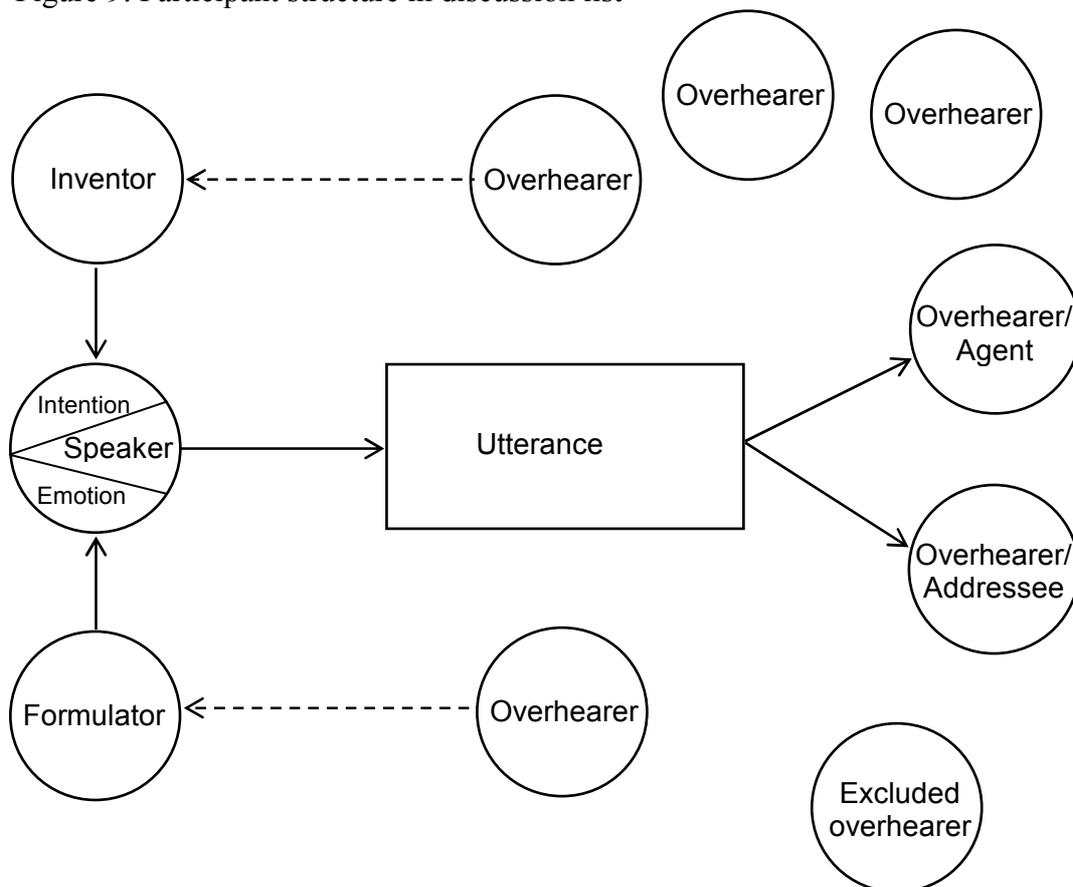
It is valuable to study code switches in relation to changes in the participant structure. One can make a classification of the many changes that are possible here, and categorize the code switches in terms of the specific change they go together with. This results in a classification of code switches which is based upon a concept – as opposed to the classification that we applied above. Another methodological quality of this classification is that it has classes which mutually exclude each other. A final positive point of such a classification is that empirical material can be described exhaustively in terms of it.

The following example illustrates the phenomenon that code switches are used to change the participant structure. The discussion had the 'default' structure of participants combining the inventor, formulator and speaker role who were addressing a general, undifferentiated

audience. The topic of discussion is 'Women are smarter than men'. The medium of communication was Dutch. Here we see that Bilge selects a specific addressee, "respect", to make a diadic interaction of 'us, women', excluding 'them, men, Neanderthals'.

aferin "respect"!! Helal olsun sana, ne iyi yazdin. Lafi agzimdan aldin. Men. God! Like they are better because they invented some machine or something. Halbuki bir bilseler what's more important in this life. iste o seyleri, like patience, love, bakim and so on... erkekler anlamiyoru.. Geri kafalila🙂e olacak

Greetz,
Bilge

[well done "respect"!! I am impressed, you described it very well. You took the words out of my mouth. Men. God! Like they are better because they invented some machine or something. If they just knew what's more important in this life. things like, like patience, love, care and so on…I don't get men.. Neanderthals is what they ar🙂

Greetz,
Bilge]

The switch to Turkish divides the audience in an addressee and overhearers; the switch to the emoticon – a pictural code - marks a split in the speaker/sender: Bilge uses a hyperbole and takes no full commitment for what she says.
In future research we will apply this perspective on code switches to more data. We want to know whether Lokum and FOK! are the same or different in their use of these means for changing the participant structure.

Conclusions

We undertook this study to gain insight into the question whether a change in the function of language is taking place. Is language used to a lesser degree than before as a means to create 'smooth' relationships in which speaker and addressee do not intrude in each other's domain, and if so, use respect politeness to compensate for this? Does the function of language as a means for self-presentation and for the expression of solidarity politeness have more impact than before? Although it is difficult to construct watertight proof of such a development, our data contain arguments in favour of it. We found that both groups of adolescents – which previously did not appear to use language for the expression and building of social relationships - made abundant use of the lingual means we focused on in this study, namely the language phenomena that are used in social play on the internet. They do not 'miss' anything, but develop a new social game with language. This game is not based on the traditional gauges for status and respect (social class, age, sex), but is turned on self-presentation, positive politeness and in- and exclusion of interaction participants. Social categories such as identity and gender are constructed instead of given. This result supports a new sociolinguistic paradigm, which has only recently begun to be articulated (Jørgensen 2003).
Both groups are agents in performing this language change, but there is a difference in the specific means that each group applies. Typical phenomena for Lokum are: code switches to Turkish, use of dots, references to ethnicity and insertions of Turkish idiom. Typical for FOK! are: code switches with emoticons, use of frames, insults and elaborate self-presentations. The

identities which are put to the fore on Lokum differ from the ones on FOK! although the overarching themes on both discussion lists are attenuation of the traditional social hierarchies and play with identity and relationships. Conventions are replaced by cyberpl@y.

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Table 1:   An overview of the phenomena studied, their forms, functions and examples from the material can be found on the next pages.

Phenomenon	Form	Function	Example from the material
Exclamation mark	Sign on key board above 1	Adds force. The author is sure of his/her point and wants the reader to feel a certain aggressive tone in the utterance. An emotion is expressed by the use of an exclamation mark	*konuyu kapat we're not talking about nick's, go to a different topic to bitch about nicknames, not here..!!*
Interjection	Combination of sounds who do not form a morpheme	Speakers associate the sound with a specific feeling. For example: *mmm* is associated with tasteful; *hahaha* with joy; *oeps* with surprise in a negative sense; *wow* with surprise in a positive sense	*yeah and that for example you don't get a donkey or a cat in front of you???* *ha ha ha ha iyaaaah*
Question marks	2 times or more the key stroke	Makes the question more compelling; expresses incredulousness	*I mean.. why be surprised that there are Turkish girls who buy a sandwich at Mc????*
Missing punctuation marks	Not only one or some punctuation marks are missing, but someone omits dots and commas consistently and does not or only rarely marks sentence boundaries	Presupposes that the addressee knows where the sentence boundaries are (just as in oral interaction)	*in the bathroom at mac I saw the following text 'be sure and flush twice: it's quite far to the kitchen'* *I couldn't stop laughing* 😃 *well, the food's a bit plastic there: makes you full for fifteen minutes and then you're hungry again*
Blank lines	Two enters in a sequence	To draw attention to something; to enlarge the importance	*o.k , ignore what I said.* *sorry.*
Frames	" ", ' ', ( ), < >	A part of a text which is linked – by graphic features – to a framework which differs from the rest of the text (an other level, an other speaker, an other domain of language use)	*"They go like guys have to work because they are guys and the woman, she has to help the guy because there's democracy."* *I didn't quite understand, do you mean that the Turkish girls say guys must work outside the home and that women have to help out at home with democracy as a pretense (which never exists for 100% anyway)??*

Phenomenon	Form	Function	Example from the material
Emoticons	Combinations of key strokes which are invented. They are registered with meanings attached to them	To express the face or the emotions of the sender. To create sympathy and solidarity. Contextualization cue (Gumperz 1982)	I like Mac better than Burger King too.. 😊 I usually go to mac, they've got these totally cool fries, with that mayo 😀
Dots	A string	An appeal to the reader to complete. Can signal that the writer is not completely sure of his/her point, or that he/she does not dare to be explicit about the matter (there might be a taboo)	Madam doesn't dare to react now ...
Slash	Key stroke	The author signals that he/she is not completely sure which word or expression to choose and that he/she gives the option to the reader	I would sue the sller/owner!
Creative turn closing	Other than a greeting or nothing	Author marks his contribution to attract more attention than the other contributions	Yeah Allah knows best. latersz
Abbreviations	Letters (2 or more) are omitted from a word	We understand each other, even with less cues	Yiu I think in generality they think more, too.
Incomplete sentences	Sentences which are grammatically not well-formed because the subject is missing or an obligatory determiner	You will understand me, even when my sentence is incomplete. Appeal to the willingness of the addressee to cooperate.	have only been living here for three years,. lived in E'hoven before that,. have to hear every time they don't understand me : O,. that must be Brabo,. you hick, doesn't interest me at all, fuck off!
Insults	Negative statement about the addressee/overhearer or something/someone related to the addressee	Ritual. In the context of the game we are playing the negative statements do not deeply touch us.	It's just fuckin' fast food, isn't it...don't expect any great culinary exploits, and stop moaning if someone else does want some greasy meat imitation...

Phenomenon	Form	Function	Example from the material
Rhetorical questions	Question which does not need an answer because the speaker has implied the answer yet	Appeal to the reasoning ability of the addressee; asserting something without being direct and offending	*do you think it's any different in a restaurant? Plus. at McD you can see into the kitchen. In restaurants you usually only see the dish on your plate...*
Creative nick name	Unusual name, with usual names being the names in daily life. Name that is not registered. Fantasy name	Has a relationship with the identity of the sender, although it is often unclear what kind of relationship	*Disorder*
Subtitle to nick name	Motto. A statement used to mark a position. An ideal. A statement with a normative aspect or concerning personal ethics. Can be directive for the addressee.		*Skateboarding is not a crime*
Character statement	Closing statement of the message. The sender wants to be associated with it. Concerns the sender.		*I would rather be right than President.*
Explicit references to identity	Reference to persons in terms of 3 aspects of identity: region, gender and etnicity	Draws attention to certain aspects of social relationships at the cost of others. Creates a reality of specific identities	*here in the Randstad we call everyone who doesn't live here a HICK. Do you think that applies to you? do you kinda like it, or do you not care?*
Code switch Turkish	Switch to the Turkish language	Diverse. Topic of study. See under Results	*Demi* 😀 *but well, sonucta kendi milletimiz (well, some) in Holland who think just like that, who for instance beak their own bread.*
Code switch English	Switch to the English language	Diverse. Topic of study. See under Results	*De "Marie Claire" is geen goede bron hoor... Verder lijkt het mij "wishfull thinking" maar goed. (translation: The "Marie Claire" is not a good source, you know... I think it's just "wishfull thinking" but hey.)*