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Categorization in the classroom: a comparison of teachers' and students' use of ethnic categories

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ABSTRACT

This paper builds on an analysis of ethnographic fieldwork data and classroom interaction to examine the use and interpretation of ethnic categories among teachers and students of a secondary school class in the city of Venlo, the Netherlands. Students with a migration background, who were born in the Netherlands, often labeled themselves *Turk* ('Turk'), *Marokkaan* ('Moroccan'), and *buitenlander* ('foreigner'), and referred to others as *Nederlander* ('Dutch'). Students used these categories in locally specific ways, for example, to engage in the management of everyday social relations and to construct social hierarchies. Teachers, none of whom had a migration background, appeared to interpret students' labeling practices as related to issues with integration and belonging. They problematized and sometimes rejected students' categorization, while at the same time, they also displayed orientation to a categorization system that differentiated between students with and without a migration background. Using tools from membership categorization analysis, the paper examines how these divergent category interpretations surfaced and evokes the effects this may have on students and their relationships with teachers.

Introduction

Much research has established that ethnic category terms are complex and locally contingent, and subject to constant negotiation and change. Especially young people have been observed to engage in reconfigurations of ethnic (and other) categories and the terminology surrounding them. For example, in a US junior high school investigated by Lee (2009), students used the label 'Mexican' to refer to people of Latin American descent, even when it was known they were not of Mexican descent. As Lee (2009, 40) argues, '[r]ather than using predetermined demographic categories, youth adopt their own categories to label ethnicity'. Speakers have also been shown to alternate between different ethnic or racial categories in different contexts (e.g. Nørreby and Møller 2015). Categorizing

people in ethnic or racial terms can achieve other kinds of classification too: it can be 'a strategic social practice for ideological commentary, not only on racial authenticity but also on gender and class performance' (Chun 2011, 404; see also Nørreby 2019). It can invoke local status hierarchies (Nørreby 2019), or address concerns related to friendship responsibilities or gender relations (Harris and Rampton 2009).

Many of these studies focus on young people, frequently in the context of formal schooling. What is not often addressed, however, is how teachers react to, and engage with, their students' reconfigured categories. It has been documented that teachers sometimes categorize their students in ways with which students themselves do not align (Koole and Hanson 2002; Martín Rojo 2008; Spotti 2011a). But when students themselves employ and negotiate the meaning of identity categories, do teachers show awareness of the complex social and interactional work that is being done? This paper examines and compares teachers' and students' discourse surrounding the categories *Turk* ('Turk'), *Marokkaan* ('Moroccan'), *buitenlander* ('foreigner'), and *Nederlander* ('Dutch'). I argue that whereas students used these terms to engage in complex local social and interactional work, most teachers seemed to understand them in connection to broader sociopolitical issues such as (lack of) integration or belonging in the Netherlands. Apparently, as a result of this, some problematized or rejected students' self-categorization. At the same time, however, many teachers showed an orientation to their students with and without a migration background as categorically different.

These differences in interpretation and use of category labels may have important consequences. Internalization of a discourse of cultural and geographical Otherness can affect students' sense of belonging (Martín Rojo 2008; Antonsich 2010), which, in turn, may impact their performance and well-being in school (Osterman 2000). As such, this study suggests that the use of ethnic categories by students and teachers at school may be a source of potentially serious misunderstandings that can impact teacher-student relations and students' position in school.

In the following, I first relate findings of previous scholarship on ethnic identification and categorization to prominent contemporary discourses surrounding diversity in the Netherlands and introduce the theoretical framework that informs my analyses. After discussing the methods by which I gathered my data, the analysis itself is organized as follows. In Section 4.1, I introduce some characteristics of students' own categorization practices, after which, in 4.2, I discuss how teachers reacted to students' self-categorizations. Section 4.3 focuses on moments in which teachers made their students' categories relevant. I end by summing up some implications of these findings.

Ethnic categorization and culturalization

Much anthropological and sociolinguistic work builds on the premise that ethnic (and other kinds of) identities are a 'discursive construct that emerges in interaction' (Bucholtz and Hall 2005, 587): they are constructed, intersubjectively negotiated, locally contingent, and fluid. Terms to denote categories are part of such multifaceted practices of identification and are therefore highly complex in their own right (Martín Rojo 2008; Cornips and de Rooij 2009; Nørreby and Møller 2015; van de Weerd 2019).

Such nuanced analyses contrast with how ethnic identities are framed in much popular discourse, however. In the Netherlands, there is a pervasive notion that immigrants and

their descendants orient to either 'the Moroccan culture' or 'the Turkish culture', or to 'the Dutch culture' (Slootman 2016), or that they are problematically caught between two cultures. These ideas are embedded in a discourse that has been referred to as culturalism (Anthias 2013; Ghorashi 2017), in which culture is 'divorced from the structural and material, and [in which] "othered" populations are endowed with culture seen as a thing which people carry with them' (Anthias 2013, 324). Culturalist discourse often includes a conception of cultures as tied to places (Malkki 1992), and of people as primarily tied to one culture and place. In the case of immigrants and their descendants, that one place is often thought to be the country of origin (Ghorashi 2017).

Normalized associations between an essentialized notion of culture and place makes the use of labels as 'Turk' directly understandable as indicating affiliation with a different culture and place when this use occurs outside of the culture/place with which 'Turk' is normally associated. This can lead to exclusion and marginalization, especially in a context that frames the 'native culture' as under threat, and where feeling 'belonging to', and being 'loyal to' the nation has become central to being perceived as a rightful citizen (Spotti 2011b). Jan Willem Duyvendak has extensively described this development in the Netherlands, which he refers to as the 'culturalization of citizenship': 'a process in which emotions, feelings, norms and values, symbols and traditions (including religion) come to play a pivotal role in defining what can be expected of a Dutch citizen' (Duyvendak 2011, 92). With such feelings being difficult to observe, 'certain actions become their symbolic stand-in' (Duyvendak 2011, 93).

In the context described in this paper, referring to oneself as 'Dutch' seemed to function as such a stand-in. However, as established through much research, some of which cited previously, such terms can have a wide range of meanings. This paper analyzes a context in which actors who engage in daily interaction with each other orient to the same category terms in divergent ways. To examine and compare students' and teachers' orientations to ethnic category labels, I build on tools from membership categorization analysis (MCA). This entails focusing on the 'organization of common-sense knowledge in terms of the categories members employ in accomplishing their activities in and through talk' (Francis and Hester 2004, 21). I approach categories as participants' resources, which are occasioned and given meaning by speakers in particular local circumstances (Hester and Eglin 1997, see also Francis and Hester 2017). In analyzing them, I depend on the understandings displayed by members (Stokoe 2012). Throughout my fieldwork, I paid consistent attention to when ethnic categories came up in interaction, analyzing what occasioned a particular category to come up, what it did in the interaction, and how it altered the course of the interaction. 'Moroccan', 'Turkish', 'foreigner' and 'Dutch' are thus not my categories or my tools for analysis. Rather, I examine how members used these categories to make sense of their social world. I do this by focusing on transcripts of recorded interaction, supported by interactions that I documented in field notes (see Waring et al. 2012 for a discussion on combining ethnography and conversation analytic methods).

In MCA, membership categories are analyzed in terms of collective categories, or membership categorization devices (MCDs), that are heard as belonging together. To take Harvey Sacks' classic example, the categories 'baby' and 'mommy' in a singular utterance can be heard as belonging to the MCD 'family' (Sacks 1995). In this paper, I refer to the labels 'Moroccan', 'Turkish', 'foreigner' and 'Dutch' as 'ethnic categories', implying that the MCD tying

those categories together is 'ethnicity'. The participants of this study did not use the term 'ethnic' to characterize the categories they used, however. If anything, they talked about *afkomst* 'descent'. I use the term 'ethnic categories' reluctantly, not to impose my interpretation of their categories, but rather to clarify the connection to, and facilitate conversation with, research that refers to those categories as ethnic (although they have also been termed 'national identities' (Koole and Hanson 2002)). It should also be noted that I use the term 'label/s' to refer to the specific terms that students used to refer to membership categories, and the word 'categories' for when the broader idea of a social persona is invoked, which can also happen without using labels.

Ethnographic fieldwork at South high school

The data I draw on in this paper were collected during nine months of ethnographic fieldwork in a secondary school in Venlo, the Netherlands, from January to May 2017 and November 2017 to March 2018. I followed the students of class 4b[1] during their 3rd and 4th school years, attending 333 hours of class, taking extensive field notes and audio-recording[2] most classes. I focused on in-class interactions, including plenary instruction-time, as well as informal interactions between students, and between students and teachers, during and between classes. On a few occasions, I took students or teachers apart to talk to them in the style of an informal focus group or interview. I spent breaks in the teachers' lounge, where I did not record but took field notes.

Of the 37 students I got to know, eight had a migration background in Morocco, five in Turkey, and four in Bosnia, Afghanistan, Gabon, and the Dutch Antilles, respectively. The remaining twenty had no (self-reported) migration background. With the exception of two students, all had been born in the Netherlands, mostly to parents who had moved to the Netherlands as children. Most students had lived in or near Venlo for most of their lives. Over the course of the fieldwork, they were between 14 and 17 years old. They followed vocational education (vmbo), which is a stigmatized track associated with high percentages of students with a migration background and lower socioeconomic backgrounds. There were a few teachers with a migration background at South High School, but during the time that I spent with class 4b, they only had teachers without a migration background (and, for a few months in one subject, an intern with a Moroccan migration background). According to the students' categorization scheme, most teachers were 'Dutch'.

The students asked me 'Wat voor afkomst heeft u?' ('What descent do you have?') at the start of my fieldwork (field notes, 17 February 2017). Their categorization of me as 'Dutch' led students to have expectations of me in terms of, for example, linguistic and cultural behavior and knowledge. But aside from being an 'ethnic' outsider to some of them, I was an outsider to all of them in many other ways. I was new to Venlo and to the province Limburg. There were age differences between me and these students. Furthermore, my role in the school was not that of a teacher nor as a student. I tried to turn this into an advantage: I positioned myself as ignorant not only in matters of their daily cultural normalcy but also in terms of ethnic categories, their sociocultural and linguistic customs related to Venlo, being a teenager in this day and age, or attending this school. In short, I took on board the role of a 'professional stranger' (Agar 1996), that is, an intentionally incompetent, but curious stranger, who asked them about many different aspects of

their lives. After hanging out at the school for a while, I became, in their words, 'like another classmate, but different' (field notes, 13 March 2018).

In total, I collected 265 interactions in which students or teachers referred to ethnic categories. On a few occasions (such as in the interaction transcribed in Example 1 below), categorizations were prompted by me, and students' subsequent characterizations of categories may not correspond exactly with how they might use categories in interactions among each other. Many more categorizations occurred in interactions that I overheard between students, however, in which I did not participate. The analyses presented in this paper are based on both interactional contexts of categorization (those in interaction with me, and those I overheard in interaction among students), and furthermore, not only on the examples given in this paper but on the entire collection of category references.

Categories and culturalist discourses in the classroom

Students' categorizations

Students with a migration background in 4b, and in South High School more generally, often referred to themselves as 'Moroccan', 'Turk', or 'foreigner', and called others (but not themselves) 'Dutch'. Students who were referred to as 'Dutch' did not often categorize themselves or others. Being 'Dutch' seemed unmarked, but moreover, it was treated as unprestigious. Students with a migration background often referred to the category 'Dutch' with rather negative characteristics such as being stingy or boring. Students would thus not use the label 'Dutch' for themselves, as it hardly carried positive associations to them. If students categorized as 'Dutch' used the labels 'Turk', 'Moroccan' or 'foreigner' for others, on the other hand, it regularly resulted resulted in social sanctioning and accusations of stereotyping or discrimination.

When students with a migration background discussed the categories 'Turk', 'Moroccan' and 'foreigner' with each other (or sometimes, as in Example 1, with me), they would typically mention characteristics such as physical appearance, dress style, ways of speaking, or sense of humor. Example 1 illustrates this. The interaction occurred during a conversation I had with Farida, Yildiz, Meryem (who categorized themselves as 'Turks'), Amira, and Dounia (who categorized themselves as 'Moroccans').

Example 1
16 June 2017. Participants: researcher (R), Farida (F), Amira (A), Meryem (M), Dounia and Yildiz (who do not participate in this part of the interaction). Transcription conventions can be found at the end of this paper.[3]

1	R	ik hoor ook [wel eens mensen die]
		I also sometimes hear [people who are]
2	F	[uh huh]
		[uh huh]
3	R	bijvoorbeeld (.) mensen die niet Marokkaans zijn
		for example (.) people who are not Moroccan
4	A	Ja
		Yes
5	R	eh eh Marokkaanse woorden gebruiken.
		eh eh using Moroccan words.
6	A	ja:
		yes:
7	M	JA dat [snap ik ook niet]

8	A	**YES I [don't get that either]** [hun willen Marokkanen worden] maar ja [lukt niet helaas] **[they[4] wanna become Moroccans] but yes [they can't unfortunately]**
9	M	[dat snap ik ook niet] **[I also don't get that]**
10	R	heh-heh snap je niet [eh?] **heh-heh you don't get it [eh?]**
11	M	[nee] **[no]**
12	A	[of dan] gaan ze Gucci petjes dragen **[or then] they wear Gucci caps**
13	M	of ze doen zich **or they do as if**
14	A	[tasje] **[little bag]**
15	M	[ja ze] doen kleren aan wat [meestal buitenlanders aandoen] **[yes they] wear clothes that[5] [usually foreigners wear]** ((25 lines omitted))
40	R	maar (.) maar waarom doen mensen dat dan (.) dat vind je dus raar eigenlijk **but (.) but why do people do that then (.) so you find it weird actually**
41		[als ze dat doen] **[when they do that]**
42	A	[ja is ook] raar, iedereen heeft toch zijn eigen cul[tuur] **[yes it is] weird, everyone has their own culture [right]**
43	M	[kijk] meestal hebben **[look] usually**
44		buitenlanders dat aan en dan (.) Nederlanders kunnen dat wel aandoen maar hun **foreigners wear that and then (.) Dutch people can wear it but then they also use**
45		doen dan ook die Marokkaanse woorden enzo gebruiken alsof ze buitenlanders [zijn] **Moroccan words and stuff as if they are [foreigners]**

When I ask the students about language practices of 'people who are not Moroccan' (my words in line 3, Amira and Meryem use 'they' in the subsequent lines), Amira and Meryem do not take up the topic of language but start discussing 'people who are not Moroccan' versus 'Moroccans' (line 8). According to Amira, who regularly categorized herself as 'Moroccan', people 'try to become Moroccans' by, among other things, using certain words. Meryem agrees: she 'does not get that either' (line 7). During my fieldwork, however, I observed that Meryem tended to categorize herself as a 'Turk' and often used Moroccan words, and thus engaged in the practice I asked about. Nevertheless, Meryem does not seem to feel personally implicated in my observation. In fact, in line 15, she changes the category we are discussing from 'Moroccans' to 'foreigners' and thereby includes herself in the imitated category. This change of category is not marked nor taken up as a change in topic. Later, in line 44, she makes explicit that the people who imitate 'Moroccans' or 'foreigners' are 'Dutch'.

This interaction serves to illustrate three characteristics of students' categorization in class 4b that are key to the interpretation of, and comparison with, teachers' discourses surrounding categories in the following sections. I have analyzed these characteristics in more detail elsewhere (van de Weerd forthcoming), but due to space constraints, they are kept to a summary here. First, these students treated the categories 'Moroccan', 'Turk' and 'foreigner' as indexical of prestige, and thus worthy of imitation, while the category 'Dutch' was not. This is a reversal of the stigma that these categories carry in Dutch society more generally (e.g. Bouabid 2016) and that these students also dealt with in their daily lives. In their school, however, where many peers had similar migration backgrounds, that migration background constituted social capital. Many references to ethnic categories in student interaction alluded to those local hierarchies, and categorization thus had an

important social function in the management of local social relations (see also van de Weerd 2019).

Second, the example shows how students framed the categories 'Moroccan', 'Turk' and 'foreigner' as embedded in the Netherlands. When Amira says 'Yes, it is weird, everyone has their own culture, right' (lines 42), she does not talk about the culture of people in Morocco. The elements that she and Yildiz have mentioned as authentic for 'foreigners' (vocabulary, clothing) are characteristics of a social category that students constructed of people with a Moroccan or Turkish migration background *in the Netherlands*.

Third, the comment in line 42 also shows the manifestation of Dutch culturalist discourse in students' talk about the categories 'Turk' and 'Moroccan'. Even though the culture that students referred to as 'the culture of Moroccans' differed from what, for example, teachers referred to with those words, the way in which students talked *about* that culture was very similar. That is when Amira's comment that 'everyone has their own culture' reflects prominent Dutch culturalist discourse (Ghorashi 2017), which perceives culture as 'static, a-historical and essentialist … with fixed boundaries' (Anthias 2013, 324). There is thus a certain degree of intertextuality to the labels and the discourse that surrounds it. An important difference between students' categorizations and much culturalist discourse, however, was that students did not display perceptions of their categories as rooted outside the Netherlands.

Teachers' reactions to students' categorizations

The ways in which students self-categorized as 'Moroccan', 'Turk' or 'foreigner' show that to them, these categories were embedded in the Netherlands, had local social functions, and did not necessarily indicate a lack of belonging to the Netherlands. The interaction in Example 2, which occurred during an informal interview I had with Ms. Jansen during a break between classes, shows that she displayed different interpretations of those categories. Ms. Jansen was 4b's head teacher at the time. The transcription starts after I expressed my surprise at the students' categorizations.

Example 2
16 June 2017. Conversation between the researcher (R) and Ms. Jansen (J).

1	J	Ja..h nouja, ik heb du- dus wel vaker dat eh leerlingen zeggen tijdens de les, ook
		Yes..h well, s- so I do have it more often that eh students say during class, also
2		andere klassen ofzo, van "↑ey, juffrouw, d'r zitten eigenlijk hier helemaal geen
		other classes or so, like "↑hey, teacher, there are actually no Dutch people
3		Nederlanders in de klas." Dus ik zo "Nederlanders? We zijn toch allemaal
		at all here in class." So I'm like "Dutch people? Aren't we all
4		Nederlander", weet je wel, en dan "ja nee:, maar hij is Poo:ls, en h–" ik zeg
		Dutch people", you know, and then "yes no:, but he's Poli:sh, and h–" I say,
5		"ja, afkomst", ik zeg "maar (.) jullie zijn sowieso al bijna allemaal
		"yes, descent," I say "but (.) in any case almost all of you were
6		in Nederland geboren,"
		born in the Netherlands,"
7	R	mm mm
		mm mm
8	J	.h ik zeg "'t kan zijn dat je ouders, hè, uit 'n ander land kom[e:n] of een andere
		.h I say "it can be that your parents, right, are from a dif[fer]ent country: or
9	R	[ja]
		[yes]
10	J	afkomst heb[be:n,] of ja (.) dat jullie dat zelf hebben ofzo", ik zeg

		have a differ[rent] descent, or yes (.) that you yourself have that or so", I say
11	R	[e-heh]
		[e-heh]
12		"eigenlijk zijn we allemaal Nederlander." – "↑Ja, ja, ja, ja, oké." En dan.h maar
		"actually we're all Dutch." – "↑Yes, yes, yes, okay." But then.h but
13		da's wel grappig dat ze dat heel erg eh, ja dat ze dat inderdaad heel vaak aanhale:n
		that's quite funny that they really eh, yes that they indeed often refer to that
14		en in dingen gebruiken, zo van "ja maar ik ben eigenlijk geen Nederlander",
		and use it in things, like "yes but actually I'm not a Dutch person",
15		weet je wel? Terwijl ik dan denk van ja maar iedere-, weet je wel, voel je je dan geen
		you know? while I then think but yes everyo-, you know, then don't you feel
16		Nederlan[der?]
		[Dutch?]
17	R	[ja precies]
		[yes exactly]
		((26 seconds omitted))
27		Maar in principe:, ja vind ik het wel heel erg belangrijk dat leerlingen zoiets hebben
		But in principle:, yes I do think it's so important that students feel something
28		van "oh, ik voel me hier wel thui[s."]
		like "oh, I do feel at home he[re."]
29	R	[ja] precies
		[yes] exactly

In this extract, Ms. Jansen recounts an example of a (hypothetical) conversation between herself and a student about category terms. By saying, 'Aren't we all Dutch' (line 3), Ms. Jansen here includes her students in the category of 'Dutch' with the pronoun 'we' (cf. Lerner and Kitzinger 2007). The student, however, rejects this by categorizing a third person as 'Polish' (line 4). Between lines 5–12, Ms. Jansen constructs the category 'Dutch' as based on something other than descent, but instead, possibly, about a 'feeling' (line 15–16). This may serve to display to her students (or to me, in the interview) that she disaligns with the widespread use of the term 'Dutch' on the basis of descent, and thus exclusively referring to people without a migration background (Ghorashi 2006; Eijberts and Ghorashi 2017). She appears to say that regardless of potential stigmatization or discrimination, she wants them to feel they are 'Dutch' anyway. This seems to signal that, in her view, it is preferable over identifying with other labels. Ms. Jansen ends with the comment 'But in principle I think it's so important that students feel at home here' (lines 27–28). It is not entirely clear what she refers to with the word 'here'. It could be 'here' at school, or 'here in the Netherlands'. Anyway, it demonstrates her perception of a direct link between students' usage of the label 'Dutch' and potentially not 'feeling at home'.

Ms. Jansen thus seemed to worry about students' categorizations as not 'Dutch'. Other teachers, like Ms. Smit in the following field note, oriented to it as somehow inappropriate or incorrect.

Example 3
19 December 2017. Field notes, Care and Well-being class.
I'm sitting with Hatice, Amira and Dounia who are talking and laughing. Ms. Smit comes by and scolds them, telling them to concentrate on their work. This exchange follows:

Hatice:	"Always those foreigners, isn't it … " ("*Altijd die buitenlanders, hè*").
Ms. Smit, rather forceful:	"You're not foreigners, you're Dutch!" ("*Jullie zijn geen buitenlanders, jullie zijn Nederlanders*").

Hatice, who (like Amira and Dounia) routinely referred to herself as 'Turk' or 'foreigner', can be seen to engage in 'say foring' here (Goffman 1981, 150; Jaspers 2005). She 'speaks for' Ms. Smit, that is, she offers a categorical explanation for the students' behavior as if she is voicing Ms. Smit's (potentially racist) thoughts. She does this in a somewhat playful way, eliciting laughter from her friends. Ms. Smit, however, sounds corrective and irritated in her reaction to this categorization. This suggests that she knew, but disliked, that students referred to themselves this way. If she understood the comment to be a disguised accusation of racism, it might also have been her way of denying racism and ending the conversation.

Examples 2 and 3 are examples of the ways in which teachers displayed preference for their students to self-categorize as 'Dutch' rather than as 'foreigners', 'Moroccans', or 'Turks'. Although the teachers' tones differ considerably, both instances invoke what Duyvendak (2011, 93) has described as 'new "feeling rules" [that] are applied to immigrants who are increasingly expected to demonstrate feelings of attachment, belonging, connectedness and loyalty to their new country'. This attachment is understood to be expressed by using the label 'Dutch' for self-reference. As I argue in the following section, however, teachers' expectations or implicit requirement for their students to feel 'Dutch' coexisted with orientations to students with a migration background as 'Other'.

Teachers making students' categories relevant

When teachers talked about students with a migration background, many used the same terms as students. They did not often categorize students in direct conversation with them, but as the examples in this section show, they did display orientations to those categories as relevant. The first example of this is somewhat unusual, as it contains more explicit othering than what I observed in most teacher-student interactions. Example 4 occurred during a presentation by a guest speaker ('Ms. O') from an organ donation organization. Ms. O visited different schools to discuss organ donation, emphasizing the importance of registering one's preference to be a donor or a non-donor. The transcription begins when Ms. O discusses the exact steps surrounding a donor's death and funeral.

Example 4
6 June 2017. Care and Wellbeing class. The students are sitting around Ms. O (O in the transcript). Yildiz (Y), Hatice (H) and Amira (A) participate in the interaction.

1	O	Maakt voor de begrafenis of crematie niks uit. Ook niet voor het eh als
		It doesn't matter for the funeral or cremation. Also not for the eh when
2		mensen afscheid komen nemen. In Nederland is de gewoonte dat we, ja, dat
		people come to say goodbye. In the Netherlands the custom is that we, yes, do
3		na vier vijf dagen doen. (.)
		that after four five days. (.)
4		in andere landen zijn er andere, dingen, in veel landen
		in other countries there are other, things, in many countries
5		**(0.6)**
6		rond eh het Midden Oosten doen meestal binnen een dag begraven.
		around eh the Middle East they usually bury within one day.
7		((gericht naar Amira en Yildiz)) Klopt dat dames?
		((directed at Amira and Yildiz)) Is that right ladies?
8		**(0.7)**
9		Hè, binnen vierentwintig uur?

		Right, within twenty-four hours?
10		**(0.5)**
11		Da's een hele andere cultuur als in Nederland maar het <u>maakt</u> in principe niks uit.
		That's a very different culture than in the Netherlands but in principle it
		doesn't matter.
12		**(3.6)**
13	Y	Doen jullie met kleren?
		You do with clothes on?
14	H	Ja:!
		Yes:!
15	O	Ja jullie doen naakt begraven heb ik begrepen, he?
		Yes you bury naked, I have understood, right?
16	A	Nee bij ons ( ) met een <u>lake::n</u>
		No, we ( ) with a <u>shrou::d.</u>
		((8 seconds omitted))
25	O	Andere landen andere s- eh gewoontes. Bij ons is de gewoonte om gewoon de kleren
		Different countries different s- eh customs. For us the custom is to just put on
26		aan te doen, z'n goede kleren dan. En bij JULLIE doet het in lakens. Ja, kijk, ieder
		the clothes, well the good clothes. And YOU do it in a shroud. Yes, look,
27		z'n land heeft z'n eigen gewoontes dus, het is wat jullie geleerd wordt, het is,
		everyone's country has their own customs so, it's just what you are taught, it is,
28		d'r is niks MIS mee. Is altijd goed, maar het is anders als bij ons.
		there's nothing WRONG with it. Is always good, but it's different from with us.
29		**(3.2)**
30		((kijkt naar Nikki en Jessica)) Kunnen jullie dat begrijpen dat hun het anders doen?
		((looks at Nikki and Jessica)) Can you understand that they do it differently?
31		**(3.3)**
32		Andere landen andere gebruiken, dus.
		Different countries different customs, so.

Ms. O's aim throughout her presentation appears to be to make the topic appeal to all students in the classroom. This leads her to make stark distinctions between students, however. In line 2, Ms. O refers to 'we' as people in the Netherlands, and portrays those people as having certain customs. This becomes part of a comparison with people 'in other countries', specifically, the 'Middle East' (lines 4–6), and she asks Amira and Yildiz to confirm this (line 7). Recall that Ms. O was a guest teacher and did not know any of the students. Directing this question at these students might have been informed by their physical appearance: Amira had black curls and dark eyes, and Yildiz wore a hijab. Neither provide the second pair-part to Ms. O's question, and Ms. O pursues it in line 9. The repeated absence of second pair-parts is salient, as Amira and Yildiz have been explicitly selected as next speakers (Francis and Hester 2004). This suggests that they are unwilling or uncertain about how to respond to a question about customs in the Middle East.

Ms. O then states that those (unconfirmed) funerary customs belong to a 'very different culture than in the Netherlands', showing orientation to the notion of culture rooted in specific places. After another long silence in line 12, Yildiz asks about something Ms. O mentioned earlier, using the same binary categorization through pronouns ('You bury in clothes?'). Only from line 16, when Amira also follows the 'we/you' opposition, the other students with a migration background chime in and enact the position of the '*jullie*' ('you' plural) to whom Ms. O has been referring. A discussion between some of the students who referred to themselves as 'Turks' and 'Moroccans' about their customs erupts in lines 17–24 – this was unintelligible and has therefore been omitted.

The repeated comment 'different countries different customs' is followed by a long silence (line 31), in which someone chuckles softly, suggesting some discomfort. Nikki and Jessica do not answer.

In this interaction, the students addressed as *jullie* ('you' plural) are endowed with a different culture (line 11) and different customs (line 25) from the people included under 'we in the Netherlands'. While no one overtly objects to being positioned as having a different culture, there were some interactional problems. The students did not immediately react when Ms. O asked them about different countries (line 7) or prompted them to assess supposedly other customs (line 30). Students also often spoke about 'we' versus 'they', and their 'we' was also premised on the idea of having a 'different culture'. However, they did not position that 'culture' as belonging to a different country. Aside from these interactional issues, however, nothing pointed to any of the teachers or students experiencing this interaction as particularly problematic, and no one commented on it after the lesson was over.

Most regular teachers of 4b did not position students with a migration background outside the Netherlands this explicitly, particularly not in students' presence. In the teachers' lounge, though, teachers regularly said things like 'In the Moroccan culture they just treat women differently' (field notes, 24 January 2017). In the next field note, Ms. Smit (who in Example 3 told the students 'they were not foreigners') addresses a categorical explanation of students' behavior to me.

Example 5
21 March 2017. Field notes, Care and Well-being class.
After cooking class, the students are doing dishes. I am sitting at a table nearby, writing notes, when Ms. Smit sits down next to me. Near us, Dounia is filling the sink. I think she's waiting for the water to get hot (as per Ms. Smit's instructions of a few weeks ago) because she has had the tap on for a while now. Ms. Smit scolds her: 'Turn off the tap!' Then, in a softer voice, she tells me: 'You know, water hardly costs anything in Arabic countries, and that's what you see reflected here'.

Here, Ms. Smit seems to try to convey the supposed knowledge of her students and their customs to me, as a researcher in this class. She lowered her voice, potentially to make sure her students did not hear. As Example 6 shows, however, she also interpreted her students' behavior in terms of category membership in direct interaction with them.

Example 6
18 April 2017. Care and Well-being. Participants: Ms. Smit (S), Meryem (M), Amira (A), Cindy (C), Jennifer (J).

1	S	E:H DAMES EN HEREN, DAARHEEN, naar het restaurant:
		E:H LADIES AND GENTLEMAN, THAT WAY, to the restaurant.
2	M	Mogen we niet leren ofzo?
		Aren't we allowed to study or what?
3	S	Nee.
		No.
4	M	Waar<u>om</u> niet?
		<u>Why</u> not?
5	S	Je hebt <u>thuis</u> kunnen leren.
		You could have studied at <u>home</u>.
6	M	<u>Ja</u>, uh-huh
		<u>Yes</u>, uh-huh
7	C	Alsof <u>jullie</u> in het weekend zouden gaan <u>le</u>ren
		As if <u>you</u> would <u>study</u> in the weekend
8	S	Da's wat <u>ande</u>[rs]
		That's something <u>diffe</u>[nt]
9	?	[(Het was) Pasen!]

		[(It was) Easter!]
10	M	[Da's hetzelfde juffrouw] ik moest Pasen viere:n
		[It's the same miss] I had to celebrate Easter:
11	S	Ggg, kom op hee. (1.2) Dat is een katholiek feest eh:::
		Tsss, come on hey. (1.2) That's a Catholic celebration eh:::
12	J	Wij zijn katholiek
		We are Catholic
13	S	Ja, dat geloof ik, dat jij katholiek bent, (.) maar Meryem zeker niet.
		Yes, I believe that, that you are Catholic, (.) but Meryem definitely not.

The students in Example 6 are complaining because, unlike usually, they were not allowed to go over their study materials before taking a test. At the start of the interaction, the category to which Meryem and the rest seem to be oriented is 'students', who engage in locally typical category-incumbent behavior by standing up against the teacher. Ms. Smit makes relevant other sub-categories within the category 'student', however. This happens when Meryem repeats the utterance of a previous student in line 10, that she could not study because it was Easter. Ms. Smit's turn in line 11 is designed as a disqualification of that excuse by categorizing Easter as a Catholic celebration, implying that Meryem cannot be Catholic, and that only Catholics would celebrate Easter. Jennifer opposes this in line 12 with the pronoun 'we', the referent of which is ambiguous. It may refer to herself and, for instance, her family. In the light of the preceding interaction, however, it seems more likely that it refers to herself and the other students (including Meryem). Ms. Smit's reaction shows her interpretation of it as including Meryem, as she rejects it by addressing Jennifer ('I believe that you are Catholic') in contrast with Meryem (line 13). She thus makes a categorical distinction between different kinds of students. Ms. Smit's use of 'believe' furthermore suggests that she did not know any of this for a fact.

The final example is one of the few moments I observed in which a teacher made explicit reference to an ethnic category in a way reminiscent of how students themselves used categories in their own conversations.

Example 7
22 May 2017. Field notes, Math class.
I overhear Amira and Meryem asking the math teacher whether he's married – he isn't. Then Amira asks him about marrying 'just on paper'. 'You mean only for the law?' asks the teacher. Meryem: 'Yeah, that's free of charge, isn't it?' The teacher laughs and says he's not sure. Then he jokes that Meryem 'has become a *tatta*' because 'she wants things for free'.

The teacher in Example 7 seemed to be more attuned than most teachers to the ways in which students used categories. This shows, for one, from his use of the word *tatta*, which is a word associated with youth language and refers to Dutch people without a migration background. Students often used it the way he does here, in jocular mocking contexts. Furthermore, this category's relation to being stingy was also one that students often invoked. The teacher's categorization of Meryem as *tatta* functions as a joke as it is an 'intentional misidentification' (Sacks 1995, 417) because Meryem usually referred to herself as a 'Turk'. Furthermore, it is a categorically self-deprecatory joke, as the teacher himself would be categorizable as a *tatta*.

Although this is more in line with how students themselves often used ethnic terms, and it does not necessarily indicate that this teacher takes students' categorization very seriously, what makes the joke possible is that it builds on the categorization system

that differentiates between students with and without a migration background. The joke is premised on the *selection* of category, not on the *practice* of categorizing. This example, and the previous examples in this section, thus show how teachers oriented to students' ethnic categories as relevant to the business at hand. In these interactions, categorizations happened while doing other things, such as teaching, disciplining, or making a joke. This does not make them less pervasive, however. These side-sequences of categorization 'are just as norm-sustaining as those other, more overt practices (if not more so), specifically because of their ubiquity and frequent *en passant* status in terms of the overall structure of the interaction' (Raymond 2019, 601). Such seemingly trivial side comments reinforce the taken-for-granted status of categories. By using them, even jokingly, teachers showed an orientation to their students as members of different categories.

Discussion and conclusion

In this paper, I analyzed teachers and students' references to the categories 'Turk', 'Moroccan', 'foreigner' and 'Dutch' in interaction. I argued that students mostly used these categories to engage in the daily management of social relations, to construct status hierarchies and form alliances within the peer group. This contrasts with the categorical associations that teachers displayed, in which self-categorizations as 'Moroccan' or 'Turk' were treated as a signal of a lack of belonging in the Netherlands. As such, some teachers problematized or rejected those categorizations. At the same time, however, they engaged in discourses that positioned their students with and without a migration background as categorically different, and sometimes projected on them a lack of national belonging that was not present in the students' own discourse about these categories or themselves.

At least a part of the process of othering that teachers engaged in by ethnically categorizing their students can be attributed to the diverging understandings that teachers and students seemed to have about the meanings of the labels 'Turk', 'Moroccan', 'foreigner' and 'Dutch'. Students rarely made explicit what, to them, it meant to categorize themselves as, for instance, 'foreigner', and I never heard teachers ask them about it. Both parties took the meanings of these categories for granted, which allowed differing categorical associations to remain largely invisible. Teachers may have been reacting to what they thought they heard students expressing.

This paper does not aim to suggest that it is per definition bad or irresponsible for teachers to use the labels their students use. The attunement to students' labeling practices demonstrated by the teacher in Example 7, for instance, may have positive effects on mutual relations. What I argue, instead, is that it seems unlikely that students will feel (more) included when their teachers problematize or reject the labels 'Moroccan', 'Turk', or 'foreigner', or urge their students to label themselves 'Dutch'. Students with a migration background are constantly being made to understand – by teachers, but also in a larger context outside of school – that they are categorically different from people without migration background and it is thus not surprising that they use labels for themselves that emphasize this distinction, and potentially turn it into a sign of prestige. When teachers reject labels that students can hardly escape from, or that they have reappropriated, however, they might be seen to imply that being 'Dutch' is better. Stimulating a sense of

inclusion for all students might be more effective when using categories that are not already subject to local renegotiation.

Notes

1. The names of the class, all students, teachers, and the school have been changed.
2. All students and teachers were aware of, and gave permission for, the audio-recordings.
3. Transcription conventions:
   (1.0) Pause, counted in tenths of seconds
   (.) Micropause,shorter than 0.2 seconds
   [ ] Overlap
   () Unable to hear
   CAPITALS Louder speech
   Underlined Emphasis
   ↑ Higher pitch
   .h inbreath
   (()) Researcher's comments
4. In Dutch, Amira's use of *hun* in the subject position (as Meryem's in line 44) is regarded as non-standard Dutch. I translate it as standard English 'they' because its use is widespread among people with different socioeconomic backgrounds, ages, ethnicities, regional varieties, etc., in the Netherlands. Translating it as (e.g.) 'them' would portray it as more marked, and therefore somehow more informative, than it is in my view. Furthermore, patterns of 'non-standard' language use are not the focus of this paper.
5. The use of *wat*, instead of *die*, is non-standard Dutch. I have translated it into standard English for the reason described in note 4.

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