The threshold of Second Language Acquisition

- Migrants’ liminal experiences of learning Dutch

Marie Rickert
12011371
marie.rickert@aol.de

MSc Cultural and Social Anthropology
Graduate School of Social Sciences
University of Amsterdam
Master thesis
Supervisor: Dr. Vincent de Rooij
Second and Third Readers:
Dr. Francio Guadeloupe
Dr. Rob van Ginkel
Amsterdam, the 14th of December 2018

Statement on Plagiarism

I have read and understood the University of Amsterdam plagiarism policy (http://student.uva.nl/mcsa/az/item/plagiarism-and-fraud.html?f=plagiarism). I declare that this assignment is entirely my own work, all sources have been properly acknowledged, and that I have not previously submitted this work, or any version of it, for assessment in any other paper.

Amsterdam, the 14th of December 2018

Marie Rickert
Abstract

This thesis conceptualizes Second Language (L2) learning as a liminal process in which learners are at the threshold of language performance in a new language. Drawing on data I have collected during three months of fieldwork in two Dutch L2 classes in Amsterdam, I explore how the stakeholders of the classroom (re-)articulate and mutually navigate the liminal dimension of L2 learning. Given the participants’ comparable experiences of language acquisition against the background of migration, a special form of togetherness or ‘communitas’ is produced in the classroom. By means of an ethnographic and Conversation-Analysis-informed approach, I identify various phenomena such as scaffolding, laughter, oral repair and code-switching that the learners use as tools to tackle liminality in interaction. The communitas in the classroom thereby stands in contrast to individually experienced liminality of L2 use in daily life outside the classroom where an intermediary language competence often marks the individuals as both migrants and learners. However, liminality in L2 learning is of a fluid nature and through a creative language use as well as progress in the L2, learners manage to circumvent and overcome their liminality at times, moving in and out of it.
Acknowledgements

To all the learners and the teacher who invited me so warmly to their classrooms. Thank you for your trust and all the stories you shared. I learnt incredibly much from you and without you, this thesis would not even have been possible.

To my supervisor Vincent de Rooij. My sincere thanks for your constant support throughout the whole last year, for guiding me, never getting tired of listening to the IPA chart with me and for all your valuable yet challenging feedback that certainly made this thesis a better paper and me a better anthropologist.

I also owe thanks to you, Caleb, for proofreading this thesis and generously suggesting alternative English formulations in such a short time.

To my friends, those in Amsterdam and those who are spread all over the globe. I am grateful for the abundance of support, genuine care and fun that I can always count on.

And last but surely not least, a heartfelt thank you to my family for holding space for me and my projects!
Reading guide for the Non-Dutch-speaking audience

This thesis comes with an inlay booklet which contains translations from Dutch to English from relevant extracts that are discussed here. If you do not understand Dutch, please have the booklet at hand while reading this paper.

Throughout the thesis, you will find markers like this one \[1\] which direct you to the page with the matching translation in the booklet. The line numbers of the translated extracts correspond to the line numbers in the original version. Utterances that were originally delivered in English are underlined.

Thank you for understanding that I have deliberately chosen to keep the Dutch extracts integrated in the main text. This is first and foremost the case because every translation of the transcripts already depicts an interpretation of them. Since the richness of the transcripts when it comes to phenomena such as code-switching comes best across in the original version, I would like to present the originals to the Dutch-speaking audience in the most accessible way possible. Especially against the background of the topic of this thesis (learning Dutch), I am glad to give the originals a more prominent place. For me, this is also a way of embracing multilingualism, which – what I am well aware of - might stand in contrast to the fact that English is the dominant language in academia.
Contents

Abstract ........................................................................................................................................... 2

1. Introduction ................................................................................................................................. 6
  1.1 Thinking of thresholds ............................................................................................................. 6
  1.2 Methodology ........................................................................................................................... 7
    a) Research setting and population ......................................................................................... 7
    b) Research question and methods ......................................................................................... 9
    c) Data analysis ....................................................................................................................... 10
  1.3 Theoretical framework .......................................................................................................... 11
    a) Theoretical approaches to Second Language Acquisition .................................................. 12
    b) The Liminal, the Liminoid and Communitas ....................................................................... 14

2. Shaping a liminal second language classroom .............................................................................. 17
  2.1 The learners’ multi-layered liminality ................................................................................... 17
  2.2 The in-class articulation of liminality ................................................................................... 21
  2.3 The encounter of liminality and liminoidity paving the way for communitas ......................... 26
  2.4 Interim conclusion: How is the stage set? ............................................................................ 31

3. Handling liminality in the second language classroom ................................................................. 33
  3.1 Accompanying liminality: Scaffolding .................................................................................. 33
  3.2 Laughing liminality off ......................................................................................................... 38
  3.3 Oral repair as bridging to the post-liminal ............................................................................ 42
  3.4 Interim conclusion: What happens on the stage? ................................................................... 46

4. Linking liminal learning and life .................................................................................................. 47
  4.1 In-class learning about life in the second language ............................................................... 47
  4.2 Ludic Dutch use amongst learners ....................................................................................... 50
  4.3 The fluidity of overcoming liminality .................................................................................... 53
  4.4 Interim conclusion: What happens on the main stage? ......................................................... 58

5. Conclusion: Thinking of thresholds revisited ............................................................................ 59

Bibliography ................................................................................................................................. 62

Annex .............................................................................................................................................. 68
  a) Table of Acronyms .................................................................................................................. 68
  b) Transcription conventions ...................................................................................................... 69
  c) The International Phonetic Alphabet .................................................................................... 70
1. Introduction

1.1 Thinking of thresholds

The very first field notes on my Master’s project stem from the 16th of May and describe the way from my residence to the location of the Dutch as a second language (L2) classes where I conducted my research. Knowing that these quick jottings were the start of several months of looking at language acquisition as a threshold, they appear to me in another light now. When I review them after all this time, I do not simply read about a 15 minutes bike ride on a sunny day in Amsterdam anymore, I rather read a story of many little thresholds that I was crossing on that day without even noticing. How so? After double-checking if I had the information sheets for the class, pen, paper and my keys, I left through my apartment door, so to speak the first little ‘passage’ of the journey. Being the most normal thing in the world for me to do, it did not even cross my mind that this entailed not only being first inside and then outside but also a moment of being in between, neither inside nor outside: a threshold. I live on Zeeburgereiland, a small island in East Amsterdam and need to bike over two bridges to get to the mainland. On these bridges, I undertook the next passage, pedalling my way against the wind over a part of the Buiten-IJ and the Amsterdam-Rijnkanaal and thus not being on the island anymore but not yet on the mainland. After finally reaching the location and locking my bike in front of it, I entered the centre in which the classes take place through a revolving door. Inside such a revolving door, things become a little different. All of a sudden, you find yourself on your own in a small enclosure. To reach the other end you must go on walking while pushing the door until an opening appears. In this in-between-zone, the droning car noises and the rattling sound of the tram from the outside were damped and I already began to hear muted chatter from inside the building. After I entered the centre, one door was yet to pass before I eventually found myself in the Dutch classroom.

What I observed in and out of this classroom over the course of three months is the matter of this thesis. Just as my journey to the class, it is a story of a threshold, namely the threshold of language learning as a migrant. The beginning and the end of this threshold might not be as clearly defined as e.g. in the case of a bridge, but it is very clear that the learners I met during

---

1 I am aware of the discussion around the concepts of ‘learning’ and ‘acquisition’ in which ‘acquisition’ commonly refers to a subconscious process (“picking up a language”) and ‘learning’ to a conscious process of gaining knowledge of a language through studying grammar rules etc. (Krashen 2009 [1989]: 10). Since I do not believe that these two can be clearly separated, I side with Matielo, D'Ely, Barretta (2015: 162) who consciously decide to use both terms throughout their work. Through alternating ‘learning’ and ‘acquisition’ in this thesis, I would like to make clear that both appear in and out of the Dutch class, potentially even simultaneously.
my fieldwork are in a state of ‘in between’ at the moment. With their intermediary Dutch competence they are neither non-speakers anymore nor yet speakers using the language the way they themselves and others imagine it for the future. Let us call this state of being ‘in between’ by its anthropological name suggested by Arnold van Gennep (1960 [1909]) and Victor Turner (1969): Liminality. Once a week, the learners who all carry this liminal feature of language performance and language acquisition individually through their daily lives, come to the classroom to learn together. How do the learners share this liminality, bring it up in interaction and which strategies do they deploy to handle it? I will take you to this classroom and beyond to explore how liminality figures in the context of second language learning.

1.2 Methodology

a) Research setting and population

This thesis is based on three months of ethnographic fieldwork which I conducted in two Dutch L2 classes in the Netherlands, more specifically in East Amsterdam, throughout the summer of 2018. The Netherlands is a country with a long history of migration. The most recent year report of integration indicates that 22.1% of the country’s residents have a migratory background (Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek 2016: 26). This part of the population is also very diverse in itself. In 2016, 9.8% of the country’s residents had a Western- and 12.3% a non-Western migratory background (ibid: 26). Even though these numbers include both migrants of the first and second generation, they still point at a high level of diversity. Whilst the Netherlands is already diverse, Amsterdam’s municipality even speaks of a development from diversity to superdiversity. It defines this as a population without any dominant majority groups but different minority groups (Smits, Wenneker and Jakobs 2016: 1). According to its ‘trend-analysis diversity’, the percentage of denizens who were born in the Netherlands and have parents both born in the Netherlands as well, lowered from 62% in 1992 to 48% in 2016. The percentage is expected to drop to 44% in 2026 (ibid: 1f.). This development reflects a rising number of residents with a variety of backgrounds.

Within the two Dutch classes I carried out my research in, this variety is also depicted. The courses take place on a weekly basis and are taught by a voluntary instructor. They target ‘highly skilled’ migrants who speak English and have a Dutch level around A2. Attendance is free of charge for all participants. This is an attractive factor for most of them as they feel that it comes with less commitment for weekly attendance which would not always be compatible with their busy schedules. The learners all decided to move to the Netherlands driven by various factors (work, studies, partners…) and vary in terms of age (mainly between 25 and 45),
nationality and the length of stay in the Netherlands. However, most of them have lived in the country for under five years.

I was primarily granted access by the coordinator of the classes who also introduced me to the teacher Janneke. Janneke was very open to letting me conduct research in her classes. She introduced me to the learners already one month before the official beginning of my fieldwork period. With this, I had the chance to present the basic idea of the project and give the learners some time to think about their participation. When I got back to the classes, I informed them about the research in a more detailed manner and handed out written information in English as well as my contact data. Most participants were interested and willing to share their experience with language acquisition, while there were a couple who seemed rather indifferent. During breaks, I approached participants individually or in small groups to ask for their consent which also the ones I previously perceived as indifferent gave. One participant spoke English and Dutch at a very basic level. Communication with her was difficult as we did not share any common languages. Since I am not certain to which extent she understood my attempts to explain my research in an easy way, I decided not to make use of any situations in which she played a key role in my thesis.

In total, I met around 25 learners in the courses, however, not every learner’s presence was consistent. Usually, there were around nine learners present in the classes, a smaller core group of maybe six in each class showed up very regularly and the few remaining came every now and then. Some learners attended both courses. I maintained contact with the staff at the participation centre, such as with the coordinator of the classes and the teacher, to learn about the wider context in which the classes are embedded.

Right from the beginning, I got the impression that being a non-Dutch person made it easier to connect with the learners. Even though my Dutch competence exceeds the level of the majority of the participants, I laid my insecurities with Dutch bare and showed that the courses are also about learning for me. I always came prepared, completed the homework and asked questions about the language when they came up. My role in the field soon became one of a learner rather than a researcher. However, this role used to change situationally since the teacher asked me to take over the class several times and lead sessions when she was unable to come. As this happened after I had already spent a few weeks in the field, I had established some rapport with the participants who were very active and willing to engage in these sessions too.

---

2 All names of the learners and staff at the participation centre used throughout this thesis are pseudonyms.
b) Research question and methods

The question I had in mind when entering the field was as follows:

*How do teachers and learners in a Dutch as a second language class categorize and position themselves and the others, in regard to their diverse backgrounds, in the language learning process?*

Over the course of the research, I realized that categorization in regards to diverse backgrounds plays a role in class. This, on the other hand, is not what the setting is really about. It is not what the participants deem very important. They are there to learn a language in the first place. Categorizations as allusions to cultural, national or religious backgrounds came up, were taken and commented on sometimes, but then, they were just let go of, mostly without massively impacting the learning experience. Of course, if they are out there they shape interaction, but I came to the conclusion that I cannot justify writing a whole thesis about a minor issue. After some time in the field, I realized that categorization is not a part of the question, but rather of the answer.

*Then, what is part of the question?* I wondered. From my informants, I learned how intertwined their practice of learning Dutch is with living in the Netherlands, the country in which they encounter Dutch on a daily basis. The participants are migrants and a lot of them told me how they had lived here for some time but still did not feel as if they had fully arrived. They expressed that they feel as if they are not a ‘real’ part of the society which communicates in Dutch, but more just on the side of it, often in an ‘expat bubble’, communicating in English. Being a migrant and being a learner is what connects all of the learners in the group. Dutch becomes a means to integrate more, but Dutch acquisition is an ongoing process. This insight led me to look at learning Dutch from the angle of liminality which comes with the learners’ intermediary language competence. The question that intrigued me so much that I wanted to write a thesis about it, eventually turned out to be:

*How do teachers and learners in a Dutch as a second language class and beyond manifest and handle the liminality of the language learning process?*

I attended 20 class sessions in total and documented my participant observations with note taking to understand this question. While taking notes, I made use of various languages, mostly English, Dutch and German, my own L1. Thereby, I aimed at writing down talk in the language that it had originally been delivered and thick description in the language in which it would
come to my mind first. When an element of the way the talk was delivered particularly struck me (e.g. an acceleration in speed, a high pitch etc.), I included this in my jottings right away, using a writing style inspired by Gumperz’ and Berenz’ transcription conventions (1990). Four sessions (amongst them two carried out by myself) have been (partly) audio-recorded after the participants agreed to it. I have transcribed the parts of the recordings which I deemed relevant for my research after listening to the whole tapes and comparing them with relevant notes from my field diary. Additionally, the entire teaching material used in the two classes has been collected.

Besides the interaction in class, I have spent time at the location of the classes as a visitor too, especially right before and after classes, and took notes on my observations there. I talked to the participants informally, amongst others about their (and my) experiences of migration and language learning. These conversations have also been included in my note-taking. In total, I conducted six individual interviews with learners, one focus group interview with three learners, two interviews with the teacher and one interview with the coordinator of the language classes. The interviews with the learners were conducted mainly in English, the focus group in both English and Dutch and the interviews with the staff at the centre were conducted in Dutch. All of the interviews except of one have been recorded and nearly fully transcribed. I left out the parts where the recording device was still running whilst the conversation shifted to other topics at the end of the interview.

c) Data analysis

The outcome of my fieldwork is a diverse data set which includes a rich collection of reports of participant observation, learning material, documentation of informal conversations as well as audio records from interviews and class sessions. I started analysing the data already while I was still in the field through transcribing, reviewing notes and first rounds of coding and writing memos. This eventually also led to the change of the research question. After fieldwork, I engaged in a deeper analysis of the material inspired by the approach of Grounded Theory (Glaser, Strauss 1967). This entailed coding, i.e. “naming segments of data with a label that simultaneously categorizes, summarizes and accounts for each piece of data” (Charmaz 2006: 43) and subsuming codes under categories. These categories led to memos which served as a base for the outline of the thesis. My analysis is mainly of an inductive nature, however, it is inspired by theories of liminality and language acquisition. These theories became significant when the relevance of the learners’ in-betweenness and the embedding of language learning in
language use became clearer to me throughout the research. In this sense, I engaged in an iterative process where also deduction and verification came into play.³

Throughout the analysis, it became clear that the diversity of my research material requires different analytical approaches. Whereas coding, categorizing and memo-writing proved fruitful to generally get a grasp of vignettes of participant observation and interviews, there are limits to it when it comes to extracts from transcripts of interactions in class. In order to create a more suitable space for an analysis of fine-tuned elements of talk in social interaction, I primarily deployed a Conversation-Analysis-(CA)-inspired approach for these extracts. CA was mainly developed in the 1960s and early 1970s by the sociologists Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson (Sacks, Schegloff, Jefferson 1974; Schegloff, Jefferson, Sacks 1977). The approach is used by a number of anthropologists even though it is not a classical anthropological method, because it allows for “detailed moment-to-moment situated ethnographies” (Clemente 2013: 696)⁴. In this tradition, I created detailed transcripts on whose basis I could look at various factors such as the interactants’ distribution of opportunities to participate in the interaction, the way they produce and understand stretches of talk, pursue their interactional goals and construct intersubjectivity (Sidnell 2016: n.p.). This allowed me to identify structures that underlie the interactions in the classroom (Stivers, Sidnell 2013: 2), paying respect to the notion of people doing things with language, not just saying things (Gee 2014: 50).

1.3 Theoretical framework

This thesis argues from a mainly socio-cognitive approach to Second Language Acquisition (SLA) and is also rooted in the concept of liminality. To understand this framework, I briefly want to introduce theoretical debates in the field of SLA which helps to understand the emergence of a socio-cognitive approach to it. In the second part of this theoretical introduction, a basic overview of the concepts of liminality, liminoidity and communitas will be given to create a solid ground for a connection of these concepts with L2 learning that follows later on in this thesis.

³ I thereby follow a Straussian approach to Grounded theory which acknowledges the role of prior theoretical knowledge (for a detailed discussion of the differences of Glaser and Strauss see Heath, Cowley 2004). Recognizing that my data analysis has an element of deduction to it, I side with Brewer and Miller (2003) who substantiate that while inductive researchers call the process of going back and forth between data and theory ‘iterative’, it is in fact an ‘oscillation between induction and deduction’ (Brewer, Miller 2003: 68).
⁴ For anthropological work in which CA is deployed at the core of ethnography see e.g. Moerman 1988 and Clemente 2007.
a) Theoretical approaches to Second Language Acquisition

Since the middle of the previous century, three main theoretical approaches, namely behaviourism, cognitivism and a social-interactional approach were influential in the research of second language acquisition. The 1950s’ psychological debates were still mainly pervaded by behaviourism, the idea that a certain stimulus yields a certain response, according to either reflexes or a person’s experience with reinforcement and punishment (Skinner 1938). In this spirit and very much informed by structural linguistics, language learning has mainly been understood as a process of habit formation at that time (inter alios Weinreich 1953, Lado 1957; also observed by Larsen-Freeman 2007: 774). The behaviourist approach lost its dominant position after Noam Chomsky’s critique of Skinner’s book ‘Verbal behaviour’ in 1959. Chomsky introduced the concept of a ‘universal grammar’, a set of grammatical structures that are innate to all humans and thus not dependent on the environment (Chomsky 2000: 7). He thereby delivered a landmark contribution to the cognitive revolution and also provided fundamental work for several decades of a cognitivist prevalence in SLA research. From now on, learners were seen as “cognitive beings” (Larsen-Freeman 2007: 774) who actively construct their own L2 knowledge by means of a cognitive process. Learning was understood as taking place “in the [learner’s] head” (Atkinson 2002: 525) with the input being mainly a “stimulus activating an autonomous cognitive learning apparatus which is assumed to perform certain (...) processing operations” (ibid.: 534). In alignment with this, the learning process was for example popularly looked upon as depicted in the emergence of an ‘interlanguage’, a linguistic system which contains both elements from the learner’s L1 and potentially overgeneralized elements from their L2 (Selinker 1972).

Despite a general spirit of time of cognitivism, there have been early critiques of Chomsky’s focus on ‘technical’ language competence. Noteworthy is especially Hymes’ work which promoted language as deeply rooted in interaction from an anthropological angle (Hymes 1962). Later on, beginning throughout the 1980s, a growing body of research exploring the social, cultural and interactional dimension of SLA developed (e.g. Frawley, Lantolf 1984; Lantolf & Frawley 1988, Block 1996, Rampton 1995). However, these happened more ‘on the side’ with the prevalent approach in SLA research still putting the emphasis on individual cognition (Firth, Wagner 2007: 803). It was not until an influential article by the discourse analysists Firth and Wagner (1997) that the challengers of ‘mainstream SLA research’ were paid more attention to (Larsen-Freeman 2007: 773). Firth and Wagner called for a reconceptualised study of SLA with more focus on social and contextual factors. In their view,
most theories of that time constructed the L2 speaker as deficient with an underdeveloped L2 competence and as the counterpart to an idealized native speaker (1997: 285). To counter this mode of research, Firth and Wagner proposed to primarily look at talk instead of input and achievement instead of problem sources (2007: 801). This suggested an epistemological shift from seeing language and L2 acquisition as happening “in the head” to seeing it as happening “in the world” (terms adapted from Atkinson 2002) and thereby demanded at least broadening (if not completely shifting) the research scope from L2 acquisition to L2 use. Methodologically speaking, this implied an extension of the research setting from the L2 classroom to various other contexts of L2 use. In fact, a growing body of literature promotes a social-interactional view on SLA ‘post-Firth & Wagner 1997’, including both early supporters (e.g. Hall 1997, Rampton 1997) and more recent ones (e.g. Pavlenko, Lantolf 2000, Block 2003).

The methodological note raised above has brought about much criticism from commentators of Firth and Wagner, amongst them quite some who agree with Firth and Wagner when it comes to learning in and through social interaction. According to them, the focus shall be on learning rather than on the interaction. In unison, the critics highlighted that the ‘A’ in ‘SLA’ stands for ‘acquisition’, which should therefore be the matter of the research field instead of ‘use’ (Kasper 1997: 310, Long 1997: 318f.; Gass 1998: 84). In their answer, Firth and Wagner substantiate that to them “acquisition cannot and will not occur without use. Language acquisition (...) is built on language use” (2007: 806).

The past two decades of SLA research have thus been characterized by “a split between mainstream cognitive SLA and emergent sociocultural approaches to SLA” (Markee, Kasper 2004: 491). Firth and Wagner have succeeded in showing how people engage in interactional work in order to establish intersubjectivity and how this process allows for learning to occur (Firth, Wagner 2007: 808). I acknowledge the interweavement of acquisition and use that Firth and Wagner describe but still find it crucial to keep the focus on learning (and its accomplishment in interaction). Individuals actively engage in learning, whether it is a matter of choice or obligation, and for example go to language classes. Therefore, the setting of my study also has the Dutch classroom at its core and not a context in which learners are confronted with the L2 without pursuing the aim of language learning in the first place, like in Firth’ and Wagner’s analysis.

My considerations are, thereby, in line with scholars who identify as socio-cognitive and try to bridge the gap between cognitivist and sociocultural approaches. A socio-cognitive perspective aims at holistically taking both language “in the head” and “in the world” into account and is
based on the idea that language is always mutually co-constituted in both the head and the world at the same time (Atkinson 2002: 583). As suggested by Larsen-Freeman, I aim at coupling the (often perceived) dichotomies ‘learning vs. use’, ‘psychological vs. social’ and ‘acquisition vs. participation’ (2007: 784). To go about this, I focus on how language is used (mainly) in the classroom which leads to new linguistic resources of the learners that are afterwards potentially deployed in future speech events. This shall not mean that learning does not occur outside the classroom as well, but rather give credit to the amount of learning that happens in the setting of the L2 classroom which was in the first place deliberately created for learning to occur. Overall, my analysis is guided by Atkinson’s thought that “to say that language is social is in no sense to deny that it is also cognitive” (Atkinson 2002: 531).

b) The Liminal, the Liminoid and Communitas

The second main theoretical cornerstone of my thesis concerns the idea of liminality. This concept originally stems from the study of rituals and has been introduced by Arnold van Gennep in 1909 to describe the in-betweenness of ritual subjects while transitioning from one social grouping to another in the frame of ceremonial acts. The term ‘liminality’ has later on been both discussed as deriving from the Latin *limes*, frontier or border, and the Latin *limen*, signifying threshold (Balduk 2008: vi). Van Gennep highlights the transitional circumstances of rites de passage in which the ritual subject falls in between the known and societally recognised social categories (van Gennep 1960 [1909]: 1-3). He distinguishes three phases: Firstly, the individual’s or group’s separation from an earlier stage in the societal structure. Secondly, the marginal phase or *limen* in which the ritual subject turns ambiguous because they neither have all the characteristics of the previous state nor of the coming state. The latter is acquired in the third phase (reaggregation/recorporation) which denotes the completion of the passage and a process of reintegration into social stability (Turner 1969: 94).

The concept of liminality gained popularity in the Social Sciences after Victor Turner further developed it through his analysis of rituals in tribal societies. According to Turner, the liminal happens within and generates a sort of alternative and liberated togetherness or, as he calls it, ‘communitas’. Communitas is integrated into the social structure surrounding the ritual, yet it emerges in between structure, forming an anti-structure at the very moment where ritual subjects are in their liminal position of transition (Turner 1974: 75). Rituals shape the setting for “direct, immediate and total confrontations of human identities” which then create social ties of the ritual subjects who share similar experiences in the liminal space (ibid.: 76f).
Turner identifies liminality in society-wide, collective ceremonial events in tribal and early agrarian societies. Later on, he also takes into account the societies after the industrial revolution which according to him do not have any rites that affect the whole of the society anymore. Whilst ceremonies pave the way to form an anti-structure that might compensate for the unfairness of normative structure in tribal societies, a variety of leisure options takes this role in industrial societies (ibid.: 83). To acknowledge this, Turner distinguishes between liminality in tribal societies and liminoidity in industrial societies, with the ‘-oid’ deriving from the Greek ‘-eidos’, meaning ‘like’ or ‘resembling’ (ibid.: 64). Liminoidity thus resembles liminality, yet it has some significant differences which I will point out in the following.

Liminoid phenomena usually take place within leisure or play. Therefore, they are often not cyclically (as liminal ones) but continuously generated. Characteristically, liminoid incidents are a matter of choice and not of obligation. Like this, they tend to be more individual, even though they can have collective effects for all of the people who choose for the same sort of play. Against this background, both settings allow for communitas to arise (ibid.: 84f.), with the slight difference that rites in tribal societies are based on collective representations to which all members of a given group attribute the same meaning whereas leisure activities allow for more peculiarity (ibid.: 85). In comparison with the liminoid, the liminal is more integrated into the society as a whole. Even though it situationally produces an anti-structure, this “anti-structure is [only] an auxiliary function of the larger structure” as rituals lead to the ritual subject’s overcoming of the threshold situation eventually (Sutton-Smith 1972: 17, quoted from Turner 1974: 83). In contrast to this, the liminoid is more diverse and fragmentary because it emerges apart from key economic and political processes of the society. It is quite often even part of the social critique, e.g. in art, literature or comedy which critically refers back to the society. In this regard, it depicts a critique of the structure, whereas the liminal helps to keep the structure up in the long run. (Turner 1974: 85f.)

Nowadays, the liminal and the liminoid cannot be strictly separated at all times. As a result of what Max Weber called the ‘Protestant ethic’ (Weber 2001 [1930]), even leisure lost its ludic character in capitalist societies and has elements of the work part to it now. Protestant reformers such as Calvin coined the idea of salvation as purely god given, so Calvinists on earth can never know for sure if they would be saved or not. As a result, Calvinists are continuously on the outlook for indications of eventually upcoming god given grace. Therefore, vocation also takes an important place in the Protestant ethic. It is through dedication to the earthly work that a service to God can be demonstrated. At times, this might even take over the domain of leisure as Turner illustrates with the example of organized sport (“pedagogic play”) which matches the
Puritan tradition better than unorganized ludic children’s play (“pediarchic play”) (Turner 1974: 70f).

Due to the interweavement of work and play that follows the logic of the Protestant ethic, the line between the concepts of liminality and liminoidity is blurry in a lot of cases. So it came that the concept of liminality was applied much more loosely in the Social Sciences and is regularly used outside its original ritual context too now. Examples of this more flexible take on liminality relate to diverse aspects of life in industrial societies as e.g. the liminality of temporary workers (Garsten 1999), the liminality of consulting (Czarniawska; Mazza 2003) or the liminality of assisted living in the context of elderly care (Black 2006).
2. Shaping a liminal second language classroom

*How is the stage set?*

This chapter explores how learning Dutch and thereby also the Dutch L2 class becomes a threshold situation through the reoccurring articulation of liminality. To approach an understanding of the class as a whole, I will first analyse individual learning experiences as well as experiences of language use of the learners who are important stakeholders in the making of a liminal L2 classroom. We will understand how they already bring a multi-layered, highly entangled liminality as learners and as migrants with intermediary Dutch skills along to class, which creates the base for liminality and communitas to be brought up on the spot in the Dutch course. Through the analysis of an in-class-situation, I will analyse how this articulation of liminality takes shape in practice and will eventually reconsider the L2 classroom as a liminal and liminoid space of communitas against this background.

2.1 The learners’ multi-layered liminality

Before stepping into the classroom, I would like to introduce three learners to you: Tianna, Camilla and Jules. Tianna is a Jamaican woman in her early thirties who is working on her PhD and has been living in the Netherlands for about four years. She took a beginner’s course in Dutch when she arrived in the Netherlands and afterward had a long learning break. Recently, Tianna got back to actively learning Dutch in one of the classes of my research. Her French classmate Jules is in his mid-twenties and works as a musician and shop assistant. Jules came to the Netherlands two years ago and has been actively learning Dutch for approximately half a year now. Later in this chapter, he will have an interesting conversation about his use of Dutch and English with Camilla, an Argentinian woman who has a Dutch husband and moved to the Netherlands half a year ago.

In their everyday lives as migrants in the Netherlands, Tianna, Camilla and Jules frequently find themselves in situations in which they are approached in Dutch. Given their basic Dutch competence, they sometimes do not understand or cannot find the right words to respond in these situations in Dutch spontaneously. Then, they would find alternative ways of reaction such as switching to English, which however marks them either as Dutch-learners or as non-Dutch-speakers, depending on the situation. Tianna describes this strategy of switching the language and denotes her feeling that it impacts the ease of small interactions in her everyday life:
“I am altered also because I don’t speak the language. And I stand out to maybe what they assume, tourist, first. I think language is also a really big thing. It’s also much about, yeah, being more a part of society and you know, you could talk to someone in Dutch and have them respond, you know even if it’s not a full conversation to also see what kind of new relationships or new ways of interactions speaking Dutch can bring. (…) Sometimes you’re in places where someone would just say something to me, just, you’re on a line, they’re gonna say something or something happens and you see something together, you might say something. You know these kind of interactions on the street, (…) they would say it in Dutch, sometimes I kind of get what they are saying and laugh, sometimes I won’t and then they have to repeat it in English and it kind of changes the ease of the interaction, do you know it? (…) their nuance would be like a friendliness that I miss because I am not able to speak the language”

(Extract A, Tianna, from an interview on 07/08/2018).5

In Tianna’s narration, her liminal position as a Dutch learner, respectively user, comes up. Her basic Dutch skills sometimes allow her to understand spontaneous Dutch utterances that are brought forward to her in public life (A, l.5-9). Then, she shows a reaction that she and probably also the other interactant(s) deem suitable in the situation, e.g. laughter (l.9). At other times, Tianna does not understand the utterance in the first place so that she asks for translations to English (l.10). Tianna is thus ‘in between’ when it comes to her language performance: She already has basic Dutch skills providing her the chance to act in the way that she perceives as in the range of what is possibly expected from her sometimes (e.g. laughing), but her Dutch skills are not sufficient for understanding and reacting to all kinds of immediate situations entirely in the target language yet.

The ‘in-betweenness’ of Tianna’s language competence comes with an ‘in-betweenness’ in terms of societal participation. Even though she is included into such interactions in the street in her daily life, she does not feel as fully part of them as she assumes she would if she could participate in Dutch only. According to her, her occasional need to ask for translations changes the easy-going nature and disrupts the flow of serendipitous little interactions. As a result, she feels othered as a migrant with limited Dutch skills and is assumed to be a tourist at times despite her permanent residency in the Netherlands. Tianna links spontaneous Dutch use, which she sometimes struggles to perform, with “being more a part of society” (l.3).

5 The interviews have originally been transcribed in a true verbatim fashion. For the sake of readability, the extracts presented have been adapted to a clean verbatim transcript, not including non-lexical utterances like ‘uh’ if they do not add value to what is being said. ‘(...)’ indicates a left-out (often a rephrasing of a sentence or backchanneling of me, the interviewer) and ‘…’ indicates a short pause.
Reflecting on why she chose to resume her Dutch language acquisition after a break of several years, Tianna denotes her motivation of being able to participate in these spontaneous interactions that she referred to above:

“I want to get to a point where I can at least keep even those conversations [on the street] going, ‘cause sometimes it’s just the small daily interactions in your everyday life also, that makes you feel at ease in a city or not. (...) I have to say that since I started these Dutch classes, my Dutch has really improved”

(Extract B, Tianna, from an interview on 07/08/2018).

In this sense, actively engaging in learning Dutch depicts a way for Tianna to reach more societal participation on a large scale, because it helps to get along with using Dutch in parts of her everyday life. Her position as a Dutch L2 learner and user entails multiple layers of liminality. On one hand, there is the liminality of language skills where Tianna is in between not understanding these utterances that are directed toward her at all and understanding them. This form of liminality is highly entangled with the liminality of language performance: She is ‘in between’ because she can sometimes react in a way that she deems adequate (e.g. laughter), but can often not “keep (...) those conversations [on the street] going” (B, l.1f.) with utterances from her side. Another layer of liminality is the result thereof, namely her feeling of being ‘in between’ in the society in which she lives and where speaking Dutch is the norm. Tianna indicates a positive development of her level of Dutch since she started the classes half a year ago (l.3f.) and she hopes that her progress will eventually induce a change in her daily interactions with Dutch people. While the Dutch acquisition makes Tianna liminal, it is thus simultaneously a strategy to overcome the liminality in the long run. It is only through actively learning the language that she can reach her aims of participating in another way in situations in which she is addressed in Dutch and hence, as she imagines, possibly feel more at ease in the city.

Just as Tianna, a lot of the learners that I got to know throughout my fieldwork make use of English when they are reaching their current limits of communicating in Dutch, some also before they reach these limits, most of the time due to convenience. Several times, learners have told me something along the lines of “Everyone in the Netherlands speaks English to me, all the time” (Interview Bijan, 19/06/18). Also Jules indicates that he mostly got along with English in the Netherlands for a very long time:

“I could do my studies for two years without speaking a single word [of Dutch] because Dutch people are extremely fluent in English, but then it’s very restricted”

(Extract C, Jules, from an interview on 08/08/2018).
In a session I led with one of the Dutch courses, we touched upon this matter when discussing the learners’ use of their language repertoire in their daily lives. We started the discussion in Dutch and then switched to English when learners had difficulties in expressing their thoughts. Interestingly, this mode of switching the language parallels a lot of learners’ use of these two languages in their day-to-day lives, as they told me during this session (field notes 01/06/18). The restrictions with communicating in English that Jules refers to in the quote above (C, l.2), have to do with a perceived superficiality (interview with Jules on 08/08/2018). During the discussion in class, he elaborates on this together with Camilla:

```
“J: When I arrived, it was great, everybody speaks English. You know (...) to be open to speak another language than the one of the country. Because I know it can be difficult in France for example. But after few months, I was like: ‘It’s not enough!’ You know? It’s very superficial. And then, if you really wanna get inside the culture of the country, it’s really difficult to access it because of not knowing the language and people not speaking it. It doesn’t help, in this sense of staying outside. What is Dutch? What is Netherlands? (...) I think, like the reason that everybody speaks English is great, like, for the beginning. But then, I miss this thing of, like knowing the culture, like discovering things, communicate with Dutch people.

C: Of course.

J: For real things, not only superficial.

C: And I think, you can go even further, because as English is already a second language for most of people, we are talking with, eh, everybody find it a little difficult. Is already another language.

J: Yes.

C: So, many people try to talk as less as they can or to finish the conversation, before you are further, because it’s just extra work.

J: Exactly, exactly.

C: That’s why it’s maybe kind of superficial or, things go, start and finish soon in English. And in Dutch they finish even sooner because of me. [laughter]

J: Yeah, it’s like,

C: (xxx, nobody) feel like, uh, comfortable, or when you talk with a friend, like, uh, you feel relaxed and talking from your heart, I don’t know. So, it’s, uh, an obstacle somehow.

J: Yeah, because (...) you know, it’s like, this language that we speak, that is not enough to have a deep conversation with someone.

C: Yes”
```

(Extract D, Jules and Camilla from session on 01/06/18).

Jules and Camilla both perceive an openness to English use in the Netherlands, but they also agree that sticking with English comes with a certain superficiality, depicted in interactions that often stay short (D, l.17-201). Both of them know some Dutch, but they describe that their Dutch level is not elaborate enough to go beyond this superficiality (l.21, 23-28). Camilla’s
interactions that she previously described as short do in fact not get longer but rather shorter if she makes use of Dutch (l.21) and in the same vein, Jules concludes: “This language that we speak, that is not enough to have a deep conversation with someone” (l.26f.).

‘This language that they speak’, namely Dutch, is discussed as not leading to the results that Jules and Camilla would like to yield through using it (deeper relations) because they do not speak it at a level which they imagine as sufficient for this purpose yet. This dilemma reflects the multi-layered liminality again: Camilla and Jules are not non-speakers and non-understanders of Dutch anymore since they have acquired basic language skills already. However, they do not speak nor understand the language in a way that they deem well enough yet. Their language skills are somewhere ‘in between’ which is tightly interwoven with the superficiality that they perceive in daily interactions. This superficiality depicts another layer of the in-betweenness: The learners actively take part in interactions, yet they do not perceive the relations that they establish as deep. Deploying their intermediary language competences, the learners find themselves with a feeling of being somewhere between exclusion and inclusion in certain Dutch-speaking contexts in society.

2.2 The in-class articulation of liminality

Tianna, Jules and Camilla experience liminality individually in their everyday lives. Then, they all meet with other learners in similar positions in the Dutch classroom which turns into a space of shared liminality. The learners all have around the same level of Dutch in each class and they are all somewhere between the point where they started their process of language acquisition and a language level that they would eventually like to reach. From Jules’ and Camillas’ conversation and Tianna’s case, we see that the learners share similar struggles and challenges as Dutch learners and as migrants with intermediate Dutch skills. As the learners bring this multi-layered sense of in-betweenness with them to class, there is always an underlying notion of liminality inherent in the classroom. How does this element come up in interaction? And, how is liminality thereby re-articulated in the classroom?

Throughout the same session in which Jules and Camilla discussed the sensation of superficiality in relation to Dutch and English use in their daily lives, I⁶ had brought a collection of photos for elicitation as a speaking incentive. I asked the learners to choose the picture which represents the role of Dutch in their daily life best. In the following scene, Jules is about to

⁶I take the initial ‘R’ for researcher in all upcoming transcriptions.
explain why he chose a picture of a person jumping over cliffs at sunset, when his Turkish
colleague Murat intervenes:

(Extract E: Waarom?/Why?, from session on 01/06/18)7

Murat has been living in the Netherlands for 22 years. He has a higher Dutch level than Jules
who moved to the country two years ago. Both of them still share the same experience of going
through the process of improving their language performance. In the situation on hand, Jules
begins in English (E,l.1) and then switches to Dutch by repeating my question “Waarom?”

7In contrast to a clean verbatim transcription that I deploy for the interview extracts, in-class situations that have
been audio-recorded are transcribed in the style of Gumperz, Berenz 1990. The arrows highlight key parts.
Transcription conventions: see annex B or the inlay booklet.
(‘Why?’, l.14). While doing so, he uses a uvular fricative /r/ which lets his French accent shine through. This pronunciation triggers Murat and kicks off a long follow-up negotiation of /r/’s and their ‘correct’ pronunciation in the Dutch language. Murat has been living in the Netherlands longer than everyone else present in the room which might be why the participants attribute a certain authority to him. He reacts to Jules’ utterance by first imitating him (l.19) and then later correcting him (l.23). This hints at Murat’s language ideology, his set of beliefs about the role and the use of language (Silverstein 1979: 193). As Murat corrects Jules even though he used the ‘Waarom?’ situationally correct yet with an unusual pronunciation, a standard language ideology, i.e. “a bias toward an abstracted, idealized, non-varying spoken language” (Lippi-Green 2006: 289) is at stake from his side.

The peer correction brings a liminal character to the situation as it makes clear that even though Jules uses the right word, this is apparently not always enough (both in the course and possibly also in real life), but that accents might also impact situations in various ways. The correction shows how language competence is renegotiated in social interaction: Jules knows the right word and applies it in a situationally correct manner, yet the adjustment reveals that people who hold a standard language ideology might make sense of him as someone who still has potential to improve by pronouncing the word differently, e.g. with a uvular trill /r/ as suggested by Murat. This little ‘Waarom?’ therefore brings liminality to the focus situationally. From a standard language ideology which is brought in by Murat, Jules falls in between the category of the ‘non-speaker’ who would not even know the word and the category of the ‘speaker’ who might pronounce the word differently. In this case, the ‘speaker’ is implicitly defined by Murat as someone who speaks without any accent. Jules and Murat engage together in shaping an image of a French accent: Jules picks up on Murat’s allusion to the accent by repeating “Waarom” once again with a uvular fricative /r/ (l.27). This prompts Murat’s interpretation of the accent that he subsequently brings forward with an altered beginning ([u] instead of the before used [ʋ]) and with a uvular fricative /r/ as well.

The situation offers the chance for Jules to revise his pronunciation of ‘Waarom’ after Murat’s suggestion, which he eventually also does by repeating the word articulating a uvular trill /r/ this time (l.24). If we think of language learning as a threshold, then there are many small steps to take until the threshold of language learning is eventually mainly overcome. The fact that

---

8 As commonly done in linguistics, I use square brackets for phonetic transcription ([fəʊˈnɛtɪk]) and slashes for phonemic transcription (/phonemic/). More information on the International Phonetic Alphabet: Annex C.

9 It must be noted on the side that as there is a strikingly high number of different phonetic variants of /r/ identified as in current use in Standard Dutch, a uvular trill /r/ is certainly not the only accepted form (Sebregts 2014: 7).
Jules adapts his pronunciation after the correction hints at the processive character of the Dutch class and thereby also at the underlying liminality again. However, this case shows us that the overcoming of small-scale thresholds which are part of the big threshold of L2 performance is a matter of personal interpretation: Murat finds Jules’ pronunciation improvable, so he suggests an alternative. In this sense, Murat implicitly situationally sets the *limes* (the border or line) for the *limen* (the threshold), apparently based on a standard language ideology.

How this little /r/ is pronounced is of course really not the most important element when it comes to using a language for communication. I can well imagine that even Murat would agree that it is far more important to make oneself understood in the second language. Especially given the fact that I sympathized with socio-cognitive approaches to SLA earlier in this thesis (and will also later on, I can already reveal this secret at this point), you might wonder why this little /r/ gets such a prominent role in this chapter. In my mind, the situation is about far more than a mere matter of pronunciation. It tells us several things about the process of L2 learning and the L2 class. I would say that Jules’ /r/ represents a more extensive issue: His knowledge of Dutch is really quite basic. He is aware of this himself as we already learnt from his previous conversation with Camilla. Murat holds an idea of Jules’ stage of language competence too. In this situation, he takes on the role of a ‘language expert’ who can help his peer, even if he is actually a learner himself in this course. The learners are thus not always ‘only learners’, but can take on various roles in the language class, e.g. also that of the language experts. Against the background of these considerations, it might be that the /r/ becomes something tangible that Murat can put his finger on in Jules’ language performance and that he can suggest to change on the spot. The unusual pronunciation of the /r/ takes on the function of a liminality- marker from Murat’s perspective and with his correction, he tries to show Jules a way to overcome liminality in this sense. Interestingly, Murat’s correction does not get triggered by my own uvular fricative articulation of the /r/ in “Waarom?” (l. 13) which is linked to my German-speaking background. He only corrects Jules’ /r/ which probably sounded just as unusual as my version. Generally speaking, I can express myself much better than Jules, so this observation supports my take on the situation that the /r/ only has a representative function and its correction is a manifestation of Murat’s overall view of Jules’ language competence. In this light, the whole situation is not only about an /r/, but it is part of a bigger picture, namely Jules’ overall liminal in-betweenness of Dutch skills and its manifestation and reproduction in interaction.

How learners can situationally take the role of language experts also becomes clear in the direct follow-up of the situation. Now, a situational reversion of the roles of the language-expert and
Murat brings up yet another variant of the /r/ in his attempt to imitate the ‘French’ pronunciation of the name of the French capital, this time a retroflex tap /r/. He shares his experience of not being understood during his travels to France. Now it is Jules who suggests an alternative pronunciation to Murat, altering the /r/ again, this time to the uvular fricative variant (F, l.13). Murat repeats “Paris” in the way suggested by Jules (l.14), just as Jules previously did with Murat’s suggestion of “Waarom?”. Other learners integrate themselves into the situation by repeating both “Waarom” and “Paris” with all sort of /t/s (E: l.25, F: l.18/19).

In this follow-up part of the situation, Murat thematically brings up a comparable experience from his life, even if it is not directly related to learning Dutch, but to multilingualism in general. The situation gets reversed and Murat is situationally more marked as liminal than Jules who turns into the language expert now. According to Turner, the communitas that emerges in and through liminality is fostered by the liminal individuals’ equality in terms of statuslessness. He
describe that “[t]he processes of ‘leveling’ and ‘stripping’ (…) often appear to flood their subjects with affect” (Turner 1969: 128). Here, Murat might have perceived himself as situationally superior to Jules when correcting his pronunciation. His description of his experiences in Paris might be read as an attempt to level himself and Jules again, reinforcing the communitas in the classroom. He implicitly shows that the learners all have different linguistic resources and share struggles in attempting to balance multilingualism and communication in the target language.

2.3 The encounter of liminality and liminoidity paving the way for communitas

After gaining a general idea of how the Dutch classroom turns into a platform for liminality, let us take a closer look at the implications thereof for the L2 classroom and its stakeholders. According to van Gennep, rites de passage have three phases: firstly the separation, secondly the marginal phase/limen and thirdly reaggregation (Turner 1974: 56). Language acquisition is not as linear as that, still one could in a van Gennepian way think of three overarching phases, namely a phase where no communication in the language is possible, then a phase in which the learners are somewhere in between not speaking it and speaking it ‘well enough’ for specific purposes. Thereby, they are also in between getting along with the L2 and not getting along with it in their daily lives. The third phase would be one in which the learners are not mainly learners anymore, but generally experience themselves more as speakers with a good command of Dutch that enables them to participate actively in Dutch-speaking contexts. This model contextualizes language learning on a more general note as it hints at SLA as a process which potentially also affects the learners’ inclusion in certain social contexts. Such a perspective highlights that the learners and potentially various other parties too, have visions and aims for their Dutch skills. The students learn the language because they imagine that it will do something for them in the future. As they are learning, they are working toward the aims that they have. These visions differ from learner to learner as we can see from a conversation which took place right before one of the first Dutch classes I attended:

Extract G: Field diary\textsuperscript{10}, 30/05/18

1 We chat with our neighbours before the teacher comes in and the class starts.
2 Mayuree asks me how well my Dutch is. Very honestly, I admit that I only
3 pretend to know how to talk a lot of times whereas I speak very much based on
4 a ‘feel’ and simply speak, not caring too much if it’s right or wrong. However,

\textsuperscript{10}I took multilingual notes in my field diary. The extracts that are presented in the thesis have been translated to English.
I can have normal conversations, so people understand me. Miran says ‘That’s all that matters, right?’ Mayuree: ‘Well no, not for me. I have to learn the correct grammar because I have to do inburgering [=civic integration].’ Miran: ‘Ah, you do the examina [sic!], well, that’s something else then.’

We learn about Miran’s language ideology from her statement: She believes that making yourself understood in a language, may there be grammar mistakes or not, is the most important when it comes to speaking (G, l.5f.). For Miran, ‘transitioning’ to the third phase, to stay in the jargon of rituals, might turn out to be a very fluid process: For a long time, there might be situations in which Miran might be able to have smooth conversations about some topics whereas smooth conversations about others might still be hindered by e.g. a lack of vocabulary from her side. In this sense, there is no clear line between phase two and phase three. This is why I would like to emphasize that phase two is about being mainly a learner whereas in phase three, the individual turns into mainly a speaker. Here, situations in which the learner is satisfied with their language performance dominate in daily life. Phase three is by no means a utopian perfection of second language performance but rather goes together with an interplay of reaching individual aims and fulfilling expectations of other parties (like e.g. the teacher, the state or society). Mayuree’s case sheds light on migration policies’ impact on the line between the second and the third phase: For her, it is crucial to use Dutch grammatically correct because her application for civic integration (inburgering) depends amongst others on her passing Dutch tests on CEFR level A2 (l.6f., Sociaal-Economische Raad, n.y.). For Mayuree, reaching the third phase is characterized by different standards than for Miran.

In society, the learners are confronted with all sort of expectations, either explicitly such as in the case of Mayuree who has to take the Dutch civic integration exam, or implicitly such as in the case of Jules and Camilla who perceive a superficiality in their daily encounters which they link to their use of English and Dutch. In the Dutch class, however, the learners come together to engage in learning as a common activity and thereby they all share a space at the “interstices of structure, in liminality; at the edges of structure, in marginality; and from beneath structure, in inferiority.” (Turner 1969: 128). The different backgrounds of the learners often lose their importance in class, because they all connect on the basis of their shared liminality and of the common goal of learning Dutch, as it is expressed by Camilla:

“It helps a lot with self-confidence to be in these groups, because sometimes the place where I am moving or living, you are one, a few, that doesn’t speak Dutch. And here, we are all of us, with all kind of backgrounds and situations, and we are the same, exactly the
Camilla describes a spontaneous and immediate feeling of sameness which results in togetherness. This feeling of togetherness that comes up in opposition to the societal structure was termed ‘communitas’ by Turner. To describe what communitas is, he gets back to Martin Buber’s thoughts on community:

“Community is the being no longer side by side (and, one might add, above and below) but with one another of a multitude of persons. And this multitude, though it moves towards one goal, yet experiences everywhere a turning to, a dynamic facing of, the others, a flowing from I to Thou. Community is where community happens”


Turner highlights that communitas is embedded in social structure yet happens in opposition to it (Turner 1969: 127). In this spirit, Camilla juxtaposes the comfort of the sameness and togetherness in class (H, l.2-4) with her general living situation in Amsterdam in which she often stands out to the rest due to not speaking Dutch very well (l.1f.). Whereas she is somehow different than the others there, she experiences communitas in the Dutch class, an “alternative and more ‘liberated’ way of being socially human, a way both of being detached from social structure (…) and also of a ‘distanced’ or ‘marginal’ person’s being more attached to other disengaged persons” (Turner 1974: 82).

Her classmate Tianna also describes how the activity of language learning brings people together:

“I like the fact that you have different people with different lives, in the classroom, all doing the same thing, in the city. And I think it’s kind of one of these things that Amsterdam would like to show, you know, how they think of it as a city with a lot of nationalities. I like that, you know, the class, and the class does sort of benefit from being able to just show, kind of how, **different people, **together. But it’s kind of hard for me to say specifically **how, except maybe just this feeling of ... I mean, like I have to say that I feel a better sense of belonging for example in that class. Even though, I am, let’s say the only **black person in this one class. But at the same time, I feel like, you know what’s different in some way (…) uh, it’s not exaggerated, but it’s understood to be a part of you and I think it’s allowed to be a part of the class”

(Extract I, Tianna, from an interview on 07/08/2018).

Tianna points out that there is a great diversity in the class, but that all of the learners are in fact united by their common activity of learning Dutch (I, l.1f., l.5). In the same interview, she told me about her experience with racism in the Netherlands:
“R: And for the future, do you see yourself in the Netherlands also or will you be moving somewhere else?

Yeah, I do, I see myself here for a while. There are certain things I have to sort of, that I’m still reconciling thinking about .. and knowing whether or not I can manage them, to live here permanently .. but, yeah, I mean I do want to try to make this home, for a while. That’s the best way to say. And I need to remember that that’s what I am viewing it as. Like, I am trying at this moment to make this place home. Yeah, another home for me.

R: So which are the obstacles which you might be facing when wanting to make this place a home?

Uh, for me mostly the obstacle have to do with race, and, yeah, Amsterdam is a very white city”

(Extract J, Tianna ,ibid.).

When talking about the Dutch classroom in which she is the only black person but feels like race does not play a big role there (I, l.8f.), she thus implicitly relates it to her general living situation in which she feels like it does (J., l.9-11). In this sense, she juxtaposes the communitas of the Dutch classroom to the structure in which she still tries to make a home.

Murat summarizes the feeling of communitas that comes up in the Dutch class in one sentence: “Er is geen kans om te discrimineren, iedereen is buitenlander” [There is no chance to discriminate, everyone is a foreigner] (Murat, in focus group on 30/06/2018). His quote might come from a slightly romanticizing stance, given the fact that there is a lot of diversity in the classroom and that differences are also perceived and addressed by Murat. We could see this in the preceding subchapter in which he related to Jules’ French accent. Nevertheless, it shows that he experiences the classroom as a space of sameness rather than one of difference. In the quote above, Tianna acknowledges that there is room for individuality in the Dutch classroom where her racial and national background is understood as part of her identity, but is not overly imposed on her (I, l.8-10). Overall, the common activity of learning Dutch and being somehow ‘different’ in the society e.g. as migrants with intermediate Dutch skills is more important than the learners’ differences in the Dutch class which results in a feeling of communitas.

As I pointed out in chapter 1.3 b, Victor Turner originally used the concept of liminality to contextualize rites in tribal societies and later added the concept of liminoidity to meet the peculiarities of societies after the industrial revolution. The salient duality of individuality and

---

11 This corresponds to my impression of this specific L2 classroom which has led me to change the research question (away from categorization and thereby separation, toward unity) in the first place.
sameness in the Dutch class leads to the question if L2 learning is really liminal as in ritual contexts, or rather liminoid as in contexts of leisure and play.

Second language acquisition is an ongoing process that takes time. Just to name a few examples of learners, Carla already attended the classes of my research for 1.5 years when I first came and Tan had even participated half a year longer than her. These constant weekly appointments over such a long period of time are a liminoid element of the class because the ‘in-between-ness’ which is present in the course rather gets constantly generated than cyclically (ibid.: 85). Sometimes, learning Dutch also takes so long because it is just one out of many elements that keep the learners busy in their everyday lives. It is not given first priority at all times, as for example the learner Liza explains. She cannot always attend the class due to her work, her side business, her upcoming wedding and all the other aspects of her life that she juggles at the same time (interview with Liza, 02/08/2018). In contrast to liminal phenomena where the full attention of the liminal subject is usually concentrated on the threshold situation for the time of the ritual, SLA is more of a fragment in the pluralistic lives of the learners and hence liminoid in that sense.

As one part of these pluralistic lives, many of the learners have a job. Whereas they choose to learn Dutch in their free time, it is more than a mere liminoid leisure activity. This choice is often directly informed by the need of specific language skills on the Dutch labour market where the Dutch language is turned into a commodity (Bjornson 2007: 66). For example in the case of Jules, the jazz pianist. He would like to teach piano lessons to school children but cannot due to his limited Dutch skills (interview with Jules, 08/08/2018). Carla who works in a shoe store indicated that the improvement of her Dutch skills comes in very handy at her job (interview with Carla, 31/08/2018). At the same time, Carla and Jules mention that they see the class as a social activity providing the opportunity to meet other migrants (ibid, interview with Jules, 08/08/2018). The class is thus both leisure and not leisure and both a matter of choice and of indirect obligation at the same time. This interplay makes it liminal and liminoid at the same time.

The indirect obligation can be traced back to work in the first place and to the language class’ relation to the wider societal framework on a more general note. As we have learnt for example from Tianna’s, Jules’ and Camilla’s cases (Extracts A, B, D), learning Dutch is often conceived to lead to more integration by the learners. Thereby, the setting has an “auxiliary function to the larger [societal] structure” (Sutton-Smith 1972, quoted from Turner 1972: 83). It situationally depicts an anti-structure, yet it supports the larger structure in which speaking
Dutch is set as the norm in the long run. Whereas this is a liminal element of the class, a quirkier and thus liminoid aspect comes up from another angle: The classes are organised for free and the teachers volunteer for them in order to create an open space of learning for anyone regardless of the financial background. This idea stands in opposition to classes at language schools which are often high-priced, especially when they prepare for the civic integration exam (interview with Kira, the coordinator of the classes, 11/07/2018). Knowing that the free classes cannot replace the professional ones, the coordinator says that they can at least be an addition and help to spare a few of the official expensive civic integration classes. In this sense, the classes are also experimental and freer, trying to offer alternatives for the norm and in a way also offering a sort of critique to the wider structure which turns language learning into a good in neoliberal societies. This quirky aspect hints at liminoidity again (Turner 1974: 85f.).

Second language learning in general and the Dutch classroom in particular are thus neither liminal nor liminoid only but rather both at the same time which comes with different implications for SLA in general and the Dutch classroom in particular. Despite this concurrency, I consciously name the phenomenon at stake in language learning liminality and not liminoidity throughout this thesis. Whereas liminoidity would certainly be suitable to describe the above mentioned points, it fails to put the finger on the pivotal element of moving from one societal stage to the next which is inherent in the concept of liminality. Through learning Dutch, the individuals hope to feel more integrated into the society eventually. As this motivation often leads the migrants to learn the language in the first place, I mainly deploy the concept of liminality.

2.4 Interim conclusion: How is the stage set?

The feeling of in-betweenness relates to Jules, Tianna, Camilla and the other learners that I introduced to you so far. This liminality takes shape in such different yet similar ways. The learners are all confronted with the implications that their intermediary language competence brings along individually as different stakeholders (including themselves) have various expectations toward the learners, their Dutch performance and progress. When they come together in the classroom, liminality is still at stake and it is even faced directly through confrontation with Dutch. This connects the participants who despite their differences all share the common goal of improving their Dutch. After all, they have more in common than they have apart. Everyone has a different story but in each story, the same narratives are key simultaneously. All of the learners’ stories touch upon challenges in communication, ‘arriving’ for real in the Netherlands and being torn between inclusion and exclusion when it comes to
language, going in conjunction with societal participation. Based on the interplay of sameness and difference, communitas arises in class and makes for a comforting learning environment. The learners connect over the common activity of learning Dutch which is so much related to their different yet comparable stories and their liminal position.
3. Handling liminality in the second language classroom

*What happens on the stage?*

So it comes that the Dutch L2 classroom turns into a platform for liminality. Liminality is inherent anyway, stemming from the multi-layered in-betweenness the learners bring along to class, and then it shows up situationally as it gets reproduced by the learners in different ways. All of a sudden, liminality is there again, tangible and exposed. And then? What do the learners do with it? How does the teacher relate to it? This chapter explores what happens on the stage, in the Dutch classroom. Three different ways in which liminality is handled will be discussed on the basis of extracts from class sessions.

3.1 Accompanying liminality: Scaffolding

In Educational Sciences, the concept of scaffolding has widely been used to describe suited support and assistance in learning processes. The metaphor relates to the movable platform on construction sites that is temporarily erected according to the construction of a building. Scaffolds on construction sites have the purpose of facilitating any kind of construction or renovation. In a similar fashion, scaffolding in learning relates to temporary support which is calibrated to the learner’s needs.

Scaffolding has been first introduced by Wood, Bruner and Ross in 1976 as

> “a process that enables the child or novice to solve a problem, carry out a task or achieve a goal which would be beyond his unassisted efforts, (…) [with a tutor] ‘controlling’ those elements of the task that are initially beyond the learner’s capacity, thus permitting him to concentrate upon and complete only the elements that are within his range of competence”


Such practices have later on been researched in various learning contexts such as literacy (e.g. Clark, Graves 2005, Smith 2006) or parental education (e.g. Bibok, Carpendale, Müller 2009). They have also been included in L2 research (e.g. Yakubi, Mozaffari 2010) and found their way into practical advice for teachers (Alber 2011).

The concept has been understood rather flexibly with reference to any kind of tailored support in the past. In a review of the most influential studies in the field, van de Pol identifies three major features of scaffolding: contingency, fading and a transfer of responsibility to the learner. Contingent teaching shall comprise an adaption to the learner’s (respectively a group of
learners’) level and is often based on a dynamic assessment of the learner’s competences. When the dynamic assessment shows an improvement of the learner’s level, this allows for fading which is a “gradual withdrawal of the scaffolding” and goes hand in hand with the transfer of responsibility, i.e. increased learner control (van de Pol 2012: 32-34).

The following extract from my field diary sums up a presentation which the learner Liza gave in class. In a previous session, Liza had announced to the class that she recently got engaged. She had difficulties answering the questions that Janneke asked regarding the engagement in Dutch. Janneke then suggested to her that she prepares a presentation about it to help her become familiar with the pertinent vocabulary.

Given the fact that the extract at hand only describes one specific situation, it is difficult to identify fading and a transfer of responsibility to the learner. Nevertheless, the approach of scaffolding with a focus on contingent teaching helps to conceptualize the situation as it provides us with an understanding of which tools and strategies can facilitate learning in the context of tailored peer support.

4

*Extract K, Field diary, 18/05/2018:*

Janneke asks Liza to give the presentation she has prepared at home. Liza goes to the front of the class and starts to read out from her notebook, very slowly, sentence by sentence: “Ik ben verloofd en mijn lerares is er heel blij over. Zij zegt, dat ik meer Nederlands moet praten. So ‘verloofd’ is fiancé. Engels of nee?” Adam is apparently not in favour of the translations and says “Nee!”, but Jeff and Tan express their wish for translations. Also Janneke allows her to translate: “Ja, toch, Liza, je mag wel iets ook op Engels vertalen, nieuwe woorden”. Liza goes on: “Okay. Ik ontmoet Eric, een Nederlands jongen in Tanzania in 2016. Do you know that number?” As nobody reacts, she writes ‘2016’ on the board and repeats: “Tweeduizend zestien!”

Liza speaks very slowly and acts the way I imagine a teacher to do: she articulates precisely, switches from looking at her text and looking around the classroom, looking everyone in the eye one by one to make sure they still follow her presentation. She keeps asking direct questions and switches constantly between English and Dutch. The classmates all look at her attentively, some take a note from time to time.

“We deden vrijwilligerswerk. Vrijwilligerswerk is volunteering. So we were volunteering.” She notes ‘vrijwilligerswerk’ on the board. “I don’t know if this is actually helping. Is it helping?” The class confirms, several people nod yes or say “Ja!” . Liza continues her story, saying that she and her boyfriend first got close when they organized movie nights at the beach and started to travel together. “Dan reisden we naar Daressalam.” Murat raises his hand: “Dār as-Salām betekent huis van veiligheid in Arabisch.” Liza asks if it means that in Dutch, Murat negates: “Nee, in Arabisch.” She does not comment on that, instead she goes on: “We maakten mooie herinneringen. Does anybody know that word?” Carla asks “Wat?”, so
Liza laughs and writes ‘herinneringen’ on the board. “No? It’s a new one for me also. It’s a good one, but it’s a tough one. Memories, okay? So ‘herinneringen’.” Liza underlines ‘her’ and ‘in’ and draws a line on top on ‘ing’. Then she draws a brain on top of the whole word. “So that’s a brain. Just to remember. It’s ‘herinneringen’.” Janneke laughs.

Liza tells how she and Eric moved to the Netherlands, elaborates on the engagement and eventually brings the story to a conclusion: “We zullen nog lang en gezellig leven. So we’ll live happily and cozy ever after. Met ons Tanzzanian hond en wij, half Indiaas, half Nederlands."

Liza smiles a lot while everyone applauds. As she walks back to her chair, Janneke congratulates her saying how proud she is and that it was an amazing presentation. When Liza sits down, Murat asks: “Hoe zeg je ‘Canadian’ op Nederlands?” Liza: “Canadees. [ENG] Well], ik ben half Canadees, half Indiaans.” Murat double-checks: “Indiaans?” Adam says: “Oh, ik hou van India, ik ben gereisd.” And then Janneke joins the conversation: “Nee, ze is niet Indiaas. Of... ben je Indiaas?” Milli looks at her, does not answer. Janneke asks “Indiaans of Indiaas?” Liza seems to understand and goes: “Aah, Indiaas! Ik ben Indiaas!”

Before we go on to the homework, Janneke explains the meaning of the word “So ‘Indiaans’ are the Aboriginal [sic!]”.

Liza applies multiple strategies to ensure that her classmates do not only follow her storytelling but beyond that also learn vocabulary from it. She makes use of a dynamic assessment of her peers’ learning experience: Right after the introduction, Liza checks in with her audience to see whether they understand her or whether she shall give translations (K, l.4). A negotiation of the scaffold that is to be provided in Liza’s presentation follows: Whereas Adam apparently does not want any translations, Tan and Jeff do (l.5). As Stone highlights, learners are active participants in the “fluid interpersonal process of scaffolding as the participants’ communicative exchanges serve to build a continually evolving mutual perspective on how to conceive the situation at hand” (Stone 1998: 165). Tan and Jeff are eventually supported by the teacher Janneke who still observes the interaction at stake and adds her assessment (l.6) to give Liza guidance in her role as a vicarious teacher. Liza then makes the “informed decision” (Lajoie 2005: 555) to go on with providing translations, e.g. here: “We deden vrijwilligerswerk. Vrijwilligerswerk is volunteering. So we were volunteering” (l.15f.) and here “We zullen nog lang en gezellig leven. So we’ll live happily and cozy ever after” (l.28f.).

Liza makes use of dynamic assessment multiple times throughout her presentation. As she does not get any reactions to her question if her classmates know the number 2016, she decides that further facilitation might be needed and thus notes the numerals on the board and repeats the number in Dutch (l.7-9). Another time, she writes down ‘vrijwilligerswerk’ on the board and asks her peers for feedback if this form of scaffolding serves its purpose: “I don’t know if this is actually helping. Is it helping?” (l.16f.) As she gets a positive reply, she continues to use noting on the board (l.23), repetition (l.24-26) and translations (l.24, 28) as strategies of facilitation of understanding, in combination with a slow speech pace. When Carla indicates
that she does not know the word ‘herinneringen’ (‘memories’) through her “Wat?” (‘What?’, l.22), Liza writes it down, translates it and additionally makes use of a visualization by drawing a brain (l.23-26). She explains “It’s a new one for me also. It’s a good one, but it’s a tough one” (l.23f) and thereby stresses that even though she is temporarily standing in front of the class, she and her peers are actually on the same level and share the same struggles and challenges.

After the presentation, the role of the teacher shifts back to Janneke. When Liza says that she is half indigenous (“Indiaans”, l.33), Janneke encourages her to think about this word again. Knowing that she already used the correct word ‘Indiaas’ (Indian) in her presentation (l.29), Janneke does so by means of probing: “Nee, ze is niet Indiaans. Of… ben je Indiaans? Indiaans of Indiaas?” (‘No, she’s not indigenous. Or… are you indigenous? Indigenous or Indian?, ’l.34-36) Now it is Janneke who provides tailored support for Liza. Liza seems to understand the cue and gives the correct answer (“Indiaas”, ‘Indian’, l.36). To make the error understandable for everybody, Janneke translates the word ‘Indiaans’ afterwards: “So ‘Indiaans’ are the Aborigines [sic!]” (l.37f.).

By means of these translations, Janneke and Liza build on the linguistic resources that the learners already have. However, it is not always possible to provide tailored support for a whole group which consists of learners at different levels. At the beginning of the presentation, Adam indicates that he does not want any translations, but since Tan and Jeff do, translations are given nonetheless.

In an interview, the learner Carla expresses her view on situations when the teacher or classmates switch to English in class:

1 “I think it is helpful. Because sometimes you can just make a parallel to
2 something, that’s familiar to you, for example English. But yeah, I am at a
3 stage where it wouldn’t be bad if everything was in Dutch. (…) Because,
4 now, if I don’t understand something, I can search it myself [sic!], because I
5 know kind of how to write if I hear it. You know, so if I hear something that
6 I don’t know, I would write it down, search for it later or ask right away of
7 course. (…) But it’s just a word sometimes, if she [the teacher] says a word
8 that I don’t know and she is in the middle of something, I am not gonna stop
9 her to ask what’s the word. Then I write it down.
10 R: Mh mh.
11 Because now I know kind of how to write things down, how it is spelled, so
12 everything in Dutch would be nice because of the immersion I think”

(Extract L, Carla, in an interview on 31/08/18).
Carla thinks of translations very much in the spirit of scaffolding. She values them as temporarily helpful, but now she already sees herself in the position to take increased learner responsibility. She describes that she has acquired knowledge of Dutch spelling which allows her to look up unknown words on her own (L, l.4-6). Therefore, she would appreciate a fading of the scaffolding strategy of translation. Classroom situations such as the one of Liza’s presentation show, however, that other learners still rely on translations and wish for them in class.

What does scaffolding become if we look at the classroom as a liminal space? The tools of translation, repetition, notes and visualizations on the board, the slow pace and direct questions that Liza applies are meant to help her peers with acquiring new words. In this sense, they can be seen as pedagogical accompaniers of the learner’s liminal transition to Dutch speakers. Peculiarly, the presenter herself is still a learner who has only recently acquired the new words that she now transmits to her peers. This allows her to draw on her own learning experience and highlight specific new words that she deems important. Standing in front of the class, Liza puts emphasis on this shared experience of learning especially in the case of ‘herinneringen’ (‘memories’, l.22-24). Here, her clarification “It’s a new one for me also. It’s a good one, but it’s a tough one” (l.23f.) serves a purpose of levelling. According to Turner, levelling is a very common practice that reinforces communitas in liminality (Turner 1969: 108). Liza expresses that the learners are actually all on the same level despite her being the one to teach this word now. She emphasizes that she had not been familiar with ‘herinneringen’ before either which is an attempt to align her position as the one standing in front of the class and transmitting knowledge with her peers’ position. Her peers are mainly consuming the presentation and potentially learning new words, just as Liza did before the presentation.

Liza already learnt the words that she transmits to her classmates when preparing the presentation. For her, the presentation thus depicts a learning success and, therefore, a small step in overcoming liminality. She indicates this in an interview:

“So, to be honest, I ended up, um .. uh, writing in English. Eric [her Dutch fiancé] ended up translating it. But then I ended up reviewing it multiple times and then asking what certain words meant. So actually, I learnt a lot at the end and I probably learnt more that way then through the exercise that we do”

(Extract M, Liza, in an interview on 02/08/2018).
Especially given the fact that Liza is a peer who is temporarily in the position of transmitting knowledge/language, her presentation gets an element of modelling to it. Modelling, “the process of offering behaviour for imitation”, is one of the means of scaffolding (Tharp and Gallimore 1988: 47). Liza demonstrates a good example of storytelling making use of newly acquired Dutch words while remaining part of the group that engages in this learning process in liminality together, in communitas.

A gradual withdrawal of the tailored support proves difficult in the context of the shared process of learning. Despite the learners’ general and overarching shared feature of Dutch acquisition, there are different language levels in the group. Individual scaffolding might not always succeed (as e.g. in the case of the translations) as an orientation toward the learning of the whole group goes at the expense of a tailored support for each individual at times. Through constantly checking in with her peers (K, l.4, 8, 16, 17, 24), Liza attempts to see whether her scaffolds are still needed or whether she can gradually withdraw them. However, whilst some of her peers might not need the support anymore, others confirm that the scaffolds are still helpful, which is why she keeps them up.

The teacher deploys a strategy to circumvent the challenge of the gradual withdrawal in the context of different levels of the learners by drawing on individual knowledge: She first asks Liza “Indiaans of Indiaas?” (‘Indigenous or Indian?’) and only after she answered correctly, she provides explanations of the difference for the rest of the class (l. 36-38).

### 3.2 Laughing liminality off

Scaffolding accompanies liminality and is a very productive means of working with it as it is oriented toward learning. However, whereas the main activity in the classroom is learning, there is an abundance of phenomena happening on a social level simultaneously. Sometimes, learning can be very amusing. In fact, I have laughed a lot together with the learners during fieldwork. This did not only make for a good time but even proved insightful with regard to how liminality is handled in the L2 classroom. Laughter shows up in different ways and, comparable to scaffolding, also as a means of accompanying liminality as can be concluded from the following extract:

1. **JA:** Eh, wat zullen we doen, zullen we even pauze hebben? Ik heb nog wel de film over het water in Amsterdam, maar dat duurt...
In this situation, while Janneke still consults with the learners of the class how to organise the rest of the session, Jules makes an unexpected move: He abruptly stands up in the middle of the discussion (N, l.12) which shifts the attention of the whole class to him (l.13f.), leaving Janneke’s question about the learners’ interest in her suggested activity (l.11) aside. There are multiple possible reasons why he does this and, just as the participants in the class, we will never certainly know why he stands up. Taking his limited Dutch skills into account, one reason might be that he does simply not understand that it is not the break yet. By abruptly standing up, he does not behave according to the norms of a class session which is usually to be ended by the teacher. If we imagine a setting in which all of the participating individuals were not mainly liminal learners but rather already competent speakers, the course of the situation might have developed differently after this incident. Jules’ behaviour could namely also easily have been understood as impatient, impolite or immature and yielded totally different reactions. In the specific setting of the second language class on hand however, Jules’ action is playfully integrated into the course of the class and is taken as a signal to quickly start the break subsequently. The teacher and colleagues might have assumed that Jules did not intend to be
impolite but simply had a hard time understanding. How do they thereby remark and approve the liminality of the situation?

If Jules’ unexpected action of standing up in the middle of the planning is really due to a misunderstanding, it can be seen as a manifestation of his liminality. It indicates that he is at a threshold of understanding: On one hand, he picks up that the break is at issue in the situation, on the other hand, he does not grasp that it is not the very moment of it yet. Maybe it is this ‘half-understanding’ which leads him to get up and take his bag. The reaction of his colleagues and the teacher who all look at him makes explicit that standing up is some sort of unexpected and unusual behaviour in this specific moment of the discussion of the further content of the session (l.13f.).

There are two elements in Janneke’s reaction through which she reaffirms that Jules’ action stands out: Firstly, she switches from a mode of addressing Jules directly (“Moet je weg?”, ‘You gotta go?’, l.15) to a mode of talking about him which comes in via latching (“==Pakt hij al die tas en dan denk ik hij gaat”, ‘He’s already packing his back and then I think he’s leaving’, l.19) to his attempt to add information to his previous utterance (“{{{fi- fi-}}”‘fi-fi-‘, l.18). This is at the same time a switch from an inclusive mode to a more exclusive mode. At first, Jules is asked directly if he has to leave, then he turns into someone who is talked about rather than with for one moment when Janneke explains, potentially to the rest of the class or to herself out aloud, that she thought he would leave because he grabbed his bag (l.19). Toward the end of the extract, Janneke switches to a mode of talking to him and encourages him to have the break now (“doe maar/”, ‘go for it’ [second person singular], l.26). This time, she only addresses him whereas she spoke of the whole class including her with “Zullen we even pauze hebben?” (‘Shall we have a quick break?’, l.1), respectively of the learners as a collective (“Als jullie vijf minuten pauze hebben”, ‘If you [second person plural] have five minute of break now’, l.3) before. This reveals his special position as it singles him out from the rest.

Secondly, her “Korte pauze, korte pauze” (“Short break, short break’, l.26) can be seen as an implicit form of other-initiated and other-completed repair (Schegloff, Jefferson, Sacks 1977) of Jules’ lexical error “Vijf minuten is klein/” (‘Five minutes is small’, l.23). The repair is completed in a very gentle way as it suggests the suitable adjective for ‘vijf minuten’ (five minutes) (‘kort’, ‘short’ instead of ‘klein’, ‘small’) but combines this with the previously-brought up noun ‘pauze’ (break) again instead of linking it to ‘vijf minuten’ (‘five minutes’). This gives the repair the character of a cue (“Hinweisgeben”, Rehbein 1984, translation taken from Kasper 1985: 205). Taking Jules’ Dutch level into account, it is questionable if he gets the
corrective nature of the remark at all. Additionally, the repair is not confirmed by him either. The relatedness of repair and liminality will be discussed further in chapter 3.3. In order not to run ahead on things too much, I only briefly want to point out that repair of learners’ utterances through the teacher can be understood as a tool in order to help the learners improve their language. In this sense, it marks the individual who brought up the repairable as a learner and puts emphasis on their liminal state. In the case on hand, Janneke’s repair shows that Jules is ‘in between’: It makes clear that he can express the idea of the perception of the length of the break so that Janneke understands it, but that this expression is not lexically fine-tuned yet. In this sense, it hints at the bigger picture of the classroom as liminal. Liminality-markers can take different forms which can be accessible or not for different people at different times. Since the repair is given as a cue without confirmation, it might be that Jules and other learners with less lexical fine-tuning do not understand it as such, whereas the teacher and learners with higher language levels do.

To conclude up to here: In the sequence on hand, Jules brings his liminality to the centre through his unexpected activity which seems out of place in the interaction. This might result from his liminal state as a learner in which he understands the wider topic of the discussion (the break), but not the whole course of it, e.g. that Janneke asks a question which she still wants to discuss before the break. Through various elements, the liminality is fostered by Janneke and the class afterwards (looks of the colleagues, Janneke’s mode-switching in relating to Jules and her repair). At the same time, the scene does not only show how liminality is produced and fostered, but it is also a meaningful example of how the stakeholders navigate liminality which will be discussed in the following.

First of all, I would like to draw the attention to Jules utterances “Kleine pauze” (‘short break’, l.16) and “Vijf minuten is klein/” (‘five minutes is small’, l.23) by which he gives explanations for standing up. Five minutes is indeed a short time, so every moment shall better be used wisely. No matter if this was really his thought when he stood up or not, by these explanations, he highlights that he extracted important information from the preceding conversation. He self-confidently attaches a logic to his behaviour drawing on the linguistic resources that he already has. This, in combination with the actual activity of standing up, evokes a striking strategy of handling liminality from the side of his fellow students and Janneke. The strategy entails an aspiration of /h/ reiterated or in combination with other sounds (potentially glottalized) while the mouth is either closed (/m/), half closed (/n/) or open (/h/) (Edmonson 1987: 23). Simply put: Laughter.
Jules’ classmates celebrate his act of standing up and explaining this with “Kleine pauze/” (‘small break’) with shared laughter (1.16f). Thinking of laughter as a conversational activity (Jefferson, Sacks, Schegloff 1987: 156), they thereby give feedback to him and demonstrate that they perceive the situation as funny. Laughter can serve as an audience behaviour because it “provides a means by which multiple hearers can respond at the same time to some preceding or concurrent event” (Glenn 1989: 146). This is what happens here too: The whole class laughs collectively and thereby displays like-mindedness and an orientation toward Jules who brought up the laughable item (ibid. 140). The laughter signals that Jules’ misunderstanding is not resented by his fellow learners but rather makes for a good laugh. In this sense, it does not exclude him but rather includes him and thereby supports the communitas of the setting once again. Turner describes social structure to be exclusive and communitas to be inclusive (Turner 1974: 82). Laughing together can mean embracing liminality together.

I have discussed Jules’ action as a liminality-marker. The laughter of the classmates is a strategy to handle this liminality. By laughing, the colleagues express that “to err is human, but also, to err is humorous” (Welker 1977: 252, cited from Askildson 2005: 48). In a way, they laugh the liminality off. This is not meant in a literal way as laughing cannot eliminate the threshold-element of learning in the classroom, but it can acknowledge it. From this perspective, the laughter in this situation stands for an acceptance and an embracement of the liminality of learning a second language and its implications.

3.3 Oral repair as bridging to the post-liminal

Now that we have already looked at the learners so much, it is about time to shift our attention to another important stakeholder who shapes the L2 classroom mutually with them: the teacher. Given the fact that Janneke is the only Dutch person in the two classes, she holds a special position. Janneke does not share the liminality with the learners, but is rather part of the structure surrounding the anti-structure (Turner 74: 75) as she is a Dutch-speaking part of the Dutch society. In this role, she also transmits an image of ‘Dutchness’ to the learners.

I asked the learner Liza if she learns something about the Netherlands or what it means to be Dutch in the class in an interview. Her answer goes as follows:

```
1 “Yeah, I think you learn a little bit. I think you officially learn a little bit and
2 then unofficially you learn a little bit just looking at her, like Janneke. She’s
3 very straight and I think she’s, like, she’s bold. (…) I think it’s like, some of
4 it is personality, just who she is and then some of it is a Dutch thing. (…) She
5 puts people on the spot, she doesn’t mind, but that just could be the Dutch
```
Liza expresses that learning about the Netherlands takes place on two different levels in the classroom: On one hand, there is factual information in the form of local advisories (O, l.6f.) and on the other hand, Janneke is seen as a sort of living example of ‘Dutchness’ (l.2-4). Even if Liza denotes a differentiated view on the perceived boldness and straightforwardness of Janneke when she links it to personality also and not to Dutchness only, Janneke is generally placed into the role of a representative of the Netherlands in the classroom.

This role as a representative is reflected in Janneke’s language use at times, such as in the following extract in which she corrects Adam who talks about what he misses in his home country.

(Extract P: De Middellandse Zee/The Mediterranean, from session on 23/05/18)

In this situation, Adam’s in-betweenness as a learner is for the first time depicted by his code-switch to English (“Mediterranean”, l.3). Schegloff, Jefferson and Sachs have developed an analytical framework for ‘repair’, a term they use instead of correction to neither limit the
analysis to errors nor only take cases which include a replacement of the trouble source into account (Schegloff, Jefferson, Sachs 1977: 363). Trouble-sources, in essence the repairables, firstly trigger the initiation of the repair and then its completion (Kasper 1985: 201). Here, Adam’s code-switch to “Mediterranean” is the trouble-source which kicks off Janneke’s repair in the situation.

Subsequently, the presence of the liminality gets intensified in lines 5, 7 and 10, where Adam seems not to understand that Janneke just repaired his use of “Mediterranean” by suggesting the Dutch equivalent “de Middellandse Zee” (l.4,6,8). In line 7, he seems to answer very much out of the context (“Ja, te koud/”, ‘Yes, too cold’). This indicates that he did not get the corrective character of Janneke’s utterance but seemingly understood something else to which it would have been appropriate to answer with a perception of the temperature. The moment he seems to grasp the correction, he reacts entirely in English (“Ah, I get it, ah okay/”, l.15), but then switches back to Dutch in line 19 after Janneke continued in the initial language (l.18f.).

This small extract of the class is liminality at its best. It shows that Adam is already able to have a conversation making use of Dutch, but the conversation still lacks smoothness, because of him being very much in a learning process, especially in the setting of the Dutch class. Conversation is “a continuous activity in which people are expected to demonstrate that they are talking to each other about the same things” (Stewart 1995: n.p.). This entails not only a construction of sentences, but also a meaningful coordination of one’s talk with the counterpart’s talk (ibid.) The coordination with the counterpart’s, respectively Janneke’s talk seems to be critical in this case. Adam’s liminal state of learning is made explicit by both his own language use and Janneke’s reactions to it. His switch to English with “Mediterranean” creates a break in the conversation. It leads to a temporary shift of the focus of the dialogue away from the actual topic, i.e. what he misses from Israel, to a matter of vocabulary, i.e. how to call the Mediterranean in Dutch.

On top of that, the personal deictic reference deployed by Janneke adds to the mode of making the liminality explicit. Janneke repeats the personal pronoun ‘wij’ (‘we’) five times: Four times, she exclaims that a group described by ‘wij’ uses the expression ‘de Middellandse Zee’ (l.4,6,8,11) and once that this group does not use the word ‘Mediterranean’ (l.13f.). The first

\[\text{[12 It might be that Adam understood “de Nederlandse Zee” (The Dutch sea) instead of “de Middellandse Zee” as both sound comparable and the Dutch sea is a lot colder than the Mediterranean. However, this is only one of the possible misunderstandings. Eventually, it does not matter what exactly he understood as the way the misunderstanding shapes Adam’s utterances and thereby the course of the conversation is the indicator of the liminality, not the actual misunderstanding itself.} \]
person plural (‘wij’) can either refer to the speaker and the listener, or the speaker and other people but exclude the listener. Who is meant by ‘wij’ in this case, or who is the group of people that Janneke sees herself as part of that holds the characteristic to call the Mediterranean ‘de Middellandse Zee’? In line 18, Janneke eventually makes a specification by adding information to the pronoun ‘we’: “we in Nederland” (‘we in the Netherlands’). Here, the personal deictic reference draws a line between Adam who uses ‘Mediterranean’ and ‘us in the Netherlands’, the constructed Dutch-speaking norm in the Netherlands, who says ‘de Middellandse Zee’. Adam’s liminality is disclosed yet again: He lives in the Netherlands whereas he is apparently not part of the group of the ‘we in Nederland’ Janneke refers to.

The SLA-researcher Kasper emphasizes the frequency of repair of a learner’s utterance completed by the teacher and speaks of a “marked contrast to non-educational discourse between participants with sufficient linguistic knowledge, where (…) [the] repair type [of other-initiated and other-completed repair] is the most avoided” (Kasper 1985: 206f.). The reason that this repair-type is so usual and popular in this setting is the learners’ liminality: In the classroom it is agreed upon the learners’ role as learners who strive to improve their language performance (which means to overcome their liminality) and the teacher’s role of the facilitator of the rite de passage of learning. In chapter 2.3, the liminal classroom has been conceptualized as a space in which the learners strive to learn Dutch to eventually overcome their liminality, i.e. become speakers who speak well enough according to both their own language ideologies and expectations that are directed toward them. Against this background, Janneke’s use of ‘wij/we’ can be understood as more than a mere means of constructing a Dutch-speaking community on one hand and Adam as standing out from it on the other hand. The correction itself is an offer to Adam to learn to call the Mediterranean ‘de Middellandse Zee’ from now on. In this sense, it is embedded in the frame of the higher function of the language class which is helping the learners to improve their Dutch and thereby overcoming the threshold of language acquisition. While the ‘we’ makes a part of the gap between the learner and the imagined Dutch-speaking community explicit, it bridges that gap at the same time as it facilitates the process of learning, which will eventually help Adam to overcome his liminality. Simply put: If Adam avails himself of the correction and uses ‘de Middellandse Zee’ instead of ‘de Mediterranean’ when speaking Dutch from now on, this is a sub-step in eventually becoming a part of the ‘we/wij’ and thereby of the Dutch-speaking community that Janneke refers to.
3.4 Interim conclusion: What happens on the stage?

The liminality of the Dutch classroom defines the setting very much. It is a lot more than just a steady element of the classroom simply lingering there. The learners and the teacher rather actively take up the liminality and work with it in various ways in different situations. Thereby, the stakeholders often emphasize the potential for progress which comes with the in-betweenness. In interaction, they shed light on the processive character of the classroom by relating to the general idea that the learners are in fact learners to eventually mainly overcome their liminality one day. The tactics of scaffolding and repair that have been discussed as examples in this chapter, are future-oriented means of handling liminality. Laughter, in contrast, comes in from a more present-related angle: It can for example serve as a form of acknowledging and embracing liminality and the communitas that it comes with.
4. Linking liminal learning and life

What happens on the main stage?

The future-orientation which often comes with handling liminality reminds us that second language learning is tightly interwoven with the learners’ daily lives from which the motivation to learn stems in the first place. The learners do not only want to learn for the mere purpose of learning, but to use the language and eventually overcome their liminality. Language acquisition and language use go hand in hand. From this perspective, this chapter moves through the L2 classroom and beyond. It explores the entanglement of liminality, life and learning; of liminality, acquisition and participation in learners’ encounters with other learners and ‘in the wild’, outside the Dutch classroom.

4.1 In-class learning about life in the second language

Through for example Liza’s presentation that I discussed in chapter 3.1, we already get an idea that elements from the learners’ lives are integrated into the classroom at times. This is also the case in the following scene:

Extract O, Field diary, 13/07/2018:

1  We are asked to compare the homework in pairs. Jules sits next to me and even though
2 his homework sheets are empty, he wants to contribute to this ‘comparison’ of the homework.
3 We look at a task in which nouns shall be put into their diminutive-form and then matched to
4 sentences. Jules reads out:
5
6   3) Het________________is uw garantiebewijs.
7  I try to help him: “Wat krijg je als je betaalt?” He answers in English: “The receipt.”
8 – “Yes, what’s the Dutch word for it?” He looks at me without answering. Then I point at ‘de
9 bon’ in the column with the nouns. Out of the blue, Jules bursts out into laughter: “Het bonnetje
10 mee? Het bonnetje mee?” He looks at me as if he could not believe what he just said. I can’t
11 help but start to guffaw with him. Janneke turns toward us and asks what happened. Jules
12 repeats “Het bonnetje mee” enthusiastically, which leads Janneke to smile and translate: “Yes,
13 would you like your receipt?” While Janneke goes to the board, Jules tells me that before, he
14 always thought that it was just a random Dutch word. The rest of the classmates slowly stop to
15 compare their homework and shift the attention to Janneke who notes ‘Wil je het bonnetje (mee-
16)nemen?’ on the board and reads it out at the same time. Mayuree interjects: “Ja, alstublieft”
17 with a big smile on her face. Janneke explains that ‘met’ turns into ‘mee-’ when combined with
a verb. “Ahh, ‘bonnetje’ and ‘mee’ are two words?!” Jules seems to understand the construction now.


Tan asks for a repetition of the phrase. He seems surprised: “Ah, meenemen, to take away! I always understand ‘Nijmegen’. Now Janneke is the one who seems surprised: “Why would they talk about Eindhoven or Nijmegen all of a sudden?” Tan explains that this was indeed never logical to him either, but he was never able to understand it because of his hearing loss. Tan has problems with hearing since an air accident some years ago.

Given the fact that the learners live in the Netherlands, they are regularly part of communicative events which take place in Dutch in their everyday lives. In the situation at hand, the learning material reminds Jules of one of these repetitive communicative events, namely conversations at the checkout in which the shop-assistant usually asks if the customer would like to get their receipt (Q, l.8f). Jules’ association triggers a discussion of comparable incidents that follow certain communicative patterns. With the elaborations on ‘Bonnetje mee?’, ‘Sambal bij?’ and ‘Hier opeten of meenemen?’, the participants learn about practical, applied Dutch use in daily life out of the classroom while in the classroom. The extract shows that in-class L2 learning is intimately linked to the out-of-class setting in which the L2 is used and the other way around (Kanagy 1999: 1467).

As the learners live in the Netherlands, they bring a particular knowledge of formulaic Dutch use along to class. In the case of Jules and the receipt, this knowledge is fragmented: He knows the expression ‘Bonnetje mee?’ (short for: ‘Do you want the receipt?’) and is reminded of it when he forms the diminutive of ‘de bon’ (‘the receipt’), but he is apparently not fully aware of its meaning. Janneke uses the allusion to the daily situation at the cash desk that Jules brings up through exclaiming “Het bonnetje mee? Het bonnetje mee?” as a docking point to first translate the expression and then further elaborate on the underlying grammatical structure of it. In that sense, the teacher uses the fragmented knowledge stemming from personal experience that the learner brings along to class as a resource and builds upon that.
The subsequent discussion of situations that learners might encounter in their daily lives pertains to language socialization, the “socialization through the use of language and socialization to use language” (Schieffelin, Ochs 1986: 163). From this perspective, SLA could be described as becoming part of a sociocultural group of the speakers of this language (Willet 1995: 475). Amongst others, this process involves getting familiar with typical interactional routines in the L2. Interactional routines are sequences of “exchanges in which one speaker's utterance, accompanied by appropriate nonverbal behavior, calls forth one of a limited set of responses by one or more other participants” (Peters, Boggs 1986: 81). As the negotiation of whether or not to hand over the receipt follows such a standardized pattern, it can be considered an interactional routine. With her interjection “Ja, alstublieft” (‘Yes, please’, l.15.), Mayuree exemplifies one of the possible responses and thereby demonstrates that she is also familiar with the interactional routine at checkouts in the Netherlands. It is unclear in what way Jules made sense of ‘Bonnetje mee?’ (short for ‘Do you want your receipt?’) exactly before, as he just indicates that he always thought that it was ‘just a random Dutch word’. However, it is clear that he reaches a better comprehension in the discussion of the phrase as he seems to understand that the ‘mee’ originates from ‘met’ (with).

The example broached by Jules is contemplated by other cases that Janneke presents as interactional routines. She uses “Sambal bij?” (short for ‘Do you want Sambal?’) to illustrate the nature of routines, namely that they always follow the same pattern and, therefore, do actually not require the speaker to have a deeper understanding of the language: “Misschien hebben ze nooit Nederlands geleerd, maar ze kennen de vraag ‘Sambal bij?’ and when you confirm, then they know that they have to put something in” (‘Maybe they’ve never learnt Dutch, but they know the question ‘Sambal bij?’ and when you confirm, then they know that they have to put something in’, l.23f.). Previous research has indeed shown that the predictability of interactional routines enables learners to participate in them with comfort and ease by means of formulaic utterances even in an early stage of language acquisition (Willet 1995: 476). However, to allow for a smooth course of a routine situation, the basics of it must be understood by all participants. Through asking what Sambal is, Mayuree avails herself of the chance to learn more about this interactional routine, possibly so that she can give the correct answer the next time she would possibly find herself confronted with the question ‘Sambal bij?’ (short for ‘Do you want Sambal?’ l.9).

---

13 I would like to highlight that there are of course numerous employees in restaurants in the Netherlands who do not use this expression and/or who speak Dutch very well. The expression has been brought up and framed as an interactional routine in the classroom and I analyse it as a situation from the field. The question ‘Sambal bij?’ does not depict my personal association with standard situations in restaurants in the Netherlands.
Janneke ties a hint at the grammatical element of ‘mee’ into the next fragment of an interactional routine that she brings up (‘Hier opeten of meenemen’, ‘Here or take away?’, l. 27 f.). Thereby, she gives yet again evidence that the grammar she teaches in class resonates in contexts in which Dutch is spoken outside of the classroom. In fact, Tan indicates that he encountered the expression under discussion before but always misunderstood it as an out-of-context mention of a Dutch city (l.29f.). The explanations of the formulaic utterance given in class might facilitate a future-enactment of the interactional routine for him. In-class learning stimulates real-life experiences: It docks on learners’ encounters with Dutch in everyday life-situations and enhances their understanding of them, which might eventually be reflected in their daily lives again.

This direct instance of language socialization takes us back to the multi-layered liminality experienced by the learners both on their own and together. It is a reminder that the learners are concurrently all ‘in between’ as they know the interactional routines roughly and somehow also take part in them, even though they do not understand them completely yet. The difficulties entail a fragmented understanding of for example ‘Hier opeten of meenemen?’ (‘Here or take away?’) for Tan and ‘Bonnetje mee?’ (short for ‘Do you want the receipt?’) for Jules. Sharing these comparable experiences with each other in class serves the communitas as it proposes a “perception of homogeneity or sense of personal sameness by destructuring social relationships” (Dabback 2018: 8). Whereas learners are confronted with liminality in their daily lives on their own, they encounter other learners with similar experiences in the classroom. Facilitated by the teacher, the learners enhance their understanding of interactional routines together and thereby go through the liminality of learning and language socialization conjointly. However, whereas learning has this strong collective element to it in the classroom, it also has a powerful individual element to it in terms of engaging in communicative events in Dutch-speaking contexts outside of the classroom. Eventually, the learners will be in situations in which they e.g. need to enact the interactional routines individually on their own and thereby face and overcome liminality on their own.

4.2 Ludic Dutch use amongst learners

It is important to note that whereas the learners face liminality individually outside of the classroom sometimes, this is not constantly the case. A lot of times, they are also connecting with other migrants or learners outside of the class setting. In these cases, the liminality might only be underlying and not play such a big role. This subchapter will explore how these situations can serve as a try-out zone for playful Dutch use.
As we are coming to the end of the analysis of classroom situations, let us also look at a situation from the end of my fieldwork now.

**Extract R. Field diary, 13/07/2018:**

Summer break comes, the course is about to end. (...) To make the morning a worthy ending of our course, Tan brings ingredients for Vietnamese spring rolls, we all prepare them together and eat a lot. (...) In the evening, I send a WhatsApp-message to Mayuree. I want to ask her for the group picture that we took with her phone on that day. Without even thinking about it, I switch between English and Dutch when texting with her. I have to laugh when I read her last line:

```
Hoi [Hello] Mayuree :) can you send me the group picture that you took of our Dutch class today?

[sends picture]

😊

Dank je wel😊 [Thanks!]

Mooi hoor! 😊 [Nice hoor!]

😊😊😊 😍 Jaaaaa hoor!!! [Yeeeee hoor!!!]
```

First of all, this little extract shows that the language learners’ communitas can exceed the walls of the classroom: Learners also communicate outside the class and some friendships have evolved amongst them (interview with Carla on 31/08/2018). Secondly, it is an example of how Mayuree and I construct our relation bilingually using code-switching, the “systematic alternating use of two languages or language varieties within a single conversation or utterance” (Liebscher, Dailey-O’Cain 2005: 235).

Informally, we had always mostly talked in English and blended in some Dutch at times throughout my fieldwork. We regularly begin in Dutch and then change to English after greetings, just as I do in the message where I started with “Hoi” (‘Hello’) and then went on with the question in English (R, l.7-10). Mayuree and I often switch to English as an expression of liminality: We could possibly also talk in Dutch with great endeavour and improvisation, but the conversations would stay superficial. It is simply more convenient to switch to English once we talk about something a little more complex. Auer (1984) distinguishes between participant-related and discourse-related code-switching. While discourse-related switches mainly serve the purpose of giving meaning to the interaction on meta-level, participant-related switches can e.g. “make note of a speakers’ [or interlocutors’] unbalanced bilingual competence” (Auer...
Our switches to English for convenience primarily have a participant-related function as they are meant to correspond to our linguistic abilities.

The case at hand however occurs apart from the (assumed) inferiority of our Dutch competences in comparison to other languages. After Mayuree sends the picture, I thank her in Dutch and then comment on the picture with “Mooi hoor!” (‘Nice, hoor!’ l.13f.). The Dutch final particle ‘hoor’ literally translates to ‘hear’, but is commonly not attributed any meaning to in terms of hearing (Mazeland, Plug 2010: 161). Instead, it often functions to retroactively reinforce or put emphasis on an element of the previous utterance (Wenzel 2002: 228, quoted from Mazeland, Plug 2010: 161). There are certain discourse particles that are used frequently in Dutch for a fine-tuning of talk (Mazeland, Plug 2010: 161). I personally have to say that ‘hoor’ belongs to my favourite ones. In my position as a Dutch learner and non-native Dutch user, I find a subtle and suitably-utilized ‘hoor’ to be ‘as Dutch as it can get’.

In this sense, the code-switch to English that I deployed here does not come from a place of imbalanced language skills, but rather from a place of knowledge of Dutch. Mayuree parallels my use of ‘hoor’ with her answer “Jaaaaa hoor!!!” (‘Yeeeees, hoor!!!’), complemented by several laughing smileys (l.15). We do not know if her amusement comes from my perception of the picture as nice, from my use of ‘hoor’ or maybe even from both at the same time. However, it becomes clear that we demonstrate our knowledge of Dutch to each other in our short chat conversation. We creatively make use of our shared language repertoire that consists of English and Dutch. Thereby, our liminality is not in the foreground while we constitute our chat bilingually, giving space to already acquired language expertise. Whereas we are ‘in between’ as liminal learners on a more general note, this extract highlights that we can still succeed in communication and even use our shared language repertoire as a resource to fine-tune our interaction.

I have experienced such a creative deployment of shared language repertoires with other learners too and have learnt about their multilingual practices in interviews. For example from Carla who is in her early thirties and hails from Brazil. Carla has lived in the Netherlands for two years with her Brazilian husband who learns Dutch too.

“R: So in your everyday life, how is it? Like, how much do you speak Portuguese, English and Dutch?
Portuguese like, all the time with him. Like with my husband, it’s Portuguese, the official.
But sometimes, we forget an expression in Portuguese or it doesn’t come, it just comes in English or in Dutch. For some words the name of the things, we were doing groceries online, first time we tried doing groceries online. And I was looking for something and we

52
translated the page to English because we were kind of, just, we didn’t want to think that much,

R: [laughs]

S: so we translate it, but at some point I was looking for something, I was searching I think eggs, and the ‘eggs’ didn’t come to my mind. I had to put ‘ei’ ['egg’ in Dutch]

R: [laughs]

Like, Dutch thing, you know? [laughs] So, those are the things. That usually, when you’re like, in a different, yeah, in an environment where Dutch comes more naturally, it comes more naturally, yeah”

(Extract S, Carla, from an interview on 31/08/2018).

Carla and her husband usually speak in their common L1, Portuguese, with each other. Both of them also know English well and use it frequently in their daily lives. Carla describes how they avoid doing groceries online (S, l.5-8) in Dutch which might be read as an expression of their liminality. Their English linguistic resources usually allow them to get along without having to rely on Dutch with their order. However, even if this is their intention in the first place, Carla’s Dutch comes up in what she describes as a “natural” way (l.14f.). Potentially, she deems the Dutch lexical item ‘ei’ as natural at the moment because her daily life takes place in the Netherlands now. This also means that she encounters Dutch product names in her standard grocery-contexts at the moment. The everyday context in which learners encounter the language over and over again normalizes its use, so that even sometimes, when the learners make sense of themselves as liminal (because e.g. Dutch use would still make them ‘think so much’ to put it in Carla’s terms), the language finds its own way into the learners’ lives. When Carla types ‘ei’ (‘egg’) while she is talking in Portuguese to her husband in the middle of doing groceries online on an English speaking website, this denotes her firm embedment into some contexts of Dutch use in her daily life.

The ‘in betweenness’ of the learners’ Dutch skills thus does not necessarily come as a deficiency. Their intermediary Dutch competence is actually a skill and not a lack in the first place. Amongst each other, the learners playfully integrate their already acquired knowledge of Dutch into their interactions to mark their multilingual competences, denote a specific interpretation or a link to a Dutch-speaking context.

4.3 The fluidity of overcoming liminality

Even if the liminal phase brings up all sorts of creative language use that allow for smooth (multilingual) communication, most of the learners still eventually want to overcome their liminality to be able to have smooth conversations in Dutch only as well (see chapter 2.1). As
they engage in learning, they pave the way for progress in the language and thereby embark on overcoming liminality. How does progress in Dutch manifest itself in the learners’ lives?

In the second chapter, we learnt about Tianna’s multi-layered liminality and her feeling of standing out because she cannot fully take part in small interactions on the street in Dutch. This was not the whole story of Tianna’s experience with applying Dutch in her daily life. In the same interview, she shared other comparable situations in a much more positive vein:

“So it [the Dutch class] really applied in everyday life (…) like yesterday, I was at another appointment and the person said ‘You can now go upstairs.’ And they say that to me in Dutch, ‘cause I do it now too. All I have to say is ‘Goedemorgen’ [‘Good morning’] or whatever. Not ‘avond’ [‘evening’], it’s never that late. ‘Goede middag’ [‘Good afternoon’], right? ‘Ik heb een afspraak met’ [‘I have an appointment with’] whoever, right? So that’s all I have to say.

R: General standard sentences.

Exactly. So I just need to say that, and it’s the same thing every week, right? So she’ll be like ‘Yeah, okay. Yes, it’s at 4 o’clock’ and then afterwards she’s like ‘You can go upstairs’ in Dutch which I would understand if she said ‘boven’ [‘upstairs’] right? I just need to hear ‘boven’ and I am going up but I don’t really know what it is. I know what she’s telling me anyway. But now, I don’t remember exactly what she said, but I remember that yesterday, I could understand **every word of the sentence.

R: Wow.

You know, normally I would have said ‘Oh, I know, I need to go upstairs’ ‘cause I hear ‘boven’ and I know I need to go upstairs. And yesterday, it was this really nice movement, of like, yeah, you are actually having a full conversation, ‘cause you can actually understand everything.

R: You think that’s due to the Dutch class?

Yeah, for sure. Yeah yeah yeah”

(Extract T, Tianna, from an interview on 07/08/2018).

Tianna describes her progress in an interactional routine in which she takes part in Dutch on a weekly basis at the front desk of an office that she visits. The general course of the interaction consists of her indicating that she has an appointment, the lady confirming the time and telling her to go upstairs and Tianna eventually doing so. The recurring character of the interaction comforts her to enact the role of the incoming person in Dutch: Greetings and the reference to the appointment from her side follow a formulaic pattern and “boven” (“upstairs”) from the lady’s side serves as a signal word for Tianna to go upstairs (T, l.16f.). The interaction proceeds smoothly overall, even if Tianna’s understanding of the ladies utterance is limited to ‘boven’ (“upstairs”).
Against this background: What about liminality? Does it come in again through this fragmentation of the understanding? In the situations which were discussed in the second chapter, Tianna’s intermediary language competence was very visible for her co-interactants because she e.g. had to ask for translations. Here, even though Tianna is in between not understanding and understanding what is being said to her, she finds a strategy to circumvent this disclosure of her struggles. Due to paying attention to the signal word ‘boven’, she can take part in the interactional routine smoothly. While she herself is very aware of her own half-understanding, the receptionist might not be aware of it because of Tianna’s confident interactional style. Comparable to the last subchapter, there is thus an underlying liminality at stake which is far less prevalent than in the situations on the street that Tianna described previously. If liminality is a stage of ‘not-anymore-this’ and ‘not-yet-that’, the focus is clearly on the ‘not-anymore-this’-part here. Tianna is not anymore a non-speaker since she already has basic Dutch competences which enable her to take part in certain interactions, making use of that language.

Tianna’s story goes on: “yesterday, I could understand **every word of the sentence. (...) yesterday it was this really nice movement, of like, yeah, you are actually having a full conversation, ‘cause you can actually understand everything” (l.13f., l.17-19). After managing the situation despite this form of half-understanding in Dutch for a while, she observes her own progress now, which she describes with the term “movement” (l.19). I deem ‘movement’ a very suitable term for this phenomenon as it draws our attention to the dynamics of liminality. Here, it consists of a level-up: Where Tianna could not understand everything beforehand, every word is clear to her now. She temporarily overcomes the liminality as she goes from being a liminal ‘half-understander’ to a post-liminal ‘understander’. However, this is only situational and the movement actually goes back and forth. Tianna told me about many other situations in which her intermediary language competence prevented her from having conversations entirely in Dutch, such as the small situations on the street. In this sense, Tianna moves in and out of liminality. A threshold-situation of language performance can be very present in an individual’s life on a more general note, even when the threshold might be crossed in particular situations.

I have heard about similar experiences of progress in establishing intersubjectivity in the L2 from almost all of the learners that I got to know throughout my fieldwork. Also from Carla who works part-time as a yoga teacher and as a shop assistant in a shoe store. Whereas she teaches yoga in English, she is often confronted with Dutch in the shoe store:
“R: But in the store, do Dutch people come there also?

Yes, that’s the thing. Yeah, for example when I started there, almost one year
and a half ago, I couldn’t understand **anything**, so it was completely like an
outside language for me. I couldn’t understand anything. So, I had to ask them
(…) They were kind of mad at me in the beginning.

R: The customers?

Mh-mh. Because they came to me speaking in Dutch and then I had to
immediately switch to English and I asked them ‘Is it okay if I speak in
English?’ (…) But, they got mad most of the time. So, sometimes I had to call
a colleague. ‘You know, my colleague speaks Dutch, she will help you.’ And
then, I go, like just jump to another customer. But that’s fine, I don’t mind. But
I feel like they’re getting really, really mad. So, yeah, I am in their country, so
that’s the thing, I should at least make an effort to speak. And that’s what I do
now.

R: Ah, so that changed.

Yeah, it changed a lot. Since the moment I started to understand them at first.
For example when they come to me, asking for colours, sizes of the shoes, stuff
like that, I already understand that, it’s like already natural for me. So, if I can
and I know I’ll answer it in Dutch. If not I say: ‘I got what you mean, but is it
okay if I answer you in English?’

R: Yeah.

‘But I know what you want, you don’t need to repeat.’ So, yeah, so that
happens, that’s how it’s going now. But sometimes I’m already able to finish
sales only in Dutch!

R: Ah, good!

Yeah, yeah, it’s nice!

R: So, how does it feel for you?

Yes, it’s like ‘yes’, I could finish this all, without speaking a word in English.

[laughter]

R: [laughter]

Even the end, with the receipt, what should they do and stuff, [laughter] kind
of memorized the idea, like the sentences, what they should do, but it’s
something, right?”

(Extract U, Carla, from an interview on 31/08/2018).

Carla describes different stages in her language performance on the job. She went from not comprehending at all to understanding basic questions and answering to them in Dutch at times while still resorting to English at other times. Carla’s case sheds light on the fluidity of the liminal and the post-liminal too: Sometimes, she crosses the threshold of language performance and can deal with customers entirely in Dutch and at other times, she finds herself in the threshold-situation again. Then, her intermediary language competence becomes apparent e.g. when she understands the question but does not feel competent enough to answer in Dutch. Due to previously receiving negative reactions to not speaking Dutch, she stresses her understanding
to the customer by stating: “I got what you mean, but is it okay if I answer you in English? But I know what you want, you don’t need to repeat” (U, l.19f.). She thereby emphasizes her passive Dutch skills and suggests a model of ‘receptive multilingualism’ for the interaction. In ‘receptive multilingualism’, interactants use different languages without the help of any common lingua franca (Rehbein, ten Thije, Verschik 2011: 248f).

At a later point in the interview, Carla explains that this way of addressing her need for a switch of language stems from a strategy that she has developed together with her husband who is also from Brazil and lives in the Netherlands:

“Me and my husband, we thought in the beginning, that this one is one of the best ways to approach people if you don’t speak the language, you ask if you can speak another language, not ask them to speak another language. **You are the one who doesn’t speak the language, you know**”

(Extract V, Carla, from an interview on 31/08/2018).

She consciously chooses to stress that it is her who would like to make use of English and tries not to radically impose a change of language on her customers. It is an attempt to take the tension out of the situation that she has previously experienced as successful.

Carla mainly refers to repetitive situations as moments in which her progress eventually manifests. She encounters discussions about shoe sizes and colours frequently at her job, so they became “natural” to her at a given point as she puts it (U, l.18). Just as Tianna, Carla successfully engages in interactional routines in the L2. In her case, it is the final sequence of a sales conversation in which the standardization of the situation allows for a flow of it: “I could finish this all, without speaking a word in English [laughter]. (...) Even the end, with the receipt, what should they do and stuff, [laughter] kind of memorized the idea, like the sentences, what they should do” (U, l.28-32).

With a creative use of the L2, the learners can manage particular situations very well as for example Tianna’s case of the signal word ‘boven’ demonstrates. Additionally, Tianna and Carla perceive the situations in which they experience their own progress in the L2 as a success because they turn out to be helpful in interactions in their daily lives. Tianna even links this success directly to the Dutch class. When this progress enables the learners to speak Dutch in a way that they and their interaction-partners deem ‘well enough’ for a smooth conversation at
times, the learners can situationally overcome their liminality. Tianna and Carla are nevertheless still mainly liminal Dutch learners and users on a more general note, as these situations of smooth Dutch use do not dominate in their daily lives yet. The liminal and the post-liminal are fluid as learners move in and out of liminality.

4.4 Interim conclusion: What happens on the main stage?

Liminality in learning is simultaneously an individual and a shared experience and communitas does thereby not stop at the classroom doors. The L2 classroom is one out of many contexts in which the learners learn and use Dutch. It is tightly connected to ‘the main stage’, the manifold contexts outside the classroom that the learners are involved in. Learners bring up matters from outside the classroom into the classroom (e.g. Jules ‘Het bonnetje mee?, ‘Do you want the receipt?’) and the learning process that happens there is then again reflected in their lives. We can see this for example in the case of Tianna who describes her successful participation in a situation in Dutch which she links her attendance of the Dutch class.

Making use of diverse multilingual repertoires and switching the language can be attributed different meanings to in different contexts. This depends on the expectations which get tied to the learners in the first place: While trying out Dutch playfully in bilingual conversations with for example other learners might be enjoyed by both sides, code switches in professional settings might in some cases lead to negative reactions because they are unexpected and/or not deemed suitable. Carla and her husband for example appreciate using Dutch, English and Portuguese while shopping online together, whilst Carla gets negative reactions to switching between English and Dutch with customers at her job.

As the learners engage in learning Dutch long term, they gradually perceive how their language skills improve, which situationally leads them to overcome liminality. Other linguistic resources and creative strategies of language use that the learners deploy (e.g. relying on signal words as ‘boven’) can undermine their liminality at other times, making it less prevalent. After all, liminality in SLA is a very fluid phenomenon, all the more outside of the Dutch classroom where the learners are involved in such a rich variety of contexts.
5. Conclusion: Thinking of thresholds revisited

In the introduction, I took you along on my journey to the Dutch classroom on my first day of the research. On my last day, I undertook this journey in the other direction and encountered the same thresholds on my way homewards: the classroom door, the revolving door, cycling over the bridges, this time supported by a strong tailwind, and finally going through my apartment door as the last threshold. This thesis brought a socio-cognitive perspective on language learning as a threshold forward. I have first analysed how the L2 classroom is shaped as a liminal space, then how liminality is handled in the L2 classroom and eventually, I have elucidated the links of liminal learning and life. To provide answers to the research question “How do teachers and learners in a Dutch as a second language class and beyond manifest and handle the liminality of the language learning process?”, I suggest a revisited concept of thresholds.

When comparing L2 learning to other thresholds such as the ones from my way to the classroom and back that I described in the introduction, there are certain striking characteristics that make the in-betweenness at hand a very particular form of liminality. In a way, different levels of liminality exist in the lives of the learners. As a migrant with intermediary Dutch skills, liminality is present in daily life. In some situations, it comes up very clearly, namely when communication is shaped by the in-betweenness of the learner’s language competence. Just as I normally do not even realize the moment of being ‘in between’, because e.g. going through a revolving door is so normal to me, the learners are also not always devoting much attention to the liminality at times because it appears so usual and life goes on despite it. However, sometimes there is a feeling of standing out to the rest of the society due to the intermediary language competence and acquiring Dutch is viewed as a way to integrate more. Then, the learners are dual liminal subjects as liminality in language learning gets linked to a liminal position in the society.

In chapter 2, I have shown how once a week, when the learners come together in the Dutch class, liminality gets very central to the situation. The classroom turns into a liminal space as the learners and the teacher bring learning to the foreground and thereby make the in-between state of the learners’ language competence explicit. This in-between state entails the idea that the learners have a solid base of language competence, but that there is room for more at the same time. It gets expressed through various means, for example corrections or vocabulary questions. Whereas the learners are confronted with liminality alone in their daily lives, the L2
classroom serves as a platform where liminality is shared in communitas. In this communitas, it is worked toward overcoming the liminality of L2 learning through the very act of L2 learning itself, together. Think of a big manual revolving door with 15 people all pushing it together so that it moves forward. Here, engaging in learning together also means facing liminality in communitas. Chapter 3 has illustrated that this comes with different modes of handling this liminality, such as accompanying it through scaffolding, laughing it off or bridging to the post-liminal.

Van Gennep has described rites de passage as linear transitions, just as my bike ride over the bridge: Pedalling onto the bridge sets a rather clear beginning to it, then there is a period of being neither on the mainland nor on the island yet and eventually, I reach the other end. Yet, acquiring L2 competences is not such a linear process. It is more of a constant fluid back and forth, as we could especially see in chapter 4. The learners move in and out of liminality all the time as they improve their language skills and apply newly acquired skills creatively and successfully in their everyday life at times, but face limits of communication in Dutch at other times. The metaphor of the revolving door fits better here: The learners are at the threshold of L2 competence, depicted by the zone inside the revolving door. They turn around and around in there, at times step out at the other end, then step back in and walk one or two rounds inside before stepping back out again. Liminality in language learning is fluid.

This thesis also showed that learning and using Dutch in the classroom together is tightly interwoven with learning and using Dutch outside of the classroom individually. The classroom is not disengaged from the learners’ everyday lives, but the daily life is used as a docking point which brings certain topics and questions into play. Even though the learners all have different everyday lives, they share comparable challenges when using Dutch. This is taken up in the classroom, discussed and eventually, the newly acquired knowledge is taken back ‘into the wild’ by the learners. Then, it is the in-class-learning which becomes a docking point for L2 use in turn.

This latter process of taking knowledge from the classroom ‘into the wild’, has only peripherally been touched upon in this thesis because I could just rely on what the learners told me about their experiences in interviews. Yet, the use of newly acquired knowledge and skills is an element of handling liminality as it shows how learners actively strive to overcome it. Methodological decisions I had to make in this research to allow for a focus on in-depth analysis of learning in Dutch classes limited the exploration of L2 use outside of the classroom. This aspect deserves further attention in future research which would highly benefit from individual
case studies following learners not only into the L2 classroom but also into other contexts of their daily lives. This brings us back to Firth and Wagner’s call for an emphasis on language in use in opposition to a cognitively oriented analysis of SLA in the classroom which I have discussed in the introduction. Firth and Wagner themselves provide examples for an analysis of the use of newly acquired L2 knowledge, but staying firmly rooted in their socio-interactional approach, they only discuss cases of learning-in-action in what they call “naturally occurring” interactions, thus moments of learning outside of the L2 classroom (Firth, Wagner 2007: 800, for an example of acquisition-in-action see ibid.: 808f). Inspired by a Firth and Wagnerian approach, but still keeping the L2 classroom as a central element to the analysis, studies which investigate how learning is carried over in time and space from the L2 classroom into various other contexts of the learners’ lives could connect to my findings in the future.

This paper brought language (learning) as both an act of social interaction and as embedded into social interaction at the same time into the spotlight. Methodologically speaking, my goal is to contribute to an integration of a greater diversity of methods to anthropology through this thesis. I believe in the undoubtingly powerful benefits of long term fieldwork with participant observation as a cornerstone method in order to establish close relationships with the individuals in the research setting. In my research, I took this as a starting point and eventually connected rather typically ethnographic data such as vignettes and interviews with CA-informed analysis of extracts from class sessions. These proved particularly insightful for the focus on language.

I would not go as far as Moerman, one of the first anthropologists to make use of CA, with saying that CA is the method that Geertz was in search of but did not manage to develop for the study of culture (Moerman 1988: 89, cited from Clemente 2013: 691). I am however convinced that it adds a valuable tool to the detailed study of social interaction, as I was hopefully able to illustrate through analysing how liminality is dealt with in a Dutch L2 classroom.

Liminality originally referred to rites de passage in tribal societies and implicated that the full attention of the liminal subjects is devoted to the ritual for the time being. With the distinction between the liminal and the liminoid, Turner later on acknowledged the pluralistic nature of the lives of people in post-industrial societies. Around 50 years after Turner substantiated that “one works at the liminal, one plays with the liminoid” (Turner 1974: 86), I suggest that one also learns a second language mainly at the liminal. With my reconceptualised understanding of liminality, allowing for individuality that does not hinder the emergence of communitas, it becomes clear that L2 learning is a multi-layered sensation of being ‘in between’ in both linguistical and societal terms.
Afterthought

Over the course of three months, I had the honour to share a space of communitas with Tianna, Jules, Murat, Mayuree, Liza, Carla and their colleagues. Taking my own background as a German woman who moved to the Netherlands less than a year ago into account: Am I liminal?

Hailing from the German-Dutch border, I followed three years of Dutch classes in high school and thought of myself as conversational. However, upon moving to Amsterdam several years later, I found out that I am not familiar with casual Dutch talk such as interactional routines. I made similar experiences as the learners that I met in the L2 classroom. For example, I often resorted to English, which was easy, especially given the fact that I was embedded in a very international environment in Amsterdam anyway. So yes, I was certainly in a liminal state of language performance.

Just as my Master project gradually advanced throughout the last year, my Dutch competence steadily improved. Reflecting upon it, I have to say that, in fact, this progress in the language went hand in hand with my own integration in Dutch-speaking contexts and a feeling of ‘arriving for real’. Have I overcome my liminality then? I am still moving in and out of it, and it feels okay.
Bibliography


Annex

a) Table of Acronyms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>L1</td>
<td>First Language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L2</td>
<td>Second Language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SLA</td>
<td>Second Language Acquisition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CA</td>
<td>Conversation Analysis</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
b) Transcription conventions

The transcription conventions deployed for the classroom extracts are taken from Gumperz and Berenz 1990 and have been slightly adapted with regard to code-switching.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symbol</th>
<th>Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>//</td>
<td>Final fall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/</td>
<td>Slight final fall indicating temporary closure (e.g. more can be said on the topic)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>?</td>
<td>Final rise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>,</td>
<td>Slight rise as in listing intonation (e.g. more is expected)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-</td>
<td>Truncation (e.g. what ti-what time is it/)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>_</td>
<td>Level ending</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>..</td>
<td>Pauses of less than .5 second</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...</td>
<td>Pauses greater than .5 second (unless precisely timed)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt;2&gt;</td>
<td>Precise units of time (= 2 second pause)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>= =</td>
<td>Overlap of speakers’ utterances</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>::</td>
<td>Lengthened segments (e.g. wha::t)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>~</td>
<td>Fluctuating intonation over one word</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*</td>
<td>Accent; normal prominence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>**</td>
<td>Extra prominence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>{{ }}</td>
<td>- Nonlexical phenomena, both vocal and nonvocal, which overlays the lexical stretch e.g. {{lo} text//}}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>- Nonlexical phenomena, both vocal and nonvocal, which interrupts the lexical stretch e.g. text [laugh] text</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>( )</td>
<td>Unintelligible speech</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>di(d)</td>
<td>A good guess at an unclear segment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(did)</td>
<td>A good guess at an unclear word</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(xxx)</td>
<td>Unclear word for which a good guess can be made as to how many syllables were uttered with &quot;x&quot; = one syllable</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[ac]</td>
<td>Acceleration in speed of speech</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[dc]</td>
<td>Deceleration in speed of speech</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[lo]</td>
<td>Low pitch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[hi]</td>
<td>High pitch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[f]</td>
<td>Loudly spoken (forte)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[p]</td>
<td>Softly spoken (piano)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
c) **The International Phonetic Alphabet**

To get an idea of the sounds used in the phonetic transcription, please visit the spoken IPA chart:

http://www.ipachart.com/

“The International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) is a set of symbols that linguists use to describe the sounds of spoken languages. This page lets you hear the sounds that the symbols represent, but remember that it is only a rough guide. There is lots of variation in how these sounds are said depending on the language and context. For example, in English voiceless plosives usually end with a puff of air called *aspiration*, but the voiceless plosives on this page aren't aspirated.”

(Interactive IPA chart. http://www.ipachart.com/; n.y.)
The threshold of
Second Language Acquisition
-
Migrants’ liminal experiences of learning Dutch

Translations to English

Marie Rickert
This in-lay booklet contains translations from Dutch to English from relevant extracts that are discussed in ‘The threshold of Second Language Acquisition’. If you do not understand Dutch, please have this booklet at hand while reading the thesis.

Throughout the thesis, you will find markers like this one \( \textcolor{gray}{1} \) which direct you to the page with the matching translation in the booklet.

The line numbers of the translated extracts correspond to the line numbers in the original version. Extracts from the field diary do not have any line numbers in the booklet, the references in the main body of text correspond to the original version. Utterances that were originally delivered in English are underlined.
J: ([f] Adventure) [grabs a picture, thereby audibly knocks on the
table]
X: =
Y: =
= [short laughter by several classmates]=
R: Ehe, av- eh, how is adventure = in Dutch? =
X: =adventure=
R: ==adventure? [short laughter] =( )=
M: =adventure/= 
X: = Yes/ =
X2: = nah, = it’s like in
English,} adventure/
J: ..adventure/
R: Why? ['Why?’ = /Waarom?/ with a uvular fricative /r/]
→ J: Why? [/Waarom?/, with a uvular fricative /r/]
R: ~Mh mh/
J: Why?
R: Yes
J: Ehm, [clears throat]
→ M: ~Why? {{f} ~ Why?} [/Waarom? Waarom?/, also with an uvular
fricative /r/][short laughter]
X: [short laughter]
J: No?
→ M: (xx)Why [/waarom/, uvular trill /r/]
→ J: Why [repeats /waarom/ with uvular trill /r/]
X: ([p] Why)
M: Yes, why/ but, but French people-
→ J: {{lo, rough} Why//}[uvular fricative /r/]
X: = [laughter]=
→ M: = Why, Why = [[u] instead of the before used [v] and with uvular
fricative /r/]
Extract F: Paris

2. retroflex tap /r/, no articulation of an /s/]
3. J: eh,
4. M: ==Jules, I have been to Paris, Paris, I (talk)
5. X: eh
7. X: ([p] yes)
8. M: and French people don’t understand/
9. X: ([p] no)
10. M: ([f] [hi] * paɾi, paɾi,) =yes, *paɾi = [/Paris/ as pronounced by
11. him before]
12. X: = ( ) =
14. → M: ==Yes, ([lo] pa*ʁi) [also uvular fricative /r/] [short laughter]=
15. X =[laughter]=
tap /r/]
17. P: paɾ*i [retroflex tap /r/]
18. X: paɔ*i [uvular fricative /ʁ/]
19. → M: ([FR]Pardon)/ Why? [/waaroːm?/ as in A:1.29, with /u/ instead of
20. The [u] and with uvular fricative /ʁ/]
Janneke asks Liza to give the presentation she has prepared at home. Liza goes to the front of the class and starts to read out from her notebook, very slowly, sentence by sentence: “I am engaged and my teacher is very happy about it. She says that I have to talk more in Dutch with my fiancé. So ‘verloofd’ is fiancé. English or not?” Adam is apparently not in favour of the translations and says “No!”, but Jeff and Tan express their wish for translations. Also Janneke allows her to translate: “Yes, Liza, you can translate something to English, new words”. Liza goes on: “Okay. I met Eric, a Dutch guy in Tanzania in 2016. Do you know that number?” As nobody reacts, she writes ‘2016’ on the board and repeats: “Two thousand sixteen!”

Liza speaks very slowly and acts the way I imagine a teacher to do: she articulates precisely, switches from looking at her text and looking around the classroom, looking everyone in the eye one by one to make sure they still follow her presentation. She keeps asking direct questions and switches constantly between English and Dutch. The classmates all look at her attentively, some take a note from time to time.

“We volunteered. Vrijwilligerswerk is volunteering. So we were volunteering.” She notes ‘vrijwilligerswerk’ on the board. “I don’t know if this is actually helping. Is it helping?” The class confirms, several people nod yes or say “Yes!”. Liza continues her story, saying that she and her boyfriend first got close when they organized movie nights at the beach and started to travel together. “Then, we travelled to Daressalam.” Murat raises his hand: “Dār as-Salām means ‘The house of peace’ in Arabic.” Liza asks if it means that in Dutch, Murat negates: “No, in Arabic..” She does not comment on that, instead she goes on: “We made nice memories. Does anybody know that word?” Carla asks “What?”, so Liza laughs and writes ‘herinneringen [=memories]’ on the board. “No? It’s a new one for me also. It’s a good one, but it’s a tough one. Memories, okay? So ‘herinneringen’.” Liza underlines ‘her’ and ‘in’ and draws a line on top on ‘ing’. Then she draws a brain on top of the whole word. “So that’s a brain. Just to remember. It’s ‘herinneringen’. ” Janneke laughs.

Liza tells how she and Eric moved to the Netherlands, elaborates on the engagement and eventually brings the story to a conclusion: “We zullen nog lang en gezellig leven. So we’ll live happily and cozy ever after. With our Tanzanian dog and the two of us, half Indian, half Dutch.”

Liza smiles a lot while everyone applauds. As she walks back to her chair, Janneke congratulates her saying how proud she is and that it was an amazing
presentation. When Liza sits down, Murat asks: “How do you say ‘Canadian’ in Dutch?” Liza: “Canadees. {[ENG] Well}, I am half Canadian and half indigenous [Indiaans].” Murat double-checks: “Indigenous? [Indiaans?]” Adam says: “Oh, I love India, I travelled there.” And then Janneke joins the conversation: “No, she’s not indigenous. Or... are you indigenous?” Milli looks at her, does not answer. Janneke asks “Indigenous or Indian? [Indiaans or Indiaas?]” Liza seems to understand and goes: “Aah, Indian! I am Indian!” Before we go on to the homework, Janneke explains the meaning of the word “So ‘Indiaans’ are the Aborigines [sic!].”
JA: Eh, what shall we do, shall we have a quick break? I do have the film over water in Amsterdam, but it takes 45 minutes. So, if you have five minutes of break now and we resume at half past two, it will last until quarter past three. I don’t know what you want.

M: =Small break/=  
R: = Break =  
JA: Mh? Small break?  
R: {[p] =Break =  
T: = Yes/ =  
JA: And watch the film? Yes? About water in Amsterdam?

[JU abruptly stands up and grabs his bag, he keeps standing behind his chair and does not move while all his colleagues and the teacher look at him]

JA: You gotta go?

JU: ... [looks around the class] Small break/  
[the whole class laughs 5s]

JU: {[f] fi- fi-},  
JA: == =He’s already packing his back {[laughter] and then I think he’s leaving/} ==  
={underlying laughter of the classmates, slightly quieter than before}=

JU: Five minutes is small/  
JA: Very good/  
[laughter in the classroom flares up again ]  
JA: Short break/ short break, go for it/ Sorry, [laughter]  
[JA walks to the back of the class to search for something in her bag, the learners start chatting, some stand up and go out, beneath them JU.]
A: What do I miss? Ehm, I miss my mother, but we try to meet two or three times each year/ I miss the sea of the Mediterranean/
J: We call that [rit] de Middellandse Zee1)/
A: Yes/
J: We call that ‘de Middellandse Zee’/
A: Yes, too cold/
J: [laughter <2>] No, we call \textit{Mediterranean}, ‘de Middellandse Zee’/
A: [laughter <2>] No, I mean the Mediterranean/
J: Yes, {"f" we call it that way}/
A: Oh, sorry/
J: [laughter <2>] We don’t call it the \textit{Mediterranean}/
A: {\[HI\] Ah:, I get it, ah okay}/
J: Because it’s located in between all these countries/
A: Ah:/
J: We in the Netherlands call it ‘de Middellandse Zee’/
A: Alright, okay, okay/

1 ‘De Middellandse Zee’ is the Dutch term for the Mediterranean.
We are asked to compare the homework in pairs. Jules sits next to me and even though his homework sheets are empty, he wants to contribute to this ‘comparison’ of the homework. We look at a task in which nouns shall be put into their diminutive-form and then matched to sentences. Jules reads out:

3) The ___________________ is your guarantee statement.

I try to help him: “What do you get when you pay?” He answers in English: “The receipt.” – “Yes, what’s the Dutch word for it?” He looks at me without answering. Then I point at ‘de bon’ in the column with the nouns. Out of the blue, Jules bursts out into laughter: “Het bonnetje mee? Het bonnetje mee? [Do you want your receipt? Do you want you receipt?]” He looks at me as if he could not believe what he just said. I can’t help but start to guffaw with him. Janneke turns toward us and asks what happened. Jules repeats “Het bonnetje mee” enthusiastically, which leads Janneke to smile and translate: “Yes, would you like your receipt?” While Janneke goes to the board, Jules tells me that before, he always thought that it was just a random Dutch word. The rest of the classmates slowly stop to compare their homework and shift the attention to Janneke who notes “Wil je het bonnetje (mee-)nemen? [Do you want to take your receipt with you?]” on the board and reads it out at the same time. Mayuree interjects: “Yes, please” with a big smile on her face. Janneke explains that ‘met’ turns into ‘mee-’ when combined with a verb. “Ahh, ‘bonnetje’ and ‘mee’ are two words!” Jules seems to understand the construction now.

Apparently, this reminds Janneke of something: “Jules, do you sometimes get Chinese food?” Jules asks what ‘de Chinees’ is. Janneke: “What is Chinese, Chinese?” She looks at Mian who is Chinese: “Well, you gotta know it, right?” Mian smiles silently and Murat translates to English: “Chinese.” Janneke continues the story: “They ask the same thing there. They ask ‘Sambal bij? [Do you want hot sauce?]’ And that’s kind of the same. Maybe they’ve never learnt Dutch, but they know the question ‘Sambal bij?’ and when you confirm, then they know that they have to put something in.” Some of the learners laugh, Mayuree asks what Sambal is. Janneke says that it would refer to any kind of hot sauce, such as Sambal Olek. Then, she adds that the next logical question to follow is always “Hier opeten of meenemen [Here or take away]?”, which would bring us back to the ‘mee-‘ from ‘Bonnetje mee?’ again, she substantiates. Tan asks for a

2 ‘de Chinees’ literally translates to ‘the Chinese’, as in ‘the Chinese restaurant’, or ‘the Chinese cook’.
repetition of the phrase. He seems surprised: “Ah, meinen, to take away! I always understand ‘Nijmegen’.” Now Janneke is the one who seems surprised: “Why would they talk about Eindhoven or Nijmegen all of a sudden?” Tan explains that this was indeed never logical to him either, but he was never able to understand it because of his hearing loss. Tan has problems with hearing since an air accident some years ago.
Transcription conventions

The transcription conventions deployed for the classroom extracts are taken from Gumperz and Berenz 1990 and have been slightly adapted with regard to code-switching.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symbol</th>
<th>Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>//</td>
<td>Final fall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/</td>
<td>Slight final fall indicating temporary closure (e.g. more can be said on the topic)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>?</td>
<td>Final rise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>,</td>
<td>Slight rise as in listing intonation (e.g. more is expected)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-</td>
<td>Truncation (e.g. what ti- what time is it/)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>_</td>
<td>Level ending</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>..</td>
<td>Pauses of less than .5 second</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...</td>
<td>Pauses greater than .5 second (unless precisely timed)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt;2&gt;</td>
<td>Precise units of time (= 2 second pause)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>=</td>
<td>Overlap of speakers’ utterances</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>==</td>
<td>Latching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>::</td>
<td>Lengthened segments (e.g. wha::t)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>~</td>
<td>Fluctuating intonation over one word</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*</td>
<td>Accent; normal prominence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>**</td>
<td>Extra prominence</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| {[ ]}  | - Nonlexical phenomena, both vocal and nonvocal, which overlays the lexical stretch e.g. {[lo] text//}
|        | - Indication of language (NL=Dutch; FR=French; ENG=English) |
| [ ]    | - Nonlexical phenomena, both vocal and nonvocal, which interrupts the lexical stretch e.g. text [laugh] text// |
|        | - Explanation of phonetics |
| ()     | Unintelligible speech |
| di(d)  | A good guess at an unclear segment |
| (did)  | A good guess at an unclear word |
| (xxx)  | Unclear word for which a good guess can be made as to how many syllables were uttered with “x”= one syllable how many syllables were uttered with "x" = one syllable |
| [ac]   | Acceleration in speed of speech |
| [dc]   | Deceleration in speed of speech |
| [lo]   | Low pitch |
| [hi]   | High pitch |
| [f]    | Loudly spoken (forte) |
| [p]    | Softly spoken (piano) |