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Mediating Creoles: Language Practices on a YouTube show

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0. Introduction

In my first column I argued for a greater need to investigate the synchronic linguistic practices of Creole speakers focusing on pragmatics. In this column, I zoom in on mediated language practices, that is, communication that does not take the form of typical face-to-face communication. Such practices have risen sharply in volume, social presence and accessibility with the advent of Web 2.0. which affords people the possibility to actively engage with others. Although access to the web remains highly stratified in many countries where Creoles are widely spoken (Deumert 2014a), urbanization and global mobility including the creation of ‘diasporas’ has made virtual communication an integral part of many people’s lives. Popular and academic discourses have pondered their (usually negative) influence on (face-to-face and traditional written) language use and celebrated their unprecedented heterogeneity (see Deumert 2014b for a critique) but the precise relationship between mediated and off-line language practices continues to be far from clear as studies of different computer-mediated-communication (CMC) and social contexts reveal different scenarios (e.g. Androutsopoulos 2006b; McLaughlin 2014; Sharma 2014). Although language use in CMC contexts are often assumed to be ‘inauthentic’ and ‘marred’, they afford us a glimpse into the language practices of the (emerging) middle or professionalized sections of society that also serve as important models for younger generations and the social roles they attribute to minoritized languages such as Creoles.¹ When comparing them with offline practices, they allow us to assess the long-term sustainability of Creoles, providing a window on language change. This column investigates language practices on the YouTube show *Radio Wie Loetoe* “Radio our Root”.

There is a growing tradition of research on mediated language practices involving Creoles. Initially, research investigated representations and functions of Creoles in literature (e.g. Mühleisen 2002; Lalla 2005; Pollard 2014; Winer and Buzelin 2008). A second strand of research explores Creoles in broadcast media such as on radio and TV (e.g. Shields-Brodber 1992; Garrett 2000; Managan 2011; Migge 2011). A third set of studies examines the linguistic practices in music performances (e.g. Herzfeld 2004; Farquharson 2017) and a fourth strand discusses practices in different electronic media or CMC. Hinrichs (2006) and Deuber & Hinrichs (2007), for instance, look at language use and orthographic representations of Creole and English in emails, Dupré (2012) examines language practices and attitudes in Texting among young people in La Réunion, Sebba (2003) investigates language and identity construction on a website, Moll (2015) explores language use and discursive practices on a diasporic Jamaican internet forum and Heyd (2014) analyzes how race and ethnicity are performed on a Nigerian emigrant web forum. To my knowledge, there is only one study to date that focuses on YouTube. Wrobel (2012) compares patterns of variation for Virgin Island Creole in a news broadcast available on YouTube with face-to-face data and finds that variation in the former closely mirrors that found in traditional recordings. The relative absence of studies on YouTube is surprising given its particular interest for linguistic research. It houses oral and grassroots managed content (Zähres to appear), is highly interactive due to being the most important platform for participatory culture globally and is heavily frequented especially by people in their teens to mid-thirties. Although it is not a social networking site per se, it enables a certain sociability and a certain

¹ They also challenge correlational and structuralist approaches to language, foregrounding creative aspects of language, e.g. Deumert (2014a, b).

“connection between audience members and larger worlds of discourse” (Benson 2017: 35). By providing space for uploading videos documenting natural disasters, police violence, war crimes etc., YouTube, for example, contributes to sustaining and dismantling dominant political discourses.

YouTube has received fairly little attention compared to other social media platforms possibly because there is an impression that “YouTube is mainly about the moving image, with language playing a peripheral role.” (Androutsopoulos & Tereick 2020: 354). Sociolinguistic research treats YouTube productions as complex semiotic events or vernacular spectacles (Androutsopoulos 2013) which foreground the performance aspect. It investigates the specific discourse structure of such spectacles, such as who is interacting with whom, how, and what semiotic resources are employed to stage the spectacle and self-representation. It also explores the language practices including how other materials (e.g. other films) are recontextualized, transformed or blended in such spectacles (Tereick 2012). Audience comments are examined from a participation perspective, investigating sequential structure and coherence (e.g. Bou-Franch et al 2012), and from a discursive perspective such as how language ideologies (e.g. Androutsopoulos 2013, Sharma 2014) or social interaction, e.g. conflict (Bou-Franch et al 2014) are negotiated.

The analysis in this column investigates the language choices on the YouTube-based Eastern Maroon show called *Radio Wie Loetoe*. It aims to obtain insights into the nature, role and status of the Eastern Maroon Creole varieties and how they relate to a newly emerging Maroon ethnic and cultural identity. The data come from streaming of the *Radio Wie Loetoe* show available on its YouTube site. Selected parts of these shows were transcribed by me and an Eastern Maroon speaker. Following a brief overview of the current social and linguistic context in section 2, I first discuss the structure and identity of the show in section 3 before exploring language use in section 4. The final section assesses the findings in the light of previous research and argues that Eastern Maroon varieties are undergoing important social changes that enhance their viability but also spur linguistic changes due to newer cultural and linguistic patterns of contact.

2. Overview of the social and linguistic context

In the new millennium, Maroons are predominantly city dwellers, living in cities, the urbanizing outskirts of cities or in rapidly urbanizing villages in French Guiana and Suriname. Housing and workplaces are linguistically and socio-culturally heterogeneous both in Suriname and French Guiana. Contact with different French, French Guianese and Surinamese cultural spheres is no longer predominantly restricted to institutional and administrative contexts but extends to informal settings as social networks are not socially homogeneous, especially for younger people. Apart from socially diverse contexts in South America, there is also increased contact with Europe through travel and migration. In the last five to ten years many young Maroons who grew up in (western) French Guiana, currently the urban area that is most densely populated with Maroons, have migrated to France, initially to take advantage of work and educational opportunities. This new migration from French Guiana to metropolitan France, which is not hampered by punitive immigration laws, has led to the emergence of a new diaspora that is in close contact with people in French Guiana, Suriname and the Netherlands due to belonging to the same family networks and significantly improved travelling and virtual communication opportunities.²

Migge & Léglise (2015) show, based on data from French Guiana and Suriname, that younger speakers of Eastern Maroon varieties conceptualise themselves as belonging to

² The Dutch Maroon diaspora emerged since the 1980s and continues to receive new arrivals from Suriname but to a much lower degree due to tight immigration laws for Surinamese citizens.

socially distinctive communities but their social categorizations are different from those of previous generations.³ Unlike their parents, they are foregrounding a common or pan-Maroon ethnicity, rather than insisting primarily on traditional ethnicities (Aluku, Ndyuka, Pamaka), and national alignments.⁴ The notions of pan-Maroon-ness in the two constituencies now link Maroon-ness to urban-ness. Like their parents, children generally have positive attitudes to Maroon languages and confidently declare having competence in them, especially in French Guiana where ethnic identification remains important due to the absence of a unifying regional or national identity (Léglise & Migge 2019). However, children also declare being minimally bilingual in the Maroon language and the dominant language (French or Dutch), and often also report speaking other languages. They often rate their competence in other languages lower than in the Maroon languages, suggesting that Maroon languages in the first instance and bilingualism or multilingualism in the second instance are important emblems of their social identity (Migge & Léglise 2015).

Research on Maroons' language practices indeed suggests that Maroons manage this social transformation for now by adapting their Eastern Maroon language practices and the development of bilingual or multilingual repertoires rather than by language attrition. With the Eastern Maroon Creole's extension into new social spheres (e.g. broadcasting sector, formal and health education, urban contexts), new communicative conventions and new interactional norms are emerging or are actively developed. For instance, we see the emergence and mainstreaming of shorter greetings and a simplified system of courtesy titles for everyday use in non-high status or socially sensitive contexts as well as the suppression of certain features of traditional formal language such as its strictly dialogic nature and the use of metaphoric language to encode negative linguistic politeness (see Migge 2004, 2005a, 2011). As a result of changes in Maroons' linguistic repertoires, we have also seen an emergence and mainstreaming of translanguaging practices involving particularly Maroon languages and Sranan Tongo and to a lesser extent European languages in everyday public interactions. Episodes and insertions from Sranan Tongo often function to negotiate stances of (non-traditional) cocky power and being knowledgeable of the urban world in these contexts while monolingual Eastern Maroon practices have been discursively positioned as encoding stances of being traditional and possibly backwards (Migge 2007; Migge & Léglise 2013).

There are also other developments that enhance the status and maintenance of Maroon languages and are testament to its vitality. For quite a long time, speakers of Eastern Maroon languages, often in conjunction with non-Eastern Maroons, have been developing new vocabulary to accompany the language's use in domains such as the Christian religion and the formal education context. This work has resulted in the publication of the New Testament in 1999 and numerous short stories and language learning materials by SIL. Mother tongue teachers employed by the Academy de Guyane in French Guiana have also published short stories and teaching materials. There is also increasingly signage and short advertising in (Busi)nengee Tongo – the names used to refer to Eastern Maroon varieties in French Guiana – reflecting the greater number, buying power and self-confidence of Maroons in Suriname and French Guiana. In terms of CMC, Eastern Maroon varieties are used on social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram and other local sites to comment on photos in conjunction with or separately from European languages and emojis. People also frequently write or record messages in Eastern Maroon varieties on WhatsApp. Particularly the Ndyuka

³ Their origin in communities born from flight from 16th century Surinamese plantations is still considered to be an important social difference that affects people's outlook on life.

⁴ The nature of the pan-Maroon ethnicity differs slightly in Suriname and French Guiana and alignment with them also differs slightly due to the differences in the sociohistorical makeup of the two constituencies (Léglise & Migge 2019).

variety is well represented in dubbed and original local films available as CDs or increasingly on YouTube. The radio station *Koyeba* in Paramaribo broadcasts the whole day and UDL in western French Guiana has a number of broadcasts such as *Loweman Pansu* in Eastern Maroon varieties during the week. These and smaller stations in Suriname broadcast informational features and music.⁵ YouTube now houses a large amount of recordings of Eastern Maroon popular music videos that are widely watched by young people in Suriname, French Guiana and Europe. *RadioWie Loetoe* is definitely part of this tradition; however, it goes beyond it in several ways.

3. *Radio Wie Loetoe*

According to the information available on YouTube, the channel was set up in December 2015, currently has 46.2K subscribers, is physically located in France and describes itself as “Une chaîne spécialement dédiée à la promotion des artistes guyanais et surinamais.” While *Radio Wie Loetoe* shows can be watched at any time as they are normally uploaded to the site, it is conceived of as a live show that generally takes place between Thursdays and Mondays and each show runs for between two to four hours.⁶ The show aspect is also emphasized by the host’s name: he refers to himself as DJ Flexy DBG.

3. 1. Overview of the spectacle

Most commonly, when the show starts, a single window view opens and music plays while ads are shown on the screen. At some stage, the host appears usually with his headphones and a baseball cap worn back to front, rocking along with the music and looking at his computer screen being absorbed in the music. The ads continue to be visible next to him. At some stage the ads go into the background and after greeting the audience, DJ Flexy animates the audience through a combination of talking, announcing games and playing music. This part functions as a lead up to the main part of the show: the interaction with an invitee. This part may last for over an hour or be very short, less than 10 minutes, probably depending on the availability of the invitee. When the invitee comes live, the screen view changes and superimposed on the background, we see DJ Flexy in one window and the invitee in another window. The interaction with the invitee, which could go on for more than two hours, then consists in large part of a question-answer-commentary-type discussion first between DJ Flexy and the invitee and then between the two and people calling in. The interaction is punctured by music and if the invitees are artists, they also give short performances. At the end, DJ Flexy may talk a bit more about future events, raise other issues, finish a game etc or take a few more callers before ending the show by playing music. Sometimes, typically Sundays, DJ Flexy does not appear at all and only music is played often for more than an hour. At other times, the host introduces another DJ who then plays music for most of the evening and we might, at times, see DJ Flexy dancing or rocking along in a separate window.

Radio Wie Loeto is highly interactive or dialogical. DJ Flexy addresses the audience, the invitee, callers and/or chatters. Chatters talk to each other, an unspecified audience and the host. Callers address the host and invitees. Finally, invitees directly and indirectly respond to the host, chatters and callers. The verbal interactions are punctured by laughter, jokes and games and the chats show abundant use of emoji. Watching the show creates a

⁵ During the 2020 pandemic, Eastern Maroon varieties were also used in local TV news broadcasts otherwise broadcast in French and in short films and recorded messages originating from Suriname or French Guiana that circulated via WhatsApp and mother tongue teachers also regularly broadcast cultural material in Eastern Maroon varieties for children.

⁶ Based on my watching of live shows and then revisiting them a few days later, depending on the theme, I found that there are between 800 and 1600 people following it live but within a few days the viewer numbers rise to the 10 000s and sometimes above.

sense of spending an enjoyable time with a bunch of people who have similar interests; they talk about their concerns and you can also frankly contribute your own views and listen to music. For linguists, these different interactions provide great samples of situated language use.

3. 2. Identity of *Radio Wie Loetoe*

In this section I scrutinize *Radio Wie Loetoe*'s self-representation and its participants. Unlike typical diaspora sites (Mc Laughin 2014), the YouTube site does not display any national identifiers. It shows the logo, a green circle with the letters *wlt* in white and black, an abbreviation of its name, the full name, the number of subscribers and the videos uploaded to the site, that is, shows and music videos.⁷ The lack of stylization of the YouTube site gives the impression that it caters to a closed community – people who are in the know.

The name, *Radio Wie Loetoe*, creates a cultural association and is also used in traditional discourses to invoke a shared cultural realm. The slogan on the Facebook page, is more explicit about the community aspect (1), asserting the importance of sticking together and beckoning people to come.

- (1) *A foluku na wie taanga kong moo koosube fu wie*
'The people are our strength, come closer to us.'

Both on the Facebook page and at the bottom of the Youtube show window, there is another assertion of cultural unity (*Na wie Radio – c'est notre radio – it's our radio*) and at the end of the shows DJ Flexy often reinforces this togetherness orally as in (2).

Extract (2)

... teki i big up live a ini ladiyow wi lutu sondee fi i feegete fi i abi ladiyow wi lutu fanowdu. I sab fa u, pe u de fu i contacter fu u wooko makandi, fu u taki makandi kon na awan. I á mu feegete dati wani taki ala sama denki bun fu u wooko fu kon awan, alikiman fu ladiyow wi lutu, wi taki 'you welkom live na ladiyow wi lutu' bika ladiyow wi lutu na wi ladiyow.

'... take your strength from *Radio Wie Loetoe* without forgetting that you need *Radio Wie Loetoe*. You know how we, where we are for you to contact us to work together, to talk about things together to come together. Don't forget that everyone's way of thinking is welcome in our community, listener of *Radio Wie Loetoe*. We say 'you are welcome live on *Radio Wie Loetoe* because *Radio Wie Loetoe* is our radio.'

These assertions and the name of the show contrast with the description of the channel in French which describes *Radio Wie Loetoe* as a forum for promoting French Guianese and Surinamese artists.

Yet, *Radio Wie Loetoe* is far from being a cultural indoctrination show. Artists are a central part of the show and of viewer's enjoyment of it.⁸ A good number of the invitees are known or even very popular performers such as singers, comedians, DJs from the Suriname/French Guiana popular cultural sphere. Others come from other walks of life such as politics in Suriname or French Guiana, professionals in the beauty business, or even the

⁷ Compare this with its Facebook page which displays photos indexed to Maroon culture such as pictures of Miss Guyane 2019 and others wearing clothes made of colourful fabric displaying Eastern Maroon artwork (*tenbe*), advertising of events and products and posts by people.

⁸ (Eastern) Maroon music has been very popular for a while now and has played a considerable role in Suriname in destigmatizing things Maroon and in raising the profile of Maroon languages.

French army. In short, people who have made something of their lives.⁹ During the show, participants/viewers enjoy performances of artists but more importantly, they find out about things that matter to them personally such as how invitees got to where they are, their views, their likes and dislikes, about their profession etc through DJ Flexy's relentless questions and caller's and chatter's comments. They have the opportunity to experience known personalities close up and in a private and accessible manner and contribute their own views, if they want to. Invitees are given the opportunity to explain themselves and to present themselves as community leaders through advice-giving and motivational talk. This creates an atmosphere of professionalism and positivity while at the same time enjoying music and lively discussions. Invitees are generally of Maroon origin and the music played is also typically by Maroon bands and sung mostly in Eastern Maroon varieties. The images that appear in DJ Flexy's background are often also linked to places frequented by Maroons, such as the new bridge over the Suriname river or images of villages. The advertising on the show promotes transport opportunities, food, hair care and fashion enterprises operating in/from French Guiana and is usually presented in French.

This emphasis on Maroon culture does not entail homogeneity of views though, see also (2). There are at times fierce debates between DJ Flexy and the invitee and callers/chatters about themes that are also popular in off-line discussions – see the discussions on racism in early June 2020 following the violent death of George Floyd. A popular theme referred to as #Sexuality deals with male-female relationships and with what is appropriate behaviour for both.¹⁰ These themes deal with areas of life that have seen much change over the last few decades and this is also contextualized on the show. For instance, in one show people discussed the French term 'romantic' and pondered whether an equivalent exists in the Eastern Maroon Creole and whether or not Eastern Maroon men know how to be romantic. *Radio Wie Loetoe* provides a forum to work through this together and to hear different perspectives, something that is not always easily possible in off-line contexts due to social policing and politeness constraints.

There is very little direct social information on the participants of *Radio Wie Loetoe* but we can infer their profiles indirectly (Androutsopoulos 2006a: 2425; Androutsopoulos 2006b: 539f; McLaughlin 2014: 30; McLaughlin 2014: 30). Based on an analysis of chatters' screen names, which allow indexing of social information, it appears that they are men and women and a good number of them come from or want to create a link to a Maroon background by using typical Maroon (last) names (Amayota, Kago, Adam, Misiedjan), ethnic identifiers ("Pamaka boy") or by creating playful names that describe personal traits which incorporate words of Eastern Maroon origin (*maafia donou* 'rich head of a mafia group', *A. dape* 'A. there', *Lagi Soupe* 'good-for-nothing soupe', *Dogla Dogla* 'mixed person'). Other playful names rely on words from other languages, mostly English (Money- Bank, The Money, Brownskin Brownie, Music is life, ThinkIOverthink, Manu le coq, NÉGOSS OFFICIEL). A similar conclusion can be reached based on callers as many introduce themselves using names commonly linked to Eastern Maroons and their oral language use is fully in line with off-line practices though by no means homogeneous.

⁹ This is little overtly contextualized in the show but in both countries pressure to assimilate to mainstream middle-class norms is considerable. An important subtext of the show therefore is: you can be positively aligned with Maroon culture and still make it in life, here are the examples.

¹⁰ Every show is assigned a larger theme such as #Sexuality, #Libimakandaa 'community spirit', #Samanaju 'who are you' and #kengi denki 'change your thinking/mind' and reference to specific subthemes is also displayed at the bottom of the show window. In one show on #Sexuality, for example, we see the following two phrases appear e.g. *Ifii no sabi libi anga mang fa i wani a mang romantique anga ju*. 'If you do not know how to properly behave with a man, how do you want the man to be romantic with you' and *Boys vs. Girls*.

People's place of residence is less easily determined. *Soolan*, the western French Guianese town of Saint-Laurent-du-Maroni and currently the largest urban (Eastern) Maroon hub, is often invoked as a place of origin or as a reference point for activities. However, only some assert living there. Other towns such as Foto 'Paramaribo' or Cayenne and Kourou in Eastern French Guiana feature less frequently. There is also mention of upriver villages, particularly the Ndyuka village of *Gaansanti* 'Grant Santi' located on the French side of the upper Maroni River, also Flexy's place of origin, and the upriver Aluku area. They are presented as places where people have spent time, grew up or where their families come from. Metropolitan France and the Netherlands figure mostly as places where people currently are/have come to to do something or as reference points for comparisons. This suggests that the people tuning into the show are largely part of the growing mobile section of the (Eastern) Maroon community that grew up since the 1990s in western French Guiana's urbanizing coastal zone, who while having their roots in heavily Maroon dominated areas, have taken up opportunities for professional 'development' in French Guiana and Europe.

There is some indication about ethnicity too. Although the show does not overtly promote itself as being Ndyuka, many of the callers and invitees sound Ndyuka. Invitees or callers from the smaller Maroon groups often either independently assert being Pamaka, Aluku or Kotika, or are asked to 'identify' themselves by the host. As in interviews with children (Migge & Léglise 2013, 2015), some people try to dodge questions about ethnicity and origin. On the show, this most typically happens with people from Suriname where ethnic belonging plays a somewhat different role than in French Guiana.

Finally, the advertising of events which always lists both metropolitan French and French Guianese/Surinamese times suggest that the show targets both audiences.

4.0 Language Use on the *Radio Wie Loetoe*

In this section I discuss oral and written language practices on the show.

4.1. Language Choices on the show

While the Ndyuka variety predominates due to the host, many of the invitees and listeners being Ndyuka, given that it is also the largest Eastern Maroon community, talk on the show is by no means mono-varietal; it also features Aluku, Pamaka and upriver and downriver, including Kotika Ndyuka. The other languages that are present on the show are French, Dutch and English. They are differently represented on the show though. In the light of previous analyses of Maroons' language choices in different contexts (e.g. Migge 2005a&b, 2007, 2011), the greater use of French is noticeable. Example (3), delivered by DJ Flexy during the opening phase of the show when he is talking about the main event and enticing participants to stay online and to encourage others to join, is typical of the use of French on the show:

Extract (3)

wacht now, [music] and sondee feegete taki a ini tu wiki na wi e kisi L. a ini ladiyow wi lutu, sondee feegete san e pasa yaaso, san i denki pasa, san i denki pasa, wi wiki di be pasa yaaso J. booko a **record, mille trois cent personnes** be de **en direct**, kon u luku sa Lo. o du tide, dati wani taki u paati en u paati en gi Loba, u paati en u paati en meke a gwe moo faawe, a so a mu de, G. big up i seefi live a ini ladiyow wi lutu, **cousin** teke i **spécial** big up from from ladiyow wi lutu, a so a mu de [music]

'Listen, and not [wanting] to forget to tell you that in two weeks we'll welcome L. on Radio Wie Loetoe, without forgetting what is happening here, what do you think is happening, last week J. broke the **record, 1300 people** followed the show live online, let's see how Lo. will fare today. That means, let people know [that Lo. will be on], let people know, let people

know, let him go further [have more live listeners]. That's how it should be. Strength to G. you are live with Radio Wie Loetoe, brother take the special strength from Radio Wie Loetoe, that's how it should be.'

In Extract (3) French insertions are minimal, involving elements that are not uncommon in off-line speech (e.g. numbers) and/or for which there are no easy equivalents given the sentence frame (*record, special, en direct*). The only one that is a bit unusual and probably has a performative function (locally called *modo*) is *cousin*. We also find extended episodes in French though (4). These occur comparatively rarely and usually come from invitees when discussing professional practices such as that of a makeup artist (4) or other topics that people appear to discuss more typically in French. Note, that the speaker accompanies her use of French with translations (italics) into Eastern Maroon varieties, suggesting that she feels a need to contain or mitigate her use of French although it is obviously an important language for her professional work.

Extract (4)

Te wi **choisir** antisérum, a antisérum a mu de eh, **(en)fin** te i go a wan **formation** den taygi i taki a mu de **deux temps plus claire**, a wani taki *a mu kiin tu toon moo*, a moo i sikin, ma mi seefi **tester** a sani de, te a de tu toon, te a kiin tu toon moo i sikin, a né e moy, boyti efu na a ini so wanwan yuu so i wani poti en [gesture; unclear] ma efu i, ma kon taki efu i poti en a i ondoo ayn sani makeup seefi a de a i ayn da a e kisi [unclear], a ná e moy, dus moo a meki a mu de wan leysi likti moo a, moo a sikin fu u. **Donc votre antisérum doit, moi je vous conseille que votre antisérum doit être un temps plus claire que votre incarnation et pas deux temps plus claire, si non, bein, c'est trop claire. En métropole, les filles ça les dérangent pas, elles en ont habitude, mais ici en Guyane, c'est pas encore ça ça c'en fait pas en tant que makeup. Ok, donc je vais venir trav, je vais venir nettoyer son sourcille, mi kon kiin a boo fu ayn fu en na ondoo...**

'When we **choose antiserum**, the antiserum, it must be ehh, **in fact**, when you go to a **training**, they tell you that it must be two times lighter, that means *it must be two times lighter than your body*, but I tested that matter myself, when it is twice, when it is two times lighter than your skin, it isn't nice, unless if it is at this sort of time and you want to put it [gesture] [unclear] but if you, but let's say if you put it even on the makeup on the lower part of your eye, it's on your eye and it takes effect [unclear], it isn't nice, thus as a result it should be one shade lighter than your skin color. **Thus your antiserum must, as for me, I advise that your antiserum should be one shade lighter than you skin color and not two shades lighter, if not, well, it's too light. In continental France, the girls, they don't mind, they are used to it, but here in French Guiana, it's not yet that, that's not done for makeup. Okay, thus I will come work, I will now come to cleaning her frown, I now clean her frown below.**

As in the case of other contexts (e.g. Migge 2007; Migge & Léglise 2013), English commonly occurs on the show but its use is limited to individual insertions into Eastern Maroon discourses and consists of common popular culture words such as *vibes, live, love, game, sexy, playlist*, YouTube-related language such as *superchat, chat* in addition to other commonly known words (*and, again, live from*). There are no extended episodes in English. The most frequently used term is *big up* from reggae music which is used to mean 'to lift up' or 'strength' and contrasts with the local term *kaakiti* 'strength' commonly used in off-line contexts in the same meanings and as a friendly subcultural greeting between equals etc.

Extract (5)

Wacht now, mi sabi fa wi e fii ma mi e fii a **vibes**, fu ini yaaso te yu e fii a **vibes** dati wani taki ala den wan di lasi wan lobi wan, kaakiti gi u, lobi gi u te a ini wi ati **live** te a ini ladiyow wi lutu, fa anga yu, fa anga yu, fa wi e fii, **live** a ini ladiyow wi lutu, Lo. kon u gwe, teke a **vibes**, **keeping the vibes**, paati en meke a gwe moo faawe [music] P. **again** dati wani taki u de **live** a ini ladiyow wi lutu, **week end vibes** yu e paati en [...] yu e libi yu libi enke fa yu wani, enke fa Gadu taki a so i mu libi, a so yu e libi, **big up** ala a hii **team** ladiyow wi lutu, V. teke fi yu **live** a ini ladiyow wi lutu, a so a mu de, wi e gwe anga langa [music] ‘Listen, I know how we feel, but I feel the **vibes or atmosphere**, inside here, when you feel the **vibes**, that means, everyone who lost a loved one, strength to you, love to you with all our heart, **live** on Radio Wie Loetoe, how about you, how about you, how do we feel, live in Radio Wie Loetoe, Lo. let’s start, take **vibes**, **keep the vibes** going, share them, make them go further [song] P. **again**, that means we are **live** on Radio Wie Loetoe, **weekend vibes**, share them [...] you live your life as you want to, how God says that you should live, that’s how you live, **strength** to all the **team** of Radio Wie Loetoe, V. take what you need **live** on Radio Wie Loetoe, that’s how it should be, we’ll go on with the show. [music]’

Dutch features comparatively little on the show when compared with previous analysis and comprises most commonly of greetings extended to Surinamese invitees as a gesture of inclusiveness (6), calls to attention *wacht* ‘listen, wait’ (5), individual words such as *bel* ‘call’ *formatie* ‘training’, *situatie* ‘situation’, *beste* ‘best’ that alternate with French equivalents and have also become an integral part of the Eastern Maroon lexicon.

Extract (6)

DJ Flexy: [...] T. live a ini ladiyow wi lutu, dati wani taki goontapu aliki i nownow live, T., T., sama na T. live a ini ladiyow wi lutu? goontapu oo tyoo, goontapu sani. T. fa anga yu, bonsoir, **guten avond how gat het me je?**
‘T. live in Radio Wie Loetoe, that means the world is listening to you live now. T., T. who is T. live in Radio Wie Loetoe? The whole world, T. what’s up with you, good evening, **good evening, how are you?**
T.: Yow Yow Yow Yow

Although DJ Flexy at times tries to hold a brief conversation in Dutch with Surinamese invitees, it is typically invitees from Suriname, such as a woman involved in Suriname politics (7), who are most likely to make use of a lot of lexical insertions or even very short episodes in Dutch. Before Extract (7) was uttered, DJ Flexy had asked her to explain in plain language.

Extract (7)

A **voorsitter** for ABOP na a man di den e kay Ronny Brownswijk. **En** Ronny Brownswijk ala sama sabi eke bigi **bravo**, dan en na tiiman di wi abi a ini ABOP. **Ondervorsitter** di wi abi a ini a **partij** na **mijn heer K. en so** wi abi den taa **structuur**, i abi **congres bestuur en so, en** a wan, den **verschillende** sani di ABOP du, na taki a pisi ten di ABOP be de wi abi **bij voorbeeld ministerie fu sociale zake**, u opo **kinder** ehmm, **kinderbijslag** opo, gaansama moni opo, a pisi ten di ABOP be de, u be abi **ministerie TCD**, en mu meke **moegelig** taa **bedrijf** kon, ...

‘The **leader** of ABOP [a Maroon party] is the man we call Ronny Brownswijk. **And** Ronny Brownswijk, everyone knows him as a ???, he is the leader that we have in ABOP. The **second in command** that we have in the **party** is **Mr. K. and then** we have the other **structures**, there are **congress leaders and then and** the one, the **different** things that ABOP did at the time when it was in power, we have for example **the ministry for social**

affairs, we opened up **child** ehm, **child benefit** started, pension benefit started that time ABOP was in power, there was the ministry of ???, and we made it possible for other **businesses** to set up business, ...’

Sranan Tongo, a closely related Creole, which features frequently in urban public speech among older male Maroons in both Suriname and Guyane (Migge 2007) has a very low representation on *Radio Wie Loetoe* and, if used, is mostly produced by invitees from Suriname, though individual expressions are used by others too.

The recordings also reveal some language contact phenomena. I will mention two here that seem particularly salient. First, although there is obviously an indigenous word for question (*akisi*) DJ Flexy and invitees often use either French *question* sometimes embedded with the French verb *poser* ‘to put to’ (8a) or Dutch *vraag* (8b). It may have something to do with the cultural pragmatics of *akisi* – it has the overtones of beseeching or reprimanding while the European ones do not – or it may be that it is more typically used as a verb, see expressions like (*mi wani akisi I wan sani* ‘I want to ask you something’) and (8).

- (8) a. ala den **questions** di u wani kon **poser** wi e kon akisi en tide.
‘all of the questions that we/you want to ask, we are going to ask them today.’
b. wi abi fu akisi yu wan, wan **vraag**
‘we have to ask you a question.’

Second, DJ Flexy and some callers put the French question particle *est-ce que* in front of non-wh questions (9). The question particle does not affect the Eastern Maroon structure as it employs a rising intonation. This usage, which seems mostly subconscious, may suggest that the influence of French on Eastern Maroon varieties is changing in quality. A more detailed analysis of such phenomena, including intonational uses, is necessary.

- (9) **est-ce que** i sa kay wantu nen gi wi fu u, fu u, kande wi ná e follow den sani [...] ‘can you call out a few names for us so that we, maybe we are not aware of these things.’

The above examples demonstrate that while the Eastern Maroon varieties are clearly the main means of interaction on the show to which participants seem to mostly naturally orient, the use of other linguistic resources from their linguistic repertoires is also common and mostly unremarkable, appearing to naturally fit into the conversational flow. Longer episodes in a language other than the Eastern Maroon varieties appear to function as instances of marked code-switching (Myers-Scotton 1993), that is, a divergence from the habitual situational norm. This suggests that an effort is being made to keep languages apart, or in their places – e.g. Eastern Maroon varieties for community talk and French or Dutch for specific limited contexts. One reason for that might be that while all participants have competence in Eastern Maroon varieties, this is not necessarily true of the other languages due to different educational trajectories which seems to be the reason for the chat comment in (10).

- (10) [MC] Takie aukaans miki wie jee ‘Speak Ndyuka, let us hear and understand’

While lexical insertions may come from different languages that speakers do not necessarily speak (in their off-line lives), the fact that participants primarily code-mix and code-switch with French (and to a lesser extent Dutch) rather than Sranan Tongo and the overall low frequency of Sranan Tongo is remarkable. It suggests that Eastern Maroon varieties are directly competing and coexisting with European languages and do not rely on the

intermediary role of Sranan Tongo which has traditionally functioned as an urban or educated vernacular proxy for Maroons.

In terms of style, *Radio Wie Loetoe* targets respectable language use, see for instance DJ Flexy's warning (11), but neither the host nor the invitees target the Eastern Maroon formal style associated with traditional formal meetings (Migge 2004) as in the case of the radio broadcast *Loweman Pansu* in French Guiana (Migge 2011). Most notably, the speech is continuous rather than punctured with regular short intervals and speakers use plain language rather than special polite vocabulary.

Extract (11)

And enke fa mi be taygi u kaba ala den sama di e poti den négatifs commentaires, dati wani taki fi yu e poti wan sani di wi e si taki a ná e go anga ladiyow wi lutu, bika te wi e kay den artistes kon yaaso, winsi sama wi e kay fu kon yaaso, a fu u taki makandaa, libi makandaa anga wiseefi, bika kande yu, yu á capable fu kon yaaso no wan dey kon soy i fesi, da den sama di e kon yaaso, u lesipeki den, and te u si yu dun a sani yaaso, yu á e go na a se, dati wani taki wi e bloqué yu, te u bloqué yu dati wani taki yu á kon a ini ladiyow wi lutu moo, a so a mu de.

'And as I told you already, all the people who put disparaging comments [in the chat], that is, if you write something that does not agree with Radio Wie Loetoe, because when we invite the artists to come, it is for a friendly discussion, because maybe you do not have it to come on the show, but we are respectful with them, and if we see you doing it [sending disparaging comments], we won't stand for that, that means, we will block your account. When your account has been blocked, you cannot be part of Radio Wie Loetoe

A possible reason for the difference in style is that talk on *Radio Wie Loetoe* is very dialogical while *Loweman Pansu* and *Koyeba* focus on information provision in a presentation format which is more similar to the formal style.

While I have so far not come across openly disparaging comments about language use as reported for other fora (e.g. McLaughlin 2014; Sharma 2014), people nevertheless comment on language use. For instance, in one case the host and some chatters remark on an invitee's frequent use of the agreement tag *i sa fa* 'you know' or the chatters criticise the host for his manner of talking and conducting the interaction (12).

- (12) a. [YC] flexy e lolo 'Flexy is off topic'
b. [BC] Flexy fusaide i bali so 'Flexy, why are you shouting like this'

There is, however, some indication that the host's inquisitive questioning of invitees including about very personal matters, which resembles western-style media interviews, is not perceived to be entirely acceptable. For instance, DJ Flexy feels the need, at regular intervals, to explain why what he calls *dyakata sama* 'making people stumble' is necessary, and some chatters (13) and callers (14) also remark on its intrusive nature when assessing the show.

- (13) [BR] Flexy soso poti faya 'Flexy is constantly challenging [the invitee]'

Extract (14)

Mi lobi ala sani ma son leysi yu e go tumisi a ini tusani eke L. fa a be kon ape a abi wantu sani fu i aksi en, son leysi mi tey mi ana tee taki fu a mu piki son sani...

‘I like all the things [on the show], but sometime you go too much into shady things like with L. just now. There were some things that you asked him, sometimes I cramped up my hands, hoping that he would not reply...’

The style alluded to in (13-14) clearly contrasts with traditional verbal behaviour which highly values indirectness, avoidance of open dispute, concealment of taboos and imposition on others, especially when talking about difficult issues (Migge 2004, 2011).

4.2. Written language practices

Throughout the show participants are sending comments to interact with DJ Flexy, other participants and to express their views about what is happening on the show. Messages in this running commentary consist of just one or more emoji, a combination of text and emoji or just text. As in the case of the oral practices on the show, the main languages used for chatting are the Eastern Maroon varieties, but French also features regularly; the presence of French in the chat appears greater than in (the oral part of) the show. Messages only in Dutch (15a) are rare, but code-mixing involving Eastern Maroon varieties and languages such as Dutch, French Guianese Creole (15b), French (15c) or English is not uncommon (15c).

- (15) a. [DD] Welke tune is dit van loba ‘Which one of Loba L.’s songs is this?’
b. [CA] ofa **toute moune** ‘Greetings to everybody’
c. GB] Mio poti **vert fard à paupières** gi la machine meke a *shine*
‘I will put eyeshadow on the eyelids of the Machine [a person] to make it shine.’

Language use in part varies according to activity or topic. For example, greetings are often presented in French (16a-c) but sometimes in combination with informal Eastern Maroon greetings such as *yo* (16d) and *ofa* (16b). Formal Eastern Maroon greetings (Migge 2005) such as *A tapu u oo* ‘Good evening’ occur rarely in the chat but are used orally.

- (16) a. [MP] bonsoir ‘good evening’
b. [MC] salut salut a tous ‘hello, hello to all’
c. [FMM] Bonsoir tout le monde ‘good evening, everyone’
d. [MC] yo bonjour à vous tous ‘hey, good evening to all of you’

Denser use of French, including longer messages and or extended exchanges, occur in the chat when the invitee talks about professional practices using a lot of French (insertions) such as in the case of the makeup artist’s show, see the interaction in (17), suggesting that written language use is influenced by oral language use in the show.

- (17) [AKM] Les gens très foncés ils faut utiliser le crayon noir
‘The people who are very dark, they should use the black pencil.’
[STB] Faut quand même que la couleur du crayon ressorte
‘The colour of the pencil should come out.’
[GB] Mio poti vert fard à paupières gi la machine meke a shine
‘I will put eye shadow on the eyelids of the Machine [person] to make it shine.’
[LB] bien tu va me maquiller un jou [2 laughing emoji]
‘fine, you are going to make my make up one of these days’
[GG] Je ne fais pas en haut je fais que le bas [1 worrying emoji]
‘I do not apply it to the upper part, I only do the lower part.’
[KKL] [2 laughing & 1 praying emoji]
[TB] Si ça ressort pas ça ne sert à rien d’en mettre slinki [1 laughing emoji]

‘It it is not visible, it makes no sense to put it ???’

Strong emotions (e.g. anger) and critical observations are generally presented in Eastern Maroon varieties but there are exceptions (e.g. 18) and there also seem to be different chatter language profiles. While many chatters write monolingual, bilingual and multilingual messages, some appear to show a preference for French rather than Eastern Maroon varieties when chatting. A more detailed analysis tracking people within one and across different shows is necessary to get more insights into user profiles.

(18) [RB] 2020 c'est quelle femme qui va supporter tes chantages à la con ?
‘2020 what woman is going to support your cunt-like blackmail?’

The discussion suggests that Eastern Maroon varieties and French are in an even closer encounter with each other in the chat than in the oral part of the show, at times competing with each other. Other languages occur much less frequently and as part of code-mixed utterances. There is also code-mixing between Eastern Maroon varieties and French within one message and across messages and the alternation between the two appears to be much smoother than in the oral part of the show; use of French does not involve translations and chatters do not tell other chatters to adapt their language use.

4.3. Orthographic practices

An important difference is found in terms of the orthographic choices of chatters. European languages and French in particular are represented using the official orthography with occasional use of orthographic colloquialism such as *c* instead of *c'est*, *bnjr* for *bonjour* or *cv* for *ça va* ‘fine’.

(19) a. [NN] C vrai ‘It’s true.’
b. [NL] bnjr ‘hello’
c. [TF] Oui cv J.-m. et toi ‘Yes, fine, J.-M. and you?’

In contrast to that, the ‘official’ writing system for Eastern Maroon varieties (Goury & Migge 2017; Shanks 1984) is rarely used consistently on the chat. The main reason, of course, is that while writing in European languages is formally taught in schools and highly policed, writing in Eastern Maroon varieties is currently only taught in some schools mostly in western French Guiana and the people who participate in *Radio Wie Loetoe* are probably too old to have benefited from this teaching. Eastern Maroon varieties are represented using an older Sranan Tongo-based orthography, as used in writing on *Radio Wie Loetoe*, an adaption of French conventions or a mix of both and the official system. The elements indicative of the former are, for instance, the double vowel grapheme <oe> to represent the monothong [u] or <ie> to represent [i] and emblematic adaptations from French orthography involve the use of <ch> to present the palatal voiceless fricative that alternates with [s] before high vowels in words like *fasi* ‘manner’ or *peesi* ‘place’ (20a-b) and the occasional use of <ou> (20d) to represent the monothong [u].¹¹ French writing also affects Eastern Maroon orthography in other ways: the imperfective marker *e* is at times represented by the homophonous French conjunction *et* ‘and’ (20e). The palatal glide is generally represented as <j> (20a) rather than as <y>, pre-nasal stop sounds are often omitted (20c) and the word final velar nasal is represented as <ng> (20d) rather than as <n>.

¹¹ The use of <ch> is particularly popular among Aluku and less so Pamaka speakers to display their difference to Ndyuka which is associated with an alveolar fricative realization.

- (20) a. [JR] Alaf**achi** na fai ji taki (ala fasi na fa i e [ye] taki) ‘In any case, as you say’
 b. [CC] sopi teki pe**chiii** ‘Alcohol is taking over [i.e. they are talking strangely].’
 c. [SP] Flexy ye fania a sani a **djuka** tongo badder e taki u fika waka sani de
 ‘Flexy you are misinterpreting the thing. Badderman is talking about the
 Ndyuka language. You guys stop talking about having affairs.’
 d. [JJ] nex **ou** naii fustang ‘We do not understand anything’
 e. [YA] mi **et** taigi ‘I’m telling you’

Writing is generally quite informal as indicated by the abundant use of emoji and the use of repetition of letters or capitals to express emphasis, for example.

- (21) a. [MCN] DEDE OOOOOOOOOOOOOO [15 laughing emoji] ‘I’m dying [of laughing]!!’
 b. [MN] F. AI SWITIE GI MI TI A KOSIE FLEXY
 ‘F. I love it when he curses Flexy’
 c. [CK] flexy fikaaaaaaa mang ‘Flexy let it go’
 d. [JS] flexyyyyyyy man ‘Man, Flexy [come on]’

Apart from the use of <ch> which may indicate that someone is not Ndyuka, people also use other dialect indicators such as the well-known variation between <i> and <e> at the end of some words that distinguish between Aluku/Pamaka and Ndyuka, respectively.

- (22) a. [KK] Flexy fika meke wi yee ‘Flexy, let us here’
 b. [BB] LV noiti meki casquette ‘He never made a helmet’

While chatters do not consistently use any one writing system and sometimes merge separate free morphemes into one, the language used on the chat is structurally and pragmatically ‘authentic’ in that language use is idiomatically and pragmatically appropriate (e.g. 23a-b). Chatters language use is also stylistically rich ranging from very bold on record familiar and directive language (e.g. 22a, 23d) to sympathizing (23f), joyous (21a, 23b) to assertive (23c, 23d), warning (23e) language use.

- (29) a. [QK] Aw leii gi j (a o ley gi J) ‘He’ll say untrue things about J’
 b. [NP] aw kiiimi (a o kii mi) ‘He’s really funny’ (lit.: he’ll kill me)
 c. [PS] lo. nai weli nep **ye** [3 laughing emoji] ‘Lo. does not get tired at all!’
 d. [AD] meke à man singi **man** ‘Let the guy sing man’
 e. [NA] flexy joe dede **ooh** ‘Flexy you’ll exhaust yourself, mark my words’
 f. [RM] j. **baa** bia ‘I’m contemplating J. my friend’

This brief analysis demonstrates that chatters creatively exploit the lack of a socially normed orthographic conventions for Eastern Maroon varieties as a resource to encode social and interactional information. While it is technically also possible for French and other languages, this is not done suggesting that the languages perform somewhat different functions: Eastern Maroon varieties are more used as a vehicle for personal matters while French performs more informational functions but, of course, neither usage is exclusive. Further analysis is required.

5. Conclusion

Radio Wie Loetoe demonstrates that a rich and distinct Eastern Maroon cultural and artistic sphere exists and that it is worth engaging with. Instead of imposing traditional culture, it opens up a critical discourse about it in an enjoyable, enriching and mutually respectful atmosphere for those who associate with it but are probably at least bi-cultural.

Linguistically, *Radio Wie Loetoe* bears testament to the fact that Eastern Maroon varieties continue to function as important media of communication and are considered a salient cultural and communal resource by their speakers, despite globalization, geographic dispersion and pressure to adopt national languages and culture. Eastern Maroon varieties are an important unifying force for this network of people who live across several different political entities: Suriname, French Guiana, France and the Netherlands. They have normative status on the show, but this norm is not entirely prescriptive as it allows for limited coexistence with the languages that also play a role in speaker's lives such as French, Dutch and English. Language choices on the show suggest that Eastern Maroon varieties are positioned as an urban vernacular in addition to being a community language because the language that has traditionally most heavily competed with Eastern Maroon varieties in this domain, Sranan Tongo, only plays a negligible role on the show; they also provide further evidence of the fact that separate national (French (Guianese) vs Suriname) Eastern Maroon language practices are emerging (Léglise & Migge 2019). In this (French (Guianese)) context, Eastern Maroon varieties are in close encounter with French due to many of its speakers being bilingual in these languages. Eastern Maroon varieties dominate in the oral domain but in the written realm, the chat, French sometimes competes with Eastern Maroon varieties being used for a wide range of functions. However, unlike French, Eastern Maroon varieties may be productively used for conveying salient social information such as ethnicity.

As argued by Androutsopoulos (2006a: 423) CMC data “can be examined by and provide a new empirical arena for, different research traditions”. YouTube data in particular closely correspond to the kind of data that we desire for our analyses: it is spontaneous, stylistically rich data that were not created for the benefit of researchers or influenced by researchers' presence. *Radio Wie Loetoe*, as highlighted by its motto, is a show for (Eastern) Maroons produced by (Eastern) Maroons. It provides a window to people's current social concerns and how language, both the Eastern Maroon varieties and their entire linguistic repertoire, is mobilised in these interactions. Although these data are obviously constrained by the affordances of the setting, as in the case of any other data, they are real, easily accessible and a great addition to current data sources. They may also help us create the increasingly larger corpora needed for our analyses.

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