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**Author(s):** Dlaske, Kati

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## **Music video covers, minoritised languages and affective investments in the space of YouTube**

### INTRODUCTION

While interest in ‘affective processes’ has led to an ‘affective turn’ in cultural studies (Knudsen & Stage 2015; Gregg & Seigworth 2010; Ahmed 2004), in sociolinguistics this perspective has been given far less attention, despite the stated ‘audacity of affect’ in fields focal to sociolinguistic inquiry (McElhinny 2010; cf., however, e.g. McLaughlin 2015; da Silva 2015; McEwan-Fujita 2010; Pavlenko 2002; Goodwin & Goodwin 2000). One such focal field is the ongoing revaluation of minoritised languages in contemporary globalisation, effected, among other things, by increased circulation of these languages in new media domains<sup>i</sup> (Pietikäinen et al. 2016; Kelly-Holmes 2014; Pietikäinen & Kelly-Holmes 2013; Heller 2011). In this connection, research has investigated how access to new media spaces and genres can create new values and functions for minoritised languages often regarded as old-fashioned and unglamorous (e.g. Moriarty 2014; Pietikäinen 2014; Jones & Uribe-Jongbloed 2013; Honeycutt & Cunliffe 2010). Although these investigations lean towards mention of affective processes, they fail to make these central to an exploration of how the revaluations are shaped by affective investments embedded in broader socio-political processes.

Combining recent theorising on affect with insights from sociolinguistic research (e.g. Ahmed 2004; Wetherell 2012; Moriarty & Pietikäinen 2011; Kelly-Holmes & Atkinson 2007), the present study<sup>ii</sup> directs the ‘lens of affect’ (McElhinny 2010) on two examples: music video covers from two minority language<sup>iii</sup> contexts, Irish and Sámi, uploaded on YouTube and performed in Irish and Sámi respectively. The Irish video is a remake of the global hit *Wake me up* by the Swedish DJ and producer Avicii, made by the Irish language summer school Coláiste Lurgan. The Sámi performance, made by the Sámi female comedy duo Märrät Säpikkää/Njuoska bittut, is a parody of the popular song *Missä muruseni on* (‘Where is my sweetheart’) by Finnish pop singer Jenni Vartiainen. Both performances received considerable attention on YouTube when they were first launched there. Moreover, both became part of a larger phenomenon: while the Irish performance became an international (media) phenomenon in its own right, the Sámi video was launched as a teaser for a comedy show broadcast on a national TV channel in Finland. Most importantly for this paper, however, both videos elicited an abundance of affective comments expressing a range of emotions towards not only the performances, but also the minority languages and their speakers.

Focusing on this affective-discursive practice (Wetherell 2012) of YouTube commentary, this study analyses nodes of ‘affective investment’ (Kølvraa 2015) emerging from the web of comments. The analysis shows how the affective investments create a space around the two minoritised languages, their speakers and the related ethnicities/nationalities filled with positive affects: enthusiasm, admiration, love, solidarity and pride. At the same time, however, these apparently ‘happy’ spaces are shaped and cut through by boundaries and divisions within and between ethno-linguistic communities, marked by scorn, anger and shame. Examining further the socio-historical embeddedness of the affective investments, the study discusses how many of these are expressions of, to a greater or lesser degree, a banal ‘everyday nationalism’ (Billig 1995; Jones & Merriman 2009), connected in complex ways to the colonial

histories of the two countries, Ireland and Finland. Overall, the investigation sheds light on how the social media operate as a catalyst of socially conditioned affective investments contributing to a (re)valuation of minoritised languages, speakers, and ethnic and national belongings, at the crossroads of ‘banal globalisation’ and ‘everyday nationalism’ (Thurlow & Jaworski 2010; Jones & Merriman 2009).

#### AFFECT, LANGUAGE, THE SOCIAL MEDIA AND ‘EVERYDAY NATIONALISM’

Following the view of Ahmed (2004) among others, *affect* is understood in the present study as more or less synonymous with *emotion* or *feeling*. What sets the notion of affect apart from the conventional notion of emotion, however, is that affects are seen as fundamentally relational, emerging and existing only in relation to another (human or non-human) body. Affects can be thought to travel between and to ‘stick’ to bodies (Ahmed 2004), making them sites of ‘affective investment’ (Kølvraa 2015; see also Knudsen & Stage 2015). Affects are understood not only as relational, but also as socially conditioned and performative; affects not only shape their objects – individual and collective bodies to which they ‘stick’ – but also create alignments, divisions and boundaries between those bodies. It is these social dimensions that connect affects inseparably to the ‘cultural politics of world making’ (Ahmed 2004: 12).

What is more, affects are understood here as something that can be expressed via language, not as ‘an “extra discursive” event’ (Wetherell 2012: 350; cf. Massoumi 2009). Understood this way, affects lend themselves to ‘textual’ (Ahmed 2004; Knudsen & Stage 2015), or rather, in the present study, discourse analytical, examination. In her powerful critique of approaches separating affect and discourse, Wetherell (2012) introduces the term *affective-discursive practice* to underline the inseparability of affect and discourse. The

YouTube comments on which the present study focuses are a tangible illustration of such practice.

Regarded as ‘objects, mediators and repositories of affect’ (Kuntsman 2012: 6), social media sites, YouTube among them, have attracted a growing body of research in cultural and media studies (e.g. Karatzogianni & Kuntsman 2012; Knudsen & Stage 2012; McBean 2014; Reestorff 2015). Kuntsman (2009), among others, has studied what might be termed, following Billig (1995), ‘hot’ nationalism in cyberspace. The present study draws on the notions of hot and banal nationalism as introduced by Billig (1995), ‘hot’ nationalism referring to the more extreme and visible expressions of nationalism, ‘banal’ nationalism pointing to the rather routine and often imperceptible reproduction of national belonging. Nevertheless, the study contributes to the critique of the underlying dualism problematised by empirical contexts, such as the social media site examined here, where there is a mixture of more or less ‘banal’ or ‘hot’ acts of nationalism which, moreover, can be interpreted as more or less ‘banal’ or ‘hot’ by different actors (cf. Jones & Merriman 2009). As an overarching concept seeking to overcome the dualist inclination, the study adopts the notion of ‘everyday nationalism’ introduced by Jones and Merriman (2009), aimed at highlighting not the quality but the everydayness of nationalist acts.

## THE SOCIOLINGUISTIC CONTEXT OF (THE) IRISH AND (THE) SÁMI

Both Irish and the Sámi languages can be characterised as minoritised languages from peripheralised sites (cf. Pietikäinen & Kelly-Holmes 2013) although the respective languages have very different positions in the context of the respective nation states, Ireland and, in this study, Finland. The following outline presents some aspects of both contexts as a background for the analysis below.

Although Irish is the first official language in the Republic of Ireland, and as such is promoted especially through the medium of education, it occupies rather a marginal position in many other areas of everyday life, such as business and the media, where English is the dominant language (Kelly-Holmes 2011; Moriarty 2014; Brennan & Costa 2016; for an overview of Irish in the media see Kelly-Holmes & Atkinson 2007). As Moriarty (2014: 471) has pointed out, ‘the limited space for Irish language in the public domain has increased the association of the language with schooling’, strengthened the notion of the language as old-fashioned and backward and sustained a view in which ‘speaking Irish has been afforded little indexical value in Irish society’ (ibid.: 468). Kelly-Holmes and Atkinson (2007: 176–178) have described the relation of the Irish people to the language in terms of two continua, both running from superiority to inferiority. The first continuum relates to the societal status of the language, with ‘Irish as a marker of ethnolinguistic belonging’ at one end and the notion of ‘Irish as a dead language with no relevance in the world’ at the other. The second continuum, relating to competence, emerges against the backdrop of the prevailing ideology that ‘complete competence in Irish is the only possibility’ (Kelly-Holmes 2011: 531). Having the “‘élite” of fluent Irish speakers’ at one end, the ‘majority of non-fluent ones’ at the other, the continuum makes clear the division between ‘them’ and ‘us’ (cf. Kelly-Holmes 2011: 521). The ideology, along with the perceived division, might also at least partly explain the somewhat curious fact that although Irish is a compulsory subject throughout the years of compulsory schooling in Ireland, in the 2011 Census only 41 % of the population reported an ability to speak Irish (Census Ireland 2011, n.d.).

Of the nine Sámi languages, on the other hand, the native languages of the indigenous Sámi people, three have the status of an official language in the Sámi domicile area in the north of Finland<sup>iv</sup>, a country which otherwise has two national languages, Finnish and Swedish.<sup>v</sup> The most vibrant of the Sámi languages, Northern Sámi, is estimated to have around 30,000

speakers in total; other Sámi languages have only a couple of hundred speakers, and all nine languages are classified as endangered. Today, around a half of the Sámi speak some Sámi language to a varying degree. The historical trajectory of the Sámi languages echoes that of many other minoritised languages (including Irish), involving deliberate marginalisation and stigmatisation on the part of the dominant nation states and, in the past couple of decades, attempts at language revitalisation, especially among young people. (See e.g. Pietikäinen 2008; Pietikäinen & Dlaske 2013). Despite the gradual strengthening of the position of the Sámi languages in the Sámi domicile area, in the rest of Finland, in public domains including the media, the Sámi languages remain marginal. (For a recent overview of the Sámi languages in the media in Finland see Pietikäinen 2014.)

What the majority Finns know not only about the Sámi languages but also about the Sámi people in general remains rather sketchy, being shaped primarily by the popular media and its imagery of the Sámi as backward, dirty, over-sexed drinkers, and the Lapland tourism industry, which maintains an image of the Sámi as pristine but primitive people leading their lives far away from modern civilisation (see Dlaske & Jäntti 2016; Näkkäljärvi 2016, May 16; Lehtola 1999). Notwithstanding these rather negative conceptions, the attitude of the Finns towards the Sámi is characterised by a kind of ‘double-entanglement’ (McRobbie 2009): while on the one hand othered and repudiated, on the other hand the Sámi are regarded as a kindred nation living within the borders of the Finnish nation state, as ‘our’ indigenous people. Both of these viewpoints reflect present-day colonial discourses circulating in Finland (cf. Näkkäljärvi 2016, May 16).

In both the Irish and Sámi contexts, access of the languages to new media spaces and genres, such as radio satire, rap, stand-up comedy and TV comedy shows, has contributed to shifts in values and indexicalities attached to the languages (e.g. Kelly-Holmes & Atkinson 2007; Moriarty 2014; Pietikäinen & Dlaske 2016). The two music video covers examined in

the present study exemplify further circulation of the two languages and their speakers in new media domains.

## THE TWO MUSIC VIDEO COVERS

The video from the Irish context, entitled *Avicii Vs Lurgan - "Wake me up" as Gaeilge* ('in Irish') (TG Lurgan 2013, August 9), is a remake of the global mega hit *Wake me up*, by the Swedish DJ and producer Avicii, launched on July 29, 2013. The Irish version is a joint production of teachers and students from Coláiste Lurgan, an independent, non-profit, but self-supporting, Irish language summer school in Gaeltacht, the Irish-speaking region on the west coast of Ireland where many Irish teenagers spend a couple of weeks in the summer to improve their Irish. Producing Irish-language versions of globally popular pop songs and the related videos has for a few years been part of the course work and a way of learning Irish at Coláiste Lurgan. The video examined here, then, is not unique. What makes it special, however, is the (media) attention it gained and the huge popularity it achieved. Just to give a few examples, the performance was praised by newspapers and online magazines, which also circulated the video through their websites; radio stations took the song on their playlists, not only in Ireland, but also in Australia and Canada; and part of the group starring on the video were invited to perform on the Late Late Show, broadcast on the national channel RTÉ1.<sup>vi</sup> The performance was noted even by Avicii himself, who linked the video on his Facebook page and posted 'This one is so cool! I can't understand a word but I love it'. (Ó Fátharta 2013, August 17). Arguably aided by this link, in its first two months on YouTube the video gathered two million views. A year later, the figure had risen to over 4 million (being, at the time of data collection, in February 2016, 4 988 004.) In February 2016, the performance had received 34 974 likes, 1 253 dislikes and 5 550 comments. Most of these are written in English, but around 900 hundred are



in Irish or include some Irish, while a handful are written in other languages, such as Spanish, Russian, Polish, German, French and Italian.

The video from the Sámi context was uploaded on YouTube in autumn 2011 (MaratSapikkaat 2011, December 13) as a teaser for the TV comedy show, *Märät säpikkäät/Njuoska bittut*,<sup>vii</sup> conceived, co-written and presented by two young Sámi women, Suvi West and Kirste Aikio, whose professional background lies in documentary film and Sámi radio journalism. The show ran for two seasons, the first in spring 2012, the second a year later. The series was the first ‘Sámi comedy show’ shown prime time on national Finnish TV. As such, it was widely noticed and promoted by newspapers, weeklies and women’s magazines, which published puff pieces, reviews and interviews with the presenters of the show. Elsewhere (e.g. Pietikäinen & Dlaske 2013; Pietikäinen 2014) we have described the show as a hybrid which mixes different genres (documentary, music videos, sketches), languages (Finnish, northern Sámi, English, Swedish), styles and other resources to ‘reflect on ethnic, sexual, gender, and geographical stereotypes and categories’ (Pietikäinen & Dlaske 2013: 91). In the show, the presenters themselves embody a kind of post-feminist girl power: at the same time giggling, hyperactive and in-your-face, hyper-sexual and ‘always up for it’ (Gill 2008; Dlaske & Jäntti 2016). The video in the focus of the present study appeared in the first episode of the show as the first part of the series of similar parodic music video covers which were a regular part of the show. On YouTube, by February 2016 the video had gathered 327 660 views, 1 335 likes, 47 dislikes and 230 comments, written mostly in Finnish, with a few short ones in Sámi (7 comments) and English, and one in Spanish. Although the number of comments on the two videos differs rather significantly (5550 vs. 230), qualitatively the two data sets converge, as we will see in the analysis below, on a number of points.

Before moving on to the description of the analytical approach and the actual analysis of the comments, it is necessary to briefly introduce the two videos (for a detailed analysis of the

videos see Dlaske 2016). In the Irish remake of Avicii's *Wake me up*, the makers have taken up the original song, freely translated the lyrics into Irish, and altered the composition by adding a choir to the chorus and a number of instruments (e.g. accordion and flutes) to give the melody a distinctive Irish twist. The visual storyline, situated in the original version partly in a village in early 20<sup>th</sup> century USA, partly in Avicii's concert, has been changed for the purposes of a summer school project. In the Coláiste Lurgan version, the video features over 300 students and teachers in a huge hall. Most of the performers are gathered along the sides, forming a stage in the middle for the lead singer, a mixing table and two female dance groups, one performing graceful ballet movements, the other traditional Irish dance. Some of the performers along the sides accompany the action on various instruments (piano, flutes, accordion, drums, violin), others form a huge singing and dancing choir that join in the chorus. The faces and clothes of some of the performers are painted with phosphor paint which glows in the dimmed hall lit with blue, red and purple spot lights. The video is edited to consist of quickly shifting close-ups of the (remarkably good-looking) lead singer and the different groups of performers, zooming in rather often on pretty girls in the crowd. While the boys are dressed in jeans and t-shirts, many of the girls, especially those in the close-ups, are wearing white tops and tight hot pants. The performance clearly taps into what Helen Kelly-Holmes (2011: 511) has called 'a newly emerging discourse of "sexy Irish"', signifying 'Irish speakers as young, beautiful and mediatisable' (cf. also Dlaske 2016).

The Sámi performance, on the other hand, preserves more of the visual story while altering the lyrics of the song, and this gives the whole a parodic twist. The original song by Jenni Vartiainen, *Missä muruseni on* (Where is my sweetheart), is a popular love song about longing for the other in a long-distance relationship. Entitled *Leivänmuruseni* ('My breadcrumb'), the *Märät säpikkäät/Njuoska bittut* version plays with the polysemy of the Finnish word *muru*, which means both 'sweetheart' and 'crumb'. The remade version is sung

in (northern) Sámi but subtitled in Finnish. Preserving a few words from every line to maintain a connection to the original, it tells a story about a Sámi woman who embarked on a hike in the fells but ate up all her provisions too quickly and is now starving. Through this story line the remade version makes a parodic allusion to the hardships of the traditional Sámi way of life. (For a more detailed examination, see Dlaske 2016.) The visual story seemingly reproduces the visuals of the original, but instead of being on a desolate shore, like Vartiainen in her video, the two women find themselves on the treeless uplands of Lapland, exactly the surroundings the women sing about. In both videos, the young women are clad in long, black close-fitting chiffon dresses, embodying a kind of femme fatale aesthetic with their pale faces, dark eyes and, in the case of *Märät säpikkäät/Njuoska bittut*, excessively blushed cheeks, which gives also their physical appearance a parodic twist. Their dark, free-flowing hair blows in the wind as they move to the music, representing with exaggeratedly passionate gestures the woman of their story on her long journey. At this point, I would like to suggest that despite the exaggerated and parodic twist, by representing Sámi speakers as ‘young, beautiful, [sexy] and mediatizable’ (Kelly-Holmes 2011), the performance mobilises a discourse of ‘sexy Sámi’. We will come back to this suggestion below, in the analysis.

## READING FOR AFFECT: THE ANALYTICAL APPROACH

Although questions of method and methodologies in affect research have been of increasing interest in recent years and empirical studies on textual, especially (social) media, material, proliferate (e.g. Knudsen & Stage 2015; Wetherell 2012; Mcbean 2014; Reestorf 2015; for more linguistically oriented studies, see e.g. Chilwa & Ifukor 2015; Malmquist 2015), more work needs to be done to explore analytical approaches to ‘reading for affect’ at the micro level of language use.<sup>viii</sup> The present study seeks to make a contribution in this direction.

The analysis of the data proceeded in three steps, or cycles. The first cycle involved reading the comments to identify ‘nodes’ of intensified ‘affective investment’ (Kølvraa 2015), that is, topics or themes in the web of comments that particularly gathered affective reactions from the users. Through this reading, I identified four main nodes of affective investment, which will be introduced below. The second cycle consisted of grouping the comments relating to these nodes together for a systematic analysis. The third cycle was an examination of these comments for the *kinds* of affective investments they involved, together with an examination of the socio-historical embeddedness and performative power of, as well as the dynamics between, the affective investments. To better describe the topography of the affective investments, I will present some quantitative data along with the qualitative analysis (cf. Knudsen & Stage 2015: 18).

Although, as Ahmed (2004: 13) holds, ‘texts [can] name or perform different emotions’, the question of how to analytically pin down ‘the emotionality of texts’ (ibid.), or linguistic utterances, is another matter. Certainly, affects can have a tangible linguistic expression in the form of verbs or (predicative) adjectives (*I love this version! This makes me proud to be Irish!*), but more often than not, this is not the case. What I found in the analysis was a continuum of cues ranging from naming an affect/emotion (*I’m proud*) to (para)linguistic cues (e.g. exclamation marks, emoticons), to (ever) more subtle indexical cues, where the meaning, or in this case affect, could not be ‘read off’ the linguistic content but rather emerged in connection with contextual factors, as part of the ‘metalinguistic’ meaning of the utterance (cf. Blommaert 2005: 252; Silverstein 2003; Dlaske & Jäntti 2016). To be able to attend to these various ways affects are expressed in the data along with their socio-historical embeddedness, the analysis follows discourse analytical and sociolinguistic approaches (e.g. Fairclough 1992; Blommaert 2010) in combining textual cues with contextual information for interpretation.

The four nodes of affective investment mentioned above emerge from the accumulation of affects relating to (1) *the two performances*, (2) *the performers* (3) *Irishness and Sáminess as an ethnic/national category* (4) and the *Irish and Sámi languages*. Comments relating to the first node (the performance) account for 41% of the comments in the Irish context and 24% in the Sámi/Finnish context; the second node (the performers) accounts for 8% of the comments in the Irish and 16% in the Sámi/Finnish context; node (3) (Irishness and Sáminess as an ethnic/national category) accounts for 8% in the Irish and 6 comments in the Sámi/Finnish context; and node (4) (the Irish and Sámi languages) 16 % in the Irish and 31 % in the Sámi/Finnish context. The comments linked to the languages of the performances extend from (4a) affective-evaluative comments on the languages themselves to a multifaceted and multivoiced debate on (4b) speaking and (4c) learning the languages. This ‘language dimension’ can thus be seen as a node of affective investment comprising at least these three thematic sub-nodes. In the following, necessarily linear examination, we will focus on each node in turn.

## NODES OF AFFECTIVE INVESTMENTS IN THE WEB OF COMMENTS

### *The performances*

The vast majority of comments on both the Sámi and the Irish performance are positive in tone. The video by *Märät säpikkäät/Njuoska bittut* attracted expressions of approval, at times even high praise, in which the positive affects were expressed mostly through linguistic (verbs, intensified predicative adjectives), at times also paralinguistic means (exclamation marks, emoticons):

- Really good, I liked;) <sup>ix</sup> (*Commentator1*)<sup>x</sup>

- This is damn great! (*Commentator2*)
- BRILLIANT!! :) (*Commentator3*)

The postings on the Coláiste Lurgan performance, on the other hand, create an atmosphere of overwhelming enthusiasm and excitement, evoked especially through the abundant use of paralinguistic resources, but also the choice of linguistic means.

- LOVE, LOVE, LOVE, LOVE, LOVE IT!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!! (*Commentator4*)
- Omg I love this video soooooooooo awesome! (*Commentator5*)
- Is aoibheann liom ea!!!!!!!!!!!!!! (I love it) (*Commentator6*)
- Absolutely unreal (*Commentator7*)

are just a few examples from among over two thousand similar ones expressed in both English and Irish, but also in other languages, such as Polish, French and Spanish.

In both the Sámi/Finnish context and the Irish context some of the commentators praise the performance for its contribution to language revitalisation. In Finland *Commentator8* remarks: “This was nice to watch. Great way to introduce Sámi to the gray mass :)”. In relation to the Coláiste Lurgan performance, similar comments read: ”I can't believe how good this is, and I'm so glad to see that Irish is being promoted in this way!” (*Commentator9*), ”The great comeback for the Irish language. You cannot get more sexy than this. Riverdance part 2” (*Commentator10*).

In both contexts, a number of posters (in the Irish 215, Sámi/Finnish 5) suggest that the cover version is “way better than the original”. In the Irish context, the relatively high number of these comments is likely to have been provoked by the juxtaposition in the title of the cover, *Avicii Vs Lurgan – “Wake me up” as Gaeilge*. In both contexts, moreover, several commentators suggest that the performance “should be sent to the eurovision”, to represent

Ireland or Finland, respectively. In the Irish context, the fans even set up a Facebook page to promote the initiative. The Eurovision Song Contest may be seen as a manifestation of ‘banal nationalism’ (Billig 1995) par excellence. If in both contexts the suggestions reflect a nationalist sentiment, in the light of the colonial histories of the two countries they have opposite effects. In the Irish context, the suggestion can be seen as an expression of an aspiration to linguistic de-colonisation. In the Sámi/Finnish context, the suggestion is a tangible example of present-day ‘banal colonialism’, arising from the notion that the Sámi culture somehow belongs to the Finns (Näkkäljärvi, 16 May 2016).

What is striking in relation to the Irish performance, moreover, is the discursive work done for ‘affective attunement’ (Massoumi 2009); not only are most of the comments overwhelmingly positive towards the performance, but the few negative ones are quickly ‘policed down’, with wordings indexing not only considerable affective investment in the performance but also aversion towards ‘affect aliens’ (Ahmed 2010); viewers unwilling to participate in the general celebration. In the following example this is indicated most clearly by the stylistically vulgar command *stop whining and just fuck off*, and the abusive name-calling *you fucking twat*, on the part of *Commentator12*:

- Good songs should not be mutilated by changing the language. It does nothing but take away from the great work of the original artist. But if people want to ruin songs, fine I just wont listen (*Commentator11*)
- You musnt be irish. Stop whining and just fuck off and dont watch this you fucking twat. (*Commentator12*)

Another discursive strategy that commentators employ to construct the performance as a ‘happy object’, invested with positive feelings, is to keep a record of and comment on the

dislikes the video has received. Suggesting at times irritation, at times amusement, some of these comments read:

- Wow amazing.. i love it!! the people dislike this video is stupid! (*Commentator13*)
- Screw those 670 people who disliked (*Commentator14*)
- 1000 people watched this upside down 🖐👎 (*Commentator15*)

Above, in his/her reply, *Commentator12* notes that *Commentator11* disliking the video means he/she ‘must’ (i.e. cannot) be Irish. The implication that it is normative to like the video if one is Irish not only reinforces the notion of the performance as a ‘happy object’, but provides another instance of the intertwining of affectivities with banal nationalism. We will encounter the same sense of normativity and further, more or less banal acts of ‘everyday nationalism’ (Jones & Merriman 2009) in relation to the affectivities around the Irish language and Irishness in the investigation below. First, however, let us examine further the affects attached more directly to the performance itself, moving on to comments relating to the performers.

### ***The performers***

The comments relating to the performers can be divided into two types: one relates to the performers as social actors, as the makers of the videos, the other as part of the performances. In both contexts a number of posters address the performers directly to congratulate, compliment, encourage and thank them, thereby expressing admiration and enthusiasm, as well as gratitude. In the Irish context, moreover, several posters comment admiringly on the talent of the group. Comments on the performers as part of the performance in both contexts focus



especially on their voice and appearance. The great majority of these comments are positive in tone. In the Irish context, *Commentator16* writes, “unreal! his voice is great :)”, while in the Sámi/Finnish context *Commentator17* comments, ”The girls got great voices” and *Commentator18* notes, “...the girls sing beautifully..”.

More numerous than comments on the performers’ voices (35 in the Irish, 6 in the Sámi/Finnish context) are comments on their appearance (135 in the Irish, 20 in the Sámi/Finnish context). In the Irish context some of these read:

- Irish people are very beautiful! :o and the song is very good too! :) (*Commentator19*)
- Besides the language, there's another mandatory requirement to join the band: must be good looking. I only see super cute girls, and this version is absolutely fantastic (*Commentator20*)
- the lad singin is h.o.t.t HOTT!! (*Commentator21*)
- the women r bang-ing-ing-ing (*Commentator22*)
- haha 50% listening 50% drooling at stiofan [the lead singer] (*Commentator23*)

While some of the comments indicate rather straightforward aesthetic affection (*Commentator19*, above), in many cases this spills over to include (a hint of) sexual attraction, often presented in a humorous tone.

In the case of the *Märät säpikkäät/Njuoska bittut* performance, 16 of the 20 comments relating to the appearance of the women allude to their sexual appeal<sup>xi</sup>:

- Great epic video! These women bewitched me... for a hundredth time already and which voices they have and had we Jenni Vartiainen join them we would be close to perfection! (*Commentator24*)
- cute chicks, one could move to Lapland ;) (*Commentator25*)

- fuckable looking creatures... (*Commentator26*)
- I'd well hit both on a reindeer skin by a campfire (*Commentator27*)
- I would gladly offer my dried meat to the girls if they came across in the fell feeling very hungry (*Commentator28*)


While some of the comments are rather favourable, even adulatory (cf. *Commentator24*, *Commentator25*), many others are strikingly offensive (cf. *Commentator26*), some of them evoking scenes reminiscent of porn fantasies (cf., *Commentator27*, *Commentator28*).

Although the comments on the appearance of the performers do not make up a very large proportion of the data in quantitative terms, they are significant in how they echo the discourse of 'sexy Irish' / 'sexy Sámi' manifest in the performances, as discussed above. As the comments suggest, the affects this discourse evokes are of two different kinds, characterised, roughly speaking, by desire and admiration in the one context, desire and derogation in the other. These affective orientations have different implications, and I will return to them in the concluding section, in which I discuss the examination in relation to the results of the whole analysis. Now I would like to continue the investigation of the user comments, focusing first on the affectivities attached to Irishness and Sáminess as an ethnic/national category and then moving on, against this background, to the language dimension.

### ***Irishness and Sáminess as ethnic/national category***

In both contexts, the performances triggered affective comments on Sáminess and Irishness as an ethnic/national category. While this dimension is not particularly prominent in the Sámi/Finnish context - there are six comments that include a reference to the Sámi cultural tradition - in the Irish context, comments professing pride in being Irish are perhaps the most striking feature of the stream of comments. Commenting on the performance by *Märät*

*säpikkäät/Njuoska*, *bittut Commentator29* praises it thus: "The girls got great voices, the Sámi language sounds beautiful in songs!!" and adds, "I wish people with Sámi blood could finally be PROUD of their heritage!". While *Commentator29* does not him/herself express pride in the Sámi heritage, but refers to the Sámi in the third person plural, which suggests that he/she might not be Sámi him/herself, in the Irish context the posters speak of themselves. If Irish people usually identify positively with Irishness, what is happening here is more than positive identification; this is (a demonstration of) pride gone viral, a manifestation of the contagious nature of affects<sup>xiii</sup> (Brennan 2004). While some of the altogether over 260 postings make a connection to the video, most simply state, "proud to be Irish":

- Proud to be Irish after watching this.... Go Huinteach [sic] ['great'] (*Commentator30*),
- I'm Irish and so Proud to be (*Commentator31*)
- Proud 2 be Irish maith Thu ! :- ['good on you'] (*Commentator32*)
- proud to be irish :D (*Commentator33*)
- bródúil as a bheith Gaeilge!  ['proud to be Irish'] (*Commentator34*)

What seems to have happened is what *Commentator35* urged: "Keep listening to it and spread the word about it brings out the Irish in us all :)". Thus we can also read exchanges like the one between *Commentator36* and *Commentator37*:

- As an Irish American I can say this make so proud to be Irish. Simply amazing (*Commentator36*)
- as an irishman i can say you're not Irish you have nothing to be proud of except mcdonalds (*Commentator37*)

Other more or less subtle acts of legitimating oneself and excluding others not considered to be ‘Irish enough’ include:

- Proud To Be 100% Irish Go Maith xxxx [‘good’] (*Commentator38*)
- Proud to have Irish blood! (*Commentator39*)
- Makes me proud to be irish 🍀🇮🇪 And yes I was born, raised and still live in Belfast, Ireland 🍀🇮🇪 Im not an american who thinks they are half irish because their aunties cousins goldfish nextdoor neighbour was a quater irish :/ (*Commentator40*)

Referring to ‘blood’ and geographical origin as two central tropes of authentic Irishness and using mockery as an additional resource, these comments perform boundary work, attempting to demarcate the ‘right to pride’. In this connection, the use of Irish language, and especially the tokenistic way in which many of the posters use it (e.g. *Commentator30*, *Commentator32* and *Commentator38*, above), can also be seen to have a self-legitimizing and authenticating function, to which we will come back further below.

Along with the expressions of pride in being Irish, we find a handful of supportive exclamations cheering, *Up the Irish!*. Inspired arguably by these exclamations on the one hand and the declarations of pride in being Irish on the other, some viewers post “Up the ra!”, an expression of support for the Irish Republican Army (IRA). While these short postings are likely to be meant humorously, at the same time they remind us how the ever-so-banal expressions of nationalism are never far away from its ‘hotter’ manifestations (Billig 1995), not separated from but rather joined to them, blending here into a mixture of everyday nationalism (Jones and Merriman 2009). This is even more clearly indicated by cases in which the expression *Up the ra* is used in less humorous exchanges, of the following kind:

- Bloody Irish can't help but ruin everything, GOD SAVE THE QUEEN! (*Commentator41*)
- #FuckTheEnglish (*Commentator42*)
- up the ra (*Commentator43*)

These are accompanied by further, rather toxic exchanges:

- Fuck the Irish language, no need for it! You speak English and that's it!!! (*Commentator44*)
- hah, there is need for irish language u uneducated fool and is amazing language and proud we do speak irish and happy bout that, but we would be more fluent if wasnt for ye stupid english cunts invading our country!! (*Commentator45*)
- 1200 West Brits dont like this? Who gives a fuck.... (*Commentator46*)
- Fuck Those danm cock sucking pride shitting brits (*Commentator47*)

If there is boundary work going on to demarcate the 'right to pride' among those who wish to identify themselves as Irish, as analysed above, these exchanges indicate boundary making on another front, namely between the Irish and the English or the English-minded 'West Brits'. On many occasions, these exchanges take on features of hate speech (Butler 1997), indicated above most clearly by the abusive name-calling, *u uneducated fool, ye stupid English cunts and those damn cock sucking bride shitting brits*. The lines of inclusion and exclusion, of solidarity and separation, that have emerged here in relation to Irishness and Sáminess will take on new dimensions when we move on to examine the affectivities relating to the Irish and Sámi languages.

### ***The language dimension***

As suggested above, in the web of comments, the ‘language dimension’ constitutes a node of affective investment, which can be divided into at least three subnodes: affects related (1) to the two languages, Sámi and Irish, themselves, (2) to speaking and (3) to learning Sámi and Irish. In the following, I will examine each of these three subnodes in turn.

### *Sámi and Irish language*

In both contexts, the performances triggered affective comments on the two languages. Mostly the languages were praised for sounding ‘beautiful’, ‘awesome’ or ‘amazing’, suggesting that the languages were experienced as a source of aesthetic pleasure. In the Irish context, moreover, a number of commentators express their ‘love’ for the Irish language. Here are some examples from the Irish context:

- holy shit im embarrassed to say i didn't even know this language existed! Sounds amazing.  
(*Commentator48*)
- What an Incredibly talented group... Never knew the irish language sounded so  
Awesome!!! (*Commentator49*)
- So this is Irish? Cool! (*Commentator50*)

In the Sámi/Finnish context, there are similar comments:

- Sámi language does sound beautiful although I don't understand any of it :)  
(*Commentator51*)
- sounds grand that Sámi language (*Commentator52*)

In the first four comments the posters indicate more or less directly that they are not familiar with the Irish or Sámi language. In his/her comment, *Commentator52* refers to Sámi with the deictic pronoun *that*, which in this context can be interpreted as referring to the language in the video and indicates a rather distant relationship to the language. The non-familiarity with

the languages suggests that these posters are writing from outside the Irish or Sámi community, belonging, in the latter case, to the Finnish majority. In contrast to the rather toxic relationship between some English and Irish people indicated by the exchanges examined above, these positive evaluations of Sámi suggest a positive affective investment on the part of the Finns. As we will see further below, in the section on *Learning Irish and Sámi*, this will grow into emphatic expressions of solidarity and support, albeit not without ulterior motives.

In the Irish context, a number of those who comment on the language explicitly identify themselves as writing from another country. In these comments, the expressions of love and encouragement also both suggest and at the same time forge ties of solidarity between groups of (minority language) speakers:

- Guys you are great! I love your language! We love it here! Let it live forever! Russia's with you, friends! (*Commentator53*)
- Great way to popularize the Irish language (which is very beautiful to me). Keep going the Irish! Greetings from Ukraine! (*Commentator54*)
- Keep your language alive, guys. Great job :D hugs from a Basque here (*Commentator55*)

In the Irish context, however, we also find a steady stream of comments of the following kind:

- i love irish i also love this song :) (*Commentator56*)
- Is breá liom an teanga seo. Gaeilge abú ['I love this language, irish forever'] (*Commentator57*)
- I hate irish but I love the song (*Commentator58*)
- How can you hate Irish? I live in Louth, I'm 13 and I've been learning Irish since I was 3, now I have my fáinne (That means I'm completely fluent) Irish is a class language and everyone should know it (*Commentator59*)

These commentators expressing their love or hatred of the Irish language are arguably members of the Irish (speaking) community, and so these expressions begin to mark the sensibilities of the affective space around the Irish language and its subtle but multiple divisions crossing with Irishness, which will take fuller shape in the course of the analysis.

Besides the commentators professing their love for the Irish language, there is another group of posters triumphing over the ‘‘truth’’ discourse’ which constructs Irish as a dead and/or useless language (Kelly-Holmes 2011; Kelly-Holmes & Atkinson 2007):

- at least the Irish language is still alive over 1 million views #proud (*Commentator60*)
- And there's ppl out there who say our beloved Irish language is dead? Watch this and they'll know that's not true! (*Commentator61*)
- Go on Gaeilge (Irish) (*Commentator62*)
- gaeilge abú :) [‘Irish forever’] (*Commentator63*)

In this atmosphere, postings putting forward the ‘truth’ discourse trigger heated responses:

- this is SHIT the language is DEAD no one uses it .. pointless (*Commentator64*)
- Jack Daniels are u even Irish?? If ya are you'd be proud of our language and culture not writing uneducated stupors fucking comments (*Commentator65*)

Although the brief comments that see the Irish language as useless or dead (cf. also the exchange between *Commentator44* and *Commentator45*, above) can be read as instances of casual trolling<sup>xiii</sup>, like the ones running down the Irish people or the performance itself, they do open up cleavages which the heated responses deepen and broaden. While suggesting considerable affective investment in the Irish language, many of the responses also posit pride



as a normative attitude towards ‘our language and culture’ ‘if ya are [Irish]’, thus reinforcing the nationalist spirit around Irish and Irishness.

### *Speaking Irish and Sámi*

In the Irish context, the ability to speak Irish emerges as a node of affective investment in its own right. Although in the Sámi/Finnish context, in this discursive space, speaking Sámi is not an object of similar meta discourse, the comments *in* Sámi can be read, it will be argued, as instances of affective investment in speaking the language.

In the Irish context, the performance triggered meta comments on ‘speaking Irish’ which express joy and pride, accompanied by a sense of defiance, but also of solidarity.

- I'm proud to be able to speak fluently Irish and although I agree that not many people speak Irish.. We are still pushing through and more and more people are speaking the language ..  
(*Commentator66*)
- Tá sé seo ar cheann de na hamhráin is fearr na hÉireann, Is féidir aon rud stop a chur leis an Gaeilge go bhfuil muid i gcónaí ar bun le haghaidh troid! Labhairt liom i bhfad Gaeilge agus tá mé Gaeilge. [‘This is one of the best songs of Ireland, nothing can stop the Irish that we are always up for a fight! I speak much Irish and I am Irish.’] (*Commentator67*)
- I know how to sing the hole song because I speak IRISH (*Commentator68*)
- This is the language of my people! (*Commentator69*)
- say tá [‘yes’] if you live in Ireland and can speak Irish or can speak a little bit of Irish (*Commentator70*)

Evoking at the same time the tropes of status and competence (Kelly-Holmes & Atkinson 2007) by referring to the inferiority of Irish on the one hand and to her own superiority as a fluent

speaker on the other, *Commentator66* declares pride in being fluent in Irish, combined with a sense of solidarity but also of pugnaciousness ('we are still pushing through'), like *Commentator67* ('I speak much Irish and I am Irish', 'we are always up for a fight!'). Along with pride and joy, the comments of *Commentator69* and *Commentator70* express and elicit rather feelings of belonging and solidarity (cf. Kelly-Holmes & Atkinson 2007). The invitation of *Commentator70* has so far received seven 'tás', the statement by *Commentator68* has drawn 30 likes.

In this context, then, as also in the context of the Sámi performance, being able to actually use Irish / Sámi to express oneself is arguably a source of joy, pride and belonging. This is an opportunity, both in the sense of a discursive space where the languages can be used and in the sense that the speakers are 'speakers of choice' (Ó Laoire 2008): they could use Finnish / English or some other language instead, as many others have. Especially in the Irish context, however, using Irish also involves courage, at least for those who are not 'able to speak fluently Irish' and who thus do not match up to the dominant view 'that complete competence in Irish is the only possibility' (Kelly-Holmes 2011: 531). Some of them try, as suggested by spelling errors, mixed language practices and apologies for their shortcomings. They are greeted by posters such as *Commentator70*, quoted above, who acknowledges also people who 'can speak a little bit of Irish', and *Seo linn* (band involved in making the performance) who, echoing newer language policy efforts (e.g. Kelly-Holmes 2011) comments delightedly: "Great to see the entire Gaelgóirí posting in Irish, and everyone using their cúpla focail ['couple of words'] aswel ;)" (*Commentator71*).

If the expressions of pride, joy and solidarity forge ties of belonging among those (considering themselves as) able to speak Irish, at the same time they perform boundary work in relation to those who cannot occupy this position. As a counterpart to the expressions of

pride and joy we can find postings indicating shame, anger, sadness, jealousy, and the wish to be fluent:

- I am Irish but am ashamed to say I don't understand a word of this but i still love it...  
(*Commentator72*)
- Makes me Proud to be Irish and sickens me that I can't understand a fu#king word  
(*Commentator73*)
- I just like the song☺I can't even speak my own language ☹️ (*Commentator74*)
- very good video, unfortunately i hate the language and envy those who are fluent in it.  
Nonetheless well done (*Commentator75*)
- I'm so jealous of them all. Wish I could speak the language of my own country!!  
(*Commentator76*)

Those who are not so fluent find themselves surrounded, on the one side by the expressions of pride and joy of those considering themselves fluent in Irish and, on the other, apart from a few expressions indicating recognition by sarcastic and dismissive remarks:

- I love how the most of you 'Irish' are commenting in English (*Commentator77*)
- all the people on here are claiming that they love Irish and they're proud of their language, yet they don't have a clue of basic grammar or spelling, just band wagoners... (*Commentator78*)
- Tá mé go Maith (*Commentator79*)
- I am good? Sorry dude you failed. Tá go maith, "Its good" or Is maith liom ar "I like this" (*Commentator80*)

Joining the dozens declaring pride in being Irish and tagging their comments with a few words in Irish for purposes of authentication or otherwise, *Commentator81* posts: "proud to be irish

an bothar cailin bainne” which translates as ‘the girl road milk’. The posting makes an allusion to a TV advertisement for Carlsberg, in which some Irish men going into a bar in Rio de Janeiro are asked ‘to do something Irish’ ‘to prove their Irishness and authenticity’ (Kelly-Holmes 2010: 30). The men start reciting random phrases and words associated with school Irish, among which is the line *ciúnas, bóthar, cailín, banne* ‘quiet, road, milk, girl’. Although *Commentator81*’s reference can be read as a humorous reference to the advertisement, it can also be interpreted as making fun of those struggling to use the language to be recognised as Irish to have their share in the right to pride. (For an analysis of the advert, see Kelly-Holmes 2010.)

Among the voices of posters celebrating their competence in Irish and of those mourning their lack of it, there are other voices announcing:

- Im irish and i dont have a clue what hes [e.g. the singer] saying! (*Commentator82*)
- I dont even understand wat hes sayin ugh but still love bein irish :) (*Commentator83*)

Despite the merely declarative appearance of these statements, in the context of the dominant ideology normatively mapping linguistic competence on nationality, sustained here through the multiple small acts of everyday nationalism as analysed above, these individual statements can be seen as subtle acts of insurgency against this ideology. However, in the flow of comments they provoke few responses, except for the occasional likes.

### *Learning Irish and Sámi*

The final node of affective investment analysed here relates to the topic of learning Irish and Sámi. This is a prominent node in both contexts, although it takes different shapes in each, partly due to the different positions of the languages in the respective societies.

In the Irish context, many of the comments reflect affective stances towards learning Irish in school. While some people say they love learning and speaking Irish, announcing by the same token that they go to an all-Irish school and are fluent in Irish, others express rather negative sentiments towards Irish in educational settings (cf. Moriarty 20014; Kelly-Holmes 2011). As an example, *Commentator84* contemplates:

- I really dont like that irish is my worst subject in school :/ the same goes for my year,it would have been awesome to learn to speak irish but the teachers who teach irish are very bad and make it more of a memory game than a language.The teachers who teach irish are a part of the reason why irish is becoming non existent slowly.

At the same time, other comments suggest that the Coláiste Lurgan performance has moved the viewers' ideas about learning Irish in school. While some regret not having paid attention in class, others seem content that they did, after all:

- makes me wish I had listened in school and could speak irish! :( all them years learning irish and I still cant put an irish sentence together! lol :) (*Commentator85*)
- 12 years of learning Irish in school, this actually makes it worth it. Haha (*Commentator86*)

The comment of *Commentator86* has drawn 56 likes. Alluding to the way 'the educational system has approached the teaching of Irish' (Moriarty 2014: 478), thematised also in the comment by *Commentator84* above, *Commentator87* expresses her fascination towards the Coláiste Lurgan project: "Fantastic that is the way to teach Irish. Those kids are terrific. Love it. Proud to be Irish" and *Commentator88* comments, "One way of making Irish sexy to students to study it!". In accordance with these meta comments, over 60 posters announce along

the lines of *Commentator89*, "Have to learn this for school...YAY!!! :D" and over 20 express the wish, "Really wanna go Lurgan this year!!" (*Commentator90*).

If the Lurgan performance has had an impact on attitudes towards learning Irish in educational settings, it seems also to have been the inspiration for informal learning. *Commentator91* writes, "This cover and all the other covers that you guys have done have inspired me to learn Irish again, but this time for pleasure, and as a real language... not only to pass the leaving cert! Love it! Go h- iontach!". Besides the comments from Irish viewers, there are also a couple of posts from abroad, like the one by *Commentator92*, who expresses her wish in Portuguese and English: "aah, como quero aprender o irlandês! ['Oh, how I want to learn Irish'] ♡ As I want to learn the Irish language!!!" On a perhaps more serious note, a handful of others inquire where one could learn Irish outside Ireland.

Also in the Sámi/Finnish context, a number of comments suggest the performance provoked some interest in learning Sámi.

- Thanks girls! Hey, you need to teach that language to us! (*Commentator93*)
- Oh, it would be lovely to be able to speak Sámi or Japanese :) (*Commentator94*)
- That's it. I'll start learning Sámi:D (*Commentator95*)
- Are there lyrics available to this?? :DD Would like to learn myself that grand, beautiful language <3 (*Commentator96*)
- Aaaaargh! Tell me where I could learn Sámi! Other than university (*Commentator97*)

While the various expressions of interest in learning Irish or Sámi may or may not result in any actual learning, what they do, nevertheless, is to construct the languages as objects of interest and desire, as languages worth learning - also by others than the Sámi / Irish themselves.

In the Sámi/Finnish context, too, a number of the comments relate to learning Sámi in school. For the most part, however, it is not the Sámi themselves who debate this, but the

majority Finns, who import into this discussion forum the ‘mandatory Swedish’ debate, a debate fuelled by nationalist sentiments which have gained strength in recent years also in Finland (Hult & Pietikäinen 2014). Part of the discussion here goes as follows:

- Learning Sámi should be part of the all-round education in Finland... and not some fucking Swedish! (*Commentator98*)
- are you serious after all there are a few more Swedish speakers than Sámi speakers lol (*Commentator99*)
- However, we Finnish speakers care more about these Sámi speakers, even if they are fewer in number, than about the greater number of Swedish speakers. At least I do. (*Commentator100*)
- I agree. Rather mandatory Sámi than mandatory Swedish ;) It’s strange how one minority is given such a position. It’s sad. The Finland-Swedes are the most papered minority in the world. How about the Sámi? GO SÁMI. (*Commentator101*)

In the debates on ‘mandatory Swedish’ in the media, Sámi is not usually mentioned (see Hult & Pietikäinen 2014). Here, the performance prompts some viewers to not(ic)e how the kindred language, Sámi, is ‘an achingly beautiful language’ and to draw the Sámi language(s) and speakers into the debate, making them into an object of solidarity and support (only) to oppose the position of Swedish in Finland. If the comments quoted above expressing interest in learning Sámi index some sincerely positive affects towards Sámi, in this strand of discussion, the ‘love’ for Sámi is inspired by ‘hatred’ of Swedish; rather than uniting, it tears apart ‘in the name of love’ (Ahmed 2004).

## MINORITISED LANGUAGES AND THE POLITICS OF EMOTION

While interest in affective processes has led to an ‘affective turn’ in cultural studies, among other fields, in sociolinguistics this perspective has been given far less attention. Focusing on two music video covers exemplifying the current circulation of minoritised languages and their speakers in new media spaces, this study investigated how the socio-historically conditioned affective investments of YouTube users contribute to a (re)valuation of the two minoritised languages, Irish and Sámi, their speakers, and the related ethnic/national belongings. In so doing, the study adds a new angle to the current strand of research examining the ongoing revaluation of minoritised languages in contemporary globalisation (e.g. Pietikäinen et al. 2016; Kelly-Holmes 2014).

The study shows how the affective investments create a space around the two languages and their speakers filled with positive affects: enthusiasm, admiration, love, desire, solidarity and pride. At the same time, it demonstrates how these apparently ‘happy’ spaces are shaped and cut through by boundaries and divisions within and between ethno-linguistic communities, marked by scorn, anger, bitterness and shame. Many of these affectivities – of both kinds – are enactments of more or less banal ‘everyday nationalism’ (Billig 1995; Jones & Merriman 2009), connected in complex ways to the colonial histories of the two countries: in the case of Ireland to England, and in the case of Finland to Sweden and the Sámi.

Put in other words, both videos mobilise everyday nationalism. In the Sámi/Finnish context, the suggestion that the Sámi performance should be sent to the Eurovision Song Contest to represent Finland actualises not only banal nationalism, but also present-day banal colonialism. On another front, the support for and solidarity with the Sámi arises from an antipathy towards the former colonial power, Sweden. In the Irish context, besides the outpouring of expressions of (the normative policing of) ethnic/national pride evoked by the video, a feeling of national pride may be one reason why the video itself went viral. The discussion forum provides a space where the distinction between ‘us’ and ‘them’ identified by



Kelly-Holmes (2011) can be challenged, ‘us’ being here the often repudiated Irish language speakers, ‘them’ the majority with less competence in the language. Despite this reversal of the usual power balance, the (normative) mapping of language on nationality, implicit in the video, explicit in the comments, leaves the ‘us’ emerging here with rather elitist and nationalist overtones.

While the discourse of ‘sexy Irish’ / ‘sexy Sámi’ arguably plays its part in the production of the positive space around the two languages, as was indicated in the analysis, it is also enmeshed in the reproduction of both banal nationalism and banal colonialism, demarcating further divisions. In the Irish case, the discourse is liable to buttress the notion of ‘the Irish language élite’, superior not only on ‘the competence continuum’ (Kelly-Holmes & Atkinson 2007: 177; Kelly-Holmes 2011) but, as suggested by the video, also in terms of looks. Pushed a little further still, the division is not only symbolic, but also material: a 3-week-course at Coláiste Lurgan costs over 900 euros (Lurgan/biz, no date) and thus the video also represents young people with parents wealthy enough to pay for their participation. As such, this Irish language élite in the making adds a rather significant dimension to recent mediatised attempts to associate the Irish language with attractive individuals from the urban middle class (Kelly-Holmes 2011). In the Sámi/Finnish context, on the other hand, the discourse of ‘sexy Sámi’ harks back to an old colonialist notion of Sámi (like other indigenous) women as overly sexual (Lehtola 2000; Bird 1999). The expressions of sexual desire echoing porn fantasies and including marked references to Sámi culture (‘I’d well hit both on *a reindeer skin by a campfire*’) posted by viewers, at least some of whom are non-Sámi Finnish men, are decidedly derogatory. They therefore create a relation of domination not only between men and women, but between white men and indigenous women, reproducing old colonial power relations along ethnolinguistic divisions in a new guise.

In conclusion, the study sheds light on how the social media operate as a catalyst of affective investments involved in an ethnolinguistic (re)ordering of languages and their speakers at the intersection of ‘banal globalisation’ and ‘everyday nationalism’ (Thurlow & Jaworski 2010; Jones & Merriman 2009). The lens of affect opens up a vital angle on the ‘cultural politics of world making’ (Ahmed 2004: 12) and, as such, it is also a perspective worth developing in sociolinguistic research.

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<sup>i</sup> ‘New media domains’ refers here generally to new *mediatised* domains, not only to ‘new media’ domains (cf. Kelly-Holmes 2014).

<sup>ii</sup> At this point, I would like to extend a big thank you to members of *Jyväskylä Discourse Hub* and especially to the two anonymous reviewers, whose insightful and constructive comments substantially contributed to the improvement of earlier versions of this paper. All remaining shortcomings are of course my own.

<sup>iii</sup> ‘Minority’ refers here to the current status of the language; ‘minoritised’ reminds the reader of the socio-historical processes of repression.

<sup>iv</sup> As a whole, the domicile area of the indigenous Sámi people spreads over the northern parts of Norway, Sweden, Finland and north-west Russia.

<sup>v</sup> The now independent Finnish state was part of Sweden until 1809. Today Swedish is the first language of around 5.5% of the population of Finland. Due to its position as a national language of the country, Swedish is taught as a mandatory subject for three years as part of compulsory education (except in the Sámi domicile area). In recent years this ‘mandatory Swedish’ has been the subject of heated debate (see e.g. Hult & Pietikäinen 2014).

<sup>vi</sup> This success sparked further ripple effects, one of them being a 5-part music series featuring selected videos and interviews with ‘the acclaimed students of Coláiste Lurgan’. The series was commissioned as part of the 20th birthday celebrations of the Irish language channel TG4 and broadcast in autumn 2016 (TG4, n.d.).

<sup>vii</sup> In the name, *märät/nuoska* denotes ‘wet’, and *säpikkäät/bittut* refers to long legwarmers made from reindeer skin, traditional in Sámi culture. Metaphorically, the term has been used to refer to a promiscuous woman.

<sup>viii</sup> This need is highlighted - and effected - by, as Margaret Wetherell (2012: 351) has put it, the ‘absence of a productive dialogue between affect and discourse research’.

<sup>ix</sup> The original comments on the *Märät säpikkäät/Njuoska bittut* performance are in Finnish. The English translations are by the author of the article. The comments in Irish and Sámi of relevance for the analysis are given in the original languages, accompanied by English translations. Otherwise the comments are reproduced as written on the posts.

<sup>x</sup> To protect the privacy of the commentators, the usernames have been replaced by sequential numbering.

<sup>xi</sup> Four viewers refer humorously to the women looking scary, one of them commenting, “Lappish witches, yikes...”. One expresses (alleged) aversion towards aboriginals, posting, “Natives, yuck.”

<sup>xii</sup> What exactly is ‘sticking’ here is, however, debatable. While at least for some it arguably is the feeling of pride itself, the meme-like repetition of the *expression* of pride suggests that at stake are also feelings of belonging and solidarity evoked by being part of the same ‘thing’ (cf. Ahmed’s critique of the notion of contagion, Ahmed 2010).

<sup>xiii</sup> ‘Trolling’ refers to the practice of posting insulting or otherwise inflammatory messages in an online community to provoke emotional responses from other users.