

Language, Materiality, and Digital Neapolitanità

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Abstract

Southern Italian digital humanist Domenico Fiormonte has argued that “DH is...a discipline and academic discourse dominated materially by an Anglo-American elite and intellectually by a mono-cultural view” [Fiormonte 2012, p. 59] and has repeatedly called for a digital humanities that “improve[s] and cultivate[s] the margins...[giving] more attention [to] variegated cultural and linguistic cultural diversity” [Fiormonte 2012, p. 74]. Similarly, Crystal Hall points out that both the Digital Humanities and Italian Studies “have struggled with inclusivity and the representation for traditionally marginalized voices...[though] both fields offer tools and materials of study that can assist in [a] transformation” [Hall 2019, p. 103]. This article takes up the work of these scholars in its investigation of the Neapolitan language on YouTube. According to UNESCO, the Neapolitan language is a vulnerable language because the number of speakers has been decreasing steadily in Southern Italy, forecasting the eventual extinction of the Southern Italian language. UNESCO’s categorization of Neapolitan as “vulnerable” is problematic because it only accounts for speakers in Southern Italy and not in the Italian diaspora, which involves a physical relocation of Neapolitans to other parts of the world such as Australia and the United States. It is also problematic because it indicates that Italians either in Italy or in the diaspora may no longer want to speak Neapolitan. A Neapolitan digital diaspora, unaccounted for in UNESCO statistics, also exists on social media, which may include Neapolitans in Italy and abroad but also may include first-generation Italians, heritage-language speakers, and other-culture people fluent or familiar with the language. In this article, I explore how usages of Neapolitan-Italian language on YouTube might counter the linguistic and cultural subordination of Neapolitans.

I shall try . . . to say something useful about the language of the people who speak the vulgar tongue, hoping thereby to enlighten somewhat the understanding of those who walk the streets like the blind, ever thinking that what lies ahead is behind them. [Alighieri 1996]

“De vulgari eloquentia,” Dante Alighieri

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Southern Italian digital humanist Domenico Fiormonte has argued that “DH is...a discipline and academic discourse dominated materially by an Anglo-American elite and intellectually by a mono-cultural view” [Fiormonte 2012, p. 59] and has repeatedly called for a digital humanities that “improve[s] and cultivate[s] the margins...[giving] more attention [to] variegated cultural and linguistic cultural diversity” [Fiormonte 2012, p. 74]. Similarly, Crystal Hall points out that both the Digital Humanities and Italian Studies “have struggled with inclusivity and the representation for traditionally marginalized voices...[though] both fields offer tools and materials of study that can assist in [a] transformation” [Hall 2019, p. 103]. This article takes up the work of these scholars in its investigation of the Neapolitan language on YouTube. According to UNESCO, the Neapolitan language is a vulnerable language because the number of speakers has been decreasing steadily in Southern Italy, forecasting the eventual extinction of the Southern Italian language. UNESCO’s categorization of Neapolitan as “vulnerable” is problematic because it only accounts for speakers in Southern Italy and not in the Italian diaspora, which involves a physical relocation of Neapolitans to other parts of the

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world such as Australia and the United States. It is also problematic because it indicates that Italians either in Italy or in the diaspora may no longer *want* to speak Neapolitan. A Neapolitan digital diaspora, unaccounted for in UNESCO statistics, also exists on social media, which may include Neapolitans in Italy and abroad but also may include first-generation Italians, heritage-language speakers, and other-culture people fluent or familiar with the language. In this article, I explore how usages of Neapolitan-Italian language on YouTube might counter the linguistic and cultural subordination of Neapolitans.

An Interdisciplinary Perspective

This article is fueled by postcolonial digital humanities scholarship (a sub-strand of Disrupting DH) ^[1] that engages with differences, attempts to “tell an untold story” [Risam 2019, p. 140] in the digital cultural record, and responds to calls to “undertake the important work of digitizing under-represented cultural heritage” [Risam 2019, p. 140], considering what digital work can do for and with underrepresented communities [Josephs 2019]. In *New Digital Worlds Postcolonial Theory, Praxis, and Pedagogy*, Roopika Risam expresses that “as digital knowledge production has accelerated rapidly in the last few decades, the exclusions and biases that have characterized print culture — products of colonialism, racism, and patriarchy — have been reproduced in the digital cultural record” [Risam 2019, p. 139]. Risam’s work dovetails with such digital humanities multilingualism scholars as Élika Ortega [Ortega 2014] and Alexander Gil [Gil 2014], who consider how technology intersects with globalization and transnational cultural ecologies to explore why digital scholarship, like most academic scholarship, is only sanctioned or recognized if it is (a) either published in English or (b) produced by and from English-speaking nations. In particular, Risam’s work echoes Southern Italian digital humanist, Domenico Fiormente, who has repeatedly critiqued the cultural homogeneity of the digital humanities ([Fiormente 2012]; [Fiormente 2021]). For Fiormente:

the Anglophone dominance of DH produces a series of negative effects: (1) [it] prevents the construction of a genuinely democratic, supportive, and multilingual international community (one of the hallmarks of the human and social sciences); (2) [it] links institutional representation (mostly governed by Anglophones) with the selection and management of tools and resources, hindering methodological and epistemological pluralism; (3)...[it] changes the representation of research in the field of DH and tends to project its own monolingual nature on the entire discipline [Fiormente 2021, p. 348].

My work is a response to Fiormente’s insistence that “the cost of Anglophone monolingualism cannot be borne entirely by non-Anglophones” [Fiormente 2021, p. 359] and to Risam’s call to digital humanities scholars to use their training and skills to devise local practices that “avoid a directional politics of knowledge that flows from the top down” [Risam 2019, p. 143]; I therefore attempt to unsettle categories of difference to revise and expand the existing digital cultural record.

Much like digital humanities, Italian Studies has struggled with “inclusivity and the representation of traditionally marginalized voices” [Hall 2019, p. 103]. Italian digital humanities projects to date tend to reproduce or recover the dominant Italian cultural canon and even so, there is “little in Italian Studies scholarship in major digital humanities journals” [Hall 2019, p. 109]. Crystal Hall explains that “one of the most notable aspects of Italian digital humanities from a North American perspective is the centrality of Dante in many prominent DH projects” [Hall 2019, pp. 98–99]. Digital humanities scholarship related to Southern Italy is especially uncommon. Though projects such as *The Medieval Kingdom of Sicily Image Database* [Duke University 2022] illustrate promise for the future of Southern Italian cultural recovery projects in the digital humanities, there is still much work to be done to ensure that “the [Southern Italian] stories and voices which have been underrepresented in both print and digital knowledge production...[and] marginalized in their national contexts — can be heard” [Risam 2019, p. 139]. My work is an effort to respond to this lacuna in the field.

Walter Mignolo explains that one’s locus of enunciation or place of speaking, involves a recognition of how her personal histories, cultural backgrounds and ideological commitments shape her current behaviors and perspectives [Mignolo 2007]. My personal experience as a second generation Neapolitan-American and as a Professor of inform this project. As a an immigrant daughter, I have often felt like a “linguistic outsider” in both the Italian and American culture. Through

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long periods of time spent in Naples, and as a heritage language speaker in the K-16 system, I have experienced firsthand the type of linguistic and cultural biases I see many students of color struggle with as they try to negotiate their accented Englishes with the privileged “Standard Englishes” of the academy. My position as researcher is informed by these experiences, as is my argument for linguistic justice and a translingual ideology that emphasizes all languages as emerging, fluid, and contextual.

This project is also informed by statistics from UNESCO’s “Atlas of the World’s Languages In Danger” [UNESCO 2010] and, more recently, the Endangered Language Alliance’s proclamation that “Neapolitan is considered vulnerable to extinction due to the declining intergenerational transmission and overwhelming power and prestige of Standard Italian. Although there is a written form of the language, the majority of speakers do not write the language, and there is disagreement on how it should be written” [Endangered Language Alliance 2021]. My focus on Naples has cultural exigence as well. As a UNESCO World Heritage Site, the city of Naples and much of its periphery have “retained the imprint of successive cultures that emerged in Europe and the Mediterranean basin,” [UNESCO World Heritage Centre 2023] making it one of the most unique linguistic and cultural centers in Europe. The evolution of the city dates back to the “Neapolis founded by Greek settlers in 470 B.C.” [UNESCO World Heritage Centre 2023] and has been described by Mediterranean scholars like Iain Chambers’s as follows: “a violent mixture of antiquated street rites and global design capitalism, Naples confronts us as a riddle. It’s sphinx like qualities... disclose and unstable hubris dissected by different cultures and historical rhythms” [Chambers 2008, p. 73]. This article extends Chambers’ inquiry of the “riddle” that is Naples into the realm of social media.

Much like the concept of Italianità or Italianness was constructed at the turn of the twentieth century in Italy through printed media as a way “to consolidate national unity in the face of emerging nations and nationalism in Europe” [Viola and Verheul 2019, p. 1], this article anchors the word Neapolitanità to illustrate how Neapolitaness, or Neapolitan identity is constructed, revised or perhaps, expanded by translingual representations on YouTube. I also envision this article as a contribution to various studies of Southern Italy and Naples that reveal the deliberate marginalization of the region Naples and its people such as Janet Schneider’s *Italy’s ‘Southern Question’: Orientalism in One Country* [Schneider 1998], Pino Aprile’s *Terroni: All That Has Been Done to Ensure that the Italians of the South Became ‘Southerners’* [Aprile 2011] and Nicola De Blasi’s *Storia Linguistica Di Napoli* [De Blasi 2012]. Though Naples may not be typically regarded as postcolonial, the region of Naples was historically colonized by various feudal or monarchical systems ending with the intra-colonization by the House of Savoy and pursuant establishment of a northern, Piedmontese national government through the project of Italian unification. Pasquale Verdicchio points out that “Italian identity was consciously built on the presumed racial alterity of southerners” (in [Allen and Russo 1997, p. 191]), while Antonio Gramsci’s *Prison Notebooks* (written between 1929-1935 by the philosopher, during his imprisonment from the Italian Fascist regime in power) explain that the unification project undertaken by the Risorgimento, or movement for the unification and independence of Italy, consisted of three interconnected elements: the perception of southerners as “biologically inferior beings”; the poverty of the southern masses that was inexplicable to the northern masses; the colonial choice of post-Risorgimento governments to move the potential conflict of the unemployed southern masses further south, in order to dispossess other presumed inferior populations of their own land and political autonomy [Gramsci and Callari 2011, p. 429]. Naples’s political and cultural marginalization prevails:

Like many Mediterranean cities, Naples refers to itself and its local hinterland long before the nation-state appears in its sense of identity... Once a capital, Naples has become an eccentric city without an obvious compass. Seemingly robbed of its destiny, its trajectory has been blocked by a loss that is seemingly incapable of confronting and working out. [Chambers 2008, p. 76]

The national and cultural imaginary of Southern Italians, particularly Neapolitans, as poor, uneducated and vulgar has persisted a century and a half since Italy became a nation, as evidenced by organizations such as the overtly anti-Southern political party, the Northern League, which advocates for economic and political autonomy of Northern regions from its Southern counterparts. Nicola De Blasi explains how linguistic disenfranchisement followed political subjugation for Naples, though Neapolitan was the most widely spread language (not dialect) in the pre-unification Kingdom of Two Sicilies, and despite the fact that the use and global circulation of the Neapolitan language in art, particularly music and opera is evident as early as the 18th century [De Blasi 2012, p. 140] and persists in popularity today.

Much like digital humanists, media communication scholars have also investigated the relationship between media and cultural identity. In “Cyberethnographic Research Methods for Understanding Digitally Mediated Identities,” Natalia Rybas and Radhika Gajjala detail participatory practices such as interviews for studying Othered cultures’ social media use [Rybas and Gajjala 2007]. My research on Neapolitan-Italians aligns with the findings of these scholars, which illustrate that media clearly shapes cultural identities and, conversely, cultural formations influence the political economy of global media [Chopra and Gajjala 2011]. Linguists have extended this type of ethnographic inquiry to determine how “new forms of circulation” and aspects of mediatization such as sound and aesthetics materialize language and cultural signification [Cavanaugh and Shankar 2017]. My research follows linguist Jillian Cavanaugh whose recovery work on the marginalized Bergamasco Italian language and culture in northern Italy investigates the complex relationship between language and nation [Cavanaugh 2012].^[2] In particular, Cavanaugh’s “Anything Can Happen on YouTube (or Can It?): Endangered Language and New Media” [Cavanaugh 2017] explores the implications of social media for linguistic preservation, visibility, and signification of Bergamasco Italian, as this article does for Neapolitan Italian.

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While postcolonial digital humanities, media communications, and linguistic scholarship work together to inform this project, methodologically I turn to translingual theory together with Laura Gonzales’s “Revised Rhetoric of Translation” framework. Gonzales’s “Revised Rhetoric of Translation” is “a culturally situated orientation to studying linguistic fluidity, one that intentionally situates language work within broader systems of power, privilege and oppression” [Gonzales 2018, p. 5]. Building on theory in Composition and English Studies that “conceptualize and protect language difference at the level of policy [such as] CCCCs ‘Students’ Right to Their Own Language,’ and NCTE’s ‘Definition of 21st Century Literacies’,” [Gonzales 2018] Gonzales’s “translation moments” [Gonzales 2018, p. 5] make it possible to understand “language difference at a level of practice” ([Guerra 2015] in [Gonzales 2018]), particularly through digital platforms and how they intersect with language and cultural identity.

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Composition scholars have referred to translingual composing practices as interconnected and integrated, mediated through one another, and continuously emergent [Horner, Selfe, and Lockridge 2015]. Especially in the world of social media, communication is fostered by a combination of modalities which overturn notions of linguistic “standardization,” and of what constitutes communicative “capital” [Bourdieu 1984]. Successful understanding for the interlocutors or what Suresh Canagarajah calls “uptake” [Canagarajah 2011, p. 5] is the primary object of translingual communication. Uptake is contingent on the linguistic and digital resources available to the writer/designer of a social media object and also reflective of the time and cultural context (or place) it is produced in.

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It is important to note that “By exploring various moments and sites of translingual encounter, we find ourselves in a position to revisit many of our foundational assumptions about, and therefore arrive at a fuller understanding of, what might constitute culture to begin with” [Won Lee 2022, p. 5]. YouTube is not only a site rife with “translingual encounter[s]” [Won Lee 2022, p. 5], but is also a generative tool for exploring the way “linguistic and cultural difference can be located *via* [these encounters]” [Won Lee 2022, p. 5]. I selected “Miley Cyrus - Wrecking Ball - Parody (Explicit),” as the focus of my analysis in this article, as it is a fitting Neapolitan example of a global, translingual encounter that resists the idea of language as a “universal epistemology of communication” [Won Lee 2022, p. 6], while countering a static, emplaced, Neapolitan cultural identity.

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This article analyzes Neapolitan, a southern Italian, vulnerable language on YouTube, through a multimodal, translingual analysis which focuses first on the video “Miley Cyrus - Wrecking Ball - Parody (Explicit),” and then on the comments that follow the video. I examine the way the producers of the video harness the multimodal affordances of YouTube (video, audio, transcription) to advance the language beyond Italian borders, but also to consider how Neapolitans “wish to be portrayed as public selves (local, national, international)” [Cavanaugh 2017]. By affordances, I refer to intersecting disciplinary perspectives of the concept. Technical communications scholar Stuart Selber’s premise that “A technological affordance, or a suite of affordances, is *directional*, it *appeals* to us by making some forms of communicative interaction possible or easy and others difficult or impossible, by leading us to engage in or attempt certain kinds of rhetorical action rather than others” [Selber 2004, p. 13]. Like Selber, sociolinguists David Barton and Carmen Lee argue that “perceived affordances” [Barton and Lee 2013, p. 27] are the context for the “action possibilities” [Barton and Lee 2013, p. 17] people take up in digital spaces. The authors argue the uses of digital platforms are not a given and are not fixed. Rather, people both create and are created by these environments. In this way affordances are

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[also] socially constructed and change as people act on their environment...for example, on Facebook the structure of the software creates likely activities and likely pathways, but human ingenuity leads to the wide range of uses it is put to [Barton and Lee 2013, p. 28]. Similarly, the technical, social and communicative affordances of YouTube facilitate a global, translingual narrative of Neapolitanità that may not be visible in Italian mainstream media or the cultural record at large.

Neapolitan language practices on YouTube reflect “the highly distributed, embodied, translingual, and multimodal aspects of communicative practice[s]” ([Shipka 2016, p. 253] in [Gonzales 2018, p. 3]) in Neapolitans’ interaction with the site and underscore Gonzales’s premise that “translation moments are inherently multimodal and multilingual, reflecting the lived experiences of multilingual communicators who constantly think across languages, modalities, and technologies, to transform and adapt information for various audiences” [Gonzales 2018, p. 24]. Though Gonzales applies her theory to the work of multilingual translators in professional spaces, I argue that Neapolitans have energetically harnessed “translation... a multimodal activity... that requires the rhetorical coordination of semiotic resources beyond alphabetic language” [Gonzales 2018, p. 38] to remix the Neapolitan language and create cultural counternarratives that upend the national imaginary of Neapolitan as vulgar and uneducated [De Blasi 2012] and of the people as “terroni” (people of the dirt or “dirtballs”) [Aprile 2011]. The translation moments afforded to Neapolitans through the multimodal options of social media such as YouTube enable a post-national Neapolitanità: a remixed, hybridized linguistic and cultural imaginary that extends beyond the limited geographic boundaries of Italy.

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Inventing Post-National Neapolitanità

Neapolitanità, or the cultural essence conveyed through the Neapolitan language, is closely intertwined with performance. Gestures, facial expressions, intonations, and words crisscross to create meaning that is interdependent on the mix of modalities. In short, using Neapolitan words alone in a conversation would detract from the interlocutors’ ability to specify meaning. Simply reading Neapolitan words on a page would nearly dilute signification altogether.

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Representations of the material disenfranchisement of Neapolitans are circulated in new, material ways through social media spaces such as YouTube, supporting Risam’s argument that “the internet gives us opportunities to look beyond ourselves and our institutions, to partner with our local communities . . . to create spaces in which we can make legible the stories that go untold and the voices that go unheard” [Risam 2019, pp. 142–143]. The embodied features of the Neapolitan language are materialized through the translingual affordances of social media platforms. Translingual practices involve dynamic and fluid movement between linguistic knowledge, alphabetic writing, and virtual-material modalities [Horner, Selfe, and Lockridge 2015]. The affordances ^[3] of YouTube, in particular, helps producers underscore the Neapolitan dialect as a material form of social interaction and practice, and to strategically present narratives of Neapolitans that are absent from Italian mainstream media and the cultural record at large.

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The stagnant political economy of Neapolitan lives in Italy is depicted in Pino Aprile’s *Terroni: All That Has Been Done to Ensure That the Italians of the South Became “Southerners.”* For Aprile, “when such [disparate political and economic] difference exists [in a nation] for so long, one risks to no longer correctly attribute the reasons to the causes of the current situation, but rather to the inadequacy of those who continue to tolerate the status quo” [Aprile 2011, p. 13]. This unchanging national positionality has important connections to the material conditions that govern the choices Neapolitans make about language. These choices are embodied through bodily gestures, intonations, and facial expressions. The affordances of YouTube intersect with the “vulnerable” [UNESCO 2010] Neapolitan language to illustrate the institutional systems (political, economic, and social) that direct Italians toward a determinate view of Neapolitans. This socio-political economy is often the content or subject of Neapolitan representations or exchanges on social media platforms such as YouTube.

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As political scientist Michael Warner notes, “The direction of our glance can constitute our social world” [Warner 2005, p. 89]. A Neapolitan YouTube video can reconstitute the social world the Neapolitan language and people are from, enabling counternarratives of Neapolitanità that resist the national (geographically bound) imaginary of the region and its people. YouTube, a global social media platform, moves Neapolitanità beyond Naples and Italy to a place where it can be consumed anywhere in the world, at any time of day, by Italians or anyone else. The repeated, collective

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consumption of YouTube videos fosters circulation and socialization about language and culture that were impossible pre-Web 2.0.

Jillian Cavanaugh's analysis of the endangered Bergamasco Italian dialect on YouTube identifies categories or types of videos that contain the language: (1) videos taken from some other media source (usually television or film) and dubbed into Bergamasco, transforming the content such that the speakers speak not only Bergamasco, but *as* Bergamasco; and (2) originally produced videos with spoken (and sometimes written) language in Bergamasco [Cavanaugh 2017, p. 90]. The Neapolitan YouTube case study I describe below falls into Cavanaugh's two categories. It remakes or remixes an originally produced film or video (Miley Cyrus's original "Wrecking Ball" video) into a YouTube iteration that looks back at particular cultural inheritances Neapolitans embody, hybridizing conventional scripts of Neapolitan language and identity *in Italy*. In other words, the video below reimagines and revises dominant ideologies and narratives of Neapolitans, particularly those that are emplaced in the national, geographically bound context of Italy.

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YouTube's digital, social, and paralinguistic affordances create a post-national space where Neapolitan language and identity exceeds national or emplaced physical and ideological boundaries. Through each YouTube post, like, dislike, comment, and share — versions of the dialect can extend across objects (as hyperlinks, shares, and, indirectly, other social media platforms) and others (as viewers, followers, and content communities beyond YouTube) that may disrupt or even overturn the language's "definitely endangered" status and forge a post-national Neapolitanità. Neapolitans use the affordances of YouTube to use translation as transformation and "... think across languages, modalities, and technologies, to transform and adapt [their language and culture] for various audiences" [Gonzales 2018, p. 24]. YouTube gives Neapolitan user/producers an opportunity to affect "translation moments" that redefine the uses of Neapolitan and what Italian nationalists have determined to be authentic Italian linguistic and cultural capital. The same implications apply for other vulnerable or endangered languages on YouTube, such as Bergamasco, Sicilian, and Nones, which are other "minority" Italian languages. Such languages, formerly regarded as emplaced and incapable of being useful or used beyond a specific national boundary or location, that are presented on YouTube through videos such as the one I describe below can challenge purist ideas of language, culture, and identity. YouTube representations of these supposed minority languages and cultures enable alternative perceptions and circulation for them, altering their positionality in a national and global context. The way producers and users engage through specific kinds of YouTube videos and other digital objects like them creates new linguistic and cultural counternarratives that rupture users' orientations toward nation as a point of origin. Post-intercolonial, post-national conceptions of Neapolitanità become possible through the digital and communicative affordances of YouTube.

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Parodia Napoletana di Wrecking Ball and Remixing Neapolitanità

"Miley Cyrus-Wrecking Ball-Parody (Explicit)" [frankEcerrone 2013] is one case study of Neapolitanità on YouTube that can be classified into what compositionists have long called a remix [Palmeri 2012]. Like Cavanaugh's examples of Bergamasco on YouTube, this parody is taken from another media source and produced in Neapolitan so that the speaker sings not only in Neapolitan but *as* a Neapolitan, using specific language to affect Neapolitan identity. The YouTube video I discuss here does this work by parodying the iconic pop singer Miley Cyrus's worldwide musical blockbuster video "Wrecking Ball." The publishers of this YouTube channel, frankEcerrone boast 87,900 subscribers and 32,747,359 views for this channel from the December 6, 2010 date the channel was created to the March 29, 2022 date this analysis was completed, indicating a tremendous scope of audience. The translated description of the producers' channel states: "Hello guys! We are Frank and Cerrone and on our channel you will find parodies of Neapolitan songs of the moment, short sketches, Jokes and videos at [and about] Naples and Neapolitans. In short, we will invent anything to make you laugh :) Have fun!!!" [frankEcerrone 2010].

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The FrankeCerrone YouTube channel's many interviews, skits, and parodies are comedic in nature, and hybridize and materialize Neapolitan language and culture. More importantly, videos like the one discussed below represent Neapolitanità in new, translingual ways that exceed notions of cultural and linguistic purity and create a post-regional, post-national Neapolitan identity — one that extends beyond the physical location of Naples and defies the national disenfranchisement of Neapolitans and creates a Neapolitan linguistic and cultural diaspora. Neapolitan producers on YouTube exploit digital and social affordances to circulate counternarratives that are often made invisible through the

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images of Neapolitans circulated through Italian national media (and the digital cultural record writ large).

Through the audio and visual affordances of YouTube, “Miley Cyrus-Wrecking Ball-Parody (Explicit)” astutely reimagines the use of a top-ten, global, pop video to create a tragi-comic labor advocacy video that illustrates the alienated plight of the working-class subject in Naples, Italy. frankEcerrone strategically choreograph the “Miley Cyrus-Wrecking Ball-Parody (Explicit)” in ways that revise the myth of language and cultural identity as nationally emplaced [Cavanaugh 2017]. “Miley Cyrus-Wrecking Ball-Parody (Explicit)” [frankEcerrone 2013] not only counters the national imaginary of the Neapolitan language and culture, but it also strategically repositions objects traditionally associated with male or female gender and sexuality so that these ideologies (in this case, Italian, patriarchal, heteronormative) also are disrupted. The video particularly exemplifies the cultural and linguistic potential for other minority, vulnerable, and/or endangered communities to push back at emplaced, national, patriarchal narratives that restrict the uses and experiences of their languages and communities.

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The repurposing of objects from Cyrus’s original “Wrecking Ball” video in this one (e.g., blondish hair, blue eyes, clothing, tears) recasts colonial, patriarchal depictions of working-class Neapolitan men and pleads for a more egalitarian working landscape in Naples and the transnational culture that reifies these biases. A blonde and blue eyed male is much more typical of Northern Italy, therefore, superimposing Northern Italian male characteristics onto a Neapolitan body (that hybridizes the female body of a global American pop star) reflects layered “rhetorical manipulation...by [producers] who are part of or familiar with the community for whom they are translating” [Gonzales 2018, p. 58] Neapolitan language *and* cultural identity:

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Figure 1. Superimposing a Northern Italian Looking Male on Miley Cyrus’s Female Body

The producers likely use an actor with Northern Italian physical characteristics as a way to attract a Northern Italian viewing audience but also as “rhetorical manipulation” [Gonzales 2018, p. 58] laced with humor that forces Northern Italians to see themselves in a socio-economic position many Neapolitan Italians experience. frankEcerrone co-author a revisionary post-national Neapolitanità that pushes back at nation-based, intra-colonial, homogenized, patriarchal views of language and identity. The translated version of Neapolitan identity and culture through frankEcerrone’s “Wrecking Ball-Parody (Explicit)” [frankEcerrone 2013] disrupts the intra-colonizer-colonized binary, rupturing static conceptions of Neapolitanità or Neapolitan identity for a public beyond Italy illustrated by the 1.3 million views, 9500 likes/dislikes, and 506 comment/replies as of the date of this analysis.

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In one of the early images in the parody, the actor imitates Miley Cyrus hammering away at the metaphorical pieces of her ended relationship. The irony in the Neapolitan version is that the backdrop of the video signifies the real life and

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career of a typical bricklayer or “*muratori*” as frustrated, overworked, and underpaid while Cyrus is an affluent Western celebrity who probably has never picked up a sledgehammer in her life except as a prop in her video. The words the actor sings in Neapolitan are subtitled in English throughout the video, though not the standard English [Wiesen 2022] Americans might be accustomed to hearing, but an accented, or global version. This reflects deliberate translanguaging, or a multimodal and linguistic “multicompetence that functions symbiotically for the different languages in one’s repertoire” [Canagarajah 2011, p. 1]:



Figure 2. Repurposed Objects, Translingual Captions

In the above clip, the actor sings the lyrics “*stong’ na munezz*” [frankEcerrone 2013] which translates directly as “I am or I feel like garbage” but is instead subtitled “I’m a piece of sheet.” [frankEcerrone 2013] An Other-English-variety viewer might infer that the subtitle is meant to read “I’m a piece of shit,” however, the seemingly inaccurate translation succeeds partly because the images, objects and other subtitles in the video co-signify to inform the meaning of this particular segment, and also because the humorous depictions of the actor detract from the awkward sounding “sheet.” The producers might also intend a double entendre in this case where “sheet” could be interpreted as the lifeless, dull sheetrock that is typically present on a construction job site as well as a reflection of the actor’s socio-economic position, one that is unacknowledged or supported by the economic framework he is “stuck” in.

The producers take a popular, global, digital object, the “Miley Cyrus - Wrecking Ball (Official Video)” [Cyrus 2013] and recreate it with an actor that not only sings in Neapolitan, but as a *Neapolitan*, repurposing the objects of the original video to rescript a narrative that focuses on local issues which are still rampant in the region of Naples today such as the lack of employment opportunities, compensation, benefits or social safety nets for many under-educated, hard working manual laborers. The producers co-opt Cyrus’s theme of lost-love desperation, with the actor singing his local version of despair in the Neapolitan language, while his hair and clothing clearly imitate Cyrus’s in the original “Wrecking Ball” video:

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Figure 3. Cyrus's Unrequited Labor of Love

frankEcerrone's deliberate use of the objects of Cyrus's video to co-signify with the Neapolitan dialect and the narrative contained therein is pointed and also satirical, which many of the comments (discussed later in the article) reflect upon. Cyrus fetishizes the objects of working-class culture (in one part of the video she licks the sledgehammer) to eroticize her performance of heartbreak and lost love while the objects in her video — masonry tools, work boots, stark drywall — are repurposed in Frank Cerrone's video to reshape the significance and use of labor (emotional in Cyrus's version but physical and emotional in frankEcerrone's) that Cyrus represents.

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It is important to note that the humor that frames the frankEcerrone video not only illustrates "critical understanding of [rhetorically and culturally situated] communicative practice" [Gonzales 2018, p. 40] but is also a "disruptive [strategy which facilitates] a creative engagement with others, demonstrating both a knowledge of cyberculture activities as well as a... performative complexity" [Lizárraga et al. 2015, p. 14]. Neapolitans love what they refer to as "*a chiacher*" or "the gift of gab" peppered with "*a barzellett*," or "a joke," which the producers of this video are astutely aware of. They use this situated cultural knowledge to present a "light" version of the repetitious, mundane routine a manual laborer in Naples might experience. The clip below is a clear instance of humor as rhetorical strategy:

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Figure 4. "I Eat the Same Sandwich Every Day"

The lyrics in this part of the video *"me mang' semp o stress u panin'...o speck e o galbanin"* [frankEcerrone 2013] translate directly to "I eat the same sandwich everyday...prosciutto and cheese," though the subtitles do not reflect this exact wording. The meaning is clear however: a typical, enjoyable Neapolitan snack (a sandwich is not considered a proper lunch in Naples), becomes part of the soul crushing routine the bricklayer cannot escape as part of his workday. This moment in the video reifies the lack of choice the bricklayer or *"murrator"* has in his choice of profession, especially after 30 years (as stated in later lyrics), and the feeling of entrapment that comes with that lack of choice. Unlike many white collar professionals and business owners in Italy who have a long, sanctioned midday break for a hot "pranzo" or lunch at home or a local restaurant, the "murrator" is limited in the length of his work break (only 30 minutes as later lyrics illustrate) and therefore, he is also limited in his selection of lunch foods. Humor is strategically invoked as "performative complexity" [Lizárraga et al. 2015, p. 14] in this part of the video because the sandwich "disrupts" the rhetorical continuity of the bricklayer/work related artifacts. The sandwich looks fresh, appetizing, and even enjoyable, so it is therefore ironic that this too is repurposed to signify part of the bricklayer's burdensome life.

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As evidenced earlier, some subtitles of the parody are English translations that do not always convert directly from the Neapolitan. The clip below illustrates faulty translation as well, and is one of many in the video that illustrates "translation as a multimodal practice...with critical attention to how modes like visuals, sounds, and words work together to create meaning for various stakeholders" [Gonzales 2018, pp. 39–40]. The actor sings *"numé paven' e contributt"* [frankEcerrone 2013] which translates directly to "they don't pay my contributions," a phrase that may not be clear to non-Italian viewers:

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Figure 5. No Benefits or Healthcare

Though the subtitle “my boss even doesn’t pay my taxes” may be an imperfect translation in this case, the actors body language, coupled with the concrete rubble and somber turn in the sounds of the music to clarify, and even amplify lyrics. Manual laborers may be hardworking and dedicated, but particularly in Naples, they are exempt from the benefits of institutional labor that is handsomely rewarded with social security, healthcare, and other employee benefits in Italy (derived by taxes the institutional owners pay on behalf of the employee to the state). The laborer who works 30 years without any of these benefits is, indeed, broken. English and Neapolitan are strategically hybridized in this digital artifact (the parody) to create a new, translanguaged “Wrecking Ball” video, one that ironically exceeds Cyrus’s 1.1 million video views by almost 130,000 viewers as of the date of my analysis. where Neapolitan’s presumably endangered dialect and English’s global lingua franca intersect across multiple modes to affect uptake between producers and viewers, commenters and repliers [Canagarajah 2011, p. 1]. The result is a global “Wrecking Ball” that demonstrates “social-semiotic acts and moments,” which “produce and stabilize but more significantly, unmoor” [Won Lee 2014, p. 80] static or one-sided representations of language, labor, class, gender, ethnicity, and perhaps even romantic suffering.

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Transnational, Translingual, Transmodal Comments

Though the comment section of “Miley Cyrus-Wrecking Ball-Parody (Explicit)” [frankEcerrone 2013] video mostly illustrates translangual or mixed semiotic responses, there are certainly comments that reify stereotypes of Neapolitans. In her analysis of northern Italian Bergamasco on YouTube, Jillian Cavanaugh finds that: “these . . . videos [reflect] the dominant Bergamasco language ideologies and social stereotypes, in which Bergamasco is associated with maleness, a working class or peasant socioeconomic position, roughness, straightforwardness, the value of hard work, as well as deep connections to the past” [Cavanaugh 2017, p. 93]. The language ideologies and social stereotypes that Cavanaugh describes as tied to Bergamasco are typical associations for Neapolitans and Neapolitanità as well. These associations are depicted not only through the content of the video itself (e.g., the male actor, the video’s theme evidenced by a working class socioeconomic position), but also through the comment section. Some of the comments of this video reflect the emplacement of the Neapolitan language and the Northern-Southern binary and divide that exists in the national imaginary of Italy, also are reflected in the comments of “Miley Cyrus-Wrecking Ball-Parody (Explicit)” [frankEcerrone 2013] by frankEcerrone, while others represent metalinguistic and cultural analyses, often through intercultural dialogue.

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The potential for community building is a social and communicative affordance of YouTube, one that has strong implications for the way languages and cultures are perceived. This notion of community is partly illustrated through YouTube’s digital affordance which enables producers to link their videos and channels to other social media platforms and objects in order to increase their follower base. The comment feature of YouTube is another space where users’

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orientations toward the video and one another foster community and reshape Neapolitanità. The comments are one of the most visible and interactive social affordances of YouTube (unlike the “share” and “like” buttons, which may be overlooked). The interpretive frame of commenting expands social boundaries around the song and performance, fostering engagement with the Neapolitan language and Neapolitanità (or Neapolitan identity) beyond Naples and Italy. The commenting feature of YouTube is a social and communicative affordance of YouTube that “disrupts codes of tacit social interaction” [Humphreys 2005, p. 810] because commenters’ identities are largely undisclosed, making their social interaction virtual and multimodal. Therefore, viewers might be from Italy or Naples or from the Neapolitan and/or Italian Diaspora, but they can also be from other parts of the world.

Although one might make some assumptions about a user/viewer’s identity by clicking on the commenter’s username and accessing their “About” page, YouTube users do not typically reveal detailed information on this platform as they might on Facebook where aforementioned detailed personal information categories are offered for producers to populate and Friends and Followers to view. And, while YouTube viewers can also look at video producers’ or commenters’ Home, Videos, Playlists, Community, and Channels tabs to garner more detailed information about other commenters, these objects do not always indicate clear cultural or other identity markers, and they may not serve to further a connection among the viewers. This distanced communication is important in that it differs from the tribalization often observed on gaming and other social media sites [Nakamura 2002]. The global community fostered through anonymity on YouTube here is more likely to ignore coercive cultural norms (though these may include politeness and interaction), in favor of freedom of speech. It is precisely this type of freedom that I argue may be necessary to reconstitute Neapolitanità in the national and global imaginary.

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The comment section of the video is a cultural “contact zone” [Pratt 1991] which enables the translingual, transmodal “translation moments” for Neapolitans that I address in this case study. I use Gonzales’s definition of “translation is a multimodal practice” as an analytical framework that reflects:

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1. Decentering of alphabetic language and of alphabetic, written language in English (what some scholars describe as “standardized written English”) as the single or most important element of communicative practice ([Horner, Selfe, and Lockridge 2015] in [Gonzales 2018, pp. 39–40]);
2. Rhetorical awareness of how modalities and genres function in different contexts for various audiences ([Arola, Sheppard, and Ball 2014] in [Gonzales 2018, pp. 39–40]);
3. Purposeful and rhetorical layering of modes and media, with critical attention to how modes like visuals, sounds, and words work together in creating meaning for various stakeholders ([Selfe and Takayoshi 2007] in [Gonzales 2018, pp. 39–40]); and
4. Critical understanding of how communicative practice is always rhetorically and culturally situated ([Kress 2000]; [Guerra 2015]; [Shipka 2011] in [Gonzales 2018, pp. 39–40]).

Gonzales’s multimodal translation practice enables the producers and users of this YouTube video to foreground the materiality of the Neapolitan language *and* of the material, lived experiences of Neapolitans. Shankar and Cavanaugh’s language and materiality theory explains that “looking at the linguistic and the material together is both a theoretical AND methodological choice . . . that takes into account material AND linguistic labor” [Shankar and Cavanaugh 2012, pp. 359–360]. Translingual theory posits that “language is constantly in motion, [and] the words that we use to describe specific concepts or ideas shift and transform with our cultural norms and practices” [Gonzales 2018, p. 39]. Producers of multimedia, such as frankEcerrone, have to “echo this flexibility and fluidity, constantly changing their practices as languages and linguistic patterns evolve” [Gonzales 2018, p. 39]. Gonzales’s translation framework carefully weighs the strategic communicative choices interlocutors make in a specific context, such as the particular date and time users might access frankEcerrone’s YouTube parody. Other semiotic/rhetorical choices that *A Revised Rhetoric of Translation* weighs include visual, audio, gestural, and spatial decisions — choices that greatly impact the “materiality of language” that Shankar and Cavanaugh discuss. In this example, YouTube’s communicative affordances enable a post-national, postcolonial, translingual, transmodal dialogue through the comments section that foregrounds linguistic and cultural materiality of Neapolitans.

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The comment/reply section of this video spans from September 9, 2013 (the date the video was first published) to

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March 29, 2022 (the date of access), with the most recent comments posted on March 12, 2022. I used the data sorting features of Google Sheets to categorize a total of 506 comments and replies. In their research, Halpern and Gibbs have illustrated how users' anonymity on YouTube engenders less deliberation in the comment section and a stronger tendency to share what comes to mind [Halpern and Gibbs 2013]. My findings through the 506 comment/reply thread illustrates a lack of deliberation in some places; however, these findings also reflect a transnational, transmodal dialogue that defies the fixed emplacement of the Neapolitan language and culture. The comment/replies whose language I could decipher on this video are written in Neapolitan, Italian, English, Dutch, Spanish, Portuguese, Norwegian, Croatian and Azerbaijani illustrating a number of YouTube viewers/users from beyond Italy and beyond an Italian/Neapolitan diaspora. Most comments are translingual, reflecting a combination of two or more languages (Neapolitan and Italian, Neapolitan and English, etc.) or transmodal (reflecting words *and* emojis or other non-alphabetic characters such as :). Forty percent of the comment/replies simply illustrate whether users like or dislike the video. However, a more interesting facet of this YouTube comment dialogue is how translations of either the lyrics the actor in the video uses or of the subtitles of the video “rupture” a singular interpretation of the video, instead offering a co-created meaning of the text, and subsequently, of Neapolitan language and identity.

For example, user xLinkTijgerFan's post reflects typical “translation moments” in the comment/reply thread through the way they post their question in Dutch first and then follow it with an English translation; they receive a reply from an Italian user (Auroretta, whose YouTube *About* page only has Italian information), who opts to reply in English, misspelling the word “language.” Interestingly, the translingual dialogue reflects the translingual object or video as illustrated in comment examples listed below. xLinkTijgerFan3 poses his metalinguistic question in both Dutch *and* English:

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User	Date Stamp	Comment/Reply	Translation of Comment
xLinkTijgerFan3	4 years ago	<i>Heyo welke taal is dit? omdat ik er niets van versta want ik ben Nederlands</i>	What language is this? because i can't understand what he's saying because i speak Dutch
Auroretta 1564	4 years ago	Evelien Rostie it's a naples leanguage	-

Table 1. “What language is this?”

Other posts are also translingual, mixing languages in a singular post. For example, the user psyco_F25 in Table 2 asks “Who, like me, was raised with this song? Like it if you are watching it in 2020” (my translation).

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psyco_F2	5 months ago	<i>Chi e come me che e cresciuto con questa canzone ? Like per chi lo vede nel 2020</i>
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Table 2. “Who grew up listening to this song?”

The commenter in this case mixes the English word “like” with their Italian words, translanguaging their request for fellow commenters to like their comment if they feel a shared experience with the song.

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Similarly, user/viewers use emojis to create affect that compliments alphabetic text or as word substitutes, in some cases. For example, the post in Table 3 translates to “you’re a monster” followed by two laughing emojis that extend the meaning of the words in the comment to intend sarcasm or humor versus an intentional slur. In fact, “sij nu mostri” is a compliment in Neapolitan slang, indicating the recipient of the compliment is “huge” or “great.” The laughing emojis emphasize the humorous use of the word monster in this case:

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Antonio Candia 4 years ago *sij nu mostr* 😂😂

Table 3. "You're a monster"

In Table 4, Stascema qui, posts: "At first it looks like German" with two laughing emojis indicating that the transcultural aspect of the video makes it humorous.

stascema qui 1 year ago *All'inizio sembra tedesco* 😂😂

Table 4. "At first, it looks like German"

Semiotic objects such as emojis assume the same importance as the written word, often shifting or emphasizing the signification of the comment. Without the emojis, this comment could have been interpreted otherwise.

Some non-Italian user/viewers announce their desire to see the video in their native tongue, such as TheDanySP whose post in Table 5 translates "Why don't you translate it into Spanish?"

Request for translation in Spanish

TheDanySP 3 years ago *POR QUE NO LO TRADUCIERON AL ESPAÑOL >:v*

Table 5. "Why don't you translate it in Spanish?"

There is a trend in this short list of non-English users' comments (evidenced by their names and, sometimes, the information available on their own YouTube "About" pages) written in English, which is unsurprising, as English is a global language (though problematically global per post-colonial theory), and therefore a cultural norm that is co-opted by the producer of the video through the subtitles intended to translate the Italian parody. Table 6 illustrates a Bulgarian name commenting in English.

Трукси Аллен 3 years ago It's cool parody!

Table 6. "It's cool parody!"

Language and identity are fodder for discussion in the comments, as evidenced by some of the examples above. Some comments respond to the gender-play the video is imbued with through the male iteration of the female Cyrus's sexy performance, as shown in Table 7.

vincenzo desiderio 4 years ago *ciccio è gay*

Table 7. "Ciccio is gay"

In this comment by Vincenzo Desiderio, a person with an Italian name but whose Italian identity cannot be verified (i.e., there is no info on his YouTube "About" page), says the actor in the video is gay. Although the comment may appear innocuous, it is prefaced by "ciccio," which can be used in a derogatory sense in Italian to mean "chubby" or "fat" or simply a rude way to summon someone over (as in saying "Yo!" vs. calling a person by name). However, in some Northern Italian regions, "ciccio," is also used as an endearing term among friends. Either way, the user comments on the reconfiguration of male/female objects/portrayals in the video and comments on the sexual identity of the actor in the video, move beyond the focus of the majority of the comments which center on superficially liking or disliking the video.

For example, of the 506 comments and replies analyzed regarding this video, approximately 16% reflect metalinguistic commentary (language about language) and 16% reflect a social commentary fostered by the content of the video and

either connected to local, emplaced (Italian) issues or related to a “shared moral community...[that is] non-geographical” [Cavanaugh 2017, p. 95]. For example, a particularly long, contentious comment/reply section (see Table 8) offer a metalinguistic and social commentary that constructs and maintains provincial, national tensions that “replicate long standing prejudices that divide Italians amongst themselves and problematize the presence of non-Italian immigrants” [Cavanaugh 2017, p. 94] indicated by the word Arab in this thread which might refer to recent Italian immigrants from the Middle East or Africa [Statista 2022].

The comment/reply section begins with a question that many others in the comments ask, “What language is this?” But, this particular comment/reply grouping begins with an assumption by commenter Matteo who asks “what language is it arab?” reflecting Eurocentric colonial attitudes that have historically been linked to Southern Italians [Aprile 2011]. The dialogue starts off contentious with Matteo Patrian replying to Ferdinando YT that the Neapolitan dialect, is in fact, Arabic (or a derivative of Arabic) with the words “eh appunto,” which translates “that’s my point”:

User	Date Stamp	Comment/Reply	Translation of Comment
Matteo	5 years ago	<i>che lingua é? araba?</i>	what language is it arab?
Ferdinando YT	5 years ago	<i>Matteo Patrian dialetto di napoli</i>	Matteo Patrian dialect of Naples
Matteo	5 years ago	<i>Ferdinando YT eh appunto</i>	Ferdinando YT that’s my point
ThomerOfficial	5 years ago	<i>sai cosa vuol dire dialetto, o sei troppo ignorante da capirlo</i>	you know what dialect means, or you are too ignorant to understand it
Valeria Esposito	5 years ago	<i>Matteo Patrian napoletana lingua</i>	Matteo Patrian Neapolitan language
Matteo	5 years ago	<i>Tommaso Arena sono abbastanza intelligente da capire che voi e l'Italia siete due cose ben separate</i>	Tommaso Arena I am intelligent enough to understand that you and Italy are two very separate things
ThomerOfficial	5 years ago	<i>Matteo Patrian infatti io non sono napoletano ma sono umano tu invece sei un razzista e pezzente</i>	Matteo Patrian in fact I am not Neapolitan but I am human you instead are a racist and beggar

Table 8. “what language is it arab?”

Matteo’s insistence throughout the comment thread that Naples and Italy are “two very separate” things incite a 14-line dialogue (one of the longest) in the comments, with users debating the Northern-Southern divide, and making assumptions about one another’s Italian “origins.” The dialogue reflects “‘*campanilismo*’ or the belief that everyone who lives within the same bell-tower or *campanile* shares similar tastes, language practices, and beliefs” [Cavanaugh 2017, p. 94]. Though no bell-tower is in sight on YouTube, these types of comments co-construct one and over-emphasize “living in a place with having certain values and habits” [Cavanaugh 2017, p. 94]. In this case, a metalinguistic comment becomes a social commentary that ties the Neapolitan language directly to a low-class cultural identity (see Table 9), as is evident in Matteo’s comment “I also have many friends from the south (Calabria, Salerno ..) who have lived here for years and they are the first to say that their (ex) countrymen are low class! And also from how they speak, they only ruin Italy, which is already made of shit” (Matteo Patrian 2017 in [frankEcerrone 2013]):

User	Date Stamp	Comment/Reply	Translation of Comment
ThomerOfficial	5 years ago	<i>Matteo Patrian perche cosa ti ha fatto la gente del sud da odiarli cosi tanto, io SONO amico di tanti del sud e ti dico che sanno il significato di famiglia a differenza del nord, e gente che esprime amore , purtroppo i mass media rovinano la mente</i>	Matteo Patrian What did the people of the south do to you that you hate them so much? I have many friends from the south and I tell you that they know the meaning of family unlike the north, and people who express love, unfortunately the mass media ruin the mind
Matteo	5 years ago	<i>Tommaso Arena anche io ho molti amici del sud (Calabria, Salerno..) che vivono qui da anni e sono loro i primi a dire che i loro (ex) compaesani sono gentaccia! poi anche da Come parlano, rovinano solo l'Italia, che già è messa di merda.. che poi i luoghi la al sud sono spettacolari, ci sono alcuni luoghi dove c'è brava gente! alcuni luoghi, magari non bellissimi, dove è la gente che li anima! ma solo alcuni luoghi, niente di più!</i>	Tommaso Arena I also have many friends from the south (Calabria, Salerno ..) who have lived here for years and they are the first to say that their (ex) countrymen are low class! And also from how they speak, they only ruin Italy, which is already made of shit .. that the places in the south are spectacular, there are some places where there are good people! some places, perhaps not beautiful, where people are the ones who animate them! but only some places, nothing more!
Stefano	5 years ago (edited)	<i>A Mattè fa na bella cosa... Cerca di andarte a fare in cu.lo tu e tutti quelli che la pensano come te. Rompete tanto li cojo.ni eppoi siete i primi ad andare al sud a farvi le vacanze. Quando magnate tutti bravi. Ps. NON SONO NAPOLETANO, si vede MA SONO ITALIANO.. Mer.da</i>	A Mattè does a good thing ... Try to go fuck yourself, you and all those who think like you. You all break balls and then you are the first to go south to take your holidays. When you eat there all is good. Ps. I AM NOT NEAPOLITAN, you can see BUT I AM ITALIAN .. [you] Shit

Table 9. “What did the people of the south do to you that you hate them so much?”

Though comments like these indicate that Neapolitan and stereotypes surrounding Neapolitan identity are not necessarily transformed on social media, the total of 506 comments and replies are punctured with other rhetorical moments that help to construct both a revised Italian *and* post-national public “in which the language in use is less idealized and purified than in other publics” [Cavanaugh 2017, p. 94] and also illustrate a translingual “blending and a movement of discourses as individuals make meaning from person to person” [Gonzales 2018, p. 43] as illustrated in earlier examples and in Table 10, below, where a dialogue about the Neapolitan language between an Italian and a Greek user is written mostly in English, despite the users’ national ethnicities:

User	Date Stamp	Comment/Reply (Original Language)
Konstantina Gkazou	6 years ago	Is he talking Italian or another language?
Sabrina Grimaldi	6 years ago	he's talking NAPOLETANO an italian dialect. I'm italian and i talk napoletano. (sorry for my english...)
Konstantina Gkazou	6 years ago	@Sabrina Grimaldi omg ! Even the name of that dialect sounds pretty interesting ! Your English are OK I don't think you did a mistake (I'm Greek by the way sonever mind no one will test us)

Table 10. “Is he talking in Italian or another language?”

The comment/reply thread is also rife with translation moments, where users “consider the specific histories and backgrounds of their intended audiences, understanding regional and historical variations of specific languages...that might influence how information is perceived in a particular stance or utterance” [Gonzales 2018, p. 45]. Table 11, below, illustrates a translation of alphabetic text, correcting words in the subtitles of the video, which other commenters also pointed to as being inaccurately funny, or generated by an automated translator, and therefore faulty:

User	Date Stamp	Comment/Reply	Translation of Comment
Giuseppe Samo	8 years ago	When you sing “ <i>teng' e rin à piezz</i> ” on the subtitles appear “kidneys”. Actually, “ <i>le rin</i> ” is the back.	When you sing “my back is in pieces” on the subtitles appear “kidneys”. Actually, “le rin” is the back.

Table 11. “When you sing ‘my back is in pieces’”

Independent, though ideologically unified comments in Table 12 (below) reflect “translation as a culturally situated practice, one that expands conceptions of translation from...a one to one replacement of words in the first language to words in the second language...to community-based rhetorical contextualization” [Gonzales 2018, p. 58]. Here, users agree on a tragi-comic translation of the video based on their lived experiences and perhaps, based on the lived experiences of their fellow commenters:

User	Date Stamp	Comment/Reply	Translation of Comment
TitanKekko 34	2 years ago	<i>L unica canzone vera che parla dei problemi della vita. Peccato che con questo caldo mio padre mette l asfalto sui tetti della gente.</i>	The only true song about the problems of life. Too bad that in this heat my father puts asphalt on people’s roofs.
Tonyparker88	2 years ago	<i>Questa canzone è divertente da una parte, ma dall'altra fa riflettere, quindi ci sta tutta.</i>	This song is fun on the one hand, but on the other it makes you think, so it fits.
Giuseppe rossi	3 years ago	<i>Con questa parodia c'è da ridere, ma nello stesso tempo da piangere per la realtà dei fatti..... Si può fare insieme... Oppure alternato... Un po' ridi e un po' piangi.... Dipende dal fa bisogno dell'utente 😊</i>	With this parody there is to laugh, but at the same time to cry for the reality of the facts It can be done together ... Or alternately ... A little laugh and a little cry ... It depends on the user's need 😊
Santolo Mele	3 years ago	<i>Questo dovrebbe essere l'inno mondiale del fravecattore. Fa ridere ma sul fino a nu certo punt...</i>	This should be the world anthem of the construction worker. It makes you laugh but only up to a certain point ...

Table 12. “The only true song about the problems of life”

This overview of the comments illustrates the exciting mixed or translingual ways people use Neapolitan and language in everyday settings, pushing back against so-called pure ideologies of Neapolitan and/or Tuscan-Italian and simultaneously countering emplaced notions of cultural identity. It also posits producers and users of media such as YouTube as translators “constantly making rhetorical decisions as they present information to audiences from various linguistic and cultural backgrounds” [Gonzales 2018, p. 45]. Moments like the ones shown in Tables 8 and 9 also illustrate the concerning reality that for many, Neapolitan on YouTube (and perhaps in other digital spaces) has not engendered new depictions of the language or the culturally divided Italy in which it is used.

Coda/Conclusion

In her foundational text *Cybertypes*, Lisa Nakamura discusses how people tend to tribalize with their own kind online, reifying the same “-isms” and stereotypes that exist in physical realities [Nakamura 2002].^[4] Although more research is

necessary to understand what the implications of a transcultural, translingual presence can do for the circulation and preservation of a vulnerable language like Neapolitan and for its attendant cultural ideologies, it is clear that the emplaced ideologies surrounding this language and other minority languages is up against some of the same barriers in social media spaces such as YouTube.

My analysis illustrates that a translingual, post-colonial framework that considers language and materiality offers a counternarrative analytic for considering so called vulnerable or endangered languages and cultures on social media. Cross-cultural, translingual “response to the hierarchies of knowledge and power within the global landscape of the digital humanities . . . [through] counter-world making” [Risam 2019, p. 83] challenges the “discursive imaginaries of the nation” [Won Lee 2014, p. 80] and potentially, the political, economic, and material realities of disenfranchised groups such as Neapolitan Italians. YouTube becomes an effective medium for illustrating translanguaged Neapolitan *and* Italian, countering Italy’s ideology of any “pure” or “standard” Italian. YouTube’s affordances also offer culturally situated translation moments that revise Neapolitan identity and construct new publics that move Neapolitan and Neapoitanità beyond the geographical boundaries of Italy. The dialogic, transnational public this and other YouTube videos like it^[5] create offers possibilities for other marginalized peoples and cultures, not only those whose languages are vulnerable or endangered.

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The case study I have described here is intended as a call for other postcolonial Italian digital humanities studies that are decidedly “non-Anglo” (Fiormonte in [Hall 2019, p. 98]), go beyond “a North American perspective” [Hall 2019, p. 98], and work to revise and expand the digital cultural record to include linguistic and cultural preservation for “minority” Italian cultures such as Neapolitan Italians, while honoring the cultural specificities of those regions and their people. More importantly, perhaps, this Neapolitan case study also illustrates how other minority and/or colonized cultures might harness the affordances of social media such as YouTube to express counternarratives of their languages and cultures that counter emplaced, national narratives that have kept them silenced and subjugated.

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The case study I have detailed herein is homogeneous in that it represents a male-created viewpoint of labor and inequity in Naples. Also, it is not clear by my analysis who exactly the users of the page and site are (although the comments analyzed are mostly in Italian or Neapolitan) or even how far reaching the Neapolitan diaspora extends globally. Future studies that include a global mapping of Neapolitan social media users/producers and that incorporate their voices through ethnographic methods such as interviews would offer a more holistic, participatory representation of a population that is consistently referred to as a “*popolino*” (small or lesser people) in the national Italian imaginary. Still, this case offers a beginning interrogation on how to potentially extend (perhaps even preserve) a statistically derived “endangered” linguistic and cultural heritage beyond national boundaries, illustrates how digital Neapolitan content communities on YouTube and, perhaps, other social media platforms might work collectively against the socio-political structures that have historically silenced Neapolitans, devalued their language, and dismissed the cultural materiality that informs their lived experiences. Neapolitan on YouTube offers a way for minority cultures (Italian and other) to revise the historical and digital cultural record that has kept them on the linguistic and material periphery of their national positionality.

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Notes

[1] The Disrupting DH movement has focused on remapping the discipline to include non-Anglo-American and historically marginalized scholars/ship. Like the scholars in this movement, my project co-opts the term “disruption” from feminist critical race theory

to decenter the digital humanities narrative vis-à-vis new critical voices, new languages, new locations, and new methodologies that reimagine DH as not the seamless products of neoliberal governments and non-profit capitalism, but the work of people, labor, and voices at the margins creating fiction and fantasy, mapping edges and new locations, playing slanted and in glitches with distributed resources and global communities. [Kim and Stommel 2018]

[2] Bergamasco is spoken by people in a small town in the Northern region of Piedmont, Italy.

[3] For this article, I refer to Don Norman’s definition of affordance in technological design in *The Design of Everyday Things* as “the perceivable action possibilities that users consider possible based on an object’s features” [Norman 2013, p. 3], and Ian Hutchby and Simone Barnett’s concept of communicative affordances, which emphasizes how affordances are both functional and relational; functional in the sense that they are enabling, as well as constraining and *relational* in terms of drawing “attention to the way that the affordances of an object may be different

for one species than for another” ([Hutchby and Barnett 2005, p. 151], emphasis in the original).

[4] Nakamura is not the only cultural critic to point out the replication of real-world -isms in digital environments, from gaming spaces to coding infrastructures. See [McLuhan 1995], [Earhart 2012], [Liu 2013], [Everett 2009], to name a few.

[5] [frankEcerrone 2011]; [Rafelopazz 2012]; [Rafelopazz 2014].

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