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Thematic issue

Language, Identity, and Imagined Communities

This issue is guest-edited by

Mark Fiffer Seilhamer, National Institute of Education, Singapore

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Message from the editor

This 9th issue of *Language, Discourse & Society* is the first thematic issue. I am particularly grateful to Mark Fifer Seilhamer to undertake this evolution both for sharing his experience with us, and, through this, for his support to *LD&S*. Mark is currently a lecturer in the English Language & Literature (ELL) academic group at the National Institute of Education in Singapore. His research interests are mainly related to sociolinguistics through the following issues: language and identity, language ideologies/attitudes, and language planning and policy.

While developing thematic issues, *Language, Discourse & Society* still publishes a *varia* section, which welcomes contributions in relation to its editorial line: sociology of language, and sociolinguistics. The *varia* section of this issue counts four articles.

Delin Deng contributes to discourse markers understanding. Focusing on the French spoken by Chinese-native speakers in France, a linguistic analysis of *oui* and *voilà*, is conducted. These functionally interchangeable discourse markers are used differently by French native speakers and Chinese-L1-speakers of French: while the former preferentially use *voilà*, the latter rather use *oui*, which is also the preferred form in Mandarin Chinese. This preference appears to change according to the composition of social network (if native speakers are included): then, the use of *oui* decreases.

Maliheh Rezaei contributes to the understanding of familiarity, formality, and frequency regarding slang. Focusing on Farsi native speakers in Iran, various slang use situations are analysed together: describing people, humiliating people, and expressing feelings. The mixed-method approach underlines both the familiarity of native speakers with slang whatever age, gender, and educational level, and that it may be considered as a part of mainstream speech.

Emmanuel Amo Ofori contributes to the understanding of insults. The case of their use in Ghanaian political discourse underlines a feature as a mean to challenge existing politicians. They are embedded in a way to empower given voices, beyond the usual status of insults as causing mental pain, embarrassment, and disgrace.

Finally, Natasha S. K. contributes to the multidimensional understanding of biotechnology discourses and the questioning of truth-telling. The analysis is undertaken in the Indian case. Similar language is used by those who are in favour, as those who are against it. Alongside, ends of each position varies in the public meaning making process.

Finally, the book reviews section presents *Racialized Identities in Second Language Learning. Speaking Blackness in Brazil* (2017), written by Uju Anya and published by Routledge.

The December 2017 issue of *Language, Discourse & Society* will be dedicated to “« Migrants », « Refugees », « Boat people » and the Mediterranean Crisis: People in Words, Language Issues”, under the leadership of Frédéric Moulène (Université de Strasbourg & Université de Franche-Comté, France), the guest-editor for this call.

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Message from the guest editor

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The concept of imagined communities, originally put forth by Benedict Anderson in 1983, has had its links to language and identity highlighted from its first conceptualization. A political scientist and historian, Anderson's central concern was chronicling how nationalism originated and spread. His *imagined communities* concept explained how citizens of nations are able to conceptualize their own national communities, which Anderson (1991: 6)¹ argues can only be described as imaginary "because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion". He credits print-capitalism for facilitating the creation of imagined national communities due to the profit motive for printers, who chose to print works in particular dialects since printing multiple versions in various language varieties would not have been at all economically feasible. This turbo-charged the language standardization process, with the chosen dialects emerging as the standard language varieties of power and education. Whereas different regional dialects had previously played a substantial role in preventing individuals from imagining any sort of shared identity with their fellow citizens in other regions, the existence of a common standardized language variety with which printed works (especially newspapers) addressed a national audience made a shared identity with those in other regions of a country far more imaginable.

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Application of the imagined communities concept to the world of applied linguistics came largely by way of Etienne Wenger's (1998) expansions on the influential theory of situated learning that he and Jean Lave had previously put forth (Lave & Wenger, 1991), identifying imagination as a mode of belonging to a community of practice. Wenger's ideas were subsequently embraced by Bonnie Norton (2001) who, with Yasuko Kanno, edited a themed issue of *Journal of Language, Identity, & Education* devoted to examining "how the notion of imagined communities might enhance our understanding of language learning and identity" (Kanno & Norton, 2003: 242). In the articles that comprised Kanno and Norton's themed journal issue, the concept of *imagined communities* extend well beyond Anderson's original conceptualization of the imagining of people and communities that might exist *in the present* to the imagining of social relationships in communities that might exist *in the future* – communities imagined both by individuals themselves (e.g., Norton & Kamal, 2003) and communities imagined *for* individuals *by* others, such as parents (Dagenais, 2003) or teachers and school administrators (Kanno, 2003). Upon reading the articles in this themed journal issue in 2003, I was instantly stuck by the explanatory power of the imagined communities construct for issues related to identity and language learning. Learners' investment (Norton, 2001; Norton Pierce, 1995) in particular imagined communities seemed to me to be a remarkably apt

¹ Anderson's 1991 work cited here is the revised version of his 1983 work, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*. Anderson (1991) acknowledges that in the period between 1983 and 1991, the world changed a great deal, but rather than subject the work to an extensive overhaul to reflect post-Cold War changes, he chose to keep the original work mostly intact, "as an 'unrestored' period piece" (Anderson, 1991: xii), restricting his revisions to the correction of errors (that he attributes mostly to inaccurate translations) and the addition of two chapters that did not appear in the original 1983 work.

characterization of the forces that were driving language learning for the research participants I was then working with, and when I contemplated my own language learning experiences, I realized that investment in imagined communities had been a key driver for me as well. At the time, I fully expected a barrage of research employing the concept to be forthcoming.

Although not quite the barrage I had predicted, in subsequent years, the imagined communities concept did regularly appear in applied linguistics literature, with works by Kanno, Norton, and others (e.g., Carroll, Mothra, & Price, 2008; Kanno, 2008; King, 2008; Pavlenko & Norton, 2007; Ryan, 2006) applying the construct in various ways. A take on the imagined community concept that especially resonated with me was the one put forth by Ryan (2006). Proposing that it is a sense of membership in an imagined global community of English users that compels many EFL learners to expend considerable efforts learning the language, Ryan contends that for young people in much of the world today, the English language is increasingly associated not with any particular geographic area or culture, but instead with an international global culture and community – one which, as citizens of the world, they are already legitimate members. I seized upon this imagined global community of English users concept and utilized it to frame discussions of L2 personas (Seilhamer, 2013a) and English ownership (Seilhamer, 2015), as well as to highlight factors preventing many of my former students in Japan from being able to conceptualize themselves as members of such an imagined community (Seilhamer, 2013b). Other scholars (e.g., Sung, 2016; Zheng, 2013) have also found the imagined global community of English users concept relevant in their various research contexts.

In this special issue of *Language, Discourse, & Society*, we seek to contribute further to the growing body of literature highlighting the relevance of imagined communities to the study of language learning and use. The four articles featured here were all submitted in response to a call for contributions that originally elicited papers on the theme of ‘Imagined communities and motivation in language learning’. While language learning motivation was indeed featured, in varying degrees, in most of the submissions we received, it was *identity* rather than *motivation* that turned out to be the theme that most strongly connected these papers beyond *language* and *imagined communities*. We have, hence, re-themed this issue as *Language, identity, and imagined communities*, and I believe the four contributed articles that made the cut to be featured here represent a good variety of perspectives on connections between language, identity, and imagined communities.

The first article by Shelley Dawson is perhaps the contribution here that highlights language learning motivation (or more precisely, the more nuanced notion of *investment*) most prominently, foregrounding the very individual nature of imagined communities by showcasing two English language learners in New Zealand – learners who envisioned themselves participating in the future as members of ostensibly the same community. Yet these two learners’ individual imaginings of the particular identities necessary to achieve community membership differed, and these differing community conceptualizations substantially impacted their investments. Utilizing interactional data and a discourse analytic approach, Dawson examines how the two learners attempt to cultivate the identities they individually see as valued in their respective imagined communities – identity construction in interaction in which investments are sometimes aligned with the imagined communities of interlocutors and sometimes not.

In the next article, Maloney and De Costa examine how two Japanese-American sisters envision imagined communities and the language-related struggles that they encounter at the

local, translocal, and transnational scales. For these sisters, as Japanese heritage language learners/users in the United States, the relevant imagined communities would be their conceptualizations of the local Japanese community in and around the city where they live and attend university, the translocal Japanese community (including other Japanese heritage language learners) in the U.S. more generally, and the transnational Japanese community beyond U.S. borders, which for them generally consisted of Japanese in Japan. As Kanno and Norton (2003: 243) point out, the communities people imagine do not necessarily “accord well with the realities encountered in their daily lives” and this was indeed the case for the two sisters. Maloney and De Costa, in this case study, chronicle the sisters’ identification of areas in which their imagined community conceptualizations at each of the different scales were found to not mesh so well with their lived realities, forcing them to revise their imaginings of these communities.

The issue’s third article by Davis, Day, Eichsteller, and Baker also deals with scales. In this case, the focus is on imaged communities at the supra-national scale – specifically the scale of a transnational ‘European’ imagined community. The authors examine autobiographical narrative data from the Euroidentities² project, attempting to identify evidence of ‘European’ imagined community conceptualizations in the narratives. While data related to languages and language learning was not specifically sought in the narrative interviews, these are, unsurprisingly, reoccurring themes. And in relating stories of transnational experiences in which triumphs and adversities of language learning and use are highlighted, participants reveal orientations to Europe that, the authors conclude, fall somewhat short of a European imagined community.

Finally, our fourth article and sole contribution in French is by Cyril Robelin, who takes us on a historical journey through the various incarnations of the territory of Neutral Moresnet, an area of less than four square kilometers at the borders of Belgium, the Netherlands, and present-day Germany. This tiny territory has officially been a part of Belgium since 1944, but functioned as a quasi-independent state for more than a century³. Towards the end of the territory’s existence, efforts were afoot to make Neutral Moresnet a truly independent entity – imagined as an Esperanto-speaking state. Robelin examines the discourse of this imagining *vis à vis* vintage and more recent sociological perspectives⁴.

As Ryan (2006: 42) points out, “The challenge to articulate the imagined is indeed a daunting one”, but since it is not only very concrete here and now experiences, but also hopes and dreams for the future, that affect individuals’ identities, affiliations, and investments, the imagined communities concept promises to continue to provide a very fruitful lens with which to view language learning and use, probing the link between identity and desire. The authors of the four articles in this issue have accepted the challenge of articulating the imagined, and it is my hope that others will continue to undertake this daunting challenge in the years to come.

² The Euroidentities project is an EU Framework 7 collaborative endeavour in which the authors of this paper were heavily involved, both in data collection and analysis, particularly for the Wales portion of the project. See <http://www.euroidentities.org/>

³ For those unable to read French, but nevertheless desiring more information on the curious phenomenon of Neutral Moresnet, Earle (2012) provides a good overview. Earle, however, only briefly mentions the Esperantist aspect of the Neutral Moresnet story.

⁴ This article really served to underscore for us the motivations for certain disciplines typically adopting particular citation conventions. For documenting rather obscure historical references, Chicago style footnotes really do work much better than our house referencing style. This article is, therefore, presented with a fusion of our house style and Chicago citation style.

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Call for guest-editors for e- journal *Language, Discourse and Society*

Language, Discourse & Society is an international peer reviewed journal published twice annually (June and December) in electronic form. The journal publishes high-quality articles dedicated to all aspects of sociological analyses of language, discourse and representation.

All interested guest-editors are invited to submit a proposal (a call for papers) in order to edit a thematic issue. The editor in chief will consider proposed call for papers based on clear commitment to studies of language. *Language, Discourse & Society* cannot publish proceedings. Guest-editors are free to choose the thematic of their issue proposal. *Language, Discourse & Society* accepts electronic submissions year round. Please send your proposals to: journal@language-and-society.org

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The position of guest-(co-)editor is unpaid.

Original Articles

Language, Identity, and Imagined Communities
guest-edited by Mark Fifer Seilhamer

An investigation into the identity/imagined community relationship: A case study of two language learners in New Zealand

Shelley Dawson¹

Abstract

The relationship between imagined communities and identity construction has much potential to enrich our understandings of language learners' experiences. Both constructs sit at the forefront of the wider 'social turn' in Applied Linguistics which challenges notions of language learning as a predominantly psychological enterprise and views students instead as part of a wider social world. As identities are co-constructed in interactions, learners not only bring their histories and socialised ways of doing and being into the present, but their future desires are also harnessed and linguistically deployed in the 'now' (Block, 2015). The investigation of these emergent identities can then provide a linguistic springboard from which to access visions of desired futures. In times of enhanced mobility where English has accrued (for many) an unprecedented amount of symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1986, 1991), the concept of a future imagined self merits even deeper consideration.

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This article investigates the relationship between identities and imagined communities for two key participants: Hue from Viet Nam and Jose from Timor Leste, both government officials in their respective countries and adult learners of English in a New Zealand university environment. Through a layered methodology which prioritises naturally-occurring conversational data and a discourse analytic approach, this article explores the emergence of salient identities and the significance of the imagination in identity construction. Findings show that similarly-labelled imagined communities may result in very different instantiations of identities and investments for language learners. By making connections between identity negotiations and the abstract realm of imagined communities, this paper highlights at once the importance of emic identity categories and the need for educators to remain open to the ways similar imagined communities may impact on their students' investments and classroom identity work.

Keywords

Imagined community, Identity, Interaction, Investment, Struggle

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Introduction

The relationship between imagined communities and identity¹ has reached centre stage in SLA research (Block, 2007; Dagenais, 2003; Kanno & Norton, 2003; Morgan & Clarke, 2011; Meadows, 2010; Norton, 2001, 2013). Both constructs sit at the forefront of the wider ‘social turn’ (Block, 2003) in applied linguistics, challenging beliefs of language learning as a predominantly psychological enterprise, one which accords importance to identity primarily in terms of the ‘native speaker’/‘non-native speaker’ division. This conceptual shift has allowed for fascinating insights into language learner experiences as learners navigate new contexts and use language to negotiate both their sense of self and their various social identities. The role of imagination in the form of future and present social memberships is part of this wider encapsulation. As learners co-construct and negotiate identities in interactions (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005), they not only bring their histories and their socialised ways of doing and being (e.g., Bourdieu’s [1977, 1986] notion of ‘habitus’) into the present, but their future desires are also harnessed and linguistically deployed in the ‘now’ (Block, 2015). It follows that the relationship between identity, imagination, and language learning should remain at the forefront of second language acquisition research in the interests of deepening our understandings of language learners’ experiences. The present article focuses on identity negotiations of two adult English language learners, and the influence of their imagined communities.

Identity is central in exploring imagined communities for language learners. No longer viewed as a static construct, identities are understood to be multiple, fluid and a “site of struggle” (Norton, 2000: 127), and as emerging through situated and negotiated encounters (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005). An understanding central to the social constructionist framework is that negotiation forms a crucial part of this co-construction (see Holmes & Marra, 2017). This approach to identity encompasses not only how people imagine themselves, but also how they relate (through language) to their social worlds. It includes how they are positioned and repositioned by self and others, and their sense of legitimacy in the various social, cultural, and linguistic contexts in which they interact (Block, 2015; Duff, 2015). Given the dialectic relationship between language and identity (Bakhtin, 1981), it makes sense to investigate what language learners actually ‘do’ with their language by way of negotiating identities which are salient to them. The analysis of conversational interactions can be revelatory in this respect. The fact that the same linguistic features may well index multiple identities (Eckert, 2008) reinforces the centrality of context and reflexivity in attempts to reveal nuances of meaning. Further, the investigation of these identities which emerge as salient can provide a linguistic springboard from which to access visions of desired futures. In times of enhanced mobility where English has accrued (for many) an unprecedented amount of symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1986, 1991), the concept of a future imagined self merits even deeper consideration.

¹ The term identity is used to reference “how a person understands his or her relationship to the world, how that relationship is constructed across time and space, and how the person understands the possibilities for the future” (Norton, 2013: 4), thereby encouraging a shift in the conceptualisation of identity as static to one that is dynamic and influenced by the imagination. In line with this conceptualisation, identities are discursively co-constructed, continually re-created, and emergent in interaction (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005).

This present article investigates the relationship between identities and imagined communities for two key participants: Hue from Viet Nam and Jose from Timor Leste, both government officials in their respective countries and adult learners of English in a New Zealand university environment. Through a layered methodology which prioritises naturally-occurring conversational data and a discourse analytic approach, this article explores the emergence of salient identities and the significance of the imagination in identity co-construction for the learners. This study shows that similarly-labelled imagined communities may result in very different instantiations of identities and investments, a finding which heightens in significance when viewed against a backdrop of globalisation and mobility. By making connections between real identity instantiations and the abstract realm of imagined communities, this paper highlights at once the importance of emic identity categories and the need for educators to remain open to the ways seemingly similar imagined communities may impact on their students' investments and classroom identity work.

1. Identity, investment, imagined communities and struggle – interconnected concepts

The relationship between identity and language learning is now taken as axiomatic by many. The poststructural framing of identity (within which social constructionism fits) has been instrumental in this regard, and the learner is now firmly situated in the language learning context with notions of *agency* and *empowerment* providing distance from previously anonymising SLA discourses.

The idea of imagined communities is valuable in its explanatory expedience. Much research has pointed to the powerful guiding force of the imagination in identity negotiations (e.g., Norton, 2001; Pavlenko & Norton, 2007). Originally coined by Anderson (1991), the term 'imagined community' refers to a conceptualisation of nationhood as being imagined, and necessarily different for each individual despite some commonalities of experience. In the education realm, the notion of the 'hopeful imagination' (Simon, 1992) encapsulates an emancipatory view of learning and teaching by bringing the role of imagination centre stage and calling on educators' sensitivity to both their own and their students' histories and desires. These ideas are further explored in discussions of *communities of practice* as a situated model of learning (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998). While the original conceptualisation of a community of practice stresses the powerful nature of the immediate in affecting an individual's learning, later revisitings see the role of imagination as crucial. Moving from peripherality to legitimacy in terms of community membership (and therefore learning) necessarily entails the construction of an image of our place in relation to particular communities and possibilities for the future (Wenger, 1998). Further, findings of the importance of imagined communities such as that of the 'global citizen' (Ryan, 2006) are of value, and invite an engagement with theory by way of 'articulating the imagined' (Ryan, 2006: 42) through real data provided by real learners.

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The concept of investment (Norton Peirce, 1995; Norton, 2013) also merits attention in its important role in the conceptualising of the identity/imagined community relationship. Drawing on Bourdieu's economic metaphors, the notion of investment provides a social alternative to existing psychological constructs of motivation. It emphasises the socially and historically constructed relationship of the learner to the target language, acknowledging learners' complex

Shelley Dawson

“An investigation into the identity/imagined community relationship: A case study of two language learners in New Zealand”

histories and multiple desires. Investment also presupposes a ‘return’ in the form of enhanced language skills, which can then function as a form of symbolic capital, leading to eventual economic capital. Many studies have shown how identity and investment are inextricably bound up in language learning. As an example, Norton’s (1997) study of Mai (an immigrant learner in Canada), paints an absorbing picture of one woman’s struggle and ultimate inability to invest in classroom practices, given the mismatch between teacher and learner investments and identities. McKay and Wong’s (1996) study of Chinese-speaking immigrant teenagers in a Californian classroom context also points to the duality of investment in that learner investment in the target language presupposes an equal investment in social identities such as ‘being American’. As Ryan (2006) shows, investing in learning English may be a way to appropriate an imagined ‘global identity’, thereby advancing the future plans and goals of many learners as they navigate fields impacted by globalisation.

As noted earlier, identity construction has been conceptualised as a “site of struggle” (Norton, 2000: 127), and as conflictive as opposed to harmonious, especially in situations involving border crossing (Block, 2007). In sociolinguistic workplace scholarship, interactional negotiations involved in boundary crossing are represented as “‘sites of struggle’ par excellence” (Holmes & Marra, 2017: 129). This has direct relevance for today’s mobile adult language learners whose favoured identity practices may not be recognised or legitimised in their new setting. There may be a tension, then, between the learner’s attempts to instantiate aspects of their preferred (or desired) identities and ways in which they are interactively positioned (see Davies & Harré, 1990; Menard-Warwick, 2009) by others.

The realm of the imagination too has been referred to as a “terrain of struggle” (Pavlenko, 2003: 252), capturing the sheer breadth of ideologies, societal discourses, and visions that can bring to bear on identity co-construction in a second language learning environment. While it is well recognized that the negotiation of identities does not imply a smooth journey toward shared understanding (e.g., Norton & McKinney, 2011; Pomerantz, 2008), the concept of struggle has been relatively underexplored in identity and imagined community research. This study posits then, that a better understanding of identity and investment practices for language learners, with attention to the level of struggle involved in negotiations, can throw light on the important connections between a language learner’s identities and imagined communities.

2. Methodology

This article focuses on two case studies of government officials from South-East Asia who were in New Zealand for a five-month theme-based English proficiency course. While data was collected from six key participants for the wider study (see Dawson, 2014), two were selected as focus cases because of their interesting identity trajectories and the similarities in their desired imagined communities. The particular course the officials were participating in is commonly seen as the more academically challenging component of the overall programme and it was at this time that I came to assume a privileged ‘insider position’ with regard to this study. This occurred initially through my role as ‘workplace liaison person’, organising visits and accompanying the officials to New Zealand workplaces (an important component of the course), and later, as a co-teacher.

Data collection took place over a period of 9 weeks in a New Zealand university environment. In terms of data collection, I use a layered methodology in order to engage with complexity and multivocality. Naturally-occurring data (in the form of audio recorded interactions inside and outside of the classroom) was prioritised, aligning with Block's (2007) call for this type of data as a way to enrich understandings of the dialectic relationship between identity and second language acquisition. I was interested to see what identity co-construction looked like in practice, and how it played out in both a classroom context² and outside of the classroom with a conversation buddy³. By spreading the data collection across a period of 9 weeks and capturing identity negotiations in different contexts, I used an approach to identity examination established by scholars outside of the classroom domain (e.g., Dong & Blommaert, 2009).

Recordings alone, however, are not sufficient to provide strong warrants for interpretation (see Holmes & Hazen, 2014; Marra, 2012 for approaches to triangulation). To provide qualitative rigour, a supplementary ethnographic data collection was used. During nine weeks of a fourteen week course, participants recorded themselves four times in a classroom setting, twice with their conversation buddies⁴, and participated in two semi-structured interviews with me. In line with the 'research with' principal (Roberts, 2003), the goal of empowerment was also taken into consideration, in that the participants not only had complete control over the recording process (Holmes & Stubbe, 2003), but also the opportunity to listen to the recordings afterwards, a tool many saw as valuable for their learning. In addition, I observed the class 4 times over this period and interviewed the main classroom teacher, the language tutors, and the conversation buddies. I also attended several informal gatherings and taught the class twice a week in the latter stages of the course (see Figure 1 below).

Analyses are presented in the form of participant case studies, so as to underscore the centrality of the participants' trajectories (De Costa, 2010), while simultaneously acknowledging the multiple perspectives in the data (Duff, 2008). 19

² The classroom context involves small group interactions around the course theme, as well as a one-off 'workplace visit' group task. Note that data for the latter is not included in the present paper.

³ Each of the officials is paired up with a conversation buddy at the start of the course. Careful consideration is given to these pairings. The aims of the buddy programme are to provide regular opportunities for the officials to speak English outside of class, to learn more about the New Zealand lifestyle, and to develop friendships.

⁴ Note that this only occurred where the conversation buddy consented to being recorded. Figure 1 represents this by including dotted lines around the conversation buddy circles.

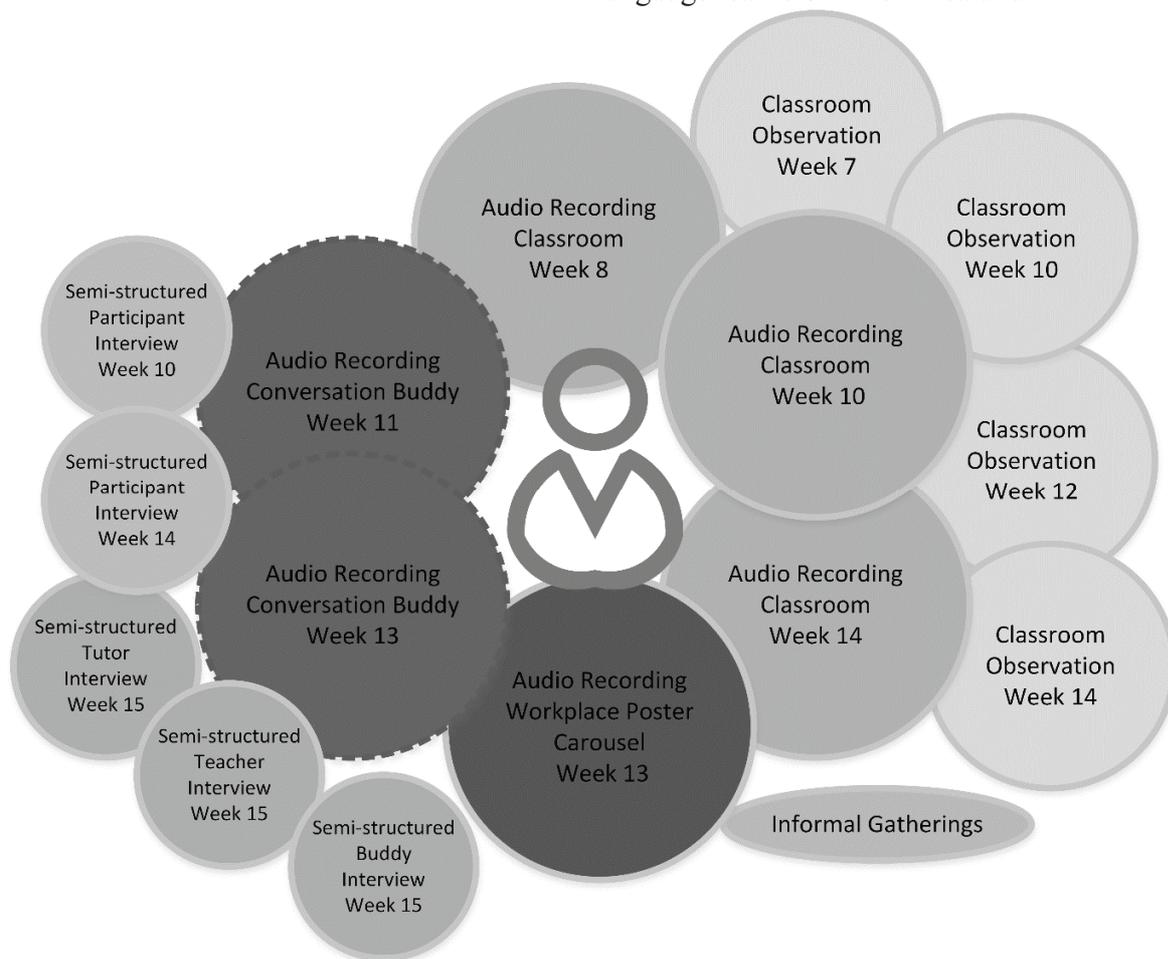


Figure 1: Multiple data sets

In terms of analysis, the application of a discursive linguistic approach to social constructionism afforded access to intricate detail within these different contexts. I was interested in capturing “rich points” (Blommaert & Dong, 2010: 41), or rather elements of surprise and promise to be used as portals to access the underlying workings of identity negotiations. By remaining aware of the dynamic interplay between macro and micro elements, identity co-construction was captured as it occurred without the encumbrance of preconceived notions of identity categories. A major focus of this article (and the social constructionist approach) is to show how identities emerge in negotiated interactions and are not given in any a priori fashion. I did not start out with the aim of investigating what a ‘good student’ identity looked like, for example. Rather, I was interested to see the shape of my key participants’ identity trajectories and what particular identities became salient to them in their interactions with classmates and conversation buddies. This approach involved an openness to potential identity categories and an engagement with abstract concepts as well as the ground-level instantiations. I show how these identity categories emerged as salient (for my particular participants) through a focus on the linguistic micro features of the interactions (while acknowledging the intersectional properties of identity), and use existing scholarship and the ethnographic data collection to support the analysis.

The importance of imagined communities first arose in my interviews with key participants. These interviews provided evidence of the importance of a similarly-envisioned future imagined community for both Hue and Jose in the emphasis they placed on their aims of becoming part of a postgraduate community of learners in an English-speaking country. For example, in my first interview with Hue (in the context of discussing her aim of achieving highly in IELTS⁵), she directly indexed this aim: “I want to study and get masters”. The brief interaction which followed lays claim to the English ‘native-speaker’ element of her future vision:

Shelley: oh that’s exciting and where do you want to study do you know
Hue: native speaker like New Zealand or Australia

Teachers and tutors too were well-aware of these goals for both students, elaborating on them in our interviews. The naturally-occurring data also provided evidence of this desired future community both through direct indexicality where this community was directly referenced and through more indirect indexicality (see Silverstein, 2003 for a full discussion on indexicality) where linguistic forms and lexical choice can be seen as moves towards appropriating desired identities in light of these future aims. In sum, the multiple data sets allowed for strong support for interpretations of the naturally-occurring conversational data (see Holmes, Marra & Vine, 2011). The findings section makes use of a limited number of excerpts from the recorded conversational data that were selected as illustrative of wider patterns which show how identities emerged in interaction. I provide contextual cushioning from the ethnographic data at the outset to situate each participant, as well as interview data (presented in quotation marks).

3. Findings

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3.1. Hue, The ‘good student’

At the time of the study, Hue was a 28 year old government official in Viet Nam equipped with several degrees. In her own words, she is “forgetful”, “lucky”, and “self-confident”. Throughout the course, she was very willing to communicate, despite being acutely aware of what she termed her “wrong pronunciation”, a strong focus during her time in New Zealand. She was committed to her long-term goal of gaining a scholarship to study for her Master’s degree in an English speaking country, and the English proficiency programme she was part of appeared to provide a pivotal stepping stone in this eventual attainment. Her drive impressed, concerned, and at times puzzled her teachers, tutors and conversation buddy, in equal measures.

Hue was invariably described as highly motivated and as displaying leadership qualities by her teachers. Her tutors, however, noticed a tendency to dominate small group discussions and to perhaps rely too heavily on model answers; in other words, there was a perceived lack of critical engagement. Hue’s conversation buddy, Lucy, was initially struck by her clear desire to improve her spoken English. Hue made it very clear in our interviews that she was determined to make the most of every opportunity available to her both in and out of the classroom. She painted the

⁵ IELTS is the acronym used for the International English Language Testing System.

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English-speaking environment as a “precious opportunity”, one which would allow her to “practise and enhance” her English.

The examples below highlight the situated and fluid nature of identities and imagined community membership, and the struggle these identity negotiations sometimes entail. For ease of presentation I have structured the analysis in such a way as to separate key identities whilst allowing for their interwoven and contradictory nature (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005; Norton, 2013). The focus on the selected excerpts does not preclude the negotiation of other identity positions in the data (see Dawson, 2014 for a fuller discussion).

The ‘good student’ identity emerged as salient from the outset for Hue, unsurprisingly perhaps given the academic context and her strong overall motivation and investment in classroom practices (as repeated in the interviews and supported during classroom observations).

The first recorded classroom interaction involves Hue working in a small group with her classmates – Dara from Cambodia and Jose from Timor-Leste (the second case study participant). Small group work was a regular way of exploring the course theme and this particular activity invited discussion on the costs and benefits of urbanisation by way of preparation for an essay task (see Appendix 1 for transcription conventions). The imagined community of ‘postgraduate student in an English-speaking community’ appears to be guiding Hue’s (and Jose’s) investment in different identities. For Hue, the most salient of these was that of the ‘good student’, as the following excerpts explore.

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Excerpt 1: ‘Good student’ in a classroom interaction

1. Hue: see record becau-
2. Dara: okay start
3. Jose: start from you
4. Dara: [laughing]: nooo not //me:\
5. Jose: /yeah\\ start from you ()
6. Hue: in my opinion i think that the (potential) er
7. [non-standard pronunciation]: urbanisation:
8. far outweighs the disadvantages
9. [speech-like]: firstly I feel that the benefits of:
10. [non-standard pronunciation]: urbanisation: is means that
11. er we can create more ++ er we can
12. create er + [with conviction]: more: optun- opportunity
13. for the poor people and
14. er when they move from rural to the urban
15. at that time they can easy
16. to get a job to earn more money
17. and to have a better life and another way of u- er
18. [pronounced ‘youburnisation’; struggles with this word]:
19. urbanisation: is the economic grow
20. Jose: pronunciation?
21. Hue: [focuses on the word; pronounces correctly]: urbanisation:
22. Jose: okay urban//isation\
23. Hue: /urbanisation\\ when it’s mean I mean that the grow of
24. economic when economic grow it’s mean that we will
25. reduce poverty in our country
26. in most of country in over the world +

27. in developing country we see that
28. many people move from the rural to the urban to get job
29. because that here they can get more opportunity
30. however the policy making er
31. the policy making of the government
32. can help them or not it depend on each government
33. if the government can have er
34. economic policy for the growing of the country
35. they can create more opportunity for the poor people
36. um and when the economic grow //()\
37. Jose: /what\\ is your point

This extract, as in the majority of others, shows Hue as initiating (line 1: see record becau-) the interaction. This suggests that Hue's idea of being a good student involves not only investing fully in the prescribed activity, but in maintaining a level of control, which emerges as a common feature in the data. This is similarly reflected in the relative length of her turns (e.g., lines 6-19, and 24-36), and in her use of questioning later in the dialogue as a topic control mechanism (Holmes, Stubbe, & Vine, 1999). These strategies act as helpful contextualisation cues (Gumperz, 1982) in accessing the emergent 'good student' identity. However, these strategies do not directly lay claim to this identity irrespective of context, nor are they devoid of negotiation and struggle.

The 'speech-like' delivery and length of the turn suggests that Hue sees these group discussions as a valuable opportunity to practise the academic vocabulary in her course materials. Although beneficial (in terms of opportunities for repetition), phrases such as "far outweighs the disadvantages" (line 8), sequencing words (line 9: firstly), and formal adverbs (line 30: however) may indicate a lack of discourse competence (Celce-Murcia, Dörnyei, & Thurrell, 1997) in that they stand out as being somewhat inappropriate for this particular spoken genre. This focus on producing academic vocabulary correctly is also evident in Hue's use of collocations (line 25: reduce poverty; line 31: policy making; line 34: economic policy). 23

This combination of academic vocabulary and length of turns does not appear to ensure clarity, inviting some explicit negotiation from one classmate in particular. Jose's use of the interjection "pronunciation" (line 20), is framed as a question and seems intended to check his hearing of the word "urbanisation", which may be seen as reasonable given the difficulties Hue is exhibiting with the articulation of this noun. While Jose's repetition (and accompanying tone) of the correct word (line 22: okay urbanisation) supports this view, the ambiguity in his move may also provide insights into the negotiation at hand. His choice of word ("pronunciation"), viewed from this angle, may equally be conceived of as a power move, invoking a teacher identity, with the potential to destabilise Hue's confidence given her previously-mentioned focus on pronunciation. Her subsequent overlap implies that she does not read it as such, however, as she swiftly regains the floor (line 23) and attempts to elaborate on her ideas through an enactment of what seems to be inspired by a teacher-type discourse of her own.

The lack of minimal feedback is also evident and is made all the more salient by Hue's relatively slow speech and careful attention to words which provide ample opportunities for linguistic ratification of her turn. This lack of support is in direct contrast to other points that occurred later in this same interaction where Dara and Jose furnish each other's turns with a growing level of lexical and quasi-lexical backchannel cues. Despite the different cultural norms at play in terms

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of provision of such feedback (see Stubbe, 1998), and the varying appreciation of what is acceptable in a New Zealand context, the complete lack of minimal feedback is striking and appears to emphasise Hue’s interlocutors’ discomfort rather than enacting support. This interpretation is supported through the ultimate result of what may be termed a “deep interruption” (West, 1979: 82), rather than any form of orientation to a transition-relevance place (Pomerantz & Fehr, 2011), i.e., a signal to continue talking. Indeed, Jose’s direct question (line 37: What is your point?) can be viewed as a significant intrusion into the internal structure of Hue’s preceding utterance, and thus calls forth West & Zimmerman’s (1977) findings on the predominance and non-facilitative nature of interruptions as a way to achieve dominance.

A more situated interpretation would see Jose as concerned with Hue’s lack of authenticity in this interaction and his direct question may therefore be viewed as an attempt to denaturalise (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005) her claims to the ‘good student’ identity by questioning what he sees as problematic. Struggle, then, appears to manifest itself quite explicitly here in the form of ‘discursive tussles’.

The salience of this ‘good student’ identity for Hue can be seen as it traverses contexts and manifests itself in similar yet novel ways with her conversation buddy, Lucy. Hue makes full use of these buddy meetings for what I will term ‘identity rehearsals’. In other words, this context seems to function as a valuable practice space for appropriating her desired identities in light of her future aim of being part of an English-speaking postgraduate community. While there is evidence of a level of struggle, the interactions are for the most part harmonious and ‘discursive faultlines’ (Menard-Warwick, 2009, 2014) remain inactivated. Several learning strategies feed into this enactment, including the checking of vocabulary, use of academic vocabulary, direct questions, and requesting spontaneous model responses, a particularly ingenious learning aid (yet one which also potentially supports ethnographic interview data indicating Hue’s overreliance on native-speaker models). Most relevant in this context, however, is the way in which this identity is often co-constructed in a supportive manner. The following extract from week 11 follows a discussion on Hue’s childhood ambition to be a chef because of the poverty in Viet Nam at that time.

Excerpt 2 : ‘Identity rehearsals’: Valuable practice space in appropriating the ‘good student’ identity

1. Hue: but now er when our country er [guesses]:
2. economic: er improve
3. Lucy: yep //()\
4. Hue: /we have\\ many country in over the world and many
5. I mean that many aids from foreign country and
6. they help our country to reduce poverty
7. Lucy: right re//ducing poverty\
8. Hue: /yes and\\ er improve er economy
9. Lucy: yeah
10. Hue: and so er now I think that our living standard im//prove\
11. Lucy: /yeah\\

Much of this data set provides evidence of Hue’s willingness to attempt complex vocabulary items, in the manner of line 2 (“economic improve”). Lucy’s regular contribution of minimal feedback provides a level of scaffolding not apparent in the small group classroom discussions. While Hue’s determination to string her sentence together with chunks of academic vocabulary is

resonant of her classroom identity work (as in Excerpt 1), in this case her claims to the ‘good student’ identity are actively supported and encouraged through Lucy’s minimal feedback and sympathetic echo responses (see Marsden & Holmes, 2014) (e.g., line 7: right reducing poverty). Although the ‘good student’ identity position is instantiated in both contexts, the value placed by Lucy on Hue’s linguistic and cultural resources seems to contribute to a more controlled and confident ‘doing’ of this particular identity, all of which brings to bear on future classroom episodes where Hue’s sense of her own ‘right to speak’ (Bourdieu, 1991) is noticeably stronger and less susceptible to derailment. In moving towards her desired community of postgraduate students, the opportunities to trial this identity in the conversation buddy context were extremely valuable.

Hue’s ‘good student’ instantiations were also actively supported by her main classroom teacher Julia in the classroom sessions, where she gained significant individual attention (as evidenced in the ethnographic observations). In this sense, we could argue that Hue’s evolving identity work and strong levels of classroom investment aligned with Julia’s sense of imagined community for her students (see Kanno & Norton, 2003), a vision which seemed to gel with that of Hue in the acknowledged importance of English to be used as ‘capital’ in (often transnational) career advancement (Dagenais, 2003). This idea is likely to have developed from socially constructed staff and stakeholder discourse around the course. Moving further towards the ideological core, this may also reveal the ability of larger institutional Discourses (Gee, 1996) to ‘coerce’ identity work to an extent (see Ehrlich, 2008) in the implicit and explicit value placed on behaviour which appeals to historically constructed notions of what is appropriate.

Interview data show that elements of Hue’s ‘good student’ identity are called to task, however, by different interlocutors in other contexts. Her language learning tutor, Felipe, felt Hue had “put blinders on”, a reference to her unwavering determination to improve her English, which seemed to involve a reliance on transmission (see Nelson & Kim, 2001) and little critical engagement. This idea of criticality seemed to form a central aspect of Felipe’s optimal imagined community for this particular group of students, encouraging them towards a more autonomous approach to learning. Similarly, Lisa, another of the language learning tutors, seems to be calling on sociohistorically constructed visions of what it means to be part of this particular course, when she commented on Hue’s tendency to “take over” discussions. As suggested earlier, part of Hue’s ‘good student’ toolkit involved taking all opportunities to convey the knowledge she had worked hard to acquire, an occasioning which did not fit into Lisa’s particular vision of an equal and harmonious sharing of ideas. These examples show that imagined communities can intertwine and collide in various ways.

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3.2. Jose, The ‘supportive classmate’

At the time of this study, Hue’s classmate Jose was a 28 year old government official from Timor Leste who had a leadership role for his Timorese colleagues during his time in New Zealand. Fluent in both Indonesian and Tetun, he completed his Bachelor of Arts in Indonesia, and, like Hue, harboured a strong desire to pursue postgraduate level study in an English-speaking country (“it’s like a passion”). Jose took time out from his job in the area of human rights to take part in this course, the opportunity for which he was extremely grateful. Highly communicative, he thrived in this New Zealand context, despite bouts of homesickness.

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Jose actively sought opportunities to communicate with native speakers of English, and the enjoyment he gained from discussions with his conversation buddy Robert was a regular topic of our conversations and interviews, where he spoke of feeling motivated by the “authentic” nature of these discussions. Meeting regularly in a pub, and being treated as a “real person” (with no language concessions made) was a highlight according to Jose, and it is likely that this would have played a key role in his developing English language confidence and competence. During interviews, he often spoke of his emotional struggle during the course. He mentioned feeling “overwhelmed” in the beginning stages, and his difficulty with time management was a recurring theme, echoed by his teacher and more strongly by his tutors who found his lack of preparedness frustrating and confusing in light of their fondness for him. During the workplace visit I accompanied him on, Jose was the embodiment of professionalism, creating a strong impression and engaging with sincerity.

Salient in much of the data were two identity positions, the ‘leader’ and the ‘supportive classmate’ which appeared interrelated and connected to his future imagined community of postgraduate students in an English native speaker context. The excerpts which follow zoom in on aspects of this ‘supportive classmate’ identity.

Despite the identity tussles in Excerpt 1 where Jose may well be viewed as instantiating a distinctly non-supportive classmate identity with Hue, it is of note that this is a rare occurrence in all data channels. In interviews, teachers and tutors all spoke highly of the support he offered to his peers in his leadership role and in general as a classmate. Classroom observations added further support to this viewpoint. It became clear very early on in the data collection that Jose prioritised relational aspects in his interactions, seeking to make meaningful, “authentic” connections with his interlocutors and effectively holding his interlocutors to the same standards he placed on himself in this respect. The locus of struggle between Jose and Hue’s early interactions, therefore, appears to exist (at this point in time) in this mismatch in identity investments, in their differing visions of what type of identities require nurturing to facilitate the transition to their desired community of postgraduate students.

The importance placed on the relational is highlighted in excerpt three, an interaction which occurs in classroom recording 1, involving Jose, Dara, and Hue discussing the costs and benefits of urbanisation by way of preparation for an essay task (see Excerpt 1).

Excerpt 3 : The importance of the relational

1. Dara: too many people
2. Jose: [drawls; in agreement]: y//es\:
3. Dara: /too many\\ people in the the government just
4. the government how to say + i need to think
5. Jose: well er you know it you know the point but you just hard //to\
6. Dara: /stuck\\ with the wo//rd\
7. Jose: /yeah\\

A close-up analysis suggests the need for a nuanced interpretation, one that sees Jose as instantiating his ‘supportive classmate’ identity. This, as mentioned above, seems to have connections with his future imagined community in the focus on relational aspects of communication. Immediately of note is Jose’s stretching of the vowel sound ‘e’ in his drawled response in line 2, which is not a common feature in the recordings. That there is meaning

attached to this prosodic choice is instantly clear. Dara's short utterance in line 1 ("too many people") is in response to Jose's question about the 'costs' of urbanisation, and comes after a linguistically dense turn from Hue, which had resulted in Jose's frustration (see Excerpt 1). Jose's response then, must be viewed in light of what had come prior, and can therefore be understood as a token of his appreciation and acceptance of what he sees as the authenticity of Dara's turn. 'Too many people' is a concrete answer that may be seen as indexing a shared 'concerned global citizen' identity (a reflexive positioning used more frequently by Dara in subsequent data), thereby invoking a sense of empathy and concern. This supportive identity is further reinforced in line 5, where the repetition of "you know" acts as a significant contextualisation cue (Gumperz, 1982) to interpret meaning. By reinforcing this shared perspective through repetition and insisting on Dara's cognitive depth (despite her own self-positioning as linguistically deficient), Jose can be seen as encouraging and authenticating Dara's line of discourse. With Dara, then, in this particular context, Jose's contributions are primarily facilitative and supportive (e.g., line 5), and the regular co-operative overlaps (Stubbe, 1998) between these two participants serve to reinforce the co-construction of the 'supportive classmate' position.

Another example of the 'supportive classmate' identity (which feeds into Jose's conceptualisation of his future imagined community of postgraduate students) occurs in the final classroom recording. This particular interaction involves Jose, Dara, and Vithu (another participant from Cambodia) and was characterised by a great deal of joviality at the beginning, as shown in the following segment. It involved shared laughter, funny voices, good-natured teasing and, later in the recording, some heartfelt supportive comments on what they felt they had all achieved.

Excerpt 4 : Idioms as indexing relationality

1. Jose: [exaggerated intonation; joking]: good morning Vithu how are you:
2. Vithu: [same intonation as Jose]: I'm fine and you: // [laughs]\
3. Dara: / [voc; laughs]\
4. Jose: a bunch of fluffy d//ucks\
5. Dara: /laughs\

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Jose's exaggerated intonation and 'funny' voice immediately engages the support and 'buy in' from his classmates. Vithu's copying of Jose's intonation pattern seems to validate this as a supportive and relational resource and the subsequent shared laughter indicates the strong rapport these officials have developed. Of note is Jose's use of the idiom 'a bunch of fluffy ducks' (replacing the traditional 'box' with 'bunch'⁶), articulated carefully and with a similarly upbeat tone. Both Dara and Vithu reinforce the currency of this language, and thereby his 'supportive and friendly' classmate position, through accompanying laughter. While there was evidence of the teaching of idioms during the early stages of the course, it is unclear whether this one was part of the set. It seems likely that it was appropriated by Jose outside of the classroom environment (given that he is the only participant to use it in the data). Interview material also provides evidence of the satisfaction gained from what Jose understands as "natural language", which points to his desire to be part of a 'native speaker-like' community, and also perhaps has implications for the importance he places on 'authenticity' (see Excerpts 1 and 3) and corresponding concern with 'appropriate and judicious' language use (Bourdieu, 1977).

⁶ 'A box of fluffy ducks' is an idiom that has derived from 'a box of birds', both of which are used in New Zealand English. The intended meaning is to express happiness or more generally, that everything is going well.

Jose’s investments in these aspects of his identity work are connected to his visions of what his desired imagined community of postgraduate students will entail. Jose regularly spoke of the motivation and pleasure his conversation buddy sessions with Robert provided. Being treated as a “real person” and not being subject to ‘deficient communicator’ discourses was a highlight and it seems reasonable to assume that his enjoyment of idiomatic language may have either derived from, or have been intensified by these experiences. Jose also foregrounded his own associated embodied capital (Bourdieu, 1986, 1991) by mentioning his “Irish friend” at his workplace in Timor Leste during our interviews and the final classroom recording, stressing how much help he had been in preparing for the English speaking component of the course. Jose saw this friendship as crucial in continuing to strengthen his speaking skills upon his return home (which he deemed a high priority). These men appear to embody the type of community that Jose sees as a necessary prerequisite in accessing his overarching community of postgraduate students in an English-speaking context. As such, their strength in shaping his identity work, and effect on his overall trajectory cannot be underestimated.

4. Discussion

This section builds on the case studies described above by examining the relationship and connections between future imagined communities and language learner identities. As already discussed, the notion of the imagined community was one that arose early in the data as a strong guiding force, and as such, offers a rich and intriguing lens on the identities that emerged as salient for Hue and Jose. Both Hue’s and Jose’s co-constructed identity work seemed to be guided by their powerful visions of becoming part of a postgraduate community of learners studying in an English-speaking environment. Despite this similarity, their identity instantiations and investments (Norton, 1997; 2013) were very different. Hue focused on demonstrating her knowledge, investing strongly in the perceived academic side of this community while Jose’s investment lay primarily in the relational, in the authentic interactions he saw as characterising this group. This adds weight to Kanno & Norton’s (2003) observation that imagined communities do indeed have the potential to impact more strongly on learners’ actions (and identity co-construction) than the ones with which they have daily engagement.

Envisaging themselves as postgraduate students in an English-speaking environment had a strong bearing on their investment in different identity practices (classroom or otherwise), and the means of appropriation used to construct and negotiate these identities in English. Hue, in particular, appeared to have a strong sense of the cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986, 1991) afforded by a command of academic English, conceptualising further study (which requires English language skills) as a way to advance her career. Her strong levels of investment were obvious from the outset as she took every opportunity to work hard and project herself as ‘a good student’. Both the classroom and conversation buddy contexts provided discursive evidence of her commitment to constructing this identity position and interview data with tutors and her teacher provided further support for this interpretation. For Hue, developing this particular identity may be seen as the first rung in climbing towards her future imagined community. In other words, a legitimate claiming of this identity would help to validate her goals of future study, as surely (as Hue seems to be saying) only ‘good students’ populate this desired realm.

Jose, on the other hand, wanted to commit to further study because it was his “passion”, yet he also acknowledged the positive repercussions there would be career-wise. Based on my extensive ethnographic observations (which showed Hue’s complete commitment to each classroom task and Jose’s sometimes ambivalent responses) a traditional SLA perspective would deem Hue a ‘highly motivated’ learner, and perhaps label Jose as unmotivated (Gardner, Tremblay, & Masgoret, 1997). This essentialising only serves to sweep rich social constructs under the carpet, undermining the agency of the person in question, their particular visions for the future, and the importance of context. The perspective of an imagined community, however, allows these investments to be understood in the light of Hue’s and Jose’s desires to “expand [their] range of possible selves” (Kanno & Norton, 2003: 246).

Identity construction, however, does not happen in a vacuum. Through interactions, identity enactments may intersect with the imagined communities of others, leading to a level of struggle and opposing sets of negotiations. Given the fact that the ‘identity collisions’ in my data (see Excerpt 1 in this article) were seemingly activated by (and sometimes mitigated by) the pull of imagined communities, I would thus conceptualise struggle as an integral part of co-construction, involving sometimes challenging negotiations enacted through discursive positioning (Davies & Harré, 1990). As the case studies demonstrate, the power of these visions and potential lack of alignment between interlocutors’ imagined communities can be the ideological root of disharmony. When imagined communities aligned, however, struggle did not manifest itself explicitly in interactions, existing rather beneath the surface as participants struggled on other levels to appropriate their desired identities despite the supportive context (see Dawson, 2014).

The embeddedness and overlap of these imagined communities also surfaced as salient. Jose’s investment appeared to involve a breaking down of the abstraction of the imagined community into specific chunks of attainability. Interestingly, he appeared to invest particularly strongly in what seemed to be another level of imagined community – that of a ‘native speaker-like’ group, sitting under the wider umbrella of his postgraduate scholarship visions. In other words, these imagined communities may be embedded (Hall, 2004), and access to one may open the portal to another. Jose’s investment in this second-tiered ‘native speaker-like’ imagined community entailed an equal commitment to imagined identities (Norton, 2001) which he practised, struggled with, and seemingly revelled in during his time in New Zealand. In the ‘doing’ of his identities, there was an alignment with what he saw as authentic (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005), where the concrete and ‘real’ were privileged. By discursively enacting these notions in his identity work and demanding them from others, Jose may be viewed as slowly appropriating the voice (Toohey, 2000) of a supportive individual with leadership qualities, somebody who can relate easily and confidently to proficient English speakers. In other words, this focus on gaining communicative competence and perhaps ‘proving himself’ in this New Zealand setting may well pave the way for a seamless segue into a higher tier of a postgraduate, English-speaking imagined community.

A key finding of this study pertains to the different investments that can arise from a seemingly ‘similar’ imagined community. The fact that Jose’s and Hue’s trajectories were so very different, yet guided by their shared desire to be part of an English-speaking postgraduate community is a useful reminder to educators to avoid assumptions of what such a goal would or should entail and to remain open to the range of identities and investments that these visions may result in for each learner. One way for teachers to at least access the abstraction of imagined communities is to

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acknowledge the various identities that emerge as important to the learners (Menard-Warwick, 2009; Morita, 2004) and to speculate on this relationship. Even a minimum of speculation as to the links will be more helpful than employing essentialising terms such as ‘motivated’ or ‘unmotivated’, which do not do justice to social histories and future visions.

One way of maximising classroom potential is to provide opportunities to access multiple identity positions (Norton, 2000), encouraging students to draw on valuable intellectual and social resources and transcend the less powerful position of ‘second language learner’ (Miller, 2004; Pavlenko & Norton, 2007). It may also be of value to set up activities at the beginning of a course which involve an equal sharing of ‘future visions’ so that a climate of respect and awareness is fostered from the outset, mitigating the potential amount of struggle in identity negotiations. Nurturing collaborative power relations under the umbrella of an inclusive pedagogy (Nelson, 1999) will likely lead to increased levels of tolerance and understanding in identity negotiations stemming from diverse sets of ideologies.

The clear ‘meshing’ of identities, investments, and imagined communities paints a complex picture, highlighting the sheer magnetism of these future visions for language learners as they guide on-the-ground identity co-construction. The embeddedness and intersubjective complexities of these imagined communities as they are brought into the social realm, however, is something which bears further investigation.

Conclusion

The goal of investigating identity co-construction and imagined communities has revealed layers of complexity which bring to bear on our understanding of English language learner experiences and investments. The fine-grained linguistic analysis of interactions has shed light on what identity construction looks like in practice, allowing for discursive intricacies to be captured as they emerged at ground level, feeding into a richer understanding of their connections to the more abstract realm of desired future communities. On a theoretical level, I would posit that this identity/imagined community relationship is itself dialectic and fluid. A deeper investigation of the linguistic instantiations of identities can enrich our understanding of the relevance of imagined communities for language learners, just as an enhanced appreciation of the importance of these future communities can add value to current understandings of identity. The empirical potential of capturing identity in this way is something to be embraced by researchers.

The findings also highlight the need for educators and students alike to acknowledge learners’ imagined communities and the connections to investment and identity construction, given that the lack of such recognition has the potential to exacerbate non-participation (Norton, 2001). I argue, in line with Simon (1992), that there is a need for educators to reflect on their own socially and historically-constructed imagined communities (for themselves and the learners they teach). This would usefully be accompanied by a consideration of the implications of a less than harmonious co-existence.

The relationship between identities and imagined communities is therefore both complex and salient in the ESL classroom, given the links with investment and overall trajectories. The more educators appreciate the complexities around the nature of identity co-construction, and

understand the power of imagined communities, the stronger the chances will be for an essentially transformative and engaged learner experience (Cummins, 1996; King, 2000). In Jose's and Hue's cases the supportive parameters of the programme resulted in both learners flourishing in distinct ways. Identity co-construction involved struggle and challenges; it involved commitment to a desired future, and it manifested itself differently. Crucially, however, it allowed the learners to finish the programme not only with an enhanced ownership of a linguistic resource, but a stronger sense of how they might build on this new capital to access the communities they so aspire to be a part of. In this regard, the future seems bright.

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Imagining the Japanese heritage learner: A scalar perspective

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Abstract

Heritage language learners (e.g., Montrul, 2013; Wiley et al. 2014) have recently received increased attention in SLA research. In keeping with this growing interest, this case study examines how multiple social and geographic scales (Canagarajah & De Costa, 2016) come together and contribute to how two transnational (Duff, 2015) Japanese heritage learners perceive themselves in relation to their multiple imagined communities (Anderson, 1983) on a local, translocal, and transnational scale. The focal participants for the case study are two Japanese heritage-language-speaking sisters, both who grew up in the Midwest United States. Findings suggest that the sisters' experiences both on a local and transnational scale shape their expectations of the community of Japanese speakers. While both sisters grew up in a relatively similar environment, individual characteristics coupled with their unique experiences led the sisters to encounter different ways of viewing themselves with relation to the different scales that they found themselves a part of. In particular, the sisters imagined the transnational Japanese-speaker community as more diverse and inclusive than their more traditional, non-transnational Japanese speaking counterparts. Additionally, how the sisters confronted and reacted to their experiences differed, based on their perceptions of themselves in relation to other Japanese speakers across different scales. The older sister, for example, was more active in confronting practices she disagreed with while the younger sister, who was equally frustrated at certain practices, did not actively try to counteract them because she did not want to stick out. Highlighted is the complex nature of heritage and transnational individuals' experiences and identity formation, and how the findings from this study can be used to inform heritage language learning instruction.

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Keywords

Heritage language learner; scales; imagined communities; transnational

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Introduction

In his conceptualization of imagined communities, Benedict Anderson (1983) conceived of imagined communities as those in which individuals conceive of having communion with, even though they may never actually meet. Since the early 1990s, second language acquisition (SLA) researchers have coopted this construct in order to “explore how learners’ affiliation with such communities might affect their learning trajectories” (Norton, 2013: 8). More recently, a growing number of SLA researchers (e.g., Manosuthikit & De Costa, 2016; Montrul, 2013; Wiley et al., 2014). have begun to investigate the complexities surrounding heritage language learning. Often, heritage learners and transnationals develop and maintain ties with their peers and family members across local, translocal and transnational contexts (Lam, 2009). To our knowledge, there has not been work examining heritage language learners’ *imagined communities* across these multiple contexts, in particular through the lens of social and geographic scales. This paper examines how multiple social and geographic scales come together and contribute to the ways in which two Japanese heritage learners perceive themselves in relation to their multiple imagined communities on a local, translocal, and transnational scale. We start with a brief review of transnationalism and heritage language learning before proceeding to explain how a scalar approach to language learning can enhance our understanding of heritage language acquisition in a contemporary era.

1. Framing the study

1.1. Transnational linguistic repertoires: Issues of legitimation

Within applied linguistics, a major area of interest is the language learning related issues surrounding transnationalism. Transnationalism generally refers to the crossing of borders and the maintenance of identities, communication, and activities linking individuals with communities outside of those in which they currently reside (Vertovec, 2006). With increased international migration comes greater linguistic diversity and language contact. Thus, the identities of transnational language learners are often in a state of flux as they shuttle between communities as well as social and linguistic practices. Commenting on the effects of an increasingly global world, Duff (2015: 59) noted that “mobility may lead to the retention of prior languages primarily or the expansion of linguistic repertoires by learning new languages or other varieties of the languages they already know.” These linguistic repertoires, however, are valued differently, depending on their context of use. Relatedly, Flores and Rosa (2015) challenged the concept of linguistic appropriateness and its surrounding discourse, suggesting that this phenomenon inherently devalues the diverse and complex capital of individuals who are not deemed to have the ‘right’ type of capital. Consequently, Flores and Rosa call for a dismantling of the system that continues to racialize the language of those who do not constitute the *white listening subject*. Regardless of the race-centeredness of this term, we argue that the notion of those who do not constitute the white listening subject can be extended to apply to any group that experiences minoritization, marginalization, or oppression based on their linguistic practices or capital. To some effect, Flores and Rosa’s problematization of the white listening subject invites comparison to Blackledge’s (2003) earlier work that linked the notion of imagined communities

with the racialized discourses in the UK; these discourses, as noted by Blackledge, stigmatized the cultural practices of Asian minorities who visited their heritage countries regularly, thereby highlighting the challenges encountered by heritage language learners.

1.2. Heritage language learners (HLLs) and the Japanese HLL experience

The emergence of an increasingly transnational world, as previously described, has also given rise to linguistic challenges faced by heritage language learners (HLLs). For this paper, we adopt the view that heritage language learners include individuals whose primary language is not the one regularly spoken in the home. As observed by Montrul (2013), a majority of the HLL studies have investigated individuals with low language ability. To extend the HLL research agenda, Montrul also called for an exploration of the opposite end of the ability spectrum, that is, an emphasis on the native-like abilities of HLLs that have been largely overlooked by the field. One way to enhance our understanding of the HLL experience, according to Melo-Pfeifer (2015), is to examine the role that families can play in the construction of expectations for HL maintenance and how to integrate them with language pedagogy. Indeed, a number of sociolinguistically-oriented SLA researchers (e.g., King, 2013) have begun to examine language policies as enacted within transcultural families. King (2013), for example, investigated how three sisters in an Ecuadorian family that immigrated to the United States constructed and performed their HLL identities within a family setting, thereby highlighting the important role that families play in influencing language development. Building on this body of HLL research, this study examines the experiences of two Japanese HLLs. As will be demonstrated, the conceptions of an imagined Japanese identity as conceived by our two focal HLL learners were different from what other Japanese speakers expected. For this paper, and building on earlier family-based HLL work, we examine how HLLs construct and project their identities onto multiple *imagined communities* (Anderson, 1983) and across multiple *scales* (Blommaert, 2007; Canagarajah & De Costa, 2016).

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To date, much of the family-based work involving HLLs has focused on their literacy development and reclamation of their ethnolinguistic identities. Hashimoto and Lee (2011), for example, explored the Japanese literacy practices of three Japanese families in a predominantly Anglo and Latino community in the United States, where other Japanese interlocutors were uncommon. Although their participants differed in their practices, Hashimoto and Lee reported that their focal children's engagement in Japanese literacy greatly improved when the families emphasized the communicative aspects of learning Japanese as opposed to focusing on reading and writing activities.

In regards to the construction and maintenance of Japanese bilingual identities, a few studies have focused on the experiences of emerging adolescents and the struggles and changes they go through. In her work with multiple Japanese *kikokushijo* ("sojourner children" or "returnees"), Kanno (2003) observed that as the adolescents matured, their ability to understand and negotiate their conflicting identities and social expectations also developed. She concluded that the individuals grew more adept at achieving a balance between the two worlds that they found themselves a part of. These bilingual individuals, according to Kanno, also found a way to cope with shuttling between two distinct languages and cultures. In a related study, Kamada (2010) explored the experiences of biracial Japanese adolescent girls living in Japan and how they struggled with their mixed ethnicities. Kamada reported that (a) her participants' hybrid identities

were not monolithic and unchanging but were constructed through a difficult process of struggle and diligent effort, and (b) their identities shifted and changed in accordance with the context in which they found themselves.

Thus far, the bulk of the work focusing on Japanese HLLs has focused on the dynamic nature of identity construction that evolved as these individuals traversed physical and cultural borders. To help us better understand how HLLs perceive their identities across space and social spheres, we turn to the construct of *scales* and *imagined communities*, which are described next.

1.3. A scalar and imagined communities-based approach to heritage language learning

Scales can take the form of timescales (e.g., days, months, years) or be arranged according to nested social contexts (e.g., interpersonal, classroom, school, community, national, transnational). Emphasizing the spatiotemporal aspects of scales De Costa (2016), who examined the experiences of a transnational Vietnamese scholarship student in Singapore, illustrated how her learning outcomes were affected by the ways in which she was discursively positioned by her peers and teachers. Working within a U.S. context, Wortham and Rhodes (2013) examined how different timescales (e.g., local developments over a decade vs. the larger historical narrative of U.S. immigration) came together harmoniously for their participant, Allie, who lived in a community with a large Latino population. These circumstances combined to help construct Allie’s identity as a good reader.

In their introduction to a special issue of *Linguistics and Education* that focused on scalar approaches to language learning and teaching, Canagarajah and De Costa (2016) advocated that scales be adopted as a category of practice. This power-inflected notion, they contend, enables researchers to view scale as a verb which provides additional constructs such as scale jumping and differentiation. They emphasize the agency of individuals who are not constricted within a given time and space. In other words, individuals are not necessarily bound by a power hierarchy. Instead, they are able to inhabit more than one space at any given time because of affordances such as technology, thereby enabling them to jump scales and engage in differentiation. Transnational HLLs, in particular, are able to communicate with family and friends in different parts of the world and also visit them as a result of travel. Such affordances, in turn, allow transnational HLLs to envision themselves as being members of more than one imagined community because, often, these students straddle several communities as they crisscross the globe both virtually and in person.

Relatedly, and of particular importance to this study is the notion of *upscaling*, as conceived by Blommaert (2007). According to Blommaert, this practice of upscaling can be utilized as a form of expressing power because in certain contexts, individuals may invoke a higher scale that is inaccessible to another individual who lacks the ‘right’, legitimized capital (Bourdieu, 1991). Such an act of upscaling is therefore an overt attempt to demarcate an individual’s distinction. In the opposite direction, individuals can also *downscale* by switching to a lingua franca language to establish solidarity with their interlocutors. Thus, downscaling indicates a more positive connection with an interlocutor, and the refusal to do so (upscaling) is suggestive of an unwillingness to legitimize another speaker and her language or language variety. As will be discussed later, a Japanese speaker’s refusal to respond in Japanese, but instead use English (or another language) when speaking to non-Japanese individuals would exemplify an upscaling act.

Put differently, this practice, when viewed from a scalar perspective, can indicate a move to delegitimize the Japanese skills of their interlocutor in and through an exercise of power. In this paper, we apply the notion of upscaling and downscaling as well as the view that moving across scale levels (e.g., local, transnational) can indicate familiarity, closeness or connection. We also illustrate how these scaled relations are contextually embedded and unique.

As discussed previously, we use the lens of scales to examine HLLs' imagined communities. Anderson (1983) originally conceived of imagined communities in connection with nation states. Like Norton (2016: 477), however, we adopt an extended view of imagined communities to cover "any community of the imagination that is desirable to the language learner." In SLA research, the notion of *imagined communities* has often been examined in terms of identity and investment in the language learning process (Norton, 2001). The analysis of language learner identity is apt, as oftentimes it is through the imagined community of language speakers that learners and speakers draw and mobilize their *investment* in learning a given language (Kanno & Norton, 2003). These imagined communities may not actually exist in the ways that learners conceptualize them, yet they continue to have a very real and important impact not only on learner trajectories and their life choices, but also those of family members (Dagenais, 2003; Song, 2012) and peers (Lam, 2009). Put differently, the language development of transnational HLLs is shaped by the multiple scales in which they are embedded and by the imagined communities to which they aspire to gain membership. On the local scale, HLLs may conceive of an imagined community of speakers in the surrounding city and local institutions. On the translocal scale, HLLs may conceive of an imagined community of other transnationals living within the same national borders. The transnational scale would then include the imagined community of speakers globally or those of the same ethnic heritage. In short, scales provide an efficient lens with which to examine the multiple imagined communities HLLs construct as they move across multiple contexts. Building on these recent theoretical developments associated with transnationalism, heritage learning and scales, this present study is guided by the following research questions:

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1. How do the multiple scales at play within the lives of our focal HLLs, Claire and Erika, come together to affect their identity construction?
2. In what ways are their identities constructed differently?
3. How do they perceive and relate to different imagined communities across different scales?

2. Methodology

2.1. Context

Our study took place in Fall 2015. Both participants, who are sisters, were born in the United States and have spent most of their lives in a suburb of a large metro area in Michigan. Within their hometown, individuals identifying as of Japanese race make up just over 3.5% of the total population of 55,000 (census.gov). This community has been referred to as the state's *Little Tokyo* by the consulate general, and has a long history of harboring Japanese families that come to the United States for a short period on business assignments. These facts may play a role in Claire's and Erika's (pseudonyms) experiences as they were growing up. While the Japanese

residents in their hometown are still definitely an ethnic minority within their home community, their disproportionately larger numbers here may have played a role in Claire’s and Erika’s social experiences. Additionally, their hometown has a relatively higher percentage of college graduates (59% compared to Michigan state average of 26%) and a higher median household income. All of these factors combine to afford Claire and Erika a relatively higher amount of what Bourdieu (1991) terms *economic* and *social* capital within the community they were raised in, as others there have had ample exposure and interactions with those of Japanese ethnicity. In addition, their hometown has a weekend Japanese complementary school for Japanese students whose families are here in the United States for a short period and for those families who want their children to receive an education in the Japanese language.

2.2. Participants

Author 1 met both focal participants through his graduate assistantship duties. He met the older sister, Erika, first during his first year of PhD work. It was through this work relationship that he first had discussions with her about her unique HLL situation. He initially approached only her as she was about to leave the United States to live and work in Japan as a Japanese HLL with a sound command of the language. It was not until the second year of his PhD study that he learned that Erika’s younger sister, Claire, had begun studying at the same university where this study is situated. Through his interactions and discussions with both sisters, it became clear that their situation was unique due to their experiences living in the United States while still returning regularly to Japan during breaks and holidays. As mentioned, both Erika and Claire grew up in the United States, although they had consistent exposure to Japan, Japanese living, and even some of the education system. Their parents, who are both Japanese and originally from Okinawa, came to the United States as adults. Their family regularly visited Japan each year, often spending an extended amount of time in Okinawa during the summer. Travel outside of Okinawa for the participants had been limited for their family, although Erika had spent more time travelling to other parts of Japan.

The sisters were enrolled in a Japanese complementary school while attending grade school, although Claire hated attending and rebelled to the point that her parents eventually allowed her to quit. Erika indicated that she did not enjoy it either, but did not put up such a fight with her parents. With regards to their Japanese language ability, Erika reported that their mother was ‘satisfied’ with their proficiency. Both sisters expressed that they were much more comfortable speaking Japanese than they were reading it, and both disclosed a desire to someday become more proficient writers and readers. Japanese, according to Claire and Erika, is also the language that is spoken most in the home, although the siblings often codeswitch between Japanese and English.

At the time of this writing, Erika was a 22-year-old electrical engineering major with a concentration in Biomedical Engineering. As noted, she planned to move to Japan to pursue her career upon graduation. In March 2016, Erika joined an engineering firm near Tokyo, a job that she said she landed from her involvement with the Boston Career Forum – an event that she became aware of through the Japanese student group on campus. Through conversations with her, it became clear that she enjoyed reading literature, but did not often read Japanese literature due to the difficulty of reading Japanese characters. When asked about her Japanese language ability, she readily admitted that it was not where she thought it could be, but that further language

instruction in a formal setting was something that would be as she put it, “a waste of time” (Interview, October 28, 2015). Interviews and further interactions with Erika revealed that she did not think that formal instruction would provide her with the kind of practice and instruction that would be beneficial for her Japanese language use. When asked why this might be, she noted that practice and instruction was ‘a waste of time’ because she already knew the language.

Claire was an 18-year-old media and information major, and she wants to focus on computer graphics, design and programming. She has become a regular part of the Japanese student club on campus, and at the time of this writing was working towards becoming a member of the executive board of the group. She is very interested in Japanese pop-culture and media, and is often observed reading popular Manga (Japanese comics) or watching Japanese variety television shows. When asked about her involvement with the Japanese club, she responded that she was interested in the group because she wants the opportunity to practice her Japanese and to also broaden her network of friends. While not an anxious language learner, Claire, became increasingly aware of how people position her and how she attempts to resist certain categorizations of herself. An issue that has come up is that of her *Okinawan* accent (as mentioned, her parents were originally from Okinawa), which to her was a surprise, since she had always just assumed that she had an American accent.

2.3. Data Collection and Analysis

As stated, this case study seeks to shed light on the heritage language learner experiences of Claire and Erika. Of specific interest is how their identities in relation to imagined communities across scales were discursively constructed primarily through written narratives and face-to-face interactions between the two sisters and Author 1.

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Data collection occurred throughout the course of one semester (Fall 2015). Approximately, five hours of interviews (both individual and group) were recorded and transcribed. In addition, multiple journal entries and personal correspondence via email were combined for analysis in which the data were continually re-examined and compared in a constant-comparative approach (Fram, 2013). This was done in order to identify emergent themes from the data. Once a recurrent theme was identified, the data were revisited to find additional examples to provide support. This process was repeated for each theme.

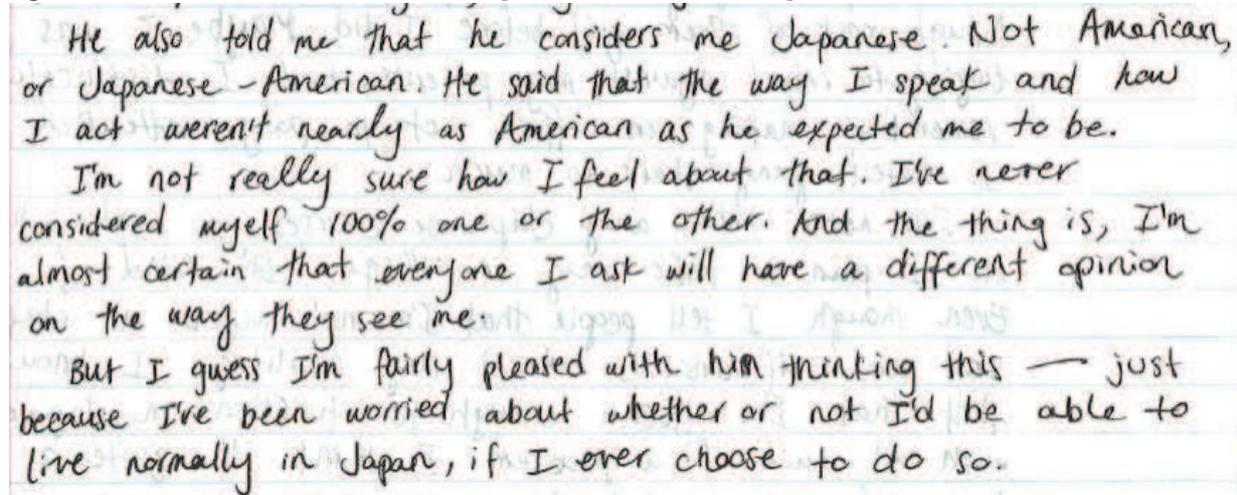
3. Findings

3.1. Blending in and being Japanese

In Claire’s first journal entry (Figure 1), she outlines how a friend in the Japan club on campus told her that he viewed her as being Japanese, not American or even Japanese-American. She expresses how she is unsure about this because of how she has felt that she is not Japanese or American. In further interactions with Claire and Erika, it became clearer that the Japanese international students view Claire as being more Japanese than American because of her mannerisms and understanding of Japanese cultural norms and culture. On the local scale, and as demonstrated in Figure 1) it appears that Claire has been acknowledged as being closer to the

Japanese international students in terms of *Japaneseness* than other HLLs, and even her own older sister.

Figure 1. Claire: He told me he considers me Japanese. Not American or Japanese-American



He also told me that he considers me Japanese. Not American, or Japanese-American. He said that the way I speak and how I act weren't nearly as American as he expected me to be. I'm not really sure how I feel about that. I've never considered myself 100% one or the other. And the thing is, I'm almost certain that everyone I ask will have a different opinion on the way they see me. But I guess I'm fairly pleased with him thinking this — just because I've been worried about whether or not I'd be able to live normally in Japan, if I ever choose to do so.

What is also interesting is how Claire recognizes that other people will view her differently; however, this recognition on the local scale does not stop her from feeling some satisfaction and taking it as a confirmation to her that on a transnational scale she would not have many issues if she decided to go to Japan. In the interview following this entry (Excerpt 1), Claire (C), however, expresses to Author 1 (J) that she would prefer to be viewed more as a Japanese-American, because as she puts it, “that is what I am” (line 3). At the same time, Claire seems to place value on being able to “blend in more” (line 7) and being viewed as Japanese by at least one friend locally is something that appears to have boosted her confidence to survive in the transnational context of Japan.

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Excerpt 1. Claire: I would rather have them view me as Japanese American

- J: Mhm and then so how do you feel about how they view you ?
 C: I mean I would rather have them view me as like Japanese American because that's what I am uhm like a good mixture of both but I don't I don't really know how I feel about that because it I guess its kinda nice to like like to know that they could view me as Japanese then if I potentially do go and live in japan for a bit then uhm I don't know I would feel a little bit more confident that I would be able to like like I don't... blend in more with like the Japanese community and stuff not stick out so much
 J: Mhm
 10 C: so I guess that's kinda nice but Id rather have them view me as both

By contrast, Erika (E) has had more experience visiting Japan, and she has had first-hand opportunities to be recognized by Japanese people as not being out of the ordinary in more transnational contexts and experiences. In Excerpt 2, Erika responds to the question of whether she thinks her language ability has played a role in how she is treated when visiting Japan. Interestingly, she prefaces how she is treated by informing J how “obvious foreigners” (line 2) are treated to enable contrast to her own personal experiences. She claims that she is treated “just

like a normal Japanese person” (line 4) but also indicates that sometimes she is asked if she is part Japanese, which would indicate that they somehow discover that she is not “normal Japanese.” Erika then expresses the reasons for this as being more likely from her ability to speak English well or how she dresses (lines 9 -12), however. Also noteworthy is the use of the term “foreigner” to indicate someone that is non-Japanese. Through the use of this term, Erika indexes herself as someone other than a foreigner in the transnational context of Japan.

Excerpt 2. Erika: Obvious foreigners

- E: Oh yeah, like usually when I go to Japan I mean like when foreigners go to Japan like they're obvious foreigners like they're spoken to in broken English and given an English menu- They do like speak to me in Japanese so like in Tokyo, Okinawa I'm treated like just a normal Japanese person but uhm maybe
5 more so here or when I am talking to people like like you know it's not just like a waiter a waitress or a waiter like somebody I'm actually talking to as a person you know sometimes they'll ask like oh are you like part Japanese things like that
- J: mhm do you know why they ask you those questions or is it just...
- E: I think its just like uhm I guess the fact that I can speak English and I speak it
10 well uhm maybe like a little bit of like the way I dress because like the fashion like its different and like you can tell by how a person like chooses what they wear that they're maybe not from around there

While both sisters and those with whom they socialize outside of their family readily recognize Erika's abilities to speak Japanese to be superior, Claire more closely resembled what a friend described as someone who is “Japanese on the inside.” Erika, on the other hand, is viewed as being more American since her mannerisms and way of speaking tend to be much more direct. Erika herself identified the fact that she tends not to adopt Japanese interactional patterns, and recognized that other people have expressed that she is a *Dokuzetsu* (毒舌) or “poison tongue”. Typically, this means that others view her as being overly direct or even using abusive language. Erika also differs in how she thinks about or conceptualizes being ‘Japanese’ or ‘American’. In Figure 2 she explains in her journal entry that being Japanese is a “more self-determined thing”. For Erika, it appears that being a transnational Japanese HLL allows her the option of being either American or Japanese. This set of options, however, is not available to someone who is not of Japanese ancestry.

Figure 2. Erika: A more self-determined thing

I think this is mostly a self determined thing. The important thing is that you identify with what you believe are Japanese values. *
 However, I think it would be difficult for a non-Japanese (ethnically) to feel Japanese in Japan. First, ~~such~~ such a person may stand out and be stared at, which can really wear you down. People may purposefully not speak to you, or only speak to you in English, at least at first. A sense of "othered" would pervade.

* although language important too

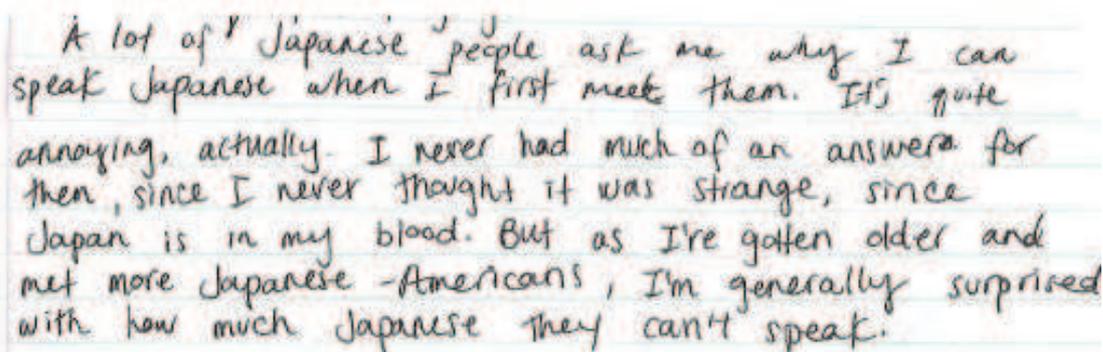
Thus, from the experiences of the two sisters, it appears that on a local scale (e.g., local community and organizations) with other Japanese HLLs and transnationals, *Japaneseness* is seen as more grounded in cultural understanding and norms. However, on the transnational scale (e.g., in Japan) there is not as much emphasis placed on *Japaneseness* in the same way since there is not enough opportunity for interaction and evaluation of interlocutors. This fact may lead to the different experiences of Erika and Claire – Claire being considered more Japanese on the local scale and Erika less so, and vice versa on the transnational scale, as Erika is a more proficient speaker and has less of an American accent.

3.2. Language abilities and ‘being Japanese’

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For Claire and Erika, being proficient in both Japanese and English seems to have influenced their conceptions of the translocal imagined community of Japanese HL learners. Both sisters note that it was normal for them to be proficient in Japanese, which is something that they have discovered is not universally the case for others of Japanese descent living in the United States. Verschueren (2012) observes that ideologies may not be questioned by different community members, which seems to be the case for Claire and Erika. As is seen from Claire’s journal excerpt (Figure 3), many of their Japanese counterparts are surprised by the fact that they speak Japanese so well, going so far as to ask them why that is the case. In the same journal entry, Claire outlines how the fact that she is a proficient speaker has led to some disruption of her conception of an imagined translocal community of Japanese heritage learners. As stated in the final sentence, she is surprised at how only a few of them could speak Japanese.

Figure 3. Claire: Japan is in my blood



A lot of Japanese people ask me why I can speak Japanese when I first meet them. It's quite annoying, actually. I never had much of an answer for them, since I never thought it was strange, since Japan is in my blood. But as I've gotten older and met more Japanese-Americans, I'm generally surprised with how much Japanese they can't speak.

Here, and through the interviews and interactions that Author 1 had had with her, it became clear that Claire's unique experiences with going to Japanese school, her parents' insistence on maintaining Japanese, and her frequent visits to Japan have affected her views and expectations for what the experience of being a person of Japanese descent entails. These experiences, coupled with growing up as a HLL in the United States, appear to have helped her construct an imagined community of Japanese HLLs on a translocal scale that have had similar experiences of attending Japanese schools and maintaining a certain level of language ability.

In a joint interview captured in Excerpt 5, Claire narrates how her close friend, Kai, experienced 'othering' by her Japanese interlocutors in the form of their implicit refusal to respond to her in Japanese because she is bi-racial, even though, as Claire identifies, her Japanese is "I think ... like better" than her own. Nevertheless, Kai had to negotiate the frustrating experience of not having her Japanese legitimized since she is biracial. Erika adds how she attempted to resist this practice by voicing her views since she is a part of the executive board of the Japan club, stating that she told the members of the board, "it's just rude". Interestingly, Erika attempts to frame the problem as occurring on a more local and interpersonal scale, stating that "it might have just been the guys." Claire, however, immediately moves to refute this notion by adding how Kai's experiences go beyond the local scale of the Japan club, in that when visiting Japan the same pattern continues. On the transnational scale (i.e., visiting Japan), at least in Claire's statements of her view, this practice is common – even normalized – for Japanese people. As noted, "... a lot of Japanese people just assume that like...if you look foreign then you like don't speak Japanese." Deliberate attempts to exclude a biracial Japanese speaker like Kai on the basis of her physical appearance can be seen as an *upscaling* act (Blommaert, 2007) on the part of her Japanese interlocutors. We consider this *upscaling* as more than just distancing others, as it may also be a display of power that de-legitimizes the Japanese that others speak, regardless of actual language ability. This may occur as Japanese speakers seek to index a sense of distinction instead of establishing solidarity with Kai. In the other direction, choosing to engage with interlocutors in Japanese could possibly be seen as a *downscaling* act, in which the *Japaneseness* of the other may be legitimized by engaging in the language. Importantly, Erika condemns this framing of Kai's experiences by affirming Claire's observation, stating how she thinks it's "really bad" how people in Japan behave towards people that do not fit within their stereotype of what a Japanese speaker looks like.

Excerpt 5. Refusal to engage in Japanese

- C: My friend Kai she goes here too she's really tall and she's uhm half-black half-Japanese so she stands out quite a bit and I think she's like better at Japanese than I am like her mom's a Japanese teacher and she - she's like learned Japanese from like a really young age so she's pretty good at Japanese but like no (*laughs*) matter
- 5 how many times she like tries to talk to somebody in Japanese they always talk back to her in English it like really frustrates her
- E: Oh dude I said that in - I said that in the Japan club e-board meeting I was like kind of force - I was like very, very like I was like-guys it's rude
- 10 C: Yeah
- E: That's just rude
- J: Hmm so do you know why they [why uh people respond in English]
- E: It might have just been the guys (*laughs*)
- C: No but she said that like she goes to like Japan too like and then everybody like
- 15 they only speak to her in English and I feel like she doesn't even have like an accent when she talks in Japanese - I guess like it's not really noticeable but they just can't like get past like the way she looks I [think they just like]
- E: [Yeah that's true]
- 20 C: Like all Japanese people or like a lot of Japanese people just assume that like I don't know like people that look Japanese speak Japanese but then if you look foreign then you like don't speak Japanese (...) yeah
- E: Yeah I think that's really bad like Japanese people in Japan or most people in Japan at least if they don't know you they'll just assume or they won't acknowledge you in
- 25 Japanese if you don't look Japanese

It appears that this *upscaling* practice (Blommaert, 2007) of not responding in Japanese to someone that does not look (or sound) Japanese occurs both on a local (their home, community and affiliated institutions) and transnational (Japan and abroad) scale, much to Claire's chagrin. Claire shared that while working at a Japanese bakery in her hometown, many individuals would simply speak English to her even though she attempted to communicate in Japanese. This practice of only responding in English to people who are “foreigners” is something that Claire and her friend, Kai, have experienced in a local Japanese context. The fact that it has occurred for both of them locally (for Kai in the Japan club on campus, and for Claire at the Japanese bakery) and internationally when both women visited Japan indicates that this practice may be an attempt on Claire's and Erika's part to *downscale* the interaction by establishing a more personal relationship with the Japanese-speaking interlocutor, offering an opening for their language ability and *Japaneseness* to be legitimized.

These experiences may be further frustrating for Claire and Erika because they are at odds with the imagined community of Japanese speakers which they initially thought they would become members of, forcing them to reconsider or reshape their conceptions of their imagined Japanese speaking community. These actions may also thus be interpreted as a social display of power in which those from Japan may not wish to grant recognition to the speech of individuals who do not meet their subjective and imagined beliefs of what a legitimate speaker of Japanese either looks or sounds like. As Flores and Rosa (2015) point out, a monolingual speaker who maintains a *monoglossic language ideology* would filter what he hears in accordance with his personal

prejudice. In a similar vein, monolingual Japanese speakers who accept only one language norm and subscribe to the notion of an imagined Japanese identity are likely to act in ways that exclude HLLs like Claire and Erika; such HLLs would be perceived as not conforming to their notion of an idealized native speaker of Japanese. Writing specifically with regard to the Japanese context, Kamada (2010) pointed out that the construction of an imagined Japanese native speaker exists alongside a discourse of *gaijin* (or foreigner) otherness. *Gaijin* typically is used to mean foreigner or outsider, and so Japanese speakers may be invoking these beliefs and enacting them in a display of an unwillingness to recognize a *gaijin* as a fully legitimate speaker. This distinction is made evident in the next excerpt (excerpt 6) through Erika's observation.

Excerpt 6. Making a point to speak in Japanese

- E: ... Oh but one thing I did in Tokyo like in Tokyo there are a lot of foreigners, right? But naturally because they live in Tokyo I assume that foreigners can speak Japanese so I made it a special point to talk to them in Japanese first because I think that's important like a lot of people who might not look Japanese can speak
- 5 Japanese
- C: mhm
- E: Simply because they live in Japan they have to get by, so I think its almost kind of rude to speak in English

Erika has made it a point to challenge some of these practices that people from Japanese culture tend to do when interacting with someone who does not fit the normal expectations of a Japanese speaker. She indicates that she tries to do this across both local and transnational scales. As you may recall, in Excerpt 5 she labels the practice of speaking English to an individual who is attempting to practice their Japanese as being very rude. On a local (Michigan) level, she argues that members of the Japan club should legitimize or recognize the Japanese that people use. Here, in Excerpt 6 she further expresses how she attempts to contest this practice on a transnational scale when visiting Tokyo, by claiming that she tries to make it a point to communicate with what she terms as *foreigners* first in Japanese before using English. In these ways, Erika is utilizing her linguistic repertoire to enact her identity of a bilingual HLL (Fuller, 2007) and also that of someone who understands both communities. Her experiences in the United States and Japan have provided her with a platform with which to contest a practice that she disagrees with in two ways: (1) her connection with the Japanese students at her university has enabled her to voice her concern over the practice, and (2) her understanding of the problems that non-Japanese people face when living in Japan or attempting to speak Japanese has led to her actively negate this practice through her own actions.

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4. Further Discussion

The different experiences that the two sisters have had with regards to their language abilities and how other people have positioned them has led to different outcomes on how they view their abilities and how they reconcile their bilingual identity within and across multiple scales. As Wortham and Rhodes (2013) found for their participant Allie's identity of a good reader, multiple social scales (family, local community, country) came together to emphasize and solidify her identity. For Claire, there are multiple scales at play, but some may be more in conflict than they are in harmony. On the local scale, Claire received affirmation of her Japanese abilities from Japanese friends and those around her in the form of being considered more Japanese than

American. Erika contributed to this affirmation by indicating during the group interview with Author 1 that she felt that Claire understood more cultural nuances and was more aware of Japanese mannerisms.

Although she had had her abilities affirmed by her family and through newly-formed relationships, it appears that Claire’s HLL identity was still a site of struggle (Norton, 2013). For example, Claire indicated that she worries about her ability to “live and work normally” in the transnational scale of Japan, indicating a desire to not stick out if she were to decide to make her home there. This fear may stem from the fact that others have perceived that she has a strong Okinawan accent when speaking Japanese (Interview 2), or the experience of having Japanese customers only respond to her in English while working in a Japanese bakery. Kamada (2010) reported similar findings in that this idea of “sticking out” was of utmost concern, and refers to this desire to conform and its associated actions as a result as ‘enacting Japaneseness’. Kamada also found that within Japanese society there is a pervasive discourse of homogeneity, or that Japanese people tend to place a high value of conforming to what is viewed as normal Japanese behavior. This cultural value seems to have been carried into Claire’s experiences across multiple scales, and seem to have led her to construct an imagined community of Japanese speakers that she is unsure if she could ever legitimately be a part of. This fear, at least in Claire’s mind, seems to grow out of actual experiences with other speakers in translocal and transnational contexts.

Recently, though, Claire has begun to see her accent as being “strangely Okinawan” rather than being an American accent based on the observations of certain Japanese peers. Others have also positioned her locally as being the sister who is more Japanese on the inside, or the sister who understands Japanese mannerisms and cultural nuances more than her siblings. Her combined experiences and perceptions of how she views herself and her identity have been colored by how other people have positioned her within her family, the community in which she grew up, and recently in how her friends at the Japanese club on campus have viewed her. Her family literacy practices have also been a source for surprise as she has encountered Japanese international students who do not expect her Japanese to be so advanced, as well as coming into contact with others in her similar situation that do not speak Japanese as proficiently. Her social experiences as well as the recent recognition that her family situation was somewhat unique have combined to create for her a belief that she is someone that could possibly live and work normally in Japan, if she were to choose to do so. She expressed that she views herself as being both Japanese and American, and that her particular loyalties keep shifting. This may indicate that she is still coming to terms with her position as a Japanese HLL. In addition, the imagined community of Japanese speakers that she originally conceived may not have matched with what her actual experiences showed to her.

By contrast, Erika has had a slightly different experience. As reported by her, she has not been so concerned with how other Japanese individuals view whether or not she is “Japanese on the inside.” Rather, her experiences across local, translocal and transnational scales have become a boon for her ambitions to be a world traveler and to find employment. As expressed by Erika, she has experienced situations where her ability to speak and interact with other Japanese peers have led her to feel that she could be successful if she chose to live and work in Japan. She seemed to feel that she is between both American and Japanese culture, and she also indicated in a journal entry that she did not view herself as either Japanese or American. As a result, she was more willing to take a more agentive role in how she engaged with her Japanese peers locally,

especially in ways such as contesting practices that she felt were rude or inappropriate, such as not responding in Japanese to interlocutors that do not look or sound Japanese. Additionally, on a transnational level, Erika indicated that she makes it a point to downscale her interactions through using Japanese with ‘obvious foreigners’ in order to legitimize their Japanese language abilities.

Thus, while both sisters grew up in a relatively similar environment, individual characteristics coupled with their unique experiences have led Erika and Claire to encounter different ways of viewing themselves with relation to the different scales that they find themselves a part of. In that respect, their experiences were not unlike the experiences of the Ecuadorian sisters reported in King (2013). As American citizens, Claire and Erika expressed that they see a difference between themselves and their friends who are not of Japanese heritage. They have experienced a sense of disconnection with the larger scale of major cultural references or practices, such as Thanksgiving, a major American holiday and the presence of Biblical references within literature and other forms of media. From this perspective, their experiences invite comparison to those of the Bengali HLLs in Blackledge et al. (2008), who felt disconnected with their ethnic culture. On a smaller, more local scale Erika reported that they are not like other families in their practice of not going camping or fishing as a family, or exploring a local popular destination, which she noted is something that many individuals do.

Through the examination of both Claire and Erika’s experiences, it appears that their identities are, as Kamada (2010) also found, constructed through great effort and is a complex process. Both sisters are in a continual process of self-evaluation and re-evaluation in relation to the differences and similarities that they see within themselves and the imagined communities they conceived across local, translocal and transnational scales. While Claire and Erika seem to be more comfortable with the English language as a result of growing up in the United States, their abilities to connect with a separate and distinct language and culture enable them to view themselves across multiple local and translocal scales. Both women are confronted with experiences that are shaped and colored by their connections to American and Japanese culture; at the same time, these same connections lead to an awareness of how they do not fit into a particular ‘Japanese’ mold. Instead, they feel comfortable in American culture due to their familiarity with the context as well as their ideological belief that America is more multicultural. As Claire put it in one of the journal entries, “because there is no particular race that makes you American, it just comes down to citizenship” (Journal Entry, November 8, 2015). This comment highlights how Claire may view her English speaking identity as more closely tied to the fact that she has a U.S. passport and was raised in the United States, while her Japanese speaking abilities and her ethnicity may be more important to her identification as someone who is Japanese.

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4.1. (Re)imagined Japanese HLL community membership

Claire and Erika’s experiences as Japanese HLLs appear to have impacted how they imagined the larger community of Japanese speakers, across local, translocal and transnational scales. Claire saw herself as someone who is unsure of her place within the imagined community of Japanese speakers on the transnational scale. Interestingly, while she initially saw herself as being a typical member of the local and translocal imagined Japanese HLL community, she soon came to realize that this was not necessarily the case. This was evidenced by how she was often surprised at the low Japanese proficiency of other Japanese HLLs. These conceptualizations further played out in her responses to experiencing upscaling or being viewed as an “other”.

Claire’s encounters with not being acknowledged in Japanese in some instances by patrons of the Japanese bakery and her expression of surprise by the fact that other Japanese heritage speakers do not speak as much Japanese as her (Figure 3) underscores that the multiple imagined communities of Japanese speakers that she conceived of did not align with her actual experiences. A desire for Kai’s recognition by the local Japanese community is also echoed in her expressions of frustration that her biracial friend is not adequately acknowledged by other Japanese students, again emphasizing her desires for a more open and accepting community. As a consequence, and in contrast to this harsh social reality, Claire imagines a more inclusive Japanese community, one that would honor the resources of non-conventional Japanese speakers like Erika, Kai and her. Similarly, Erika’s experiences have also led her to reconceptualize her imagined community as one that is more welcoming of non-mainstream Japanese speakers. Encouragingly, she reports responding to social inequalities as a result of minoritization processes by contesting practices that do not align with her conceptions. This is demonstrated through her insistence on responding in Japanese to non-Japanese while in Japan (Excerpt 6), and her discussion with other Japanese students about how it is a rude practice.

As illustrated in the data, both Claire and Erika indicate slight differences in how they perceive their roles within the imagined community of Japanese speakers across local, translocal and transnational scales. These perceived roles, however, evolved in accordance with their respective personal experiences. Erika experienced more acceptance on a transnational scale while in Japan and interacting with the Japanese community because of her language abilities. At the same time, however, she was not viewed as being ‘true’ Japanese by Japanese speakers on the local scale, thereby exemplifying Blommaert’s (2007) astute observation that not all discourses are valued equally in all locales. As a result, Erika did not report feeling unsure of her place within an imagined community of Japanese speakers across multiple scales, which in turn led her to state that she actively strives to change the practices of others both on the local and transnational scale. Claire had experiences that were the opposite – on a local scale she was treated and viewed as being more Japanese, while on a more translocal and transnational scale (outside of her groups of friends and school associates) her attempts to initiate conversations in Japanese were rebuffed. These experiences led Claire to sometimes question her ability to be accepted as a legitimate member of the imagined community of Japanese speakers on the transnational scale, even though she was accepted on the local scale (i.e., by the Japanese group and her friends on the college campus).

Conclusion

This paper has illuminated how the multiple scales in which our two sister participants find themselves interconnect and interpenetrate one another. What can be taken from our case study of Claire and Erika is that experiences can produce effects that reach beyond the local and could lead to struggles when reconciling with a HLL identity that bears a transnational dimension. Both sisters viewed many practices surrounding them from a unique perspective, as both being a part of and distinctly different from monolingual and non-transnational individuals. Given that Claire and Erika did not express interest in pursuing further education in the Japanese language due to their advanced abilities, it may be of worth for administrators and educators to (1) take into account the varied range of backgrounds and experiences of HLLs, (2) redesign the language

curriculum in ways that cater to the needs of HLLs like them, and (3) create structured support systems (e.g., a resource center or support groups) that work in consultation with each other. Such a concerted effort will assist other HLLs in improving their language skills to accomplish their language use and learning goals. Specifically, ensuring that HLLs are aware of the kinds of available resources that could cater to their specific needs may assist individuals like Claire and Erika in overcoming challenges that may arise as a result of negotiating the written language and cultural norms. HLLs in situations akin to Claire and Erika's may benefit from programs that provide interactions and discussion about their identities and how they align with the communities across local, translocal and transnational contexts. At the end of the day, we need to remember that language learners are embedded within complex ecologies. These ecologies, which are characterized by multiple scales and constitutive of the imagined communities into which learners seek to gain membership, can facilitate language learning if they are harnessed effectively.

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Language in autobiographical narratives: Motivation, capital and transnational imaginations

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Abstract

Anderson's notion of imagined communities has helped to focus attention on the complex connection between language and membership of social groupings. This article explores the sense of membership of an imagined transnational community of 'Europe' through a selection of autobiographical narrative interviews in a multi-nation study of identity formation. Data drawn from a sample of European Union citizens reveals how people narrate their experiences of transnational mobility and how languages feature in their storytelling. We present evidence of key linguistic situations and encounters, including childhood experiences of other languages, experiences of education, as well as language choices in mature relationships and careers. We engage with the question of what it means to identify oneself as a learner, user or non-user of languages in the context of cross-border mobility. To the extent that language acquisition is advantageous for expanding cultural horizons, increasing mobility, extending networks and enhancing careers, the data is consistent with concepts of imagined community and language learning motivation. However, we also see evidence that linguistic diversity is a source of inequality and that languages can exclude as well as include. This prompts a conceptual discussion designed to articulate the problem that what is imagined is less than a collective identity or community, and more a mental frame of reference. In this context, we consider the applicability in the European context of the metaphor of linguistic capital, investment, markets and the right to speak developed by Bourdieu and others. Extempore narratives provide particularly valuable data for showing how social relations of language are configured and how they are experienced as constraint as well as opportunity.

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Keywords

Biographical narrative; Europe; linguistic capital; mental space; transnational mobility

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Introduction

Recent developments, not least the UK’s decision to leave the EU (‘Brexit’), have cast doubt on the continuing success of the European project (Chopin & Jamet, 2016). Growing public disaffection across a number of member states has highlighted the fragility of any common understanding of what constitutes the meaning and purpose of a shared European future. After almost sixty years of concentrated political and administrative effort, the gulf between the rhetoric of an emergent European identity and the reality of national and subnational (local) commitments remains enormous. A substantial proportion of the EU’s population remains indifferent or even hostile to its purported values and objectives (ECFR, 2013; Eurobarometer, 2015; Wellings, 2012; Zalc, 2013). For them, Europe has failed to gel as an imagined community that can command their allegiance and respect (Ivic, 2016). There are very many reasons for this, among them the significance of language as a basic resource and mode of communication.

The centrality of language to the imagined community is a consistent theme of Benedict Anderson’s (1991: 7) seminal discussion. In Anderson’s imagined community, there is a “deep horizontal comradeship” between people who may never meet one another, which rests primarily on a shared vernacular language and access to a common print culture. It is this shared language which is held to be crucial to the formation of the national identities which the European project seeks now to transcend or subsume. As Norton (2013: 8) puts it, “Imagined communities refer to groups of people, not immediately tangible and accessible, with whom we connect through the power of the imagination”, and we are able to do so primarily because we speak and comprehend a common language. Conversely, differences of language represent intractable barriers or obstacles to the development of a common consciousness. This is not a problem which Anderson addresses in any depth. Thus (despite his avowed Marxist leanings), Anderson is singularly quiet on the issue of how the imagined community of the nation extends to include members of different classes and other social groups across the gulf in literacy, dialect, standards of life, habits and customs dividing them, so that they ingest the ‘same’ conception of their nationhood, or feel that they inhabit the same social world (Day & Thompson, 2004: 92).

Furthermore, the connection between language and membership of social groupings is complex. For instance, it is well established that the gaps between the formation of national boundaries and the distribution of particular languages are formidable. In remarkably few of the existing European states is language coterminous with the national territory: languages cross national boundaries, and minority languages exist within them (Wright, 2016). Billig (1995: 36) notes that languages themselves have to be imagined as distinct entities; language does not simply ‘give’ us nations – indeed, nations or states play a formative role in the production of language. Hence the ‘idea’ of the nation often precedes coherent linguistic foundations, or can be deployed to sharpen and promote linguistic differences, so that the contention that nations and national identities grow spontaneously out of a shared language must be heavily qualified (Day & Thompson, 2004: 90). All this points to linguistic diversity as a major complicating factor in the construction of a supranational or transnational identification as ‘Europeans’.

The relevance of linguistic diversity, and experiences of second or further languages, became evident in an international study – the Euroidentities project – which set out to elicit lengthy, personal and reflective accounts of biographies involving mobility and cross-national

relationships in Europe (Miller & Schütze, 2011; Miller, 2012). The objective was to investigate the problem of European identity without presupposing a framework of reference beyond the need for individuals to connect their own biographical construction of identity with orientations to collective concerns at varying levels of abstraction. In this article, we use these interviews as a resource to show how people relate their experiences of being involved with more than one language community. In contrast with the data from other studies with an interest in identity, the theme of language emerged spontaneously. We did not prioritise questions such as modes of language acquisition, learner identities, study abroad (Benson et al., 2013) or language learning ‘careers’ (Benson, 2011), although they are frequent topics in the narratives. We will argue that this data affords some new insights into the connection between individual ‘identity work’ (Miller & Schütze, 2011:13-14) and imagined Europe.

1. Language, identity, and European mental space

Within the European context, expansion of the imagined community beyond national boundaries almost always involves contact with and learning of other languages. Language is understood here as being situated in social interaction and inseparable from the social conditions, relations, practices and institutions routinely experienced by speakers. While the literature on language learning is clearly relevant to the theme of motivation and personal investment in languages, we also have a broader sociological interest in how narrators invoke language situations and experience in their biographical accounts of transnational mobility.

Theoretical and methodological efforts in the field of second language acquisition (SLA) originally concentrated on language teaching and learning, especially in the cases of children’s language acquisition and bilingualism. The most developed areas of SLA studies are associated with linguistics (White, 2003) and cognitive psychology (Doughty & Long, 2008). However, studies have increasingly recognised the relevance of identity formation to SLA (Benson et al., 2013; Nunan & Choi, 2010). In this context, Pavlenko and Blackledge (2004), Block (2007) and Norton (2013) have been influential in bringing together the theme of identity and the field of second language learning. Pedagogical literature shows how the multiple identities that students bring to their learning affect their acquisition of languages (Menard-Warwick, 2005). Research in the context of migration enlarged the debate on the processes of acculturation and assimilation (Perdue, 1993a, 1993b). Especially within the EU framework, SLA studies have focussed on the importance of educational mobility (Eichsteller, 2011; Young-Scholten, 2013), comparative studies measuring second language proficiency (Gerhards, 2014) and the link between linguistic proficiency and national sense of identification (Hochman & Davidov, 2014). The growth of educational mobility has prompted research on language in the context of studying abroad in Europe (Murphy-Lejeune, 2002) and elsewhere (Benson et al., 2013), while studies on the educational and social impact of mobility often contain data on language learning and attitudes to language (King & Ruiz-Gelices, 2003; Teichler & Janson, 2007). This diverse body of literature tends to assume a positive causal relationship between enlarging language skills and social mobility; hence language learning is often framed in terms of its contribution to cultural and symbolic capital (Norton, 2013). The metaphor of capital, as applied to one’s ability to use a second language, and the metaphor of investment in language acquisition, naturally steers the theoretical discussion towards the conceptual framework of Pierre Bourdieu (1992) and the value of Bourdieu’s contribution will be considered below. As well as invoking Bourdieusian ideas of capital, Norton (2013: 195) also makes the direct link between SLA and imagined communities of practice. Ryan (2006) and Seilhamer (2013) have advanced the idea of a global imagined community of English language users, including second language learners.

The interest in identity is often accompanied by an emphasis on narrative as the process which brings together the strands of multiple experiences and identities. Schiffrin (1996), for example, demonstrated the value of narrative analysis in the study of sociolinguistic constructions of identity. Pavlenko (2007) addresses the use of autobiographical narrative as a resource for the study of language in an article which applauds the growth of interest in personal narratives among applied linguists but is also critical of analytical approaches which fail to recognize the interpretive nature of the data and the distinctions between the subject content, the way the story is told, and the form of the text. The types of narrative discussed are diaries, linguistic biographies and language memoirs, which all have a topical focus on language. Alternatively, an autobiographical interview can be designed to show the unfolding of a whole life, allowing the topic of language learning to enter spontaneously into the narrative and reveal how the narrator’s experiences of language are significant in making sense of their story. Franceschini’s (2003) analysis of a single interview demonstrates the value of this approach. Benson et al. (2013: 25) acknowledge that too much emphasis on the contingency and multiplicity of self-narratives can be criticized “for underplaying the role of social and discursive forces in the construction of identities”. The Euroidentities project avoids this charge by deliberately searching for intimate connections between individual biographical identities and collective identities conceived of as imagined communities.

2. Methodology

The primary purpose of the Euroidentities project, an EU Framework 7 investigation (Miller, 2012)¹, was to explore the relationship between individual experiences and the spaces of ‘Europe’ in terms of economic life, social ties and culture, employing the extempore autobiographical narrative interview method developed by Schütze and colleagues (Riemann & Schütze, 1991; Riemann, 2003; Schütze, 2014). The interviews with residents of seven countries were intended to examine evidence for the development of European identity in the everyday social worlds of the participants, who were ordinary citizens of the EU, rather than members of any political or bureaucratic elite. The countries are not representative of the EU, but they include a broad range of experiences of recent European history from north, south, east and west, and different parameters of interacting with ‘Europe’. The selection of interviews was non-random, but designed to include sub-groups for comparison and contrast across the seven countries. To minimize the possibility that interviews would contain no narrative content relevant to personal engagement with the EU or Europe, the respondents were selected from groups assumed to be ‘sensitized’ to the topic of Europe by their previous experiences: the educationally mobile, transnational workers, farmers, cross-cultural intermediaries and workers in international civil society organizations (see Miller, 2012: 3-7). The assumption was that these individuals would display a greater sensitivity than others towards the issue of a European identity, by virtue of their personal experiences. They were expected to have cause to reflect on the challenges and opportunities of making their way within the spaces of Europe. Of course, personal opinions about the EU or European issues are likely to be held by any resident of a European country, but opinions were not our priority.

The interviews have the minimum of structure to give interviewees maximum freedom to express their life story from their own perspective, in their first language. Respondents are

¹ EU Framework 7 Collaborative Research Project in Socio-Economic Sciences and Humanities, Theme 8. The partners were from the UK (Northern Ireland and Wales), Germany, Italy, Bulgaria, Estonia and Poland. <http://www.euroidentities.org/>

given an explanation of the general purpose of the research and then invited to tell their own story, in their own way, without further intervention. The interviews begin with a stimulus formulation along the lines of “Please tell me your life story, how it has developed, how it started and how it has unfolded until today” (Miller, 2012: 25-26). The narrative which follows represents a flow of experience which reveals key biographical events, reactions to circumstances, and the meanings attached to situations. When this stage of the interview comes to an end (the coda), the interviewer moves to a more interrogative but still non-directive mode of questioning. Thus, the Euroidentities interviewers did not prompt respondents to speak on the subject of language (let alone experiences of second language acquisition), but the topic occurred spontaneously, especially in descriptions of educational experiences, and it figured regularly in narratives of life projects, both as a means and as a barrier to opportunities. The result is a distinctive form of qualitative data on language which complements data obtained by other researchers from surveys, focused interviews and administrative sources (e.g., European Commission, 2012; Extra & Yağmur, 2012).

We observed that the stories people tell about their lives often contain rich descriptions of experiences of language and language learning. Frequently we encountered narratives about language as a communicative space, references to language as a source of opportunities for, or difficulties in, biographical experience, as well as reflections on language aspirations and identity. There is sufficient detail to treat this as a distinct analytical theme which, from the point of view of our narrators, is an (on-) “going concern” (Gubrium & Holstein, 2009: 127). In this article, we have selected for analysis interviews which contain significant or multiple references to language². The language references are not purely descriptive but contain explanations, justifications and argumentation. Biographically, they indicate structures of opportunity for mobility, careers and self-development, action schemes to realise ambitions, orientations to different cultures, sources of identity and difference, and obstacles to personal development. In our selection, we have sought to include a variety of countries, languages and social contexts, as well as a spread of age, gender and nationality. The key characteristics of the selected cases are summarized in the Appendix.

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Our analysis adopts elements of Schütze’s (2014) formal structural method, supplemented by a narrative ethnographic approach (Gubrium & Holstein, 2009). The former emphasises the constraints of storytelling which shape the order of the narrative as well as the biographical ‘process structures’ which give form to the individual’s story (for example, through intentional schemes of action, alignment or non-alignment with institutional patterns, trajectories which lead to crisis and metamorphosis). The latter approach is concerned with the relationship between individual micro-narratives and macro narratives which reflect the history of nations and cultures. The steps in the analysis were, first, to make a summary of each life story in the sequence in which it occurs in the interview transcript, paying particular attention to references to language and language learning. We then used this sequential report to trace the salient process structures in the life story, including the long-term consequences of knowing languages. We compared interviews to draw out similarities and contrasts which help to reveal the ways in which individual stories resonate with bigger narratives of nation, culture and being in Europe. The main empirical conclusions from the wider study were that, in the groups

² This article is based on the analysis of 15 autobiographical narrative interviews selected from the Euroidentities corpus of 120. All names are pseudonyms. Quotations are reproduced directly from the interview transcripts, to reflect the style of the interviewees’ speech. Where the original language of the interview was not English, the transcript was made available for analysis in English translation. One of the interviews used here is presented in greater detail by M. Eichsteller in ‘Identity project under construction: European identity and educational mobility in the case of Majka’ (Miller, 2012: Chapter 4).

studied, biographical ways of relating to Europe are mostly implicit and situational, that images of Europe as some sort of collective identity are rare compared with orientations towards and within a “European mental space of reference” (Miller, 2012: 158). The space is ‘an imagined territory’ created through bottom-up processes which involve interaction between the multiple opportunities which exist for cross-border and cross-cultural communication, the forms of knowledge and learning which create a shared frame of reference, and practical commitments which encourage identification and belonging. Collective, especially national, identities in the sense of ‘imagined communities’ are relativized in and through this mental space (Schütze & Schröder-Wildhagen, 2012: 255-278).

Our research question concerning language learning and motivation is therefore about how people narrate their experiences of transnationality in a biographical perspective, and how acquiring a second language speaker identity in another community is linked to structural processes in the life course. These processes include the structural realities of EU politics and policies which feed into individual decisions to embark on new life projects or action schemes, such as learning and using a new language.

3. The narrative data

According to Schiffrin (1996: 170), “telling a story allows us to create a ‘story world’ in which we can represent ourselves against a backdrop of cultural expectations about a typical course of action; our identities as social beings emerge as we construct our own individual experiences as a way to position ourselves in relation to social and cultural expectations”. In the interviews the theme of language emerges through spontaneous recollections of particular experiences in the life course. The first (‘native’) language is a universal background feature in all the narratives, but rarely discussed. In contrast, stories about the learning of a second language or additional languages are very common. The process of learning a second language is narrated through the lens of social relationships, in terms of motivations, the learning process and the ability to use the second language in social contexts. The interviews capture the unique biographical moments where experiences of the second language broaden the social and cultural imagination and widen cognitive horizons. We will explore the evidence of these themes in biographical order from early childhood experiences of other languages, through experiences of education to mature relationships, before discussing whether the evidence can be interpreted as an orientation to European mental space. We will then address the question of how actors make use of second or additional languages within their action projects that transcend national borders.

Early experiences

Examples of narration of early experiences of second languages mark the contours of the imaginative horizons within which the narrator’s biography is taking place. In the case of **Brenda**, a UK teacher of modern languages, her first reference to another language is the recollection of her father’s attempt to communicate during holidays abroad when she was a child. Brenda says:

my father ... I don’t know if he was planning on a holiday abroad ... and he had a very old ... it was a kind of a 1950’s languages course and, you know ... he was trying to teach himself a little bit of French. And I can remember being absolutely fascinated by that, I thought that was an amazing thing for you to be able to do, to speak another language.

Brenda highlights the monolingual context she grew up in but her father's attempt to communicate in French increases her awareness of the world outside her everyday environment. This awareness directs her future interests in the French language. Similarly, **Joanna**, a UK journalist working in Germany mentions an early connection to German culture:

Like my dad invited always a lot of Germans to stay with us from university. Because he speaks German and likes Germans and so I was among Germans as a child... So I decided 'Oh, if I have to spend a year abroad, I'll spend it with the Germans rather than the French'.

The importance of second language recognition not only opens out the individual horizons of Brenda and Joanna, but also provides them with an insight into the mechanisms of second language communication. In her narrative, **Brenda** emphasises this by saying:

I can still remember the very first conversation that I ever had with an alternative language speaker, of my own volition, where I said something to them, and they said something back and I understood it; it just made me feel amazing.

In Brenda and Joanna's narratives, there is also a strong association between the idea of travelling and the idea of communication. For them, speaking a second language is a tool to engage and explore the other as well as to locate oneself clearly in a specific linguistic and cultural context. This creates a particular individual standpoint: both are explorers of the world outside their first language environment in a rather intellectual pursuit of, and delight in, 'cultural diversity'.

The narratives of individuals brought up in multilingual environments highlight different aspects of early experiences. At the beginning of her narrative, **Daniela** says:

I was born in Romania, next to the Hungarian border and that's why I had my three mother-tongue languages. That means - Hungarian, Romanian and German. And at the age of 14 - I came over to Germany. Well, I got basically two possibilities. The first one, I got one year scholarship with school just to stay for a year and the other one was ... kind of sports related. And so I decided to take the second one ... although we were almost European Union, I needed about half a year to get out of Romania and then I started in ... the north of Germany to play basketball.

Historical background and family relationships created the multilingual community in which Daniela grew up. She mentions speaking German within her family, Hungarian with friends and Romanian at school. She is very proud of her heritage, but she does not celebrate that diversity as something special.

Education and travel abroad

For many of our interviewees the first significant encounter with a second language is through formal education and they describe these early experiences as having a lasting impact into higher education and later careers. **Emma**, from Northern Ireland, notes how her (primary school) headmaster "*would always teach us a little bit of French, we learned a little bit of Irish - he was quite interested in ensuring that our world view was a little bit more expanded.*" **Brenda** says "*the very first French lesson I ever had I absolutely fell in love with it, I thought it was fantastic*". Likewise, for **Joanna** "*French was always my best subject and I had no problem with French ... so that was really good*". Doing well at languages as a school subject can shape the future trajectory; like Joanna, Brenda went on to study languages at university.

While there is a degree of contingency in this, a seemingly accidental affinity with languages, encouragement or pressure from others, especially parents and influential teachers, helps motivate and steer individual choices. **Majka**, a Polish PhD student in the UK, tells how she had been learning English “*for many, many years. My parents have always, from the beginning, said: English is a basic thing, you have to know languages.*” **Reni**, an international academic, recalls that her parents played an even more decisive role: “*during the summer ... all the children played in the afternoon, while we translated whole books from Hungarian into Bulgarian ... in order to train ourselves in the language*”. Reni considers having learned the language “*a great wealth*”, and later applied the technique of studying literary classics to learn English.

Gaining access to another language opens up possibilities which can be transformational for a person’s sense of identity and social recognition. If simply acquiring the language does not always have this effect, using it in the context of travel abroad generally will. **Emma** reports that she was

very, very lucky because I was ... granted a scholarship to study Flemish ... so I went out to Belgium and I had the most amazing year of my life ... because it really did open my eyes. ... we had students from all the universe.

Majka shares this experience of entering an international zone during her Erasmus year abroad in Holland:

it was something that changed me completely. It truly changed my approach to life. Really ... I was living with a Spanish girl in one room and the kitchen I was sharing with a Canadian and an American girl... I mostly spent my time with those girls, so I was speaking English all the time. And to be honest, that was the first time that I started to learn how to speak English.

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The decision to study abroad involves conscious control and planning. For **Maria**, an Italian studying in the UK, what begins as an unplanned journey when “*I decided to go to the linguistic high school following in my sister’s footsteps*” becomes more purposeful when she acts to remove herself from her fellow Erasmus students. The realisation after two months

... that we spoke everything except English forced me to leave my Italian friends ... to find more international friends but I looked for specifically English ones because speaking English with a French guy was no use and from that moment I lived a life not like an Erasmus student but like a typical English girl i.e. we did English dinners, English barbecues. I was very at home – really at home with the language.

Maria develops the sense that she can cope in a different, foreign, environment and says her language studies have contributed to the “*internationalisation of my personality*”. Likewise **Brigitta**, an Estonian student abroad in Germany, refers to that

understanding ... that everything works in the same way at any place in the world, that it is not ... anything extraordinary or unreachable... neither in a physical sense nor - so to speak - in a sense taking a challenge and coping with it.

For neither Brigitta nor Maria does this necessarily mean that they can or will make use of this realisation in later life. When she returns to Italy, Maria finds her path blocked because her professor refuses to recognise the qualifications she has gained in England, and she settles back into her previous rather circumscribed Italian existence. Despite travel and study in several European countries, Brigitta says she has “*never felt any respect or a kind of admiration to life*

abroad, nor did I have any urgent desire to go over there or stay or settle down there.” However others seek to build on and enlarge the openings provided by command of another language. A religious calling took **Lisa** from Northern Ireland to a short residential course in France, where she discovered that

actually I could speak some French, much to my surprise and really enjoyed the sense of achievement ... and eating different food and it was really the first time I suppose that I'd really been out of Ireland you know, properly.

Taking a year out of her university course she joined intensive French classes with a multi-national group. Lisa keeps in touch with some of those she met at this time. In the above cases, we see the enduring impact of education, not in the narrow sense of a mechanism of language learning but as a context within which the narrators form and re-form their sense of self.

Personal and intimate relationships

All life stories have personal relationships at their heart. People's perceptions of opportunities, possibilities for self-development, barriers and limitations are shaped by and shape their personal ties, especially to family and home. This is apparent in the case of couples who have different first languages, parents who have to make language choices on behalf of their children, and friends of different nationalities who seek a common language for their interaction. Languages have both practical and symbolic importance in their biographies. In the context of such personal relationships, language is the essential medium for relationships to succeed and is likely to be linked to an enlarged sense of identity.

In the case of a Welsh-Swedish couple, **Gwilym** describes their decision to move to Sweden after some years of married life in Wales, in order to maintain contact with the Swedish side of the family, the language and culture, and give his wife a chance *“to recapture her old background... She felt at that time she was losing her language”*. The outcome is to make the language choices in the family more complex and in practice trilingual, based on the first languages of the adults and the desired outcome for the children: *“So then I was talking Welsh to my children and English to my wife, but she was talking English to her husband, Welsh to her daughters and Swedish to her son”*. The interview indicates the importance of relatively egalitarian family relationships and the receptivity of both the Welsh and Swedish destination countries to their chosen way of life. A more negative story is provided by **Kinga**, who described her experience of a Polish-Japanese relationship. She explains that the relation between the couple looked completely different in 'Asia' compared with Poland because *“it could be said that a woman does not count much in Japan ... There is not much [a woman] can say and nobody really asks her about what she thinks”*. But she also describes her Japanese as *“not good enough”*. She says *“There was a plan that I would learn the language there, but somehow at the time we stopped being together my Japanese wasn't very advanced”*.

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Brigitta says she did not go out of her way to form friendships while in Germany, but recalls one acquaintance, a German of Turkish origin, who surprised and impressed her because of how many foreign languages he knew, *“so cosmopolitan”*. However, it should not be assumed that mobility invariably leads to language diversity. **Alexandra** decided to experience at first hand the new opportunities available on Poland's accession to the EU. She left for the UK to visit a friend she had met in a chat-room, but when he failed to support her she faced a situation of extreme discomfort, exacerbated by her lack of English. Her recovery began when she met an English man who she would later marry and settle down with in the UK, in a process of

complete cultural immersion. Acquiring English was part of the process of assimilation accompanied by a deliberate refusal to acknowledge her Polish roots.

What we see from these examples is that acquiring a second or further language has the power to enlarge awareness, transforming personality in a way that respondents regard as ‘amazing’ or life changing. It enables them to cross linguistic divides, opening up an appreciation of aspects of foreign cultures (food, manners, family habits), throwing a light on the peculiarities of their own background and environment, enabling the development of personal friendships, and even facilitating entry into multilingual intimate and family relationships. Through these contacts, people make lasting social connections across national boundaries, and take a step towards becoming transnational. The interviewees tend to frame this in terms of relationships to specific groups of people, or with particular individuals, or moments of exceptional communion with others, rather than to generalize about absorption into other cultures, let alone make any explicit reference to such a grandiose notion as European solidarity or identity. Where there are references to a sense of being European, it arises in those instances of relationships which reach beyond Europe, such as Kinga’s experiences of life in Japan, which throw into relief some major dissonances with previous habits and experience. These developments in personal biography produce a widening of imaginative horizons which allows the individual to engage with the social and cultural characteristics of the ‘other’, but falls short of the breadth of solidarity and commitment to others presumed by Anderson’s conception of the imagined community. For this reason, we prefer to conceptualize these outcomes in terms of the enlargement of the ‘mental space’ inhabited by our respondents. If not ‘European’, this mental space is at least transnational, enabling individuals to transcend their own familiar regional and national horizons and move towards an exploration of other possibilities of life. They learn to value aspects of the modes of behaviour of other regional and national collectivities, but without necessarily grasping them as a coherent community to which they owe some debt of mutual loyalty (Miller, 2012: 258).

Language in careers

In narratives of their later life, interviewees reveal how their command of a second language has assisted, and sometimes hindered, them in achieving their objectives. While it might be thought that any ability with additional languages confers some positive benefit, accounts of using them prove often to be fraught with negative experiences of obstacles, failure, shame, and powerlessness. It is here that Bourdieu’s theories of linguistic capital seem most pertinent. In situations where speaking a second language opens the way for the realisation of personal and professional action schemes, second language proficiency can be presented as primarily a means to an end. **Daniela** realised that her multilingual abilities were an asset very early on in her life. It was the fact that she spoke fluent German that opened doors for her to partake in an international sports exchange. Thereafter her awareness of international opportunities and ability to exploit them become a key facet of her biographical experiences. She is conscious that these structures of opportunities form part of a bigger institutional market, in which she needs to use her skills to facilitate her individual aspirations and plans. **Jakub** from Poland shows a similar awareness of the advantages conferred by linguistic abilities, and he offers a highly instrumental account of his trajectory. Learning French is a key to opening up professional opportunities. His narrative is almost entirely career oriented, a story of ‘cunning’ and adaptability through which he flourishes in the world of IT consultancy.

Jakub left Poland to participate in the EU Erasmus programme, arriving with only very basic French. He learned the language alongside his studies and his work as a hotel night shift receptionist. Jakub mentions that the “*French language is a difficult language. And you know,*

if you want to work as a professional, you need to speak the language". He explains it is not enough to just pick up the language as you might as a babysitter or even as a construction worker. He recalls:

particularly the first year, that was incredible hard-core. Not knowing the language, it was tough... And in general about the beginnings, working the night shifts and all that. Well, but it paid off. But all the time you're saying. ... we had to invest.

The reference to investment is telling; for Jakub, the language is a form of capital providing access to future career opportunities. Once he had overcome the language barrier, he was able to manage his entry into the French labour market and cope with the demands of working in a high-powered international office. He even seems blasé about it when saying:

in general, right now no matter where you go in Europe, if they send you ... communicate in French, in English without any problems. Right now more and more people do speak English ... Europe is small and no matter where they send you, you'll cope.

Jakub is one of the few interviewees who refers explicitly to Europe in this way. Jakub's preoccupation throughout is to make sure his investment of time and effort pays off:

If I wouldn't have seen what's next, some opportunity, I would have gone back straight to Poland. Because if you just stay aimlessly in a foreign country, well, it makes no sense to be sitting there. What for? It gives you nothing.

Jakub's perspective is quite unlike those who express a love or admiration for different places and cultures.

Even though Jakub focuses in his narration on learning a second language, the main form of capital he deploys is his expertise with IT and computers, and there is evidence that he is also a great social networker. Language is a precondition, a necessary asset for his progress in France, but not his main professional skill set. A similar pattern in professional narrative can be found in the life story of **Gwilym**, in which the demand for medical doctors in Sweden grants him entry into the labour market whilst his Swedish language skills need time to catch up. In both Jakub and Gwilym's narratives, learning the new language is contingent on the struggle of working in a different cultural environment. Similar patterns can be observed in the stories of other transnational couple relationships, where second language learning is a vital but subsidiary aspect of the continuing development of relationships with one's extended family and children.

In some circumstances, the second language can also become a personal and professional obstacle in the employment or relationship action scheme. In the case of **Joanna**, working in Germany, language is a constant source of frustration. Having studied at an elite British university, she describes her experiences with language in terms of competition with other learners. She says:

I got to university and I was the worst, it was awful. Everybody else was really good, a lot of people, they had German parents or they had lived in Germany for a year. A lot of people had taken a year out between school and university and gone to Germany for a year, so they could speak it very well, and I hadn't done that, and people were just very clever, and I suddenly felt really average to poor, which had never been something I had experienced.

Joanna, a high achiever, persisted in her pursuit of mastering German. She now speaks the language, but still falls short of her dream of “*a state of fluent, mistake-free German*”. Her efforts to write in German about business matters and German life were heavily edited and corrected by colleagues, so eventually she “*decided I don’t want to write in German anymore, that’s too depressing*”. Her struggle with language seems to have tainted her overall experiences in Germany. She often mentions that she hated her stay in Hamburg and Berlin and concludes her narrative by indicating her intention to give up on her plan to use German as a professional working language, opting instead for ‘international journalism’, where she can use her English and some of her German to increase her chances in the professional market.

Eric, a manager from the UK with career experience in Spain and the Netherlands, also highlights the importance of foreign languages in the international labour market. He is proactive and achieves some success in learning French and Spanish. At one stage he invests his redundancy money to realize his project of an international career. Yet he experiences language behaviour which frustrates his progress. This occurs when he is working with Dutch colleagues who he says “*could be very rude*”. They would revert to Dutch if they wanted to exclude Eric from a conversation, and when they realized he was gaining fluency in Dutch, they spoke in German. To succeed in business, Eric had to be tenacious, to get involved and negotiate around “*the whole cultural thing*”. Command of a dominant international language, English, does not help Eric realise his ambitions. A similar blockage is experienced by **Pauline**, an Irish born professional who, after some international experiences, attempted to settle in Denmark with her Danish husband. While people in her environment spoke English well, during lunch times she felt excluded from their conversations. Pauline says:

I think it’s because I want to learn Danish ... But it’s really hard. Because every day, I push myself to try to fit in – or try to integrate. You know, my Danish isn’t that great yet so I can’t, I can understand more, but sometimes I can’t even find the words that I need to be able to say something ... there was one day last week where I went out and there were a few people sitting around, people that I actually really like and that I would talk to normally. But they were sort of having conversations anyway and I was sitting there. I’d finished my lunch and ... I was ready actually just to go back to my office and, and cry almost, because I just felt like, gosh, I so don’t fit in.

In the case of Pauline the language experience has a prominent impact on all aspects of her life. She struggles to keep her professional identity, social connections and social status, and in due course decides to return to Northern Ireland.

4. Commentary

We set out to discover how stories about language are embedded in extempore autobiographies and how they are linked to structural processes in the life course. Languages are clearly assets with social value for their users, but they are also sites where biographical work needs to be done, such as coming to terms with otherness and experiences of diversity.

It is in their work oriented accounts of later life that our respondents come closest to expressing the approach to language as capital promulgated by Bourdieu. Bourdieu (1992: 76-78) describes how in situations of linguistic diversity, bilingual or dialect speakers anticipate ‘profits’ by following the ‘law of price formation’ in that particular market, as evidenced by code-switching, self-censorship, accents and other forms which reveal what is possible or impossible to say in any particular context. In a related discussion, Bourdieu (1986: 411-413) refers to the ‘right to speak’. In an analysis of the political field and political opinion, he notes

the capacity of some, but not others, to produce discourse about the social world. He contrasts the “authorized speech of status-generated competence, a powerful speech which helps to create what it says” with “the silence of an equally status-linked incompetence, which is experienced as technical incapacity...” (Bourdieu, 1986: 413).

In a similar vein, Norton and McKinney (2011) argue that learning a second language should be considered in terms of investment, an individual’s attempt to gain access to symbolic resources and increase their cultural capital. However, the outcome of investment must be negotiated, via various social groups and networks, as learners “struggle to appropriate the voices of others ... and negotiate language as a system and as a social practice” (Norton & McKinney, 2011: 81). In other words, they must establish ‘the right to speak’. This approach highlights the social aspects of second language learning by pointing to the interaction between the learner’s agency and the social structures they encounter, which can either nurture or hinder progress. It is highly pertinent to the interpretation of our interviews, although our cases are even more diverse than the migrant learners in Norton and McKinney’s research. The narratives in our sample contain clear examples of this interaction, including the cases of Eric and Pauline above. The linguistic ‘market’ is not homogeneous, and the value of capital varies according to how it is embodied in specific relations between speakers. For instance, in the cases of Eric and Pauline we see how command of a dominant international language, such as English, the ‘lingua franca’ of much of contemporary Europe, seems to offer capital advantages in a linguistic market, but in reality, its value is very context-specific. Mastery of the host language proves to be essential for gaining access not only to professional opportunities, but also to normal everyday social participation. Even Joanna’s advanced ability to use the language in everyday social and work situations is challenged when faced with the standards of professional writers of German.

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The capital and market metaphor and the rights theme together provide a potential framework through which to interpret the biographical narrative data on language. They highlight the relationship between dispositions (the probabilities associated with a given position in the social structure) and the capacity to use linguistic capital (to profit from understanding and the ability to produce discourse). The mounting evidence of the importance of the social contexts of learning suggests that simple accumulation is not the norm, as Bourdieu implies – a point which he does not go on to elaborate except in terms of the ‘interests’ of actors. Thompson (1992: 16) notes how, in his attempts to define capital, Bourdieu assumes the fundamental link between actions and interests, between the practices of agents and the interests which they knowingly or unknowingly pursue (Bourdieu, 1992: 16). At the same time, Bourdieu rejects the idea that interests are always narrowly economic, and therefore capital must not be construed as an exclusively economic asset. Nor is it simply a reward for motivation. Gaining competence in a second or additional language can gain admittance to and acceptance within social relations which are far removed from calculation of financial or material gain, for example by providing an entrée into new worlds of meaning and new kinds of social practice. Among our examples there are some, such as Brenda, who choose not to ‘cash in’ their linguistic capital in pursuit of economic profit, and others like Maria who find their way to material advantage blocked, but who nevertheless value the benefits they have accrued in capacity to appreciate different conventions and ways of living. Their mental space has been enlarged, enabling them to engage in new types of acts of exploration, comparison and imagination across national frontiers (Schütze & Schröder-Wildhagen, 2012: 261). However, as Schütze and Schröder-Wildhagen (2012: 262) note, this is a risky undertaking since entering the agency space of a different nation can entail “a systematic devaluation of [their] social,

educational, cultural, symbolic capital ... the degradation experienced due to a lack of competence”.

Whilst issues of language variation, dialect and code-switching are prominent in single language contexts, they become overwhelmingly complex in multilingual situations of language learning combined with experiences of transnational mobility. Thus a linguistic ethnography conducted in a multicultural urban milieu in the UK concludes: “Here, language was up for grabs, traded, exchanged, bartered, wrangled over and negotiated, as language ideology and practice moved across time and space” (Grenfell, 2011: 146). In such situations the ‘right to speak’ is not only indicative of power hierarchies within the society but also of the hidden structure of interests in the game between the ‘native’ and the ‘other’.

There is an aspect of Bourdieu’s (1992) theory of language and symbolic power which goes beyond likening language to capital and characterizing the market as a structure of power relations, where linguistic expression always depends on the laws of the markets in which it is found. It is the aspect of language which Bourdieu describes in terms of the logic of practice (Bourdieu, 1990). Language communicates and represents, but also occludes the social relationships that constitute it as a form of power. It is in this spirit that we have responded to Grenfell’s (2011: 222) call to “look more into the biographical elements, habitus, of language users, the way they interact with local site features, fields, how that local site is configured, and the way it links with broader social structures”.

Conclusion

In taking up the challenge to “articulate the imagined” (Ryan, 2006: 42), we have shown how individuals’ relationships, identities and investments in languages, at least in the European context and among individuals who are particularly sensitized to transnational issues, can be construed as an enlarged space in which participation has important consequences for identification and belonging. Mobility plays an important part in this, as it does in Benedict Anderson’s account of the emergence of the imagined community of the nation (Anderson, 1991). For Anderson, it is the recurrent journeys or ‘pilgrimages’ undertaken by functionaries and others around a shared territory, and within a framework of common institutions associated with a shared language, that sows the seeds of the imagined community. In his words, “the interlock between particular educational and administrative pilgrimages provided the territorial base for new ‘imagined communities’ in which ‘natives’ could come to see themselves as ‘nationals’” (Anderson, 1991: 140). The limitation of ‘Europe’ as an imagined community, as expressed in our interview material, is that while it provides a sort of outer shell for peoples’ imaginings, and definitely has some of the necessary aspects of legal, administrative, and political unity, most journeys are not ‘around’ Europe, but along particular paths – cross-national rather than supra-national. Consequently, our respondents do not talk explicitly about a European identity, or make generalizations about a European ‘we’. For this reason, the ‘European mental space of reference’ they inhabit falls well short of an imagined community, and does not yet engender the kind of “mutual sense of loyalty of its individual and collective members towards each other” (Schütze & Wildhagen, 2012: 258) which we associate with the nation.

What our investigation of language in the biographies of persons implicated in the evolving European project has shown is that language can be considered as capital in the sense that it has value; it can be accumulated, invested and spent. The interviews illustrate the accumulation

process through family, schooling, adult learning and careers. Multilingual backgrounds and successful second language acquisition are clearly advantageous for expanding cultural horizons, increasing mobility, extending networks and enhancing careers. Some narratives describe the struggles and limits of language learning, while others depict it as a natural process – but none dismiss it as having no value. Language is a resource and the more of it a person has, the better their position in the ‘markets’ for language – except that the economic market metaphor quickly breaks down because languages are not like currencies which can be exchanged at rates which reflect their comparative values according to supply and demand. Linguistic markets are differentiated by size, territory, status and power, as the terms ‘major’ languages or ‘minority’ languages suggest. Languages have equivalence linguistically, but they are not socially equal (Bourdieu, 1977: 652). The size limitation of the present study means that it cannot represent the full scale and diversity of languages in Europe and there is a preponderance of experiences of mobility from east to west, which reflects recent trends in migration. Further research would ideally have data from a wider spread of populations and experiences to draw on, but the biographical approach we have used does not have to start from a comprehensive map of institutions (especially language education and formal practices of teaching and learning), groups of speakers, policies to promote language acquisition, or connections between dominant languages and mobility. We have shown the value of a method which investigates language without constructing the object of research as language itself.

Because, in our narrative interviews, people are not answering an explicit question about the language, but rather their observations are required to make sense of their story within the constraints of narrative, the biographical narrative method utilised here shows the workings of the linguistic field behind the features of language and linguistic behaviour. It reveals how language is a structure of power relations experienced by the individual as significant for their biography, sometimes as opportunity, sometimes as constraint. Extempore narrative is particularly valuable data for accessing this ‘occluding’ character of language because it reveals, but does not rely on, reflexive awareness of the processes which constitute the individual’s experience. When people talk spontaneously of their experiences of language in their own biography they recall things that are omitted by other methods. Our aim here has been to contribute to the understanding of language and social life by demonstrating the potential of biographical narrative analysis, and to throw light on the processes through which people undertaking transnational journeys (real or symbolic) expand their imagined horizons and perhaps take tentative steps towards a larger imagined community. We have sought to ground this empirically in the experiences of a mobile population in Europe, finding their way through the growing diversity of languages and cultures. In the fine details of narration, we observe what might be called the banal ‘familiar habits’ of language (Billig, 1995: 94) in relation to the European social context. Whereas Billig was explaining the contribution of everyday language to national ideologies, we have seen that everyday explanations of individual social conduct often require the narrator to refer to language in a way that we can interpret as an analogous process of banalization in European space.

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Appendix: list of cases

- Brenda, age 48, British, studied languages at school and now a language teacher in German and French.
- Emma – in her 30s, from Northern Ireland, learned languages at school, she was an Erasmus student in Belgium where she learned Flemish.
- Joanna, age 24, British, learned languages at school and university, she is attempting a career in journalism in Germany.
- Daniela, age 28, Romanian, has lived in Germany since the age of 11, professional sportswoman.
- Reni, age 40, Bulgarian, learned languages in school – French and English, studied in the UK and Hungary, currently lives in Bulgaria.
- Majka, age 26, Polish, learned English at school, PhD student in the UK.
- Maria, age 28, Italian, studied in the UK (Erasmus) learned languages at school.
- Lisa, age 28, from Northern Ireland, studied languages at school, Erasmus student in France.
- Brigitta, age 31, Estonian, learned language at school and studied in Germany.
- Gwilym, age 55, British, married to a Swedish citizen, lived and practiced medicine in Sweden for 10 years.
- Kinga, age 31, Polish, currently studies in the UK, English teacher in China, married to a Japanese citizen.

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- Pauline, age 31, Northern Irish, currently completing PhD in Denmark, married to a Danish citizen.
- Alexandra, age 30, Polish, learned language in the UK, pharmacist, married to a UK citizen.
- Jakub, age 30, Polish, learned French language during Erasmus educational exchange, working as an IT consultant in France
- Eric, age 51, British, studied language at university, working in Spain and Holland.

La plus petite communauté imaginée du monde: le Territoire Neutre de Moresnet

The smallest imagined community in the world: The Neutral Territory of Moresnet and the transformation of a disputed territory into a nation

Cyril Robelin¹

Résumé

Cet article propose d'étudier les différentes mutations du territoire particulier de Moresnet-Neutre. Situé près d'Aix-la-Chapelle, il a vécu, du Traité de Vienne de 1815 jusqu'au Traité de Versailles de 1919, sous la souveraineté conjointe des Pays-Bas (puis de la Belgique à partir de 1831-1839) et de la Prusse (devenue Allemagne en 1870). Le processus de l'Etat-Nation a transformé le village de Moresnet, alors territoire contesté, en un simulacre d'Etat indépendant, la plus petite des communautés imaginées. Perçu de l'extérieur, en particulier par la presse, le village est décrit comme le plus petit Etat du monde, souvent de manière artificielle. Cela se matérialise avec la construction d'un discours autour du statut de Moresnet (création de regalia et d'une rhétorique de la nation). La question des langues est centrale puisqu'on tente de dépasser avec le projet d'un état espérantiste. Ses descriptions et ses études par les observateurs contemporains font appel à des codes sociologiques anciens (les *Lumières* par exemples) ou plus nouveaux. Les structures d'analyses transmises par les grands sociologues sur l'Etat, la Nation, la Civilisation ou l'Utopie permettent ainsi de jeter un regard nouveau sur ce territoire qui est incontestablement un objet sociologique, dont l'analyse des éléments de langage et linguistiques associés permet d'éclairer la dimension imaginaire.

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Abstract

This article studies the different mutations of the particular Moresnet-Neutral territory. It is located near Aachen, where it was established with the Treaty of Vienna in 1815, but incorporated into Belgium with the Treaty of Versailles in 1919. It was under the joint sovereignty of the Netherlands (then of Belgium from 1831 to 1839) and Prussia (which became Germany in 1870). The village of Moresnet, then disputed territory, was transformed into a simulacrum of an independent state: the smallest imagined community. Perceived from the outside, especially from the press, the village is described as the smallest state in the world, often artificially. This materializes with the construction of a discourse around the status of Moresnet (creation of regalia and rhetoric of the nation). The question of languages is central because this was an Esperantist state project. Its descriptions and studies by contemporary observers call upon classic sociological codes (the *Lumières* for example) and newer ones. The analytical structures transmitted by the great sociologists on the State, Nation, Civilization and Utopia allow us to take a fresh look at this territory, which is undoubtedly a sociological object, and analysis of the elements of language and of Linguistics helps illuminate the imaginary dimension.

Mots clés

Etat-nation, civilisation, utopie, territoire imaginé, discours, communauté

Keywords

Nation-state, civilization, utopia, imagined territory, discourse, community

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Introduction

Comme Benedict Anderson (2002) le souligne dans son ouvrage, une nation est une communauté imaginée où il est impossible que tous se connaissent. Pourtant un cas peut retenir notre attention: le Territoire Neutre de Moresnet, souvent décrit comme la plus petite nation du monde. Même si les études sur les petits états (Blévin, 2015; Fuligni, 1998; Hoffmann, 2010) sont moins négligées ces dernières années, ils demeurent encore mal connus. On les appelle micro-états (Combarous, 1932), comme si ils ne rentraient pas dans les cadres. Moresnet-Neutre est d'ailleurs souvent considéré comme un de ces états, ce qui est une erreur, puisque son statut est davantage hybride. Pourtant, dès la fin du XIXe siècle, on le classe dans la même catégorie que la Principauté d'Andorre ou de Monaco². Dès le tournant du siècle, la confusion s'installe. On le voit dans le vocabulaire utilisé dans les articles qui traitent de ce territoire: république, état, pays³. Ainsi, il est impossible de penser en dehors du cadre de l'État-nation. Ce que l'on va tenter de démontrer, à l'instar des thèses de Benedict Anderson et de Eric J. Hobsbawm (1992), est la restructuration et les mutations des regards sur ce territoire en liaison avec le processus de l'État-nation. Comment le processus de l'État-nation a-t-il transformé le village de Moresnet, alors territoire contesté, en un simulacre d'État indépendant et souverain? Comment cette communauté est imaginée en interne comme en externe? Ses descriptions et ses études par les observateurs contemporains font appel à des codes sociologiques anciens (les *Lumières* par exemples) ou plus nouveaux. Les structures d'analyses transmises par les grands sociologues sur l'État, la Nation, la Civilisation ou l'Utopie permettent ainsi de jeter un regard nouveau sur ce territoire qui est incontestablement un objet sociologique, dont l'analyse des éléments de langage et linguistiques associés permet d'éclairer la dimension imaginaire.

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1. Moresnet-Neutre, une anomalie géopolitique : à la recherche de normes sociétales

1.1. De Vienne à Aix-la-Chapelle, l'émergence d'un problème frontalier

En 1813, la défaite de Napoléon semble de plus en plus probable et les Coalisés commencent à repenser les frontières européennes. Si la restauration des princes reste le principe le plus répandu, les anciens Pays-Bas autrichiens et la rive gauche du Rhin, qui ont été départementalisés par la Révolution et l'Empire, posent problèmes. En effet, une restauration de l'Autriche ne semble pas être suffisamment crédible pour pouvoir contenir les appétits éventuels de la France; tout comme un retour à la myriade de principautés sur la rive gauche du Rhin bien trop faibles pour pouvoir se défendre. Dès 1813, deux idées s'imposent (Van Sas, 1985): d'abord la Prusse prendrait sous son aile la Rhénanie, ensuite les princes d'Orange prendraient sous leur coupe un Royaume des Pays-Bas élargi. Le Royaume-Uni se porte alors le garant de ce nouvel état. Le traité de Paris de 1814 consacre ainsi cet état de fait. Pourtant, si la frontière méridionale ne provoque que peu de débats, les limites septentrionales et orientales sont plus problématiques (Brassart & Robelin, 2016), que ce soit avec le Luxembourg, le Limbourg ou la province de Liège. Elle n'est pas dépourvue de richesses, loin de là, avec notamment des mines de zinc. C'est donc une explication de cette « curiosité » qu'est Moresnet (Wintgens, 1981).

² Cette idée reste encore vive, comme en témoigne la seconde de couverture de Dröge (2016).

³ “Un état minuscule”. In : *La Lanterne*. Jeudi 18 avril 1901. p.1

Le gisement est connu depuis le Moyen-âge. C'est pendant l'occupation française que l'on voit finalement son potentiel. En 1806, le chimiste liégeois Jean-Jacques Dony reprend ce hameau sous forme de concession et développe de nouveaux procédés pour obtenir du zinc laminable. Toutefois, ses recherches l'ont ruiné et il doit céder, en avril 1813, l'entreprise à un de ses créanciers, le banquier parisien d'origine belge Mosselman. Les promesses sont nombreuses et suscitent donc de nombreuses convoitises. Les royaumes de Prusse et des Pays-Bas ne peuvent donc passer à côté de ces richesses.

Après la bataille de Leipzig, la défaite de l'Empereur Napoléon est inéluctable. Le 17 janvier 1814, le général et baron russe de Wintzingerode rentre dans Aix-la-Chapelle avec ses armées, puis dans Liège le 22 (Pauquet, 1960). Les Pays-Bas réclament donc la Belgique et la Prusse revendique les terres entre Meuse et Rhin. A la suite du Traité de Paris, dans un protocole daté du 31 mai 1814, les puissances se partagent les zones d'occupation. La Prusse administre provisoirement la rive droite de la Meuse. La rive gauche échoit aux troupes anglo-hollandaises. Le roi de Prusse proclame alors le 5 avril 1815, la prise de possession de territoires de l'ancien département de l'Ourthe: les cantons de Saint Vith, Malmédy, Cronenburg, Schleiden, Eupen et « une partie du canton d'Aubel, traversée par la chaussée de Liège à Aix-la-Chapelle (Klingenburg, 1940) ». Il faut donc comprendre ici, la mine de Moresnet. Il les incorpore au Grand-Duché du Bas-Rhin. Ceci est confirmé par le traité de Vienne du 31 mai 1815 et par l'Acte final du 9 juin 1815. Toutefois, une erreur rédactionnelle va attribuer deux fois le même territoire à deux puissances différentes: les Pays-Bas et la Prusse. Il s'agit des articles 25 et 66.

Néanmoins personne ne souhaite vraiment rompre les alliances devenues de plus en plus fragiles entre les princes d'Europe. Il est donc décidé qu'une commission mixte prusso-néerlandaise, réunie à Aix-la-Chapelle réglera le problème. La Commission siège à partir du 15 décembre 1815 jusqu'au 26 juin 1816, date de la signature du Traité des Limites. Le problème de Moresnet est examiné le 21 mai 1816, lors de la 50^e séance de travail.

Si les Néerlandais cédèrent sur quelques points, comme Baelen, Welkenraedt ou Henri-Chapelle, ils se refusent à laisser les mines de zinc sous le contrôle prussien. Il est alors décidé que les frontières mal définies resteraient indéterminées. L'article 17 déclare:

« Du point d'intersection dont on vient de parler à l'art. 15, jusqu'au point de contact des trois départements, la ligne de démarcation restera indéterminée; les deux commissions n'ayant pu s'entendre sur la manière dont serait coupée la petite partie du canton d'Aubel, qui, d'après le traité du 31 mai et autres actes du Congrès de Vienne, doit appartenir au royaume de Prusse. Cette difficulté sera soumise à la décision des gouvernements respectifs, qui prendront, pour la terminer, telles mesures ultérieures qu'ils jugeront convenir. [...] la frontière provisoire sera formée par la commune de Moresnet, de manière que la partie de cette commune située à gauche d'une ligne droite, à tirer du point de contact des trois départements, appartiendra, dans tous les cas, au royaume des Pays-Bas; que celle située à droite d'une ligne à tirer des limites du canton d'Eupen, directement du sud au nord sur le même point de contact des trois départements, appartiendra également, dans tous les cas, au royaume de Prusse; et qu'enfin, la partie de cette même commune située entre ces deux lignes, comme étant la seule qui puisse être raisonnablement contestée, sera soumise à une administration commune, et ne pourra être occupée militairement par aucune des deux puissances; [...].⁴»

Le traité prend effet le 16 septembre 1816. En février 1817, l'occupation exclusivement prussienne prend fin. Un triangle est donc administré à la fois par la Prusse et les Pays-Bas. En fait la commune de Moresnet est divisée en trois: un Moresnet que l'on appelle belge, Preuss-

⁴*Recueil des traités et conventions* (1858), *Op. cit.*, p.177.

Moresnet et enfin un territoire indivis: Moresnet neutre. Le terme de « Neutre » est d'ailleurs dans un premier temps galvaudé. Il serait préférable de dire neutralisé, car il jouit d'une situation de non occupation militaire.

1.2. La question du statut juridique : définir ce qui est neutre et ce qui ne l'est pas

La Notion de « Ville frontière » prend ici tout son sens. Comme le souligne Joël Kotek, « une zone frontière est un territoire disputé par au moins deux collectivités. Le terme frontière [...] contient en français comme en anglais, l'idée de front, donc de confrontation, sinon d'affrontement [ainsi] un territoire pour deux rêves (Kotek, 2001) »

Le problème majeur est donc celui de la nationalité et de l'allégeance des habitants. En cohérence avec la désignation du Moresnet « neutre », dès 1817, il est décidé que les habitants seraient exempts de tous services et obligations militaires que ce soit envers la Prusse ou les Pays-Bas. Toutefois, ce statut est trop attractif pour être viable. Ainsi, de nombreux réfractaires au service militaire décident d'établir domicile dans le territoire neutre. En 1854, la Belgique décide de mettre fin à la dispense de service national aux nationaux habitants à Moresnet-Neutre. L'Allemagne fait de même en 1874. En 1816, la nationalité des habitants est « réservée », dans l'attente d'un règlement. A l'origine, on ne compte que 250 habitants. Mais le dynamisme des mines de la Vieille-Montagne et les privilèges fiscaux ou politiques en font un pays de cocagne. Ainsi en 1901, le recensement est de 3038 habitants dont 1380 Allemands, 918 Belges, 308 Hollandais et 432 « Neutres » (Pauquet, 1960). C'est six ans après le traité de Paris, le 30 mai 1820, que les « Autochtones » sont véritablement définis. Ainsi seront « Neutres » les régnicoles du 26 juin 1816 et les immigrants jusqu'au 26 juin 1820. Les juristes se sont penchés sur ce cas particulier. En effet, le statut d'autochtones devrait alors leur donner automatiquement à la fois la nationalité belge et prussienne. Pour la Belgique, dans les premières années ses ressortissants établis à Moresnet ne sont pas considérés comme des émigrants en 1855. Pourtant il existe une tendance à en faire une nationalité à part entière⁵. Il s'agit du contraire du côté germanique. Le 4 novembre 1858, l'*Anklagesenat des Rheinischen Appellations-Gerichtshofes* à Cologne considère le Moresnet-Neutre comme extérieur au royaume⁶. Un arrêt du *Reichsgericht*, daté du 10 août 1898 proclame par contre que Moresnet fait partie de l'Empire allemand⁷.

Devant ces incertitudes, les habitants du triangle neutralisé protestent contre tous les signes éventuels de changements. Précurseurs de l'opinion publique, et prônant une démocratie directe, ils s'expriment par le biais de la pétition. Le 25 janvier 1867, ils font circuler une demande pour rester neutres, qu'ils envoient aux Assemblées belges et prussiennes. Ils récidivent au début du XXe siècle en redemandant la neutralité, ou dans un moindre mal, le rattachement au royaume de Belgique.

Hobsbawm (1992) explique que la constitution d'un État-nation se forme à la fin du XIXe siècle avec trois processus: le recensement, c'est le cas ici; la carte, on le remarque avec le bornage; et le musée qu'on remobilisera.

Les lois prussiennes et hollandaises n'ont pas la primauté ici et on décide donc de garder le

⁵ Lors du recensement à Lille, on décompte un « Moresnetois », alors qu'il ne s'agit pas vraiment d'une nationalité In “La population étrangère à Lille” (Vendredi 11 janvier 1889). In : *La Justice*. p.3.

⁶ Hauptstaatsarchiv Duisburg, Quellen zur Geschichte der Deutschsprachigen Gemeinschaft in Ausländischen Archiven, Band 2, C. Gemeinde Moresnet (1816-1916), 922, Gemeinschaftliche Verwaltung des neutralen Teiles der Gemeinde Moresnet, Bd. 2 (1856-1868), “Moresnet”. In: 4 novembre 1858 *Anklagesenat des Rheinischen Appellations-Gerichtshofes Köln*,

⁷ “Reichsgericht du 10 août 1898”. *Entscheidung in Strafsachen*, Band 36, Nr. 259. Leipzig.

régime législatif et judiciaire antérieur, c'est-à-dire les lois impériales françaises. Le code civil en particulier reste en vigueur, comme le code du commerce, le code des mines ou les lois sur la police et le maintien de l'ordre (Pauquet, 1960: 85). Le franc français reste de fait la monnaie officielle, mais dans la pratique les devises des deux pays tuteurs sont utilisées. Il faut attendre le développement de la Vieille-Montagne et l'accroissement de la population pour voir les autorités sortir de leur léthargie législative. Le premier arrêté royal belge puis prussien approuvant l'impôt communal date de 1862. Quatre autres arrêtés sont promulgués: une taxe sur les chiens (1867-1868), un impôt sur les boissons (1895), un règlement de police (1884) et une loi de santé publique (1896) (Schmetz, 1899: 16-17). En fait, ces arrêtés-lois sont préalablement rédigés par les commissaires ou le Conseil municipal. Certains ont pu y voir une manifestation de l'anarchie (Earle, 2014) ou de l'autogestion. Il n'en est rien, au contraire, puisque ce territoire est soumis à de multiples pouvoirs.

En 1830, les Pays-Bas cèdent leurs droits sur le territoire au Royaume de Belgique, et en 1870 le roi de Prusse devient empereur d'Allemagne.

1.3. S'organiser politiquement et socialement: réinventer des contenus pour des fonctions clés

En 1835, une première mine de zinc est ouverte. Les mines de calamine de Moresnet sont exploitées par une société anonyme, celle de la Société de la Vieille-Montagne (Société des Mines et Fonderies de Zinc de la Vieille-Montagne, 1962). Principal employeur du territoire neutre, il s'agit en effet d'un état dans l'état. Fondée en 1837 par des capitaux franco-belges avec un capital de 5 millions, elle compte dans un premier temps 932 ouvriers. Elle s'occupe, en bonne entreprise paternaliste du XIXe siècle, des affaires sociales, culturelles et religieuses (en bâtissant une église par exemple) de Moresnet. En 1847, elle crée une caisse de secours pour les ouvriers de la mine. La société connaît un véritable succès, jusqu'à devenir une des entreprises les plus puissantes d'Europe, en possédant notamment des sites en Allemagne, Belgique, Suède, France, Espagne et même en Amérique latine. C'est d'ailleurs grâce à ses mines que Moresnet jouit d'une certaine notoriété à l'étranger. En effet, lors des expositions universelles, des ouvriers, des machines et des échantillons sont présentés au public. Ainsi en 1855, un ouvrier reçoit une médaille pour son travail. Les machines sont parmi les plus révolutionnaires d'Europe.

C'est véritablement à partir du moment charnière qu'Hobsbawm (1992) qualifie de deuxième phase du nationalisme (1870-1918), la phase de transformation, que les changements dus au processus de l'Etat-Nation transforment les structures politiques et mentales (Gellner, 2011, parle d'âge d'or). Les juristes (Piccioni, 1891) se penchent alors sur cette entité bien spécifique. Condominium, co-imperium, protectorat, état etc., les repères sont trop flous. Il faut trouver des cadres plus solides. Cette focalisation sur l'Etat-Nation amène de nouvelles questions, qu'il s'agira d'envisager pour Moresnet, comme celles de la nationalité ou du vide juridique.

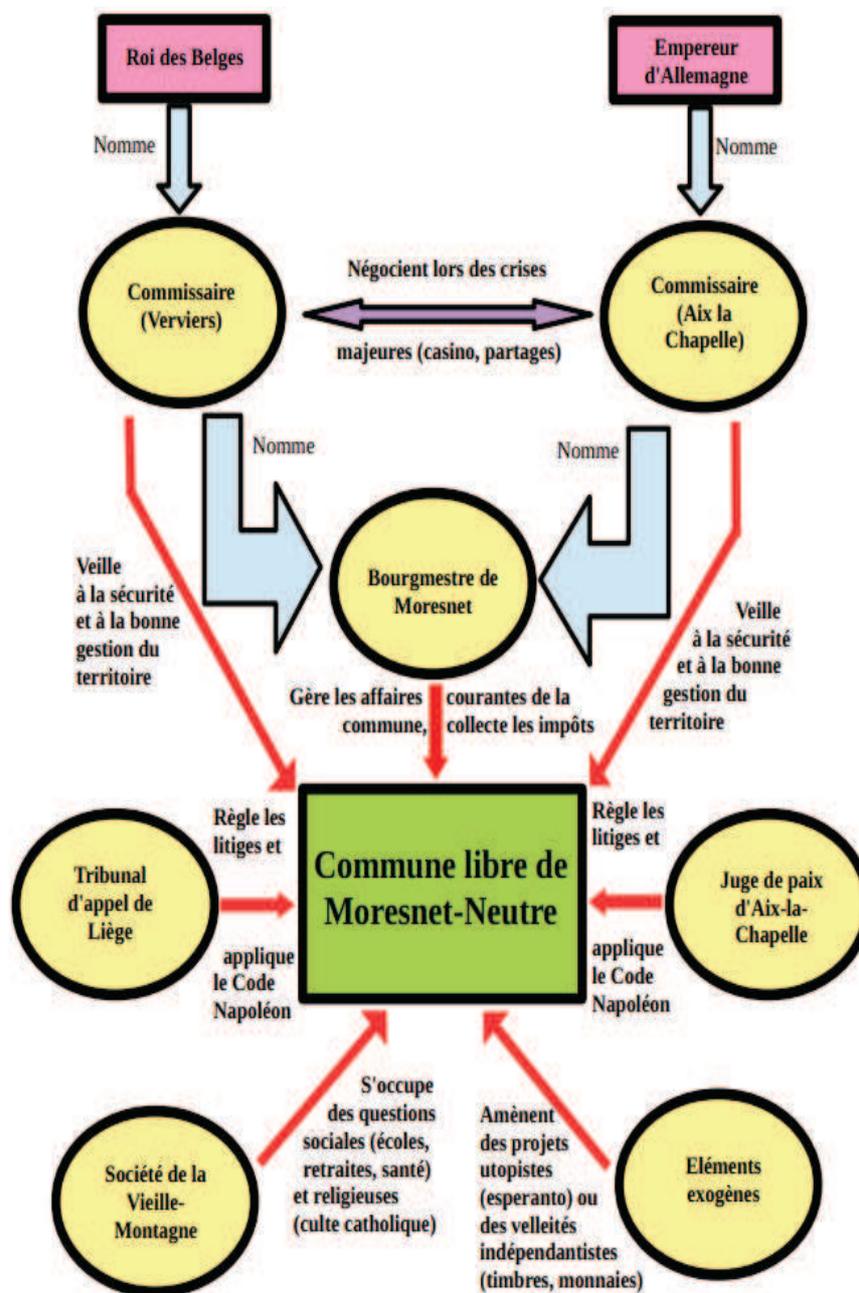


Figure 1 : L'organisation des pouvoirs à Moresnet

Différents pouvoirs se disputent donc l'influence sur le territoire avec presque une séparation des pouvoirs (*cf.* Figure 1). En effet, théoriquement ce sont le Roi des Belges et l'Empereur d'Allemagne qui prennent les décisions des pouvoirs exécutifs et législatifs. Néanmoins ils délèguent leurs pouvoirs à deux commissaires nommés, l'un à Verviers, l'autre à Aix-la-Chapelle (Pauquet, 1960: 102-104). Ils veillent à la bonne gestion et à la sécurité du territoire, négocient lors des crises et surtout nomment un bourgmestre. Ce dernier est en théorie en charge à vie, gère les affaires courantes de la commune et collecte les impôts (comme une taxe sur le revenu créée dès le 16 décembre 1859). Le Territoire n'a aucune légitimité historique ou dynastique. Moresnet n'était même pas un village, il a donc fallu créer l'administration communale, qui arrive finalement tard, en 1841. Le bourgmestre (Earle, 2014) est alors choisi par les deux commissaires, belges et prussiens, et dispose d'un petit conseil municipal. Il doit de faire le lien avec les commissaires en cas de problèmes inhérents à la commune. La presse le

dépeint comme une sorte de président d'une république idéale, en comparant même le garde-chasse au seul représentant de l'armée du territoire. Il occupe un local prêté par la Société de la Vieille-Montagne. Il est aidé de deux adjoints, le directeur de la fabrique de la Calamine, l'autre nommé par les deux commissaires. Dix membres supplémentaires sont nommés sur proposition du bourgmestre et du second adjoint (Pauquet, 1960).

Les institutions religieuses⁸ s'autonomisent également. Elles veulent devenir une entité face au pouvoir temporel. Ainsi, Moresnet a dû négocier pour devenir une paroisse unique, avec son église catholique, face aux Moresnet belge et prussien.

En ce qui concerne le domaine judiciaire, le tribunal d'appel de Liège et le juge de paix d'Aix-la-Chapelle règlent les litiges et appliquent le Code napoléon. La Société des mines de la Vieille-Montagne s'occupe de facto des questions sociales, comme la gestion des écoles ou du culte catholique (Detiège, 1968-1969).

2. De l'émergence d'un langage de la nation à l'invention d'une langue

La question des restructurations d'anciens systèmes politiques et mentaux vers de nouvelles organisations est ici centrale. Le choc du nationalisme et de l'État-nation semble imposer ce modèle à toute l'Europe occidentale: un État pour une nation (à l'inverse de l'expression de Mazzini, « une Nation un État »), au tournant des XIXe et XXe siècles. Il est intéressant de voir comment, en interne, ce paradigme est rencontré à Moresnet en dotant le territoire de toutes les *regalia* (drapeau, monnaie, timbres, hymnes), par imitation des États voisins. Perçu de l'extérieur, en particulier par la presse du temps, le village est décrit comme le plus petit Etat du monde, souvent de manière artificielle.

2.1. Symboles et *regalia*

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L'idée d'une prise de conscience en tant que force face au destin (expression de Renner), se matérialise surtout autour des symboles de la souveraineté. A partir de la fin du XIXe siècle, Moresnet se dote de tous les *regalia*. Elle opte pour symboles les outils du mineur, le lion belge et l'aigle prussien. Les couleurs du drapeau sont noire, blanche et bleue en bandes horizontales. Le second symbole de souveraineté est celui des timbres-poste. Le philatéliste belge Jean-Baptiste Moens fait une farce à ses collègues en publiant un faux article annonçant la création de ses timbres⁹. Cette blague a donné des idées au médecin du territoire neutre qui décide alors d'en imprimer une série qui n'aura cependant cours que quelques jours puisque les autorités belges et allemandes l'interdisent de suite (Robelin, 2012). Une série de monnaie fut frappée au nom de Moresnet. La revue numismatique belge de 1867 les décrit ainsi:

«Une monnaie historique ayant trait à Moresnet neutralisé, nous vient d'être communiquée de la façon la plus obligeante. Elle porte au droit : SUB DUPLICI PRAESIDIO LIBERTAS, 1848. Dans un grènetis, deux têtes: à droite, Léopold Ier, Roi des Belges ; à gauche, Frédéric-Guillaume IV, roi de Prusse ; sous les deux figures F. R.O, en petits caractères. Au revers, on voit les écus de Belgique, au lion, et de Prusse, à l'aigle. (Ici, l'auteur de la notice fait la remarque que l'écu de Prusse n'est point dessiné d'une manière complète. On constate, en effet, que, ainsi que le lion, l'aigle est sans couronne.) Un bâton portant le chapeau de la liberté sépare les écus, au-dessus desquels se voit la désignation de la valeur 2 F., et le symbole de l'union, deux mains qui se serrent: Lég. COMMUNE LIBRE DE MORESNET. La pièce est fortement cannelée et pèse 10 gr. Nous ne sommes point parvenu à

⁸Eupen, H. Eglise 73, Kirchenbau, 1858-1913.

⁹«Les fumisteries célèbres, les timbres de Moresnet ». In : *Le Timbre Post.* (10 août 1913 Quaesitor n°83). Pp.113-117

connaître le lieu de provenance de cette jolie et rare monnaie, et nous prions les personnes mieux instruites que nous de bien vouloir nous enseigner à cet égard¹⁰».

Cependant, c'est une monnaie seulement destinée aux collectionneurs. Un hymne, l'Amikejo, est même composé.

C'est sans doute dans le domaine des représentations politiques que la métamorphose est la plus visible. De territoire indivis, Moresnet devient peu à peu un territoire indépendant, la plus petite des républiques. C'est à la fin du XIXe siècle que le « choc de l'État-nation agit véritablement. On ne peut plus penser en dehors du critère de l'État-nation. Ainsi sur les manuels d'écoliers datant d'avant 1880, Moresnet n'apparaît pas. En 1886, le territoire de la Vieille-Montagne est un point (F.I.C., 1886). En 1893, Moresnet devient une surface, sans aucune dépendance apparente à la Belgique ou à l'Allemagne (Dupont, 1893). Visuellement, le territoire est donc devenu un état totalement indépendant. De même, de nombreux reportages décrivent les petits états, comme Andorre ou le Liechtenstein¹¹; Moresnet fait partie de ce catalogue. On trouve des choses analogues dans les atlas.

2.2. Rhétorique de la Nation

Peu à peu, Moresnet change de dimension. L'imagination de cette entité sort du cadre des parties prenantes (territoires alentours, habitants, etc.) qui participe à une nouvelle définition de Moresnet, à une apparence dans un imaginaire plus large, à l'échelle mondiale. Il gagne une certaine notoriété à partir du moment où, en 1885, le *Pall Mall Gazette*, un journal britannique, publie un article qui présente le territoire à partir d'un article français¹². Ce dernier est repris par l'ensemble des titres mondiaux (États-Unis, Australie, Singapour, Brésil etc.). Désormais, il se dote d'une certaine visibilité. En cette fin de siècle, on observe également un glissement. Bien sûr, cette entité permet une réflexion sur ce qu'est un état. On l'a décrit comme la république idéale, une sorte de négatif de ce que doit être le pays parfait. Tout d'abord, on loue le faible coût des impôts, seulement un franc par an. On met aussi en avant la neutralité et surtout l'absence de contraintes militaires. Enfin, l'absence de nationalisme permet de critiquer très sévèrement celui de l'Allemagne¹³.

Ce qui est frappant est l'émergence d'un langage de la nation. Pour décrire cet « objet politique non identifié » il faut alors faire usage de mots existants déjà dans le vocabulaire. Si l'on compare cinq articles, de cinq langues différentes (français, anglais, allemand, néerlandais et portugais) qui traitent tous de « Moresnet plus petit Etat d'Europe », on constate des similitudes et quelques différences:

¹⁰Cam, P. (1867) “Mélanges” In : *Société royale de numismatique, Revue de la numismatique belge*. Bruxelles : Librairie polytechnique belge d'Aug. Decq. Pp.96-99.

¹¹“Moresnet A Description of the Smallest State in Europe”. (21 novembre 1886). In : *Los Angeles Herald*. p.10.

¹²“Lectures étrangères” (mercredi 6 octobre 1886). In : *Le Temps*. p.3.

¹³“La fin d'une République”. (samedi 23 novembre 1889). In : *La Croix*. p.1.

Tableau 1 : Similitudes et différences dans l'appréhension de Moresnet « plus petit Etat d'Europe »

	<i>La Justice</i> (France) 13 mai 1893	<i>Sunday Times</i> (Australie) 22 juin 1913	<i>Karpathen Post</i> (Autriche- Hongrie) 28 octobre 1886	<i>Leeuwarder Courant</i> (Pays- Bas) 13 avril 1908	<i>O apostolo</i> (Brésil) 10 décembre 1886
Type	Etat	State / Country	Staat (3 occurrences)	Staatjes	Estado
Statut juridique	État indépendant / autonomie/ Commune	« The status of Moresnet, or. as it strictly should be written »	Territorium Moresnet (2 occurrences) unabhängig und Neutral	Bürgerij Dorpjes	Territorio de Moresnet Terra contestado independenciapol itica (2 occurrences)
Régime politique	République x2	X	Republik x2	Republiek x3 Democratie Anarchisme	Republica Republicazina
Chef d'Etat	Chef suprême / Bourgmestre	X	Bürgermeister Regierung	X	Burgo Mestre (3 occurrences)
Habitants	Habitants	inhabitants	Einwohner (2 occurrences)	menschens	Habitantes (3 occurrences)

Les expressions (lexèmes) utilisées pour décrire ce type d'organisation sont assez floues. Il s'agit du terme « État (Elias, 1975) ». Il peut désigner à la fois un État comme organisation politique instituée. Le néerlandais permet cependant une inflexion avec le suffixe « je » qui marque le caractère minuscule (presque affectueux) de cette entité. L'anglais utilise le mot « *country* » synonyme à la fois de pays et de région. En ce qui concerne le statut juridique, les descriptions sont polymorphes. Il s'agit d'abord d'un simple territoire (allemand, portugais), d'une commune ou d'un village (néerlandais, français), d'une entité autonome voire indépendante (français, portugais, allemand) et finalement indéfini (anglais). Ces énumérations nombreuses et variées de statuts juridiques participent alors au caractère unique de Moresnet qui rentre difficilement dans plusieurs cases, mais jamais parfaitement dans une. Néanmoins, tous semblent d'accord pour définir son régime politique comme étant une république (le portugais, à la manière du néerlandais permet une inflexion avec *Republicazina*). Toutefois, il faut comprendre ce terme à la manière de Rousseau (1961) dans son contrat social: « J'appelle République tout État régi par des lois, sous quelque forme d'administration que ce puisse être [...] Tout gouvernement légitime est républicain ». Seul l'article hollandais rajoute des précisions qui oscillent entre démocratie et anarchisme. Le chef d'état est, selon la presse, incontestablement le Bourgmestre (français, allemand, portugais), quelques fois assisté d'un gouvernement (allemand). Le terme pour désigner les habitants sont pratiquement à chaque fois synonymes.

Ce que l'on peut conclure de tous ceci est l'émergence d'un véritable champ lexical de la Nation aux XIXe et XXe siècles. Toutefois, les langues manquent encore de vocabulaire pour désigner Moresnet. Elles sont obligées d'utiliser des expressions qui ne sont vraiment adaptées à ce cas. Les notions de Micro-nations (Blévin, 2015; Combarnous, 1932), de cryptarchies (Fuligni, 1998; Hoffmann, 2010) ou tout simplement d'États fantoches ne sont pas encore dotées de moyens d'expression.

Il devient aussi petit à petit un territoire imaginé, un territoire liminal entre monde réel et fantasmé. Le cas le plus célèbre est celui des vampires de Moresnet. En 1912, les journaux

américains relatent une bien curieuse affaire¹⁴: un automobiliste s'est fait agresser par des individus suceurs de sang; des vampires conclut le journal. Ce qui est étonnant est le fait que cette information se cantonne à la sphère américaine, rien en Europe. Loin des yeux, loin des réalités. Le territoire fait aussi son trou dans les feuillets de la presse¹⁵, où le territoire devient une image, un imaginaire. Les autres arts comme la musique¹⁶, la littérature¹⁷, le théâtre¹⁸ ou la poésie (Lovio, 1908: 107) mettent aussi en scène le territoire.

2.3. Inventer et dépasser la langue : l'espéranto

Anderson et Hobsbawm insistent bien sur l'enjeu des langues dans la construction nationale. Il démontre que les nations « non historiques » potentielles s'appuient sur la race ou sur la langue (comme Gottfried von Herder). Ici, il n'est pas possible de mobiliser la « race » pour une poignée d'individus. De même, on ne distingue pas vraiment de particularismes linguistiques, si ce n'est sa position frontalière. La langue ne peut donc être décisive dans la constitution d'une nation, il faut donc la dépasser, c'est tout l'enjeu de l'utopie espérantiste.

Moresnet est bien un territoire de frontières. C'est également un carrefour linguistique, puisque la Vieille-Montagne ressemble à une tour de Babel européenne. En effet, l'allemand coexiste naturellement avec le français. Mais le hollandais, le patois francique et wallon sont largement utilisés. Les langues sont donc un enjeu de puissances et d'influences. La presse française s'insurge de la perte d'influence de la langue de Molière dans le territoire neutre au détriment de l'Allemand¹⁹. Le nationalisme agressif s'invite malgré la neutralité affichée. D'ailleurs, il n'existe pas de nationalisme à proprement dit à Moresnet. Dans l'esprit des observateurs extérieurs, c'est un État-nation sans nationalisme.

Moresnet-Neutre est un territoire qui a voulu se réinventer. Les hommes qui sont derrière ceci ne sont autres que le docteur Molly, monsieur Beaufays et monsieur Crickboom. Le premier d'entre eux est particulièrement remarquable. Né en 1863, à Wetzlar, il s'installe en tant que médecin dans la partie prussienne du territoire. Il réussit à vaincre une épidémie de choléra et est nommé médecin officiel de la société exploitant le cuivre dans tout le territoire. Il œuvrera pendant toute sa vie pour donner plus d'autonomie à Moresnet. Son premier combat est celui de l'espéranto. Cette langue à vocation internationale est conçue à la fin du XIXe siècle par le polonais Ludwig Leiser Zamenhof (Janton, 1989), dans le but de faciliter les communications entre les Hommes. Polonais, mais faisant partie de la communauté yiddish il fut très vite amené à rejoindre Moscou. Il parle ainsi de nombreuses langues et a parfaitement conscience qu'il faut établir une langue universelle. Il signe son projet en 1887 de *LingviInternacia* sous le nom de *Doktoro Esperanto* (le docteur qui espère) d'où le nom. Il base sa langue sur une grammaire régulière avec des mots se formant à partir de racines lexicales et d'uffixes. De structure simple, elle devait être facile à apprendre pour tous les Européens. Rapidement, la langue rencontra le succès, notamment dans les pays multiethniques que sont l'empire russe ou austro-hongrois pour pallier les difficultés de communications. Elle se diffuse ensuite au Japon, en Europe occidentale et aux Amériques. En 1905, le premier congrès mondial d'espéranto a lieu à

¹⁴ *Fort-covington-sun*. (jeudi 16 mai 1912). p.4.

¹⁵ Duval, G. (lundi 10 avril 1916). “Tine la dentellière”. In : *Le Figaro*. n°101. p.4.

¹⁶ *Annuaire des artistes et de l'enseignement dramatique musical*. (1903). Paris. p.1193.

¹⁷ “Die tolleHerzogin”. (16 février 1914). In : *Mercur de France*. n°400. p.860.

¹⁸ *L'Art lyrique et le music-hall. Journal indépendant des café-concerts, concerts et théâtres*. (23 octobre 1898). Paris : n°145.

¹⁹ “Les Allemands en Belgique, ils poursuivent la délatinisation de ce malheureux pays”. (dimanche 21 mai 1916). In : *Le Temps*. n°1529. p.1.

Boulogne sur Mer. La langue n'est plus seulement écrite, elle devient parlée. L'étoile verte devient alors son symbole. Elle fait des émules partout dans le monde, notamment en Allemagne. C'est donc ce docteur Molly qui met tout en œuvre.

Il se met en rapport dès 1906 avec le professeur français Gustave Roy pour établir un état espérantiste, c'est donc tout naturellement qu'il se tourne vers Moresnet-Neutre. En 1907, un Congrès espérantiste en Suisse met à l'étude un projet de capitale européenne à Moresnet. Cette même année il expose un projet dans la revue *l'espérantiste*²⁰. L'année suivante, du 15-23 août 1908, au Congrès espérantiste de Dresde, Gustave Roy souhaite faire de Moresnet la capitale mondiale de l'esperanto. Deux ans plus tard, ils organisent une réunion d'information dans le local des Carabiniers (gendarmerie). Le village est réuni pour entendre les discours des deux hommes sur la création d'un état espérantiste: l'Amikejo (lieu de grande amitié). Il rédige ainsi un projet réalisable en six mois d'un état espérantiste²¹. Il explique alors que sa situation géographique et linguistique permet un épanouissement de la langue internationale²². La presse est réunie dans ce lieu.

Les réalisations sont cependant bien minces. En novembre 1908, M. Schwob, riche négociant allemand, donne 10000 marks pour la réalisation du projet de Gustave Roy dans le but d'apaiser les tensions franco-allemandes, il les utilise pour créer une Ligue Internationale d'aviation²³. En février 1909, le *Journal de Vienne*²⁴ signale que Moresnet est le siège de plusieurs institutions internationales, alors que la réalité est beaucoup plus modeste. On organise également un concours d'aviation qui consiste à survoler trois pays de langues différentes (Allemagne, Belgique et Pays-Bas). Le point de départ est Moresnet-Neutre. L'hymne²⁵, la marche Amikejo, créé par Willy Huppermanns reste un peu dans les mémoires. Cependant, jamais vraiment l'esperanto ne fut pratiqué par les habitants de Moresnet-Neutre qui préfèrent vivre dans une Babel où l'on se comprend finalement tant bien que mal (Dithmar, 1975; Horgnies, 1988). C'est bien la première guerre mondiale qui va couper court à ces ambitions. Il faut attendre 1960 pour que l'Allemand soit reconnue langue officielle.

3. Moresnet objet sociologique

3.1. Analyse d'une micro-société

Moresnet se représente dans les langages comme une communauté unie et homogène. Pourtant, dans les faits la situation est bien plus complexe. Dans ce territoire coexistent plusieurs statuts. Les recensements sont cependant difficiles²⁶. En tant que terre ouvrière, les travailleurs vont et viennent. A côté des 400 neutres, d'autres nationalités vivent et organisent le village. Les Belges et les Allemands sont les plus nombreux, mais des Français, des Hollandais ou des Méditerranéens (Espagnols, Italiens) y circulent.

La structure de cette micro-société s'organise autour de deux pôles. Le pôle industriel est le plus important. La Société de la Vieille-Montagne structure totalement Moresnet-Neutre. Les ouvriers du zinc calaminaire forment la colonne vertébrale de cette communauté. Cols bleus et

²⁰ Roy, G. (Décembre 1907) "Neŭtrala Esperanto-lando (Amikejo)" ? In : *L'espérantiste*. n°11. p.261.

²¹ Roy, G. (1908). *Moresnet-Neutre Projet Réalisable en six mois d'un ÉTAT ESPÉRANTISTE INDÉPENDANT*. Paris.

²² "Un état espérantiste" (Vendredi 31 janvier 1908). In : *Le Journal des Débats politiques et littéraires*. p.1.

²³ "Echos". (vendredi 13 novembre 1908). In : *Journal des débats*. n°316. p.2.

²⁴ "L'association espérantiste universelle et l'aviation". (17 février 1909) In : *Le Journal de Vienne*. p.2.

²⁵ http://www.moresnet.nl/francais/volkslied_fr.htm

²⁶ Eupen, F. Populations 63. Bevölkerungsregister, 1855, 64. Desgl., 1860, 65. Desgl., 1864, 66. Desgl., 1868, 66a. Unterlagen betr. Niederländer, 1881-1913, 66b. Ausländer. Register betr. Im neutralen Gebiet wohnende Ausländer, insbesondere Holländer, o.D.

cols blancs semblent former un ensemble homogène. Ainsi, le Moresnetois type est un homme âgé de 30 à 40 ans travaillant pour la Vieille-Montagne, très souvent un immigré belge ou allemand. On observe une division sexuée de la société du territoire.

Le second pôle est celui qui organise la vie du village, ce que l'on peut appeler la « société civile ». Bien sûr, sa vitalité est une conséquence de la puissance du pôle industriel. La vie religieuse, sanitaire et éducative est gérée par la Vieille-Montagne (*cf.* Figure 2). Le reste des métiers de la communauté est occupée par des commerces (cabarets, ventes diverses...), des artisans et même quelques agriculteurs. Nous avons alors deux visages du « Moresnetois moyen » de la société civile:

- Une figure féminine, souvent issue de l'émigration qui travaille comme domestique
- Une figure masculine qui possède un commerce né ici et qui possède le statut de neutre.

Faire la sociologie de Moresnet-Neutre demeure très compliqué car les données manquent (*cf.* Figure 3). De plus, il s'agit d'un territoire où la mobilité est un fait marquant. Si les « Neutres », souvent propriétaires d'ailleurs restent très souvent dans le triangle, les immigrés vont et viennent en fonction des besoins. Ce n'est en aucun cas une société figée et fermée. Moresnet est globalement très bien intégrée au réseau des villages voisins. Ainsi, cette communauté se caractérise par une symbiose entre éléments endogènes et exogènes. Étrangement, c'est l'élément extérieur qui milite le plus pour faire de Moresnet-Neutre une communauté nationale imaginée. Ce sont avant tout les élites de ces éléments endogènes, cols blancs de la Vieille-Montagne ou nouveaux notables de la Société civile qui construisent le plus le mythe de la plus petite nation du monde.

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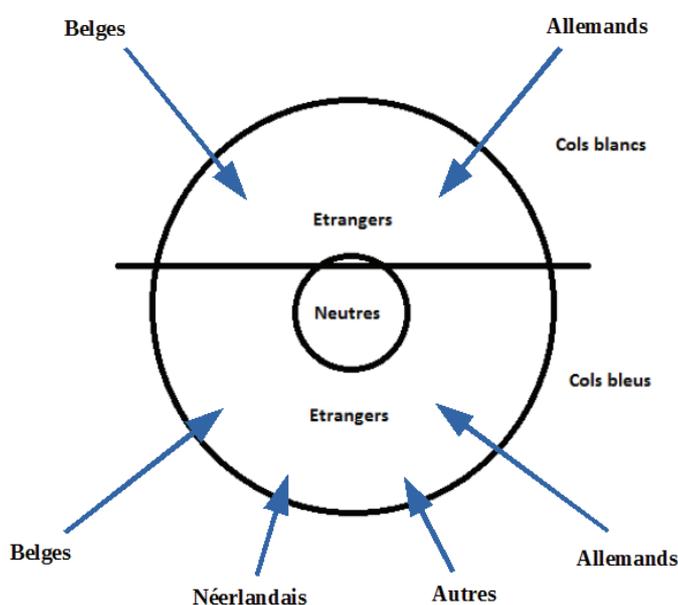


Figure 2 : Sociologie de Moresnet – la société de la Vieille-Montagne

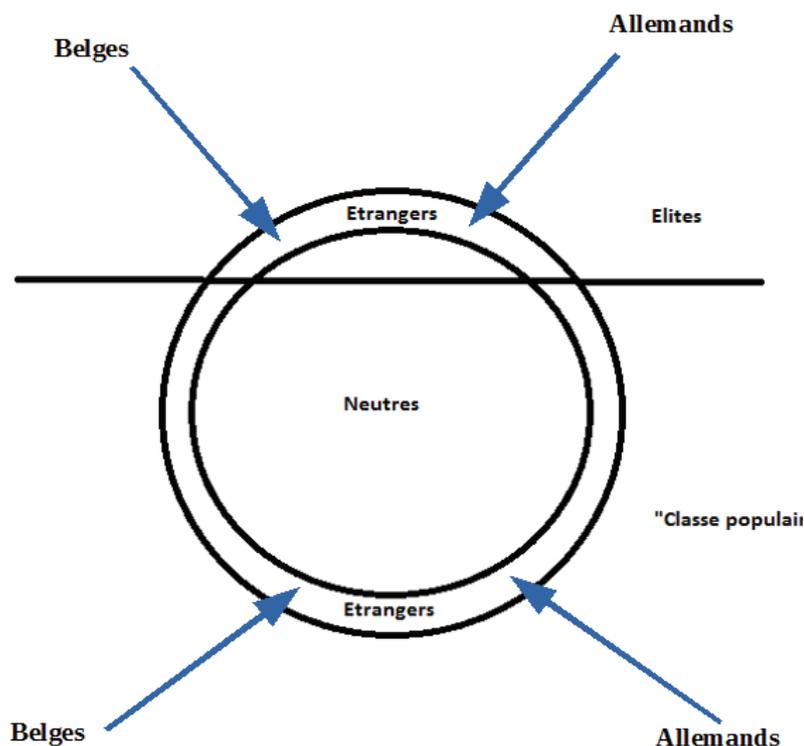


Figure 3 : Sociologie de Moresnet – la société civile

On connaît finalement très peu d'expression populaire, à part des pétitions qui réclament le statu quo (d'ailleurs organisées par les élites). Les Hommes qui construisent les langages autour de « Moresnet-Neutre plus petite communauté nationale du monde » sont bien les « élites », le plus souvent immigrés. Ils s'appuient alors sur des conceptions sociales bien différentes.

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3.2. Imaginer Moresnet : un héritage des Lumières?

Dans ses *Notes républicaines*, Voltaire déclare « De toutes les républiques, la plus petite semblerait devoir être la plus heureuse ». Cette expression montre bien le regard bienveillant que portent les philosophes des Lumières sur les organisations sociales microscopiques. Chez Voltaire, mais surtout chez Rousseau, les géants étatiques nuisent au bonheur des Hommes. Si l'on s'appuie sur le chef d'œuvre du Genevois, *Du Contrat social*, on remarque bien que le stade de la communauté est le plus efficace et le moins coercitif pour le bonheur individuel. On retrouve très largement ce néo-rousseauisme dans de nombreux articles de presse.

La « nostalgie de la Communauté » (Vernes, 1978: 9) demeure le leitmotiv de Rousseau. Il reste en constante recherche des origines. Le philosophe définit alors la Communauté comme une participation de chacun aux tâches collectives et celle d'une similitude de sentiments et de croyances. Elle est avant tout une affaire de relations sociales qui se double de symboles d'appartenance. Néanmoins, pour lui, la communauté n'est pas l'état. Alors que les observateurs voient Moresnet à la fois comme une communauté et un état. On la décrit davantage comme une *Gemeinschaft* (communauté), c'est à dire avec des représentations sociales nationales, spirituelles et instituées, plutôt qu'une *Gesellschaft* (société) vue comme une construction artificielle (Tonnies, 1944).

Le bonheur, la vie simple l'absence de forces étatiques chères au Léviathan de Hobbes (à part le garde forestier qui est censé être le seul représentant de l'armée) sont mis en avant comme les symboles d'un état idéal. L'impôt est mis sur le devant de la scène. En effet, les conditions

fiscales particulièrement avantageuses (on ne paie que quelques francs de taxe par an) donnent l'image d'un pays de cocagne. On peut même aller plus loin, l'argent semble être totalement absent. La vie simple, presque champêtre est celle qui prime.

L'autre thème rousseauiste mobilisé par la presse est celui de la Démocratie. Même si il souligne que le gouvernement parfaitement démocratique est impossible (Vernes, 1978: 148), le territoire est vu comme le plus démocratique du monde. Ainsi, on décrit le conseil municipal, censé être le gouvernement de Moresnet-Neutre comme une réunion entre les principaux notables du village. Toutefois, ils gardent leur côté sympathique puisqu'ils le font autour d'une table de taverne garnis de bières et autres charcuteries.

Ainsi, cet état de communauté presque primitive nous amène à une réflexion sur le mythe du bon sauvage. Bien sûr, nous ne pouvons pas dire que les Moresnetois soient des sauvages. Néanmoins, leur mode de gouvernement l'est. Rousseau est l'auteur le plus emblématique. Son chapitre sur la Démocratie dans *Du Contrat social* influence grandement les lignes de lecture de la presse du temps. Les Moresnetois acceptent facilement la présence d'un nécessaire exécutif (Vernes, 1978). En effet, ce territoire n'est absolument pas anarchique (Earle, 2014). Par exemple *la Lanterne* décrit ainsi le gouverneur de cette communauté:

« C'est un brave paysan, robuste et rubicond, propriétaire d'une des plus jolies maisons de la vallée et très fier de sa dignité souveraine. Il est dépositaire des archives de l'État, du plan cadastral de son territoire et des portraits de tous ses prédécesseurs. On le voit habituellement, le soir, boire débonnairement sa chope à la brasserie, en compagnie de son adjoint, à la façon du roi d'Yvetot, façon qui n'est point la pire. Personne n'ayant le droit de vote à Moresnet, il n'y a ni partis ni luttes politiques. Les décisions sont habituellement prises à l'unanimité, et les choses marchent le mieux du monde.²⁷ »

La démocratie à la française est donc prise avec méfiance tandis que la véritable démocratie rousseauiste, celle du consensus sociale est mise en avant. L'analyse de la presse montre le territoire neutre comme souverain. Encore une fois, c'est l'acception de Rousseau qui est utilisé. En effet, du point de vue juridique Moresnet n'est pas souverain. Pourtant, si l'on prend la définition du Genevois, à savoir essentiellement l'essence de la volonté générale unie par le *Contrat social*; ce territoire peut être qualifié de souverain puisque le souhait des habitants de rester neutres est respecté²⁸.

Le dernier thème très influencée par l'auteur genevois est celui de la fête. Juste avant la Grande guerre, la communauté se met en scène et fête son centenaire. La presse décrit alors cet événement²⁹. Ainsi Rousseau dans sa *Lettre à D'Alembert* (Vernes, 1978: 62) souligne l'importance de la fête dans une société. Elle permet d'abolir les tensions (ici celle d'une course à la guerre entre ses deux pays tuteurs) et les contradictions³⁰. Elle démontre que Moresnet est ce qu'on l'on appelle une communauté affective (Starobinsky, 1971: 120-121)³¹. La musique, les drapeaux, l'ivresse et la danse sont autant de vecteurs qui permettent aux habitants de se penser en tant qu'un tout homogène, une nation. Rousseau va plus loin en disant que la fête c'est avant tout le refus de la mort. Cette communauté s' imagine alors comme immortelle. Ainsi nous somme passé dans une autre dimension, celle de l'État-Nation. La fête permet la nationalisation de la communauté (Vernes, 1978: 105).

²⁷«Le plus petit état européen» (samedi 2 octobre 1886). In : *La Lanterne*. numéro 3451. p.2.

²⁸ Plusieurs pétitions ont circulé dans le territoire neutre pour maintenir ce statut particulier.

²⁹«Un centenaire». (lundi 20 juillet 1914). In : *Journal des débats politiques et littéraires*. p.1.

³⁰*Ibid.* p.17.

³¹« Elle montre la force humaine d'une nation, [...] l'incarnation de la volonté générale, sa visibilité ».

3.3. Quel modèle d'État-Nation pour Moresnet ?

On a souvent tendance à opposer les deux visions de l'État-Nation de Renan et de Fichte. En effet, elle met en opposition surtout deux nationalismes différents. La thèse de Renan (2009) est celle d'une nation qui se choisit. Fichte (1981) appuie davantage sur l'idée de « race ». Moresnet-Neutre rentre-t-elle dans ces cadres définis?

On peut donc affirmer avec Renan que ce territoire peut être un État-nation. Il réfute bien sûr le caractère racial d'une nation (Renan, 2009: 50), qui demeure toujours le résultat de la fusion notamment migratoires; elle est donc le résultat d'une histoire (Renan, 2009: 57). Hobsbawm réutilise l'expression de Walter Benjamin « l'ange de l'histoire » pour montrer que l'histoire est réinvestie et souvent réécrite et glorifiée dans le but de se construire une culture commune. Ainsi, à la fin du XIXe siècle, le patrimoine médiéval de la région élargie est mobilisé, Charlemagne est convoqué (Wintgens, 1981), Napoléon évoqué (Dröge, 2016). L'acmé de ce processus est matérialisée lors de la célébration du centenaire du territoire en 1914, quelques jours avant la guerre. Il faut également rajouter le mouvement de la redécouverte du folklore qui touche toute l'Europe. Ici, les associations, musicales notamment, se veulent les gardiens de cette culture populaire.

Pour Renan (2009: 57), chacun a le droit à la Nation, celle-ci partant de la volonté des Hommes: ainsi, pour former une communauté nationale pas besoin de langue, ni de religion³², ce ne sont pas des critères. La Nation est une communauté d'intérêts qui construit ses propres lois. Incontestablement, le statut particulier du territoire neutre permet de consolider ces intérêts. De plus, pour Renan, la Nation forme un principe spirituel, le résultat des complications de l'Histoire; on pense ici aux difficultés engendrées par le Traité de Vienne. La Nation est une âme, un désir profond de vivre ensemble. C'est le fameux « plébiscite de tous les jours ». Dans ce territoire, ce plébiscite est matérialisé par les nombreuses pétitions.

Néanmoins, beaucoup d'éléments permettent d'infirmer le fait que Moresnet-Neutre est une communauté nationale. Le plus important traite de la question du nombre. Pour Renan, les cités-états ne sauraient être des nations, leur communauté est trop restreinte, puisqu'ils peuvent tous se connaître.

Dans les *Discours à la Nation allemande*, Fichte développe une vision beaucoup plus restrictive de la Nation, très éloignée des codes que l'on trouve à Moresnet. Pour lui, une Nation n'est pas forcément un État (c'est le cas d'une Allemagne morcelée au début du XIXe siècle), mais une civilisation (Fichte, 1981). Or ce territoire neutre n'en est clairement pas une. Une nation se caractérise par sa langue, Moresnet n'en a pas. La Nation n'est pas une construction, mais une unité déjà existante, accomplie et réalisée. Elle dispose d'une conscience, d'une connaissance claire et s'appuie sur une souche, une race. Nous sommes donc à mille lieux de pouvoir qualifier Moresnet-Neutre d'État-nation.

Ainsi, si l'on peut appliquer les principes de Renan à Moresnet (avec beaucoup de restrictions cependant), il est clairement impossible de classer ce territoire comme étant une Nation selon Fichte. Il est ainsi frappant de voir que c'est davantage la presse francophone qui qualifie Moresnet d'État-nation, le plus petit du Monde.

3.4. Moresnet à l'épreuve des grandes écoles sociologiques du XXe siècle.

Ce territoire, défini comme la plus communauté imaginée du monde, rentre-t-elle dans les cadres des grandes écoles de pensées sociologiques du XXe siècle? Ce cas permet donc de nous interroger sur plusieurs sujets d'étude que sont l'État, la Nation, la Civilisation et l'Utopie.

³² A Moresnet-Neutre, les cultes catholique et protestant sont pratiqués.

L'Etat

Georg Hegel et Max Weber ont avant tout défini l'État par la loi, c'est à dire l'existence d'un corps de fonctionnaires (Colliot-Thélène, 1992: 7), et la construction d'un Droit (Weber, 2015). A ce titre le pouvoir est assuré par des fonctionnaires (le Bourgmestre qui représente l'administration: *Verwaltung* et les Commissaires des deux puissances voisines symboles de la domination: *Herrschaft*). Weber démontre qu'un État est une organisation politique où l'équilibre des pouvoirs est défini par le droit. Malheureusement, sur le territoire neutre le droit est assez flou, puisque seules les lois napoléoniennes, souvent obsolètes, sont officiellement en vigueur. Ainsi, selon l'école historique allemande, nous sommes donc en présence d'un État, mais pas tellement d'une Société (Colliot-Thélène, 1992: 118).

La Nation

Pour Norbert Élias, la Nation est une unité de survie qui se transforme en une communauté de citoyens (Delmotte, 2007). A Moresnet, il s'agit de survivre aux ogres allemand et belge, ce qui développe alors un « habitus national » (Delzescaux, 2016: 82) dans le territoire. Il soutient que l'apparition de l'État et l'émergence de la nation correspondent à deux phases historiques, dans la droite file de Jürgen Habermas (1998). Ainsi, Moresnet pourrait être qualifié d'État de 1815 à 1870, puis de « nation » de 1870 à 1914, mais une « nation subjective » (Delmotte, 2007). Ainsi, on passe du « je » à l'identité du « nous ». Néanmoins, la notion de *Kultur* (culture), est beaucoup plus difficile à intégrer pour Moresnet, même si les élites « aristocratiques » développent une auto-affirmation sociale en mettant en place une rhétorique de la nation en développant des symboles nationaux (Delzescaux, 2016).

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La civilisation

Ce territoire neutre s'inscrit totalement dans le *Processus de Civilisation* défini par Norbert Elias (1939). Pour lui, la civilisation est une évolution naturelle des sociétés humaines qui acceptent de déléguer et de renoncer à la violence. Dans cette évolution, la phase de l'État-Nation peut être dépassée (Delmotte, 2007: 19). De fait, Moresnet est un révélateur de ces thèses. Dans cet ordre d'idée, la civilisation se comprend comme la réduction des pulsions agressives par la monopolisation et la confiscation par l'État. Moresnet va plus loin en supprimant les violences et les passions (selon la presse bien sûr, la réalité est bien plus nuancée). Le territoire ne possède pas d'armée, il est totalement désarmé et ne dispose même pas de puissance de police, à part le garde forestier. Il affirme ainsi que la civilisation est avant tout une interdépendance entre les Hommes. Moresnet est donc l'État « le plus civilisé du monde » car chacun se connaît. L'acceptation des auto-contraintes permet un équilibre au sein du village. La rationalisation de cette société est le fait de la bourgeoisie, comme le Dr Molly. Finalement, ce territoire souhaite s'inscrire dans le cadre de l'État-Nation pour mieux le dépasser par l'utopie.

L'Utopie

Moresnet est une utopie à bien des égards. La remise en cause des nationalismes et la volonté d'imposer une langue internationale montre bien que le territoire a voulu se réinventer, mais aussi réformer les cadres. Élias définit l'utopie comme « la représentation imaginaire d'une société, représentation contenant des propositions de solutions à des problèmes non résolus [ici les langues], bien particuliers, de la société d'origine, à savoir des propositions de solutions qui

indiquent les changements que les auteurs ou les porteurs de cette utopie souhaitent ou bien les changements qu'ils redoutent, voire peut être les deux à la fois. » (Elias, 2014). L'espéranto est bien une utopie en tant que non lieu (dépasser la territorialisation de la langue) et un lieu idéal (où tous se comprennent). Elle fait émerger un buisson de « forces sociales », qui amène une reconstruction de nouveaux cadres. Moresnet est aussi une utopie « sociologique », une société politique révolutionnaire qui souhaite revenir à une forme antique de gouvernement. Karl Mannheim est plus restrictif puisqu'il lie l'utopie à l'idéologie (Mannheim, 2006). L'utopie doit transcender la réalité, pourtant il réduit ces idées à quatre figures, le chiliasme des anabaptistes, l'idée libérale-humanitaire, l'idée conservatrice et l'utopie socialo-communiste. Il déterritorialise les utopies. Ainsi, selon la typologie d'Élias, Moresnet est une utopie, beaucoup moins chez Mannheim.

Conclusion

L'épilogue de cette curiosité est finalement rapide. Le 4 août 1914, l'Allemagne viole en même temps la neutralité de la Belgique et de Moresnet, qui comptait alors 4668 habitants. Pendant toute la Grande Guerre, le territoire est occupé par les troupes de Guillaume II. Un décret du ministère prussien des Affaires étrangères, daté du 27 juin 1915, annonce la décision d'exercer désormais seul la souveraineté sur le Territoire neutre de Moresnet. Le maire avait été suspendu quelques jours plus tôt. Le Reich arme et fortifie même les frontières, bombardées en 1916. En mai de la même année, elle est alors rattachée dans la zone de langue allemande. Le 3 janvier 1919, l'armée française pénètre dans le Moresnet prussien. Dès novembre 1918, les Moresnetois rédigent une demande solennelle de rattachement au royaume de Belgique. Néanmoins, il faut attendre les négociations de Versailles pour trouver une solution définitive.

Dès le 7 mars 1919, la Commission des affaires belges tient séance sur le territoire neutre. Toutefois, les Belges souhaitent ajouter à Moresnet-Neutre, Preuss-Moresnet et ses bois en guise de réparations aux dégâts et à l'occupation. Les cantons d'Eupen et de Malmedy sont aussi réclamés par la Belgique. D'ailleurs, les troupes belges occupent Moresnet, Eupen et Malmedy le 26 mai 1919. Une bataille s'engage alors pendant tous les mois de juin et de juillet entre la délégation allemande menée par le baron Van Lesner et les délégations belges et françaises. Finalement, les Moresnet sont rattachés à la Belgique par les articles 32 et 33. L'article 34 spécifie que les districts d'Eupen et de Malmedy seront soumis à un plébiscite. Le 8 août, la Chambre vote un projet de loi qui crée la commune de La Calamine, la rattache à la Province de Liège, à l'arrondissement judiciaire de Verviers et au canton d'Aubel. Les Neutres obtiennent la nationalité belge immédiatement. Les Allemands de plus de 18 ans et établis au moins depuis le 1^{er} août 1916 peuvent devenir belges dans les deux ans.

A la fin des années 30, quelques incidents de frontières remettent en avant le territoire. En 1940, Hitler rattache au III^e Reich Eupen, Malmedy et Moresnet, au nom du pangermanisme. Après son retour à la Belgique en 1945, les cantons de l'est doivent attendre les années 60 pour que les Germanophones disposent d'un statut particulier. Aujourd'hui, le territoire cultive son histoire et sa différence au sein d'une Belgique qui se déchire sur les questions linguistiques³³.

Bien sûr, il est impossible d'affirmer que Moresnet-Neutre fut un Etat-Nation. Tout au plus, dans la typologie de Hroch, le territoire a effleuré la phase B, c'est à dire la constitution d'un groupe de militants, mais jamais la phase C, celle de l'adhésion populaire, n'a été d'actualité. Si on suit Gellner et Weber, Moresnet n'est même pas un Etat, car elle ne dispose pas du

³³ Le Musée de la Gueule de la Calamine conserve l'héritage du territoire neutre.

monopole de la violence, puisque ce sont les deux commissaires qui veillent sur la sécurité. Est-ce une communauté imaginée? Anderson déclare que « chaque nation est une communauté imaginée car même la plus petite des nations ne connaîtra jamais la plupart de leurs concitoyens, jamais ils ne les croiseront ni n'entendra parler d'eux ». Ici, on peut supposer que pour une communauté de 500 à 1000 habitants, il est possible que les connexions entre chaque membre soient plus fortes.

Ainsi, même si Hobsbawm peut reprocher à Gellner d'assimiler la notion d'invention à la supercherie et la contrefaçon ; on ne peut qu'être d'accord avec ce dernier sur le cas de Moresnet-Neutre État-nation.

Ce territoire neutre est donc le premier de ces états qu'on peut qualifier de *Nationes ex-machina*³⁴. Il s'agit de territoires contestés et frontaliers, nés d'un grand conflit avec un intérêt stratégique ou économique. Toutefois le désir de paix et la lassitude conduisent les puissances à laisser ces territoires dans un certain flou. Mais dès la fin du XIXe siècle, le flou est impossible et le concept d'État-nation s'engouffre alors dans la brèche. Nées en Europe pour la plupart, à la suite des trois grands conflits que sont les guerres napoléoniennes et les deux Guerres mondiales, ils ont peu à peu été vus comme des « mini-états-nation », avec tous les mécanismes, ce qui montre bien que ce sont des constructions qui viennent à la fois du haut et du bas. Toutefois, ce sont parfois des « anti-états-nation », puisque l'utopie et l'expérimentation politique tiennent une place majeure en leur cœur.

Trois influences agissent donc en profondeur dans ces nouvelles entités:

- Des mouvements exogènes: c'est à dire des influences extérieures qui veulent profiter de cette situation particulière.
- Des mouvements endogènes: c'est à dire des « autochtones » qui au fil du temps prennent conscience de leur particularité.
- Des mouvements universalistes où l'utopie demeure une composante essentielle.

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³⁴Chronologiquement, on distingue le Territoire neutre de Moresnet, la République de Cracovie, la ville libre de Dantzig, Fiume, le Territoire de la Sarre, Memel et Trieste.

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Varia

Oui and Voilà: Analysis of two discourse markers used by Chinese-L1 speakers of French in France

Delin DENG¹

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Abstract

French discourse markers, functioning as connectors in discourse which appear the most in informal register, are not explicitly taught in language classes. However, they could mainly be acquired through extracurricular interactions with native speakers. Despite many fruitful researches on discourse markers, few studies have documented the usage of French discourse markers by non-native speakers who live in France. In this paper, we conduct linguistic analysis on two functionally interchangeable discourse markers, *oui* and *voilà*, through our own oral data corpus of French non-native speakers of Chinese origin, allowing us to examine how extralinguistic factors, which have been proved significant to the speech of native speakers of French, influence the French speech by Chinese-native speakers in France.

Keywords

Discourse marker, French, non-native speakers, Social network, Extralinguistic factors

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Introduction

Since the 80s, research on discourse markers (DM) has increased significantly built on the pioneering work of Labov in Martha’s Vineyard (1962) and in New York City (1964). Fraser (1998: 19-33) considered the research on DM as an increasingly relevant topic in the field of linguistics. However, few studies are specifically interested in the use of French DM among non-native French speakers of Chinese origin. Today, an increasing number of Chinese move to France either to pursue their studies or to work. By integrating into the community, these speakers become or form a social community. Their daily contact with French native speakers then becomes a necessity. In the research on French spoken by Anglophones in Montreal, Sankoff et al. (1997: 191-217) indicated that the mastery of DM is a good indicator highlighting the integration of non-native speakers into the linguistic community. Whether they have learnt French or not before their arrival in France, these non-native speakers have never had access to an explicit teaching of DM in second language classroom, as laid out in many other studies. Hence, we may assume that the learning of DM may only be done through extracurricular contact with native speakers of French. The goal of this research is to examine how the social factors influence the use of DM by the Chinese-L1 speakers of French in France, by adopting the sociolinguistic variationist approach¹.

Firstly, previous research on DM *oui* and *voilà* will be reviewed and our hypothesis will be proposed. Secondly, our methodology including the corpus used, the data collection, the participants’ profile and the extralinguistic factors to examine will be presented. After the calculation of the occurrences of the variables and the presentation of the use of these two DM among different groups, the obtained results will be discussed. We will conclude this article with a discussion on the limitation of our approach and a research proposal for a longitudinal research on the same group of speakers in the years to come.

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1. Previous Study

A first data cleaning of our corpus allowed us to observe a very high frequency of the DM *oui* and *voilà* in the speech of our non-native speakers. Before making any hypothesis, it is important to understand the function of these two particles in the speech of French native speakers.

1.1. The case of *oui*

Firstly, *oui* may be used as an agreement marker appearing after a query and therefore constituting a vis-à-vis affirmation to the query of the interlocutor. Although, in general, this particle can react to all sorts of speech acts: questions, assertions, requests, orders, suggestions, recommendations as well as excuses and wishes. Kerbrat-Orecchioni (2001:95-119) illustrates this function by the following example:

A1-le directeur est à Paris pendant toute la semaine donc euh si vous voulez me	A1- the director is in Paris for the whole week so euh if you would like to give me
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¹ Sociolinguistics is a descriptive study of the effect of social factors, such as ethnicity, religion, gender, social status, age, etc. on some language variables. Sociolinguistic variationist approach is widely believed pioneered by William Labov’s work in the 60s in New York City on some phonological variables in American English. This approach claims that language varies systematically in accordance with social characteristics of the speakers. In this article, we therefore used this approach to compare two variables that do not have the same meaning in their original definition but are functionally interchangeable as discourse markers.

donner vos coordonnées	your contact information
B1- <i>oui</i> c'est monsieur comment le directeur↑	B1- yes this is mister who the director

There are cases when *oui* does not come at the initial position but the final position of an utterance. See example of Kerbrat-Orecchioni (2001) in the same corpus:

- Qu'est-ce qui vous arrive vous avez froid	- What happened to you you feel cold
- J'ai pas chaud <i>oui</i>	- I don't feel hot yes

In this case, even though *oui* does not directly follow the utterance of the interlocutor, it always responds to the interlocutor's assertion. Thus, it is to be considered an agreement marker.

Secondly, *oui* can simply receive the value of recording or the value of regulation. For example:

B3-s'il vous plaît parce que j'aime bien noter les noms quand même	B3-please because I would like to write down the names as well
A4- <i>oui</i> non mais je comprends bien de toute façon elle ne fera rien	A4-yes no but I understand well anyway she will do nothing

(Kerbrat-Orecchioni 2001: 98)

In this example, *oui* functions more like a regulator than an agreement marker, since it does not express a real position taking and does not bring any information element. This function is therefore different from the function of agreement marker.

In both cases, the function is not necessarily the function of DM, which we are interested in. In fact, Chanet (2004: 83-106) established a list of the 85 most used French DM by French native speakers and *oui* was not on that list. Yet, this absence does not mean that *oui* may not function as DM in their discourse. It may simply be less frequent than other DM. In order to find out if French native speakers also use *oui* as DM, we used the corpus PFC (Phonologie du Français Contemporain: <http://www.projet-pfc.net> Durand et al. 2002, 2009) as a reference. The following example that illustrates well this function:

E : Les garçons et les filles ?	E : The boys and the girls?
DL1 : Non, non. Non, non, non. (XXXX), il y avait l'école, bon il y avait l'école libre, l'école privée, enfin euh, pour les filles, et l'école pour les garçons. Et on se mélangeait pas hein <i>oui</i> .	DL1 : No, no. No, no. No. (XXXX), there was the school, well there was the free school, the private school, in the end euh, for the girls, and the school for the boys. And we did not get mixed hein yes.

In this example, *oui* does not appear at the beginning of the utterance to show agreement of the speaker with his interlocutor. Moreover, this utterance does not follow a concrete question raised by the interlocutor and therefore cannot be considered as the speaker's position-taking vis-à-vis his interlocutor. *oui* does not function as regulator either, since it does not prove a function of recording. Here, *oui* is rather to be considered as a DM, more precisely, a discursive progress marker that marks the end of the utterance.

In order to have a clearer picture of the distribution of the aforementioned functions of *oui* in the discourse of native speakers, we randomly chose 8 speakers from the Parisian area from the same corpus: 4 men and 4 women. We examined a free conversation of 30 minutes for each

speaker (4 hours in total for 8 speakers). **Table 1** represents the distribution of the usage of *oui* in their discourse.

Table 1: Distribution of *oui* used by French native speakers

Occurrence of <i>oui</i>		Agreement markers and Regulators		Discourse Markers	
Total	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
143	100%	117	81.82%	26	18.18%

Firstly, we notice that *oui* is not used with high frequency. Being engaged in free conversation, the interviewer and the interviewee are not in a simple turn's taking of question-answer. The interviewee takes the turn of discourse for most of the time, which would theoretically facilitate the emergence of the use of *oui* as DM. Nevertheless, our results show that, in fact, *oui* is used mostly as agreement marker and regulator. Only in 18.18% of the occurrences *oui* is used as a DM.

However, these results support our hypothesis that *oui* may function as a DM in the discourse of native speakers. In the empirical chapter, we will compare the native speakers' use with the use of *oui* by our Chinese-L1 speakers of French. For our analysis, we excluded the occurrence of *oui* used as agreement markers or regulators.

1.2. The case of *voilà*

Voilà can be used as agreement markers in numerous cases like *oui*. The following example illustrates well this function (Delahaie, 2009):

E- c'était l'hôtel (nom) hein c'est ça hein ?	E- it was the hotel (name) hein that's it hein?
C- <i>voilà</i> à Lesbos et il y a une semaine à Kyos (agence de voyage, « Lesbos », données personnelles)	C- there it is in Lesbos and there is a week in Kyos (agency of travel, « Lesbos », personal data)

In this exchange, the employee E already knew the answer to the question (she has the clients' dossier in front of her) and she only requires the confirmation to the person the most informed (the client C wants to add a person to his journey to Lesbos and to Kyos). On contrary, the real questions-requires of information does not allow an answer in *voilà*.

E- est-ce que vous avez un passeport ?	E- do you have a passport?
C- oui ?? <i>voilà</i> (exemple inventé)	C- yes ?? <i>there it is</i> (exemple invented)

According to Heddesheimer (1974), the above mentioned example is to be seen as a verbal act by which the interlocutor B marks expressively that he would have pronounced the same utterance as the interlocutor A. The request of confirmation refers to acts that Delahaie (2009) calls A-B, which means: A asserts something about a fact B, but A is not sure about it, B is more suitable to know what it is and B interprets the utterance of A as a request of

confirmation. Here, *voilà* functions as an intermediate structure between assertion and question. This structure is often preceded by a marker of research for approbation like *c'est ça* or *hein* and ends the asserted utterance, whose function often corresponds to that of *oui*.

In addition to this function, *voilà* may also function as a DM that appears at the end of the utterance. For example:

après j'ai fait l'année 2012 et 2013 à Clermont Ferrand pour améliorer la partie de français voilà c'est un peu près euh un peu près deux ans voilà oui bien sûr ce sont des français euh voilà euh ils sont-ils sont Auvergnés oui ils sont Auvergnés mais dans/dans différentes villes euh ma prof de compréhension orale c'était prof qui vient de Aurillac après le prof de cultu/euh civilisation elle est originale de clermontoise après euh ils sont tous Auvergnés voilà	afterwards I did the year of 2012 and 2013 in Clermont Ferrand in order to ameliorate the French part there it is it's a little about euh a little about two years there it is yes of course these are French euh there it is euh they are they are Auvergnés yes they are Auvergnés but in/in different cities euh my professor of oral comprehension that was a professor who comes from Aurillac afterwards the professor of cultu/euh civilization she is of clermontoise origin afterwards wuh they are all Auvergnés there it is
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(Wei-H-P-2014)

In this example, the DM *voilà* appears in the final position of every utterance to mark the end like a punctuation of the sentence. In fact, according to the list of Chanet (2004), *voilà* is the 13th most used DM by French native speakers. Its frequency in their discourse is about 1 occurrence every 2 minutes 52 seconds. In our study, *voilà* functioning as an agreement marker is excluded from the analysis.

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There are several reasons why we chose to compare these two DM for our analysis. On one hand, these two particles may both function as agreement markers and are considered as essential markers in native speakers' speech (Delahaie, 2009). On the other hand, these two particles may as well function as DM in native speakers' discourse, even though this function is not highly frequent for *oui*. Admittedly, *oui* and *voilà* are neither the only agreement markers that are functionally interchangeable; nor they are the only DM used at the end of the utterance. It is rather the fact that these two particles are interchangeable in both cases mentioned above that makes them more suitable for comparison than other particles that may have the same function in either case. This article focuses on the influence of the social environment on the use of the two DM. Hence, we will not analyze the effect of L1-transfer in detail; despite we do consider it a possibility.

2. Methodology

2.1. Corpus

The data in the corpus we used in this article were collected in France in 2014. The analysis presented here is based on the sub-corpus of 27 semi-directed conversations in French collected involving 27 speakers, which is about 15 hours of recording in total. It is important to point out

that the questions asked by the interviewer during the interview only served to elicit free speaking in a more informal register. For this purpose, questions like “Est-ce que vous avez l’expérience d’être volé?” (Do you have the experience of being stolen?), “Est-ce que vous vous souvenez encore de vos premiers jours en France?” (Do you still remember your first days in France?) were often asked.

We analyzed all occurrences of DM *oui* and *voilà* presented in our corpus. Consequently, we calculated the occurrences per thousand words for each speaker. In this way, even though the interviews vary in length, its impact on the statistical treatment is minimized. The number of words produced by the interviewer is excluded from this calculation. Taking into account the limited number of interviews realized at this point, the current study is to be seen as a starting point on the subject.

2.2. Speakers

The sample of 27 speakers (12 from Paris and 15 from Nice) consists of a quasi-equal number of men and women. Despite their current nationality, they are all of Chinese origin and lived in France at the time of the interview. They all speak French as L2. They were recruited through the personal network of the interviewer and the interviewees. They are aged from 20 to 36 years old and represent the younger generation. Therefore, we will not analyze the influence of age on their use of DM.

We are aware of the relative small size of the sample of speakers, which is not uncommon in sociolinguistic studies, considering this is only the beginning stage of a longitudinal study of this community. Thus, we do need to underline that with such a sample, it is not possible to reach more statistically conclusive results from the sociolinguistic point of view. Hence, the results are descriptive and should be still taken as a qualitative apprehension of figures, instead of statistics per se. However, the statistical results related to occurrences analysis are consistent with a sufficient sample size.

2.3. Extralinguistic Factors

Regarding extralinguistic factors, firstly, we hope to determine if the gender of the speakers has an influence on their use of *oui* and *voilà*. Do men and women privilege the usage of one of the two DM?

Secondly, we divided our speakers into four groups based on their length of stay in France: less than 1 year, 1-3 years, 4-6 years, more than 6 years. Numerous studies showed that the length of stay in a foreign country has a positive influence on second language acquisition. The speakers, who are more exposed to the language, would master the authentic and informal usage better. Thus, the length of stay is to be regarded as a factor with a potentially crucial impact on DM usage by our speakers. Concerning their social network, we divided the participants into two groups: those with a restrained social network, that’s to say, who only go out with Chinese friends, and those who have a mixed social network, that’s to say, who go out with French friends as well as Chinese friends. As laid out earlier, DM is not taught explicitly in class. Extracurricular contact with native speakers hence appears to be an important and essential way for the acquisition of DM. Consequently, we expect to observe differences in DM use with respect to the social network of the participants.

2.4. Quantitative Analysis

We used T-test (Snedecor & Cochran, 1989) and one-way ANOVA (Field, 2007) to determine the significance of the factors. The T-test is used to see if two groups differ significantly; and the one-way ANOVA allows the comparison of the behavior of three or four groups. For our analysis, we consider the p-value in the result. If the p-value is above 0.05, the result is not statistically significant and the hypothesis is null. But if the p-value is below 0.05, then, the result is statistically significant and the null hypothesis is to be rejected. Since there is no correlation between these two DM, we test them separately. We will have a p-value for each DM and for each group.

For ANOVA, the factor is proven statistically significant if the obtained p-value is below 0.05. We then conducted a post-hoc test, in which we only compare two groups at a time in order to see what the significant differences are.

3. Results

3.1. General Tendency

The case of oui

Table 2 : Distribution of oui used by Chinese speakers

Occurrence of <i>oui</i>		Agreement markers and regulators		Discourse markers	
Total	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
1554	100%	962	61.9%	592	38.1%

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As shown in Table 1, which is about the DOM use of native speakers, only 26 DM *oui* are produced in over 4 hours conversation, i.e. 6.5 occurrences per hour. According to Table 2, our Chinese-L1 speakers of French produced 592 DM *oui* in 15 hours, i.e. 39.47 occurrences per hour. The frequency of DM *oui* is much more important in the speech of our French L2 speakers than in that of native speakers. The question of the L1-transfer may be raised. In her article on the most used DM in Mandarin, Liu (2009), briefly analyzed on DM *dui*, equivalent of *oui* in Chinese. She indicated that even though there are not too many works regarding the analysis of Chinese DM, *dui* functions as DM either at the initial or at the final position of an utterance. Its omission does not affect the integrity of utterance. In this case, the DM *dui* offers a textual function as pause filler or delay device. In addition, in her statistics regarding the frequency of Chinese DM in mandarin, the DM *dui* is the 10th most used by Chinese. This would then explain why our Chinese speakers privilege the DM *oui*, while the French native speakers do not use it this much often as DM, even though this usage does exist in French. This confirms our hypothesis on the possibility of L1-transfer.

The case of voilà

According to the list of Chanet (2004) regarding the DM use of French native speakers, the frequency of *voilà* is 1 occurrence every 2 minutes 52 seconds. The DM *voilà* is hence much more frequent than *oui* in the speech of native speakers. For Chinese speakers, 234 occurrences are produced over 15 hours interview, i.e. 1 occurrence every 3 minutes 51 seconds. This

frequency is slightly inferior to that of native speakers. One possible reason of this could be the difference in speech speed between the native speakers and the non-native speakers. Normally, native speakers talk faster than the nonnative speakers (at least this is the case for our participants). This is why counting the frequency per minute is always problematic at statistical level, since the speech speed of the speaker could influence the result, especially when we compare the performance of non-native speakers with native speakers. This leads us, to rather consider the frequency per thousand words for our analysis.

3.2. Extralinguistic Factors

Gender

13 male speakers and 14 female speakers participated in this research. This quasi-equal distribution between the two genders allows us to reach more statistically conclusive results.

Table 3 : Distribution of DM between the two gender groups

	oui (per thousand words)	voilà (per thousand words)
Female	10.31	0.52
Male	6.12	5.38
P	0.1709	0.0096

Nota Bene: the sample size is under 30 observations, thus these figures should be taken as qualitative and indicative.

Table 3 shows that there is a net statistical difference between the two gender groups for the DM *voilà*. It seems that men's usage of this DM is considerably different from women's usage. However, it should also be noted that the DM *oui* is used more frequently by women, even though the difference between the two groups does not reach a statistically significant level.

We could notice that, for men, the usage of *oui* and *voilà* does not differ much with respect to their frequency. These two DM are used substantially similarly. However, for women, the difference between the usages of these two DM is significant. Women seem to privilege the usage of DM *oui* rather than *voilà*.

If the frequency of DM *oui*, higher among Chinese speakers, is interpreted as a result of L1-transfer, can we consider that the difference of the use of these two DM between men and women corresponds to a difference of linguistic competence? It seems that the answer is not as simple as this. Based on the calculation, it can be found that the occurrences of these two DM in total vary little between the two groups: 10.83 per thousand words for women and 11.5 per thousand words for men. The difference between these two groups consists notably in the distribution of the two DM. The more one uses one DM, the less the other DM is used. As previously stated, the DM *voilà* is much more employed among French-L1 speakers. In this case, the men's usage is closer to that of native speakers with an important use of *voilà* and a decreased use of *oui*. If the linguistic level is the only factor that allows explaining this difference in linguistic behavior, we would expect a usage closer to that by native speakers, when the linguistic level is higher. That is, a higher linguistic level correlates with a less frequent use of DM *oui* and more frequent use of DM *voilà*. Following this logic, the men in our study do have a higher linguistic level than the women in question.

This finding leads us to another question: why do men in this study seem to have a more advanced language level than women, since very often we think women are better than men at language study? However, we should always keep in mind that when we talk about language learning, we usually refer to the acquisition of formal forms of language in formal settings, which stresses the mastery of what we call the “standard language form” that should conform to the norms prescribed in grammar books and dictionary. And if we look into the dictionary we would notice that the usage of DM never appears. As put earlier in this article, DM are not taught explicitly in classroom setting, therefore the acquisition of DM may have nothing to do with language learning ability in L2 classrooms, but social environmental influence. In other words, what we see here does not indicate that men have a more advanced language level than women, but a very different extracurricular activity type, otherwise this would be an overgeneralization of the situation. The results can only be interpreted as that the male speakers in our study do seem to have more contact with French native speakers. We would then ask the question: is this difference due to the difference of their length of stay in France or is the difference caused by their social network?

Length of Stay

Table 4 : Distribution of DM among the four groups of length of stay

Length of stay	<i>oui</i> (per thousand words)	<i>voilà</i> (per thousand words)
<1 year	18.84	0
1-3 years	6.53	3.59
4-6 years	9.75	1.17
>6 years	6.64	4.82
p	0.18	0.36

Nota Bene: the sample size is under 30 observations, thus these figures should be taken as qualitative and indicative.

Table 4 indicates that the length of stay is neither statistically significant for *oui* nor for *voilà*. Nevertheless, it is worth underlining that the new-arrivals, living in France for less than 1 year, show a heavy use of the DM *oui*, while the DM *voilà* is totally absent from their discourse. This tends to correspond to our hypothesis that the excessive usage of DM *oui* is the result of L1-transfer, and the acquisition of DM *voilà* necessitates a longer stay in the target country.

Apart from this, the development of the usage of these two DM does not necessarily follow a linear itinerary of development, since the linguistic behavior regarding these two DM is closer to that of the new-arrivals in the group staying in France between 4 and 6 years. However, this could be the case in foreign language acquisition. Their linguistic competence in second language develops until a certain point before their linguistic performance decreases. In consequence, the non-native speakers at this stage are easily seen as beginners. This is why the length of stay does not impact the linguistic level of a speaker linearly. In addition, it is always very difficult to determine which phase of acquisition the speaker is at. Also, the use of these two DM does not correlate with the length of stay in France. The length of stay may not be a good indicator of a good mastery of DM. The use of these two forms must hence be related more directly to other extralinguistic factors such as the social network.

Social Network

For this grouping, we have 17 speakers who have a restrained social network and 10 speakers who have a mixed social network.

Table 5 : Distribution of DM between two groups of social network

type of network	oui (per thousand words)	voilà (per thousand words)
restrained	11.47	1.99
mixed	3.00	4.37
P	0.00099	0.1976

Nota Bene: the sample size is under 30 observations, thus these figures should be taken as qualitative and indicative.

Table 5 shows that the type of social network is statistically significant to the DM *oui*, but not to the DM *voilà*. The interaction with native speakers leads to a less important use of the DM *oui*, while it facilitates the use of the DM *voilà*. The findings indicate at the same time that the rate of occurrences for each DM is substantially the same for the speakers with a mixed social network, but there is a wide gap between the uses of the two DMs regarding speakers with a restrained social network. These results tend to show that a mixed social network allows a better mastery of the alternation between the available forms for the same function.

In addition, we also find that the linguistic behavior regarding the use of these two DM between the two groups relates to different DM use of men and women: one group relies heavily on one of the two DM, while the other uses them in a quite balanced way. At first glance, these findings might suggest that women have a more restrained social network than men.

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In fact, in the group of restrained social network, we do have more women than men. In other words, women may prefer to stay inside their community, while men are more open to the exterior world. We wanted to understand why women and men have different social network. An interviewee gave us a quite astonishing answer to this subject:

...mais je n'ai pas l'ami français j'ai déjà dit donc s'il y a le chance je veux on me inviter je vais aller mais en fait je pense comment dire i/i/il y a un/un XXX c'est dans mon école il y a des d'in/d'in/d'information pour les Chinois pour trouver un f/un f/français pour bava/bavarder comme ça mais j'ai essaie de envoyer mes/mes XXX un/un français mais en fait je trouver que il vient que coucher avec moi c'est vrai c'est comme ça parce que on a on a on a dit que c'est si vous voulez habituer habilement ici tu dois coucher avec un	...mais je n'ai pas l'ami français j'ai déjà dit donc s'il y a le chance je veux on me inviter je vais aller mais en fait je pense comment dire i/i/il y a un/un XXX c'est dans mon école il y a des d'in/d'in/d'information pour les Chinois pour trouver un f/un f/français pour bava/bavarder comme ça mais j'ai essaie de envoyer mes/mes XXX un/un français mais en fait je trouver que il vient que coucher avec moi c'est vrai c'est comme ça parce que on a on a dit que c'est si vous voulez habituer habilement ici tu dois coucher avec un français oui
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français oui
(Yu-F-P-2014)

We hypothesize that women may feel less safe like this interviewee and thus feel the need to protect themselves by staying with their compatriots. Very often, women tell us similar stories in which they talk about their difficulties in integrating in the French social life or in making new friends outside the community. On contrary, men complain less about this problem. Several male speakers even mentioned that from the very beginning of their arrival they tried to avoid Chinese. These two completely different attitudes towards their own community have a possible influence on their linguistic attitude, which subsequently influences their acquisition of the target language.

In order to answer this question, we scrutinized the social structure within the Chinese community in France into depth. For example, even within a restrained social network, it is always possible to have well-integrated individuals and isolated individuals. In the first case, we would find at least one central person in the network whose suggestions count for the other members of the community. In this case, the linguistic attitude of this leader would be crucial. In the second case, the analysis of the leader of the community would be less relevant for the linguistic behavior of those isolated persons, since for the latter, the suggestion of the leader does not count. At first glance, it seems that women are quite closely connected with each other within the community while this is not necessarily the case for men. As future work, an analysis of social network, both qualitative and quantitative, is proposed for providing much more accurate answers to this question.

Conclusion

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Adopting a sociolinguistic approach, initiated by Labov (1962, 1964) in the 60s, we presented the first results of our project to document the French spoken by Chinese-L1 speakers in France.

The results of this analysis show that, firstly, although the DM *oui* and *voilà* are functionally interchangeable, *voilà* is the preferred form by French native speakers, while *oui* Chinese-L1 speakers of French. Such a difference could be explained by a L1-transfer, since *oui* is also the preferred form in Mandarin Chinese.

Secondly, the alternation between the two DM for non-native speakers is restricted by several non-linguistic factors: gender and social network. Regarding language proficiency, it seems that women are less advanced than men regarding the acquisition of social variables, even if they spent the same amount of time in France than men. This difference may be explained by the fact that women generally have a more restrained social network than men. Since DM acquisition requires interaction with native speakers, a restrained social network does not facilitate a good control. This explains why women use much more *oui* than men.

Thirdly, the length of stay is not necessarily a relevant indicator with respect to the good control of these variables, because of the nonlinear nature of the development of language learning.

Finally, by studying the use of these two French DMs by the Chinese community in France, we aim to better understand how the social environment influences the use of the target language and what differentiates them from speakers of other language communities. In this context,

other variables would also be useful to study. The Chinese community, like other linguistic communities of immigrants, has its own characteristics, not only linguistically, but also socially. These features are part of a particular cultural context. Very often this context determines the social structure of the community. Moreover, this structure influences the perception and language attitude towards the target language. Thus, integration into the host community becomes a permanent issue for non-native speakers abroad. To confirm our hypothesis, we will spend more time with the community, firstly, in order to limit the observer's paradox (Labov, 1973: 113) and, secondly, to be able to determine whether the data collected during our interviews correspond to the actual practices of our speakers. We may also consider the effect of the passage of time on the use of linguistic variables. In this regard, a longitudinal study of the use of French by speakers of Chinese origin in France would allow further reflection on these issues.

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Investigating Degree of Familiarity, Formality and Frequency of Slang Used by Farsi Speakers: A Situation-Based Study

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Abstract

Despite the high frequency of slang use among speakers of different languages, investigating this significant language phenomenon has been limited to specific areas including the use of slang by adolescents though evidence shows that slang is becoming ubiquitous across a variety of age and social groups. Therefore, the present study was designed to develop current understanding about slang with respect to FFF (triple F), that is, the level of familiarity (with slang), formality (of slang as perceived by its users), and frequency (of slang use) with regard to three situations whereby slang is used: describing people, humiliating people and expressing feelings. The FFF was investigated in light of three variables including age, education level and gender of the participants in the sociocultural context of Iran. The participants were 154 native speakers of Farsi language within 20-50 years of age. A mixed-method research design including both qualitative and quantitative approaches (questionnaire and interview) was utilized to collect data which was then analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. The results indicated that, the participants, above all, were familiar with slang used to describe people, they perceived slang used for humiliating people as more formal than other slang types, and they used slang more frequently to express feelings. Concerning age, education-level and gender variables, the differences were statistically significant mostly with regard to the frequency of the use of slang. The findings generally suggested that members of a society are roughly familiar with popular slang regardless of their age, gender and education level; otherwise, they cannot obtain legitimacy in the groups or communicate successfully with different members of the community. Thus, slang is a cultural feature of any living language without which the language is impractical and spiritless.

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Keywords

Slang, Situation-based, Farsi speakers

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“Slang is language which takes off its coat, spits on its hands- and goes to work.”

Carl Sandburg

Introduction

The first question concerning slang is that where it comes from; however, there is uncertainty about the exact origin of it. Once belonging to the criminal class of society (Asher, 1994), this variety gradually “came to donate unconventional vocabulary as well as sub-cultural speech” (Membe, 2006: 11) with culture having a strong effect on the use and acceptance of it (Bartolo, 2008). In common sense, slang is typically attributed to informality, imprecision, unsystematicity and illegitimacy (Eckert, 2000; Hudson, 2000; Labov, 1992; Membe, 2006) to the extent that Sornig (1981) describe it as “a stigmatized language variety or deviant variant when compared with the codified standard language”. Slang is also perceived as sociolect because social factors such as homosexuality, drug (Zhou & Fan, 2013), religious and army settings (Skolnik, 2015) would contribute to its development and spread, and it has a variety of social dynamics (Danesi, 2010). However, there has traditionally been a minority group who have taken a positive approach towards slang (De Klerk, 1990; Hayakawa, 1941; Mojela, 2002) by taking into consideration the importance of user’s intention and contribution of slang to language enrichment as aspects frequently neglected by scholars holding a negative stance towards it. Hayakawa (1941), for instance, believed that slang “vividly expresses people’s feelings about life and about the things they encounter in life” (p. 195). Reflecting on the work of Michael Adams (2009), the well-known expert on slang and linguistic variation, Danesi (2010) calls slang a type of basic poetry “revealing the presence of a creative impulse in humans in the ways they create and use language” (p. 507). Taking a critical stance towards previous studies, Agha (2015) introduces a new way of looking at slang and stresses that it is not simply a speech variety but “is a term whose usage indexes relationships between discourses and their speakers” (p. 308).

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As evident in the aforementioned descriptions, despite attempts made to offer a comprehensive definition of slang, it has remained frustratingly complicated to describe since there is no consensus about what it entails; hence, linguists usually set some criteria to realize whether or not a given utterance can be considered as slang. Dumas and Lighter (1978) argue that presence of a true slang diminishes the dignity of formal written or spoken communication, is a taboo term for some people, implies the acquaintance of the speaker and the listener, and is used in place of the well-known conventional term to avoid the discomfort of using it. Labov (1992) also remarks that the use of slang suggests that its users approximately share the same world and are familiar with each other. However, it should not escape from our mind that even in situations where interacting individuals do not have a common interest, they may intentionally adopt features of each other’s speech in order to reduce the social distance and to smoothen communication. This is one of the core assumption of Communication Accommodation Theory (Giles, Coupland, & Coupland, 1991) referred to as ‘downward convergence’ which reflects “a move toward more stigmatized or less socially valued forms of communication” (Shepard, Giles, & LePoire, 2001, p. 37).

Overall, whether taken as a positive or negative feature of a language, slang is an essential ingredient which adds flavor to any language. As discussed by Skolnik (2015), perhaps the best example showing the value of the presence of slang for vitality of a language is that of the

Hebrew language which was revitalized in 1980s. Though the created language appeared stiff in its primary stages, the inclusion of more slang made spoken Hebrew a smoother language to use. Given the interactivity of different languages, many of the colloquial phrase entered this language had roots in other languages specifically Arabic (e.g., *ahalan* (hi)), Yiddish (e.g., *foyleshtik* (monkey business)), and English (e.g., homo, hippie, job, joker, killer, lunch) roots. Since its early revitalization of Hebrew language to date, the number of slang has considerably grown, reaching over 10,000 entries in *Millon ha-Sleng ha-Makif* (Ruvik Rosenthal, 2005). Thanks to slang “Hebrew has thus become a living language in the most modern sense, its vitality reflecting the vitality of the country, which despite increasing social malaise remains its most attractive feature” (p. 173).

Slang is frequently described as a feature of youth talk or teenage speech, or in other words, as an area of vocabulary which is an indication of the speaker’s age (Holmes, 2013) since most slang users are adolescents and it sounds unusual if it is uttered by elderly people given the fact that “a sense of belonging is important to the average insecure teenager” (De Klerk, 1990, p. 5). Results of some studies are in corroboration with this idea. As a case in point, Eric’s (2009) study showed that Rwandan students *often* used slang at school when talking with fellow students and in informal social gatherings, *sometimes* used it when talking with people or intimate relatives of their age group, but *never* used it when talking with their parents, lecturers and in formal situations. Nevertheless, more recently, voices can be heard claiming that slang is not peculiar to adolescents and people in different age groups may consciously take on slang from lower social groups (Holmes, 2013; Pederson, 2007). This idea is supported by Danesi (2010) who argues that “People use slang more often than they realize” (p. 507), and even the so-called standard language is replete with many words such as ‘jazz’ and expressions such as ‘Deal with it!’ that once had been recognized as slang, therefore slang can be a language feature used by all its speakers regardless of their age. Besides age as one of the main markers of slang frequently addressed in slang studies, there is a large body of research addressing gender differences in the use of slang. Most of these studies have shown that the frequency of slang use is higher among males (Anderson, 2000; Karlsson, 2007; Lakoff, 1975; Pederson, 2007; Salma, 2013; Spender, 1980; Stenstrom, 2002) that is why slang is characterized as male domain. Yet, there are a couple of scholars questioning this fact. De Klerk (1990) argues that the stereotype of males being the primary slang users was questionable. In their study, Hashemi Shahraki and Eslami Rasekh (2011) found that the use of slang was more common among Iranian high school students than primary school and senior university students thereby, it was one of the main features of adolescents’ talk; however, gender differences in the use of slang were not significant. One reason why slang is usually featured as a male domain is due to males’ membership in more sub-groups; men persistently get involved in political, business, sport sub-groups, to name a few whereas women typically stay in their own neighborhood and family circles and majorly use slang related to clothing, hairstyle and home, (Zhou & Fan, 2013). But a more significant gender difference in the use of slang can be related to domains of slang use by males and females than the frequency of its usage by them.

Slang has a variety of functions and realizing them contributes to better understanding of his language phenomenon. In an early study, Partridge (1935: 6-7) outlined 15 potential reasons for using slang which are summarized in what follows: 1) just for the fun of the thing, in playfulness or waggishness; 2) as an exercise either in wit and ingenuity or in humor; 3) to be ‘different’, to be novel; 4) to be picturesque (either positively or negatively); 5) to be unmistakably arresting,

even startling; 6) to escape from clichés, or to be brief and concise; 7) to enrich the language; 8) to lend an air of solidity, concreteness to the abstract; 9a) to lessen the sting of, or on the other hand to give additional point to, a refusal, a rejection, a recantation; 9b) to reduce, perhaps also to disperse, the solemnity, the pomposity, the excessive seriousness of a conversation (or of a piece of writing); 9c) to soften the tragedy, and/or thus to enable the speaker or his auditor or both to endure, to ‘carry on’; 10) to speak or write down to an inferior, or to amuse a superior public; 11) for ease of social intercourse; 12) to induce either friendliness or intimacy of a deep or a durable kind; 13) to show that one belongs to a certain school, or social class; in brief, to be ‘in the swim’ 14) to show or prove that someone is not ‘in the swim’; and 15) to be secret - not understood by those around one. To date, several studies have tried to identify the reasons underlying the use of slang. Eble (1996) found that slang is usually used to fulfill social functions and the main objective of people’s conversations is not to gain new information about different things suggesting that slang occurs in certain situations specifically to address people or talk about them. Almost a decade later, Pederson (2007) studied the use of slang in British English in a TV show and a movie to identify the situations in which slang occurred while the gender of the slang users was also considered. The results of the study showed the situations or areas of slang use among men in the TV show as following: talking to or about someone (17%), talking about drugs and alcohol (11%), mood (11%), sex and other taboo areas (10%), violence (10%), ethnicity (4%), and miscellaneous (37%), whereas the situations in which slang was used by women were limited to talking to or about someone (100%). In Namavar and Ibrahim’s (2014) study, the Malaysian ESL students (85% of them were females) were mainly familiar with movie, internet and abbreviation slang. Adopting Partridge’s reasons for using slang, Rwasamanzi (2009) investigated the use of slang by students in a higher institute in North of Rwanda and found that they used slang to be fun, humorous, secretive, creative, establish group identity, imitate other students, and communicate more easily, respectively. Facilitating social interaction, establishing friendliness, taking a distinctive identity, achieving politeness, expressing emotion, indicating attachment to a particular social, its aesthetic appeal, and its ability to fill in cognitive gaps with new linguistic signs, among other things, are reasons why people use slang as informed by more recent studies (Adams, 2009; Dalzell & Victor, 2008a; Danesi, 2010; Hashemi Shahraki & Eslami Rasekh, 2011; Membe, 2006; Pederson, 2007; Zhou & Fan, 2013), some of which had already been acknowledged by Partridge (1935).

Although these studies have offered invaluable insights into slang use, there are still some aspects of this evolving phenomenon that have not received sufficient attention in Iran as well as in other contexts. A major underinvestigated problems is the use of slang by people other than adolescence and the results of few studies available are a good indication of the ubiquity of this subcultural language among people across different educational classes in a society. The results of the study by Mazer and Hunt (2008), for instance, indicated that unlike common belief that teachers should not typically use colloquial language, the teacher’s use of positive slang such as ‘cool’ used with the purpose of establishing or reinforcing social approval in the classroom community was appreciated by the students and did not degrade the status of the teacher and his credibility in the eyes of the students. Findings of this type shed light on potential benefits of slang.

Overall, once depicted as an illegitimate form of communication, slang continues to be an insightful and legitimate variation with its root growing in all age, gender, and educational groups

within a community and this requires slang to be revisited by empirical studies which provide evidence of its changing role and usage in contemporary era. The many features of slang doubtlessly makes it worth of academic investigation (Labov, 1992), and studying it is also a way of knowing more about the culture and society in which slang is embedded (Zhou & Fan, 2013). Therefore, some gaps evolving around the use of slang were investigated in this study as discussed in what follows.

1. Statement of the Problem and Research Questions

The above discussion clarified that there is no consensus on what slang exactly is. People react to slang differently; whereas it is considered as taboo by some people, others consider it as a creative language. Therefore, to understand what slang really is, it is important to know who uses it and in what situations. Studies have investigated slang in different languages (Hashemi Shahraki & Eslami Rasekh, 2011; Sau-Ling, 2005; Skolnik, 2015; Namavar & Ibrahim, 2014; Pederson, 2007; Reyes, 2005) and have yielded different findings; these inconsistent findings accordingly necessitate more investigation of this issue so that a more shared understanding of this phenomenon can be obtained. The available have mainly dealt with slang used by adolescents (Andersson & Trudgill, 1990; Eble, 1996; Labov, 1992; Reyes, 2005; Salma, 2013; Stenstrom, 2002), thus leaving adult's slang usage underinvestigated. Moreover, despite the high frequency of slang by Farsi-speakers, slang studies have been rare in the Iranian context.

Though slang is becoming ubiquitous across different age groups, there is a serious lack of investigation on slang use by people who have already passed their teenagehood. The current study was, therefore, designed to develop the current knowledge about slang with respect to FFF (triple F): the level of familiarity (with slang), formality (of slang as perceived by its users), and frequency (of slang use) with regard to three situations whereby slang is used, that is, describing people, humiliating people and expressing feelings. The FFF was investigated in light of three variables including age, education level and gender of the participants in the sociocultural context of Iran. In simple words, the present study sought answer to the following questions:

1. Is the level of familiarity with slang determined by age, education level and gender of people across different situations in which slang is used?
2. Is perception about formality of slang affected by age, education level and gender of people across different situations in which slang is used?
3. Is the frequency of slang usage affected by age, education level and gender of the participants across different situations in which slang is used?

The present study is significant because it is an addition to the limited available literature on slang studies. Moreover, unlike most studies investigating slang among adolescents, it addressed this understudied topic among different age groups from young to middle-aged. Gender differences were also taken into account and, above all, the less-frequently studied variable of education level and its association with slang use was investigated. A rather novel aspect of this study, to the best of the author's knowledge, is that it used a situation-based framework and instead of presenting a bulk of slang used in Farsi language, it explored slang used by Farsi speakers in three specific situations.

2. Methodology

2.1. Participants

The participants of this study were Iranian families living in Famagusta, Northern Cyprus, who were recruited from a meeting held for celebrating a religious event (thus, selected through convenience sampling). Of the 79 people present at the meeting, 14 were excluded because they were not willing to participate but 65 voluntarily accepted to participate in the study. In an attempt to collect more data, the soft copy of the questionnaire was emailed to the researchers' colleagues and friends in Iran and thus 89 more questionnaires were collected. Therefore, a total of 154 questionnaires were collected. The inclusion criteria were to be between 20-50 years of age and to be native speaker of Farsi language. Table 1 shows the demographic information of the participants.

As shown in Table 1, the male/female ratio was almost equal (51.9% & 48.1%, respectively). The participants were divided according to their age into three categories with a ten-year interval. Most of the participants were between 21-30 (42.9%), and 31-40 (39.0%) years of age, with the last group, 41-50, being the smallest in number (18.1%). The participants were also divided according to their education level into four groups. An equal proportion of participants had either high school diploma or were PhD candidates (5.85%), and likewise, similar proportion of the participants held either bachelor or master's degree (44.15%).

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All the participants were native speakers of Farsi and at the time of the study were living either in Iran or contemporarily in Mağusa, Northern Cyprus for education or visiting purposes.

Table 1. Demographic Information of the Participants

	Frequency	Percent	Mean	SD
Gender			1.48	.50
Female	80	51.9		
Male	74	48.1		
Age			1.75	.75
21-30	66	42.9		
31-40	60	39.0		
41-50	28	18.1		
Education			2.50	.88
High school diploma	18	5.85		
BA/BS	68	44.15		
MA/MS	68	44.15		
PhD (candidates)	7	5.85		
Total	154	100		

2.2. Instruments

Data was collected through a close-ended questionnaire developed by the researcher. The English translation and transliteration of the questionnaire is provided in Appendix A. The questionnaire has four sections; whereas section A elicits background information about the participants, the three next sections represent situations whereby slang is utilized in speech: B) slang used to describe people, C) slang used to humiliate people, and D) slang used to express feelings (abbreviated as DP, HP, & EF). A list of slang (N = 40) used in this study were selected from the online Contemporary Dictionary of Persian Slang due to their high frequency of usage in the sociocultural context of Iran. The participants were required to rate the FFF with respect to three variables of age, gender and educational status. Familiarity with the slang was assessed through Yes/No responses to the items, formality was assessed on a 3-point Likert type scale (informal, colloquial, formal), and the frequency of usage was rated on a 5-point Likert type scale (from never to always). For ease of answering, all the scales were merged to form only one questionnaire (Appendix A).

A semi-structured interview was also administered to eight participants on a voluntary basis as a secondary and qualitative source of data to be triangulated with the quantitative data obtained from the questionnaire. The interview questions centered on FFF and also the situations whereby slang was used by the participants.

2.3. Data Collection and Data Analysis Procedures

Data was collected during the 2016-2017 second academic semester. A mixed-method research design including both qualitative and quantitative approaches (questionnaire and interview) was applied in this study (Teddlie & Tashakori, 2009). The participants were briefed about how to fill out the questionnaire and it took approximately 15 minutes to complete it. In order to analyze the data, SPSS software (19.0) was used. Descriptive statistics was run and the frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation of responses to the items of the questionnaire were computed with respect to three situations whereby slang is used in order to answer the three research questions. The participants' mean score was used to determine the level of FFF. To elaborate, the questionnaire has 40 items and as far as Familiarity is concerned there are two choices which are rated as either 1 to signify Yes or 2 to signify No, so the highest score that could be obtained is 80 and half of this score is 40 with the mean of 1 which is the middle score and thus all the obtained means are analyzed with respect to this mean which is representative of the normal distribution.

In this paper, data was not analyzed in details by referring to the frequency and percentage of responses to every single item of the questionnaire (though this information is provided in Appendix B); rather, to shed more light on the extent to which FFF were affected by the three variables (age, education level, and gender) across the three situations, ANOVA test was performed to compare the means between the categories of each variable, for example between different age groups, to identify potential relationships between the use of slang and the age of the speakers. Therefore, a total of 27 ANOVA tests were performed.

3. Results and Discussion

In this section, the results of the study are presented in three sub-sections, each answering one of the research questions.

3.1. Familiarity with Slang

In order to examine the degree to which the participants were familiar with slang, descriptive statistics was run and the mean and SD was computed across the three DP, HP, and EF situations as shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics for Familiarity with Slang

Situations	Mean	SD
Describing people	1.25	.67
Humiliating people	1.20	.31
Expressing feelings	1.14	.22
Total	1.20	.24

As can be seen in Table 2, the total mean score (M: 1.20) as well as the mean of slang across the three situations is more than half of the possible average response ($1.20 > 2.00/2$) suggesting that Farsi speakers are not familiar with all the slang presented to them and this is true in relation to all the DP, HP & EF situations (M: 1.25, 1.20, & 1.14, respectively). However, the mean is closer to 1 suggesting that the participants are familiar with most of the slang.

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A more in-depth analysis shows the level of familiarity with slang with respect to three variables addressed in this study the result of which was obtained by performing ANOVA as shown in Table 3. According to the results, the mean difference between the three age groups was not significant ($p < 0.05$) in any of DP, HP, and EF situations (M: .569, .807, & .412, respectively) suggesting that the degree of familiarity with slang specific to a given situation is not affected by the age of the speakers. However, these results are in contradiction with those of Namavar and Ibrahim's (2014) study which indicated high familiarity with slang among teenagers, 2014).

The same results were observed concerning the education level and gender variables. In fact, there was not a significant mean difference ($p < 0.05$) between the four education level groups (M: .718, .862, & .210, respectively), nor between the two gender groups (M: .894, .319, & .354, respectively) in any of the situations meaning that, similar to age, the level of familiarity with slang used in different situations is not influenced by the education level and gender of the speakers. Confirming this finding, interviewee 1, a 25-year old female, explained that:

Slang usage has nothing to do your age or education level, in my idea. The more you are involved in society and intermingle with different groups, the more slang you will learn and if you do not learn and use them, they (its users) treat you hum... like you do not belong to their community.

In fact, the above quotation denotes that speakers, though not familiar with all slang, believe that it is essential to understand slang because it is used by speakers “to establish or reinforce social identity or cohesiveness within a group or with a trend or fashion in society at large” (Eble, 1996: 11). The presence of slang as an important requirement for acquiring legitimacy in a given community, and establishing stronger cultural bond necessitates any member of the society to be

more or less familiar with it even if they resist to use them. For instance, there may be many slang peculiar to men that is understood but never uttered by women (Kramer, 1973). Namavar and Ibrahim's (2014) study maintaining that people are familiar with movie slang but the important point here is that, slang are becoming such frequent and significant feature of a language that without sufficient familiarity with them, complete understanding of the speakers' speech would not be possible.

Table 3. ANOVA for Familiarity with Slang across Different Situations

Situations for slang use		Mean	SD	Mean Square	Sig.
Describing people					
Age	20-30	1.25	.21	.016	.569
	30-40	1.23	.13		
	40-50	1.30	.11		
Education	High school diploma	1.23	.15	.013	.718
	BA/BS	1.28	.20		
	MA/MS	1.25	.13		
	PhD	1.20	.13		
Gender	Male	1.25	.14	.001	.894
	Female	1.26	.19		
Humiliating people					
Age	20-30	1.27	.43	.022	.807
	30-40	1.27	.18		
	40-50	1.25	.20		
Education	High school diploma	1.23	.18	.026	.862
	BA/BS	1.25	.46		
	MA/MS	1.17	.19		
	PhD	1.17	.17		
Gender	Male	1.25	.18	.100	.319
	Female	1.16	.41		
Expressing feelings					
Age	20-30	1.13	.27	.045	.412
	30-40	1.12	.16		
	40-50	1.25	.17		
Education	High school diploma	1.13	.17	.076	.210
	BA/BS	1.22	.31		
	MA/MS	1.10	.12		
	PhD	1.05	.07		
Gender	Male	1.17	.18	.044	.354
	Female	1.11	.26		

*p < 0.05

Consistent with the findings of the present study, a few previous studies have acknowledge the importance of familiarity with slang. Investigating slang usage in African indigenous languages, Mojela (2002) found that the presence of slang dos not contaminate the language; rather it enriches the language in the sense that it is adopted as loan words in the vocabulary of the

indigenous languages, such as Northern Sotho, and contributes more to the expansion of their lexicon and bridges the gap between spoken and written language.

When asked about how one may become familiar with slang, interviewee 2, a 35-year old man, mentioned that:

It's not difficult to learn them. Of course, there are some slang that you do not hear frequently, uh... I have learnt most of them from TV. We have some famous actors and actresses in movie industry, most of whom are comedians, who use slang and people enjoy imitating them.

In line with the above quotation, Pederson (2007) also confirms that TV-programs have boosted the spread of slang. Additionally, by the advent of social media (e.g., Twitter, Facebook, etc.), slang is becoming progressively more common and keeping up with these terms is a way of keeping oneself current.

3.2. Level of Formality of Slang

In order to examine the degree to which slang was perceived as formal, colloquial or informal across different situations, descriptive statistics was run the result of which is represented in Table 4.

Table 4. Descriptive Statistics for the Participants' Perception about Formality of Slang

Situations of slang	Mean	SD
Describing people	1.51	.38
Humiliating people	1.53	.47
Expressing feelings	1.51	.42
Total	1.52	.44

As seen in Table 4, the total mean score (M: 1.52) as well as the means of the three situations are almost the same as the possible average response ($1.52 > 3.00/2$) suggesting that Farsi speakers have a middle stance towards slang across all the situations and consider it neither formal and informal but rather as colloquial. In other words, Farsi speakers, overall, perceive slang which is used to describe people, to humiliate people, and to express feelings as colloquial.

The result of ANOVA run to investigate the participants' perception about formality of slang across the three situations with respect to participants' age, education level, and gender variables is presented in Table 5.

According to the results presented in Table 5, as far as age is concerned, the mean difference is not significant across the DP, HP, & EF situations (M: .925, .618, & .626, respectively). On the other hand, the mean difference between the four education level groups was significant ($0.007 < 0.05$) with people holding a master's degree being more familiar with slang used to describe people (M: 1.45) compared to those used to humiliate people, and express feelings (M: .151 & .653, respectively). This finding suggests that education level might have an impact on perception about the style or degree of formality with slang used in a certain situation.

With regard to the gender variable, a significant difference was observed between males and females ($0.045 < 0.05$), with males perceiving slang related to humiliating people as more formal than females (M: 1.55 vs. 1.47, respectively). This finding suggests that gender may be a factor determining one's perception about formality of slang. The present finding can be justified in light of the example given by Lakoff in 1975, maintaining that almost everybody knows that the word *shit* is part of male vocabulary whereas *oh dear!* is part of female vocabulary. In other words, due to higher prevalence of slang in men's speech, it appears more common or even more formal to men compared to women who may perceive some of these words as less formal or even as taboo terms. Yet, given that the mean difference is not significant with respect to different situations of slang use in the majority of the categories of the age, education level and gender variables, there is not high certainty about the extent to which the degree of formality of slang is influenced by education level and gender.

Table 5. ANOVA for Degree of Formality of Slang across Different Situations for Slang Use

Situations for slang use		Mean	SD	Mean Square	Sig.
Describing people					
Age	20-30	1.48	.40	.012	.925
	30-40	1.52	.39		
	40-50	1.54	.37		
Education	High school	1.20	.25	.557	.007*
	diploma	1.17	.35		
	BA/BS	1.45	.38		
	MA/MS PhD	1.39	.32		
Gender	Female	1.44	.29	.250	.198
	Male	1.58	.46		
Humiliating people					
Age	20-30	1.56	.51	.047	.816
	30-40	1.54	.47		
	40-50	1.45	.37		
Education	High school	1.26	.42	.395	.151
	diploma	1.68	.48		
	BA/BS	1.53	.49		
	MA/MS PhD	1.35	.28		
Gender	Female	1.41	.33	.894	.045*
	Male	1.66	.56		
Expressing feelings					
Age	20-30	1.57	.47	.085	.626
	30-40	1.47	.40		
	40-50	1.44	.33		
Education	High school	1.39	.45	.099	.653
	diploma	1.55	.38		
	BA/BS	1.55	.47		
	MA/MS	1.38	.34		

PhD

Gender	Female	1.47	.34	.089	.484
	Male	1.55	.49		

*p < 0.05

The interview data was also consistent with these findings. As a case in point, interviewee 3, a 22-year old male student asserted that:

In my opinion, you cannot assess how formal slang is simply by one’s education level or age, for example, hum... people usually think that an informal expression is also less polite, and nobody prefers to appear impolite in our society... I mean, people use them because they don’t think these expressions are impolite or informal at all... hum... they are not formal either, I mean they are just normal.

The above quotation clarified that politeness is another important issue that sparks to mind when dealing with formality of a given speech or language. In this regard, Allan and Burrirdge (2009) argue that time, place and context determine if slang is polite. So, in a context like Iran where slang is frequently utilized in conversation of people with varying age, gender and education levels, it is not surprising that the speakers may recognize them as colloquial. However, Bartolo (2008) who studied a slang word (bogan) in Australian English, points to the fact that slang can be used both negatively as impolite projection of a social identity and positively, as a sign of compliment amongst members of the same group depending on the cultural stereotype attributed to it by the users. Therefore, “If the person does not classify him or herself as a part of this in-group than offence can be taken whereas if the person sees him or herself as part of the in-group then the comment will be seen more like a compliment” (p. 11).

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3.3. Frequency of Slang Use

In order to examine the frequency at which slang is employed across different situations, the mean and SD were computed as represented in Table 6.

Table 6 shows that the total mean score is 2.26. The mean of all the three situations is a little lower than half of the possible average response ($2.26 > 5.00/2$) suggesting that Farsi speakers less often use slang.

Table 6. Descriptive Statistics for Frequency of Using Slang across Different Situations

Situations for slang use	Mean	SD
Describing people	2.10	.71
Humiliating people	2.33	.85
Expressing feelings	2.35	.84
Total	2.26	.80

Table 7 shows the result of ANOVA run to study the participants' frequency of slang use across the three situations with respect to age, education level, and gender variables.

According to the results, as far as age is concerned, the mean difference is significant across all the DP, HP, & EF situations (M: 0.49, 0.001, & 0.002 < 0.05, respectively). The mean was the highest in 20-30 year old category and the lowest in 40-50 category showing a descending trend in the use of slang as people get older.

Table 7. ANOVA for Frequency of Slang Use

Situations of slang		Mean	SD	Mean Square	Sig.
Describing people					
Age	20-30	2.36	.78	1.49	.049*
	30-40	2.00	.67		
	40-50	1.75	.40		
Education	High school diploma	1.63	.42	1.43	.032*
	BA/BS	2.35	.80		
	MA/MS	2.18	.63		
	PhD	1.65	.49		
Gender	Female	2.00	.56	.564	.296
	Male	2.21	.84		
Humiliating people					
Age	20-30	2.72	.77	4.41	.001*
	30-40	2.23	.84		
	40-50	1.62	.55		
Education	High school diploma	1.71	.53	2.01	.037*
	BA/BS	2.35	.88		
	MA/MS	2.51	.86		
	PhD	1.82	.59		
Gender	Female	2.18	.75	1.27	.191
	Male	2.49	.95		
Expressing feelings					
Age	20-30	2.73	.80	3.68	.002*
	30-40	2.23	.76		
	40-50	1.74	.43		
Education	High school diploma	1.94	.72	1.75	.043*
	BA/BS	2.37	.78		
	MA/MS	2.67	.79		
	PhD	1.82	.69		
Gender	Female	2.27	.71	.384	.452
	Male	2.44	.91		

*p < 0.05

This finding was consistent with those of some previous studies indicating that young people use slang more frequently than their older counterparts (Hashemi Shahraki & Eslami Rasekh, 2011; Namavar & Ibrahim, 2014; Labov, 1992; Sau-Ling, 2005). Stenstrom (2002) also confirmed that

from 20 years of age onwards, slang use will decline. It is an undeniable fact; yet, slang, though not very frequently, is used by older generations in the contemporary Iran compared to the past as a 44-year old, male interviewee (No. 4) explained:

In fact, I didn't use these expressions in the past because if you utter those expressions people would consider you, especially if you are a woman, as an illiterate or impolite person or as someone behaving much younger than his age. But as we moved on, uh... today, you see, uh..., for example everybody, even old people may say “it's cool” and it's not considered as impolite anymore or peculiar to youth.

The same example can be found in American English as described by Danesi (2010); the word ‘cool’ which was a shibboleth for the lifestyle of *the golden era of rock* in 1950s in adolescent speech, entered the mainstream language where, to date, it is used to mean following the latest trends. Examples of this kind denote that, when particular slang is used by all members of the society regardless of their age, the slang, in fact, has established its stance as a standard word in a given language.

The fifth interviewee, a former 43-year old female teacher also remarked that:

I used to teach sociology at female high schools. You know, girls of that age enjoy using that informal expressions... as if they want to say we are different from you...I was learning many new expressions from them and once I realized that I am using a few of those expressions when I'm with them.

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The above statement highlights that effective communication between different members of society occurs only when members of the society try to understand each other's language and taking on features of each other's speech. Elderly people may also use slang terms as an “efficient shorthand ways to express their ideas and concepts” (Zhou & Fan, 2013, p. 2211).

Concerning education level, the mean difference between the four groups was significant across all DP, HP, and EF situations (M: .032, .037, & .043 < 0.05, respectively) with people holding a bachelors or master's employing more slang during their talk. This may suggest that more educated people have a more tendency to use slang but the fact that PhD students did not use them as much frequently is still questionable. One justification might be the age of this group. People start their doctoral education usually in their 30s whereas bachelor's and master's education often occurs in 20s and as the results of this study showed younger people used slang more frequently. However, unlike age and education level variables, gender was not a determining factor affecting the frequency of slang use among people regarding the three situations of slang use (M: .296, .191, & .452 > 0.05). This finding rejects those of many other studies which indicated that males were more frequent users of slang (Salma, 2013; Pederson, 2007) but is consistent with De Klerk's (1990) argument and Hashemi Shahraki and Eslami Rasekh's (2011) results which indicated no significant difference.

Conclusion

Today, slang is a common feature of all languages across a variety of contexts. Since the advent of the internet, the boundary between formal and informal language styles has become more blurred and people, regardless of their age, gender, educational level as well as other variables not addressed in this study, have more exposure to informal styles. However, the question of what slang is, is highly determined by how people perceive and use it. As Reyes (2005: 513) argues “there is no precise formula for knowing if a particular term or phrase qualifies as slang”; nevertheless, studies of this type contribute to our current information and understanding about slang.

A significant outcome of this study was to show that all people living in a society are more or less familiar with common slang regardless of their age, gender and education level; otherwise, they cannot communicate successfully with different members of the society. Unlike dominant beliefs about informality or illegitimacy (Eckert, 2000; Hudson, 2000; Labov, 1992) of slang, it appears that this subcultural language is gaining more legitimacy in the modern era to the extent that the participants of this study majorly considered slang as colloquial and an indispensable part of everyday language, and numerous colloquial expressions used in informal mainstream speech, finally pass into mainstream formal speech as people try to attain a desired social distance between them and their interacting interlocutors (Giles, 1973). More importantly, according to Adams (2009), tracing the history of slang terms shows that it is in fact “the history of culture” (cited in Danesi, 2010: 513), and the spread of slang once used by adolescence at a given time in history of language but later used even by elderly people as a more standard form can “symbolize a break with tradition” (p. 513).

Lack of any gender differences in neither of FFF investigations also confirmed that slang, once a feature of male language, has gained its way to female’s language territory. However, it is noteworthy that the present study addressed slang used in three situations only (describing people, humiliating people, and expressing feelings) and there are certainly areas, such as sport, in which gender differences in the use of slang comes to the surface. A broader justification of this finding might be that due to languages change, it is now the time to think differently about languages, in general, and slang, in particular, hence, “The word shit and the expression oh dear! may have another meaning today compared with their meaning when Lakoff made the statement in 1975” (Karlsson, 2007: 10). It is now the ripe time to pay heed to more important functions of slang and its influence in contemporary societies. Slang is not simply a language variety used by a particular age or gender group or specific to lower social class anymore; it rather is a ‘poetic solution to human problems which is created whenever necessary “regardless of situation, time, and place” (Danesi, 2010: 516). Slang is such an essential element of language that without its presence a language may appear artificial and spiritless (Skolnik, 2015).

This study shed more light on Iranian people’s perception of and use of slang among different age, gender, and education level groups but the results might have implications across different languages because slang is a ubiquitous feature of all languages. Due to the small sample size of the study and investigating aspects that had rarely been addressed both in Iran and other contexts, future studies are recommended to follow this line of research and explore slang across different situations to verify the findings suggested by this study and provide a more comprehensive picture of this language phenomenon.

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Appendix A**A) Background information****Gender:** male female**Education:** High school diploma BA/BS MA/MS PhD**Age:**

Instruction: please select the correct choice and put ✓ in appropriate box.

		Familiarity		Formality			Frequency				
		Yes	No	Informal	Colloquial	Formal	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
Slang											
A) Slang used to describe people											
1	Jævat i.e., villager, low class										
2	Golabi (pear) i.e., lazy, stupid, gawky										
3	Shirin asal (a sweet cookie) i.e., flatterer										
4	ʃasi boland (high chassis) i.e., a tall person										
5	Chalghüz i.e., absent-minded										
6	Gägül i.e., stupid, absent-minded										
7	Hapalı i.e., untidy, messy										
8	BΛ etiket (a person with etiquette) i.e., prestigious, respected										
9	KhΛlı band i.e., liar										
10	IQ i.e., shrewd, smart										
11	Λvizün (hanging) i.e., a person you can hardly get rid of										
12	Bache mosbat (positive child) i.e., a person who does not bad things.										
13	KhiyΛr ʃür (salty cucumber, pickle) i.e., an uninteresting person										
14	FazΛ navard (astronaut) i.e., a person addicted to drugs										
15	Λdam kolangı (dilapidated) i.e., old, elderly										
16	BΛtrı ghalamı (slim battery) i.e., very thin										

17	Khar Khün (to read like a donkey) i.e., a person who studies a lot																		
18	Pastorize (pasteurized) i.e., a clean and tidy person																		
19	EvA (referred only to men behaving like women) i.e., pampered, spoil																		
20	PANASONIC (Panasonic, a brand) i.e., a beautiful well-curved girl																		
C) Slang used to humiliate people																			
21	Püz zadan (to hit someone's chin) i.e., to make someone feel ashamed!																		
22	ZAYê shodan (to rot) i.e., to feel ashamed in front of others by telling something that should not have been said!																		
23	pichündan (to twist someone) i.e., to get rid of someone by telling them a lie!																		
24	Albalü (sour cherry) i.e., (uttered) to tease people																		
25	Oskol shodan (to make sb. Oskol (a bird's name)) i.e., to fool someone																		
26	Sütrü dıdan i.e., to tell something that should not have been told!																		
27	Süsk kardan (to make someone a cockroach) i.e., to humiliate someone																		
28	Rız dıdan (to see someone small) i.e., to degrade/underestimate someone																		
D) Slang used to express feeling																			
29	Hesef nıst (I don't have its feeling) i.e., I'm not in the mood for doing it!																		
30	Sarı pesar khAl-e mishe (He quickly becomes my causin!) i.e., he quickly feels too intimate!																		
31	Hame chi rele hast. (Everything is relay.) i.e., everything's fine!																		
32	Raftim safA siti! (We went to pleasant city) i.e., we had a great time!																		
33	Kheyli bAlAl-e! Kaf mikoni. (It's with joy!) i.e., it is very cool, you'd exhilarate!																		
34	AâsAbef Khatkhatiy-e (His nerve is doodled!)																		

	i.e., he is nervous!												
35	Terekündım! (We exploded (there)) i.e., to humiliate someone												
36	Züd ghat mızane! (He quickly becomes) i.e., he quickly gets angry.												
37	Jav zad-e shod! (he got atmosphere-stricken) i.e., he was affected by the atmosphere.												
38	Fakef zamm khord! (His gums fell down!) i.e., he surprised.												
39	Tirip lav hastan! (They are love trip) i.e., they love each other.												
40	Sürakh-e jürabetım! (I am the hole of your socks!) i.e., to show so much sincerity to someone.												

Appendix B

Frequency and percentage of responses o items of the FFF questionnaire
Familiarity

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Situations	Items	Yes	No
		No & %	No & %
Describing people	1	49 (90.7)	5 (9.3)
	2	48 (88.9)	6 (10.1)
	3	31 (57.4)	23 (42.6)
	4	45 (83.3)	9 (16.7)
	5	42 (77.8)	12 (22.2)
	6	52 (96.3)	2 (3.7)
	7	39 (72.2)	15 (27.8)
	8	37 (68.5)	17 (31.5)
	9	53 (98.1)	1 (1.9)
	10	52 (96.3)	2 (3.7)
	11	50 (92.6)	3 (5.6)
	12	53 (98.1)	1 (1.9)
	13	28 (51.9)	25 (46.3)
	14	14 (25.9)	39 (72.2)
	15	25 (46.3)	29 (53.7)
	16	30 (55.6)	24 (44.4)
	17	50 (92.6)	4 (7.4)
	18	53 (98.1)	1 (1.9)
	19	47 (87.0)	7 (13.0)
	20	12 (22.2)	42 (77.8)

Humiliating
people

21	45 (83.3)	9 (15.7)
22	49 (90.7)	5 (9.3)
23	52 (96.3)	2 (3.7)
24	19 (35.2)	35 (64.8)
25	47 (87.0)	5 (73.0)
26	52 (96.3)	2 (3.7)
27	38 (70.4)	16 (29.6)
28	48 (88.9)	6 (11.1)

Describing
feelings

29	52 (96.3)	2 (3.7)
30	52 (96.3)	2 (3.7)
31	43 (79.6)	11 (20.4)
32	47 (87.0)	7 (13.0)
33	49 (90.7)	4 (7.4)
34	52 (96.3)	2 (3.7)
35	51 (94.4)	3 (6.6)
36	50 (92.6)	4 (7.4)
37	52 (96.3)	2 (3.7)
38	41 (75.9)	13 (24.1)
39	41 (75.9)	13 (24.1)
40	28 (51.9)	26 (48.1)

Formality

Situations	Items	Informal No & %	Colloquial No & %	Formal No & %
Describing people	1	37 (68.5)	16 (26.9)	1 (1.9)
	2	32 (59.3)	19 (35.2)	3 (5.6)
	3	34 (63.0)	18 (33.3)	2 (3.7)
	4	35 (69.8)	16 (29.6)	3 (5.6)
	5	41 (75.9)	11 (20.4)	2 (3.7)
	6	38 (70.4)	12 (22.2)	4 (7.4)
	7	32 (59.3)	19 (35.2)	3 (5.6)
	8	24 (44.4)	21 (38.9)	9 (16.7)
	9	19 (35.2)	25 (46.3)	10 (18.5)
	10	21 (38.9)	16 (29.6)	17 (13.5)
	11	31 (57.4)	17 (31.5)	6 (11.1)
	12	17 (31.5)	24 (44.4)	13 (24.1)
	13	42 (77.8)	12 (22.2)	-----
	14	36 (66.7)	17 (31.5)	1 (1.9)
	15	33 (61.1)	18 (33.3)	3 (5.6)
	16	36 (66.7)	18 (33.3)	-----
	17	24 (44.4)	23 (42.6)	7 (13.0)
	18	21 (38.9)	23 (42.6)	10 (18.5)
	19	33 (61.1)	18 (33.3)	3 (5.6)
	20	43 (79.6)	8 (14.8)	3 (5.6)

Humiliating people

21	34 (63.0)	16 (29.6)	4 (7.4)
22	21 (38.9)	23 (42.6)	10 (18.5)
23	25 (46.3)	18 (33.3)	3 (5.6)
24	50 (92.6)	3 (5.6)	1 (1.9)
25	36 (66.7)	14 (25.9)	4 (7.4)
26	17 (31.5)	25 (46.3)	12 (22.2)
27	43 (79.6)	10 (18.5)	1 (1.9)
28	23 (42.6)	26 (48.1)	5 (9.3)

Describing feelings

29	17 (31.5)	24 (44.4)	13 (24.1)
30	24 (44.4)	25 (46.3)	5 (9.3)
31	34 (63.0)	15 (27.8)	5 (9.3)
32	36 (66.7)	17 (31.5)	1 (1.9)
33	30 (66.6)	23 (42.6)	1 (1.9)
34	23 (42.6)	24 (44.4)	7 (13.0)
35	28 (51.9)	21 (38.9)	5 (9.3)
36	28 (51.9)	20 (37.0)	6 (11.1)
37	23 (42.6)	22 (40.7)	9 (16.7)
38	46 (85.2)	7 (13.0)	1 (1.9)
39	35 (64.8)	17 (31.5)	2 (3.7)
40	47 (87.9)	7 (13.0)	-----

Frequency

Situations	Items	Informal N & %	Colloquial N & %	Formal N & %	Formal N & %	Formal N & %
Describing people	1	25 (46.3)	18 (33.3)	7 (13.0)	3 (5.6)	1 (1.9)
	2	26 (48.1)	14 (25.9)	9 (16.7)	3 (5.6)	2 (3.7)
	3	35 (64.8)	14 (25.9)	3 (5.6)	4 (7.4)	-----
	4	25 (46.3)	9 (16.7)	14 (25.9)	4 (7.4)	2 (3.7)
	5	34 (63.0)	9 (16.7)	6 (11.1)	3 (5.6)	2 (3.7)
	6	21 (38.9)	16 (29.6)	12 (22.2)	3 (5.6)	2 (3.7)
	7	28 (51.9)	8 (14.8)	14 (25.9)	2 (3.7)	2 (3.7)
	8	30 (55.6)	8 (14.8)	9 (16.7)	3 (5.6)	4 (7.4)
	9	10 (18.5)	11 (20.4)	44 (25.9)	11 (20.4)	8 (14.8)
	10	14 (25.9)	6 (11.1)	13 (24.1)	11 (20.4)	5 (18.5)
	11	13 (24.1)	17 (31.5)	14 (25.9)	3 (5.6)	7 (13.0)
	12	7 (13.0)	9 (16.7)	16 (29.6)	8 (14.8)	14 (25.9)
	13	38 (70.4)	12 (22.2)	2 (3.7)	1 (1.9)	1 (1.9)
	14	47 (87.0)	5 (9.3)	1 (1.9)	-----	1 (1.9)
	15	44 (81.5)	7 (13.0)	1 (1.9)	2 (3.7)	-----
	16	37 (68.5)	9 (16.7)	4 (7.4)	3 (5.6)	1 (1.9)
	17	7 (13.0)	7 (13.0)	17 (31.5)	9 (16.7)	14 (25.9)
	18	10 (18.5)	12 (22.2)	14 (25.9)	7 (13.0)	11

						(20.4)
	19	23 (42.6)	12 (22.2)	11 (20.4)	3 (5.6)	5 (9.3)
	20	48 (88.9)	4 (7.8)	-----	1 (1.9)	1 (1.9)
Humiliating people						
	21	22 (40.7)	14 (25.9)	10 (18.5)	6 (11.1)	2 (3.7)
	22	9 (16.7)	10 (18.5)	14 (25.9)	13 (24.1)	8 (14.8)
	23	6 (11.1)	12 (22.2)	15 (27.8)	11 (20.4)	10 (18.5)
	24	43 (79.6)	7 (13.0)	2 (3.7)	-----	2 (3.7)
	25	16 (29.6)	19 (35.2)	10 (18.5)	3 (5.6)	6 (4.1)
	26	7 (13.0)	10 (18.5)	15 (27.8)	14 (25.9)	8 (14.8)
	27	32 (59.3)	13 (24.1)	6 (11.1)	3 (5.6)	-----
	28	25 (46.3)	13 (24.1)	11 (20.4)	3 (5.6)	2 (3.7)
Describing feelings						
	29	7 (13.0)	5 (9.3)	14 (25.9)	15 (27.8)	13 (24.1)
	30	13 (24.1)	6 (11.1)	19 (35.2)	10 (18.5)	6 (11.1)
	31	22 (40.7)	10 (18.5)	15 (27.8)	1 (1.9)	6 (11.1)
	32	27 (50.0)	8 (14.8)	12 (22.2)	6 (11.1)	1 (1.9)
	33	14 (25.9)	14 (25.9)	17 (31.5)	4 (7.4)	1 (1.9)
	34	13 (24.1)	16 (29.6)	19 (35.2)	4 (7.4)	2 (3.7)
	35	15 (27.8)	8 (14.8)	15 (27.8)	9 (16.7)	7 (13.0)
	36	13 (51.9)	14 (25.9)	18 (33.3)	5 (9.3)	4 (7.4)
	37	7 (13.0)	9 (16.7)	23 (42.6)	10 (18.5)	5 (9.3)
	38	28 (51.9)	19 (35.2)	5 (9.3)	2 (3.3)	-----
	39	29 (48.1)	14 (25.9)	8 (14.8)	5 (9.3)	1 (1.9)
	40	42 (77.8)	11 (20.4)	-----	1 (1.9)	-----

The Use of Insults to Challenge Political Authority: A Critical Discourse Analysis

Emmanuel Amo Ofori¹

Abstract

Many scholars have argued that insults are meant to cause mental pain, embarrassment, and disgrace; they violate the principle of politeness; and they are face-threatening acts (Agyekum, 2004; Leech, 1983; Brown & Levinson, 1987). Therefore, they may be considered in many societies as socially unacceptable. In this study, however, I argue that the use of insults in Ghanaian political discourse is a means by which ordinary citizens challenge the existing political authority (herein refer to current elected politicians or those in political office). To achieve this end, I adopt two of Fairclough's (1989) three-dimensional approach to the study of discourse: discourse-as-text and discourse-as-social-practice. Drawing on these two layers of analysis, I link text to context, and employ the sociopolitical and cultural context to link the entire discourse to the society in general. By studying the sociopolitical and cultural context, the analysis reveals media empowerment of the powerless in society to make their voices heard in political discussions to the extent of insulting and challenging the existing political authority.

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Keywords

Insults, Politics, Ordinary Citizens, Ghana, Critical Discourse Analysis

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Introduction

According to Samarin (1969, p. 324), the study of insults should be looked at as “a special genre on purely linguistic grounds.” That is to say, it has a structure like proverbs, riddles and other linguistic routines such as apology, compliment, thanking, greetings and gratitude. Insult as a genre has a topic, form and context of use. The topic normally involves speaking ill of a person’s physical characteristics and the moral intellectual of the target. This may at times compel the target to respond with an equal measure or more offensive words. With regard to the form, insults may be relatively short, consisting of two or three sentences or more. It could also manifest in the form of just a word, phrase, simile, descriptive adverbs or a non-verbal form of communication such as gestures. Indeed, the core of insults is a characterization of “some part of the target’s body or his/her action; this may be preceded or followed by other utterances relative to the situation” (Samarin, 1969, p. 325). There are some variations in terms of the context of insults. It could be face-to-face where the participants stand in proximity to one another. In political discussion, it could be on the radio, phone-ins on radio and television, press conferences, in print media (newspapers and online) and on political platform (Ofori, 2016). Aside these contexts, Agyekum (2010) contextualizes Akan insults into six (6) groups: animal names, types of disease, ethnicity and tribe, personal behavior and profession, sexual organs, part of the body and religion.

In this paper, I adopt Ofori (in press) modification of Yiannis’ (1998, p. 3) definition of insult, that is, “a behavior or discourse, oral or written, which is perceived, experienced, constructed and at all times intended as slighting, humiliating, or offensive. Insult can also be verbal, consisting of mocking invective, cutting remarks, negative stereotypes, rudeness or straight swearing.” The modified form is defined below:

A behavior or discourse, oral or written, direct or indirect, gestural or non-gestural, which is perceived, experienced, constructed and most of the time intended as slighting, humiliating, or offensive, which has the potential of psychologically affecting not only the addressee or target but his/her associates (Ofori, in press; 2015, p. 21).

It must be mentioned that the modified definition should not be taken as a universal concept because there is no universal measure of insults. The yardstick to measure insults differs from society to society and also from one culture to another (Ofori, in press; 2015, p. 25). The justification for choosing this definition relies on the fact that within the Ghanaian society insults do not only affect the target or addressee, but people who are in one way or the other connected to him or her, such as his/her family or in the context of this work, the political party the target is associated with.

In recent years, politics in Ghanaian political discourse has become a discourse of personal attack, vilification, and insults. There has been an extraordinary public concern on the recent surge of insults in Ghanaian political discourse. Some of the concerns are from the media, civil society, academia, leaders of political parties, chiefs, opinion leaders and others. However, I argue that while insult has its own ramifications on society, in a broader context it is a means by which ordinary citizens challenge the existing political authority, infantilize politicians and animalize political authority in Ghanaian political discourse. The argument is broadened to capture where ordinary citizens derive this power from to challenge the existing political authority.

1. Literature Review

Insult in its general sense is considered unacceptable in many societies. However, there are festivals and games in some communities in Africa where people freely use insults. Months, weeks and days are set aside in which social norms are reversed or suspended, and verbal and non-verbal behaviors that are normally a taboo allowed (Yankah, 1998). Though insults are considered a taboo, during these times people use them freely without any restrictions.

Agovi (1987, 1995) puts acceptable insults into two traditional groups: institutionalized and non-institutionalized. The institutionalized ones can further be grouped into the occasional and non-occasional; the non-institutionalized is made up of verbal and non-verbal forms of communication. The occasional ones are the ones in which people use insults as part of yearly celebration of the festivals or events. For example, the *Apoɔ* festival is a feast of eight days. In the course of the festival, there is all manner of singing, with the liberty to insult superiors as well as inferiors without any punishment (Rattray, 1923). During this festival, even women and children who are not normally given the opportunity to express themselves are permitted to openly point to the ills and the scandals of the society. Agyekum (2010, p. 140) points to the fact that the festival period is the time when “the attention of the rulers is drawn to some of the faults of their administration, so that they start taking corrective measures to rectify the shortcomings of the society after the festival.” Thus, this festival marks the beginning of free speech and democratic governance, which allows the rulers to have full support of their subordinates. It must, however, be mentioned that “social norms are frozen within the period of the festival, after which all social norms and courtesies are restored” (Yankah, 1998, p. 20-21). Though this festival, to some extent, empowers the powerless, it is for a very short period of time in very controlled circumstances. Subjects have only eight days in a year to review the performances of their leaders. Similarly, the *Kundum* festival of the Nzemas (Ethnic group in Ghana) creates a platform for the people to openly criticize the deeds of their rulers and elders in songs and poems (Agovi, 1995). Though this festival also empowers the powerless, it is also for a specific limited period of time.

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In terms of the non-occasional insults, there are verbal and speech games in traditional African societies that allow people to express themselves freely. The Akans have a game called the *aborɔme*. It is an invective game played among peers. The general rule of this game is searching one another for correct answers to some riddles, which is eventually meant to insult the addressee (Agyekum, 2010). If the addressee is able to find the right answers he then poses the riddle to the opponent, and this ensures the continuity of the game. The expressions are basically used to tease one another and do not constitute verbal invectives. This principle exists in games such as *dame* “draughts” (checkers in American English) and *ntetɔ* “playing marbles.” It must be mentioned that during these games the norms governing speech behavior are waived, and opponents can insult and use any abusive language without any fear or favor.

The non-institutionalized insults, as mentioned above, consist of verbal and non-verbal forms of communication (Agovi, 1987; 1995). The non-verbal form of insults is common among women. This is due to the social constraints in traditional African societies, which inhibit them from communicating freely. This, however, has led to some social innovation in that women have created other avenues to express their opinions and pent up feelings. Akan women, for instance, use garments and waist beads as a channel for the silent projection of arguments (Yankah, 1995). Some of these garments are used to insult other women or rivals.

Verbal insults according to Sakyi-Baidoo (n.d.) are invectives used among people of equality and intimacy, that is, among friends or colleagues such as politicians, professors, and doctors. Different forms of abuse are acceptable within these social networks. The main purpose of these insults within groups is to maintain “social cohesion and group identity” (Sakyi-Baidoo, n.d., p. 1). The rules of engagement in the use of insults among members are tacitly known to all of them; if someone contravenes the rules or applies them to a non-group member, the appropriate sanctions are applied. That is, the insult is meant to be used among the group members and cannot be extended beyond the borders of the group.

These traditions of institutionalized and non-institutionalized insults show that there is a limit as to when one is allowed to use insults. Insults have restrictive operational parameters beyond which socio-cultural norms are imposed. That is, power is invested in people in authority such as chiefs, elders, politicians and many others. These people wield a lot of power, and thus for an ordinary citizen to make unsavory comments about/to them is considered disrespectful and unacceptable. The powerless in society do not have the right to insult the powerful or people in authority even when they [powerful] deserve it; it is only in limited situations, as mentioned above, that the powerless have the license to do so.

However, the Ghanaian society has changed drastically to the extent that through the power of the media, ordinary citizens in democratic Ghana insult politicians on radio and on the Internet. This has become possible because political discussions are broadcast via affiliate stations to most parts of Ghana, and through Internet radio to those abroad. Ghanaians at home and abroad are able to contribute to political discourse via phone-ins, SMS, and online commentaries. This allows ordinary citizens to participate in political discussions in Ghana. As part of their contribution, some of them insult and challenge politicians for the bad state of the country. There is no time frame or culturally accepted or appropriate context for one to insult politicians. When callers are given the opportunity to call into the program or use any of the online websites, they could make such comments. As will be seen in the analysis of this paper, these insults serve various functions, such as (1) challenging the existing political authority; (2) infantilizing politicians; and (3) animalizing political authority

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2. Methodology

2.1. Theoretical Framework: Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

Scholars such as Norman Fairclough, Ruth Wodak, Teun van Dijk and Paul Chilton have developed institutional tools for conducting research in CDA. It must be mentioned that CDA is a position that has been taken by these scholars who agree on certain principles and also agree to address similar issues (Blommaert, 2005). The foundation of CDA is pivoted on the scholarly work of Fowler et al. (1979) on language, power, ideology, and control, as well as Michael Halliday’s systemic functional linguistics (Blommaert, 2005). CDA became popular through the works of Norman Fairclough in that late 1980s. His theory is hinged on the research of Bakhtin, Foucault, Halliday, Trew and Saussure.

A term very central in CDA is “discourse.” This term is used differently in different academic fields. Wodak (2006) makes a distinction between the uses of discourse. In the German and Central European context, a distinction is made between “text” and “discourse,” relating it to written and spoken language respectively, while in the English speaking world, “discourse is often used for both spoken and written language” (Wodak, 2006, p. 3). Blommaert (2005, p. 3), following Foucault’s perspective of discourse, sees it as “comprising all forms of meaningful

semiotic human activity seen in connection with social, cultural, and historical patterns and developments of use.” Weiss and Wodak (2003) talk about the interdiscursivity of discourse. This means that texts are linked to each other in various ways. They are not restricted to just one field when addressing a specific topic.

CDA is an interdisciplinary approach to text and talk that “aims to investigate critically social inequality as it is expressed, signaled, constituted and legitimized” (Wodak, 2001, p. 2). It insists that “all representation is mediated, molded by the value systems that are ingrained in the medium used for representation; CDA challenges common sense by pointing out that something could have been represented some other way, with a very different significance” (Fowler, 1996: 4). Thus, CDA looks at some critical terms that are central to the discussion of social inequalities, that is, power, ideology, hegemony, dominance and voice. In this paper, I focus on power because it is related to how ordinary citizens use insults to challenge their elected officials.

According to Fairclough (1995, p. 1-2), power is seen “both in terms of asymmetries between participants in discourse events, and in terms of unequal capacity to control how texts are produced, distributed and consumed...in particular sociocultural contexts.” Wodak draws her definition from Foucault (1972), Bourdieu (1991) and van Dijk (1985), interpreting it as “discursive control [including] who has access to the various types of discourse, who can and cannot talk to whom, in which situations, and about what. The more powerful the people, the larger their verbal possibilities in discourse become (van Dijk, 1996, p. 66). In sum, power within CDA research is an illegitimate use of power leading to power abuse and domination.

There is constant unity between language and other social matters that ensures that language is knitted in social power in a number of ways: language indexes power, expresses social power, and is involved where there is contention over and a challenge to power (Wodak, 2001). This means that “power does not derive from language but language can be used to challenge power, to subvert it, to alter the distributions of power in the short or long term” (Wodak, 2001, p. 11). Ordinary citizens’ use of insults in Ghanaian political discourse is one of the ways in which political authority is challenged.

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For the current purposes of discussion, power can be seen to operate within the media and in the hands of politicians. The power that the media holds in political discourse in Ghana is transferred to the powerless in society (i.e. ordinary citizens) who are empowered to challenge the existing political authority through phone-ins and online commentaries. The CDA approach employed in the analysis of this paper is two of Fairclough’s (1989) three dimensional framework, that is, discourse-as-text and discourse-as-social-practice.

2.1.1 Fairclough’s Discourse-as-Text through a focus on lexicalization and predication

This is the first dimension of Fairclough’s three-dimensional framework, and it is concerned with the structure and combination of propositions (Fairclough, 1995b). The focus of the researcher, under this dimension, is to take cognizance of the fact that in terms of the text, that is, what is present and what could have been present, but is visibly missing; the choice to describe a person, an action or a process over another; the choice to use one way of constructing a sentence over an alternative; and the choice to include a particular fact or argument over another. Textual analysis in CDA focuses mainly on the lexicalization, predication, presuppositions, verbal processes, metaphors and figurative devices, and how these forms are used to describe and represent social actors. The two models that were used in

the collection of the data and identification of the themes for the analysis are lexicalization and predication.

Lexicalization involves the choice or selection and the meanings of words used to refer to social actors. A typical lexical analysis looks at the denotation (the literal or primary meaning of words) and connotation (the various senses that a word invokes in addition to its literal or primary meaning). This analysis is important because “words convey the imprint of society and of value judgments in particular” (Richardson, 2007, p. 47).

Predications, on the other hand, according to Wodak and Meyer (2001, p. 27), are strategies or phrases that “appear in stereotypical, evaluative attribution of positive or negative traits and implicit or explicit predicates.” Resigl and Wodak (2001: 54) also see predicational strategies as “the very basic process and result of linguistically assigning qualities to persons, animals, objects, events, actions and social phenomena.” They suggest the various forms by which predicational strategies are realized. These are (1) specific forms of reference based on explicit denotation as well as on more or less implicit connotation; (2) attribution in the form of adjectives, appositions, prepositional phrases, relative clauses, conjunctive clauses, infinitive clauses and participial clauses or groups; (3) predicates or predicative nouns/adjectives/pronouns; (4) collocation; (5) explicit comparisons-similes, metaphors and other rhetorical figures; and (6) implicit allusions, evocations and presuppositions/implications. Indeed, “predication is used to criticize, undermine and vilify certain social actors, sometimes with potential dangerous consequences” (Richardson, 2007, p. 53).

In this paper, I lump the analysis of lexicalization and predication together to show how ordinary citizens use lexical items and predications (insults) to challenge politicians, infantilize and animalize them. Drawing on these two models of analysis, I link text to context, and employ the sociopolitical and cultural context to link the entire discourse to the society in general. Thus, the inclusion of Fairclough’s third dimension: discourse-as-social-practice, which specifically links the text to the society.

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2.1.2. Fairclough's Discourse-as-Social-Practice

Fairclough claims that a critical analytical work in CDA will have to consider an analysis of the text’s “socio-cultural practice” or “the social and cultural goings-on which the communicative event is part of” (Fairclough, 1995a, p. 57). There are general questions that explain these levels of analysis: (1) what does the text say about the society in which it was produced and the society that it was produced for? (2) What influence or impact do we think that the text may have on social relations? (3) Will it help to continue inequalities and other undesirable social practices, or will it help break them down? (Richardson, 2007, p. 42). It is at this level that the issue of social practice, ideological struggles, and power inequalities is crucial in explaining why a text or stretch of talk is how it is.

2.2. Data Collection

The data for this study were obtained from commentaries online (websites) and recordings of phone-ins on political discussions on radio. They were gathered from 2012 to February 2014. This period was used for the data gathering because Ghanaians had elections on December 7, 2012, which was contested in court by the main opposition party, New Patriotic Party (NPP) in 2013. I employed purposive sampling technique to identify the various instances of insults on online political commentaries and radio that are relevant to this study.

The online websites from which the data were collected are: www.peacefmonline.com; www.myjoyonline.com; and www.ghanaweb.com. A total of 455 commentaries were gathered from the online websites of which 356 are from peacefmonline; 70 from ghanaweb; and 29 from myjoyonline. The unequal number with respect to the various websites is that peacefmonline is one of the most visited website for political news by Ghanaians both home and abroad. Followed by ghanaweb and then myjoyonline. This accounts for the disparity in the numbers.

With regard to the data on radio, I selected three radio stations, all in Accra, the national capital: Peace FM, Adom FM, and Happy FM. These stations were selected because most of their programs, especially political discussions and morning programs, are broadcast in Akan and sometimes in English (for those who do not understand Akan to contribute or understand the subject matter being discussed). In addition, they have affiliates and communication centers spread across the length and breadth of the country. This enables listeners, both home and abroad, to text and call-in to contribute to political discussions from every part of the country. The programs from which the recordings were done are: Peace FM's flagship daily morning show, *Kokrookoo*; Adom FM's evening program, *Burning Issues*; and Happy FM morning program, *Yεpe a Yεbehu* "when we search we shall find (it)." 100 phone-ins were randomly recorded, sampled, transcribed, and analyzed, using two of Fairclough's (1989, 1992a, 1995a,b, 2000, 2003) three-dimensional model: (1) Discourse-as-text and (2) discourse-as-social-practice. The data were first transcribed by the researcher and checked by a native speaker of Akan for accuracy and consistency.

It must be noted that the online commentaries were exclusively written in English and unedited. This was done to avoid the situation of changing the meaning and content of the comments. In cases where a word is spelt wrongly [SIC] is applied.

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The sampled data from both online commentaries and radio were subjected to thematic analysis in order to group the insults. This afforded the researcher the opportunity to analyze the patterns in the data. Based on the thematic analysis, the researcher discovered that the insults used to challenge political authority could be grouped under two themes, that is, infantilization and animalization of politicians.

3. Analysis

This section concentrates on the various lexicalizations and predications used by ordinary citizens to challenge political authority. I divide this section into two different themes: infantilization of politicians and animalization of politicians.

3.1. Infantilization of Politicians

The analysis of the data reveals that ordinary citizens infantilize political authority by reducing them to the level of *girls* and *boys*, as exemplified in excerpts 1 and 2. Within the Ghanaian society, the representation of an adult as a *girl* or a *boy* is an insult. The reason is that these terms depict someone who is immature, cannot make his or her own decisions, is at the mercy of others, and frail. All these qualities are mapped onto the adult. The representation "rank-shifts" (in the words of Agyekum, 2010, p. 130) the adult, that is, it lowers his/her status to a lower rank and degrades him/her. It is the expectation of society that adults act maturely and not behave as kids. Any adult who behaves contrary to this is considered as a child. Therefore,

this infantilization implicitly presents the deputy minister of communication, Victoria Hammer and government communicator, Felix Ofori-Kwakye as unfit to hold leadership position because they are behaving like children. That is to say, society wants people who are matured enough to hold leadership position since governance is not a child’s play, which these politicians are displaying. This, notwithstanding, society admires young ones who conduct themselves in accordance with the standards set by society. A typical example is the Akan proverb, which states, *abɔfra hunu ne nsa hohoro a, ɔne mpaninfoɔ didi to wit* “If a child learns to wash his hands well, he may eat with elders.”

For anonymity purpose, the names and the exact dates of the people who communicated online and phone-ins are not mentioned.

Excerpt 1

[Background: The focus of the discussion was on a Deputy Minister of Communication who was heard on a leaked tape saying that she will not quit politics until she has made one million dollars. After the discussions, the phone lines were opened to solicit the views of the public. Below is a comment from an ordinary citizen.]

Adom FM (Burning issues) November 11, 2013

Woahu girl no nyankopɔn na ɛretete ɔɔmo to saa no. ɔhia one million dollars na sɛ ɔnya saa sika no to ne account mu na sɛ ɔgyae politics a ɛnye hwee. Woahu adwene? Ghana ahokyerɛ senea esi bɔn ha no. Master, bra B/A bra Sunyani behwɛ, 1000 Ghana ntumi nhae dan. Na mmrantee nam desert so kɔ Libya kɔ wu sei a, na nnipa ɛwia sika, politicians. Nyankopɔn mfa nkyɛ ɔɔmo o.

“Have you seen that girl (Deputy Minister of Communication), God is revealing all their bad deeds. She will not quit politics until she makes one million dollars into her account. Have you seen such mentality? People are suffering everywhere in Ghana. Master, you come to B/A and come and see things for yourself, you cannot rent a room with 1000 Ghana cedis. And young men die on the desert en route to Libya, and politicians are stealing from the state. God should forgive them.”

Excerpt 2

[Background: The comment from the ordinary citizen below is a response to a government communicator who insulted the running mate of the New Patriotic Party’s (NPP) presidential candidate, Dr. Mahamudu Bawumia.]

Comment to: Dishonest Bawumia has not been fair to his parents who educated him- Kwakye-Ofosu.

I think this boy should be sent to a psychiatric hospital, he is not normal. Can National Democratic Congress (NDC) have such a technocrat in their party? Even they don’t respect their party founder. Shame unto them! GOD will punish them one after the other, o God save mother Ghana. (Source: Myjoyonline)

Similarly, ordinary citizens chide politicians to behave in accordance with their ages and positions in society. This is seen in “I have always believed that there is wisdom in old age”; “Yaw Boateng Gyan should humbly grow with his age why?”; and “I actually thought age is proportional to wisdom and maturity but it seems my own uncle Yaw Boateng -Gyan is on the contrary” in excerpts 3, 4, and 5 respectively. Ghanaian and most African cultures equate old age to maturity and wisdom, and this is insisted upon at every forum and situations. This is because age is a significant cultural measure, which encompasses the social and cultural conventions, expectations and perception of the society about the ways in which people should act and behave, as they get older. Those who do not act in line with their growth and age are

infantilized for behaving like children while those who act above their age are elevated, as in the Akan expression *abɔfra no yɛ mpaninsem* to wit “the child behaves like an adult.” Thus, the behavior of some politicians in Ghana are questioned by citizens, revealing that they are not acting in accordance with their age and positions they hold in society. This portrays them as not paying attention to the cultural priorities of displaying wisdom in speech and deeds with regard to their age and positions in society, as seen in excerpt 3, 4, and 5.

Excerpt 3

[Background: This comment was as a result of the barrage of insults rained on the NPP and its Greater Accra regional communicator director, Michael Ampong by Allotey Jacobs, NDC central region communications director. Mr. Allotey claimed that Mr Ampong had described him as a fetish priest. Below is a comment from a citizen in response to Allotey Jacob’s insult.]

Comment to: Allotey Jacobs: “NPP People Are Very Stupid and Behave Stupidly...They Are Getting Crazy And Mad”

I have always believed that there is wisdom in old age. This confirms my {believe} [SIC] belief in the scripture concerning what Apostle Paul said that “when I was a child, I acted and spoke like a child and now that I have grown ... Behavior of characters like Allotey Jacobs make you think that for some it is the reverse. Is the Peace Council alive? (Source: Peacefmonline)

Excerpt 4

[Background: The comment below is a response to an NPP MP, Edward Ennin whose comment is borne out of Yaw Boateng Gyan, NDC national organizer and presidential staffer’s assertion that “NPP is neck deep in tribalism.”]

Comment to: Yaw Boateng Gyan Stooped Low...He Should Rather Counsel Mahama On How To Govern Efficiently

Yaw Boateng Gyan should humbly grow with his age why? This man always talks about tribal politics in Ghana. They will never learn to solve the economic problems, but will get time and do naughty politics on OKAY FM Shameless talks. (Source: Peacefmonline)

Excerpt 5

[Background of this excerpt is the same as excerpt 4.]

Comment to: Yaw Boateng Gyan Stooped Low...He Should Rather Counsel Mahama On How To Govern Efficiently

I actually taught age is proportional to wisdom and maturity but it seems my own uncle Yaw Boateng -Gyan is on the contrary. An old man like him should reason and sit to counsel the young ones on such irresponsible statement but he himself is doing this. Who then would correct him. Uncle, please don’t lower yourself to that level. Maintain your dignity. Your position is assured. (Source: Peacefmonline)

Closely related to age is the metonymic use of grey hair to represent wisdom. Ghana like most African societies believes that grey hair is a repository of wisdom. The general assumption within traditional African societies is that, a leader would only be respected if he or she looked older than his followers due to believe that wisdom and skilled leadership are endowed in grey hair. That is why chiefs are called “Nana/Togbe/Nii” in Ghanaian society. This is because the elderly are respected for their wise advice. They also hold fast to traditional social norms, and are therefore trusted not to deviate from these norms.

Correlating the metonymic use of grey hair understanding with excerpt 6, former President Rawlings is challenged by the citizen to act in line with his grey hair when he insulted former President Kufuor as an “autocratic thief.” Literally speaking, Rawlings has grown a lot of grey hair, but according to the citizen, he was not showing the wisdom associated with it. That is to say, he is not exhibiting the characteristics or dignity of people with grey hair. Therefore, the ordinary citizen infantilizes Rawlings for not exhibiting the wisdom society attaches to grey hair and old age.

Excerpt 6

[Background: The citizen’s comment below is in response to an New Patriotic Party (NPP) Member of Parliament (MP), Major (Rtd) Derrick Oduro’s insinuation targeted at former President Rawlings who described former President Kufuor as “autocratic thief.”]

Comment to: Kufuor Will Not Speak From The “Chamber Pot” As JJ Does...

This is the tale of two cities. The city of wisdom and the city of folly. Kufuor rules over the city of wisdom and Rawlings the city of folly. *Gray hair is supposed to be the crown of old age in dignity.* Rawlings, show me your dignity. You have none. (Source: Peacefmonline)

In addition to the infantilization of politicians, citizens question the cultural understanding and upbringing of politicians. This is reflected in “this mogul talks like he was not raised by his parents” and “my ten (10) years old girl is more cultured than Hammond” in excerpts 7 and 8 respectively. It is common practice in Ghanaian culture that children are socialized and trained from a very early age to respect and obey elders, be humble towards elders, not to insult elders and to take their advice. Gyekye (1996, p. 85) aptly states: “Character development is an important aspect of upbringing of children. In this connection, efforts are constantly made to instruct children in the values of the society to help them acquire the virtues that a person should possess in order to live a most satisfactory life.” Juxtaposing this with the behavior of adults, recall that in the previous discussions on age and grey hair, we mentioned that adults are respected as repository of knowledge and wisdom. So, an adult who has gone through these socialization processes but does not pay attention to proper speech behavior, is infantilized of needing proper training. That is to say, such adults were not properly trained as kids and therefore needed to go back for another socialization to learn societal norms governing speech behavior. This is seen in the infantilization of Kennedy Agyapong, MP in excerpt 7 and K. T. Hammond in excerpt 8.

Excerpt 7

[Background: The comment was a response from a citizen in reaction to NPP MP, Kennedy Agyapong who described the chairman of Electoral Commission as “stupid.” This insult was as a result of the 2012 election petition spearheaded by the NPP.]

Comment to: Ken Agyapong: Afari Gyan Is Stupid And Not Indispensable

This mogul talks like he was not raised by his parents. He should open his warmouth and let the militant patriot go and kill Afari Gyan. God is only giving him time to repent. (Source: Peacefmonline)

Excerpt 8

[Background: The ordinary citizen’s comment below was a reaction to NPP MP, K.T. Hammond who launched a blistering verbal attack on the Majority Leader of

Parliament, Benjamin Kumbour in the house, for making anti-corruption statement that did not go well him (Hammond).]

Comment to: EXPLETIVES GALORE!!!! K.T Hammond Slams Majority Leader For Passing “Foolish, Stupid And Useless Comments”
I can’t believe I voted for this thing? *My ten (10) years old girl is more cultured than Hammond.* Am not sure Kumbour was trying any mischief here. Clearly, Hammond seems to be running away from his shadows. (Source: Peacefmonline)

3.2. Animalization of Politicians

One common theme in the analysis of the data is the use of animal imagery to represent and describe political authority. The use of animal names to insult people is a common trait across cultures. The target or the object of such insults is addressed dysphemistically using animal names, most of which have their own metaphorical extensions and denotations (Allan and Burridge, 1991). Some unpleasant characteristics, appearance, behavior or parts of the animals are metaphorically mapped onto the target human. The traits manifested by some of the animals in the society carry heavy semantic loads, which in most general sense are negative.

As exemplified in excerpts 9 and 10, citizens describe the behavior of politicians as *mooasem* (animalistic behavior) and *aboa* (animal) respectively. Agyekum (2010) translates “aboa” as “a beast” and considers it to be a generic term used for all animals. It is often applied to a person, as in *woye aboa* “you are a beast.” The representation and description of the behavior of politicians as “animals” is telling, in that, it implicitly presents them as not human beings; their behaviors are incongruous with society’s acceptable behavior of other human beings. Indeed, they have broken the social contract of how normal human beings should behave and do not have to exist alongside humans. That is to say, their behaviors do not conform to human society and therefore deserve to live in the bush with animals.

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Excerpt 9

[Background: The discussion was focused on the erratic power supply and the increased electricity tariffs in the country. Below is the conversation that ensued between the host of the program, Afia Pokuaa and the caller, Sam.]
Adom FM (Burning issues) October 21 2013

Ye trust wo; yegye wo di. Kyerε sε deε President okaa ye yi. Kyerε sε ministers no ɔɔmo pay ne nnooma no εso so dodoo, me nuabaa. Ade no ye ɔtele, ɔtele, abodεε, abodεε, abodεε, abei. Wɔgye gye wei nyinaa wie na ɔwie wɔsan abεkyε agu yen so, hei ye nye deen? Akyεde wɔn nya, mesee ministers, akyεde a wɔn nya as ministers akyεde nkorɔfoɔ de ma wɔn, εno deε yεfrε no odwan to ɔnka nam ho, ɔno dwem, bebreε kεkε. Na lady, wei bebreε na ɔwie nso woabεye mooasem, woabεye rough akyerε yen. Abei!

“We trust you. We’ve confidence in you. What the President said means that the pay and other things for the Ministers are too much, my sister. It is too big, too big, too big! They receive all these and pass them onto us, what do they want us to do? These Ministers receive a lot of gifts from people; those ones are just the tail of a goat. It is not part of the meat. They enjoy them. It is too much! And Lady, after all these many things, they exhibit these animalistic tendencies on us. Why?”

Excerpt 10

[Background: the comment below is an ordinary citizens’ response to Dr. Tony Aidoo, a Senior Presidential Aide and Head of Policy and Evaluation at the Presidency, for describing the NPP’s 2008 and 2012 presidential candidate as having an “offensive body language.”]

Comment to: Akufo Addo Has An ‘Offensive Body Language’ That Puts People Off
- Tony Aidoo

Aboa Tony... I sincerely do not think you are in the position {of} [sic] [to] make such a comment on Nana Addo. Just leave the man alone and if you do not have anything to say just smoke, ok. (Source: Peacefmonline)

In the same way, there are instances where specific domestic animal names such as “dog,” “sheep,” “goat,” “pig,” “horse,” “donkey,” among others, and the insults associated with them, are used to insult politicians. An example is excerpt 11, where an NPP MP, K. T. Hammond was described as a “dog” when he insulted the Majority Leader of parliament as “foolish, stupid and useless.” Also, in excerpt 12, Rawlings is presented as a “dog” for his “loud silence over corruption under President Mahama (the current President of Ghana).” Akans and most cultures in Ghana as well as Africa have negative perceptions of “dogs”. According to Agyekum (2010), a “dog” is considered as a very good pet but it has some negative characteristics: (1) it is promiscuous, especially the males; (2) it steals; (3) it is quarrelsome; and (4) greedy. Some of these characteristics are ascribed to the politicians in question. More importantly, in excerpt 11, the most suitable characteristic mapped on the NPP MP is “stealing,” since the discussion that resulted into the insult was about the selling of a drill ship and the inability of the state to trace the proceedings from the sale, which the MP was involved.

In excerpt 12, the suitable attribute of dogs extended to former President Rawlings is “greed,” because according to the ordinary citizen, he was now enjoying under President Mahama and that he is too busy with his “bones” (reference is made to the enjoyment of dogs’ attention and steadiness with respect to bones) and does not have the time to criticize the administration over corruption. The “bones” represents the supposed “goodies” given to Rawlings. Recall that Rawlings has criticized all presidents who came after him, including his own vice president, John Evans Mills of blessed memory, who was elected in 2008. His unusual silence of not doing same under the current administration (President Mahama’s government) baffles the ordinary citizen who therefore compares his attitude metaphorically to that of a dog with a bone.

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Excerpt 11

[The background of this excerpt is the same as excerpt 8]

Comment to: EXPLETIVES GALORE!!! K.T Hammond Slams Majority Leader For Passing “Foolish, Stupid And Useless Comments”.

This dog is fighting hard to win back the confidence of his mother. He says his mother does not believe him about the \$3.5m. (Source: Peacefmonline)

Excerpt 12

[Background: The comment below is in response to NPP MP, Derek Oduro who was surprised at the sudden loud silence of former President Rawlings over corrupt practices in the Mahama-led NDC government. Recall that Rawlings has criticized almost every government after him, including his own party.]

Comment to: Rawlings’ Conscience Has Been Bought...Why The Loud Silence Over Corruption Under Mahama?

If you give meat to a *dog* it finishes it fast and starts barking again. But if you give it a bone it does not come back. Mills gave Rawlings meat and he quickly finished it.
(Source: Peacefmonline)

4. Discussion: Media, Power, Voice and Ordinary Citizens

Throughout the analysis, we have observed that ordinary citizens challenged the existing political authority via phone-ins and online commentaries an avenue created by the media. We saw that citizens used insults to infantilize politicians and animalize them. The broader question I discuss in this section is where do ordinary citizens derive this power from to challenge the existing political authority, taking into the consideration the conservative nature of Ghanaian society?

Recall also that in the literature review, the *Apoɔ* and *Kundum* festivals all of which empower the powerless in society to review the performance of their leaders, are done within a very short period of time in a controlled circumstance. Similarly, the various speech games that give people the license to insult are operational within the parameters of the game. Further, members of a particular social network cannot use “group insults” outside the domain of the network.

The moral priorities and direction of culture as well as the restorative and regulatory functions of the tradition of institutionalized insults, particularly the festivals, point to the power imbalances in traditional Ghanaian society. Juxtaposing the power asymmetry in Ghanaian traditional and cultural set up to the current democratic context, the right to vote is a basic fundamental right of every citizen in a democratic state to elect political leaders. For example, article 42 of the constitution of the republic of Ghana states that “Every citizen of Ghana of eighteen years of age or above and of sound mind has the right to vote and is entitled to be registered as a voter for the purposes of public elections and referenda.” After exercising this fundamental right and power to vote, how do ordinary citizens contribute to political discourse or challenge the people they have elected into office? What are the avenues created for the ordinary citizens to make their voices heard in political discussions? How do citizens see themselves as partners and not observers in the governing process?

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The argument I want to put across is that the power in Ghanaian political discourse operates within the media, in that, it is the main medium for the dissemination of political information, ideological enactment, and a persuasive tool for socio-political and cultural activities of people. They also provide an opportunity for citizens to participate in political discourse.

Communication researchers see the media as the place where politics occurs (Ross, 2004) as well as the institution whose function is to mediate politics in democratic society (Blumler and Kavanagh, 1999). These views are in line with political radio program and online commentary, because they are avenues that empower the powerless in society to contribute to political life. Listeners on radio, for instance, feel a strong sense of civic duty, which makes them call into a political program, send text messages or send comments online to contribute to political discussions. Indeed, it offers ordinary citizens a communication outlet that conforms to their desire to participate in politics, yet allows them to take an outsider stance (Owen, 1997).

The power the media holds in political discourse in Ghana is transferred to the powerless in society (i.e. ordinary citizens) leading to their empowerment to challenge the existing political authority and also contribute meaningfully to the day-to-day political discourse via phone-ins,

SMS messages and online commentary. By observing the actions of political authority, ordinary citizens use the power given to them to insult and challenge the existing political authority. As observed by Wodak (2001, p. 11), “power does not derive from language but language can be used to challenge power, to subvert it, to alter the distributions of power in the short or long term”. The use of insults in Ghanaian political discourse, as has been explained, therefore, is one of the ways in which the existing political authority is challenged.

Conclusion

In this paper, I have utilized CDA and one of its critical terms, that is, power. I specifically employed one of the prominent approaches in CDA: two of Fairclough’s three-dimensional framework. Drawing on these two layers of analysis, I took the text and linked it to the cultural and sociopolitical practices to give a broader explanation on the discourse of ordinary citizens and how they used insults to challenge the existing political authority.

The primary objective of CDA is “the object of moral and political evaluation, and analyzing them should have effect on society by empowering the powerless, giving voice to the voiceless, exposing power abuse, and mobilizing people to remedy social wrongs” (Blommaert, 2005, p. 25). Based on this core tenet of CDA, I have argued and analyzed how the media empower and give voice to the powerless and voiceless in society to challenge the existing political authority. To understand the discourse of citizens, I brought together “linguistically-oriented discourse analysis and social and political thought relevant to discourse and language” (Fairclough, 1992, p. 92).

Generally speaking, the findings of this study point to the conclusion that Fairclough’s framework, has given a broader insight into the understanding of how the media empower ordinary citizens to challenge the existing political authority by going to the extent of insulting them.

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Truth and Truth-Telling in the Agricultural Biotechnology Debate in India

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Abstract

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The debate on agricultural biotechnology has largely been characterised in the literature as being polarised between the "triumph narrative" (Stone, 2012) of biotechnology and the "hazy romanticism" (Irwin, 1995) of the so-called neo-Luddites. This seeming polarisation has been made possible in part by the obscuring of the term agricultural biotechnology, which has lent itself to many interpretations and significations. Drawing from academic literature, publicly available government and private reports as well as popular media accounts, I argue that pro and anti-biotechnology groups in India often employ similar language and appeal to similar sentiments and principles, but to different and contradictory ends in the public meaning making process. Further, I examine the manner in which regimes of truth(s) about agricultural biotechnology in India have been discursively constituted in keeping with perceived public interests to privilege particular characterisations of the term and consequently some discourses of agricultural biotechnology over others. Unravelling how some narratives gain prominence over others requires however, that we turn towards the politics of their production: who are the truth-tellers, what do they say, and how do they try to speak the loudest? And what does this mean for transformative public deliberation?

Keywords

agriculture, biotechnology, discourse, India, truth

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Introduction

“Dichotomous distinctions can be convincing only as long as they are enforced by a strong asymmetrical bias that treats the two sides of the divide or border very differently. As soon as this prejudice loses hold, cognitive abilities jump in all directions: sorcerers become Popperian falsificationists; scientists become naive believers; engineers become standard 'bricoleurs'; as to the tinkers, they may seem quite rational.” (Latour, 1986: 1).

Article 2 of the UN Convention on Biological Diversity defines biotechnology as “any technological application that uses biological systems, living organisms, or derivatives thereof, to make or modify products or processes for specific use” (United Nations, 1992). Though seemingly straightforward in definitional terms, in practice the term defies clear interpretation, resulting in it having come to signify a number of concepts and processes other than the genetically engineered organism that is supposedly at the centre of debate. In the Indian context the term bio-technology, and specifically agricultural bio-technology, has come to occupy a very contested position, with advocates (most notably scientists and policy makers) and those who oppose it (largely environmentalists activists located within networks of non-profit organisations, some non-science academics, etc.) voicing very stringent opinions of it and each other. The choice of discourse then appears to be between what Stone (2012) describes as the “triumph narrative” of biotechnology versus the vague romanticism of the so-called neo-Luddites, many of whom advocate for a return to agro-ecological or traditional methods of cultivation. The claims of agricultural biotechnology have not lent themselves to unambiguous interpretation. Overlaps between the ostensibly independent and polarised discourses of pro and anti-biotechnology groups point towards realms of the production of truth that are not limited solely to the field of language, but the field of relations between actors, as further sections will demonstrate.

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Despite the controversy surrounding them, the introduction of the genetically engineered seeds Bt Cotton and the (so far) failed introduction of Bt Brinjal, (claimed to allow for greater yields because of their ability to reduce damage through specific pest attacks) have galvanised public debate in the context of what appears to now be an inevitable march towards its widespread adoption, shaped and contained by intensive efforts within different institutions; a process Marcuse would identify as “a trend toward consummation of technological rationality” (Marcuse, 1964: 19). In this paper, I will attempt to examine the manner in which regimes of (opposing) truth(s) (Foucault, 1980) about agricultural bio-technology in India have been discursively constituted to privilege some discourses of agricultural biotechnology over others, deriving traction more from relations of force rather than language. Characterisations of the biotechnology regime in agriculture have been extreme in most instances, with representations of modern and traditional technologies pitted directly against each other. Opponents of biotechnology associate it with increased ecological, health and economic risks. Those in favour of it pose it as an alternative to backward traditional technologies that offer low yields and employ unscientific methods. Perceptions of it have tended to be polarising, with most participants in debates being unequivocal in their advocacy or denunciation of it. And yet, opposing camps have created discourses of the technology in such a manner that they are contradictory and yet they overlap, a confusing medley of voices that at times appear to echo the same sentiments and goals but different roads to them. These representations are often the prerogative of institutions, even if only initially.

Based on an analysis of media reports, activist literature, blogs, etc., this paper argues that supporters and dissenters of biotechnology while appearing to be mutually exclusive in their

arguments for and against it, demonstrate significant overlap in their discursive articulation of concerns about biotechnology. The “dichotomous distinctions” (Latour, 1986: 1) of the agricultural biotechnology debate are less pronounced than they might seem. While a commonality in discourses would seem to predict or at the very least facilitate constructive, lively and engaged public deliberation, the machinations of state power limit these possibilities. This in turn has implications for the manner in which public deliberation may be constituted. *Italic is used for emphasis of given points.*

1. The Discursive Production of Bio-technology in Agriculture

“Discourse is...the object of desire...discourse is the power which is to be seized”
(Foucault, 1981: 52).

Discourses take place at different levels. In the context of transgenic seeds, they are most evident in their functioning at the policy and public levels, given the wide proliferation of discourse through media (Yamaguchi et al., 2003). Discourses are arguably however constructed differently in different spaces, and to different ends. As Marglin notes, “a particular way of knowing may go along with different power relationships among the people who share knowledge and between insiders and outsiders” (Marglin, 2006). An analysis of discourse cannot therefore assume a constancy or uniformity in discourse across different settings and levels of debate. Instead, different practices in different domains allow for different faces of the same truth to be showcased as needed - whether truth as understood by bio-technology promoters or dissenters.

Before I attempt to analyse the discourse of the agricultural biotechnology (henceforth agbiotech) debate in India, it is important to clarify what I mean by discourse. Foucault treats discourse as “the general domain of all statements, sometimes as an individualisable group of statements, and sometimes as a regulated practice that accounts for a number of statements” (Foucault, 1972: 80). Language is implicated in any analysis; but language is not just a set of words, but language is also a “social action... (and a) situated performance...tied to social relations and identities, power, inequality and social struggle...(and) a matter of 'practices' rather than just 'structures', etc.” (Slembrouck, 2004: 1). While statements in and of themselves are of interest, also pertinent are the power relations that govern these statements, and the power relations that govern *opposing* statements, to cause them to be co-constituted (Foucault, 1980: 112).

Consequently, the function of discourse is to achieve dominance and make relevant its own voice (or truth') while subjecting competing discourses to its logic. Those discourses that are taboo are suppressed by the expanding frame of the dominant discourse, by making it difficult to think outside of them (Hook, 2001: 2). But discourse does not achieve this dominance on the basis of the truth' itself. Instead, it does so through the frameworks of knowledge, institutions and qualifications of the discourse-providers that shape the form and context within which truth is produced (Foucault, 1981). The will to truth of discourse has roots in the material (Foucault, 1981; 1980). At the same time, it is also enhanced in the way in which knowledge is valorised, made use of and linked with society (ibid).

Analysis of discourse requires an examination of how a discourse achieves its ends through specific means and practices in a specific context, by paying attention to the “material structure of ideology” and the “material basis that is at stake in the struggle between social class (and other) forces” (Morton, 2007). In the absence of such an exercise, seemingly static and

concentrated power would appear to operate with absolute autonomy in a unidirectional manner that prevents counter-discourses from surfacing (Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1982).

One of the foremost points of contention in the media-led public debate on agricultural biotechnology hinges on the “triumph narrative” of Bt Cotton, a view attributed largely to scientists, their “academic allies” (Stone, 2012) as well as spokespersons of governments; claims sometimes but not always substantiated by peer-reviewed research. Counter-claims of failure are put forward by those broadly lumped into the categories of non-government organizations (NGOs), journalists, academics, etc., many of whose claims are rooted in peer-reviewed research but also derive from field-based work. It is important to note that the categories of actors listed are not exclusive to either side of the argument, and instead as we shall see, the location of rebel actors in opposing camps has implications for how discourses shift. In addition, as the following sections will show, though debates on agricultural biotechnology tend to be constructed in oppositional terms, analyses of discourses and practices indicate a more mixed picture. The task of this project is to empty the seeds themselves of meaning, and conceptualise instead how these meanings are produced in the context of discursive regimes. Unravelling how some narratives gain prominence over others and under what conditions requires that we turn towards the politics of their production: who says what, to whom and for whom?

For this analysis I draw from the debates on agricultural biotechnology as they appear in a number of sources. Newspaper articles were accessed through LexisNexis Academic. I created a database of news articles on the topic using LexisNexis Academic, limiting the search to articles printed between January 1st 2011 and April 2014 for manageability of data, using the key words “genetically modified” and “biotechnology”. The results were filtered to show only newspaper results and within those, results for India. In the next step, publications with high circulation rates were selectively sampled. This left a sample of 49 news articles from newspapers including *The Times of India* (25), *The Economic Times* (11), *The Indian Express* (11) and *The Financial Express* (2). Alternative media sources such as *Down to Earth* and *Tehelka* were also accessed through their own websites and included in the sample to incorporate non-mainstream media sources given that their views often differ from those expressed in the mainstream. In addition, public speeches, publicly available reports of state-mandated committees set up to investigate specific aspects of the debate (specifically the Technical Expert Committee Report, the Inter-Academy Report, and the various centre and state commissioned Genetic Engineering Approval Committee reports), and academic writing on the topic including but not limited to prominent actors in the discourse. The data was then analysed through labour-intensive textual-analysis, accounting for inter-textuality while cognisant of the social structures that shaped their formulation and the orders of discourse they tend to represent (especially in the case of alternative media sources or media sources such as the *Times of India* which tend to be pro-establishment). This was complemented by a quantitative appraisal of frequent themes and keywords in sources to observe what aspects of the debate are highlighted in different kinds of sources.

Because of the nature of the material available in the public domain, much of what is discussed in this paper is largely limited to discourses at the macro level. In the second half of this paper, I will briefly lay out the manner in which the agricultural biotechnology debate in India is constructed. India is a useful case study to analyse given that in addition to the safety concerns European countries have had about the consumption of foods grown from genetically modified seeds, India’s situation is unique given the alarming number of farmer suicides attributed to the increase in usage of GM cotton seeds in states like Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh, which

catalysed the debate on biotechnology usage. This debate was later carried forward by a more expanded group of actors when Bt Brinjal came up for consideration, given that it constitutes an important part of people's daily diets in many parts of the country, unlike cotton which is not a food crop. The biotechnology debate in India is one of livelihoods and consequently politics, given that much of its population is largely rural and dependent to various degrees on agriculture.

In the sections that follow, I present the results of my analysis, focussing on three main themes: the narratives that are deployed and the slippages between them, the role of different actors in the debate and how they gain legitimacy, and finally the politics of truth/knowledge production,

4.1. (In)Congruent Narratives

The technological rationality that characterises much of the dominant pro-biotechnology discourse in India must first be contextualised within the larger bracket of the scientific rationality that has formed the underlying basis for the governmentality that has shaped state functioning since the early days of Indian independence (Raina, 1990). This rationale was reinforced by the then Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh in a speech to the 101st Indian Science Congress in 2014 who invoked the role of science in nation building, a sentiment that still informs much of state policy. The notion of science as progress has also permeated widely into the public imagination through public discourse and education (Visvanathan and Parmar, 2002) and is linked to a wider discourse of efficiency and growth, that has broadly characterised the rationale of governance of the state since economic liberalisation in the early nineties (Chandrasekhar & Ghosh, 2002).

Douglas points out that institutions that are successful create identities, and function as vehicles of memory and forgetting (Douglas, 1986). Institutions do not only function as repositories of memory and forgetting, but are also its creators and channels. In the instance of institutions engaged in the propagation of agricultural techniques such as research institutions, regional and local agriculture offices, extension agencies, etc., they may (re)create particular memories of actors, society and/or farming practice, and hold it to be the truth that informs their overarching goals and strategy.

In addition to the role of state-backed science institutions such as agricultural research institutes, of particular relevance to the biotechnology debate in India is the role of social movements and public engagements with science. The perceived role of the public in shaping science policy has evolved from the science literacy paradigm in the 1960s – 1980s, to the public understanding of science paradigm in the 1980s – 1990s and finally to the current day science-in-society one (Bauer, 2009). The science-in-society formulation of citizen engagement in science policy has allowed for activists to also don the role of action researchers and vice versa. This allowed for the gap between researchers and the laypeople to be blurred to some extent, while still privileging certain groups of activist-researchers (ibid), most notably those associated in some ways with non-governmental organisations and those groupings that identify as social movements.

Social movements have greater engagements with publics than scientific organisations, and at the same time acquire their own sets of “knowledge-practices” (Casas-Cortes et al., 2008: 19), making the need to engage with activist knowledge crucial to understanding how science is perceived and enacted in the public sphere. More significantly, social movements make similar claims to truth-making, challenging the seeming sanctified domain of hard scientists.

Environment oriented social movements mobilise particular imaginaries of nature and society (Delgado & Rommetveit, 2012). This is important, given that what constitutes an environmental issue itself is a political act. NGOs – and social movements – play no small role in framing environmental issues (Princen et al., 1994). “Discourse coalitions” (Hajer, 1995) play no small part in the negotiations around what constitute environmental facts, a number of which are represented in this paper. These discourses run up against “public bioethics” Kelly (2003: 340), that play no small part in setting boundaries in terms of who speaks with legitimacy.

Claims and allegiance to science and the scientific paradigm become important because they shape claims to the validity of truths represented. Despite the seeming disconnect between the so-called 'modern' and 'ecological' approaches to agriculture then, actors on both sides characterise themselves as being rooted in some formulation of science - whether they be seed industry giants Monsanto or the prominent oppositional NGO Deccan Development Society (Pearson, 2006). However, science is believed to take on a specific image in the wider public imagination, an image of cutting edge innovations and technology. The claims of those who fall outside this specific imaginary of science (such as prominent anti-biotechnology campaigner Vandana Shiva's appeal that agro-ecology *also* be considered to be “cutting-edge science” (Shiva and Lynas, 2013) are not held to be relevant insofar as they are claims to science. Their isolation from the mainstream scientific paradigm in turn relegates them to the realm of the traditional or unscientific. Claims to science do not work alone independently of the relationships of framers with their audience – whether farmers or consumers – but may be constituted by what Gramsci terms “inter-subjective forms of consciousness” (Gramsci, 1971: 235) between farmers, consumers and the framers of discourse who co-produce frames on agricultural biotechnologies to different degrees.

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4.2. Representing the Farmer

Common to both sides has also been a stated interest in the well-being of the farming class, whether this is characterised in terms of “pro-poor development” through the employment of advanced technologies that increase yields (Glover, 2009) or in terms of promoting biodiversity and ecological sustainability leading consequently to farmer welfare (Shiva, 1993). In her analysis of her interviews of prominent elite actors involved in the biotechnology in India Yamaguchi notes the legitimacy they accorded to their own views through their relationships with farmers (Yamaguchi, 2007). The director of the genetically modified seed distributing company Monsanto responded to a question about Monsanto's vision for India in an interview stating “when farmers succeed, we succeed” (Chaudhury, 2010a). Yamaguchi attributes this to the primacy accorded to farming as a rhetorical tool employed widely by political and religious leaders (Yamaguchi, 2007) but also by activists and those in the development sector. Similar claims were also made by actors strongly opposed to the dissemination of these seeds. The claim of co-production of a discourse with its subject (here, the farmer) allows for the validation of normative statements about the seed/technology. The continued presence of over 50 per cent of the Indian population in the agrarian sector gives this ascribed relationship much traction, especially when employed in the rural context.

Farmer choices of seed then become important events on which to hinge narratives, even if narratives diverge. In arguments for greater technology adoption in agriculture, farmers are characterised as rational, utility maximising individuals, who choose to adopt particular farming practices (Marglin, 1996). The framing of the agbiotech debate as being concerned with “farmer choice” (Shiva and Lynas, 2013; Herring, 2013) for example, constitutes farmers

as savvy, profit-maximising autonomous individuals, acting to maximise their gains in the context of the pro-transgenic seed group and de facto exercising agency when they choose to plant transgenic seeds even at the risk of prosecution (Herring, 2009). Attempts on the part of activists to ban Bt seeds and consequently deny them agency is then construed as being paternalistic and self-interested. Opponents of biotechnology characterise farmers as contextually situated actors trying to adhere to diverse, traditionally tried and true methods that not only maximise gain but allow for relationships with farming. The focus of these frames is on that of farming as an inter-related activity, circumscribed by or production in conjunction with the environment as well as (more often than not) 'local' rather than universal farming practices. Many opponents also pay attention to the socio-political environment within which farming practices and choices' are made. At the same time, while the violence of GM technology is held to be its homogenising nature, the discourse of alternatives swings between particularism ("The seed is the embodiment of culture because culture shaped the seed with careful selection" (Gelder, 2013)) and the homogenisation of the (woman) farmer's experiences, motivations and practices ("women picked the best...diversified (seeds)" (ibidem). Frequent characterisations of unchanging traditional farmers and societies following local, indigenous farming practices elide the hybrid nature of villages (Gupta, 2005) as well as farming practices of most farmers not yet fully integrated into capitalistic agriculture (Gupta, 1998), resulting in what Appadurai describes as the spatial incarceration of the native (Appadurai, 1988), held to be bound by a geographically de-limited set of traditional practices.

In both framings of the farmer, the discourses (and the practices attached to their framers) attempt to create specific subjectivations and representations of the farmer that limit or constrain the scope of the discourse. In doing so, the farmer herself becomes a "docile body" (Foucault, 1991) whose preferences are depicted in the public arena as those of the authors of discourse. This docility reflects both the effect as well as the limits of discourse. Though seeming to privilege farmer interests, both framings tend to create static images of her which are then communicated in the public domain of the consumer.

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4.3. Representing the Seed

Obscured here in representations of farmers is an understanding of how farmers themselves conceive the seed. The representation of the seed is inextricably bound up in the representation of farmers by the framers themselves, making the need to understand the processes by which farmers are constituted (and actively incorporated into the discourse making arena, if so) important.

Similarly, characterisations of "the seed" in the public realm obscure the processes through which the seed acquires meaning. For advocates of transgenic seeds, the seed is claimed to represent the potential to increase the productivity of the crop through the acquisition of new and desirable traits, such as reduced susceptibility to pests for example (Qaim, 2003; Herring, 2013). The claims of enhanced productivity of the seed and the higher yields predicted to follow from this has allowed for a broader spectrum of benefits of the adoption of this technology to be suggested. These include environmental sustainability from reduced pesticide use, greater food production and food security, farmer prosperity, etc. (ibid).

For those opposed to it, the use of transgenic seeds has been equated with monoculture cropping patterns, capitalist control over agriculture, increased pesticide use, higher input costs, sickness, falling yields, a focus on the seed in opposition to a focus on the system, and most notably, farmer suicides (Shiva, 1993; Shiva et al., 2000; Qayyum & Sakhari, 2005). In

contrast indigenous seeds and agro-ecological practices are equated with freedom and life, farmer autonomy, ecological biodiversity, lower cost of production and autonomy (Shiva et al., 2000; Parrott & Marsden, 2002; Gelder, 2013).

The term GMO clearly serves as a powerful signifying force, even when, or perhaps because it is constructed in oppositional terms. The fixation on the seed – by both groups – is somewhat curious, given that the term genetically modified organism or 'GMO' as it is deployed in the debate, obscures more than it reveals. Herring suggests that much of the campaign against transgenic seeds is located in the usage of the term 'Genetically Modified Organism' (GMO) which has come to signify a specific 'unnatural' process of genetic mutation of seeds in agriculture – the use of recombinant DNA technology (also known as genetic engineering) – but obscures the usage of rDNA in the pharmaceutical industry, with 22 rDNA constituted drugs in India having already been approved for manufacture (Ghosh, 2008) in addition to non rDNA processes of genetic mutation in plants practiced prior to the introduction of the 'GMO'. The wide acceptance of technologies with broadly similar underlying bases – that of genetic modification – coupled with the denunciation of a specific kind of technology in agriculture is held to be a frame that therefore obfuscates this similarity between accepted and unaccepted practices and technologies – a topic on which little debate has emerged in the public domain even amongst the biotechnology dissenters.

4.4. Drawing Boundaries around Knowledge

Aspects of the discourse (characterised as being largely technical) remain outside the purview of public discussion. For example, an analysis of media reports on agbiotech indicates that little discussion is included of the technology itself in the mainstream media, and what makes it different from previous forms of breeding, and why this may be un/safe. As mentioned previously, Herring argues that this has made it possible for a specific form of genetic mutation (that employed in transgenic seeds) to become demonised, to the exclusion of other forms. This has also allowed the technical aspects of the discussion to remain outside public consideration, within the realm of power struggles for the production of truth. Consequently, science, the farmer the seed have all increasingly been emptied of meaning in the course of the public meaning making process, and have come to signify static and yet constructed concepts. While these concepts themselves may not be static, and may be continuously co-produced behind the scenes, there is little evidence of this in the public sphere. This results in a simplification of the discourse, ostensibly to a form that the non-expert public can absorb. The simplification of discourse also allows for greater manoeuvrability since mobilisation of public opinion is believed by some to be made easier by appeals to emotion (Motion & Doolin, 2007) or fears (Viswanathan & Parmar, 2002) rather than appeals to scientific facts' - a tool that works for both sides. The science and interpretation of this science is left then to scientists and science-writers (from across the spectrum of believers), causing what Foucault calls a “finitude of discourse” (Hook, 2001).

For example, not many members of the general public will read the state-mandated Technical Expert Committee's (TEC) report on agricultural biotechnology in India, and commentary on it in the public domain is largely limited to its broad prescriptions. Much of the technical discussion on transgenic seeds is assumed to be esoteric, and consequently outside the scope of understanding of the general public *because* it is technical. Environmental activist Sunita Narain suggests that scientists do not want to engage in discussions of science with the general populace because of their presumed scientific illiteracy (Business Standard, 2011). It remains up to the scientists and science writers to decipher science then, and interpret it for others

(Raina, 1993). The focus of truth-telling speech becomes the interpretation of science with an unequivocal voice. For the majority then, the object of discourse – transgenic seeds – is received as signified through commonly used words – food security, unsafe, scientific, etc. – rather than as concepts to be examined independently. This in turn limits the possibility that the discourse of biotechnology can be reshaped to push its existing boundaries in different directions - or that the processes through which discourse itself is created be examined.

The rhetorical practices of framers of the biotechnology debate function to constrain not just the judgements, but the judgement making abilities of their audiences. This gives rise to the need to bring into prominence the representation and meaning making processes that underlie public discourse. In the absence of this, between seemingly oppositional groups, it is the louder voice that is heard, a voice amplified by the media. Print media that disseminate particular viewpoints on the debate acquire what Bourdieu terms “symbolic power” (Bourdieu, 1991: 167) when they enjoy wide readership (Dittmer, 2010). In the English speaking media in India for example, much of the opposition to transgenic seeds is found in left-wing journals such as *Down to Earth* and *Tehelka*, with far less readership than mainstream newspapers such as *the Times of India* and *the Indian Express*. On the other hand, mainstream newspapers themselves are also characterised very often by a wide range of opinions, further muddying the waters of public meaning making amongst consumers.

The challenge for both sides is to break the boundaries between the aspects of discourse that were previously considered alien to them: for the traditional scientists to speak of non-science interests and for the 'others' to speak of science. While according to Cook et al. (2014), this may result in a hybridity of discourse, with potential for misunderstanding, in the absence of overlapping discourses, a stalemate is often reached. If frames remain static, impervious to new ideas, they may not succeed in recruiting more participants. Frames may also fail to have an impact if they do not attend to the concerns of those they are intended for. People do not receive frames simply as they are, but make meaning of frames subjectively. I suspect that while a discourse that appeals to feeling and emotion may have great traction in the case of Bt Cotton, a crop that is not directly consumed as food, Bt Brinjal, a food crop appears to be more easily co-opted into discourses that voice fears about bio-safety and human health (consumers and producers) even if other aspects of the discourse resonate less. This is evident in the increased public participation that took place when GM technology came to be associated with a crop that was consumed by eating it rather than wearing it. Even here however, the frames are themselves constraining in terms of what they allow to be imagined. The challenge for framers is to re-invent frames, co-producing them with their intended audience. This co-production of the frame has been in some evidence in the context of the biotechnology debate. For example, the introduction and rapid proliferation of the indigenously developed stealth Bt cotton seed Navbharat gave impetus to a belief that farmers themselves prefer Bt seeds (despite the monetary loss to themselves).

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5. The Construction of Truth by the Truth-Tellers: Actors in the Debate on Biotechnology

Truth-telling in this debate is usually the prerogative of designated truth-tellers: most often than not, the scientists. Two questions are relevant here. One relates to the constitution and role of the discourse-makers or truth-tellers. Who is an appropriate source of knowledge, and what makes her a trustworthy truth-teller? Second, what are the processes through which these interpretations of truth framed?

The legitimacy of the truth-teller derives from constructed rules that govern who can speak truth. Consequently, those who speak within accepted frameworks of knowledge have less legitimacy-building work to do than outliers. Like truth, truth-tellers themselves are subjects, constructed within normative frameworks that constrain. Scientists for example, employ the language within which they are rooted. In India, clear disciplinary divisions between scientists and non-scientists are perpetuated through the higher education system and are introduced as early as in the years preceding an undergraduate degree. This often ensures that the language and the perspective employed by academics and other actors are over-determined by the institutions and/or surroundings in which science-based (and other) intellectuals find themselves. The language of expanding food production for example is one that is very specific to a particular mode of thinking and imagining, and a specific rationale of governmentality. Attendant is the kind of knowledge or the knowledge formation process that is privileged in the production of truth. For example, after the introduction of the Green Revolution, agricultural research in India moved decisively in the direction of plant breeding, chemical inputs, irrigation etc. to the near exclusion of alternative cultivation practices – a trend that is in evidence today as well. Academic disciplines tend to privilege some kinds of knowledge over others and some kinds of theoretical frameworks (very often the dominant ones that inform the rationale of governance). The legitimacy of truth is often restricted to these dominant frameworks. Pre-existing conventions of particular fields of science circumscribe the introduction of new traditions (Prelli, 1989). Disputing facts – and especially those derived from particular kinds of scientific methodologies – is in itself held to be symbolic of non-science – or nonsense. What is argued to make these facts true and untainted is their claimed autonomy from politics and morality (Shuji, 2005; Tallacchini, 2009).

In the context of the GM debate, how the statements of the anti and pro groups (and those who hold various positions in the continuum) govern each other to validate themselves scientifically and also do or do not become “capable of being verified or falsified by scientific procedures” is consequently of interest (Foucault, 1980: 112). Herring for example dismisses what he calls “extreme scepticism” about his own triumph narrative about Bt Cotton because it is born of “postmodernist and constructivist” critiques of “facticity” (Herring, 2013: page) or an alleged distrust of statistics pertaining to transgenic crops. This facticity is not held to be displayed in statistics produced by other actors however, and dissenters are argued to be unattached to empirical constraints (Herring, 2013. Also see Chaturvedi, 2003; Das, 2006; Swaminathan & Rawal, 2011; Kuruganthi, 2009; Rao, 2013). Research conducted by “self-interested NGOs” and activists holding “faith-based” and “unscientific” views (Shiva and Lynas, 2013) is viewed with suspicion, and held to be anecdotal and lacking in rigour (Shiva and Lynas, 2013; Herring, 2013) irrespective of who conducts the research and their credentials. The constitution and legitimacy of the intellectual is clearly linked to her rootedness in a specific context. This legitimacy may not be permanently fixed however, but may be continuously re-inscribed through struggle. Actors (including scientists) may also attach a sense of legitimacy to themselves based on their own identity constructions as well as their identity constructions in relation to others as Polyani points out: “The authority of scientific opinion remains essentially mutual; it is established *between* scientists, not above them” (Polyani, 1962: 59). Similarly, when ministers, policy makers and the public invoke the opinions of scientists to make the final statement about GM technology there is a reinforcement of the legitimacy of the identity of the scientist as a truth teller as well as the minister by extension. Legitimacy becomes a relational concept then, making powerful those in relationships that can exert dominance.

But not all relationships are valid. Shiva and others who travel to countries around the world in connection with protest and advocacy work have been both valorised and questioned for

activities argued not to be in keeping with their focus on grassroots mobilisation. While actors such as Shiva are widely commended in international spaces for their work, the act of soliciting support from outside India, and physically being outside the realm considered appropriate for those advocating the interests of the marginalised is also considered to be a violation of received perceptions of genuineness. The act of soliciting support from outside India is constructed as a threat to national sovereignty and interests. When Planning Commission Chairperson M.S. Ahluwalia and Union Minister for Agriculture Sharad Pawar attributed anti-GM protests to being closely associated with and funded by European organisations (*India Today*, 2011) implicit in their denunciation of anti-GM protests was a characterisation of discourses evolved outside the physical boundaries of India as illegitimate and detrimental to national interests. The characterisation of opposition to transgenic seeds as being superstitious, ideological, anti-people, anti-choice or neo-Luddite (*Shiva and Lynas*, 2013; *Indian Express*, 2013) and consequently anti-Indian for example, is a powerful argument that fits within a broad nationalistic public orientation towards progress and development. Whether the act of soliciting external support (if this is in fact a reality) is really a point of contention is debatable. Even if it isn't, denunciation of foreign influence works discursively to achieve its aim of destabilising alternative goals. Legitimacy springs in this instance from identification with the national cause – but again, the cause as defined as that falling within the dominant discourse.

The question of legitimacy born of identity becomes tricky however when scientists constitute the ranks of both sides. High-profile dissenting scientists from both universities and public research institutions in and outside India have gone on record (including in a public statement presented to the Prime Minister of India) to voice their opposition to transgenic seeds whether on the basis of the seed itself or its presumed larger social and political effects. The counter of bio-technology supporting scientists has been to label them 'maverick' and 'irresponsible' (Sahai, nd) who attempt to unsettle the “scientific consensus” (Herring, 2009). Deepak Pental, Professor of Genetics conducting research on transgenic crops also characterised scientists opposing transgenic seeds as being unqualified to speak of non-science issues, noting, “(The) TEC report is ideological not scientific. They were to comment on bio-safety. They are scientists assuming the role of socio-political guardians though they have no expertise on the latter” (*Indian Express*, 2013). Discrediting a discourse entails discrediting its author.

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Significant in the debate is the cautious dissent put forward by M.S. Swaminathan, often described as the Father of the Green Revolution in India. Many of the ill-effects of the Green Revolution have been widely noted in the academic literature. Despite this, there is a general public belief in the narrative of the success of it. Swaminathan is a publicly acclaimed figure, and barring those who contest the fundamental premises underlying the Green Revolution, commands respect in many spaces. Swaminathan opposed the introduction of Bt Brinjal when the debate took place in 2010. At the same time, Swaminathan is firmly rooted in the scientific paradigm that is disparaged by those who hold the Green Revolution to be another example of a reductionist approach to agriculture. He therefore enjoys the status of being an 'index of truthfulness' (Foucault, 2001), his voice against Bt. Brinjal then lending credence to the stance. Swaminathan is not the 'mad' man of the clinic, precisely because though his voice appears to echo that of dissidents, his position does not. Viswanathan and Parmar depict this as a means to co-opt new concepts into old ones (specifically, the Green Revolution), allowing for a 'continuity of narratives' (Viswanathan & Parmar, 2002: 2716). These sorts of ruptures in otherwise fixed discourses create spaces for new discourses that in this instance, may not be as polarising. None of these discourses - or intellectuals - works in isolation however. The truths they produce - of whatever kind - are ultimately circumscribed by and produced with the power relations in which they are embedded.

6. The Politics of Truth/Knowledge Production: Power and the Apparatuses of the State, Industry and Activists

Agricultural bio-technology is often characterised by its opponents as being wielded by hegemonic forces – that of capital embedded in industry and the state – against its powerless dissidents: a characterisation described by Scoones as the “David and Goliath narrative” (Scoones, 2008: 162). Big capital is argued to be in the service of imperial forces, driving the promotion of the technology, and flattening all opposition to it. Hapless farmers committing suicide are inextricably linked to Monsanto through a political narrative of the killer seed (Viswanathan & Parmar, 2002). On the other hand, anti-biotechnology protestors have been criticised for inhabiting spaces closed to those without substantial means (most notably those such as Shiva and founder-member of the Karnataka Rajya Ryota Sangha (KRRS), Prof. Nanjudaswamy, who participated in protests outside India in connection with anti-biotechnology protests) and consequently wielding considerable power themselves. Herring draws our attention to well-funded 'technocratic NGOs' that incentivise the creation of and allow for the existence of oppositional networks to counter the claims of the pro-transgenic networks (Herring, 2009: 10). Though Shiva has been castigated for giving “lucrative speeches” to “sympathetic left-wing audiences in western countries” (Shiva and Lynas, 2013), relative but stark inequality in funding between actors like Shiva and organisations like Monsanto has implications for the kinds of spaces that actors can enter into, and the actors co-opted into these spaces through the attachments their (less) privileged positions allow them.

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Different actors amongst those opposed to bio-technology have attempted to create counter-discourses to challenge what is perceived to be the hegemony of the dominant one. While this has been at the level of statements (most notably those of organisations such as Greenpeace and Vandana Shiva’s Navdanya), it has also been operationalised in the practices of more scattered groups such as the KRRS and the Bharti Kisan Union (BKU) (both farmers groups) which have countered the spread of transgenic crops through the public burning of fields on which trials are conducted. Protests are often very public and spectacular, aimed at directly threatening both the state and seed companies. These protests while being dramatic, have been limited in scope, and have not found support amongst those directly involved in the creation of regulatory policy.

In the case of the pro-biotechnology groups however, activism has extended into spaces where they enjoy considerable influence in decision-making through the overlap of actors who hold formal and informal positions in both spaces - as members of industry and members of high-level committees and regulatory groups (alleged to receive benefits for providing support to industry) (Scoones, 2003). For many, the appearance of a state push for the introduction of transgenic seeds is indication of the “corporate agenda” of the government (Nayar, 2011). The seeming congruence between the rationale of governance as well as the interests of industry – alongside the opportunities for rent-making - has been widely alleged to have led to the imposition of a hegemonic or directly coercive regime of agricultural bio-technology (Scoones, 2003). And yet this congruence cannot be assumed to function without impediment. A glance at the various ways in which different state institutions have functioned in a less than coherent manner – vis-à-vis each other or even within the institutions themselves – points towards a heterogeneity rather than consistency in practices.

While speaking of the state, Foucault cautions his audience against reifying concepts and consequently essentialising them (Foucault, 2008). This anti-essentialist conception of the state

can be extended to other institutions as well. Rather than viewing the apparatus of seed industry giants Monsanto and Mahyco in India as monolithic and exerting overwhelming power over dissenting voices then, it is useful to focus on the relations of force that shape the field of knowledge (Morton, 2007).

6.1. Identifying Relations of Force: The Apparatuses of the Central and State Governments

Relations of force are evident in the manner in which the biotechnology debate and practice is shaped. These relations extend from international sources to domestic ones. A part of the impetus for biotechnology in India itself derives from the Indo-US Knowledge Initiative on Agriculture, that has found enthusiastic advocates in high-level state officials in India as well as American politicians such as Hillary Clinton and George Bush when it was announced in 2005 (*Analytical Monthly Review*, 2010). Given that India's seed industry commands a revenue of \$1 billion a year and its seed market is the 8th largest in the world, the KIA has been taken up enthusiastically in policy networks despite the conflict of interest that characterises it: agro-industry giants Monsanto and Archer Daniel Midlands (amongst others) have representatives on the KIA Board, with implications for the shape decision making processes will take (ibid) The role of industry is not limited to the KIA however. Instead, the seed industry is represented in other spheres as well, including those of the state and research and design networks. Part of this influence is evidenced in the changing nature of public research and evaluation in the country, which is increasingly being conducted in conjunction with or solely by private industry. Bt Brinjal itself was developed by a consortium of seed company Mahyco and the University of Agricultural Sciences, Dharwad and Tamil Nadu Agricultural University, Coimbatore, resulting in the stakes of all three institutions being co-constituted. The alleged incapacity of the state to evaluate claims independently is also a point of debate. T.V.Jagadisan, former Managing Director of Monsanto South Asia admitted that when Monsanto introduced a variety of herbicides to the Central Insecticides Board for approval, lacking the capacity, the Board turned towards Monsanto itself for testing (Chaudhury, 2010b). This reliance on the private sector to approve and consequently regulate its own activities is evident in the present context as well, as a number of reports on agricultural bio-technology have indicated.

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For example, after the introduction of Bt Brinjal was approved in 2009, public caused the Ministry of Environment and Forests to impose a moratorium on Bt Brinjal and commission a report on its suitability to be written by members of 6 prominent state-run academies in India. The report unequivocally recommended the re-instatement of Bt Brinjal. However, the advocacy group Coalition for GM Free India found that parts of the report were plagiarised from promotional material generated by industry, an occurrence attributed to the presence of pro-biotechnology academics in the committee with linkages to industry. This caused the minister of the MOEF Jairam Ramesh to reject the report. Though Ramesh has limited popularity with the broadly defined left groups because of his support for nuclear power plants, seen as being imposed through coercive state will (Kaur, 2011), in the context of agricultural bio-technology his stance is more ambiguous. Similar contradictory practices are evident in the functioning of the Genetic Engineering Approval Committee (GEAC), a body set up to approve the introduction of transgenic crops. The GEAC comprises some government representatives and a number of scientists from prominent agricultural research institutes. The seemingly appropriate composition of the GEAC is detracted from by the composition of its funding of its reports – all the annual reports drawn up by the GEAC since its inception in 2002 were funded by Mahyco and/or Monsanto, whose seeds were the object of investigation. That there are dissonances in the versions of truth put forward by the GEAC and other organisations

appears evident in the dissonance between the findings of the GEAC Monitoring Committees and the reports of the state governments with respect to the performance of Bt Cotton in different states. While for the most part the GEAC reports were positive about the prospects of Bt Cotton, the reports of state governments were far more critical. These contradictions themselves raise questions about the politics of knowledge production, and the positions of various actors in decision making. The disparities in the views of two state-mandated institutions points towards a wider prevalence of slippages in a coherent state policy. Centre-state relationships, intra and inter Ministry relationships as well as relationships between differently located research institutions betray the cleavages in state perspectives and policy-making processes.

Though the Indian state is widely characterised as being oriented towards a governmentality focussed on production and efficiency, and by extension being pro-transgenic seeds, the MOEF functions in a manner contradictory to this stand as evident in the imposing of a moratorium. Other state-run institutions when called upon for inputs have also presented mixed feedback. For example, when asked to consider the possibility of the transfer of anti-biotic resistance from Bt Brinjal to humans, The Department of Health Research suggested that the transfer of antibiotic resistant genes from plants to bacteria had so far not been successful, and therefore did not believe the genes could be transferred to humans. The Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) voiced a preference for molecular breeding over the adoption of transgenic seeds with antibiotic resistance genes. The complexity of voices within closely related institutions points towards a plurality of voices in the sphere of the state.

On the other hand, the Ministry of Agriculture is seen to have a very strong preference for the introduction of transgenic crops leading to conflict in the stand of the Central Government as a unity, leading to conflict between both ministries (*Indian Express*, 2013). The tussle between ministries is also replicated in intra-Ministry and centre-state relations.

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State governments to date enjoy a prerogative in determining their own agricultural policies because agriculture is constitutionally defined to be a state subject. Some states have consequently refused to entertain transgenic seeds within their territorial boundaries, events argued by former Minister of Environment Jairam Ramesh as having been prime considerations in the imposing of a moratorium on Bt Brinjal. While the moratorium was placed after a series of public consultations that spoke to economic, social and health considerations, Ramesh offered a pragmatic justification for the decision as well when he went on to say that “there are political questions involved” (*Outlook*, 2010), such as the unwillingness of state governments to allow agricultural bio-technology within their state boundaries and the implications of this for coalition politics in the national government. The introduction of federal politics/state-centre relationships widens the discursive field to include aspects of the practice of the technology not included in the discussions prior to this. The greater the number of actors involved in this instance, the larger the variation in voices, since state governments are bound by the specific considerations and interests of their own constituencies.

6.2. The Biotechnology Regulation Authority of India (BRAI) Bill

This is not to argue that certain apparatuses of the state do not attempt to exert dominance. The introduction of the Biotechnology Regulation Authority of India (BRAI) Bill in the Parliament is one such example of state dominance – or the dominance of the highest powers in the centre, the Prime Minister’s Office (PMO). The BRAI Bill was introduced in the Parliament in 2013 to

regulate the introduction and practice of biotechnology in India. Some aspects of its introduction and text point towards the aspirations of its introducers. The Bill was introduced ostensibly on the behest of the PMO by the Ministry of Science and Technology (side-stepping other ministries) in the Lower House of the Parliament in early 2013 in what has been described as a hasty manner by some members of the Opposition, amidst a period of general chaos in the Parliament and with insufficient public input. The Bill performed specific functions as excerpts from its text indicate. One, it allowed for a single window for the clearance of new technologies, and therefore allowed for greater unevenness in the exercise of power, as opposed to previous regulatory mechanisms wherein a number of actors from different domains would be responsible for the combined evaluation of new technologies. At the same time, the right to make decisions regarding biotechnology was vested in the BRAI, thereby presumably stripping the ministries of health and agriculture - seen sometimes to have contradictory views to that of the Department of Science and Technology - of rights constitutionally accorded to them.

Second, though the Bill made provisions for the setting up of a State Biotechnology Regulatory Advisory Committee, its function and scope remained ambiguous, and appeared to leave state governments little say in decisions. If this were the case, the Bill would have functioned to change the field of discourse by limiting the voices of previously legitimate actors. It was not just state governments, but the public as well that was edged out from decision making. Article 28 (2) of the Bill stated that, "If the Authority is satisfied that the public interest outweighs the disclosure of confidential commercial information or such disclosure shall not cause harm to any person, it may refuse to retain that information as confidential commercial information" with implications for transparency in the functioning of the Bill. This opacity of knowledge in the case of BRAI is characteristic of some of the functioning of the practice of transparency in the debate. The international environmental organisation Greenpeace was engaged in a battle to get a copy of the bio-safety dossier submitted by Mahyco to the Department of Biotechnology that lasted over 30 months and finally ended in it approaching the Supreme Court, despite the Department being bound to provide it under the Right to Information Act. A further clause of the Bill in Article 62 stated that any person found guilty of providing information that was deemed to be 'false and misleading' can be fined and imprisoned. In the absence of clear guidelines as to how information may be deemed so, this Article could have been used to prosecute actors who voiced any kind of dissent. These developments point towards an attempt to unify discourse into an overarching dominant one. If the Bill had been passed, it could have functioned as a technique or method of coercion, attempting to narrow the debate and bind discourses into a coherent whole, while excluding the possibilities of aberrant alternatives.

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The Authority is required to "inform"the public (Section 18) about the mandate, programmes and policies of the authority and can also invite their "objections and suggestions" (Section 27). However, the Bill also classed some information as being 'confidential commercial information' (Section 28), severely limiting the decision-making processes and abilities of deliberative publics. Kinchy and Kleinman suggest that very often a shift of the emphasis from social regulation to risk and scientised regulation in science policy is one assisted by industry and its interests (Kinchy & Kleinman, 2003). On the other hand, Marres (2007) draws from Lippman (2002) and Dewey (1991) to point out that public involvement is needed precisely in the case of such intractable debates when institutions cannot resolve issues. The new BRAI Bill firmly attempted to reinforce dominant understandings of truth-telling and truth-tellers, further precluding the possibility as demonstrated above, that resolution of the debate would take place in a manner that excludes relations of force. Though the Bill has currently lapsed, it remains to be seen how its future form will address these concerns.

Conclusion

In this paper we have seen how the biotechnology debate in India has been carried out by different actors, state, non-state and the public, undergirded by different logics and strengthened by different identities. Both groups, spanning from agricultural research institutes to Vandana Shiva's organisation Navdanya have appealed overwhelmingly to science in their validation or critique of it: whether by positing Bt technology as or agro-ecological technologies as constituting scientific methods of production. Despite this seeming congruity in narratives, it is state actors that have enjoyed discursive success through their deployment of uneven relations of force, especially through legislation. Arguably, discursive success is not an end-state, but a temporally limited phenomenon. As new actors and new developments emerge, the relations of force and language will be reformulated to reflect these changes.

Even so, when the BRAI Bill came up for consideration, it became clear that despite the plurality of voices exhibited in different spheres, the *practice* of the agricultural biotechnology debate is beginning to tend towards totalitarianism as defined by Marcuse:

“not only a “terroristic political coordination of society”, but also a “non-terroristic economic-technical coordination which operates through the manipulation of needs by vested interests”...which may be compatible with a ‘pluralism’ of parties, newspapers, ‘countervailing powers,’ etc.” (Marcuse, 1964: 5).

While the debate is characterised by a multiplicity of voices and consequently a multiplicity of truths', the expanding practices of domination by the state will attempt to function to not just exclude, but to silence non-compliant truths - even *within* the space of the state. Debates about what agricultural bio-technology is and how it affects and is affected by social and economic relationships - however limited in scope they currently are even if characterised by the pluralism Marcuse refers to - will become less and less relevant as the perceived need for debate itself by policy makers diminishes. Deliberation may more and more take the form of overt resistance, unless the discourse shifts to produce new narratives.

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Book Review

Uju Anya (2017). *Racialized Identities in Second Language Learning. Speaking Blackness in Brazil*, Routledge, 254 pages, ISBN 978-1-1389-2778-0 and 978-1-3156-8228-0

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Racialized Identities in Second Language Learning. Speaking Blackness in Brazil is the first volume of Routledge Advances in Second Language Studies serie, edited by John Hellermann and Søren Wind Eskildsen. The author, Uju Anya, looks at language to shed light on multiple identities arrangements changes while learning another language. Second language learning interfaces with the positioning of multiples identities in a new context. The multiple identities in question are related to an intersectional approach, articulating social class, gender, sexuality, race, and ethnicity. All these dimensions are taken into account, even if a focus is done on blackness as an entry point. The respective American and Brazilian contexts are presented to understand what may be at stake when navigating from one social space to the other.

From the very beginning of the book, Uju Anya presents herself as a critical language researcher, who “promotes[s] antiracist and feminist sociopolitical agenda”. Three main goals are underlined for *Racialized Identities in Second Language Learning*, which are related to a twofold agenda: language learning research, and sociopolitical commitment. She stands her rejection of descriptive neutrality against a strong attention paid to methodological rigor. Thus, she reminds her positioning at key moments in the book, and detailed methodological concerns are presented. Regarding the conceptual framework, she notably presents languaging and translanguaging. The book is not about blackness in Brazil (even if it is informative about it too), but about African American blackness arrangements while studying Portuguese in Brazil.

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The analysis is undertaken through four case studies. Four multilingual Africal American aged 19-22 (three female, one male), who already took intensive language course (they reached or exceed the B level), participate to a university Portuguese language study abroad program in Brasil (Salvador de Bahia). They stay overall six months; the first three months are dedicated to the program. The language course itself lead to five hours a day during ten weeks.

The data and information collection occurred before, during, and after the program. Indeed, pre-study interviews and post-study reflexion were collected from participants. During the stay, Uju Anya, as observer and program companion, was able to assist almost all the classes of the program (except one, for which the access was not granted by the teacher) and workshops (music, dance, capoeira). The material reports this intensive field, as it includes video recorded interactions, interviews, students' journals and writings, and fieldnotes. Excerpts are inserted throughout the analysis of the book; when the language collection was Portuguese, a side-by-side translation in English is systematically offered. The analysis is conducted using thematic, descriptive and critical discourse analysis. Among the eight chapters, four are dedicated to the four cases (one by participant). While they end on a shared final section “Identity, investments and outcomes”, which is closely related to the core objectives of the research project, the majority of these chapters are dedicated to each single multiple identities negotiation and construction.

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The focus is on personal transformation experienced by participants, i.e. how they develop a “new consciousness of how to do and how to be black in this new context” while they “learn to live and speak Portuguese through living and speaking their multiple identities” (p. 3). Uju Anya’s objective is first to show how learning new language goes hand in hand with a renewed definition of identities and positioning in sociopolitical spaces. Second, from the point of view of language learning, she aims for underlying the role of the investment in communities (here the classroom, the host family, and outside places) as a key variable regarding a successful learning. Third, she contributes to the understanding of underrepresentation of African American in language learning programs, and what can be achieved (and thus is missed) during such programs.

The conclusions are particularly rich from this perspective. Indeed, the research underlines the enhancement features of participation to such a program, which invalidate the generalization and the deficit theory, and the related renunciations to a solution. Beyond the language learning objective, the overall process is related to empower multiple identities positioning, which enrich the navigation in social spaces. The specificity of confronting American and Brazilian sociopolitical context while learning Portuguese is that notably blackness belonging is defined in different ways: while the “one drop rule” prevails in the US, in Brazil it does not hold. Incidentally, while two of the participants choose to keep a black identity regarding race / skin colour in Brazil, the other two participants choose intermediary skin colour terms (*moreno*, *pardo*).¹

Also, with this book Uju Anya also supports a multilingual approach versus a monolingual approach regarding the requirements of language learning program in order to leave room for the students who are less comfortable to deal with all the implicated dimensions (own identities and positioning) while learning a new language. She also underlines that leaving out or unsaying identity issues highlight them through their absence.

Overall, I found the volume interesting and it fostered my curiosity to learn more about these issues. Notably, I wonder how it works, for example, for Brazilian students studying English in the United States. Even, I wonder how it works whatever the intersectional combination when navigating from one language to another. Indeed, beyond the opportunity inequalities (which cannot be denied), this book reminds me to the “travel broadens the mind” saying, which could be also reformulated in “travel renegotiates the mind”. Regarding other features of *Racialized Identities in Second Language Learning. Speaking Blackness in Brazil*, I found it also relevant for various audiences. For example, its clarity makes it appropriate to be used as teaching material. I would underline the way the critical research is conducted and presented too. Finally, Uju Anya offered another way to look at language learning to shed light on sociopolitical issues.

¹ Let us notice that these terms are either considered as intermediary or as belonging to the black (*negro*) category. For the participants, it seems clear that they use *moreno* and *pardo* as intermediary terms.

RC25 Awards

Since their creation, RC25 awards are linked to *Language, Discourse & Society*, as all published articles are eligible to be considered by the Awards Committee. Here is a record of the articles granted and the Awards Committee composition.

2012, Buenos Aires, Second Forum of Sociology of ISA

Award Committee

Devorah Kalekin-Fishman, University of Haifa

Viviane Resende, University of Brasilia

Sergei Riazantsev, Institute of Social and Political Research, Moscow

Chair: Stéphanie Cassilde, CEPS/INSTEAD, Esch-sur-Alzette, Luxembourg

Academic Excellence Award

Anders Persson (2012), "Front- and Backstage in Social Media", *LD&S*, 1(2), 11-31.

Graduate Student Award

Not granted.

2014, Yokohama, XVIII ISA World Congress

Award Committee

Nadezhda Georgieva, Trakia University, Stara Zagora, Bulgaria

Corrine Kirchner, Columbia University, United States

Anders Persson, Lund University, Sweden

Chair: Stéphanie Cassilde, Centre d'Études en Habitat Durable, Belgium

Academic Excellence Award

Raymond Oenbring and William Fielding (2014), "Young Adults' Attitudes to Standard and Nonstandard English in an English-Creole Speaking Country: The Case of The Bahamas", *LD&S*, 3(1), 28-51.

Graduate Student Award

Nassima Neggaz (2013), "Syria's Arab Spring: Language Enrichment", *LD&S*, 2(2), 11-31.

2016, Vienna, Third Forum of Sociology of ISA

Award Committee

Erzsebet Barat, Institute of English and American Studies, University of Szeged, CEU, Budapest

Irina Chudnovskaia, Department of Sociology of Communicative Systems, Lomonosov Moscow State University, Russia

Roland Terborg, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Mexico

Chair: Stéphanie Cassilde, Centre d'Études en Habitat Durable, Belgium

Academic Excellence Award

Tiffany A. Dykstra (2016), “Assemblages of Syrian suffering: Rhetorical formations of refugees in Western media”, *LD&S*, 4(1), 31-48.

Graduate Student Award

Tomoaki Miyazaki (2016), “The Rhetorical Use of Anecdote in Online Political Discussion”, *LD&S*, 4(1), 49-61.

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