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Sociolinguistics in a languagised world: Introduction

Abstract: The idea that there exist separate, enumerable languages has in the last decades been widely criticised, and it has led scholars to propose various new terms and concepts such as 'polylingualism', 'metrolingualism', and 'translanguaging', among others. As these terms are attracting considerable acclaim within the academy, this paper argues it is time to reflect on their occurrence, provenance and pertinence for future research and theorisation. We devote particular attention to the risk of confusion if newly proposed terms interchangeably serve descriptive, ontological, pedagogical and political purposes; to the continuing relevance of language separation outside as well as inside the academy; and to the purported transformative and critical potential of fluid language practices in education and beyond. We suggest a close consideration of each of these concerns is central to a sociolinguistics of rather than for particular linguistic practices.

Keywords: sociolinguistics, language separation, pedagogy, language policy

As common as it is to say "she speaks three languages", to find governments investing in languages as an economic strategy or minority groups struggling to have their language protected, so regularly in the past three decades has the idea that there exist separate, enumerable languages received a serious critical pounding. This criticism has been raised from a range of perspectives. Integrational linguists, for instance, have called the concept of "a language" a "myth" and have named linguists "language makers" (Harris 1981). Philosophers have described the idea of a language as "a western ambition" (de Certeau 1984: 133, in Canagarajah 2013: 10), while educationalists call it "a Platonist relic" (Lemke

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2002: 85, in Creese and Blackledge 2011: 1198). Linguistic anthropologists have closely traced how what we know today as a standard language is an idea that has depended on assiduously separating language from nature and society before associating it with civilisation, progress, and later with national, supposedly organic communities (Bauman and Briggs 2003; also see Agha 2007; Gumperz 1982; Makoni and Pennycook 2007; Silverstein 1985; Schieffelin et al. 1998)

More in particular, the notion of language as a bounded code has been found to be descriptively and theoretically inadequate, and to have undesirable ideological implications. These inadequacies and implications have been brought into relief in spaces of linguistic contact like contemporary urban metropolises, digital communication, and various sites of language learning and teaching (Blommaert and Rampton 2011). And they have led scholars to introduce a range of new names and concepts such as "polylingualism" (Jørgensen 2003, 2008), "metrolingualism" (Otsuji and Pennycook 2010), "codemeshing" (Canagarajah 2011) and "translanguaging" (Blackledge and Creese 2010; García and Li Wei 2014), among others. While tied to specific settings and projects, the development of these new concepts testifies to the need for an analytical apparatus and a sociolinguistic theory that is sufficiently sensitive to the empirical complexity of current and earlier communicative conditions. They also reflect a growing conviction that the time is ripe for transcending a widespread monolingual mindset, hence their implication in various pedagogical and political projects that aim to introduce heterogeneous linguistic practices in institutions where monolingual expectations hold sway.

These new terms and the perspectives associated with them have in recent years attracted considerable acclaim within the academy and are beginning to enjoy some uptake outside of it. It is time therefore to step back and reflect on their occurrence, provenance and pertinence for future research and theorisation. One reason for doing so is terminological and conceptual: on some occasions these terms are mainly used descriptively, on others they are theorised as ontological nouns, and some of the terms seem to label both of these while also lending their name to pedagogical and political projects. This is likely to create confusion rather than precision. Another reason pertains to the perspective underlying the studies from which these terms emerge. "If language is an invention", García (2007: xiii) argues for example, "then we must observe closely the way in which people use language and base our pedagogical practices on that use, and not on what the school system says are valuable practices". However reasonable this may sound, such claims in effect disguise ideological debate on which linguistic practices are valuable to whom as a mere question of schools' distortion of pupils' "true", natural language use; they ignore that some people observably use language in a way that schools are said to value, and that all language use is social and thus unavoidably manipulated well before people arrive at school. A third reason for

reflection is that "Language-with-capital-L" continues to be an important discursive figure and a potent symbol in national language (education) policies, economic discourses, and in mass media. We continue to live in a, what may be called, "languagised world". This implies that even if invented, people will often have all sorts of valid reasons to invest in separate languages since they will be held accountable for this investment. It would be hazardous in this light to project some linguistic practices – say, "polylanguaging" – as somehow more valuable in whatever type of circumstance for anyone. It would be equally problematic, we believe, to suggest that those practices wrongly valued by schools for others are valuable for ourselves. And yet sociolinguistic practice itself – the writing of this text, or speaking at symposia – is not usually singled out as eligible for a translanguaging makeover, in contrast to urban classrooms. Sociolinguists' deconstruction of languages as bounded codes, then, does not seem to preclude their continuing professional commitment to this idea, as we are reminded too when investing in this text to make it look as idiomatically English as possible.

Such observations can of course serve as inspiration for sociolinguists' sustained demystification of popular wisdom on language, for continued criticism of the effects of monolingualism in state-organised institutions, or for persistent description of people's resistance to these effects, and there is much to be gained by pursuing such an agenda. The same is true for attempts to develop a more effective translation of empirical findings of translanguaging for pedagogical purposes (e. g. Canagarajah 2011). Doing so however invites relatively less attention or comprehension for the difficulties of those pursuing an investment in separate languages, for the predicament of those needing to navigate a languagised world *and* sociolinguists' deconstruction of it, or for the possible trouble, practical limitations and potentially exclusionary effects of post-Language practices. Also, while current language education policies are deserving of criticism and revision, there is little consideration of the fact that proposals for change often share basic assumptions about the relation between language, education and social change with the policies that they criticise.

Hence, while sociolinguistics has seen an important and empirically founded development towards a theoretical deconstruction of Language, resulting in a flurry of new labels, we wish to make room in this special issue for analyses that not only address speakers' investment in practices that defy the idea of separate languages, but that also attend to the vitality, inevitability and validity of Language for speakers across a range of national and institutional settings. In the rest of this introduction we will be devoting particular attention to:

1. the theoretical and descriptive clarity of the various new terms that are suggested to reconceptualise language (use) (Section 2);

2. the continuing relevance of language separation outside, but also inside the academy (Section 3);
3. the transformative potential of fluid language practices in education and beyond (Section 4).

2 Theory, analysis and ideology in sociolinguistics

Of the various new terms that are popular today in sociolinguistics,[1] we will focus here on three in particular that have become widely used: polylanguaging (introduced by Jørgensen and Møller), translanguaging (as defined by García and Li Wei), and metrolingualism (coined by Pennycook and Otsuji). Important to note is that the first two of these explicitly lean on the notion of languaging as a basic ontological concept for how people communicate through linguistic signs. Jørgensen first introduced the term in his study of 11-year-old children's intense switching between and blending of Turkish, Danish, English, and other fragments of language (Jørgensen 2003). He concluded that these young speakers were most accurately described as "languagers" (as opposed to bi-linguals or switchers between separate codes) (Jørgensen 2003: 146), and later defined languaging as "language users employ[ing] whatever linguistic features are at their disposal with the intention of achieving their communicative aims" (Jørgensen 2008: 169). García and Li Wei (2014) refer to Becker (1995) as one of the sources for languaging and describe it as "a better term to capture an ongoing process that is always being created as we interact with the world lingually" (García and Li Wei 2014: 8). In addition, they refer to and align with Jørgensen's and others' use of the term as "emphasizing the agency of speakers in an ongoing process of interactive meaning-making" (García and Li Wei 2014: 9). Such accounts suggest that languaging is to be understood as an ontological concept. It refers to all situated linguistic communication, and thus includes languaging with the aim of, for instance, coming across as competent in what is thought to be a "pure" language (we shall return to this below). Languaging so distinguishes between first-order linguistic practices (employing linguistic resources) and second-order categories for these resources ("languages", "registers", "styles", "codes") that speakers may orient to when languaging. The question is then whether prefixed terms such as poly-, metro- or

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1 Apart from codemeshing mentioned above these include terms like transidiomatic practices (Jacquemet 2005) or flexible bilingualism (Creese and Blackledge 2011).

translanguaging refer to particular models or categories for languages, or to something else.

Looking first at polylanguaging, the prefix poly- is inspired by Hewitt's (1992: 30) definition of polyculture as a collection of cultural practices that, in contrast to imaginings of a "multiculture", "are not (a) discrete and complete in themselves; (b) are not in any sense "intrinsically" "equal"; and (c) are active together and hence bound up with change". "Polylanguaging" accordingly refers to a particular type of languaging that defies imaginings of "multilingualism" and that involves "the use of linguistic features associated with different "languages" in the same production, regardless of the fact that some people believe that the features do not belong together" (Jørgensen and Møller 2014: 73). Translanguaging originates in a pedagogical strategy that involves the functionally integrated use of different "languages" (Baker 2011). It usually maintains this pedagogical meaning, but the term is often inscribed in a vision of critical social transformation, where linguistic hybridity is seen to lead to "*new* language practices that make visible the complexity of language exchanges among people with different histories, and releases histories and understandings that had been buried within fixed language identities constrained by nation-states" (García and Li Wei 2014: 21). Both poly- and translanguaging in this respect would seem to refer to a type of languaging that is irreconcilable with dominant models for language ("mono"- or "multi"-lingualism) or that resists if not transforms these established models.

If we turn to metrolingualism we see that its prefix is inspired by Maher's (2005) notion of metroethnicity and refers to individuals' adoptive, anti-essentialist, idiosyncratic "shopping" and blending of all kinds of ethnic commodities (linguistic or not) into a hybrid, often urban, lifestyle (e. g. Otsuji and Pennycook 2010). This is in line with polylingualism and translanguaging, but on other occasions metrolingualism appears to function broadly as a synonym for languaging when it is referred to as an interpretive perspective of language use which accommodates "the complex ways in which fluid and fixed, as well as global and local, practices reconstitute language and identities" (Otsuji and Pennycook 2010: 247). Metrolingualism is also argued to:

> [...] describ[e] the ways in which people of different and mixed backgrounds use, play with and negotiate identities through language; it does not assume connections between language, culture, ethnicity, nationality or geography, but rather seeks to explore how such relations are produced, resisted, defied or rearranged; its focus is not on language systems but on languages as emergent from contexts of interaction. (Otsuji and Pennycook 2010: 246)

Without going into the full details of each of these conceptualisations of language, the general perspective highlighted by their creators, is that 1) we mobilise

linguistic resources that are at our disposal in specific socio-historical conditions; 2) our use of these resources is significantly impacted by wider sociocultural and ideological models connecting signs to registers, languages, styles or codes; and 3) these models can be (re)produced, transformed or resisted, in which case we describe such acts of languaging as poly-, metro-, or translanguaging (see also Jørgensen and Møller 2014; Karrebæk, Madsen and Møller 2016; Møller, this issue).

An immediate corollary of this view would seem to be that if the latter terms (barring the use of metrolingualism as a synonym for languaging) are used to describe transgressions of established models for language, speakers must observably orient to such transgressions, and this implies orienting to the established models in order to transgress them (Li Wei 2011; Møller, this issue; Pennycook and Otsuji, this issue). Unintentional transgression of these models (Ritzau and Madsen, this issue), or habitual ways of speaking that look "mixed" from a separate codes view of language, would after all count as basic "languaging" until analysts find evidence of a particular socio-cultural model that speakers (decide not to) orient to. In this sense the descriptive use of the three terms at issue here would seem to depend on the idea of separate languages as a pre-existing ideological construction (cf. Orman 2013; Otsuji and Penncyook 2010: 244).

Looking at some of the finer nuances we see that the relation between first-order practices and second-order categories, and how these are labelled, can become quite complicated. Jørgensen and his colleagues, for example, apart from referring to types of languaging that transgress established language categories as "polylanguaging", also identify a "polylingualism norm" (Jørgensen 2008, 2010; Jørgensen et al. 2011; Møller, this issue). The latter entails that "language users may know – and use – the fact that some of the [linguistic] features are perceived by some speakers as not belonging together" (Jørgensen et al. 2011: 34), but also that "speakers employ linguistic features associated with different languages as a matter of habit" (Jørgensen and Møller 2014: 73). More or less the same term is thus used to name a type of languaging in which speakers transgress established norms (which, as we argued, should include signs of speakers' orientation to transgression), a purported normative type of polylanguaging (so, a norm of transgressing established language categories), and to name a conventional type of languaging where speakers are orienting to a different model for languaging that leads to what is called "hybrid language use" from a separate codes perspective. Languaging in defiance of existing models for language is in other words labelled similarly to a type of languaging that simply orients to a different, less established reflexive model. That this latter model is called "polylingual" again raises the question whether it is the observed speakers' or the analysts' idea of where linguistic features belong that inspires the use of "poly" (cf. also Ritzau

and Madsen, this issue), and to what extent established categories for language inform the labelling of practices in an approach that sets out to problematise these categories.

Metrolingualism, in turn, is explicitly claimed to reflect an emic perspective: it is "centrally concerned with language ideologies, practices, resources and repertoires" which "provides an understanding of the ways in which languages need to be understood in terms of the local perspectives of the user" (Otsuji and Pennycook 2010: 247). These local perspectives are empirically investigated through a combined analysis of interactional practices and metalinguistic reflections in metropolitan contexts (see also Pennycook and Otsuji, this issue). Yet, as we indicated above, metrolingualism is not only used descriptively, but also denominates a sociolinguistic theory of language in which speakers use all kinds of resources, whether seen by others as fluid or fixed, to negotiate, constitute or contest specific identities within and across interactions – the linguistic regularities ensuing from this, possibly called "languages" by some, are not to be confused with the primary interactional work that precedes them. In this sense of the term metrolingualism does not imply the presence of separate languages that speakers strive to transgress, and it avoids the problem of who these actually exist for and are transgressed by. At the same time, certainly when its application is said to be "not confined to the city" (Otsuji and Pennycook 2010: 245), this would seem to make the prefixed term redundant compared to languaging or unnecessarily indexical of the metropolis.

Translanguaging, finally, perhaps is the most capricious term of the three. In spite of its reliance on languaging, translanguaging in García & Li Wei's conception is itself also held to refer to "the fluid nature of actual and local language practices of *all* speakers" (García and Li Wei 2014: 9, our emphasis), even if a distinction is sometimes made descriptively between speakers producing "natural translanguaging" (unplanned, spontaneous), and those producing "official translanguaging" (as part of a pedagogic strategy) (García and Li Wei 2014: 91). Very often though this wide scope is narrowed substantially, either to a resistant stance towards monolingual school policies, or to the sense-making practices of a particular, bilingual, group. Thus we find statements to the effect that "despite language education policies that strictly separate languages, students and teachers constantly violate this principle [...] they use what we are calling here *translanguaging*" (García and Li Wei 2014: 52, italics in original), or that:

> [t]ranslanguaging for us refers to languaging actions that enact a political process of social and subjectivity transformation which resists the asymmetries of power that language and other meaning-making codes, associated with one or another nationalist ideology, produce. (García and Li Wei 2014: 43)

This would seem to reserve translanguaging exlusively to "resistant" languaging. Elsewhere in García and Li Wei's book it looks as though translanguaging only refers to sense-making practices, whether pedagogically planned or not, among bilingual pupils. Translanguaging in this context refers to the "multiple discursive practices in which bilinguals engage in order to make sense of their bilingual worlds" (García and Li Wei 2014: 65). Or its occurrence in class is held to create a "[t]hirdspace which does not merely encompass a mixture or hybridity of first and second languages", but which "invigorates languaging with new possibilities from a site of 'creativity and power'" (García and Li Wei 2014: 25). If deliberately maintained, these sense-making and creative processes, it is argued, can contribute to a transformative pedagogy that is "capable of calling forth bilingual subjectivities and sustaining bilingual performances that go beyond one or the other binary logic of two autonomous languages" (García and Li Wei 2014: 92–93). Translanguaging thus appears to function as an ontological and descriptive term, and to name a pedagogical and language-political project the success of which depends on making room for bilinguals' multiple discursive practices at school.

Polylanguaging is not as consistently or explicitly linked to language ideologies of resistance and transformation (though see Ritzau and Madsen, this issue), but metrolingualism appears to be inscribed in a similar political project:

> We locate metrolingualism instead as another practice of undoing, as both a rejection of ortholinguistic practices and a production of new possibilities. The *metro* as we understand it, then, is the productive space provided by, though not limited to, the contemporary city to produce new language identities." (Otsuji and Pennycook 2010: 247, emphasis in original)

Clearly then, polylanguaging, metrolingualism and translanguaging are not only used as descriptive and ontological terms, but also label political and pedagogical projects that criticise language separatist imaginings and the institutions that enforce them.

Language form, contextualised use and ideology are of course closely interconnected phenomena, as Silverstein's (1985) recently much-cited notion of the Total Linguistic Fact suggests. It is, as he states, "irreducibly dialectic in nature. It is an unstable mutual interaction of meaningful sign forms, contextualized to situations of interested human use and mediated by the fact of cultural ideology" (Silverstein 1985: 220). We argue however that terminologically and descriptively aiming to capture all these dimensions at once while also covering etic, emic and political perspectives, threatens to blur the relationship between descriptive, theoretical and ideological agendas. If meaningful sign forms (say, linguistic resources) are mediated by facts of cultural ideology (say, "languages", registers, or styles),

descriptive problems occur when the same term is used to name both of these: this is actually the type of conflation that the creation of new terms has sought to throw into relief (one does not use "a language" when using a particular feature that is customarily associated with a particular language), but it is repeated if "basic languaging" and "languaging in defiance of particular ideologies" are both baptised as "metrolingualism". Similar problems occur when different ideologies for languaging carry identical names, as when polylinguaging names "languaging that rejects dominant linguistic norms" and "languaging that orients to a different norm". Likewise, labelling particular spaces or situations for interested human use (the city, teaching) in the same terms as the sign forms that people employ in them (translanguaging, metrolingualism) is likely to create confusion. This can also be expected when ontological concepts (say, agency) are consequently employed for descriptive, pedagogical or political purposes (for example, by distinguishing "natural" from "official" agency, identifying "agentive teaching" and purporting that "more agency" is needed to defy unequal structures).

In fact, unless meaningful sign forms that appear "mixed" from a separate codes perspective are only contextualised in defiance of that perspective, the question is which other reflexive model of behaviour speakers orient to when habitually producing types of languaging that newly descriptive terms seek to highlight and normalise. This question assumes that all routine styles of languaging depend on reflexive, that is "overt (publicly perceivable) evaluative behaviour" (Agha 2004: 27) through which languagers help each other to recognise and value a routine way of languaging as different from other, or non-routine, types of languaging.[2] Such behaviour is no less ideological in the case of a routine poly- or metrolingual style, although less institutionalised, than the metapragmatic practices required for reproducing widely disseminated and officialised models for languaging. In this light, investing the former types of languaging with normality and the latter models for languaging with inventedness is itself an ideological move. This does not discredit the attention given to practices that sociolinguistics has been slow to address. But it risks compromising the introduction of these practices in, say, education, if the argument for this primarily relies on their presumed normality rather than on a principled choice for a plurilingual education. It may also obscure if not irrationalise the everyday relevance for many languagers of investing in pure and separate languages. We now turn to discussing the conditions for this investment.

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2 See Rampton on "contemporary urban vernacular" for a useful attempt to describe both "sets of linguistic forms *and* enregistering practices (including commentary, crossing, stylisation)" (2011: 291, emphasis in original).

3 The relevance of language separation

The notion and promotion of separate languages is closely bound up with the existence and flourishing of nation-states and with a set of Enlightened ideas about perfectible, civilised and rational language (Bauman and Briggs 2003). Nation-states have in the last decades gone through a complicated political and cultural patch, however (Bauman 1998). The opportunities and threats of a globalising economy (expansion, delocalisation, offshoring, …) have prompted governments to reconsider their role as guardians of citizens' welfare and to explore new paths as catalysts of economic flows or as low tax havens. The 2015 Greek financial crisis acutely demonstrated the curbs on nation-states' autonomy imposed by their membership of supranational organisations. And the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) negotiations at least in vitro further gnaw at nation-states' political weight through projecting juridical procedures allowing transnational investors to object to national regulations (minimum wages, the right to strike, …) that harm expected profits. On a linguistic level, the global culture industry, migration and communication technologies increasingly complicate representations of a separate nation defined by a communal language, while investments in a global knowledge economy are steadily anglicising large swathes of the academy to the detriment of local languages. Discursively speaking too, nation-states notice, or contribute to, a reframing of their citizens as consumers and individual "hunters" rather than collective-minded "gardeners" (Bauman 2007), weakening traditional pleas for a sanitised language as a sign of progress, rational thought and cultural refinement: "the *mission civilatrice* no longer convinces" (Heller and Duchêne 2007: 6). In such bleak light, it can indeed be asked if notions such as a standard national language, which before served to mould and shape a collectivity into linguistic civilisation and unity, are still a central concern for nation-states (Rampton 2015). Such questions mesh well with suggestions that linguistic standardisation is in consistent decline across Europe (Coupland and Kristiansen 2011). It looks like the days of separate national languages will soon be over.

However, and as sociolinguists' continuing criticism of "monoglot" ideologies exemplifies, large-scale evolutions never have clean ruptures between them (Woolard 2004) and this insight should alert us to competing conceptualisations of national languages. To be sure, whereas nation-states are currently experiencing erosion of their power, they are also in various ways reaffirming their presence, either through military action, intelligence gathering and economic policy or, more relevant for our purposes, by strengthening their supervision of civil society. This can be seen in nation-states' expanding bureaucracies and

digital surveillance technology (Haggerty and Ericson 2000; Rampton 2015; Sarangi and Slembrouck 1996). It also transpires in nation-states' attempts to tailor education to the changing needs of the economy, notably by regimenting it linguistically and organisationally.

Apart from burgeoning quality measurement procedures and teacher professionalisation frameworks (Ball 1997; Lefstein 2013) this materialises in the formulation of language education policies that promote the acquisition of linguistic skills intended to increase nation-states' competitive edge in the global marketplace. So much as such policies invite a pronounced investment in multilingual skills, however, they frequently also pursue a cultural agenda by emphasising competence in the national standard language as a precondition to state membership, and by imbuing it with common-sense values like equal opportunities, efficient communication and social cohesion. In Flanders (Belgium) for example, language education policy suggests that "equal opportunities lead to three clear priorities: language, language and language" (Vandenbroucke 2007a).[3] This catches several birds with one stone: it appeases rising concern over persistently failing working class and ethnic minority pupils by presenting language as a tool with which this concern can be successfully confronted, at the same time as it speaks to the accountability agenda through raising schools' and teachers' responsibility: "each teacher must be a language teacher" (Vandenbroucke 2007b) to ensure pupils have equal opportunities. "Language" moreover stands for "Standard Dutch" as much as for "multilingual skills", and in this order. While an investment in the latter is seen to be indispensable because of the internationalising economy, the unconditional basis on which all other language skills are to be built is Standard Dutch, since "only [...] the standard language, will [...] be able to guarantee that opportunities in society do not depend on social origin" (Vandenbroucke 2007a: 6). Moreover, alongside this presentation of language as a kind of neutral "technology of the mind" (Collins and Blot 2003) that assures social mobility for those who need it and market opportunities for those reaching higher, it is often simultaneously presented as a social glue, if not as a crucial part of self-realisation:

> A rich knowledge of Standard Dutch is a prerequisite for a successful school career, access to the labor market; it is a prerequisite for social empowerment and integration, for one's access to youth work, culture, sports for an increase of social cohesion, personal development, and for stimulating each individual's sense of civic duty. A rich knowledge of languages contributes to a greater social and economic mobility (Smet 2011: 4)

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3 Two other education policy (concept) briefs have appeared since the ratification of the 2007 brief in 2011 and 2015, which, respectively, staunchly support or generally accept the lines set out in the 2007 document.

These conceptualisations of the (sub-)national language contribute to turning Standard Dutch into a "potent, condensed and multivalent symbol" (Harris et al. 2001: 9), capable of promising social mobility and economic prosperity as well as allaying fears of linguistic fragmentation through promoting it as an obligatory passage point for all those speaking non-standard Dutch or other languages.

Such policies in effect allow governments to proclaim their simultaneous love for monolingualism and multilingualism, although this usually implies locating multilingualism in the individual mind or in international relations while zoning off the national territory as a monolingual sanctuary (Hambye and Richards 2012; Heller and Duchêne 2007). Their attention to standard rather than vernacular varieties as necessary tools for climbing the social ladder likewise paves the way for adoring specific types of multilingualism only, notably those that combine earlier visions of language in a parallel monolingualism consisting of separate European languages (also see Jørgensen 2008). At least for the time being, therefore, it looks as though denationalising and transnationalising tendencies are still being accompanied by renationalisation attempts, and that national standard languages are reinvigorated as symbols of unity and essential life-skills in a time of fragmentation and precarity.

Other important motors for the promotion of language separation are mainstream media (Cotter 2010: Jaspers 2014b) and methodologies of language learning and teaching. In the latter domain teachers customarily identify and teach an abstract, useful for all practical purposes but essentially separated learning object to their learners. Foreign language acquisition research inspires teachers across the globe to "push" their learners' competence partly through compelling them to separate their primary and target language skills during certain spates of time, and to speak exclusively in the latter in order to notice gaps in their actual knowledge of the idealised target that they will be motivated to remedy (cf. Nation 2007). Other authors draw attention to the fact that "languages are salient dimensions of [people's] sense of self. That is, some people's 'identity' is inexorably linked to their 'language'" (Blackledge and Creese 2010: 17); that "particular languages clearly are for many people an important and constitutive factor of their individual, and at times, collective identities" (May 2005: 330); and that "imagined identities, projected selves, idealizations or stereotypes of the other [...] seem to be central to the language-learning experience" (Kramsch 2009: 5 in Rampton 2013: 360; cf. Ritzau and Madsen, this issue; Ruuska, this issue).

The continuing validity of separate languages also shows in academic practice, both in relation to the treatment of other languages and non-native English, and in relation to the reproduction of an academic register. To be sure,

while sociolinguists write about translanguaging, their texts enter a discursive field where any academic prose displaying translanguaging can count on rejection. Unidiomatic and first-language influenced English is likewise frequently identified as eligible for remediation in English language journals. This is less a sign of sociolinguists' insincerity or devotion to purist ideals perhaps than an expression of their adherence to the rational deployment of descriptive language, that is, their cultivation of an "instrument for constructing sharable knowledge" (Silverstein 2003: 9) and maximal understanding that they see threatened by linguistic forms that create confusion or incomprehension for those unfamiliar with them. This cultivation of expository prose is not limited to English vis-à-vis other languages but also occurs in each of the different recognised-as-languages academics write in: to create the semblance of autonomous texts that are free of overtones, innuendo, or other verbal material and text-ordering devices that may destroy that illusion, academics continuously engage in separating an academic register from other ways of speaking and writing, and resist "transregistering", that is, the mixing of an academic register with other recognisable registers.[4] As Agha's (2007) work teaches us, the social existence of this register, as any other, depends on continuous instructing of its boundaries to new members, on active typification of other discourse types as non-academic, and many academics use it to exclude those thought incapable of producing the linguistic emblem of their profession. Such metapragmatic activity is not found unnatural by academics, neither are those who intentionally or inadvertently mix an academic register with sign forms from other registers seen to produce a natural, uninvented type of language use that schools should be adopting.

This does not make a critical approach of the predominant language concept uncalled for, as long as it points out that, theoretically speaking, (1) this concept is as invented, or testament of particular ambitions, as any other model for language use, and (2) that ordering sign forms, linguistic or not, into cultural models, and subsequently manipulating and hybridising these models for interactional effect, is intrinsic or natural to the organisation of social relations. Some of these speech models may contain sign forms conventionally seen to belong to different languages, but that does not make their existence any more natural than that of other models for speech, and it does not avoid teaching their boundaries through metapragmatic activity nor the fact that people's competence in them depends on their access to institutions that socialise them to these models' production (also see Ruuska, this issue). Each of these may

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4 Exceptions such as the volume on "Global linguistic flows" edited by Alim et al. (2009) demonstrate that some transregistering by established scholars may be warranted by the topic at hand.

subsequently institutionalise and become an ideological zero-point against which other models are differentiated. Instead of getting "beyond Language as an invention" to "uninvented" linguistic practices that are thus held up as normal, the point is to describe and explain which models for language circulate, which of these are authorised as the baseline ("real", "natural", or "standard" language) and why, and with which implications for the organisation of social relations. This brings us to the pedagogical and political aspirations of much research into, particularly, translanguaging.

4 Pedagogical responses and political aspirations

Many socio- and applied linguists advocate the introduction of translanguaging or mixed language use in the (mostly urban) classroom. Blackledge and Creese (2010: 201) for example "argue for a release from monolingual, instructional approaches and advocate teaching bilingual children by means of bilingual pedagogy, with two or more languages used alongside each other". Canagarajah (2013:12) likewise advocates a pedagogy that draws on speakers' entire repertoires, one "that teachers may find useful to help students communicate along, against and beyond the dominant norms without disregarding them". Hornberger (2004) proposes "continua of biliteracy" through which learners develop literacy in what are regarded as separate languages through a set of practices that defy first language-second language, oral-written, receptive-productive categorisations. Using translanguaging practices in the classroom is held up as ensuring flexibility, efficiency, and maximal communication with different audiences at the same time. Other authors promote the development of pupils' linguistic creativity and artistic plurilingual expressions, and introduce pedagogies that set out to transfer pupils' semiotic skills from art and popular culture – such as hip hop – into more formal teaching and training contexts (Alim et al. 2009; Holmes 2014).

Many of these calls are inspired by the conviction that pupils who "poly-" or "translanguage" will be disadvantaged by the school's insistence on a non-mixed, standard language, and that such pupils will benefit from a curriculum that admits linguistic mixing. This is argued also by García and Li Wei:

> Because policies and structures of separation have never been enough to keep bilingual use out of instruction, language-minoritized children using home language practices in schools have been, and continue to be, severely punished [...] Today [in contrast to before], the

punishment is not corporal, but relies on instruction and assessments that follow monolingual language standards, ensuring that bilingual students get lower grades, are made to feel inadequate, and fail in schools. [...] Clearly the educational consequences of the sociopolitical inability to authenticate a multilingual and heteroglossic reality is responsible for educational failure of many language minorities around the world. (2014: 55–56)

Consequently, "the incorporation of the students' full linguistic repertoire [i]s *simply the only way* to go about developing language practices valued in school, as well as to educate" (García and Li Wei 2014: 74, our emphasis).

Statements such as these thrive on different supporting assumptions about causal relations between teaching and student outcomes. Some of these are of a language-pedagogical nature, while others press the idea of institutional bias. Language-pedagogical hypotheses often emanate from the Vygotskyan perspective that learning is constructive, cumulative and interactive: together with an experienced guide learners build on their previously acquired skills and knowledge (Vygotsky 1978). Essential in this process is to avoid too big a gap between the subject matter offered and the learners' actual competence so as not to demotivate learners, and to provide tangible learning experiences as a scaffold to more abstract knowledge and complex cognitive skills. Pupils' home languages are regarded in this sense as pivotal: they facilitate pupils' access to complex curriculum content that they can subsequently learn to formulate in the school language. But over and above this, pupils' home language is viewed as an essential tool for acquiring the school language: the greater pupils' skills in their first language (notably in a school register), the easier they will be able to transfer these skills into a second or a third. Denying pupils the use of their home language in this perspective boils down to depriving pupils of a crucial scaffold for performing well at school and to wasting valuable time (Baker 2011; Cummins 2000; Thomas and Collier 2000).

The introduction of translanguaging at school is also motivated by the notion of institutional bias and the need for a critical pedagogy. Institutional bias usually consists of two dimensions: the self-fulfilling prophecy (or "Pygmalion effect", Rosenthal and Jacobson 1968) and the "hidden curriculum". The first of these proposes that teachers expecting non-mixed, standard language use will develop negative attitudes towards pupils' mixed, non-standard language use and that these attitudes then provoke punishment and negative assessment or instil feelings of inferiority among pupils, resulting in failure or demotivation. The second, closely related, dimension emphasises that although nation-states' curriculum and educational system is "seen as representing 'normal' social relationships [these] [...] are in fact relationships of inequality and social oppression with the hidden aim of reproducing them" (Moore 2007: 10). The monolingual character of western nation-states' curricula, the teaching of foreign languages excepted, is thus taken

to instantiate power relations between majority language speakers and ethnic minority groups. The interested nature of the curriculum subsequently invites calls for a critical pedagogy in Freirean sense (Freire 1970) that re-presents knowledge of language and the social world, among other things through diversifying the language and the materials through which this knowledge is transmitted in class (cf. Busch and Schick 2007). For want of a lack of enthusiasm for this among policy makers, bottom-up curriculum reform is thus meant to bring about social change.

There can be little doubt that nation-states' curricula are generally biased towards monolingualism and an "orderly" multilingualism. Teacher attitudes towards multilingualism, certainly when polled nation-wide, are generally quite demoralising (see e. g. Agirdag et al. 2013), and at least some effect of this on pupils' learning or well-being has to be reckoned with. The abovementioned work amply demonstrates that defying strict language boundaries does not stand in the way of learning, not even of acquiring skills in separate national languages, and that it can be beneficial to pupils' well-being. It is only sensible therefore to find out how translanguaging can be further developed for pedagogical use and how as a practice, it may become part of the curriculum. Some researchers formulate a number of caveats, however. Martin (2005: 90, cited in Blackledge and Creese 2010: 205) warns that "we need to question whether bilingual interaction strategies "work" in the classroom context ... do they facilitate learning? Can classroom code-switching support communication, particularly the exploratory talk which is such an essential part of the learning process". Blackledge and Creese (2010: 213) equally cite other work as cautioning against assumptions of easy generalisability of mixed language practices. They also point out, contra calls that pedagogy needs to adapt to pupils' basic multilingual language practices, that at least within the complementary schools that they studied "ideologies often clash, with as many arguments articulated for separate bilingualism as for flexible bilingualism" (2010: 213). The deliberate production of translanguaging in class does not automatically entail pupils' approval either: Charalambous et al. (this issue) describe how a teacher's well-intentioned translanguaging in class, and her invitation that pupils join her in this, is met with reluctance and discomfort about the effect that using problematised linguistic resources will have on their identities in class. Such analyses demonstrate that fuzzing up boundaries between languages in class still needs to reckon with larger-scale language hierarchies and indexicalities, or may even contribute to their replication (see Jaspers 2014a). Other caveats pertain to the tendency of associating monolingualism and translanguaging with each pole of a set of dichotomies such as oppressive vs. liberating, structural vs. agentive, colonial vs. post-colonial or bounded vs. unbounded. Even if in a great deal of cases such associations may make good sense, in principle any way of speaking

that people have come to produce can be exclusive, oppressive or hierarchising, if appropriately ideologised, and translanguaging is not immune to this (cf. Canagarajah 2013: 29). Any statements as to its intrinsically transformative or critical character must thus be taken as a matter of empirical concern rather than a theoretical starting point (cf. also Ritzau and Madsen, this issue).

Apart from these caveats, moreover, and less often in focus, is that to the extent that curricula are biased and teachers report negative attitudes, it is not always clear whether they always produce the effects that are usually ascribed to them, and hence, whether changed curricula and positive attitudes are crucial remedies for school failure. Questions also need to be asked with regard to the overall advantageousness of translanguaging practice. Thus, aside from the inherent problems with the Pygmalion effect study (see Wineburg 1987), other studies caution as to its automatic occurrence by pointing at student success under less than favourable linguistic conditions, that is, when teachers are unaware of, hold negative linguistic attitudes or are indifferent towards their pupils' linguistic backgrounds (D'Amato 1993; Erickson 1987; Gibson 1987; Moore 1996; Ogbu 1978). There is some evidence too that the occurrence of negative attitudes and a variation-unfriendly school language policy do not impede the construction of a positive working climate nor the production of unofficial teacher translanguaging (Jaspers 2014a). Naturally this does not mean that negative expectations or biased curricula are acceptable, but that to the extent that they are negative or biased, they may not prevent high pupil performance or congenial classroom relations, and may be less responsible for school failure than is usually suggested (see Moore 2007: 10). Inversely, there is little longitudinal evidence at this stage that translanguaging is a certain guarantee for school success, regardless of specific circumstances. This lack of evidence obviously resides in policy makers' general reluctance to fund research that explores the longitudinal implementation of translanguaging at school. But also smaller-scale yet long-term experiments have sometimes been unable to find the boost in achievement that the ratification of home language use in class and extra tuition in that language were expected to produce (Ramaut et al. 2013). Such varying outcomes cannot be explained if automatic links are presumed between high attainment levels, the transmission language, and pedagogies conceived in a translanguaging spirit.

Many recommended suggestions for change moreover share with the authorised curriculum they hold to account fundamental assumptions about the relation between language, education and social change. Both official and critical pedagogies after all reproduce the post-war social-democratic consensus that changing educational inequality will generate changes in social inequality (cf. Moore 2007: 102), and both of these pedagogies therefore invest in

"language, language and language" as the tool for bringing this educational and subsequent social change about. There are signs however that such strong links between education and social stratification are hard to maintain. Based on a diachronic comparison of education policy, school results and the occupational structure in post-war Britain, Moore's work has been pointing out that changing educational inequality is possible and has been achieved, and that curricula can be reformed in a way that takes account of student backgrounds and incorporates concerns over its biased character. However, "[w]hat has not taken place is the range of wider social changes that it was believed would follow on from such reforms" (2007: 116; also see Marsh 2011; Reay 2010). Some of the main reasons for this are that educational expansion raises attainment levels for all groups, but also leads to credential inflation; successive generations therefore need more education to maintain their existing status, which is affordable only to those groups who, prior to educational expansion, needed less education to distinguish themselves from semi or illiterate others: "attainment levels increase and returns decline *pro rata*" (Moore 2007: 152). Neomarxist and critical theories generally seek to explain this standstill as the outcome of capitalist reproduction through school, but in their explanation and in their remedies (viz., disruptive, radical pedagogies) generally adopt a similar strong relationship between schooling and stratification, explaining exceptional student success respectively as accidental or as the result of specific curriculum changes. Specific pedagogies may in particular circumstances of course lead to better learning. But in light of the broadly unchanged stratification patterns, and taking into account the limited explanatory value of assuming automatic links between curriculum language, school success, and social inequality, maintaining that particular pedagogies and curriculum reforms will have a profound impact on social inequality beyond school bears a risk of "greatly exaggerating what schools can do and what they can be held accountable for. Schools and teachers have been over-burdened with responsibility and blame by largely unwarranted claims about the effect of the curriculum" (Moore 2007: 14).

There has indeed been no lack of blame. "[S]ufficiently powerless and disorganized" (Wineburg 1987: 35), teachers now find themselves accountable to authorities and sociolinguists alike. Authorities raise teachers' responsibility by pronouncing that "each teacher must be a language teacher" to ensure pupils' equal opportunities or work out complex "public rituals of blame allocation" (Lefstein 2013: 646) to those standing in the way of expected behaviour. But sociolinguists are no less fervent in dishing out responsibility or intimating their preference: some argue that "educators [...] hold as much responsibility for policy making as do government officials" (Menken and

García 2010: 3–4); others insist they "are heartened by our experiences obser-
ving and working with a teacher collective that is resisting and to varying
degrees renegotiating policies of standardisation" (Pease-Alvarez and
Thompson 2014: 166); still others maintain that "[t]eachers, students, all of us
have a choice to either uphold or disrupt that [monolingual] hegemony" (Alim
and Paris 2015: 81) and already, given the few signs that this hegemony is
successfully overthrown, seem to hint at teachers' moral failure. Making the
right choice may not always be easy, however, in a field where expectations are
often contradictory and where parents, pupils, colleagues, heads of school and
even sociolinguists may see teachers' acceptance or promotion of linguistic
diversity in class as a sign of their insufficient devotion to the symbolically
powerful language pupils need for climbing the social ladder (see e. g. Codó
and Patiño-Santos 2014)

    Failure at school is more than symbolic and has real-world effects.
Developing appropriate pedagogies remains important therefore, and research
in translanguaging has an important role to play in this. Even if education only
has limited effects on social inequality at large, its value in itself is incontest-
able, and there are good reasons to assume that exchanging a monolingual type
of education with one that makes room for more linguistic resources can con-
tribute to its flexibility, efficiency, as well as to pupils' well-being. There is also
much that teachers can learn about (their own) linguistic variation, register
differences, and individual linguistic repertoires that they can employ to help
pupils transition from more familiar ways of speaking to a less familiar school
register. Morally speaking too, the increasingly diverse pupil populace in many
Western schools deserves to be addressed in terms of a more plurilingual
curriculum. The above pages have tried to argue however that it would be
unwise to overlook the relevance of language separation, both as a widespread,
historical social purpose and in our own professional practice. Projecting poly-
or translingual practices in this light as somehow more valuable or desirable
regardless of specific circumstances would be perilous. We have suggested that
it is essential to reflect on our terminology and its capacity to help us analyse
which forms of languaging are mobilised in specific contexts of use, what
models for languaging they pay tribute to, and with which implications for
speakers' social position. We have equally attempted to argue that presenting
some languaging practices, whether called trans-, poly-, metrolingual or other-
wise, as superior pedagogical tools or as inherently critical of power relations,
bears a risk of overstating the capacity of particular types of languaging and of
endorsing a sociolinguistics *for* rather than *of* particular linguistic practices (to
borrow a point made by Moore (1996) on educational sociology). With this
special issue we hope to highlight each of these concerns that we believe a

thorough explanation and understanding of linguistic practices in this languagised world depends on.

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