Unmooring Language for Social justice: Young People Talking about Language in/and Place in Manchester, UK[1]

Khawla Badwan

Department of Languages, Information and Communication, Manchester Metropolitan University

Author Note

Khawla Badwan https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1808-724X

No conflicts of interest to disclose.

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Khawla Badwan, Manchester Metropolitan University, M15 6LL. Email: K.badwan@mmu.ac.uk

[1] This article has been accepted for publication in Critical Inquiry in Language Studies, published by Taylor & Francis.

Abstract

Unmooring language is a proposal for a language-based social justice concept that aims to go beyond national and local epistemologies of language in place. This article contributes to current discussions in critical sociolinguistics about how to conceptualise language bearing in mind the primacy of mobility and fluidity. Drawing on folk linguistics, local metalinguistic talk, and citizen sociolinguistics; this study explores how young people (aged 18-25 years) talk about the relationship between language and place in the urban city of Manchester, UK. Through 57 online questionnaires and eight semi-structured interviews, the study finds that participants' descriptions of their linguistic repertoires foreground the primacy of motion and invite the fluidity of unmooring. It also indicates that while young people tend to have positive attitudes towards linguistic diversity in the city, some reported exposure to language-based discrimination and others expressed different views on linguistic diversity. The paper concludes with emphasising the importance of language-based advocacy and activism to ensure that linguistic diversity has a right to the city, a step to combat linguistic hostility and ethnolinguistic nationalism.

Keywords: Unmooring language, social justice, advocacy, activism, young people.

Unmooring Language for Social justice: Young People Talking about Language in/and Place in Manchester, UK

> As soon as we start looking closely at real people in real places, we see movement. We see languages turning up in unexpected places, and not turning up where we expect them to be.
>
> Monica Heller (2007, p.343)

This article problematises the relationship between language and place and the implications of this on individuals' lived experiences with/of language in the urban city of Manchester, UK. It stems from the premise that the idea of unexpected language raises questions about the expected (Pennycook, 2012) which is usually linked to the pairings of language and nation, language and ethnicity, language and locality, or what Gurney and Demuro (2019) refer to as "linguistic essentialism". While such epistemologies of language in place fail to reflect the increasingly migratory social life of the twenty-first century (Nail, 2019), they continue to be vital and influential to how many "ordinary language users" (McGregor, 2001) talk about their world of language and language in the world. This has created some tension between how language in place is traditionally imagined, and how language in place is sociolinguistically reconceptualised in light of contemporary liquid speech communities. In this article, I discuss these two views of language in place using the terms "mooring" and "unmooring" language.

Mooring, Phipps (2013) argues, offers certainty, order, stability and control. It offers confidence in the languages of people and places and emphasises social cohesion, consensus and coherence. It locks language to a place and enables the mapping of sociolinguistic features across horizontal spaces. Nonetheless, this mooring not only fails to cope with the language-in-motion reality of contemporary communities but also reproduces fixed imaginings of language in place. This is a social justice concern because 'the expectation that

the world of mobile bodies will conform to a static model of states, borders and political behaviour is causing millions of people around the world to undergo immense suffering' (Nail, 2019, p.2). What kind of immense suffering is expected when language turns up in unexpected place? This suffering has different manifestations: fear, shame, shaming, othering, abuse, harassment, bullying, (un)belonging, as well as feelings of being unrecognised, unpresented, unaccepted and unwelcome. We do not have to look too far to find news reports about people being verbally or physically abused because their language turned up in unexpected places. For example, Forrest (2018) reports on an incident of a woman "punched for speaking Spanish" in London Underground. Another incident reported by Baynes (2018) describes how an American citizen of Iraqi origin was "kicked off the flight" for speaking Arabic over the phone. These displays of language shaming, language policing and language fears continue to actualise the link between language, people, ethnicity, place and social justice.

Unmooring, on the other hand, is about shaking the confidence in what language to expect in place. It draws on the ontology of turbulence that generates new entanglements where "novelty, unpredictability and uncertainty are produced" (Stroud, 2015, p.209). It is about engaging with conflict, chaos and fluidity in liquid speech communities. It calls for expecting the unexpected and being committed to "caring for the language that is actually produced by persons, legitimately or illegitimately" (Komska et al., 2019, p.127). It also challenges linguistic essentialism, engaging with acts of (de)occupying language (Alim, 2019) and denaturalising discourses about language, ethnicity and identity (Svendsen & Marzo, 2015) in order to permit new ways of talking and thinking about language in place. I agree with Nail (2019, p.5) when he says, "as the world has become increasingly mobile, our ontological descriptions of it have struggled to reflect this". To this end, I argue that the

notion of unmooring is a useful sociolinguistic concept that responds to the increasingly mobile social realities of language in place.

Like other creative sociolinguistic conceptual endeavours such as disinventing language (Makoni & Pennycook, 2005), challenging the discreteness of language (Jørgensen 2008; Otsuji & Pennycook 2010; Wei, 2011), (de)occupying language (Alim, 2019), decolonising multilingualism (Phipps, 2019) and linguistic disobedience (Komska et al., 2019), among many others, unmooring language is going to be messy and unsettling. It is going to require "awkward practice [and] uneasy rehearsals" (Phipps, 2019, p. 7), as well as the effort to unlearn the habit of perceiving the world as unchanging and static. It will also require a lifetime of disquieting activism that argues for the legitimacy of the "unexpected" language of the mobile, the oppressed, the displaced, and the socially marginalised. And yes, it is not always possible to be neutral in the way we conceptualise and describe language in place because whenever we discuss *a* language, "we indulge in political linguistics" (Blommaert, 1996, p. 217).

In this article, I explore how young people (aged 18-25 years) talk about their world of language in the urban city of Manchester (UK): how they describe their language in relation to place, how they talk about their experiences of language behaviour in place, and how they navigate and negotiate epistemologies of mooring/unmooring language in place. As such, this study draws on folk linguistics (Preston, 1994), local metalinguistic talk (Canagarajah, 2005) and the language wonderment phase of citizen sociolinguistics (Rymes, 2020). In what follows, I start by discussing ontologies of "mooring" and "unmooring" language. Subsequently, I discuss language in place as a social justice concern. After that, I explain the methodological design of the project, which is followed by a presentation of its key findings. I finally discuss the potential for advocating and promoting the concept of

unmooring language to give linguistic diversity a "right to the city" (Lefebvre, 1996; Purcell, 2013).

Ontologies of Mooring: Language in National Discourses

One of the most pervasive social imaginings of the world is framed around the notion of the nation, which, in its collective sense, ties its members together through joint history, culture and language. Bauman and Briggs (2003) explain that European populations were regarded as civic or modern by virtue of being perceived as monolingual and mono-cultural, whereas non-assimilated groups were negatively described as pre-modern and uncultivated. This "dogma of homogeneism" (Blommaert & Verdchueren, 1998, p.195) led to the suppression of individuals and groups. For example, Bauman (2000, p.173) contends that the nation-state fought tooth and nail against local customs and dialects to promote a unified language at the expense of communal tradition. Nationalists believe that the nation-state is ideally a monolingual entity where the national language is not only a marker of loyalty and homogeneity, but is also a tool to manage the state (Wright, 2012). While the monolingualising ideology of the nation-state is commonly tied with efficient administration, it simultaneously results in creating a mechanism of linguistic hegemony and privilege that favours those who speak the national language, particularly those who speak it with the highly valued standard variety. As such, language in the nation-state is an instrument for establishing and reinstating order, a basis for privilege, and a tool for accessing employment, education and civic participation in general. Speaking the "wrong" language or variety not only entails deprivation of most of these benefits but it delegitimises their speakers, as well.

National discourses seek to produce and normalise a geographical imagination where languages are neatly distributed along ordered national categories that confidently "lock language to place" (Badwan, 2018). Such discourses of "linguistic stasis" (Pennycook, 2015, p. 190) seek to shield and "freeze the mobility of people's live" (Pennycook, 2015, p. 191).

Still, they influence and inform thought and action (Cresswell, 2006). Therefore, it is not surprising that folk understandings of language distribution in the world are framed around historically grounded and reinvented geo-political boundaries, resulting in the perpetuation of the one-language-one-nation ideology and/or the one-variety-one-location imagining. These imaginings are factually wrong (Piller, 2017) and socially non-inclusive. Other examples of language mooring are equally flawed. For instance, Schneider (2018) demonstrates how maps displaying the distribution of English in the world typically highlight countries known as "English as a Native Language" (ENL) or "English as a Second Language" (ESL). This mapping is becoming increasingly faulty because "we find native and second language speakers of English in probably every country around the world" (Schneider, 2018, p.8). Consequently, mooring language as evident in language maps is not only problematic but is also simplistic and reductionist because "diversity is the given reality of human social action" (Higgins and Coen 2000, p.15) and linguistic diversity is not an exception to this.

Locking language to place, i.e. mooring language, does not stop at the level of named languages but it also applies to mapping local varieties (accents and dialects). Rather than relying on national framings, these maps rely on local framings, showing linguistic features that are historically tied to being "from here". Like language maps, maps displaying local varieties stem from a geographical imagining that confidently locks language to place. This is equally problematic because local framings create divides between those whose voices are worth including in a map because they are "from here", and those whose voices are not relevant because they are "from there" but they happen to be "here". Ultimately, this evokes dichotomies such as "us" and "them" and "minority" versus "majority" (Stroud, 2004; Rampton, 2011) which feed into processes of societal inclusion and exclusion in a changing Europe (Svendsen & Marzo, 2015).

At the same time, it is important to acknowledge that mooring language can be a strategic ideological and political tool to recognise minoritised and marginalised languages and varieties in certain places (MacSwan, 2020). In other words, not all acts of mooring are equally negative. Some mooring can be utilised in the context of linguistic rights and political action to advocate for the social recognition and civic participation and representation of voices that have been historically marginalised and remain socially subordinated. Mooring voices in local geographies allows their speakers to be proud of their cultural heritage, identity and linguistic roots. It can be an act of being "strategically essentialist" (Pennycook, 2002, p. 24). However, the challenge here is that this mooring works in favour of these speakers as long as they remain in the "right place"; a place where their variety or language is recognised and legally protected (Piller, 2016). What if they move to the "wrong place"? How can we talk about language in place in ways that encourage ordinary language users to accept and expect linguistic diversity regardless of historically grounded expectations of language in place? How can we conceptualise the turbulent uncertainty and the disruptive unpredictability associated with the linguistic manifestations of mobility?

In this section, I have explained that national and local framings of language based on the concept of "mooring" are problematic. Such framings are normalised by national discourses, which are then manifested in people's expectations of language in place. When Pennycook (2012) coins the oxymoron "the ordinariness of the unexpected", he argues that when language turns up in unexpected places, we need to question the expected. Most importantly, we need to explore and reflect on the implications of such expectations on how individuals perceive the presence of different languages and varieties in the places they share with others.

Ontologies of Unmooring: Language in Critical Sociolinguistics

In *Short history of linguistics*, Robins (1997) explains that the development of linguistics as a discipline at the beginning of the 19th century coincided with the heyday of nationalism. It is, therefore, not surprising that the discipline is influenced by national imaginings of language, or what Schneider (2018) calls methodological nationalism in linguistics. Yet, critical sociolinguists over the past two decades have argued for the need to revise traditional paradigms (Blommaert, 2010) in order to treat linguistic communities as "emergent ones, constantly being shaped by the interactive dynamics of their members" (Mufwene, 2010, p. xii). In addition, Canagarajah (2018) calls for a "spatial turn in sociolinguistics", with the aim to explore how language manifests itself in contexts of mobility (Badwan and Simpson, 2019; Blommaert, 2010; Canagarajah & De Costa, 2015; Pennycook, 2012), diversity (Piller, 2016), and intercultural contact (Holliday, 2018).

The field has witnessed the introduction of a critical stock of terms that engage with political, ideological and pedagogical projects to describe contemporary "linguistic fluidity", a notion ontologically aligned with "unmooring" language. Yet, I agree with Jaspers and Madsen (2019, p.18) when they say, "it would be oversimplified to situate scholars of fluid language on one side of a fixity-fluidity dichotomy". There are, at least, three different approaches to linguistic fluidity in place. First, an approach that researches the flexible use of language across what is commonly known as separate languages. Examples are found in research on heteroglossia (Bailey, 2007), flexible bilingualism (Creese & Blackledge, 2011), code-meshing (Canagarajah, 2011), code-switching and code-mixing (Rampton, 1995). Second, there is the focus on language for sense-making and communication. Within this approach there seems to be two schools. One that researches language from the perspective of linguistic resources such as the research on languaging (Jørgensen 2003, 2008), metrolingualism (Otsuji and Pennycook, 2010), translanguaging (Garcia and Li, 2014;

Otheguy et al., 2015). The other school researches sense-making and communication from post-language and post-human perspectives. For example, the focus on creative inquiry (Bradley & Harvey, 2019), semiotic assemblage (Pennycook, 2017) and post-humanism (Pennycook, 2018). Third, there is the emphasis on language in relation to power structures in place. Examples are featured in research on scaling (Badwan and Simpson, 2019; Blommaert, 2010; Canagarajah and De Costa, 2016), roots and routes (Heller et al., 2016), linguistic disobedience (Komska et al., 2019) and decolonising multilingualism (Phipps, 2019).

Superdiversity sociolinguistics has indeed been useful in theorising the notion of "unmooring" language. Not only does this research shake the confidence in what language to expect in place, it also engages with political agendas for promoting linguistic diversity and language-based advocacy and activism. However, what it is noticeable about this research is that it seems to focus on translingual and multilingual aspects of linguistic diversity without paying sufficient attention to other "monolingual" aspects of linguistic diversity in place. This has created a divide within sociolinguistics as a discipline: there is either a focus on sociolinguistic variation that operates within national and local framings of a named language, or a focus on the presence of "other" languages in the urban place with more international framings of language. Here, I argue that researching language in place needs to include both foci in order to develop an expansive framing of language; a framing based on caring for the different languages and varieties that inhabit the place.

Language in Place and Social Justice

Migration research has extensively drawn on the notion of "hospitality" (Balch, 2010; Friese, 2011; Bulley, 2017). Commenting on this, Butler (2016) asks, 'when we speak about hospitality, it is always this "we" that extends hospitality to "them". But once "they" are inside, who is now the "we,"? Does that "we" change? Are they then part of the "we"?'. Language is central to these discussions because linguistic diversity is mistakenly perceived

by many as a threat to local communities, to the "we". In such discourses, language is not necessarily foregrounded for its communicative value but for its ideological and political significance. Commenting on this, Cameron (2013, p.61) asserts, "[i]n any given time and place, the forms of verbal hygiene, which are most salient, and which provoke most debate, will tend to be linked to other preoccupations which are not primarily linguistic, but rather social, political and moral". The social and political anxieties that surround migration debates and encounters with "strangers at our door" (Bauman, 2016) are manifested in comments about language proficiency, accented speech, sounding foreign, speaking a "foreign language", and sounding- or looking like being- from "there". All of these, and many more, are political statements about who is "of place" as opposed to "in place" (Bauman, 2000).

At the same time, language in place causes and alleviates social justice issues because of its power to include, exclude, divide, privilege, name, shame, profile, other, promote, demote and discriminate. In her discussion about social justice, Picower (2012) explains that social justice entails respect for human rights, equitable access to opportunities, political representation, cultural respect and social recognition. Epistemologies of mooring restrict participation in civic and community practices. As such, they limit the social recognition of languages and varieties that have not traditionally been thought to belong to a certain place. Individuals affected by this mooring, assert Avineri et al. (2019, p. 5), are prevented from self-advocacy and access to opportunities and privileges. They are offered a degraded social positionality, and are indeed denied humanity itself.

Unmooring language is a social justice concept that aims to defy discourses of ethnolinguistic nationalism (Cameron, 2013) and unravel the links between ways of speaking and the values ascribed to individuals (Svendsen & Marzo, 2015). It is about challenging fear-based narratives that depict the different other as unfitting, undeserving, and un-integrable. It is about alerting us to myths of assimilation and imagined order and coherence.

It is about treating "linguistic diversity as the norm that it is, rather than the exception" (Badwan, 2018). Yes, "we do, after all, still live in a world of places, regions, nations and so forth" (Latham, 2002, p.139). However, I echo Herod and Wright's (2002, p.9) view that, "while changing our metaphor does not change the way the world is materially, it does change the ways in which we engage with our world and how we think about the possibilities for changing it".

Is this social justice concept an optimistic good life fantasy that "makes life bearable as it presents itself ambivalently, unevenly, incoherently" (Berlant, 2011, p. 14)? This is a persisting question that I am still grappling with as I research how young people talk about language and place in Manchester. These young people carry and cross places and borders. Consider for example: the north-south divide, the home-EU-international divide, the rural-urban divide, the student-resident divide, the here-there divide, along with ethnic, religious, cultural and social class divides. With all the carrying and the crossing, language continues to present itself turbulently, fleetingly and unsystematically, so how do young people in the city talk about language in place?

Methodology

This project utilizes a "palette of methods" (Mason, 2006). It uses online questionnaires from 57 young people in Greater Manchester (UK). The gender ratio is 3:2 female to male participants. It also uses semi-structured interviews with eight students (five female and three male participants). Using purposeful sampling, the recruitment criteria were: (1). to be a young person aged 18-25 years and (2.) to be living in Greater Manchester during the time of the data collection (May-August, 2019). The emphasis on age was important because of two reasons: first, McLaren et al. (2019) have recently indicated that younger generations are more positive about diversity and as such, this study offers an opportunity to explore attitudes towards linguistic diversity among young people. Second, this age group tends to live a

mobile life since the majority of young people move to live in other cities in pursuit of higher education degrees (Badwan & Wilkinson, 2019). Therefore, the project explores the impact of being mobile on individuals' epistemologies of language in place. In order to avoid methodological nationalism (Schneider, 2018), the project recruited students from different backgrounds so there were 35 "home" students, six "EU" students, and 16 "international" students. Twenty-one students had a language, other than English, as their "mother tongue".

Moving to the project location, Manchester is a leading metropolitan European city with over 100,000 students (Universities in Manchester, 2019). Manchester is a city with increasing ethnic diversity as evident from the 2011 census (Manchester City Council, 2011). At the same time, Manchester 'exemplifies the tensions and ambivalences of globalisation' (Savage et al., 2005) in that it lost its industrial economy while it pioneered urban developments through attracting global flows.

The online questionnaires asked the participants to describe their own English; to think about their attitudes towards, and experiences of, linguistic diversity in the city; and to comment on the relationship between language, place and belonging. In addition, eight interviews were conducted in order to generate some in-depth experiences of/with language in the city. The interviews lasted between one to two hours. These tools were devised to generate local knowledge about language and place. Through this 'local metalinguistic talk' (Canagarajah, 2005), non-specialists talked about language in their worlds (Preston, 1994). In addition, these tools enabled "language wonderment" (Rymes, 2020), an initial phase of citizen sociolinguistics whereby participants are reminded that their language is a topic worthy of discussion. As such, I methodologically place this research as floating between folk linguistics and citizen sociolinguistics. Data was analysed using a content-oriented approach, examining what is overtly said and what is implicitly presupposed within the participants' epistemic positions (Albury, 2017; Preston, 2011).

Findings

Participants Talking about Their English

To encourage the participants to think about their own English, the questionnaire asks 'how would you describe your own English?'. In response, three categories emerged: references to intra-national English varieties (Table 1), references to international English varieties (Table 2), and less assertive descriptions (Table 3).

Table 1

A description of own variety of English	**Participants who used this description**
Mancunian English	14
Yorkshire English	2
Liverpool English	1
East Midlands English	1
Chester English	1
London	2
Warringtonian	1
Northern English	2
Southern standard	2
Total	26

Participants' References to Intra-national English Varieties

Table 2

A description of own variety of English	**Participants who used this description**
Indian English	7
German Accent	1
English with an international accent	5
English with local Malaysian accent	1
US accent	1
English accent	1
Pakistani English	1
Total	17

Participants' References International English Varieties

Table 3

English with slight Yorkshire accent
English with Algerian accent but a bit American
Mixed and varied? Hints of Eastern European and American, mixed up with Southern English and other
English with a specific international accent, slightly southern
English with a Latin American accent
English - Yorkshire twang
Slight Bristolian English
Mancunian with elements of Yorkshire and Polish
No obvious accent that's from a specific location
Mixed between southern and northwestern accents
Somewhere between a London and Surrey accent
Ambiguous accent
English with an accent
South of England with a slight south westerly twang

Participants' Less Assertive Descriptions of their English

Participants' descriptions of their own English reflect the diversity of the English varieties in Manchester in a way that defies the logic of mooring and foregrounds the primacy of motion. Here, they talk about their language in relation to place in different ways. In the first category, the participants link their English varieties to regional locations in the UK. In the second category, the participants link their English varieties to the countries they come from. Descriptions such as *US*, *Indian*, *Malaysian*, *English* and *Pakistani* reflect how normative national thinking about language is manifested in the language about language. A similar argument can be made in the case of the five participants who described their English as "with an international accent". These participants are possibly reflecting on their status as "international students", a label closely tied with students' nationality and visa status. On the other hand, the third category (Table 3) shows less assertive descriptions from 14 participants. While some participants seem inspired by personal routes of mobility, others found it difficult to pin down their linguistic variety to a particular label; a telling testimony of how language moves around with people, and how it continues to exhibit traces of the different places individuals inhabit in their mobile lives.

The linguistic manifestations of mobility in Manchester, as evident in this sample, invites the fluidity of unmooring and foregrounds the primacy of motion in the lives of these young people. While place is significant in all of these descriptions, this place cannot be mapped as a bounded territory but must be represented as spatial networks, or what Leitner et al. (2002, p. 287) describe as, "linked lattices of connected entities brought together by mobility". Manchester is not just a single location; it is networked, complexified and interconnected, and so is the language brought along/about by its inhabitants. By asking the participants to describe their own English, they are encouraged to reflect on their ways of speaking in relation to traditional conceptions of language and place-or language and origin. The responses suggested different ways of talking about own language in relation to place.

Experiences of Language-based Discrimination

The questionnaire continues to invoke language wonderment to encourage the participants to think of language as a basis for discrimination. It asks, "have you ever been discriminated against or treated differently on the basis of your language or accent?". 70.2% answered "No", 19.3% "Yes", and 10.5% "Sometimes". Those who chose "yes" provided some explanations, as follows:

Table 4

Participants' explanations of being discriminated against on the basis of language (my *emphasis*)
I have been discriminated against because of my ***race/how I look*** but people comment on my language instead
I have been mocked for how strong the ***Northern aspect of my accent*** can be. I've been told to stop dreaming about being a teacher because no student will take me seriously with my accent.
When I used to have a ***more Eastern European accent*** I definitely think people looked at me weirdly sometimes or would assume that I wasn't smart.
On the first site [sight] I look English as I'm white but when I speak ***my polish accent*** has ways of picking out and I often get comments or am being judged - even been told to get back to mine country.

I sound "southern" compared to Mancunians and so I am judged immediately based on that. E.G: "***Dirty Southerner***". Although, in the South I'm regarded as a Northerner.
I noticed that one woman was annoyed because I spoke ***German*** on the phone in a bus.
I've been made fun of for having a ***posh sounding accent*** so I had to make it more like everyone else but when I did it didn't sound "white enough" to some people
Verbally harassed by local people (usually drunk) because of my ***Liverpool accent.***

Participants Talking about Being Discriminated Against on the basis of Language

While it is encouraging to see 70.2% of the participants not reporting language-based discrimination, the responses provided by the participants commenting on experiences of being treated differently because of their language or accent indicate that social justice issues on the basis of language are wide-ranging and they affect different types of people. This is why it is important to include participants from different backgrounds in order to develop an expansive understanding of how language raises concerns for social justice in contemporary societies. The table above indicates that language-based discrimination can be political (in the case of "foreign" accents and foreign languages), racial (in the case of commenting on language as a proxy for ethnic and racial tensions), regional (in the case of not being from "here"), or ideological (as in the case of not speaking standard, middle-class varieties). What underpins most of these types of discrimination is the moored understanding of language; the belief that the only legitimate voices in a place are those which are traditionally and historically thought of as belonging to this place.

Comments on the Linguistic Diversity of Manchester

To follow up from the previous question, the questionnaire moves on to encourage the participants to think about their own views on linguistic diversity. It asks, "how do you feel when you hear languages other than English spoken in public places in Manchester?". In response, 89.7% chose "It is normal because diverse places have different languages", 8.6% chose "I usually have my headphones on so I don't notice this", and only 1.7% chose "I feel annoyed because everyone should speak English". This suggests that the majority of the

participants have positive attitudes towards the linguistic diversity of Manchester. This could be attributed to the observation that these young participants have already unmoored language by virtue of being mobile individuals in networked places themselves.

The eight interviewed participants agreed that the linguistic diversity of Manchester was something they expected. Participant (1) – 24 year old, female, white-British- reflects this sentiment:

> I was already aware that there were people of lots of different nationalities and languages in cities. So, it was just normal. A lot of people travel for the university so it's just sort of expected.

This response highlights the role of universities as meeting-places (Massey & Jess, 1995) where diversity, at least for many students, appears to be an ordinary reality of social life (Higgins & Coen, 2000). Such an expectation can arguably be linked to the development of less certain and more unmoored imaginings of language.

While the eight interviewees seem to embrace an unmoored understanding of language, some explained that the linguistic diversity of Manchester is more noticeable in some parts of the city. In the following quotation, Participant (4) – 23 year old, female, white-British- talks about her observations of where languages turn up Manchester:

> You hear more languages on Oxford Road or in the city centre whereas in the university I don't think I've actually heard anyone speak a language like Arabic at university. Which is interesting because you'd presume it's quite diverse but I think it again this sort of middle class-ness. Everyone has to be proper and English. Another place where you hear more languages is down near the Curry Mile.

Here, the participant is trying to make sense of the different linguistic behaviours she observes in the city by suggesting that there are some bordered spaces with certain expectations and norms of linguistic behaviour. Public places such as the city centre, places near the university such as "Oxford Road", and places known for their ethnic diversity such as "The Curry Mile" are spaces where linguistic diversity is more expected. However, she

observes that academic spaces such as universities are more bounded and have certain expected norms of linguistic behaviour. She seems quite critical of this when she discusses how individuals perform middle-class belonging through language. This response indicates the importance of exploring place power in relation to the symbolic meanings individuals attribute to physical settings (Vigouroux, 2009) and how these meanings, in return, influence linguistic behaviour. In this instance, place is both discrete and overlapping. It is shaped by language and it shapes language at the same time.

Another example of discussing place as discrete and overlapping comes from Participant (5), a Polish-English bilingual, who avoids speaking Polish in public:

> The only time when I hear people speak other languages is if they're on the phone. Other than that, I don't know, but I do the same thing to be honest…If I'm speaking to a Polish person I'll speak to them in English because obviously if someone's around you, they don't feel attacked.

Speaking over the phone enables the communication between individuals in different places. It is an example of shrinking space, a type of mobility enabled through telecommunication tools. It is an example of overlapping places and linguistic behaviours. Here, the participant reports a sense of language fear. She is trying to navigate dominant conceptions of language in place by adhering to expected linguistic behaviour in face-to-face communication while challenging these norms when speaking over the phone. Her response shows how she deliberately hides her linguistic and cultural identity even when communicating face-to-face with another Polish speaker in order not to offend- and not to be offended by- those who expect that Manchester is a place where only English is recognised. This act of language fear can also be interpreted as an example of language shame as she is trying to conceal her positioning as a female, Polish foreigner in post-Brexit Britain.

In a similar vein, Participant (8)- 23 year old, female, Asian- reports that she avoids speaking Gujarati in public and narrates a story when she was on the train and needed to speak to her non-English speaking grandmother:

> I had to talk to her in Gujarati. So I did get a funny look from the lady who I sat next to and obviously she probably thought that oh it's a bit rude because she can't understand what I'm saying but for me it's just like I had no choice.

This participant reports sentiments of shame and fear as her language turns up in an "unexpected" place. The "funny look" from the other passenger is an enactment of violence and alienation through which this participant was positioned as not belonging based on language (c.f. McNamara, 2010). This act of violence is targeted at a female, Asian-Indian young woman trying to adhere to expected norms of linguistic behaviour based on linguistic stasis, mooring and essentialism. What we learn from these two participants is that while it is important to turn up urban multilingualism by continuing to unmoor, unravel, denaturalise and untie normative connections between language, place, identity (c.f. Nortier & Svendsen, 2015 for a comparative lens on urban multilingualism), it is crucial to remember that it is not uncommon for multilingual inhabitants to report feelings of fear, shame or frustration when they speak a language, other than the national language, in public places.

As expected, the subject of language in place sparked different political views. Participant (2) – 25 year old, male, white-British- expressed some concerns over social integration because of linguistic diversity:

> Q: how do you feel when you hear other languages and dialects in Manchester?
>
> P (2): I think it's a good thing. Sometimes I think that's probably one problem you know. When you're talking about integration. One barrier is when people speak different languages. That's a barrier but then to me it's a good thing that people are out and about and speaking their languages… I am perfectly fine with people speaking other languages but I think from a cognitive point of view something in your brain is like I can't understand it, what are you even saying? and the response [I offer myself] is well why are you listening into other people's conversations anyway.

This participant seems to appreciate the linguistic diversity brought about/along by the different inhabitants of the city. Interestingly, his response does not comment on different English varieties in the city, as he seems more focused on the intelligibility of what is spoken around him. While he is in favour of speaking different languages, he seems uncertain about how this could affect social integration. This ambivalent position could be linked to the common perception that for a community to be integrated, everyone has to speak the same language. This is a dominant ideological and political view in Europe (Cameron, 2013) and young people are susceptible to the influence of discourses that continue to actualise the link between language, ethnicity, people and integration (Aarsaether et al., 2015).

When asked the same question, Participant (4) – 23 years old, female, white-British- reported that she is in favour of linguistic diversity in the city:

> I quite like it because I like diverse things. I like the world to be like that. I think it's really nice that they feel comfortable to be able to do that. I like hearing a mixture of languages. It's one of the reasons why I like being in a city so much because there is just so many different people. At home [Wigan], if someone was to speak in a language that wouldn't be English you'd be out of the ordinary … I would think that's really nice that they felt they could do that and I think it would bring something to the area. I think it would get people out of their little right-wing Brexit bubble of like 'let's make Britain, British' and all this. You can be British and not speak English. Some people don't understand that.

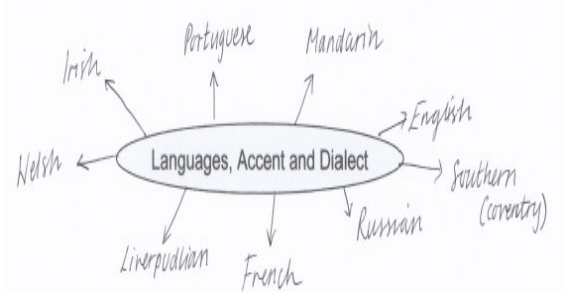
This participant sees in linguistic diversity a political statement that challenges notions of citizenship in relation to speaking English in the UK (Cameron, 2013). She is critical of the dominant populist and nationalist discourses of post-Brexit Britain and perceives the presence of different languages in the urban place an act of resistance and resilience. At the same time, she is aware that this linguistic diversity is not observed everywhere in the UK.

Participants Talking about Language in Manchester

In another task of language wonderment, the eight interviewees were given an activity sheet that asks them to, "create a spider diagram of the languages, accents, dialects you hear around

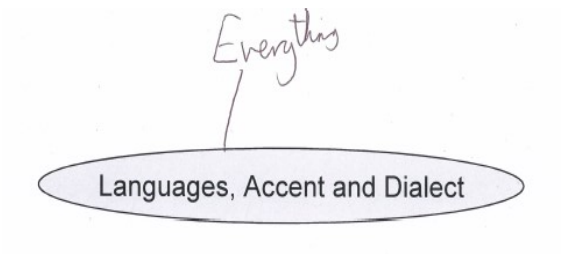
Manchester". Here are some samples of these mind-maps chosen to represent the different ways in which the participants thought about language in the city:

Figure 1



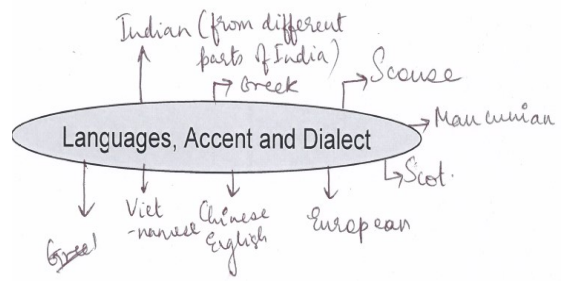
Participant 1: 24-years old, female, white-British

Figure 2



Participant 6: 23-years old, male, white-British

Figure 3



Participant 8: 23-years old, female, Asian-Indian

All the participants explained that the languages and varieties they included in their mind-maps reflected only the ones they could recognise based on their socialisation practices.

Many of them indicated that there are more features of linguistic diversity around them but they could not identify every language or variety they hear. Participant (2) drew a single line and said, “I could be here for another 25 minutes trying to list everything I hear”. Similarly, Participant (6) wrote, “everything”. It is interesting that four of the eight mind-maps included references to named languages only. This suggests the prominence of national framings of language, which could perhaps reflect the lack of awareness of linguistic diversity within these languages as they present themselves in Manchester.

Discussion

When they talk about language in place, the young people in this project displayed some awareness of national, local, transnational, international and deterritorisalied understandings of language. Manchester is depicted here as a dynamic space (Casey, 1993), rather than a passive location (Entrikin, 1991), whereby different linguistic affordances exist depending on a range of temporal factors, power dynamics and inhabitance patterns. There is an emphasis on “the dialectic of roots and routes” (Urry, 2000, p.133) when talking about language descriptions and communication. There is also a recognition of the fluid and unpredictable presence of language in the city. As such, this depiction of linguistic diversity can be conceptually understood through the ontology of unmooring which offers the potential for caring for language and recognising its fluid presence in place.

Nonetheless, the responses reveal some political tensions. The study generally agrees with Vieten (2006) that political belonging in contexts of increasing mobility is becoming more relevant to young people. While the majority of the participants did not report feelings of discomfort when they hear different languages around them, some participants reported social justice issues such as language-based discrimination, either because of speaking a “foreign language”, having “accented” English, sounding “posh” in the north, or speaking an accent which is not “from here”. Such acts of discrimination stem from traditional moored

imaginings of linguistic behaviour in the city, which continue to cause immense suffering, shaming and fear endured by inhabitants disadvantaged by the linguistic and social sanctioning of intra-national and international linguistic diversity in England.

Manchester, which is described as "Britain's city of languages" with over 200 languages spoken by long-term residents (Multilingual Manchester, 2013), is also a place where some multilingual young people talk about shame, fear and frustration that make them hide their non-English repertoires in public places. It is a place where young people have different views on linguistic diversity. This indicates that young people are prone to wider socio-political discourses that demonise linguistic diversity and fuel xenophobic backlash against migration and its associated linguistic displays (Bauman, 2016).

Conclusion and Moving Forward

During the writing of this paper, Manchester City Council (2019) released a policy report to acknowledge and celebrate the value of linguistic diversity in Manchester. The report focuses on nurturing linguistic diversity to create an inclusive, equitable, internationally connected and economically global city. This is an applaudable example of how linguistic diversity can have a "right to the city" (Lefebvre, 1996; Purcell, 2013) from participation and governance perspectives. When linguistic diversity becomes part of the urbanity of the city, language becomes unmoored (Phipps, 2013) and the unexpected becomes expected (Pennycook, 2012). This is a social justice concept to defy growing sentiments of language fears, language shame and language-based discrimination. While a post-national world is still unlikely, young people's experiences of, and with, language in urban cities suggest that unmooring is not a utopian concept. Rather, it is a concept that requires advocacy and activism for, and through, language, by linguists and non-linguists.

The world today is desperate for scholars committed to social justice. My commitment to social justice advocacy and activism has been mainly sustained through engaging university students in wonderments about language through research-led teaching, small-scale student-led projects, classroom debates, and raising awareness about a range of creative sociolinguistic concepts that shake the confidence in what we already know about language. These have produced a collective struggle to unlearn and relearn. At the same time, we continue to experience moments of pain, loss, vulnerability and puzzlement as we shake our confidence in our knowledge about language. This will always be a crucial step forward, undertaken while reminding one another that, "unlearning habits of oppression and inequality is not straightforward or neat and tidy" (Phipps, 2019, p.8).

Acknowledgments

I would like to acknowledge the contribution of Kate Pahl, Helen Sauntson, Naeema Hann, Samantha Wilkinson and Elisha Hall in shaping the development of this paper and thank them with gratitude. Thanks are due to the young people whose perceptions and experiences of/with language in the city helped me conceptualise the unmooring of language. I also give thanks to the editor and two anonymous reviewers for their valuable insights, suggestions and enthusiasm for this article.

References

Aarsaether, F., Marzo, S. , Nistov, I., & Ceuleers, E. (2015). Indexing locality: Contemporary urban vernaculars in Belgium and Norway. In J. Nortier & B. A. Svendsen (Eds.), *Language, youth and identity in the 21st century: Linguistic practices* (pp. 249 – 270). Cambridge University Press.

Albury, N. (2017). Mother tongues and languaging in Malaysia: Critical linguistics under critical examination. *Language in Society*, 46, 567–589.

Alim, S. (2019). (De)Occupying language. In N. Avineri, L. Graham, E. Johnson, R Riner & J. Rosa (Eds.), *Language and social justice in practice.* Routledge.

Avineri, N., Graham, L., Johnson, E., Riner, R., & Rosa, J. (2019). Introduction. In N. Avineri, L. Graham, E. Johnson, R Riner & J. Rosa (Eds.), *Language and social justice in practice.* Routledge.

Badwan, K. (2018, August 29). Don't assume language or dialect is locked to a particular place. *The Conversation*. https://theconversation.com/dont-assume-language-or-dialect-is-locked-to-a-particular-place-92374

Badwan, K., & Simpson, J. (2019). 'Ecological orientations to sociolinguistic scale,' *Applied Linguistic Review*. Advance online publication. https://doi.org/10.1515/applirev-2018-0113

Badwan, K. & Wilkinson, S. (2019). Most of the people my age tend to move out: Young men talking about place, community and belonging in Manchester. *Boyhood Studies*, 12(2), pp.29-50.

Bailey, B. (2007). 'Heteroglossia and boundaries'. In M. Heller (Ed.), B*ilingualism: a social approach* (pp. 257-274). Palgrave Macmillan.

Balch, A. (2010). Economic migration and the politics of hospitality in Spain: Ideas and policy change. *Politics & Policy,* 38, 1037-1065.

Bauman, R., & C. Briggs. (2003). *Voices of modernity*. Cambridge University Press.

Bauman, Z. (2000). *Liquid modernity*. Polity.

Bauman, Z. (2016). *Strangers at our door*. Polity.

Berlant, L. (2011). *Cruel optimism*. Duke University Press.

Blommaert, J. (1996). Language planning as a discourse on language and society. *Language Problems and Language Planning*, 20, 199-222.

Blommaert, J., & Verschuere, J. (1998).The role of language in Europoean nationalist ideologies. *International Pragmatics Association,* 2(3), 355-375.

Blommaert, J. (2010). *The sociolinguistics of globalization*. Cambridge University Press.

Bradley, J., & Harvey, L. (2019). Creative inquiry in applied linguistics. In C. Wright, L. Harvey & J. Simpson (Eds.), *Voices and practices in applied linguistics* (pp. 91–107). White Rose Publishing.

Bulley, D. (2017). *Migration, ethics and power*. Sage.

Butler, J. (2016). Trump is emancipating unbridled hatred. https://www.zeit.de/kultur/2016-10/judith-butler-donald-trump-populism-interview?wt_zmc=sm.ext.zonaudev.twitter.ref.zeitde.share.link.x

Bynes, C. (2018, February 14). Muslim student 'kicked off flight for speaking Arabic' sues Southwest Airlines for racial discrimination. *The Independent.* https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/muslim-man-removed-flight-arabic-speaking-sues-southwest-airlines-racial-discrimination-a8210636.html

Cameron, D. (2013). The one, the many and the Other: Representing multi- and mono-lingualism in post-9/11 verbal hygiene. *Critical Multilingualism Studies,* 1(2), 59-77.

Canagarajah, S. (2011). Codemeshing in academic writing. *The Modern Language Journal*, 95, 401-417.

Canagarajah, S. (2005). Reconstructing local knowledge, reconfiguring language studies. In S. Canagarajah (Ed.), *Reclaiming the local in language policy and practice* (pp.3–24). Lawrence Erlbaum.

Canagarajah, S. (2018). Translingual practice as spatial repertoires: Expanding the paradigm beyond structuralist orientations, *Applied Linguistics*, 39(1), 31–54.

Canagarajah, S., & De Costa, P. (2015). Introduction: Scales analysis, and its uses and prospects in educational linguistics. *Linguistics and Education,* 34, 1–10.

Casey, E. (1993). *Getting back into place: Toward a renewed understanding of the place-world*. Indiana University Press.

Cele, S. (2013). Performing the political through public space: Teenage girls' everyday use of a city park. *Space and Polity*, 17(1), 74-87.

Centre for City. (2019). Manchester is the second most popular city for new graduates. https://www.centreforcities.org/press/manchester-is-the-second-most-popular-city-for-new-graduates/

Creese, A., & Blackledge, A. (2011). Separate and flexible bilingualism in complementary schools. *Journal of Pragmatics,* 43, 1196–1208.

Cresswell, T. (2006). *On the move: Mobility in the modern western world*. Routledge.

Entrikin, N. (1991). *The betweenness of place: Towards a geography of modernity*. Palgrave.

Forrest, A. (2018, October 27). Woman 'brutally punched' for speaking Spanish in racist attack on London Overground train. *The Independent*. https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/crime/woman-punched-racist-attack-london-overground-speaking-spanish-tfl-police-a8604436.html

Friese, H. (2011). The limits of hospitality. *Paragraph,* 32(1), 51-68.

García, O., & Li, W. (2014). *Translanguaging*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Gurney, L., & Demuro, E. (2019). Tracing new ground, from language to languaging, and from languaging to assemblages: rethinking languaging through the multilingual and ontological turns. *International Journal of Multilingualism*. Advance online publication. DOI:10.1080/14790718.2019.1689982.

Heller, M. (2007). 'Bilingualism as ideology and practice'. In M. Heller (Ed.), *Bilingualism: a social approach* (pp. 1-22). Palgrave Macmillan.

Heller, M., Bell, L., Daveluy, M., McLaughlin, M., & Noel, H. (2016). *Sustaining the nation*. Oxford University Press.

Herod, A., & Wright, M. (2002). Theorising scale. In A. Herod & M. Wright (Eds.), *Geographies of power*. Blackwell.

Higgins, M., & Coen, T. (2000). *Streets, bedrooms, and patios: The ordinariness of diversity in urban Oaxaca*. University of Texas Press.

Holliday, A. (2018). *Understanding intercultural communication*. Routledge.

Invest in Manchester (2019). Universities in Manchester. https://www.investinmanchester.com/why-manchester/education/universities

Jaspers, J., & Madsen, L. (2019). *Critical perspectives on linguistic fixity and fluidity.* Routledge.

Jørgensen, J. (2003). Languaging among fifth graders. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development,* 24, 126-148.

Jørgensen, J. (2008). 'Polylingual languaging around and among adolescents,' *International Journal of Multilingualism,* 5, 161-176.

Komska, Y., Moyd, M., & Gramling, D. (2019). *Linguistic disobedience.* Palgrave Macmillan.

Latham, A. (2002). 'Retheorising the scale of globalisation: Topologies, actor-networks and cosmopolitanism'. In A. Herod & M. Wright (Eds.), *Geographies of power*. Blackwell.

Lefebvre, H. (1996). *Writings on cities* (E. Kofman & E. Lebas, Trans.). Blackwell.

Leitner, H., Pavlik, C., & Sheppard, E. (2002). Networks, governance and the politics of scale: Inter-urban networks and the European Union. In A. Herod and M. Wright (Eds.), *Geographies of power*. Blackwell Publishing.

MacSwan, J. (2020). Translanguaging, language ontology, and civil rights. *World Englishes.* Advance online publication. DOI: 10.1111/weng.12464.

Makoni, S., & Pennycook, A. (2005). Disinventing and (re)constituting languages. *Critical Inquiry in Language Studies*, 2(3), 137–56.

Makoni, S., & Pennycook, A. (2007). *Disinventing and reconstituting languages*. Multilingual Matters.

Manchester City Council Policy Report. (2019). Available from: https://democracy.manchester.gov.uk/documents/b9845/Supplementary%20Agenda%2005th-Sep-2019%2014.00%20Communities%20and%20Equalities%20Scrutiny%20Committee.pdf?T=9

Manchester City Council. (2011). Manchester's population, ethnicity and migration. Accessed from: https://secure.manchester.gov.uk/info/200088/statistics_and_intelligence/438/population/1/

Mason, J. (2006). Mixing methods in a qualitative driven way. *Qualitative Research,* 6(1), 9-25.

Massey, D., & Jess, P. (1995). 'The conceptualization of place'. In D. Massey & P. Jess (Eds.), *A place in the world?* Oxford University Press.

McGregor, G. (2001). Folk linguistics, review of Folk Linguistics. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*, 20, 480-483.

McLaren, L., Neundorf, A., & Paterson, I. (2019). 'Diversity and perceptions of immigration,' *NICEP Working Paper.* Available from: https://nicep.nottingham.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/2019-01-Mclaren-Neundorf-Paterson.pdf

McNamara, T. (2010). Reading Derrida: Language, identity and violence, *Applied Linguistics Review*, 1(2010), 23-44.

Mufwene, S. (2010). 'Foreword'. Blommaert, J. *The sociolinguistics of globalisation*. Cambridge University Press.

Multilingual Manchester. (2013). Manchester is Britain's city of languages. Available from: https://www.manchester.ac.uk/discover/news/manchester-is-britains-city-of-languages/

Nail, T. (2019). *Being and motion*. Oxford University Press.

Nortier, J., & Svendsen, B. A. (Eds). (2015). *Language, youth and identity in the 21st century: Linguistic practices*. Cambridge University Press.

Otheguy, R., García, O., & Reid, W. (2015). Clarifying translanguaging and deconstructing named languages. *Applied Linguistics Review*, 6, 281-307.

Otsuji, E., & Pennycook, A. (2010). 'Metrolingualism: fixity, fluidity and language in flux,' *International Journal of Multilingualism,* 7, 240-254.

Pennycook, A. (2002). Mother tongues, governmentality, and protectionism. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, 2002(154), 11–28.

Pennycook, A. (2012). *Language and mobility*. Multilingual Matters.

Pennycook, A. (2015). Early literacies and linguistic mobilities. In C. Stroud and M. Prinsloo (Eds.), *Language, literacy and diversity* (pp. 187-206). Routledge

Pennycook, A. (2017). Translanguaging and semiotic assemblages. *International Journal of Multilingualism,* 14(3), 269-282.

Pennycook, A. (2018). Post-humanist Applied Linguistics. *Applied Linguistics,* 39(4), 445–461.

Phipps, A. (2013). Unmoored: language pain, porosity and poisonwood. *Critical Multilingualism Studies,* 1(2), 97-118.

Phipps, A. (2019). *Decolonising multilingualism*. Multilingual Matters.

Picower, B. (2012). *Practice what you teach: Social justice education in the classroom and streets*. Routledge.

Piller, I. (2016). *Linguistic diversity and social justice*. Oxford University Press.

Preston, D. (1994). Content-oriented discourse analysis and folk linguistics. *Language Sciences*, 16(2), 285–331.

Preston, D. (2011). Methods in (applied) folk linguistics: Getting into the minds of the folk. *AILA Review*, 24(1),15–39.

Purcell, M. (2013). Possible worlds: Henri Lefebvre and the right to the city. *Journal of Urban Affairs,* 36(1), 141-154.

Rampton, B. (2011). From 'Multiethnic adolescent heteroglossia' to 'Contemporary urban vernaculars'. *Language and Communication*, 31(4), 276–294.

Rampton, B. (1995). *Crossing*. Longman

Robins, R. (1997). *A short history of linguistics*. Longman.

Rymes, B. (2020). Students as Sociolinguists. *Phi Delta Kappan* ,101(5), 8-15.

Savage, M., Gaynor, B., & Brian, L. (2010). *Globalisation and belonging*. Sage.

Schneider, B. (2018). Methodological nationalism in linguistics. *Language Sciences*, 1–13.

Stroud, C. (2004). Rinkeby Swedish and semilingualism in language ideology debates: A Bourdieuan perspective. *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, 8(2),196–214.

Stroud, C. (2015). Turbulent Deflections. In C. Stroud and M. Prinsloo (Eds.), *Language, literacy and diversity* (pp. 206- 216). Routledge.

Svendsen, B. A., & Marzo, S. (2015). A 'new' speech style is born. *EuJAL*, 2015, 3(1): 47–85.

Urry, J. (2000). *Sociology beyond societies*. Routledge.

Vieten, U. (2006). Out in the blue of Europe: Modernist cosmopolitan identity and the deterritorialization of belonging. *Patterns of Prejudice,* 40(3), 259–79.

Vigouroux, C. (2009). A relational understanding of language practice: interacting timespaces in a single ethnographic site. In J. Collins, S. Slembrouck and M. Baynham (Eds.), *Globalisation and language in contact* (pp. 62-84). Continuum.

Wei Li (2011). Moment analysis and translanguaging space. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 43(5), 1222–1235.

Wright, S. (2012). Language policy, the nation and nationalism. In B. Spolsky (Ed.), *The Cambridge handbook of language policy* (pp. 59-78). Cambridge University Press.