
SYSTEMATIC REVIEWS AND META-ANALYSES

Language and identity *beyond the mainstream*. Democratic and equity issues for and by whom, where, when and why

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Taking a point of departure in multidisciplinary research related to ethnicity, gender and functional dis/ability, this paper presents a conceptual framework where center staging languaging and identity-positionings are central. Building upon empirically framed results from ethnographical projects across timespaces, it discusses how languaging opens possibilities for discussing learning and identity-positionings that take place in and via the deployment of one or more language varieties and modalities. This is conceptually made possible by going beyond dominating, dichotomizing positions related to language, language learning methods, and the organization of language learning. The study argues that scholars inherit and live with dichotomizing positions within scholarship that in turn create specific framings for children and adults in institutions for learning.

The paper discusses the case of research and the organization of language issues related to bilingualism and diversity education as specific instances of a dominating dichotomy. It illustrates how going beyond this dichotomy makes visible languaging and identity-positionings that open new ways of understanding participation and inclusion. Such a position builds upon critical humanistic thinking where sociocultural and decolonial framings are central. Going beyond the mainstream allows for new ways of conceptualizing research in the areas of language and identity where social practices are center staged. To make visible languaging thus implies that issues related to identity are focused in terms of performative processes.

Keywords: Languaging; Identity; Epistemology; Performativity; Sociocultural; Decolonial

1. Introduction

Recent calls related to power hegemonies and reflexivity often center stage *alternative* epistemologies related to language and identity. Going “beyond the mainstream”, the analytically framed study presented here takes its points of departure in sociocultural and Southern perspectives.¹ It grounds its arguments on and theorizes from empirically framed research across learning sites inside and outside schools; it is explicitly interested in understanding the use of heterogenous communication repertoires in everyday life by individuals, who for a range of reasons are marginalized. The ethnographically framed empirical work that informs the discussions here is particularly interested in analytical, methodological issues and domains within *communication* (oral, written, and signed language); *culture* (collective ways of being and living; i.e. learning); and *diversity* (the many identity-positions humans navigate throughout their lives).² This work on diversity

focuses on and across specific identity domains, most prominently gender, ethnicity, and functional dis/ability. While taking a point of departure in multiscale analysis, this paper also presents an overarching reflection related to language and identity. Framed in terms of the need to go beyond a mainstream that is dichotomized, these ideas center stage language use or “languaging” (Bagga-Gupta, 2014b, 2017a, 2017b, 2017c; Garcia, 2009; Linell, 2009) and the performance of identity (Bagga-Gupta, Hansen & Feilberg, 2017; Butler, 1999; Wetherell, 2010) or “identifying” (Bagga-Gupta, 2017a). Focusing on the use of multiple linguistic resources, including different modalities, I argue, opens possibilities for discussing learning from alternative vantage points related to language (i.e. monolingualism – bi/multilingualism), language learning methods (i.e. methodologies that are based on top-bottom–bottom-up conceptualizations) and the organization of language learning itself (i.e. inclusion/integration/mainstreaming–segregation/special arrangements). Such dominating dichotomized positions create specific framings for children and adults across educational institutions. A point that is salient is that we have inherited, live with, and continue to reproduce such positions, albeit unwittingly, within scholarship.

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Thus, a central aim of the study presented here is an attempt to unpackage assumptions that relate to some key concepts within language learning for specific identity-positions at the margins (i.e. identity-positions beyond the mainstream). The paper highlights the subtle ways in which the deployment of concepts itself unwittingly contributes to a continuing marginalization of language learners who, in the context of educational institutions, are at a disadvantage to begin with (see below). A parallel issue here is the need to privilege the everydayness and the sites where language, learning, and identity processes play out.

Two interrelated issues are significant to this enterprise. The first relates to conceptual “webs-of-understandings”, or, in other words, the linked and looped manner in which concepts reinforce one another in meaning making (Bagga-Gupta, 2012a, 2017a, 2017c). Concepts steer any field of enquiry, and the domains of language and identity are no exceptions. However, concepts steer these two domains in important ways where discussions related to marginalization, migration, and language education constitute contentious dichotomized battlegrounds for legitimacy (sections 3 and 4). Mainstream positions on language and identity are “naturalized” (Säljö, 2002), policed through concepts that are “looped” (Hacking, 1995) and create taken-for-granted understandings. Sections 2 and 3 discuss and frame two concepts – “bilingualism” and “diversity” – as “boundary objects” (Sataoen, 2016; Star, 2010; see below) that play a key role in such processes.

The empirical nature of the scholarship that illuminates (or confounds) the domains of language and identity constitutes a second issue. Thus, despite the major focus that bilingualism and diversity have received, since at least the 1990s, research continues to be dominated by methodologies that report and present people’s accounts of issues, in contrast to a “social practices” agenda that privileges everyday life data. Furthermore, a social practice agenda currently risks being framed by nomenclature that is “academically branded” (Pavlenko, in press). For instance, while there is no dearth of research on bilingualism, scholarship that builds on social practices data, where languaging or the “doing of bi/multilingualism” in everyday life, including digital-analog spaces are scrutinized, is limited (section 3). In a similar vein, despite the major (re)focus on diversity since the turn of the century and “super/hyper” prefixed terminology (Blommaert, 2015; Vertovec, 2006), the “doing of diversity and identity-positions” in everyday life, including digital-analog spaces, remains elusive (Bagga-Gupta, Hansen & Feilberg, 2017; Pavlenko, in press).

Going beyond such dichotomizing, essentialized academic-branded concepts, section 2 explores the nature of “normal” language and diversity. Dichotomized mainstream positions that reproduce a hegemonic stance, particularly within education, are focused in section 3, before central theoretical assumptions in a “going beyond mainstream”, alternative position is outlined (section 4). Concepts like “languaging” and “identity-positionings” or “identiting” are central to such an alternative stance. Issues regarding democracy and equity

from Southern perspectives (often glossed as postcolonial, decolonial, emancipatory education) are raised in section 5. By “questioning the disciplines epistemological presuppositions” (Savransky, 2017, p. 12), this final section presents an overarching commentary with the intent of contributing to an epistemology of language and identity beyond the mainstream.

2. An Analytical Note on *Normal-Language* and *Normal-Diversity*

Scholars³ across “timespaces” (Edwards, 2012) have highlighted the need to understand the *usage* of language varieties/modalities, including embodiment and the deployment of tools for identity-positions and learning (Bagga-Gupta, Hansen & Feilberg, 2017; Khubchandani, 1998; Linell, 2009; Wetherell, 2010; Wittgenstein, 1999). Furthermore, the significance of *performative* conceptualizations where fluidity and processes, rather than fixed essentialist framings, are salient have been upfronted within postcolonial theory, feminism, literature studies, anthropology, and so on. An issue that engages scholarship in these traditions is their very *location* and *nature* (see Bagga-Gupta, Hansen & Feilberg, 2017; Finnegan, 2015). Here, boundaries between language varieties and identity-positions are debated, their very existence challenged (Bakhtin, 1981; Khubchandani, 1997; Landri & Neuman, 2014; Wittgenstein, 1999). Finnegan (2015) eloquently highlights these new-old discussions by upfronting assumptions of what language is and where its boundaries lie. Critiquing the consequences of such critical reflexivity for documenting a language, she questions epistemological presuppositions and confesses, at the end of her career, to be unsure about “where information about a given language should be found, or how, by, and for whom a language should be documented” (2015, p. 1).

Thus, issues related to what, where, and when is language, in addition to what scholars reproduce in their own work, constitute a small, albeit important, renewed focus within the language sciences. Here, a global South perspective related to the nature of knowledge production is relevant: which scholars are studying which language varieties/modalities and which identity-positions. Furthermore, nomenclature pluralism in the new millennium – particularly terminology that has gained popularity in Anglo-Saxon scholarship – tends to build on concepts that are naturalized. For instance, shifts in nomenclature from bi-, to multi-, to plurilingualism, including the uptake of prefixes such as trans/super/hyper, represent efforts to illuminate the *slipperiness* of empirical data from heterogeneously framed settings where individuals deploy more than one language variety/code and modality. In other words, a focus on the social practices of “normal-language” and “normal-diversity” has given rise to both nomenclature pluralism and shifts in terminology. Another interest in normal-language occurs through the recent discussions about the problematic nature and assumptions related to “monolingualism” (Bagga-Gupta, 2008; Gramling, 2016) and “native” language (Davies, 2003; Shakouri & Shakouri, 2014).⁴

In the domain of identity research, diversity – including the fields of bi/multi/inter/pluriculturalism – constitutes a cornerstone concept. Broadly defined as something that is composed of differing dimensions, elements, or qualities and as including “different types” of people in a group, it too is recognized as a simple term for a complex phenomenon. What such understandings of diversity and their relationship to culture have in common is the stratifying functions of prefixes like multi/inter/pluri/trans/super/hyper. These too index (and thereby maintain) *boundaries* between bounded separate identity-positions.

In addition to a regression to *Otherness*, not least in terms of ethnicity and race, there exists an absence of an engagement with discussions on “intersectionality” (McCall, 2005; Gunnarsson, 2017) and “hybridity” (Bhabha, 1994; Gutiérrez et al., 1999). The latter discussions appear to flourish primarily in philosophical and theoretical arenas. A recent editorial of the “International Journal of Education for Diversity” raises concerns with this renewed stratification, suggesting that the concept has been hijacked and is “often misused to merely highlight ‘racial’/‘ethnic’/‘cultural’ differences, instead of integrating individuals” many complex facets such as “gender, language(s), religion, social class, etc.” (Machart et al., 2014, p. i). Diversity, thus, continues to be conceptualized in essentialized ways, not least within education for pupils who are differently abled in terms of functionality or majority language usage (Bagga-Gupta, 2014a, 2017a). Finally, as highlighted above, differencehood, not least spurred by reviewings of old and new migrations are, in sections of the scholarship, increasingly marked through concepts such as “super/hyper-diversity” (Blommaert, 2015; Vertovec, 2006). As Pavlenko (in press) succinctly argues, not only is it fruitless to try and define diversity, “there is no heuristic that determines at what point *diversity* transforms into *superdiversity*” (in press, emphasis in original).

Thus, parallel to the renewed interest in the features that constitute normal-language, a need exists to reflect on the features of normal-diversity (Bagga-Gupta, 2013, 2014a). Taking cognizance of a performatory nature of identity-positionings in empirically pushed scholarship that does not a priori buy into neologisms brings center stage the fluidity and continuum to which attention is being (re) drawn in Machart et al., (2014), Pavlenko’s (in press), and others’ arguments. Recognizing the essentialism of labels on the one hand and the intersectional, multifaceted nature of diversity – both at the individual *and* community levels – on the other hand are central here. Such recognition potentially allows for leaving aside noun-based boundary-marked essentialist epistemologies as well as the current “terminological innovation” trends that involve “academic branding” (Pavlenko, in press). In other words, going beyond the mainstream involves recognizing the boundary-marked, imagined, essentialized nature of neologisms related to separated and fixed languages and identities (Anderson, 1991; Bagga-Gupta, 2013, 2017a). This, as Finnegan (2015), Savransky (2017), and others critically suggest, has consequences for the nature of

methodological framings that are deployed. The webs-of-understandings that emanate from the concept of “bilingualism” constitute a key illuminating case in this respect.

3. Boundaries and a Dichotomized Mainstream

3.1. Boundary-marked/marking concepts. A monolingual bias

Bilingualism has been a cornerstone concept in the language sciences since at least the 1990s and, like diversity (section 2), is recognized as being a simple term for complex conduct. Its contentious nature has seen terminological shifts, wherein prefixes such as “multi”, “pluri”, “trans”, and “super” have become popular within research and policy. Common to such shifts is the stratifying functions of the prefixes that continue to index (and thereby maintain and reproduce) *boundaries* between bounded separate language varieties.

The centrality of bilingualism in the language sciences builds upon its “boundary object” (BO) nature. BOs are concepts that are “characterized by interpretive flexibility” (Sataoen, 2016, p. 4) that enable and support adaptability and cooperation between the locations of different social worlds. Sataoen suggests that while a BO does not “accurately describe the details of any one locality or thing ... it is adaptable to a local site because it is fairly vague” (Star & Griesemer, 1989, p. 412). Its popularity and resilience on the one hand and vagueness on the other are conceptualized in terms of a central agreement “core” and a “fuzzy periphery” that differs in the local sites of different social worlds. The popularity and resilience as well as the fuzziness of the boundary marked/marking concept bilingualism builds, furthermore, on an unmarked naturalized monolingually framed norm (Bagga-Gupta 2008; Gramling 2016) or a *monolingual bias* in the language sciences. Building upon Eurocentric mainstream conceptualizations, this unmarked norm contrasts with renewed discussions about the fluid ways in which individuals as well as communities language (i.e. do language (see section 4)).

3.2. Classifications and essentialized categories within a one-school-for-all. Language and identity examples

The webs-of-understandings related to the boundary-marked/marking concept bilingualism become elaborated, for instance, through the organization of language teaching in educational institutions. How this gets played out can be illustrated through a scrutiny of how some subjects are classified in a global North curriculum. I will take the central subjects of *Swedish*, *mother tongue*, and a nationally recognized minority language, *Sami*, in the Swedish national language curriculum to highlight how classifications – implicitly and explicitly – mark and essentialize pupil identity-positions within a one-school-for-all education.

While the subject “Swedish as a second language” (*Svenska som andra språk*) is reserved for pupils who have migrated to, or whose parents or even grandparents have migrated to Sweden, all ethnic majority (including nationally

recognized minority) pupils are automatically offered the unmarked subject “Swedish”. A caveat here is the fuzziness that pertains to who can be enrolled in “Swedish as a second language”, since almost three-fourths of the pupil population that has, or whose parents/grandparents have, migrated to the nation-state study the unmarked subject “Swedish”. The curriculum furthermore offers another marked Swedish subject: “Swedish as a second language for deaf/hearing-impaired” (*Svenska som andra språk för döva/hörselskadade*). While this third Swedish subject is reserved for a group who cannot hear or are hearing-impaired, it is only offered to pupils who are enrolled in one of Sweden’s five regional segregated special schools for the deaf/hearing-impaired (HI). This means that the majority of deaf/HI pupils who are mainstreamed after receiving cochlear implants⁵ as young babies (Holmström, 2013) do not have access to this subject in mainstream settings; they are offered only the unmarked subject “Swedish” (if they are ethnic Swedish deaf/HI pupils) or perhaps “Swedish as a second language” (if they are immigrant deaf/HI pupils). Immigrant deaf pupils in the segregated schools are offered the subject “Swedish as a second language for deaf/hard of hearing”. It is also, for present purposes, interesting to note that Swedish Sign Language (SSL) is considered a “first” language for deaf pupils since the 1994/96 national curriculum (Lpo 94). Such numerical labelling is fuzzy, since reports suggest that 95% of deaf children are born into hearing families where members, at least initially, don’t use SSL. A final Swedish subject in the national curriculum targets adult immigrants and is labelled “Swedish for immigrants” (*Svenska för invandrare*).

The curriculum subject “mother tongue” is marked as the “first” single language for a pupil who has migrated or whose parents/grandparents have migrated to the nation-state of Sweden. These pupils are understood as acquiring this singular language automatically in the private spaces of the “home”. This language subject furthermore draws upon specific gender biases related to parenthood, where a mother is positioned explicitly in terms of the “natural” language instructor for a child in private spaces (Bagga-Gupta, 2017a, 2017c; Bagga-Gupta & Mäarak Leffler, 2016). Circulatory arguments (for instance, in dictionaries) equate “mother tongue” with “native language”, framing it as the language “first” learned by a person in the singular. Concepts such as “mother”, “tongue”, “native”, and “first” all collate towards monocentric webs-of-understandings. Making invisible the multiple significant others in children’s language socialization, a concept like “mother tongue” furthermore accords recognition only to language varieties that are oral/verbal (and not signed).

Five groups received recognition in terms of national minority communities in the nation-state of Sweden during the European ratification processes at the end of the 1990s.⁶ Of these, the Sami are recognized as the only “native” group in the nation-state, even though the geographical territory “Samiland/Sampi” associated with this group’s “homeland” includes the nation-states of Norway, Sweden, Finland, and Russia. The language Sami⁷ is recognized in the national curriculum as a subject that

pupils can study if they are enrolled in special Sami schools (up to grade six) in the Swedish region of Samiland. Sami can also be studied (in mainstream schools in other parts of the country) if pupils can provide evidence of a biological connection to Samiland. The language is recognized as these pupils’ “mother tongue” irrespective of whether the language is deployed in their “homes”. This situation is similar to the provision of “mother tongue” instruction when a claim to a migratory history can be made and the “first/second” language framings for pupils whose hearing status is problematic; the significant issue is that these pupils do not necessarily use their “mother tongue” or “first/second” language varieties in their “homes”.

In addition to the strict boundaries that are made relevant, the unpacking of three language subjects – Swedish, mother tongue, and Sami – illustrates the diffuse, interrelated webs-of-understandings that enable a naturalisation of explicit and implicit ideas regarding *different language codes for different learner categories*. Two organizationally framed stratifications are relevant in these processes: “horizontal divisions” (i.e. different language codes) and “vertical divisions” (i.e. different codes for different pupils) in the national curriculum (Bagga-Gupta, 2004, 2012b, 2017c). These two divisions illustrate structuring devices that (re)create and (re)mediate specific ways of understanding identity and learning. The creation and subsequent naturalized linking of bounded language varieties/codes to specific learner groups is contentious for a range of reasons. Another important caveat is that such conceptualizations are not in sync with the ways in which pupils/adults language and perform identity; they constitute an explicit selective position (in at least the geopolitical spaces of Sweden).

The webs-of-understandings linked to bilingualism discussed so far also build upon specific metaphors that reinforce other simplistic, reductionist boundaries, thus further reinforcing the BO nature of this concept (see also Lakoff & Johnson, 1984). In addition to numerical terminology (e.g. first/second/third/bi/multi) that continues to frame language in the educational landscape, relational-ownership metaphors – *my/your/their* language, *mother* tongue, *native* language, language *background* – also contribute to specific ways of understanding identity and the nature of language itself (i.e. of the what and where language is). Geographical metaphors – *national/native/home/foreign* language, *roots, background* – further frame and reinforce language- and identity-related boundaries. Another metaphor that gets reinforced relates to gendering of language and the gendered spaces of language – *mother* tongue, *home* language. Salient for present purposes is that a selective individual-centred tradition vis-à-vis learning is pushed and mediated by such nomenclature.

Such demarcation processes are furthermore reinforced across the activity systems of research and higher education. In other words, horizontal and vertical divisions flourish both as administrative categories in schools and within higher education and research. These bounded concepts exist in relation to an imaginary static, correct, and desired point of departure (i.e. a

“Swedish language” norm and a norm-identity), including assumptions regarding how language learning occurs. Taking the identity-position of an imagined monolingual native ethnic Swede as a naturalized point of departure, including selective understandings of language learning, thus legitimizes other areas of language and identity in the curriculum.

3.3. Norms of a dichotomized mainstream

The dichotomized nature of the mainstream scholarship on language and identity is constituted by a paradoxical continuum. At one end exists a relatively less “visible” norm that nevertheless potently shapes our understandings of language and identity. This *dominant* default norm is marked by a monolingual, monocultural, and monoethnic perspective and nomenclature. It is naturalized in Eurocentric Northern discourses and is often *not made* visible in either mundane or academic discourses. While the use of only “one” language/dialect/sociolect constitutes an uncommon human condition, it is this idea that sets the standard. An essentialist, prescriptive-ideological framing of language and identity thus marks and shapes how institutional support for marginalized individuals has developed across timespaces in Northern contexts like Sweden. The webs-of-understandings associated with this dominating, albeit less visible, norm build upon a “principle of sameness”: everyone is considered the same and therefore must be treated as same. Following this premise, integration and mainstreaming are understood as ways of achieving equity (Rees, 1998; Walby 2003, 2011). The previous placement of “native” children in white families in North America and Australia and the current education of deaf children in mainstream monolingual hearing schools constitute examples of how a sameness principle gets operationalized. In scholarship, it is represented in traditional linguistics, language studies, and separate fields of identity research (i.e. disability research, gender research, and research that focuses on immigrants).

At the other end of the mainstream dichotomy lies the more marked or visible norm related to the common human condition as far as language use and identity are concerned. This condition, however, paradoxically gets marked as the deviant, marginalized, not-normal in Northern discourses. It gets framed in academic and popular discourses through boundary-marked/markings concepts such as bi/multi/pluri/translingualism, bi/multi/pluri/transculturalism, bi/multiethnicities, hyper/superdiversity, and the like. In other words, the common condition of diversity gets aberrantly framed, marking and making visible (albeit as the not-normal) multiple language varieties and membership in multiple communities of practices. This position also plays a significant role in how othering of the common human condition continues to take place, not least in Northern spaces. In other words, the webs-of-understandings associated with the dominating, marked norm highlights the common human condition as belonging to the marginalized Other. This paradox, made visible in both popular and academic discourses, builds upon a “principle of difference”: people are different and thus need to be

treated differently for achieving equality (Rees, 1998; Walby 2003, 2011). Implicit or explicit segregation and special treatment are considered important for achieving equity. Placing immigrant children in special language streams and educating deaf children in segregated bilingual or oral schools constitute examples of the operationalization of a difference principle. In scholarship, it is represented in traditional linguistics, language studies, and separate fields of identity research, such as disability research and research that focuses on immigrants.

Both ends of this paradoxical mainstream are interlinked and represent normative Northern discourses where language and identity are approached through, and tend to be reduced to, technical, essentialized epistemologies. Such understandings are critically relevant for the organizing of institutionalized learning for children/adults across geopolitical spaces generally, not least in Northern contexts such as Sweden. In contrast to Finnegan’s (2015) and alternative Southern conceptualizations⁸ regarding language and identity, mainstream dichotomized positions build upon understandings of language in terms of something that can be pinpointed to a specific space – a dictionary, the brain, a classroom, an entire nation-state. Such understandings are, in other words, mapped onto individuals, groups, institutions (i.e. schools), and geopolitical spaces (i.e. nation-states). The principles of sameness and difference together with boundary-marked/markings terminology that circulates within schools, higher education, and research contribute towards and reinforce the webs-of-understandings and assumptions of the dichotomized mainstream. Here, the less visible “mono” norm continues to play a hegemonic role in how Othering of the common – albeit boundary-marked – human condition takes place.

4. Language and Identity: Beyond the Mainstream

Shifting one’s gaze to the margins requires center-staging performances of language and identity. Focusing on mundane everyday life inside and outside schools, including digital spaces, is an important academic agenda at these margins. This entails understanding what transpires when children and adults “do” language and identity. Going beyond the naturalized, looped assumptions embedded in the norms of the dichotomized mainstream thus allows for radically *rethinking* issues of language and identity. Focusing on recorded and archival “naturalistic” empirical data (Guba & Lincoln, 1994), as well as new-old nomenclature that steers clear of boundary-markings is key here. Naturalistic data, compared to reported or elicited data, opens alternative windows of opportunity for unpacking the complexities of languaging and identifying.

A fundamental premise here is that everyday life is significant, both as a site where language and identity play out and one that needs analytical scrutiny. Everyday life is a complex arena that is multilayered, unpredictable, and, at times, chaotic. Everyday life is invisible and human beings, including scholars, tend to have implicit or explicit assumptions about what transpires here. The mundane

nature of social practices become visible either when daily routines get disturbed or when specific research traditions explicitly go beyond a focus upon reported or elicited data *and* steer clear of academic branding nomenclature. While everyday life may also be focused within dichotomized mainstream positions (as highlighted in sections 2 and 3), a nomenclature that builds upon a priori boundary-marked/marking concepts as well as monolingual biases tends to frame research there. Research that goes beyond the mainstream is curious about such queries as the following: What are the ways in which people language in settings that are labelled mono/bi/multi/pluri/translingual? What do bilingual (or other boundary-marked/marking concepts') practices look like? What practices make a human being mono/bi/multi/pluri/translingual? In contrast to bilingualism, what are multi-, pluri-, or translingual practices? A related set of questions and concerns are raised with regard to identity and diversity.

Thus, going beyond the mainstream can, for present purposes, be understood in two closely related senses: first, in terms of the doing of language and identity, and second, in terms of the nature of research that is conducted. In addition to offering a theoretical lens, a focus on everyday life has concomitant methodologically framed consequences. Going beyond people's concrete accounts or reports (i.e. what they think they or others do or say about different aspects of everyday life) or a focus on a single scale of analysis (such as on social interaction or on institutional or national policy), center staging the mundaneness of human action takes place across physical, geopolitical, virtual, and temporal sites. Such research tries to acknowledge issues and challenges related to emically studying the complexities of languaging, identity-positioning, and learning within, outside, and across sites.

A performative stance on communication, where language and identity are understood *as* social action, differs significantly from essentialist, static, bounded understandings common in the dichotomized mainstream. This constitutes a central point of departure in both theoretical sociocultural and Southern perspectives. Performatory-marked terminology shifts in the scholarship – knowledging, together with languaging, identity-positioning, and identifying – mark key epistemological framings. Thus, marking a paradigmatic shift, knowledge and learning are equated in terms of participation in communities of *practices* and *practitioners*. Social interactions across communities reframe experiences and enable “boundary-crossing” (Säljö, 2003). Here, languaging is recognized as a seamless meaning-making enterprise constituted by a continuum across varieties and modalities that humans deploy *to language*.

A performatory stance implies that linguistic units, including modality-related resources, constitute meaning-making tools. Thus, for instance, human beings in the 21st century language in ways where oral, textual, and digital resources constitute a “continuum” and are “chained” (Bagga-Gupta, 2008, 2014b, 2017a, 2017b; Gynne & Bagga-Gupta, 2013; Messina Dahlberg & Bagga-Gupta, 2014). In other words, digital resources effortlessly

penetrate textual and oral communication. For instance, emojis and nonalphabetic symbols litter contemporary Latin-based writings – both in digital written languaging across a computer keyboard, smartphone, and iPad (Bagga-Gupta, 2017b; Gynne, 2016) and in traditional paper and pen written languaging (Gynne & Bagga-Gupta, 2015). Nonalphabetic symbols such as @ and # are used in both oral talk and written communication. For instance, the written communication, “Let's meet @ Churchgate”, is rendered as follows in oral talk, “Let's meet at Churchgate”.

A key premise here is that it is through languaging that identity-positionings receive meanings, at least temporarily (Bagga-Gupta, Hansen & Feilberg, 2017). Framed in sociocultural Southern perspectives, going beyond a dichotomized mainstream implies that an understanding of human conduct needs to build on the nitty-grittiness of mundane life processes and actions, including languaging and identifying in textual data (i.e. archives, policy, and curricula texts, such as those discussed in section 3). In other words, such a shift calls attention to the need for empirically framed reviewings and researchings where recognition is accorded to the constitutive boundary-marked/marking role of language in *both* language and identity research.

Such a position counters the tangibility and nounness conferred on language, learning, and identity in the dichotomized mainstream. Recognized as fluid processes, verbs in the margins, when language and identity are objectified and captured for heuristic purposes, they risk losing their complexities in the research enterprise. Every time we take a snapshot or freeze them into a tangible thing, we simplify the many ways in which human beings language, the many ways in which humans perform identity, and the numerous pathways through which human beings learn. Languaging instead of language, identifying instead of identity, and learning as cultivation and boundary-crossing instead of learning as transfer of knowledge is what human beings do in everyday life. As such, we always perform ourselves in and through communication, and this is the foundation of learning and development. Going beyond the dichotomized mainstream also implies that we as scholars need to – in the analytical enterprise – constantly remind ourselves that people are *always* situated within language, within learning, and within identity. Human beings (analysts included) can never go outside of language, we cannot stop identifying, and we can never *not* learn. We are, in short, doomed to communicate and participate in identity work. We, as Goffman stated, “perform ourselves” in and through communication.

While we, as scholars, have inherited conceptual understandings that can be framed in terms of a dichotomized mainstream, and some of us have embraced such concepts as languaging, performativity, hybridity, and so on, we continue to work within the frameworks of naturalized, interlinked webs-of-understandings because, in part, scholarship infrequently engages in analytically pushed empirical work that focuses on everyday life. This constitutes a gap that can be understood as an “empirical

ghetto" (Clark et al., 1998) in the language sciences. This gap raises significant issues related to democracy and equity.

5. Democracy and Equity: Raising Issues From Southern Perspectives

The fundamental assumptions that frame and substantiate an alternative position beyond the dichotomized mainstream on language and identity are not new, but rather in need of revitalization. We infuse concepts such as language, identity, bilingualism, and diversity in everyday commonsensical ways, but also with a range of meanings in research (Bagga-Gupta, Feilberg & Hansen, 2017). Differences arise not least since such concepts have become fossilized as tangible entities that one can view objectively, dissect, scrutinize, tweeze out specific dimensions of, and make predictions about. Based on a disciplinary or a given – a priori based – theoretical stance creates a technified sense of knowing what language is, what learning or what identity and diversity are. While a sense of being able to control and handle these concepts is misleading, such a stance creates epistemological confusion at different scales, and this, in turn, has pragmatic consequences. Here, decolonial perspectives can be illuminating. These do not build upon "a fixed set of propositions but [constitute] a challenge to develop new knowledge projects and new ways of learning with globally expanded resources" (Connell, 2014, p. 210). This calls for an "ecology of knowledges" (Santos, 2014, p. viii) that upfronts the "question of epistemology" in terms of how specific scholarship – for present purposes language and identity – "comes to know and represent its objects of study" (Savransky, 2017, p. 12). A decolonial perspective strives to make visible Northern hegemonies – inside European, Asian, African, and other spaces – where *alternative epistemologies* are marginalized. Southern perspectives highlight a distinction between geopolitical places *from* spaces of dominance/subjugation across what is glossed as the north-south or east-west. In other words, decoloniality constitutes a *perspective* that has relevance for all geopolitical spaces with relevance to issues of hegemonies and marginalization processes.

5.1. Out of the mainstream: on centres and margins

A decolonial position questions the relationship between centres and margins with regard to for whom, by whom, and in what spaces such relationships are operationalized. The emergence of the knowledge society, increased global-local migration flows, the explosion of social media, and disparate regional power and resource shifts, including current societal conflicts, have shaped not only the sociocultural fabric of human existence but also the parameters of the research enterprise itself (Connell, 2007; Savransky, 2017).

Critical of how globalization is being conceptualized, including the reductionist ways in which marginalization is itself handled analytically, Omoniyi (2015) calls for discussions on "Northern versus Southern conceptualisations of 'globalization'". He raises a new

range of critical questions where the focus shifts to investigating "The Centre and how The Centre perceives and constructs itself" in tandem with what alternative articulations of "The Center" can be glimpsed if Southern conceptualizations were center staged (Omoniyi, 2015).

Similarly, calling for "a decolonial imagination", Savransky (2017) highlights a "constructive, political affirmation ... of alternative – and often suppressed, silenced and marginalised – realities" (2017, p. 13). These recent articulations call for the recognition of "alternative voices" (Hasnain, Bagga-Gupta & Mohan, 2013) that shake and dislodge the stability of epistemologies of the dichotomized mainstream. "What is at stake is the larger task of the very decolonization of knowledge, and being, including institutions such as the university" (Maldonado-Torres, 2011, p. 1). Drawing upon various "turns", especially the Decolonial Turn (Maldonado-Torres, 2011; Mignolo, 2009, 2012); the Mobility Turn (Landri & Neuman, 2014); and the Boundary-Turn (Bagga-Gupta, 2013; Bagga-Gupta & Surian, 2014) "center-stage the growing disparity in newer-colonial power relationships in research, including access to and the acknowledgement of different epistemologies in the learning sciences, not least when cultural and linguistic diversity are in focus". Transgressing Northern hegemonies and turning towards alternative voices where Southern scholarship comes into dialogue in its own terms with dominant conceptualizations vis-à-vis language and identity is the salient message here.

Situating the examples of classifications and essentialized categories discussed in section 3.2 against such framings illustrates ways in which concepts create and steer webs-of-understandings that are diffuse, loop, and reinforce one another in the language sciences. It is in such a sense that BOs, like bilingualism, constitute key concepts that exist in relation to imaginary, static, correct, and desired points of departure. They are related to other concepts that are imagined in and through mathematical, spatial ownership and gendered terminology. Finnegan's (2015) sharp reminder to scholars working within the language-learning fields calls for going beyond dominating mainstream understandings (section 3), making salient the location and nature of language and identity (section 2). These old-new discussions allow for the scrutiny of the naturalized dichotomized state of the language and identity mainstream scholarship as it relates specifically to educational institutions.

5.2. Epistemologies: analytical and institutional

While being an institutional activity system in itself, research differs in fundamental ways from other institutional activity systems (i.e. schools). By deploying analytically pushed questions, methodologies, and theoretical framings refined over time, research is entrusted with systematically illuminating phenomena under scrutiny against the backdrop of previously accumulated knowledge in and across a domain. However, epistemologies are themselves historically framed into separate disciplines that become *stratified* as well as *fossilised* across time. Current calls for multi/cross/inter/transdisciplinary research aim to weaken such

boundedness as well as draw attention to the centrality of analytical viewings in research or the knowledge rebuilding enterprise. This notwithstanding, the issue at hand is that research into language and identity differs significantly from the work done within educational institutions. Thus, what is glossed in terms of a bilingual pupil/adult, gender, functional dis/ability, or immigrant pupil/adult in institutional activity fields such as bilingual education, special education, and so on has significantly *different agendas* when compared to research work that scrutinizes these fields. The analytical enterprise calls for critically reviewing and researching not only specific institutional activity fields but also the very assumptions and norms that underlie the analytical enterprise itself. Thus, key assumptions regarding language, identity, and learning constitute lenses with which different methodological and conceptual tool kits are deployed by researchers. Unpackaging the core assumptions/norms of the dichotomized mainstream but also those of the alternative marginalized epistemologies that frame research in the areas of language and identity are, thus, significant.

Focusing on communities of practices and practitioners where more than one language is deployed in everyday life, and steering clear of a priori boundary-marked/marking concepts, potentially allows for understanding the norms of multiple ways of languaging and identifying. Studying their mundane nature enables going beyond Eurocentric quaint ideas related to bi/multi/pluri/translingualism, bi/multi/pluri/transculturalism, and the divisions that create and fossilise diversity when monolingualism, monoculturalism, and singular nation-state-framed separate identities are taken to be the norm.

5.3. Analytical unit-of-analysis and hybridity norms

Analytical-methodological considerations in a going-beyond-a-mainstream position build upon a unit of analysis marked by a “Boundary-Turn” and other associated turns (see above). Moving beyond a focus on essentialized divisions that mark individuals, activities, places, or specific scales, recognition is accorded to the irreducibility of human action across timespaces and across the use of material and intellectual tools. Thus, taking socioculturally framed conceptual ideas regarding the irreducibility of social interactions (where cultural tools are central) across timespaces as a *fundamental* unit of analysis (Wertsch, 1998), a counter-stance position argues for the need to have languaging data rather than pretheorized noun-based ideas inform discussion and policy. Southern tenants allow us to focus on the hegemonic layers involved in language and identity without falling into essentialist nation-state units that are, despite their instability and internal complexities, popularly taken as points of departure in research on language and identity.

Discussions related to the concept “liminality” or thresholds and in-between spaces (Bhabha, 1994; Hall, 1992) are also based on calls for moving beyond bounded, fixed notions of language and identity. The concept hybrid(ity) flourishes within and outside scholarly

domains. A clear sense of bringing together elements from two different areas into a “hybrid” new one is marked in this usage. Herein lies the significance of borders and margins as sites of beginnings and what lies beyond: “there is a sense of disorientation, a disturbance of direction, in the ‘beyond’: an exploratory, restless movement ... here and there, on all sides ... hither and thither, back and forth” (Bhabha, 1994, p. 2; see also Bagga-Gupta, 2013). Hybridity has more recently come to represent how culture and identity are nonlinear and chaotic processes that play out at thresholds and in-between spaces. The move from “fixity” to “hybridity” points to “openings between spaces of uncertainty ... [highlighting] a break with essential colonial categories” of identity and culture (Jones, 2011, p. 30).

Here, two issues are relevant for present purposes. First, discussions related to language and language learning are rarely framed in relation to hybridity. This constitutes a potentially rich and mutually beneficial area waiting to be engaged with. Furthermore, the concept hybrid(ity) within the human sciences literature continues to be nonempirically pushed. It, in its liminal and in-between sense, has the potential to contribute to empirical explorations that illuminate the complexities of language and identity beyond the dominating mainstream. In a similar vein, the more recent explorations of the decolonial idea of “Third Spaces” (Bhabha, 1994), within education (Gutiérrez, 2008; Gutiérrez et al., 1999), calls for the need to illuminate social practices across north-south settings with the intent of illustrating the complexities of languaging and identifying across timespaces.

Building upon empirical ethnographically framed research, what I have argued for in this paper is how a focus on languaging opens possibilities for discussing learning and identity-positionings that take place in and via the deployment of one or more language varieties and modalities. Such an alternative position goes beyond the dominating, dichotomizing positions related to language, language-learning methods, and the organization of language learning. These, as I have illustrated, create specific framings for children/adults across institutions for learning, on the one hand, and the very organization of research and higher education, on the other hand. Going beyond a mainstream position builds upon a critical humanistic thinking where theoretical sociocultural and Southern framings are central. These enable new ways of understanding the participation and inclusion of learners who are at a disadvantage (i.e. they open new ways to conceptualize a one-education-for-all). Such a position raises pertinent issues related to democracy and equity where questions regarding for whom, by whom, why, when, and so on are made relevant.

Notes

¹ Sociocultural framings draw inspiration, for instance, from Lave and Wenger (1991); Linell (2009); Säljö (2002, 2003); and Wertsch (1998, 2002). Decolonial perspectives are inspired, for instance, by Bhabha (1994), Maldonado-Torres (2011), Santos (2014), and Savransky (2017).

- ² Information regarding the research projects related to ethnicity, gender, and functional dis/ability that I draw upon here can be accessed at www.ju.se/faculty/bagsan and www.ju.se/ccd.
- ³ Whose work can, for the most part, be situated within theoretical or anthropologically framed discussions.
- ⁴ The fact that my Word program does not recognize the term *monolingualism* but recognizes the lexical item *bilingualism* and marks the former is also evidence of the naturalization of the latter.
- ⁵ Advanced hearing aids operated into the inner ear.
- ⁶ The groups and the language varieties identified in the ratification processes include Sami (Sami), Finns (Finnish), Tornedalers (Meänkeili), Roma (Romani), and Jews (Yiddish).
- ⁷ At least 10 Uralic language varieties are glossed as one language – Sami – in the nation-state of Sweden.
- ⁸ See Southern Multilingualisms and Diversities Consortium, <https://southernmultilingualisms.org>; Hasnain, Bagga-Gupta and Mohan (2013); Khubchandani (1997); and Bagga-Gupta, Hansen and Feilberg (2017).

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