

Multilingualism and Multimodality

Current Challenges for Educational Studies

Ingrid de Saint-Georges and
Jean-Jacques Weber



SensePublishers

Multilingualism and Multimodality

The Future of Education Research

Volume 2

Series Editor

Daniel Tröhler

University of Luxembourg

One characteristic of modern societies is that they are likely to assign their social problems to education. Arising in the specific context of the late eighteenth century, this ‘educational reflex’ paved the way for education to become an important social factor on regional, national and global scales. Witnesses for this upswing are for instance the expansion of compulsory schooling, the state organization and tertiarization of teacher education and thus the introduction of education departments in the universities.

However, in contrast to the social artefact of modern societies – pluralism in languages, cultures, values, and customs –, education research seems in many respects still committed to ideas of unity or uniformity: For instance, the global standardization movement fosters uniformity in curriculum and content to serve the purpose of dominant global evaluation schemes, which in turn are based on the idea of human cognition as an immutable arrangement of mental processes with regard to learning. Moreover, critics of these developments often argue with arguments and convictions that can be traced back to the time when the education sciences emerged in the context of the cultural and political idea of the uniform national state.

Obviously, today’s education research often operates using concepts that are derived from ideas of unity and uniformity in order to tackle the challenges of cultural and linguistic plurality in the context of democratic societies. This is both a paradox and an occasion to reflect upon the present and future role of education research in the context of modern societies in four attempts.

Education Systems in Historical, Cultural, and Sociological Perspectives (Vol. 1);

Multimodality and Multilingualism: Current Challenges for Education Studies (Vol. 2);

Professionalization of Actors in Education Domains (Vol. 3).

Multilingualism and Multimodality

Current Challenges for Educational Studies

Edited by;

Ingrid de Saint-Georges

University of Luxembourg

and

Jean-Jacques Weber

University of Luxembourg



SENSE PUBLISHERS
ROTTERDAM/BOSTON/TAIPEI

A C.I.P. record for this book is available from the Library of Congress.

ISBN: 978-94-6209-264-8 (paperback)

ISBN: 978-94-6209-265-5 (hardback)

ISBN: 978-94-6209-266-2 (e-book)

Published by: Sense Publishers,
P.O. Box 21858,
3001 AW Rotterdam,
The Netherlands
<https://www.sensepublishers.com/>

Printed on acid-free paper

All Rights Reserved © 2013 Sense Publishers

No part of this work may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, microfilming, recording or otherwise, without written permission from the Publisher, with the exception of any material supplied specifically for the purpose of being entered and executed on a computer system, for exclusive use by the purchaser of the work.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

The Future of Education Research: Introduction to the Series of Three Volumes <i>Daniel Tröhler</i>	vii
Preface <i>Ingrid de Saint-Georges & Jean-Jacques Weber</i>	ix
Multilingualism, Multimodality and the Future of Education Research <i>Ingrid de Saint-Georges</i>	1
 I. Multilingualism: Concepts, Practices and Policies	
Superdiverse Repertoires and the Individual <i>Jan Blommaert & Ad Backus</i>	11
From Multilingual Practices to Social Processes: The Understanding of Linguistic ‘Respect’ in Contact Zones <i>Luisa Martín Rojo</i>	33
Language, Superdiversity and Education <i>Adrian Blackledge, Angela Creese & Jaspreet Kaur Takhi</i>	59
Multilingualism in EU Institutions: Between Policy Making and Implementation <i>Ruth Wodak</i>	81
Multilingual Universities and the Monolingual Mindset <i>Jean-Jacques Weber & Kristine Horner</i>	101
 II. Multimodality: Concepts, Practices and Consequences	
Recognizing Learning: A Perspective from a Social Semiotic Theory of Multimodality <i>Gunther Kress</i>	119
Multimodality and Digital Technologies in the Classroom <i>Carey Jewitt</i>	141
Power, Miscommunication and Cultural Diversity: Applying a Discourse Analytic Lens to Vocational Education Practices <i>Laurent Filliettaz, Stefano Losa & Barbara Duc</i>	153
Geographies of Discourse: Action Across Layered Spaces <i>Ron Scollon</i>	183
Index	199

DANIEL TRÖHLER

THE FUTURE OF EDUCATION RESEARCH

Introduction to the series of three volumes

One characteristic of modern societies is that they are likely to assign their social problems to education. Arising in the specific context of the late eighteenth century, this ‘educational reflex’ paved the way for education to become an important social factor on local, regional, national and global scales. Witnesses for this upswing are, for instance, the expansion of compulsory schooling, the state organization and tertiarization of teacher education and thus the introduction of educational departments in the universities, the introduction of certificates for both students and teachers.

However, in contrast to the social artefact of modern societies – pluralism in languages, cultures, values, and customs – the educational sciences seem in many respects still committed to ideas of unity or uniformity: For instance, the global standardization movement fosters uniformity in curriculum and content to serve dominant global evaluation schemes. These schemes in turn are based on the idea of human cognition as an immutable arrangement of mental processes with regard to learning. And the critics of these developments often argue with motives, arguments, and convictions that can be traced back to the time when the educational sciences emerged in the context of the cultural and political idea of the uniform (and of course superior) national state. In other words: Today, often the education sciences operate using concepts that are derived from ideas of unity and uniformity in order to tackle the challenges of cultural and linguistic plurality in the context of democratic societies. This obviously is both a paradox and an occasion to reflect about the present and future role of the educational sciences in the context of modern societies.

With over 40% of inhabitants not having Luxembourgish passports, Luxembourg is a multinational and thus a multilingual and multicultural society. With its three official languages Luxembourgish, German, French, and with Portuguese as first language of nearly 20% of the inhabitants, it is also a multilingual society. Against this background, Luxembourg is predestined to evaluate the ‘educational reflex’ mentioned above, the assigning of social problems to education. The University of Luxembourg, which defines itself as ‘multilingual, international and strongly focused on research,’ responded to this desideratum by making ‘Education and Learning in Multilingual and Multicultural Contexts’ a Research Priority in the frame of the current four-year-plan (2010-2013).

One particular challenge of this research priority is the self-reflection or critical self-evaluation of the educational sciences in the context of the social expectations

concerning education. Therefore, one of the major aims of ‘Education and Learning in Multilingual and Multicultural Contexts’ was to assess the future of educational research with outstanding international scholars. The 2010-2013 lecture series ‘The Future of Education Research’ is an integral part of this research priority. Here the international discussion is not restricted to questions regarding technical feasibility and methods of educational ambitions. Self-reflection or critical self-evaluation meant precisely refraining from compliant adoptions of research desiderata defined by stakeholders of political, cultural, religious, or developmental institutions and being engaged in the (self-) critical assessment of the legitimacy and general feasibility of educational desiderata, that is of social expectations emerging from the educational reflex. Education research was defined not simply as a service towards fulfilling social expectations but like any other academic discipline a field in which its actors, the researchers, define the appropriateness of its research agenda – research questions and methods – in the realm of their peers.

With these premises, the future of education research is defined to be international, self-reflexive, and interdisciplinary and to include a broad range of traditional academic disciplines such as the education sciences in the narrower sense, psychology, sociology, linguistics, history, political sciences, cognitive sciences, and neurology sciences. And it is meant to focus on the macro, meso and micro levels of education questions and problems analytically, empirically, and historically. The invited international colleagues addressed their respective scholarship to the topic under consideration, the future of education research, in one of three lecture series at the University of Luxembourg from 2010 to 2013. In accordance with the interdisciplinary approach, the relevant questions were not clustered around traditional disciplines but around several focal points, resulting in this series of the following three volumes to be published between 2011 and 2014:

- *Education Systems in Historical, Cultural, and Sociological Perspectives* (Vol. 1)
- *Multimodality and Multilingualism: Current Challenges for Educational Studies* (Vol. 2)
- *Professionalization of Actors in Education Domains* (Vol. 3)

We greatly appreciate the support of the University of Luxembourg and extend thanks for the opportunity to establish a Research Priority dedicated to ‘Education and Learning in Multilingual and Multicultural Contexts,’ within which the lecture series ‘The Future of Education Research’ is being held. We are grateful to all the excellent international scholars participating in this research discussion. And last but not least, we sincerely thank Peter de Liefde of Sense Publishers for his support of this series and for giving us, by means of publication, the opportunity to open up this discussion on a more global level.

Walferdange, Luxembourg, August 2011

Daniel Tröhler, Head of the Research Priority ‘Education and Learning in Multilingual and Multicultural Contexts’, University of Luxembourg

PREFACE

The contributions presented in this volume derive from the second lecture series – in a set of four – dedicated to the interdisciplinary investigation of the ‘Future of Education Research’. This second series took place between September 2011 and January 2012 at the Faculty of Language and Literature, Humanities, Arts and Education (FLSHASE), University of Luxembourg. It was organized under the umbrella of the University Research Priority on ‘Education and Learning in Multilingual and Multicultural Contexts’. Complementing the first series on *Education Systems in Historical, Cultural, and Sociological Perspectives*, the goal of the second series was to address some of the varied educational challenges resulting from two contemporary phenomena: on the one hand, the new dimensions of social, cultural and linguistic diversity arising out of unprecedented migration and mobility patterns; and on the other hand, the increased visibility of technology (old and new) both in schools and outside them. Hence, the focus for this volume on *multilingualism* and *multimodality*. Nine scholars, presented their work for the second lecture series: Jan Blommaert (Babylon Centre, Tilburg University), Gunther Kress (Institute of Education, University of London), Adrian Blackledge (MOSAIC Centre for Multilingualism, University of Birmingham), Laurent Filliettaz (University of Geneva), Carey Jewitt (Institute of Education, University of London), Jean-Jacques Weber (University of Luxembourg), Ruth Wodak (Lancaster University), Kevin Leander (Vanderbilt University) and Luisa Martín Rojo (Autonomous University of Madrid). We are very grateful that they readily accepted our invitation and shared their expertise with us.

A lecture series is constituted by presentations and texts, but only takes place when rooms have been prepared, flyers posted, receptions organized, hotels booked and when a good audience attends. Many colleagues have contributed to make this event possible and we would like to express our appreciation to Ragnhild Barbu, Andrea Hake, Marianne Graffé and Sofia Pacheco for their support during the lecture series and beyond. Constance Ellwood, Adam Le Nevez, Kristian Mortensen and Stefan Serwe have moreover delivered excellent editorial assistance when it was most needed. It has also been heart-warming to see our colleagues and students attend this collective event with so much enthusiasm. Their astute and stimulating questions made the interdisciplinary debates all the more lively and thought-provoking.

Another feature of this lecture series was that, on the day following each presentation, small workshops were organized with the speakers for doctoral candidates. During the workshops, concepts, frameworks and methodologies were dissected every bit as much as the social practices and processes involved in doing linguistic and semiotic research. The participants in the workshops were: Stefan Serwe, Rahel Stoike, Philip Blanca, Katja Weinerth. They were joined on various occasions by colleagues and students (Kristian Mortensen, Patrick Sunnen, Anne Franziskus, Claudia Seele, Adrienne Ouafo, Sarah Vasco Correia, Martin Kracheel and Roberto Gomez). These participants' projects in the fields of multilingualism and multimodality nurtured invigorating debates.

Finally, a thread was woven into the series that we had not anticipated. Many informal conversations evoked scholar and linguist Ron Scollon. Ron having been Ingrid's mentor at Georgetown University, this was not entirely by chance; the mere mention of his name usually triggered thoughts, stories and anecdotes. As a result, when we were putting this volume together, we thought he might have enjoyed sitting in such good company and being part of this conversation. Suzie Scollon, his wife, gave us permission to print a previously unpublished plenary lecture delivered at Aalborg. It has been included as a coda for this book.

Ingrid de Saint-Georges & Jean-Jacques Weber
Walferdange, Luxembourg, August 2012

INGRID DE SAINT-GEORGES

MULTILINGUALISM, MULTIMODALITY AND THE FUTURE OF EDUCATION RESEARCH

EDUCATION IN TIMES OF CHANGE

The labels ‘post-modern condition’, ‘late modernity’, and ‘superdiversity’ (Vertovec 2007) are some of the terms used in the discourse of researchers in the social sciences and humanities to capture aspects of the transformations and new conditions evident in today’s developed societies. These transformations can be seen in a great many areas of social life but two examples suffice to give a glimpse of their extent.

The first has to do with changes in patterns of mobility and migration in a ‘globalized’ world. A generation or two ago, immigrating most often meant restricted contact with the home country, assimilation into host community norms and values, and lasting settlement in the new place. Now the picture is much more fluid and complex. Migrants today often have a footing in more than one community; they have more complex geographical and biographical trajectories; and the communities they join are less unified than previously believed. In addition, it is not only migrants who exhibit transnational behaviors; ‘locals’ do too. Tarrow (2005: xiii), for example, uses the term ‘rooted cosmopolitans’ for those individuals who grow up and remain firmly rooted in one place but who increasingly take part in global flows of information, communication, solidarities or contentions through travel, work or digital media experiences. In the globalized era, transnational connections are thus increasingly ‘taken to new levels’ and ‘shaped in new forms’ (Tarrow 2005: xiii).

The second example of profound transformation affecting contemporary societies is associated with the development of information and communication technologies. From an economic perspective, these new technologies are the source of new kinds of productivity and organizational forms, and of the development of a global economy. At the individual level, they also make possible ‘texts’, ‘relations’ and ‘actions’ (Jones & Hafner 2012) that, previously, simply did not exist. Social media for example allow interactions in virtual environments with people never encountered face-to-face and who reside in distant geographical locations. Such media permit the fast spread of news to a large audience by tweeting and retweeting a line of information. They allow simultaneous off- and on-line conversations, the exertion of political pressure on governments through on-line petitions, management of one’s bank account without leaving home, and so on. In this digital era, new media bring challenges to, among other things, existing notions of work, learning, identity, literacy, social networks, bodies, gender, generation, ethnicities, agency, time and

geographical space. New media transform not only ‘the way [people] communicate but also “who they can be” and the kinds of relationships they can have with others’ (Jones & Hafner 2012: 1).

These late-modern conditions create a great many interesting challenges as they are of course reflected in the classroom and other sites of learning. Conditions of ‘superdiversity’ (Vertovec 2007) for example – ‘more people moving to more places, with more complex social formations ensuing’¹ – mean that, in educational institutions, varied practices, linguistic repertoires, and symbolic and economic resources come into contact, posing questions about how these institutions choose to deal with this diversity and how digital technologies transform the classroom. Visual and multimodal texts for example redefine what counts as knowledge, how it can be presented, engaged with and produced. With these transformations, the meaning of teaching, learning, interpreting and assessing demands reconsideration.

It was in order to open up talk on these changing conditions that we invited the contributors to communicate on multilingualism and multimodality. Although multilingualism and multimodality are on the surface seemingly unrelated, we expected that they would constitute useful vantage points from which to observe and describe some of the changing experiences and priorities brought to educational sites by the new social order.

MULTILINGUALISM AND MULTIMODALITY: DIVERSE READINGS

Overview of the Chapters

Two kinds of readings of the texts assembled in this volume are possible (Handler 2012). One is a scaled-down, ‘episodic’ kind of reading. We might go into the arguments of the various chapters and find out how each in its own way reflects some particulars of the changing social order and the consequences for education and educational research. Or we can take a ‘scaled up’, synthetic, bird’s eye view approach, reading all the texts and observing how *together* they construct a certain image of the conditions under which we live and in which we operate. This in turn allows us to reflect critically on the society and institutions making these conditions possible (as also suggested by Kress, this volume). We start with the ‘scaled-down’ approach.

The first part of the volume – *Multilingualism: concepts, practices and policies* – begins by considering broadly some of the theoretical and practical consequences of ethnic, linguistic and cultural diversity as we know them now and as they are visible in educational settings. Jan Blommaert & Ad Backus thus begin by reconsidering what it means to ‘know a language’. They argue that language learning is much more eclectic and piecemeal than is often assumed and that individuals, especially those with complex track records of mobility, have in general larger and richer linguistic repertoires than is commonly thought. Assessment instruments however often fail to take into account these diverse repertoires, which may not be distributed homogeneously and do not necessarily coincide with the repertoires valued by

the assessing authorities. Luisa Martín Rojo next examines what happens when individuals with different resources come together in the ‘contact zones’ (Pratt 1981: 584) produced by contemporary migration. She considers how the legitimacy of linguistic resources is established or denied, especially in contexts where such resources are unequally distributed or valued, such as the context of ‘bridging classes’ for newly arrived immigrants. Adrian Blackledge, Angela Creese and Jaspreet Kaur Takhi likewise discuss the limits of traditional definitions of the concepts of ‘language’ and ‘multilingualism’. Analyzing the exchanges in heritage classrooms, they propose that research should go beyond studying the multiple competences and repertoires of multilingual learners and rather make visible the social, individual and cultural tensions and creativity that arise from belonging to multiple communities, in the sense of being able to appropriate and ventriloquate many different ‘voices’ at once.

The next two chapters are concerned with how language policies accommodate multilingualism (or fail to do so). Ruth Wodak first examines multilingualism within EU institutions. She explores the everyday practices of the eurocrats working in these structures and the language ideologies related to multilingualism internalized as part of their work. Wodak emphasizes that although multilingualism is such a key element for the construction of an ‘inclusive and democratic Europe’, there are as yet no articulated multilingual policies in the context of the EU institutions. While we might think that if such policies existed they could provide a model for other institutions which have transnationalism, migration and mobility at their heart, Jean-Jacques Weber and Kristine Horner’s chapter warns us that it might be some time before a ‘multilingual mindset’ takes over from the ‘monolingual habitus’. Their study of language policies in two multilingual universities indeed shows that even those institutions that seem most engaged in developing multilingual programs remain in fact unable to break away from an ideology of ‘monolingualism as the norm’.

The chapters in the second part of the volume – *Multimodality: Concepts, Practices and Consequences* – are concerned with the changing communication landscape associated with the new order. They focus however not so much on the *linguistic* repertoires individuals deploy in educational situations but on the full range of *multimodal* resources made use of. These chapters also ask: what happens when material conditions and social arrangements are redefined, through the use of new technology or otherwise? Gunther Kress begins by proposing that, if one is to fully recognize the semiotic work learners do when learning, the new circumstances require new thinking about learner agency, pedagogical tools and pedagogical relations. Examples from museum exhibits and surgeries are used by Kress to reflect upon how one is to recognize and sanction what counts as ‘signs of learning’ in circumstances ill-adapted to evaluation by the current metrics of assessment. The multimodal social semiotic framework articulated by Kress is also taken up by Carey Jewitt. She provides a detailed case study of transformations in the teaching of English as a subject in UK classrooms across a time-span of ten years. This longitudinal approach permits us to see the interplay between pedagogical and social

arrangements in the classroom and new media. In this chapter, Jewitt demonstrates the importance, if one wants to understand present day conditions of teaching and learning, of jointly studying technological changes, the production of curriculum knowledge and the social and cultural particulars of teaching a subject. The chapter by Laurent Filliettaz, Stefano Losa and Barbara Duc turns to the field of vocational education and training. The authors examine the difficulties experienced by apprentices of ‘gaining recognition’ when entering the workplace. They show that the demands made in workplace contexts are often complex and implicit, requiring access to subtle linguistic routines and non-verbal conduct. Not all apprentices come equally equipped to meet these demands and many face difficulties in their professional development and upward mobility as a consequence.

The chapters as a group take critical stock of current responses to the increased diversity, multilingualism and technological possibilities in schools and other educational institutions. In the closing section, the chapter by Ron Scollon invites us to start imagining and building the ‘new geographies’ that, through reflection on interconnections between individual actions and larger ‘material-semiotic activity systems’, will make possible new responses to new conditions.

Overall, the chapters revisit many important themes for education research, related to diversity, multilingualism, language learning, language policy, assessment and evaluation, teaching and learning, curriculum development, the place and role of new technology in the classroom, guidance and socialization. They also all seem to address an unspoken question: what adjustments and recalibrations must analysts make so that their work remains suited to the task of responding to and understanding changing educational experiences and social priorities? Some authors find traditional concepts and images still powerful, some propose that we need new ones in the light of present circumstances, yet others propose amending or reworking the coordinates used thus far. But a point made in all chapters is that approaches more consonant with today’s diverse, fluid, fragmented and complex society urgently need to be developed.

Key Themes

These more general comments lead to the second possible approach to reading the chapters, the ‘synthetic’ or ‘scaled up’ approach. If we take a bird’s eye view, what themes stand out? The task of identifying transversal threads here is complicated by the fact that the two main themes of the volume – multilingualism and multimodality – are not automatically connected. Yet, it is instructive to attempt to adopt such a bird’s eye view in order to determine the sub-themes that become visible if one does so.

Sites and sorts of learning. The first interesting thing of note is that many of the authors provide rich and careful observations of ‘sites’ of learning not traditionally studied in applied linguistics. Alongside the studies carried out in traditional schools (Jewitt, Kress), authors in the volume examine: bridging classrooms (Martín Rojo), heritage/complementary schools (Blackledge et al.), multilingual universities

(Weber & Horner), vocational programs (Kress, Filliettaz et al.), museums as sites of learning (Kress) and European institutions as multilingual workplaces (Wodak). Many of these 'educational sites' are recent contexts developed in response to new patterns of mobility, migration and internationalization. In that sense, the research focus reflects the social zeitgeist.

At the same time, it is also interesting that more traditional places of learning have been revisited using the new tools that have become available. Take for example the focus on vocational education and the interest in embodied learning (Filliettaz et al., Kress). It is not that that previous research about these topics was non-existent but the new communicational landscape has created the need to develop a new vocabulary to talk about non-verbal modes of meaning-making, and this new vocabulary has now become available to describe embodied forms of learning and to 'rediscover' the characteristics of older teaching and learning practices such as apprenticeships. With these multimodal approaches to learning, it becomes possible, for example, to investigate situated learning in the domains of the trades and professions and also to recognize and describe, in the more formal spaces of schooling, how learning, thought, creativity and communication are processes of the whole body.

History/Histories. Another theme, when we look at all the texts assembled in the volume, concerns methodology. While they inscribe themselves in different traditions and draw concepts from different disciplines (social semiotics, critical discourse analysis, interactional sociolinguistics, discourse analysis, sociology, literary criticism, etc.), the texts have at least one common point. All stress in one way or another the importance of incorporating 'history/histories' into the research process. Jewitt and Kress for example both adopt a contrastive perspective, comparing schools 'then' and 'now' as a means of capturing how societal changes have affected the organisation of schooling and the resources available for teaching and learning. Kress, Blommaert & Backus, and Filliettaz et al. focus on the learning processes through which skills and repertoires come to be integrated in the biographical trajectory of individuals. Blackledge et al. investigate how past voices and discourses resonate in the exchanges of learners from migrant backgrounds, and how these historically-loaded voices make possible a playing with identities, along with the adoption of different positionings and displays of 'authenticity'. Martín Rojo underlines that newcomers to bridging schools do not come as blank slates but with a set of values internalized at other educational institutions. This primary habitus provides a context for learning that is sometimes at odds with what the new context has to offer in terms of content or procedures. Wodak insists on the necessity of always considering different layers of context when analyzing any piece of discourse and shows how these layers exist on different timescales, while Weber & Horner similarly ensure that their analysis of language policies integrates understanding of the larger socio-historical context in which the policies were produced. The chapters thus all seem to point to the fact that the rapid changes experienced today are best understood by looking at the consequences of social and political history for individual histories. Awareness of

history/histories helps our understanding of how things have come to be the way they are; it helps us understand the continuities and discontinuities in individuals' lives as well as in the social organization of these lives; it permits us to name some of the practices that serve to create or erase differences between groups. Without historical understanding, the authors seem to suggest, our insights into teaching and learning processes or policies can quickly become shallow and fleeting.

Multilingual repertoires and multimodal resources. A third observation that can be made when we look at the volume as a whole is that none of the chapters venture into any explicit discussion of how its two main themes – multilingualism and multimodality – are to be connected.

In the first half of the volume, the chapters converge in discussing the conceptions of 'language' and of 'multilingualism' best suited to current circumstances. Contributions by Blommaert & Backus, Martín Rojo, Blackledge et al., Wodak, Weber & Horner make the case that folk models that hold languages to be discrete, bounded entities are ill-suited to making sense of the mixed multilingual practices, creolization, code-meshing, continuities across varieties, etc., typical of the current cosmopolitan context. Yet these models are prevalent in mainstream discourse and contribute effectively to reproducing an ideology that sees monolingualism as the 'norm' and multilingualism as the 'odd case' (Weber & Horner). Since many learners in contemporary classrooms have in fact large repertoires at their disposal, these authors warn, we need to watch how the 'monolingual mindset' plays out in limiting access and in the expression of voice.

In the second half of the volume, it is a reflection on the multiple modes in which learning can be presented and shaped that is foregrounded. Here for example, Kress vividly makes the point that teachers and educators need to become better at detecting evidence of learning, especially when 'signs of learning' do not come in canonical or traditionally expected forms. Authors in this part of the volume (Kress, Jewitt, Filliettaz et al.) concur that verbocentric perspectives on teaching and learning are not well adapted to do that detection.

If we seek to connect the two parts of the book, what becomes apparent is that it is not just learners' multilingual repertoires that speak of their mobility across spaces, of the learning opportunities that were given to them, of the people they have encountered and of the kinds of milieus and environments they have traversed (Blommaert & Backus), but their repertoires of (multimodal) practices also speak of these (Kress, Filliettaz et al, Jewitt, Martín Rojo, Blackledge et al.). This means that more studies are needed to look jointly at, on the one hand, the resources multilingual repertoires constitute for constructing knowledge, pedagogical relations, texts and actions and, on the other, at the manner in which texts, tools, actors, spaces, technologies, etc. mediate the learning and appropriation of multilingual repertoires.

Valuation/Recognition. A final thread developed by several authors across the two parts of the volume, even though it is treated in quite different ways, is the theme

of ‘recognition’ (see Kress, Filliettaz et al., Martín Rojo for the most prominent discussions of this theme, but also related arguments in Wodak, Weber & Horner, Blackledge et al. and Blommaert & Backus).

Recognizing something, Kress argues, has different meanings. It might mean simply to ‘see it’, acknowledge it or give it credit, or it might imply distinguishing its worth (as when one gives an award in ‘special recognition’ of some accomplishment). In that sense, Kress proposes, recognition integrates the idea of ‘value’ and ‘valuation’. When diverse practices come into contact, the question of ‘recognition’ and ‘valuation’ almost always takes center stage: which practices get recognized? And by whom? Which practices allow one to gain recognition and how? Which practices are ‘devalued’ or ‘delegitimized’ and for what purposes? The chapters collectively show that ideologies of assimilation and conformism to a specific set of social norms are reinforced (a situation often found in formal schooling institutions) when the option of taming diversity is taken. But the chapters also show that, even in situations where diversity is in principle appreciated and encouraged, different weight is still given to different practices. In other words, even when the social and cultural market seems open, not all practices are valued equally.

This links to another line of discussion. To a large extent, the focus in all the texts is very much on detecting where the center of authority is in educational sites and institutions, as well as on how hierarchies are played out and differences emphasized. It is on reflecting how a different balance of power could be imagined or enacted. As O’Reilly (1993) has pointed out, we have become quite good at investigating how devaluation works, but have been less busy observing consensus, pluralism, unity in diversity, etc. and less savvy at detecting the mechanisms and patterns behind ‘respectful’ attitudes. With Adam and Groves (2007: 152) we could perhaps suggest that what might be needed to develop this shift of balance is another social model for schools and educational institutions, not one based on the presumption of *equality*, but one based on an *‘ethics of care’*. Such an ethics, Adam and Groves argue, means that we do not operate on the assumption that we should perform certain tasks and encourage certain relationships with others because those others are of equal value to ourselves, but because they are of *‘special and unique value’*, and because it means something to us personally that those others realize the futures they project for themselves, since our futures and theirs are inextricably bound. This brings us to our closing discussion.

THE FUTURE OF EDUCATION RESEARCH

In conducting careful empirical observations and analyses of interactions in superdiverse, and/or technologically complex environments, the authors of the contributions assembled in this volume contribute something important: they give a shape – a semiotic form – to some of the issues raised by transnational migration, sociocultural complexity, and the new social order. The chapters provide ‘images, more or less detailed or sketched, of present social arrangements and conditions’

(Kress, this volume). Through these images, the authors help make visible changes in progress; they provide evidence of the social, cultural and political challenges associated with the new order; they help us to see which ideologies are strengthened or remodelled in the new context. They also importantly work at identifying the kinds of new questions and new terrains that can and must be explored in this new context. So one major way in which the chapters address ‘the future of education’ research – the focus of the book series to which this volume contributes – is by identifying new directions for investigation.

But by building images of current social arrangements, the chapters also do something else. They set the readers thinking: are the social arrangements identified the preferred ones or could alternative, possibly more desirable, scenarios be entertained? Following Gee (1998: 22), the chapters propose that ‘one way we can analyze people, words, and deeds is to ask what they seek to project into the world, what political projects they implicate’. At the end of this volume, we are left with the understanding that one of the tasks that lies ahead with regard to the future of education research is to make more visible which social arrangements work ‘to limit our imagination’ and which ones ‘play out in funnelling opportunities for experience of a different kind’ (R. Scollon 2002). This experience may be one in which we show more care for others in this world of diversity and in which we acknowledge their special and unique value to us, rather than attempting to tame or make invisible the diversity of repertoires and practices.

NOTE

- ¹ As summarized in the presentation of the research project on ‘superdiversity’ <http://www.mmg.mpg.de/research/all-projects/super-diversity/>

REFERENCES

- Adam, B., & Groves, C. (2007). *Future matters: Action, knowledge, ethics*. Leiden and Boston: Brill.
- Gee, J. P. (1998). The New Literacy Studies: from ‘socially situated’ to the work of the social. Paper presented at ‘*Situated literacies*’, Lancaster, UK. 8-10 July.
- Handler, R. (2012). What’s up, Doctor Goffman? Tell us where the action is! *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 18, 179–190.
- Jones, R. H., & Hafner, C. (2012). *Understanding digital literacies: A practical introduction*. London and New York: Routledge.
- O’Reilly, M. R. (1993). *The peaceable classroom*. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook Publishers.
- Pratt, M. L. (1991). Arts of the contact zone. *Modern Language Association*, 33–40.
- Scollon, R. (2002a). *What’s the point? Can mediated discourse analysis stop the war?* Accessed April 2003 at <http://www.gutenbergdump.net/mdp/point.htm>
- Tarrow, S. (2005). *The new transnational activism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Vertovec, S. (2007). Super-diversity and its implications. *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 30, 1024–1054.

Ingrid de Saint-Georges
University of Luxembourg

I. MULTILINGUALISM: CONCEPTS, PRACTICES AND POLICIES

SUPERDIVERSE REPERTOIRES AND THE INDIVIDUAL

INTRODUCTION

The term ‘repertoire’ belongs to the core vocabulary of sociolinguistics.¹ John Gumperz, in the introduction to the epochal *Directions in Sociolinguistics: The Ethnography of Communication* (Gumperz & Hymes 1972/1986) lists ‘linguistic repertoires’ as one of the ‘basic sociolinguistic concepts’ (Gumperz 1972/1986: 20–21) and defines it as ‘the totality of linguistic resources (i.e. including both invariant forms and variables) available to members of particular *communities*’ (italics added). In his equally epochal *Discourse Strategies*, he reformulated this notion, basically juxtaposing his original definition with the wider range of phenomena programmatically addressed by Hymes (1972a/1986 and 1974):

Studies of language use are called for which concentrate on what Hymes calls the *means of speaking*. This includes information on the local *linguistic repertoire*, the totality of distinct language varieties, dialects and styles employed in a community. Also to be described are the *genres* or art forms in terms of which verbal performances can be characterized, such as myths, epics, tales, narratives and the like. Descriptions further cover the various acts of speaking prevalent in a particular group ... and finally the ‘frames’ that serve as instructions on how to interpret a sequence of acts. (Gumperz 1982: 155; italics in original; cf. also Bauman & Sherzer 1974: 7)

The narrower notion of ‘linguistic repertoires’ is here combined with the broad and somewhat less precise notion of ‘means of speaking’. The job of the Gumperz–Hymesian sociolinguists was to describe *all* of that, to put these things in relation to each other, and to interpret them in terms of that other key notion in sociolinguistics, ‘communicative competence’ – the *knowing what and knowing how* to use language which Hymes pitted against Chomskyan ‘competence’ (Hymes 1972b is the locus classicus; see also Hymes 1992). ‘Repertoire’ so became the word we use to describe all the ‘means of speaking’, i.e. all those means that people *know how to use and why* while they communicate, and such means, as we have seen, range from linguistic ones (language varieties) over cultural ones (genres, styles) and social ones (norms for the production and understanding of language). In the eyes of Gumperz, Hymes and their peers, repertoires were tied to particular *speech communities*, the third key sociolinguistic notion. Repertoires characterized communities within which

the sharedness of repertoire guaranteed smooth and ‘normal’ communication. This collocation of repertoires and communities was a precipitate of, let us say, ‘traditional’ ethnography, in which the ethnographer studied a ‘community’ – a group of people that could somehow be isolated from the totality of mankind and be studied in its own right.

This is very much where the concept has stayed since then; there has not been much profound reflection on the notion of repertoire.² The term is commonly used in sociolinguistics, usually as a loosely descriptive term pointing to the total complex of communicative resources that we find among the subjects we study. Whenever ‘repertoire’ is used, it presupposes *knowledge* – ‘competence’ – because ‘having’ a particular repertoire is predicated on knowing how to use the resources that it combines. The four decades of use of the term and its links to other concepts, however, have seen quite some shifts and developments, notably in the field of what one can broadly call ‘language knowledge’. This paper seeks to engage with these developments and to bring them to bear on the notion of repertoire. If patterns of language knowledge are better understood, we may be in a position to be more precise in what we understand by repertoires. Likewise, we have moved on in our understanding of ‘community’; and here, too, important new insights can be projected onto the concept of repertoire. Repertoire can so be turned into an empirically more useful and theoretically more precise notion, helpful for our understanding of contemporary processes of language in society.

This is the intellectual motive for this paper. There is, however, a more practical (or polemical) motive as well. In spite of significant advances in the field of language knowledge, dominant discourses on this topic seem to increasingly turn to entirely obsolete and conclusively discredited models of language knowledge. The European Common Framework for Languages is naturally the most outspoken case, but language and literacy testing methods predicated on linear and uniform ‘levels’ of knowledge and developmental progression are back in force. Such practices and methods have met with debilitating and crippling criticism from within the profession (see the essays in Hogan-Brun et al. 2009; also Spotti 2011); yet they remain unaffected and attract more and more support among national and supranational authorities in fields of immigration, labour and education. Something is seriously wrong there, and this paper can be read as yet another attack on the linguistic and sociolinguistic assumptions underlying this complex of tests and models.

In the next section, we will summarize the most important developments in our understanding of the structure of contemporary societies. Armed with these insights, we will set out to describe patterns of learning ‘the means of language’. Such patterns, we will argue, are widely different in nature and in ‘technology’, they range from highly formal modes of patterned learning to highly informal and ephemeral ‘encounters’ with language. These different modes of learning and acquiring lead to different forms of knowledge, and this is the topic of the next section. We will consider the repertoires that can emerge from the widely varied modes of learning and highlight some less expected modes of ‘knowing language’ as elements of

repertoires. In a final concluding section, we will connect such repertoires to the wider historical frame in which they operate: late modernity and its particular forms of subjectivity. Let us now turn to some central insights which we need to take on board in this exercise.

SUPERDIVERSITY

Questions of what is shared and not in the field of cultural (including linguistic) knowledge acquire a particular urgency and relevance in the context of superdiversity. Superdiversity is a descriptive term, denoting the new dimensions of social, cultural and linguistic diversity emerging out of post-Cold War migration and mobility patterns (Vertovec 2007). The new migrations characterizing the post-1991 order in many parts of the globe, as well as the emergence of mobile global communication systems such as the internet, have led to extreme degrees of diversity to which the application of notions such as ‘diaspora’, ‘minority’, but also ‘community’ and other basic terms from the social-scientific register have become increasingly problematic. ‘Ethnic’ neighborhoods have turned from relative homogeneity into highly layered and stratified neighborhoods, where ‘old’ migrants share spaces with a variety of ‘new’ migrants now coming from all parts of the world and involved in far more complex and unpredictable patterns of migration than the resident and diaspora ones characterizing earlier migration patterns. And while social life is primarily spent in such local neighborhoods, the internet and mobile phone afford opportunities to develop and maintain social, cultural, religious, economic and political practices in other places. Exiled political leaders can remain influential political actors in their countries of origin, even when they live in Rotterdam, Marseille or Frankfurt; isolated individuals can maintain intense contacts (and live social and cultural life) in a transnational network; languages can be used through such networks as well, while they are absent from everyday communicative practices in the local neighborhood. In general, most of the ‘normal’ patterns of social and cultural conduct that were central in the development of social-scientific theories have now been complemented with a wide variety of new, ‘abnormal’ patterns, for which we are hard pressed to provide adequate accounts.

The impact of superdiversity is therefore paradigmatic: it forces us to see the new social environments in which we live as characterized by an *extremely low degree of presupposability* in terms of identities, patterns of social and cultural behavior, social and cultural structure, norms and expectations. People can no longer be straightforwardly associated with particular (national, ethnic, sociocultural) groups and identities; their meaning-making practices can no longer be presumed to ‘belong’ to particular languages and cultures – the empirical field has become extremely complex, and descriptive adequacy has become a challenge for the social sciences as we know them.

The implications of this for sociolinguistics have been sketched in a growing body of work (e.g. Blommaert 2010; Creese & Blackledge 2010; Otsuji & Pennycook 2010; Jörgensen et al. 2011; Blommaert & Rampton 2011 provide an overview), and

they revolve around: (a) an increasing problematization of the notion of ‘language’ in its traditional sense – shared, bounded, characterized by deep stable structures; (b) an increasing focus on ‘language’ as an emergent and dynamic pattern of practices in which semiotic resources are being used in a particular way – often captured by terms such as ‘linguaging’, ‘polylingualism’ and so forth; (c) detaching such forms of ‘linguaging’ from established associations with particular groups – such as ‘speech communities’ or ‘cultures’; (d) viewing such groups exclusively in terms of emerging patterns of semiotic behavior with different degrees of stability – ‘speech communities’ can be big and small, enduring as well as extremely ephemeral, since they emerge as soon as people establish *in practice* a pattern of shared indexicalities; (e) and seeing people as moving through a multitude of such groups in ‘polycentric’ social environments characterized by the presence and availability of multiple (but often stratified) foci of normativity.

All of this is grounded in sociolinguistic and linguistic-anthropological work (e.g. Silverstein 2004; Agha 2007). It is clear that work on communication in superdiverse environments is not well served with a priori notions of ‘language’, ‘community’, or ‘understanding’, but must proceed from observations of actual usage, and that it must allow for tremendous variability in observation and interpretation.³ The stability that characterized the established notions of language can no longer be maintained in light of the intense forms of mixing and blending occurring in superdiverse communication environments (both in spoken and written forms of language; for the latter see e.g. Juffermans 2010; Varis & Wang 2011), and established notions of competence are in need of revision in light of the highly unequal patterns of distribution of communicative resources resulting in the often ‘truncated’ and ‘unfinished’ character of communication (see e.g. Blommaert 2010, chapter 4; Kroon, Dong & Blommaert 2011).

In what follows, we shall engage with the paradigmatic challenge of superdiversity and revisit patterns of language learning and the repertoires that are results of such learning processes. The attempt is to *reconstruct* the concept of repertoire in a descriptively realistic manner, driven by our usage-based focus and attempting to avoid as much of the traditional linguistic and sociolinguistic biases as possible.

LANGUAGE LEARNING TRAJECTORIES

In superdiverse environments, patterns of ‘learning’ languages are widely diverse. ‘Learning’ is a somewhat uneasy term that requires qualification, and this will become clear when we review some patterns below. We use the term here for the broad range of tactics, technologies and mechanisms by means of which specific language resources become part of someone’s repertoire. ‘Acquisition’ is another candidate as shorthand for this complex of phenomena and processes, but the term suggests an enduring outcome (resources have been ‘acquired’ once and for all), while ‘learning’ does not (one can ‘unlearn’ or ‘forget’ what one has learned). Hence the pragmatic choice for ‘learning’.

The Biographic Dimension of Repertoires

With the distinction between ‘acquisition’ and ‘learning’, we have already introduced a major differentiating feature into our discussion: the fact that some effects of learning are permanent and enduring (e.g. learning the grammatical patterns of a prominent language in one’s repertoire), while others are temporary and dynamic. Discursive and sociocultural features would typically be temporary and dynamic, in the sense that their learning patterns closely follow the biography of the person. When someone is six years old, s/he speaks *as* a six-year old. At the age of twelve this pragmatic complex of speech practices has disappeared and has been replaced by another complex; likewise at the age of eighteen, thirty and sixty: with each stage of life we learn the modes of communication of that stage of life, and *we unlearn part of the modes characterizing earlier stages*. At the age of forty, we cannot speak as a teenager anymore. We can speak *like* a teenager, i.e. imitate the speech forms we observe in teenagers (or remember from our own teenage years); but we cannot speak *as* a teenager, deploying the full range of communication resources that define people as teenagers. At the same age, we cannot yet speak as a very old person – learning these resources will happen later in life. We can speak as a middle-aged person, and the resources we can deploy define us as such.

This must be kept in mind: the ‘language’ we know is never finished, so to speak, and learning language as a linguistic *and* a sociolinguistic system is not a cumulative process; it is rather a process of growth, of sequential learning of certain registers, styles, genres and linguistic varieties while shedding or altering previously existing ones. Consequently, there is no point in life in which *anyone* can claim to know *all* the resources of a language. Actual knowledge of language, like any aspect of human development, is dependent on biography. As for other aspects, knowledge of language can be compared to the size of shoes. Shoes that fit perfectly at the age of twelve do not fit anymore at the age of thirty – both because of the development of one’s body size and because of fashion, style and preference (few of us would feel comfortable in the types of shoes we wore in the 1970s). Repertoires are individual, biographically organized complexes of resources, and they follow the rhythms of actual human lives.

This means that repertoires do not develop in a linear fashion. They develop explosively in some phases of life and gradually in some others. Let us give one very clear example. A child, typically, experiences an explosion of literacy resources in the first couple of years of primary schooling. Between the age of six and eight/nine, a child passes through the intensely difficult exercise of learning how to write and read (see Kress 1997 for a classic survey and discussion) – not just technically (increasingly not just in longhand but also on a keyboard) but also ideologically, by attributing particular values to writing and reading achievements – the sociocultural norms of literacy (Collins & Blot 2003). The outcome is that starting (typically) from scratch, a child learns to write linguistically and sociolinguistically relatively complex texts, and read large volumes of such texts. Once this revolutionary stage is over, literacy skills develop more gradually and incrementally. In the same stage of

life, children learn another vast complex of linguistic and sociolinguistic practices: ‘school language’, the discourse patterns of formal education. S/he learns how to talk and write as a pupil, and s/he learns how to listen to and read from instructors, follow up their instructions, and convert them into regimented, ordered forms of discourse practice. The child learns genres, registers and styles that are specific to formal educational environments and have hardly any validity outside school – think of Latin, mathematics or physics as a discursive field, for instance. This, too, is a massive achievement which marks their repertoires for life, allowing more gradual expansion and development after that.

With every new stage of life we learn new linguistic and sociolinguistic patterns. Becoming a teenager involves exploring the experiential worlds of love and relationships, of sexuality, of popular culture and of identity opportunities that deviate from those preferred and organized by school or parents. Those who proceed to higher education learn how to speak and write in new ways there, and for many this period of life coincides with first experiences as someone who lives apart from his/her parents and has to navigate that new complex world of opportunities and responsibilities. Becoming an employee in the labour market involves similar dramatic jumps in learning, as one acquires the discourse patterns of specific and specialized professions as well as those of a salaried independent person and consumer, now capable of purchasing expensive items such as cars or a house (and having to manoeuvre complicated financial, legal and insurance aspects of it). Becoming a parent likewise induces one into an entire world of new discourses, just as becoming unemployed, chronically ill, a widow or widower, or a retired person come with new and highly specific linguistic and sociolinguistic resources.

Learning by Degree

We learn all of these new skills and resources in a variety of ways. The most visible ways are those of formal learning environments: school and college, but also formal training sessions, evening courses, self-study on the basis of a set curriculum, and so on. Such formal patterns of learning result in particular forms of skills and resources: uniformly distributed ones over the collective of students who participate in the same learning environment, regimented and normatively elaborated, often also with a high degree of self-awareness that this is ‘knowledge’ (as in ‘I learned German at school’). Such formal patterns of learning always go hand in hand with patterns of learning in informal learning environments – the family, peer groups, media and popular culture or just life experiences. Acquiring specific registers in adolescent and adult life is only partly an effect of formal learning; it is more often an effect of having acquired access to certain communities and groups in society – from Metallica fans to computer engineers in a telecom business, or from parents of young children to victims of a car accident, or from Catholic priests to Chinese professional colleagues – and having been exposed to the specific discourse patterns valid in such communities and groups.

Naturally, the internet has become a tremendously influential provider for such informal learning environments over the past couple of decades.

Evidently, this vast range of ways in which people come across linguistic and sociolinguistic resources leads to an equally vast range of modes of learning. Let us highlight just a few, aware that the vocabulary we must use for describing certain phenomena lacks clarity and precision.

'Comprehensive' language learning. Full socialization across a lifetime in a language, including having access to the formal learning environments for such language skills and resources as well as having access to a wide range of informal learning environments will lead to a 'maximal' set of resources: different language varieties, different genres, styles and registers, distributed over oral as well as literate modes of production and reception, and dynamic in the sense that one is capable to rapidly learn new forms and patterns – the gradual expansion and overhaul of one's repertoire.

'Specialized' language learning. Particular stages of life come with access to specific and specialized skills and resources. Becoming a university student, for instance, comes with access to technical and specialized registers, genres and styles (e.g. the academic essay or thesis), whose validity is entirely restricted to that part of life and that specific environment. For people all over the world, becoming immersed in the academic environment increasingly means that they learn such specialized skills and resources in different varieties of academic English. Parts of any multilingual repertoire, consequently, will often be 'specialized' in the sense used here: one can be fluent and articulate in academic genres and registers in English, but not in the genres and registers of everyday life outside of academia (e.g. those valid in supermarkets or in a medical doctor's office).

Those two patterns of learning we would consider to be profound and enduring; the second type usually is nested in the first one, as one specific pattern of socialization encapsulated in more general patterns of socialization. They account for what Hymes (1972b and 1992) understood by 'communicative competence': the capacity to be a 'full' social being in the communities in which one spends one's life; the capacity for 'voice', i.e. to make oneself understood by others in line with one's own intentions, desires and ambitions, and this in a wide range of social arenas (Hymes 1996). When we see people as 'fully integrated' members of some group, it is because they have acquired such elaborate forms of language skills and resources.

Apart from those elaborate patterns of learning, however, we need to consider a number of others: more ephemeral and restricted ones. Let us turn to some such patterns.

'Encounters' with language. In the context of globalization, people and linguistic resources are mobile; consequently, one can come across particular bits of language, learn them in particular ways, and use them. In contrast to the two previously mentioned modes of learning, we are facing *minimal* modes of learning here:

we learn very small bits of language, not the elaborate sets of genres, styles and registers we discussed above. Let us survey some of them; they may illustrate what is undoubtedly a much broader range of ‘minimal’ forms of language learning.

- *Age-group slang learning.* In particular stages of life, people pick up particular bits of language that typify and identify them as members of age groups, professional groups and so on. Thus, most middle-aged people still have a repertoire of ‘dirty words’, obscenities and obscure slang expressions learned during adolescence. Together they amount to a whole discourse system, to be used in particular social arenas with peer group members and an occasional outsider. While such complexes define particular stages in life, they tend to become less frequently used in later stages of life and ultimately live on as an obsolete, anachronistic discourse system.
- *Temporary language learning.* People who frequently travel often learn small bits of the local languages, sometimes sufficient to conduct very short conversations within specific genres (e.g. ordering a meal in a restaurant or saying that you don’t speak or understand the other’s language), to perform more elaborate greeting rituals or engage in some minimal form of social bonding with local people. Often, such learned skills and resources do not survive; they are gradually forgotten and disappear from one’s repertoire. Yet they were learned and were part of someone’s repertoires at some point in time.
- *Single word learning.* Many of us know single words from languages we otherwise do not speak, write or understand. Isolated greeting formulae from different languages would very often feature in the repertoire of many people: ‘sayonara’ and ‘konichi wa?’ from Japanese, ‘ni hao’ from Chinese, ‘shalom’ from Hebrew, ‘salem aleikum’ from Arabic, ‘ciao’ from Italian, ‘karibu’ from Swahili, and even ‘aloha’ from Hawaiian: they all belong to a globalized vocabulary known to large numbers of people. Similarly, terms related to the use of food or drinks (‘salud!’, ‘santé!’, ‘Gesundheit!’, ‘nazdovje!’, ‘bon appétit!’), expressions for yes or no (‘njet!’, ‘Jawohl!’) or curses and insults (‘cojones!’, ‘hijo de puta’, ‘cornuto’, ‘merde’, ‘asshole’, ‘sucker’, ‘Schweinhund’, etc.) are widely available candidates for single-word learning. The point is that such terms are often the *only* words we know in some language, but that they *nevertheless* represent a minimal form of learning and a minimal form of knowledge. It is not as if we don’t know these words.
- *Recognizing language.* There are many languages we do not actively use or understand, but which we are nevertheless able to recognize and identify, either on the basis of sound or on the basis of script. Thus, many people in Western Europe would recognize Chinese, Arabic, Cyrillic and Greek scripts, even if they are not able to read texts written in that script. Some may even recognize Thai or Amharic script, and many would recognize the particular visual image of Finnish and French in writing. Similarly, people who live in immigrant neighborhoods may be able to tell the language people are speaking, even if they don’t understand

these languages: these people are speaking Turkish, others Russian, others German, others Arabic. Recognizing language is the effect of a learning process – typically an informal one – and it results in the capacity to identify people, social arenas and practices, even if one is not able to fully participate in such practices. It is again a – minimal – form of language knowledge which goes hand in hand with social knowledge. Recognizing someone as a speaker of Turkish involves identifying that person as a Turkish person, and it triggers a world of ideas and perceptions: ideas about Turkish people, about their religion, culture and presence in a particular place; insertion into widely circulating discourses on multiculturalism, Islam, the wearing of the veil, and so forth. Recognizing language is an important emblematic process in which language projects social, cultural, ethnic and political categories and social and spatial demarcations (recognizing Hebrew writing, for instance, can make one realize that one has entered a Jewish neighborhood). Minimal knowledge of language here connects to maximum knowledge of society.

The first two modes surveyed above are ‘transitory’ patterns of language learning: bits of language(s) are learned but lose active, practical deployability after some time. The two latter ones are usually not seen as ‘language learning’, either because of the extremely small amounts of language learned, or because no active competence in the language has been acquired. Yet in all of these cases, such bits of language are part of our repertoires; they document moments or periods in our lives when we encountered language(s). Encounters with language account for the otherwise inexplicable fact that we often know more ‘languages’ than we would usually acknowledge or be aware of; that we recognize sometimes very alien forms of language; that we achieve particular small communicative routines without ever having been deeply immersed in the language or having gone through an elaborate formal training and learning process.

‘Embedded’ language learning. We sometimes learn bits of language that can only be used if another language is used as well. Thus, there are forms of learning in which the finality of learning is to perform code-switching in an appropriate way. Computer-related terminology is often a case in point: all over the world, English vocabulary associated with the use of computers would be used as an embedded vocabulary in discourses conducted in other languages (Dutch IT engineers, consequently, would speak Dutch with English vocabulary embedded). The school languages that are not studied for achieving productive fluency in them – think of Latin and Greek, but increasingly also German and French in Europe – would typically be languages that only exist as embedded parts of instructional discourses in another language. A Dutch secondary school student learning Latin would use Latin only as part of Dutch instructional discourses, consequently. One can also think of hobby activities that involve exposure to other-language vocabulary: Yoga, Feng Shui, Karate, but also Italian or Oriental cooking would produce discourses in one language dotted

by specific terms or expressions from another language. Thus people practicing Japanese martial arts would go to the *dojo* for practice and would listen to their *sensei* calling ‘*mate!*’ – even when that *sensei* is a full-blooded Antwerp native who has no competence whatsoever in Japanese beyond the specialised register of the sport s/he practices. Note that such specialized embedded bits of language can be quite large, running into dozens if not hundreds of expressions. These bits, however, do not make up a ‘language’ in the sense of an autonomously functioning set of resources, they always need scaffolding from another language.

The ‘minor’ forms of language learning typically occur in informal learning environments: through everyday social contacts with others, travelling, media, internet use, peer group memberships, exposure to popular culture, and so forth. When such forms of learning coincide with formal learning programs, as with ‘school languages’, we see the emergence of different, specific registers across the range of languages learned – ‘school languages’ become *polycentric* sociolinguistic objects whenever they are ‘taken out’ of school and used to poke fun at each other or to imitate teachers and stereotypical characters associated with the language. This was the case with the ‘Deutsch’ Rampton (2006) observed in UK schools, where pupils used bits of school German to bark commands at each other. An imagery of Second-World War Nazi stereotypes was never far away, and the pupils drew on this rich indexical source by turning school German into an emblematic resource for playful brutality and oppressiveness. The same thing happens when language material from outside school is ‘brought into’ schools and blended with the formally learned bits – as when the formally learned RP accent in school English is replaced by a ‘cooler’ American accent in the schoolyard; or when a degree of competence in school English is used as a platform to experiment with alternative forms of writing, as in ‘boyz’ or ‘cu@4’; or when children in a Barbadian classroom get reprimanded by their teacher for inserting Rasta slang into their speech (Van der Aa 2012).

Formally and informally learned language and literacy resources merge into repertoires, and such repertoires reflect the polycentricity of the learning environments in which the speaker dwells. The precise functions of such resources can only be determined ethnographically, i.e. from within the group of users, from below. Thus, as every parent knows, it is by no means a given that the most normatively regimented varieties of languages – ‘correct’ school varieties, in other words – carry most prestige and operate as a yardstick for social interaction. The specific blend of different bits of language – the fusion of grammatical correctness (acquired in a formal learning environment) with fluency in an adolescent slang (derived from informal learning environments), for instance – provides the actual resources deployed by people. Evidently, such resources (or ‘features’, Jørgensen et al. 2011) can be part of what is conventionally defined as ‘one language’ – Dutch, English, German – but they may also be derived from a variety of conventionally defined ‘languages’. The repertoires of people absorb whatever comes their way as a useful – practical and/or pleasant – resource, as long as such resources are accessible to them. The complexity of polycentric learning environments (something that escalates as

an effect of the growing importance of new media, as mentioned earlier) ensures that new ‘markets’ for linguistic resources become accessible: linguistic resources that were until recently almost exclusively accessible through formal education (e.g. normative varieties of English) now become available through a multitude of other, often more democratically organized channels (see e.g. Blommaert 2010, chapters 2 and 6; Block 2012).

This creates complex and layered repertoires; at the same time, it raises a wide variety of issues regarding normativity and stratification in the social use of language. While some resources (e.g. HipHop English) have become democratically distributed resources, the normative varieties of English remain accessible only through access to exclusive learning environments. This also counts for literacy resources: whereas literacy historically was intimately tied to access to formal schooling, we see that alternative literacies (such as ‘cu@4’) can be easily and quickly learned through informal learning trajectories (Velghe 2011). This democratization of access to literacy resources has, however, not removed the hierarchy between ‘correct’ and ‘incorrect’ writing: it has highlighted and emphasized it. The expansion of the modes of language learning has not resulted in a more egalitarian field of language learning; it has led (and is leading) to increased stratification and polycentricity.

KNOWLEDGE OF LANGUAGE(S)

We have seen that repertoires are the result of polycentric learning experiences; we have also seen that they involve a range of learning trajectories, from maximally formal to extremely informal – in fact, that we often learn bits of language(s) without being aware of it; and we have seen that they involve a range of learning outcomes, from ‘full’ active and practical competence down to a level where language(s) are just recognizable emblems of social categories and spaces, a form of learning that does not require any active and practical competence. All of those very different resources are part of our repertoires, and all of them have or can acquire a multitude of functions.

Let us now turn to someone’s actual repertoire. For the sake of argument, we shall discuss the repertoire of the first author of this paper. Pending the development of a more accurate vocabulary, we shall be compelled to list languages as named entities and to group oral and literacy skills. The categorizations we will have to use in this exercise are necessarily clumsy and inadequate; we hope to give an impression, though, of the diverse and layered structure of a repertoire. We shall also describe the synchronic repertoire, i.e. the resources that are active in our subject’s repertoire at present; past temporary language resources will not be listed (our subject learned, e.g., particular bits of several African languages in the course of his life, but cannot claim any active competence in those languages now).

We shall proceed in three stages: first we shall list the different languages from which particular resources have entered the repertoire, after which we shall attempt

to introduce distinctions in the actual skills and competences they involve. Finally, we shall comment on the biographical basis of this repertoire.

Thirty-Eight Languages

Let us distinguish between four large categories of competence – the actual practices and skills enabled by the resources we shall list.

- (a) The first level would be *'maximum' competence*: oral as well as literacy skills distributed over a variety of genres, registers and styles, both productively (speaking and writing skills) and receptively (understanding oral and written messages), and in formal as well as informal social arenas. Resources from two languages qualify for inclusion here: Dutch and English. Note that in both languages, our subject would also be competent in at least some intra-language varieties. In Dutch, several regional dialects and slang codes are known; and English covers (at least receptively) competence in different kinds of regional UK and US English, different international ('world') accents, some Pidgin and Creole varieties of English, and specialized varieties such as Rasta slang and HipHop slang.
- (b) The second level would be *'partial' competence*: there are very well developed skills, but they do not cover the broad span that characterized the first category, of genres, registers, styles, production and reception, and formal and informal social arenas. Thus, our subject can read relatively complex texts, but not write similar texts; he can understand most of the spoken varieties but not make himself understood in speaking them; or he can use the language resources rather fluently as an embedded language in another one. Six languages qualify for inclusion here: French, German, Afrikaans, Spanish, Swahili and Latin. Knowledge of intra-language varieties is minimal here (our subject would be able to recognize various regional varieties of French but not of German, for instance).
- (c) The next level is *'minimal' competence*: our subject can adequately produce and/or understand a limited number of messages from certain languages, confined to a very restricted range of genres and social domains: shopping routines, basic conversational routines and stock expressions. Eight languages qualify: Japanese, Chinese, Italian, Greek, Finnish, Russian, Portuguese, Lingala.
- (d) Finally, there is *'recognizing' competence*. Obviously our subject is able to recognize all the languages listed in the three previous categories; the fourth category, however, lists languages in which our subject has *only* recognizing competence. The list is quite long: Turkish, Arabic, Korean, Northern Sami, Gaelic, Berber, Polish, Albanian, Hungarian, Czech, Serbo-Croatian, Hebrew, Yiddish, Schwytsertütsch, Xhosa, Zulu, Gikuyu, Yoruba, Amharic, Thai, Tibetan, Tamil. We count twenty-two languages in which our subject can recognize sounds and/or scripts.

We see that our subject's repertoire combines resources from thirty-eight languages. These resources are very unevenly distributed, as we know, and while some resources allow him versatility and choice in a broad range of social contexts, others offer him only the barest minima of access and uptake. All of these resources – *all* of them – have their places and functions however, and all of them reflect particular itineraries of learning during specific stages of life and in particular places and learning environments. Let us have a look at these functions.

Competence Detailed

When we look at what our subject is really capable of doing with these resources, the picture becomes extremely complex. If we divide the broad notion of competence over a number of concrete parameters that reflect the capacity to perform actual practices and the different social domains in which they can be practised, we notice that the resources of each language listed above are differently distributed and functionally allocated within the repertoire. Someone's actual competence so becomes a patchwork of skills, some overlapping and some complementary, with lots of gaps between them. While our subject obviously has a broad and diverse range of resources in his repertoire, there is no point at which he can be said to be capable to perform *every* possible act of language. Some of the resources offer a general and multigeneric competence, while others are extremely specialized and only occur in rigidly delineated contexts.

We will turn to the former in a moment; an example of the latter would be Latin, listed above under 'partial' competence. Our subject can adequately deploy a broad range of Latin linguistic resources ('his Latin is good', as one says in everyday parlance), but only and exclusively as an embedded language couched in Dutch instructional discourse. The Latin he knows is his own old 'school Latin' – a specific register structured along lines of translation and grammatical analysis – which is nowadays deployed only when he coaches and supervises his children's (and their friends') learning of school Latin. It is not as if he does not 'know' Latin – the knowledge of Latin, however, is confined to a particular generic space and tied to a very small range of communicative events ('explaining' and 'teaching' Latin by means of Dutch instructional discourse). Latin is a highly specialized resource in his repertoire, and is not used autonomously but always in synergy with another language.

Let us now move to two other languages listed in the same category: French and German. We will see that, compared to Latin, those two languages offer an entirely different range of competences to our subject; we shall also see that even between these two there are major differences in the distribution of actual competences, which are an effect of the different trajectories by means of which they entered our subject's repertoire.

Let us first consider French:

Table 1. Distribution of competences (French)

<i>French</i>	<i>Spoken production</i>	<i>Spoken reception</i>	<i>Written production</i>	<i>Written reception</i>
<i>Formal</i>	Restricted: not able to give a formal speech or lecture without preparation and scripting; partial access to courtesy and politeness norms; partial access to ‘sophisticated’ registers	Advanced: capable of understanding most formal genres in French	Absent: not able to write formal genres in French	Advanced: able to read most formal genres in French
<i>Informal</i>	Advanced: capable of having conversations on a wide range of topics in a vernacular variety of French	Advanced: able to understand most informal spoken messages in French, including some regional and slang varieties	Average: able to write some informal texts (e.g. email) without assistance	Advanced: able to read most informal messages in French, including some regional and slang varieties

And let us now compare this to German:

Table 2. Distribution of competences (German)

<i>German</i>	<i>Spoken production</i>	<i>Spoken reception</i>	<i>Written production</i>	<i>Written reception</i>
<i>Formal</i>	Absent: not able to produce formal speech	Average: able to understand most formal speech genres in German	Absent: not able to produce formal written text	Advanced: able to read most formal text genres
<i>Informal</i>	Very restricted: only simple routines and responses	Average: able to understand most spoken Standard varieties of German	Absent: not able to produce informal written text	Average: able to read most informal Standard varieties of text

While both languages were listed under ‘partial’ competence above, we now see that the actual ‘parts’ in which our subject has real competence differ substantially. Our subject has hardly any real competence in the production of spoken and written German; while he has some competences in the production of French. Note, however, that (a) these productive competences in French are by and large confined to informal domains, and (b) that his productive competence in spoken French is restricted to the use of a vernacular variety – whenever he speaks French, he speaks a distinct Belgian variety of it, influenced by the Brussels dialect as well as by a Flemish-Dutch accent. Notwithstanding these restrictions, it is not unlikely that French interlocutors who encounter our subject informally and have a chat with him may find him relatively fluent in French. This fluency is generically and sociolinguistically restricted – it is a ‘truncated’ competence (Blommaert et al. 2005; Blommaert 2010, chapter 4). That means that this competence is *not generative*: fluency in these informal conversations does not automatically imply fluency in other genres and social domains; competence in one sociolinguistic area does not imply fluency in any other area, nor can it a priori be seen as an engine for acquiring such fluency. Competences are as a rule sociolinguistically specific (a point very often overlooked by language teachers). They cluster around particular social arenas and become generative in those arenas (a process called ‘enregisterment’: Agha 2007; Silverstein 2004), but have no automatic applicability outside of them.

Apart from these important differences, we notice similarities. Receptive competences of our subject are present in both French and German, even if the receptive competences in French are more advanced than those in German. Our subject can thus perform with relative adequacy the roles of listener and reader in both languages, even if listening to vernacular varieties of German can be challenging. In actual interaction events, this unevenly distributed competence – receptive competence without productive competence – can give rise to various kinds of surprises, misjudgments and misunderstandings, as when German interlocutors are surprised that a very well understood German question is answered in English, not German; or when Francophone colleagues assume that our subject can adequately lecture in French because they have unproblematic informal conversations with him (or, even worse, believe that his conversational fluency indicates that he can write academic papers in French).

A full and comprehensive survey of what our subject can actually do with his repertoire would of course require an analysis of every particular resource in his repertoire – an exercise we cannot contemplate in this paper. The point should be clear, however: all the elements that together compose the repertoire are functionally organized, and no two resources will have the same range and potential. A repertoire is composed of a myriad of different communicative tools, with different degrees of functional specialization. No single resource is a communicative panacea; none is useless.

Repertoires as Indexical Biographies

How did these different resources enter into our subject's repertoire? Let us have a look at the very different trajectories we have to review here.

- *Vernacular Dutch* is our subject's *first language* – his 'mother tongue' or 'L1' as it is usually called. His first speaking skills were gathered through common socialization processes, and they were composed of a local dialect. This dialect stayed with him for the remainder of his life, even though the communicative network within which he could deploy it shrunk dramatically in the course of his life. His family moved to Brussels when he was eleven; the initial social world of dialect was replaced by another one, now dominated by a vernacular variety of Standard Dutch with a distinct Brussels regional influence. These dialect backgrounds account for the distinct accent he has when speaking Standard Dutch (and every other language, for that matter). Currently, dialect is exclusively used in a tiny family network, and only in informal domains. The dialect never developed into adult repertoires nor into specialized professional repertoires; consequently the range of social roles which our subject can assume through that dialect is very limited.
- Note that the L1 was a dialect (or a complex of dialects); *Standard Dutch* as well as *French*, *German* and *English*, but also *Latin* and *Greek* were *school languages*. The fact that they were school languages accounts for the fact that some – Latin and Greek – never really transcended the level of school competences: the capacity to translate a fixed body of texts and to perform in depth grammatical analysis of them; accompanied in the initial stages of formal learning by a modest capacity to speak and write French, German and English and a well developed capacity to read formal texts in those languages. *Swahili* was the language in which our subject specialized during his student years. It is in a sense also a school language: he acquired the school competences mentioned earlier and a modest productive and receptive competence in formal Standard Swahili. Part of the training he followed also included an introduction to *Arabic* and *Yoruba*, the results of which were later shrunk to the 'recognizing language' level.
- Some of these school languages, however, acquired a life after and outside school in *complementary informal learning environments*. Growing up in Brussels as a teenager meant that our subject picked up local vernacular and informal varieties of *French*. This accounts for his present conversational fluency in informal domains. Our subject, however, never found himself in formal social domains where French was the code, so that part of competence never developed fully. During his student years, texts in *English*, *French* and *German* belonged to the mandatory readings in African Studies, as well as a modest amount of texts in *Spanish* and *Portuguese*. This accounts for the fact that reading formal texts poses little problems in English, French and German. And finally, advanced studies made our subject enter the world of academic English, which became the code for

formal speaking and writing in the academic field, as well as for a certain amount of informal social skills. These competences are consequently highly developed. *Swahili*, finally, broadened and deepened as our subject further specialized in that language, made numerous fieldwork trips documenting urban vernaculars, and eventually did some language teaching in Swahili.

- Our subject learned several languages in a *purely informal learning environment*. Bits of *Spanish* were learned by attempts to read Neruda's poetry, later complemented by reading some academic works in Spanish; bits of *Italian* through an interest in Italian cinema and mediated by competences in Latin and French; bits of *Russian* through reading a Teach Yourself booklet; some contemporary *Greek* mediated through the Ancient Greek learned at school; *Lingala* by social contacts with Congolese friends and colleagues; *Finnish* by a two-year visiting appointment in Finland; *Afrikaans* by frequent contacts with South African colleagues and by fieldwork in an Afrikaans-dominant area; *isiXhosa* and *Northern Sami* also through fieldwork exposure.
- *Travelling* was a major source of new language material, and almost all of the languages listed above were at some point or another also languages of the travelling destinations of our subject. *Japanese* and *Chinese* entered the repertoire exclusively through travelling, later complemented by personal contacts with friends and colleagues. The recognizing competence for languages such as *Tibetan*, *Serbo-Croatian* and *Schwytserdütsch* is also an effect of travelling.
- *Life in the neighborhood*, finally, is the origin for much of what is listed under 'recognizing competence'. Our subject lives in a super-diverse inner-city neighborhood, where e.g. *Turkish*, *Arabic*, *Berber*, *Polish*, *Russian*, *Albanian*, *Thai*, *Czech*, *Tamil*, *Hebrew* and *Yiddish* are frequently used and publicly displayed. The lingua franca of the neighborhood is a 'truncated' form of vernacular Dutch; hence the superficial competence in the languages of the local immigrants: they are a social and cultural compass that guides our subject in identifying interlocutors in his neighborhood.

We can see how the particular synchronic competences we reviewed in the previous section have their historical roots in the distinct ways in which they arrived to him or in which he arrived to them – the *roots* are *routes*, so to speak. Each of the resources was learned in the context of specific life spans, in specific social arenas, with specific tasks, needs and objectives defined, and with specific interlocutors. This is why our subject can seem very fluent when he speaks or writes on academic topics in English, while he can be extremely inarticulate when he has to visit a medical doctor, a lawyer, grocer or a plumber in the UK or the US. It is also why he can chat in vernacular French but not lecture in it, why he can read German but not write it, and distinguish between Turkish and Yiddish without understanding a word of either language. And of course, this is why certain resources did not survive in the repertoire. Our subject had to devote a considerable amount of time studying *Tshiluba* as a student; not a fragment of that language survived in the repertoire.

The course was entirely unexciting, the exam requirements undemanding, and the opportunities to practise the language nil, the more since he and his fellow students discovered humiliatingly that no Congolese actually spoke the kind of Tshiluba their 1950s missionary-authored textbook offered them.

Each of these trajectories – all of them unique – contribute more than just linguistic material to one's repertoire. They contribute the potential to perform certain social roles, inhabit certain identities, be seen in a particular way by others (e.g. an articulate or inarticulate person, as in the example of informal versus formal French), and so on. The resources that enter into a repertoire are indexical resources, language materials that enable us to produce more than just linguistic meaning but to produce images of oneself, pointing interlocutors towards the frames in which we want our meanings to be put. Repertoires are thus indexical biographies, and analyzing repertoires amounts to analyzing the social and cultural itineraries followed by people, how they manoeuvred and navigated them, and how they placed themselves into the various social arenas they inhabited or visited in their lives.

LATE-MODERN REPERTOIRES AND SUBJECTS

Let us by way of conclusion recapitulate what we intended to achieve in this paper. We set out to describe patterns of learning 'the means of language', taken here in their broadest sense as every bit of language we accumulate and can deploy at a given point in life. Such patterns, we argued, are widely different in nature and in 'technology', ranging from highly formal modes of patterned learning to highly informal and ephemeral 'encounters' with language. These different modes of learning lead to different forms of knowledge of language, and while the diversity of such modes of language is tremendous, we must accept that all of them *matter* for the people who have learned them. None of them is trivial or unimportant. Even more, we can see how a subject constituted him- or herself by analysing the indexical biographies that are contained in the spectre of language resources they can deploy.

The relevance of the latter point should be clear. While earlier authors on repertoire emphasized the connection between (socio-)linguistic resources, knowledge and communities, we shift the direction from communities towards individual subjects. We have explained the rationale for that above: superdiversity compels us to abandon any preconceived and presumed stable or absolute notion of community, and replace them with a more fluid view of networks, knowledge communities and communities of practice – all of them dynamic, in the sense that most of them are peculiar to particular stages of life, and those that persist through life (as e.g. the family or regional forms of memberships) change in shape and value during one's lifetime. Repertoires in a superdiverse world are records of mobility: of movement of people, language resources, social arenas, technologies of learning and learning environments. A relevant concept of repertoires needs to account for these patterns of mobility, for these patterns construct and constitute contemporary late-modern subjects.

'Community' is not the only notion we have to revisit; the same counts for 'language'. We have repeatedly flagged the uneasiness of our own vocabulary in describing the repertoires of contemporary subjects; the fact is that we all carry the legacy of modernist hegemonies of language and society, and that an important part of our task consists of redesigning the analytical instruments by means of which we proceed. If we look back at our subject's repertoire, we have seen that no less than thirty-eight languages are represented there. Yet, of course, none of these languages is in any realistic sense 'complete' or 'finished': all of them are partial, 'truncated', specialized to differing degrees, and above all dynamic. This also counts for the 'mother tongue', that mythical finished-state language spoken by the 'native speaker' of language-learning literature. The Dutch now spoken by our subject is different from the Dutch he spoke at the age of eight or of eighteen, not just linguistically but also sociolinguistically. He still occasionally uses his dialect, but since this dialect lost its broad social scope of application due to migration at the age of eleven, it never developed any of the registers of adult life: the register of relationships and sexuality, of parenthood, of money, death, cars and work. Whenever our subject speaks his dialect, he can only speak it from within two social roles: that of the son of his mother and the brother of his sisters. He can no longer use it adequately during infrequent encounters with childhood friends or relatives – the dialect does not allow him the voice he wants and needs in that stage of life and that social arena. The repertoires change all the time, because they follow and document the biographies of the ones who use them. In that sense, repertoires are the real 'language' we have and can deploy in social life: biographically assembled patchworks of functionally distributed communicative resources.

As for our subject: the thirty-eight languages he has assembled throughout his life may put him on the high side in terms of scope of repertoire. His life is that of a mobile subject, someone who travels extensively and whose 'basis' – the locality where most of his life is organized – is itself deeply coloured by globalized mobility. While he may be seen as an exception, we may as well see his repertoire as unique – a unique reflex of a unique biography. But when similar exercises would be applied to other subjects, surprising results could be obtained even among biographically more 'average' subjects. We tend to underestimate the degree to which our lives develop along trajectories of mobility, in which we encounter, leave, learn and unlearn social and cultural forms of knowledge (such as languages) because we need to be able to make sense of ourselves. In that sense, we can see 'structure', or at least 'pattern' in repertoires that are otherwise entirely unique. The structures and patterns are dynamic and adaptable, while they are driven by shared motives and intentions: to make sense, to have voice wherever we are.

There is an angle to this that merits exploration. Voice, as we know, is subject to normative judgment – one has voice when someone else ratifies it as such. In that sense, our subject's repertoire is a complex of traces of power: a collection of resources our subject *had to* accumulate and learn in order to make sense to others, that is, in order to operate within the norms and expectations that govern social life

in the many niches in which he dwelled and through which he passed. The elements of the repertoire are resources he *needed* to deploy, practices he had to perform, in order to be ‘normal’ in the polycentric and dynamic world in which he lived. We have here a very Foucaultian view of the subject: the subject as an outcome of power, as a complex of features of self-disciplining, as a subject perpetually subjected to regimes of normality.

Thus conceived, repertoires invite a new form of analysis. No longer seen as the static, synchronic property of a ‘speech community’, we can now approach it as an inroad into late-modern subjectivities – the subjectivities of people whose membership of social categories is dynamic, changeable and negotiable, and whose membership is at any time always a membership-by-degree. Repertoires enable us to document in great detail the trajectories followed by people throughout their lives: the opportunities, constraints and inequalities they were facing, the learning environments they had access to (and those they did not have access to), their movement across physical and social space, their potential for voice in particular social arenas. We can now do all of this in significant detail, because we are no longer trapped by a priori conceptions of language, knowledge and community. Or are we? We noted in our introduction the increasing predominance of purely modernist technologies of language ‘measurement’ through uniform testing. Such practices have become a central element of administrative and bureaucratic apparatuses all over the world, and they operate with exceptional power in fields such as education, labour and migration. The Common European Framework for Languages has in a very short time become an industry standard for measuring language competence far beyond Europe, and it is applied as an ‘objective’ tool for measuring progress in language learning, the benchmarking and accreditation of language experts such as teachers and interpreters, the ‘readiness to integrate’ of new immigrants as well as the ‘degree of integration’ of recent residents.

We do not believe that we have to engage in a lengthy comparison and critique of the assumptions underlying such standardized language measuring tools; we believe our critique of them should be clear from the way we addressed repertoires here. The conclusion of our critique is therefore obvious: such measuring instruments are a form of science fiction. They have only a distant and partial connection with (specific parts of) the real competences of people, the way they are organized in actual repertoires, and the real possibilities they offer for communication. If we apply the Common European Framework levels for language proficiency, our subject would undoubtedly score a C2 – the most advanced level of proficiency – for English, when the language test concentrates on academic genres of text and talk. The same subject, however, would score A2 – the most elementary level of proficiency – if the test were based on how he would interact with a medical doctor, a plumber, an IT helpdesk operative, an insurance broker, and so on. So, ‘how good is his English’ then? Let it be clear that this question can only be appropriately answered with another one: ‘which English?’

NOTES

- ¹ This paper grew out of discussions within the Max Planck Sociolinguistic Diversity Working Group. A preliminary version was presented at a colloquium on sociolinguistic superdiversity held at the Max Planck Institute for Ethnic and Religious Diversity, Göttingen, November 2010, as a plenary lecture at the 32nd Ethnography in Education Forum at the University of Pennsylvania, February 2011 and as a lecture in the series *The Future of Educational Studies*, University of Luxemburg, September 2011. We are grateful for the comments provided by audiences at all of these occasions, in particular those of Jens-Normann Jörgensen, whose incisive comments greatly improved the argument in this paper. This paper draws extensively on a broader-aimed one, Blommaert and Backus (2011), and anticipates further developments in this direction.
- ² The other key notions, in contrast, did attract a considerable amount of theoretical reflection. Hymes himself questioned the idea of isolated and closed speech communities in his essay on the concept of ‘tribe’ (Hymes 1968); more recent critiques of the traditional concept of speech communities include Rampton (1998). Blommaert (2005 and 2010) announced the crucial role of repertoires in further work and spelled out its potential relevance.
- ³ In Blommaert & Backus (2011), we examine the compatibility of these insights with recent developments in usage-based linguistics.

REFERENCES

- Agha, A. (2007). *Language and social relations*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Bauman, R. & Scherzer, J. (1974). Introduction. In R. Bauman, & J. Sherzer (Eds.) *Explorations in the ethnography of speaking*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 6–17.
- Block, D. (2012) Economising globalisation in applied linguistics in neoliberal times. In D. Block, J. Gray & M. Holborow (Eds.) *Neoliberalism and applied linguistics*. London: Routledge. 56–85.
- Blommaert, J. (2005). *Discourse: A critical introduction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Blommaert, J. (2010). *The sociolinguistics of globalization*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Blommaert, J., & Backus, A. (2011). Repertoires revisited: ‘Knowing language’ in superdiversity. *Working Papers in Urban Language and Literacies* 67, 1–26.
- Blommaert, J., & Rampton, B. (2011). Language and superdiversity. *Diversities*, 13(2), 3–21.
- Blommaert, J., Collins, J., & Slembrouck, S. (2005). Spaces of multilingualism. *Language and Communication*, 25, 197–216.
- Collins, J., & Blot, R. (2003). *Literacy and literacies*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Creese, A., & Blackledge, A. (2010). Translanguaging in the bilingual classroom: A pedagogy for learning and teaching? *Modern Language Journal*, 94, 103–115.
- Gumperz, J. (1972/1986). Introduction. In J. Gumperz, & D. Hymes (Eds) *Directions in sociolinguistics: The ethnography of communication*. London: Blackwell. 1–25.
- Gumperz, J. (1982). *Discourse strategies*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Gumperz, J., & Hymes, D. (Eds). (1972/1986). *Directions in sociolinguistics: The ethnography of communication*. London: Blackwell.
- Hogan-Brun, G., Mar-Molinero, C., & Stevenson, P. (Eds) (2009). *Discourses on language and integration*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Hymes, D. (1968). Linguistic problems in defining the concept of ‘tribe’. In J. Helm (Ed.) *Essays on the problem of tribe*. Seattle: University of Washington Press. 23–48.
- Hymes, D. (1972a/1986). Models of the interaction of language and social life. In J. Gumperz, & D. Hymes (Eds.) *Directions in sociolinguistics: The ethnography of communication*. London: Blackwell. 35–71.
- Hymes, D. (1972b). On communicative competence. In J. B. Pride, & J. Holmes (Eds.) *Sociolinguistics*. London: Penguin. 269–293.
- Hymes, D. (1974). Ways of speaking. In R. Bauman, & J. Sherzer (Eds.) *Explorations in the ethnography of speaking*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 433–451.

- Hymes, D. (1992). The concept of communicative competence revisited. In M. Pütz (Ed.) *Thirty years of linguistic evolution*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins. 31–57.
- Hymes, D. (1996). *Ethnography, linguistics, narrative inequality: Toward an understanding of voice*. London: Taylor & Francis.
- Jørgensen, J. N., Karrebaek, M., Madsen, L., & Möller, J. (2011). Polylinguaging in superdiversity. *Diversities* 13(2), 23–37.
- Juffermans, K. (2010). *Local languaging: Literacy products and practices in Gambian society*. PhD Dissertation, Tilburg University.
- Kress, G. (1977). *Before writing: Rethinking the paths to literacy*. London: Routledge.
- Kroon, S., Dong, J. & Blommaert, J. (2011). Truly moving texts. *Tilburg Papers in Culture Studies* 3.
- Otsuji, E., & Pennycook, A. (2010). Metrolingualism: Fixity, fluidity and language in flux. *International Journal of Multilingualism* 7(3), 240–253.
- Rampton, B. (1998). Speech community. In J. Verschueren, J.-O. Östman, & J. Blommaert (Eds.) *Handbook of pragmatics 1998*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins. 1–32.
- Rampton, B. (2006). *Language in late modernity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Silverstein, M. (2004). Cultural concepts and the language-culture nexus. *Current Anthropology* 45, 621–652.
- Spotti, M. (2011). Ideologies of success for the superdiverse citizen: The Dutch testing regime for integration and the online private sector. *Diversities* 13(2), 39–52.
- Van der Aa, J. (2012). Monitoring narrative collaboration in a Caribbean classroom. PhD dissertation, University of Jyväskylä.
- Varis, P., & Xuan, W. (2011). Superdiversity on the Internet: A case from China. *Diversities* 13(2), 71–83.
- Velghe, F. (2011). Lessons in textspeak from Sexy Chick: Supervernacular literacy in South African instant and text messaging. *Tilburg Papers in Culture Studies* 1.
- Vertovec, S. (2007). Super-diversity and its implications. *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 30, 1024–1054.

Jan Blommaert
University of Tilburg

Ad Backus
University of Tilburg