Chapter 1

Fixity and fluidity in sociolinguistic theory and practice

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Abstract

This chapter takes critical stock of such terms as ‘polylingualism’, ‘metrolingualism’ and ‘translanguaging’ to question perceptions around linguistic fixity and fluidity. It discusses the provenance and pertinence of these terms against the backdrop of earlier language contact research, pointing out the difficulties caused by their on-going semantic inflation. It addresses the epistemic and political affordances of claims that the facts of linguistic fluidity must take absolute precedence over the fiction of fixed, bounded languages. And it critiques the status of fluid language as a more natural language practice, and in turn, its greater potential for social transformation. We argue that linguistic fixity and fluidity must be approached as mutually presupposing, that this invites dilemmas in everyday life and academia, and that sociolinguists should pay close attention to the way both types of linguistic practice open up or close down avenues for social transformation.

Introduction

Multilingualism is an established topic in the study of language. Self-evident as this statement is, it is useful to remember that up until some 60 years ago it was something of a fringe topic, at best, in the broad field of linguistics, pursued by scholars who dared defy the motto that real linguists should investigate the systematicity of speakers’ cognitive abilities...
for producing language by relying on introspective intuitions of their own, and singular, native language. Studying multilingualism at the same time has long run up against popular assumptions that it is an exceptional, deviant phenomenon, or that it delays learning and causes linguistic deficiency – assumptions indebted to a predominant view, at least in the West, that communities are naturally monolingual, and to commonsense metaphors of the mind as a limited container with room for only one, complete, language. That the first sentence on multilingualism on the Linguistic Society of America’s website, to take one professional organisation, still posits that ‘contrary to what is often believed, most of the world’s population is bilingual or multilingual’, illustrates the extent to which a scientific interest in the topic has been accompanied by normalising it as a social fact.

While it would be rash to claim that these fears and misgivings are a thing of the past, it is difficult to ignore the currently more receptive societal climate for multilingualism. Just as diversity has become a corporate value, managerial and policy discourse (especially at EU level) is now rife with praise for multilingualism. Also the wider public has not been insensitive to its value, bearing in mind the growing interest in linguistic immersion or content and language integrated learning, attracted by promises of cognitive advantage or increased job opportunities. Multilingualism today matters, then, even if it matters mostly in economic rather than cultural terms, and even if, as several authors have pointed out, the type of multilingualism that is seen to matter in fact concerns a set of parallel monolingualisms, preferably of Western-European cut (see, for example, Heller 2007; Moore 2015).

It is somewhat ironic therefore that multilingualism as a term, just when it has become a self-evident topic in the academy and beyond, is facing increasing dissatisfaction among sociolinguists who have been proposing a range of alternatives such as, among others,
translanguaging, polylingualism, and metrolinguialism. The main reason for proposing these and other terms is that they shift away from a focus on multiplying, switching or mixing distinct codes whenever speakers combine features that conventionally belong to separate ‘languages’, in favour of a focus on how speakers flexibly combine linguistic features of whatever pedigree in line with local perceptions of language. Describing behaviour as multilingual may be correct if it corresponds with participants’ conscious alternation of what they see as several linguistic codes (‘French’, ‘Danish’). But on other occasions such a description is jumping to conclusions, it is argued, since speakers may not regard what they say as ‘using multiple codes’ but as ‘the normal way of speaking’ or as ‘using one code’ if not a ‘continuously changing’ one. The prefix ‘multi’ thus merely pluralises language, it does not help with understanding its complexity (Otsuji & Pennycook 2010: 243). Sociolinguists moreover maintain that the occasions where multilingualism is inadequate for capturing language use are starkly increasing in (often, urban) settings characterised by intense migration, mobility, and communication technology, and that fluid language use is unnecessarily stigmatised or misrecognised, especially in education. The newly proposed terms for language thus strike several birds with one stone: they evoke a theoretical perspective that overcomes conventional ways of understanding language; they describe fluid linguistic behaviour that deviates from these conventional understandings; and they help draw attention to the normality and the ubiquity of linguistic practices that policymakers are hesitant to register on their discursive radar.

This explains at least partly the current popularity of new terms for multilingualism. Translanguaging, polylinguaging, and metrolinguialism, to take three of the best-known ones, have each appeared in the title of highly cited publications, and translanguaging in particular has commanded a great deal of attention. There is little that seems to impede the eventual
recognition of these terms as the label for a separate province of sociolinguistic research or as the foundational precursor to a so-called ‘new sociolinguistics’ which more accurately addresses the complexity and unpredictability of contemporary communication. Pending this development, however, we believe that the production and uptake of these terms, and the interest in linguistic fluidity that they represent, merit closer consideration as a scholarly phenomenon, and that an analysis of this phenomenon can contribute to understanding its present salience in sociolinguistics, to examining its viability, and to gauging its potential impact on the world this discipline takes as its object (cf. Salö 2017).

In this introduction we draw attention to three reasons for doing so. A first one is that these terms epitomise an anti-canonical standpoint, against linguistic fixity, the urgency of which appears to invite an over-usage given that each term is recruited for descriptive, theoretical and ideological purposes at once. Rather than more, this leads to less precision: the fluidity these terms identify spills over into their flexible application. A second reason is that scholars’ interest in highlighting linguistic fluidity contributes to viewing an investment in linguistic fixity as a sign of false consciousness or conservatism, at the same time as the idea of separate languages is difficult to avoid epistemically and ideologically. The third reason is the principal, but problematic, association of fluid language with ideas of natural language, liberation, or transformation. In what follows we give a fuller account of each of these arguments, before explaining how the different chapters in this volume contribute to their elaboration.

**Post-language theory**
Recent sociolinguistics has seen numerous new terms for characterising the flexible use of linguistic resources commonly associated with separate languages. In addition to polylinguism (Jørgensen 2008; Jørgensen & Møller 2014), translanguaging (García & Li 2014), and metrolinguism (Otsuji & Pennycook 2010), there is codemeshing (Canagarajah 2011), transidiomatic practices (Jacquemet 2005), truncated multilingualism (Blommaert et al. 2005), flexible bilingualism (Creese & Blackledge 2011), heteroglossia (Bailey 2007), and multilanguaging (Nguyen 2012). These terms add to a range of predecessors such as code-switching, code-mixing, crossing (Rampton 1995), fused lects (Auer 1999), and dual lingualism (Lincoln 1975), among others. If daunting at first sight, this terminological profusion usefully allows to distinguish, say, the idea of speakers who communicate each in a preferred, but mutually different, language (‘dual lingualism’) from the short-lived, exploratory experiments into a local out-group’s language (‘crossing’), and the unpredictable combination of linguistic features from diverse sources (‘polylingualism’). It is not unusual either to see several new terms highlight an important insight, and that from the total set of alternatives available at one point only one or two withstand the test of academic criticism.

The recent stream of terms epitomises an anti-canonical stance. Several sociolinguists have repeatedly insisted that the idea of separate, fixed languages must be seen as an invention and a socio-political tool of nationalist and colonialist projects that long went under the name of ‘modernity’ (Bauman & Briggs 2003; Heller 2007; Makoni & Pennycook 2007). They have argued in addition that these inventions, and the homogeneous speech communities they are commonly associated with, are empirically inadequate for addressing an era of unprecedented socio-linguistic complexity (Blommaert 2010) or the ‘complex linguistic realities of the 21st century’ (Li 2018: 14) which have invited ‘new ways of being in the world’ (García & Li 2014: 9). Because these inventions and concomitant assumptions ‘are so deeply embedded in
predominant paradigms of language studies that they are rarely questioned’ (Otsuji & Pennycook 2010: 251), it is recommended to reconsider the existing disciplinary vocabulary:

although notions like ‘native speaker’, ‘mother tongue’ and ‘ethnolinguistic group’ have considerable ideological force (and as such should certainly feature as objects of analysis), they should have no place in the sociolinguistic toolkit itself. (Blommaert & Rampton 2011: 4-5).

Research on code-switching has been frequently lampooned in this regard as a domain that unnecessarily assumes, upon observing speakers’ use of linguistic features that are usually seen to belong to different ‘languages’, that such speakers combine autonomous linguistic entities. This is not only seen as empirically problematic but also as reproducing the conditions for problematising speakers as deficient: it implies a view of the ‘perfect’ bilingual as a double monolingual, and of all other bilinguals as people who have difficulty keeping their two codes apart. Terms like metrolinguism or translanguaging are part of an attempt to go beyond these assumptions and undesirable consequences.

Apart from spawning a flourishing of new terms this anti-canonical stance has been productive in other ways. It has invited scholars to denaturalise common frameworks for language by revealing the continuous activity that is required to construct the idea of separate languages, and by exposing the impact of this activity on the organisation of unequal social relations; it has inspired scholars to focus on non-native, unusual, self-conscious language use in multi-ethnic, ephemeral, practice-related communities rather than on non-self-conscious, regular, native speech in established ethnic or social groups; and it has invited a focus on language as an emergent property of interaction, that is, on how the use of linguistic
features co-occurs with other semiotic sign forms, and on how the recurrent production and evaluation of such conglomerates of verbal and non-verbal resources can over time lead to their recognition as a distinctive model for interaction (Agha 2007).

Anti-canonical trends are not without risks, however. As Rob Moore (2007), an educational sociologist, argues, they likely invite schismatic discourse. Such discourse temporalises the social world and the research that addresses it by announcing a radical break with the past, both in the sense of postulating a new epoch that is fundamentally different from the previous one, and of carving up the scientific field in traditional pre- and innovative post-approaches. Typical of such discourse ‘is its claim to orginality – it is being thought for the first time’ (Moore 2007: 44). But underneath this rhetoric it has a paradigmatic form in that it ‘appears episodically across the intellectual field in its various disciplines and sub-disciplines’ (Moore 2007: 44) to ‘adjus[t] the time frames of intellectual production – rearranging the history of scholarship and the sense of continuities and discontinuities’ (2007: 40). Rather than minimising the value of incisive criticism or the possibility of societal change, Moore cautions that the logic of schism leans towards a simplified representation of both sides of the dichotomy, and to a relative lack of engagement with earlier work that offered similar insights or that addressed comparable circumstances.

While Moore was mainly concerned with how postmodern approaches are distinguished from modern ones, the risks he points up may not be entirely hypothetical in this context (as is noted by Blommaert & Rampton 2011: 3; Makoni & Pennycook 2007: 3; Otsuji & Pennycook 2010: 245-246) when we observe, first, that the idea of languages as distinct codes has a long history of criticism (cf. Makoni & Pennycook 2007: 3). It will soon be half a century since Haugen claimed that the
concept of a language as a rigid, monolithic structure is false, even if it has proved to be a useful fiction in the development of linguistics. It is the kind of simplification that is necessary at a certain stage of science, but which can now be replaced by more sophisticated models (1972: 335)

A decade later Strevens pointed out that

A central problem of linguistic study is how to reconcile a convenient and necessary fiction with a great mass of inconvenient facts. The fiction is the notion of a ‘language’ – English, Chinese, Navajo, Kashmiri. The facts reside in the mass of diversity exhibited in the actual performance of individuals when they use a given language. (1982: 23 in Kemp 2009: 16)

Other authors have put forward similar ideas around that time (Ferguson 1982; Gumperz 1982; Harris 1981; Hymes 1973; Silverstein 1979) as well as a century earlier (cf. the references to Schuchardt 1884 and 1909 in Auer 2007 and Piller 2016). This suggests that the insight that the idea of autonomous languages is useful but reductive has long been a part of the sociolinguistic canon, if it has not been relatively mainstream seeing as it has been formulated by some of the best and most widely acclaimed sociolinguists. Rather than incarnating a radical turn in the discipline, then, the current search for new terms to address the ‘inconvenient facts’ seems to stem from a long-recognised problem, one that probably haunts the entire discipline of linguistics – famously exemplified in Chomsky’s claim that performance features are irrelevant to analysing competence, whereby he recognised the reality of their inconvenience.
Some authors have remarked, secondly, that the perception of substantial societal change, especially in relation to linguistic diversity, may have to be seen as a contemporary Western (European) impression of conditions that it would be difficult to characterise as radically different from what can be observed in contemporary non-Western settings and from historical linguistic practices across the globe (see, e.g., Lucassen & Lucassen 2013 and Mackey 2005, cited in in Wiese 2018; Pavlenko 2018; Piller 2016; also see Collins & Krause, this volume). The representation of extraordinary complexity today may thus depend on the relative oblivion of complexity elsewhere and before (cf. Makoni & Pennycook 2007).

Thirdly, while research on code-switching often serves as a negative counter-example to a proper analysis of contemporary language use, this strand of research itself problematises the use of ‘a “language”’ [as] a prime of linguistic analysis’ (Auer 2007: 320; MacSwan 2017). To take one example, the key argument of Auer’s (1998) edited volume on conversational code-switching and code-mixing (which includes authors like Jørgensen and Li) is that verbal actions must be understood not by subsuming (‘coding’) them under pre-established external categories, but by explicating the systematic resources that members of a community, as participants in a conversation, have at their disposal in order to arrive at interpretations of ‘what is meant’ by a particular utterance in its context (Auer 1998: 2)

Especially with regard to code-switching this approach is argued to have far-reaching consequences, since what linguists tend to take for granted as ‘codes’
(and hence classify as ‘code-switching’) may not be looked upon as ‘codes’ by members/participants […] It is not the existence of certain codes which takes priority, but the function of a certain transition in interaction (Auer 1998: 2, 13, 15)

The goal for linguists is then to find when participants meaningfully orient to a juxtaposition between sets of co-occurring linguistic features, which must be done by investigating the possible conversational function of such a contrast and the social indexicality of the features in question. In principle therefore there is no guarantee that what participants consider different codes on one occasion they will see as different codes on the next – especially not in communities where a mixed code, and eventually a fused lect, is being developed on the basis of frequent, thus gradually less salient, alternations of linguistic features (Auer 1998: 16-21).

Some of the chapters in the volume subsequently demonstrate that what a linguist may on structural grounds be tempted to define as code-switching has to be understood as one ‘code-switched code’, a code in its own right that speakers meaningfully alternate with another inherently mixed one (Meeuwis & Blommaert 1998). Similarly, speech that appears to be the ‘use of one code’ is pointed out as a meaningful alternation of different, objectively closely related, codes (Alvarez-Cáccamo 1998). The point to draw from this is that the evaluation by a linguist that ‘a given arrangement of signs [is] a combination of elements of two systems is not only very difficult to make at times […], it is also irrelevant’ (Auer 1998: 13; our emphasis). Other chapters in Auer’s volume underline that objectively hybrid linguistic practices cannot be taken as a straight sign that speakers have elaborate competence in the source varieties, and that such practices neither occur exclusively to project particular social identities. Indeed these practices may equally result from enduring restricted competence, from temporarily ‘crossing’ into linguistic varieties one is not usually seen to own (cf.
Rampton 1998), and in many cases they serve the sequential organisation of talk (Auer 1984; Meeuwis & Blommaert 1998).

The following terms for different types of linguistic fluidity result from this: code-switching (further differentiated according to its discursive and participant-related function), mixed code, and crossing. Which is the appropriate term is presented as an empirical question based on participant understandings that are to be explored through a combination of conversation analysis and ethnographic accounts. Clearly, then, a critical concern with the idea of autonomous languages and a delicate approach to linguistic fluidity predates more recent calls that this is urgent. Let us now turn to newly proposed terms to see how they address a similar concern.

**Terminological expanse**

Recent new terms are inspired by an ontology that understands language (use) as not driven by use of ‘a language’, but by people’s attempt to create meaning in context through deploying linguistic sign forms and accompanying non-linguistic signs (gestures, facial expressions, and so on) which, as a result of their usage in earlier contexts, create expectations about the entities that can be referred to and about the type of social occasion people find themselves in (cf. Agha 2007; Silverstein 1985). In such a view people gradually become more familiar with the sets of linguistic resources and co-occurring non-linguistic signs that make sense in specific, and, in the course of their life trajectory, changing social settings. Complete knowledge of ‘a language’ is impossible therefore, if not difficult to imagine, since people only ever become familiar with, and to an even lesser extent competent in, a limited set of the ways in which linguistic and co-occurring sign forms can be used; they
also lose familiarity with sign forms that are typically produced in social settings they have stopped participating in.

One of the propositions in this regard is to describe communication through language as an act of ‘languaging’. This avoids the assumption of different languages in objective statements made by linguists, leaving it to the latter to find out how people perceive their languaging acts (e.g., as ‘switching codes’, ‘code mixing’, ‘pure language’, and so on) (Jørgensen 2003, 2008; García & Li 2014). Translanguaging, metrolingualism and polylanguaging can then be understood as labels that draw attention to specific types of languaging which defy, transcend or otherwise inflect established types of languaging (‘mono-languaging’), without multiplying languages (‘multilingualism’). Contrary to the Auer volume, however, these terms are not part of a single theoretical attempt to identify and explain different languaging types, but each function as stand-alone terms to highlight that a particular type of languaging cannot be confused with switching or mixing codes. These terms moreover do not allow to make further distinctions within non- or lesser established types of languaging. So, while it can be useful to label speakers’ meaningful transgression of conventional models for languaging as an act of ‘translanguaging’, it is less useful that no other term is available to characterise those practices where speakers unintentionally transgress such models (Ritzau & Madsen 2016), temporarily experiment with other people’s languaging models (as in ‘crossing’), meaningfully switch between languaging models, or habitually adhere to a languaging model that only appears transgressive to those who have a different one.

Metrolingualism as a term similarly and helpfully highlights the existence of fluid language practices, but although it is presented as ‘a broad, descriptive category for data analysis’ (Otsuji & Pennycook 2010: 245) and as ‘a way of describing diverse grounded local
practices’ (2010: 248), it does not offer further detail about how these practices may differ in form and function and by which other terms this can be described.

Terms like polylanguaging, metrolingualism and translanguaging have furthermore acquired a range of additional meanings. Metrolingualism and translanguaging have both been presented as broad synonyms for ‘languaging’. Metrolingualism is suggested to ‘accommodate the complex ways in which fluid and fixed, as well as global and local, practices reconstitute language and identities’ (Otsuji & Pennycook 2010: 244). Translanguaging scholars suggest that ‘[h]uman beings have a natural translanguaging instinct’ (García & Li 2014: 32) or see translanguaging as the unrestrained performance of ‘individual linguistic competences of speakers the world over, irrespective of whether we call them monolingual or multilingual’ (Otheguy et al. 2015: 286). This raises the question what the prefixes ‘trans’ and ‘metro’ bring to bear. If metrolingualism refers to fluid as well as fixed practices, and moreover ‘as a practice is not confined to the city’ (Otsuji & Pennycook 2010: 245), the term may draw undue attention to the metropolitan melting pot. Likewise, if translanguaging is a natural capacity which logically also reproduces those types of languaging commonly known as monolingual language use, ‘languaging’ would avoid the assumption of a particular transgression where none is occurring in participants’ perception.

Polylinguaging, in its turn, is not only used to refer to an unconventional type of languaging, but also lends its name to a ‘polylingualism norm’ (Jørgensen 2008; Jørgensen et al. 2011; Møller 2016). This entails that ‘language users may know – and use – the fact that some of the [linguistic features] are perceived by some speakers as not belonging together’ (Jørgensen et al. 2011: 34), but also that speakers ‘employ linguistic features associated with different languages as a matter of habit’ (Jørgensen & Møller 2014: 73). More or less the same term is
thus used to name speakers’ deliberate transgression of existing languaging models and to label a type of languaging where speakers habitually orient to a different, possibly local or less established model for languaging. That this latter model is prefixed with ‘poly’ raises the question whether it is the observed speakers’ or the analysts’ idea of where linguistic features belong that inspires its name (cf. Jaspers & Madsen 2016).

Some of these terms become *passe-partout* labels when it appears that they can name a particular theory of language as well as a language political project. So, apart from its descriptive function, metrolingualism also denominates an approach to language:

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

what […] sets metrolingualism apart is its productive power to overcome common ways of framing language, its capacity to deal with contemporary language practices, and its ability to accommodate both fixity and fluidity in its approach to mobile language use (Otsuji & Pennycook 2010: 252).

Such quotes imply that metrolingualism is largely synonymous with (an undeniably interesting version of) ‘sociolinguistics’. But apart from the fact that this makes the object and the approach to that object go under the same name, with all the attendant risks of
misunderstanding, metrolingualism is also understood in a more restrictive sense, as a political project against established, ortholinguistic, models for languaging:

We are interested in the queering of ortholinguistic practices across time and space [...] We locate metrolingualism [...] as another practice of undoing, as both a rejection of ortholinguistic practices and a production of new possibilities (Otsuji & Pennycook 2010: 246-247).

Such a political project is legitimate, but its priorities may invite friction with the scientific approach that carries the same name, and that promises in principle also to describe and explain how ortholinguistic practices emerge from interaction and are adhered to by ‘straight’ speakers. Translanguaging similarly names an approach to language:

[T]ranslanguaging is an approach to the use of language, bilingualism and the education of bilinguals that considers the language practices of bilinguals not as two autonomous language systems as has been traditionally the case, but as one linguistic repertoire with features that have been societally constructed as belonging to two separate languages (García & Li 2014: 2).

Note that here, in contrast with its definition as a universal instinct (including so-called monolingual speakers), translanguaging only refers to bilinguals’ use of language. More important is that this name for a broad approach to language and education is equally given to a specific educational philosophy, and to linguistic practices that demonstrate resistance to existing language models. For, as García & Li (2014: 74) argue, ‘[a] translanguaging theory in education views the incorporation of the students’ full linguistic repertoire as simply the
only way to go about developing language practices in school, as well as to educate’. At the same time translinguaging ‘refers to language actions that enact a political process of social and subjectivity formation which resists the asymmetries of power that language and other meaning-making codes, associated with one or another nationalist ideology, produce’ (García & Li 2014: 43). Consequently, translanguaging can denote a universal instinct, the fluid language of bilinguals, an approach to language, an educational philosophy, and resistant linguistic practices – not to mention that it retains its original pedagogical sense as the planned alternation of different languages in class. This chameleonic character makes translanguaging a term with a rich employability, but it makes it a challenge to know which of its meanings is in play (cf. Jaspers 2018a).

So, while there is no lack of new terms for describing fluid language, at least some of these are made to do far more work than their precursors in language contact research, functioning as mid-level concepts that seem more intended to sensitise us to particular types of languaging than to help us dive into the fray of their detailed interactional analysis. Such a strategy may be worthwhile in a world that is oblivious about, or hesitant to recognise, the diversity of languaging types that exist in it. The polysemy of scientific terms as such may not be a guaranteed problem either, as is demonstrated by the uptake and impact of terms like identity, ideology and discourse. Cameron (2001: 17) explains that discourse is several things at once. It is a method for doing social research; it is a body of empirical knowledge about how talk and text are organized; it is the home of various theories about the nature and workings of human communication, and also of theories about the construction and reproduction of social reality. It is both about language and about life.
Such a polysemy is challenging but understandable in light of the term’s use in different domains across the humanities. Yet if ‘[a]ny term which tries to cover too much threatens to cancel all the way through and end up signifying nothing’, as Eagleton (1994: 11) warned in relation to ideology, it may be less than convenient, unless precision isn’t a priority, that new terms that have been proposed only quite recently attain a comparable ambiguity within a single discipline like sociolinguistics.

We now turn to a second reason for critically reviewing the recent interest in fluid language, which is that it contributes to abnormalising an investment in its opposite, despite the reasonable epistemic and ideological grounds for doing so, and to downplaying the dilemmas that arise from living in a considerably ‘languagised’ world.

**Languagised lives**

It would be oversimplified to situate scholars of fluid language on one side of a fixity-fluidity dichotomy. Otsuji & Pennycook (2010: 244) for example argue that while one of their aims is ‘to demythologise notions of language mixing along the fault line of bilingualism, another is to demythologise hybridity as if cultural and linguistic fixity also were not part of its apparatus’. Hence ‘[w]e cannot leap into an examination (or celebration) of hybridity as if fixed ascriptions of identity and their common mobilisation in daily interaction have ceased to exist’ (2010: 244). Because what looks fluid may well have been inspired by mobilising fixed categories, while linguistic fixity may be informed by an awareness of fluidity. They conclude therefore that ‘it is important not to construe fixity and fluidity as dichotomous […]’
but rather to view them as symbiotically (re)constituting each other’ (2010: 244; cf. also Jørgensen 2008; Møller 2016).

We agree with this view. Yet it is the fluidity side of this symbiotic union that captures most of the current sociolinguistic interest, with fixity often relegated to antagonist status as ‘th[e] very language ideolog[y] that we need to supersede’ (Otsuji & Pennycook 2010: 251). An example of this is the influential revisiting of Gumperz’s (1964) notion of the linguistic repertoire (Blommaert & Backus 2011; cf. also Busch 2012). While Gumperz saw repertoires as speakers’ know-how of linguistic resources, following from their membership of relatively stable speech communities, Blommaert and Backus argue that this is hard to maintain in a world where intensified mobility and communication technologies make individuals experience a variety of more or less short-term and fluid types of groupness. Consequently the linguistic knowledge individuals acquire must be related to their ‘active usage and passive exposure’ (Blommaert & Backus 2011: 5) to language in the inconstant collectivities that they move between. This makes variation and change ‘natural design features of language’ (Blommaert & Backus 2011: 6), and it results in speakers’ development of a dynamic ‘inventory of resources’ that includes linguistic elements besides ‘anything that speakers use to communicate meaning’ (Blommaert & Backus 2011: 7). Far from offering a community-based snapshot of styles and registers, then, repertoire becomes in this view a linguistic track record of individual biographies, and this invites a challenge of the idea of complete knowledge of a language:

[T]he ‘language’ we know is never finished […] 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 (Blommaert & Backus 2011: 9)

Thus Blommaert and Backus move away from a conception of multilingualism as complete knowledge of separate languages: they call for accounts that are ‘no longer trapped by a priori conceptions of language, knowledge (competence, cognition) and community’ (2011: 24) but that attend to how individuals display types of knowledge as different as speaking fluently, making oneself understood, or recognising a language one does not speak at all.

Underlying their argument is a concern with justice: if no one is fully competent in a language, it is questionable to evaluate speakers according to benchmarks inspired by such competence (cf. Extra et al. 2009; Hogan-Brun et al. 2009). Hence, ‘a more practical (or polemical) motive’ of their work is to take issue with ‘dominant discourses [that] seem to increasingly turn to entirely obsolete and conclusively discredited models of language knowledge’ (Blommaert & Backus 2011: 4), such as the European Common Framework of Reference for Languages and its measuring bureaucracy. The spearhead of the attack is the precision of their approach: since this produces a more complex account, official instruments based on a view of separate languages must be considered ‘a form of science fiction’ since they ‘have only a tenuous connection with the real competences of people, the way they are organized in actual repertoires, and the real possibilities they offer for communication’ (Blommaert & Backus 2011: 24).

Despite this opposition to science fiction, it appears that it can be reasonable to recycle terms that reproduce it. For, when Blommaert and Backus demonstrate the complexity of the first
author’s linguistic repertoire, they indicate that it counts 38 ‘languages’, and then break that number down into smaller figures for the ‘languages’ in which he has obtained maximal (two), partial (six), and minimal competence (eight), and for those he merely recognise (22).

Aware of the fact that invoking ‘languages’ is problematic, they explain that the ‘reason for doing so is primarily didactic: we must start from a widely known vocabulary and attempt to refine it’ (2011: 2). The reductive terminology is thus a temporary, pragmatic solution: it makes the complexity of a repertoire more tractable than when each of the counted ‘languages’ would have had to be broken up in countless, nameless ways of speaking, writing, reading, and recognising. Reverting to separate language terms in other words serves the epistemic purpose of idealisation, that is, ‘the intentional introduction of distortion into scientific theories’ (Weisberg 2007: 639; cited in MacSwan 2017: 175). The question is if this merely is a temporary move, since the point of evoking languages here does not seem to have been to provide a provisional description while we await a more sophisticated vocabulary, but to provide a minimalist idealisation, one that deliberately abstracts away from a more complex reality in order to clarify complexity through simplicity, that is, to elucidate with sufficient rather than maximal accuracy how layered and diverse actual repertoires can be. After all, ‘minimalist idealizers are not interested in generating the most truthful or accurate model. Rather, they are concerned with […] discovering the core factors responsible for the target phenomenon’ (Weisberg 2007: 655) – what they lose in completeness they gain in explanatory acuity. This suggests that sociolinguists may have more options than chucking the idea of a separate language out of their toolkit, since depending on their (pedagogical, explanatory, etc.) purpose and theoretical ideal (completeness, simplicity, predictive power, etc.), it can be epistemically defensible to ignore an excess of variation and to evoke the fiction of language – or, indeed, the fiction of style, register, genre, variety (MacSwan 2017: 175-177; cf. also Jørgensen 2010: 37).
For MacSwan the analytic utility of such constructs trumps their political (ab)use. But on an epistemic and political level positing the existence of ‘a language’ is probably neither entirely beyond the pale nor wholly unproblematic (cf. Makoni & Pennycook 2007: 27): sociolinguists themselves have recruited analytic idealisations to dignify marginalised groups as systematic rather than disfluent speakers, with positive but also problematic outcomes (Jaspers 2016). Also the inverse strategy, that is positing that ‘languages do not exist’, is neither unreasonable nor trouble-free. Such a claim usefully denaturalises predominant views and opens up innovative ways of thinking about language, but we have just seen that to radically maintain it can be needlessly complicated for at least some epistemic purposes. Also on a political level it can be problematic radically to argue that precise knowledge of what language is disqualifies official models based on a different conception of language, or to advance a radical strategy of ‘disinvention’ to counter the ‘epistemic violence’ of invented languages many people have to endure (Makoni & Pennycook 2007: 16). For, while it is necessary to expose the unrealibility of tests, the inaccuracy of the language model they are based on, and the undesirable effects that ensue from them, one could very well imagine the implication of highly precise language models and reliable tests in unjust conditions, or experiences of injustice when no test is applied and incompetence is no objection. Rather than on their precision alone, the fairness of such models would also seem to depend on why they are used, by and for whom, on which occasions, and with what kind of impact on those to whom they are applied. This also means that, if precision is not enough to decide on the political suitability of language models or tests, representing the issue as a scientific one threatens to depict political values as a matter of evidence, or to place the debate in a context of a widely shared value (the truth about what language is) rather than in a context of
conflicting values about what type of language is desirable, where, and when (cf. Pielke 2007: 43ff.).

Such a strategy in fact follows a ‘linear model’ of science according to which ‘achieving agreement on scientific knowledge is a prerequisite for a political consensus to be reached and then policy action to occur’ (Pielke 2007: 13). From the perspective of this model science is central to politics, and because scientific understandings are supposed to motivate political action, winning a scientific debate leads to a privileged position in political battle […] Science thus becomes a convenient and necessary means for removing certain options from a debate without explicitly dealing with a dispute over values […] For who can argue against truth? (2007: 124-125)

Typical of this model is to argue that a particular policy is based on junk science (or is obsolete, discredited) to imply that the ‘political agendas following from that science must be ill conceived and not deserving of support’ (2007: 126). But such a strategy does not suffice to determine whether to choose, say, for a more precise language test, for no test at all, or for a different course of action, since ‘what is factually true does not automatically render it desirable; we cannot simply induce what we should do by accurately observing what is currently being done, any more than we can induce the facts from the way we think things ought to be’ (Cameron 1995: 227). What ought to be done ultimately is a political, not a scientific matter, although facts are important in debating the options. And to the extent that scholars represent the matter at hand as one of ‘what is’ rather than ‘what ought’ in order to disqualify particular options from the debate, they ultimately risk compromising the
credibility of their insights if the public and decision makers start seeing these as an extension of scholars' political stance. Because the odds for this are high when there is intense conflict over values, Pielke (2007: 135ff.) argues a more sustainable role for science in such contexts resides in expanding decision makers’ set of alternatives, in sketching the relation between potential choices and outcomes, and in proposing innovative options that may allow for compromise between conflicted parties.

A radical insistence on the fictional nature of linguistic categories for political reasons moreover contributes to obscuring the value-based nature of these categories, their ‘social truth’ so to say, and the real dilemmas that they pose for ordinary speakers and sociolinguists alike. Makoni & Pennycook (2007: 3) concede in this regard that ‘while the entities around which battles are fought, tests are constructed and language policies are written are inventions, the effects are very real’. Yet the epistemological battle (2007: 21) they propose in response to this again reduces the scope of acceptable options and leaves little alternative than to identify as a symptom of false consciousness the fact that ‘languages are salient dimensions of [people’s] sense of self […] some people’s ‘identity’ is inexorably linked to their ‘language’ (Blackledge & Creese 2010: 17) or that ‘particular languages clearly are for many people an important and constitutive factor of their individual, and at times, collective identities’ (May 2005: 330), and this may pave the way for various kinds of academically endorsed pressure and blame (cf. Jaspers 2018a, 2018b). When we see such involvements as reflections of a particular, predominant, and debatable view of desirable language that competes with other views in an undeniably real political conflict, linguistic fixity and fluidity can be understood as contradictory social values, neither of which is by definition anathema to a justifiable political project, since this depends on considerations of desirability, feasibility and viability. Such a view moreover allows to see fixity and fluidity as mutually
presupposing values: it would not make sense to disprove or oppose linguistic fixity if it was not at the same time considered a socially relevant value; at the same time the existence of linguistic fluidity is clearly presupposed, if not feared, by those who value linguistic fixity (for an analogous argument, see Billig et al. 1988: 125ff.). Without linguistic fixity, in other words, no fluidity, and vice versa (cf. McDermott & Varenne 1995; also see Busch 2012; Otsuji & Pennycook 2010: 244). The two are part of the same linguistic culture, where their mutual association with widely shared liberal values such as communication, equality, inclusion, and emancipation, invites dilemmas in everyday life and academia (cf. Billig et al. 1988). We call this culture a ‘languagised’ one to underline the principal, enduring social value of separate languages in it, despite the insight that its proponents cannot legitimise their pursuit of this value as based on facts; calling it ‘languagised’ does not exclude the existence of linguistic fluidity in that culture nor minimise the value it has for other parties, indeed it highlights that adhering to the latter value is fraught with difficulties and invites ambivalent responses.

Such responses transpire when we see sociolinguists’ advocacy of linguistic fluidity coincide with their continuing professional investment in a register of English that eventually adheres to, and reproduces the conditions for recognising as a benchmark, the idea of a monolingual standard language. A similar response emerges when translanguaging scholars, in contrast to their claim that including students’ full linguistic repertoire ‘[i]s simply the only way […] to educate’ (García & Li 2014: 74) propose that ‘students need practice and engagement in translanguaging, as much as they need practice of standard features used for academic purposes’ (García & Li 2014: 71-72; also see Otheguy et al. 2015: 283), which only seems possible by actively reducing, at least some of the time, students’ linguistic repertoires at school. Rather than being inconsistent such responses demonstrate the complexity of dealing
with a culture where linguistic fluidity and fixity presuppose each other and are both, albeit to a different extent, tied to widely shared ideals.

So, instead of relegating fixity to the sociolinguistic scrapheap and viewing fluidity as the only ‘real’ target phenomenon, it may be more useful epistemically to explain how, why, and with what outcomes, laypeople and academics (dis)align themselves with both linguistic fixity and fluidity in the course of their social trajectories (cf. Pérez-Milans & Soto 2017 for a similar argument). On a political level, following Pielke (2007), we argue that in a context of enduring value-conflict over what language use is desirable, sociolinguists’ credibility and impact on policymaking diminishes if they represent the issue as a strictly scientific one, and that a more effective strategy resides in prefiguring the effects of several policy options and proposing innovative courses of action that may reconcile opposing parties.

**Natural, transforming language use**

A third reason to look critically upon new terms for language (use) is that they are particularly associated with ideas of natural language, and with assumptions that recognising, or promoting, these natural practices will entail a form of liberation and social transformation. Also these assumptions need closer consideration.

Statements to the effect that natural, everyday language emerges in counterpoint to a notion of non-natural, ideologically constrained language can be found elsewhere in contemporary sociolinguistics. Shohamy for example argues that language is

personal, open, free, dynamic, creative and constantly evolving. This concept of language does not have the boundaries of language x or language y, since it spreads
beyond words and is manifested through a variety of multi-modal representations and different forms of ‘languaging’. Yet, in spite of such views, language is commonly perceived as closed, stagnated and rule-bound. Language is manipulated, as it is used as a symbol of unity, loyalty, patriotism, inclusion and legitimacy, especially by various collective groups (2006: xvi)

Such an argument evokes a Rousseauian perspective on language use in which individuals’ authentic, in this case linguistic, nature suffers from the manipulative incursions of society. A similar conception emerges in research on translanguaging where a pre-social idiolect – ‘the mental or psychological sense [which] encompasses the billions of individual linguistic competences of speakers the world over, irrespective of whether we call them monolingual or multilingual’ (Otheguy et al. 2015: 286) – is distinguished from ‘the social walls erected by the named languages’ (2015: 304) and where it is suggested that these named languages ‘have nothing to do […] with the billions of the world’s idiolects, which exist in a separate, linguistically unnamed and socially undifferentiated mental realm’ (Otheguy et al. 2015: 293). In this ontology it becomes natural to see linguistic freedom as the unencumbered realisation of fluid language, and to see translanguaging as ‘the act of deploying all of the speakers’ lexical and structural resources freely’ (Otheguy et al. 2015: 297; emphasis in original), or ‘as the full use of idiolectal repertoires without regard for named-language boundaries’ (Otheguy et al. 2015: 304). Such a view in effect pulls up a wall between the mental and the social world to contest the existence of social walls for language.

Linguistic anthropologists argue however that language must be seen as a phenomenon that is ‘irreducibly dialectic in nature […] [as] an unstable mutual interaction of meaningful sign forms, contextualized to situations of interested human use and mediated by the fact of
cultural ideology’ (Silverstein 1985: 220). In such a view the occurrence of linguistic features is inevitably tied to a specific context and will be somehow informed and understood by the ideas people have of culture, language, and other people. On a developmental level too, linguistic anthropologists insist on the socialising, and thus ‘manipulative’ nature of human interaction. How children learn to act and speak, as Kulick & Schieffelin (2004) point out, is profoundly influenced by parents’ ideological views on language, interaction, learning, culture, and by what they assume that infants are. There is no escape in this perspective from the impact of ideology, no ‘unwalled’ language, although ideology does not totally determine speakers’ choices. Usage-based accounts similarly argue that children’s acquisition of linguistic competence results from their socialisation in specific localities: rather than instinctive or natural therefore, ‘ways of using language across ‘language’ boundaries are not ‘natural’ but are learned in the same way other kinds of discourse patterns are learned’ (Ruuska, this volume). MacSwan (2017) claims that from a syntactic perspective an explanation of the available bilingual data requires the postulation of at least some internal differentiation that is related to socially recognised ways of speaking (not necessarily ‘named languages’).

Applying fluid language use is at the same time frequently considered to be liberating or transformative. Translanguaging research in particular argues that introducing fluid language at school is ‘transformative for the child, for the teacher and for education itself” (Garcia & Li 2014: 68) because it enables pupils to construct and constantly modify their sociocultural identities and values, as they respond to their historical and present conditions critically and creatively. It enables
students to contest the ‘one language only’ or ‘one language at a time’ ideologies of monolingual and traditional bilingual classrooms (Garcia & Li 2014: 67)

Flores & García (2013: 246) likewise claim that allowing fluid language at school has the capacity to release buried histories, and encourages the emergence of ‘new subjectivities […] that defy ethnolinguistic identities defined by a nation-state/colonial paradigm’, while García (2017: 24) maintains that translanguaging ‘gives agency to minoritized speakers, decolonizes linguistic knowledge, and engages all of us in the social transformations that the world so sorely needs today’. Frequently it is suggested that allowing translanguaging at school provides a ‘third space’ (Bhabha 1994) that generates new, now hybrid, identities, values and practices (Flores & García 2013; García & Li 2014; Li 2011).

It is possible of course that allowing fluid language at school creates new opportunities for pupils and teachers, and that they experience this as transformative. Yet expecting all of the above from fluid language ‘may be seen as a case of claiming quite a lot for a change in pedagogical practice’ (Block 2018; Jaspers 2018a). Linguistic anthropologists maintain as well that ‘all subjectivities […] are negotiated and achieved, not given’ (Kulick & Schieffelin 2004: 350). This entails, first, that subjectivities cannot simply be ‘set free’ but depend on their consistent cultivation – a process that requires distinction, and thus, new ‘walls’. Second, this cultivation of new, now fluid, linguistic subjectivities inevitably implies the simultaneous invention of new ‘bad subjects’ (2004: 354-360) who do not correspond to the valued subjectivity. New social walls can be expected to emerge as well through celebrating a ‘third’ space ‘which, if it is a space, must have boundaries of its own, and thus be based on oppositions to its own others’ (Friedman 1997: 79, in Allatson 2001: 199). Charalambous et al. (this volume) furthermore show that benevolently introducing fluid language at school can
also fail to be seen as liberating, and may even lead to silence among pupils: in the Greek-
Cypriot school they describe Turkish-speaking pupils were anxious to be seen as speakers of
the aggressor’s language in that context. This illustrates that, however well-intentioned,
pluralising language at school, or inviting pupils to use linguistic resources from the home in
class, is always contextualised and thus inf(l)ected by immediate as well as by larger-scale
conditions and expectations for language. Liberation, release, or transformation are not
dependent on the type of language itself but on the relation between language, participants
and setting, which in its turn needs to be understood against the background of wider-scale
language ideologies and socio-economic processes (Block 2018; Lorente & Tupas 2014).
Fluid language use therefore is, like hybridity, ‘neither intrinsically nor invariably a radical
marker of subversiveness’ (Allatson 2001: 196). Its effects are a matter of empirical
observation. Coupland (2001: 369; also see Canagarajah 2011) made a similar point when he
argued that

The social theoretic and discourse analytic wings of sociolinguistics are increasingly
receptive to ideas of cultural hybridity […] but perhaps sometimes uncritically. To
recognize the view that social identities can be, or even necessarily are, multiple is
usually argued to be a liberal and progressive antidote to assuming that each person
inhabits a given and single social identity. This traditional and allegedly repressive
ideology is called essentialism. The idea of authentic cultural experience is held to be
essentializing and therefore suspect. But it is surely simplistic to posit that multiplicity
and hybridity are necessarily good and that essence and authenticity are necessarily
bad. There are challenging and intriguing qualifications and interaction effects.
For example, the claim that social and cultural identities are necessarily hybrid in the late-modern world does undervalue many people’s experience of group membership. Welshness remains, in some ways and for some people, an essential and defining quality, not only an authentic experience but an authenticating one. We should not be too ready to dismiss cultural essentialism as if it were inevitably a naïve or pernicious assumption. Karim 1997, Said 1978, and others show that it can also be this, especially when a cultural uniformity is imputed by powerful outgroups with vested interests in containing and perhaps exoticizing cultural ‘Others’ […] The conditions of late-modernity add layers of complexity and conditionality to many people’s senses of cultural essence, but they do not simply neutralize them.

In this view it is conceivable that ‘obsolete’ models for language open up new horizons, serve to construct new subjectivities, or function as a linguistic compass in a confusing world. Rather than trying to swing the pendulum back towards monolingualism, though, this is to argue that sociolinguistics should concern itself with explaining the transformative potential of all language use, regardless of its fixed or fluid nature.

**The chapters in this volume**

In this introduction we have taken a critical look at some new labels for language (use). We have addressed the conceptual imprecision entailed by their varied use, the tendency to view opposition to fluid language practices as conservative or poorly informed, as well as the trend to imbue these practices with liberation or transformation. The rest of this volume brings together empirically based observations that in various ways address these assumptions. The chapters below illuminate how lives are, or become, ‘languagised’, how languages can be
seen as valid and valuable in speakers’ lives, and how an aspiration for language(s) in the traditional sense does not solely amount to inequality or oppression.

The first section of the book comprises chapters that each investigate how speakers’ lives in various places are ‘languagised’, that is, how speakers come to recognise established categories for language, how they reconcile them with their own practices and different purposes, and how they use these very categories, whether or not in line with their official conception, in their dealings with others.

So, on the basis of a longitudinal study of speakers of Turkish minority background in a Danish suburb and on data collected in relation to a three-year long ethnographic study at a linguistically diverse public school in Denmark, Janus Møller describes how young Danes over time acquire an awareness of how their habitual linguistic practices (which combine resources from Turkish and Danish) relate to established models for ‘Turkish’ and ‘Danish’ and subsequently use this metalinguistic knowledge in interaction to (dis)align with these models. Katharina Ruuska draws on data from interviews with highly proficient adult foreign language speakers of Finnish to investigate how their linguistic competence can be understood as fashioned in relation to the linguistic ideologies that surround them. She argues that an ability to keep ‘languages’ apart and to display this ability in relevant contexts may have to be seen as an intrinsic part of competent multilingual speakers in their particular, in this case European, context. The third chapter in this section, by Alastair Pennycook & Emi Otsuji, explores how workers in food markets and restaurant kitchens deploy language labels in diverse and flexible ways. This metrolinguual metalanguage should not be taken at face value, they argue, but investigated for how Australians of different backgrounds constantly
rearrange their relations, spaces, and speakers, and, in the process, reconfigure the meanings of language names.

The second section of this volume concentrates on how conventional linguistic categories can, despite their seeming old-fashionedness, be valid in people’s life plans and conducive to the emergence of new subjectivities – as well as new ‘bad subjects’.

In this regard the chapter by Bernadette O’Rourke explores why and with which effects speakers invest in delineated minority languages rather than in a more fluid linguistic practice that combines resources from a minority and majority language. Drawing on interviews with speakers seeking to acquire Galician, a minoritised language in north-western Spain, she shows that investing in a ‘pure’ minority language competence is a valid concern for many speakers, which produces new subjectivities but also leads to new tensions and opportunities for sociolinguistic hierarchisation.

Taking the case of Hong Kong, Kara Fleming in her chapter demonstrates how an official policy of ‘biliteracy and trilingualism’ can thwart social mobility when groups are differentiated as to the degree they meet the ‘ideal’ biliterate and trilingual. She describes how South Asians, in spite of their competence in English and Cantonese, continue to be constructed as disfluent, socially excluded and economically problematic and argues that multilingualism in this context acts as a smokescreen to hide race and class based stratification, even if South Asians invest in English as a way of transcending their predicament. In showing how types of multilingualism can be socially hierarchised, Fleming hints at how potential policies in favour of fluid language are not immune to being inflected by long-standing socio-economic inequalities. Thomas Rorbeck Norreby & Lian Malai
Madsen subsequently describe linguistic interaction in a French private school in Copenhagen, Denmark, that is, in an institution that epitomises the authority and success of ‘real’ language. On the basis of ethnographic fieldwork Nørreby & Madsen explore how this investment in real language plays out interactionally in and outside of class, how it is legitimised through linking it up with a cosmopolitan ethos, and how pupils reconcile the linguistic regime at school with the wider sociolinguistic economy of Denmark.

The third section in this book explores different meanings of fluid language use than the usually transgressive or liberating qualities with which it is often associated.

Thus, the chapter by Panayiota Charalambous, Constadina Charalambous and Michalinos Zembylas explores how the well-meant introduction of Turkish in a Greek-Cypriot primary school class was resented by Turkish-speaking pupils as an unwelcome opportunity for others to perceive their ‘speaking Turkish’ as a sign of ‘being Turkish’, which is (still) not held in high regard in Greek Cyprus despite the peace-building efforts. Rather than liberation, translanguaging in this context contributed to awkward silence and feelings of insecurity. Ursula Ritzau & Lian Malai Madsen’s chapter illustrates that linguistic hybridity needs to be examined in close connection to its local and conversational settings. Consequently what looks like ‘polylanguaging’ to the sociolinguist may need to be explained as oriented to an idea of ‘pure’ language. They argue this on the basis of data collected among Swiss-German university learners of Danish as a foreign language, showing how these students sometimes indeed knowingly align (and amuse) themselves with ideas of hybrid language, while in other cases their hybrid language is undeniably oriented to learning Danish.
The fourth and final section of this book contains chapters that demonstrate the simultaneous push and pull of monolingual vs. plurilingual and standardising vs. vernacularising tendencies, showing that this often produces dilemmas and makeshift strategies rather than clear-cut choices.

Jürgen Jaspers starts from the fact that Flemish teachers in Belgium are consistently found to report negative attitudes towards their pupils’ use of non-Dutch home languages, that these attitudes are seen to be detrimental to pupils’ well-being and learning outcomes, and reflect teachers’ monolingual habitus. On the basis of ethnographic research at four secondary schools he argues however that these teachers frequently, in contrast to their rigid attitudes, vacillate between linguistic uniformity and diversity because language-political concerns are cross-cut by pedagogical and organisational ones. Instead of unthinking agents of monolinguailism, teachers must thus be approached as deliberative thinkers, in this and many other contexts. James Collins and Lara-Stephanie Krause in their chapter examine how teachers and multilingual student bodies in two South African public schools in the metropolitan Cape Town region co-construct linguistic and social hierarchies. Although different from each other in terms of school language and pupils’ linguistic background, Collins & Krause shows on the basis of classroom interaction as well as school staff and out-of-school commentary that in each school, teacher and pupils negotiated tensions between, and hierarchically organised, notions of standard vs. vernacular varieties of Xhosa, Afrikaans and English; in so doing they took up differing, ambiguous positions vis-à-vis these varieties as they grow up in a society where identity politics and social mobility aspirations take shape against the backdrop of the history of apartheid.

The volume is concluded with a discussion by Rob Moore.
References


