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Modernist language ideologies, indexicalities and identities: Looking at the multilingual classroom through a post-Fishmanian lens

MASSIMILIANO SPOTTI

Abstract

This paper focuses on the construction of immigrant minority pupils' identities in a regular multicultural primary school classroom in the Netherlands. It presents three ethnographic data sets. The first set features the evaluative discourse of a Dutch medium primary school teacher and it focuses on the ways in which this class teacher indexes pupils' identities on an axis of (linguistic) disorder versus order on the basis of an attributed monolingual upbringing. The second set features the evaluative discourse of Moroccan girls of both Berber and Arabic-speaking origin. Although the Dutch language is a given in their lives, their identity belongings are strongly anchored on the axis of purity versus impurity, established on the basis of their language skills in the immigrant minority language. The third set features a sabotage move perpetrated by two pupils of Turkish background, who assert the validity of 'international' languages as opposed to their home language and who use 'fake' Arabic to escape the pressure exerted on them by the classroom researcher. The paper concludes by proposing a revisited understanding of multilingualism that can give justice to the complexity of the pupils' own sociolinguistic repertoires and identity performances. This renewed understanding is based on a post-Fishmanian awareness that sees language use and identity construction as polycentric semiotic performances not necessarily bound to groups.

Key words: Identity, multilingualism, Fishman, immigrant pupils, primary education, the Netherlands, interpretive ethnography

1. Introduction

Cultural and linguistic diversity in Dutch mainstream society have been the object of heated public and political debates for decades, with increased attention being paid to the need for integration (more recently addressed as 'participa-

tion') of immigrant minority group members within mainstream Dutch society. This integration is marketed and sold as something to be achieved through the means of Dutch alone (Extra and Spotti 2009). As a result of immigration, the Dutch educational system has also been confronted with complex new patterns of multilingualism and the identities of immigrants and their offspring, and primary education is one of the institutionalized environments in which monoglot policing has taken place. That is, it is one of the institutional environments in which government policy has enabled the Dutch language, rather than being side kicked by immigrant minority languages, to be the only language of instruction in the curriculum (Bezemer and Kroon 2007). This situation, however, is in sharp contrast with the findings of ethnographic research that reconstruct a discontinuity between monoglot language policies and the heteroglot language repertoires of immigrant minority pupils (cf. Bezemer 2003; Spotti 2006). With the above as backdrop, this paper focuses on the construction of immigrant minority pupils' identities in a regular multicultural primary school classroom in the Netherlands. It presents three ethnographic data sets. The first set features the evaluative discourse of a Dutch medium primary school teacher and it focuses on the ways in which this class teacher indexes pupils' identities on an axis of (linguistic) disorder versus order on the basis of an attributed monolingual upbringing. The second set features the evaluative discourse of Moroccan girls of both Berber and Arabic-speaking origin. Although the Dutch language is a given in their lives, their identity belongings are strongly anchored on the axis of *purity* versus *impurity*, established on the basis of their language skills in the immigrant minority language. The third set features a sabotage move perpetrated by two pupils of Turkish background, who assert the validity of 'international' languages as opposed to their home language and who use 'fake' Arabic to escape the pressure exerted on them by the classroom researcher. The paper concludes by proposing a revisited understanding of multilingualism that can give justice to the complexity of the pupils' own polylingual sociolinguistic repertoires and identity performances.

The central concepts here are *modernist language ideologies*, *indexicality*, and *identity.* Together, these three concepts help construct a viable conceptual pathway for the study of identity construction. It is therefore necessary to outline my understanding of these three concepts at the outset of this paper.

2.   Modernist language ideologies, indexicality and identities

Modernist language ideologies are belief systems that have served, and still serve, nation-states and their institutional ramifications – such as education – in

setting up and perpetrating national order (Baumann and Briggs 2003; see also Silverstein's 1996, 1998 work on a culture of monoglot standard). Modernist language ideologies present languages as codified in specific artefactualised linguistic objects: grammars, dictionaries etc. (Blommaert 2008) – that have a name (e.g. Dutch, Turkish, Arabic, etc.), and whose speakers have clearly definable ethnolinguistic identities, i.e., 'I am a speaker of language X and therefore I am a member of group Y'. These ideologies, seen as contributing to the maintenance of national order, revolve around two tenets: the establishment of a standard or norm for language behaviour that is common to all inhabitants of a nation-state, and the rejection of hybridity and ambivalence in any form of linguistic behaviour. Of these two closely related tenets, the former is the goal towards which the latter is seen to contribute. That is, the rejection of hybridity is embedded in the search – whether in writing or in pronunciation – for a 'standard' (see Agha 2003 for a comprehensive explanation of the emergence of Received Pronunciation of English [RP] as a product of characterological discourses). The standard is presented as the norm and, as such, is sold and marketed as the uncorrupted variety of the official/national language and often associated with the righteous moral values of its users (see Agha 2003: 231–273). Finally, given that languages are understood as finite entities bound by syntactical rules and grammars, their usage can be assessed. From this it follows, then, that there will be language users whose use of language can be evaluated as better than that of others. As for education, categorising pupils on the basis of how skilful they are in the usage of the standard variety, or even in the usage of the school variety of a certain language, holds deep implications for identity construction. This leads us to the concept of indexicality.

Any bits of language that someone uses carry an ideological load in that, in addition to their referential meaning, they also carry either pragmatic or social meaning (i.e. have 'indexicality'). In other words, any bits of a language that one uses are potentially subject to evaluation against the standard/norm from others who inhabit the same socialisation space. A poignant example of this indexicalisation process is the evaluation of accents, which can be embedded in people's discourse on language use (e.g., 'he speaks like a farmer' or 'he surely is from the capital'), and that are drawn on grounds of – often implicit – shared complexities of indexicality within a certain centering institution (see Dong 2009: 72–73). For instance, an accent can be evaluated as 'funny' because it indexes distance from the authorised standard accent which in turn is an index of prestige and constructs the identity of those performing it as an identity of someone who is 'well schooled'. Indexicality is therefore the connective cement that links language use to social meanings, and all this is done through institutionally authorised evaluative discourses. This means that in any act of

language use, there is always identity work involved and that indexicality points to the grassroots displays of 'groupness'. Consequently, every utterance, even when not explicitly about identity, is an act of identity performance. This leads us to the third and final concept of the conceptual framework employed here: that of identity.

Space constraints do not allow for a complete review of the concept of identity (see Block 2006; Dong 2010; Joseph 2003; Spotti 2007). For the present purpose, it should suffice to pin down three things. First, identity is not something that someone possesses. Rather, it is something that someone constructs in social practice within a space of socialisation. Second, identity is not monolithic. Instead, it consists of a series of performative acts that take place according to the socialisation space one occupies. We can therefore talk of 'identities' instead of 'identity' and identities are constructs that are built on the basis of semiotic resources at one's disposal within a certain socialisation space. Third, identities are inhabited as well as ascribed. Inhabited identities refer to self-performed identities through which people claim allegiance to a group. Conversely, ascribed identities are attributed to one by others on the basis of evaluative criteria that make one either well-fitted or ill-fitted for a socially circumscribed category (e.g., 'the good neighbour', 'the bad student', 'the college beauty', 'the nerd'; see also Goffman 1981).

How do modernist language ideologies, indexicalities, and identities work together, then? Borrowing from Bakhtin (1981: 293), in any stratified urban society, languages, the connections between language varieties and the identities of different groups are not as straightforward as modernist language ideologies would have us to believe. Varieties are indexes of diverse, often conflicting, symbolic meanings of social, cultural and ethnic belongings. More simply put, the bits of language that someone uses are not only a means for the direct expression of someone's intentions but they are also objects that index identity belonging both in one's own eyes (inhabited identity) and in the eyes of others (ascribed identity). Language(s) and their words therefore carry an ideological load (see Rampton 2005: 75) because they are subject to the values at play at the time and in the space in which they are uttered (Blommaert 2005: 222–223). It is according to the centring institution that someone is either part of, or tries to gain access to, that one's identity is constructed as that of a 'good' (insider) member or a 'bad' (outsider) member. This is done on the basis of either how successfully, or unsuccessfully, one manages to embrace the complexity of indexicalities present within that specific socialisation space. The evaluative discourses that construct identities result from either the respect or trespass of situated language norms. These, in turn, revolve around the central values of the centring institution in which bits of language have been deployed. A case in point would be a pupil

learning standard Dutch who, engaged in mapping graphemes onto phonemes in a primary school classroom, fails to use standard Latin script and, consequently, is assessed as having 'sloppy' orthographic skills, (mis)recognised as having 'faulty' literacy skills and, finally, ascribed the identity of an 'illiterate' pupil (see Blommaert, Cleve and Willaert 2006). The phenomenology of super-diverse migration movements that makes up for a new form of diversity that impinges upon the group oriented diversity that has characterized (Western) Europe from the 1970s onwards, shows that mobility of people involves mobility of linguistic and semiotic resources. It follows, that a sedimented understanding of language and identity as finite entities, and an understanding of language use according to sedentary patterns is now complemented by 'translocal' forms of language use (see Jacquement 2005). The combination of both holds unexpected sociolinguistic effects and it has outreaching consequences for people's identity performances.

3. The study

The study was part of a larger interpretive ethnographic inquiry on identity construction in one Dutch and one Flemish multicultural primary school classroom. Both case studies aimed at analysing evaluative discourse ethnographically to understand how immigrant minority pupils' identities are constructed in the discourse authored by policy documents, school staff members and pupils, as well as in classroom interactions. The data consists of field notes, long open-ended interviews with staff members, focused group discussions with the pupils and audio recordings of classroom interactions.

Approximately 55 hours of classroom interactions were observed and audio taped. The observer never sought to actively participate in the classroom interactions. Interviews followed the plot of the 'long open-ended interview' (McCracken 1988), and they were structured around general topics like the educational and professional background of the teacher, the knowledge that s/he held of the pupils' sociolinguistic background, of their ethno-linguistic, cultural and religious belongings as well as about events that were observed during the unfolding of the classroom's daily life. The first interview was conducted with the classroom teacher after a week's visit in the classroom and another three interviews were conducted either to further elucidate the teacher's evaluative discourse (indicated below with 'S02') or to gain the retrospective view of the teacher on the taped classroom episodes. Central to the analysis here are also the focused group discussions carried out with the pupils (below indicated with 'GD01'). The groups were formed based on the quantity of contact that pupils

had with each other. The discussions turned out to be friendly chats where pupils could express their views on topics that emerged from the questionnaires administered to them to gather some initial information on their ethnic, linguistic and religious belongings and from the field notes drawn during the observation period. All discussions took place in the afternoon, mainly in the schools' staff room and lasted between 30 to 45 minutes for each group. The discussions were all audio taped and the pupils were made aware that the audiotape recorder was on as the group 'chat' started. Their discussions touched upon various topics. Starting from the pupils' knowledge of their parental patterns of migration, the discussion moved to the exploration of the pupils' own understanding of their identity belongings. As in the interviews with staff members, my position in all the discussions was limited to giving them prompts and asking them to either expand on or clarify their statements. I showed my curiosity in what they had to say and tried to limit, when needed, the intervention of the more talkative ones to allow each group member to participate.

As for classroom interactions, a pool of the recordings was selected and transcribed[1] from the synopsis drawn out of the field notes and audiotapes. These were thought to have the potential to be selected as incidents that shed light on how identities of immigrant minority pupils are constructed in interaction and contribute to construct "a description so that others may see what members of a social group need to know, understand, interpret, and produce to participate in appropriate ways" (Green and Bloome 1997: 186). The transcriptions of the recordings are presented in English, with the Dutch text underneath in italics. These transcriptions were combined together with the field notes gathered during the observation time for a tentative analysis and interpretation along the lines of the 'key incident approach' (Erickson 1986; Kroon and Sturm 2000). As Erickson (1986: 108) points out in illustrating the meaning of the term 'key':

> [a] key event is key in that the researcher assumes intuitively that the event chosen has the potential to make explicit a theoretical 'loading'. A key event is key in that it brings to awareness latent, intuitive judgments the analyst has already made about salient patterns in the data. Once brought to awareness these judgments can be reflected upon critically.

The reviewing of the pool of incidents initially selected on the basis of the researcher's intuitive assumptions has given way to a first tentative analysis that was then either discarded or taken further in a more coherent and deeper analysis and interpretation of the incident in hand. An incident is selected as 'key' in that it represents tangible instances of the working of the cultural ecology (the normal) of a certain sociocultural space and of its social organization. Its analysis has

helped to shed light on how identities are performed in the discourses present in the classroom under investigation (cf. Guba and Lincoln 1989: 176; Polanyi 1989).

3.1. *The school, the classroom and the pupils*

The data that I present here were collected in the school year 2004–2005 at St. Joseph's Catholic Primary, a regular multicultural primary school in Duivenberg, a medium-sized city of approximately 200,000 inhabitants in the south of the Netherlands. At that time, the school had a high concentration of immigrant minority pupils and an exclusively Dutch-speaking teaching staff. On February 15th 2005, Form 8a at St. Joseph's Catholic Primary amounted to eighteen pupils in total, eight boys and ten girls. The age of the pupils ranged from eleven to thirteen years due to some pupils having repeated one or more school years. None of the pupils had been enrolled during the ongoing school year; thirteen of them had attended St. Joseph's Catholic Primary since Form 1. All pupils reported to be of immigrant minority background. According to the school register, all pupils but one had been assigned an educational weight of 1.90[2] i.e. they were all registered as pupils in need of additional educational support as a consequence of their parents' low educational and socio-economic background (the 'norm' for educational weight being 1.0). The exception is Walid, who has an educational weight of 1.0 and whose parents were both born in Morocco and are highly educated. All pupils reported to speak a language other than or another alongside Dutch at home. Concerning the country of birth of the pupils, thirteen out of the eighteen pupils were born in the Netherlands. Out of the remaining five pupils, three were born in the Dutch Antilles, one in Bosnia-Herzegovina and one in Morocco. Half of Form 8a came from the Moroccan immigrant community and of these pupils only Walid and Khalid were born to parents of Moroccan Arabic-speaking background, while the rest was born to Berber parents. Among the latter, Hajar – born in the Netherlands to a father of Arabic-speaking background and a mother of Berber background – understands and speaks Berber. However, her network of classroom friendships claims to address her mostly in Moroccan Arabic. Affifa was the only pupil born to a second-generation Moroccan Arabic-speaking father and a first-generation Moroccan Arabic-speaking mother. In order to gather information on the home languages present in the classrooms under investigation, all pupils have been asked by their class teacher to fill in a home language survey (cf. Broeder and Extra 1998). Table 1 reports the home languages, gender and names of the pupils as gathered from the home language survey carried out in this class. All names of the pupils are fictive.

Table 1.   *Gender, names and home languages of the pupils in Form 8a*

Boys	Girls	Home language(s)
Khalid		Dutch and Arabic
Sofian	Samira; Lemnja; Siham	Dutch and Berber
	Rhonda	Dutch and Papiamentu
Roble		Dutch and Somali
Cemal	Özlem	Dutch and Turkish
Walid; Zakariya	Hajar; Affifa	Dutch, Arabic and Berber
	Lejla	Dutch, Bosnian and Croatian
Joshwa		Dutch, Papiamentu and English
Osman	Meryem	Dutch, Turkish and Arabic
	Micheline	Dutch, Papiamentu, English and Spanish

The data gathered from Form 8a home language survey are not in agreement with the annotations made in the class register by the Form 8a class teacher. She, in fact, relied on her own 'well-educated guess' about the pupils' (supposed yet untapped) ethnic affiliation and home languages as well as on the information given in the pupils' enrollment forms. The gender, names and home languages of the pupils as they appeared in the class register are reported in Table 2.

Table 2.   *Gender, names and home language(s) of the pupils following Form 8a register*

Boys	Girls	Home language(s)
Osman	Affifa	Dutch
Walid; Zakariya	Samira; Lemnja; Siham	Dutch and Moroccan
	Lejla	Dutch and Bosnian
Joshwa	Rhonda	Dutch and Papiamentu
Roble		Dutch and Somali
Cemal	Meryem; Özlem	Dutch and Turkish
	Micheline	Dutch, Papiamentu and English

The class register does not report any information on Hajar, Khalid and Sofian. It also indicates that Osman, born in the Netherlands to Turkish parents, and Affifa, born in the Netherlands to a second-generation Moroccan father and a first-generation Moroccan mother, only have Dutch as their home language. Further, while the home language survey indicates Berber as one of the home languages for eight pupils of Form 8a, in the class register the home language of these pupils is given under the umbrella term 'Moroccan'. The class register also does not report the use of any language other than Turkish for the pupils coming from the Turkish group. In the home language survey, though, Arabic

is also mentioned by half of the pupils with a Turkish background who attend Qu'ran classes at the weekends.

4. Multilingualism through a modernist lens: the class teacher

Miss Sanne, the class teacher of Form 8a, is 23 years old. She was born in Duivenberg to Dutch native parents, she holds Dutch nationality and she has lived in Duivenberg all her life. Sanne was brought up in a multicultural neighborhood. In Sanne's view "there is simply nothing special about foreign people; they are just, you know, they live here too" (S03: 57) and she believes that her way of thinking about foreigners has been strongly influenced by her upbringing as she learned that "we all live here (...) we live in the Netherlands and we have to do it all together with each other [...]" (S03: 59). In recalling her primary school experience that started in 1986, she states that there were indeed a few children from immigrant minority groups in her class, but not so many as at St. Joseph's, and that they were all just able to get on with each other. Miss Sanne's statement 'I have not a single Dutch child in my class' is used as an explanation for why her pupils perform worse than those pupils at other schools in Duivenberg. The lack of parental qualifications and these parents being non-native Dutch are the basis for Miss Sanne's own reasoning in explaining St. Joseph's extra investment in the Dutch language with a particular focus on vocabulary. We now move further in the analysis of Miss Sanne's evaluative discourse and we encounter the cases of two pupils, i.e. Mohammed and Lejla, whose language attributions marked the opposite ends of the ascriptive category 'immigrant minority pupil'.

4.1. *Mohammed*

Miss Sanne starts with Mohammed, a thirteen-year-old Somali child who was in Miss Sanne's class during the previous school year. At that time, Mohammed, who had been in the Netherlands since he was eight years old, "was fluent in the Somali language" (S02: 314). However, in Sanne's discourse, proficiency in the Somali language turned out to be detrimental to Mohammed's Dutch language development because:

> Sanne: So he had (...) when he was eight so he had to learn a second language
> *Dus die heeft (...) toen ie acht was heeft ie dus een tweede taal moeten leren*
> Max: (hmm)
> Sanne: and the Somali language has a different sentence structure (...)
> *en Somalische taal heeft een andere zinsopbouw (...)*

Max: (hmm)
Sanne: than the Dutch language so he always spoke in twisted sentences.
        dan de Nederlandse taal dus hij sprak altijd in kromme zinnen
Max: (hmm)

(S02: 316–321)

At the age of eight, Mohammed was already fluent in Somali – his mother tongue – and he had to learn Dutch as a second language. As Miss Sanne reports in the coordinate phrase that follows (318), the Somali language has a different sentence structure to Dutch. This has led Mohammed to use Somali syntax in Dutch and to always speak 'in twisted sentences', i.e., abnormal sentences compared to standard Dutch or, at least, the local variety of Dutch spoken in the city where the school is located. Mohammed's difficulties in speaking Dutch 'properly' are explained with the syntactical interference hypothesis where the second language learner inappropriately transfers structures of his first language to the second. Miss Sanne adds:

Sanne: And if you get it also at home, because that mother, she, of course, was
        also having problems with that [Dutch language: MS] herself
        En als je dat ook van thuis uit, want die moeder, die was, natuurlijk, daar
        ook mee aan het stoeien
Max: (hmm)
Sanne: and that father too, he also spoke hardly any Dutch.
        en die vader ook die sprak ook nauwelijks Nederlands
Max: (hmm)
Sanne: so he could not hear it properly from home either so he (. . .) yes he used
        let's say the Dutch language with the structure
        Dus hij kon het ook niet van thuis uit goed aanhoren dus hij (. . .) ja
        hij gebruikte zeg maar de Nederlandse taal met de opbouw
Max: (hmm)
Sanne: from the Somali language.
        vanuit de Somalische taal.

(S02: 323–329)

Mohammed not only uses 'twisted sentences' in Dutch because his language use is based on the structure of Somali, a language that uses SOV-order in its main clause in comparison with the Dutch SVO-order (cf. Saeed 1999). Also, as introduced by the causative conjunction 'so', both Mohammed's parents are responsible for the syntactical interference between the two finite linguistic entities that in the dichotomy presented by the teacher are part of Mohammed's repertoire, i.e., Somali and Dutch. The father, in fact, spoke no Dutch and the mother also 'suffered' from Somali sentence structure in her use of Dutch. The

parental lack of Dutch proficiency has consequences for Mohammed's identity, as the lack of Dutch in the home is indexical of a pupil with a language disadvantage.

4.2. *Lejla*

Miss Sanne's discourse dealt also with Lejla, an eleven-year-old girl born in Bosnia- Herzegovina to Bosnian parents who came to the Netherlands when she was three years old. Miss Sanne explains:

> Sanne: Lejla is also (…) let's see she has lived here ever since she was three or so, therefore also still really very young when she already … … ?? a new language (…) look and small children can pick up a (…) another language really easily that is simply, yeah, scientifically proven.
> *Lejla die is ook (…) even kijken die woont hier al sinds dat ze drie is of zo dus ook nog heel erg jong dat ze al een nieuwe taal (…) kijk en kleine kinderen kunnen heel makkelijk een andere taal oppikken dat is gewoon, ja, wetenschappelijk bewezen*
>
> Max: (hmm)
>
> Sanne: And indeed she is also better at Dutch than other children and that is also because her parents have also just spoken Dutch at home from the beginning.
> *En zij is ook inderdaad beter in het Nederlands dan andere kinderen en dat komt ook omdat haar ouders ook gewoon vanaf het begin af aan hier gewoon ook thuis Nederlands praten.*

(S02: 443–445)

In the utterances above, Lejla is in an advantaged position in picking up a second language because she came to the Netherlands at a very young age. Further, Miss Sanne tries to obtain objectiveness for her claim. In the utterance 'look and small children can pick up a (…) another language really easily', she uses the imperative 'look' to substantiate the evidence of her claim. Further, she calls upon the critical age hypothesis, implying that a putative language learning function is much more developed in younger children who approach the learning of a second language more easily than those who approach a second language at an older age (see Singleton 1994, 1–29 for a comprehensive discussion of the age factor in second language acquisition). Not only is the age at which Lejla came into contact with Dutch relevant; her parents' language behaviour is also now regarded as a key element in Lejla's 'good' language development. It is noteworthy that Lejla's parental language behaviour is accompanied by the adverb 'simply'. The use of this adverb may indicate that the practice of

speaking Dutch at home is regarded by Miss Sanne as nothing more than what parents should do by default with their children at a young age. However, at home, Lejla and her parents have a language repertoire that includes Croatian, English, Dutch and Bosnian, the latter being the language Lejla denotes as her language, and in which she claims to have both passive and active literacy skills that she reports to use for verbal exchanges with her younger siblings and with her parents. Miss Sanne therefore looks at Lejla's multilingual repertoire through a monolingual lens that sees one language in the home, that is Dutch, being key to Lejla's being 'good' at Dutch. This is in contrast to Mohammed whose parents' Dutch, or the lack thereof, caused him to use a 'twisted' sentence structure and therefore deviate from the 'standard' form of expression. However, in terms of their institutional identities, the sociolinguistic difference between the repertoires of these pupils is erased as they are both categorised as 1.90, i.e. as pupils who are almost twice as 'heavy' to teach compared to a pupil with Dutch-native parents.

5.   Multlingualism through a modernist lens: the Moroccan girls

In spite of Miss Sanne's general view about the poor results of her pupils in Dutch, the immigrant minority pupils' language use in Form 8a showed a marked preference for Dutch in daily language exchanges both within and outside the classroom. Arabic and Berber, being the most popular home languages in the classroom, of course also had their own space, although mostly outside formal instruction time. During a gym lesson, for instance, when the girls were playing handball, one could indeed find a more prominent rate of home language use than in the classroom, and, as can be expected, Arabic and Berber were popular in derogatory exclamations and imperatives such as 'pass me the ball'. The marked preference for Dutch was quite different when the girls were engaged in a focused group discussion concerning the diacritics of identity belonging, i.e. language use and ethnic affiliation. The discussion I had with them unfolded as follows:

Lejla: Them live in the Netherlands also and are a hundred percent Moroccan too.
Hun wonen toch ook in Nederland en zijn ook honderd procent Marokkaans.
Max: Is that so girls?
Is dat zo meisjes?

[The other girls agree loudly]

Max: Yeah right, behave properly.
           Ja hallo, doe normaal.
Lemnja: What do you mean a hundred, what do you mean a hundred, a thousand
           right?
           Wat honderd wat honderd, duizend of niet?
Max: A thousand percent Moroccan, what do you mean?
           Duizend procent Marokkaans, hoe bedoel je?
Hajar: Simply.
           Gewoon.
Lemnja: A million.
           Miljoen.
Hajar: My whole life.
           M'n heel leven.
Lemnja: Uncountable. [At the same time as Hajar]
           Ontelbaar.
Max: Uncountable Moroccan?
           Ontelbaar Marokkaans?
Hajar: Oh no, oh no, one percent is for Dutch as I speak I do talk that mostly.
           *Oh nee, oh nee, één procent is voor Nederland want ik spree ik praat
           dat wel het meeste.*
Lemnja: Yes one little percent then.
           Ja één procentje dan.
Hajar: One comma zero zero percent.
           Eén komma nul nul procent.

(GD01: 05–017)

Lejla compares her own 'being Bosnian' with her fellow classmates, stating
that even though they were born in the Netherlands, these girls are also 'a
hundred per cent Moroccan'. When the girls, who are all of Berber origin, react
to Lejla's statement they all voice an outspoken, i.e., more than a hundred per
cent, affiliation to the umbrella term Moroccan: 'what do you mean a hundred,
a thousand right?', 'all my life', 'uncountable'. This unquantifiable affiliation to
being Moroccan is tempered by the role that Dutch has in these girls' everyday
lives. Hajar, in fact, admits that Dutch is the language she speaks the most and
this leads her to attribute 'one comma zero zero percent' to Dutch; a point also
raised by Lemnja who states 'one little percent then'. When dealing with the
role of Berber and Arabic in Form 8a, Lemnja and Hajar eagerly explained the
difference between these two languages and how they came to be the languages
of Morocco. After that, the discussion continued as follows:

Max: Yes and then the Arabs came there. So you speak Berber?
           Ja en dan de Arabieren zijn daar gekomen. Dus jullie spreken Berbers?

Siham: Yes.
          Ja.
Lemnja: Pu[:]re Berber.
          Pu[:]re Berbers.
Hajar: Pu[:]re Berber.
          Puu[:]r Berbers.
Siham: They, they are half Arabic they are (…) [Looking at Samira and Lemnja]
          Zij, zij zijn half Arabisch zij zijn (…)
Hajar: I, I, I (…)
          Ik, ik, ik (…)
Samira: Half Berber. [Shouting out]
          Halve Berbers.
Hajar: I, I, I am, I speak them [Berber and Arabic MS] both.
          Ik, ik, ik ben, ik spreek ze allebei.
Max: Hey, hey, hey, hey, can I say something myself?
          Hey, hey, hey, hey, mag ik zelf iets zeggen?
Lemnja: No.
          Nee.
Hajar: I am one hundred percent Berber but I simply speak Arabic because I
          cannot speak Berber that well.
          *Ik ben honderd procent Berber maar ik spreek gewoon Arabisch want
          ik kan niet zo goed Berbers.*

(GD01: 183–193)

In the discussion above, Siham ascribed the identities of Lemnja and Samira, but not that of Hajar, as 'half Arabic'. In response to Siham's identity ascription, Samira counteracts with 'half Berber'. At the opposite end, Hajar – who in the beginning also claimed to be 'pure Berber' – has to defend her Berber affiliation. She explains the cause of her language use and disentangles a limited proficiency in Berber, compensated with the use of Arabic, from being 'less Berber'. Being 'pure' Berber is therefore coupled with being a user of the Berber language alone, while the speaking of Arabic and/or a limited knowledge of Berber, as in Hajar's case, is seen as not 'pure'. Hence the category 'they are half Arabic'.

Contrary to what one could expect for immigrant minority group members, we see that the discourses proposed by these girls are constructed within a modernist ideology of language use and national/ethnic belonging. The macro language politics at play in the Maghreb world are thus being (re)proposed within the verbal micro-interactions of this super-diverse group of pupils giving way to processes of identity misrecognition, sanctioning and contestation. For instance, Samira, who was ascribed by Siham as 'half Arabic', objects to being constructed

at the periphery of the Berber group and reiterates her 'Berber Arabic' affiliation where the use of Berber first and Arabic second may be done with the purpose of contesting Siham's initial ascription of her as 'half Arabic'. Hajar, instead, stresses with her upset remark that she has been ascribed as not Berber. In contrast to other research on the language use of Moroccan youngsters (Jaspers 2005: 287), the link between Arabic and Berber was strongly emphasised by the girls in question. The use of Berber and the link between monolingualism and being 'pure Berber' is an act of identity performance that is assessed, weighed and measured socially. In this case, though, the social measurement does not happen on the basis of language hierarchies along a majority versus minority divide. The status of Arabic and Berber and the need to express competence in Berber might be a reaction product to the symbolic hierarchy that exists between these two codes in the Maghreb world (De Ruiter, Saidi and Spotti 2009) and within the local immigrant minority community in Duivenberg, to which these two girls belong. However, as one of the girls points out in the discussion, Berber is no match for Arabic in the existing religious and pan-Arabic political frameworks, and the fact that Arabic is usually spoken in cities as opposed to the rural areas – where most of the parents of these pupils originate from – can be a reason for the low appreciation that Arabic has and for the identity ascription as 'half-Arab' of those girls who either do not know or have a limited proficiency in Berber.

6.   Escaping from the modernist lens of authority

We now come to the third data set which features a conversation between myself and two boys, Osman and Cemal, both of Turkish immigrant minority background. The conversation focused on these pupils' use of Turkish across different institutional environments and it unfolded as follows:

Max: And do you, do you do that often, Turkish, at school?
         En doe je, doe je dat vaak, Turks, op school?
Osman: Yes.
         Ja.
Max: Oh.
Osman: At break.
         In de pauze.
Max: Yes? [Turning to Cemal] So do you also speak Turkish with everyone because it makes you look very tough?
         Ja? Dus spreek je ook met iedereen het Turks want het maakt je heel stoer?

Cemal: It is not tough.
          Het is niet stoer.
Max: No?
          Nee?
Cemal: Not for me. Simply it [Turkish: MS] is a normal language.
          Voor mij niet. Gewoon is normale taal.
Max: It is simply a normal language.
          Het is gewoon een normale taal.
Cemal: If it was English it would have been a bit tough perhaps, it is a famous
          language.
          Als het Engels was een beetje stoer misschien, het is een beroemde taal.
Max: Oh that is what you mean.
          Oh zo.
Cemal: Or French, and Turkish is not so well-known so (uh) (...) yes (...)
          Of Frans, en Turks is niet zo beroemd dus (uh) (...) ja (...)

(GD01:349–362)

Community languages are often referred to as a *we*-code that (in this case) places
the pupils who speak these languages in an advantaged position compared to
those with a *they*-code (cf. Gumperz 1968), i.e., in this case, all the pupils who do
not have a knowledge of Turkish. However, in Cemal's case Turkish is addressed
as 'simply it is a normal language' because it is not so 'famous' or 'well-known'
as English or French, both 'international' languages. In Cemal's discourse, the
macro- politics of language are encapsulated in a micro-discursive practice of
language ranking and of construction of order (Foucault 2007). In other words,
Cemal is presenting a hierarchical ranking of the languages that he thinks do
count there, and leaves Turkish in the neutral position as he addresses it as a
'normal language'. This (implicit) denial of the *we*-code character of Turkish,
though, surprises the researcher and is in conflict with what happens in the
following episode between Osman, Cemal and myself before the beginning of
a physical education lesson. The conversation proceeded as follows:

Max: So then do you speak a bit of Moroccan?
          Zo dan spreek jullie een beetje Marokkaans?
Osman: No, no a real Turkish man speaks only just Turkish.
          Nee, nee een echt Turks man spreekt alleen maar Turks.
Cemal: Shouf shouf habibi. [Giggles]
          Shouf shouf habibi.
Osman: Yes, shouf shouf habibi. [Giggles]
          Ja, shouf shouf habibi.

[They both tie their shoelaces and run off to the gym hall laughing: MS]

The sentence 'No, no, a real Turkish man speaks only just Turkish' may indicate a patrimonium-loaded connotation that, as reported in the home language survey, corroborated the fact that Osman only spoke Turkish with his father (cf. Pujolar 2001: 137). However, contrary to the language practice just claimed by Osman for 'a real Turkish man', Cemal utters the Arabic words '*shouf shouf habibi*'. These words, apart from being ('incorrect') Arabic, have an emblematic function in that they call upon something like Arabic – they are in fact the title of an, at the time, popular Dutch TV comedy on the lives of three young men of Moroccan ancestry in a city in the Netherlands who run into all kinds of adventurous situations that are mainly connected to their immigrant condition in a Dutch environment. Further, in agreement with Cemal, Osman utters the same 'Arabic' sentence, after which they run off to the gym hall laughing.

Cemal and Osman's linguistic practice therefore can be interpreted as non-authentic (Jaspers 2005: 116) because it is incongruent with what, following Osman, a 'real Turkish man' would do languagewise, i.e., speak Turkish only. The use of a semiotic artefact, i.e., an emblematic 'Arabic' utterance that belongs to the youngsters' knowledge of a specific piece of Dutch popular culture, may instead be interpreted as an example of language sabotage employed to take off the pressure exerted on the boys by the authority, i.e., the gullible researcher who is exploring their linguistic practices. At the same time the episode shows that, although there is no explicit policy regulating them, immigrant minority languages and hybrid forms of semiotic expression(s) that go beyond straight-forward ethnic affiliations do play a role in the institutionalized everyday life of these pupils. As such, '*shouf shouf habibi*' could be qualified as an authentic expression of late modern mixed language repertoires in which languages are no longer artefactualised matters and where languages are not exclusively bound to specific immigrant groups (see Rampton 2006) but can be and are actually used *ad libitum*.

7. Discussion and conclusions

Multilingualism has been the flagship of sociolinguistics for decades. This has entailed advancing the claim that, in general and in principle, multilingualism and the preservation of ethno-linguistic identities is a positive thing. Further-more, sociolinguistics has addressed human beings as users of either one or more languages or language varieties, with language(s) being understood either as distinct denotational codes or linguistic systems and their users studied on the basis of the question who speaks (or writes, or signs) which language (or language varieties), to whom, when, where and possibly to which end (see Fish-

man et al. 1968; Fishman 1972, 1989). This approach was valid in that it has given way to powerful notions such as language maintenance, language loyalty, language shift, language (repertoire) change, language death, etc. Furthermore, it has paved the way towards the study of language use and of identity construction as a matter of the internal organization of particular speech networks. Building on these notions, some sociolinguistic research has focused on the use of immigrant minority languages in the homes of immigrant minority pupils, advocating their use to be evidence for the ethnolinguistic vitality of groups (Extra and Yağmur 2004), or on the role that a language or one of its varieties plays in a given nation. Certain varieties have also been seen as endangering the existence of other less powerful languages (i.e. indigenous minority languages), and official languages as hindering the language rights and the display of ethnolinguistic identities of minorities (Das Gupta 1970; Huss 1999; Svonni 2008). The sociolinguistics of this era has produced an understanding of multilingualism and its identity byproducts as an agglomeration of fairly neat monolingualisms that can be linked to certain groups. In other words, it has addressed monolingualism as a majority thing and multilingualism as a minority thing. Moreover, this branch of sociolinguistics has tackled multilingualism as a problem that it should address for the benefit of (immigrant) minorities and their identity maintenance, and with an eye to the maintenance of the national order.

This kind of sociolinguistics seems to have failed to address the grassroots realities of multilingualism and identity construction in three ways. First, it has not managed to solve the tension between immigrant minorities' own linguistically heterogeneous repertoires and the general tendency in education to see immigrants contributing positively to mainstream society by learning the language of the majority, preferably in its school variety. Second, it has missed noticing that institutional ideologies of homogeneity are also part and parcel of the discourses of immigrant minority group members themselves when dealing with their identity diacritics, i.e., language use and ethnic belongings. Third, it has overlooked the fact that crossing, hybridity and ambivalence in language use and identity construction are an endemic condition of pupils inhabiting (urban) globalised educational environments.

What I hope to have illustrated here is that modernist language ideologies are not only top-down phenomena (i.e. appropriated only by the majority to attribute certain identities to minorities). Rather, micro-crystallisations of these ideologies can be found both in discourses of the majority (e.g. certain pupils' Dutch is poor because at home their parents do not use Dutch only), as well as minorities (e.g. one is not a 'pure' Berber because one does not have a 'good' knowledge of Berber and, consequently, is ascribed the identity of a 'half-Arab'). As the conversation between Osman, Cemal and myself illustrated, linguistic

diversity is not to be seen as directly related to group membership alone and that an (ethnic) group and an (ethnic) identity now seem to be a great deal less clear and less relevant than what they have been in the past two and a half decades of sociolinguistic research (see also Rampton 2006: 17). These findings therefore not only question the assumptions of institutional key figures about the identities of their immigrant minority pupils; more generally, they suggest that not all forms of multilingualism are productive and empowering. Some – accordingly to the institutional space – are unwanted, disqualified, and actively endangering to people. We should therefore look at language use and identities through the lens of a post-Fishmanian awareness, addressing the two as polycentric semiotic performances confronted with the demands of specific language and identity markets set in specific times and spaces where different, often conflicting, orders of indexicalities are at play.

Notes

1. The transcription uses (. . .) for a pause, (-) for an abrupt stop, [:] for emphasis, [xx] for inaudible fragment, and [text MS] for a comment.
2. In 2005, the Dutch educational system used to assign to each pupil an educational weight. A pupil born to Dutch parents and raised in the Netherlands was assigned an educational weight of 1.00. A pupil with at least one of his parents having been born abroad and where the household breadwinner would be a manual labourer, was assigned a 1.90. That is, this pupil is almost twice as heavy a burden on the educational system as a pupil of Dutch origin.

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