The very sensitive question

Chronotopes, insecurity and Farsi heritage language classrooms

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This paper engages with ideological difference, education, and expressions of insecurity on the basis of a year-long ethnographic fieldwork in two Farsi heritage language classrooms and the group of Iranian immigrants organized around these classrooms in Copenhagen, Denmark. We show how insecurity and surveillance gave meaning to different space-times, or chronotopes (Bakhtin 1981), evoked by the participants, and to the understandings of community. The contemporary state of Iran and political and religious ideologies associated with this were subject to taboo in class but not necessarily elsewhere. We argue that this partly motivated the structure and content of the classroom, as the teacher tried to create a neutral space for children whose parents' ideological backgrounds were potentially incompatible. This could liberate the children from their parents' anxieties and it made the teacher's job less vulnerable. Linguistic Ethnography (Rampton 2007) is the analytic framework of the paper.

Keywords: heritage language, classroom interaction, chronotopes, surveillance, (in)security, linguistic ethnography

1. Introduction

Heritage language education[1] is often described as an institution where traditional interpretations of the cultural and linguistic resources associated with pupils' (ancestral) 'country of origin' are celebrated and taught (Curdt-Christiansen

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1. We use the term heritage language classes to emphasize the cultural side of this type of educational endeavour. Although a misnomer in many ways, *mother tongue education* is the most commonly used term in Denmark. A more thorough discussion of the different labels is less relevant for this paper's objectives.

2008; Fishman 2001). The classroom here-and-now also regularly presupposes more or less similar interpretations of cultural signs. However, pupils being raised far away from the countries of origin may contest conservative and traditional understandings of relevance, appropriateness, and belonging; this can lead to confrontations between pupils, on the one hand, and teachers and stakeholders, on the other (Blackledge & Creese 2009; Creese, Wu & Blackledge 2009; Li, Juffermans & Kroon 2012). In this paper we engage with a different type of discrepancy in and around two Farsi[2] heritage language classrooms in Copenhagen, Denmark, a discrepancy which involves parents and teacher as much as the children who attend these classes. We focus on issues of ideological difference and insecurity, which came up during our fieldwork. These were treated as founded in the participants' relations to Iran, whereas their life in Denmark was treated much less dramatically.[3] Our starting point is the observation that the classes were carried out as decontextualized instruction in grammar, literacy and vocabulary. The contemporary state of Iran and political and religious ideologies associated with this appeared to be unmentionable in the classroom setting (Fleming & Lempert 2011; Karrebæk & Ghandchi 2015), a type of (ideological) sensitivity which apparently is not uncommon for individuals of Iranian background (Elling 2013; Mobasher 2012). However, although there was no inclusion of cultural issues with relation to present day Iran in the classrooms, neither culture nor ideologies were necessarily subject to taboo outside of class.

From its early days, the political leaders of the Islamic Republic of Iran (established 1979) defined the state's identity, principles and policies by means of Islamic ideologies and an anti-Western stance (Borjian 2013; Digard, Hourcade & Richard 1996). This was partly a reaction to the secularizing part of the modernization project carried out by the previous leaders, the Pahlavi monarchy (1925–1979). The governmental and ideological changes led to substantial emigration, and this has continued since. Emigration has been triggered by different socio-historical circumstances and events, e.g., the Iran-Iraq war (1980–1989), the lack of educational and professional opportunities, and ideological (religious and political) differences from and incompatibilities with the political establishment. Consequently, exile Iranians often endorse other ideologies than the Iranian government does, although this is by no means always the case, nor the case in all respects. This complicates the question of what a heritage language classroom is, what potentials

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2.   Farsi is also referred to as Persian. We use Farsi as this is the way the language is named in official Danish educational documents.

3.   Of course, many factors may lead to the feelings of insecurity, but we only treat those that came up as relevant through our data, and those were mainly the political ones. This point was made to us by one of the anonymous reviewers, and it cannot be underestimated.

it has, and what objectives it is supposed to achieve. It is certainly not easily regarded as a site of socialization into a single shared understanding of a 'Culture'.

Among our research participants, the contemporary State of Iran and its associated cultural signs generated mixed feelings and interpretations. In the following, we discuss the relation between the classrooms and the social community of Iranians they catered for. We argue that the Farsi classrooms were fundamentally affected by anxieties about surveillance rooted in Iran's politics of securitization (Buzan & Wæver 2003; Emmers 2013), that is, the discursive constructions legitimizing exceptional political measures, in the form of actions that could even cross international borders (and thus take place in Denmark). Treating security as discourse, we focus on the role of expressions of insecurity and surveillance, and the ways that such expressions were deployed, in order to compare representations of worlds and to present their alignment and disalignment. In this way, we employ ethnography to understand "security and insecurity as situated lived experience" (Goldstein 2010: 128) and to explore how participants used these expressions to engage "with other local actors and with the state itself" (ibid.).[4] We turn to the Bakhtinian concept of the chronotope (Bakhtin 1981) "as that aspect of contextualization by means of which specific chunks of history can be invoked in discourse as meaning-attributing resources" (Blommaert 2015: 11). We use the concept of the chronotope to account for the space-time[5] envelopes evoked during our observations, and the relations between different space-times and general soci(et)al issues. The concept of the chronotope is well-suited to demonstrate how communicative actions and the meanings indexed by them are complex phenomena, and that 'context' may both be a question of here-and-now and elsewhere-at-other moments.

2.   Language education and politically sensitive contexts

As pointed out by Rampton, Charalambous & Charalambous (2014), insecurity and war have probably always influenced language education. Yet, we have only few ethnographic studies of how and why political sensitivities, precarity, and security pervade language classrooms. Here we mention three recent studies which explore how a language taught becomes subject to Othering, raises animosity, and becomes politicized. Uhlmann (2010, 2012) describes how the Arabic language

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4.   Other approaches to security exist, of course. Some share their inspiration from Bourdieu and Foucault with much of the sociolinguistic literature. We have chosen a different path, but see Bigo (2008) and Rampton (2014) for Foucauldian inspired takes and further references.

5.   Time-space and space-time are both in use in the academic literature. We use the second term in accordance with Silverstein (2005) and many others.

in the Jewish educational system is taught as a 'dead' (i.e., not spoken) language, and how the mainly Hebrew speaking Jewish teachers lack oral skills in Arabic. Israel has a large population of native Arabic speakers, but they are considered unsuitable as teachers. This is partly because the Israeli military dominates (parts of) Arabic instruction, and Arabs are regarded as a default security risk (see also Mendel 2013). Borjian (2013) reports about the teaching of English in post-revolutionary Iran, where English became associated with political sensitivities during the first post-revolutionary years and the political establishment initially made efforts to cleanse 'West-toxicated' educational establishments. Textbooks were re-written and purified of references to Anglo-American culture, and an exclusive focus on the structural aspects of the English language was adopted (Borjian 2013: 73). Rampton et al. (2014) study security as (de-)securitization in the teaching of Turkish to Greek Cypriots in Greek Cyprus, where the Turks have been viewed as a threat since the beginning of the 20th century. Similarly to the Iranian case, one strategy of teaching Turkish constructed language as a culturally void code, the teacher's attention remained solely on its structural aspects, and classroom sessions would often avoid reference to everyday life in authentic Turkish contexts. Rampton et al. (2014: 1) argue that the aim here was to circumvent the negative associations with Turks and everything Turkish. Therefore, such decontextualized "exclusively grammar-focused pedagogies display acute cultural sensitivity" Rampton et al.: ibid.). Interestingly, such efforts also contrast with many contemporary Western methodologies where inter-cultural understanding is regarded as a key aim, and communicative language pedagogy is directed towards an imagined group of 'native speakers' of the language (see also Charalambous 2012; Charalambous & Rampton 2010).

The three studies mentioned here document attempts at 'erasing' culture in foreign language classrooms, where the language taught is considered to belong to an 'Other'. In our case, the language taught was associated with the participants' own linguistic, cultural, and ethnic backgrounds, as well as with their political sensitivities and antagonistic feelings. In this way, the language indexed hostility and animosity, insecurity, fear, and troubles *as well as* heritage, personal identity, and family relations.[6]

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6. For related studies, see Khan (2014a, b) on the increasingly strong links between security and English language policy in the UK as well as the *Modern Language Journal* 88 on post 9–11 language teaching.

Security, securitization and surveillance

Goldstein (2010: 127) points out that security, "like so much else that interests cultural anthropology, is not an objective fact but a socially constructed set of relationships and discourses." Security then becomes a question of individuals' interpretations of one another, themselves, and the world. When the concept of security is invoked, it reflects a situation, creates a new one, and influences future actions (Balzacq 2011: 13, 15). This ties in nicely with the security studies undertaken by the Copenhagen School (Buzan, Wæver & Wilde 1998; Wæver 1995), which considers security a discursive construction rather than a material reality of threat (Huysman 2011: 371). The focus is on the *speech act of securitization*; here, an object of concern is represented as threatened (Emmers 2013), whereupon the securitizing speech act moves the object from the standard political domain into the domain of the exceptional. Yet, it remains an empirical question if, how, and to what degree a specific activity is – or becomes – routine or exceptional (Huysman 2011: 377). Moreover, as securitization is an intersubjective process, embedded in social actors' identity and everyday projects, a more sociological approach to securitization emphasises the practices, contexts, and power relations involved in the creation of threat (Balzacq 2011: 1, 3).

Surveillance is connected to security concerns and to exceptionality. It is often understood as "a sinister force that threatens personal liberties" (Haggerty & Samatas 2010: 1) and privacy (Lyon 2007: 7). Although new technologies may have increased the capacities of surveillance (Lyon 2007: 15), the pre-internet surveillance technology of networks of informers holds an impressive track record (Haggerty & Samatas 2010: 5). So, while 'surveillance' may evoke (police) agents' tracking (Lyon 2007: 36, 49), in fact it covers a wide range of forms of monitoring (Haggerty & Samatas 2010: 2; Lyon 2007: 7).

We study the understandings of 'watcher' and 'watched', risk, anonymity, and (in)security as well as effects of (formulating) such understandings; consequently, security and surveillance are central to our analytic aims. In the course of our fieldwork, it appeared that security and surveillance were more or less routine discourses, regardless of whether at the same time they were also routine (or even 'real') activities. The contemporary state of Iran was regularly positioned as the 'watcher' and the securitizing actor; Denmark was formulated as a place where the watching was *also* done; and our participants were transformed into objects of surveillance through (assumed) acts of securitization.

3.   Chronotopes

Chronotopes are intrinsic configurations of time and space in representational universes (Bakhtin 1981: 184) in which linguistic and other actions and signs are attributed meaning and indexical sign value. Chronotopes are "invokable histories", i.e., "elaborate frames in which time, space and patterns of agency coincide, create meaning and value, and can be set off against other chronotopes" (Blommaert 2015: 9). A chronotope exhibits (some degree of) consistency, coherence, and unity and it invites certain understandings and inferences; in Silverstein's words, "a chronotope constitutes a space-time envelope in the narrated universe of social space-time in which and through which, in emplotment, narrative characters move" (2005: 6). Evidently, chronotopic logics can be (more or less) general, local, individual, etc.; as individuals have different experiences, they may draw different inferences. Chronotopes can be accepted, negotiated, contested, and contrasted with other chronotopes (see Agha 2007: 324). When chronotopes are compared, this informs us of ideological understandings of social personae, self, appropriate behaviour, and the world in general. Such comparing invites alignment or disalignment with the ideologies and models represented in and through the chronotope, while representations of chronotopes link representations of time to those of locale, personhood, and participation frameworks (Agha 2007: 321; Dick 2010; Riskedahl 2007).

We found a diversity of perspectives and representations during our fieldwork, both in narratives and other everyday speech genres. The fieldwork space-time was penetrated by radically different expectations, presuppositions, and ideological positions, originating in other space-times. A relatively peaceful here-and-now was juxtaposed to issues of insecurity, conflict, and surveillance, although such sensitive issues were regularly semiotically erased (Gal & Irvine 1995) and left implicit in the classroom setting. We show how the invocation of specific space-times, or chronotopes, had a certain logic to it, how they offered socio-historical momentary agency to language users (Blommaert 2015), and how they generated specific responses. In this way, the chronotopic perspective enables us to link and compare the participants' representation of themselves, of their respective states (Iran and Denmark), and of their different (in)security concerns. Consequently, our study of language in society becomes a study of local group internal differences, anxieties, and complex histories – all lived out through single communicative encounters. Of the different chronotopic envelopes that were invoked, we focus on three, for convenience labelled as "The Chronotope of Insecurity" (Examples 1, 2, 4 & 5), "The Chronotope of (Political and Religious) Ideology" (Example 3), and "The Chronotope of Neutrality" (Example 3).

4.   Methodology, data and settings

Our study builds on a +1 year long ethnographic fieldwork (2013–2014) in two Farsi heritage classes in Copenhagen, primarily carried out by author Ghandchi. Data comprise fieldnotes, audio-recordings from classrooms, a few home-recordings, 19 interviews with parents, grandparents, and organizers, two with the class' principal teacher (anonymised as Mansour), and one with another Farsi teacher in Copenhagen. Participants were asked for informed consent; all participants, except for the authors, are anonymized. Data are analyzed with a specific focus on language and the details of linguistic interaction; however, the relations between the local interaction and higher-scale social and societal issues are central to this paper. This particular approach and its use of ethnography – teasing out local rationalities, understandings, and meanings, focusing on different aspects of language-in-use and the interrelations between these, and identifying connections between language and social structures – is fundamentally shaped by Linguistic Ethnography (Rampton, Maybin & Roberts 2015). Classroom access was enabled through Ghandchi's position as a volunteer assistant teacher, dating from some time prior to the project's start. The fact that Ghandchi is a native speaker of Farsi and of the same (ethno-linguistic) background as most participants certainly made our work easier in some ways. Yet it also made her an object of suspicion in a climate ripe with feelings of insecurity; in some cases, it probably generated unexpected responses to her classroom actions (cf. Examples 3 and 5). This theme deserves a more extensive discussion, which we will need to postpone to another occasion.

The classes were privately funded and organized, having been set up in 2002 by two groups of Iranian parents and their principal teacher, when public funding for minority mother tongue education was withdrawn. Each class catered for approximately 10 pupils between the ages of 4 and 17. Most were 2nd generation Iranians in Denmark; a few were 3rd generation. Despite the principal teacher's preference of using Farsi in the classroom, the pupils most often chose to speak Danish (or English, in the case of a few English speaking pupils) with each other, and to some extent with Ghandchi.

One class took place at a cultural centre in Copenhagen, the other at a public school in a Copenhagen suburb. The principal teacher used the same curriculum and teaching methods in both. Regarding his main task as promoting literacy skills, he deployed mostly conservative pedagogical interactional strategies, such as teacher initiated and constrained I(nitiation-)R(esponse-)E(valuation)-structures (Mehan 1979). Teacher-pupil interaction was predominantly dyadic, the teachers going from pupil to pupil to offer individual instruction; as a result, there was hardly any general classroom discussion, and the principal teacher did

not encourage group or pair work. This pedagogical approach was partly motivated by the students' age span, their different levels of fluency, and their socio-cultural backgrounds, but in addition, we argue, there were other, ideology-based motivations.

Mansour, the principal teacher, was trained and had worked as a (Farsi language) teacher in Iran during the (late) 1960s and 1970s; upon migrating to Denmark in the early 1980s, he had taught Farsi to children of Iranian background in both the private and public sector since 1989. Mansour had conversational skills in Danish, but was most comfortable in Farsi. He opposed the introduction of anything he associated with politics and religion into the classrooms, even as a subject of discussion; his ideal of what he called an 'ideology free classroom' was shared with at least some of the parents and other stakeholders. While the parents told us that the children were not aware of the socio-political situation in Iran, some children did reveal some insight through comments and questions (usually formulated in Danish) which they addressed to classmates or to Ghandchi. According to our observations, when the pupils asked Mansour about such matters in Danish, he did not respond in an eager manner.

The parents had different migration histories. Many reported to have left Iran for political reasons: some had fled because they were involved in political activities, while others had escaped obligatory military service during the Iran-Iraq war (1980–1988). In a few cases, the pupils' grandparents were first generation emigrants, having left the country after the Islamic Revolution (1978–1979). The parents showed different types of engagement with the current political and social situation in Iran; only a few took active part in political debates – but always outside the classroom and in the absence of the children.

5.   Analyses

We will begin with analyzing a fieldnote extract, in which a parent introduces the Chronotope of Insecurity and the theme of surveillance; eventually, his introducing the chronotope had interactional consequences which will be discussed in the sequel. The situation took place at a fun fair close to Copenhagen, during the only annual activity that included teacher and children as well as parents. We joined four parents who went to a café, while the children were trying out the attractions. The conversation primarily took place in Farsi. At some point, in response to an inquiry about a mother's absence, her husband ventured into a monologue which attracted everybody's attention.

Example 1: "Somebody is watching us!"; fieldnote

"The father tells that his wife has been arrested in Tehran. She made a careless phone call to him, and subsequently her passport was confiscated. He says that he occasionally receives strange phone calls from people who appear to know a lot of things, also concerning the inside of his house, and he talks about one of his friends, a political activist like himself, who experienced something similar. By using a small transistor radio they found 24 pieces of tiny surveillance microphones, similar to fish scales or watch batteries, hidden around the friend's house, behind curtains and under tables. At this point, the father adds: "I have nothing to hide" (*man cizi barâye penhân kardan nadâram*). Another father looks around with wide eyes and exclaims, in English, "somebody is watching us"."

The fieldnote describes a father's narrative, along with its three key effects: it *explains* the absence of his wife; it *creates* the social group of exile Iranian parents; and it *offers* an account of the group's social and cultural identity (Thornborrow & Coates 2005: 7), namely as individuals potentially under surveillance. The fieldnote's narrative consists of three cases, each situated within a space-time configuration where a protagonist is faced with a force. The first case takes place in present Iran. The wife's freedom is constrained by an implicit agent, textually erased in the passive constructions. This agent is easily identifiable as the Iranian intelligence service and/or the police force, who both have the power needed to take the actions referred to. The narrating father presents his wife's situation as caused by her attempts at contacting him; we infer that he is the real object of the force's attention. The second case concerns an event in Denmark at an unspecified time; here, the father is the protagonist. The two cases are strikingly similar: the antagonists (the mysterious phone callers) are likely to be identical (or at least aligned), even though the national setting now has changed to Denmark, where the Iranian intelligence does not have any legitimate agency. The venue of the last case is also Denmark, at some specific moment in time, and with the narrator's friend as the protagonist. Whereas the oppositional forces remains unspecified here, we may (due to the cases' similarities) infer them to be similar to the ones previously identified. The details in this case (the size of the microphones, their hiding-places) increase the father's reliability; in order to know all this, he must have been there.

Overall, the narrative introduces a space-time of a compromised world which originates in Iran. The chronotope has a certain internal coherence and logic: e.g. privacy is not respected, and unknown threatening agents interfere with people's lives. We refer to the space-time evoked as the Chronotope of Insecurity. The narrating father is a mediating figure between the narrative, as an entextualized figure, and the here-and-now in the café, as the speaker; he is "a fulcrum through which the "beyond here" enters into the present" (Urban 1996: 71; quoted Dick

2010: 276). As the father moves the narrative's threatening force closer and closer to the here-and-now, from Iran to Denmark, it becomes difficult to ignore its potentially serious real-life consequences. One effect is immediately effectuated as a change in the participation framework (Goffman 1981) with regard to the participant positions in this particular communicative activity. The father jumps out of the narrated event, addressing an eavesdropper (Goffman 1981), while loudly exclaiming that he "has nothing to hide". We suggest that the supposed eavesdropper is aligned with the agentive force behind the narrated bugging; the other father confirms this interpretation by adding: "somebody is watching us". This chronotopic representation is inhabited by the whole group (*us*); it also addresses non-speakers of Farsi (compare the shift into English); and it represents the conversation of the group of *us* as overheard (as well as *watched*) by an outsider, i.e., *somebody*. All the parents are aligned with, and inserted into, this compromised world through the father's narrative and mediating participation and through the other father's congruent interpretation of its implications. The chronotope alignment informs the other parents that they are all potentially under surveillance, regardless of whether their backgrounds are politically charged or not. We find it to be a substantiated interpretation that the oppositional force in question is meant to be identified as the Iranian intelligence service (we assume that the parents had no experience with the Danish intelligence service; at least we never noticed them mentioning or even alluding to it). In the present case, the presumed intelligence service does not respect national borders, and the mere talk about it creates real-life effects such as aligning the parents.

Our perception of a general sense of fear and insecurity among our participants was confirmed in the interview presented below as Example 2. Prior to this excerpt, the father had talked about Iranians' different reasons for migrating to Denmark, and about their different social and ideological backgrounds. He claimed this to be an obstacle to the establishment of an efficient and coherent cultural community, one that could also engage in non-educational activities, e.g., cultural festivals and celebrations. The father compared the Iranians with the Turks by depicting the latter as a homogeneous group with similar social backgrounds, migration histories, and motivations, in particular by having found employment in the work force.[7]

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7. This reflects the father's point of the view; in reality many Turks, in particular Turkish Kurds, had political reasons for leaving Turkey.

Example 2: "while riding the bus"

Interview; participants: Ghandchi (Gh, researcher), father (F)

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14 F:   mâ con az tabaqâte moxtalefi umadim (.) tars tu mâ hast
        since we are from different (social) classes (.) fear
        exists inside us
15 Gh:  cejur tarsi manzuretun hast (.) nesbat be hamdige
        what sort of fear you mean (.) for each other
16 F:   âre (.) tars masalan (.) mâ tanhâ melliyati hastim be
        nazare man (.)
        yeah (.) fear for instance (.) we are the only nation I
        think (.)
17      vaqti tu utubus mišinim ye irâniyo mibinim inâ sedâmun ro
        miyârim pâyin (.)
        that when we see an Iranian while riding the bus then we
        lower our voice (.)
18      in ciye in c- man nemidunam (.) man jâme'ešenâs nistam
        why wh- I don't know (.) I'm not a sociologist
19      nemidunam cerâ (.) cerâ mitarsim (0.2) xob
        I don't know why (.) why we are afraid (0.2) well
20 Gh:  az âdamâye jadidam be hamin šekl
        and we are afraid of new people as well
21 F:   âre (.) kolan mitarsim
        yeah (.) we are afraid in general
        …
26 F:   man fekr mikonam hamaš mâ (.) ye zendegiye ârumi nadâštim
        (0.2)
        I think we never (.) we have never had a peaceful life
        (0.2)
27      yani yek (0.1) šarâyet va xxx ârumi nadâštim (.) hamaš
        means a (0.1) we have never had a peaceful situation and
        xxx (.) never
28 Gh:  bexâtere masâ'ele ejtemâ'yi [yâ     ] siyâsi tarbiyati
        hattâ?
        because of the social       [or    ] political (.) or
        even educational issues?
29 F:                               [masâ'ele] ejtemâ'yi s-
                                    [social issues] or p-
30      tuye ye sennosâle pâyini az mamlekat umadim birun (.) hamaš
        dar hâle tanâqoz
        when we quit Iran we were very young (.) ((we have)) always
        controversial experiences
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The father's use of "we" throughout the excerpt indexes a group of people who have the same country of origin, and who despite internal differences (mentioned in the beginning) share the experience of a fearful life without peace ("fear exists inside us", l. 14). This is turned into a *leitmotif* in reference to particular properties of the Iranian immigrant community. The Iranians' fear is related to mutual suspicion, illustrated by the example that Iranians lower their voice if they see

other Iranians in a public space, e.g., a bus (l. 17). The father's remarks imply that Iranian immigrants as a default regard other Iranians as a source of anxiety, as a potential threat, or as being connected to a potential threat (cf. Mobasher 2012: 58). The presence of other Iranians introduces an element of surveillance, and therefore Iranians hide their identity and origin from each other. Of course, in reality there may be other factors that contribute to reactions such as those named by the father, but only one is voiced here. Through his comments, the father creates a striking contrast to the space-time 'Denmark today' where people are expected to speak openly even in public, whereas surveillance is less expected. He does not explain how social diversity within the group of Iranians (l. 14) is related to their fear of each other, nor what exactly it is that they fear. Yet, he argues that the feeling of mutual suspicion and fear of surveillance stems from the Iranian parents' social backgrounds in a past space-time in Iran. These backgrounds have led to an eternally insecure situation (l. 26) and to controversial experiences, both in Iran and Denmark. In this way, the source of fear is located in a different space-time (the earlier Chronotope of Insecurity in Iran), but it is weaved together with the immigrants' present life in Denmark, and thereby influences it fundamentally for the present generation.

Examples 1 and 2 constitute atypical kinds of data, as in general, our data were collected in classrooms. The theme discussed in the examples is also rare in our data, as the classrooms were considered inappropriate for introducing political matters. In Example 3, we illustrate how the principal teacher, Mansour, argued for the need of classrooms to be "ideology free", in order for the children to become scientifically minded, rather than politically biased, individuals. He illustrated his opinion by invoking two space-times: One associated with the state of Iran, the other with his Danish classrooms; one with ideology, the other with science. The discussion was occasioned by Ghandchi, who had brought along a Wikipedia article in Farsi to use as teaching material. As the text dealt with a historical garden in Iran, we could not detect any (indexes of) sensitive issues, apart from the names of the kings and other rulers involved in creating the garden. Nevertheless Mansour objected to the use of this authentic text and construed it as dangerous – even threatening. In order to account for his dispreference, he moved to a more general argumentative level.

Example 3: "what the Islamic Republic does"

Discussion; participants: Ghandchi (researcher), Mansour (principal teacher); 13–09–2013

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131 Mansour:   mese hâlâ tu Irân
               like now in Iran
132 Ghandchi: doroste
               I see
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133 Mansour:   ketbhâ ro mibini ce- ceqadr ↑zahre ideoložik tuše
               can you see the books ho- how much ↑poison of
               ideologies there is in them
134 Ghandchi: aha
               …
142 Mansour:   (1) yani ye cizâyi nabâyad tu maqze baccehâ bere
               (1) I mean there are some things that shouldn't
               enter children's brains
143            con mohite âmuzeš bâyad dur az masâ'ele ideoložik
               because educational institutions must be ((removed))
               far from ideological matters
144            va masâ'ele siyâsi bâše
               and political matters
145 Ghandchi: doroste
               I see
146 Mansour:   ↑harceqadr dur az in masâ'el bâše be 'elm nazdiktare
               ↑the further from such matters the closer to science
147            va be baccehâ va be zehniyate šaffâfe baccehâ
               and to children and their crystal clear mentalities
148            'elmitar bâyad âdam barxord bokone (.) na siyâsitar
               na ideoložiktar
               one must approach everything more scientifically (.)
               not politically ideologically
149            con jomhuri ↑'eslâmi inkâro mikonan ↑tamâme ketâbaš
               injure
               because this is what the ↑Islamic Republic does ↑all
               of their books are like that
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Mansour sets up the Chronotope of Ideology and the Chronotope of Neutrality. While both chronotopes of course are ideological, for Mansour, 'ideology' presumably refers to a skewed understanding of the world (cf. van Dijk 2006). Mansour locates the Chronotope of Ideology "now" and "in Iran" (l. 131), that is, not here and in Denmark; he characterizes it in negative terms: as affected by "poison of ideology"; and he points out the responsible agent: "The Islamic Republic" (l. 149). The second space-time is represented as the moral counterpart of the first; Mansour issues a personal manifesto on education: "one must approach everything more scientifically (.) not politically ideologically". We are invited to infer that this ideal infuses his pedagogical approach and the classroom here-and-now with a predominant focus on grammar and literacy. Mansour is thus part of the generic "one" (*âdam*; l. 148).

Importantly, this extract is part of Mansour's response to Ghandchi's introduction of an unremarkable, but authentic text. A reasonable explanation for his hostility towards the text is that he was afraid it might contain elements that could invite a discussion of unmentionables into the classroom. Obviously, Mansour could also be seen as protecting his authority as the principal teacher, vis-a-vis Ghandchi, who was just an assistant; his strong reaction likely contained an

element of that as well. By verbalizing his fear of introducing issues related to the Islamic Republic much more clearly, Mansour manifests his sensitivity towards not feeling in full control; his metapragmatic arguments justifying this sensitivity were upgraded to a general concern about ideological differences in pedagogical approaches.[8]

In addition, the local importance of the Chronotopes of Ideology and Neutrality was validated by a father in charge of organizing one of the classes. In an interview, he noted how it was important to erase all differences based on political ideologies before entering the classroom. To him, "whoever had other thoughts or political things ((i.e., ideas)), should park them outside before entering the class." (Interview, 13–06–2014). Only by erasing difference and creating neutrality, one could establish a space-time envelope generating particular educational and social possibilities.

The next extract exemplifies an unusual classroom situation. It was the only instance where the Chronotope of Insecurity was overtly introduced into the classroom *and* a rare occasion of sharing attention. A father with a Danish background was showing pictures and telling in (heavily accented) Farsi about the family's recent holiday in Iran. He depicted Iran as an inviting country, full of attractions, and offering many encounters with friendly and hospitable people. As some of the children did not understand Farsi, Ghandchi (in her function of assistant teacher) occasionally translated the presentation into Danish, or asked the children questions for clarification.

The conversation occurs just after Ghandchi has asked Mehran (9 years; boy) in Danish if he has been to Tehran. The two brothers Pouria (7 years) and Parsa (6 years) are central in what follows. All of the conversation took place in Danish.

Example 4: "he'll be killed"

Classroom recording; participants: Pouria (pupil), Parsa (pupil), Mehran (pupil), Ghandchi (assistant teacher/researcher)

```
27 Pouria:    hvis vi skal til Iran så kommer far ikke med
              if we are going to Iran then dad won't come along
28 Ghandchi:  hvad siger du
              what do you say
29 Pouria:    hvis vi skal til Iran så kommer far ikke med
              if we are going to Iran then dad won't come along
```

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8.   Mansour also suggested that Ghandchi showed him any unknown texts prior to the sessions, with the motivation that he could then adjust them according to class requirements.

```
30 Parsa:      shu:t [dig
               shu:t [you⁹
31 Ghandchi:  [nå   n[ej
32 Mansour:        [nej
                   [no
33 Ghandchi:  det er derfor
              that's why
34 Mansour:   din far han kommer [xxx
              your dad he comes xxx
35 Ghandchi:                    [⁻o⁺kay
36 Pouria:    ☺fordi så bliver han slået ihjel☺
              ☺because then he'll be killed☺
37 Parsa:     ☺horh ne:(he)j☺
              horh no:(ho)
38 Ghandchi &
   Mansour:   hoho ((nervous laughter))
39 Pouria:    ☺jo:ho☺
              ☺yes☺
40 Parsa:     ☺ne:j☺
              ☺no:☺
41 Mehran:    hvorfor gør han det
              why is that
42 Parsa:     jah (.) det spørger jeg faktisk også om (1.0)
              yeah (.) in fact I have the same question (1.0)
43            bliver han slået ihjel
              will he be killed
44 Pouria:    fordi han har
              because he has
45 Mehran:    er han eftersøgt
              is he wanted
46 Parsa:     er han eftersøgt (.) eller bliver han sl- el- eller
              is he wanted (.) or will he be ki- o- or
47            er der en  [gulerod der vil dræbe ham]
              is there a [carrot who wants to kill him]
48 Pouria:              [er du klar over hvor mange] (.)
                        [do you realize how many] (.)
49            er du klar over hvor mange i Iran der hver dag bliver
              do you realize how many in Iran who every day are
50            henrettet for at (.) gå imod præsterne
              executed for (.) opposing the imams
```

Prior to Pouria's outburst, two types of interactional organization were unfolding: a platform event where a father was doing a show-and-tell and a teaching session where Ghandchi asked questions to individual children. Pouria's new focus created a third type, with himself as the dominant speaker and Mehran as

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9. We think that Parsa here may try to silence his older brother, using the English language *shut* from the generally well-known and used (in Danish) *shut up*, but here combining it with the 2nd prs.sgl. pronoun in the oblique case *dig* 'you', with the meaning 'shut you up'.

the primary addressee, as signalled e.g. by the deictic pronoun *du* 'you' (2nd prs. sg.) (l. 48) and by Mehran's request for clarification (l. 41). Everybody else present (Ghandchi, Karrebæk, two mothers, a father, Mansour and the other children) became Goffmanian overhearers (Goffman 1981). Ghandchi's attempts at interfering in order to embed Pouria's information in the teaching session were unsuccessful. In addition, Pouria's interruption introduced a chronotope which contrasted strikingly with the one introduced by the father. Whereas the father represented Iran as a friendly place, in Pouria's description it was a place where his father would be killed. Whereas in the father's account the family travelled together, in Pouria's description the travelling family could not include the father. And whereas the father talked about a very recent past, Pouria described a future situation which could only come true under certain conditions as signalled by the *if… so* structure (l. 27, 29). Pouria proceeded from the highly personalized narrative into a general statement about the political situation in Iran: "are you aware how many in Iran are executed every day for opposing the priests" (l. 49–50). Although this was never put into so many words, it was an obvious inference that his father was among those in opposition to the priests. Therefore he could not go to Iran. Both Pouria and the father, who was leading the show-and-tell session, acted as mediators between the here-and-now event in the classroom and their significantly different chronotopic representations of Iran. Pouria's representation was a counter-example to the father's, and the overhearing audience could choose between aligning with an explicitly ideological representation of Iran and one with a less overt ideological load.

The discrepancy between the serious information presented by Pouria and the way it was presented and received deserves a remark. Pouria spoke in a smiling voice and gave the impression of suppressed laughter, and both adults and children (not all audible on the sound recording but registered in our fieldnotes) laughed when he exclaimed that his father would be killed in Iran. This response was probably occasioned by Pouria's own laughter, and Pouria may have laughed because the entire situation was awkward. Unmentionables (Fleming & Lempert 2011) were put into words, and such situations are often alleviated through laughter. Pouria's younger brother made some foolish comments (which were not entirely easy to follow), perhaps because he did not know as much about the situation as did his brother, perhaps because he did not wish to talk about it. In any case, he may have added to the laughability – compare the silly and childish image of the carrot hunting his father in order to kill him.

Most significantly, the narrative sequence was closed right after this example and never became part of the official classroom talk ratified by teachers. Neither was it ever brought up in any later encounter between the principal teacher, parents or children that we know of. Pouria and Mehran were left to handle these very

difficult issues on their own. They both needed to find a way to consolidate the father's narrative with a different space-time with different inferential logics; for Pouria, this must even have involved re-considering what he had learnt at home about Iran. In any case, the extract demonstrates that the Chronotope of Insecurity was part of the children's life, although it was not welcome in class, where the Chronotope of Neutrality dominated and was effectuated. Pouria's aligning his father with people who would get killed in Iran certainly affected how he understood himself, both in relation to Iran and to the classroom. Similarly, the other participants' alignment with Pouria's or the narrator-father's space-time influences or demonstrates their own understanding of selves, of Iran, and of each other. Non-alignment with any of these is to ignore or even erase their large, perhaps incommensurable differences.

What Example 4 demonstrated is that the Chronotope of Insecurity, although unwelcome in class, was part of the children's life, just as it was part of some of their parents' life. In the next, final example, we return to Mansour, the principal teacher. The extract represents some rare explicit expressions of Mansour's (in) security concerns; as already mentioned, Mansour was determined to ignore ideological issues, and instead install or safeguard neutrality. The example is drawn from a long conversation between Mansour and Ghandchi on a quantitative questionnaire we distributed among the parents. Prior to the excerpt, Mansour had asked about some of the questions concerning the parents' occupation background, migration trajectories, and economical status. He was concerned that these data would reveal the participants' identities.

Example 5: "The very sensitive question"

Classroom recording; Mansour (principal teacher), Ghandchi (researcher & assistant teacher)

```
01 Mansour:  (…) ba::d (1) so'âle (1) xeyli ↑hassâso (1)
             (…) the::n (1) the very ↑sensitive and (1) question (1)
02           inâ ineke (.) âyâ in ete'lâ'ât hevz miše
             is that (.) if these informations will be safely kept
03 Ghandchi: ba:le
             ye:s
04 Mansour:  hamino (.) Martha goft bale (.)
             Martha answered yes (.) to the same ((question))
05 Ghandchi: aha
06 Mansour:  goftam (.)šomâ fekr nakardin ke jomhuriye 'eslâmi (1)
             I said (.) haven't you thought that the Islamic
             republic (1)
07           ↑hak kone cize šomâro xxx
             could ↑hack into your thing ((i.e., server)) xxx
```

As soon as Mansour had received a thorough description of the anonymization and data saving process, he expressed his fear that the information received could fall into the hands of the Iranian intelligence service (l. 02, 06, 07). Doing this, he set up a chronotopic representation of insecurity in which it was a valid inference that the classroom was in danger of being compromised. Upon Ghandchi's reply, he mentioned that Karrebæk had said something similar when she interviewed him (l. 04), and then he expressed concerns about the safety of the database – could it be hacked by Iran's Intelligence? – quoting himself from the interview. In this way, his negative interrogation (l. 07) connotes that either he knew more than we did about the various sensitive matters, or that he criticized us for having overstepped a privacy borderline. In any case, he suggested that the information we had access to could involve an increased risk for some participants, as they needed protection from the state of Iran.

6.   Conclusion

In this paper, we have approached language-in-society as representing different (local and non-local) space-times. The space-times, or chronotopes, were loci of meaning, constructed in and around two Farsi heritage classrooms, where participants used them to create social groups and demonstrate (dis)alignment with the contemporary Iranian establishment. Lack of trust and fear of surveillance were salient characteristics of the social environment among our research participants inside the classrooms and within the class communities. We consider as surveillance both the systematic information gathering by an external actor such as the Iranian state, and the trivial, everyday observations made by fellow Iranians involved in the same classes. The two may not always be distinguishable – as reflected in the father' utterance in Example 2: "when we see an Iranian while riding the bus then we lower our voice". This is echoed by a Texan bus driver with an Iranian background, interviewed by Mobasher, according to whom Iranians "try to keep distance from other Iranians. They avoid speaking Persian in public stores, so they can hide their identity." (Mobasher 2012: 58). The Mobasher interview took place in the US, in the aftermath of 9/11, where there were many tensions and reasons for not disclosing an immigration background to the surroundings. Yet we find that its similarity to our study may be non-coincidental. In fact, our entire research endeavor caused some worry, both to some of the participants who distanced themselves from to the researcher (Karrebæk) and the assistant teacher (Ghandchi), and to the principal teacher (Mansour), who suggested that we risked attracting the attention of the Iranian intelligence service, even feeding our information to them.

While ideological differences are potentially socially disruptive, still the privately organized Farsi classrooms depended on some degree of social conviviality and mutual acceptance. At the same time, the principal teacher had to cater to people – stakeholders and audiences – having different, maybe incompatible ideological persuasions. We suggest that his choice of pedagogical organization, when controlling the publicly accessible classroom content, and his attempts at creating a Chronotope of Neutrality, a non-ideological 'here-and-now' inside his classrooms, were supposed to carve out a space where families could participate, regardless of political and religious persuasions. Many Iranians have been brought up in an atmosphere of fear and controversy. Their background becomes a burden which they do not wish to impose on their children. This may be why several parents agreed with the teacher's priorities. Parents could draw on the Chronotope of Insecurity and engage explicitly in discussions of politics and surveillance only outside of the classroom, or in adult-only situations. The Chronotope of Neutrality was a representation of a space-time configuration in which science (or knowledge) was the dominant educational force. It was construed in contrast to a Chronotope of Ideology, in which a particular political system worked strategically to influence children's minds. Thus, the Chronotope of Insecurity was closely related to the Chronotope of Ideology.

The insistence on lack of knowledge about, or even erasure of, topics associated with present day Iran affected more than the pedagogical organization; the possible outcome of the children's participation in heritage classes was also influenced. A chronotopical analysis involves individuals' (momentary) expressions of understandings of their social world; such understandings participate in formative processes of social selves. When the children occasionally introduced the Chronotope of Insecurity or other unmentionables, this was ignored, as were inferences and real life consequences based on this Chronotope. By making the Chronotope of Insecurity unavailable as a basis for understandings of self and others, Mansour refused to acknowledge some important parts of the children's shared experiences.

In this article, we have demonstrated how a universe in which insecurity is allowed to exist may be construed in contrast to a universe of neutrality. We have also argued that both the formulation of insecurity and its erasure have potential social effects. Presenting our argument from the vantage point of language classrooms, we have pointed out that language learning deals with past and future, with ways of presenting and imaging one-self, and with pupils and other involved persons. In the case under consideration, some pasts were denied discursive existence, some future selves were avoided – perhaps for good reasons, but certainly not without implications for education.

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