

Authority and morality in advocating heteroglossia

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In this article I address the fact that influential strands in socio- and applied linguistics advocate heteroglossic policies in education and other monolingually organised domains without extending this heteroglossia to public debate about language policy. Often this occurs by presenting linguistic diversity to relevant stakeholders as natural and real, or as the only option on account of its proven effectiveness. I argue that this strategy removes options from the debate by framing it as a scientific rather than political one, that it confronts stakeholders with academic pressure and blame, and that this may diminish scholars' impact on policy making. Using examples from research on translanguaging, repertoires, and linguistic citizenship, I will suggest that scholars may be more effective in contexts of value conflict when their knowledge serves to expand rather than reduce the range of alternatives for stakeholders. Focusing on education I will then explore how we may reclaim language policy from an evidence-based discourse and address matters of value besides matters of fact.

Keywords: heteroglossia, authority, morality, translanguaging, repertoire, linguistic citizenship

1. Introduction

Contributing to what was, at the time, another episode in the recurring debate in Belgium on whether to allow minority pupils to use their home languages at school, Flemish educationalist and language sociologist Orhan Agirdag noted in an op-ed that:

Education is too important to leave it to ideology and politicians. Certainly in times of elections politicians use education to advance their ideology [...] [T]he majority of linguists, neurologists, sociologists and educationalists agree that

multilingualism is a better approach than imposed monolingualism. Mother tongue is as healthy as mother's milk. Now we still have to convince politicians of that. (Knack.be, 14 April 2014; my translation)

Agirdag here succinctly articulates a stance that is regularly adopted across the field of socio- and applied linguistics when it comes to advocating multi- or plurilingualism at school and in other monolingually organised institutions. To be sure, advocates of heteroglossia often represent debate over language policy not as a discussion between opponents over what is ideologically, politically, morally, or financially desirable, but as an issue of truth or falsity in which it is problematic to be ideological, and where consequently, the choice we need to make is self-evident, a matter of feeding mother's milk. Such representations can be explicit, as in Agirdag's statement, but they are also implicitly reinforced by advancing two technical arguments. A first one represents linguistic diversity to stakeholders as developmentally natural or as exemplifying a cognitive essence, by arguing for example that "human beings have a natural translanguaging instinct" (García & Li, 2014: 32), or that translanguaging is "an innate capacity to draw on as many different cognitive and semiotic resources as available to them to interpret meaning intentions and to design actions accordingly" (Li, 2016: 541). This argument often chimes in with claims that the idea of separately existing languages is an invention or a persistently institutionalised perspective on language, and that consequently, policies and pedagogies should be based not on myths but on how people observably use language. A different formulation has it that language separation is a typically Western creation, and that worldwide, linguistic diversity is the norm rather than the exception, if not increasingly also in the West because of intense migration, mobility, and use of communication technology.

A second argument does not so much focus on "what is" but claims that linguistic diversity "works", because it is more effective than linguistic uniformity. This argument can be social-psychological when it claims that pupils will feel rejected to the extent that the curriculum, the teaching-learning process, or teachers fail to recognise pupils' linguistic backgrounds; this feeling of rejection is then assumed to entail a lack of confidence or a negative self-image which in its turn causes diminished learning and low attainment levels. Including, instead, the linguistic resources pupils bring to school is taken to raise well-being, improve learning results, and to boost equal opportunities. Alternatively, scholars claim that pupils obtain an increased understanding of subject matter when they learn through fluid language or are allowed to recruit from whichever linguistic resources they have available; or that pupils will learn the instruction language more efficiently if they can use it in combination with other linguistic resources or

when they are helped to improve their first language competence so that they can transfer skills from that first language into a second or a third.

The upshot of these arguments is that stakeholders' concerns for policies that are not (very) inclusive of linguistic diversity can be easily dismissed as a denial of reality, or as irrational, misguided, biased, and thus as irrelevant. In this article I want to raise some questions about this effect and the strategy that leads towards it. This is not to suggest that existing policies or stakeholder concerns are free from error or bias – research, as an interpretive practice, is not without such problems either. Nor will I say that facts are trivial, or that drawing on facts to advocate a change in policy is wrong. I argue though that a radical focus on facts is not without risks; that it can constrain, if not silence, stakeholders when the debate prioritises technical expertise; that facts alone do not tell us what is desirable; that using facts to justify a predetermined goal may raise suspicion that scientists are hiding their intentions, and that this may diminish scientists' credibility and impact on policy making; and, on a more linguistic level, that naturalising a particular type of language as normal, good, or liberating can have authoritative effects of its own. The general point will be that it is reasonable, in a discussion over which linguistic practices are valuable, to insist that facts are shown respect, but that representing this discussion as a debate between owners of knowledge and misguided believers of fictions precludes reasoned disagreement about contrary moral positions.

In what follows I will add flesh to these abstract bones by showing how these issues occur in (some) research on translanguaging, linguistic repertoires, and linguistic citizenship. In doing so I will be critical of work the value of which cannot be underestimated. Scholars in these research strands have disseminated evidence to denaturalise the project of purifying languages and have so contributed to normalising fluid, non-standard, and plurilingual language use; they have demonstrated that it is possible and pedagogically exciting to teach through more than one “language”; that speakers have far more linguistic resources than is usually thought; and that other types of linguistic citizenship are imaginable than the ones that have been institutionalised for a long time. These scholars have also shown that so-called “impure” voices can contain the germ of counter-discourses that allow to talk back to homogenising forces and help to “deprive [a culture]”, as Bakhtin says, “of its naïve absence of conflict” (1981: 368; cited from Gardiner, 2004: 38). Such efforts must be understood moreover against the backdrop of a strong commitment to contesting inequality and the role of monolingual conceptions of language in this. This commitment itself is part of a modernist tradition – with roots in Franz Boas's contestation of the developed nature of European languages compared to supposedly primitive non-European ones – in which linguists have sought to improve society through their technical expertise, notably by challenging common perceptions of deficit and by exposing conflict and exclusion

behind the apparent normality of dominant language policies (Bauman & Briggs, 2003; Heller & McElhinny, 2017; Jaspers, 2016; Lewis, 2018). Many of these efforts have focused on education, inspired by the consensus view that schools are key to redressing inequality. Faced with persistent school failure and rising concern about the legitimacy of their education systems, governments have further intensified the search for an evidence-based practice that fairly sorts pupils into their eventual social status, opening up opportunities for scholars to underline the use-value of their work against the background of a shift from basic to applied science funding.

An established line of work, however, questions schools' potential to change inequality (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977; Moore, 2007) as well as the authority relations that the improvement tradition has installed between experts and mere owners of opinions (Cameron et al., 1992; Cameron, 2012; Rampton, 1997; see also the dialogue sections in *Journal of Sociolinguistics* initiated by Heller, 1999 and Bell & Coupland, 2001). Several socio- and applied linguists have moved away from a strictly facts-based, positivist stance towards a more interpretivist, dialogical engagement with nonscientists "in which the voice and interests of non-academic participants must be allowed to be put on the table [...] Not that dialogue is in itself an innovation" (Heller et al., 2017: 149; also see Bezemer, 2015; Cooke et al., 2018; Jaffe, 2012; Lefstein & Snell, 2011). Grounded in long-standing personal relations between experts and nonscientists in relatively small-scale or community-based settings, this has resulted in, for example, the joint production of texts and presentations, the exploration of new procedures, or the collection of facts. There also is less agreement on the effectiveness and cognitive advantages of bi/multilingualism, or on the socio-psychological effects of (mis)recognising pupils' linguistic resources than it may seem (de Bruin et al., 2014; Bruce Morton & Harper, 2007; Erickson, 1987). Others argue that "epistemological vigilance" (Del Percio et al., 2016) is necessary, that is, that we need to ask in what sense our expertise may reinforce late capitalist discourses that celebrate linguistic flexibility or project language as key for emancipation while obscuring the material dimensions of inequality (Block, 2018; Chun & Lo, 2016; Flores, 2017; Lewis, 2018). This involves "problemat[is]g the consequences of the knowledge we produce and the costs implied in terms of who profits and who loses from these forms of expertise" (Del Percio et al., 2016: 70).

So, it would seem that rather than consensus, there is in fact disagreement in the field about how scientists should approach nonscientists, indeed a lively multivocality about how to do an engaged socio- or applied linguistics. But historically and today the different voices in the linguistic choir have not been in balance: the loudest voice has been that of scholars who approach nonscientists' commitments to language, and to monolingualism and standardisation in particular, as errors of fact and who suggest that observable linguistic diversity provides the tools for

necessary improvement. That it is unusual to read criticism of work on translanguaging, repertoires and linguistic citizenship further shows that dissonance is relatively marginal. There are good grounds therefore for a cost-benefit analysis of what are, at present, uncontroversial but influential exemplars of the consensus view. I also believe though, and here I sing out of tune with the interpretivist voice, that the question remains how scholars can enter into dialogue with nonscientists they do not have long and good personal relations with, and how they can develop such dialogues about larger-scale matters than a presentation or local procedure, such as a language policy for education, without slipping into a positivist stance.

In what follows I will first address how some research on translanguaging, repertoires, and linguistic citizenship, respectively, adopts a strategy that merits reconsideration. I will in each case focus not on the totality of research under these headings but on prototypical or highly successful examples – there exist other examples in these strands that do not so much illustrate the abovementioned issues, neither do the examples I discuss present each of these issues in the same way. I will then discuss some insights from political science and pedagogy to explore which other strategies we might be able to develop.

2. Translanguaging

Translanguaging initially stood for a bilingual pedagogy in which pupils use a better-known language to learn a lesser-known one in order to become proficient in both. But the term's scope has been successfully extended over the last years to include not just speakers' natural instinct and cognitive ability, as we have seen, but also "the flexible use of linguistic resources by bilinguals in order to make sense of their world" (García et al., 2015: 200), or the "fluid language practices of bilinguals" (García & Lin, 2016: 117). A central tenet in this research is that applying fluid language at school is "transformative for the child, for the teacher and for education itself" (García & Li, 2014: 68) because it

enables students to construct and constantly modify their sociocultural identities and values, as they respond to their historical and present conditions critically and creatively. It enables students to contest the 'one language only' or 'one language at a time' ideologies of monolingual and traditional bilingual classrooms.

(García & Li, 2014: 67)

Giving students this possibility is argued to be urgent, moreover, since "the educational consequences of the sociopolitical inability to authenticate a multilingual and heteroglossic reality is responsible for educational failure of many language

minorities around the world” (García & Li, 2014:56; also see García & Hesson, 2015:221).

Such claims exemplify scholars’ profound aspiration to transform inequality and school failure trends, and to do so at least in part through pupils’ fluid language use. Others have argued though that presenting fluid language as the key causal factor for transformation and school success overstates the available evidence and raises inflated expectations about the effects of language on long-standing processes of stratification (Block, 2018; Jaspers, 2018). More relevant for my purposes here is that the sense of urgency that guides these scholars seems to invite a narrowing of the scope for relevant stakeholders. On some occasions the alternatives are narrowed to one, when it is argued that “the incorporation of students’ full linguistic repertoire [is] simply the only way to go about developing language practices valued in school, as well as to educate” (García & Li, 2014:74), or that “unless teachers’ pedagogies include the language practices of students, and unless all students are taught in ways that support and develop their diverse language practices, there cannot be any meaningful participation in education, and thus, in society” (García & Flores, 2012:232). On other occasions stakeholders’ options are reduced through disseminating particular images of the ideal teacher or type of education:

All teachers in the 21st century need to be prepared to be bilingual teachers [...] Teachers need [...] to be aware of language diversity and to see their students as people, not just numbers. But beyond linguistic and cultural information, teachers need to develop a critical sociopolitical consciousness about the linguistic diversity of the children [...] Teachers then need to act on all this information by constructing curricula and pedagogies that build on the sociopolitical, sociohistorical and sociolinguistic profiles of the bilingual children in question.

(García & Li, 2014:122–123)

Multilingual pedagogies are thus at the center of all education that meaningfully includes learners, that is, education that is not simply done to students, but in which students do and participate.

(García & Flores, 2012:232)

It is not unreasonable to expect that teachers recognise their students’ linguistic diversity and to be concerned about the harm that may ensue from professional bias or complacency. Yet aligning these concerns with first principles that are imparted in even the most elementary kinds of teacher training in the last decades – that teachers should see their students as people and invite them to participate in class – seems at once to intimate the authors’ skepticism about teachers’ capacity for critical thinking and to suggest that taking the authors’ preferred option is self-evident or less than negotiable; the number of formulated demands reinforces this impression. But most teachers work in institutions where various

stakeholders (government, the principal, colleagues, parents) expect them to use or teach monolingual, standard, varieties, besides other subject matter. Even those teachers who are maximally aware of linguistic diversity and prepared to adapt their curricula will in these circumstances have to strike compromises and will often not be able to prioritise students' linguistic backgrounds.

Advocates of linguistic diversity seem to help teachers fall on the wrong side of history then (uncritically living in the 20th century), with all the kinds of blame this can entail, to the extent they suggest it is self-evident to meet their expectations; it also reduces their opportunities for observing how teachers try to reconcile opposing institutional, pedagogical, and ideological interests. Such reconciliation work moreover makes clear that teachers' increased familiarity with linguistic or cultural information does not automatically invite practices that those who value the information consider improved or desirable: all information needs be interpreted for its application in specific situations for particular students at a certain point in their trajectory (Biesta, 2012), and as we have just seen, teachers work in a field of contradictory expectations, where they will need to weigh different, conflicting, types of information (Hammersley, 2005). Rather than requiring the compliant facilitation of a particular stakeholder's desires, such judgements require an interpretive teacher, an agentive actor who will prioritise, ignore and combine information, of whatever nature, depending on purpose and context. In short, the more it is suggested that teachers have no alternative, the more translanguaging scholars would seem to depend on the uncritical actor that they are rightly concerned about in the first place.

The message to minority language activists likewise seems to be that there is no alternative, and that their concerns are obsolete or an improper intervention in the nature of language that they inadequately understand. To see this we must remember that translanguaging scholars develop an ontology in which all humans are instinctively prone to producing fluid language, as we saw earlier, and that they have a unique, fluid, linguistic repertoire that is realised to the fullest if they ignore social boundaries for language:

Once named languages have been properly allocated to the socio-historical realm of boundary-making efforts by actual or emerging nations (or by existing or aspiring states), and once idiolects are situated in the individual idiolectal realm of lexico-structural repertoires, we are able to define translanguaging as the full implementation of the latter without regard for the former; as the full use of idiolectal repertoires without regard for named-language boundaries.

(Otheguy et al., 2015: 304)

This ontology is not unproblematic. Linguistic anthropologists argue that all language use is mediated by its socio-historical environment (Silverstein, 1985), and

that the human capacity for language may well depend on cognitive abilities, but that the more it is presented as an “instinct, propelling us from the inside”, the more language becomes “a form of behaviour which is not subject to reflection” and value-judgment, processes which are socio-cultural and which draw on all kinds of boundary-making efforts (Cameron, 2012:viii). More essential is that this ontology blends with a descriptive use of translanguaging. The term after all also refers to the fluid *practices* of *bilingual* speakers which, it is argued, should be authenticated at school. Translanguaging thus at once refers to a universal instinct and to a particular manifestation of that instinct. While at first glance this is merely a cumbersome ambiguity, upon closer consideration it seems to facilitate the formulation of a moral imperative, which is that observable linguistic practices should closely correspond to what language ontologically is. Indeed, definitions of translanguaging as “the full use of idiolectal repertoires without regard for named-language boundaries” (Otheguy et al., 2015:304), or as “the act of deploying all of the speakers’ lexical and structural resources *freely*” (Otheguy et al., 2015:297; emphasis in original) evoke an image of unfettered language use that, in light of the authors’ advocacy of it at school, implies that people’s idiolects had better be left to develop unimpeded.

Such arguments are formulated to expand the linguistic options for minority speakers. But advocating specific practices as instinctive constitutes, as Cameron (2012:viii–ix) notes, an update of the “leave your language alone” advice that she found when linguists, faced with protest against language change, asked people to let language run its natural, free course. And it is important to see that this reasoning contributes to a new dynamics of purification and hybridisation (Bauman & Briggs, 2003): while the fluid language use of some speakers appears to be represented as the pure outcome of a human instinct, because it is “free” or untouched by social ideas about language, the monolingual language use of others comes to stand for impure language, as language that is affected by “the socio-historical realm of boundary-making efforts”. Moreover, like earlier juxtapositions of pure and impure language, the pure type of language is associated in this context with good qualities – which today are creativity, criticality, transformation, or disruption – and is promoted as emancipatory and liberating; the newly impure language (monolingual language use) is related to the opposite.

This view of natural, free language may not be intentional, but it does not seem to be accidental. It is a built-in feature of a successful translanguaging theory, and its effects transpire in quotes such as these:

Minoritized languages must be protected and developed if that is the wish of people. But it is important to understand that the linguistic features that make up that minoritized language cannot be totally isolated from others because they are gen-

erally part of the linguistic competence of bilinguals. Bilingual education cannot maintain minoritized languages as if they were autonomous museum pieces.

(García & Lin, 2016: 128; cf. also Otheguy et al., 2015: 283, 299)

Minority language concerns are here initially taken seriously (minority languages must be protected, if it is what people want) but are then found naïve (natural language has no boundaries, so minority language features cannot be totally isolated from others) and reactionary (“museum pieces”). Several efforts to protect minority languages have of course become overly puristic or museological, excluding many of the speakers in whose name they are saved (Jaffe, 1999; Jaspers & Van Hoof, 2013; Hill & Hill, 1980; Woolard, 1989), and in such cases there are good reasons to resist the imposed boundaries. But it may be premature to qualify all such efforts as inherently repressive or indefensible if in various contexts minority language protection precisely enables speakers to be critical of existing linguistic arrangements and to deploy freely a part of their repertoire that a lack of boundaries would severely complicate.

3. Repertoires and linguistic citizenship

A similar focus on linguistic facts as a decisive argument can be found in some research on repertoires and linguistic citizenship, which, for reasons of space, I will treat more briefly. In both cases the suggestion to nonscientists is that language in reality is much more complex than they assume, and that this should be translated into policy. Some scholars of repertoires do so by underlining that all speakers have a dynamic inventory of semiotic (including linguistic) resources; that speakers’ know how of these can range from the very elaborate to the highly restricted; and that, because repertoires depend on tangible, particular, speaker experiences, all speakers only ever master a subset of the resources that are customarily associated with “a language”. This is solid knowledge. But in an influential paper this knowledge serves to denounce:

dominant discourses [that] seem to increasingly turn to entirely obsolete and conclusively discredited models of language knowledge. The European Common Framework for Languages is naturally the most outspoken case, but language and literacy testing methods predicated on linear and uniform ‘levels’ of knowledge and developmental progression are back in force. Such practices and methods have met debilitating and crippling criticism from within the profession [...] yet they remain unaffected and attract more and more support among national and supranational authorities in fields of immigration, labor and education. Something is seriously wrong there [...].

(Blommaert & Backus, 2011: 4)

Later in the paper we find that this Common Framework and the measuring instruments designed in its name must be considered “a form of science fiction”, because they “have only a tenuous connection with the real competences of people, the way they are organized in actual repertoires, and the real possibilities they offer for communication. This is because they measure only part of language knowledge” (Blommaert & Backus, 2011: 24).

Clearly, most language tests will not provide an accurate measurement of speakers’ full linguistic repertoire. Various tests also play an insidious role in the regulation of access to residency or welfare provisions (Hogan-Brun et al., 2009). At the same time, focusing on technical flaws leaves little ground for opposition when accurate tests are applied in unfair procedures. Neither does it follow from observing the reality of repertoires that it is wrong or unfeasible to design valid tests that measure a specific part of repertoires that people find valuable or necessary – unless we suggest that valorising and testing particular linguistic skills is unacceptable *per se*, or that stakeholders can only assess complete repertoires, regardless of specific purposes or problems. If it is defensible in certain contexts to measure, based on an idea of competent or desirable language, the question is then whether and which models and measuring tools are needed, for whom, for which reasons they are found necessary, and whether the effects of measuring are acceptable. Such questions cannot be answered by drawing attention to the facts, since these allow for multiple interpretations, depending on the value assumptions of those who interpret them. Any advice formulated on the basis of repertoire knowledge likewise hinges upon the advice givers’ value assumptions. Yet such assumptions are unspoken in the work discussed here, or remain hidden behind the idea that precision or empirical completeness is the litmus test for deciding which models of language are “seriously wrong”. This does not only turn worthwhile debate about policy into shadow-boxing over the means with which it is realised (McNamara, 2009), it also implies that the “fictional” status of the Common Framework and its instruments is best appreciated not as a disinterested claim, but as a *charge* in a conflict over language policy that is couched in the neutrality of observation. That many scholars do not accept the empirical reality of existing policies either only underlines that confining our handling of facts to accepting them provides a poor base for meaningful policy making.

In research on linguistic citizenship, finally, the classic argument is that Linguistic Human Rights approaches “do not gel with what we know about language in society, correspond to experiences with linguistic pluralism, nor are they empirically sustainable” (Stroud & Heugh, 2004:191). Such approaches “invisibilise” the complexity of the “real sociolinguistic realities” (Stroud, 2001:350) because they impose a “one language-one territory” framework that neglects population mobility, presupposes membership of a single state, and ignores how

fluid, non-standard ways of speaking at grassroots level can generate narratives of self and society alternative to the usual national or liberal storyline. Instead, a notion of linguistic citizenship is proposed that does not emphasise language but individual voices; that draws on an idea of language which includes non-standard or fluid language, variable proficiencies, multilingual and cross-border communication; and which understands language as a site of political and economic struggle. This research proposes a linguistic citizenship, in brief, that takes account of linguistic reality and the forces that shape it in order to provide marginalised speakers increased visibility and opportunities for democratic participation (Stroud, 2001; Stroud & Heugh, 2004).

But while a one language-one nation framework undeniably simplifies sociolinguistic reality, this reality itself does not tell us what should be done. Indeed, “what is factually true does not automatically render it desirable; we cannot simply induce what we should do by accurately observing what is currently being done” (Cameron, 2012: 227). Observing sociolinguistic reality can inform us that other linguistic practices exist which are eligible for being politically recognised. Validating grassroots, fluid linguistic practices can liberate speakers in contexts where such practices are ignored. But sociolinguistic reality usually consists of many more grassroots, fluid linguistic practices than can reasonably be taken as a basis for political action. Consequently, a selection of practices is inevitable, based on some type of justification that particular practices are more deserving of immediate support than other potential candidates, and this justification will have to engage with other, competing ideas about linguistic citizenship. Insisting on the complex sociolinguistic reality does not, in other words, dissolve the political problem that conflicting views exist of how this reality must be approached. Some of these ideas have absolutely been very dominant and excluding, but insisting on their empirically unsustainable, fictional, nature would seem to obscure rather than tackle the political reality of these ideas on its own terms (cf. Kompridis, 2005: 325–326). In fact, if some selection of practices is inevitable, in the promotion of a new linguistic citizenship, a political justification is essential given that this selection will in its turn invisibilise, or at least make less prominent, those aspects of sociolinguistic reality that are considered less meaningful or liberating. Such an outcome may be defensible as the side-effect of a justified choice for what is believed to be in the common interest. But if the main yardstick for evaluating policies is empirical – a matter of how well they match with reality – any and all proposals for linguistic citizenship become eligible for disqualification.

So, it seems as if a relatively similar strategy emerges, across influential strands of socio- and applied linguistic research, about how to dispute monolingual language policies. Preferred, multilingual, practices are presented as more effective, natural, or real; current policies are denounced as based on junk science; and there

is a hesitation to address matters of value directly. Of course, the work discussed here, and the proposals it makes or implies, has emerged in contexts where there is often little or no openness on the part of policymakers to engage in debate over language, if powerful groups do not actively exert pressure to ignore, discredit, or silence facts they find unhelpful. It is not unreasonable that scholars in such case insist on facts or try to persuade policymakers in terms that they find appealing (objectivity, effectiveness). I believe though that this strategy needlessly constricts the interaction with stakeholders into a “scientists knows best” straitjacket. This is in itself not a new insight, but I will in what follows first address why this strategy may even have adverse effects, before exploring how we could remove the straitjacket and expand the set of policy alternatives.

4. The relation between science and policy

To address this recurrent strategy I draw on Roger Pielke’s (2007) insights on the relation between science and policy, in line with other recent work on how the language sciences understand the relation between knowledge and decision making (Salö, 2017). Broadly speaking, the strategy adopted in the research I have discussed falls largely within the scope of a linear model of science:

the linear model of science is often used to suggest that achieving agreement on scientific knowledge is a prerequisite for a political consensus to be reached and then policy action to occur [...] In even stronger forms, some use the linear model to argue that specific knowledge or facts compel certain policy responses.

(Pielke, 2007:13; also see Blommaert, 1999:30; Stevens, 2007; Wynne, 1993)

Based in a view of the expert standing above the fray, the linear model is rooted in an Enlightenment ideology which sought to define a modern, legitimate type of authority that would confine the intellectual anarchy that a radical valorisation of equality was seen to invite, notably by invoking a rational foundation for one’s opinion (Billig et al., 1988:70–74). As a model of how research impacts on policy making, however, it offers a simplified view of the generally unpredictable, indirect, and selective ways in which research filters through into policy (Hammersley, 2014; Stevens, 2007). Pielke argues moreover that this model, and the image of the impartial scientist it evokes, easily leads to politicising science. After all, so long as experts are seen to stand above the fray, stakeholders will be tempted to recruit evidence that lends credibility to their cause; experts will in their turn be glad to provide evidence in a knowledge economy that expects them to prove their use-value. Rather than political consensus, this often leads

to more *dissensus*, because science is usually diverse enough for everyone to find facts that support their cause (Pielke, 2007: 30–36).

Scholars amplify this politicisation when they recruit the image of the pure scientist to enter the fray and advance their own agenda. They then act like a “stealth issue advocate” (Pielke, 2007: 92ff.), because they use evidence as “a convenient [...] means for removing certain options from a debate without explicitly dealing with disputes over values”; it becomes a “trump card in political debates. For who can argue against truth?” (Pielke, 2007: 125). Stealth advocacy thus makes public debate less heteroglossic in the name of one *über*-value to which experts have special access: real knowledge. For Pielke this does not disqualify *overt* political advocacy by experts, which he insists is an honourable role in democratic societies. But he warns that this advocacy must not be disguised as intelligence if experts wish to avoid the public to start believing that in the end, science is nothing more than an extension of experts’ political views, since this can diminish their credibility and impact on policy making. This risk is difficult to avoid in a model that views science and politics as strictly separated spheres, and when scholars only take up one other role apart from the pure scientist, which is to act as an advocate of group interests.

Pielke suggests more roles become imaginable if we understand democratic decision making not only as the upshot of competing group interests, but also as a process in which the public selects among alternatives provided to them by experts. In addition he distinguishes between a linear model of science and a stakeholder model that develops research in interaction with science users (see also Longino, 2002). Based on this he develops four (idealised) roles for scientists. The “pure scientist” works without consideration for the practical use of research findings, disconnected from decision makers. The “science arbiter” responds to specific questions from decision makers but does not address any normative matters. The “issue advocate” draws attention to research to pursue a specific political cause or alternative. In contrast to the issue advocate, and finally, the “honest broker of alternatives” does not reduce but instead tries to expand the scope of choice for decision makers by integrating knowledge with several stakeholder concerns (cf. Pielke, 2007: 8–21).

Scholars wishing to engage with policy decisions productively, therefore, need to choose wisely what role they take up, and Pielke argues that this crucially depends on the context one operates in. Acting as a pure scientist can be effective, for example, but only in those, very specific, decision contexts where there is a strong agreement over values and little uncertainty over how actions lead to particular outcomes. Such contexts involve what Pielke calls “tornado politics”; when everyone agrees that the tornado must be avoided and that the preferable course of action is the one that most reliably leads to safety. This is very different from

situations which involve “abortion politics” because there is serious disagreement over values, a large number of alternatives, uncertainty over how practices lead to desirable outcomes, and an awareness that improving information will not soon diminish uncertainty or reconcile competing values (Pielke, 2007: 40–50).

Many contexts will involve both types of politics, but because debates about language and education largely fall within abortion politics, scholars may be more productive, following Pielke, if they act as “issue advocates” or “honest brokers of alternatives”. Doing so resists the tendency among conflicted parties to turn abortion politics into tornado politics by requesting that decisions be based on sound science, and explicitly associates knowledge with choice. Against this backdrop, we can see that the scholars whose work I have discussed act as explicit issue advocates when they point out that, to their knowledge, (1) fluid language of bilinguals causes beneficial outcomes, and that consequently, schools should apply such language; that (2) existing tests fail to reflect the complexity of linguistic repertoires and that, therefore, they are unreliable, unfair, and should be abolished; or that (3), since multilingual exchanges provide alternative narratives of self and society, governments must develop a “new post-liberal understanding of citizenship” (Stroud & Heugh, 2004: 208). This is a fair strategy. Yet issue advocacy also has its drawbacks, Pielke points out: it reduces the scope of options and so raises the chance that others will equate the provided information with a political stance; it is relatively ineffective against the presentation of contrary evidence (e.g. that fluid language does not have beneficial outcomes, that tests can be reliable even if they only reflect repertoires partially, or that multilingual exchanges can foster conventional narratives of self and society); and because science is respected and therefore valuable as a tactical tool, issue advocacy often acquires features of the pure scientist or science arbiter.

Traces of such stealth advocacy are visible too in the work I have discussed, when scholars present themselves as pure scientists to suggest that what language *is* compels what language we *ought* to use (freely) at school; or that linguistic reality compels what models of language or types of citizenship we need to develop. Such a strategy uses science to justify a predetermined goal, it disguises a value preference as scientific evidence, and eventually this may pave the way for a political debate couched in scientific arguments which, in the end, reduces the impact of science. Again, the specific context in which these scholars operate may explain their insistence on facts, certainly when stakeholders fail to observe some of the duties that Longino (2002: 132–133) identifies as essential for fair intellectual exchange.

But if issue advocacy can entail significant difficulties, it may be more effective, if we follow Pielke’s argument, to explore how scholars can broker several policy alternatives in this context rather than narrow the playing field. This would

mean that apart from showing that it is possible to teach through fluid language, we also provide, for example, knowledge to teachers who are opposed to such an approach but interested to learn how they can take their pupils' repertoires into account during time off-task; to teachers who wish to know in what ways these repertoires can scaffold the learning of the instruction language; to minority language activists who are willing to consider how fluid language can help raise the visibility of the minority language outside of the spaces they reserve for that language; to teachers and policymakers who wish to know if and how fluid language can be a testable skill or subject matter; to policymakers who are against allowing fluid and home language use at school but interested to learn how this can be supported in extra-curricular activities; if not to fellow scholars who would like to know if fluid language can be part of academic activity, or for what reasons, and in which contexts, it may be impractical. Providing such intelligence naturally exceeds the competence of a single socio/applied linguist, but teams of linguists can certainly make some of these options more concrete or indicate options not taken. The point is that by expanding the options experts allow stakeholders to select opportunities that are in line with their own values, and that this selection increases experts' impact on practice (which, clearly, at the same time intensifies the need for "epistemological vigilance").

5. From "what is/works" to "what do we want (and why)"

It could be argued that if context is crucial, linguists have few other options than to act as brokers of alternatives, given that debate over language, forensic contexts excepted, will almost always involve "abortion politics". Am I not in this way, and in mirror image of the work I have discussed, reducing the scope of options for socio- and applied linguists, and taking the moral high ground? Such a claim would disregard, however, that openly advocating a specific course of action on the basis of evidence remains a viable option in contexts of value conflict, and a potentially very persuasive one, but that there are costs and risks to bear in mind that may have to be considered more seriously. It would also overlook that the idea here is not so much to advise others how to engage in debate or to puncture any beliefs they may nurture about knowledge transmission, but to interrogate whether we are entering this debate judiciously enough. It seems important in this regard that besides evidence, there are other yardsticks available in debate over language, and here I take my cue from the Dutch educationalist Gert Biesta. He argues in his work that in order to decide what must be done, evidence must be complemented by views of what is desirable, that is, of what is good education, or, in our case, of what we consider good language (education). Such questions have

drifted out the picture, he says, and one reason for this is a widespread concern for an effective, predictable education. This concern has duly anchored discussions in “factual data rather than [i]n assumptions or opinions about what might be the case”, but the “abundance of information about educational outcomes has given the impression that decisions about the direction of educational practice can be based solely upon factual information” (Biesta, 2009: 35).

A second reason why the question of good education has faded into the woodwork has to do with a broader change in educational discourse in the recent decades: teaching has gradually been redefined as the provision of learning opportunities or experiences, the idea of the learner has replaced the notion of the pupil or student, while teachers have come to be seen as coaches and mentors of learning processes. Biesta suggests that this evolution has usefully allowed teachers to realise that learning does not simply depend on providing input but also on their students’ activities; a focus on learning can moreover empower students to take control of their own educational agenda. He also believes though that this evolution obscures the fact that:

education is not simply about any learning or about any influence of teachers on students. Education is a teleological practice – a practice framed by a *telos*: an aim or purpose – which implies that decisions about educational actions and arrangements always have to be taken with an eye on the desirability of what such actions and arrangements are supposed to bring about. (Biesta, 2010: 500)

Education in this view does not consist of reproducing the outside world within the school, nor of acknowledging the totality of skills that pupils already have; it involves the teaching of something *specific*, for a particular *reason* or *purpose*. These purposes consequently help determine the value of educational actions and arrangements: it can be reasonable to adopt an ineffective strategy, or to expect that students, at least sometimes, endure difficulty, boredom, and a lack of well-being, if this is part of achieving a greater educational objective (cf. Masschelein & Simons, 2013).

Since we have more or less forgotten to talk about education in this way, Biesta proposes that we reconnect again with the question of purpose, and the content that this entails, by framing discussions about good education systematically against the background of three different, but related, functions that education generally performs:

- Qualification, that is, the transmission of knowledge and skills;
- Socialisation, both in its intended form, when the idea is to introduce students to particular traditions and values, and as an implicit effect of what happens at school: the so-called hidden curriculum; and

- Subjectification, which refers to empowering individuals to develop autonomy as unique individuals, or seeing students as “subjects of action and responsibility, not objects of intervention and influence” (Biesta, 2012: 39).

The idea is not to choose between these purposes, but to see that education generally has an impact on all three, and that they influence each other. There can be synergy between them, for example when obtaining knowledge and skills helps students to become more autonomous, independent from common-sense. But these purposes can also come into conflict: an excessive focus on qualification may lead pupils to experience too much pressure and a lack of self-initiative, and it may implicitly socialise them to compete rather than collaborate with one another. Teachers will thus experience dilemmas, and need to judge what a suitable course of action is, rather than basing themselves simply on “information”.

More important is that in Biesta’s view, this framework invites all concerned parties to be explicit about what constitutes good education: whether they have qualification, socialisation or subjectification goals in mind, or all three, and on the basis of which value assumptions, and for whom, they find particular goals for education desirable. Clearly, such rationales will need to be justified in context – there is no sense in which some qualification goals take precedence over others, or over socialisation goals, in the abstract. It is here too that facts enter the picture as a means to indicate which aspects of the world can be made publicly accessible as subject matter for particular students; which learning stages, materials and evaluations are necessary to attain the defined goals; how particular aims can be reached effectively after they have been identified; which effects the pursuit of qualification goals have on students’ socialisation or subjectification; or which impact stakeholders’ attempts to prioritise the school’s socialisation function (through an emphasis on, say, employability or security) has on subject matter and students’ capacity for autonomy or creativity. For Biesta, though, these questions of evidence and effectiveness only have meaning in terms of decisions about the aims of education: “[t]here is [...] no evidence to generate or collect if we do not first decide about what the aim or purpose of the practice is” (2010: 501).

Looking at education in this way may provide opportunities for advocates of translanguaging, new language models, or innovative types of linguistic citizenship. If, for example, we pour the various concerns that Rampton et al. (2018) formulate in their discussion of a new “sociolinguistic citizenship” into Biesta’s mould, the result could look like this:

- Qualification: developing a sociolinguistic understanding, broadening linguistic repertoires, teaching a persuasive rhetoric that includes named languages;

- Socialisation: encouraging linguistic inclusivity, acknowledging complex individual repertoires;
- Subjectification: elaborating individual linguistic creativity, pleasure, performance, and developing a critical voice.

This representation immediately shows that the answer to what these authors consider good sociolinguistic citizenship slightly differs depending on the specific function of education that is in focus (Biesta, 2009:42). It also makes clear, as Rampton et al. point out, that fostering a new type of sociolinguistic citizenship does not have to be an alternative in the margins, but can be put forward as a full-blown objective for mainstream education. Another quality is that it projects linguistic diversity as something that students acquire knowledge of rather than restricting it to the domain of socialisation and subjectification. There is room for synergy moreover: developing a sociolinguistic understanding may lead students to acknowledge and appreciate their own repertoires and help them to expand those repertoires or to develop a critical voice. But there also is scope for conflict and friction. Rampton et al. reserve a place for named languages as part of qualification, because, the authors claim:

if someone's viewpoint is to be heard elsewhere in unfamiliar situations, it needs to be represented in a repeatable form that, regardless of its eloquence, inevitably simplifies the first-hand experience that motivated it [...] Named languages may form part of persuasive rhetorics that travel [...] [Sociolinguists have to] accept the possibility that in certain circumstances [...] named languages hel[p] to advance political causes that they deem progressive. (Rampton et al., 2018: 6)

Teaching named languages may limit the space, however, at least some of the time, for valorising creative language, or it can inadvertently teach students that some voices are less persuasive. This problem does not disappear when named languages are replaced with fluid language, because it will be necessary then to distinguish between worthwhile and less worthwhile fluid language, at least if we wish to evaluate students' knowledge or skills.

Thus, while it is more than defensible to argue that other types of language deserve to be made publicly accessible at school or should be further elaborated, such a choice will also, often simultaneously, narrow down the possibilities for accessing or elaborating other types of language (cf. Biesta & Osberg, 2010:1). In principle this invites chronic debate over how justifiable these new opportunities and limits are. Clearly, it would be naïve to assume that such a debate easily leads to an equitable consensus, since it will be impacted by existing power differentials, least of all to imagine that such debate will significantly modify material inequities. But the idea is not to project imminent agreement, nor to call for more

critical reflexivity (cf. Lewis, 2018). It is to insist, in contrast with the image of wide agreement in the introduction, on the possibility of on-going argument and dialogue about language in education. Indeed, it is to argue that it is important to cultivate *disagreement* as a condition for thinking and entering “new realms of talk and thought” (Billig, 1996: 28). Socio- and applied linguists have rightly disagreed much with the idea that the one “good” type of language (teaching) is monolingual, but the same critical spirit can be applied to emerging orthodoxies that state the same about plurilingual language and to the monological qualities that the evidence-based line of argumentation for it can acquire.

6. Conclusion

I do not wish to suggest in this article that facts about language are trivial. They offer crucial information about the contexts that language policy will be applied to, about the effects of policy, intended or not, and about why some policies or practices fail while others succeed (Hammersley, 2005). Facts about language have also been essential to disprove the unconfirmed evidence that circulates to devalue marginalised speakers. Yet I have tried to say that a radical focus on facts in advocating heteroglossia restricts the scope of public conversation, paradoxically in light of Bakhtin’s insistence on multivocality, and deprives us of the idea of conflict over policy. The goal of this article moreover was to point out, in line with Pielke’s argument, that scholars’ impact on policymaking may diminish to the extent they disguise a value preference as scientific evidence, but that openly associating knowledge with a range of stakeholder voices may, in contexts of value-conflict, enhance this impact. I have in addition, inspired by Biesta’s work, argued that apart from considering facts, there is another side to the matter – the issue of values – and that this can help us reclaim language-in-education policies from positivist discourses and reconstruct them as sites for jointly envisioning what types of language we find desirable and wish to pursue. Such an exercise draws attention to the fact that there are multiple purposes for education, and thus multiple roles for language to play; that these purposes can reinforce but also contradict each other; and that this often requires finding a compromise between them. We may thus have to revise our expectations about how straightforwardly teachers and other professionals can “act on information”. Drawing attention to desirability may avoid the risk that our evidence turns itself against us, when linguistic diversity fails to be effective, and allows us to advocate that language which does not improve learning outcomes or well-being can still have a place in a vision of good education.

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