Multilingualism and Social Exclusion

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INTRODUCTION

It is the aim of this chapter to provide an overview of research into the ways in which
social exclusion and multilingualism articulate. "Social exclusion" and its inverse, "social
inclusion," are relatively new terms, which first started to be used in Europe in the 1990s
in reference to those excluded from the Social Contract, particularly through lack of paid
work. The term has since gained prominence due to its use in the European Union's
Lisbon Strategy of 2000, which aims "to strengthen employment, economic reform and
social cohesion as part of a knowledge-based economy" (European Parliament, 2000).
Social exclusion is sometimes used to refer narrowly to the absence of economic well-
being, particularly un- and underemployment, and sometimes it is used more broadly to
include the absence of civil and social rights, particularly to healthcare and education
(Burchardt et al., 2002). The usefulness of the term "social exclusion" over older terms
such as "poverty" or "deprivation" (Welshman, 2007) or over its North American
equivalents "marginalization" or "underclass" (Hills et al., 2002) lies precisely in this
broad conceptualization and in the recognition that identities are a major source of
exclusion from material well-being. Key aspects of identity that are widely recognized as
mitigating access to material resources include gender, ethnicity/race, class and
citizenship status and the myriad ways in which these intersect (see, e.g., Browne and
Misra, 2005, Burman, 2003, Valentine, 2007, Westwood, 2005, Yuval-Davis, 2007).
While the intersection between social exclusion and these ascribed identities is well-
researched – if not necessarily well-understood – there is a relative lack of attention to the

ways in which linguistic identities, linguistic proficiencies and language ideologies mediate social inclusion.

In this chapter I use "social exclusion" primarily to refer to the absence of material well-being, the importance of which is enshrined in Paragraph 23 of the *Universal declaration of human rights* (1948) as the human right to work. Social inclusion is necessarily a multi-faceted and complex phenomenon but the *Human Development Indices* (2008) provide useful indicators of development on the national level, which can also serve as indicators of social inclusion on the group level within a nation: the three indices identified by the United Nations Development Programme, which publishes the *Human Development Indices*, are (1) "a long and healthy life" as measured by life expectancy; (2) "access to knowledge" as measured by the adult literacy rate and gross enrolment ratio in primary, secondary and tertiary education; and (3) "a decent standard of living" as measured by GDP.

Social inclusion is usually conceptualized with reference to the state – the Social Contract is between the state and its citizens – or with reference to international bodies that have taken on some functions of the nation state, particularly the European Union. However, while the state remains the almost exclusive reference point for research into and discussions of social inclusion, economic globalization has partly eroded the capacity of the nation state to be an effective agent of economic development (Reinert, 2008), and hence, social inclusion. Some states in the Global South never developed the capacity to be an effective agent of social inclusion in the first place (Carr and Chen, 2004). In order to understand the articulation between multilingualism and social inclusion, we therefore

need to write two additional factors into the account: transnational migration and development, as the *2009 Human Development Report* (2009) does.

Transnational migration needs to be considered because on the national level, language regimes serve to exclude particularly transnational migrants in ever increasing numbers. I will thus focus on the social exclusion of transnational migrants in this chapter (for a discussion of the social exclusion of indigenous minority groups, refer to Chapters xxxx). Of course, segments of the native-born population face exclusion, too – youths, the elderly, people with disabilities etc. However, multilingualism usually only plays a minor part, if any at all, in the exclusion of native-born populations other than indigenous minorities. Some groups are always in a more privileged position vis-à-vis the state than others – as far as language is concerned, speakers of the standard of the official language of a nation are in a privileged position to begin with. So, the key question is around the social inclusion of speakers of migrant languages in a given context.

Language as a factor in social exclusion thus arises in the context of transnational migration. However, it is also enabled by the global inequality. "Development" and "social inclusion" are usually treated in two separate baskets: "social inclusion" is an intra-national issue for the countries of the Global North and "development" is an international issue for the countries of the Global South. I am bringing them together here for a range of reasons: to begin with, the majority of the world's "excluded" live in the Global South and there might be some value in trying to understand the articulation of multilingualism and exclusion in general terms, rather than by reference to only a relatively small group, i.e. those excluded internally in the countries of the Global North. Second, the exclusion of communities, nations and even a whole continent (i.e., Africa)

from economic well-being, education and healthcare is a key factor in international

migration and often a precondition for the internal exclusion of migrants, often without

citizenship rights, in the cities of the Global North (Ehrenreich and Hochschild, 2002,

Sassen, 2001). Finally, the countries of the Global North achieved their relatively high

levels of social inclusion internally in large part through maximising external inequality

and exclusion through colonialism and neo-colonialism (Djité, 2008). The articulation

between social inclusion and multilingualism is therefore best understood within a global

system of the (de)valorization of certain speakers and certain languages.

In the following, I will begin by reviewing early developments in thinking about the

interrelationship between poverty and language. Two broad viewpoints can be

distinguished: one that sees poverty as inherently connected with non-standard speech

and predicts that linguistic assimilation will result in greater social inclusion; and another

one that sees the monolingual bias of institutions as agents in the exclusion of

linguistically diverse populations and argues for linguistic recognition and multilingual

provision as ways to promote social inclusion.

I will then move on to review key issues of theory and method by considering two

different approaches to understanding the articulation of language and social exclusion:

on that starts with a consideration of language and another one that treats social exclusion

as the core problem. I will argue that the role of language in social exclusion can only be

meaningfully understood from a social rather than a linguistic perspective. I will make

that argument on the basis of an Australian case-study of the employment of

contemporary transnational migrants from non-English-speaking backgrounds (NESB).

In the final sections on policy issues and future directions in research I will suggest that

there might be a need to shed those professional linguistic blinkers that assume language and culture are core factors in social phenomena. In the case of social exclusion, they are often pretexts that blind as to socio-economic structures.

EARLY DEVELOPMENTS IN THE FIELD

As I pointed out above, "social exclusion" and "social inclusion" are relatively new terms. However, concerns with the relationship between language and (economic) disadvantage have a long tradition. It is useful to distinguish two broad developments: one that grew out of the mass migrations of the 19th century to the New World and which came to associate bilingualism with poverty. This tradition with its assumption that linguistic assimilation will enhance economic well-being and social inclusion continues to be influential today. The second tradition grew out of the various emancipatory movements of the 1960s with their call for the recognition of diversity. In this tradition, individual bilingualism came to be celebrated and the monolingual bias of institutions tends to be blamed for the disadvantages experienced by speakers of minority languages and non-standard varieties. These two strands broadly coincide with two opposing assumptions about the root cause of social exclusion (Burchardt et al., 2002): while one school of thought blames poverty squarely on the individuals mired in poverty (e.g., their delinquency, drug addiction, promiscuity, weak character, low IQ or, increasingly, their genes), an opposing school of thought sees disadvantage as built into institutions and "the system" (e.g., racial discrimination, capitalism, class exploitation, colonialism, sexism etc.). If bilingualism has been incorporated into these analyses of social exclusion, it has been done within this overall dichotomy: bilingualism is either seen as a "fault" of the individual which prevents their social inclusion or social exclusion is traced to the

monolingual bias of the state and its institutions. I will now discuss each of these two strands.

Bilingualism as an obstacle to social inclusion

The 50 years around the turn of the 19th to the 20th century are know in American history as the "Great Transatlantic Migration." This period saw unprecedented numbers of non-English-speaking migrants, particularly from Eastern and Southern Europe enter the United States and the percentage of the foreign-born population hovered around 35% during the period – levels never seen before nor since (*Foreign-Born Population and Foreign Born as Percentage of the Total US Population, 1850 to 2007*, 2007). Many of these new arrivals joined the urban and rural poor, particularly the working poor, and it did not take long before their relative lack of proficiency in English was singled out as a cause of their relative disadvantage vis-à-vis the native-born population. Sometimes this link was seen to be indirect, as was the case when bilinguals were determined to have lower IQ levels than monolinguals, and a conclusion was drawn that their lower IQ levels prevented their full participation in American society. Hakuta (1986) explores the flawed reasoning behind such tests, which were administered in English to non-English-speakers, who were then – rather unsurprisingly – found to be "feeble-minded."

Those authors who saw a direct link between lack of English proficiency and social exclusion have had a much more lasting influence. Beginning with the English instruction of the Americanization campaign (Pavlenko, 2005), the argument that migrants need to learn English – or whatever the national language of a particular destination country may be – in order be included into the mainstream has been with us ever since. The policy results of this conviction have often been coercive with their

attempts to force migrants into English, as is the case with anti-bilingualism or "English Only" legislation in some US states (Gunderson, 2006) or language testing for citizenship (McNamara and Shohamy, 2008). Rather more rarely has there been a consistent state response to the perceived link between lack of proficiency in the national language and social exclusion through a national language teaching program. An exceptional example is the Australian Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP), which I will review below. The perceived conflict between linguistic pluralism and social inclusion, can be observed not only on the national level where the inclusion of indigenous and migrant speakers is at stake but also in global development discussions. During the period of political decolonisation in the middle of the 20th century, development policies typically associated development with linguistic assimilation towards national monolingualism, mostly the language of the former colonial master but sometimes also a regional language (e.g. Bahasa Indonesia). Taylor and Hudson's (1972) data on "ethno-linguistic fractionalization" have often been used to demonstrate a correlation between linguistic diversity and underdevelopment: correlating linguistic diversity in a country and gross domestic product, these authors found a negative correlation between the number of sizable language groups in a country and the size of the country's GDP; in other words, the greater a country's linguistic diversity, the greater its poverty. Data such as these were then used to argue for the promotion of linguistic assimilation as a way to grow the national economy.

Pool (1990) offers an incisive analysis of the flawed reasoning behind the assumption that linguistic assimilation will further development and social inclusion. The reasoning in all these cases goes something like this: members of a nations' dominant group are

better educated, find jobs more easily, have a longer life expectancy etc. than member of indigenous and migrant group. Similarly, an observation can be made that monolingual countries are more often economically and technically advanced and less likely to experience civil unrest or even war than multilingual countries. On the basis of these facts, many observers have concluded that promoting the linguistic assimilation of minority members in a national unit, will be beneficial for the individuals concerned (i.e. enhance their access to education, employment, health care etc.) and the nation as a whole (i.e. enhance national unity and national development resulting from better education, employment, health care etc.). The problem with this kind of reasoning – as Pool (1990) shows for linguistic assimilation and Reinert (2008) shows for a raft of other development policies that the rich force upon the poor – is that they are a correlational fallacy based on static data. The fact that multilingualism and social exclusion co-occur does not mean that there is a causal relationship between the two nor does it mean that changing the language variable towards linguistic assimilation will necessarily have the desired development outcomes.

Social exclusion as a result of the monolingual bias

Indeed, by the 1960s, the fact that linguistic assimilation did not necessarily lead to social inclusion had become all too apparent – in the USA, for instance, large scale language shift to English had produced little if any inclusion benefits for African Americans or Native Americans. At the same time, the ways in which language intersects with power and inequality became a key concern of both some of the emancipatory movements of the time, particularly the Civil Rights Movement and the Second Wave Feminist Movement, as well as the emerging discipline of sociolinguistics (see Philips (2005) for an

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overview). It was particularly new investigations into the role of "Black English" (such the term at the time) in sustaining the continued disadvantage of African Americans that helped to shift thinking around language and social inclusion away from a focus on the individual speaker and orient it towards the institutions in which these speakers have to interact. One foundational study (Labov, 1972) showed how schools made it difficult to succeed for African American children by devaluing the language they spoke and forcing them to interact in Standard English, a variety they were not familiar with. Labov's (1972) work was critical in creating a paradigm shift: rather than blaming the linguistic repertoire of the speaker – and trying to intervene at the level of the individual in order to achieve social inclusion outcomes – the focus shifted to institutions and how they set certain speakers with certain repertoires up for success and others for failure. Labov's (1972) work with it focus on Black English was not framed as bilingualism research, but it sparked a wide variety of research into the ways in which disadvantage and inequality were sustained in institutions, both in contexts that are typically seen as monolingual (i.e. involving more than one variety of "the same language") and as multilingual.

The valorization of a particular linguistic practice in a particular institution or social space pertinent to social inclusion – such as employment, welfare, the police and the courts, health care or education – automatically enhances or restricts access to those spaces on the basis of having the right sort of linguistic proficiency. As Bourdieu (1991, p. 55) puts it: "[S]peakers lacking the legitimate competence are *de facto* excluded from the social domains in which this competence is required, or are condemned to silence." Below, I will specifically review work on the role of language in access to employment in contemporary Australia. The policy outcomes of recognizing the monolingual bias of

institutions centre around enhancing access to key institutions through multilingual provision.

Summary: What is better: Linguistic assimilation or linguistic diversity?

For the sake of clarity, I have presented the two main assumptions about the relationship between social inclusion and linguistic diversity as diametrically opposed. I now have to hasten to add that they are not, of course. However, oftentimes, their proponents do present them as diametrically opposed and set the other camp up as a kind of bogeyman. Linguistic assimilationists sometimes like to deride the naïveté of multiculturalists and the fans of multilingualism sometime like to present the arguments of assimilationists as somewhere on the slippery slope to fascism. None of this is helpful and it is itself based on a fallacy that both viewpoints sometimes share, namely that multilingualism exists as a unitary phenomenon. However, socially, it does not. Multilingualism is always mediated by context, particularly language status and speaker status (Heller, 2007). Speaker status refers to the fact that the same bilingual proficiency, for instance in English and Spanish, will be of different value to an illegal Mexican immigrant in the US than to a middle-class Anglo-American citizen. Language status refers to the fact that multilingualism in small languages in many contexts is relatively less useful than monolingualism in English (see de Swaan (2001) for a good overview of the global language system). A good example of the differential value of the same linguistic skill to different speakers is offered in Grin's (2001) study of the economic value of English in Switzerland. When this researcher correlated proficiency levels in English in a sample of 2,000 Swiss wage earners, he found that the economic reward of high-level proficiency in English was higher for men than it was for women, and it was higher for residents in the

German-speaking area of Switzerland than in was for residents in the French-speaking area.

In sum, the early framing of the relationship between social inclusion and multilingualism as a problematic one where the problem is either the bilingual speaker or the monolingual institution has been replaced with a view of the relationship between social inclusion and multilingualism as intersecting in different ways in different contexts. Policies that work in one context may be counterproductive in another. There are examples where linguistic assimilation has indeed promoted social inclusion: a number of studies of the labour market integration of immigrants have documented that proficiency in the language of the destination country is the most important predictor of immigrant earning potential (Chiswick, 1978, Chiswick and Miller, 1995, Chiswick and Miller, 1998, Chiswick and Taengnoi, 2007, Kossoudji, 1988). However, there are also examples where linguistic assimilation has retarded social inclusion, as is for example the case with Native Americans and Indigenous Australians as well as a number of immigrant communities in various European countries (Martin-Jones and Romaine, 1986). Pool (1990, p. 251) cites Lenin as speculating that "voluntary linguistic assimilation promotes political development but coerced (or apparently coerced) linguistic assimilation damages political development." In the same way, that monolingual policies have differential social inclusion outcomes in different contexts, multilingual policies and practices are not automatically more inclusive than monolingual ones. In the following, I will explore the theoretical issues underpinning differential outcomes.

KEY ISSUES OF THEORY AND METHOD

Sociolinguistics as a discipline has a long-standing problem with its own interdisciplinary status and how, or even if, to avoid privileging one of its component disciplinary perspectives over the other. Analyses of the role of language in social inclusion tend to be no exception. A recent volume on *Language and Poverty* (Harbert et al., 2008, p. 1), for instance, is concerned with these two central research questions: "On the one hand, it addresses the question of how poverty affects language survival. [...] On the other hand it examines the role of languages in determining the economic status of speakers." Both these questions start with "language" as the end from which they try to unravel the Gordian Knot of poverty. The effort to focus on language as a principal cause of social exclusion is most prominently displayed by proponents of so-called "linguistic human rights" but can also be found in the less influential "language and economics" paradigm (e.g., Grin and Vaillancourt, 1997, Vaillancourt, 1985). As their principal focus on the role of language in social inclusion and their theoretical positions on what a language is are similar, I will review on the linguistic human rights approach before moving on to present a case-study to argue for an alternative position which starts with the domains that are known to be crucial to achieve social inclusion – namely employment, citizenship, education, health and governance – and goes on to explore how multilingualism – which in this perspective is usually framed as "communication" rather than "language" – intersects with access to and capacity building in these domains.

Putting language first

The view of language that underlies the research questions about the articulation between language and poverty quoted above (How does poverty affect language survival? How does language determine the economic status of speakers?) is characterized by two

problematic assumptions. The first problematic assumption is that for linguists the central issue of concern is language survival, and poverty is one of the variables that affect language survival. Even though language obviously is at the core of linguistic enquiry, I feel that it is a moral duty to take a perspective that puts poverty alleviation – more broadly, social inclusion – first and then asks how language issues, including language survival, contribute to social inclusion. Social inclusion is quite obviously more important for the Common Good than language survival – which may or may not further social inclusion. The second problematic assumption is that a language is a static unit that can be labelled and counted and that is best understood through anthropomorphic metaphors as a living being that can "die" or "survive." As this assumption underlies the movement for linguistic human rights, which has in recent years come to occupy a key position in discussions of language and social inclusion, I will explore it in greater detail (see also Piller and Takahashi, in press).

The concept of "linguistic human rights" originates in the work of Tove Skutnabb-Kangas (e.g., Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000, 2003; Skutnabb-Kangas and Phillipson, 1994, 1998) and finds its most comprehensive expression in the *Universal Declaration of Linguistic Rights* (Follow-up Committee, 1998). The concept of linguistic human rights is characterized by an understanding that sees the right to use a particular language as a human right and thus places language itself at the core of social exclusion. The imposition of a language other than the mother tongue, particularly through schooling, is seen as a human rights violation and thus a key manifestation of social exclusion. Linguistic human rights are conceptualized as both a collective and an individual right, or conversely, the violation of linguistic human rights, results in the exclusion of both

groups and individuals. Minority groups are seen as having a right to their ancestral tongue and individuals are seen as having a right to their mother tongue. While the concept of linguistic human rights has been enthusiastically embraced by some non-governmental organizations and international organizations such as UNESCO, it has been controversial within sociolinguistics. One key criticism of the concept of linguistic human rights has been that the understanding of "language" it is based upon – a bounded entity that is associated with a particular ethnic or national group – is in itself the product of a particular language ideology that brought the modern nation state and its colonial relationship with internal (and sometimes external) minorities into being (Blommaert, 2001, Duchêne and Heller, 2007). As Blommaert (2001, p. 136) explains:

> [W]hat counts is not the existence and distribution of languages, but the availability, accessibility and distribution of specific linguistic-communicative skills such as competence in standard and literate varieties of the language. Granting a member of a minority group the right to speak his or her mother tongue in the public arena does not in itself empower him or her. People can be 'majority' members (e.g. they can speak the language of the ruling groups in society) yet they can be thoroughly disenfranchised because of a lack of access to status varieties of the so-called 'power language'.

Putting social exclusion first: an Australian case-study

While linguists tend to start with language as the most important variable, policy makers and practitioners usually need information that starts from social exclusion or inclusion.

What is it that helps or hinders the social inclusion of a particular group? It is useful to ask negative questions and learn from mistakes. The key negative question is how language serves to exclude transnational migrants from the Social Contract, and specifically how language mediates access to employment. It is also useful to ask positive questions in order to learn from successful social inclusion practices. The key positive question is how does language serve to promote social inclusion, and specifically enhance access to employment? These questions, which are based on an understanding of the intersection between language and social inclusion as context-specific, suggest a case study approach. I will therefore present in the following an Australian case-study of the labour market experiences of contemporary migrants from non-English-speaking backgrounds (NESB). There are two reasons why I focus on language and social inclusion in contemporary Australia. First, in contrast to European and Asian nations that have seen significant immigration in recent history but have failed to include migrants in their national narratives, immigration has been a corner stone of Australian nation building since the 1940s and consecutive governments have been committed to the social inclusion of migrants (Castles & Vesta, 2004; Jupp, 2007). Furthermore, in comparison to the US, another country where immigration is part of the national imagery, Australia has consciously adopted and experimented with state intervention to facilitate social inclusion, including language programs (Martin, 1998).

The search for employment and economic opportunity has always held first place among the many reasons why humans choose to migrate and many migrants measure the success of their migration in economic terms (see, for example Ong, 1998). Likewise, receiving societies tend to measure successful settlement largely in economic terms. Indeed,

employment can be considered key to social inclusion as economic well-being powerfully impacts all other dimensions of human life. As I will show in this section, while limited proficiency in English dramatically limits access to employment, increased proficiency does not automatically lead to access to careers consistent with qualifications and experience as such access is mediated by a range of factors including accent, race and social networks.

The experience of unemployment and underemployment tends to be more common for transnational migrants than for the native-born. In Australia, for instance, even during the period of low unemployment and labour and skills shortages that characterized much of the first decade of the 21st century, the unemployment rate of recent migrants (5.5%) was considerably higher than that of the Australian-born population (4.1%) (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2008). Furthermore, these statistics only reflect unemployment but not underemployment.

The *Report on the Labour Force Status of Recent Migrants* (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2008) provides evidence for the role of proficiency in English in finding employment. Table 1 lists the unemployment rate for four levels of self-reported English proficiency. As can be seen, as proficiency in English goes down, the unemployment rate goes up.

Table 1: Self-reported English proficiency and unemployment rate (adapted from Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2008)

Self-reported level of proficiency in English	Unemployment rate
English spoken very well	7.0

English spoken well	8.7
English not spoken well	4.9
English not spoken	23.1

Another indicator of the role of proficiency in English can be gleaned from the fact that of recent migrants those born in an English-speaking country were more likely to be employed (88%) than those from non-English-speaking countries (76%) (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2008). Finally, 35% of recent migrants reported that language difficulties were the main obstacle to finding work they experienced. A recent report to the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission (Berman, 2008, p. 21f.) notes that "those from non-English speaking backgrounds struggle to find gainful employment within Australia and are often underemployed, even when they have relative proficiency in the language." Even when they find work, employees with English as an additional language experience salary discrimination, as the same report notes: "NESB employees with degrees and post-graduate qualifications also receive 8% and 14% lower pay respectively than similarly qualified Australian-born employees" (Berman, 2008, p. 29). Colic-Peisker (2005, p. 632) sums up the exclusion of people with limited proficiency in English from the Australian labour market as follows: "The language barrier seems to be the single most important reason: the 'original obstacle' that hampers all aspects of social inclusion."

Indeed, the fact that limited proficiency in English would make it difficult to gain employment in Australia seems like a common-sense proposition and the Australian state has for more than six decades been committed to reducing the language barrier for new

arrivals through the provision of a national language training service, the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP), which is open to all new arrivals, who have less than "functional English" and fulfil certain visa requirement (i.e. they must have a permanent visa as humanitarian entrants, family reunion migrants, and skilled and business migrants and their dependants do) (for detailed overviews of the AMEP see Lo Bianco (2008) and Martin (1998)).

There can be no doubt that by international standards the AMEP is an exemplary language program for the social inclusion of new migrants (Piller, 2009). At the same time, the question remains why NESB migrants face significantly higher rates of un- and underemployment and lower salary rates than the native-born given that, overall, the levels of English proficiency of Australia's new migrants are high: those entering as skilled migrants need to meet high standards of English before being admitted, many of those who gain permanent residency are former overseas students with degrees from Australian universities and the AMEP is catering to all those entering with low levels of English. Media debates of the issue often blame Australian universities for graduating overseas students with insufficient language skills to meet the communication needs of professional employment or the AMEP for not teaching "good English" fast enough. There is the obvious reality that not everyone is a good language learner but the following story allows us to approach the question of the relationship between employment and language proficiency from another angle.

Masterman-Smith and Pocock (2008, p. 29) in their exploration of low-wage work in Australia quote an unemployed migrant fitter-and-turner with 20 years' overseas experience in the trade as follows:

I have tried to apply for many jobs in that field of fitter and turner but the requirements are with the English. They have to be like high standard of English…and this is the difficulty I have had in the past. I've been to (over 20) interviews with different companies regarding a job but I haven't been successful and I think the main problem would have been the English.

To this point this is a familiar story: the fact that this person's English is not good enough for the demands of work in Australia makes sense – except that we have to assume that this is a direct quote from the interview as the authors provide no indication that the interview was conducted in a language other than English. While we get no indication of the speaker's accent and while the transcript may have been edited for readability, this person obviously speaks some English and we might ask whether this level of English is not enough for the fitter-and-turner trade? According to an Australian job website (http://www.youthcentral.vic.gov.au/; last accessed on 2009-07-07), the job specification for a fitter and turner is as follows:

Duties: A mechanical engineering tradesperson may perform the following tasks:

- examine detailed drawings or specifications to find out job, material and equipment requirements
- set up and adjust metalworking machines and equipment
- operate machines to produce parts or tools by turning, boring, milling, planing, shaping, slotting, grinding or drilling metal stock or components

- fit and assemble metal parts, tools or sub-assemblies, including welding or brazing parts

- cut, thread, bend and install hydraulic and pneumatic pipes and lines

- dismantle faulty tools and assemblies and repair or replace defective parts

- set up and/or operate hand and machine tools, welding equipment or computer numerically controlled (CNC) machines

- check accuracy and quality of finished parts, tools or sub-assemblies.

Personal requirements:

- enjoy technical work

- physically fit

- good hand-eye coordination

- able to work as part of a team

- able to work independently

- practical ability

- attention to detail

- normal hearing

- no skin allergies

It is obvious from this description that the linguistic and communicative demands on a fitter-and-turner are not very high – certainly not high enough to warrant specific mention

in the job description. We can only speculate that the English proficiency of Masterman-Smith and Pocock's (2008) interviewee would suffice to meet the linguistic and communicative demands of the job for which he has qualifications. However, the story raises the possibility that "lack of English proficiency" is actually not the reason for exclusion but a pretext. Further evidence that this might be the case comes from a recent field experiment in which almost 5,000 fictional CVs were sent in response to job ads for entry-level jobs in waitstaff, data entry, customer service, and sales (Booth et al., 2009). The CVs differed only in the names of the applicants, which were names typical of five distinct ethnic groups, namely Anglo-Saxon, Indigenous, Chinese, Italian, and Middle Eastern. The CVs made it clear that the fictional applicant's high school education had been in Australia, so the assumption that their English was not good enough was unlikely to arise and the response rates can be seen as employers' indicators of their attitudes towards these ethnic groups. The researchers found

> [...] clear evidence of discrimination, with Chinese and Middle Easterners both having to submit at least 50% more applications in order to receive the same number of callbacks as Anglo candidates. Indigenous applicants also suffer a statistically significant level of discrimination, though the effects are smaller [...]. We observe virtually no discrimination against Italian applicants. (Booth et al., 2009, p. 20)

In another study, Colic-Peisker and Tilbury (2006) compared the unemployment rates and underemployment rates (as measured by working below one's skill level) of three groups of recent refugees and found that those of refugees from Europe (Bosnia) were

substantially lower than those from Africa (Eritrea, Ethiopea, Somalia, Sudan) and the

Middle East (Iraq). If we combine evidence such as this of discrimination in employment

against non-European job seekers with the evidence cited above that the charge of lack of

English proficiency is levelled against more migrant job seekers than is to be expected on

the basis of existing proficiency levels relative to the language requirements of a given

job, we must conclude that "lack of English proficiency" is not only a factor in the social

exclusion of transnational migrants but also a pretext for their exclusion. In a context

where employers are bound by equal opportunities legislation and can be assumed to be

genuinely committed to upholding the values of equal opportunities and human rights,

"lack of linguistic proficiency" becomes a substitute for racial and ethnic discrimination

(see Hill (2008) for a detailed version of this argument in the US context). In contrast to

ethnic and racial discrimination, linguistic discrimination is largely invisible, including to

those discriminated against themselves. After all, most additional language speakers

themselves recognize that their English is "far from perfect" and believe in the ability of

"native speakers" to judge the quality of the English of non-native speakers – forgetting

that the question is not whether their English is perfect (no one's ever is ...) but whether

their communicative competence is such that they can do the job (whatever that may be).

So far, I have argued that some transnational migrants in Australia are excluded from the

employment sector because their English proficiency is factually insufficient to do a

particular job. At the same time, employers and the general public extend this argument

to a much larger group of transnational migrants whose English levels factually meet the

requirements of a particular position. However, why would employers actually want to

discriminate against appropriately qualified workers? Is not it in their economic self-

interest to select the best person for a job whatever their background? Well, no, actually

not. Colic-Peisker and Tilbury (2006) argue that discrimination is a perfectly rational –

and highly exclusionary – response to the specific circumstances of the contemporary

Australian labour market where – in contrast to other advanced economies – only a

relatively small pool of cheap labour (e.g., illegal aliens) exists to fill vacancies in low-

wage, rural, seasonal or otherwise undesirable work (e.g., abattoirs, cleaning, aged care).

> In this context, racism is not simply an irrational prejudice, but a
>
> basis for rational, economically advantageous behaviour of
>
> employers: it keeps certain 'marked' groups out of the mainstream
>
> labour market and good jobs and thus ensures that undesirable job
>
> vacancies are filled. (Colic-Peisker and Tilbury, 2006, p. 221)

In sum, the un- and underemployment of NESB migrants is not only a function of their

English proficiency but of existing labour market segmentation. Multilingualism and

employment thus articulate in at least two different ways in the Australian context: on an

individual level, the English competence of a person may not match their skill level and

thus exclude them from employment at their skill level. On a systemic level, the

exclusion of migrants on the basis of their real or perceived lack of proficiency in English

creates a pool of people with a lack of employment options at their level and thus forces

them into low-paid work. In the following section, I will address the policy issues that

result from this dual nexus.

POLICY ISSUES

The case study presented above suggests two distinct policy issues, one relative to

language policy and one relative to industrial policy. In cases where linguistic

competence limits access a language policy response is called for, which ideally should take a two-pronged approach as is the case in Australia through the AMEP and multilingual provision, i.e. transnational migrants need access to language learning opportunities and at the same time, there needs to be multilingual provision of services, particularly in areas directly controlled by the state, such as citizenship, education, health and the justice system.

Furthermore, language policy that aims at raising the status of languages other than English also can serve to increase employment opportunities for transnational migrants, as is evident from the "Productive Diversity" policy, which was launched in 1992 with the dual objective of increasing Australian business access to diverse domestic and export markets as well as take advantage of Australia's multilingual and multicultural workforce (Pyke, 2005). The policy has indeed resulted in the creation of "cultural mediator" roles, particularly in the service industry and thus created employment opportunities for migrants (Bertone, 2004, Bertone and Esposto, 2000).

At the same time, language policy can only be effective in the context of industrial policies that address the conditions under which "undesirable", i.e. undervalued work is performed, specifically minimum wages at community standards, working conditions and job security, a social wage, and the dignity of work (Masterman-Smith and Pocock, 2008). Language policies for social inclusion can only be effective if they are undergirded by industrial policies that indeed allow for work to be the foundation of social inclusion and justice. According to a recent report by the International Labour Office, *Global Employment Trends Update* (2009, p. 16f.):

It is estimated that in 2007, 624 million workers – 21 per cent of all workers in the world – lived with their families in extreme poverty on less than USD 1.25 per person per day. This share is down sharply from the early part of this decade, when the global working poverty rate exceeded 30 per cent. […]An estimated 1.2 billion workers lived with their families on less than USD 2 per person per day in 2007, representing more than 40 per cent of all workers in the world.

If a society does not face the true cost of work and reward it justly, language proficiency can emerge as a "natural" criterion to forge migrants into low-paid work and thus exclude them from an overall prosperous and inclusive country, as we've seen in the Australian case study.

SUMMARY AND NEW RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

The key focus of social inclusion policies is on economic capacity building and I have therefore concentrated on language and work as the central issue of the articulation of language and social inclusion in this chapter. I have described the interrelationship between language and employment as a three-layered one: (a) the economic value of a particular language or variety; (b) language competence as an access criterion to employment; (c) language ideologies as an exclusion criterion from decent work. It will be an important direction for future research to explore those articulations in a wider range of contexts and also for other aspects of social inclusion, namely education, healthcare and citizenship.

I have also argued that linguistic and cultural ways of seeing diversity are marred by two shortcomings when it comes to understanding the intersection between multilingualism and social inclusion: first, they render people and their differential linguistic capital invisible, and, second, they render inequalities, discrimination and socio-economic exclusion invisible. It follows that future research would do well to start from actual instances of social exclusion and actual social justice issues and explore what, if any, role is played by language.

Methodologically, I have argued for a case-study approach and suggested that an important function of research would be to provide evidence for what works and what doesn't. This ties in with the final research direction, which I ultimately see as the key challenge for research in the field. The central challenge for multilingualism and social inclusion research will be to write language into the social inclusion agenda and to contribute to the cause of social justice in ways that are meaningful outside of the academy.

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http://www.ilo.org (the website of the International Labour Office is another important

resource).

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