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'Language Is Your Dignity': Migration, Linguistic Capital, and the Experience of Re/De-Valuation

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Abstract: Using critical hermeneutic phenomenology, this study considers the lived realities of seven adult migrants with diverse migratory trajectories who came to London in order to set up a new life. Drawing on Bourdieu, it explicates their symbolic struggles for value fought out at the linguistic level and the way they live through experiences of re-valuation of their linguistic capital. Because of the fact that linguistic repertoires are not equal in terms of their value in transnational settings, this is often marked by devaluation, lack, and deficiency. The question amidst unequal linguistic realities is then how space for contestation can be secured. This paper stresses the importance of paying attention to the emotional, affective dimension of such experiences to account for how social transformation may be brought about. To this end, Skeggs' gaze is employed, particularly the notion of 'just talk' as a means to turn negative affects that occur in the face of inequitable relations into action. The study argues that paying attention to this could be a form of metalinguistic talk in language classrooms to counteract experiences of inequality and devaluation. Collective awareness in turn can foster a sense of solidarity and enhance collective agency as mediated by discursive action and solidarity.

Keywords: migration; linguistic capital; experiences of devaluation; affect

1. Introduction

Against the backdrop of an increasing multilingual society in the U.K., discussions of the 'strategic value of languages' (Cambridge Public Policy SRI 2015) have gained momentum. These debates are often focused on the decline of language learning in the U.K. and the negative impact this has on the U.K. economy and society. Amidst the perceived language deficit, languages are promoted as a 'value-added-skill' (British Academy 2016), linguistic skills as valuable capital, and multilingualism as an asset. Paradoxically, this language deficit is being reported on in contexts which are actually linguistically very diverse, as migration and mobility have brought about changes in the linguistic landscape of the U.K., making diverse linguistic repertoires a common reality for many. London, for example, has long been celebrated as the 'multilingual capital of the world' (Buncombe 1999; King and Carson 2016). Piller (2014) succinctly identifies this conundrum as she remarks that,

> the existence of an apparent language deficit in contexts of so-called linguistic super-diversity points, yet again, to the fact that some language skills are more equal than others. When it comes to bragging about linguistic diversity and the number of languages spoken in a place, we are happy to count 'diverse populations;' but when it comes to the economic opportunities of multilingualism, these same 'diverse populations' become invisible all of a sudden. (Piller 2014, n.p.)

This article is concerned with the experiences of those who, according to Piller, 'become invisible', those who find themselves limited in translating 'strategic value' into their linguistic repertoires and skills. Critical sociolinguistic work that engages with migration firmly acknowledges the fact that languages and migrants' linguistic and communicative resources are valued differently in

different contexts (Hurst 2017). This does not simply mark difference but is a question of inequality (Blommaert 2010). Clearly, linguistic repertoires are not equal in terms of their value in transnational settings. Taking the inequality of linguistic realities as given, the question then becomes how this is experienced by those who are marginalized and how space for contestation can be secured by them. Park (2015), among others, has stressed the importance of paying attention to the emotional, affective dimension of such experiences to account for how social transformation may be brought about as aspects such as affect and emotion "are not simply matters of an individual's inner psychology, but constitutive elements of subjects as agents" (p. 60).

The aim of this article is to provide a sociological perspective on immigrant and refugee languages and the process of linguistic capital revalidation that occurs in the context of transnational migration. Drawing on Bourdieu, it considers the lived realities of seven adult migrants with diverse migratory trajectories who came to London in order to set up a new life and explicates their symbolic struggles for value fought out at the linguistic level and the way they live through experiences of re-valuation of their linguistic capital. As this is often marked by devaluation, lack and deficiency, the affective dimension of these experiences is highlighted. To be better able to account for this, Skeggs' gaze (Skeggs 1997, 2004, 2011, 2016) which extends Bourdieu's thinking tools is employed, particularly the notion of 'just talk' as a means of turning negative affects that occur in the face of inequitable relations into action. The study argues that paying attention to this could be a form of metalinguistic talk in English language classrooms to counteract experiences of inequality and devaluation. To this end, it provides valuable insights to work on 'unequal Englishes' (Tupas 2015) or 'unequally globalized Englishes' (Parakrama 2015) and approaches which frame linguistic inequalities as both structural and subjective, political and personal, as well as deeply affective in nature (e.g., Park 2015). It also adds to the emerging literature within critical English language teaching on post-structural/discursive approaches to emotions as socially constructed (e.g., Benesch 2012, 2017; Pavlenko 2005, 2013) following the social turn in the field of second language acquisition (see Block 2003). The article is structured as follows: Section 2 introduces the core theoretical concepts underpinning the inquiry. Section 3 presents its research context before the participants and methods are introduced in Section 4, and the findings are presented and discussed in Section 5. Section 6 concludes the article.

2. Theoretical Underpinnings

Bourdieu's theory of practice and his notion of linguistic capital and the linguistic marketplace serve as a useful starting point to help understand the experiences of the study participants. He proposes that as people traverse social space they encounter opportunities to accrue value to themselves by accumulating different forms of capitals (economic, social, cultural, symbolic) in fields of exchange (Bourdieu 1986). A person's position in social space is determined both by the value and the weight of their capital portfolio. The accrual of capitals and thus value is a strategic imperative (Bourdieu 1987). Capitals are context-specific. If the context changes, their value is reassessed. This might happen, for example, in the process of transnational migration.

For Bourdieu (1991), language is not simply a means of communication, but serves as an instrument of symbolic power. Produced in particular contexts or linguistic markets, the properties of the market determine the value of the linguistic product with some products valued more highly than others (Bourdieu 1992). As such, the producer/user of a language is endowed with linguistic capital, a form of embodied cultural capital defined at the level of the individual (Bourdieu 1977). Their utterances convey signs of wealth and authority, as according to Bourdieu (1977) a "person speaks not only to be understood but also to be believed, obeyed, respected, distinguished" and that "language is worth what those who speak it are worth" (p. 652). In this way, prestigious accents or dialects and ways of speaking can lend more credibility or legitimacy to the speaker, e.g., the 'legitimate language'. In order for one language to impose itself as the only legitimate one, the linguistic market has to be unified and the different languages (and dialects) of the people measured practically against the legitimate language. On a national level, the acquisition of the 'national language' or 'state language' is thus

absolutely key as it becomes 'the theoretical norm against which all linguistic practices are objectively measured' (Bourdieu 1992, p. 45). De Swaan (2001) extends this rationale from the individual level within a language to the level of assessing the position of entire languages in the global economy by assessing their 'Q-value', their communicative value. For example, a global language such as English has high Q-value as it is spoken by so many people and carries economic benefit. Thus, it also carries high symbolic power internationally.

Bourdieu's concepts are useful in particular to understand how the dominant symbolic operates and is put into perspective, how interests are protected and pursued, and how authorisation occurs (Skeggs 2004, 2011, 2016). However, they fail to account for the nuanced practices and experiences of those who do not operate from a dominant position, those who are excluded and cannot access the "right resources, convert, exchange or accrue value for themselves" (Skeggs and Loveday 2012, p. 475). To counteract this shortfall, Skeggs, for example, examines affect (the circulation of feelings) through emotions such as pain, frustration and fear as experienced in daily life, for example, carefully contained or expressed as anger and resentment towards symbolic violence. These negative affects can be produced by those who have been forced to inhabit social relations differently or are subject to devaluation (economically and symbolically) and are living the relations of injustice and inequality. However, these 'ugly feelings' (Ngai 2005) can be turned into action, for example in the form of 'just talk'—talks of fairness and kindness against devaluation and delegitimisation, fostering solidarity (Skeggs and Loveday 2012). Speech acts where issues of justice and injustice, equality and inequality are discussed can be a powerful means for adult migrant language learners to work through their experiences of devaluation. They can provide a platform for transformation and empowerment and increase adult migrants' agency. Thus, 'just talk' can be an enrichment for English language classrooms and teaching practice where wider language ideologies may intersect with affordances to resist these through 'just talk' discourses.

3. Research Context

The article focuses on the lived experience of adult migrant language learners in London. The term 'migrant' is used in a broad sense to refer to people who have moved to London from another country. It employs the definition of international migration as "the movement of people across borders, both by choice and under economic and political forces, which involves stays of over one year" (Jordan and Düvell 2003, p. 5). Global migration has continually been on the rise—approximately 244 million international migrants were living in the world in 2015 (United Nations 2016)—and the U.K., in particular London, has been attracting a large number of migrants. Official figures show that in 2014, the total usual resident population of London stood at just over 8 million, including 3 million residents who had been born outside of the U.K. (Rienzo and Vargas-Silva 2014). The increased number of international migrants and their diverse migratory patterns, countries of origin, ethnicity, language, and other characteristics have led to a new level and kind of complexity often referred to as 'super-diversity' (Vertovec 2007). One in three Londoners were born outside the U.K. In terms of linguistic diversity, this means that over 300 languages are spoken in the city. According to the 2011 Census which for the first time included a question asking for the respondents' main language, in Inner London, approximately a quarter of the resident population above the age of three do not speak English as their main language. From those London residents who selected a language other than English as their main language, 44% reported speaking English very well, 37% well, 16% not well, and 3% reported not speaking English. Over 50% of the country's ESOL (English for speakers of other languages) provision takes place in the capital (Greater London Authority 2019; Rienzo and Vargas-Silva 2014).

London's popularity as a destination for migrants is to a large part due to its rise to global-city status, propelled by global neo-liberal economic management which has continuously created both the desire and necessity for people to migrate (Wills et al. 2010). It is important to note that global cities are responsible for creating different types of migrants. On the one hand, there are 'privileged citizens', mainly professionals and investors brought by transnational corporations or drawn by the

career opportunities the service industries in these cities afford them. On the other hand, the presence of these privileged citizens also requires and attracts less skilled and other service-giving people, such as waitresses, chauffeurs, cleaners, etc., in order to make sure that all the demands of the global city are met (ibid.; Getahun 2012). The participants in this study are not part of the 'privileged' group but rather find themselves towards the other end of the spectrum within what Wills et al. (2010) identify as 'London's new migrant division of labour' mediated by race, ethnicity, and gender and as such highly hierarchised and stratified.

Undeniably, migration denotes far more than a crossing of geographical borders. It also means the transition between societies or social fields with inherent subfields facilitating wide-ranging transmissions and transformations in social, economic, and cultural terms. Language is a basic element for participation and integration in new social spaces and plays a crucial role in terms of experiencing social mobility. Research has shown that both English proficiency and the ability to learn it quickly are of prime importance in the transfer of existing human capital and also in boosting success in the labour market. The 'right' linguistic competence is a key factor that accounts for migrants' disparities in terms of educational attainment, earnings, and social outcomes in terms of social positioning, e.g., whether they experience inclusion or exclusion in various social fields in their new surroundings (Adsera and Pytlikova 2015). Language as symbolic power is of prime importance for migrants' symbolic struggles within the different social hierarchies they find themselves in—on the one hand, within the migrant population itself, and on the other hand, in the society in the country of settlement as a whole in relation to the native population (Sayad 2004). It thus not only serves as an important instrument of exercising power and agency but also as a barometer of unequal realities and relations In order to counteract processes of 'deskilling' or 'delanguaging' that are a common occurrence in migrants' lived realities (Garrido and Codó 2017) and to boost their linguistic skills, many migrants find themselves as language learners in a variety of institutional settings in the hope of getting closer to the legitimate language.

4. Participants and Methods

Using critical hermeneutic phenomenology, this study was interested in the lived experience of the research participants. The data for this article were collected between mid-April and mid-May 2016 in two consecutive steps by means of written lived experience descriptions (LEDs) and one-on-one phenomenological interviews which were transcribed verbatim with seven adult migrant language learners from diverse backgrounds and migratory trajectories.

In order to fulfil ethical responsibilities in relation to all individuals involved in the research, sound research practices were employed throughout the process. To this end, the research was conducted according to the ethical guidelines for educational research laid out by the British Educational Research Association (BERA 2011). Formal ethical clearance was obtained by means of the research ethics review checklist from the researcher's home institution prior to recruiting participants for data collection. From the start, I ensured that my participants understood the implications of taking part in the study, particularly regarding what would be expected from them in terms of the writing task and interview. I also raised awareness of the fact that the research involved communicating information of a very personal nature, which could be experienced positively but can also have negative effects. A participant information sheet was used to communicate clearly how their data would be stored, analysed, and used and I had individual briefing meetings with my participants. I obtained consent by asking participants to sign a consent form which was affirmed throughout the project to ensure that my participants remained comfortable with their decision to engage in the study. All participants had the right to withdraw at any time without stating a reason. Participants were made aware how their privacy and confidential details would be treated. This was of particular importance as the data is very personal, including details of participants' lives. Participants' identities were anonymized and protected by assigning pseudonyms, as well as by changing or omitting any potential identifying information in the transcript.

The participants were recruited from English language classes at a further education institution in west London to which the researcher had access because of prior professional involvement. In order to recruit suitable participants, a criterion sampling strategy was employed. Two criteria were set. Firstly, participants should have been living in London for a minimum of one year in order for them to be able to provide a rich account of their experience. Secondly, they needed to have sufficient language skills to express themselves relatively freely in English in oral and written form as the research was conducted in English. To this end, the level of the participants' English language classes was equivalent to an independent user (B1/B2) as described by the Common European Framework (CEFR). Their previous experiences with English and the value it represented in their lives before coming to the U.K. differed. To better canvas diversity in the experience, care was taken as much as possible to ensure a spread of different backgrounds, ages, ethnicities, gender, occupation, length of stay in the U.K., etc., which was greatly facilitated by the diversity of the student body at the institution. In phenomenological studies, the sample size can vary greatly depending on the complexity of the phenomenon as well as the skill of the researcher to gain rich data. It is often between 5 and 15 (Cresswell 2013). Dahlberg et al. (2008) argue that "the question of variation is more important than the question of number" (p. 175) in order to be able to obtain rich data. The following table provides an overview of relevant background information and migratory trajectories of the research participants (Table 1). All names are pseudonyms to protect the identities of the participants.

Table 1. An overview of relevant background information on the research participants.

Karam (male, 36, Syria, length of stay in the U.K.: 1.5 years)
Karam was a successful businessman. The war in his country brought his business enterprise to an end and for him this also meant substantial financial loss. He subsequently decided to invest more in his cultural and linguistic capital and took up English Literature studies at Damascus University where he was very well respected by the academic staff and his fellow students. He was a member of the British Council library and was well acquainted with the staff at the British Council. He came to London as a refugee about one and a half years ago and described how he experiences himself as being at the lowest end of the social spectrum.

Hakim (male, 29, Eritrea, length of stay in the U.K.: 2 years)
Hakim came to London two years ago with the hope for a better life. Originally from a rural area in Eritrea, he managed to be upwardly mobile through studying hard and training as a nurse and midwife. However, his qualifications are not recognized in the U.K., which meant he had to start as a leaflet distributor for an Ethiopian restaurant, moving on to some factory work. Currently he is employed as a carer. He is hoping to be able to work in a hospital again and to forge a more desired position in the U.K.

David (male, 46, Afghanistan, length of stay in the U.K.: 5 years)
David had to interrupt his engineering studies when the Taliban closed all universities twelve years ago, and after some time working for a government department, he fled to Pakistan from where he came to London five years ago. He is currently working in a Pakistani owned chicken shop. He reflected on his experience, "In my country I had good life, good position. In my country you know study engineering is very good, like law or medicine is very good [. . .] everyone respect me I had many opportunities, we had a decent life [. . .] here is different, very different, here you have to start again from beginning, here you are low" (interview).

John (male, 28, Iran, length of stay in the U.K.: 3 years)
Attracted by the career opportunities the global city London provides, John came about three years ago as a highly skilled migrant with the hope of furthering his career as a software developer in one of the many transnational companies. However, quite unexpectedly he encountered difficulties with validating his degrees and qualifications and had to accept lower-skilled work as a sales assistant in Primark whilst trying to build up business contacts through freelance work. Only recently he secured a position in his profession which he is very pleased about, "now I feel like I can live again, before I only existed" (interview).

Ana (female, 49, Poland, length of stay in the U.K.: 8 years)
Ana came to London as an Eastern European migrant worker eight years ago with her children. Her husband had already been here for two years. Both had been driven to leave Poland by the economic situation which meant that, although they were both working full-time, they could not sustain a proper life for their family. Her limited knowledge of English meant that she had to accept lower-skilled work as a kitchen porter and cleaner. She is currently taking some graphic design courses offered by her local Polish community centre.

Table 1. *Cont.*

Gabriela (female, 24, Brazil, length of stay in the U.K.: 6 years)
Gabriela's migratory trajectory was mediated by her aunt and the Brazilian community when she came six years ago. She was 'neatly slotted' into the low-skilled service sector in London, becoming one of the migrants who make the global city London run by providing cleaning, housekeeping, catering, and similar services, as she described, "I come here help my aunt. After one week she say 'Do you want to work? You can work as cleaner.' So I start [. . .] they are all Brazilian in the company, we all clean offices together, we all speak Portuguese" (interview).
Maria (female, 59, Ecuador, length of stay in the U.K.: 16 years)
Maria came to London 16 years ago in order to secure better treatment for her sick son. Originally, she had only planned to stay for a few months, however, the health condition of her son required them to stay on. As a well-educated teacher from Ecuador, she had the possibility to secure a respected teaching position in an educational establishment within the Latino community. However, this isolated her from forging ties into the new society. Her experience in this regard is marked by great ambivalence. She is currently not working because of ill health, but is thinking about opening up her own bilingual nursery.

The data were analysed in two stages. The first one followed a hermeneutic phenomenological approach, characterized by its inductive nature and openness. In order to explore the accounts of my participants' life-worlds, I used Van Manen's (1997, 2014) phenomenology of practice and his fundamental existential themes and guided inquiry as the method of interpretation during this reflective inquiry process. This elucidated my participants' experiences along the following axes: lived space (spatiality), lived body (corporeality), lived time (temporality), lived human relation (relationality or communality), lived things (materiality), lived language (discourse), and lived mood/feelings (atmosphere). The unit of analysis was the individual learner. In order to stay with the data and not import theoretical ideas at this stage, Finlay's (2011) lifeworld orientated questions were also useful to take a step back whilst I engaged in the iterative analysis process, by means of the 'hermeneutic circle'. This meant repeated independent reading of the data, both at the macro level (whole texts) and the micro level (parts and sentences), as well as dialoguing between an interview/LED script among several. A critical lens using Bourdieu and Skeggs' work, as introduced earlier, was then employed during the second stage of data analysis in accordance with the premise of critical hermeneutics elucidating issues of injustice and seeking to give a voice to those who might be marginalized or are not members of privileged groups (Lopez and Willis 2004). The finding section represents the results of this stage of analysis by presenting the themes around linguistic struggles that emerged from the participants' experience of English, linguistic capital, and multilingual realities, along with accompanying supporting quotes. It also addresses the affective dimension of these experiences and the potential role English language classrooms could play for reflecting on negative affects and turning them into action.

5. Findings and Discussion

This section presents and discusses the findings along five key constituents or dimensions that emerged when the critical lens was applied as a hermeneutic device to interpret my participants' life scripts: (Section 5.1) English—language of dreams made and dreams shattered; (Section 5.2) The 'proper English'; (Section 5.3) Linguistic hierarchies and the experience of multilingual realities; (Section 5.4) 'Language is your dignity'—the affective dimension of devaluation; (Section 5.5) Language learning and opportunities for 'just talk'.

5.1. English—Language of Dreams Made and Dreams Shattered

On a global scale, English is commonly perceived and experienced as the language of success. The world-wide spread of English, bound up with economic and political interests, has reinforced the high Q-factor (De Swaan 2001) and symbolic power English possesses on a global scale (Pennycook 1997). This reality was agreed upon unanimously and very uncritically by my participants. This became evident

in statements such as, "It's the international language everybody needs to know" (John, interview) or, "English is most important language of course" (Ana, interview). David noted:

> English . . . English is the international language . . . in the world is most important . . . everybody must learn now [. . .] when you speak English you can do everything . . . you have no problem. (David, interview)

Here, David agrees with the importance of the English language promising a bright future as it denotes linguistic capital that he thinks can be of value everywhere. For him, like for all other participants, global English denotes a language without borders promising individual success. It is perceived as powerful in making dreams come true on a global scale. This assessment of English as linguistic capital that can be of value everywhere resonates with Seargeant and Erling's (2011) observation that "this belief in global English is now mostly accepted as a 'done deal'. Indeed, it is an attitude that is so entrenched in contemporary thinking and has become [. . .] a commonsensical notion." (p. 8).

However, the migratory experience often means that this commonsensical notion can begin to unravel as dreams suddenly undergo a reality check. Migrating to the U.K., where English as the national language dominates the linguistic marketplace, can lead to experiences of devaluation as previous success cannot always be validated and reproduced. This can be especially difficult for those who spoke English well relative to others in their country of origin or even studied for their degrees in English, since the change in relative position makes their experiences of devaluation all the more poignant. This is well-illustrated by Karam, whose knowledge of English during his time as a successful business entrepreneur in Syria made him a valued and much wanted business partner and subsequently allowed him to forge a position as a well-respected English language and literature student at his university, the British Council, and other cultural institutions in Syria. In his homeland, he had access to valued cultural capital, and as such, Shakespeare, Christopher Marlowe, BBC, and Queen's English were mentioned by him frequently during his interview. He explained how his dreams got shattered when he came to London:

> I could still remember when I came to U.K.; I was spiritually full of energy as I arrived to the land of education and knowledge. But then I realized that things are very different here and I started to have many problems. These problems led to have some symptoms which was really annoying, as I felt I did not know English at all, when I wanted to express myself or ask for something. I could remember when I try to speak, it was not easy for me even to make a simple sentence, and I forgot about the grammar too. [. . .] When I wanted to express myself I feel shy and afraid of saying something wrongly pronounced, because of the accent, the words limit, or making grammar mistakes. (Karam, LED)

During his interview he added:

> You know . . . I was always dreaming of coming to England . . . the land of education . . . I want to see theatre shows and visit museums and galleries . . . and to learn more about this beloved language and culture . . . I adore English language . . . but look at me now, I haven't been to a theatre or anything and I can't even do a GCSE course because when I asked about it the man said to me 'I'm sorry, you can't do it because of your accent.' (Karam, interview)

As he explains here, through his migration, he came geographically closer to the valued linguistic/cultural capital but socially more distanced from it because of his migratory status and his inability to successfully validate his previously acquired linguistic capital. In London, where English as the national language is the 'legitimate language', my participants often experienced that their English is not seen as the right resource in the new field—'the right English'. In the U.K., the same English when considered as 'foreign', 'non-native, or 'non-standard' loses value and symbolic power and is considered as 'lack' or of lesser value in the linguistic market. This resonates well with Blommaert's

(2007) assertion that "articulate, multilingual individuals could become inarticulate and 'language-less' by moving from a space in which their linguistic resources were valued and recognized into one in which they didn't count as valuable and understandable" (p. 2). As we can see in Karam's example, such processes of 'deskilling' or 'delanguaging' are often accompanied by great anxiety and insecurity. To a certain extent, all my participants were caught up in these processes rather than experiencing language as a 'value added skill'. As a result, they often felt locked up "into a shell of incompetence" (Park 2015, p. 70) which had a profound impact on their feelings and emotions. The affective dimension will be discussed in more detail further below.

5.2. The 'Proper English'

Alongside the 'global English equals success' mantra, my participants frequently referred to the need for 'proper English' replacing the global with a more local discourse. Although all of them spoke English well, they did not perceive their proficiency as sufficient, or 'proper'. Thus, formal English language instruction (to learn 'all the grammar and the tenses' as well as the 'right' accent) played an important role for them in order to come closer to the sort of language that dominates their linguistic market. At times they voiced their frustration at not having been taught the 'proper' English in their countries of origin but a different English from what was required in the U.K. Hakim, who had to interrupt his language classes recently in order to attend to some unforeseen circumstances, pointed out:

> I don't like I can't come to class at the moment . . . you have to come to class to learn the proper language . . . so now I can't really make any progress . . . I mean you speak English at work but that's different . . . it's not proper . . . it's important to learn all the grammar and the tenses . . . otherwise you can't make any progress and move on. (Hakim, interview)

Altogether, they were well aware of the right linguistic capital as a tacit requirement particularly for success in the labour market. Puwar (2004) notes that although, "today different languages and accents from around the globe slide past and into each other on the streets of Western métropoles, [. . .] in the higher echelons of social life, in professional occupations [. . .] a specifically classed form of speaking [. . .] what Bourdieu has incisively coined the 'legitimate language' is a requirement. It is 'intrinsic to the somatic norm in the professions' and a 'key tacit requirement'" (p. 109). This became evident throughout and is well illustrated by the following statement:

> Maybe if you're rich and you don't need work you don't need to speak proper English . . . but if you have to work you have . . . I mean . . . now at work I always speak English . . . but we don't speak the proper English, we just speak our own English . . . to communicate . . . but our supervisors and managers speak better . . . so if you want better position you need to learn the proper English. (Hakim, interview)

His statement clearly reflects the upward trajectory that my participants associated with acquiring more of the 'proper' English and the perception that different Englishes index different positions in the socio-economic hierarchy privileging certain people over others'. Those who are not privileged are most likely the ones who were earlier described by Piller as becoming 'invisible', or markedly limited in capitalizing on the value of their multilingual skills.

5.3. Linguistic Hierarchies and the Experience of Multilingual Realities

Besides their previously acquired English, my participants also brought their other linguistic repertoires with them. The native languages of the participants varied widely and, as such, their reports of how they experience the value of these languages in their lives demonstrated heterogeneity. What was evident throughout their accounts was that "[p]ower geometries of language are at work when linguistic forms travel–some travel well and others not so well" (Stroud and Prinsloo 2015, p. x). Overall, the linguistic world they are immersed within was described as highly stratified and hierarchized, shedding a critical light on London's multilingual reality.

Talking about his mother-tongue Tigrinya and describing linguistic hierarchies, Hakim stated emphatically:

> I hate my language, it is of no use to me here, it is only useful in one small place in this world that is back home in my country, but nowhere else . . . I mean there are other languages that can be of use for you in London for example Italian or Arabic, you have to speak it if you want to work in an Italian or Arabic restaurant because nobody use English there . . . but my language is useless . . . and because it is so different from English it makes even harder for me to learn proper English . . . (Hakim, interview)

For him English is the internationally powerful language against which he assesses the value of his own, which he sees as useless in his new field. As such, he has negative feelings towards his own language, and his low perception of it is further tainted by the fact that he sees its linguistic difference to English as an additional obstacle in his pursuits of learning English. His observations reveal that different languages do not only index different levels of symbolic power but that there are complex power dynamics at play between them, which is experienced as either advantage or disadvantage, again reminding us that multilingualism is always mediated by context, particularly language status and speaker status (Heller 2007).

David is also aware of the low value his home language, Deri, has in London. Working in a Pakistani owned chicken shop with all of his colleagues being from Pakistan or, like him, from Afghanistan, he said:

> We use Deri in the kitchen in the back but you can't use it in the front of the restaurant or outside—nobody wants to hear Deri here . . . (David, interview)

He clearly identifies the spatial constraints in which Deri has any potential use at all—the back of the chicken shop where he, a former engineering student and government employee in his native Afghanistan, is currently employed. This stands in stark contrast to his assertion of the borderless value of English discussed above. During his interview, he also mentioned how he uses Deri within his Afghan diaspora network. This raises the question of what role local diaspora communities and networks play in these experiences, and whether they are perceived positively or negatively, as possible opportunities or restrictions.

All of the study participants reported on the usefulness of their native language(s)—if they ascribed any use to it at all—solely within their families or co-ethnic communities, thus limiting their 'strategic value' tremendously. As Blackledge (2001) points out, "those who choose to go to a market other than that created by the dominant group in society may have little or no power to achieve economic mobility and success" (p. 348). Gabriela, for example, whose experiences were strongly mediated by her Brazilian aunt and the Brazilian community, found herself neatly slotted into and stuck in the spectrum of the migrant division of labour occupied by Brazilian's cleaning offices[1]. She described:

> I come here help my aunt. After one week she say 'Do you want to work? You can work as cleaner.' So I start [. . .] they are all Brazilian in the company, we all clean offices together, we all speak Portuguese. (Gabriela, interview)

Her experience was mixed with ambivalent feelings as she was well aware of the fact that this to a certain extent isolates her from the wider society, which was not only the case in her accounts. Instead of being "able to move confidently between linguistic markets" (Blackledge 2001, p. 348) my multilingual participants' accounts were rather characterized by ambivalence, insecurity, and frustration. Maria reported:

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[1] Wills et al. (2010) report on the remarkable growth of the number of Brazilians arriving in the U.K. over the last decade and a half, estimated at about 200,000, with most of them living in London and forming a very close-knit community. Most of them are in unskilled and low-paid jobs (mainly in cleaning or hotel and catering), markedly different from the occupations they had at home.

> When I come here I involve in the Latino community . . . it is the big mistake [. . .] your community help you but . . . but also hold you back . . . when you there you feel confident and . . . . and strong . . . you do everything . . . you're the real you . . . everybody know you and respect you . . . . but when . . . when I am outside I feel like in the middle of a big ocean. (Maria, interview)

In summary, these findings show that while London is certainly one of the most multilingual places, multilingualism itself is hierarchized, and as such is experienced differently. This is reiterated by the authors of the London City Report for the LUCIDE (Languages in Urban Communities: Integration and Diversity for Europe) network as they conclude:

> our research paints a rich and dynamic picture of London as a hub of multilingual activities. [However behind] this richness and dynamism is a language hierarchy. [. . .] Speakers of languages which are perceived as high status—either because of their current economic value or historical circumstances—experience London in a fundamentally different way to those who speak less prestigious languages. (cited in: Sachdev and Cartwright 2016, p. 30)

When the places and spaces—the various social fields and linguistic markets—across which people and their linguistic repertoires move are filled with their own indexical orders, their significance and value are reassessed and recalibrated. For those involved in these processes, these can be highly emotional experiences, as "[w]hen people move, they do so with feeling and emotion" (Stroud and Prinsloo 2015, p. xi).

5.4. 'Language Is Your Dignity'—The Affective Dimension of Devaluation

Overall, the experiences discussed thus far were accompanied by a lot of frustration and negative emotions on the side of all the study participants. It is clear that the weight of their 'lack' or 'deficiency' is felt in their everyday realities and produces negative affects (e.g., of devaluation and lack of respect). This is further revealed by the following statements:

> without the proper language you are put down so much . . . it really makes me angry . . . you are so devalued. (Hakim, interview)

> Many times people don't want understand . . . they decide not understand you . . . they don't respect you. (Maria, interview)

Going back to Karam's account presented earlier further shows the importance of paying attention to the affective dimension inherent to the experience of linguistic devaluation. His experience of high levels of anxiety in everyday interactions in his new surroundings stands in stark contrast to his former embodied confidence and sense of entitlement due to his advanced knowledge of English in his country of origin. Referring to the instance when he was denied access to a GCSE course because of his accent, he notes:

> He told me I can't do it because of my accent . . . I felt so terrible . . . I went home and cried . . . and then a few days later I saw a TV program about how people help animals . . . they love them so much . . . and then they had this little bird and they tried to resuscitate it . . . when I saw how they cared about this bird I felt so despised . . . like nothing. (Karam, interview)

For John, these anxieties translated into feelings of merely existing instead of living:

> You feel disabled, it's . . . it's not only that you can't speak . . . you . . . you can't be yourself . . . you only . . . you only exist, you don't really live. (John, interview)

What is quite striking is the prevalent theme of devaluation and the choice of words to express the affective reactions to this, e.g., 'lack of respect', 'makes you angry', 'feel terrible', 'despised'. For my

participants, instances when they are positioned as language-less subjects equals being worth-less or value-less subjects, which is accompanied by strong emotional reactions and 'ugly feelings' (Ngai 2005; Skeggs and Loveday 2012). How powerful language is perceived to be in everyday processes is best summed up by the following statement: 'Without the language you are nothing . . . language is your dignity' (Maria, interview).

5.5. Language Learning and Opportunities for 'Just Talk'

The data presented thus far, reiterates the importance of considering affect and emotion in second language learning settings in a much more profound way, especially as these are typically only conceived of as passive, unagentive psychological responses or states (Park 2015). As mentioned earlier, this article intents to specifically consider the possibility for English language classrooms to be places where negative affects can be turned into action in the form of 'just talk', talk that produces fairness, kindness, and solidarity against experiences of symbolic violence, devaluation, and misrecognition (Skeggs and Loveday 2012). As educational settings are crucial regarding symbolic violence and reproduction (Bourdieu 1977; Bourdieu and Passeron 1990), they also carry high potential to be or open up spaces for contestation and transformation. In second language learning settings, action could for example translate into confident talk or classroom participation with the prospect of empowerment even beyond the classroom walls, thus fostering change in the experience of everyday encounters and realities. Such instances were referred to by the study participants and were suggested as something the language classroom could capitalize more upon throughout. In particular, the wish for discussing things such as human rights, social justice, or their own frustrations, pains, anger, and resentments towards inequitable operations were salient themes and more emphasized by those who had been subjected to greater devaluation. Maria reported an experience that was of great importance for her. It happened about nine months before I interviewed her—sixteen years after she first came to live in London. Her class was talking about social justice and equitable education in one lesson which stirred up something in her and gave her courage to speak up:

> I feel like . . . like . . . something in me . . . like ice . . . melted . . . before . . . before I am frozen but when we talk about this I forget everything . . . I just talk . . . with passion . . . and then all in class say 'You are so different . . . we never see you like this' [. . .] I never feel like this before in class . . . I am different person . . . I am so happy . . . I just talk and don't think . . . (Maria, interview)

This poignant account of her experience is an example of the potential effect of turning negative affects that had made her frozen inside into action—confident and fluent classroom participation. During the interview, she went on to explain that this was very strongly felt by her and the whole class a little while later when they had the opportunity to discuss their lived realities in the light of proposed cuts to their language provision with the local MP (Member of Parliament). Again, she stood up and passionately spoke out against this perceived injustice together with her classmates—turning negative affects into action and thus exercising and experiencing agency. This can be seen as an example of how dimensions of affect and emotion constitute aspects through which individuals shape and construct social relations and an important way through which speakers can bring about transformations in the social structure (Park 2015).

6. Conclusions

In this article, I aimed to contribute to the discussion of immigrant and refugee languages by taking a closer look at linguistic capital revalidation in the process of transnational migration, particularly instances when this involves experiences of devaluation. The findings revealed that a more nuanced explication of the affective dimension of such experiences can provide a fruitful platform for future research, and for theory and practice in the field of second language education in migration contexts. This can further enable the field to pursue a critical stance and engage with issues of social justice within

the complexities of a 21st century globalized and ever-diversifying world in order to meet the needs of a diverse student body and engage with issues that impact learners' lived realities. I would like to highlight the possibility for classrooms to plant the seeds for transformative experiences if reflexive engagement with affect and emotion is pursued by making them a subject of metalinguistic awareness (Park 2015). Collective awareness in turn can foster a sense of solidarity and enhance collective agency as mediated by discursive action and solidarity. Park (2015) concludes that "[i]n considering together the implications of lived experiences of [languages], speakers may come to acknowledge that such aspects of affect and emotion are not just individual matters but social practices in which they are jointly engaging" (p. 71). Recently, there has been an increased acknowledgement and interest in exploring the potential of participatory pedagogy in English as a second language contexts to give voice to migrant language learners (e.g., Bryers et al. 2013; Winstanley 2016). In light of the data presented in this article, these are undeniably very welcome developments and can be seen as instances when 'just talk' is actively promoted in the learning environment.

As mentioned previously, there is a growing literature within critical English language teaching on post-structural/discursive approaches to emotions as socially constructed (e.g., Benesch 2012, 2017; Pavlenko 2005, 2013) which go beyond more traditional cognitive SLA theories. For example, Benesch (2012), drawing on Ahmed (2004, 2010) and Ngai (2005), queries simplistic views of emotions as being either positive or negative—with the latter often being perceived as obstructing language learning—and the ensuing implications. To this end, Benesch (2012) advocates against "the societal pressure to simply brush away having what is socially constructed as negative or what Ngai (2005) called 'ugly feelings' [. . .] and to locate the sources of these emotions solely within" (p. 43). This not only ignores the wider socio-political context of increasing inequality and inequitable relations provoking these 'ugly feelings' in the first place, but also hinders or limits possible critical agencies to challenge the contextual sources of these emotions (Ngai 2005). The research discussed in this article corroborates these notions and encourages further research, particularly within English language classrooms, to investigate how experiences of devaluation resulting in specific emotions such as 'ugly feelings' can be addressed in order to support adult migrants as students in the classroom, as well as within the wider societal context. As we have seen, English language classrooms can be both sites of reproduction/symbolic violence and contestation. In order to facilitate the latter, more critical awareness from within the English language teaching profession is needed so that individual and collaborative actions can be initiated.

Although providing valuable insights into the lived experience of adult migrants, this study is without doubt limited as it is very context-specific with the global, super-diverse city of London as its setting. More comparative investigations would certainly be beneficial as different settings display different opportunity structures, different migrant patterns, a different spatial distribution of migrants, and different labour market opportunities, channeling migrants into complex scatterings and pathways. In addition, different political cultures are more or less successful in creating an environment of legitimacy and respect for migrants (Meissner 2015). As "every context is different and above all, every context is lived differently by individuals within" (Block 2008, p. 199), listening to the voices of those living through processes of linguistic re-/de-valuation and (unequal) multilingual power relations instead of simply pronouncing inequality is a necessity. They certainly should also play a vital part when multilingualism and the strategic value of languages is discussed. In addition, more ways for migrants to actively use their multilingual repertoires as a resource (for example such as 'chatterbox', an online and in-person language tutoring service delivered by refugees, see: www.wearechatterbox.org) should be encouraged and actively promoted.

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