3 Revisiting 'Community Language': Arabic in a Western Global City

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Introduction

'Community' or 'heritage' languages is the term given to immigrant minority languages especially in global cities (see Clyne, 1991; Cummins, 1992; Edwards, 2001). Alongside inventories of community languages and related provisions in individual cities (García & Fishman, 1997; Matras & Robertson, 2015; King & Carson, 2016; Benson *et al*., 2018), studies have focused on aspects such as cross-generation language maintenance and self-reporting of language preferences (Extra & Yağmur, 2004; Matras *et al*., 2016) and the public visibility of languages on signs (Barni & Bagna, 2010). Appreciation of superdiversity and the growing complexity of community-related networks have prompted interest in the dynamic connections between individuals' language choices and movement across urban space (Duarte & Gogolin, 2013; Blommaert *et al*., 2005; Lamarre, 2013; Pennycook & Otsuji, 2014, 2015), repertoire choices in educational settings (Blackledge & Creese, 2010), ethnographic approaches to changing linguistic landscapes (Blommaert, 2013) and the role of agency and collaborative networks in urban language provisions (Cadier & Mar-Molinero, 2012).

In this chapter we introduce a model of immersion-based, iterative research that takes a holistic approach to community or immigrant minority languages within the setting of a linguistically diverse, globalised city. It is anchored in a vision of the civic university that sees research as embedded into the practices of local actors. That vision is represented in the approach developed by the Multilingual Manchester research unit, which we introduce below. We revisit the concepts 'community language' and 'language community', taking account of the complexity of language practices, language ideologies and external perceptions. We embrace ethnographic approaches to 'community' as practice and as the object rather than the site of investigation

(Brubaker, 2005, 2012; Blokland, 2017; Bessant, 2018). Drawing on the example of Arabic in Manchester, we discuss how the diaspora setting and transnational links prompt actors to re-negotiate practice routines and language ideologies that are imported from a background or heritage setting, with practical and theoretical implications for notions of community language 'maintenance' and 'vitality'. We show how the immersion model of research that builds reciprocal relations with local stakeholders offers opportunities for a new epistemology where knowledge is informed and driven by practical engagement.

'Community' and the civic university approach

The Multilingual Manchester (MLM) research unit was founded at the University of Manchester in the academic year 2009–2010 with the aim of piloting a framework that would bring together research, teaching and public engagement. It also aimed to embed the teaching of Modern Languages and Linguistics into a local setting, capitalising on the city's language diversity. MLM first became publicly visible through a website that featured undergraduate student research reports on Manchester's languages, compiled through first-hand observations and interactions in the city. This attracted interest from local stakeholders such as the National Health Service and local schools and hospitals, who enquired about ways of improving outreach to diverse populations. These encounters, in turn, helped formulate new research questions that were intrinsically of value to external stakeholders.

The emerging emphasis in the higher education sector on enhancing student experience and demonstrating the impact of research on policy and practice, along with the University of Manchester's adoption of Social Responsibility as one of its key goals, opened up an opportunity for the MLM model to serve as a strategic priority project (see Matras & Robertson, 2017; Matras, 2018a). In 2013, it launched a student volunteer scheme, which continues to attract around 200 students every year. Volunteers engage with the city's ethnic and linguistic diversity, working in public and voluntary sector host organisations to help improve communication with customers, deliver English conversation sessions to new arrivals and refugees, support community groups' outreach activities and organise interactive exhibitions at public events and local schools. MLM researchers have co-produced public reports with the National Health Service, Greater Manchester Police and Manchester City Council on various aspects of language diversity and service accessibility and have had input into local policy discussions and the practice of local cultural institutions.

These engagement avenues have, in turn, produced fruitful settings for first-hand research observations on the ways in which residents and organisations respond to language diversity. In this way, the MLM model

has created an environment where the relationship between research and policy impact is non-linear (Matras & Robertson, 2017): impact is not just derived from research, but also provides the setting for research. Researchers gain insights through their immersion in practical challenges faced by local stakeholders, as well as from the experiences of students and their own immersion, as sustainable partnerships offer iterative engagement opportunities. Outputs are disseminated in a variety of ways, not just through academic publications, and include published student reports, co-produced surveys and policy documents, public events that showcase local practice, video documentation and public 'celebration' activities that feature performances and interactive exhibits on language diversity.

Among the practical outputs are also a series of digital tools. In 2016, MLM released LinguaSnapp – the University of Manchester's first teaching and research mobile app. The app is used to take images of multilingual signs and to tag them for a series of analytical descriptors. They are then uploaded onto a searchable database and are displayed on an online map. LinguaSnapp offers an overview of the geographical distribution of signs in particular languages, their representation by commercial or cultural sector, the frequency of particular language combinations, as well as aspects of multi-modal representation. Both the app and the map are freely accessible. The resource has been used for student projects, as a research corpus and as an interactive repository for school learning activities and public exhibitions. LinguaSnapp is tailored to individual cities through its choice of scroll-down menu items and map calibration; following the release of the Manchester version, tailored versions have been produced for other cities including Melbourne, Jerusalem, Hamburg, St. Petersburg and Birmingham.

Another resource, the Data Mapping Tool, released in 2018, brings together a variety of datasets on languages in the city and allows users to compare data for individual languages, sectors and location (wards or districts). This is the very first such repository that allows data triangulation on languages, drawing on data from the census, school records, interpreter requests in the health care sector and stock held by local libraries, and featuring profiles of languages frequently spoken in the city and language profiles for individual wards. Its purpose is to prompt students and the wider public to engage with statistical data on languages and to encourage public service providers to maintain consistent and transparent standards of data collation and data sharing protocols in order to help gauge language needs and demand for language services.

The MLM portfolio of digital resources includes a number of dialectological databases. Those for Kurdish and Arabic were launched in 2016 and 2017 respectively, both modelled on earlier work of the Manchester Romani Project. The Kurdish resource displays searchable

samples of questionnaire-based phrase elicitation and connected speech samples of dialects from around 150 locations, while the Arabic database currently contains a comprehensive questionnaire-based survey of translated phrases representing regional varieties from around fifteen different countries. The resources rely in part on the input of postgraduate students and on fieldwork conducted among immigrants living in Manchester and visitors as well as in the origin countries. Both databases are designed as research tools for dialect variation and as supporting resources for teaching and learning. They have also been used as control samples to assess the reliability of government Language Analysis reports for the Determination of Origin (LADO) commissioned as part of the asylum application procedure, especially for applicants from Syria and other countries in the Middle East (see Matras, 2018b). This work is carried out as part of a forensic linguistic service – MLM-Analysis – launched under the MLM umbrella to provide consultancy support to legal practitioners, the courts and public agencies.

This diverse portfolio of research, outreach and public engagement activities is understood to be part of the civic university vision: one in which the relationship between the higher education institution and other organisations operating in the city is reciprocal, and where the canonical university activity strands of teaching and research are tightly embedded into the local community, help address local challenges and seek intellectual inspiration from the immersion of staff and students in the local setting. MLM has also been providing practical support to local stakeholders through training on the city's language diversity offered to practitioners, and by hosting events to showcase good practice in areas such as interpreting and translation, ESOL provision and the teaching of community languages. One of its key activities is the Supplementary School Support Platform, launched in 2017 to facilitate networking, teacher training and student enrichment sessions for non-statutory organisations that provide heritage language instruction (i.e. weekend supplementary schools). Student placements, university staff engagement, public reports and a series of events to help raise the public profile of these establishments have turned the Support Platform into an exemplary activity in terms of its sustainability and mutual benefit. MLM's public engagement has also made a key contribution to shaping the public narrative on language diversity, with key institutions including the city council embedding language diversity (often under the motto 'City of 200 Languages', taken from a news headline covering MLM research in 2013) into their mission statements (see Matras, 2018a).

In the following, we draw on our immersion experiences with local stakeholders in public services and the local community, and on our digital research tools, to set out a methodological blueprint for the documentation of language practices that might be said to be constitutive of a 'language community' or 'community language'.

We regard these notions as reciprocal, since, as we explain below, the community of persons sharing a language is an entity that needs to be defined on the basis of shared practices that pertain to language; a 'community language', in turn, is a language identified as being shared in the context of local practices that are confined to particular segments of the population, rather than being the property of the majority and larger public (statutory) institutions. In this way, we approach the 'community' aspect not from a strictly numerical, status-based or geographical origin perspective, but in terms of the set of language practices and general interaction and practice routines that it represents.

Arabic in Manchester

Statistics as records of events

Some 16.6% of Manchester's population identified a 'main language' other than English in the 2011 Census, more than twice the national average. Annual School Census results indicate that around 40% of young people speak a language in addition to English in the home ('first language'). Both figures can be considered to be very conservative, since the way questions are formulated is known to lead to significant under-reporting (see Matras & Robertson, 2015). We estimate that upwards of 200 languages are spoken in significant numbers among established residents of Manchester. Over 50 languages have been identified on the city's public signs, mainly on commercial as well as cultural outlets (Gaiser & Matras, 2016a).

Some studies have urged caution when considering statistical data on language, questioning the implicit ideologies that link a single language to a person and place and therefore the usefulness of what is sometimes dismissed as 'demolinguistic enumeration' (see Mar-Molinero, this volume; cf. Pennycook & Otsuji, 2014; also King, 2016: 188). However, we believe that a practice-based perspective can be taken on such data. While statistical datasets indeed do not reveal the full picture of respondents' use of their language resources, each point in a statistical dataset represents an event, and together they add up to a pattern, spread among different people in an identifiable segment of time and space. Responses to the Census, for instance, represent a declarative event on the part of respondents who choose to register Arabic, for instance, as their 'main language'. Ambiguity remains as to what each respondent precisely understood as constituting a 'main language'. The likelihood that different respondents understand this in different ways – frequency of use, for example, versus emotional identification – means the sum of all responses cannot necessarily be regarded as the sum of identical events. Nonetheless, they are indicative of the number of people, and their areas of residence in the city (as well as other attributes that can

be correlated), who used the Census as an opportunity to associate themselves with the category 'Arabic' (itself not unambiguous, due to dialect differences; see below) and in that way to use the opportunity offered by the Census to make a declaration about an aspect of their subjective belonging to an identity category.

The School Census's identification of a child as having Arabic as a 'first language' goes back to parents' declarations when registering their children, or staff's local knowledge or assumptions about a child's background. As such, this too is an ambiguous category, but it represents the reality of institutional records, which in turn is often used to anticipate needs or to construct an institution-internal narrative on the composition of the school population and possible challenges in reaching out to families. Requests for interpreter services labelled 'Arabic' offer a record of events where a service provider registered a client's articulated need to rely on an intermediary in order to communicate with a practitioner. Again, we do not know whether that record indicates a necessity, whether there might have been a mismatch between the client's and the interpreter's dialects of Arabic, whether communication was effective, and so on. But again, the record represents a real-life event, and the accumulation of records represents a pattern, which can inform strategic planning by practitioners and suppliers of interpreting services.

The MLM Data Mapping Tool allows us to retrieve some of this data and to draw a picture of the distribution of 'Arabic' as a declarative category. Obtaining the data is a process that is full of obstacles. The objective of the MLM Data Mapping Tool is to collate datasets that are not otherwise accessible in a single repository. With the exception of Census data, which represent a single event once every decade, and where the question on 'main language' has so far only been asked once, in 2011, none of the other datasets are publicly accessible. We have relied on links with local institutions to obtain them, often as part of collaborations on particular projects. As a result, there is not a steady flow of comparable data. Nor are the data for individual sectors directly comparable without some degree of redacting or data 'coercion'. Our rationale for mapping the data in one resource has been to connect the (declarative) category 'language' with a time frame (fiscal year, school year or calendar year) and location (attributed to one of the municipal wards, while the original datasets may have contained a more discrete location such as the address of a doctor's surgery, a library or a school). But even for the category 'language', some redaction is needed, as the different datasets sometimes differ in the way they identify varieties of a single language (for example, Kurdish, Kurmanji, Sorani and Bahdini) or the labels chosen or spelling conventions used. For Arabic, there is by and large no differentiation by regional variety, which simplifies data coercion.

In the 2011 Census, some 7000 Manchester residents declared Arabic to be their 'main language', with Arabic ranking third after Urdu and Chinese (including Mandarin, Cantonese and other Chinese languages). Of those, 80% reported to speak English well or very well, and only 4% reported that they could not speak English. The first figure is similar to that found among respondents who gave Urdu as their main language, but is higher than the figure for other languages including Chinese, Panjabi, Bengali and Polish, reflecting a subjective perspective on functional bilingualism which in the public discourse is often associated with 'integration'.

While the Census has not since been repeated, other datasets indicate a rise in Arabic users. The School Census counted some 2500 pupils with Arabic as 'first language' in 2013, and over 3000 in 2015, with Arabic now ranking second after Urdu. The same period also saw a 30% increase in the number of face-to-face interpreter requests for Arabic at Central Manchester Hospitals, up from 2894 in 2014 to 3769 in 2015 (Gaiser & Matras, 2016b). Overall, in 2014–2015 around 12% of all interpreter requests including telephone interpreting at Central Manchester Hospitals were for Arabic (around 6000), second after Urdu, while in the same year 16.5% of interpreter requests at Manchester GP surgeries were for Arabic (around 3000), ahead of Urdu and at the top of the list, indicating high demand among new arrivals with poor English language skills, which might be attributed to a wave of refugees from the Middle East.

The pattern of increasing demand for Arabic interpreting is confirmed over a slightly longer period also for Manchester City Council's in-house interpreting services 'M-Four Translations' (see below), which in 2017/18 responded to 1792 requests for Arabic (second after Urdu/Panjabi), up from just 870 back in 2012/13. In 2017/18 Arabic topped the list of requests for written translations (total of 277), apparently reflecting the arrival of individuals with professional qualifications who needed document translation. This is echoed in the fragmentary information that is available from private providers of interpreter services. Thus, Translation Empire, one of the larger suppliers in the Manchester area with contracts serving the National Health Service and other public service providers, reports on its website on demographic changes since the 2011 Census, suggesting that today 'Arabic and dialectal variations of Arabic would definitely make the top 5' languages in the United Kingdom (Translation Empire, 2019). The number of library issues and renewals of items in Arabic across the city rose from 396 in 2014, to 738 in 2015 and 985 in 2016, showing both a demand and an awareness of and engagement with municipal cultural facilities.

These data do not offer a consistent, year on year comparison basis, for reasons outlined above. Nevertheless, they show a pattern of steady increase in demand for Arabic language services. The localisation of these datasets represents a coherent picture of a strong

presence of Arabic in the Crumpsall and Cheetham Hill areas in the north of Manchester, and in Fallowfield, Moss Side, Hulme, Rusholme, Chorlton Park, Ardwick and Levenshulme in the south (Figures 3.1–3.2). Differences between responses to the School Census (Figure 3.1) and requests for interpreters at GP surgeries (Figure 3.2) can be taken to represent the settlement patterns of more recent arrivals as opposed to long-established residents. This corresponds to different levels of income, if one takes property prices as an indicator: In 2014/15 there was high demand for Arabic interpreters (Figure 3.2) in Rusholme (just north of the Withington ward), where the average house price in 2019 is around £130 k, but not in Chorlton Park (west of Withington), where the average house price in 2019 is around £320 k, although both areas show a comparable number of school pupils with Arabic as 'first language' (Figure 3.1). Library demand for Arabic in the years 2013–2016 is concentrated in the south Manchester wards of Chorlton, Old Moat and Longsight, reflecting Arabic speakers' place of residence, while Abraham Moss Library, which is the city council's principal facility that serves the northern districts Crumpsall and Cheetham Hill, does not carry stock in Arabic.

LinguaSnapp data (Figure 3.3) show a high concentration of Arabic signs on commercial outlets in the high streets that serve these same areas, indicating spatial overlap of commercial practices and public visibility with other practices such as engagement with library material, demand for interpreting and the 'declarative' practices of the Census and School Census. The LinguaSnapp data, when viewed in closer detail than we are able to provide in Figure 3.3, offer information on the

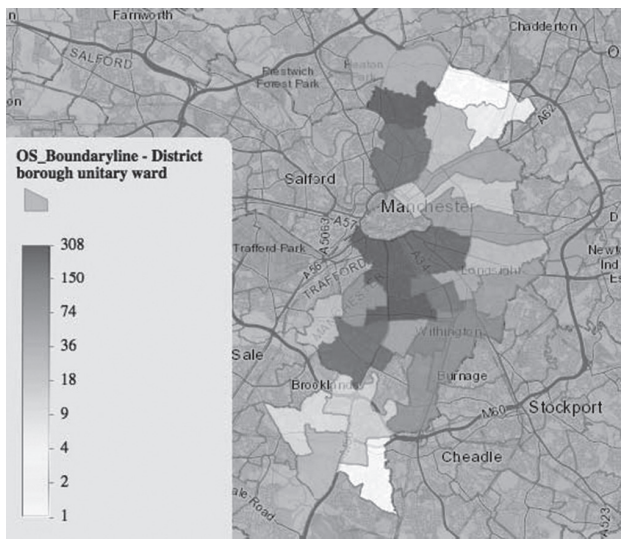

Figure 3.1 Localisation by ward of School Census responses 'first language Arabic' (2015)

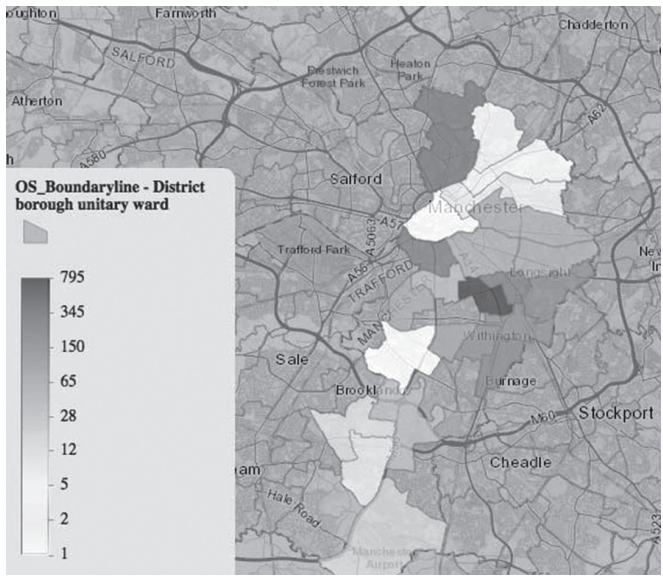

Figure 3.2 Localisation by ward of requests for interpreting in Arabic at GP surgeries (2014–2015)

Figure 3.3 Position of signs containing Arabic (LinguaSnapp, 2016–2019)

spatial distribution of outlets that carry signs in Arabic, and of course, via tagged images, on the precise multi-modal configuration of such signs. While the tool does not provide us with immediate information on users' engagement with the signs (though for some outlets we have a

corpus of annotations based on observations), the positioning of Arabic signs and their composition are, once again, real events representing action taken by sign owners, with an effect on the landscape. Striking is the dominance of Arabic signs along Manchester's so-called 'Curry Mile', once a centre of the city's South Asian population (Figure 3.4). The public visibility of Arabic along this stretch (between Moss Lane in the north and Platt Lane in the south) creates in effect a spatial demarcation within which Arabic is identifiable as the principal language of commercial public space alongside English. We are aware of shop owners of a variety of backgrounds – Afghan, Turkish, Kurdish and others – who opt for Arabic signs for actual content (such as service and product information, not just brand names or religious quotations) in order to accommodate to the perceived demand in this zone. Far from constituting a mere enumeration, this finding gives an objective dimension to the Arabic 'feel' of the street, which has a direct effect in shaping local practice routines. The name 'Curry Mile', which is recognised officially through the permanent banners at both entrances to the stretch, relates to the historical pre-dominance of a South Asian population and businesses, but current Linguistic Landscape practices reflect present-day realities that in effect override the meaning implied by the label.

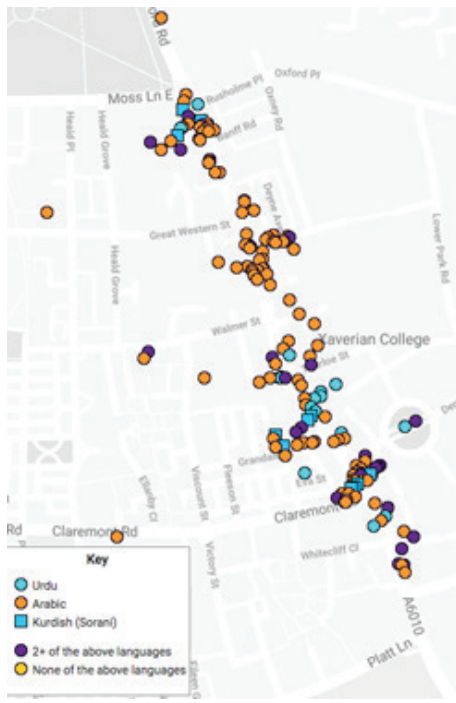

Figure 3.4 Arabic signs in the 'Curry Mile' (2019)

Status and provisions

As a city, Manchester does not offer statutory provisions for particular languages. Public service providers generally make use of either in-house or contracted interpreting and translation services as part of a more general statutory commitment (common to most larger cities in the UK) to ensure that language should not constitute a barrier to equal access to essential services. City council libraries carry stock in various languages but as noted above the policy is implemented locally, with differences between outlets. Among Manchester's 29 secondary schools, at the time of writing, only two mainstream state schools offer Arabic as part of the curriculum; both are run by a single education trust and have a relatively large population of Arabic speaking pupils who are the primary beneficiaries of this provision. The only other secondary schools that offer Arabic are Muslim faith-based schools. In this respect, Arabic is clearly marginalised or even excluded from the teaching of what is referred to in the education system as Modern Foreign Languages, and is instead classified as a Community Language for education purposes, that is, an option of additional qualification for those who speak the language at home, or else part of cultural heritage education and not primarily a universal skill that can or should be acquired irrespective of ethnic, religious or linguistic background.

Arabic is otherwise taught at supplementary schools – privately run enterprises that teach usually at weekends and sometimes in the evenings. We are aware of at least 20 supplementary schools that operate in Manchester to teach Arabic, of which at least two have been established since 2017 and already have several hundred pupils enrolled between them. We estimate that at the time of writing at least 3000 school age children in Manchester are attending Arabic supplementary schools on a regular basis. A study of home language proficiency among a sample of 531 pupils at four Manchester schools (two primary and two secondary) revealed that Arabic showed the highest level of proficiency (alongside Romani) and the highest rate of supplementary schools attendance (Matras *et al.*, 2016). Supplementary schools offer different curriculum formats and different qualifications (see below; Gaiser & Hughes, 2015). Some cater to a pan-Arabic audience originating from different countries, while others target particularly families of the same (national) background, notably Libyan, Iraqi, Sudanese, Yemeni and Syrian (though we understand that no formal entry criteria by background are imposed). There is at least one 'translingual' school, offering instruction in Arabic and Sorani Kurdish.

This flags the transnational composition of the city's Arabic speaking population. It is also multilingual or multi-dialectal, given the extent of diglossia in Arabic (see Bassiouney, 2009; Albirni, 2016), and the

fact that the uniform Standard or *fuṣḥa* is used almost exclusively for tightly scripted written interactions while the vernaculars or ʕāmiyya are used for almost all verbal interaction and show considerable structural differences which may often impede mutual intelligibility. In this respect, there are, in fact, several or even numerous populations of Arabic speakers both in the sense of 'diasporas' (populations originating from the same country) and in the sense of speech communities (populations who speak the same vernacular language). Religious divisions further prescribe participation in different practices and some extent of spatial segregation, and Manchester has at least one Arabic-language Christian church. There is also a large population of speakers of Arabic as a second language. These include Syrian and Iraqi Kurds, Algerian Amazighs and many Somalis. Manchester's Muslim populations, in particular those of South Asian background, use Arabic for liturgy and many attend religious schools where they learn to read and recite the Quran in Arabic.

Policy at national level affects at least some users of Arabic who apply for asylum and are subjected to LADO procedures, where a sample of the applicant's speech is recorded and sent for analysis to a private contractor. Typically, however, no consideration is given to sociolinguistic complexity such as the diffusion of urban speech variants or migrants' exposure to different forms of speech (Rosenhouse, 2013, 2017; Spotti, 2016). It has been shown that results in the UK procedure are sometimes biased by the use of a wholesale 'alternate hypothesis' suggesting that applicants, irrespective of their individual statement on their life history, might be from Egypt, and the tendency to try to assign, on that basis, stylistic variants to Egyptian Arabic (see Matras, 2018b). Since 2015, LADO procedures have been applied across the board in the UK to all applicants stating to be from Syria, Palestine or Kuwait, lending Arabic a particular position in the asylum process. Accurate assessments of sociolinguistic and regional aspects of the use of Arabic are therefore of crucial importance for the integrity of the procedure as it affects the destiny of individuals and their families. In the Manchester area, we are aware of several dozen appeals by applicants against the rejection of their applications by the UK Home Office based on language analyses carried out between 2015 and 2019.

Arabic is one of the most prominent languages in Manchester's linguistic landscapes (LL), and there has been a notable increase in its presence (see Gaiser & Matras, 2016a). The overwhelming majority of signs featuring Arabic are, however, private or 'bottom-up' signs put up by businesses, community institutions or private individuals: restaurants hairdressers, supermarkets, language schools, etc. We are aware of relatively few occurrences of Arabic in the public sector; these include a number of signs put up by Manchester City Council, advising residents not to drop litter (particularly food) or not to feed

Figure 3.5 Public sign in Victoria Park (Arabic and Urdu) (2019)

birds, where Arabic occurs alongside Urdu (Figure 3.5), as well as signs at Manchester Airport advising on security provisions, tax refund, and prayer space. Arabic is also included on signs that celebrate the city's language diversity, usually by inserting the word 'Welcome' in a number of languages.

Manchester City Council's in-house interpreting and translation unit M-Four Translations serves a range of municipal departments and the wider public (see above). It has a team of six in-house staff offering services for Urdu/Panjabi, Mandarin and Cantonese Chinese and Bengali. Despite rising demand, Arabic is not part of this core provision. Instead, it is covered by the pool of freelance staff. The service registers freelancers' languages on a database, but unlike for other languages (such as Bengali/Sylheti), it has no built-in provision to specify either the regional variety of Arabic or the freelancer's country of origin. This can have implications for face-to-face oral interpreting, where mutual intelligibility between some Arabic vernaculars may be limited. Clients, too, do not always specify the variety of Arabic requested, though looking through a sample of requests we have found occasional crude categories like 'Middle Eastern Arabic' and 'North African Arabic'. But in the absence of specification on freelancers' profiles, the service is unable to match such requests to staff competences. Examining several dozen registration forms by freelance staff, we found that Arabic is often listed alongside other languages (Sorani Kurdish, French, Berber or

Amazigh, Somali, Italian, German, Spanish and others). But there are few cases in which knowledge of a particular regional variety is listed. There is clearly lack of awareness of the transnational and sociolinguistic nature of Arabic and the potential problems that arise in the diaspora setting, both on the side of the institution, which does not request relevant information, and on the side of registered interpreters, who do not volunteer such information. We found a similar pattern in our investigation of language provisions in Manchester's health care services (Gaiser & Matras, 2016b).

Promoting heritage: Classroom practices in supplementary schools

Arabic speakers in Manchester cultivate their language in various ways. Parents use Arabic in the home alongside English, and make use of books and films as well as satellite broadcasts to expose children to Arabic. Othman (2011) observes that parents in Manchester place a high value on maintaining Arabic as a means of communication in family settings. Their active efforts include socialising their children with children from other Arab families, sending children to Arabic schools, exposing them to Arabic media and satellite channels and undertaking regular visits to the origin countries, findings that are also confirmed through reports from Arabic speaking school pupils (Matras *et al.*, 2016). Arabic can be the preferred choice over other potential family languages. We are aware of families of Algerian Amazigh and Iraqi Kurdish backgrounds who send their children to Arabic supplementary schools, and of a family whose background is in Khuzistan in Iran, where Arabic is a regional language, who socialise their children in Arabic and send them to an (Iraqi) Arabic weekend school but do not cultivate their knowledge of Persian, the official language of their country of origin. From long-term observations of language practices in other family settings – a Palestinian family with UK-born children, and a Syrian family with Syria-born children – we know that there are families in Manchester that have a clear and explicitly formulated 'Arabic-only' rule in the home. Our observations show that child-initiated interaction with parents often tends to be in Arabic in these settings. Not all parents who attach importance to passing on Arabic send their children to supplementary schools and such decisions may depend on the area of residence and the accessibility of schools, or parents' acceptance or endorsement of the inclusion of some element of religion (Islamic Studies, Quran recitation) in their curricula. Christian Arab families, for example, tend not to send their children to Arabic supplementary schools.

While Manchester's Arabic supplementary schools differ in the content of their curriculum, they all tend to emphasise the teaching of Standard Arabic (*fuṣḥa*) for written and scripted interaction, rather

than colloquial or conversational Arabic. However, schools implement different language policies in the classroom. In some schools, teachers and pupils routinely use their respective vernacular forms of Arabic, and *fuṣḥa* is used only for reading and writing, while English is avoided. This is most common in schools where most teachers and pupils share a (national) background, as is the case in two Libyan Schools in Manchester, which follow the Libyan school curriculum including Libyan qualifications, a legacy of the period where one of the school's principal aims was to prepare pupils for a potential return to their families' country of origin. Other schools see *fuṣḥa* as the desired choice even for oral communication, but allow interaction in English, acknowledging that for most pupils English is the preferred language in most settings. This tends to be the case in schools that cater to pan-Arab (as well as non-Arab Muslim) audiences and prepare students for UK school leaving qualifications such as Arabic GCSEs and A-levels.

Our participatory immersion in Manchester's supplementary schools allows us to draw on classroom observations, and we discuss here the case of one Arabic supplementary school and the use of different language narratives and attitudes toward language repertoires. The school was set up in late 2017 and caters to a diverse population of pupils from families originating from across the Arab world as well as a small group of students from non-Arab Muslim backgrounds. Teaching takes place every Saturday, and the school operates classes from nursery to GCSE level. Apart from a small number of 'recently arrived' (in the past year or two) children from Syria and Libya, most children are UK born. The pupils constitute a heterogeneous group, with diverse competences, motivations and learning goals and varying levels of proficiency in Arabic and other languages. Some are native speakers of a colloquial variety of Arabic. Many UK-born children can speak and understand their families' colloquial varieties at a basic level, or have passive knowledge through frequent exposure. Others can read (and write) Standard Arabic but do not use Arabic for day-to-day communication.

Teachers and parents unite around the goal of promoting knowledge of *fuṣḥa* or Standard Arabic for the purpose of reading the Quran as well as preparing for GCSE qualifications. Staff emphasise in the classroom, in interaction with parents, and in conversations with us that the target and classroom language is Standard Arabic, even in casual interaction, and that non-standard varieties of Arabic are to be avoided. There appear to be several reasons behind this absolute preference for Standard Arabic in the school's policy. First, it attempts to replicate the mission statement of educational institutions in the Arab world, where the Standard is taught at school while knowledge of the vernacular is taken for granted. The diaspora situation differs, of course, in that many pupils have either limited or only passive exposure to Arabic in the home, and none or very little outside the home, and families rely on the

supplementary school to teach them any form of the language. Next, the Standard is seen as the only form of the language that has institutional legitimacy, is more widely intelligible than the regional varieties, and can be seen as a core value that unites Arabic speakers from across the Arab world (see Al-Sahafi, 2015; see also Karatsareas, 2018 and Karatsareas, this volume, for similar findings for Greek and Cypriot Greek in London). Finally, we have heard anecdotal reports from staff that parents argue against the use of colloquial varieties at school for fear that their children might bring home non-standard forms that are associated with a different country or region than their own place of origin.

However, the policy of using Standard Arabic is undermined by the realisation that English is often necessary to clarify instructions and content, and to keep students motivated. There is equally a realisation that, in spontaneous interaction both inside and outside the classroom, dialect elements can hardly be avoided, and that in their home setting, students will use their regional varieties. Teachers sometimes argue that in the classroom they try to adopt a 'neutral' variety or 'middle form' of Arabic, described as a variety that does not carry obvious dialect features and should be widely intelligible to pupils from different backgrounds. This conforms to a common understanding among Arab intellectuals of *fuṣḥa* and colloquial varieties as constituting opposite ends on a continuum rather than clear-cut alternatives. Such discourses, however, do not always match the language practices in the classroom. In the GCSE class, in particular, the scripted requirements dictate that only use of the Standard is recognised and rewarded by high marks. Teachers often urge pupils to 'speak Arabic' when they use dialect forms. Such practised language policies (Bonacina-Pugh, 2017) reflect perceptions of what counts as accepted forms of the target language. Teachers associate regional varieties with labels such as 'slang', 'accent', 'Libyan', 'Palestinian' and so on, in this way marking boundaries between accepted and unaccepted sets of linguistic resources. To the extent that teachers are aware of their own uses of non-standard features, their self-corrections indicate that while *fuṣḥa* is perceived as the target variety, it is not the variety speakers are comfortable using in oral communication.

The following excerpt from our field notes shows how boundaries between 'Arabic' and its varieties are constructed through interaction (March 2019, GCSE class). When the teacher prompted pupils to ask about the time in Arabic, a student of Libyan background volunteered an answer, using the regional-colloquial interrogative *giddāš* 'how much' rather than the Standard Arabic equivalent *kam*:

Pupil: *giddāš es-sāʕa?* [What's the time?]
Teacher: That's not Arabic, *ya ḥabībi*! [my dear]
Pupil: It is! What else should it be?
Teacher: It's Libyan!

With such comments, teachers reproduce and reinforce the schools' language ideologies and policies, which are to encourage Standard Arabic and discourage the use of dialect forms. Such negotiations illustrate a certain paradox where the aim is to teach and 'maintain' a language as 'heritage', yet the varieties actually spoken in the learners' homes are not accepted in the supplementary school setting. Moreover, the excerpt shows how teachers' assessment of dialectal forms as 'incorrect' and distinct from what is defined as the target language 'Arabic' does not remain uncontested. Such observations confirm Lytra and Baraç's (2008: 30) findings that supplementary school pupils often tend to be 'less likely to endorse the compartmentalization of their different sets of linguistic resources' that their teachers or parents imagine: As seen in the above excerpt, pupils may sometimes question teachers' separation of non-standard features from the 'Arabic language'. Perceived language boundaries and what is accepted as 'Arabic' thus depend on the vantage point. The pupil's understanding of what is and what is not 'Arabic' is based on the larger-scale distinction between 'English' and 'Arabic', whereas the teachers are guided by the scripted definition of Standard Arabic. Similarly, pupils sometimes challenge the perceived universality of *fuṣḥa* as a neutral form of the language, one that is the closest variety to Classical Arabic used in the Quran, and one that is not biased towards any country or region and therefore best represents a broad, pan-Arabic or even Muslim 'community'. In a conversation between two pupils preparing for their oral GCSE exams, one of the girls emphasised her disagreement with the requirement to use Standard Arabic in GCSE exams (Arabic GCSE candidate, December 2018):

> They say it's universal. It's kinda universal, because it's not a specific dialect. But then, it's not, 'cause actually it's not easy to understand for us if you're not used to it!

Coming from Iraqi families, the girls question why, as co-owners of the Arabic language, they should not be able to understand the Arabic that is being taught at the supplementary school. Such discussions and contestations can only emerge in the diaspora context and are the product of negotiations around interpretations of an 'emerging community' that builds on a transnational interaction and identifications based on individuals' respective countries of origin. Pupils negotiate their understandings of the role and value of Arabic in the multilingual city, introducing localised understandings of Arabic language, dialects and Arab culture (see also Lytra, 2011). These understandings are filtered through their personal, family, and transnational experiences and reflect the different ways that, drawing on these experiences, the children see Arabic as something that was used in the past, may be used in the present, or can be projected in the future.

Language in a commercial setting

As mentioned above, use of Arabic on the façades of commercial outlets across Manchester reflects its relevance in business interaction and marketing. Arabic has a high status across diverse populations and is used by both Arab and non-Arab business owners. Iraqi Kurds use signs in Sorani Kurdish and Arabic to reach wider audiences; Syrian Kurdish owners of shisha bars use Arabic to address a diverse clientele; Quranic Arabic verses decorate shop fronts across Manchester's Muslim communities; Afghan-owned restaurants display Arabic on their signage to accommodate a population of Arabic speakers. The presence of Arabic in the Linguistic Landscape can thus point us to business settings where Arabic may not be the dominant means of communication among owners, staff and clients, nor an emblem of the owner's background, but is used instead as a form of alignment with Arabic in the diaspora setting.

The Arabic label حَلَال ('halal') appears on outlet signage across the city. As in Muslim communities around the world, regardless of language and script, it signals adherence to Islamic rules on meat consumption and thereby defines the target clientele based on shared faith. We find the symbol on the façade of a butcher's shop in the Trafford area, southwest of Manchester city centre. The neighbourhood has a large South Asian population, a large presence of Polish speakers, and a smaller population of Arabic speakers. Inside the shop, near the entrance, a poster is on prominent display. It depicts slices of meat above a picture of a cow, a lamb and a sheep grazing in a meadow. At the top it carries the liturgical verse in Arabic 'In the name of Allah the most beneficent the most merciful', recognisable to any Muslim regardless of native language, and below that, in smaller letters, also in Arabic, the phrase 'I put my trust in Allah'. While the poster does not necessarily address speakers of Arabic, it targets a Muslim practice community who also share a particular linguistic practice, the reading of liturgical verses in Quranic Arabic. The shop's business card, by contrast, reaches out to users of Arabic more explicitly. On one side, at the top, it carries the English title 'Trafford Halal Meat' in large print. Below the title are pictures of animals (a chicken, fish, a lamb and a cow), accompanied by the label 'Halal' in Arabic and Roman scripts on the right, and the words 'fresh halal meat' in Urdu on the left. The next frame lists meat categories in English ('lamb, goat, sheep, mutton, chicken, beef, fish & sausages'), with the very same content then repeated below in Arabic, introduced by the Arabic phrase 'excellent assortment of meats'. The bottom two lines provide contact information and the address, in English. On the back the card gives marketing and delivery specifications in English, and repeats the phrase 'fresh halal meat' in Urdu. This multilingual business card thus shows how choices within a multilingual repertoire are indicative and constitutive of different communicative acts and illocutions (see

further Matras *et al*., 2018): Urdu is used for branding and could be seen as ornamental, serving to attract the attention of a local Pakistani clientele. Arabic is used to convey more specific product information, while English is used for both, as well as for the orientation (location and contact information), drawing on the highly codified marking of the English-speaking environment.

From conversations with staff members we know that the owner, most staff and most clients are not Arabs nor fluent Arabic speakers; yet Arabic has a symbolic significance in the neighbourhood. One member of staff we spoke to is UK born of Pakistani descent and speaks Urdu and Panjabi alongside English, with limited literacy skills in Arabic. He said he occasionally uses Panjabi in conversations with clients, but suggested that most South Asians living in the neighbourhood speak and read English, which confirms our assumption that the use of Urdu on the business card is mainly emblematic. Another staff member was of Iraqi Kurdish background, and reported to use Arabic as well as Sorani Kurdish with some customers. A third staff member is Kurdish from northwestern Iran. Staff reported that their clientele was diverse and they used their full collective language repertoires – Arabic, Sorani Kurdish, Panjabi, Persian and English – to communicate with clients.

When asked what motivated the use of Arabic in the outlet's communications, the staff replied: 'Arabic appeals to everyone in the area. It belongs to all, you know, so we use it'. This comment indicates the symbolic value that Arabic assumes in the diverse neighbourhood, serving as a link between different Muslim populations. Appropriation of the language by non-speakers is considered to be acceptable. This challenges traditional understandings of 'using' a language. Arabic is part of the wider neighbourhood repertoire and thus a resource that is available for everyone to use (see Blommaert (2010) on 'truncated repertoires'). Such practices in shared space also challenge traditional understandings of 'community' as bounded and fixed. Instead, public display of Arabic reflects practice routines and repertoire management that are dynamically shaped by wider interaction practices in the local space. Actors make use of available resources to establish links with a diverse audience. Elements of language are used to appeal to others – to 'speak to everyone in the area'. Shared interests, practices and needs (compliance with Islamic dietary laws) create a bond that is mediated through the emblematic values of the Arabic language. As Canagarajah (2017: 37) points out, spatial repertoires are 'assembled in situ, and in collaboration with others, in the manner of distributed practice' and may not be part of one's existing proficiency but become relevant in a given shared space.

Frurt, a small outlet in Manchester's city centre, is another example of how Arabic is combined with other language resources that are

perceived as locally relevant, transcending traditional community boundaries to reflect more complex practices in the globalised setting. Frurt is a small franchise business that, at the time of writing, has three stores across the Northwest of England that sell frozen yoghurt, coffees, milkshakes and similar products. The Manchester shop is located close to the city's two large university campuses off Oxford Road, in close proximity to several student halls of residence, many of whose residents are international students. From visits and conversations with staff and clients at the Manchester store, we know that the shop is frequented by young adult males of Arabic background who use it as a venue to socialise with each other and with the shop's owner, who is also of Arabic background. The default language used in the outlet is Arabic. Staff and clients we spoke to reported that most customers come from Bahrain or Kuwait. Chinese students who pass by the store on their way to and from the universities also frequent the shop, but do not appear to spend much time there for interaction.

Figure 3.6 shows the sign that Manchester's Frurt store displays outside their store. The trilingual sign, in English, Chinese and Arabic, was created specifically for the local branch. The owner's sister, who designed it, added her own language Arabic and, with the help of a Chinese friend, Chinese. Clearly, the translations are not required in order to give access to the content, since the clients are largely university students who know English. Rather, the sign targets the two specific clientele groups in an effort to

Figure 3.6 Frurt trilingual sign: English, Chinese, Arabic

make both feel welcome. According to the staff, the use of Arabic on the sign prompts Arabs to associate the products with those available in their countries of origin, reassuring them of their quality.

The trilingual sign thus reflects the customer base that routinely frequents the shop; it also encourages future practice and legitimises the choice of certain languages with staff members: staff reported that they were often addressed in Arabic even by new customers, prompted by the sign. In this way the sign acts as a statement of micro-level language policy. The use of Arabic also signals the outlet's role as a hub of social interaction and thus a community space. The choice of Chinese serves a different purpose, reaching out to a customer base, a strict marketing function. These distinct functions offer a nice illustration of how the linguistic landscape can reflect the more dynamic practices that constitute 'urban community' links as described by Blokland (2017). These can include people's more volatile, ephemeral experiences of belonging through encounters in public space. The repetitiveness of rather fluid encounters, such as those in the Frozen Yoghurt outlet, can create a more defined sense of connectedness. It is a form of flexible encounter, which can create more durable relations. The non-fixity of the 'community' becomes temporarily fixed through space, facilitated by the multilingual urban diaspora setting and formally licensed through the choice of languages on public display, which links background, local practices, and place of encounter.

Conclusion: 'Community', Practice and Language Hierarchies in the Diaspora Setting

Across settings and actors, languages and varieties are evaluated hierarchically in terms of their perceived relevance and value (see also Karatsareas, this volume), but actors' understandings of language boundaries and assessments of sets of resources are highly dependent on the situation, setting, aims and the individual speaker. Arabic is generally seen as an important community resource for its communicative and emblematic values. Individuals and institutions seem to have very strong opinions about the sets of resources in their language repertoires. In contexts of access provision and heritage language maintenance, Standard Arabic is perceived as the desired variety, despite the fact that non-standard colloquial varieties are used for oral communication. This reflects and reinforces ideologies that are held more widely about Arabic. The relevance of Standard Arabic is echoed also in the requirements for GCSE and A-level qualifications. Acquiring such UK-based qualifications may be seen as a form of 'empowerment' through formal recognition of language resources and a way of officially recognising and legitimising community language resources at a city and national level; at the same time, it reinforces traditional language ideologies.

The institutional frame of the supplementary school frames what is 'proper' and 'improper' Arabic, and which language and variety to encourage or discourage. Among parents and teachers, and even pupils, there is an assumption that there is one 'proper' way of speaking Arabic, and at the supplementary school children can learn it. 'Native speaker' parents who use their regional variety of Arabic in the home setting are believed to not master the 'correct' variety of Arabic and therefore need support for their children's GCSE preparations. Speakers of different varieties are, in the diaspora setting, united around an abstract notion of Arabic, which is however not actually used as a 'native language' anywhere in the Arab world. A sense of 'community' is built around a mutual identification with Standard Arabic for its associations with education and religion, which in turn helps showcase and protect an 'Arab identity' in the diaspora setting. The *fuṣḥa* is thought to belong to and to be owned by speakers from different (Arabic and non-Arabic speaking, Muslim) backgrounds. Similarly, in freelancer registration forms for M-Four Translations, the emphasis is placed on the positive associations of Standard Arabic with qualifications and success, which echoes the general devaluation of colloquial varieties of Arabic and disregards complexities at the practical level of ensuring effective communication across Arabic dialects, a necessity when the aim of the provision is to support access to services and communication between clients and practitioners.

In the context of language analyses for the identification of origin (LADO), the standard expertise that is usually relied on by government agencies often fails to take a critical stance to the relationship of language and place, or take account of language hierarchies. Language analysis reports by government contractors overwhelmingly assume a constant relationship between structural features and place, and give no consideration to the spread of urban varieties in rural areas, the dissemination of prestige forms through media, the infiltration of Standard features into spontaneous speech in settings that are deemed formal (such as the asylum interview itself), or contacts among people of various backgrounds during and after migration; instead these are regarded as 'deviations' from an expected idealised alignment of language and place, often to the disadvantage of applicants (see Matras, 2018b).

The diaspora setting alters language practices, the ways individuals evaluate their linguistic resources and community alliances. It produces, on the one hand, a universalisation effect, as actors align themselves with a diverse global community. At the same time it triggers a nationalisation effect, as language users hold on to symbolic and practical forms of identification with their countries of origin. Language ideologies related to the varieties of Arabic are thus reproduced, re-interpreted and appropriated in the diaspora setting.

However, as our classroom observations in the supplementary school setting show, ideologies that prioritise *fuṣḥa* for spoken interaction do not remain uncontested.

Linguistic hierarchies that privilege the Standard and separate it from colloquial spoken varieties do not seem to be central in the evaluation of language resources in business or family settings, where the language generally enjoys a high status and assumes a key role, in relation to other 'languages'. People's alignment with 'Arabic' plays a role in establishing and maintaining ties, but this does not necessarily presuppose proficiency in the language. Actors who do not gather explicitly around language maintenance may still perceive the shared alignment with Arabic as a way to create bonds in the diaspora setting. A common language can facilitate interaction between people on a functional level as means of communication, but it can also help build trust at a mainly symbolic level.

Negotiations around language, language ideologies, and the actual use of language thus play a role in understanding social identification in the diaspora context. They involve a range of practices and practice routines that display 'belonging' to place and can therefore be seen as constitutive elements of 'community'. This suggests that 'community' cannot be taken for granted as a pre-defined site of investigation, but instead it offers us an object of investigation, as proposed by Brubaker (2005, 2012; see also Bessant, 2018). Cities provide an ideal space for developing loose ties with others who become, in the sense of Blokland (2017), 'public familiars' but not necessarily part of close social networks, on the basis of repeated encounters in a shared place, encounters that may be fluid, durable, or transactional. In these encounters, use of Arabic takes on a variety of forms.

This necessarily requires us to consider a range of different indicators in order to assess language vitality through different forms of engagement with language. That, in turn, puts the very notion of 'language maintenance' into a new perspective, as it does not necessarily mean a replication of the language practices of the origin country. In the Manchester setting, some 'imported' practices, such as notions of language hierarchies, continue among some actors, but are questioned by others, while the linguistically diverse diaspora setting adds new practices to the repertoire, such as encounters among regional varieties of the language, the use of Arabic to forge connections across national and linguistic backgrounds, or its use to signal the availability of a unique interaction space. Such spaces as the supplementary schools, the butcher shop that brings together clients with similar preferences, the milkshake outlet that is used as a hub of social interaction, or the dense row of businesses that display Arabic signs in what is still labelled the 'Curry Mile', in fact contribute to shaping the very fabric that might be characterised as 'community'. In this sense, a 'language community'

is best defined by the practices that link actors, while 'community language' might be defined as a language that is afforded a contained level of recognition as part of a package of provisions as well as public acknowledgements of a celebratory nature relating to the city's overall language diversity.

At this point we would like to return to two important points of methodology, both relevant to 'researching multilingually'. Our somewhat critical stance toward theorising 'community languages' and 'language communities' is, as we explained above, enabled through a programme of systematic observations of everyday practices in a variety of sites – from immersion in the private sphere of families, supplementary schools and businesses, to interaction with public service providers and local government, and through to the creation of new data collection tools – one that builds on a network of sustainable and reciprocal relationships between researchers and local stakeholders or actors. Our approach re-configures the dynamics between researchers and 'researched', where active involvement of research participants in the design of our activities results in projects-in-return that enrich those participants' own work (as, for example, through the Supplementary School Support Platform). Our close and continuous engagement allows participants to, in turn, inspire and shape our research agenda and inform knowledge and teaching. This extends not just to individuals and initiatives from among the local Arabic speaking population, but also to practitioners who provide professional services to such individuals. Thus, our documentation of variation in Arabic and our analyses of language hierarchies and the contacts and links among linguistic varieties that are prompted through migration and diasporic settings, have been informing legal practitioners through our LADO consultancy work, helping in many cases to overturn administrative decisions in the asylum process that were based on an unrealistic or erroneous understanding of the relationship between language/dialect and place/origin.

Our research also benefits from two complementary manners of immersion in the language that is the object of our study, thus offering two distinct perspectives on Arabic in the global diaspora: One co-author is a near-native speaker of Arabic, having acquired the language in early adolescence in a setting where Arabic is an officially recognised language, and has been involved for many years in research on Arabic structure and variation. The second co-author takes the perspective of a language learner, learning (Standard and non-Standard varieties of) Arabic together with heritage learners in the diaspora setting as part of the ethnographic observation (for the rationale and piloting of the method of 'ethnographer as language learner' see Abercrombie 2018). Long-term participation in an Arabic supplementary school classroom as a language learner and regular informal tutoring in a

private context have allowed intensive engagement with the Arabic language and its speakers over time and across language maintenance settings and teaching formats in Manchester. This approach re-positions the researcher – otherwise typically regarded as a language expert – as a learner, legitimising the posing of questions about language variation and ideologies of Standard language use. As researchers we thus share various aspects of repertoire resources with the participants, resulting in a new form of multilingual research encounters and a comprehensive approach to analysing language practices in the superdiverse urban setting.

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