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Actors' discourses on language supplementary schools: diaspora practices and emerging ideologies

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ABSTRACT

Drawing on interviews with staff from Language Supplementary Schools (LSS) in Manchester (UK), we discuss the emergence of makeshift ideologies whereby actors seek to legitimise choices and policies of heritage language transmission in the diaspora setting. Actors discuss the use of regional and vernacular varieties, the consideration given to pupils' multilingual repertoires, and the use of the majority language (English) as 'scaffold'. Conscious that such practices potentially clash with the schools' expected mission statements and prevailing ideological dispositions, actors seek to justify them. They do this with reference to changes in setting and attitudes, which they position along time and place axes, comparing origin countries with the diaspora reality, thereby forging new language narratives as a 'diasporic stance'. We consider the discursive tools and actions of talks that constitute descriptions, explanations, justifications, and their interplay in actors' efforts to share their perspective on practices and the attitudes that accompany them. The study shows how ideologies regarding the particular diasporic situation are shifting, and the relevance of pluralistic language repertoires within it. Methodologically, the study suggests that ideologies are not just discursive dimensions, rather they are constructed and communicated discursively, allowing us to trace their emergence using semiotic and discourse-analytical tools.

Introduction

Language Supplementary Schools (LSSs) – also referred to as complementary schools, heritage language schools, or community language schools – are voluntary organisations that teach heritage languages and promote heritage cultures (Baker and Wright 2017; Blackledge and Creese 2010a; Creese et al. 2006). In this article, we refer to these schools as LSSs because 'supplementary schools' is the term most consistently used in Manchester, both among those working in such institutions and by Manchester City Council. In focusing specifically on those schools which specialise in teaching heritage languages[1] rather than support the mainstream curriculum, we use 'language supplementary schools' throughout this article. Present in the UK for over half a century, LSSs are typically set up by members of diaspora communities to offer educational support tailored to the cultural interests and needs of children of immigrant background, which are not met within the mainstream education system (cf. Wei 2006, 78). Through an analysis of interview data obtained from staff members representing twenty-four LSSs, collected as part of a larger survey of LSSs in

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Manchester (see below), we explore how teachers in LSSs in Manchester, UK frame their practices and policies.

LSSs often play an important role in the intergenerational transmission and maintenance of heritage languages. The voluntary nature of LSSs means attendance is not compulsory, and so it depends on family decisions, or Family Language Policy (Curdt-Christiansen 2018; King, Fogle, and Logan-Terry 2008; Spolsky 2012). The fact LSSs are independent from the mainstream school system also means staff are able to develop curricula (Creese et al. 2006, 24–25). As we show, this often prompts them, when asked to describe and explain their policies and practices, to *justify* their choices.

The diasporic context of LSSs conditions teachers' choices. Since students' principal language of everyday interaction is often English, LSSs need to support not just literacy in the heritage language but also basic communication skills. For some languages, this requires teachers to acknowledge regional and vernacular (non-standard) varieties in addition to standard varieties, i.e. varieties perceived as the 'correct' standard form of a 'language'. The broader plurilingual reality of diasporas often plays a role, as teachers need to take into consideration students' varied backgrounds and their broad (often complex) linguistic repertoires.

Recent research on LSSs in the UK has given some attention to the extent to which the diaspora setting might prompt reflection and re-negotiation of ideological dispositions on language. Language ideologies are sets of beliefs and feelings about language (cf. Woolard and Schieffelin 1994; Spolsky 2009; Kroskrity 2010; Piller 2015). Like ideologies in general (cf. Boudon 1989; Gerring 1997), they become a hallmark of a group's strategic position within society; they function to legitimise, repress or motivate behaviour, and they become personal dispositions when internalised and embedded in character and behaviour. Studies of practice and attitudes conducted in UK LSSs have identified an overwhelming preference for standard over non-standard varieties, for languages such as Bengali (Blackledge and Creese 2008, 2010a; Creese 2007), Mandarin Chinese (Wei and Hua 2010; Huang 2020), Turkish (Lytra 2012; Çavuşoğlu 2019), and Greek (Karatsareas 2018, 2020, 2021). Such attitudes have generally been explained as a continuation prevailing practices in the statutory school systems of the origin countries, driven by state-sponsored language ideologies that fail to attribute value to regional or vernacular varieties.

Ideological dispositions also shape attitudes to bilingualism, which is ubiquitous among LSS pupils. Teachers often seek to impose monolingual communication as a way of counteracting language shift, thereby serving the perceived mission statement of LSSs. This is arguably reinforced by teachers' experiences in their origin countries, where monolingualism is expected in educational settings (cf. Blackledge and Creese 2010a, 2010b; Creese and Blackledge 2011; Huang 2020). At the same time, a seemingly contradictory practice of 'flexible bilingualism' is observed (see also Martin et al. 2006, 2007), also referred to as 'translanguaging' (Garcia and Wei 2014), involving the use of a wide range of resources from participants' communicative repertoires, including English, to aid teaching and learning.

We adopt a discourse-interaction approach to the analysis of the interview data: At the discourse level, we look beyond the descriptive and explanatory accounts provided by the actors[2] and focus on the justifications and insights they offer into changing ideological dispositions. At the interaction level, we consider the presence of researchers and the questions they pose a key prompt that leads actors to justify practices that appear to clash with prevailing ideologies. The interview setting and the encounter among professionals from two different sectors (academics and LSS practitioners) thereby becomes a site in which practices and the thinking behind them are processed and re-evaluated, and thus a potential avenue to seeking recognition and legitimation of diasporic practices.

We first provide an outline of the research methods and data collection and analysis procedures employed. This is followed by the analysis of the interview data exploring the way that LSS actors describe, explain and justify LSS practices and policies. The Discussion and Conclusion summarises the key findings of the article, and considers the interview excerpts analysed in light of Gal and

Irvine's (1995, 973–75) postulation of the three semiotic processes involved in the discursive representation of language ideologies. These are: (1) the way linguistic fixtures are indexed (iconisation), (2) the setting of boundaries and projection of an opposition (fractal recursivity), and (3) the suppression of aspects of reality perceived as inconsistent with the ideology (erasure).

We argue that the justifications provided by actors for their changing practices go beyond descriptive accounts and constitute a significant step toward shaping new ideologies, where the reality of the diaspora figures in the argumentative formulation of practice and policy. In that context, the indexical hierarchies among language varieties are re-negotiated, as are boundaries and the targets of erasure. By juxtaposing diasporic practices with monolingual ideologies associated with the (pre-migration) background settings, actors make the contrast and thereby their diasporic stance explicit, thus adopting new forms of agency. Justifications are found to address the relevance of practices to the overall mission statement of LSSs, which is to promote and maintain the heritage language. Actors argue that the inclusion of non-standard vernaculars can be seen as covered by the remit of LSSs since they are part of the linguistic heritage; that relaxing or adjusting the hierarchical and distributional (indexical) status of speech variants equally serves to encourage pupils to use the heritage language; and that allowing clarification and other meta-discourse in English similarly strengthens confidence and participation. Essentially, the justifications revolve around the argument that the abandonment of monolingualism is not contrary but in fact helpful to achieve the goal of heritage language maintenance.

Data and method

The data presented in this article derive from semi-structured interviews conducted with LSS staff members between September 2019 and February 2021 as part of a broader project conducted to provide an updated profile of LSSs in Manchester.[3] This study builds on a previous survey conducted in 2013/2014, in which staff and students from 23 LSSs were interviewed to learn more about school demographics, logistics, curricula and language qualifications, motivations, and sustainability (Leonie and Hughes 2015). The present study also involved the collection of questionnaire data from 126 parents of students attending eleven LSSs. Here, parents were asked about their backgrounds, language preferences and practices, visits to origin countries, and motivations and expectations from the LSS. Additionally, longitudinal observations were carried out by one of the authors focusing on an Arabic school in Manchester, and as a team the authors have been recording casual observations through outreach work as part of the Support Platform since 2017, and in a series of consultations that preceded its launch, from 2014.

We conducted interviews with a total of 31 staff members from 24 LSSs in Manchester, varying in size and teaching a total of 21 languages including Arabic, Chinese, Polish, Russian, Persian, Armenian, Turkish, Lithuanian, Kurdish, Ukrainian, Greek and Amharic. The interviews aimed to gain insights into topics such as infrastructure and funding, interaction with external bodies, curricula, qualifications, and classroom language practices and policies. Conducting interviews with staff members as a means of data collection for the survey was in part inspired by recent studies which have highlighted the value of interviews in providing in-depth insights into LSS practices, policies, and language ideologies (see e.g. papers collected in a recent Special Issue edited by Curdt-Christiansen, Hua, and Wei 2021). Huang (2020) draws on interviews with LSS staff to capture their ideological stances to bilingualism and translanguaging, i.e. their views on the appropriateness of language choices within the classroom. Interviews with second-generation Greek Cypriots in London allowed Karatsareas (2018) to gain insights into attitudes towards linguistic variation in the community, revealing negative attitudes toward Cypriot Greek that had previously remained undetected through quantitative studies in the same community (e.g. Papapavlou and Pavlou 2001).

We approached LSS actors and invited them to participate in an interview about practices and policies in their establishment, firstly approaching LSSs with whom MLM had existing

relationships, since no official records or directories are kept of LSSs in Manchester. We then identified other LSSs through extensive internet searches, personal contacts within the research team, and during visits to other LSSs. The interviews were conducted as part of MLM's broader engagement with LSSs; this may have impacted on the interaction dynamics between the research team and LSS staff. The fact individuals within the research team had previously organised training sessions and other support for LSS staff, and the possibility an LSS had established links with members of the research team prior to the data collection for the present survey, may have influenced interviewees' responses and their motivation to participate. Thus, while 'projects in return' (Schiller 2018) can be beneficial to the evolving relationship between researchers and researcher subjects, this may give rise to practical issues, namely how shared background knowledge and attitudes are negotiated. In particular, participants inevitably associated the researcher team with a project that promotes multilingualism, which may have influenced responses to questions asked during the interview, with actors potentially accommodating to what they perceived to be the team's expectations.

Of particular interest to us was the interplay of interview question and response in light of the relationships or perceived relationships between the research team and the interviewees. We approach these from an interactional perspective as actions of talk, and our analysis takes inspiration from theoretical traditions that regard communication as action. In the Functional Pragmatics tradition (cf. Rehbein 1977) actions of talk are analysed in terms of the overall field of action (the conditions and attributes of those participating in action), which includes spaces of knowledge, control, assessment and beliefs. The task of action-oriented speech analysis is to assess participants' cooperation, which can be broken down to their evaluation of the setting, their motivation to participate in the interaction, and the goals that they wish to achieve. These give rise to an action plan, which is then realised in the form of actions of talk – various types of which are distinguished. For the action of 'describing', Rehbein (1984) identifies the reliance on a factual inventory of elements of knowledge that can be ascertained and so transferred from speaker to interlocutor. Explanations, by contrast, serve to close a gap between the speaker's knowledge and that of the hearer, which, until an explanation is fulfilled, shows a deficiency with respect to a particular state of affairs that is of interest. Usually, explanations are instigated through a request on the part of the hearer. Justifications, in the philosophical tradition of theorising communication as action (cf. Habermas 1981; McKeon 1968), are regarded as a performative practice of argumentation and reasoning that serves to defend or condone one's own attitudes or opinions.

When conducting interviews with LSS actors, we were interacting with them within a field of action and knowledge in which we have status of language 'experts', so acknowledged thanks to our membership of a local higher education institution who were also known to have engaged with the LSS sector in the past. The encounter inevitably evokes associations with external inspections to which schools at all levels, and to some degree LSSs as well are subjected. An aspect of scrutiny was therefore a by-product of the encounter and the manner in which it was organised (running through a set of interview questions, and recording responses). This impacted the collaborative process of the interaction with interviewees, prompting them to respond to questions with both descriptive and explanatory actions of talk as well as with justifications. In this article we focus our attention on the interplay of those three types of actions, and in particular on the role of justifications. We consider those indicative of shifting attitudes and new reference points for values and hence of shifting ideologies that adjust to the diaspora setting by moving away from monolingual ideologies and embracing plurilingual attitudes. Through their actions of justification, actors defend that shift.

Our aim in this study is to identify the way in which justifications are constructed and delivered, rather than draw a profile of LSSs and LSS actors based on their background. We have found that there are patterns of framing justifications that are typical of the respondents irrespective of their backgrounds. Consequently, we choose not to discuss the data by language groups but by the features that characterise relevant actions of talk. Typically, factual descriptions are linked to

explanations of actors' practice, often contextualising those in relation to logistical constraints that make some forms of practice possible and others not.

Data analysis

The analysis below explores the different practices and policies that LSS actors sought to provide justification for, drawing from different reference points on the axes of time and space.

Framing justifications

This section presents data from an interview with the headteacher of a Chinese LSS established over forty years ago and currently attended by over three hundred pupils. Extract 1 presents her response to a question about the curriculum: The interviewers are asking whether the school teaches Cantonese, a language widely spoken within Manchester's Chinese community. This follows an earlier report by another interviewee from the same school (referred to as 'she'):

Extract 1: Interview at Chinese LSS

Interviewer 1:   She mentioned that you also have some Cantonese classes?

Headteacher 1:   Actually there is not a Cantonese class. We used to have, but now we don't have it anymore, but you know like this class they get a teaching assistant who can speak Cantonese, so you can help the students more easier to understand at the first [unclear]. Even most of the teachers they speak English as well, but when they speak Cantonese it's still Chinese and it's better than speaking English.

Note that the reference to 'Cantonese classes' is potentially ambiguous (though it was not intended to be): In context, it could be interpreted either as classes in which Cantonese is taught, or as classes in which Mandarin is taught to Cantonese-speaking students (the latter was reported on by the other teacher, 'she'). The headteacher confirms that there is no Cantonese class, before explaining that practices have changed over time. Building on the ambiguity, she justifies the discontinuation of Cantonese as a taught subject by mentioning that there is a Cantonese-speaking teaching assistant. This seeks to reassure the interviewers that the needs of Cantonese-speaking students are still being taken into consideration. She adds that using Cantonese is preferable to English as 'it's still Chinese': Use of Cantonese in the classroom is justified since, being a Chinese language, even if not a curriculum subject, it is aligned with the LSS's mission to promote the heritage language.

Further justification is offered in Extract 2:

Extract 2: Interview at Chinese LSS

Headteacher 1:   I've worked here for 16 years and yeah a lot of students have graduated from after the A-Level exam because they are quite good at Mandarin. They can listen and then also at the same time not inside the school environment – it's outside – more and more Cantonese had to learn Mandarin, because now a lot of people are from mainland.

The successful track record serves to validate the school's policy choices. The demographic changes in the local Chinese community (which had originally comprised mainly Cantonese speakers from Hong Kong) are offered as an explanation for the change over time in school policy, and the discontinuation of teaching in Cantonese. Combined, the two arguments serve to justify and legitimise the change of policy (cf. Huang 2020 for a related discussion).

These extracts show us that in response to the prompts, the headteacher goes further and outlines *why* a given practice takes place, offering a justification in an effort to bring about attitudinal harmony with the listener. We propose that the reason for engaging in an act of justification is the wish to eliminate potential disharmony, which may arise out of an expectation that the descriptions and explanations offered may not meet with the interviewer's approval.

Such anticipation of a possible clash in attitudes rests on an assessment of existing ideological dispositions and relates, we propose, to the way in which actors interpret the purpose of the

interview: A research interview of the kind presented here does not form part of the actors' routine repertoire of interactions; it is instead an exceptional event. In trying to accommodate to the interview setting, actors assess and anticipate the interviewers' dispositions. They do this by reviewing familiar interaction routines as well as on the basis of the information that had been given about the research team's interests. In the LSS context as in the education sector more generally, interaction with visitors who are professionals and present themselves as wanting to write a 'report' is associated with inspections and quality evaluations by persons in authority. In such situations, staff are keen to satisfy the criteria set by the visitors. Against this background, the research interview is interpreted as a setting where staff need to impress upon the visitors that the school is successful in meeting its mission to promote the heritage language. Risk of disharmony arises when actors anticipate that their descriptions and explanations might not satisfy that goal.

The research team's expressed interest in Cantonese proves to be such a risk point; the interviewee mitigates the risk by providing a justification for the practice and policy in an effort to win over the addressee and bring about attitudinal harmony: On the one hand, Cantonese is not taught because of the need to cater to Mandarin (due to changing demographics), legitimised by the fact that Cantonese speakers can master Mandarin successfully and so are not disadvantaged. On the other hand, the Cantonese language support offered in the classroom remains fully aligned with the policy of promoting the heritage language and avoids a concession to the dominance of English (which might otherwise be used to support learning).

Change over time, and spatial dislocation, serve as key points of reference in constructing the justifications. On the space axis, *There* – the situation in the origin country – represents an acceptance of the diglossic relationship between standard and non-standard varieties, the teaching goals and methods that are guided by that hierarchy, and the alignment of language and place where Cantonese is marked as a regional variety (and the successful acquisition of Mandarin is measured by the loss of a Cantonese regional accent). By contrast, *Here* represents the prominence of English and the effort to avoid reliance on English in the classroom, a realignment of language and place (where Cantonese no longer flags a distinctive, shared regional identity, owing to the diverse backgrounds of the local Chinese community), a potential weakening of diglossic values associated with different varieties, and the school's proven success in teaching Mandarin. On the time axis, *Then* represents the personal experiences from which confidence is drawn about the ability of Cantonese speakers to master Mandarin, but also the LSSs past practices in Manchester, whereas *Now* represents the new community demographics following the immigration of non-Cantonese speakers from mainland China, and the current practice of accommodating Cantonese as a supporting tool in the classroom (compensating for the discontinuation of teaching in Cantonese). In this way, practice and policy are not just described and explained but also justified with reference to the particular features of the diaspora setting. Language related ideological dispositions concerning the hierarchical status of the languages, their identity value, and the manner in which repertoire resources are taken into consideration undergo a re-configuration as a way of legitimising current diaspora practice and policy.

Diaspora as a translingual space

Diasporas comprise individuals from a range of backgrounds: the *Here* represents a transregional space – a realignment of place and language that potentially features a coexistence of multiple varieties of the heritage language. This contrasts with the relative linguistic homogeneity *There*, where a single non-standard variety is aligned with a particular region in a diglossic relationship to the standard variety. Extract 3 is taken from an interview with the headteacher and a teacher from an Arabic LSS established in 2018 and attended by approximately eighty-five students; both students and staff come from various Arabic-speaking backgrounds:

Extract 3: Interview at Arabic LSS 1

Interviewer 2:	I was wondering if you think, maybe, I don't know, having all the teachers having a similar dialect might make things easier, but that's not an issue you think?
Headteacher 2:	No, it's not
Teacher 1:	I don't think so, no
Headteacher 2:	Because we are trying to speak a very neutral dialect in the school. It's not very specific, it's like a simple Arabic, but not related to any dialect, but we respect students in the school are just exchanging some words and they learn from each other. So, we have Libyans, Egyptian, Sudanean, umm, Algerian, Tunisian, Saudi, and Syrian.

The interviewer's question is interpreted as succinctly challenging the effectiveness of the school's mission in light of the contrast to the alignment of language and place *There* – where Standard Arabic (*Fusha*) is the language of instruction and participants share the same regional variety in informal interaction, and so there are no issues of mutual intelligibility of dialects. Faced with a tacit evaluative assessment the interviewees first deny that teachers' multiple dialect backgrounds constitute an impediment to the school's mission. The headteacher then offers an explanation, alluding to a 'neutral dialect' – a construct that is the product of *Here* (cf. Authors 2020, 68). She continues to describe the declared acceptance of pupils' plurilingual practices, alluding to the reality of dialect multiplicity. The combination of explanation and description serves to legitimise the school's policy of avoiding the imposition of dialect uniformity among staff. At the same time, it constitutes an emerging ideological disposition in regard to the value of dialect diversity, one that is created by the local actors and tailored to the diasporic reality.

Similar to the Arabic LSS, the German LSS is attended by students with links to a variety of regions of Germany, Austria and Switzerland, meaning they have acquired different varieties of German outside the LSS. Extract 4 presents the response of the headteacher of a German LSS attended by approximately twenty students to the question whether her students speak different varieties of German:

Extract 4: Interview at German LSS

Headteacher 3:	We have Standard German as the main language, but sometimes we do bring this into play and we have one child, he only spoke Swiss German and he found it quite tricky and he was a very shy boy and there were two lads, they were very – let's say cocky – they were Standard German speakers from the north, and they leaned a little bit on my little fella – and I said 'OK, right'. The mother of this boy came in and she did Swiss and I did Bavarian, and our two cocky boys were sitting there looking 'oh what's going on?' and we said 'yes, this is what we are fluent speakers of', another language – nearly – because the grammar is different, the vocabulary.

The use of Standard German as 'main language' in the LSS conforms to expectations. The description of activities around regional dialects offers insight into an innovative practice of exploring dialect differences. The headteacher justifies this practice by narrating a particular episode where it served to strengthen the confidence of a child who found himself vulnerable in interactions with his peers. Celebrating classroom plurilingualism thus capitalises on the diasporic reality and serves as a pastoral tool of inclusion.

Extract 5 presents the response of the headteacher of another Arabic LSS. Much like the Arabic LSS featured in Extract 3, Arabic LSS 2 is attended by individuals from a range of Arabic-speaking backgrounds. It was established in 2017 and is attended by approximately sixty students. The headteacher responds to the question whether students are corrected when using non-standard varieties of Arabic:

Extract 5: Interview at Arabic LSS 2

Headteacher 4:	We try our best to make it as Fusha as we can, the proper, the proper language, which is you know, like, it is better to learn the right way, I know they can't say it but sometimes my kids are at home now, two of them had Arabic GCSE and they had A★, so sometimes when they forget the word in Arabic, they'd say it in proper how did they learn it.

The headteacher establishes common ground with the addressee by employing the term 'Fusha' ('Modern Standard Arabic' or 'literary Arabic') and the attributes 'proper' and 'the right way'. This evokes associations with the prevailing diglossic dichotomy *There*, where the standard variety is used in formal and educational settings only while home interaction is in the vernacular. She then moves to describe how *Here* her children use Arabic at home. Family Language Policy, as inferred from the narrative, is to use *Arabic* in the home, which means using the family's regional vernacular. But the children occasionally opt for Standard Arabic forms when the vernacular counterpart is not available to them. The fact that they find Standard Arabic forms – referred to here as 'proper' – easier to retrieve than vernacular forms – referred to here as the default 'Arabic', expected in the home – is explained with reference to their LSS education and the fact that they successfully completed qualifications in Standard Arabic. In this way, the headteacher in effect inverses the question (whether pupils' use of the vernacular in the LSS setting is overridden): Whereas in *There* settings it can be assumed that pupils are more confident in vernacular Arabic than in the standard variety, the reality of *Here* is that in fact standard forms are occasionally encountered where vernacular forms are expected. The combination of LSS practice and Family Language Policy leads to a realignment of linguistic form and context, which in turn serves to reaffirm the actors' commitment both to formal language teaching and to heritage language maintenance in the home. Prevailing dispositions about the expected role division among the varieties are corrected with reference to the diasporic reality; recognised measures of success (qualifications and the avoidance of English in the home) are presented to justify the choices made in both LSS and family policy.

Heritage language as choice

Students attending LSSs may be proficient in a variety of languages; this is brought about through the cosmopolitan nature of LSS clientele and the reality of the settings from which they originate. In post-colonial settings, the colonial language(s) are usually acquired through the education system. These linguistic repertoires are imported from *There* and renegotiated *Here*.

Extract 6 presents the response of a teacher from an Armenian LSS, attended by twelve students, to a question regarding language practices in the classroom. Here, one factor influencing the linguistic repertoires of staff and students – and contributing to the multilingualism in the classroom – is the fact that Armenia was formerly part of the Soviet Union. This becomes evident in the extract when the teacher discusses the use of Russian to facilitate teaching:

Extract 6: Interview at Armenian LSS

Interviewer 1:	So, sometimes in the classroom, even though they speak Armenian at home, do you sometimes have to use English to explain things to them?
Teacher 2:	Yes, to explain. Some word is very hard. Armenian words [are] very hard. And then I have to break that word in small words to explain what is that mean, and then how we bring together, and then I have to explain that word meanings in English, they can understand more, because just straight Armenian they are thinking 'oh what is that mean?'. You have to explain in English, some children for Russian, because I can speak Russian too, it's my second language, Russian. And then, I have to explain how we need to write that word, and why that word is so long. So many hard words in Armenian.

The teacher justifies the use of English to provide clarifications to students, as it allows the students to understand more, aiding their learning of Armenian; translanguaging is thus presented as aligned with the LSS's recognised mission statement. The teacher continues to describe how she uses Russian, her 'second language', offering a similar justification. She embraces the reality of the pupils' and her own plurilingual repertoire as an instrument serving the school's policy to promote Armenian.

Extract 7 is from an interview with the headteacher of an LSS that teaches French primarily to students of Cameroonian background. As in the Armenian case, the colonial history of Cameroon has impacted on the linguistic repertoires of LSS staff and students. Earlier on in the conversation,

the headteacher distinguished between the 'taught language' in the school, French, and the 'mother tongues', African languages, that constitute parents' home languages and which some pupils are exposed to in their home in the UK:

Extract 7: Interview at French-African LSS

Interviewer 2:	And how important do you think it is to learn the 'mother tongue' […] or several 'mother tongues', in order to be able to link up with the heritage?
Headteacher 5:	Those days, to us particularly, the mother tongue is not as much a link to the heritage, French is more the link to the heritage than the mother tongue, because done the studies in French, so the heritage has been preserved in French.

Prompted by the interviewer to link the promotion of 'heritage' to 'mother tongue' as previously defined, the headteacher relates the practice adopted *Here* to the conventions followed *There*, where education is delivered in French. The concept of 'heritage' is in this way linked invariably to the delivery of formal education. While we witness how the diasporic practice aims at replicating language policy *There*, we also note a particular diasporic positioning in the justification that is provided and which links the choice of French to 'heritage'. Characteristic of the diasporic stance is the re-negotiation of the indexical values of language varieties in a plurilingual repertoire. Actors acknowledge the scalar arrangement of such varieties but allow for scales to be re-defined in relation to the reality of the diaspora setting and the goals and expectations of actors and participants including LSS staff and their clients. We return to this point in our concluding remarks.

'Here' and 'Now' as scaffold

The reality of *Here* means that English is the main language of the majority of LSS students and its use in this setting is inevitable (see Blackledge and Creese 2010a; Martin et al. 2007). However, given the primary aim of LSSs to maintain heritage languages, the use of English ostensibly departs from expected 'heritage language only' practices in this setting.

Extract 8 presents the response of the headteacher of a Persian LSS that has been running for over thirty years and is attended by approximately eighty-five students, when asked about the use of English in the classroom:

Extract 8: Interview at Persian LSS

Headteacher 6:	In the past we had one teacher who was adamant to speak only Farsi and I didn't think myself that it would be constructive if the child is struggling […] and I said probably to speed it up you need to at least back it up with a bit of translation and continuum.

The headteacher contrasts the monolingual, Farsi-only policy of one teacher with her own opinion that the use of English is acceptable. The use of English is justified as it serves a practical purpose: it aids the teaching of Farsi (Persian). This reflects the reality of *Here* in which students are more proficient in English than Farsi. The headteacher also justifies the use of English as part of a set of linguistic resources that can be drawn on and utilised in the LSS; her reference to a 'continuum' implies a fluid set of linguistic resources that can be drawn on in a flexible manner to teach students (cf. Blackledge and Creese's 2010a discussion of 'flexible bilingualism').

Extract 9 presents the response of the headteacher of the German LSS to being asked about students' language practices at break times:

Extract 9: Interview at German LSS

Interviewer 3:	Do the children tend to speak German amongst themselves, like in the break times, or anything or?
Headteacher 3:	We had years where this was the case, at the moment the majority – because we're fifteen minutes break between the two – ten to fifteen minutes – and many of them quickly go into their English, and some parents say 'oh no you should really sort of lean on them and say no', but I said we have to acknowledge their first language is – English is the emotional language, so we have to accommodate that.

The headteacher opens her response with a description of *Then* – an earlier practice confirming the picture depicted by the interviewer. She then shifts to *Now*, offering an explanation for the change, for which the word 'because' serves as a cue. She contrasts the prevailing practice of the children (to speak English during breaks) with the attitudes and expectations of parents, the school's client base, thereby alluding to a potential clash between what the school allows and the ideological dispositions that guide the community that it serves. In light of that contrast, she moves to justify the school's practice, introducing that justification with the cue 'but I said'. As in the case of the Persian LSS, the justification provided by the German LSS headteacher is anchored in the reality of *Here* and the utilitarian value of acknowledging diasporic reality: English is students' 'first', 'emotional' language and this needs to be accommodated in the LSS.

Extract 10 is taken from a later point in the same interview in which HT3 discusses language practices in the classroom:

Extract 10: Interview at German LSS

> Headteacher 3: I rarely use English, yeah, just make sure that in a roundabout way they do understand. We have sometimes children who didn't speak that much at home, and they spoke more once they started coming to our classes. So to help them along, that's where my teenagers sometimes come in, that they whisper to them maybe something to keep it all on a straight and narrow, but if a child is totally lost it wouldn't be fair to let them struggle.

The headteacher's statement that she 'rarely' uses English aligns with the ideology of monolingual classroom practice in language teaching. She then goes on to describe and explain difficulties encountered by children in the classroom as a result of limited exposure to German in the home. The contrastive marker 'but' serves once again as a cue for the introduction of a justification for the teacher's use of English in the classroom, for the sake of 'fairness' and the duty not to allow students to struggle.

Discussion and conclusion

Lytra (2012) and Karatsareas (2018) demonstrate how LSS actors' attitudes are shaped by language ideologies replicated from the origin countries. Lytra (2012) relies strongly on Gal and Irvine's (1995) aforementioned postulation of three semiotic processes involved in the discursive representation of language ideologies. Blackledge and Creese (2010a) note how actors acknowledge the reality of 'flexible bilingualism' when describing practices while otherwise making ideological statements in support of 'separate bilingualism' (embracing ideologies of nationalism in relation to the origin countries as part of their mission to promote intergenerational transmission of community languages). They interpret actors' descriptions and explanations of 'flexible bilingualism' as an implicit endorsement of language mixing and thus as an alternative institutional ideology to 'separate bilingualism'.

In relation to Gal and Irvine's (1995) processes it can be argued that describing practices of 'flexible bilingualism' might be seen as counteracting prevailing dispositions in regard to erasure (denying recognition of certain practices) and as crossing the boundaries of opposition (between acceptable and non-acceptable practice), counteracting fractal recursivity. Implicitly, acknowledging the use of certain variants can also be seen as an indexing act: Huang (2020) argues for the presence of a 'stratified ideological ecology' as a diasporic phenomenon, where the value of Putonghua is recognised but also contested in regard to certain contexts of interaction. She considers this to be a manifestation of the Bakhtinian notion of 'heteroglossia' and its association with stratified functions of language varieties. Like Blackledge and Creese (2010a), Huang considers actors' descriptions of 'translanguaging' (the use of both English and Chinese in the classroom) as a re-negotiation of language ideologies. Huang points out a key theme – 'it is different now' along with 'it is necessary here' – on which actors rely, referring to changes on the time axis and a new situation that promotes the value of Putonghua and makes access to teaching materials easier.

Our interview data demonstrate how actors go beyond descriptions and explanations of classroom practice, from which new ideological dispositions might be inferred, and offer justifications, thereby explicitly formulating alternative ideologies. We regard these justifications as being triggered by the presence of the researchers and the associations that it evokes with institutional evaluation and assessment processes. We argue that in formulating justifications for practices, actors are taking a significant step beyond mere description and explanation and toward more explicit negotiation of a new ideological stance. We regard justifications as important indicators of shifting ideologies, where the reality of the diaspora figures in the argumentative formulation of practice and policy. Gal and Irvine (2019) define ideologies as social action (rather than doctrine) that draw on the organisation of difference. Ideologies offer a view of the world that is partial, in that it is dependent on perspective and so it is inherently contestable. Formulating ideologies is an act of social positioning that entails differentiation and the construction of boundaries, often achieved by way of comparison and the scalar positioning of values.

We have shown above how actors rely on comparisons between *There and Then*, referring to the practices and values of origin countries and sometimes to past experience in the diaspora communities, and *Here and Now*. The interview extracts also offer insight into actors' indexical referencing of language varieties and their scalar positioning of attitudes: In the Chinese school, Cantonese is positioned lower than Mandarin but higher than English ('when they speak Cantonese it's still Chinese and it's better than speaking English'; Extract 1), justifying the preference now given to Mandarin over Cantonese while reiterating the commitment to intergenerational heritage language transmission. In the Arabic school, avoiding a clear preference for a particular regional variety (so as not to inadvertently disadvantage pupils based on family background) while admitting that Standard Arabic is not used consistently in verbal interaction leads to the postulation of a third-level variety ('a very neutral dialect … it's like a simple Arabic, but not related to any dialect'; Extract 3). Simultaneously, for casual interaction in the home, literary Arabic is indexed almost mockingly as 'proper' while the family's regional vernacular is indexed as 'Arabic' in contrast to English ('when they forget the word in Arabic, they'd say it in proper how did they learn it'; Extract 5). In the German school, attention to regional varieties is justified by attributing to them a status akin to (fully recognised) 'languages' ('this is what we are fluent speakers of, another language – nearly – because the grammar is different, the vocabulary'; Extract 4).

Acknowledgement of plurilingual repertoires also takes the form of indexing based on actors' own biography and linguistic environment: 'it's my second language, Russian' (Extract 6); 'French is more the link to the heritage than the mother tongue' (Extract 7). To justify the use of English in the classroom, actors index it as a bridge that facilitates access to the pupils and supports their learning: 'back it [= Farsi] up with a bit of translation and continuum' (Extract 8); 'English is the emotional language' (Extract 9); 'just make sure that in a roundabout way they do understand' (Extract 10).

Actors draw comparisons and contrasts through juxtaposition of states of affairs flagged by the contrastive conjunction 'but': 'We used to have [= Cantonese classes], *but* now we don't have it anymore', (Extract 1); 'a simple Arabic, *but* not related to any dialect, *but* we respect students in the school are just exchanging some words' (Extract 3); 'We have Standard German as the main language, *but* sometimes we do bring this into play' (Extract 4); '*but* if a child is totally lost it wouldn't be fair to let them struggle' (Extract 10); and more. In this way, presupposed dispositions are explicitly contested through an argumentative discourse structure that anticipates and processes hearer-sided inferences and introduces a 'broken causal chain' (Rudolph 1996).

We have followed Gal and Irvine's (2019) approach to language ideology as social action, and the semiotic model of language ideological dimensions including indexicality, boundaries and erasure, and have also drawn on a pragmatic-functional understanding of the actions involved in description, explanation and justification (Rehbein 1984; Hohenstein 2006). We have shown that in our interviews with LSS staff, actors go beyond mere description and

explanation of diasporic practices of 'translanguaging' or 'flexible bilingualism'. They engage in active justification of these practices by contrasting historical and spatial perspectives, by introducing new indexing and scalar re-positioning of language varieties, and by blocking potential chains of inference from existing ideological dispositions through contrastive juxtaposition. We consider this to be evidence that actors are not just aware that diasporic practices clash with ideological dispositions on language that are carried over from origin countries; rather, by formulating justifications for these practices actors engage actively in forging new ideological stances that are tailored to the diasporic setting and are in that way assuming new forms of agency: They empower themselves to present their practices as beneficial and effective to achieve the objectives of the LSSs – to promote the target, heritage language – and thus as connected inherently to the common ground that all sides in the interview interaction accept and share. While those practices evoke natural processes of self-reflection that the actors inevitably engage in as part of their diasporic teaching practices, they become apparent and explicitly formulated as a result of the prompt provided by the interview setting, where actors seek to establish ideational harmony with the interviewers and to that end resort to actions of speech that convey justification.

Our study has implications for an understanding of the role and format of LSS practice, and thus also for policy initiatives that seek to support the work of LSS: It demonstrates the sense of agency among LSS actors and the fact that they are concerned with tailoring the delivery of their curriculum to the abilities and interests of pupils, and in particular to take into consideration pupils' language repertoires, including their multilingualism and use of non-standard or vernacular varieties of the target or heritage language. Yet this agency and its background are not sufficiently recognised and acknowledged by those with authority in the sector – be they those who prepare and provide curriculum material, or those who advise on the curriculum or vet it. The effort made to justify practices indicates a sense of insecurity in regard to the common ground with those who have an interest in the work of LSS.

In terms of methodology, we have demonstrated how semi-structured interviews are useful instruments to elicit expressions of attitudes and as such they complement classroom observations and questionnaire-based surveys. Once elicited, interviews are revealing, particularly when they undergo a discourse-based analysis where participants' actions of talk are assessed in regard to the spaces of knowledge that are shared in the institutional context and among the participants, and the goals that such actions serve. The build up of description, explanation and justification characterises actors' responses to the interview prompts and opens a channel to convey shifting ideological stances. From this, we learn that not only are ideologies themselves discursive dimensions with semantic components, but their transmission and indeed construction is itself a discursive event, one that can be captured by assessing the components of actions of talk.

Notes

1. We use the term *heritage language* with caution, as we are aware of its ambiguity and the complexity of the notion of 'heritage' (see Eisenchlas and Schalley 2020 for a critical discussion of such terminology). The data obtained as part of our broader LSS survey (outlined below) demonstrated that maintaining 'heritage' is the primary motivation for parents to send their children to LSSs in Manchester. In this context, *heritage language* is arguably more neutral than alternative terms such as *community language* or *home language* since, for the actors involved, the 'languages' in question are of interest to them as they represent some form of heritage.
2. The use of the term *actors* is widespread in the ethnography of institutions. In the case of language policy research, those viewed by researchers as holding power in language planning are defined as actors, since they have an active, agentive role in the way that they implement, interpret, and resist transformative language policies (Hornberger et al. 2018).
3. The project was led by Yaron Matras as part of the Multilingual Communities strand of the AHRC-OWRI consortium 'Cross-Language Dynamics: Re-Shaping Communities'.

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