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Translanguaging in the contact zone: Language use in superdiverse urban areas

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Introduction

People and languages have always been on the move, and diversity in the world's urban areas has been well-documented since antiquity. By the same token diverse languages and cultures have always been in contact. However, the mass movement of people associated with globalisation, coupled with the mobility of the linguistic and semiotic message in online communication, now indicate social and linguistic diversity of a type and scale not previously experienced. With the emergence of new sociolinguistic configurations that such mobility entails, so new theoretical understandings are developed and deployed. In this paper I discuss two concepts that are current in contemporary sociolinguistics – superdiversity and translanguaging – and explore their relevance for research into contemporary language use.

I argue for the utility of both concepts principally because in some quarters the multilingualism associated with globalisation is regarded not as a resource, or even a fact of life, but as an obstacle. There is no doubt that the circumstances that lead to great sociolinguistic diversity differ from place to place and across time. Patterns of migration which entail social and linguistic heterogeneity in urban Delhi or Dhaka are different from those that bring about multiplicity in Madrid or Manchester. Ancient Athens is not twenty-first century London. But the same arguments which see diversity denied in the global South certainly resonate with those used in the global North. A university professor in India assures me that her institution is doing everything it can to combat the 'problem of multilingualism'. A British Prime Minister appears on the radio to suggest that the threat of terrorism in the UK can be addressed if only Muslim mothers would learn English. Both the professor and the politician are troubled by the way that the multilingualism of contemporary urban life disturbs notions of linguistic fixity and boundedness, and hence of social homogeneity and even national cohesion. I maintain that a counterpoint is needed: policy – and my main interest is educational policy – needs to be informed by sociolinguistic descriptions of contemporary language use which in turn need to take into account the nature of linguistic and cultural diversity in the world's urban areas.

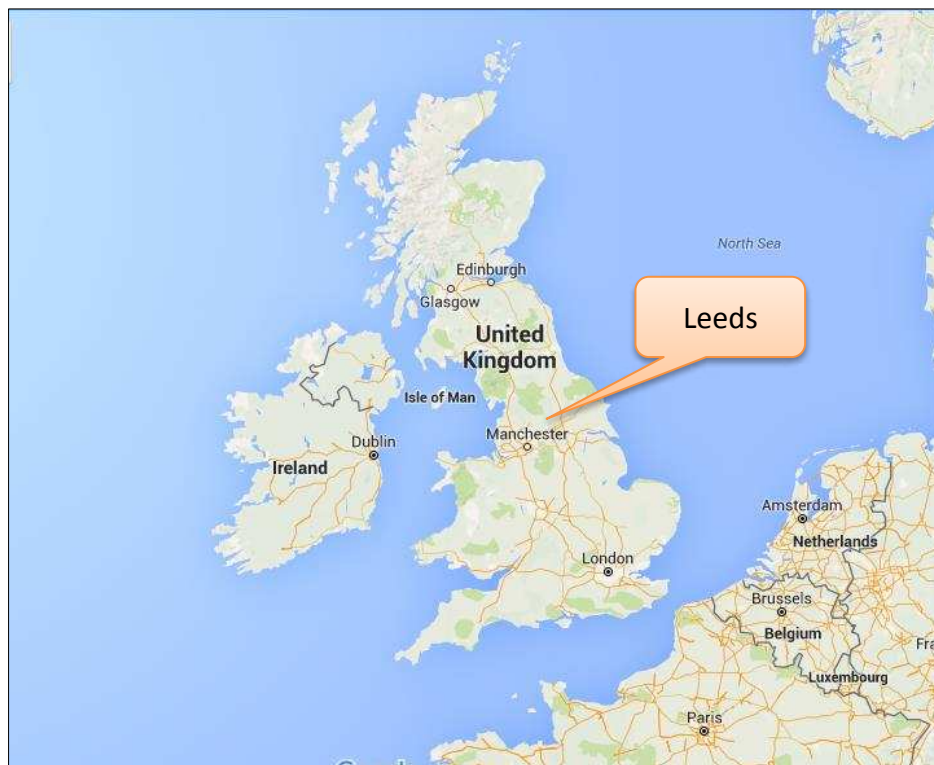
I begin by providing a definition and discussion of the sociological concept of superdiversity, as it has been used by sociolinguists, as they attempt to elaborate relevant explanatory frameworks within which to consider language practices and policies in urban areas of the world. I suggest that superdiversity can refer relevantly not only to spatial concepts (for example superdiverse cities) but also to dynamic processes, which can be understood as superdiverse practices. I then turn to the concept of translanguaging, which I refer to as superdiverse practice, as an alternative paradigm for describing much contemporary multilingual interaction. I finish with a short discussion of how policy discourses about language use relate to language in education. I suggest that policies and practices relating to language in education should, but currently do not, reflect the sociolinguistic reality on the ground. I maintain that both superdiversity (as a sociological heuristic) and the superdiverse practices associated with translanguaging (as a descriptive lens) enable such a revised view.

My data derive from the Leeds-based part of a project studying contemporary multilingualism in the UK funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council of

Great Britain, Translation and Translanguaging: Investigating Linguistic and Cultural Transformations in Superdiverse Wards in Four UK Cities, known for brevity as TLang. The overall aim of the four year project (2014-2018) is to investigate how people communicate when they bring different histories, biographies and trajectories to interaction in contexts of superdiversity (Creese et al 2016). In my discussion towards the end of the paper I move beyond TLang to open up a space to consider a disconnect between policy and practice in multilingual contexts in both the developed and the developing world.

Superdiversity

The reality of contemporary multilingualism will be familiar to anyone who lives or works in an urban area. In the TLang project we look at language practices over time in public and private settings in four cities in the UK, to understand how people communicate multilingually across diverse languages and cultures. The overarching research question is: How does communication occur (or fail) when people bring different histories and languages into contact? One of the cities is Leeds, in the North of England. The Leeds TLang team are carrying out most of their research fieldwork in Harehills, an inner-city area a mile to the north-east of the centre of Leeds.



[Figure 1: UK, with Leeds indicated. Map data ©2015 Google]



[Figure 2: Leeds, indicating Harehills, 1.5km from the city centre. Map data ©2015 Google]

We characterise Harehills as superdiverse, like many of the world’s urban areas. The term superdiversity was coined by the sociologist Stephen Vertovec: his 2006 paper is usually cited as the original source. Superdiversity for Vertovec refers to a diversity which exists not just in terms of where people come from, but other variables including ‘a differentiation in immigration statuses and their concomitant entitlements and restriction of rights, labour market experiences, gender and age profiles, spatial factors, and local area responses by service providers and residents’ (Vertovec 2006: 1; see also Cooke 2010). The notion has been taken up and developed by sociolinguists interested in mobility, for instance Blommaert and Rampton (2011):

There is a growing awareness that over the past two decades, globalisation has altered the face of social, cultural and linguistic diversity in societies all over the world ... the multiculturalism of an earlier era (captured, mostly, in an ‘ethnic minorities’ paradigm) has gradually been replaced by what Vertovec (2007) calls ‘super-diversity ... characterised by a tremendous increase in the categories of migrants, not only in terms of nationality, ethnicity, language, and religion, but also in terms of motives, patterns and itineraries of migration, processes of insertion into the labour and housing markets of the host societies, and so on (Vertovec 2010). *The predictability of the category ‘migrant’ and of his/her sociocultural features has disappeared.*’

(Blommaert and Rampton 2011: 2; my italics)

Some commentators suggest that superdiversity is something of a fad: that the notion does not actually add any more to our understanding of linguistic heterogeneity than diversity, and moreover, that the way superdiversity is currently theorised betrays a Eurocentric and an a-historical worldview. Piller (2015) identifies an Anglo-centric bias

in sociolinguistic research into superdiversity, which derives, she suggests, from a misunderstanding of patterns of movement as universally novel, and a failure to recognise that migration has not in fact led to more diversity everywhere. As she says (2015: 5) ‘‘Super-diversity’ and heightened linguistic heterogeneity may thus well be part of the contemporary British experience but that does not mean we should theorize multilingualism on this basis.’ And quoting John Edwards (2012, in Piller 2015: 5), she maintains that ‘superdiversity is an obviously unnecessary term coined to suggest a non-existent development.’ It is of course a truism to say that diversity is everywhere, and indeed it is possible that global cities in the past (e.g. Istanbul, Baghdad) were at least as diverse than they are now. But engaging with the growing field of urban superdiversity in the sociolinguistic study of migration has its benefits. Not least it extends sociolinguistic attention beyond the linguistic and the social, to encompass the spatial and the economic. It enables, and perhaps obliges, a consideration of phenomena that have previously remained unexamined in sociolinguistics: it makes us look at things that we had not noticed before.

Following Blommaert and Rampton (2011, above, and cf. Arnaut et al 2015) there are at least three ways in which considering an area as superdiverse might take our thinking forward. Firstly, the world’s cities currently witness greater range, variety and dynamism in patterns of migration and mobility than ever before. The way populations move (including translocal and transnational movement back-and-forth) and the way they communicate locally, globally and transnationally online (Androutsopoulos and Juffermans 2014), entails a reconfiguration of the city. Second, the unpredictability of migration consequently throws out a corresponding unpredictability in the alliances between new arrivals that emerge. A contribution of ethnography is to enable the examination of such alliances, associated with the practices of being superdiverse. And thirdly, although superdiversity is a common characteristic globally, it is manifest differently from place to place, pointing to the value of comparative fine-grained studies of superdiverse processes and practices.

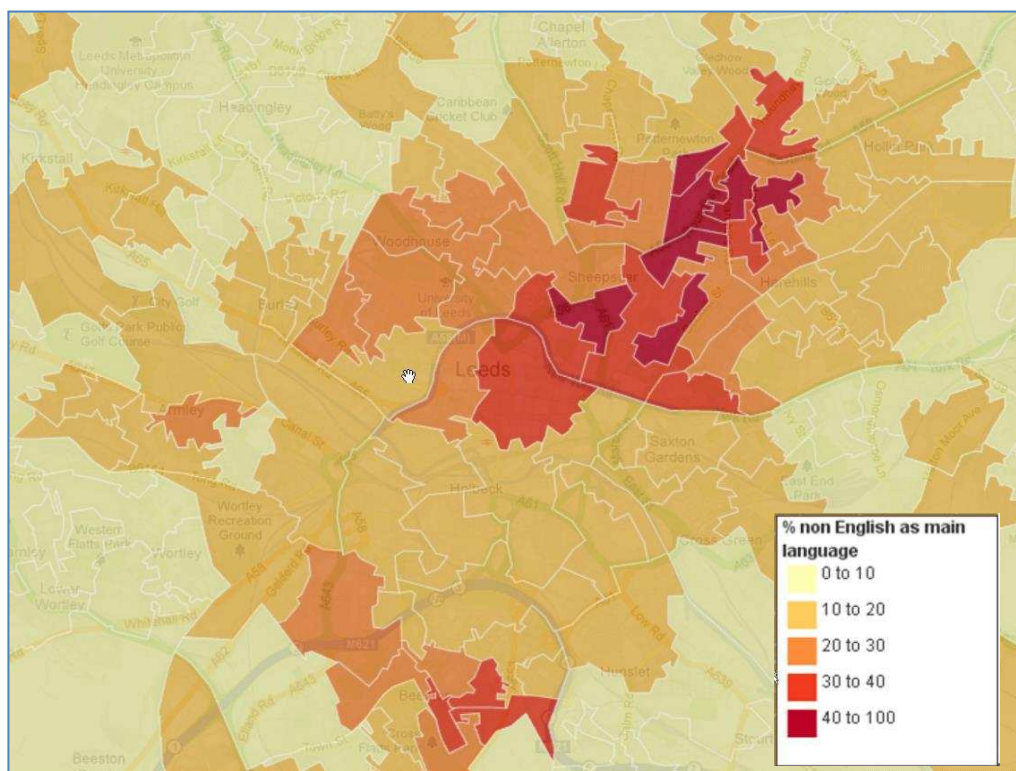
I shall consider each of these in turn, with reference to emergent findings from the TLang project, as it is being carried out in superdiverse Harehills, Leeds.

Migration: Range and variety across dimensions

Harehills saw ‘waves’ of migration in the past: from Ireland in the mid-nineteenth century; Jewish settlement from Central Europe in the late nineteenth century; from German-occupied Belgium in WW1; from across Europe after WW2; from the Indian sub-continent and the Caribbean in the mid-twentieth century. In more recent years people have arrived from places such as Ethiopia and Eritrea, Somalia, Congo, Iraq, Afghanistan, and latterly Libya and Syria, where the political and economic situation has forced people to uproot and leave their homes. At the same time, citizens of the 28 countries which now make up the European Union are exercising their right to live in the UK. Britain’s urban centres, including Leeds, now host multilingual and multicultural populations from potentially anywhere in the world. Contemporary mobility brings broader diversification too: variation is not just in terms of where people are from but also their socioeconomic status, their educational background, their age, their motives for moving and so on.

But what does a superdiverse area look like? A census-informed snapshot of linguistic superdiversity can be found in this map of Leeds (with data from the 2011 census). The

darker the shading, the higher the percentage of respondents claiming a language other than English as their main language:

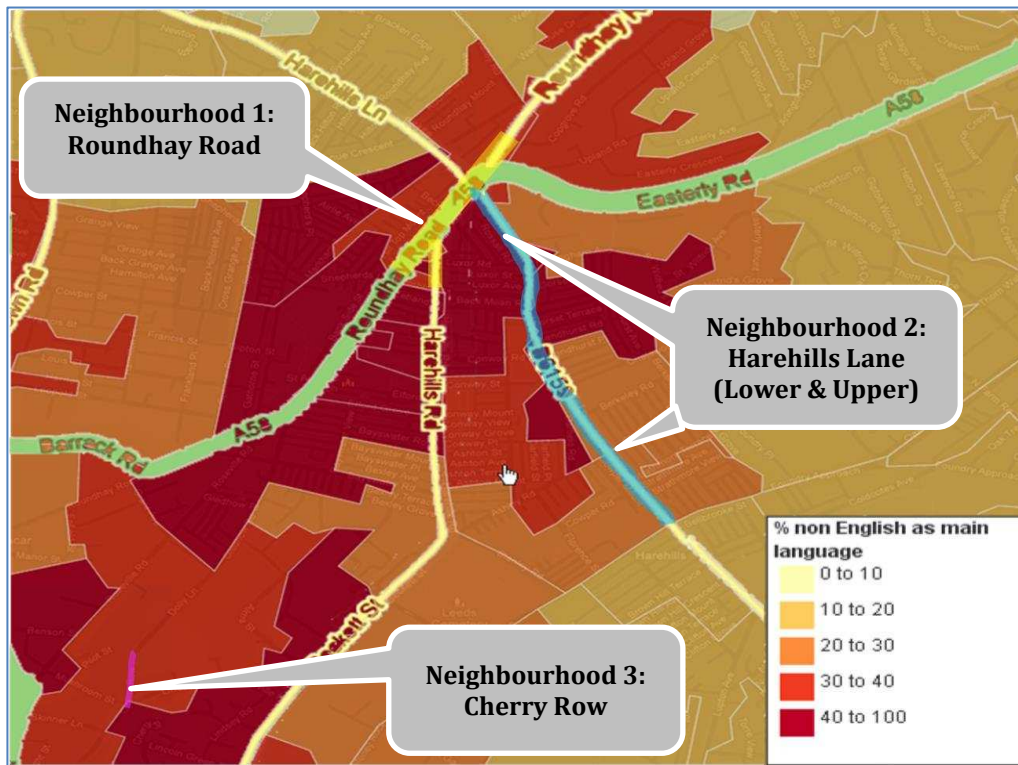


[Figure 3: Multilingualism in Leeds. Map data ©2015 Google]

Parts of Harehills, to the north-east of the city centre, are shaded dark red, indicating over 40% of respondents use a language other than English as their main language. Census 2011 data also reveals that between them these respondents claim over 65 minority languages as main languages.

Census data can only provide a limited account of multilingualism: it is restricted by the question asked on the census (‘What is your main language?’) and by the response rate amongst multilingual potential census participants. It is certainly incumbent on sociolinguists, as Busch (2016: 1) asserts, to ‘call into question the sometimes careless way in which statements are made about the numbers of people who speak certain languages.’ In the TLang project we use ethnographically-informed linguistic landscape methods (Blommaert 2013) to explore the neighbourhoods in Harehills (see in particular Callaghan 2015). In this strand of work we document the visual evidence of multilingualism and written translanguaging and its emergence in time using photographs of shop fronts and signage, we note the uneven distribution of multilingual texts across a neighbourhood’s streetscapes, and we exploit the potential of ethnographic observation of small businesses and services, and of their owners, users and customers, in order to discover the details of everyday life ‘behind’ the linguistic landscape. In so doing we consider how migration is not something that simply happens to people but itself is a process of city-making and re-making: with superdiversity comes the reconfiguration of the city (Hall 2015).

An early stage of the TLang research in Leeds involved documenting the linguistic landscape of three neighbourhoods in Harehills:



[Figure 4: Three neighbourhoods in Harehills. Map data ©2015 Google; diagram from Callaghan 2015]

Neighbourhood 1: Roundhay Road

Roundhay Road is a globalised corridor; a major arterial road whose shopping opportunities attract visitors from across the city and beyond, and where English seems to act as a lingua franca. Here there is evidence of the affluence and aspiration of longer-standing residents, displayed in the availability of luxury goods and services.



[Figure 5. Junaid, Roundhay Road. Photo: John Callaghan]

Historically the linguistic landscape of Roundhay Road seems to represent quite an advanced stage in the evolution of a migrant ecology, with two communities (Pakistani, Bangladeshi) having settled in the neighbourhood and becoming home and property owners. Others from these and other communities who arrived at the same time have migrated to more affluent areas of the city. These groups, however, are still represented in the neighbourhood by businessmen and women, members of the professions (health, law, education, charities, advocacy and advice), who have moved out of Harehills but still do business there.



[Figure 6. Optician sign on Roundhay Road. Photo: John Callaghan]

This optician's business is owned and run by someone from a South Asian background who does not live in Harehills but works there. The signage is in English: the lingua franca is used to appeal to a linguistically-diverse potential clientele, who also might have travelled across the city to Roundhay Road to visit their optician.

Neighbourhood 2: Harehills Lane

Harehills Lane is a main road which takes us towards the periphery of Harehills. This is a migrant area at a much earlier stage of development, a high street along which shops spring up to cater to more recent arrivals, among them EU migrants and refugees seeking asylum. As we know from the current humanitarian crisis in Europe, refugees often arrive with little or nothing and are hence struggling to equip themselves with the basics for survival.



[Figure 7. Shop on Harehills Lane. Photo: John Callaghan]

These newer groups are much smaller, more numerous, and therefore less cohesive than those which arrived in the last century, though like the first Asian migrants, newcomers are in many cases single and male. On Harehills Lane too we observe the trend towards monolingual English signage in shops, as the range of expert languages used in a neighbourhood grows and the need for English as a lingua franca correspondingly increases.



[Figure 8. Monolingual signage; multilingual customers. Photo: John Callaghan]

Neighbourhood 3: Cherry Row

Cherry Row is a smaller backstreet niche environment inhabited almost exclusively by Kurds, Somalis, and Eritreans. Here the linguistic landscapes are more visibly multilingual, perhaps reproducing conditions which existed along the Roundhay Road (Neighbourhood 1) in the 1960s.



[Figure 9. Multilingual travel services. Photo: John Callaghan]

Multilingualism here is more visible because a smaller number of expert languages used means that writers of the signs can use languages other than English: the need for English as a lingua franca is not so pressing. Cherry Row is also home to very recent arrivals, without the competence in English literacy of more established migrants.

Superdiversity and unpredictability

As Blommaert and Rampton (2011) suggest, a defining characteristic of a superdiverse urban area is its unpredictability. But although the linguistic landscapes of Harehills suggest great complexity, this complexity does appear to be patterned in some ways, and is not as unpredictable as it might seem at first sight. This patterning cannot easily be identified through census or counting, even at a very local scale, and only reveals itself on close examination, pointing to the relevance of linguistic ethnography (Creese and Copland 2015) as an appropriate research approach for the study of linguistic diversity in superdiverse urban spaces. We know precisely that Neighbourhood 1, Roundhay Road, is where we are most likely to find shops, businesses and services catering for the more well-heeled and more established migrants, for example. We are also aware that Neighbourhoods 2 and 3 are where we will find ones responding to the demands of those who arrived more recently or whose lives are more precarious.

The unpredictability perhaps lies in how the individuals in Harehills align, or potentially align. Who teams up with whom? And for what purpose? The contribution of ethnography is to shed light on the practices associated with being superdiverse (and not simply of living in a superdiverse area). Through ethnographic work we elicit the stories behind the signs which tell us how new ethnic alignments are made. An Afro-Caribbean barber employs young Ghanaian and Tanzanian assistants. A Kurdish man and his Polish wife run an 'East European' food store. A Slovak Roma woman and her Afghani refugee husband form partnerships with Pakistani entrepreneurs to run a pet shop, then a clothes outlet, then an internet café. The complexity of the relationships is seemingly unpredictable. But still an account can be found. The business partnerships, for example, are based on shared language (e.g. the Afro-Caribbeans and Africans speak English; the Afghan and Pakistani speak Urdu). The reasons for the marital pairings (Afghan/Slovak Roma, Kurdish/Polish) are less clear, but relate to the fact that there are many more Afghan men than women in Harehills, and hence Afghan men look beyond their place of origin for partnerships.

It is not only sociolinguists of mobility who have taken up Vertovec's notion of superdiversity. The study of the reconfiguration of the city, the process of superdiverse city-making, is the focus of a series of projects in critical urban geography led by Suzanne Hall, examining the multi-ethnic streets of Britain's cities (Hall et al 2012-2014; Hall et al 2015-2017). Hall describes interaction amongst the shopkeepers of Rye Lane in London, from over 20 countries of origin, maintaining that:

Interactions on the street are more than simply lingual, and one in four of the independent shops have been subdivided and sublet into smaller shops, where proprietors from across the globe, each arriving on the street in different migratory rhythms, share space, risk and prospect.

(Hall 2015: 22)

This, as Hall points out, requires a coexistence of a different nature than that expected and promoted by central government, one based not on community cohesion but on exchange of economies and ideas, and on a necessity to converse across lines of difference and across affiliations of ethnicity and origins. For Hall and colleagues, a concern is with a mismatch between ‘lived realities within diverse, comparatively deprived, yet economically active inner-city locations and authorized processes of displacement or regeneration’ (2015: 23). Their example is the different valuing of the street’s shops by the local residents and shopkeepers (on the one hand) and the local council and its redevelopment plan (on the other). In Harehills too, alliances based on exchange appear to be prevalent. Here too is the potential for coming up against state-sanctioned dominant discourses of integration and assimilation. Our own concern with this, as UK-based sociolinguists, might be with the mismatch between the monolingualist and monolingualising policy-informing discourses of integration and social cohesion on the one hand and the lived multilingual reality on the other (Simpson 2015). That is, there is a shrill insistence by politicians of all stripes that newcomers speak English; English dominates in certain spheres of public life (including most education); and a (lack of) proficiency in English is appropriated in language-related ideological debates about otherness and difference, as I discuss further towards the end of this paper. Conversely, as we see with the new alliances that are emerging in a superdiverse inner-city, multiple language use and fluid multilingualism or translanguaging (see below) is the norm, rather than the exception, and English is used as just part of a heavily multilingual repertoire.

The relative nature of superdiversity

A multilingual linguistic landscape can be documented in any superdiverse urban space: visible language use can be classified and categorised, and it is possible to make claims about the language regimes which operate in such spaces. However, without corresponding ethnographic work, any such claims would be weak at best. It is also an error to assume that if there is some equivalence in the surface nature of visible linguistic forms in an area, that the sociolinguistic conditions under which they operate – in the very varied contexts that they do – are also universal. On this point, Blommaert (2016) takes Pavlenko and Mullen (2015) to task for their ‘assumption that linguistic similarity equals sociolinguistic similarity’ (Blommaert 2016: 5).

Interactions increasingly take place in what Mary Louise Pratt refers to as ‘contact zones’, often virtual ones, between speakers of different origins. The contact zone is a challenge to the established sociolinguistic notion of a speech community:

[the notion of the contact zone] is intended in part to contrast with the ideas of community that underlie much of the thinking about language, communication and culture that gets done in the academy [...] Languages were seen as living in “speech communities,” and these tended to be theorised as discrete, self-defined, coherent entities, held together by a homogenous competence or grammar shared identically and equally among all the members.

(Pratt 1991: 37)

Today, language has been deterritorialised, as diasporic communities interact with one another in contact zones. Contact zones are different in different places and of course change over time. Although most of my work takes place in the UK, the first draft of this paper was prepared for a conference which took place in Delhi. In India, migration

patterns are different from those in Europe: the concern in India is not principally with international migration, but with internal and particularly poverty-induced rural to urban migration. Motives for mobility in India are typically the jobs that cities can offer, public services that are not available in rural areas, refuge from climate shocks (Young, 2013), and the forced sedentarisation of pastoral nomads (Dyer 2014). The consequences of migration-related population growth are felt keenly in India and across the developing world, as ‘developing-country cities lack the resources and institutions to provide all the new arrivals with access to jobs, housing, and basic services’ (Brueckner and Lall 2015: 1399).

Most of the languages that are audible and visible in India’s cities are therefore likely to be Indian languages (and the dominant global lingua franca, English), rather than (as is the case in the developed west) languages from around the globe. Nonetheless there are commonalities, principally a sociolinguistic reality that needs to be recognised: that meaningful communication can take place – and in some cases can only take place – when the languages are used together, not kept apart.

Translanguaging

Theories of language description need to reflect superdiverse urban life in a world where communication is frequently transnational and online. In this section I consider the construct of translanguaging, a paradigm for describing the use of linguistic and semiotic resources in superdiverse and transnational places. Many sociolinguists of mobility align with a view that theories of translanguaging are appropriate for describing fluid or dynamic bilingualism and multilingualism in the contact zones between languages and cultures. Translanguaging shares the same drivers as superdiversity, to the extent that it can be considered superdiverse practice.

A traditional view of bilingualism rests on the idea of two languages with two separate linguistic systems (an L1 and an L2). A puzzle for cognitive linguists is that while the two (or three, or more) separate languages can be accommodated within a single mind, in some situations they remain separate and distinct and in others they interact. It is as yet unclear what the processes are that enable this (Sharwood Smith and Truscott 2014). Nascent sociolinguistically-informed theories of translanguaging, however, take a different starting point: the proposition that separate, named, autonomous and bounded languages are societally constructed. That is to say, while language is a biological endowment, individual (discrete, autonomous) languages are social conventions (García and Li Wei 2014; Makoni and Pennycook 2007). Translanguaging takes an internal view of speakers whose mental grammar has developed in social interaction with others (García 2016). It supposes just one linguistic system with features of two or more societally defined languages that are integrated throughout (García and Li Wei 2014: 13-15). When people translanguage they sometimes use these features – which are simply their own – in ways which align with societal constructions of ‘a language’. Often though they use them differently, to produce new practices, in ways which emphasise the artificiality of boundaries between languages. This is most evident when languages and cultures come into contact.

In the TLang project we have identified a range of translingual practices that encompass not just the (obvious and expected) interlingual translanguaging, i.e. movement (and mediating, and interpreting) between one societally recognised language and another. Following Jakobson’s classification of translation (1959), we describe intralingual,

intersemiotic and interdiscursive translanguaging (Baynham et al 2015). Intralingual translanguaging entails shifts from specialized registers into everyday English, in an endeavour to explain technical terms. Intersemiotic translanguaging involves shifts and switches between spoken and written, visual and verbal (Baynham et al 2015: 19) and – online – between written language and non-linguistic signs (e.g. smileys and emojis). Interdiscursive translanguaging is the translanguaging across discourses which occurs when there is an unfamiliar discourse that needs to be negotiated. Returning to the examples above of street-level communication based on exchange, the discourse of the city planning process (for instance) might be unfamiliar to shopkeepers and other citizens trying to make a living in a new environment. The transaction economies of the street favour those with competence in a range of languages, registers and discourses, including bureaucratic discourses around city planning, knowledge of which is crucial for those who need to navigate the regulatory regimes which are in play. Just as interlingual translanguaging involves moving between one language and another, so interdiscursive translanguaging can be understood as mediating or interpreting a discourse to someone who is outside it.

For the remainder of this section I present two examples of interlingual translanguaging from the first phase of the TLang project in Leeds. We followed Klára, a Czech community interpreter into her work, social and home spaces. Klára lives in Leeds with her husband, two teenage daughters and 6-year-old son, having migrated to the UK fifteen years ago in her early 20s.

Interlingual translanguaging at home

The talk in Klára's home is mainly about day-to-day family concerns. Klára typically selects features from her multilingual repertoire associated with Czech, but in situations of urgency when she needs to get a quick answer, or when speaking about institutions like school (in the UK of course), she will select features associated with the language that is dominant in society and that with which her children have greater proficiency, English. A good deal of the general conversation that is part of family life is on the topic of language and on multilingualism itself. In an episode full of humour, Klára prompts one of her daughters to say how good her carbonara was in a number of European languages. Klára herself speaks almost entirely in Czech throughout. At the level of family interaction though, the talk between Klára and her daughters is translanguaged: fluid interlingual practices are released, in family intimacy, from the social external conventions that tie them to one or another language. In the transcript, where the talk is in Czech, the original is on the left and a translation on the right.

K: ale teďka vážně řekněte mi jak vám chutnala tadyta omáčka protože to sem poprvý dělala to se jmenuje Carbonara (.) jak vám to chutnalo	K: but now seriously tell me how you liked this sauce because I did it for the first time it's called Carbonara (.) how did you like it
R: I can't taste anything	
T: das ist sehr gut ja (.) this is German ja German household [with mock German accent]	
R: that's not German you're just making it up	
K: tak teď to řekni francouzsky [loudly] c'est bon	K: and now say that in French [loudly] c'est bon
R: [makes a grunting noise]	
K: to vás učili ve škole jo (.) to si pudu stěžovat	K: is that what they taught you at school (.) I'll go there to complain

R: [...] baguette	
K: les spaghettis est bon	
R: bon [loudly]	
K: a španělsky	K: and in Spanish
T: me gusta	
K: gusta	
T: me gusta	
K: a špagety sou dobrý (.) jak se to řekne	K: the spaghetti is good (.) how do you say it
T: me gusta un spagetti	
R: marshmallows s'il vous plaît	

Klára responds to her daughter R's claim in German that *das ist sehr gut ja*, prompting her to repeat this in French; her other daughter T contributes in Spanish. Even as the family are talking about – and playing with – a range of features from different societally-recognised languages, there is fluid movement between them.

Interlingual translanguaging at work

Translingual practices are clearly commonplace in all domains of life in contemporary urban spaces. Translanguaging is clearly a bread and butter activity in Klára's workplaces, where she is a community interpreter. In this example, we see a familiar pattern of shift between languages in a triadic interpreting event (Li 2011): the patterns of movement between languages are predictable, associated as they are with the purpose of the interaction and the respective aims that each of the participants have. Here, M is the advocate, K the interpreter, and N the client. The basic structure of this mediated interaction is: M who doesn't share a language with N, communicates with N by means of K, who shares both M and N's languages:

M: do you intend to claim reduction of your council tax?
K: požádala ste si o snížení council tax?
N: ne
K: ne nežádala ste si když ste si žádala o housing?
K: she says no no...

M asks a question, which Klára interprets in Czech (but with the key bureaucratic lexis, council tax and housing in English), N replies and Klára relays her answer in English. An account of the event drawing on a paradigm that assumes multiple and separate bilingualism might interpret Klára's use of these terms as constituting a lexical gap, a lack of knowledge about the correct term in Czech, which is being filled by the English word. This would not be a helpful account here because it doesn't take into account the sociolinguistic reality. It is not simply the case that there is no term for council tax or for housing in Czech, or that Klára cannot retrieve the Czech term from her bilingual lexicon. Rather, the terms council tax and housing only have relevance for Klára and N in the new environment and the terms only exist in English in their repertoires. Indeed, why would Klára attempt to find a Czech word for constructs that are relevant for her and the client only in the UK, and only in (societally-recognised) English?

As these everyday examples show, translanguaging as superdiverse language and literacy practice is routine and unremarkable in daily life, in interaction at home and at work. Critical questions emerge that take us beyond description, when we juxtapose the practices that I have exemplified above with what is said about multilingualism in policy circles and in education. In the final section I discuss this disjuncture, with reference to language policy and political discourse in the UK.

Discussion: A fundamental disjuncture

National policy responses to the dynamic diversity associated with movement and mobility in our globalising world are uneven and contradictory. There is an inability in policy to recognise a multilingual and translanguing reality as the norm in many urban areas. Such a blinkered view is accompanied with an over-privileging of the standard variety of one particular language (or a small number of languages) in public life, disadvantaging those language users without competence in that variety. Most of my own research experience is of the field of migrant language education in the UK. Here there are frequent calls in public and political rhetoric for migrants to ‘speak our language’, often in the name of national unity and social cohesion. Such discourse is informed by deeply-entrenched language ideologies, i.e. ‘beliefs, feelings and conceptions about language structure and use which often index the political interests of individual speakers, ethnic and other interest groups, and nation states’ (Kroskrity, 2001: 1). The ideology of a standard language or small number of standard languages that should be used in the public or even private sphere across a country appears to be particularly well-established, and not just in the UK. A ‘one-nation-one-language’ ideology is interlaced with other beliefs about national identity, for example the notion that the nation state should be as homogeneous as possible. A dimension of that homogeneity is monolingualism. (In some parts of the world there is a state-sanctioned bi- or tri-lingualism: viz the regional bilingualism allowed in Wales or the autonomous regions of Spain; the official trilingualism of Singapore.) So while multilingualism and translanguing are the norm on the ground, monolingualism or a certain degree of bi- or trilingualism is hegemonic, that is it appeals to a common-sense notion that one language, or a small number of (hierarchically-arranged) ‘official’ languages, stands above all others as having a particular status as the standard language of the country or state.

In educational contexts too, language policies tend to insist on the use of the standard variety of one language or a small number of languages as the language of instruction (e.g. the three-language formula for education in India’s schools). As a result, say García and Hesson (2015: 221) ‘many language-minoritised students, speakers of different varieties of the languages used in schools, have high rates of academic failure.’ The dominance of a particular language – English, in the case of the UK – points to the imperative that language minority people have to learn it. The standard varieties and privileged genres of the dominant language have legitimacy in the public domain. As Bourdieu would put it, they are mis-recognised as the only ones which are legitimate. But we needn’t consider linguistic diversity to be a problem, any more than it should be uncritically celebrated. Rather, it is a resource to be drawn upon critically in educational contexts just as in out of class life.

To quote Hillary Janks, writing about English in South Africa:

Bourdieu (1991) draws our attention to the fact that while the education system generally fails to provide students from subordinated groups in society with knowledge of and access to the legitimate language, it succeeds in teaching them recognition of (mis-recognition of) its legitimacy (1991: 62). What is needed is language education that reverses this - that gives mastery of English, together with a critical view of its status as a global language. ... In addition, as English teachers we need to produce students who understand why linguistic diversity is

a resource for creativity and cognition, who value all the languages that they speak, and who recognise the paucity of “English only”.

(Janks 2009: 11-12)

The reality of contemporary communication, however, is deemed irrelevant in much national, local and institutional language policy and practice, which is overwhelmingly monolingualist and monocultural, and narrow in both scope and content. In the UK and in many other places, moreover, English is erroneously assumed by many to be the key both to individual advancement and to social equality. Pedagogical responses are required that reflect and value the translingual reality of contemporary urban life. Translanguaging was conceived in educational contexts: bilingual educator Cen Williams and colleagues coined the term to describe (and stress the pedagogical usefulness of) patterns of language use in Welsh secondary schools where children read a text in one language and discuss it in another (Williams 1996; cf. Blackledge and Creese 2010; Creese and Blackledge 2010 in complementary schools). Today’s populations increasingly need translingual awareness (Canagarajah 2013), as they develop a complex mosaic of multilingual and multicultural communicative competences, repertoires and language resources. In schools too, bilingual and multilingual students need to be allowed to draw upon these resources, rather than being restricted to the use of the one or two languages authorised in the school setting. As Ofelia García says, only by doing so will they ‘be able to demonstrate what they know, and especially what they can do with language’ (García 2016).

Conclusion

I began by outlining what sociolinguists understand by the term ‘superdiversity’, moving on to a definition and illustration of translanguaging as superdiverse practice. I finished by briefly considering inadequate policy and educational responses to contemporary multilingualism. Questions arise in all these areas. There is a need to explore understandings of superdiversity in contexts outside the developed north and west. Likewise, descriptions of translingual practice need to extend beyond migration contexts in Europe and North America. Moreover, with regard to translanguaging, more needs to be done to link cognitive with sociolinguistic understandings of multiple language use. For example, what are the cognitive as well as the social triggers for fluid movement across languages without functional separation? In educational contexts there is a lack of recognition of the realities of urban multilingualism, and a consequential lack of understanding of how multilingualism can be harnessed as an educational resource. But what might effective pedagogies that draw upon translanguaging look like? Finally there is clearly a great deal to do, academically and in terms of advocacy, to ensure multilingual speakers of non-standard, non-privileged languages are enabled a voice, regardless of the extent and range of their individual communicative repertoires.

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