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Bettina Migge

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## Linguistic Variation, Integration & Identity Construction in Contexts of Migration: An Assessment of Current Approaches<sup>1</sup>

Bettina Migge, *University College Dublin*, [bettinamigge@ucd.ie](mailto:bettinamigge@ucd.ie)

### Abstract

Research in sociolinguistics has to date predominantly dealt with (so-called) monolingual contexts and spatially fixed populations. However, with the growing focus on globalization, hybridity, identity construction and authenticity in the humanities and social sciences, there is renewed interest in what bilingual and multilingual populations do with their linguistic resources in contexts characterized by processes of mobility.

The aim of the paper is to give a critical overview of the research in linguistics that deals with language and mobility. I show that there are a variety of research strands that have partially different research foci and apply different approaches (of data collection and analysis). While there is some cross-fertilization between research strands, I argue that greater integration of both quantitative and qualitative approaches on the one hand and attention to complementary research in the social sciences on the other would much enhance our understanding of how mobility and language phenomena mutually impact each other.

### 1. Introduction

(Socio)linguistic research traditionally focuses on monolingual and spatially ‘fixed’ people. “[I]mmigrants are often excluded from sociolinguistic research on the grounds that they are not members of the core speech community” (Schleef et al. 2011, p. 207). A frequent outcome of mobility, namely language contact, is even today viewed with suspicion in many disciplines of linguistics such as structural linguistics and historical linguistics and languages that are well known results of contact-induced change (Creoles, Pidgins, Bilingual Mixed languages) are often excluded from certain research programs or typological databases (e.g. WALS (Dryer & Haspelmath 2013)). Language users with a migration background, including those who speak more than one language or variety and the hybrid practices that they produce, are widely seen as peripheral and possibly as deficient (read unsystematic) mostly because purity, homogeneity and simple correlations between language and society that hail from the nationalist era still impact on our ways of conceptualizing language.

The mostly covert persistence of such views is, of course, not justified because much of the research on second language acquisition (Ellis 2008) has shown that learners of so-called non-native speech may diverge from so-called native speakers’ speech patterns, but is still systematic in nature. That is, learners’ so-called interlanguages are not unprincipled, but are, like so-called native-speakers’ language use, guided by structural rules and principles (Selinker 1972)—the latter are simply different from those of the traditional native speaker group. Beyond structural principles, more recent work (e.g. Norton 2000) has also highlighted the role of so-called non-structural, subjective factors—such as language ideologies and social motivations to align with certain social groupings or social stances—in whether or not certain native patterns are adopted or rejected by non-habitual users of the language, or entirely new patterns emerge. Similar findings have emerged from the flurry of activity that has

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<sup>1</sup>This is a write up of a presentation given at the Sociolinguistics Summer School in August 2015 at Trinity College Dublin.

developed in the area of contact-induced language change following the publication of Thomason & Kaufman (1988). This research has shown that types of contact outcomes are closely related to the makeup of the social contexts in which they emerge and that the linguistic phenomena that arise from language contact are as complex and rule-governed as those found in languages less heavily affected by processes of contact.

In recent years, hybridity has become the center of attention in research in the Social Sciences and in the Humanities. Focusing on populations in large western urban agglomerations, Vertovec (2007) argues that population diversity is not only the norm nowadays, but that this diversity is also different in kind and primarily driven by processes of migration. People are not only coming from a much wider range of countries and regions in the world, but are also socially, religiously, politically and linguistically much more heterogeneous than in previous decades. It is no longer (or has it ever been?) easily possible to generalize over population groups as their life experiences including their origin, their trajectories and their aspirations, practices and social, cultural and linguistic models are likely to be rather disparate.

This new interest in diversities is also obviously having an impact on linguistics. Linguistic Anthropology, Sociolinguistics, and Applied Linguistics (language acquisition research) are the primary areas in which diversity is systematically investigated. Current work follows on from an earlier tradition of research in language acquisition which investigated the structural nature of immigrants' language use and tried to infer, either based on the phenomena observed or on the basis of observation, the processes that gave rise to these innovative phenomena. So, for instance, Pfaff's (1987) and Klein & Perdue's (1997) work on so-called *Gastarbeiter* varieties of European languages examined using descriptive and formal linguistic tools the degrees and nature of simplification in immigrants' speech from unguided language learning and argued that processes of pidginization and fossilization (Ferguson 1996) were responsible for these phenomena. Later work was concerned with identifying the differences between native and non-native speech (Adamson & Regan 2001; Bayley & Preston 1996). Using quantitative sociolinguistic tools, they were particularly interested in determining whether or not both groups of speakers were making use of variable linguistic features to the same degree which were conditioned by the same kinds of social and linguistic conditioning factors. This line of research is still active and has recently received new impetus.

There is also qualitative research in the area. This line of research, spear-headed by researchers such as Ben Rampton (1995) and Blommaert & Rampton (2011) among others, is not so much interested in correspondences between native and non-native speech, but in how speakers draw on different languages in order to create social meaning. Research focuses primarily on language-based issues while socio-politically relevant findings such as how this research can contribute to a better understanding of highly debated issues such as integration, belonging and newcomers' identity construction are not systematically considered. The only line of research that takes these issues as the primary focus of their research is work within Critical Discourse Analysis.

The aim of this paper is to provide an overview and to critically assess the linguistically-relevant research on migration and to relate it to social science research on migration. Given that there is a much longer tradition of research on issues of migration in the Social Sciences, linguistically-based research can and should benefit from their insights in terms of getting to grips with the larger social issues. Social Science research, in contrast, can greatly benefit from the insights offered by linguistic research as it provides an empirically-grounded basis for how these social categories are constructed, maintained and challenged. The paper will draw on the published literature and on my

own research on the broad topic of language and migration that has mostly been concerned with the Republic of Ireland and the South American countries of Suriname and French Guiana.

In part two I examine relevant social key concepts such as migration and mobility, integration and identity construction. In part three I look in more detail at the different linguistically-based research strands on migration and hybridity with a view to tracing, where possible, the historical development of this research and highlighting current indicative findings and methodological issues. The concluding section summarizes the findings and discusses their implications.

## **2. Key Social Concepts in Language and Migration Research**

In this section I briefly deal with relevant issues and key concepts that play a role in language and migration research.

### *2.1 From Migration to Mobility*

Samers (2010, p. 8) succinctly defines migration as “a complicated, challenging, and diverse phenomenon involving changing statuses and multiple geographical trajectories.” Migration as a concept is part of the larger complex of mobility studies and, broadly speaking, deals with issues relating to human mobility. Mobility studies generally distinguish between different kinds of mobilities. There is geographical mobility which examines the similarities and differences between regional or local mobility phenomena and those that involve long-distance displacement, such as transcontinental human mobility. Movement between rural and urban spaces have traditionally received most attention in the wake of increased globalization, but less widely studied phenomena such as urban-rural, rural-rural and urban-urban mobilities also clearly fall into the area of mobility studies. Besides rural-urban mobility, transnational mobility, which involves movement across regional borders, has probably received the greatest amount of attention in mobility research. In fact, the term migration is nowadays nearly uniquely identified with transnational movements in lay speech and increasingly also in academic language. Finally, research has also invoked metaphorical mobility which broadly refers to changes in social and cultural status. Although research may examine each of these types of mobilities as independent phenomena, they are by no means distinct, but take place concurrently, consecutively and are heavily intertwined.

To give an example from my own research sites, many people from rural Suriname move to urban centres in search of cash labour opportunities. For some, this geographical movement is best termed regional migration because they move to the capital of Suriname, Paramaribo, while for others, who have more extensive family networks in Saint-Laurent-du-Maroni, this geographical mobility is transnational because the latter town is situated in the French overseas region of Guyane Française (French Guiana). All people who engage in this rural-urban movement are also automatically implicated in metaphorical mobility in that they have to position themselves in a new social order. Older people, who often carry important community responsibilities in the rural communities such as arbitration of disputes, suddenly find themselves demoted because these functions are carried out by various institutions of the state in the urban centres. Younger people, who might have accrued a certain status in the rural community due to their ability in traditional activities such as hunting or gold-mining may find their status demoted to unskilled labourer in the urban centres where such skills are

not highly valued. By contrast, people who have good academic skills may, due to regional and/or transnational mobility experience, a rise in status.

Among types of mobilities, not only transnational but also permanent migration have received the greatest amount of attention while circular or bi-directional mobility and changing patterns of mobility have received less attention overall. In fact, it is often assumed that once people leave from one place and arrive in another, they will not engage in further mobility. While regular back and forth movement between different locations, especially if they were separated by oceans, was much less regular and common in earlier periods, this has changed significantly with the greater availability of diverse means of travel at more reasonable prices, at least in some regions. For instance, Irish people have a long history of migrating to North America. While earlier generations tended to remain for long periods (years) in the new home country or the old home before they engaged in further travel (back to the new home or the original home country), people now often do this journey at much more frequent intervals and also stay for shorter periods of times. At the same time, the phenomenon of remigration has become more important. People migrate to North America or UK, for instance, stay there for a number of years, decide to return to Ireland and then, after several years, again return to North America or the UK, or a third country such as Australia. Mobility is also not only or mainly driven by economic factors, but by a variety of reasons. For instance, in our research on migration to Ireland, my collaborator Mary Gilmartin and I have found that people's reasons for migrating to Ireland ranged from love, family relocation, adventure, desire for change, and education to more economically based reasons such as job opportunities and financial needs, or a combination of different reasons (Gilmartin & Migge 2015a).

Finally, migration research in the main tends to focus its investigations on the place of arrival, rather than on the place of departure, and the 'area/period' in-between receives even less attention as there is the assumption that mobility has only an origin and an endpoint. This is at odds with people's lived experiences because many people nowadays undergo several waves of migration throughout their life, making it difficult to clearly define endpoints and beginnings. All the locations that are part of a person's migratory trajectories have an important impact on their life: aspirations, opportunities, practices and on the development (or lack thereof) of these trajectories. For instance, many of the Haitians that come to live in French Guiana generally at least pass through, often spending periods of time stretching from a few days to several years in Suriname – or literally between the two countries as they go back and forth between them – where they forge important contacts and are exposed to practices – particularly in relation to local languages – that turn out to facilitate insertion into multi-ethnic and multi-lingual French Guianese society. While many end up staying in French Guiana once they have obtained residency papers, others, mainly men, often prefer to live most of the time in Suriname, possibly going back and forth between the two countries, because they find life more adapted to their needs there (Laëthier 2015). This suggests further that research on mobility should pay greater attention to so-called non-structural factors such as ideologies, motivations and socio-cultural issues which are best accessed at the level of the individual rather than the group.

Research on language and mobility has mostly focused on phenomena of language that arose due to transnational mobility (but see Kerswill & Williams (2000) for the effects of regional mobility). Language contact and sociolinguistic research has mostly focused on groups of people and on broad, objectifying social categories (e.g. age, citizenship, year-of-arrival cohorts etc). However, in recent years there has been a growing interest in focusing more widely on people's lived experiences and changes over time; this is only slowly being taken up in language and migration research. We also

need to obtain more information on the variation in individuals' practices, to take account of non-structural social factors such as personal, social and linguistic ideologies, as well as to focus on people's own networks and perceptions in order to define social groupings and categories that are more suitable for investigating the linkages between language and social practice in contexts of mobility. In addition, we also lack research on various forms of geographical mobility and how these, particularly circular migration and the 'in-between spaces' and other forms of non-permanent migration, affect mobile people's language practices.

## 2.2. *Integration*

Social Science research on migration is often not only interested in people's movement across space, but also focuses on questions of integration which can be broadly defined as how "newcomers to a country become part of society" (Castles et al 2002, pp. 112–113). Research often distinguishes between *migrants* who move to another political constituency on a temporary basis and *immigrants* who move to another country with the expressed aim of becoming a member of that society. The two terms are then further conflated with modifiers that indicate the permanency, legal status and/or spatial origin/destination of that movement, e.g. illegal rural migrant. In actual practice, the terms are often used interchangeably though, and are most commonly applied to low status and low-income newcomers rather than to all newcomers. A more neutral way of referring to people who have moved across political border is the term 'newcomer'.

Although questions of integration are obviously of great importance to nation states and societies, the term has been notoriously difficult to define and has been changing over time. Traditionally, integration referred to a process more or less identical to social assimilation. Essentially, it was assumed that newcomers will adopt or emulate closely the practices and customs of the local population and, at least in public, abstain from continuing those from their place of origin. Thus, according to that model an integrated person would be someone who has fully internalized and fully applies all the practices of the community they are intending to integrate with. This conception of integration has been widely criticized as being rather restrictive because it stipulates that the 'burden of the action' lies with the newcomer and no action is required from the in situ population. Moreover, there are serious issues with identification of the target norms for assimilation as they are not only variable within society, but are also continually changing. Instead, people are now often talking about acculturation. While this term can be interpreted to mean assimilation, it is generally taken to signal a two-way process whereby newcomers make an effort to find out, respect and learn the customs of the in situ population and the latter do not only recognize that the newcomers have different cultural practices but also try to find out about them and learn to respect them. Ideally, this would give rise to a situation whereby the in situ population and the newcomers mutually accommodate to each other and over time negotiate mutually acceptable ways of getting on with each other. In practice, however, the in situ population is often accorded greater power in defining the rules of the game. A third option is what has often been referred to as the salad bowl in the United States. This assumes that a society is made up of different cultural grouping that mutually respect each other's differences and that are glued together by a few minimal practices that are accepted and practiced by all of its members, regardless of their cultural ancestry.

Regardless of the model of integration that is accepted by a society, each body that attempts to measure integration will have to make decisions as to how they define and measure integration. The same is true for linguistic research on the issue. So far, linguists have not overtly addressed the issue in linguistic research outside of general

comments. However, there has been the underlying assumption, particularly in quantitative linguistic research, that native speech norms function as the learning targets for non-native members of a community. This would clearly position linguistic research in the acculturation camp. Essentially, researchers determine the variants of the variable in native speech, possibly stratifying them socially, and then compare them to those found among non-native speakers. However, the question that is rarely tackled is whether the linguistic findings correlate with the social findings. That is, do linguistics and social measures of integration cohere and if not, why not. The main reason for the absence of such studies to date seems to be that linguistic research does not make reference to integration as a social phenomenon as discussed in the social sciences, but generally relies on traditional sociolinguistic and applied linguistic criteria.

A very useful way for measuring integration as a lived experience and for determining changes in levels of integration is presented in Ager and Strang (2008). They propose to use an inductive approach for identifying domains of integration. These domains fall into four interrelated categories: foundations; facilitators; social connections; and markers and means that can be adapted to specific local contexts. These can be applied to three broad domains—cultural issues, social interaction, and employment—that were, for example, mentioned by interviewees in Ireland (MCRI 2008; Gilmartin & Migge 2015a). Facilitators are language and cultural knowledge, markers and means are employment-related matters and social connections relate to bridges and bonds with nationals, other newcomers and members of the local population. People's lived experience at one point in time and across time can then be measured in relation to these three domains.

### 2.3. *Identity*

Another issue that is regularly invoked in migration research are the identities of mobile people and the processes involved in their negotiation. As succinctly outlined by Samers (2010), so-called migrant identities, like those of so-called non-mobile people, are rather complex, being impacted by a variety of influences:

Though migrant identities constantly change vis-à-vis citizens, other immigrants, and compatriots remaining in the country of origin, they are shaped by influences associated with the country, region, or village of origin and other axes of differentiation including age, gender, religion, and skin colour. The ability to express this identity or these identities in the country of immigration in which they settle is a particular concern for many migrants. At the same time, many migrants also wish to adopt at least some of the cultural, political, and social practices of the majority of citizens in the country of immigration. (pp. 19–20)

This quote exemplifies the properties of identities and identity-construction processes as discussed by Bucholtz & Hall (2010). They argue that identities are not fixed, easily identifiable predispositions but are always emergent and temporary in that they are actively negotiated in interaction via a range of media. That is, in all their interactions, people actively position themselves in relation to their interlocutors, the nature of the encounter, the topic, their personal and institutional goals, etc. by negotiating alignment (adequation) with or distinction from one another and by assuming various stances (e.g. hesitancy vs firmness of opinion) or social positions such as authority vs. subordination. The process of identity construction may be highly intentional and conscious as, for example, in the case of active styling among teenagers or for a job interview, or it may be mostly unconscious and habitual. Negotiation of identities takes place via various semiotic processes at different levels of human practices such as,

language practices, clothing practices, spare time activities, choice of educational institutions, social aspirations, choice of country of immigration, etc., that are at people's disposal. Different processes may or may not cohere in that people's identities are not always logically consistent because people assume different identity positions in different contexts and the different identities from these different contexts influence each other. Negotiations also involve different indexical processes. People may overtly mention their identities ("I'm a traditional Irish lad!") or they may be expressed indirectly (and can be inferred from analysis of) through the use of linguistic practices, implicatures and evaluative stances. Several processes are usually operating at the same time and they do not always necessarily cohere.

Different research traditions take different approaches to identifying and analyzing identity processes. In Social Science research on migration, discussions about identities are typically based on people's overt statements about their self-identification and about their use of certain cultural resources. So, for instance, in research on migration in Geography, researchers are examining how migrants conceptualize space, the politics of belonging and how they create place-belongingness (Antonsich 2010). The lattermost refers to how people construct emotional and affective bonds with a place such as feelings of being at home while the politics of belonging refers to socio-spatial processes of inclusion and exclusion. While this research is mostly interested in the actual practices, they are typically discussed based on narratives elicited via semi-guided interviews. However, instead of systematically analyzing interviewees' responses from the point of view of identity construction, research typically takes a much more objectifying approach to people's responses (but see Gilmartin & Migge 2015b).

In Linguistics, identity processes are also studied using semi-guided interviews about people's lives, but traditionally, sociolinguists are not overtly interested in the content of these narratives. Topics in sociolinguistic interviews generally function to elicit different styles or types of speech where the aim is to obtain the most casual everyday speech (see Labov 1970, 1984). Sociolinguists traditionally study the distribution of variants of variable linguistic features in relation to a number of extra-linguistic features (e.g. gender, class, age) and then infer the social functions of these features from these correlations (but see so-called third wave approaches).

#### *2.4. Issues of Methodology*

This brief discussion suggests that the two areas, Linguistics and Social Science research (e.g. Geography and Sociology), are in fact complementary. While Social Science research examines the nature of social categories and broader social processes, Linguistics provides the tools for an empirically-based narrow analysis of people's actual practices of these categories and processes. This allows us to understand in more detail the dynamics, including the contradictions between them, that exists between people's ideologies (what they say they do) and what they are actually doing in specific settings.

In terms of approaches, the discussion so far suggests that an ethnographically-based approach which considers different data types is most suitable for a thorough investigation of issues of migration, identity and integration and their relationship to language. On the macro-level, there is a need to investigate the broad socio-historical, political and linguistic context, such as when did movements take place, who moves to where and what kinds of events or processes appear to drive this mobility. What type of mobility is involved? What are its overall demographics, such as origins of people involved, numbers and broad development of the numerical distribution? What are the languages that are spoken by both the mobile and the non-mobile population? These

issues are best determined on the basis of secondary literature published on the context. With respect to the meso-level of analysis, we need to examine the ideologies as they relate to issues of migration, integration, linguistic heterogeneity, etc, of all the people involved, those who are mobile and those that appear not to be, including decision makers. Matters of ideology can be researched using semi-guided interviews with different local social actors and observations which can then be examined using qualitative methods of analysis. On the micro-level, it is important to examine people's actual language use, for example, in situated interactions or in semi-guided interviews that deal with issues sensitive to migration. With respect to non-linguistic matters per se, it would be useful to examine how people talk about and position themselves to issues relating to migration and integration. In the remainder of this paper I will examine research on migration that deals with issues of language.

### **3. Language and Migration: An overview of types of approaches**

Research on language and migration roughly falls into two broad camps: quantitative and qualitative research. While the former studies are typically interested in exploring the distribution of variable linguistic features and their conditioning factors in one language, (usually the language of the so-called host country), the latter kinds of studies examine how people deploy linguistic repertoires in interaction in order to create social meanings.

#### *3.1. Variationist Sociolinguistic studies on language and migration*

Variationist approaches to language and migration have their origins in Second Language Studies that are primarily interested in understanding the process(es) involved in acquiring an additional language (Ellis 2008). While early research was mainly concerned with how people acquired the structure of a language, newer research is concerned with the acquisition of non-native speakers' sociolinguistic competence. That is, they explore how people acquire the social and linguistic factors that govern language use and the use of variable linguistic features in particular. This kind of research provides insights into the dynamics of language variation and change and into the processes of second (or additional) language learning. This approach to studying language and migration takes its cue from first and second wave quantitative sociolinguistics (Labov 1963, 1970, 1984). Specifically, it is based on an empirical investigation of actual language use in sociolinguistic interviews. The focus is on identifying sociolinguistic variables that are relevant to both native and non-native speech, to study this variation (i.e. identify the variants and their distribution), to quantify their occurrence in the recordings and to correlate the frequency distribution of the variants with relevant social categories. The final step involves comparing non-native to native speech patterns in order to see to what degree the former target, and have acquired, the patterns of language use of the latter. That is, (a) do non-native speakers of a language make use of the same variants as the native speakers, (b) is their frequency distribution subject to the same conditioning factors and (c) do the conditioning factors have the same strength. In line with the quantitative sociolinguistic paradigm's focus on vernacular language use, research typically focuses on non-standard features or variation between so-called standard and non-standard options.

Researchers obtain their data from both classic learners, such as people who learned a language through classroom-based learning and those who learned it outside of the classroom also referred to as unguided language learners. For instance, Adamson and Regan (1991) examined language use among Vietnamese and Cambodian immigrants in Philadelphia and Washington DC, respectively, Bayley (1996) studies language use of Chinese-English Bilinguals in California and Mayor (2004) explored the

speech of Japanese and Spanish learners of English in the US. Examining (ing), Adamson and Regan (1991) found that both native and non-native speakers showed similar patterns of variation and applied similar constraints which, however, applied in different ways. As in the case of native speakers, Cambodian and Vietnamese men were also using the variant [ɪŋ] more than Cambodian and Vietnamese women. However, there was more linguistic variation. They used the [ɪŋ] variant to a greater extent with nouns and *t-words* such as *something*. Mayor found that non-native speakers of English acquired gender differences in language use rather quickly while style differences only developed later. Finally, Bayley (1996), investigating so-called 't/d deletion', found that the frequency of deletion is dependent on the type of network. Chinese-English bilinguals who were integrated into a mixed social network were less likely to omit word final [t, d] than those who were in more homogeneous networks. Another study on L2 learners of French in Canada by Mougeon, et al. (2004) that investigated thirteen different variables found that the relative degree of fit between native and non-native speech did not only depend on social and linguistic factors but also differed from variable to variable.

One of the most recent studies in this line of research is Meyerhoff and Schlee (2012) which investigates the variables (ing), (t-deletion) and the use of quotatives in the speech of Polish youth living in Edinburgh and London and their local peers in both locations. With respect to the (ing) variable, they found that both groups used mostly the variants [ɪŋ] and [ɪŋ], however, Polish interviewees also used a reinforced variant [ɪŋk]. In both locations the Polish interviewees were sensitive to local norms, but only partially applied the same conditioning factors as the locals and the same factors, such as grammatical category, for instance, had a different strength in the two data sets.

In recent years the focus in this line of research has shifted from mostly morpho-syntactic features to pragmatic markers or discourse markers that are not essential from a grammatical perspective but add information about stance etc. According to Müller (2005, p. 1), "pragmatic competence in terms of knowing the cultural values of the second language [...] is [...] essential for successful communication" and acquisition of such markers is highly dependent on exposure to native vernacular norms because they are not generally taught in classroom contexts nor are people much aware of them. Studies that examine the use of pragmatic or discourse markers are Müller (2005) who looks at a number of such elements in the speech of German learners of English. Nestor et al (2012) analyzes the use of *like* in the speech of Polish youngsters in Ireland and Diskin (2015) looks at a number of discourse markers such as *like, you know, I mean* in the speech of Chinese and Polish adults in Ireland. Finally, Migge (2015) discusses the frequency distribution of *now* in the speech of a range of newcomers to Ireland, including non-native speakers of English and speakers of other varieties of English. All studies show that there is a fair amount of variation among speakers which cannot be easily explained on the basis of language acquisition processes, but seems to be related to extra-linguistic factors. Markedly local forms were used with the highest frequency by those who identify most closely with local culture. However, alignment with local culture is not the only factor that impacts on usage patterns. Attitudes to local and standard varieties of English and contexts of interaction also have an effect as well as the nature of the linguistic features as some features lack salience. For instance, some newcomers to Ireland show low levels of usage of local features despite positive alignment with Ireland because they have negative attitudes to non-standard speech (Migge 2012).

This line of research has produced significant insights into the relationship between native and non-native speech with respect to different varieties of English. However, there are also some shortcomings. First, studies rely too heavily on overall frequency distributions rather than examine the impact of the interactional context as is

typically done in so-called third-wave studies. Second, there is too much reliance on statistical inferences. Studies do not always investigate the social contexts in much detail and do not focus on understanding why certain people are 'off-target'. Third, it is tacitly assumed that variants belong to a single social dimension. Fourth, the selection of variables is not always done on the basis of whether or not they seem salient in the context, but on the basis of theoretical interest. Fifth, many studies take a national community approach, assuming that nationality is always an important factor in self-identity that will impact on language use patterns (Gilmartin & Migge 2015b). Because studies essentially have a linguistic rather than a social focus and do not consistently investigate socially relevant notions such as integration and identity, it is hard to say what social insights we can gain from these studies beyond the fact that non-locals only partially conform to local norms and that this is due to a variety of social and linguistic factors.

### 3.2. *New Dialect Formation*

Another line of research on language and migration that makes use of quantitative sociolinguistic tools and methods is research on the emergence of new language varieties. It has its roots in language diffusion and dialectology and its main aim is to investigate the mechanisms, factors and outcomes of language change. Focusing on vowel variables, the most well known study in this area, Kerswill & Williams (2000) and Kerswill (2002), investigates the levelling of different varieties of English and the emergence of new norms in the newly emerging town of Milton Keynes. Other studies have investigated such processes among varieties of Hindi in Fiji (Siegel 1985, 1997) and varieties of diaspora Hindi in Suriname and Mauritius (Yakpo & Muysken 2014). All these studies suggest that in cases where speakers of different varieties of the same language come in contact, the children growing up in these contexts will early on diverge from their parents' speech and establish their own norms that generally emerge from processes of koinization phenomena involving mixing, reallocation and levelling of related functionally equivalent forms.

A particularly interesting recent study in this area is Cheshire, et al. (2011). It investigates the outcomes of processes of dialect leveling involving first and additional language varieties that currently take place in all major northern European cities due to widespread migration and the emergence of multi-ethnic populations where language and language diversity is quite substantial and unguided language learning (of the 'host' language) is the norm. Focusing on Multicultural London, they investigate the features that characterize Multicultural English, when and how it emerged and the kinds of conditioning factors that govern its emergence and development. Relying on the synchronic and diachronic language data from three generations of both Anglo- and non-Anglo speakers (children, teenagers, adults), they explore the frequency distribution of a range of variables. They include so-called off-the-shelf, local and innovative variables. Off-the-shelf variables such as discourse marker *be like* and the GOOSE vowel are easily available in many places and are not heavily linked to other features. They are very salient, but their conditioning factors differ across settings. Local variables refer to variation between vernacular variants and standardized forms such as past copular agreement, article allomorphy and realization of the KIT, FOOT, STRUT, PRICE, etc. vowels. Innovative variables are those that refer to entirely new options for expressing certain meanings which are, however, usually in variation with local or standardized forms. In the study on Multicultural English, *this is + speaker quotative* was considered an innovative variable.

The study shows that children growing up in this context typically rapidly shift to English as their main means of communication. In terms of linguistic norms, children focus on peer-group norms from early on, about the ages of 4–5 rather than on the linguistic models of their caregivers. They show that incrementation plays a role for some off-the-shelf features (*be like* and *GOOSE* vowel) whose frequency rises during teenage years but peaks in pre-adolescent years. The use of other features such as the vowel in *FOOT*, *FACE* and *GOAT* appear to be conditioned by gender and ethnicity. Anglo women appear to lead changes followed by Anglo men and non-Anglo women and then non-Anglo-men. The innovative quotative marker is led by pre-teens though it is not clear whether it will be sustained into adulthood. Comparison with the earlier data shows that some of the features (raised *GOAT*, *FACE* and lowered *MOUTH*, *PRICE*) closely resemble earlier speakers' vernacular style suggesting that these features are driven by additional language speakers of English. Cheshire, et al. (2011) argue that Multicultural English is certainly heteroglossic in that different features are led by different speaker groups and changes "are only loosely associated with specific ethnicities or language backgrounds" (p. 190). This variety is a good case of a koiné because speakers do not have clear target norms but are mutually accommodating to each other and the features that emerge in this process are developing into the local norms.

This type of study is very useful because it looks at different age groups and people from different socio-cultural, including national, groups and considers a range of variables. It shows that the process of new dialect formation is rather heterogeneous and involves many different processes which affect individual variables in different ways. However, the researchers do not examine how the different features or the entire feature bundle correlates with locally significant and emerging identities and/or social categories. Once certain features have been identified as salient, a third-wave approach would be highly useful in order to sort out the meanings and functions of these particular variables and their variants.

### 3.3. *Variation and change in the ancestral language*

While the dominant language of the community to which migration has taken place is generally the focus of attention in migration research, because it is assumed that competence in that language is of utmost importance for successfully negotiating one's life in the community, there is also some work on what is often referred to as the migrant's heritage language(s). Traditional research on migration often assumes that people immigrating to a new country essentially give up their language more or less rapidly and primarily make use of the dominant language. However, this is not always the case and some community languages are maintained over several generations.

One of the projects that fit into this line of research is Naomi Nagy's research project entitled *The Heritage Language Variation and Change Project* (HLVC), which is based at the University of Toronto. She describes her multilingual and multi-level project as pushing "variationist research beyond its monolingually-oriented core by synthesizing methods for examining both intra- and interlanguage choices made by multilingual speakers" ([projects.chass.utoronto.ca/ngn/HLVC/0\\_0-home.php](http://projects.chass.utoronto.ca/ngn/HLVC/0_0-home.php)). The project examines language use and change in eight non-official heritage languages spoken in Toronto (Cantonese, Faetar, Hungarian, Italian, Korean, Polish, Russian, Ukrainian). Some of these languages have long-standing communities in Toronto while others are relatively new. The project employs mainly questionnaire surveys to determine the language use patterns as well as attitudes towards the languages and their use. The data for linguistic analysis comes from recordings of conversations and sociolinguistic interviews and elicitation tasks. These data are analyzed using quantitative sociolinguistic methods in

order to examine the nature and development of a range of variable linguistic features from different areas of grammar. The data from the different languages are then compared to homeland varieties, English and to each other in order to arrive at generalizations about the role and development of contact-induced language change. For instance, Nagy, et al. (2011) examines the variable of (pro-drop). Examining this variable for the impact of a number of factors (e.g. continuity of reference, formal ambiguity of the subject's referent, clause type, priming by preceding subject, generation, ethnic identity, language use) in heritage language data from Cantonese, Italian and Russian, they show that there appears to be no relationship between any of the social variables and this variable, suggesting that it is not involved in the construction of social identity-related issues.

A somewhat different approach is pursued by my own project in part carried out together with Isabelle Léglise. Focusing on the Eastern Maroon Creoles of Suriname and French Guiana, we examine how they develop over time, particularly in the context of rapid migration from rural areas in Suriname (and French Guiana) to urban centers in both political constituencies. Relying on two school surveys, one carried out in each constituency, long term participant observation in both constituencies among Eastern Maroons and in encounters between the latter and non-Maroons, qualitative and quantitative analysis of recordings (situated, semi-guided interviews, conversations) in the Eastern Maroon Creole and mostly French, the project aims to explore a number of issues. They include the types of practices that relate to the Eastern Maroon Creoles, their social meanings and functions in the current French Guianese and Surinamese context, the (linguistic and social) relationship among varieties, to native varieties and other languages that have an important impact in the region and the ideologies of both a range of language users and non-users of these practices. To date, the study (cf. Migge & Léglise, 2013; Migge & Léglise, 2011; Migge & Léglise, 2015) suggests that hybrid practices are very salient throughout and are thus found both in smaller village communities as well as in urban centers and play a role in public and private encounters though to different degrees. On the one hand, hybrid practices emerge from contact with other local languages such as the related Surinamese urban vernacular, Sranantongo, and Dutch, French and English. On the other hand, they emerge due to broader social changes that impact communicative patterns. Beyond the adoption of vocabulary items from Dutch and French to designate things that are specific to this context (e.g. administrative terms), habitual users of the language have borrowed few lexical items. The incidence of such lexical items is higher among non-habitual users of these practices who mostly use it for cross-linguistic communication. It appears that their higher use is due to both crutching due to incomplete language competence and identity management. The relative lack of large-scale importation of foreign vocabulary suggests that the language and its speakers maintain a relative distinct identity. This is also confirmed by work on a trilingual dictionary where local collaborators are very insistent that what they consider to be regular native but not necessarily traditional speech patterns are to be clearly distinguished from those that are linked to strongly interlingual speech contexts. The arguments in favor of this approach always center on identity differences (*them and us* discourses) which are, of course, problematic in some ways because all of participants are French citizens. Code-switching patterns which involve both discourse and identity-related alternation patterns between Eastern Maroon practices and those from other languages are rather common in public and peer-group speech. In many cases they are of the insertional/code-mixing type where the Eastern Maroon creoles function as the matrix frame. However, there are also many instances where people appear to create linguistically fuzzy practices that cannot be easily related to any specific Maroon variety or any other language such as Sranantongo and are best

described as multilingual practices. Alternational practices serve an important role in managing social and interactional alignment and identities.

Equally surprising is the fact that to date we see relatively little structural change where new constructions or constituent orders have been adopted or differences in frequency distributions emerge due to the influence from the official language(s). This is quite unlike what we see for Sranantongo, for instance, which is undergoing significant change under the influence of Dutch (Yakpo, pc 2015). However, we do see changes in the overall communication patterns in everyday encounters and new social contexts. Changed or new features involve, for instance, the adoption of shorter greeting procedures, more direct communication (direct questions, lesser use of special polite vocabulary etc), and new politeness and status signaling procedures. These changes appear to be driven by overall social change rather than specific language-based models. These innovative patterns are giving rise to new styles and new variable patterns (Migge & Léglise 2013). Further analysis of diachronic data using quantitative sociolinguistic methods is necessary in order to understand in detail the interrelationship between social and linguistic factors. Overall, the research shows quite clearly that a multi-methods approach that combines several types of methods for collecting and analyzing social and linguistic data and which pays important attention to language ideologies and a detailed archeology of the historical context is best suited to obtaining a holistic understanding pattern of language variation and change.

#### *3.4. Code-alternation, crossing and mocking: Exploring linguistic diversities*

An important linguistic phenomenon typically associated with human mobility is code alternation also referred to as code-switching in the literature. It is defined as referring to the use of two or more languages or varieties of a language in the same interaction or across different ones. There is a relatively long tradition of research on this phenomenon both from a structural and from a socio-cultural perspective. The former line of research is mostly interested in so-called intra-sentential language alternation because the use of more than one language in the same sentence challenges formal theories of syntax that are premised on monolingual conceptions of language. Researchers (e.g. Poplack and Meechan 1995; Muysken 2004; Myer-Scotton 1993b) in this line of research are mostly concerned with discovering the grammar underlying such practices and what insights it contributes to current understandings of language cognition and the construction of grammatical models.

A different approach is pursued by social and functional approaches to code-switching initially spear-headed by Blom & Gumperz's (1972) research on the juxtaposition and use of two varieties of Norwegian. Their insights were then developed further by Auer (1984) from the perspective of conversation analysis and applied to data from immigrant communities. Myer-Scotton (1993a) applied it to data from East Africa. Their overall aim is to identify the types of code-alternation patterns that exist and to determine their social meanings and functions in the discourses in which they appear and thus to arrive at a broader understanding of the semiotics of such practices and the social processes that condition their emergence and maintenance in specific contexts and more generally. Researchers examine situated language use, drawing on the development of the conversational interaction (Auer 1984) and on the larger interactional and social context (Myer-Scotton 1993a) in order to understand the meanings and functions of code-switching. They rely very heavily on the notion of 'contextualization cue', as coined by Gumperz. That is, code-alternation practices do not have a fixed referential meaning, but make relevant "some aspects of the context which, in turn, is responsible for the interpretation of an utterance in its particular locus of occurrence."

(Auer 1995, p. 123). This means that the meanings of code-switching are arrived at through a process of inferences. This happens in two ways. Either it creates a contrast with what happened before, indicating otherness such as lack of agreement or difference, for instance. Or, in addition to signaling otherness, it also restricts the number of possible inferences “because cues may have (received) an inherent meaning potential due to conventionalization or frequency of use of the pattern” (ibid, p. 124). According to Auer (ibid), code-switching also has its own characteristics because “the situated interpretation of code-alternation as a contextualization cue is strongly related to the sequential patterns of language choice.”

What researchers examine is how mobile populations or their descendants draw on their linguistic repertoires in order to negotiate their place in society, including the different social networks they are part of. So, for instance, in Migge (2007) I show that Eastern Maroon male elders use code-switching (marked code-switching) with Sranantongo and other languages in order to negotiate peer-type solidary relationships and unmarked code-switching in contexts with non-Maroons often functions to negotiate an outsider status for the latter. Code-mixing or insertional switching is commonly used among young men in order to assert notions of young, urbanized and sophisticated manhood.

A specific type of code-switching is ‘crossing’ which was coined by Ben Rampton (1995) based on his research among multiethnic youth of immigrant background in the UK. He argues that it involves cases of language alternation where the actors make use of practices from languages that are not typically part of their repertoire, a so-called disjunction between speaker and code. They essentially appropriate practices ideologically linked to other speakers (or speaker communities) in order to create interactional meanings such as specific stances, assessments of people and contexts, alignments with certain social groupings and identities, etc. These meanings are typically of a marked type and take place in interactions among pupils and between pupils and teachers. For instance, he shows that students with different ethnic backgrounds draw on (Jamaican) Creole in order to criticize someone using a stance of power and authority. Conversely, Asian kids in particular draw on what he calls ‘stylized Asian English’ linked to traditional first generation Asian immigrants in order to criticize someone for wrong-doing using a shaming approach; a hyper-polite and submissive posture is created using stylized Asian English which essentially invokes a traditional master-servant relationship where the interlocutor is positioned as a colonial master. The use of other’s language practices can function as a way of creating alignment with others. By highlighting their language competence, even if it is marginal, the speaker is creating alignment with the language’s speaker community (Dirim & Auer 2004). While there are issues with the specifics of the definition of crossing, it represents a useful start for thinking about the similarities and differences between language alternation involving different linguistic repertoires and how notions of language ownership impact on code-alternation generally and on its interpretation. These aspects play an important role in the context of lesser-used languages, especially if a politically charged relationship exists between the minority language speakers and those who belong to the dominant community. For instance, in her book *White Racism*, Jane Hill (2008) shows that the use of ‘other’s languages’ is not always benign but can majorly contribute to the construction of highly racist depictions of already discriminated population groups. She shows that many Anglo-Americans’ (often times purposefully) defective use of (written and spoken) Spanish linguistic practices in English discourses in public contexts serves to create a light, easy-going and humorous stance for the speaker, but at the same time functions to reinforce negative stereotypes about Latina/os in the United States.

### 3.5. *Superdiversity*

Superdiversity is a term coined by Vertovec (2007) in order to describe the newly emerging heterogeneity typically associated with major western urban centers.<sup>2</sup> According to Vertovec (2007) superdiverse situations involve a great increase in the categories of migrants. They differ greatly with respect to nationality, ethnicity, language, and religion, but also with respect to subjective factors such as reasons for migrating, location targeted, the trajectory and processes of insertion into the new society. With the realization that homogeneity is (and probably always has been) the exception to the norm, “mobility, mixing, political dynamics and historical embedding are now central concerns in the study of languages, language groups and communication” (Blommaert & Rampton 2011, p. 3). The focus in this newly emerging research area, which obviously cross-cuts many others such as language contact, sociolinguistics and linguistic anthropology and brings together researchers and discussions about research methods, approaches and assumptions from these disciplines, is to examine the very variable ways in which individual linguistic features with identifiable social and cultural associations cluster whenever people communicate. Unlike other research approaches to date that focus on language and specifically on spoken (vernacular) language, this line of investigation examines all aspects of variation and both written and oral communication in a range of media such as electronic media (Deumert 2014; Barton & Lee 2013), traditional texts, graffiti, notes and face-to-face communication. They examine sound and morph-syntactic variation as well as alteration in the orthographic representation of language practices. This research shows that diversity in expression is not epiphenomenal but plays an important role in negotiating community, alignment and signaling belonging.

### 3.6. *Critical Discourse Analysis*

This approach to issues around migration is quite different from previous approaches. Unlike previous approaches that are very language phenomenon driven, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) focuses on a particular macro-social issue such as the construction of belonging among migrants in Europe through discourse (Krzyżanowski and Wodak 2008).<sup>3</sup> Analysis of this topic, for instance, is based on an examination of discursive strategies employed by newcomers in semi-guided narratives of their lived experience. For other topics, such as the construction of Europe’s language ideologies or national identities (or the intersection between them) researchers examine discursive patterns in EU policy documents, for instance. Newspaper articles and other media productions such as propaganda materials of political organizations are also frequently drawn on as a corpus to examine social issues such as racism.

In their article on migrant identities, Krzyżanowski and Wodak (2008) examine migrants’ sense of self, place and identity through analysis of narrative strategies that emerged from focus group interviews in a number of EU countries. In their analysis, they look at different strategies that are employed in order to construct identities in discourse. They look at how social actors are named and positioned in discourse. For instance, do they refer to themselves (or others) with specific national identifiers (e.g. *I’m Italian*) and what is the nature of the attachments that they create. Some people rely on metaphorical constructs such as home and family to create attachment to a national identity. Another

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<sup>2</sup>Research generally focuses on major western urban centers because there is the empirically as yet unfounded assumption that rural spaces and cities outside of the urban periphery are relatively homogeneous both linguistically and socio-culturally.

<sup>3</sup> See for instance Wodak 2009, for an Introduction to CDA.

important issue is whether or not people create attachments to one or more nations. Some people create clear linkages to only one country, such as the country of origin or the new country, while others present attachments to two or more such entities. In some cases these attachments are of a highly ambivalent nature, being expressed using hesitation and mitigators, while in others they are expressed confidently, even using boosters. The types and numbers of attachments presented are varied and provide important insights into the notion of national belonging (see also Gilmartin and Migge 2015b). It is also interesting to investigate how national entities and the identities that are part of it are evaluated and positioned using descriptions, quotation patterns, down-toning or distancing devices, and overtly evaluative statements. These and other strategies can then be examined with respect to their narrative function. De Cillia, et al. (1999) suggest that there are so-called constructive, perpetuating and dismantling strategies which build shared identities, support them or challenge and demythologize them, respectively.

#### **4. Conclusion**

The main purpose of this paper is to provide an overview of the different kinds of research agendas that focus on the broad area of language and migration. The research approaches differ with respect to the level of attention that they pay to the social context and social issues such as identity, integration, etc., the nature of attention that they pay to the linguistic context, the way they approach language and the sociolinguistic approaches that they employ. Quantitative sociolinguistic perspectives and new dialect formation perspectives, for instance, are little overtly interested in social issues, per se and usually do not specifically delve into the Social Science literature about migrant identities, but essentially rely on inferences from linguistic analysis in order to make statements about issues of identity and integration. These issues are strictly secondary to linguistic issues. They also generally focus analysis on variable patterns in one language, usually the language of the so-called host community, analyzing to what degree newcomers have acquired these variable patterns and ultimately the sociolinguistic competence of the native speaker community. Other approaches such as those that focus on understanding the nature of hybrid constructions aim to understand how people are using two or more languages, the kinds of new practices that emerge and how these are employed to construct social identities. This kind of research is typically qualitatively oriented, using discourse analytical methods and make a much greater effort to develop the social categories and to identify how language plays a role in their construction. While there is a focus on hybrid practices, these kinds of studies are more holistic in that they aim to define the overall social and linguistic context and its impact on the nature, use and function of the emerging hybrid constructions. CDA approaches are, of course, most interested in the social issues and thus pay the greatest amount of attention to them. However, as in many other studies, they typically focus on language data from only one language and do not, as such, examine the linguistic context.

Interestingly, there appears to be very little cross-fertilization between approaches. This kind of cross-fertilization would, however, be very useful in order to contribute to current understandings of language and society and to the construction of specific social identities. For instance, quantitatively based approaches would benefit from a more detailed engagement with social categories and thus CDA approaches could be a useful starting point. Research on superdiversity and code-alternation practices could benefit from a greater engagement with social categories as well as with thinking about issues of linguistic representativeness which are much discussed in quantitative approaches. Linguistic research has not yet even taken up the issue of how

mobility affects the in situ population, for instance, how linguistic practices that are related to migration filter into mainstream society and thus potentially affect so-called native practices. Linguistic research is in a good position to provide empirical evidence for and critically examine theories and concepts developed in the Social Sciences, but this potential has to date hardly been explored.

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