Monolingual ideologies in multilingual states: Language, hegemony and social justice in Western liberal democracies

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Abstract

In multilingual, heterogeneous societies language ideologies are constantly constructed and re-constructed in discursive interactions at micro and macro levels. When the dominant, majority group in a society, nation, nation-state or community considers that the ideal model of society is monolingual, monoethnic, monoreligious and monoideological (Blommaert & Verschueren, 1998a), we immediately encounter questions such as 'who is in?' and 'who is out?'. A dominant ideology of monolingualism in multilingual societies raises questions of social justice, as such an ideology potentially excludes and discriminates against those who are either unable or unwilling to fit the monoglot standard. In this paper I review recent research which has illuminated our understanding of language ideologies and social justice in multilingual states, and I offer an analysis of everyday discourse practices in Britain, including monolingual practices in a multilingual educational setting, a language ideological debate in local news media, and the liberal academic discourse of a recently-published report into the future of multi-ethnic Britain. My analysis suggests that in each of these contexts the many minority languages of Birmingham, and of Britain, are being *written out* of public discourse, as a monolingual ideology continues to prevail.
Key words: multilingualism, hegemony, social justice, ideology.

Resumo

Nas sociedades multilingües e heteroxéneas, as ideoloxías lingüísticas son constantemente construídas e reconstruídas nas interaccións discursivas nos niveis micro e macro. Cando o grupo maioritario e dominante nunha sociedade, nunha nación, nunha nación-estado ou nunha comunidade, considera que o modelo ideal da sociedade é monolingüe, mono-étnico, mono-relixioso e mono-ideolóxico (Blommaert & Verschueren, 1998a), de contado nos atopamos con cuestións tales como '¿quen fica dentro?'e '¿quen fica fóra?'. Unha ideoloxía dominante do monolingüismo nas sociedades multilingües suscita problemas de xustiza social, e como tal ideoloxía potencialmente exclúe e discrimina a aqueles que non son capaces ou non

desexan acomodarse ó estándar monolingüe. Neste artigo pasarei revista a recentes investigacións que teñen clarexado a nosa comprensión das ideoloxías lingüísticas e a xustiza social nos estados multilingües, e presentarei unha análise das prácticas discursivas cotiás en Gran Bretaña, incluíndo as prácticas monolingües nun marco educativo multilingüe, un debate sobre a ideoloxía lingüística nos medios de información locais, e mailo discurso liberal académico dun informe recentemente publicado sobre o futuro da Gran Bretaña multiétnica. A miña análise suxire que en cada un destes contextos as principais linguas minoritarias de Birmingham, e de Gran Bretaña, están sendo *suprimidas* do discurso público, mentres que a ideoloxía monolingüe continúa a prevalecer.

Palabras clave: multilingüismo, hexemonía, xustiza social, ideoloxía.

1. Introduction

In multilingual, heterogeneous societies language ideologies are constantly constructed and re-constructed in discursive interactions at micro and macro levels. These interactions are always subject to relations of power in society, relations which include, inter alia, gender, class, race, ethnicity and sexuality. If the dominant, majority group in a society, nation, nation-state or community considers that the ideal model of society is monolingual, monoethnic, monoreligious and monoideological (Blommaert & Verschueren, 1998a), we immediately encounter questions such as 'who is in?' and 'who is out?'. A dominant ideology of monolingualism in multilingual societies raises questions of social justice, as such an ideology potentially excludes and discriminates against those who are either unable or unwilling to fit the monoglot standard. In this paper I review recent research which has illuminated our understanding of language ideologies and social justice in multilingual states, and I conclude with a brief analysis of hegemonic, monolingualizing discourse practices in multilingual Britain at the beginning of the twenty-first century.

2. Language ideologies

The study of language ideologies developed in paradigms of linguistic anthropology, language shift, language planning and ethnography of speaking, as a means of interpreting cultural conceptions of language, and of analysing collective linguistic behaviour. Early research in these paradigms tended to equate a language with a people, essentialising links between national or regional groups and linguistic practices. Recent studies, however, have taken a more nuanced approach, recognising the social positioning, partiality, contestability, instability and mutability of the ways in which language uses and beliefs are linked to relations of power and political arrangements in societies (Gal, 1998; Woolard, 1998; Gal & Woolard, 1995; Blommaert, 1999; Blommaert & Verschueren, 1998a; Kroskrity, 1998). Gal & Woolard (1995) make the point that ideologies that appear to be about language are often about political systems, while ideologies that seem to be about political theory

are often implicitly about linguistic practices and beliefs. Ideologies of language are therefore not about language alone (Woolard, 1998), but are always socially situated and tied to questions of identity and power in societies. Related to the essential equation of one language with one 'people'is an insistence on the significance of the 'mother tongue' as the only authentic language of a speaker, as if only the language learned at the mother's knee could convey the true self of the speaker. The essentialised links between language ideology and speakers'identities are plain here: if you are a speaker of language X, you must be an X sort of person. These links become clearer yet when we examine the moral values attributed to language varieties and their speakers.

While modern linguists may regard all languages and language varieties as equal in value, political and popular discourse often comes to regard official languages and standard varieties as essentially superior to unofficial languages and non-standard languages (Collins, 1999). This culture of standardization (Silverstein, 1996) comes into being through an ideology which implies that clarity, logic and unity depend on the adoption of a monoglot standard variety in public discourse. Lippi-Green (1994) notes that standard language ideology extends as far as discrimination against those whose accent differs from the norm, particularly those accents associated with racial, ethnic or cultural minorities. She suggests that the ultimate goal of such ideologies is the suppression of language variation of all kinds, and the promotion of an abstracted, homogeneous, spoken language which is modelled on a standard written language. Speakers of the British prestige speech form known as Received Pronunciation may be regarded not only as members of a socially privileged sector of society, but also as persons of greater intellectual and personal worth (Woolard, 1998). Woolard further makes the point that when a linguistic form such as Received Pronunciation is ideologically linked to a group or type of people, it is often *misrecognised* (Bourdieu, 1977, 1991) as being symbolically linked to speakers' social, political, intellectual or moral character. Bourdieu's analysis makes it clear that the power of speakers of standard French was misrecognised and perceived as being rooted in (rather than simply indexed by) their use of the standard variety (Gal & Woolard, 1995). Bourdieu's model of the symbolic value of one language or language variety above others rests on his notion that a symbolically dominated group is complicit in the misrecognition (*méconnaissance*), or valorization, of that language or variety. The official language or standard variety becomes the language of hegemonic institutions because the dominant and the subordinated group misrecognize it as a superior language. For Bourdieu, this misrecognition of the arbitrary nature of the legitimacy of the dominant language (and culture) "contributes towards reproducing existing power relations" (1977: 30). Woolard points out that the attribution of social, moral and political meanings to specific language varieties affects patterns of language acquisition, style-switching and shift. Moreover,

> in liberal democratic societies, the misrecognition, or revalorisation of the indexical character of language may make discrimination on linguistic grounds publicly acceptable where the corresponding ethnic or racial discrimination is not. (1998: 19)

Thus, although penalizing a student for being African American may be illegal, penalizing a student for speaking African American Vernacular English is not. Where discrimination against Asian Americans in job promotion is illegal, passing over or dismissing an Asian American because of an 'accent' that others claim is difficult to understand is not. However, Woolard makes the point that simply stating that language ideologies are really about racism and other forms of discrimination is not an adequate analysis. It is also necessary to consider how and why language comes to stand for social groups.

Gal & Irvine (1995) note that there are striking similarities in the ways ideologies misrecognise differences among linguistic practices, often identifying linguistic varieties with 'typical' persons and activities and accounting for the differentiation among them. In these processes the linguistic behaviours of others are simplified and are seen as deriving from speakers' character or moral virtue, rather than from historical accident. Gal & Irvine offer the example of nineteenth-century Macedonia, which was unusually multilingual, with language use not falling within expected ethnic boundaries. Outsiders thus positioned Macedonians as untrustworthy, as apparently shifting linguistic allegiances were construed as shifting political allegiances and unreliable moral commitments. A number of studies have demonstrated that the official language, or standard variety, often comes to be misrecognised as having greater moral, aesthetic and/or intellectual worth than contesting languages or varieties (Bokhorst-Heng, 1999; Heller, 1999; Jaffe, 1999; Schieffelin & Doucet, 1998; Spitulnik, 1998; Watts, 1999). A corollary of such language ideologies is that speakers of official languages or standard varieties may be regarded as having greater moral and intellectual worth than speakers of unofficial languages or non-standard varieties. In Bourdieu's terms, those who are not speakers of the official language or standard variety are subject to symbolic domination, as they believe in the legitimacy of that language or variety, and "symbolic power is misrecognised as (and therefore transformed into) legitimate power" (1991: 170). Bourdieu suggests that we have to be able to discover power in places where it is least visible, because

> symbolic power is that invisible power which can be exercised only with the complicity of those who do not want to know that they are subject to it or even that they themselves exercise it.   (1991: 164)

Very often, democratic, multilingual societies which apparently tolerate or promote heterogeneity in fact undervalue or appear to ignore the linguistic diversity of their populace. Instead a liberal orientation to equality of opportunity for all masks an ideological drive towards homogeneity, a drive which potentially marginalizes or excludes those who either refuse, or are unwilling, to conform.

3. Monolingual ideology, multilingual identities and hegemony

Bourdieu's notion of *méconnaissance* and symbolic domination is consistent with the Gramscian notion of *hegemony* (Gal, 1998), which emphasizes that dominant ideas are particularly powerful because they are the assumed, implicit aspects of a more explicit ideology. Gramsci (1971) proposed that state control could not be sustained over time without the consent of the polity through ideological persuasion; that is, through hegemony (Philips, 1998). Although Gramsci did not insist that such persuasion was necessarily implicit more than explicit, in post-Gramscian writings the term *hegemony* has come to mean the taken-for-granted, almost invisible discourse practices of symbolic domination. Hegemony is about domination as well as about integration. That is, it is about the process of a dominant group exerting power over society as a whole, but it is also about making alliances, and achieving consent from subordinated groups (Fairclough, 1995). Hegemonic struggle takes place at a range of sites, including those at local (for example family, workplace, community), national (for example education policy, welfare policy, naturalization testing) and international (for example globalization) levels. However, while hegemony is a recognisable process, it is neither stable nor monolithic. Rather, it is constantly shifting, being made and re-made, characterized by contradiction and ambiguity, productive of opposing consciousnesses and identities in subordinate populations, and always exposed to the possibility of alternative, counterhegemonies (Blommaert, 1999; Gal, 1998; Williams, 1977). Furthermore, it is not always the State that is the main actor, nor are hegemonic discourses always aimed at exerting control over the populace. In an increasingly globalized environment, where the power of multinational corporations is consistently increasing, the old politics of State and polity are called into question (Heller, 1999). The achievement of domination through hegemony is always complex and problematic, usually only partially achieved, and often fragile. While Gramsci's notion of hegemony has much in common with Bourdieu's model of symbolic domination, it is in the idea of 'counterhegemony' or *résistance* that the possibility of alternatives to the dominant ideology may come into being. That is, subordinated groups may not always accept the symbolic power of the dominant group, but may symbolically resist that power by adopting linguistic practices which are counter to those of the dominant group. Of course linguistic minority groups and individuals construct and (re)negotiate their identities differently in response to hegemonic language ideologies which demand a monolingual society.

The tradition of language ideological research has frequently attended to the assumed identification of a language with a people. Often dated to the work of Herder in the late eighteenth century, the ideology of 'one language equals one nation' has almost become a truism (Woolard, 1998). It is generally assumed to be natural and normal that a language represents a people or a nation. However, this equation is a relatively recent phenomenon. In Medieval Europe there was no such thing as the nation-state. Indeed national sentiment had little meaning in most European countries before 1900, and European borders were not constructed

according to linguistic differences. Language was just one way, and not necessarily the major way, of distinguishing between groups (Hobsbawm, 1990). When the French Nation was declared after the French Revolution, only a small minority of the people who lived in what we now know as France would have understood the language in which the Declaration was announced (Billig, 1995). The speakers of northern France became the dominant group, and it was their language that was adopted as the national language, and which became the language of public discourse. When Italy was unified around the Italian language, an even smaller elite spoke the language for everyday purposes (Hobsbawm, 1990). It is only in the making of a 'nation', in fact, that it is essential to create a common, standard language (Bourdieu, 1991). Hobsbawm (1990) points out that at the heart of linguistic nationalism is not so much communication, as questions of power, status, politics and ideology. That is, a language may come to symbolise the power and status of the ruling group. When a language is symbolically linked to national identity, the bureaucratic nation-state faced with a multilingual population may exhibit "monilingualizing tendencies" (Heller, 1995: 374). The symbolic status of a language can create identity and discontinuity, and can both unite and divide, as it can become a battleground, an object of oppression and a means of discrimination (Blommaert & Verschueren, 1998a). It is more than a simple national symbol, like a national anthem or a national flag (Bokhorst-Heng, 1999). Rather, its symbolic status occurs within the larger process of imagining the nation.

In his influential volume, Anderson (1983) suggests that nations are imagined political communities, imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign. They are *imagined* because most of their members will never meet each other, "yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion" (p. 6). Anderson notes that the rise of print-languages at the same time as the development of capitalism in Europe (between 1820 and 1920) demanded new literacies. The ruling elites of Europe were required to decide which of the existing vernacular languages would replace Latin and Greek as the languages of literacy (and therefore of education, business, commerce and state): "Thus English elbowed Gaelic out of Ireland, French pushed aside Breton, and Castilian marginalised Catalan" (p. 78). Those who already spoke the languages selected for national literacy were suddenly at an enormous advantage when compared to those who spoke other vernaculars, and this hegemonic process allowed the privileged, literate languages to become national languages. Now speakers of the huge variety of Frenches, Englishes, or Spanishes, who previously found it difficult to understand each other, could communicate through print. Thus the map of modern Europe is based on the 'imagined communities'which have developed from the adoption of state languages following the interaction between the emergence of capitalism and print, and what Anderson calls the essential "fatality of human linguistic diversity" (1983: 43). Anderson's analysis is helpful in identifying the ways in which administrative vernaculars came to be dominant languages in the development of European nation-states. This is not to say, of course, that communities, or nations, will necessarily be linguistically homogeneous, and

easily linked to named languages. In fact many European nation-states which are legally and/or ideologically 'monolingual' are linguistically heterogeneous. If Anderson's analysis seems to assume that languages are fixed and stable entities (Gal & Irvine, 1995), which therefore come to represent more-or-less fixed and stable communities or nations, it is in their written form that they do so. Languages are not self-evident, natural facts (Gal, 1998), and contestation occurs around definitions of languages as much as around communities. Languages are not permanent; instead, the concept of a permanent language may be invented, developed through the imagining of the nation-state. If this is the case, then language does not create nationalism, so much as nationalism creates language; or rather, nationalist ideology creates a view that there are distinct languages (Billig, 1995). In fact nations and nation-states are constantly developing, shifting and changing, and are constantly imagined and re-imagined in diverse and complex ways by dominant and subordinate groups and individuals whose identities are in a constant process of re-negotiation. Grillo (1998) points out that while modern nation-states were conceived as ideally homogeneous, seeking from their citizens uniformity and loyalty, this ideology was constantly confronted with the reality of social, cultural and linguistic heterogeneity. This tension between a dominant ideology of national homogeneity and actual heterogeneity has important implications for multilingual identities and social justice in liberal democratic states. In Western democracies the response to diversity in society has often been to unite around the hegemony of the majority, standard language (Hymes, 1996). The monolingualizing tendencies of state, social, media and economic institutions produce and reproduce this dominant ideology of homogeneity.

4. Multilingualism, identity and social justice in liberal democratic states

The study of linguistic ideology provides a bridge between linguistic and social theory, linking considerations of language use, attitudes and beliefs with considerations of power and social inequality (Mertz, 1998). These links are visible in discourse practices at macro- and micro-levels (Fairclough, 1995). For example, it has often been the expectation in the United States that immigrants should replace whatever traits make them different with characteristics which make them appear more 'American'(Dicker, 1996). Among these characteristics are spoken and written English. Allowing languages other than English to flourish appears to jeopardize the status quo of the dominance of English and those who speak it. The official-English, or language-restrictionist (Dicker, 1996) movement is based on the ideology that immigrants need to change, to conform to American ways, in order to be truly accepted and successful in their new country. In fact the dominant ideology of the United States is one of monolingualism:

It is not 'normal' to speak a language other than English, nor is it 'normal' that, if

you do, you would want to continue to speak it after having learned English

(Shannon, 1999: 183)

Schieffelin & Doucet (1998) note that language ideologies are often the location of images of 'self/other' or 'us/them'. That is, the 'official-English' debate in the United States is a contest about political identity, about who is allowed to be 'American' and who is not, and about who is 'in' and who is 'out'. Grillo (1998) recalls that after mass immigration to the United States in the early twentieth century the 'Americanization' movement insisted that all immigrants must achieve proficiency in English if they were to be American citizens. To be a 'good American' required proficiency in English, and language and literacy tests for immigrants were introduced. This dominant ideology of homogeneity is not uncontested in the United States. It sits in tension with a more liberal ideology which supports linguistic heterogeneity. One example of this more liberal ideology is the bilingual education movement. However, despite its explicit orientation towards multilingualism in society, the bilingual education movement has effectively supported and maintained the ideology of monolingualism, as it has essentially been a means towards the achievement of English monolingualism (Shannon, 1999). That is, transitional bilingual education programmes have largely been designed to provide linguistic minority students with support until they have sufficient command of English to leave their home and community languages behind. Thus the policy and practice of bilingual education are better understood as elements of the dominant ideology of monolingualism. In Europe, as in the United States, an ideology of monolingualism as the norm prevails, in spite of considerable evidence of the linguistic heterogeneity of European communities (Gardner-Chloros, 1997). In fact, especially in Europe, state monolingualism is a cultural construction embedded in broader discourses about the bases of social stratification and the nature of persons. Blommaert & Verschueren (1998a) demonstrate that in Germany an apparent acceptance of 'foreignness' is contradicted by an ideology which seeks to deny voting rights to immigrant groups. Blommaert & Verschueren's analysis of the European newspaper press finds that in the print media is a theory which "revolves around the impossibility of heterogeneous communities and the naturalness of homogeneous communities" (p. 207). Piller's (forthcoming) study of recent (1st January 2000) changes to naturalisation legislation in Germany reveals that when the coalition government of Labour and Greens attempted to simplify the naturalisation process, a central plank of the new criteria for acquisition of German citizenship was proof of German language proficiency. Accordingly, the authorities are now required to test whether naturalisation candidates can cope with daily life in their German environment, can conduct a conversation in German, and can read and understand a German text. Piller's analysis demonstrates that the newly-imposed, arbitrary language testing practices lack both democratic and linguistic validity, as knowledge of the German language functions as an exclusionary gatekeeping device. In Belgium recently, in local elections in Antwerp (October 2000), the ultra-right Vlaams Blok party won 20 of the city council's 50 seats, demonstrating that an explicitly liberal,

multilingual nation-state ideology is contested by ideologies of monolingualism which are evident in discourses on the politics of immigration. Blommaert & Verschueren (1998b) studied the 'rhetoric of tolerance'in public discourse in Belgian newspapers, documents issued by political parties and communications from government agencies. Rather than discover the self-evident ideologies of minority, ultra-right political groups, the researchers set out to identify the taken-for-granted, common-sense views and attitudes of the majority. Their analysis reveals that in Belgium the non-acceptance of diversity predominates, even among the majority which tends to view itself as the embodiment of openness and tolerance. Blommaert & Verschueren conclude that for (at least partly) historical reasons, a key aspect of homogeneity and national belonging in Flanders is the Flemish language: "language is the essence of identity" (p. 128). This ideology relies on the notion of an immutable unity between language and the cultural identity of a population group.

The ideological assertion that one language equals one culture, or one nation, ignores the complexity of multilingual societies. In her discussion of language use in the German-Hungarian town of Transdanubia, Gal (1993) points out that the symbolic association between a language and a social group is by no means either natural or necessary. In fact her respondents exhibited considerable heterogeneity, even in the discourse of single individuals on different occasions. There is a key methodological point here: a simple equation of 'one language equals one (cultural, ethnic, national, class, generational, gendered or other) identity' is clearly an oversimplification. In the twenty-first century of global communication and migration the simple formula of 'language equals identity' is no longer adequate for analysis. This point is further exemplified in Bokhorst-Heng's (1999) study of the role of language in the 'imagining of the nation' in the development of Singapore. She demonstrates that despite being explicitly imagined as a multi-ethnic and multilingual society, the implicit (hegemonic) discourse was more about homogeneity within each ethnic community than heterogeneity within the nation: "The ultimate effect of the Speak Mandarin Campaign is one of homogenizing the Chinese community" (p. 236). Stroud's (1999) research on the use of Portuguese in the establishment of the nation-state in post-independence Mozambique indicates a further dimension of heterogeneity and complexity in any assumption of simple or stable correspondence between a language and that which it apparently symbolizes. In Mozambique Portuguese had previously been the language of the oppressor; now the revolutionary government appropriated it as the language of liberation.

The monolingualizing tendencies of nation-states may be evident (if largely implicit) in a range of institutional and everyday practices, including, for example, education (Blackledge, 2000; Heller, 1999, 1995), the workplace (Goldstein, 1997; Norton, 2000), the mass media (Blommaert & Verschueren, 1998b; Di Giacomo, 1999; Spitulnik, 1998), and the law (Lippi-Green, 1994). Heller's (1999, 1995) study of a Francophone school in Ontario observed that there were tensions between the monolingual ideology of the school, and the language use and ideologies of at least some of its students, and that some of the students found ways of resisting the

linguistic ideology of the school. In a school which was concerned with using French to resist the domination of English, students set up their resistance to the school through the very language which was oppressing them. My own study (Blackledge, 2000), of the school-related literacy practices of Bangladeshi women in Britain as they attempted to support their children's education demonstrated that English was misrecognised as the only available language of communication between parents and teachers (this study is further discussed below). Goldstein's (1997) study of the linguistic practices of Portuguese-speaking women on the factory floor in Canada demonstrates that the use of Portuguese functioned as a symbol of solidarity and had a functional role in providing access to peer-group membership. Production-line workers were expected to use Portuguese if they were to be accepted by their colleagues. To speak English was to risk losing the trust of one's fellow-workers. However, promotion to better-paid jobs such as Quality Control Inspector would only come with good or excellent proficiency in English. Thus, while Portuguese enjoyed a symbolic role in the workplace, with associations of solidarity and loyalty, English had material benefits. In this world of 'double monolingualism' (Heller, 1999) there was no doubt about which language would bring greater economic power and mobility.

Di Giacomo (1999) develops an illuminating analysis of the ways in which debates over language were played out in newspapers during and after the 1992 Olympic Games in Barcelona. Taking newspapers as self-conscious loci of ideology production, Di Giacomo's analysis of reports and editorials supporting the dominance of Catalan or Castilian language demonstrates the role of the print-media in the imagining of both state and stateless nations. Played out on the international stage, and in the international press, it became clear that the debate had wider significance, beyond Barcelona and Catalonia: the dominant ideology of 'one-language equals one-nation'was recognisable in the print media of much of Western Europe and beyond. The Catalan language, an important symbol not only of the Catalan nation, but also of historic resistance to the Franco regime, became a site of contestation, waged in the columns of the press. Similarly, Blommaert & Verschueren (1998a) use data from newspapers in several West European countries to document a common language ideology which equates one language with one culture. The influence of the mass media in language ideologies is not confined to the print media, of course. Although language is only one marker of identity, it is often taken to index a speaker's 'natural' belonging to an ethnic group. Spitulnik's (1998) study of languages used on Radio Zambia finds that an explicit ideology of democratic pluralism can be interpreted as an implicit ideology of hierarchical management of diversity. In a policy which legitimizes and empowers certain groups at the expense of others, seven hierarchically-ranked radio languages were made to 'represent' seventy-three ethnic groups. At the same time, the dominant language of Radio Zambia is English. Although the explicit message is that English is a *lingua franca* available to all, in fact it is accessible to only a minority elite. The dominance of English in this context is not contested in the same way as the allocation of time

to the various Zambian languages. In this sense the dominance of English is hegemonic, as its power relies on its taken-for-granted salience. Lippi-Green's (1994) analysis of court cases in the United States based on accent discrimination is instructive, as it clearly reveals an ideology of language standardization at work in the legal system. To take just two of the cases cited in her paper, in the case of Dr. Hou, a native of China and Professor of Mathematics who was refused promotion, the judge described the professor's accent as a "handicap" (Lippi-Green, 1994: 179), and found against him; in a second education-related case, that of Ms. Mandhare, a native of India who was denied reappointment to her position as a librarian at a K-2 school, the court found against her as it was prepared to let the school administrators and school board dismiss her on the basis of her accent. Summarising her analysis, Lippi-Green concludes that accent discrimination is a widespread problem which permeates much of our day-to-day existence: "It is the site on which racism and ethnocentrism are institutionalized" (p. 190).

In the face of hegemonic ideologies of homogenization which are reproduced in these several contexts, it is not surprising that those who are subject to the 'symbolic violence' of monoglot standardization appear to comply with their symbolic domination. A process of normalisation occurs, in which it comes to appear natural that one language, or one variety, dominates others, is more legitimate, and provides greater access to symbolic resources. What Bourdieu calls "the institutionalised circle of misrecognition" (1991: 153) develops from this ideology of implicit homogenisation. In multilingual, liberal democratic states this process creates the conditions for social injustice, as those who either refuse, or are unable to conform to the dominant ideology are marginalised, denied access to symbolic resources and, often, excluded: "Those who find themselves marginalised are left to try to find a way in, to resist, or to bail out altogether" (Heller, 1999: 14). This process of marginalisation occurs in hyper-modern, neo-liberal democratic states and their institutions, which respond variously to their increasingly diverse populations. In asking questions about social justice, about who has access to symbolic and material resources in Western liberal democracies, about 'who is in' and 'who is out', we need to take account not only of localised linguistic behaviours, attitudes and beliefs; we must also locate them in wider social contexts which include class, race, ethnicity, generation, gender and sexuality.

5. Monolingual ideologies in multilingual Britain

The sites at which hegemonic, monolingualizing ideologies are visible in Britain at the beginning of the twenty-first century are evident in everyday discourse. These ideologies are identifiable in discourses along local, national and global dimensions; in (semi-) private and public discourses; and in discourses which range from the implicit to the explicit. In conducting a brief survey of everyday discourse practices, I suggest that public, hegemonic discourse in Britain is currently *writing languages out*. That is, although politicians, media commentators, policy-makers,

academics and practitioners freely debate issues of equality, race, social justice and so on, almost no reference is made to the reality of Britain as a multilingual society. This is in spite of the fact that in London alone there are speakers of more than 300 languages. My contention here is that in imagining the nation, public discourse unites around the English language, and puts to one side the other languages of Britain. In doing so, public discourse risks marginalising those who speak languages other than English, leaving them without representation or means of gaining access to power.

In my study (Blackledge, 2000) of the home literacy practices of Bangladeshi, Sylheti-speaking women in Birmingham, UK, conducted over four years in the women's homes and in their children's school (I called the school 'Valley Community Primary School'), it became clear that the main reason that this linguistic minority group was unable to gain access to information about, and support with, their children's schooling was that they did not speak English. The school was unusually liberal and progressive in its orientation to its community, which was almost entirely South Asian (Pakistani- and Bangladeshi-heritage). Posters and displays in the school were written in Urdu and Bengali, as well as in other languages, some class reading books were in Asian languages as well as English, and the teachers generally respected the children's cultural and linguistic backgrounds. During the research period the school made attempts to involve the women in their children's education by developing initiatives such as a Bangladeshi women's group, and a curriculum workshop, where parents were invited to work alongside their children in the classroom. School books were sent home with the children on a daily basis, and a reading club for siblings had been set up in the school. Notwithstanding the school's more-or-less positive attitude to its community, however, the eighteen Bangladeshi women in the study felt marginalised by the school's day-to-day ideology of English as the sole language of communication in and about school.

The Bangladeshi women all reported that they had little or no proficiency in spoken English or comprehension of spoken English. Only one of the women reported that she was able to read and write English. However, a large majority of them said that they were very proficient readers and writers of Bengali, their community language. During interviews, the women said that they were teaching their children to read and write Bengali, and some were teaching them Qur'anic Arabic. Despite their literacies, the women's lack of English proficiency led the teachers to position them as illiterate, unable to offer meaningful help to their children with the books sent home from school, which were in English-only. Despite the well-organised Bengali literacy instruction going on in the homes, and despite the women's wish for dual-language home reading books, the teachers believed that 'reading is the last thing on their minds really', as the women attempted to manage households which the teachers considered to be 'incredibly fraught'. Despite the women's evidence that they frequently told traditional, religious and cultural stories to their children, the teachers positioned them as inadequate providers of appropriate language environments for their children's development. The women had difficulty understanding parent-teacher meetings, and often stayed away, because interpreters

were rarely available when required. Written communication between teachers and parents was ineffective, as evidenced by one of the women who said that she had received a letter about her daughter's need for remedial reading instruction, but she had been unable to read the letter, which was in English. The women frequently indicated that they would have liked to ask questions of their children's teachers, but they were 'a bit embarrassed'to approach the English-speaking teachers. Ultimately, the teachers believed that in order for the linguistic minority children to succeed with English literacy, they would have to learn 'a set of rules which are really middle-class rules', and adopt the literacy practices of the 'white, middle-class'. The teachers were more confident in their communication with younger parents who had been educated in Britain. The parents who were more English, and less Bangladeshi, would be offered more support than those who had not learned English. The teachers'ideology was summarised as follows:

> it's to do with –not really thinking about second language learners, but thinking about white people, white families.

It was as if the reconstruction of the Bangladeshi families' identities as 'white families' would resolve the difficulties of communication on all sides. The women were positioned by their children's teachers as inadequate in terms of their ability to support their children's learning, to create an appropriate home environment and to activate cultural resources. The best thing to do was to become as much like the dominant group as possible by transforming themselves into 'white families'. The women were marginalised by the school's insistence on English as the sole language not only of the curriculum, but also of communication about their children's progress. The monolingual ideology of the school in a multilingual community had the effect of 'monolingualizing' interactions between school and community, as the languages of the parents were not accommodated in the school.

At this local level, despite its explicitly liberal ideology of multilingualism, the ideology of the school as an institution demanded that the Bangladeshi women acquire the monoglot standard of the monolingual middle-class if they were to succeed. There is a methodological point here: in order to understand monolingual ideologies in liberal, multilingual democracies it is necessary to look at the local interactions between groups, and to listen to the voices of the most marginalised as well as the voices of professionals. In their semi-private, anonymous interviews, the women articulated their continuing frustration with the monolingual ideology of the school. The ideology of the women was quite different from that of the school: they positively wanted their children to learn to read, write, speak and comprehend English with native-like proficiency; they positively wanted their children to maintain and develop their home language, Sylheti; they took positive steps to teach their children to read and write their community language, Bengali, which had strong cultural associations; and they were already teaching their children to learn to read Qur'anic Arabic, with its strong religious associations. Some of the women also spoke of teaching their children to read and write Urdu. The language ideology of

these women was plainly multilingual, both in their attitudes and in their practices. Yet they found themselves dealing with a school which, despite its explicitly positive attitudes to multilingualism, was revealed as a monolingual and monolingualizing institution.

It may be assumed that these teachers, and this school (which had been selected for study because the school was strongly reputed to have a positive orientation to its community, and in fact had recently acquired the rare distinction of 'Community School' status), were part of a more widespread monolingual and monolingualizing ideology in multilingual Britain. Before making such an assumption, however, it is important to look at examples of further evidence in the wider community, and in domains other than schooling. While preparing this paper I came across an article in the local evening newspaper in Birmingham (*Birmingham Evening Mail* 3rd November 2000). The headline of the article reads *Row over Punjabi signposts* and is sub-headed *Taking the Britishness out of Brum-Tory* ("Brum" is a colloquial term for Birmingham; "Tory" refers to the Conservative Party in Britain). The first half of the article was presented as follows:

> **Part of a Birmingham city suburb is to be officially renamed in Punjabi, it was revealed today.**
> But the scheme in Balsall Heath was said by a Conservative councillor to be "taking the Britishness out of Birmingham". Several 'Welcome to Apna Town' signs will soon be erected by Birmingham City Council on the Stratford Road, Stoney Lane, and Ladypool Road approaches to Balsall Heath. The name means 'Our Town' in Punjabi and other Asian languages and was chosen from a list of more than 80 alternatives by residents living in the heart of Birmingham's Balti Belt. Today Tory Councillor Peter Douglas Osborn said he very much regretted the renaming exercise. "I think it is a great pity. It is a step on the way to removing the Britishness from Birmingham and especially the inner city. The city is a multi racial society in which everybody is accepted as part of our British culture. To revert to individual components or tribes is not progressive", he said.

While there is insufficient space here to develop a thorough, critical discourse analysis of the article, identifying practices of the production and consumption of the text (Fairclough, 1995), the article struck me in several ways. The first is that the Conservative councillor (and, perhaps, the reporter) seems to assume a shared understanding of the word "Britishness". This is implicit, and need not be spelt out in the text, as the implied reader is assumed to have a shared understanding of the term. Whatever "Britishness" means, Peter Douglas Osborn believes that it will be removed by the introduction of Asian signs in the local community, and that this was to be regretted. "Britishness" therefore clearly does not include Asian languages. The quotation from Mr Osborn is repeated three times (in different versions) by the reporter/sub-editor in this short section of text, perhaps for emphasis. Mr Osborn goes on to explicitly state his liberal, multicultural, ideology: "The city is a multi racial society". His overt message is that he is liberal enough to tolerate the

"multi racial" nature of the city. In the next part of this sentence he states that "everybody is accepted as part of our British culture". The deictic possessive pronoun "our" (Wodak, de Cillia, Reisigl & Liebhart, 1999) here implies that "everybody", including racial minorities, is accepted in Birmingham, but that "British culture" belongs to a distinct (presumably monolingual, monocultural) group. The next sentence explicitly advocates a "progressive", i.e. liberal approach to diversity. The implicit message is far from this, however, as the placing of signs in Asian languages is a reversion to "individual components" and "tribes". *Roget's Thesaurus* confirms the assumed, common associations attached to these terms. "Components" is associated with words such as *machinery*, *element*, *module*, *segment*, *nuts* and *bolts* –in short, with words which imply dehumanisation and depersonalisation. "Tribes" is associated with *race*, *breed*, *multitude*, *mob*, *horde*, *native*, *inbreeding* and *interbreeding*. This is the language of intolerance: yet it is (thinly!) dressed up as a liberal, progressive ideology. In their analysis of nationalist ideologies in European newspapers Blommaert & Verschueren (1998a) point out that when making reference to minority and regional groups, politicians and newspaper editors use the term *tribes,* which "has a clear connotation of primitivism and naturalness" (p. 200). The apparently tolerant, "progressive", multicultural ideology of the councillor is in fact a monolingual ideology, which seeks to prevent Asian groups from representing their languages in their community. The article (whatever its effect, which can not be known) is just one example of the everyday, hegemonic discourses in which the contestation of monolingual and multilingual ideologies are played out in Birmingham.

At the end of the article, without a line-break, but marked with a bullet-point, is the following report:

> Balsall Heath is part of the Sparkbrook Ward in which, according to census figures, the ethnic minority has become the majority. More than 12,000 residents are Asian making up 46.5 per cent of the population. More than 13 per cent are Afro Caribbean, and seven per cent Chinese or other races. Only 8,650 Sparkbrook residents –a third– are white.

This passage does not directly deal with minority languages, and so is beyond the brief of this paper. However, its juxtaposition with the article about 'Punjabi signposts' makes a link between the size of "the ethnic minority" (sic) and speakers of languages which remove "the Britishness from Birmingham". In a report which is explicitly factual and neutral, the implicit message is that in the Sparkbrook Ward "Britishness" is likely to be eroded, or "taken out" by the extent of the population's multilingualism. The key word here is "Only": "Only 8,650 Sparkbrook residents –a third– are white." The article does not say that 'only' 13 per cent are Afro Caribbean, or that 'only' seven per cent are Chinese or other races. The implication is that the white residents are in some way under threat from the "ethnic minority", which "has become the majority". When we recall that words associated with the Conservative councillor's "tribes" include *multitude*, *mob* and *horde*, we can begin

to make the link between the juxtaposed articles. The wider context for these (unattributed) statistics is to be found in a recent Mori survey carried out for *Reader's Digest* and widely reported in the national press in Britain (for example *The Daily Telegraph* 23rd October 2000; *The Independent* 23rd October 2000), which found that two thirds of British adults feel that there are too many immigrants in Britain. Taken together, the report of this local "Row" in the *Birmingham Evening Mail,* and its accompanying statement of "census figures", make clearly visible the process of hegemonic discourse in city politics and local media. While this contestation of language ideologies is not as hostile as the 'sign riots' of the 1980s in Philadelphia, when the Korean-American community secured the city's permission to erect street signs in their native language, precipitating vandalism and protest from the white majority (Crawford, 1994), the effect is nonetheless monolingualizing. Despite the explicitly liberal orientation towards minority groups and their languages in public discourse in Birmingham, the implicit ideology is one which values monolingualism as a symbol of "Britishness", and regards public multilingualism as retrograde and tribal.

Hegemony occurs on a broad front, of course, and should be considered at the macro as well as the micro level. The teachers at Valley Community Primary School were subject to the requirements of national legislation and policy-making, which in Britain as in the United States, continue to regard minority languages as something to be left behind as pupils develop their English. There is insufficient space here to provide a detailed analysis of the recent *National Literacy Strategy* (1998) or the revised orders of *National Curriculum 2000*. Both documents take an approach to languages other than English which is benign, liberal and hegemonic, in that they explicitly support the education of linguistic minority pupils, but make little reference to their languages, and where such reference is made it is in the context of transition from the home language to English. Language ideologies come into being in academic discourse as well as in policy-making at government level. A straightforward task would be to discover academic discourse of the Right which sought to remove reference to diversity in public debate. Instead, I take here a brief look at the recent report of The Commission on the Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain (*The Parekh Report*, 2000). The report, published in October 2000, is the product of two years' deliberation by 23 distinguished individuals with a long record of active academic and practical engagement with race-related issues in Britain and elsewhere, and deals with a wide range of issues, including national identity, racism, employment, housing, health and welfare, education, immigration, asylum, politics and religion. Setting aside the misreporting, misrepresentation and outcry in the national press which followed the publication of the report (*The Daily Telegraph* described the report as 'sub-Marxist gibberish' –10th October 2000; *The Times* described the Commission as 'worthy idiots'–12th October), the surprising fact is that there is almost no reference in the 314-page report to the role of the many languages of Britain in its "multiethnic" future. Section 3.8 refers to the fact that "South Asians vary significantly not only in terms of nationality and religion but also in terms of

language" (p. 30); section 11.17 finds that "specialist training for teachers of English as an additional language has all but evaporated"; sections 13.14-13.16 are concerned with the training and availability of interpreters "so that people can use health services effectively" (p. 183); section 13.20 recommends that social services departments dealing with children at risk of being taken into care "must be required to provide a proper linguistic environment, with trained interpreters" (p. 185); section 15.26, on Asylum, notes that those granted asylum are rarely offered "English language training" (p. 216). Of the Report's 123 recommendations, only four refer to minority languages or to Britain as a multilingual society ("There should be a substantial programme of certificated training for specialists in teaching English as an Additional Language"; "Targets should be applied to the provision of interpreting services throughout the health service..."; "More interpreters should be trained and appointed"; "The Department of Health should require social services departments to record information about the ethnicity, religion and home language(s) of all children receiving direct services..."). The fact that the references to minority language and multilingualism in such a wide-ranging report on the future of multi-ethnic Britain can be so concisely quoted suggests that the Commission does not consider multilingualism to be a significant aspect of that future. In its wide-ranging review of racism, inequality, identity and representation, minority languages are hardly mentioned, despite the overall liberal orientation of the report. This liberal, academic discourse contributes to a monolingual ideology, as the minority languages of Britain are effectively removed from the debate. The Commission took evidence from a broad spectrum of sources. One of these sources was a policy statement from Haringey Borough Council. Haringey is regarded as a liberal, progressive council, and this is reflected in its policy statement, part of which reads as follows:

> We are committed to eliminating discrimination on the grounds of age, colour, disability, ethnic origin, gender, HIV status, marital status, nationality, national origin, race, religious belief, responsibility for dependents, sexuality, or unrelated criminal conviction. (Haringey Borough Council, 1999)

It seems that Haringey Borough Council is committed to eliminating discrimination on almost any imaginable grounds –except on the grounds of language. There is increasing evidence that discrimination against linguistic minorities in the workplace is based on language and accent (Goldstein, 1997; Lippi-Green, 1994). Yet Haringey Council seems not to consider that its very diverse, multilingual community should be protected against such discrimination. The Parekh Report fails to notice this lacuna, but rather commends the policy statement. This is further evidence that in everyday, common-sense, liberal discourse the languages of Britain are being *written out* of the debate, as a monolingual ideology continues to prevail.

6. Conclusion

If the widely-respected members of the *Commission on the Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain* (deliberately or otherwise) take the view that minority languages are of little significance in the imagining of "a better country" (Parekh, 2000: xii), perhaps we should ask ourselves why we need to attend to people's languages at all, especially as English increasingly becomes the language of the global economy. Perhaps a monolingual ideology in a multilingual state is the right way to go for social cohesion and opportunity for all, both key phrases for the Blair government. To find the answer we need go no further than the Bangladeshi women attempting to gain access to the monolingual environment of their children's school, equipped with a range of languages, none of which was that of the majority-culture institution. Their languages were central to their sense of themselves, to their religious and cultural identities –yet English was associated with exclusion. What I think I see in Britain at the beginning of the twenty-first century is a monolingual ideology which is evident in hegemonic discourses at local and national levels, in social institutions, in the media, in the political domain and in liberal, academic discourse. As Monica Heller suggests in a wider context, there is a struggle going on between monolingual and multilingual ideologies (Heller, this volume) –but in Britain the struggle is unequal. The *writing out* of languages from liberal political, academic and educational discourse implies that if you must speak another language, we will respect that, but speak it where the majority can not hear. If you are to succeed in the multi-ethnic Britain of the future you must keep that language out of the public domain. In this liberal, democratic state, the hegemonic silence surrounding the 300-or-so 'other languages' of Britain is an issue with important implications for social justice.

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