Discourses of Multilingualism, Identity and Belonging: The View of Arabic Bilinguals in the UK

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Purpose: This sociolinguistic paper discusses the relationship between language and belonging from the perspective of Arabic-English speaking bilinguals. It explores what knowledge of language(s) means for the minority language speaker and investigates the challenges, consequences and opportunities multilingualism poses for its speakers in a globalised era that is fraught with re-imagining nationalism, country, security, loyalty, and belonging. The project reported in this paper aimed to (1) understand the symbolisms the Arabic language held for its speakers, (2) understand the ramifications knowledge of Arabic had for these bilinguals; and (3) explore how second generation Arabic heritage speakers define their identities and feelings of belonging to the UK.

Method: Sixty-two people took part in the project; data was collected through a short survey followed up by interviews that further explored issues of multilingualism, identity and belonging. Data from interviews and qualitative responses from the survey were analysed thematically in light of Ingrid Piller's emerging linguistic social justice framework (Piller, 2016).

Finding: The findings suggest that English and Arabic are equally important to speakers; additionally Arabic is highly symbolic for reasons of religion, family, and cultural ties. The results however, also point to the apprehensiveness speakers have in using Arabic in public because they fear that they may be deemed too different, weird, abnormal, dangerous, disloyal or untrustworthy (Tonkin, 2003). The data implies that such hesitation leads to an anxiety of being viewed as 'other' and challenges how some young people envision their current and future belonging to the UK society.

Keywords:
Arabic language, migration, language, identity, belonging, linguistic justice

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1 Introduction

Migration to the UK, like that across the world (Fisher, 2014), has been taking place since the first century AD. Very early migrations and conquests (the Romans, events of 1066 and the Vikings) contributed greatly to what the UK has become today in terms of culture, language and customs (Henig, 2002, Hadley, 2006, Thomas, 2003). Hence, those with Celtic or Nordic heritage are not viewed as diverse or different anymore (there is much to be said about not identifying those long-term communities as diverse, however it is beyond the scope of this paper). Later migrations, without doubt, had less of an impact on what has come to be broadly known as British and/or English culture. The spike in movement of peoples from one part of the world to another has always been marked in history as a time of high movement due to wars, displacement, poverty and more recently out of choice (especially migration by those from wealthy relatively war-free nations in pursuit of high paying jobs), and globalisation (Greenhill, 2010, Fiddian-Qasmiyeh et al., 2014).

Migration to the UK especially after World War II originated from countries that were previously colonies of Great Britain. Access to the UK was easy because for most of these countries there were no visa restrictions and hence people or families moved to work and settle in the UK (Meloni, 2006, Spencer, 2011). Casey (2016, p. 35) points out, "[p]ostwar immigration from the commonwealth and other countries was encouraged to fill labour market shortages and settlement often reflected this- tending towards major cities and towns where industry needed workers". This explains for example why there are concentrations of single ethnic groups in a number of cities in the UK, most notably the Yemeni community in Sheffield and South Shields that came to work in the steel industry in the 1950s (Runnymede, 2012, Willis, 2017). Or the Indian population (mainly Gujarati) that came to settle in Birmingham and Leicester to work in hosiery, denim and material factories when they were expelled from Uganda in the 1970s (Martin and Singh, 2002). These communities continue to live in these cities even though the population is now well into its fourth or fifth generation, with some of these individuals no longer speaking the language of their grandparents (Said, 2014).

The presence of such communities, sometimes referred to as "old diversity" (Piller, 2016) and the arrival of newer communities from non-commonwealth countries (most markedly from the EU and beyond in the last decade), gives the impression that Britain is highly diverse, multilingual and multicultural. Indeed, the 2011 Census (ONS, 2011) affirms that the UK is increasingly diverse and more so since the last Census in 1991. White British was the largest ethnic group (80.5%), followed by Other White (4.4%) then Indian (2.5%) and finally the Pakistani community (2.0%), in the last census White accounted for 94.1% of the population; hence these findings show a change in the population, however small. Interestingly, for the first time the ethnic category of Arab was introduced in this Census and 240,000 (0.4%) respondents identified themselves as "Arab". The ONS argues that it is important to develop new ethnic categories in order to "identify more precisely which group of people are being referred to". The introduction of such a category was important, as will be discussed below, for some participants in this project with one saying, *"at last they know that there are such people as "Arabs" and we are not bunched up into "Asians" or "Other"…"* (participant 45F). To be recognised as a distinct ethnic community supports a group of people to feel more visible and more recognised. This is the complete opposite to the US Census, which continues to categorise the ethnically Arab population under the White category (Cainker, 2006). There have been discussions to introduce a Middle Eastern and North African category but these have not materialised and will likely not be included in the next 2020 census. Ethnic recognition is particularly important as it contributes to the well-being of the minority community (Taylor, 1994) and as I argue below later, it may also assist young British born citizens of the UK who speak minority languages to have stronger feelings of belonging to their society. Taylor (p.25) emphasises, "Nonrecognition or misrecognition can inflict harm, can be a form of oppression, imprisoning someone in a false, distorted, and reduced mode of being".

1.1 Ramifications of migration

The perception of elevated numbers in immigration has in the last decade or so fuelled the rise in nationalism across Europe and the UK (Goodhart, 2017 , Baker and Adler, 2013, Richardson and Wodak,

2009). These thoughts have brought to the fore issues of country, loyalty, security and belonging and forced all parts of society to re-assess what each of these mean in today's globalised and highly transnational world. The world is changing and has done so to become politically and economically different taking away old systems of making a living (mainly the deindustrialisation of the Western world, which has affected the nature of jobs) and presents a more fluid, less stable world. Richardson and Wodak (2009) argue in their discourse analytic paper on discourses of employment and nativism in Britain and Austria, that the recent popular sentiments of viewing migrants as taking British or Austrian jobs are historically, "context-dependent connotations, stemming from pre-World War II colonialism and anti-Semitism". Political parties often exploit such historical ideologies because the changes cause unrest in people and influence how they see themselves and others in this new world. The former centre-right minister of Portugal said,

"We have to be honest that the crisis and the rise in unemployment is an occasion for populist forces to become more aggressive and gain some votes…we should not forget that in Europe, not so many decades ago, we had very, very worrying developments of xenophobia and racism and intolerance (cited in Baker and Adler, 2013).

Such trepidation fuels neo-nationalism, right wing ideas and outward and open discrimination against those perceived to be the cause of the such sudden and unstable changes (Winlow et al., 2017 , Kenny, 2014, Goodwin, 2011).

In reference to the UK, Kenny (2014, p.1) says that the question of Englishness or what it means to be English has become so pertinent today that "[e]ven within mainstream debates, where national and constitutional questions are typically seen as secondary to economic and social issues, they have become more familiar..." This, he argues (p.4) is due to the "broader shifts in the nature of collective identity and the contemporary forms of belonging". The nature of these huge and non-reversible shifts coupled with the problems of terrorism, global warming, globalisation and an increasingly unequal world creates a negative reaction to those who are seen as "new" and are in turn viewed as a "threat" or "outsiders" (Winlow et al., 2017). It could be argued that such negativity is due to the uncertainty within particular sections of society about who they are today, what their lives will be like tomorrow and how they can re-establish the ways of old in which they were sure of their own identities, their belonging, and they knew what country and loyalty meant to them and others.

The re-imagining of the issues above by the host community affects the immigrant communities (of every generation) in two ways: one, they too live in a changing world that also demands such reflections to take place and they similarly think about who they are. And two, they sometimes feel that their belonging and loyalty is questioned by the host community, which often results in strong feelings of belonging (Frampton et al., 2016) or, as I report below, it may lead them to question their belonging. Thus, it is a bi-directional process in which the hosts and the newcomers engage in questioning who they are and who the other is and how that affects them respectively.

The focus of this paper is to understand how Arabic- English bilinguals view themselves, how they think others perceive them and how that (if at all) influences their feelings of belonging. This paper is one of the first to present data on the language(s) and belonging of second-generation Arab bilinguals in the UK and it is hoped that these findings can offer a more contextual narrative of how this generation views itself in at a time when their voices are seldom heard.

In what follows I analyse the current literature on multilingualism in the UK followed by a short section on methodology before presenting and analysing the results. The paper paints a positive but challenging picture of what it means to be a speaker of Arabic in the UK today.

2 UK as a multilingual society

Although the 2011 Census (in England and Wales) results above and below show a linguistically diverse UK, as a country it is officially monolingual with English as its official language. Like the US and many other countries that boast a linguistically diverse population, all policies are monolingual and as Piller (2016) argues this means that other languages naturally fall into a hierarchy. Given the current resurgence of nationalism, languages other than English are not promoted or welcomed by some within the UK society because the promotion of these languages would, in their minds, introduce an imbalance to their stable world.

In terms of languages declared as spoken alongside in the Census 2011, English was the most spoken language (92.3% of population) and was the majority language. One of the unique features of this Census was that it introduced two new questions for the first time asking respondents to name their main language and to self-report on their proficiency of English. These questions were influenced by similar questions from the US Census and were argued to be important with the intention to present more accurate data about the languages people speak (ONS, 2011). One of the criticisms of the questions posed is that they assume the respondent would only select one main language, where as, from a sociolinguistic perspective, it is perfectly acceptable to speak more than one main language (Sebba, 2017). Many monolingual countries like the UK often pose such questions from a monolingual perspective because they expect that migrant communities will eventually only speak English (Piller, 2016, Heller, 2007, Blackledge, 2000, 2006) as a sign of assimilation and integration into the host society. Indeed, Casey (2016) in her report on integration outlines, "English language is a common denominator and a strong enabler of integration" (Casey, 2016, p. 14). Such views hence create a direct link between the language spoken and degree of assimilation, they do not always take into account the proficiency of the host language. The same ideologies of monolingualism are present at every level of society in the education system, in the media and at government level. Blackledge (2006) states that for some multilingualism is considered a problem especially when it involves certain languages and not others.

Piller (2012), Heller (2007) and others explain that linguistically diverse societies, even those that purport to be multilingual push the idea that monolingualism (in the majority language or in the language of the region) promotes success and prosperity. If the individual is proficient in English, French, German, or Spanish they will assimilate better and have enhanced career prospects. This stems from, Piller (2012) argues, the nineteenth century belief that bilingualism brings about poverty (because securing employment is less likely) and does not allow the speaker to fully assimilate and be socially included. This nineteenth century idea persists even until today and may explain why much of the media reporting on the findings about languages spoken in the UK was presented in an undesirable manner underlining that knowledge of other languages threatens English and therefore the English or British way of life (Census 2011 coverage, 2013). For example, pictures on newspaper front pages depicted shop fronts of Polish supermarkets inscribed in Polish as opposed to English to emphasise the so-called loss of English language. Such images reinforced the idea that these communities did not speak any English, when in fact they did but also spoke other languages. Casey (2016, p. 63) accentuates that "[t]he new media plays an important role in influencing attitudes and levels of integration, both through investigative reporting and through fair and accurate portrayal of difficult issues."

Of course, knowledge of the host language is paramount if individuals are to be fully active in society, but that perhaps does not entail that speakers lose their other languages in order to demonstrate their assimilation (Serratrice, 2018). Heller (2007) points out an important issue that, although monolingual societies promote monolingualism they only celebrate the bilingualism of some of its multilinguals. She gives the example that English-Spanish bilingualism is favoured less if the speaker in question is an illegal Mexican immigrant; but favoured more if he or she took up Spanish in school and now works in media or diplomacy. Migrants are often seen as "out of place" (Cresswell, 1996) even though they are multilingual, meaning that in addition to their own language they have also made an effort to learn and speak the main

language. Cresswell argues this is because their type of multilingualism does not fit the expectations of the host community, and so they are additionally ascribed identities of "not belonging". However much the migrant tries they will always be seen as diverse or different, Piller (2016, p.21) explains, "the descendants of Jews, Muslims and Sikhs are forever marked by the migrations of their forbearers, even if that migrations took place centuries ago". Despite this social phenomenon, at the government level the UK has long promoted, in education papers, a vision for an inclusive society (Davies, 2018),

> "in which there is a *common vision* and *sense of belonging* by all communities; a society in which the diversity of people's backgrounds and circumstances is appreciated and valued; a society in which similar life opportunities are available to all"

Davies argues that "place" or spaces play a role in how far "pluralistic societal coherence" may be achieved. Without adequate space young people and especially those from diverse backgrounds will not feel a complete sense of belonging as I argue throughout this paper.

Language is often associated with identity (Edwards, 2009 , Sharma, 2011, Bauman, 2001, Tajfel, 1981, Rampton, 2006), belonging (Meinhof and Galasiński, 2005, Lippi-Green, 1997) and in the last decade very closely with integration and assimilation (Casey, 2016, Green Paper, 2018, Hall, 2013). Language in this paper does not refer to its linguistic form but instead to its facet as an entity of communication. Language and identity are mutually shaping and constantly connect and disconnect the speaker from those around them and from the spaces in which they occupy, the idea of spaces is discussed later in the results. Identity here is defined in line with Tajfel (1981, p.255) to be "that part of an individual's self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership in a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attended to that membership". Identity is also attributed to the individual by others and determined by the way a person dresses, what they eat and without doubt the language they speak. Thus, language plays an important part in not only how people are viewed by others, but also more essentially how young speakers view themselves in relation to the world (Rampton, 2006).

3 Current study

This study employed a mixed methods approach by collecting data through a short survey and followed that up with semi-structured interviews. Given the nature of the study and the questions posed, it was decided that this method of data collection would yield fruitful data. Three research questions were posed:

1. What does the learning of or knowledge of Arabic mean for Arabic-English bilinguals?
2. What are the consequences of speaking/knowing the Arabic language for these bilinguals in the UK?
3. How (if at all) does knowledge of Arabic affect 2nd generation Arab bilinguals' feelings/opinions of belonging to the UK?

Answers to these questions would offer some insight into issues surrounding the Arabic language and belonging from a point of view of its speakers. Data was collected over a six-week period as a side-project to another larger on-going 3-year project on Arabic-English multilinguals in London. Surveys were handed out and interviews took place at a Saturday school (where the researcher taught Arabic) and at an Arab women's club in London, where she was at the time, a member. It was felt necessary to conduct the interviews in a place where the participants felt safe. Consent was sought and given and participants asked to be made anonymous; the researcher coded all surveys and interviews by participant number and gender, for example 60M (60 year old male). It was important to connect the survey responses with the interview data and the age and background of the participant in order to better understand the context of their views (Baxter and Jack, 2008).

Sampling was conducted purposively and then in a snowballing manner (Daniel, 2012) as this would save time and ensure only those who were bilinguals and willing to take part did so. After ethics and

securing consent (Miller et al., 2012), 62 individuals completed the short survey, among them were 24 males and 38 females and all members were over the age of 18. After the survey 12 people agreed to be interviewed and were invited to take part in semi-structured interviews (Galleta, 2013) which were audio recorded (Magnusson and Marecek, 2013). Interview allows for a deeper exploration of what participants write in surveys. It was seen best to approach individuals who were bilingual and actively involved in the learning or teaching of Arabic because this would provide richer accounts about the symbolisms of their languages. The main challenge of any self-reported research is the challenge of validating what participants report (See Galleta, 2013). However, the aim of this project was exactly that, to understand perceptions and explore what these mean for the everyday lives of the participants.

The survey data was analysed quantitatively using SPSS (Gray and Kinnear, 2012) and the interview data was broadly transcribed and thematically analysed (in Nvivo) to look for ideas emerging from the data (Guest et al., 2012). The data presented here pertains only to issues surrounding language, multilingualism, identity, and belonging as they emerged from the participant responses.

4 Results

The findings reveal that language is central to the citizens' identities and that their knowledge of more than one language offers them unique opportunities in work, career progression and life. They attach equal importance to English and Arabic and although the current socio-political climate challenges their feelings of belonging, many still view themselves as active viable citizens of the UK.

4.1 Part 1: Background- age, education and gender

Of the 62 individual 24 were males and 38 were females of varying ages from 18-39, with 35 university graduates (21 females and 14 males), 20 were at the time pursuing a degree at university (11 females and 9 males), and 7 with qualifications to high school or A-Levels (6 female and 1 male).

The largest age group are twenty year olds with 9 participants in total (3 males and 6 females), followed by twenty three year olds (1 male and 6 females), then twenty-one, twenty-seven and thirty year olds (6 for each respectively). In all, the majority of participants were thirty and under. Gender, age and education did not affect how participants answered neither the survey nor the views they held about their languages and belonging (see Appendix I for survey questions).

4.2 Part 2: Discourses of multilingualism, identity and belonging

Three main themes identified in the data and are discussed separately below in three sections. After conducting a thematic analysis of the interview and open-ended questionnaire data using Nvivo, a word frequency query was ran to determine which word occurred the most (Joffe and Yardley, 2004). From the results three main themes stood out and were labelled as: multilingualism, identity and belonging.

The themes were selected based on the frequency (distinct number of times) of their occurrence in the data and more than one form of a word was accepted. The first, multilingualism was formed from expressions such as: "I'm a multilingual" (100), "multilingualism" (20), " I speak another language" (250), "more than one language" (150), and "polyglot" (3).

Similarly, for the theme identity: "my identity" (415), "my self" (10), "my way of being/existing" (15), "I identify" (50), "my ethnicity" (20), and "my double being" (5). Finally, the idea of belonging was also very frequently mentioned: "I belong" (430), "my belonging to" (100), and "I'm both"/ "I'm double" (56). The above identified themes guided the analysis of the data and helped to create a coherent account of the self-reported data of what the learning of Arabic, consequences of speaking it, and feelings of belonging were for second-generation Arabic speakers.

4.2.1 Multilingualism and the unique position of the Arabic language

The awareness among all the speakers, especially the younger participants, of their multilingualism was constant and present in their expressions of identity, belonging or how they valued their languages. Interestingly, all participants described themselves or their state of speaking more than one language as

"multilingual" or "multilingualism" and no one used the term bilingualism. It is also important to note that the researcher did not use the term multilingualism with the participants but once one participant used the term in the interviews all others followed and used the term and later used it in the questionnaires (some participants filled these out after the interview). A number of the female participants were mothers who said they were trying to raise their children to be multilingual and were hence familiar with the term from the literature they were reading. Although multilingualism was discussed in a positive light, the participants did however reveal that they perceived the Arabic language as a non-neutral language, which caused challenges for them as its speakers.

   The first two questions asked how important Arabic and English were respectively. Most people (84%) strongly agreed that Arabic was important and slightly more (89%) agreed that English was important. Such findings illustrate the importance and near equal status second-generation speakers give to their languages. Arabic was however singled out for its importance to religion, culture and family ties which is often the added importance speakers attribute to Arabic (Szczepek Reed et al., Under review, Szczepek Reed et al., 2017). In the interviews respondents highlighted that "without Arabic how can I understand my religion?" and that relying on "translations of the Qur'an was a bad idea" with one participant saying "you never get the true meaning unless it's in Arabic". Others also added that "without it I cannot cook with my grandmother and learn her Iraqi recipes" or "fully understand wedding songs because they are in old Egyptian" so Arabic therefore plays a central cultural role. Equally, others emphasised the importance of both and their connection to country *"Arabic for religion and cultural things because that's what makes me, me and English is my other heritage and language of my country"*. Participant 17F continues and says *"with both languages I can work anywhere in the world and be free"* and 47M added *"I feel good speaking both, it's the best of both worlds for me"*. So language here is seen as a social resource that enhances the lives of its speakers.

4.2.2 Arabic is "not a neutral language"
When asked what level of agreement they had with the statement "I think it is a good skill to speak more than one language" 94% of the respondents said they strongly agreed with the statement, 3% said they agreed and another 3% said they disagreed. In the interviews the researcher was keen to understand why some participants (2 in total) thought that multilingualism was not a good idea. One of the participants elaborated that she felt speaking more languages in addition to English complicated her life and that of her children because Arabic was viewed by some people as the "language of the enemy",

   "[S]o my language is seen by others as a language of the enemy, you tell me how am I supposed to love the fact that I am multilingual and all that? I read in the newspaper that I'm supposed to be bright, my kids are meant to be clever but I wish I just spoke English only well because because people think I am plotting against them… and no no really I tell you once I was in [name of place removed] and some guy says to me "go speak that terrorist language in the desert this is England". I felt so upset and went to my car and cried in front of my kids, I was upset really sad but khair [all good] it will be okay that's what I keep telling myself and what I want my kids to know it will be okay"

   Participant 52F here is reluctant to celebrate her ability to speak more than one language because of the ramifications she faces speaking a language that is associated with the terrorist acts of a group of people. She adds, *"I am tired of saying we have nothing to do with it [these acts], we just wanna live you know? But who listens"?* There are many issues raised in what 52F had to say, one is that her language has been connected to terrorism and she has been confronted because of it. Second, her language has also been openly marginalised and singled out as a language that does not belong to "England". And third, such a reaction to her knowledge of Arabic has made her upset and feel humiliated because she cried in the presence of her children. Her worry though is not to appear defeated and she emphasises that she tells her children that matters will improve and that maybe not all individuals are like the one who spoke to her in that way. Another interesting issue is that she says she is tired of trying to explain that it, meaning

terrorism, has nothing to do with her *"we just wanna live you know?"* A similar sentiment was echoed by others who reported that their language is "innocent" and just happens to be used by these "thugs" but has nothing to do with "us or with our kind and hospitable culture". A number of participants felt "tired" of having to keep explaining this point and this is something well chronicled in articles and books (Bayoumi, 2008, Bojanovska, 2017, Aslan, 2018). Participant 1M said "Arabic is not a neutral language it has lovers and haters" and that "we as its speakers are at the mercy of those around us". However, participant 12F interjected and said that "not all people are like that and I have lived here all my life, all forty years, and nothing makes me feel like my language is hated" This therefore, highlights that not all participants face the same reaction when they speak Arabic in public.

However, 19 others (3 in the interviews and the remainder in the survey) reported similar incidents where their knowledge of Arabic was directly related to terrorism or being representative of it, they felt "unsafe" and "scared" to use Arabic "in public" or "around people in shopping centres" in case "people thought I was about to do something horrible". When asked how they knew this to be the case most participants cited examples of over hearing others say, "they might do something" or similar statements when the participant had spoken Arabic and then overheard statements made about the language directly afterwards. Additionally, others said they didn't need to be told anything specific they had become accustomed to being looked at in a "suspicious" or "non-trusting" manner. What was also of note, was that some participants reported hearing of these incidents from their friends or friends of friends and so held these perceptions of apprehensiveness not as a direct consequence of what they had actually experienced. The formation of such perceptions is based on others' experiences and echoes the findings of Frampton, Goodhart & Mahmood (2016, p.21-25), in which they found that British Muslim Asian perceptions of Islamophobia were sometimes a result of "third party stories" and not personal experiences. They argue that the danger of such perceptions is that they feed "a strong belief that Muslims routinely faced discrimination" (p.23). Perception is an in-built meter that helps people gauge how others view them or as "processes that allow us to extract information from the patterns of energy that impinge on our sense organs" and can be difficult to argue with (Rogers, 2017). These speakers hold these perceptions based on how they see, hear and feel others position them because of their language. This does not however mean that such perceptions are to be disregarded or validated for their truth, as argued above, but that they are to be taken with caution. It would be iniquitous to take these as objective truths and incriminate the entire UK society as one that is bigoted and intolerant of other languages. Instead, these are the truths of the participants and are based on their own experiences or those similar to them and have impacted how they now view themselves or believe others view them (a point elaborated in the discussion below).

Participant 24M who is a Moroccan Arabic speaker says that when he speaks Spanish to his in-laws those around him do not look twice but "when I speak Arabic you see how people move back or look at me like I am about to do something, I know the difference, I feel it". Recent ,well publicised, incidents in the news , for example, report events in which members of the public complain to flight attendants and ask for individuals who spoke Arabic to be removed from a flight because they felt unsafe. Piller (2016, p.30) argues that linguistic diversity is stratified whereby some languages are seen as "more valuable" than others which results once more in "linguistic domination". Arabic is already a minority language (i.e. no support outside the home or the immediate speech community), and so its connection with undesirable acts makes it less desirable and more suspect in the minds of some.

Relatedly, the statement "I am comfortable speaking Arabic in public" offered interesting findings whereby about half of the respondents (48%) said they strongly agreed, 5% said they agreed, and 24 respondents (39%) said they strongly disagreed with the statement. As the comments above have illustrated most people are fearful in how others look at them when they speak Arabic and feel that "they do not trust us or question our loyalty when we speak 'Arabi" (meaning Arabic). 34M relates an incident in a bus when he was speaking on his phone in Arabic and a group of "ladies" moved away from him "constantly kept looking back at" him as if "he was about to do something". For the participants they fully believe that this is how they are seen and it "hurts to know others think that of you" but 46F says that "it

doesn't deter me, I still smile and try to be part of my community". As researchers working in the field of sociolinguistics know, discourse is more than simply words and the above sentiments directly affect how these individuals view themselves and construct their realities.

4.2.3 Multilinguals are "invisible"

Within the major theme of multilingualism there are sub-themes that occur such as the invisibility of multilinguals in a monolingual society. Participants reported that there are only very few spaces in which their multilingualism or rather specifically their knowledge of Arabic was appreciated and encouraged. Most participants highlighted that there is never space to discuss multilingualism outside the family home or the language classroom whilst they were growing up and even more so today. Participant 3M says his Spanish teacher encouraged him to share his knowledge of Arabic in class because of the similarities between Arabic and Spanish. Elsewhere he never felt that his Arabic mattered or as he says "was visible".

"[M]y Arabic was visible there because he really loved my language and made me feel okay to speak it in class and I became popular with my friends…"

3M hence went through a positive experience because of his knowledge of Arabic at school and became popular as a result of the teacher's interest. Similarly, 38F said the same about her French teacher, who encouraged students in her class to offer words in their own languages whenever they had to learn a set of new words,

"she would ask us how do you say these words in Arabic, Japanese, Urdu and then you kind of feel like oh okay yeah that's fun, my friends can see that I speak another language and I can learn from them too, the teacher was really interested and she learned our words and would repeat them afterwards or weeks later and we would be fascinated…so I think it was kinda like a place where we could talk about our languages and not feel less or weird I don't know…like at home like"

Spaces in which multilingualism is celebrated, talked about and explored seems to be the home and some language classrooms because teachers created such spaces for students. These spaces made participants "not feel less or weird" meaning that perhaps outside these spaces multilingualism was in fact invisible or not celebrated creating feelings of strangeness within the students.

When asked "How do your friends/teachers feel about your knowledge of Arabic?" 59 participants (95%) said their friends thought it was a positive skill, and 3 said (0.4%) that they did not know. In reference to teachers 48 participants (77%) said they did not know how teachers felt about this, and 5 individuals (8%) said they received a negative reaction and only 9 people (15%) said their teachers felt this was positive. Spaces for linguistic visibility also create spaces for social inclusion and encourage feelings of belonging (see Davies, 2018 on youth engagement and education). The participants' friends and many of their language teachers celebrated their multilingualism. It may be argued that they may not have known what their teachers thought about their multilingualism because in a monolingual society such topics are not readily spoken of in non-demarcated (outside the language classroom) spaces.

4.2.4 Identity

Participants were keen to connect their language to their identity. When asked to elaborate on question one, 10M said that "Arabic and English define my identity" and others added, "I can be both and feel okay" without as 35F emphasises "having to choose between the two worlds of Arabic and English, each one make me who I am". Linguistic knowledge here defined the identities of individuals and allowed them to embrace both worlds and what each language represented. "I think I am intelligent because I speak another language and people appreciate that about me", language here was presented as a means through which these speakers saw themselves and how they wished to be seen by others.

62M says interestingly, *"without my Arabic I would not be a good English speaker or appreciate other people. My language gives me hope, asks me to be loyal to my country and be good to my family".* He attributes his language proficiency of English to his knowledge of Arabic which is an issue supported by some linguists who argue that mastering a first language helps a speaker master subsequent languages (Lee and Schallert, 2012). He also presents language as a capable of affecting everyday life or of possessing deep ideas and meanings when he says it "asks" him to be loyal. The relationship between language and thought or language as a vehicle through which worldviews are held is common in linguistic relativity studies (Lakoff, 1990, Boroditsky, 2001). Although, the participant here means something different from what linguistics mean he has attributed an almost non-agentive ability to himself, as though he has no choice but to be "loyal". Speakers often cite such elaborate properties of their languages to elevate its status and illustrate the quality of their identity. He attributes values of loyalty and nationalism to the Arabic language, thus presenting himself as a loyal subject and active citizen, however that is not how others may necessarily view him.

16F and 11M are keen to point out "although we speak English and love it others do not like that we speak another language but how can we be without both"? 11M asks,

> "if I were to give up my Arabic today would I be seen as an English person? Would my accent offer me one identity? People keep saying this is England, this is England, but I am sure English people speak English in non-English countries!"

The respondents pose questions as if to ask the host society, what will it take to be accepted or be identified as English speakers? A question that many immigrants ask when they feel that their multilingualism is challenged. They view knowledge of Arabic as paramount to their identity as multilinguals and as important as English. 11M contests one identity and says he needs both but asks that without his Arabic would be accepted? He also points out that many people around the world maintain their language even English speakers around the world. For many immigrants it becomes important to maintain their language (Fishman, 2013, Fishman, 1991, Heye, 1975, Okita, 2001, Zhu and Li, 2016, Said and Zhu, 2017) as part of their ethnic, cultural and social identities. Others prefer to speak the language of the host country as a way of identifying more with society or as way a of signalling their new identities (Leibkind, 1999) or still, in order not to feel isolated.

26M says that he "looks sometimes for Arabic speakers like me and we hang out, I feel like they know what I am or how I feel because we share a background and I get to speak Arabic" he adds that "I don't feel out of place and it helps me feel good inside, that's what makes me me". Living with difference or accepting those who are different is not always easy for other people (Valentine, 2008), even if the respondents here are confident in belonging to both the host and their minority community. These respondents are comfortable with difference and see a value in their minority identity.

4.2.5 Belonging

When asked "Do you feel that you belong here in the UK or to your parents' country of origin? Fifty-five participants (89%) said they belonged to both, four (6.4%) said they belonged to the UK, two (3%) said they belonged to their parents' country of origin and one person (1.6%) said they did not know. The majority of participants felt that the UK was as much a home to them as their parents' home, some went as far as saying that "this is really my home if you think about it, my parents left their home to come here" and that "I connect better to the UK than I do to Libya because I have never lived there I have always lived here". Others pointed out that "Arabic allows me to access that culture, but deep inside I feel like I belong here, I can go there but not too long, I need my London life". In the interviews and in the open-ended questions a number of the participants said that they felt as though they belonged in the UK and even though their Arabic was not necessarily supported in the public domain it was still welcome. 45F says that when her mother accessed the NHS in the eighties it was not always easy to receive information in Arabic, but now when they attend a GP it is easy to find a leaflet in Arabic for her mother. Although her mother's

command of English is excellent after more than forty years in the UK and having taken a Masters degree in Biology, she still appreciates information in Arabic her first language. Others cited a simmilar examples and said this meant that at least at the Government and local authority level that they were catered for and not invisible.

The issue of visibility occurred many times in the interviews and a number of respondents said they were "happy" and "relieved" to see the ethnic term "Arab" in the latest 2011 Census. 7M says that when his father completed the last Census such a category was not available and so the family debated on whether to term themselves as *"other or Asian or something like that, but this development makes me feel that my children will feel that there is a category of people out there like us, we aren't strange".* 23M added that such visibility would help the youth feel like they belong in the UK,

"like anyone else, maybe if they feel that they belong they won't be sucked into bad things, I mean there are people out there looking for these young people who don't know where they belong. But here you can declare your ethnicity and the language you speak and it's official in the UK these are the ethnicities that exist, what do you need more than that?"

23M argues that social exclusion may lead to possible radicalisation (Kyriacou et al., 2017) and that open acceptance of people who are different may help to make these groups feel like they belong to the UK society despite obvious linguistic and ethnic differences. He and others added "that's why we try our best to help our children feel included and not like outsiders", they did not elaborate on how they achieved this. 33F says "I belong here in London, I don't care that they don't appreciate my Arabic, this is me and I will work hard and do my best". 43M adds, "I accept them and hold no bad feeling towards them, but sometimes they say things that make me feel like I need to leave the UK to be at peace". When probed about how this might make him behave he says "I think I don't want to bring my children up in an environment like this, where you constantly feel different, you can't talk your language freely, you know". Svašek (2010) makes the point that emotions play an important role in shaping how people perceive their belonging to a place. He says (p.868) "it is useful to regard emotions as dynamic processes" in which people "shape their subjectivities". Similarly, Waite and Cook (2011) argue that emotion plays an important role in "human mobility, displacements and emplacement" and should be taken into account (see discussion below).

In general, the findings here demonstrate that speakers overwhelmingly do feel that they do belong to the UK, however a smaller number feel challenged and said they would leave as soon as they could secure work outside the UK. In order for a society to be inclusive what is needed perhaps are "multilingual citizens" (Kymlica, 2003) who are not fearful or indignant of other cultures, who also feel welcome to celebrate their own diversity and accept the norms and ways of the host society only then can there be positive attitudes to diversity and firm feelings of belonging. Kymlica here is calling for a bidirectional process in which the hosts and diverse communities embrace all languages and engage in multilingual citizenship in which they all work to be citizens of one country.

5 Discussion

5.1 Conceptions of belonging

The findings illustrated that belonging to a place does not necessarily entail acceptance from the host community nor does belonging have to be directly connected with language. Although, some of the participants reported that their sense of belonging was challenged as a result of their perception of how others viewed their language, still the remaining participants did not connect belonging to their knowledge of Arabic. Instead, they reported that they belonged to the UK and wished to partake in society as active citizens despite the negative ways others might view them because of their language or any other factors. This is important because it might suggest that people can undergo what they perceive as linguistic discrimination, and still feel a sense of belonging to a particular place.

Belonging is a complex notion, concept and emotion and can be expressed in two ways, as a result of intrinsic or external (other influenced) feelings (Antonsich, 2010). Place-belongingness (intrinsic) is what Antonsich (p.654) describes as "a personal, intimate, feeling of being 'at home' in a place" regardless of the external factors. He labels the second way of expressing belonging in terms of "politics of belonging" which is a, "discursive resource that constructs, claims, justifies, or resists forms of socio-spatial inclusion/exclusion". Belonging is therefore a complex idea and can often be difficult to define and discuss, however, the role power and subjectivity plays in the lives of these participants is important as it determines how they define their belonging. For those communities that are viewed as integral to society their belongingness is rarely questioned, but perhaps for more diverse communities the question of belonging is always relevant. The participants who expressed an intrinsic conception of belonging have not connected their feeling of being "at home" to anything other than how they feel. Those who question their belonging do so based on how included or excluded they feel by the host society (people, friends, media, colleagues) and shift along the continuum of belonging based on how well or not they can resist how others place them. In this situation one might argue that the host society always possess a more powerful position to that of minority communities and naturally the newer minority community may feel less powerful.

5.2 Language as inextricably linked to social life and identity

Throughout the findings the idea of language and identity as being connected has occurred consistently in the participants comments and answers. Language unlike the other characteristics is unique in nature, first because it is the most effective ubiquitous tool through which communication takes place and second, because it has been used throughout history to promote, marginalise, include or exclude certain groups of people (Piller, 2012, Piller and Takahashie, 2011). The marginalisation or promotion of a people because of language continues until today at both the local, national and international level as can be seen in national language policies across the world (Hult, 2010, Piller and Takahashie, 2011). Language is a pervasive characteristic that many people use as a window through which to judge speakers; Cameron (1998, p.272) argues, "people are who they are because of (among other things) the way they talk". Participants in this project have highlighted the power language has in defining who they are, how they view the world, how they see their role in the world and most importantly how what they think others opinions of them can affect how they live their lives (e.g. not speaking Arabic in public or planning a future outside the UK where they can feel normal speaking Arabic). The participants perceptions have reaffirmed much of what the literature reports in terms of the relationship between language and identity, that they are closely related and individuals as well as others can use language as a marker of identity and identification. Languages in any society always sit in a hierarchical manner with minority less important languages (to the society in question) occupying the lower levels of the hierarchy. Language can also empower individuals and enhance their lives or cause them anxiety depending on how they choose to use their languages.

In linguistic and socio-cultural terms the findings of this project illustrate the complicated inseparable relationship between language, its speakers and their social lives. What unifies all the results in this paper is that language greatly influences how speakers view themselves and how they view and consequently treat others (Cornips and de Rooij, 2018) as mentioned in the introduction of this paper. Consequently, perceptions of belonging and identity affect the language practices of speakers (do they speak the language openly? Do they find language clubs at which they can mingle with other minority language speakers? Do they actively partake in learning that language?) and their sense of self and well being. Accordingly, although perceptions, as I have said throughout this paper, are participants own feelings and cannot be taken as absolute truths, they do have the power to influence how people live their lives. In particular, perceptions related to language can sometimes be harmful and have far reaching consequences (that is why many parents in this paper report reassuring their children that "things will get better" or emphasise that they do indeed belong) that may push young impressionable people to react to feelings of rejection.

Perceptions are formed as a result of what speakers experience and how they interact with those around them and that can be seen from how the participants here have reported how they think others have judged them because of speaking Arabic. Others cited how class teachers welcomed and encouraged their use of Arabic and others also reported on how their fellow Arabic speakers are treated negatively based only on linguistic reasons. Places and what takes place in them can become meaningful and help speakers feel that they do indeed belong or that they do not. Minority speakers are also not immune to the emotional and social changes the host society undergoes because although they are small in number they are still a part of the larger society. Therefore, when society as a whole undergoes an existential crises this also includes the minority community who almost always also carry with them feelings of intersubjectivity (Sharma, 2011, Waite and Cook, 2011, Creese and Kambere, 2003).

6 Conclusion

The paper has highlighted that languages are not merely codes of communication but can in fact affect the lives of its speakers in a myriad number of ways. This conclusion summarises the findings and highlights the implications of the data. Some participants in this project make a direct relationship between their language, identity and belonging. They feel that because others look at them with suspicion when they speak Arabic they are therefore looked upon as "outsiders" even though they see themselves as "insiders" and as British as their fellow countrymen. This illustrates the complexity of the symbolisms of language and how speakers' self-perceptions of how others view them may, in cases such as this, affect how much they not only feel a part of the larger society, but how much they participate in such a society. Encouraging these perceptions of judgement and mistrust from others are news reports or social media accounts about individuals singled out and treated differently because of the language they speak (Abel, 2018, Stack, 2016).

As long as linguistic subordination exists so will feelings of not belonging or feelings of exclusion. Often the onus of assimilation and integration is placed on the newcomer, the (im)migrant, the minority language speaker, but space for such actions need to be provided for them so that they feel welcome and able to explore the types and forms of assimilation and integration they wish to take part in. As it stands, such spaces seem very narrow or such assimilation is imagined in specific ways by the host societies that may differ completely to the way the immigrants imagine assimilation to be. There needs to be a bidirectional process in which migrants express their assimilation and in which the host society supports and contributes to that process. A beginning step would be to embrace languages and celebrate these not just in terms of showcasing multilingualism, but through actual tangible support. Linguistic justice would perhaps entail that support for multilinguals would be in the form of accurate reporting of issues surrounding the numbers of multilinguals in the UK, more positive framing of all multilinguals and not just those from higher (SES) backgrounds but also heritage language speakers. This would definitely help the Arabic speaking community and others to feel less "invisible" and more welcome in their societies.

Reassuringly, the findings also illustrate that despite the linguistic hierarchy and unequal view of multilinguals in the UK, participants still feel that they are citizens of the UK and attach equal importance to both their Arabic and English languages. They wish to participate in society and do not view themselves as different to others in the UK in so far as civic duties are concerned; they celebrate their multilingualism and view it as an asset and a significant skill to posses.

To end, the paper asserts that the more efforts made towards a more just linguistic society the more multilinguals will feel that they belong to their country of residence and the more active they will be as citizens. Language, like sustenance, is central to the growth and survival of a community, and without due recognition and space for each language it becomes very difficult to establish an inclusive society in which all feel that they belong.

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