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DOI:

[10.4119/jsse-1097](https://doi.org/10.4119/jsse-1097)

Document Version

Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

[Link to publication record in King's Research Portal](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

Rampton, B., Cooke, M., & Holmes, S. (2018). Sociolinguistic citizenship. *Journal of Social Science Education*, 17(4), 68-83. <https://doi.org/10.4119/jsse-1097>

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Sociolinguistic Citizenship

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- a practical perspective on diversity for the UK, strongly grounded in sociolinguistics
- offers an alternative to dominant models of language & citizenship
- stresses democratic voice & the political value of sociolinguistic understanding
- illustrates the argument with contemporary and historical cases
- identifies a role for universities sustaining sociolinguistic citizenship

Purpose: This paper introduces Stroud's 'Linguistic Citizenship', a concept committed to democratic participation, to voice, to the heterogeneity of linguistic resources and to the political value of sociolinguistic understanding.

Approach: It first outlines Linguistic Citizenship's links with the ethnographic sociolinguistics inspired by Hymes, and then turns to language and language education in England.

Findings: The discourses of language and citizenship currently dominating the UK are very much at odds with Stroud's conception, but the sociolinguistic citizenship outlined by Stroud is very well suited to the multilingualism of everyday urban life, and it complements a range of relatively small, independently funded educational initiatives promoting similar values. Their efforts are currently constrained by issues of scale and sustainability, although there was a period from the 1960s to the 80s when sociolinguistic citizenship was addressed within English state schooling.

Practical implications: Sociolinguistic citizenship may at present find its most sustainable support in the collaboration between universities and not-for-pro

Keywords:

linguistic citizenship, voice, education, sociolinguistics, multilingualism, ethnography

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1 Introduction

In a 2010 Institute of Public Policy Research report, *'You Can't Put Me in a Box'*, Fanshawe & Sriskandarajah call for a shift in British policy discourse: “[w]e need a new way of talking about diversity in the UK. Overzealous pursuit of crude equalities measures... ha[s] created a lot of awkwardness... when talking about identity, diversity and equality.... The tick-box approach to identity seems to be missing out on growing numbers of people who fall outside or across standard classifications” (2010:33-34,5). This is a problem for language classification as well, and to address it, this paper introduces Christopher Stroud’s notion of ‘Linguistic Citizenship’, building on our previous work on language and superdiversity (Blommaert & Rampton, 2011; Arnaut et al., 2016; Holmes, 2017).¹

Linguistic Citizenship (LC) is “an attempt at a comprehensive *political* stance on language” (Stroud 2008:45), and its central argument is that a subtle understanding of how language positions people in society can and should enhance democratic participation (§2). We discuss its similarities to work on language in society in the USA in the 1960s and 70s (§3), and then turn to England, where contemporary state discourses linking language to citizenship are very inhospitable to LC (§4) – to the extent, indeed, that in the British context, Stroud’s LC needs to be renamed ‘Sociolinguistic Citizenship’, both to distinguish it from state discourses and to emphasise its sociolinguistic pedigree. Nevertheless, there are small-scale educational initiatives that seek to cultivate linguistic repertoires and practices with the variety and mixing recognised in Linguistic Citizenship, and we describe two recent examples (§5). After that, we look back briefly at language education in England from the 1960s to the late 1980s, suggesting that even though current conditions are inauspicious, there is no intrinsic incompatibility between Sociolinguistic Citizenship and state education provision (§6). Section 7 turns reflexively to our own positioning, considering the contribution to Sociolinguistic Citizenship that universities can make at the present time.

2 The idea of ‘Linguistic Citizenship’

Stroud’s notion of Linguistic Citizenship first emerged in a 2001 paper that compared it with ‘Linguistic Human Rights’ as a concept in the assessment of mother-tongue education programmes in Africa. The article focused on the success and failure of programmes which used local rather than ex-colonial metropolitan languages as media of instruction, and it argued that although it was widely invoked, the idea of Linguistic Human Rights (LHR) was inadequate as a framework for understanding and promoting mother-tongue programmes that actually worked. Stroud characterised LHR as an approach to language education that involved:

- A) selective provision for a specific group, usually designed to overcome historic disadvantage.
- B) the identification, description and introduction of the group’s distinctive language as an entitlement in institutional activity – in schools, in law courts, in aspects of state bureaucracy
- C) an expectation that the courts and other bodies overseeing the nation-state will grant and monitor all this (Stroud, 2001, p. 349).

With constitutional recognition given to 11 official languages after apartheid, the LHR perspective had been very influential in South Africa, where Stroud is based, but he pointed to a number of serious limitations, of the kind articulated in the IPPR report (Stroud & Heugh, 2004):

- a) the LHR approach marginalises people who use non-standard versions of the group’s language, generating new socio-linguistic inequalities
- b) it promotes an arbitrary and essentialist view of language and ethnicity – it creates artificial boundaries between ways of speaking that are actually continuous and it overlooks mixing and hybridity



c) it appeals to a rather top-down and managerial politics; it presupposes membership of a single state; and it neglects population mobility. It isn't well adapted to the fact that "individuals now find themselves participating in a variety of sites in competition for resources distributed along multiple levels of scale, such as the nation, the supranation, the local and the regional." (Stroud, 2010, p. 200)

To overcome these problems, Stroud proposed Linguistic Citizenship, which differed from LHR in

- i) putting democratic participation first, emphasising cultural and political 'voice' and agency rather than just language on its own
- ii) seeing all sorts of linguistic practices – including practices that were mixed, low-status or transgressive – as potentially relevant to social and economic well-being, accepting that it is very hard to predict any of this if one is merely watching from the centre
- iii) stressing the importance of grassroots activity on the ground, often on the margins of state control, outside formal institutions.

Going beyond the critique of LHR, Stroud also contended that an enhanced understanding of sociolinguistic processes should actually be central to emancipatory politics. Linguistic Citizenship "aims to make visible the sociolinguistic complexity of language issues" (Stroud & Heugh 2004:192) and to promote "the idea of language as a political and economic 'site of struggle'", alongside "respect for diversity and difference" and "the deconstruction of essentialist understandings of language and identity" (2001:353). This perspective should be "inserted into political discourses and made into a legitimate form, target and instrument of political action" (2001, p. 343), and it has the potential to help marginalised people change their material and economic conditions for the better.

Stroud saw these principles at work in successful language education programmes (2001, p. 346-7), and turning to currently dominant discourses that could increase its appeal, he also argued that the notion of Linguistic Citizenship could dovetail well with the "new discourses of *entrepreneurialism* that are the order of the day" in South Africa (Stroud & Heugh, 2004), even though it was still difficult to promote in a wider public debate:

"In the African context, speakers move into... and across many different associational and socio-geographical units... exhibiting multiple and varied practices of language use, such as language crossing and mixed registers. Mozambican 'commerciantes', for example, regularly travel from the Southern Mozambican province of Gaza to South Africa, Malawi and Zimbabwe, where they conduct their purchases and sales in various forms of indigenous African languages, not metropolitan languages... From an actor-oriented, or grassroots, perspective, the relevant language communities to which speakers need to refer on a daily basis may be both larger and smaller than the traditional nation-state, comprising 'communities' delimited by both transnational varieties and local ways of speaking subnational languages. As these languages generate value, they provide a basis for political action.

However, ... when social and economic issues are debated in relation to language, the debate continues to deal with the rights and obligations that accrue to mastery of the ex-colonial, metropolitan and official language alone, and refer only to official and public arenas. [So...] there is a mismatch between the traditional, state-based institutions dealing with language issues, and the... sociolinguistic realities. We need some way of capitalising on the insight that local language practices are closely connected to generation of capital, and develop and promote economic models for these languages as a form of resistance to the market hegemony of ex-colonial languages" (Stroud, 2001, p. 350)

We will come back to the relationship between non-elite, everyday linguistic practice 'on the ground' and the ways in which state institutions conceive of language when we turn to language education in



the UK. But before doing so, it is worth considering LC's links to the sociolinguistics associated with Dell Hymes, one of the founding figures in contemporary sociolinguistics.

3 Sociolinguistic underpinnings in Linguistic Citizenship

According to Hymes, ethnographic sociolinguistics is a primarily analytical rather than a political or normative undertaking, focusing on first on 'what is' rather than 'what should be'. But the careful comparative empirical study of communicative repertoires and practices ultimately serves the ethical objectives of achieving *Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité* because it "prepares [sociolinguists] to speak concretely to actual inequalities" (Hymes, 1977, p. 204-206; 1969; Santos, 2012, p. 46).

This interplay of the academic and the ethical/political can be seen in operation in Stroud's criticism of the way in which language and ethnicity are conceptualised in the LHR perspective (see §2 above). The ideological and emotional power and persuasiveness carried by common-sense ideas about named languages and notions like 'native speaker' and 'ethnolinguistic group' is self-evident, but there is now a lot of sociolinguistic research which challenges the idea that distinct languages exist as natural objects, and that a proper language is bounded, pure and composed of structured sounds, grammar and vocabulary designed for referring to things (e.g. Joseph & Taylor, 1990; Woolard, Schieffelin & Kroskrity, 1998; Stroud, 1999; Makoni & Pennycook, 2007). The idea of named languages – 'English', 'German', 'Bengali' – emerged with the formation of European nation-states in the 19th Century (and linguistic scholarship played a very prominent part in this). But contemporary sociolinguists argue that it is far more productive *analytically* to focus on the very variable ways in which individual linguistic features with identifiable social and cultural associations get clustered together whenever people communicate (Le Page, 1988; Blommaert, 2005). If we take any strip of communication and focus on the links and histories of each of the linguistic ingredients, we can soon see a host of forms and styles that are actually connected to social life in a plurality of groups – groups that vary from the very local to the trans-national (Hudson, 1980; Le Page, 1988; Stroud, 2001, p. 350). From this, a differentiated account of the organisation of communicative practice emerges, centring on identities, relationships, activities and genres that are enacted in a variety of ways (§4 below). Along similar lines, traditional ideas about the 'native speaker of a language' and the vital contribution that early experience in stable speech communities makes to competence in grammar and coherence in discourse have also been critiqued. These beliefs were central to a good deal of linguistic model building for much of the 20th Century, but they are very difficult to reconcile with the facts of linguistic diversity and mixed language practices (Leung, Harris & Rampton, 1997). Instead, sociolinguists now generally work with the notion of linguistic repertoire, which dispenses with *a priori* assumptions about the links between origins, upbringing, proficiency and types of language and refers instead to the very variable (and often rather fragmentary) grasp that individuals have of a plurality of styles, registers, genres and practices, which they have picked up and maybe then partially forgotten over the course of their lives (Blommaert & Backus, 2011; Arnaut et al., 2016; Arnaut et al., 2017).

This deconstruction of essentialist ideas about language represents one way in which in sociolinguistic theory can "prepare [sociolinguists] to speak concretely to actual inequalities" more effectively. Politically, both Linguistic Human Rights and Linguistic Citizenship oppose the exclusion of people who don't have officially-approved linguistic resources in their repertoires. But while LHR focuses on the recognition of named or nameable languages associated with specific groups judged to have been marginalised, LC works with developments in sociolinguistics that allow a more open and inclusive position, attending to the diversity of linguistic practices that people use/need to get themselves heard in arenas that affect their well-being.

But there is a question about the potential political effectiveness of the 'actor-oriented' focus on 'practice' in Linguistic Citizenship. Petrovic and Kuntz (2013, p.142) are concerned that the processes addressed by LC are rather small-scale, and that LC risks relinquishing the wide angle view and the potential to affect relatively large numbers of people identified in the debates about LHR. But it is worth pointing out in response that both in sociolinguistic and social theory, *practices* are seen as basic



building blocks in the production of society, and instead, it is now often said that studies of *state-level* policy run into problems if they neglect practice, because they miss all the unpredictable complexity that the formulation and implementation of policy actually entails (Ball et al., 2012; Jessop, 2007): “policy never just ‘is’, but rather ‘does’... We do not restrict our analysis to... official policy declarations and texts... but place these in context as part of a larger sociocultural system... inferred from people’s language practices, ideologies and beliefs” (McCarty, 2011, p. 2).

At the same time, however, if we are to understand how units “both larger and smaller than the traditional nation-state” enter the account (Stroud, 2001, p. 350 above), we need to move beyond practice to the networks in which it is embedded. In fact, this is implied in the notion of voice itself.

In the first instance, we might define ‘voice’ as an individual’s communicative power and effectiveness within the here-&-now of specific events. But beyond this, the crucial issue is whether and how their contribution is remembered and/or recorded and subsequently reproduced in other arenas, travelling through networks and circuits that may vary in their scale – in their spatial scope, temporal durability and social reach. This is studied in research on ‘text trajectories’ which focuses (a) on the here-&-now activity in which some (but not other) aspects of what’s said get turned into textual ‘projectiles’ that can carry forward into other settings (‘entextualised’), and then (b) the ways in which they are interpreted when they arrive there (‘recontextualised’) (Bauman & Briggs, 1990; Silverstein & Urban, 1996; Agha & Wortham, 2005; Blommaert, 2005; 2008; Kell, 2015; Maybin, 2017). This kind of account can cover both ‘top-down’ and ‘bottom-up’ trajectories, involving a variety of people, practices, media and types of text, working in cooperative and/or conflictual relationships within and across specific events, and it can of course be turned to political processes. So for example, we could focus on directives formulated in government offices that are turned into curriculum documents, transmitted to schools, and then interpreted by teachers interacting with children in class, or alternatively, we could look at parents complaining at a school meeting, the local press reporting the matter, and local politicians then taking it up or dismissing it (see e.g. Mehan, 1996; Kell, 2015). These are obviously simplified sketches, but the essential point is that a ‘trans-contextual and multi-scalar’ framework of this kind allows us to investigate the resonance of particular communicative practices. This then has two further implications.

First, this view of voice and text trajectories means that sociolinguists actually have to be flexible in their response to named languages and the essentialisation that they involve, accepting that there may be occasions when the discourse of Linguistic Human Rights is strategically warranted. Certainly, when faced with data on linguistic practice situated in the here-&-now, sociolinguists first listen for the diversity of the communicative resources in play. But selection and reduction are unavoidable parts of the entextualisation process, and if someone’s viewpoint is to be heard elsewhere in unfamiliar situations, it needs to be represented in a repeatable form that, regardless of its eloquence, inevitably simplifies the first-hand experience that motivated it (e.g. Haarstad & Fløysand, 2007). Named languages may form part of persuasive rhetorics that travel, and even though sociolinguists may worry about the negative (side-) effects and watch out for opportunities to reassert the ideological constructed-ness of named languages (Stroud & Heugh, 2004, p. 212), an analytic interest in the trajectory of voices has to accept the possibility that in certain circumstances, the invocation of named languages helps to advance political causes that they deem progressive. So although Stroud’s account of Linguistic Citizenship includes mixed, low-status and transgressive language practices, we certainly should not assume that notionally purer, higher status and more standard ones are thereby necessarily excluded (Stroud & Heugh, 2004, p. 191; Blommaert 2004, p. 59-60).

Second, it is necessary to move beyond the “freedom to have one’s voice heard” to what Hymes calls the “freedom to develop a voice worth hearing” (1996, p. 64). People in the particular networks through which a voice seeks to resonate inevitably have their own ideas of what’s important, and if its message is to be taken seriously, it needs to understand and connect with these concerns. This brings education – formal and/or informal – into the reckoning. Stroud’s 2001 discussion of Linguistic Citizenship centres more on taking control of language education programmes than on what these programmes actually teach (though see e.g. Bock & Mheta, 2014; Stroud & Heugh, 2004, p. 201). But if

the practices that promote democratic participation and persuasive voices from the grassroots are to sustain themselves, it is vital to consider the organisation of institutionalised arenas for learning and socialisation that are at least partly sheltered from the cut and thrust of political struggle.

So the central ideas that Stroud et al.'s Linguistic Citizenship builds on – the deconstruction of named languages and the focus on linguistic repertoires and practice – finds a great deal of support in ethnographic sociolinguistics, where Hymes also outlined broadly comparable objectives at the interface of research and politics. At the same time, these links qualify some of the radicalism in Stroud's articulation of LC: if claims and voices want people elsewhere to listen to them, they have to make themselves relevant, and the entextualisation required to do so often results in messages that simplify and partly compromise the original intention. It can also take time to develop a 'voice worth listening to', and this raises the question of institutional support.

But how far and in what ways can a concept developed in discussions of language policy in Southern Africa transfer to a country like the UK? To consider this, it is first worth asking what ideologies of language and citizenship currently dominate public discourse and debates about language education in the country where we are based.

4 Ideologies of language and citizenship in England

In recent years, two state-level discourses that link language to citizenship have gained currency in the UK.

One of these discourses derives from the European Union, and it focuses on the development of 'plurilingual citizens', proposing that everyone should learn and use three languages. These should be: a person's mother tongue, a "language of international communication", and a "Personal Adoptive Language", conceived as a language from another EU member state selected by the individual. But sociolinguists have noted at least two characteristics in this advocacy. First, "all the linguistic practices considered worthy of mention conform to standardising... assumptions: they are named languages with unified, codified norms of correctness embodied in literatures and grammars. No other configurations of speaking are recognized" (Gal 2006:167; Pujolar 2007:78,90; Moore 2011). Second, it is elite forms of multilingualism that are emphasised. So with the Personal Adoptive Language, fluency "would go hand in hand with familiarity with the country/countries in which that language is used, along with the literature, culture, society and history linked with that language and its speakers" (Maalouf Report, 2008, p. 10, cited in Moore, 2011. p. 9). As Moore elaborates, this "conjures up scenarios of culturally-enriching and self-actualizing travel: 'mobility', yes, but of an ideally *voluntary* sort. Thus: the *Wanderjahr* or international residence of the cosmopolitan elites of traditional upper middle-class consciousness" (ibid).

The second discourse about language and citizenship focuses on immigrants, and in the UK, it proposes that they need to learn English for social cohesion and national security, claiming (without any evidence) that a lack of proficiency in the national language increases the threat of radicalisation and terrorism, particularly among Muslims. As Khan 2017 explains, there were riots in three northern English cities in the summer of 2001, involving (mainly Muslim) British Asians, far-right extremists and the police, which led to calls for more emphasis on citizenship as a way of fusing together 'parallel communities' (Cantle Report, 2002). With the 9/11 attacks a few weeks later and the 7/7 London bombings in 2005, the view developed that Islamic communities were poorly integrated and a security risk, and the expression of hostility in public discourse has since become much more explicit (Cooke & Simpson, 2012, p. 124-125). This has drawn in the teaching of ESOL (English for speakers of other languages), with the argument that to be a British citizen is to be a speaker of English (Blackledge, 2005; Cooke & Simpson 2012:125). In 2005, the *Life in the UK* test was introduced for migrants seeking British Citizenship (and for those seeking Indefinite Leave to Remain in 2007), and over time, increasingly demanding English proficiency requirements were tied into this, with, for example, a language requirement being introduced for the reunification of non-EU, non-English speaking spouses in 2011.



The spirit of these developments can be seen the words of Home Secretary (and now Prime Minister) Theresa May (2015):

“Government alone cannot defeat extremism so we need to do everything we can to build up the capacity of civil society to identify, confront and defeat extremism wherever we find it. We want to go further than ever before helping people from isolated communities to play a full and fruitful role in British life. We plan a step change in the way we help people learn English. There will be new incentives and penalties, a sharp reduction in translation services and a significant increase in the funding available for English” (Theresa May, Home Secretary, 23/3/15 *A Stronger Britain, Built on Values*; at <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/a-stronger-britain-built-on-our-values>”.

These two state discourses are not compatible with Linguistic Citizenship in Stroud’s sense. But even though they are very influential, neither is universally accepted, and there are other accounts and aspirations for British society which are much more readily aligned with Stroud’s LC. An alternative perspective can be clearly seen in the 2010 report from the Institute of Public Policy Research that we cited at the start, and it is also compatible with a substantial body of research showing that the UK is actually a highly multilingual society, and that many of its citizens have language repertoires that involve the kinds of variety and mixing that Stroud et al. describe (see e.g. Britain (ed) 2007; Rampton et al., 2008; *Working Papers in Translanguaging & Translation*). Indeed, in the next section, we will describe two educational initiatives that seek to cultivate this diversity in London, and in considering the transposition of Stroud’s conception to the UK we will speak of ‘*Sociolinguistic Citizenship*’, both to differentiate it from the two official discourses we have sketched above and to flag up its pedigree in sociolinguistics (§3).

5 Two recent projects promoting Sociolinguistic Citizenship

Educational projects that, like Linguistic Citizenship, promote the voice of relatively marginalised people through the recognition of mixed/non-standard language practices and sociolinguistic awareness have a substantial pedigree in critical pedagogy and beyond, as in work with hip hop (e.g. Alim 2009; Madsen & Karrebæk 2015; www.rapolitics.org). But we will discuss two projects that we ourselves have been involved in.

The first represents an alternative to British government discourses on citizenship and immigration, and it was an ESOL course entitled *Our Languages*. It took place within a small charitable organisation called [English for Action](http://www.englishforaction.org) (EfA) that was set up in 2012 to support London Citizens’ campaigning work. The vision that motivates EfA involves “UK migrants hav[ing] the language, skills and networks they need to bring about an equal and fair society” (EfA, 2016, p. 7), and according to its 2015-16 Annual Report, EfA is “absolutely committed to community organising; that is listening to people’s concerns in our classes and communities, connecting people, training people to listen and take action, taking action to effect change and building powerful groups to be able to hold powerful people and organisations to account. Our approach is above all, to develop the capacity of our students to effect change. Campaigns, such as to secure better housing or living wages, emerge from classroom work and our community organising” (p.5). During 2015-16, 391 people accessed the 19 free of charge ESOL courses that EfA ran in seven London Boroughs, and “over 100 students took action on a range of social justice issues” (p.11). The courses were taught by a staff team of ten, with volunteers attending 85% of the classes, and this activity was supported with an income of £178,000, mostly raised from about a dozen charitable foundations.

Our Languages ran in 2017 as one strand in a three year linguistic ethnography on ‘Adult Language Socialisation in the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora in London’ funded by the Leverhulme Trust (2015-2018; £227,500). The course was designed to explore how far the linguistic experience of the Sri Lankan Tamils studied in the ethnography resonated with other migrant groups, and it involved participatory education (aligned with Freire, critical pedagogy, and democratic education). This takes an over-arching



theme and then allows the exact shape of the course to emerge from session to session.² Working in two classes (36 students from 18 countries), the courses began by playing the recording of someone from Sri Lanka talking about how he'd practiced his English working in an off-license, and by the end of the eight weeks, the students had covered: non-standard language varieties; bi/multilingual language practices; language identities; intergenerational language transmission; multilingual communicative repertoires; language ideologies; language discrimination and the social processes of learning English in the UK. In this way, the course addressed what Stroud and Heugh see as a substantial problem for Linguistic Citizenship: the "problem... is that much current theorisation of language and politics is often unavailable to those communities who are theorised... [L]inguistic knowledge needs to be built in dialogue with communities" (2004, p. 209-210).

In any programme of this kind, the outcomes are mixed. On occasion, students themselves expressed racist ideas; the session on intergenerational language transmission generated quite a lot of frustration and guilt when students talked about their children's lack of heritage language competence; and there was also quite strong support for an 'English Only' policy in ESOL lessons, even though students had been encouraged to draw on their multilingual repertoires. But at the end of course, one of the groups said they wanted another eight weeks to continue the discussion, and there were gains in language learning, in pragmatic and 'multilingual narrative' competence and in vocabulary: one of the students reported "jokingly but proudly – that her family had commented that she was coming home from class 'sounding like a dictionary', [using] research related terms such as 'theme', 'data' and 'participant'" (Cooke et al 2018, p. 25). In fact, one of the groups also made representations to the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Social Integration, whose chair happened to be the local MP (Chuka Umunna). The APPG was conducting an inquiry into the integration of immigrants, and its interim report was picked up by the *Daily Mail* with the headline 'All migrants should learn English before moving to UK: Verdict of Labour MP...it's time to ditch failed multiculturalism'. Students objected to the negative stereotyping, to the way in which learning English was presented as an obligation rather than a right, and to the lack of any reference in either the *Interim Report* or the *Mail* article to major cuts in state funding for ESOL (c. 60% since 2007) and the long waiting lists for classes that these produced. EFA subsequently submitted written evidence to the inquiry (along with 66 other individuals and organisations) and Umunna was invited to the class. He came and admitted that the interim text should have taken more care to avoid interpretations like the *Mail*'s. In fact, the APPG's final report was entitled *Integration not Demonisation*, and it warned against rhetorics that encouraged racism (p.16), discussed the adverse effects of the ESOL funding cuts at some length (2017, p. 69-70), and acknowledged EFA and "the testimony of... community group members" (2017, 83,9).

English for Action aims to encourage the growth of participatory ESOL courses by sharing best practice (and is working on dissemination of the materials from *Our Languages*). The sharing of practice in pedagogies committed to the fluidity of language and identity, sociolinguistic understanding, linguistic inclusivity and voice was central to the second project, *Multilingual Creativity* (www.kcl.ac.uk/Cultural-/Projects/Multilingual-Creativity.aspx). This ran from 1/2015 to 11/2016, and the question guiding it was: 'How can plurilingualism among young people be harnessed for creativity?' It recognized that there were a lot of unconnected projects in universities, schools, and arts & cultural organisations which engaged with young people's hybrid multilingualism, and it set out to build links between them, seeking to develop something of a 'sector' for this kind of work.

There were three elements in the programme: research on current practice, the development of a website (www.multilingualcreativity.org.uk), and a series of events which focused on [language communities](#), [multilingual projects](#), [performing and visual arts](#), [print and multimedia texts](#), [networking](#). These involved 52 cultural organisations (from education, museums, libraries, publishing and the arts sector), 17 artists, 12 academics, and 32 members of the public. The research part surveyed existing projects and identified five pedagogic principles in something of a manifesto, illustrating them with examples of film making in Arabic supplementary schools, German teaching with hand-puppets for primary children, three-day workshops in creative translation, and a national language challenge



(Holmes 2015). The five principles were: plurilingualism over monolingual usage (the use of different ‘languages’ within the same utterance or activity); exuberant smatterings over fluency (‘bits of language’ as opposed to ‘fluency’ as a legitimate goal in language learning); reflexive sociolinguistic exploration over linguistic ‘common sense’ (focusing on participants’ own language practices); collaborative endeavour over individualisation (drawing on the pooling of repertoires within a group); and investment over ‘immersion’ (fostering a genuine desire to participate, rather than insisting on exclusive use of the ‘target’ language).

Multilingual Creativity raised important questions about the positioning of these pedagogic strategies within broader institutions. The glove puppet activity with which Holmes illustrates the ‘exuberant smatterings over fluency’ principle was produced by the Goethe Institut, which receives large-scale long-term financing from the German government to promote German language and culture at all levels world-wide, using German “as the teaching language... right from the start”.³ So ‘Felix und Franz’ is, relatively speaking, just a tiny innovation in which language mixing is a tactic to take small children on their first steps into a much larger programme of monolingual *Deutsch*, perhaps ultimately leading to the kind of plurilingual citizenship advocated by the EU. As pedagogic methods can be adopted and recontextualised in different kinds of programme and organisation, this obviously doesn’t make it irrelevant to Sociolinguistic Citizenship. Even so, the Goethe Institut stands in sharp contrast to virtually all of the other projects involved in *Multilingual Creativity*, which depended on relatively short-term, project-specific funding from charitable foundations and local communities and institutions (as did the *MC* initiative itself, which relied on 5 or 6 grants, amounting to c. £67,000). This in turn depends on the initiative of a few dedicated individuals and their perseverance and success in raising income from a plurality of funding sources. The crucial issue of sustainability emerges here, both for the projects and for the linguistic repertoires and capacities that they seek to develop.

In Stroud et al.’s account, Linguistic Citizenship develops at the margins of state provision and control, and the two cases we have described seem to corroborate this view. But there is in fact no essential incompatibility between state funding and the principles of Sociolinguistic Citizenship, as can be seen in a brief sketch of language education from the 1960s to the late 1980s in England.

6 Sociolinguistic Citizenship in English state education from the 1960s to the late 80s

Language education in England in the period from the 1960s to the late 80s was dominated by ‘progressive’ pedagogies, supported by major Committees of Inquiry (DES 1967, DES 1975) which stated, for example, that the aim of language education “is not to alienate the child from a form of language with which he has grown up... It is to enlarge his repertoire so that he can use language effectively in other speech situations and use standard forms when they are needed... No child should be expected to cast off the language and culture of the home as he crosses the school threshold” (DES, 1975: paras 10.6, 20.5, 20.17; Carter, 1988). Local authorities, teaching unions and subject associations had much more influence than central government, and contrast to the system operating from the 1990s onwards, there was no national curriculum and in regular standardised assessment testing (apart from the school-leaving exams), and “no pressure of a stringent accountability framework that would make... teachers... or their senior managers in school... risk averse” (Gibbons, 2017, p. 40). There certainly were different lines of thinking within broadly progressive language education (Stubbs, 1986, p. 78; Hewitt, 1989, p. 127–33; Cox, 1990, p. 21), and not all would fit the model of Sociolinguistic Citizenship outlined by Stroud. But there was a great deal of emphasis on voice, and together with the idea that English teaching should seek to broaden the child’s *repertoire* rather than impose Standard English on its own (DES, 1975 above; DES, 1981), this itself created openings for mixed and non-standard language. Work of this kind was supported by several very large-scale curriculum development initiatives, and the last of these, the 1989–1992 Language in the National Curriculum Project argued that: “some aspects of language resist systematisation” and “language and its conventions of use are permanently and unavoidably unstable and in flux” (Carter, 1990, p. 17); “[b]eing more explicitly informed about the sources of attitudes to language, about its uses and misuses, about how language is used to manipulate



and incapacitate, can *empower* pupils to see through language to the ways in which messages are mediated and ideologies encoded” (ibid., 1990, p. 4); teachers in multilingual classrooms can “create the conditions which enable children to gain access to the whole curriculum by encouraging them to use, as appropriate, their strongest or preferring language”, accepting that “many bilingual children operate naturally... switching between languages in speech or writing in response to context and audience” (Savva, 1990, p. 260, 263). This was supported with £21 million from central government (£165 million at current values), and it involved 25 coordinators and more than 10,000 teachers in over 400 training courses (Carter, 1990, p. 16), generating professional development materials for teachers that involved 12 units supported by BBC TV and radio, each designed to take up one to 1.5 days of course time (1990, p. 2).

In the end, the Conservative government refused to allow publication of these training materials, objecting, among other things, to a chapter on multilingualism (Abrams, 1991), and asking, in the words of the minister of state: “Why... so much prominence [is] given to exceptions rather than the norm - to dialects rather than standard English, for example... Of course, language is a living force, but our central concern must be the business of teaching children how to use their language correctly” (Eggar, 1991). Indeed, this ushered in a period of top-down curriculum reform that has left “English teachers with the underlying sense that the critical decisions about what to teach and how to teach are no longer theirs to make. So hegemonic seems the discourse around standards, accountability, performance and attainment that it can appear that this is just the way things are” (Gibbons 2017:3). Nevertheless, this retrospective glimpse of language education from the 1960 to 1980s suggests that the promotion of Sociolinguistic Citizenship – with its commitments to democratic participation, to voice, to the heterogeneity of the linguistic resources that these entail, and to the political value of sociolinguistic understanding – isn’t inevitably confined to relatively short-term projects, and that it may be possible to work on a scale which reaches far beyond local initiatives involving critical pedagogy or creative production that symbolically challenges the linguistic status quo (see Rampton et al., 2018, :§7 for fuller discussion).

But what of the situation today? In the UK at present, there is little hope of persuading central government to provide financial resources to support the kind of Sociolinguistic Citizenship conceived by Stroud and his associates. But regional bodies may well be more receptive, and in the pen-ultimate section, it is worth turning reflexively to our own positioning and the practical contribution that universities can make to sustaining initiatives that promote LC.

7 Universities as a durable resource for Sociolinguistic Citizenship

According to an OECD-based⁴ study of higher education (HE) in 12 countries, universities are expected to play a larger role in their local areas as economies become more regional (Goddard & Pukka, 2008, p. 19). Shifts in HE pedagogy are implicated in this: “learning and teaching activities... are becoming more interactive and experiential, drawing upon, for example, project work and work-based learning, much of which is locationally specific... [T]he most effective technology and knowledge transfer mechanism between higher education institutions and the external environment is through... staff and students via the teaching curriculum, placements, teaching company schemes, secondments, etc” (Chatterton & Goddard, 2000, p. 480,488). This reaches right across the disciplinary spectrum, “from science and technology and medical faculties to the arts, humanities and social sciences” (Goddard & Pukka 2008, p. 14), and similar shifts can be seen in the UK. The actual and/or potential ‘non-academic impact’ of research is now evaluated both in individual project proposals and in the large-scale national assessments of research conducted every five or six years, and as elsewhere, there is increasing pressure for teaching to cultivate employability and social responsibility among students.

In ethnographic sociolinguistics, there is a very well-established tradition of action research and outreach, with university staff and students working with local groups to promote the kind of Linguistic Citizenship we have been discussing (see e.g. Hymes, 1980; Gumperz et al., 1979; Heath, 1983; Van de Aa & Blommaert, 2011; Rampton et al., 2015, p. 16-24). Perhaps “unexpectedly”, “growing [neo-liberal]



emphasis on the economisation of research, commodification of teaching, and a need to demonstrate a ‘return on investment to clients and sponsors’ creates favourable conditions” for strengthening this tradition (Matras & Robertson 2017, p. 5). Both of the projects described in §5 draw on these developments, and if opportunities for placements and practical work outside the academy are to become an established feature of the university curriculum, then individual modules could be built around efforts to promote Sociolinguistic Citizenship, providing them with greater institutional durability, introducing undergraduates or Masters students to the underlying ideas on an annual basis, involving them in sites where they have the chance to explore these ideas in action.

Exactly what this kind of module covered would depend on the requirements and support provided in the particular institution where it was taught, on the sorts of non-academic organisation that it was linked to, and staff experience, expertise and interests (at least to begin with).⁵ Embedded like this in a teaching module, one of the core structures of the university, the promotion of Sociolinguistic Citizenship could spread in other ways, and Manchester University’s [Multilingual Manchester](#) is a spectacular example of this (Matras & Robertson, 2017).⁶ But even within the relatively limited horizons of the single module, universities could provide a high-status platform for discussion of LC ideas, and 20–30 people would emerge every year with an understanding of how language diversity privileges some and disadvantages others, and of what might be done to change these relationships. In their interaction with university students, third sector organisations like the ones mentioned in §5 could get tasks done that they wouldn’t otherwise have the resources to complete, and they’d engage with frameworks for understanding their activity that were different and maybe more elaborate than the ones they were used to. The students and organisations would now know each other, and opportunities would emerge to develop their relationship in all sorts of unanticipated ways.

8 Conclusion

Committed to democratic participation, to voice, to the heterogeneity of linguistic resources and to the political value of sociolinguistic understanding, Stroud’s Linguistic Citizenship chimes well with the programme for ethnographic sociolinguistics inspired by Hymes in the 1970s. But contemporary UK government language policy is unreceptive to these ideas, and instead, initiatives promoting Sociolinguistic Citizenship tend to rely on relatively short-term project-specific funding raised from non-state sources. But university-based sociolinguists have continued the lines of study initiated by Hymes and have quite often collaborated with teachers, arts organisers and community activists in small-scale projects promoting LC principles outside the academy, in relationships that are now incentivised, perhaps somewhat ironically, by the neo-liberal agenda driving higher education.

Finding the resources and institutional space to run these initiatives takes hard graft and tactical planning. Nevertheless, over the last few years, a set of overarching terms seem to have crystallised in sociolinguistics that start to answer the 2010 IPPR’s report’s call for “a new way of talking about diversity in the UK” (Fanshawe & Srisandarajah, 2010, p. 5). ‘Superdiversity’ characterises the linguistic terrain, ‘translanguaging’ points the kinds of communicative practice we find there, and ‘linguistic ethnography’ identifies the stance and methods needed to understand them. To these, Linguistic Citizenship – or in the UK, ‘Sociolinguistic Citizenship’ – adds the need to strengthen democratic participation with political and educational efforts tuned to the significance of language. Of course, each of these concepts can and should be interrogated, unpacked, refined, applied and compared, in and against different frameworks and situations, and this is grist to the academic/non-academic collaboration. But despite their flexible generality, these four concepts coalesce in a loosely coherent perspective on language and social change that denaturalises the traditional equation of language, culture and nationality, and promotes a clearer understanding and more constructive engagement both with the patterning and the unpredictability of contemporary sociolinguistic experience.



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Endnotes

¹ The arguments and illustrations in this chapter are developed in much greater detail in Rampton, Cooke & Holmes 2018a.

² Sub-themes are drawn out and elaborated on through the use of a range of tools, activities and texts – see the accounts of two previous short courses in *Whose Integration?* (Byers et al., 2013) and *The Power of Discussion* (Byers et al., 2014; Cooke et al., 2014).

³ <https://www.goethe.de/en/spr/kup/kon.html>. Visited 22/12/17

⁴ The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development was set up in 1961, and its members are Austria, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, The Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, United Kingdom, United States.

⁵ It probably ought to cover sociolinguistic concepts of the kind outlined in this paper (language & superdiversity; ‘named languages’ and language mixing; repertoires, practices, voice and trajectories of text). This would obviously be warranted not only by their relevance to Sociolinguistic Citizenship but also their significance within the discipline, and there are textbooks to support this (e.g. Bock & Mheta, 2014; Weber & Horner, 2012). The course would certainly need to promote an ethnographic stance – a readiness to push sociolinguistic theories into open-ended dialogue with the rationales and practices ‘on the ground’ in the non-academic activities that they and the module were linked with. In the process, they would also need to think hard about the ways in which concepts are variously complicated and simplified as they travel in and out of the academy and other contexts.

⁶ Manchester University’s *Multilingual Manchester* programme (MLM) began in 2009 with “a new second year undergraduate module on Societal Multilingualism” and “benefit[ed] from the new opportunities for digital learning and the emerging Social Responsibility agenda” (Matras & Robertson 2017:8). Since then it has grown very substantially: it is currently supported by three fixed term project managers (Matras & Robertson, 2017, p. 10); it has been adopted as one of Manchester University’s flagship regional engagement programmes; and it “bring[s] together university students, experienced researchers of international repute, community representatives, and members of local services”, inviting “contacts, offer[s] for collaboration, and requests for information, from school, local authorities and local services, businesses, media, related research projects, and students wishing to carry out research on one of Manchester’s many community languages, or on language policy and community multilingualism” (MLM website at 1/7/15). Admittedly, continuity and stability are major challenges for a programme of this size, because without “a long term commitment to providing core resources”, it is caught up in the university’s “volatile processes of prioritisation and internal competition for resources” (ibid p.11,10). But working on a smaller scale, within the boundaries of the individual module, acute issues of sustainability like these are less likely to arise.

