Ideologies, norms, and practices in youth poly-languaging

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Ideologies, norms, and practices in youth poly-languaging

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Abstract
The theme of this paper is the relationship of language ideologies as they may be uncovered in public discourse and as they are mediated through language users, for instance in minority families, to linguistic practices as observed among young speakers in a superdiverse environment in Copenhagen. We build on data from the Amager Project, a longitudinal study of the development of polylinguaging among adolescents, and analyze both explicit statements about language norms and observed and recorded language practices. We find that the young speakers encounter different norms for language use in their everyday life and that they themselves have a quite sophisticated sense of variation, both in their explicit statements on language use and in their actual behavior we can observe.

Keywords
polylinguaging, minority families, ideologies, norms, adolescents, youth language, superdiversity

Language ideologies
The individual’s use of language available to him or her is typically regimented by norms influenced by strong ideologies about language (or language ideologies). Silverstein (1979, p. 193) defines linguistic ideologies as “sets of beliefs about language articulated by users as a rationalization or justification of perceived language structure and use”. Kroskrity (2010, p. 192) similarly explores language ideologies as “beliefs, feelings, and conceptions about language structure and use which often index the political economic interests of individual speakers, ethnic and other groups, and nation states”. Ideologies may be oriented towards language structure, i.e. how specific language is shaped, as well as language use, i.e. how and when a given specific linguistic structure is used. Silverstein (1985, p. 221) makes the point that what he calls “the total linguistic fact” covers three intertwined perspectives: the structural, the pragmatic, and the ideological. In other words ideologies are ideas about structure and use. According to Kroskrity's definition, these ideas are not coincidental. He stresses that ideologies serve particular (perceived) interests. Bauman and Briggs (2003) discuss how constructions of language generally supported among societal elites and power holders become hegemonically dominant. In sum, language ideologies are beliefs that represent political interests and may become generally accepted as “truths” about language.

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The concepts of separate “languages” (or dialects, varieties, etc.) that are omnipresent in political and educational discourse are such beliefs about language structure and use, and are often ideologically motivated. Makoni and Pennycook (2006) demonstrate how the very concept of “languages” as separate and separable sets of features is a hegemonically dominant ideology. Heller (2007, p. 1) characterizes these concepts, i.e. the notions of separate languages, as “bound up in ideologies of nation and state since the nineteenth century”. The concept of language as separable into distinct “languages” is increasingly rejected by current sociolinguistics (Jørgensen, 2010) as a valid representation of real life language use. Speakers do not use “languages”, they use linguistic features which are in turn associated with “languages”. Speakers are languagers and what they do is languaging (Jørgensen, 2010).

The concepts of separate “languages” are, in other words, abstract ideological constructions, and it is highly questionable whether they are useful in the description of everyday language use (Jørgensen, Karrebæk, Madsen, & Møller, 2011), but they are very real in political and ideological discussions nonetheless. Probably the most prominent aspect of this fact is the idolization of “the national language”, especially in Europe. Based in particular on the National Romanticist (Herderian) ideology of one nation belonging to one people and having one language, a monolingual habitus is widely pursued by decision makers and educational systems in the western industrialized world (and very much so in Denmark). Through the educational system, ideologies about “languages” are used to motivate extended normativity with respect to language practices, in casu the concept of “pure” language, i.e. language which is not “infected” by features generally associated with “other languages” (cf. Gogolin, 1994).

“Pure language”

In Danish schools, media, and elsewhere people are confronted with a demand that they use only one language at a time. This is a monolingualism norm. In its most extreme form it states that it is “normal” to grow up with access to only “one language”. People who are accepted as “knowing two languages” are labeled “bilingual”, and the norm applies to them as well. This double monolingualism norm says that “bilinguals” must at all times use one and only one language, and (preferably) use it as if they were monolingual in that language. Well into the 1900s, linguists even warned against children growing up with two languages, unless special conditions were met (for instance, Jespersen, 1941, p. 133).

Whereas we understand language ideologies as abstract beliefs about language which speakers rarely make the subject of explicit comment, we understand norms as more readily and more explicitly expressed ideas about regulations of language behavior. Norms are enabled by ideologies. For instance, in order to talk about “pure languages” and “keeping languages apart” one must have an understanding of languages as separate, coherent entities. Only with the hegemonically dominant ideology that human language can be divided into separate “languages” is it possible to maintain the monolingualism and double monolingualism norm.

In addition to ideologies about the connections between “languages” and places, people encounter norms associated with specific linguistic forms. For instance, some words are, by some speakers, not considered “nice”; some pronunciations may be characterized as “vulgar” among some people. Such evaluations accompany individual features, including words (but are of course negotiable).

Ideologies do not only associate values with individual features. For instance, ideologies construct relations between linguistic features and “languages”. Individual features are in fact mostly (but not always) associated with specific languages (in our understanding: sociocultural
constructions called languages): “castles” is an English word, and “souhaite” is a French word. When we, in the remainder of this paper, write about, for instance, “English words” we mean to say “words associated with the sociocultural construction called English”.

Ideologies also construct associations between languages and speakers, languages and places, etc. and thereby also between features and speakers, and features and places, in a number of ways (see Jørgensen et al., 2011). Individual speakers are routinely positioned in relation to languages: “Queen Elizabeth is a native speaker of English, and Queen Margrethe is a second language speaker of English, while Angela Merkel is a learner”. The associations of speakers with specific languages are also ascriptions of certain rights. A person categorized as a “native speaker” of a given language is granted the right to call the given language “my language”, to use the language, and much more. The categorization also indicates obligations: it is frequently accompanied by expectations of expertise in the language.

This means that besides purity norms certain features may be deemed improper, and others obligatory – for instance, in most contexts “fuck you” would be improper as opposed to “thank you” when the speaker has just received a present. In other cases entire “languages” may be deemed improper and others obligatory – such as the average teacher’s judgment of the use of Turkish in a math class in a Danish public school as opposed to the use of Danish. Or, in another case, the use of features or “languages” by specific speakers may be deemed improper by some speakers who believe themselves specially entitled to grant rights of use.

My own language

A consequence of the monolingualism ideology is the belief that every person must have a particularly close relationship to one “language”, almost invariably the “mother tongue” of the person. Routinely, linguistic nationalists will claim that their language is particularly “beautiful” (interestingly enough, usually in a version that is about two generations older than the current youth) and worthy of preservation. What Moore, Pietikäinen, and Blommaert (2010) call the Endangered Language Industry also to a large extent builds on the national romanticist language ideology. By extension, all people will have the human right of being able to live their lives through “their” language, their “mother tongue”.

The ideologies that associate specific sociocultural abstractions, so-called “languages”, with specific places and persons, tie discourse about language to irreversible connections between the languages and the associations. This is readily observable everywhere, in language classrooms, in minority teenagers self-description on social internet media, in old people lamenting about the poor quality of young reporters’ language, etc. Even literature which is quite critical of conservatism routinely associates personality very closely with “the mother tongue” (for instance, Skutnabb-Kangas, 1981), and it is routinely claimed in educational connections that children should be taught in their mother tongue in order for them to develop self-confidence. It is interesting in the light of the following that the Danish ministry of Education uses this argument in its guidance of expatriate Danes (Undervisningsministeriet, 2005).

There are obviously strong ideological motivations behind the understanding that human language consists of different “languages”, and the understanding that these “languages” are closely related to places and individuals in a direct way. In Western societies we see a diversification of diversity (Vertovec, 2006) in which populations become increasingly ethnically and linguistically heterogeneous. Vertovec (2006, 2007) describes this social condition as superdiversity. Within this superdiversity the unequivocal connections between places and “languages”, as well as between individuals and “languages”, become blurred. Diasporas will always render assignments to places
equivocal, and the expanding transnational as well as transborder communication over the internet or other new technological phenomena contributes to the dismantling of the ideas of simple and clear connections.

**Polylingual practices**

As opposed to the monolingualism norms we find in some educational settings the *integrated bilingualism (or multilingualism) norm*, which emphasizes that languagers may use features from different languages in the same production when that is appropriate, i.e. typically when they are in the company of others who share the knowledge of two or more specific “languages”. In other words, the integrated bilingualism norm refers to the two (or more) “languages” which speakers are assumed to command (and share). Even this does not capture what we can observe in real life language use.

The use of features from several “different languages” in the same production may be frequent and normal, especially in in-group interaction, even when the speakers apparently know very little material associated with several of the involved “languages”. For instance, Rampton (1995) quotes the use of Caribbean Creole features by young white Londoners; Christensen (2004) quotes the use of words associated with Arabic by young Jutland speakers of Danish, who have a range of different mother tongues; and Nortier (2001) quotes the use of Sranan among Dutch adolescents in Utrecht. Such behavior, in which language users employ whatever linguistic features are at their disposal to achieve their communicative aims, is governed by the *polylingualism norm* (Jørgensen et al., 2011).

The polylingualism norm is different from the integrated bilingualism (or multilingualism) norm in accounting for people’s use of features associated with “languages” of which they know very little (Otsuji & Pennycook (2010) suggest the term *metrolingualism* for this phenomenon).

In the following we study the explicit norms expressed by students and parents in the Amager Project and interpret these norms in the light of macro-level ideologies which dominate public discourse in Denmark. We further analyze observed behaviors which are characteristic of the everyday interactions between young languagers.

**Data and method**

The Amager Project (Ag, 2010; Madsen, Jørgensen, & Møller, 2010; Møller & Jørgensen, 2011; Stæhr, 2010) is a longitudinal study of the development of polylanguaging (Jørgensen, 2010; Møller, 2009) among students in an ethnically, linguistically, and socially highly diverse area in the capital of Denmark, Copenhagen. The first phase of the project (2009–2011) followed a cohort of adolescents from their grade 7 through to their grade 9. One major strand of the project employs linguistic ethnographic (Blommaert & Dong, 2010) methods. The project workers conducted participant observation and took field notes in a range of school settings, not just in classrooms, but also during recess, in the school kitchen, and in the corridors. In addition to ethnographic observations in school we followed the participants in their everyday lives – in youth clubs, in so-called homework cafés, in sports clubs, in their homes and elsewhere. Field notes were turned into diaries which were regularly discussed among the members of the team.

Another strand of the project is more traditionally sociolinguistic by emphasizing sound recordings and written production of language. From the students we collected a wide range of material, including recorded individual interviews and group interviews, school essays, Facebook entries and interactions, and self-recordings carried out by the students when we were not present. Furthermore, we conducted interviews with parents, club leaders, teachers, and other adults around
the young people. In grade 8 the students participated in a semi-matched guise test which contrasted mainstream speech (in “Danish”) with speech which is stereotypically associated with late modern urban youth (also “Danish”).

Subsequent phases of the Amager Project are currently active, and in this connection we will restrict our analyses to the material from the adolescents. We describe the metalinguistic reflections of the students and their parents. The students mentioned in the following sections are all born in Denmark (except for one, Bashaar, who came to Denmark at the age of two). Their parents, on the other hand, are born in Pakistan, Iraq, Palestine, Jordan, Lebanon, and Tunisia, and they have moved to Denmark for various reasons and at different points in their lives. In the following sections we exemplify the linguistic norms which the students face and relate to. Furthermore, we describe the linguistic practices of the students. We use data from our participant observations, written essays, interviews, and self-recordings by the students in school and at home.

**Language norms encountered in the public and in school**

In the Danish educational system monolingualism norms dominate (see, for instance, Jørgensen, in press; Kristiansen, 1990). In primary and secondary schools the vast majority of teaching is carried out in Danish. Foreign languages (English, French, and German) are also almost exclusively taught in Danish. English is obligatory as a subject, and students may choose between French and German as a subject. Minority languages are almost non-existent as subjects. Although educational systems in most places do favor the acquisition of languages by students, they uphold the (double) monolingualism norms.

The official government policy is one of so-called “language parallelism”. The idea is that all public functions and documents must be available in Danish as well as in English. Education, scientific reports, business documents, etc., should, according to this policy, be carried out in both Danish and English. The policy can be viewed as an attempt at compromising between, on the one hand, those who see a spread of English throughout society and dislike it, and on the other hand, those who enthusiastically argue for the increased use of English as a means of globalizing (see Jørgensen, forthcoming).

Simultaneously there is a very strong discourse about the “necessity” of Danish and strong discouragement of the use of minority language in almost all corners of the political debate, and minority parents are routinely advised not to speak the minority language to their children (Holmen & Jørgensen, 2010).

In the school system there is therefore a strong urge to rank Danish very highly, and to encourage the acquisition of English. Very little else is appreciated, and much less rewarded. Occasionally a school or a school district may ban entirely the use of minority language, even among the students in the school yard during recess (see Ag, 2010, p. 80). These events tend to become the subject of debate in newspapers and other media, and the majority of opinions in most media support such measures.

The effect of such a normative discourse in public is not directly reflected in the school attended by our participants. In interviews teachers and the principal of the school emphasize the need for the students to develop their Danish. The teachers and principal are positive towards the use of minority languages (see Ag, 2010, pp. 55–56), but they describe no role for them and seem not to pay much attention to them. In all the field notes from the ethnographic observations in the school we do not have one single incident of an adult criticizing a student for using a minority language. In other words, the expectation that Danish be used is very much there, but it is not expressed very explicitly, it is just considered common knowledge – it is hegemonically omnipresent (as is the
expectation of majority students to speak Copenhagen Danish in schools all over the country) (Kristiansen, 1990).

**Registers presented by the Amager youth**

In interviews, the young Amager participants presented different labels for ways of speaking, e.g. “integrated speech” and “street language”, when asked questions such as “how do you speak with the teachers” or “in what way do you speak with your friends”. Later we collected written assignments and asked the students to elaborate on these labels which they themselves had introduced to us. Our study of the ongoing enregisterment (Agha, 2007) suggests that “integrated speech” is a label by which they refer to a way of speaking associated with upscale culture, a way of speaking which they associate with teachers, authorities, and adults (see Madsen, 2011; Madsen et al., 2010; Møller & Jørgensen, 2011). Another register which in many ways contrasts “integrated speech” is a register alternatively labeled “street language”, “ghetto language”, or “Perker language” [Perker: a controversial term for minority members, particularly when they are Moslems of Middle Eastern descent]. This way of speaking is considered proper among friends and siblings, but the young speakers report not using it to adults (unless they are angry with the adults). In between the two, the young speakers posit a way of speaking which they call “normal speech”. In other words the adolescent speakers describe the ways of speaking available to them and used by them as a spectrum between two extremes: integrated speech and street language. Beyond the extreme of integrated speech they describe a way of speaking labeled “old-fashioned speech”. None of the students claim to use this way of speaking themselves – whereas integrated speech may be used (or at least tried) by the young, old-fashioned speech is restricted to old people (i.e. adults). It is worth noticing that the range between integrated speech and street language is not reserved for Danish. The students also speak about, for example, “integrated Turkish” and “integrated Arabic”.

An entirely different dimension of “ways of speaking”, or “languages”, is the spectrum between, on the one hand, “my very own language” and, on the other hand, the majority “language”. This range is a reflection of the young people’s spectrum of expressed personal relations to the “languages”, i.e. over the different degrees of sense of ownership (cf. Gumperz’ (1982, p. 65) concepts of “we-code” and “they-code”). At one end we have the “languages” which are typically called minority mother tongues or heritage languages. About these, several of the young speakers use the words “my [own] language” (cf. Harris, 2006). Sometimes, however, they use expressions such as “our” language or way of speaking about street language, in casu typically Danish street language. Some of the students, especially girls, also report a relatively close relationship to English, especially in interaction with other young people. For instance, one girl writes in an essay that “det bedste sprog for mig er nok Engelsk/Amerikansk. Det syntes jeg er det bedste sprog fordi jeg syntes at det lyder rigtig sejt” [the best language for me is probably English/American. I think it is the best language because I think it sounds really cool] (Yasmin, grade 8 assignment).

We are observing two different dimensions of relations to ways of speaking, one along a cultural dimension, and one along a dimension of personal relations. A third dimension we can observe is not a range, but rather a nominal scale of different “languages” with names such as “Russian”, “Danish”, “Arabic”, “Turkish”, “Urdu”, and “French”. Combined, we get a three-dimensional space of different ways of speaking in which the young speakers navigate, and in which they position themselves and others according to the situation.
Linguistic practices in school

In the everyday linguistic practices of the students almost all official interaction in the classroom is Danish, with the possible exception of a little English. The polylingual practices which we have documented among some of the grade 7–9 students (Ag, 2010; Madsen et al., 2010; Stæhr, 2010) are found in unofficial school interactions among peers. Example 1 illustrates the differences sometimes seen between the official and unofficial interaction in the classroom.

Example 1: Self-recording by Massima in physics class

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Translation</th>
<th>Original</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Teacher: number two and why is it that</td>
<td>1 Teacher: toeren og hvorfor er det det</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Massima: because it tain [/] contains a</td>
<td>2 Massima: fordi den hold [/] indeholder en</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 current-carrying wire</td>
<td>3 ledetråd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3.1)</td>
<td>(3.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Massima: Fadwa xxx under the skirt</td>
<td>4 Massima: Fadwa xxx under nederdelen til</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 ridiculous look at her shoes/boots</td>
<td>5 grin dekh na us ke joote</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Jehan: I can’t see them</td>
<td>6 Jehan: mujhe nahin nazar aa rahe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Massima: xxx</td>
<td>7 Massima: xxx</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Jehan: a:h xxx ((laughs briefly))</td>
<td>8 Jehan: nã:h xxx (ler kort))</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(1.7)</td>
<td>(1.7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Jehan: to skirts you can put ballerinas and</td>
<td>9 Jehan: nederdel kan man sætte</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 such</td>
<td>10 ballerinaer til og sådan</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the beginning of Example 1 the teacher asks a question regarding the physics experiments with which the class is working. Massima, who is wearing one of our recorders around her neck, answers the question using only Danish. After a break she turns to her best friend Jehan and directs Jehan’s attention towards one of their classmates, Fadwa, and Fadwa’s dress. In the utterance Massima uses Danish as well as Urdu. Jehan’s reactions consist of Urdu (line 6) as well as Danish (lines 8-10). In the official interaction in the class Massima displays an awareness of and alignment with the monolingualism norm. Her linguistic practices can be related to her local identity work in the official part of the class, namely constructing an identity as a good monolingual student (Cekaite & Evaldsson, 2008). In the subsequent unofficial interaction between the two girls, Massima no longer aligns with the monolingualism norm. Instead, Massima’s as well as Jehan’s linguistic practices are polylingual (see Ag, 2010 for further analysis of the girls’ linguistic practices).

The everyday linguistic use of Nasha, another girl, differs from that of Massima and Jehan. In the official school interaction the three girls’ linguistic practices are identical with regard to the monolingualism norm – and correspond to that of the other students. In the unofficial interaction Nasha’s linguistic practices differ from those of Massima and Jehan. Like Massima and Jehan, Nasha’s minority background is Pakistani, but she does not use Urdu in school at all. A reason for this is probably that her best friends do not know Urdu, but even when talking to classmates who do know Urdu she does not – or at least very rarely – use Urdu. On the other hand, Nasha tells that she, like many of her girlfriends, use English words when they speak to each other.
Example 2: Written assignment, Nasha, grade 9

Translation

With my friends I often mix English into sentences, which is fortunately a habit that my friends do not dislike. I have a girl friend with whom I speak a special language when we talk about a certain subject. We use American words very often, e.g., Freakin awesome, OMG or Hot. That is, totally cool, Oh god/oh my gosh/god (sounds more cool in English).

Original


English features may occasionally be heard in the official interaction. But contrary to Urdu and other minority languages, English is a language of prestige in the Danish school system as well as in Danish society in general. The use of English in otherwise Danish sentences is not regarded as a violation of the monolingualism norms to the same degree as the use of Urdu or other minority languages.

So far we have looked at how the students adjust to the double monolingual norm when they participate in the official interaction in class, i.e. we have focused on their choice of “language”. It is worth noting the students also adjust their linguistic practices with regard to the dimension of “integrated” and “street” language: “Men slang og integreret er ogs vigtigt, fordi at der er nogle mennesker som ikk ka tåle at høre slang, så ska man kunne snakke med dem så de er tilpasse.” [But slang and integrated are also important because there are some people who cannot bear to listen to slang, so must be able to talk with them so that they are at ease] (Lamis, grade 8 written assignment). The students describe “street language” as a way of speaking between friends; whereas “integrated speech” is particularly associated with the way their teachers speak. Some of the stereotypic indexical values of “integrated speech” are authority and academic skills. Several of the students claim to speak – or try to speak – integratedly to their teachers or in class as well as they attempt to write integratedly in school assignments in order to fulfill the expectations of the mainstream school: “Til lærerne mener jeg også jeg taler normalt dansk. Rent akademisk synes jeg det bliver nødvendigt, at tale integreret i undervisningen [I believe I speak normal Danish to the teachers. Purely academically I believe it will be necessary, to speak integratedly during class] (Nasha, grade 9 written assignment).

In their metalinguistic reflections and in their linguistic everyday practices in school, the students do not choose language and features randomly or at will. On the contrary, they display an awareness of and a certain degree of alignment with language norms, and they adjust their linguistic behavior according to the situation.

Language norms presented by the Amager youth’s parents

Whereas our young speakers present many metalinguistic reflections regarding “integrated speech” and “street language”, this dimension does not seem to be known by or at least be of relevance to the parents. By contrast, the “personal-relations-dimension” is highly relevant to the parents. Like the students, the parents present different “languages” and they associate different social meanings and degrees of attachments to the “languages”. The languages the parents often refer to as “my own language” or “our language” are the minority heritage languages. The parents’ attitudes towards
their children’s acquisition and use of on the one hand the heritage language and the on the other hand the majority language are quite different. With regard to the heritage languages, several of the parents argue that it is important that their children speak the language at home. This is partly because the children do not learn or speak the language elsewhere, and partly it will enable the children to learn about culture associated with the language. This view is illustrated in Example 3.

Example 3: Interview, Ghazala: Massima’s mother, Maria: project worker.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Translation</th>
<th>Original</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Ghazala: no it’s okay to speak Danish that</td>
<td>1 Ghazala: nahi danish bolo bachein aapis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 the kids speak Danish to each other</td>
<td>2 me bolte hai jab matalab ke maa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 if I think that the mother</td>
<td>3 baap ko na aaye to wo apni</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 and the father can’t then you</td>
<td>4 zaban boley to zyada acha nahi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 should speak your own language</td>
<td>5 hain baja ke danish bole</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 isn’t that better</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Maria: yes that’s right</td>
<td>7 Maria: sahi baat hain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Ghazala: kids speak it they speak it already</td>
<td>8 Ghazala: bachein to boltey hi hai waisey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 they speak a lot of Danish so I think</td>
<td>9 hi bolte hain bachey bohot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 that they at home should speak</td>
<td>10 boltey hain danish to mere</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 their parents’ language so they also</td>
<td>11 khyaal mein ghaar me jaisi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 learn something about that culture</td>
<td>12 maa baap ki zaban hai waisey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 and also about that language</td>
<td>13 hi bachon ko bolna</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>14 chayein taaqe un ko us maahol</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 ka bhi patta chalein us zaban ka</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 bhi to</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We find that the parents present two different kinds of motivations with regard to their children’s acquisition and use of Danish and heritage languages. The motivation for learning Danish can be described as instrumental (Gardner & Lambert, 1972, p. 3) in that the parents want their children to speak Danish in order to get educations and jobs. The motivation for learning a heritage language on the other hand is more integrative (Gardner & Lambert, 1972, p. 3), as shown in Example 3. In the example Massima’s mother describes a simple and clear connection between speaking a language and learning about a given culture (see also Blackledge & Creese, 2010). Such an understanding of a simple connection is presented by several parents. Massima’s mother, and other parents with her, ascribe to a traditional view of “languages” and “cultures”, and the relations they describe with respect to “their” language also pertain to “their culture”. However, as we can see, the norms of behavior which traditionally accompany these concepts are not present among these parents.

While the majority of the parents express an opinion on their children’s use of specific languages in specific places and situations, they do not discuss the issue of “language mixing” with the same degree of involvement. Whereas the students are confronted with a demand in school, media, and society in general that they use only one language at a time, this is not the case in several of the students’ homes. Some of the parents even tell how they themselves deal with languages differently from this norm: “vi blander, mig og min mand, urdu, punjabi, ikke # det gør vores forældre også” [we mix languages, me and my husband, Urdu, Punjabi, right # our parents do it as well] (interview, Malika, Nasha’s mother). Yasmin’s mother explains how she mixes Danish and Urdu with her siblings, and how they as kids played with the languages. For instance they would try to construct all their sentences with Danish as well as Urdu, and English. Israh’s mother describes how sometimes, for instance when her phone rings, she mixes languages, see Example 4.
Example 4: Interview, Bashmar: mother, Israh: Bashmar’s daughter

There are parents who explain in the interviews that they administer a strict language norm at home, for instance Safa’s father explains that he demands that his children speak Arabic at home, and that he tells them to stop if they speak Danish. However, as Example 4 illustrates, some parents describe how they themselves use features associated with different languages in the same sentences and that it happens “automatically”. They have even done so already as children, and so have their parents. Several of the parents have the experience of “mixing languages” as a normal and by no means deviant linguistic behavior. So, at least with regard to many of the children, the demand that they speak one language at a time is not something they have been socialized into at home, but something they are confronted with in school, media, and society.

Linguistic practices at home

The dimension of “street language” and “integrated speech” is, as mentioned, not reserved for Danish, but is disassociated from the idea of a specific language. Also, the dimension is not reserved for linguistic practices at school, but seems to be a dimension the students also employ with family. For instance one boy writes: “til min familie taler jeg helt normal/integreret arabisk, men når jeg taler til mine fætre er det gadesprog arabisk” [to my family I speak entirely normal/integrated Arabic, but when I speak to my male cousins it is Arabic street language] (Jamil, grade 9 written assignment). To some of the students it is not only a pattern of behavior they observe among themselves, they also recognize it in their parents’ linguistic practices. In an interview Bashaar explains how his mother sometimes talks integratedly to him. According to Bashaar, integrated Arabic is a register his mother uses when she wants to put him straight. In Bashaar’s description, integrated Arabic shares characteristics with integrated Danish, for instance the use of “fine” words. Furthermore, integrated Arabic is, like integrated Danish, associated with authority.

We observed a variation of linguistic practices within the linguistic minority families. In one type of practice Danish is almost exclusively employed, but this practice is rare. We find such practice in, for instance, Yasmin’s family. Yasmin and her mother describe how they practically never speak Urdu at home, and Yasmin’s recordings of home interactions contain only Danish. Yasmin explains that she does not speak Urdu that well “fordi hun mor hun er jo # god til dansk og alt det der, hun er bare vant til at tale dansk med os” [because my mother she is as you know # she speaks Danish well, and all that, she is just used to speaking Danish to us] (Interview with Yasmin, grade 8). In an interview her mother explains how she regrets that she has not spoken more Urdu with her children, and when asked how she speaks with her children she answers: “jeg taler dansk, desværre” [I speak Danish, unfortunately] (Yasmin’s mother, interview). Having grown up in both Pakistan and Denmark, the mother speaks both Danish and Urdu. She considers the fact that she is
able to do so valuable and something to be proud of. She says she wished she had passed that ability on to her children.

One could imagine a type of linguistic practice in which the opposite happens, i.e. in which no Danish was spoken. Such a practice does not appear in any of our recordings from the students’ homes; Danish is always used at some point by some of the family members, typically in siblings’ interaction. This is the case in, for instance, Massima’s family. In most of the recordings from Massima’s home she speaks Danish with her siblings and Urdu with her parents. Therefore, in recordings of situations in which Massima and her siblings as well as her mother are present, Urdu and Danish sometimes occur in the same interaction. The frequency of so-called code-switches, however, is not as high as in Massima’s polylingual practices with her friend Jehan in school (see Ag, 2010). In an interview Massima’s mother expresses that she wants her children to speak Urdu with each other when she is present because when they speak Danish too fast, she sometimes has problems understanding what they are saying. She says that sometimes the family uses both languages in the same interaction if there are comprehension difficulties. She also explains how she and Massima’s father speak Punjabi and Urdu to each other, but only Urdu with the children. In sum, the linguistic interactions within the family routinely include different languages.

In yet another pattern of linguistic family behaviors, the frequency of sentences including features from different languages is very high. We find an example of this in interactions between Nasha, her mother, and her younger sister. In a recording which lasts 23 minutes they use Urdu, Danish, English, and Arabic. There are utterances in Danish only, utterances in Urdu only, and utterances with both Urdu and Danish integrated in a way that makes it impossible to categorize them as either Urdu or Danish. All three types of utterances are found in the contributions of all of the three family members. Example 5 illustrates the polylingual practices of the family.

Example 5: Self-recording by Nasha at home, Malika: mother, Yalda: Nasha’s sister

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Translation</th>
<th>Original</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Yalda: hi, principal</td>
<td>1 Yalda: hej inspektør</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Malika: Yalda did I tell you not to do that or didn’t I</td>
<td>2 Malika: Yalda manna kiya tha na ke nahn tha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Yalda: oohoho ((makes silly sounds))</td>
<td>3 Yalda: oohoho</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Nasha: it’s raining men hallelujah ((singing))</td>
<td>4 Nasha: it’s raining men hallelujah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Nasha: I’m so happy I got twelve in biology</td>
<td>6 Nasha: jeg er så glad for jeg fik tolv i biologi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Nasha: really Nasha did you get twelve</td>
<td>8 Malika: er det rigtigt Nasha tolv miley hain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Nasha: my subject grade is twelve</td>
<td>9 Nasha: standpunktskarakter tolv hi hain mere</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Malika: wow that’s nice</td>
<td>10 Nasha: ah det er flot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 Nasha: that [/] now I just [/] that I mean subject grade is that</td>
<td>11 Nasha: ke [/] ab mein bas[/] ke matlab standpunktskarakter yeh hota hai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 Malika: mm</td>
<td>12 Malika: mm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 Nasha: that I over an extended period, right, get nothing but twelve in biology</td>
<td>13 Nasha: ke aik period mein na sirf tolv par hoti hoon biologi mein</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 Malika: mm that’s nice, dear</td>
<td>16 Malika: mm det er flot skat</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Two important results can be inferred from example 5. Firstly, the example demonstrates that polylingual behavior is not only a practice among peers, but also in family interactions. Secondly, the mother’s polylingual practices show that polylingual languaging is not only a youth phenomenon (most other studies of polylingual languaging are conducted with adolescents, e.g. Jørgensen, 2010; Madsen, 2008; Stæhr, 2010; but see Møller, 2009). In line 8 the mother employs the Urdu word order of an interrogative sentence (“tolv miley hain”) with the object before the verb, but with the object in Danish (“tolv”). In line 14 Nasha employs the word “period” which is generally associated with English, but by using phonetic features which are associated with Urdu.

Nasha’s linguistic practice at home differs significantly from her language use in school. As described above, her linguistic practices in school follow almost entirely the monolingualism norm, whereas her linguistic practices at home follow the polylingual norm. This tells us that polylingual practices are not only the result of informal learning among peers, but that polylingual practices can be developed and employed within families as well. Furthermore, it illustrates that attention to norms is a competence, and one which Nasha has developed to a high degree.

An important point is that it would be a misunderstanding to think that the family interaction is without norms, including restrictions. This is illustrated in example 6 in which Nasha’s mother is rehearsing religious narratives with Nasha’s younger sister, Yalda. In lines 1–3 of the example Malika encourages, in Urdu, Yalda to relate a specific narrative. In the ensuing part of the conversation a negotiation between Malika and Yalda takes place. Yalda does not want to be interrupted, even if she makes mistakes. Malika accepts not interrupting. This goes on in Danish. Next, Yalda prepares to begin her narrative, switching from Danish into Urdu in her utterance. Her use of Danish – although the larger part of the actual narrative in this utterance is in Urdu – is reprimanded by Malika. In this particular connection no Danish seems to be appropriate.

Example 6: Self-recording by Nasha at home (same occasion as example 5)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Translation</th>
<th>Original</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Malika good, and will you tell our prophet’s that talk story when, who came to our beloved prophet?</td>
<td>1 Malika shabash aur hamare nabi ko jo woh baat kahani pataein gi ke jab pyaare nabi ko paas kaun aya tha?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Yalda so do not interrupt me</td>
<td>5 Yalda så skal du ikke afbryde mig</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Malika no okay I will not</td>
<td>6 Malika nej okay det skal jeg nok lade være</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Yalda okay and I can[/] if I make a mistake</td>
<td>8 Yalda okay og jeg må [/] hvis jeg har fejl så kan du fortælle det til sidst</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Yalda you can say so afterwards</td>
<td>10 Yalda ikke okay pehle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 Malika okay</td>
<td>11 Malika okay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 Yalda right, okay first</td>
<td>12 Yalda danish bolna nahn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 Malika do not speak Danish</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Conclusions

In school, media, and Danish society in general students are confronted with a monolingualism norm – i.e. a demand that they use only one language at a time. This norm is not aggressively pursued by the teachers at this particular school, and that would not seem necessary. In official school
interaction, in class, etc. the students do not employ the skills we observe otherwise. In certain
unsupervised school activities the students may occasionally use a few of the resources which
mostly seem to be reserved for non-school uses.

In the case of several of the students’ homes, polylingual practices are accepted and even
employed by some of the parents. On the other hand the parents often demand that their children
– beside their everyday-use of Danish – must be sure to learn “their own language”, i.e. the pur-
ported heritage language of the family. Certain activities which are closely related to the parents’
sense of heritage culture may also be connected to an obligatory use of heritage language.

In this tension between teachers’ expectations and parents’ expectations, the young language
users organize their “languages” and adjust their behaviors according to the demands of the given
situation. The young speakers develop these competences in and with superdiversity. They have a
quite sophisticated sense of variation, both in their metalinguistic descriptions and in the actual
behavior we can observe. This is never acknowledged in school, which strictly administers the
double monolingualism norm.

It becomes clear that different norms towards language use are dominant in different settings,
and according to different activities and participants. The norms can to a certain degree be exploited
by language users, taking into account the specific context of the interaction as well as participants’
interactional aim. Some norms are hegemonically dominant and are therefore never questioned and
they are difficult to transcend. The exclusive use of Danish in the official interaction in the class-
room is one such norm. The perspectives of structure, use, and ideology are perspectives which are
relevant in every instance of languaging, and all three need to be accounted for in order to describe
sociolinguistic developments.

**Transcription conventions:**

Urdu is transliterated into Latin characters marked in *italics*, Danish is in recte, English is *underlined*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symbol</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>xxx</td>
<td>unintelligible speech</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#</td>
<td>short pause</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>self-interruption</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>:</td>
<td>prolongation of preceding sound</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>((comment))</td>
<td>our comments</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**Author biographies**

**A. Ag** is PhD student at the LANCHART Centre at the University of Copenhagen. Her primary research interest is language practices and identity work among linguistic minority adolescents in school and family settings, and this is approached from the perspectives of linguistic ethnography. With great sadness we report that Jens Normann Jørgensen died on May 29, 2013, after a long illness. Jens Normann Jørgensen was an outstanding sociolinguist, whose innovative research on polylinguaging made an immense contribution to scholarship in the field of multilingualism. He was an inspirational teacher, who brought genuine commitment to his engagement with students. Jens Normann will be very much missed as an exceptional scholar, and as a generous colleague.

**J. N. Jørgensen** is Professor at the Department of Scandinavian Studies and Linguistics, University of Copenhagen. His primary research interests are in sociolinguistics and he has publications on variation in spoken Danish, polylingualism, language and education, Danish as a second and foreign language, and language variation and change.
