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Student perceptions of diverse accents of English in a multilingual London post-1992 university

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Abstract

Previous research in language attitudes has focused primarily on the attitudes of international students towards different accents of English, the attitudes of home or domestic students in the UK remain still under researched. However, the higher education sector in England is not homogenous, with the two-tier system between research-intensive universities and teaching intensive, or post-1992 universities. There is a lack of understanding of the language attitudes towards diverse accents of English of this underrepresented group of students (Preece & Martin, 2009) found primarily in post-1992 institutions (Simpson & Cooke, 2009). With this in mind, this article has explored student perceptions of diverse accents at a post-1992 university through the Bakhtinian notion of heteroglossia. Contrary to previous attitude studies, our findings suggest that the participants have higher levels of empathy towards varieties of English signaled through accent and that the heteroglossic context of London had had a positive impact on those attitudes. However, the participants still expressed a detectable tension between conforming to the imposed norms of standard language use and pushing against them. The paper concludes with a call to challenge traditional deficit views of multilingualism and increase student critical language awareness in a safe structured environment.

Keywords: language attitudes, accents of English, higher education, heteroglossia

Attitudes to language are informed by wider societal norms linked to prescriptivism and correctness (Cameron, 2006; Milroy & Milroy, 2012). The findings obtained using a variety of methods have consistently pointed towards the superiority of standard linguistic forms and a deficit approach to non-standardized varieties (Buckingham, 2014; McKenzie, 2008; Zhang & Hu, 2008). From previous research in language attitudes, however, we know that language attitudes can dynamically shift in response to context (Steinbach & Kazarloga, 2014) and surrounding accents (Dragojevic & Giles, 2014). In other words, certain negative attitudes associated with nonstandard varieties may become less negative when those varieties are categorized in more favorable terms such as the ingroup. Thus, this study has adopted a qualitative critical stance to explore the attitudes towards different accents of English held by undergraduate students on an education-related course within the complex ecology of a post-1992 university in London.

The higher education sector in England is not homogenous, with the two-tier system between research-intensive universities and teaching intensive institutions known as post-1992 universities. The Further and Higher Education Act 1992 granted former polytechnics full university status in England and Wales. The driving force behind the act was to widen access to higher education for non-traditional groups of students (Allen et al., 2005). One of the consequences of this restructuring of the higher education sector is the significant division between post-1992 universities, also known as modern or new universities, and older universities, in particular those in the research intensive Russell Group institutions (Boliver, 2013). Students from 'non-traditional backgrounds' often from historically marginalized groups in terms of class and ethnicity are concentrated in new, post-1992 universities with widening access remits (Boliver, 2011; 2013). These students are often from lower socioeconomic

backgrounds and the first in their family to go to university, they may have disabilities and special educational needs, or have caring responsibilities, or have been in care, and many are from minority ethnic backgrounds (DfE, 2020; Henderson et al., 2020). Indeed, research consistently shows that those from lower socioeconomic groups and ethnic minority groups are likely to attend less prestigious institutions (e.g. Modood, 2012; Perna & Titus, 2004; Reay et al., 2001). Therefore, it can be argued that post-1992 universities in England and London in particular are characterized by a diverse student population in which social class intersects with migratory flows and multilingual practices (Gamsu & Donnelly, 2017). However, much research that explores linguistic diversity and language attitudes is often conducted with higher education international students in research-intensive universities. There is a clear lack of understanding of the language attitudes and experiences of language diversity of this underrepresented group of bi/multilingual 'home' or 'domestic' students (Preece & Martin, 2009) found primarily in widening participation institutions (Simpson & Cooke, 2009). With this in mind, the purpose of the present study was to investigate undergraduate students' attitudes towards linguistic diversity expressed through accent in a post-1992 university.

Literature review

Theoretical framework

We define linguistic diversity in terms of heteroglossia. We use this term to shed light on one specific aspect of linguistic diversity - accent. We align ourselves with the sociolinguistic conceptualization of accent as "the characteristic pronunciation patterns of a variety of speech. A speaker's accent can often identify their social class, age, gender, geographical origins, ethnicity and even their political affiliations" (Llamas et al., 2006, p. 205). The term "*raznorechie*" or "heteroglossia", as it translates to English, comes from the works of Russian literary critic

Mikhail Bakhtin. The concept was developed by Bakhtin in the late 1930s but became popularized in English in the translations of Bakhtin's works by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist in the 1980s. The essay "Discourse in the novel" (1981) first introduces the term "*raznorechie*" in English and is defined as the "internal stratification present in every language" expressed through "the social diversity of speech types" (p. 263). In other words, every national language consists not only of different social dialects often reflected through language variation (e.g., standard vs non-standard accent) but also inter-speaker differences such as age, gender, socio-economic status (Ivanov, 1999). The term has since been extended beyond literary studies to provide researchers in sociolinguistics with a philosophical and theoretical framework that focuses on the socio-ideological aspects of language use particularly in the area of bi-/ multilingualism.

According to Bakhtin, heteroglossia is inherent in any living language and it exists in opposition to monolingual language ideology. The monolingual language ideology implies a monocultural and monolingual ideal of unity exemplified by a figure of an idealized native speaker who possesses unique qualities that cannot be acquired by multilingual speakers (Ferri & Magne, 2021). Bakhtin refers to this idea of unity as "centripetal forces of language" whose role is to uphold and impose linguistic norms. Bakhtin sees the standard unitary language as posited [*zadan*] but not given [*dan*] "and at every moment of its linguistic life it is opposed to the realities of heteroglossia" (p. 270). Thus, for Bakhtin, a unified idealized language standard is an imposition on the realities of language use. Heteroglossia, which exemplifies centrifugal forces of language, challenges monolingual ideology and focuses on the social role of language (Bailey, 2012). This means that language is "stratified not only into linguistic dialects in the strict sense of the word ..., but also ... into languages that are socio-ideological: languages of social groups,

"professional" and "generic" languages, languages of generations and so forth" (Bakhtin, 1981, pp. 271–272). In other words, a speaker's accent is one example where centripetal and centrifugal forces of language intersect creating a tension between the standard form, or the norm, and the speech diversity or 'non-standard' varieties.

The focus on the social dimensions of speech distinguishes the Bakhtinian notion of heteroglossia from other sociolinguistic approaches to language variation that tend to consider variation as existing outside of language ideology or political context (Bailey, 2007). The perspective of heteroglossia recognizes that language and by extension language attitudes are context-dependent and socio-historically bound. It is vital therefore to acknowledge social tensions and linguistic inequality that exist within the higher education sector in the UK and to focus on groups that are often underrepresented in language attitude research.

Higher education students perceptions of different accents of English

The terms "attitude" and "perception" are often used interchangeably in the literature. Sarnoff (1970) provides a generally accepted definition of attitudes as "a disposition to react favorably or unfavorably to a class of objects" (p. 179). In higher education contexts, most studies that have attempted to gauge language attitudes have been conducted with students learning English as a foreign language. In Austria, Dalton-Puffer et al. (1997) tested 132 university students' attitudes towards multilingual varieties of English. The results revealed a preference for the so-called "native" speaker accents, i.e., UK and US English. In Japan, McKenzie and Gilmore (2017) designed a study that investigated 158 Japanese university students' perceptions of different varieties of English speech. The results showed that the participants regarded British and American English as the most correct; however, they also held a sense of solidarity with Japanese-accented speech. Buckingham (2014) elicited 373 students'

attitudes towards various "native" and multilingual accents of English in Oman. Similarly, the students showed a preference for the accents from the UK but also responded positively to Arabic native speakers. A ubiquitous preference for UK and US varieties of English in higher education institutions among international students is not surprising as those varieties have been historically promoted as the standard models for teaching English to speakers of other languages (Moyer, 2013).

However, in their study of attitudes and identities of pre-service language teachers in Quebec, Canada, Steinbach and Kazarloga (2014) found contradictory attitudes towards "native" speaker varieties of English. The results revealed that the respondents were strongly influenced by the political context of Quebec, where there is a palpable tension between French and English felt particularly strongly outside of the urban centers such as Montreal. Their conclusions indicate the importance of considering political and multilingual discourses in society as they exert complex, conflicting influences on attitudes to linguistic diversity. Following a similar line of enquiry, Ferri and Magne (2021) found ambivalent attitudes toward the idea of the superiority of "native" English speakers along with evidence of emerging resistance to the imposed models of English among international students in Montreal.

In the context of UK higher education, little is known about language attitudes of home students. Preece's 2015 study focused on working class undergraduate home students from linguistic minority communities in a London post-1992 university, describing their positioning as remedial users of English in terms of an ascribed institutional identity, which is also noted in Preece and Martin (2009) in relation to multilingual home students. Preece (2015) reported on the binary 'posh/slang' adopted by the students in the study and their implicit understanding that their own linguistic resources needed to be kept separate from the academic language used in

academic contexts. Similarly Gimenez (2020) focuses on plurilingual students in another post-1992 university in London, highlighting their sense of agency as they negotiate their various linguistic identities while engaging in specific academic tasks. In a study conducted at a post-1992 university in the North-East of England, UK-born students' attitudes towards different accents of English are in line with previous studies carried out in higher education contexts outside of the UK where students tend to evaluate UK English varieties more positively compared to forms of L2-accented English (McKenzie, 2015). We therefore would like to extend this line of enquiry to further investigate home student experiences and perceptions around accents at another post-1992 university in London .

Context of the study

The data was collected at a post-1992 university with a student population from what is known as non-traditional backgrounds. In other words, the majority of undergraduate students would be the first to attend university in their family. The university internal statistics indicate that 60% of students come from black and ethnic minority groups, 60% are female, 56% are aged over 21 on entry and 51% are from areas of multiple deprivation. The university recruits its student body from the neighboring boroughs, which have a high concentration of population born outside of England. Greater London in particular has the highest number of minority ethnic students in post-1992 universities, this is due to a number of factors notably the tendency to study at local universities and lower prior attainment in school (Connor et al, 2004).

London is the largest and most diverse city in the UK with over 300 non-English languages spoken (Baker & Eversley, 2000). The population of London is estimated at 8.6 million and is set to grow to 11 million by 2050. It is estimated that by 2038, 50 percent of London's population will be of a black and minority ethnicity origin (London datastore, n.d.). As

Block (2008) observed, London is denationalized, i.e., it no longer represents England in terms of lifestyle and points of reference. Speakers of English in London are engaged in dynamic linguistic practices that are often perceived as non-standard or, if described in Bakhtinian terms, "heteroglossic". Rampton's (1995) ethnographic study of crossing and stylization among young people in multi-ethnic urban areas in Great Britain in the 1980s and 1990s attested to this heteroglossia; although little is known of these linguistic practices once young people become adults (Rampton, 2011). The participants in this study can be considered either young adults or mature students, and therefore their reflections are revealing of the language attitudes of this under-researched group.

Motivation for the current study

Positive attitudes towards standard varieties of language appear similarly prevalent in higher education in the UK as in other countries. However, there is an emerging body of evidence to suggest that there is resistance to "nativelike" norms of English among students particularly in geographical areas characterized by heteroglossic language use. This resistance appears to be context-dependent, which bodes well with the sociolinguistic notion that language is a local practice (Pennycook, 2017). Set against the backdrop of Anglophone higher education in a global city such as London, this study explored undergraduate students' attitudes towards diverse accents of English. We hypothesize that students' possible negative language attitudes would be attenuated by their experiences of living in a multi-diverse city and studying in a widening participation institution.

The primary research question that guided the study is: What are students' attitudes towards diverse accents of English in the context of a widening participation institution in London?

Methodology

Design

The qualitative study was designed to explore the language attitudes that students hold about different accents of English using a written structured reflective exercise. Unlike previous studies in languages attitude research that tend to use quantitative methods, a reflective qualitative stance was adopted to enable a more flexible exploration of student beliefs about linguistic diversity. Dewey (1910) defines reflective practice as "the active, persistent and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it" (p. 6). In other words, reflection allows for investigation of one's beliefs and attitudes in the context of professional practice (Epstein, 1999). According to Ryan (2011), it is essential to provide students in higher education with opportunities to reflect on their beliefs and attitudes in non-assessed reflective writing as they will be more likely to see themselves as active learners and agents of change. The research was approved by the university's ethics review panel. All participants gave their written consent to take part in the study and were provided with an information sheet and a consent form prior to data collection. To protect the participants, responses have been anonymized and all identifying information has been removed. Being students on a BA Education-related course, the participants had the opportunity to reflect on their own attitudes towards different accents and in particular how these attitudes may impact their own teaching practice once they enter the profession. Given their familiarity with the researchers, the participants were able to reflect in an open and supportive atmosphere.

Participants

Participants were 32 undergraduate students aged between 18-40 ($M = 25$) at the time of data collection. They were enrolled in an Education-related course. The Education courses at the

university are designed to prepare students to work in the area of early years and education in the

UK. There were eleven speakers from various backgrounds (Nepali $n = 1$, Arabic $n = 2$,

French/Lingala $n = 1$, Wolof $n = 1$, Pashto $n = 1$, Lithuanian $n = 1$, Portuguese $n = 1$, Polish $n =$

1, Italian $n = 1$, Urdu $n = 1$) who, when asked to name their first language, did not include

English. However, these students did not fall into the category of international students as they

were long-term residents in the UK looking to upskill themselves. This population is often

underrepresented in language attitude research studies that tend to focus on international students

from research-intensive institutions. There were twenty one participants who indicated English

as their first language on the background questionnaire. There was a stark gender imbalance with

31 females and 1 male, which is reflective of the country-wide gender gap in the area of

education (at primary level 82.4% of the teachers are female in England and Wales - DfE, 2020).

Materials and procedure

The data collection consisted of the warm-up listening task that acted as the "trigger" for

the reflective exercise that followed. First, students listened to eight recordings of the same text

read aloud by 8 different speakers from a number of linguistic backgrounds that included

"native" and "non-native" speakers of English. This task was taken from the traditional approach

to language attitude research known as the matched guise technique (MGT) pioneered by

Lambert and his colleagues (Lambert et al., 1960). However, unlike in a matched-guise

experiment, the participants were not asked to rate each speaker on a number of traits using

Likert-type scales but to engage in a written reflective exercise around diverse accents. Adopting

a qualitative approach to researching language attitudes was to combat the often cited criticism

of MGT experiments, i.e. their artificiality. That is, the MGT may result in making language

variation more salient than it would normally be outside the experimental environment (Garrett

et al., 2003) where a number of contextual and interactive cues are important. Our study therefore used the voice cues as triggers to activate social stereotypes rather than examining the attitudes to the specific varieties of English.

The text chosen for the study was an abridged version of Walker's (2010) language diagnostic test designed to assess English pronunciation. It covers a wide range of possible English sound variations, in particular the consonants and consonant clusters (please refer to Walker's 2010 book for the full description).The text is presented in the form of a voicemail in which a student laments to a friend about coursework that is due soon. Given that the listeners in the study were university students, the authors deemed the text age and context appropriate. Following the listening task, the students were invited to engage in non-assessed reflective writing. To facilitate the process they were provided with three writing prompts that were formed as questions (Q1 - What was the experience like for you? Q2 - Has your perception of foreign accents changed in any way after the exercise? Q3 - Would you recommend this exercise to raise awareness of the diversity of English? Why? Why not?). The reflective exercise was designed to foster deep active engagement with the heteroglossic nature of English and to facilitate perspective taking to combat inherent biases and existing linguistic stereotypes. Once the students completed the task, they were invited to participate in all-class discussion.

Data analysis

The authors adopted a reflexive thematic analysis approach to data analysis informed by social constructionism (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Braun et al., 2018), which emphasizes researcher reflexivity and subjectivity. We use our own positionalities as starting points to engage reflexively with issues of representation and diversity in post-1992 or second-tier institutions. As second language speakers, economic migrant women academics working with widening

participation students, we occupy a liminal space in academia (see Ferri (2022) for an overview of marginal subjectivities in HE) that has allowed us to build a relationship of openness and trust with the participants in this study.

The authors analyzed the collected data independently following the 6-phase approach outlined in Braun and Clarke (2006). The written responses to the reflective prompts were read multiple times to become familiar with the content. At the coding stage, labels were generated that were directly linked to the research question. After that, all codes and relevant extracts were collated. The authors then identified potential themes against the theoretical backdrop of heteroglossia. Following this, a discussion between the authors followed to see if there was an overlap of the themes. Once agreement was achieved and themes were reviewed the labels were finalized. Two main themes were identified. The results are presented below. Quotations from the written responses are presented in their original form with no amendments to allow participants to speak for themselves and to combat what Schegloff (1997) calls "theoretical imperialism" (p. 167), i.e. an imposition of written academic norms often associated with white middle-upper class social groups. Each participant- writer is identified with a P (Participant) and a number to protect their anonymity. The decision to use numbers over pseudonyms was to protect the anonymity of the participants as they were all students on the same course and could be inadvertently identified particularly if the pseudonyms are paired with demographic information. To further ensure confidentiality of the participant data, only essential relevant background information was collected.

Findings

Theme 1. London as a heteroglossic space

      The first theme identified in the data was labeled "London as a heteroglossic space", which epitomizes participants' experience of living and studying in a multilingual and multicultural heteroglossic environment. Inhabiting this multi-voice space means being exposed to the inherent diversity of language, which not only includes multiple languages but also a diversity within one language, particularly in the area of pronunciation, often expressed through accent. English spoken in London is heteroglossic as it includes features of second language, ethnic dialects, social class groups, and so forth. As Participant 8 succinctly put it:

      London is a very diverse city regarding ethnicity and the way English is spoken by different ethnic groups. Living here I'm aware of all these differences in accent and different levels of fluency, as I meet with them in my everyday life.

Contrary to the monolingual view of language, our participants understand that speaking with an accent is an ordinary practice, part of speaking a living language that is ever changing and is inherently varied. They have an experiential understanding that most users of English are bi-or multilingual, particularly in London where the participants live and study. Aligned with Bakhtin's notion of heteroglossia, which exists in opposition to the unifying and rigid norms of monolingual standard ideology, the participants question traditional conceptualizations of language as a unitary unchanging entity, "Multicultural England/London many different accents so it would be beneficial to be aware of how people speak" (P20) or in the words of Participant 3, "I m use to hearing lots of foreign accents when i m at work or uni". The students through their reflective narratives convey their awareness of geographical stratification of English accents within the UK, "all regions have a particular accent, "especially in UK there are people

from all countries around" (P5). Participants, born in and outside of the UK, position themselves as readily accepting of variation and multilingualism, "London is a cosmopolitan city and that's the beauty of it" (P31). They are aware that language is socio-ideological, that there are different groups of people who speak differently, "English is an international language with many nuance"; it "is normal for me to hear so many different accents. Everyday we come in contact with people of different countries" (P9).

Participants who were not born in the UK show particular awareness of the heteroglossic practices that exist within UK society, particularly in London "I am aware of speakers in different accents. I do speak with an accent myself. We all are different. Also it makes me feel good that I am not the only one speaking in different accent" (P6). Accent is perceived as a marker of identity and there is a call for empathy and understanding on behalf of the listener that comes through. As Participant 4 put it "[understanding different accents] may require a little patience" but it is a worthy enterprise as "accent is like identity and everyone should respect diversity" (P6). In other words, when it comes to understanding different accents, the onus is not on the speaker alone, listeners are expected to have awareness of linguistic diversity and variation in language. Embracing an inclusive approach to language variation requires a two-way approach that includes listeners and speakers, "I think it is interesting & important for people to know & understand that the same language can be pronounced in different ways" (S29) as "it will be good for people to become more used to other accents so that they can communicate and understand one another" (S14).

Theme 2. Contradictory attitudes to living heteroglossia

The second theme identified in the written reflections of the participants was labeled "Controversial attitudes to living heteroglossia". Similarly, to Bakhtin's definition of centrifugal

and centripetal forces that exert power on a living language, the participants find themselves in the nexus of this socio-ideological struggle. On one hand, centrifugal forces of language pull them away from the monolithic notion of language standard in the direction of stratification, difference, change and variation as a result of inhibiting a heteroglossic space such as London. This is evident in a palpable sense of resistance that arises in student reflections when tasked with making accent-based evaluations, "we have different accents. they do understand what they speak and it was clear. it was just the accent" (P30) or in the words of Participant 15 "it doesnt matter to me if you have a foreing accent". There is an urge to assert the dominance of the heteroglossic view of the language to reflect their own lived experience, "I'm aware of accent differences coming from the diversity of the society itself" (P8). Participant 11, for instance, goes as far as to refuse to make a judgment "I didn't have any perceptions". The etiology of these views on diversity and multilingual practices as the norm can be traced to the multilingual backgrounds of the participants themselves as many of them come from families where English is spoken alongside a home language, "my perception of foreign accents have not changed because my parents have a foreign accent when speaking English" (P2).

On the other hand, centripetal forces continue to exact influence on participants' perceptions of language diversity expressed through accent. Despite studying and living in a heteroglossic environment, several respondents admitted to being surprised by their own reactions to varieties of English speech. Contrary to their expectations, not all accents triggered a positive response. Participant 16, for example, confided "Wasn't aware how you can judge someone … by accent but found myself doing so … it challenges you to do something we try not to do which is instantly judge someone without knowing them. Makes you very self-aware of your own bias that you have". Similarly, Participant 25 observed "and I find myself feeling

different positive and negative emotions for each speaker despite the same words being used". Some participants expressed a sense of confusion and frustration as they were found themselves triggered by the exercise as it forced them to confront their negative attitudes towards different accents and by extension social groups those accents represent "The positive and negative feelings we have towards accents, subconsciously often, is confusing when you cannot explain why" (P25).One of the participants saw the reflective exercise as transformative "I used to stereotype people who had a foreign accent. But now through this activity, I realised that I shouldn't stereotype people because they have the knowledge but it just that their accents are different *"* (P1).

Discussion and conclusion

Previous research in language attitudes has focused primarily on the attitudes of international students towards different accents of English, and despite the work of Preece (2015) and Gimenez (2020), the attitudes of home or domestic students in the UK remain still under researched. More specifically, the role of the multilingual context of London and the complex ecology of a widening participation institution are variables not extensively studied elsewhere. With this in mind, this article has explored student perceptions of diverse accents at a post-1992 university through the Bakhtinian notion of heteroglossia. Contrary to previous attitude studies conducted with higher education students outside of the UK (Fang, 2016; McKenzie & Gilmore, 2017; Tsang, 2020) and in the UK (McKenzie, 2015), our findings suggest that the participants have higher levels of empathy towards varieties of English signaled through accent and that the heteroglossic context of London had had a positive impact on those attitudes. However, there is still a detectable tension in the written accounts of the participants between conforming to the imposed norms of standard language use and resisting them to align themselves with the realities

of heteroglossia existing in the context of London. Our study attempted to engage students in critical discussion about language attitudes by focusing on heteroglossic voices of UK higher education. We align ourselves with Alim's (2005) approach to language education that engages students in a critical dialogue about language and power in society while incorporating awareness raising exercises to challenge the existing narratives about language use.

Two themes were identified in the written data: London as a heteroglossic space and contradictory attitudes to living heteroglossia. The first theme indicates that the London context had a positive effect on the participants' perceptions of diverse accents. These findings are in line with similar studies conducted in other multilingual urban centers, such as Manchester (Badwan, 2020) and Montreal (Ferri & Magne, 2021). In these studies, the majority of the participants showed no overt disapproval of varieties of English speech expressed through accent. Our findings, however, are radically different from recent language attitudes studies conducted in other contexts. Mısır and Gürbüz's (2022) study of Turkish EFL teachers' attitudes towards English accent varieties indicates that teachers still hold a strong preference for standard forms of English and are reluctant to include different English accents in their courses. In the context of Southern Thailand, Boonsuk and Fang (2022) explored students' attitudes towards their own and native English accents. Their findings indicate that most students perceived their own accents as being deficient and inferior to native speaker accents. Kim (2021) found that multilingual postgraduate students' attitudes towards English accents in Japan were influenced by the existing linguistic hierarchy that favors standard English. The participants in Kim's study were acutely aware of the importance of using standard forms in high stakes situations, such as future employment. Taken together, these findings are in stark contrast to the participants in the current study who projected a certain sense of empowerment around speaking with an accent in

the heteroglossic context of London. Therefore, our findings have emphasized the importance of context in shaping language attitudes. By the same token, Christou et al. (2022) found that the multilingual London context and exposure to diverse varieties of English had had a positive effect on Chinese pre-service English teachers' attitudes towards English as an international language. Hence, exposure to different accents in diverse contexts could facilitate the formation of positive language attitudes.

The second theme expressed in participants' written reflective accounts highlights the tension between conforming to and resisting dominant norms of language use. Given the participants in this study were studying education, this raises the question as to how we can reconcile the heteroglossic view of language with school policies that emphasize linguistic 'correctness' and the near-exclusive requirement for students and teachers to use standardized English in speech and writing. Teachers in UK schools are positioned as standard language 'role models' whose language is controlled and monitored but who, in turn, are mandated to police and regulate their students' language use (Cushing, 2021). In other words, within UK schools teachers and students are required to adhere to the values of language standardization and a rigid normativity of language use (Ferri, 2017). Acknowledging these tensions that are internal contradictions of life in multi-ethnic societies such as London, we believe, the notion of heteroglossia can positively influence the ways in which higher education institutions support students from non-traditional and diverse backgrounds, improving the understanding of the push and pull, or centrifugal and centripetal forces, of language use. Student support services in universities and academic staff may receive specialist support with their understanding of the linguistic resources of non-traditional students, for example engaging in reflexive exercises on language attitudes that prompt discussion and examination of one's own beliefs and biases in

relation to language diversity. In this way, an understanding of heteroglossia may support educators to adopt a critical stance with regard to deficit discourses that surround students from non-traditional backgrounds who may use varieties of English that are seen as non-standard.

Unlike the multilingual students in Preece's (2015) study, our participants were not assigned the identity of a remedial user of English within the university but of an active reflective participant within the heteroglossic community of students. Overall, we argue that widening participation institutions within the UK higher education sector are answering the call to become multilingual spaces (Preece, 2011) by creating opportunities for students to engage in critical reflection and dynamic linguistic practices to move away from what Blommaert (2010) calls 'imposed normativity'. A recommendation that would stem from this study is for educators to gain a deeper appreciation of the linguistic repertoires that students from non-traditional backgrounds bring to higher education and to encourage an exploration of dynamic linguistic practices such as translanguaging (García & Wei, 2014). Such heteroglossic approaches to language use position multilingual practices as the norm, which exists in opposition to the monoglossic standard epitomized by a singular monolingual norm (Flores & Rosa, 2015).

On a similar note, teacher education programs may include similar reflexive exercises in their curriculum offer, allowing pre-service teachers to gain an understanding of ways to support students in ways that are not detrimental to their confidence and sense of identity. Only then can educators leverage their students' full linguistic repertoire, help students develop their bilingualism, and support them in selecting features that are appropriate for different purposes, including those appropriate for academic contexts (García & Kleyn, 2016). As we continue to raise critical language awareness among educators and students, it is vital to acknowledge that linguistic discrimination is often linked to race and social class stratification (Cushing, 2022).

Recent work on raciolinguistic ideologies (Flores & Rosa, 2015; Rosa, 2018) points to the crucial role of visual information, particularly signaled through race, in shaping perceptions of language use. We did not include visual cues in our design, which is a major limitation. However, we encourage future studies to explore a complex interplay between accent perception, race and multilingual environments.

Acknowledgements

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