Elite bilingual identities in higher education in the Anglophone world: the stratification of linguistic diversity and reproduction of socio-economic inequalities in the multilingual student population

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Abstract

As universities in the Anglophone world attend to operating on a global stage, linguistic diversity in the sector has intensified. Historically, higher education has adopted language-as-problem orientations to managing linguistic diversity, viewing multilingual repertoires largely as an obstacle. An emerging body of work informed by language-as-resource orientations seeks to counter these deficit views. While timely, this work often pays little attention to social class among the multilingual student population. This paper addresses this issue by developing a finer-grained understanding of student experiences of their multilingual repertoires with two groups of students from different socioeconomic backgrounds: working-class Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) undergraduate students and international postgraduate students from more socially elite families. By examining students' experiences of their multilingual repertoires in the institution, I demonstrate how universities stratify the linguistic diversity in their midst, arguing that this is resonant with elite-plebeian views of bilingualism. I contend that language-as-resource informed curriculum and pedagogy needs to attend to institutional practices that stratify linguistic diversity to avoid reinforcing a situation in which the multilingualism of students from professional and socially elite groups is reinforced while little is gained when it comes to the multilingualism of working-class BME students.

Key words: multilingual identities; elite bilingualism; linguistic diversity; higher education; social class; international students; Black and minority ethnic (BME)

1 Introduction

In countering the idea of language deficit in educational settings, applied and sociolinguists have largely focused on 'language-as-resource' (Ruiz 1984) oriented arguments. Resource based approaches share the idea of linguistic diversity as positive and to be celebrated, valued and cultivated (Hult & Hornberger 2016). There is an emerging body of work on language-as-resource approaches to the curriculum in universities in English-dominant settings (e.g. Marshall & Moore 2013; Preece et al 2018; Preece & Marshall 2020). As this work develops, attention needs to be focused on the heterogeneity of the multilingual student population as universities have historically been considered sites for the production of elite groups (Bloch et al 2018). Elite identities, such as that of an elite bilingual, depend on access to a range of material and symbolic resources; these resources are not equally accessible to working-class students, placing them at a disadvantage to more socially elite groups. The situation has become more complex through increasing regulation of education by neoliberalism (see Gray et al. 2018). As Petrovic (2005) warns us, neoliberalism seeks to appropriate language-as-resource by focusing arguments for multilingualism on the economy. In so doing, certain linguistic resources become equated with financial gain and others with financial drain in the global marketplace.

One way of resisting neoliberal creep into language-as-resource territory is to foreground matters of social justice. In this article, I seek to do this by examining the experiences of students from different socio-economic backgrounds of their multilingualism in higher education. By examining multilingual repertoires in the 'larger social fabric' (Edwards 2012: 84) of the university, I aim to develop a finer grained understanding of linguistic diversity in the multilingual student population. To

do so, I draw on data from two studies conducted in universities in London. The first study was conducted with undergraduate students from working-class Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) communities at Millennium University[1] (Preece 2009, 2010). The second study was undertaken with international[2] postgraduate students at Global University, (Preece et al 2018). In examining the students' experiences of linguistic diversity, a picture emerges of ways in which multilingualism comes to be viewed as resource or problem and how this opens up or closes down the identity of an elite bilingual in the university. To explore these issues, I start with a brief overview of eliteness in higher education and the idea of elite bilingualism. I then turn to the methodology for the studies and present data illustrating the socio-economic background of the participants and their experiences of their multilingualism in the university. Finally, I discuss what the participants' experiences suggest about the identity of an elite bilingual in higher education. I argue that their experiences in higher education largely map onto 'prestigious-plebeian' notions of plurilingualism (Jaspers 2009) in ways that contribute to the reproduction of class-based inequalities in society, particularly for BME students from working-class migrant communities.

2 Eliteness and Elite bilingualism

Eliteness has been an issue for investigation in higher education studies for some time (Bloch et al 2018). Binder (2018: 373) asserts that universities have become 'a central focus for … [understanding] the role of elites in modern society', pointing to views of the sector as a critical site for the construction of elite identities and groups. An

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[1] Institutional and participant names are pseudonyms
[2] International includes students from EU nation states that are not regarded as English-majority speaking as well as British students who normally reside and work overseas.

example of how universities desire to be viewed as sites of eliteness is illustrated in the headline below:

Figure 1: Promoting universities as sites for the reproduction of elite identities

UCL ranked in world's top 20 "super-elite" universities

5 September 2017

UCL has confirmed its position among the top 20 "super-elite" universities in the world, according to the *Times Higher Education*'s (*THE*) annual rankings published today.

I draw on Khan's (2012: 362) definition of elites as those with 'vastly disproportionate control over or access to a resource'. Resource can be understood in two ways: firstly, in terms of material wealth and social connections for gaining command of prestigious languages and literacy practices, and secondly, in relation to institutional practices that accord the status of resource to particular languages, language varieties and communicative practices.

Vandrick's (2011) work on 'Students of the New Global Elite' (SONGEs) offers insights into eliteness among multilingual university students. She investigated how increases in student mobility had contributed to a growth in international students from highly privileged backgrounds in American universities. Vandrick considered socio-economic background, which she assessed through the number of countries of residence and/or study; the number of permanent visas and dual citizenships; the number of family homes and businesses in different countries; the number of languages spoken and what these were and place and type of schooling. From this work, Vandrick coined the term SONGEs to ascribe an elite identity to students who

had 'lived and studied in at least three countries; … [are] affluent and privileged; and … [exhibit] a sense of global membership', concluding that for SONGEs, 'the world is their home. They often feel somewhat untethered, belonging both everywhere and nowhere' (p. 160). Vandrick's study allows us to quantify aspects of university students' socio-economic background and offers a more granular definition of what constitutes an elite background. While she has less to say about elite bilingualism, her research demonstrated the importance of bilingualism in the formation of SONGE identity and the centrality of English to an elite identity.

Drawing on the literature on elite bilingualism, eliteness is often portrayed in binary terms, which privileges the multilingualism of some groups while marginalizing others. Among other arguments, De Mejia (2002) relates this dualism to the power and prestige that bilingualism can afford (see Introduction, this issue). Elsewhere Stoicheva (2016) argues that multilingualism viewed as prestigious increases the prospects of employment and also confers social status. As she comments, the positive attitudes, status and prospects offered by prestige forms of multilingualism makes it 'highly desired, worth the effort and investment' (p. 103). Based on Jaspers (2009), the elite bilingualism binary is often portrayed in terms of 'prestigious' multi- or plurilingualism, to refer to the repertoires of highly educated individuals with two or more high status languages learned formally, and 'plebeian' multi- or plurilingualism, to refer to the linguistic repertoires of urban migrant communities using heritage language(s) learned in natural, rather than schooled settings.

What this illustrates is that an elite-non elite binary about bilingualism holds great resonance when it comes to institutional discourses about language. I take the view of elite bilingualism as 'something that people do' (Thurlow and Jaworsksi 2017: 243),

an identity positioning to be negotiated in relation to academic discourse and linguistic practices in higher education institutions, and as embedded in the political economy (Block 2014), in which the material world impacts on the discursive realm and ways in which individuals can be agentive. Following Block, I draw on Savage et al's (2013) view of class as a positioning in the social order arising from the accumulation of three forms of capital drawn from Bourdieu: economic, cultural and social. This perception of class integrates the economic realm, traditionally associated with employment, with the cultural and social world. While cultural capital is viewed as the knowledge, expertise and skills acquired from an individual's tastes, interests and activities, social capital refers to the usefulness of the connections emanating from an individual's networks. In sum, elite bilingualism indexes social class and this involves attending to the material, cultural and social world of the individual.

3 Methodology

For the purposes of this article, I have drawn on data from two different studies conducted in higher education, summarized in table 1. Bringing the data sets into juxtaposition enabled the class-related elements of multilingualism associated with elite bilingualism to 'stand out sharply' (Ramanathan 2005: 64). As we will see, this juxtaposition illustrated how in the university setting international students from (upper) middle-class and professional backgrounds came to experience their multilingual repertoires as resources and assets while BME students from working-class backgrounds experienced their multilingualism as a problem to be fixed or hidden.

The conversation between the data sets was also beneficial for giving a flavour of the 'superdiversity' (Blommaert 2013) to be found in the student population in the research sites. As mentioned, my intention in drawing the data sets together was to shed light on the complexity of the diversity among the multilingual student population in order to address some of the concerns leveled at language-as-resource orientations (Petrovic 2005, Ricento 2005) and to inform the development of equitable resource based approaches to curricula and pedagogies in the sector (see Hult & Hornberger 2016). For the purposes of clarity, I have organized the data presentation around the studies. In doing so, my intention is not to compare institutions but to focus on the participants' experiences of their multilingualism in the institution.

Table 1: The two research studies

	Posh Talk Study	*Multilingual University Study*
Institutional context	Millennium University: University since 1992, ranked 601-800 in world	Global University: Russell Group university ranked 1-10 in world
Student population	High percentage international students. High proportion domestic students normally resident in London with majority entering from state schools and colleges. High proportion of students from working-class backgrounds.	High percentage international students. Domestic students recruited from around the UK with majority entering from private and independent schools. Low proportion of students from

		working-class backgrounds.
Entry qualifications	Traditional[3] and non traditional[4] entry qualifications accepted for undergraduate study	Traditional qualifications accepted for undergraduate study
Context for research	Academic writing programme for undergraduate students from widening participation backgrounds	MA modules in applied linguistics and TESOL
Participants	93 BME 1st year undergraduate students	46 international MA students

The *Posh Talk* (PT) study was conducted on an academic writing programme at Millennium University with a group of 1st year undergraduate students from working-class BME communities. The programme had been established to improve the retention of students from widening participation backgrounds (see Preece 2009). The study continued for two years and aimed to gain insights into the participants' relationship with academic discourse. The project was ethnographically inspired (Blommaert and Jie 2010), in that I was concerned with observing the participants in the academic writing classroom. The data consisted of a diary of classroom proceedings, audio-recorded classroom interaction, an open-ended questionnaire, information from official records and audio-recorded interviews with key informants. The *Multilingual University* (MU) study arose from an ESRC seminar series (Preece et

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[3] In the UK, traditional university entrance qualifications denote 'A' levels and the International Baccalaureate

[4] Vocational qualifications and Access programmes are regarded as non traditional entry qualifications for undergraduate study

al 2016). This was a small-scale collaborative staff-student project that ran for 10 months with the aim of investigating how MA students drew on linguistic diversity as a resource for their studies. The project team designed a mixed methods study, consisting of an online survey and a reflective journal. Follow up e-mail interviews were conducted with the journal participants after their return to their home countries. In both instances, I collected information available to students on the university website about the languages that they could study while at the university. In what follows, data are presented to examine the participants' experiences of their multilingualism within higher education and to consider what this suggests about the identity of an elite bilingual in higher education space.

4 Participants' socio-economic background and linguistic repertoires

4.1 Posh Talk participants

The PT participants had entered higher education through widening participation routes. The widening participation categorisation positioned them as 'non traditional' students and led to their placement on the academic writing programme. The 'non traditional' positioning was derived from a series of categorisations used by the government to identify under-represented groups in UK higher education as part of the government drive to widen access to universities and promote upward social mobility. In the case of the PT participants, the non traditional positioning was composed of a cluster of categories, including social class, ethnicity, schooling and family history of higher education. The NS-SEC[5] classification of occupation (Office for National

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[5] The NS SEC (National Statistics Socio-Economic Classification) is widely used to

Statistics 2010) was used to categorise them as occupying lower socioeconomic, or working-class, status, based on parental occupations. This classification resonated with the working-class areas in which the PT participants resided, many of which were designated as areas of high deprivation (Dept for Communities and Local Government 2015). Lower socio-economic status was also indexed by the participants' limited access to disposable income and material wealth. At the time of the study, undergraduate tuition fees in the UK were £1000 per year and the maintenance grant had been replaced by student loans. These costs were of concern to the participants; most coped by living at home and combining study with employment in low-level jobs. Their non-traditional positioning was also derived from their categorisation as an 'ethnic minority', based on the official categories for ethnic monitoring in the UK. Despite this categorisation, it is worth noting that most participants shared the experience of having been born and educated in Britain with their ethnic majority counterparts. This was reflected by their schooling; most had received all or the majority of their compulsory education in state schools in the working-class areas of London where their families resided and in which the children of migrant communities are the norm. It is safe to say that on entry to Millennium, the PT participants had no experience of elite forms of education; few, if any, contacts with elite groups or individuals and very little disposal income for extra curricular activities related to language learning. As the first generation of their family to attend university, their parents and elders also had no insider knowledge of university life and studies.

When discussing their linguistic repertoires, the participants represented themselves as English-dominant multilinguals, using English in conjunction with languages

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classify socio-economic status in the UK

associated with their ancestry in South and Eastern Asia, the Caribbean and Africa. Additionally, they were bi-dialectal users of English, using standard British English learned at school and Multicultural London English (Cheshire et al 2011), the vernacular variety of English in use in the Thames Estuary associated with working-class areas of South and East London.

The participants commonly represented their schooling in Britain as a place of disjuncture between the languages of home and those at school. This is illustrated in extract 1 in which Bina, a British Asian with Gujarati parentage, is discussing childhood experiences of bilingualism:

Extract 1: 'so I would leave Gujarati'

1. When I was younger, my Gujarati was really good because [up until

2. the age of] four all I ever spoke was Gujarati and when I went to

3 school I started picking up English. So I had no English. I'd never

4 been speaking in English, didn't understand it or anything, so when

5 I started school that is when I started picking everything up and so I

6 would leave Gujarati because my parents wanted me to learn my

7 English more and so now I know how to speak it [Gujarati] but I am

8 really bad at it. I am not very good (Bina, interview 1).

While it is questionable whether Bina's childhood prior to schooling was experienced

in Gujarati only, her narration of this experience highlights the gap between home and school, marking a shift in the importance of the languages in her life and the beginnings of an educational journey ending in English-dominant bilingualism. The experience of subtractive bilingualism, in which English as the dominant language of the host society displaces migrant languages, was commonplace among the PT participants and resonates with De Mejia's (2002) view of non prestigious bilingualism as 'subtracting' rather than 'adding' to the mother tongue. Few had received sustained formal education in what they regarded as their mother tongue and many appeared ambivalent about opportunities to study their parental languages. Given this situation, it is not surprising that all reported greater proficiency in English. This was particularly the case when it came to literacy, with very few having developed expertise in reading and writing in any language other than English.

In sum, the PT participants' linguistic repertoires exemplified those of urban migrant communities using heritage language(s) learned in natural, rather than schooled settings, that are viewed as less valuable economically and accorded 'plebeian' status. Their experiences at Millennium appeared to do little to challenge this view of their inherited languages. For example, as part of their degree programmes, the participants could opt to study a language offered by the Modern Foreign Languages Department. However, of the 21 languages on offer, only four: Arabic, Cantonese, Farsi and Portuguese, were representative of the participants' home languages. This is unsurprising given that university language departments tend to focus on languages deemed to be of importance at international or national level. Drawing on de Swaan's (2001) global language system helps to explain what languages are likely to regarded as important by universities in an Anglophone context. He puts forward the idea of a

'linguistic galaxy' (p. 4) in which the languages in use in administration, government, law, large corporations and higher education, often in post-colonial contexts, have become imbued with the status of 'hypercentral', in the case of English, and 'supercentral' status, in the case of languages such as French, Spanish, German and Russian. De Swaan argues that hyper and supercentral languages hold the linguistic galaxy together by purporting to serve 'the purposes of long-distance and international communication' (p. 5) in a global economy. Official languages of nation states occupy the status of 'central' languages while all other languages are viewed as peripheral.

The minoritised positioning of the participants' inherited languages in the UK as 'community' or 'heritage' languages, is likely to have shaped the PT participants' experiences of studying these languages and contributed to views about the lack of utility of such languages in the public sphere. This is illustrated in extract 2, in which Geet is discussing his experiences of maintaining Gujarati, and whether he would take a course in Gujarati if offered by the university:

Extract 2: 'I didn't see a step forward'

1   I didn't want to get a degree or a qualification in Gujarati. For me I didn't

2   see a step forward in that unless … I was going to be a Gujarati teacher but

3   I wasn't. I didn't see any point in actually doing Gujarati at that level

    (Geet, Interview 1).

Geet's response is typical of the PT participants, who for the most part reproduced dominant discourses on their language inheritance. The characterisation of Gujarati as '[not] a step forward' resonates with the LUCIDE reports (King and Carson 2016) of

urban multilingualism in which the linguistic repertoires of urban migrant communities were deemed to lack prestige and usefulness. Geet's response points to the peripheral nature of the status that the home languages of working-class BME students occupy in the language hierarchy operating in the education system, which is reflective of language status in wider society. As we will see, the PT participants rarely experienced university as a place offering them opportunities to critique commonly held assumptions about the nature of their multilingual repertoires or to consider ways in which their multilingual repertoires could be an asset.

4.2 The Multilingual University participants

In contrast to the PT participants, the MU participants had mostly arrived at Global University through institutional policies related to internationalisation. The internationalisation agenda seeks ways of implementing 'international' and 'intercultural' education in a globalised higher education system and economy and is premised on student and staff mobility and the recruitment of international students to programmes of study (see Altbach 2016; Streitwieser 2014). The MU participants typified this agenda in that they were highly mobile, typically having travelled thousands of miles from their countries of residence and work for postgraduate programmes in the UK. Most came from East Asia and non English dominant European nations along with a small number of British students, who normally resided and worked overseas. Their positioning as 'international' students accorded them status as bearers of 'international' and 'intercultural' knowledge, viewed as of benefit for the institution in internationalisation discourses; economically, their fee income was also highly significant to the institution.

All the MU participants came from more socially advantaged backgrounds than the PT participants, with several fitting aspects of the SONGE descriptors (Vandrick 2011). All had lived in at least two countries, with 25 participants reporting having resided in 3+ countries. Some had attended international schools, which De Mejia's (2002) study indicates are sites of elite bilingualism; all had good first degrees acquired from top ranking universities. The majority also had professional experience of English language teaching, gained through employment and/ or on placements during undergraduate study. All had access to material wealth from their professional lives and/ or their families to self-fund the considerable costs of studying in London. At the time of the study, fees for international postgraduate students were around £16,000 per year and £8000 for EU students. To comply with UK visa requirements, many MU participants had to demonstrate access to funds of at least £1,265 per month in addition to course fees (Study London ND). Unlike the PT participants, the MU participants had access to disposal income when it came to language learning, travel and study, experience of elite educational institutions and social networks including elite individuals or groups.

The MU participants arrived in higher education bringing with them the official languages of their home countries, primarily from East and South East Asia and Europe, together with various regional dialects and languages learned in the course of living, studying and working abroad. Unlike the PT participants, the MU participants had experience of at least two languages as MOI: English and the official language(s) of their home countries, with many having received sustained formal education in more than one language. Consequently, they had high levels of literacy in at least two

languages, including English, on which to draw. Extract 3, drawn from the online survey, is indicative of the importance the participants attached to the experience of being literate in other languages for postgraduate studies in a majority English speaking domain.

Extract 3: 'I use Japanese to … think about my idea[s]'

1   'I use Japanese to make a summary of the articles [in English] and think

2   about my idea'.

3   'I read studies in French and thesis around subject of interest and to be

4   aware of the big names in France in my areas of interest'.

5   'I use Latin for the difficult, Latin originated words in English to guess their

6   meaning' (survey responses).

In many cases, the participants had honed their language expertise through professional experience of language teaching as well as academic study in related subject areas. As we will see, scholarly knowledge had not only raised the MU participants' awareness of multilingualism, but also enabled reflection on their experiences of linguistic diversity in the institutional setting.

In sum, the MU participants' linguistic repertoires, encompassing hyper, super and central languages along with bi-literacy derived through the education system, resonates with the idea of prestigious plurilingualism and the idea of 'additive bilingualism', in that their language learning had added to, not subtracted from, their inherited language(s). Their prior experiences appeared reinforced in the HE domain.

While language learning was an extra curricula activity on their MA programmes, the institutional offering of 'supercentral' and 'central' languages (De Swaan 2001) was well aligned with their linguistic repertoires. Additionally, much of Global's language provision was embedded in high status cultural and research centres, which linked language learning to the social, cultural and political world. These centres hosted events and activities, bringing together members of the university with institutions, officials and groups beyond the university. As extract 4 suggests, such practices created an atmosphere where the participants were encouraged to take a positive view of the importance of their multilingualism in the academic realm and to institutions in the wider world.

Extract 4: 'international in outlook'

1   Studying in a linguistically diverse environment allows others to draw on

2   their own linguistic backgrounds to inform their studies and also of their

3   colleagues. It also creates an environment which is international in outlook

4   and where other experiences can be shared (Online survey).

As we can see, the experience of the MU participants of linguistic diversity stands in marked contrast to the experiences of the PT participants.

5 Prestige varieties of English

The internationalisation agenda has benefitted universities in Anglophone settings through discourses that locate English as a global and 'hypercentral' language in the global economy (De Swaan 2001). As Garrido (2017: 362) illustrates in her work on

multilingualism and the construction of elite identities in NGOs, English is viewed as a 'must-have competence that signals (past) geographical mobility and international experience abroad'. In this sense, higher education has contributed to the idea of elite bilingualism as encompassing English. However, the label of 'English', at least in the Anglophone world, is misleading, masking the experiences of using different varieties of English. As we will see, while the MU participants largely experienced their English as acceptable for their studies and affording them the position of 'legitimate speaker' (Bourdieu 1977) on their MA programmes, the PT participants found themselves mired in discourses of language deficit, in which their affiliation to the local vernacular, Multicultural London English, positioned them as remedial users of English.

5.1 Posh Talk participants

One of the PT participants' first experiences at university was an English language diagnostic test. On the basis of their results, they found themselves required to take the academic writing programme. While the programme was designed with the intention to improve their prospects, its language-as-problem framing contributed to views of their multilingualism as an obstacle to their academic success. The deficit framing of the programme also meant that it has become associated with language remediation rather than language development. The PT participants' experience of their English as a 'problem' becomes apparent in the following extracts.

Extract 5: 'I try not to speak "like that"'

L=Leela (British Asian female), B=Biba (British Moroccan female), A=Awino (Kenyan female)

1. B: at WORK/ I tend not to speak like that/ or at uni in lectures or

2.   seminars/ I try not to speak "like that"

3. A: what do you mean "like that"?

4. L: [meaning-

5. B: [like this "d'you know what I mean?" <exaggerated Cockney>

6. L: [<laughs>

7. B: ["know what I [mean?" yeah

8. A: [oh/ you try to speak properly/ [of course

9. B: [speak properly/ erm

10.   BUT with your FRIENDS MAINly

11. L: [yeah

12. A: [yeah [yeah

13. B: [I speak slang/ it just comes out naturally

14. A: yeah

15. B: I try to prevent it/ but it's very difficult in that sense

(classroom interaction)

Biba starts by relaying her efforts to monitor the way she talks when at work and university. The raised volume of 'work' (line 1) focuses attention on domain and the statement 'I tend not to speak "like that" (line 2) points to how her ideas about which dialect of English to use are shaped by discourses about vernacular English. At this juncture, Awino has not understood the reference to the local vernacular, Multicultural London English (MLE), signalled by "that" (line 2). The response to her clarification question (lines 3-9) frames the interaction in a deficit narrative in which MLE is

represented as a stigmatised variety of English belonging on the streets of the East End of London, indexed by the use of stylised Cockney (lines 5, 7) (Rampton 2006), and as "bad" English, signalled through references to speaking "properly" (lines 8-9) and the labelling of MLE as "slang" (line 13). The marginalised status of vernacular English is emphasised as Biba represents her habitual use of vernacular English as problematic and to be curbed (lines 13-15).

The view of their communicative practices as deficient is also evident in extract 6, in which Tahir (British Asian male) is discussing the language required for academic work.

Extract 6: 'they ain't using slang'

1   That [subject] is probably the one that we did the most reading on and … it

2   was really good quality English … they ain't using slang, they use proper

3   English so we had to write in [proper] English … so we used to spend

4   most of our time trying to revise the way they've written it and what they've

5   written … but it was hard, that was proper hard (Tahir, interview).

Tahir's reference to quality and correctness indexes standard English and its prestigious status while the reference to the absence of 'slang' in the academy points to the stigmatised status of vernacular English. Tahir's use of pronouns suggests how he experiences such practices. The 'we/ they' binary positions Tahir and his peers in opposition to expert users of standard English. His use of 'so we had to' indicates how the participants felt obliged to conform to institutional requirements to use language

marked as prestigious. Tahir's final comment 'that was proper hard' speaks to the participants' experiences of using English in the institution. Their experiences are consistently constructed in a 'slang-posh' binary that entails the erasure of 'slang' (i.e. MLE) in institutional space and self-regulation to ensure the use of 'proper' English experienced as 'posh' and 'other' to themselves. As Tahir's final comment suggests, this required hard work not just cognitively, but also emotionally. Their experiences resonate with the findings of other research with working-class BME university students about the notion of grammatical 'mistakes' in academic writing (Lazar & Baraby 2015). It also points to Snell's (2013) work, which reminds us that standard and vernacular English are denoted as representing incompatible social class worlds. While standard English signals good education and middle-class dispositions, vernacular varieties mark poor education and working-class status.

5.2 Multilingual University participants

The MU participants demonstrated a different relationship with English. For the most part, they came from countries deemed to be not 'majority English speaking' by the UK Home Office. Many had initially learned English as a 'foreign' language at school but many also had the experience of English MOI either in international schools or during undergraduate studies. The MU participants also viewed English as vital for their current or future imagined professional identities in second language education and, as extract 7 suggests, for a lifestyle that transcended national borders and enabled mobility.

Extract 7: 'it's enabled me to create a new life'

1 'English plays a key role. It's the language I use at work, with many of

2 my friends in the UK, and in my relationship. It's enabled me to create a

3 new life outside Switzerland, where I grew up' (online survey)

The participants' experiences of English resonates with De Mejia's (2002) contention of elite bilingualism both as lifestyle choice and as opening up opportunities for the advancement or maintenance of social status. Their experience of English, as with the other languages in their repertoires, was primarily with standardized and prestige varieties. They had little experiential knowledge of vernacular Englishes, representing these as learned subject knowledge. In contrast to the PT participants, the MU participants showed affiliation to standard language(s) and positioned themselves as routinely making use of these in the private and well as public sphere as extract 8 illustrates.

Extract 8: 'Both my English and Dutch are considered standard variety'

1 'At age 11, I started learning English formally at school … I always

2 continued to informally develop English outside school … I have a diary

3 from when I was around 13 which, for some reason, I decided to write in

4 English … Both my English and Dutch are considered standard variety'

(Emma, journal reflection).

Further evidence for the ways in which the MU participants were positively oriented to prestige language and literacy practices comes in journal reflections on their dissertation work. The experiences they recount in their journals appear almost as a

mirror image of the PT participants' experiences (see extract 4) of using the language required for reading and writing in the academic domain:

Extract 9: 'I had to rethink and "translate" … into everyday language'

1 'This week I drafted the information sheet for my [research participants] and

2 unthinkingly I wrote a lot of it in technical terminology I'm used to reading

3 and talking about with my classmates and professors. I had to rethink and

4 "translate" my information into everyday language' (Jane, journal reflection).

In narrating this experience, Jane presents prestige language and literacy practices as part of her habitus and presents these in binary opposition to 'everyday language'. She represents her experience as having to remind herself not to use bookish language with her research participants. Whether this is the case or not, this self-representation suggests that Jane has appropriated specialist language viewed as highbrow and elite and is affiliated to using such language. The reference to interactions with professors and classmates suggests that using prestige academic language instils feelings of belonging for Jane in an elite group.

To conclude, in contrast to the PT participants, the MU participants were positively oriented to the prestige language practices of the academy. For these participants, their relationship with English appeared to be 'the posher, the better'. They desired the language associated with highbrow talk and identities; they were able to take advantage of what was on offer in the institution to develop this relationship and to position themselves as 'legitimate speakers' (Bourdieu 1977) in the academic domain.

6 Language-as-resource approaches to teaching and learning

As discussed, language-as-problem orientations view linguistic diversity as an obstacle to learning whereas resource-based approaches promote the idea of diversity as an asset (see Hult & Hornberger 2016 for excellent discussion). However, language as resource based approaches still privilege some communicative practices over others. Those that are sanctioned and modeled by institutional authority figures in universities, such as academic staff, are likely to become associated with eliteness while those that do not receive such recognition are likely to remain marginalized. What then were the experiences of the participants of making use of their multilingualism as a resource within the domain of higher education and was this sanctioned by institutional authority figures?

6.1 Posh Talk participants

As I hope is clear by this stage, there was little appreciation of the multilingual repertoires of the PT students in the site of the academic writing classroom and in the university more generally. As discussed, their experience of their multilingualism was largely as a problem that needed to be fixed. However, there were moments when the participants were able to resist this positioning and present themselves as agentive beings making use of their communicative repertoires for the purposes of learning. An example comes from Tahir in extract 10.

Extract 10 'we know slang and stuff'

1   There's five of us so we … all sit down and we're trying to [explain] …the

2   good thing is . . . whoever knows in that circle how to do it, he explains to

3   all of us and because we all know each other well, know slang and stuff,

4   we'd explain it in a way we will understand . . . whilst if the teacher explains

5   I might not get [it] . . . So I'd explain it in my terms to make sure they

6   understand it . . . showing the thinking, how I know how to do it (Tahir,

7   Interview 2).

Tahir presents the members of his study group as both familiar to each other and as sharing knowledge of 'slang and stuff'. This representation suggested group members were drawn from peers from similar working-class backgrounds to Tahir and for whom, 'slang', (i.e. Multicultural London English) was important for their linguistic and literacy practices as university students and for marking their identities as working class youth from urban migrant communities. 'Stuff' seems likely to refer to the type of online materials favoured by the participants. These were characterized as short articles for a general readership generated from non specialist search engines, such as *Ask Jeeves* that contained a high level of multimodal features. The impression of the close knit nature of the group relations was reinforced by its depiction as a 'circle', suggesting a supportive and collaborative experience with peers in which the 'slang and stuff' serving the group's modus operandi could actively be drawn upon as a resource for scaffolding subject matter without shame or sanction from institutional figures.

Tahir describes the group's experience as one in which they juxtapose vernacular and standard English, and everyday digital sources of non specialist information with student and more specialist academic texts to develop knowledge of subject matter. This juxtaposition resonates with the idea of 'flexible bi-dialetalism' (Preece 2011) and 'flexible bilingualism' (Creese and Blackledge 2011), in which multilingual repertoires are viewed as functioning holistically rather than as separable parts. Tahir suggests that group practices were contrary to their experiences of tuition. The group's experience of not always being able to follow lecturer explanation suggests pedagogical practices that rely on 'one language only' and 'one language at a time' (Li Wei & Wu 2009). In the case of PT participants, it seems likely that the discrete use of academic discourse without substantial scaffolding with 'everyday language' would be insufficient for addressing their needs. Given the mismatch between the preferred modus operandi of the participants and that of the institution, these self-formed study groups remained largely hidden from institutional gaze.

6.2 Multilingual University participants

In contrast to the PT participants, the MU participants studied in an environment where multilingualism was actively valued by their tutors, some of whom were engaged in promoting plurilingual approaches to pedagogy. The involvement of students in the project team examining ways in which linguistic diversity acted as a resource for multilingual students had also fostered an atmosphere in which students were actively encouraged to frame their experiences of multilingualism as an asset rather than a problem for their studies. The idea of linguistic diversity as a resource was reflected in the journal entries. In the following example, Suzy, an international student from

China, narrates how drawing on her multilingual repertoire enabled her to solve a task related to statistical analysis and prepare an oral presentation.

Extract 11: 'what mattered was content and language was just a tool'

1　'I came across some difficulties with the statistical analysis. To solve this,

2　firstly I googled it in Chinese and got the general idea. As I had to present it

3　in English during class, I searched the Coursera and YouTube to listen to

4　the video lesson. While I was watching I took down notes of the proper

5　English expressions and practiced to remember them. When preparing for

6　the presentation, I first presented it in Chinese to see if I can make Chinese

7　people understand. The reason I did that [was] because I thought what

8　mattered was content and language was just a tool. After that I translated

9　[it] into English and polished my expressions' (Suzy, journal).

This extract from Suzy's journal reveals some similarities with the PT participants. Firstly, Suzy makes use of a non specialist search engine to develop the 'general idea' of the subject matter under examination. Like the PT participants, this is conducted in her dominant language, in this case Chinese. Likewise general information is supplemented with more subject specific information for a student audience, here from *Coursera*[6] and YouTube. Similarly to the PT participants, scholarly sources are

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[6] Coursera bills itself as providing 'universal access to the world's best education, partnering with top universities and organizations to offer courses online' (https://www.coursera.org)

presented as providing 'proper English expressions' to which students need to attend. Finally, Suzy makes reference to a self-selected peer group. Like the PT participants, she bands together with students with whom she feels comfortable and that can support her – in this case her Chinese peers. This group, characterised as Chinese-English bilinguals, is represented as scaffolding understanding of subject matter and as facilitating the 'translation' of subject matter from the dominant language to English. In common with the PT participants, the group supports the development of academic outputs that are likely to be deemed appropriate by a scholarly audience.

However, this extract also suggests some of the differences in the experiences of PT and MU students when it came to positioning their multilingualism as resource. Firstly, while both sets of participants represent academic sources as using 'proper English', Suzy typifies the MU participants by adopting the position of a diligent language learner, who pays close attention to 'proper English', takes opportunities to practice and is at pains to 'polish' her language. As discussed, fashioning the self as positively disposed to elite language and literacy practices stands in contrast to the ambivalence of the PT participants to academic discourse and points to social class. As mentioned, the MU participants were habitual users of standardised language. Making use of language associated with prestige affirmed their classed identities and enabled them to maintain their socio-economic positioning as (upper) middle class professionals and postgraduate student members of an elite scholarly community. By contrast, as habitual users of the vernacular, the PT participants experienced academic language as alienating and distancing them from the working class BME communities from which they hailed. In their case, talking and acting posh needed careful management and was a difficult balancing act to manage.

Secondly, the PT participants focused attention more readily on flexible use of their communicative repertoires, in which they juxtaposed 'slang and stuff' with the 'posh talk' of academic discourse whereas Suzy appeared at pains to separate the languages in her repertoire, presenting these as discrete items which serve as a means to an end. Suzy portrays language as a 'tool' for content, representing her learning as proceeding in a linear and orderly manner and ending in a monolingual output. Suzy's representation of her actual language use appears overly orderly and it is questionable whether it proceeds in such a manner. As research into communicative practices in HE contexts of linguistic diversity suggests, individuals assemble various semiotic resources in their communicative repertoires to make meaning (e.g. Li, W. & Zhu, H. 2013; Marshall & Moore 2013) It seems likely that Suzy's account of her experience was shaped by notions of 'separate bilingualism' (Creese and Blackledge 2011) and the idea of using one language only and one language at a time (Li Wei & Wu 2009), particularly as she was narrating how she had produced a high stakes scholarly output.

7 Discussion

The two studies drawn on in this article are suggestive of the diverse ways in which multilingual university students from different socio-economic backgrounds experience their multilingualism in the HE domain and the heterogeneity of the multilingual student population. What do their experiences suggest about the identity of an elite bilingual in the contemporary academy and the accessibility of this positioning to students from working-class backgrounds? When linguistic diversity is treated as resource, an elite identity positioning opens up whereas this positioning is unavailable when linguistic diversity is approached as a problem to be overcome. The

studies suggest that students from higher socio-economic groupings are more likely to be able to position their multilingualism as an asset within institutional discourses than their counterparts from working-class backgrounds, who, as we saw in the PT study, were obliged to grapple with an institutional positioning as in need of English language remediation.

The participants' experiences of their multilingualism point to a number of contributing factors that impact on whether multilingualism is treated as resource or problem, three of which will be discussed here. The first relates to the location of students' multilingualism in discourses about the value of particular languages in the wider world; in other words, the ways in which their multilingualism is viewed in a linguistic hierarchy. The MU students had high degrees of expertise in at least two languages accorded high status as international or national languages of communication: English, plus at least one standardized variety of a 'supercentral' or 'central' language (De Swaan 2001). As high status languages, these languages were visible in institutional space in the university's language offering. Additionally, the efforts of academic staff on their MA programmes to promote plurilingual approaches to pedagogy raised the visibility of these languages as resources for learning and the curriculum in an Anglophone setting. These practices conferred institutional status on the MU participants' multilingualism, positioning it as valuable for scholarly activity. While the MU participants' expertise in two or more standardized language varieties occupying high status opened up the position of an elite bilingual within the academic domain, this positioning was inaccessible to the PT participants. The languages in their repertoires were largely viewed as peripheral in terms of their importance in the world order (De Swaan 2001), reflected in labels such as 'community' and 'heritage' languages, and this was reflected in their invisibility in the university curriculum. As

language-as-resource-based approaches to pedagogy were not promoted in the research site, the students experienced very little, if any, institutional support to critique the low status accorded to their multilingualism or to develop a narrative on its value as resource. Very few had expertise in supercentral and central languages and despite the dominance of English in their lives, they were affiliated to a stigmatized variety of English in the academic domain. Overall, these experiences resonate with the findings of the LUCIDE project (King and Carson 2016), which examined the vitality and importance of multilingualism in 18 cities, including London, in Europe, Canada and Australia. This project found that regardless of context, the perceived value of multilingualism was linked to societal status. They concluded that:

> 'international prestige languages, first and foremost English, and other larger European languages, occupy the top positions in the cities' linguistic hierarchies, whereas the languages of national and immigrant minorities are considered as less important and worthy of political support' (Skrandies 2016: 145).

The participants' experiences suggest ways in which institutional practices were attuned to a discourse of 'prestigious' v. 'plebeian' multilingualism (Jaspers 2009). The participants positioning in this discourse in their respective institutions conferred elite status on the multilingualism of international students from higher socio-economic backgrounds while marginalizing the multilingualism of working-class BME students.

Another factor impacting on the participants' experience of their multilingualism as a resource or problem was the route by which they entered higher education and the way this positioned them within the institution. The MU students were located in discourses

of internationalization, which positioned them as bearers of international and intercultural experience of value for the university community. Woolard (2008) is helpful in considering how this relates to their multilingual repertoires. She argues that perceptions about languages are informed by ideologies linking language to discourses about 'anonymity' and 'authenticity'. Anonymity discourses position English, as a hyper-central language, and some supercentral languages as transcending nation states and as global languages that belong to everyone. Use of these languages, particularly as the working languages of institutions, such as universities, has come to index a global reach that encompasses cosmopolitanism, internationality, neutrality, expertise and prestige. The promotion of English as a global language promotes perceptions of English as prestigious and elite bilingualism as 'naturally' including English. These ideas appeared to resonate with the MU participants, who were readily able to link their multilingualism to the creation of an international and intercultural environment on campus that was global and cosmopolitan in character.

Internationalization discourses position the identity of an elite bilingual as using languages that transcend the nation state and signal an international and cosmopolitan disposition. While this positioning was available for the MU participants, it was unavailable for the PT participants, who were located in discourses of widening participation as 'non traditional' students. Their multilingualism was not located in discourses of 'anonymity' but in 'authenticity' (Woolard 2008). As Woolard argues this links the value of multilingualism for migrant communities to its role in constructing and maintaining 'authentic' cultural and ethnic identities. These discourses were taken up by the PT participants, who viewed their multilingualism as one of several resources for negotiating cultural and ethnic identities as, for example, British Asians (Preece 2006).This cultural authenticity, in which language is associated

with territory and particular groups of speakers, is viewed at odds with the construction of an elite cosmopolitan and global identity. As Vandrick's (2011) work illustrates, SONGEs resist the appropriation of cultural and ethnic identities, preferring instead to position themselves as 'untethered' citizens of the world.

The final factor impacting on the students' experiences of multilingualism as resource or problem relates to pedagogical practices and the ways these account for linguistic diversity. The MU participants discovered that academic staff viewed their linguistic repertoires as valuable for academic work. By sanctioning the use of their multilingualism in institutional space, academic staff raised its status and created a learning environment where the participants were free to make use of it. As resource based practices emerged in collaboration between staff and students, certain types of communicative practices came to the fore as of particular value in the academic domain. Bi-literacy, particularly expertise in reading subject matter in more than one language was particularly valued. Many participants were well placed to read subject content in languages other than English given their schooling in education systems using supercentral and other official languages other than English as MOI. Additionally, a disposition oriented to the norms of separate bilingualism was valued, particularly in relation to high stakes academic activities such as assessment and public speaking. Again the participants were well versed from their prior education to separating languages and using one at a time. While more research is needed into plurilingual practices in the sector, it appears fair to conclude at this stage that elite bilinguals are positioned as bi-literate, with high degrees of expertise in reading formal and academic discourse in English and at least one other major language, and are skilled at language separation in academic outputs, particularly high stakes outputs

associated with assessment and public speaking.

The type of bilingual practices viewed as valuable in the academic domain and thus most likely to be accorded elite status were inaccessible to the PT participants. They had not received sufficient education in their home languages to develop high levels of bi-literacy; very few, if any, were in a position to read academic texts in other languages and they expressed ambivalence about academic discourse, viewing this as disturbing their classed identities. Instead they drew on online sources in English, many of which would be considered unreliable as sources of evidence in the academic realm. Additionally, they struggled to orient to the norms of separate bilingualism, or more particularly separate bi-dialectalism. For these working class BME students, higher education did not provide a space for re-evaluating these practices or for considering how a holistic treatment of their repertoires could aid their studies. Instead, their experiences reinforced the 'plebeian' status of their multilingualism in UK society and reproduced social class inequalities.

8 Conclusion

In this article, I have given an account of the way in which the social class background and entry route of multilingual university students impacts on their experiences of their multilingualism in higher education. I have argued that their experiences point to the reproduction of a 'prestigious-plebeian' binary in relation to their multilingual repertoires in which certain languages and linguistic practices are viewed as resources within the institution and accorded prestige while others are viewed as problems to be erased. I have argued that this privileges the communicative repertoires of students from higher socio-economic backgrounds, particularly for those who are located in

discourses of internationalization, opening up the identity of an elite bilingual and offering a powerful voice with which to speak. Conversely, the communicative repertoires of students positioned as 'non traditional', by virtue of their working-class origins, BME status, and lack of family history in higher education are institutionally erased; they find their communicative repertoires are seen as lacking in value and they are offered a powerless voice as a student 'in need of remediation'. This stratification of linguistic diversity in the sector points to ways in which university practices are reproducing, rather than challenging, wider class-based inequalities in society. As we promote plurilingual pedagogy in higher education in Anglophone settings, we must not lose sight of these inequalities.

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