Draft position paper of WG4: concepts and methods.

This paper outlines our understanding of what the whole action is about so that it helps to discuss how we wish to continue the activities of the network. As such, it does not provide summary of WG4 activities and it is not either a theoretical engagement with the concept of "new speaker" but rather a reflection of how the network has fared with it. By doing so, it builds mainly on the work of the research-oriented groups (1, 2 and 3) to later reflect on issues of dissemination and impact (group 5).

It is written in a very different style as the other papers as it is an attempt to map out the ground upon which very different people do research in issues that are (arguably) connected to new speakers. So we tried to produce a synthetic language, with the help of some visual aids (that should however not be interpreted as meant to produce a simplification).

What we propose to structure this reflection by focusing on the various "**Research objects**" that have come together in the contributions of all or most researchers. We see two reasons for doing so. First, the orientations and empirical foci of the various contributors to the network have been very diverse, and mapping these differences can orient our discussion. Second, because the concept of "new speaker" is somewhat atypical in sociolinguistics. Moreover, it comes at a time when the disciplinary sands of sociolinguistics are shiting. Faced with new communicative ecologies as a result of globalizing technologies and economic change, and challenged by increasingly complex, multilingual realities, sociolinguistics is in the process of reinventing itself. The idea that a language is a countable object, bounded by stable, resident communities of speakers, is fast becoming a romantic idea.

The main objects of study

A new speaker (however we define it) leads our focus to some kind of social category embodied by a human. We could visualize it like this:

Up to this point, the three main working groups were thematically organized as speaker categories: minority language speakers (WG1), immigrants (WG2) and workers (WG3). At this point, it is good to recall that sociolinguists (the vast majority of network participants) come from a disciplinary background were the primary focus has always been not the human subject or the human capacity to act but language, i.e. the subjects' product or production: language, variety, language variation, language contact, language interference, code-switching, linguistic practices, literacy practices, languaging, translanguaging, discourse, conversation.

Some strands have also sought to complexify the focus through the idea of interaction, social action or social practice, which we could represent like this.

The discipline has also traditionally engaged with closely-related notions that were supposed to express properties or characteristics of the subjects, such as language competence, communicative competence, language attitudes or, more recently, linguistic ideologies, arguably a property halfway between the individual and the practice. In any case, with linguistically-focused categories, human subjects, speakers, discourse producers are placed in a secondary focus and may easily disappear from view in the analysis. In contrast, a focus on interaction, contextualization or situated practices makes it less easy to erase the subjects, although their wider life experiences (outside the ethnographic context) and life trajectories are often not addressed either.

It is useful to note that sociolinguistics as a discipline has addressed subject categorization only peripherally and with difficulties; "speech community" being probably the best example and one that shows very well how the exercise is doomed when engaged through a positivistic lens. There is no way to define what a linguistic community is and how membership is achieved outside the very procedures that social subjects contentiously employ to do so. The implication of Barth's seminal work on ethnic groups and boundaries was therefore that speech communities could not be defined beforehand by sociolinguists but that studying

language would actually yield the understanding of how such communities came about. This

leads to a further complication of the subject matter, basically because it is not that

is just a product of

but actually that

"   "

happens to be also the product of

too,

…which means that an improved representation could be the following:

It is from this perspective that a concept such as identity makes sense as a way into tracing how the status of the participant as such is constituted (for sociolinguists, through language).

There is however, one additional level of analysis that is important though we can probably not treat it as an object, which has to do with the vision of the collective. In WG1 research the collective is not theorized as such; but simply described in terms of individual properties. In WG2, an important strand is the theorization of the collective in terms of a) how one identifies the position of subjects within it (identity, social class, social position) and also how one understand the collective to operate (as hierarchical social fields, as groups in tension, as scales), and what the consequences are for individuals and groups.
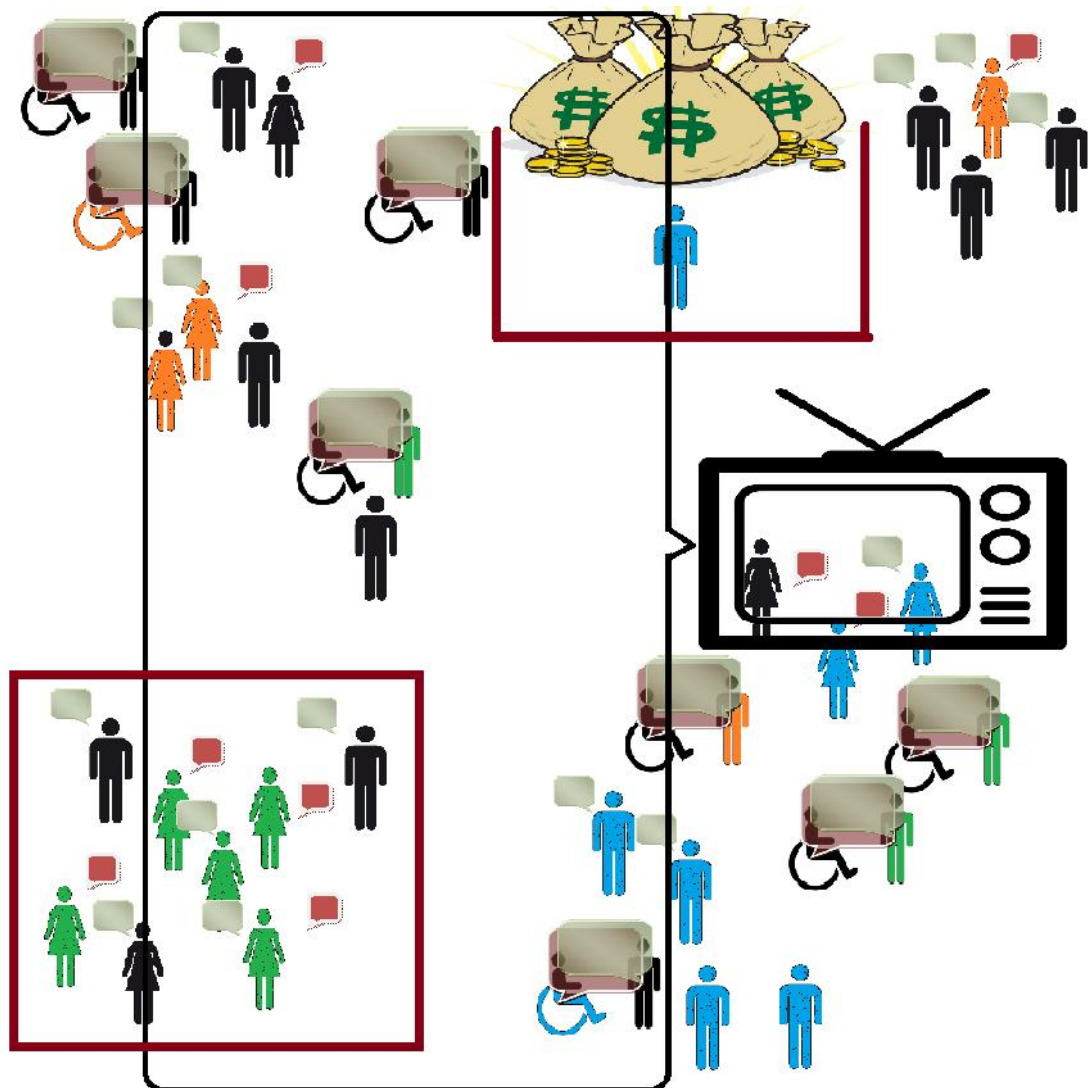
The research agendas

Now traces of these different orientations to the objects of sociolinguistics were found in practically all the workgroups. This can be shown by picking one of the paragraphs of the WG2 position paper:

Speakers' testimonials reflect that features such **as race** and **ethnicity** shaped the consideration of **new speakers** as **native**, **quasi native** or **non-native**, as competent or not- in other words, as **legitimate speakers** of the language and as **legitimate members** of the community. Thus, pointing out that communicative competence is valorised in every social field according to linguistic ideologies and the hierarchy of the different varieties of language, linguistic assessment becomes one of the most powerful mechanism of control and regulation of citizenship. WG2

However, it was possible to find some visible contrasts in the research agendas of WG1, on the one hand, and WGs 2 and 3 on the other. With respect to WG1 we could organize them as follows:

Language focused: the issue of alternative linguistic models, the issue of describing native speaker speech and characterizing the social meanings of semiotic elements.

Speaker focused: processes of becoming a speaker (mudes), types of new speakers.

Policy focused: implications for revitalization agendas (for the characteristics of the collective).

The frequent references of WG1 to the revitalization agenda was to be expected. However, to consider how the different agendas may enter in dialogue, we need to reflect on how it structured the research approach. Results and phenomena were judged as meaningful in terms of their implications in the processes of expansion (or stopping the contraction) of the language community. A certain ambivalence is thus maintained about whether the language or the persons are the central issue. In this context, the research community has no specific interest in deconstructing language as a bounded category, and on querying the status of language as community marker and community builder, as this assumption is what constitutes the field. Thus:

- Language variation and hybridity were regarded as positive in so far as they could be seen as "natural" features of language and also as traces of speaker trajectories into the speech community. As such, members showed interest in:

- Legitimate models of language that diverged from the traditional and the authentic but not necessarily from the standard. Hence a strand that is interested in linguistic description, and another strand interested in agency and creativity.

- Linguistic mudes as a means to understand transit into the speech community, e.g. from school competence to social performance in the language.

In contrast, for WG2 the key issue was how the processes studied affected individuals and categories or individuals, what the consequences for them were. Thus, WG2 paper starts with the immigration phenomenon as seen from a global perspective, with actors moving across the globe in search of economic resources. In this field, the basic question is how language features in this process of displacement, diaspora, transnationalism or rerooting. Language however does not feature in the ultimate goals, and the agenda is not destabilized if the epistemology of language varies. Actually, changing language epistemologies may help understand how linguistic knowledge and knowledge about language is produced in reproduced within specific power-knowledge regimes. *Thus the critique of language as an object becomes a central concern*:

With respect to WG2 and WG3, the scheme would be so:

Speaker focused: Subjects circulate across different linguistic regimes (trajectories) and atune their language performances accordingly (mudes and agency); use of language produces socially-relevant speaker categories; sites and events in which these categories are produced and participants involved (within different markets), processes of recognition or legitimization.

Language focused: Stylisation, indexicality (values attached to semiotic devices), complex repertoires, translanguaging, ideologies…

Policy focused: antiracist, social equality agenda, inclusion and exclusion, "new speaker" category as another source of institutional categorization (the collective as structuring and consequential).

Thus WG2 and WG3, while decentering language in their research agenda, they also feel comfortable with linguistically-focused approaches where the description or mapping of language practices helps to deconstruct linguistic regimes of inequality and particularly those which, through sociolinguistic classification, are used to exclude diasporic populations from symbolic and economic resources. Notice however that the contrast here between the language ontology of WG1 and WG2/3 is remarkable: basically, WG1 still directs its gaze to an object called language which may undergo variation and hybridization; but WG2/3 focus their gaze on the practices that transcend linguistic boundaries.

As a concept, however new speakers travels up and down very well: it makes intuitive sense for policy makers and journalists (upward travel) as well as for migrants and lay people (downward travel). However, the notion sits uneasily with sociolinguists (sideways travel, eg. coffee break talk during the different COST symposia).

With respect to WG5, the position paper reflects the multiple concerns shown by participants; however, in quantity and detail there have been many more contributions from the linguistic revitalization agenda. This certainly cannot be a reflection that the issues of WG2/3 affect less people or that these WGs were less numerous. We would argue that this reflects the fact that the interface between research and policy in the WG1 strand has traditionally been more intense. However, the paper reflects a primary focus not on linguistic form and practice but on the implications for individuals and groups. Finally, the school context is a significant meeting point for all strands.

Concepts in tension, concepts for articulation

Thus to encourage a dialogue we would like to raise four issues.

The category of "**new speaker**" sits well with WG1. Beyond the fact that it is actually used in ordinary life in some contexts, it also contributes to raise questions which the logic of the revitalization field had kept muted or less visible: linguistic variation and hybridization *within* the community. These are issue that now need to be addressed for the viability of the revitalization projects themselves, as it may not be realistic to expect an expansion of the use of the language and a stability in its form. Additionally, revitalization "participants" need to clarify what is the status of the speakers that the politics of revitalization produce. In contrast, for WG2 and WG3 "new speakers" comes to meet a field where speaker categorization was already richly problematized. Whereas it is consistent in the field to query a principle such as *nativeness*, which may provide relevant additions to existing critiques, this does not necessarily bring a substantially new angle to it. However, the problematization of speaker categories may be used as one theme of articulation amongst all: as WG2/3 researchers have predominantly accepted the notion of superdiversity as characterizing the increasing diversity of speaker profiles, WG1 members have also become aware that speakers categories are getting more

complex in their own grounds and that this complexity is on the increase. The notion of intersectionality, i.e. how social position is constituted by multiple axes of belonging and performance (gender, class, race, religion, age), has been brought in by very few participants; but is also germane to these issues. In any case, the new coinages "**speakerness**" and "**newspeakerness**" have travelled across the board although with slightly different accents: WG1 members seem to be interested in finding out how actors take up this position and what conditions make it possible and what responses it meets from others. On the other hand, many WG2/3 members believe that they have to pay more attention to the specific situated processes in which given categories of speaker and speaking get socially constituted and with what consequences.

Equality: this principle hovers as the ethical foundation that legitimates the research agendas across the board, although it is mobilized through very different angles. It is not difficult to explain how this difference arises. WG1, primarily composed of researchers who are speakers of the less powerful languages, basically envisage a socioeconomic or a symbolic status for members of the speech community comparable to that of the powerful ones. WG2 and WG3, primarily composed of white European middle-class urbanites, tap into the civil rights and socialist traditions of advocacy for the oppressed. Of course, these groups are not homogenous, and they may use their heterogeneity to actually reflect on how both agendas and their research angles could be seen as more intimately connected. In any case, a common discussion on the issue could help bridge differences that are of significance, most notably the investment that WG1 has in maintaining a bounded conception of language, while WG2 and WG3 are more interested in deconstructing it.

Languagization, a languagized world. The issue of languagization came up in WG2 as a specific response to linguistic deconstructivism. While researchers generally subscribe to it, some point out that notions of language in popular circulation still have powerful effects that need to be examined, as no matter how relativistic the view of sociolinguists, individuals and institutions still overwhelmingly hold an organic conception of what a language is and how languages are embodied in speakers. To explore languagization, some members of all WGs may be able to contribute to explore how it works, its risks and its affordances in specific contexts.

Governmentality. The unbalanced participation in the stakeholders activity is an issue that should be addressed. It does not reflect a disinterest in policies and institutions on the part of sociolinguists of migration, as the ongoing critiques of institutional practices in the literature display. It may however reflect a lack of practice in the discipline to attend to the ways in which research is recruited in educational, welfare and bureaucratic processes, as well as a difficulty to work out what our position as professionals should be in this matter and how it should inform (and does inform) our questions and methods. Here some more practiced WG1 researchers (as shown in the Barcelona plenary) might contribute to the wider agenda substantially; but we should ensure that this is done with a wider participation across the board.