On (not) speaking English: colonial legacies in language requirements for British citizenship

Abstract

This article examines the colonial legacies shaping current language requirements for immigrants applying for settlement or citizenship in Britain. The article argues that common sense understandings of 'national language' and monolingualism/multilingualism were developed in the context of imperial expansion, the legacies of which resonate today in a disdain for multilingualism and other Englishes conceived as hampering cohesion. Put simply, other languages and other English are spoken *here* because English was *there*. Drawing on interviews with applicants and English teaching professionals, the article discusses how participants variously experience English language requirements. The analysis shows how the colonial legacies supporting the rise of English as a 'world language' cast it as the locus of a regime of audibility that establishes a hierarchy between 'the English' and the 'anglicised'. In today's Britain, the multilingualism of the other is not external and prior to Britain, but rather speaks volumes *to* and *about* contemporary Britain.

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Introduction

This article centres on language requirements for immigrants seeking permanent residence (settlement) or citizenship in Britain. At a time when linguistic racism has been brought to public attention in the months after the Brexit vote,[1] this article shows how the grounds for linguistic racism were laid well in advance of June 2016, through the politicisation of language that demonises minority languages not only in the public domain, but in the home. The aim of this article is twofold: to shed light on the historical linkages between linguistic imperialism and the current policy, and to address the ways in which the 'multilingualism of the other' (to paraphrase Derrida, 1998) is denigrated in favour of an increasingly monolingual politics of national language. The argument is simple: rather than being external intrusions on the 'national culture', other languages (and other Englishes) are spoken *here* because English was *there*.

Literatures on language tests from sociology (Byrne, 2016; de Leuuw and van Wichelen, 2012; Etzioni, 2007; Joppke, 2013), politics (Bauböck and Joppke, 2010; Triadafilopoulos, 2011), international relations (Löwenheim and Gazit, 2009), linguistics (Blackledge, 2005; Khan, 2014; Extra et al., 2009; Slade and Möllering, 2010), and educational research (Cook, 2009; Han et al., 2010; Hogan-Brun et al., 2009; McNamara and Shohamy, 2008) constitute a fertile ground for important debates concerning the limits of liberal citizenship, the disciplinary power of governing regimes in an increasingly 'securitised' world, and the evolving and contested understandings of citizenship in the contemporary world. What is missing in this scholarship, particularly in sociological research, are the histories of domination upon which language requirements – and by extension modern citizenship (Bhambra, 2015) – are founded. This article fills this gap by taking a postcolonial lens to language requirements included within what I call 'citizenisation' measures (Fortier, 2017b). Citizenisation measures come out of twenty-first century European integration and naturalisation policies aimed at a range of noncitizen populations seeking 'citizen-like' statuses such as permanent residency or citizenship. These often include measures such as formal language and/or citizenship tests. Furthermore, citizenisation includes a dimension of

values: who are 'good' or 'bad' citizens? Who is worthy of British citizenship? In this context, language requirements are a measure of subjects' capacity (or commitment; see Fortier, 2017a) to integrate into a presumed shared 'community of values', in Bridget Anderson's (2013) phrase.[2]

This article offers an account that takes seriously the intimacy of nation and empire in past and current language requirements here and there, in order to go beyond endogenous analyses that contain civic integration measures within political and institutional 'cultures' (c.f. Bhambra, 2007). More specifically, its analysis of legislation challenges claims made in support of language requirements – such as assumptions about the 'national language' – that omit the imperial history and legacy surrounding the (unequal) spread of the English language. The article asks two questions. First, what does a postcolonial analysis tell us about the current language requirement for immigrants, in relation to both its historical linkages and specific contemporary expressions? Second, how do injunctions to learn, speak and teach English affect those who are variously tasked to do so? The following pages include five sections. The first section centres on the current legislation and language requirements within British citizenisation measures and critically examines their underlying assumptions. I argue that common sense understandings of 'national language' and monolingualism/multilingualism were developed in the context of imperial expansion, the legacies of which resonate today in a disdain for multilingualism conceived as hampering cohesion. Second, I situate the material used in this article within the broader research from which it is drawn, particularly regarding questions of language. The third section, 'on (not) speaking English',[3] draws on interviews with applicants who express mixed sets of relationships with the English language. Section four, 'assessing other Englishes', briefly turns to ESOL[4] professionals who speak of the effects of language requirements on their work. The article concludes with a critique of the misrecognition of the multilingualism of the other as external to rather than constitutive of contemporary Britain.

The legislation: colonial legacies and the 'multilingualism of the other'

Postcolonial and decolonial scholarship on the rise of English as a 'world language' examines the role colonial regimes played in 'disciplining' the English language and its speakers

(Gunew, 2017; Pennycook, 1994, 1998; Phillipson, 1992, 2010; Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000), or in the creation of 'other Englishes' that decentre the authority of British or US English (Brutt-Griffler, 2002; Hitchcock, 2001).[5] A connecting theme among this scholarship is that the spread of English paradoxically cleared a space for the rise of 'other Englishes' as well as other languages that challenged, and continue to challenge, global hegemonic English (Chow, 2014). This is what Homi Bhabha argues in his discussion of colonial mimicry, which, in order to be effective, he argues, 'must continually produce its slippage, its excess, its difference.' (1994: 122). My interest in this section (and in the article more broadly) is less on mimicry *per se* than it is on how the legacies of linguistic imperialism within current linguistic politics produce new hierarchies of language, particularly a disdain for multilingualism in the name of social cohesion.

Like many European states since the turn of the twenty-first century, the UK tightened its citizenship and integration requirements and designed new citizenisation measures that include formalised English language requirements, which are assessed by evidence of fluency in English and the *Life in the UK* test (the 'citizenship test'). Initially introduced for citizenship acquisition in 2004, the language requirements were moved forward in the process of citizenisation to applications for Indefinite Leave to Remain in 2007 (ILR; permanent resident or settlement status). In 2010, English language tests used for skilled migrants (tiers 1 and 2) were extended to all third country migrants seeking entry in the UK as a spouse, civil partner or fiancé(e) to a British citizen. Since October 2013, *all* applicants for settlement, unless exempt, are 'expected *both* to pass the *Life in the UK* test *and* to have an English speaking and listening qualification at B1 CEFR or above.' (Home Office, 2013; my emphasis) These changes raised the bar significantly and have acted as a deterrent against citizenship applications, as reflected in the drop in numbers of foreign citizens naturalised as British citizens in 2014 and 2015 (Blinder, 2017).

Those exempt from showing an English speaking and listening qualification are those who obtained a degree taught in English and nationals of majority English speaking countries (white settler societies and countries in the West Indies; Home Office, 2013: Appendix). Migrants from white settler societies or the educated elites from the New Commonwealth or other countries are advantaged in this system. Indicatively, in 2016 the largest groups

obtaining British citizenship were from India, Pakistan, Nigeria, and South Africa (Blinder, 2017). As further explained below, the legacies of English imperialism line the fabric of migration and citizenship linguistic requirements insofar as English has and continues to operate as a gatekeeper to social, economic and geographical mobility in the world today (Pennycook, 1998).

Conceived in the aftermath of the civil disturbances in Northern England in the summer of 2001, the new British citizenisation measures were cast as the solution to the 'weakness' of community cohesion and the need to 'rebuild a sense of common citizenship' (Home Office, 2002: 10; see Fortier, 2010). The White Paper on immigration, asylum and nationality laid the grounds for citizenisation measures and stated that

> We need to develop a sense of civic identity and shared values, and
> knowledge of the English language (or Welsh language or Scottish
> Gaelic […]), can undoubtedly support this objective. (Home Office,
> 2002: 32)

Thus tighter language requirements for immigrants seeking entry (to work, study, or marry) or seeking to settle in the UK were hailed as key actions by the government aimed at creating 'common ground' constitutive of a 'community of values' (Anderson, 2013), that is: 'A clear sense of shared aspirations and values, which focuses on what we have in common rather than our differences.' (Department of Communities and Local Government, 2012: 10) The rationale surrounding citizenisation measures purports that a shared *national* language is a necessary channel for interpersonal, social, and cultural *values*, and an efficient way to ensure peaceful cohabitation between 'communities'. English proficiency is not only tied to British values; it *has become both a British value and the standard upon which to value foreign citizens and their will and capacity to integrate* (Fortier, 2017a).

Implicit here is a 'one-nation-one-language' discourse that undermines multilingualism as a valuable national or individual asset. The idea of one-nation-one-language is widely linked to the birth of the modern European nation that required the standardisation of language as a means to create the imagined national community (Anderson, 1991; Balibar, 1991; Haugen, 1966). In the process, local languages were condemned as threats to national cohesion (Haugen, 1966), notably in France in what was

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likened to 'domestic colonisation' (Eugen Weber in Scott, 1998: 72). Similarly, Alastair Pennycook argues that the standardisation of English was 'a very particular construction of the nineteenth century, one that was held in place by the discipline of linguistics', which in turn, developed in part as a reaction to 'the rapid expansion of the empire'. (1994: 109, 115) Pennycook observes that the spread of the English language around the world produced a need to discipline it in a way that 'held the language and its desired meanings firmly in the hands of the central colonial institutions.' (1994: 104).

Pennycook (1994) shows how policies that limited education in English to the few were favoured because English was linked to limited higher status jobs in the colonial administration, and the fear was that 'natives' who acquire even a little English would consider manual labour – much needed by the colonial regime – to be beneath them and leading them to foment social unrest (Pennycook, 1994: 85-87). Thus what gave the English language its power was not so much its widening use, but rather the more prestigious social, economic and political positions that it gave individuals access to. As a result, English Language Teaching (ELT) became the locus of tensions between those who sought access to improve their status and colonisers who were hesitant to provide that access (Pennycook, 1998).

At the same time, language training in local vernaculars was required of British colonial officers for fear that an over-reliance on local interpreters who did not have 'sufficient knowledge of the English language' could lead to 'serious corruption' (Pupavac, 2012). The assumption appears to have been that British colonial administrators *could* acquire 'sufficient knowledge' of the local vernacular, or perhaps that a cursory knowledge was sufficient. Encouraging bi- or multilingualism for colonial administrators – however superficial – was deemed necessary in order to ensure the 'proper' running of the colony, while the bi- or multilingualism of the 'natives' was seen as dangerous, if not with suspicion. Together, these colonial policies and practices around language resulted in a 'linguicism'[6] that established a hierarchical distinction between the 'anglicised' and the 'English', where the former were '*emphatically* not English' (Bhabha, 1994: 125).

Assumptions in the current language requirements surrounding English as a national language presume its status as natural and timeless rather than the product of the historical spread of English, past and present, and its implications in global forces and inequalities. The

one-nation-one-language logic is shored up by the naturalised status of 'English as an international language', which deterritorialises English and deems it the property of the world and of whomever chooses to acquire it (Pennycook, 1998: 190). Former Communities Secretary Eric Pickles suggested as much in his praise of the power of the English language around the world, leading him to declare that speaking English at home is a measure of good parenting:

> From Mumbai through to Beijing, every aspirational parent is trying to
>
> get their kids to learn English. . . Because anyone with ambition –
>
> anyone with aspiration – values our great language. English is a
>
> passport to prosperity. (Pickles, 2013)

As discussed below, such assumptions about the worldliness of English take is as natural, equal and to the benefit of all. Furthermore, in a manner that resonates with fears of corruption or unrest among the anglicised few in the colonies, contemporary politicians and policy-makers in Britain link languages other than English, and therefore speakers of these languages, with civil disorder and threats to democracy, citizenship and nationhood (Blackledge, 2005). In this context, language has become an object of scrutiny in the name of (inter)national security, where some languages signal either a threat to the national culture (Byrne, 2013), or identification with a threatening political movement (Khan, 2014). The one-nation-one-language ideal can be seen as a defensive response to globalisation and transnationalism (Hogan-Brun et al., 2009: 11), and linked to the rise of defensive nationalisms in many European countries, including Brexit Britain. The point I wish to emphasise here is how language, English monolingualism, and identity have become deeply enmeshed.

One of the main underlying principles of the language requirements is that 'English language is a common denominator and a strong enabler of integration', as stated in the recent Casey Review on integration (Casey, 2016: 14). While there is no denying that speaking the majority language is a useful *tool*, the way that language and integration are linked in government policy consistently locates the 'problem' of integration in 'English-free homes', as former Prime Minister David Cameron put it (Mason, 2016), particularly Asian (Muslim) homes where Asian women migrated as foreign spouses. Asian women are blamed

not only for hindering their and their children's integration (Casey, 2016: 32), but also for increasing the risk of radicalisation of racially minoritised youth, particularly Muslims and British Asians (Cameron in Mason, 2016; Blackledge, 2005; Khan, 2014). Casey cites the 2011 National census according to which

> 8.4% of the population in England and Wales (aged 16 and over) did
> not have English as their main language – around 3.6 million people.
> More than 760,000 people aged 16+ in England (1.8% of the
> population) could not speak English well or at all. (Casey, 2016: 94).

What counts as 'main' language and what it means are debatable, as they tell us nothing about where, when and how much English is spoken, let alone anything about the fluency of the persons concerned. Likewise, what speaking English 'well' means is not clear, as will be discussed below (also Byrne, 2013). This conception of the necessity of speaking English *at home* as well as in the streets or at work comes with a disdain for multilingualism and equates *speaking* another language at home with not *knowing* English and certainly not *being* English. A conflation occurs between language as an instrument of communication with language as a symbol of social identification and wholesale cultural identity. There is no room here for the multilingual speaker who might have multilocal or transnational attachments and identifications, including in Britain.

Since 2007, the 'multilingualism of the other' has gradually lost government support, as indicated in a shift in attitude towards translation from being 'endorsed as a way of providing access to, and engaging members of ethnic minority communities in settlement services and policy' (Millar, 2014: 199), to being discouraged because it 'prevent[s] interaction between groups, prevent[s] language skills being developed, and in extreme cases even cause[s] suspicion across groups' (Commission for Integration and Cohesion cited in Millar, 2014: 199). In 2013, Eric Pickles cut millions of pounds from translation services and 'plough[ed] in £6million to encourage people to improve their lot' (Pickles, 2013). Wrapped in a pedagogical rationale, the effect of these cuts on foreign language resources sets up the creation of a monolingual public sphere where anxieties about and disdain for foreign languages congeal (Byrne, 2013).

It is in this discursive and policy context of monolingual Britain as a 'natural' foundation of the nation and national identity, of English language as a 'natural' aspirational skill for everyone in the world, and of multilingualism as unnecessary if not undesirable for residents in Britain, that migrants are required to speak English – and to speak English to me, as I now explain.

Researching citizenisation

This article comes out of a larger study about practices, processes and experiences of the British citizenisation measures. The study is based on multi-sited fieldwork conducted in England between March 2012 and February 2014. It includes observations of ESOL classes, citizenship ceremonies, and shadowing a 'citizenship and nationality' team of registrars at a London borough council where, amongst other things, I observed meetings between registrars and applicants[7] and followed registrars as they sorted various documents or planned citizenship ceremonies. I also conducted over forty semi-structured interviews with twenty applicants for settlement or citizenship and new citizens, as well as nineteen institutional actors (ESOL professionals, registrars, ceremony officials).[8] The names of all locations and participants have been changed to preserve their anonymity.

The interviews took place in interviewees' work places, homes, in my own home, or in public spaces such as language schools or cafes. I was recognised as a foreigner because of my foreign accent by all institutional actors and by the most fluent applicants. I told all participants that I took British citizenship in 2011 by way of establishing my familiarity with and understanding of the process.

Of the fourteen registrars and ceremony officials interviewed, only five said that they spoke one or more languages other than English; the rest spoke English only. ESOL teachers, in contrast, all had two or more languages (including English) in their repertoire. For their part, all but one of the twenty applicants – who represented eleven different countries[9] – declared that they speak at least one other language: ten spoke one other, and nine spoke two or more.[10]

The better part of the fieldwork period took place before the introduction of tighter requirements for applicants in October 2013. Prior to that, the language requirement

separated applicants for settlement or citizenship along two routes: the ESOL route or the *Life in the UK* route. What determined an applicant's route was whether or not they had an entry level 3 ESOL proficiency.[11] Those with that level and above could take the citizenship test, a computer-based, multiple choice test based on the *Life in the UK* handbook and set at an English level equivalent to B1 (intermediate level; ESOL entry level 3) on the Common European Framework of Reference for languages (CEFR). Those whose level of English was below entry level 3 were entitled to take an ESOL with citizenship-content class. If they progressed a level, evidenced by passing a speaking and listening test, they were eligible for settlement or citizenship without having to undertake the *Life in the UK* test.

While access to institutional actors proved to be relatively easy, recruiting applicants was more difficult, if only because they were not as easily locatable as were registrars, ceremony officials or ESOL teachers and providers. I sought applicants through ESOL classes as well as local and personal networks. I hoped but failed to meet new citizens at citizenship ceremonies. 'New citizens' often appear nervous before ceremonies, and having someone who they might associate with the local authority or the Home Office approach them for an 'interview' might understandably make them wary (also Byrne, 2016). Furthermore, my fieldwork took place primarily in the North West of England where the majority of new citizens had gone through the ESOL route. Hence their English fluency was adequate but limited, which made it difficult for me to effectively introduce myself in the informal context of the ceremony waiting room, where new citizens are usually having tea and biscuits with relatives or friends. It was through ESOL classes that most of the ESOL-route interviewees were found. Some I met in a class I observed over several weeks, which allowed me to develop some kind of connection with them as I occasionally took part in conversation activities by way of assisting the teacher. Others I met in a private language school that I visited for a day, where some participants were extremely keen to speak to me, stating that they wanted to tell their story, that they wanted it to be heard.

But on several occasions, I felt that the stress of requiring them to 'tell me their story' in English was quite high. The individuals I met in the private language school had the weakest English speaking skills of all participants. They volunteered to speak to me even though they knew that the interview would be conducted in English – one even saw it as an

opportunity to practice his English. It seems that the expectation that we would all speak

English was normalised by the fact that we met in an ESOL environment where the teacher

introduced me. These encounters were also normalised by our respective positions in the

power differentials constitutive of the 'Anglophone' worlds we inhabit, where my status as a

presumed white 'English native speaker'[12] meant that I stood in for the English-speaking

majority – if not as the state, then at least as an immigration 'expert'.[13] These encounters

were sites where language was itself a 'postcolonial experience', as Rey Chow puts it, which

is imbricated in class and racial systems of differentiation through which we were 'racialized

by language' (Chow, 2014: 9).[14] These postcolonial experiences take different forms, as the

next sections now turn to.

On (not) speaking English

Jeremy is an Indian-Malaysian British man who I met in 2012. Jeremy strongly identifies as

British and speaks fondly of the English language, which he sees as a 'blessing' and 'a

wonderful gift of this country to the world'. He tells me how his father encouraged him to learn

English and he recalls the following:

> we were still a colony in 1950-55, so it was my primary… secondary
>
> school and I had a wonderful English teacher Mrs Scott, I remember
>
> [He laughs] Ohh, I practically fell in love with her, she was beautiful and
>
> oh, I, I was, I became enamoured with the language after she taught us.

Jeremy's appreciation of the English language as 'gift to the world' carries the traces

of his early encounters with the language under colonial rule, where English language training

is seeped in the meanings that language conveys through its historical association with the

superiority of 'standard' (British) English, and, as Jeremy suggests, its association with the

desirable white British 'native speaker' who is the bearer of English culture and language.

Jeremy embraces the discourse of the worldliness of English that assumes it occurred

naturally, equally, and to the benefit of all (Pennycook, 1994). The expansion of the use of

English in the world is seen as natural because it is understood as resulting from external

global forces, colonial and postcolonial. It is seen as equally distributed, rather than as

operating as a gate-keeping mechanism within colonies – where it was reserved to some

sections of the populations, including in Malaysia – as well as in international migration flows. Finally, as Pennycook states, 'it is considered beneficial because a rather blandly optimistic view of international communication assumes that this occurs on a cooperative and equitable footing.' (1994: 9) Jeremy was brought up with the notion that learning English was a passport to England and he considers it the responsibility of all migrants

> to make sure [they] master the English language. I stand before you as
> an example of one who has done this. English is the language spoken
> here and if we do not learn to read and write it properly, we will always
> feel we are second-class citizens.

Throughout our conversation, Jeremy oscillates between, on the one hand, worrying about the unequal access to English tuition for migrants because of years of cuts in government funding and the dangers of tethering language to citizenship, and on the other hand, waxing lyrical about English language and culture as gifts to the world.

I met several other individuals who were younger than Jeremy, who grew up long after formal decolonisation, and who also spoke fondly of the English language. They were men or women from Pakistan, Iran, Iraq, or India, most of whom had been introduced to English at school. Like Jeremy, they came to Britain bearing the aural traces of linguistic imperialism, with their desire for the English language and what it represents.

Khebat, a young Kurdish Iranian man I met in a private language school in 2013, spoke animatedly about his desire for English and England: he said 'my dream it was learning English, be in England'. I asked him to tell me about that dream: 'when did it start?'

> Khebat: I remember I was in first years in school, imagine about seven
> years, eight years [old] […] I used to say to my teacher, just teach me
> one word, you know? Just please teach me one word, because I don't
> know I love to learn in English. That's why I come here.
> AMF: And it was in England that you wanted to come, not in the US, it
> was England?
> K: It was proper English yeah.
> AMF: Hmm [sounding sceptical]… Proper English…
> K: Proper English, I mean British.

Young Khebat's dream of coming to Britain where he would find 'proper English' is a manifestation of the endurance of the colonial disciplining of the worldliness of British English. I wonder if his expression of love for the language and for the country – which he repeated several times in the course of our conversation – was a way to outdo what Derrida might call the 'performative contradiction' (Derrida, 1998: 3) of his claim to love English and England, but where his very utterances belie his 'deficiency', his 'broken English', his otherness. Khebat is striving for recognition even as he must efface part of himself in the process of speaking – when I ask how he would define himself if he were granted British citizenship, he promptly replies 'British'. 'Not Kurdish-British?' I ask. 'No, I will say I am British'.

Both Khebat's and Jeremy's accounts are telling of the role of desire in manufacturing the authority of English as an international language. Writing from a different colonial context and (linguistic) regime, Frantz Fanon's accounts of the Antillean's aspiration to master French, which comes with the promise of making him whiter (1967: 18), tracks the kinds of subjectivity created through the spread of language in colonial regimes and how they are tied up in complex relations of desire and repression.

But others express resistance to English language requirements. Consider Nicole, a Filipina refugee who I met in 2013:

> The government is making us dumb saying that we do not speak
> English. But we run this country we run the capital [laughs]. We are
> workers; look at us, we're working in your toilets we're working in your
> offices we're working to take good care of your old ladies and your sick
> and your disabled families […]
>
> But even though Filipinos speak English you know, they couldn't pass
> […] *The life in the UK* test. Cause it's too…But they've been in the
> country working and there's no problem with their job I mean they can
> communicate they can understand simple English they can understand
> the rota they can understand the erm erm erm [trails off].

Nicole is angry at the deafness to what it means to speak a language that you cannot claim to be your own (Derrida, 1998); to work, communicate, listen in another language, day in day out.

She is angry at the deafness to her and her fellow Filipino immigrants' 'other English'. The minoritisation of other Englishes comes with the minoritisation and devalorisation of the subject who speaks other languages, sometimes several other languages. To cite Sneja Gunew, the first language of some migrants is 'rendered alien, shameful, transgressive, particularly if it is outside the acceptable repertoire of "foreign languages"' (2005: 74). While some 'foreign languages' are deemed less acceptable than others in the contemporary securitised politics of language, the framing of English as necessary for settlement and for British citizenship means that the multilingual skills of the migrants' going through citizenisation are repressed, rendered unnecessary, indeed undesirable or threatening if they speak other languages in the streets or in their home.

Nicole sees how her usage of the majority language is cast as a debased, dumbed down affront to the fetishised English language (c.f. Fortier, 2017a) rather than the product of hard work, dedication, skill, and desire. Nicole's 'non-belonging', then, is not the product of a state that existed *prior* to her arrival. Rather, *it is carved out from the very dynamics of the linguistic relation that she is brought into*. Indeed, the formalisation of a range of skills required of migrants seeking entry, settlement or citizenship has led to a dilution (but not disappearance) of absolutist cultural racism that dominated much of the post-war debates about migration and the integratability of those entering the country (Hansen, 2000). Instead of assumptions about cultural differences and their compatibility with British culture, managed migration measures such as the points-based system – which include language proficiency for some skilled migrants – paved the way to formal but also informal testing of individuals' capacity, willingness and responsibility to integrate.

Together, Jeremy, Khebat and Nicole show how speaking a language does not mean sharing the same relationship to it. The differences between them suggest that sharing a language says nothing about the affective and material connection they might have to that language, nor does it shed light on the unequal distribution of 'language' in the 'Anglophone' community and the resulting hierarchies of belonging that ensue. However, their different Englishes *do* force the question about what counts as 'standard English' (Brutt-Griffler, 2002). If modern citizenship emerged 'in the context of the development of the "'subject capable of property"' (Bhambra, 2015: 105; also Brace, 2004), then denial of *linguistic* property – of a

legitimate ownership of English and other languages – to multilingual other-English speakers is also denying them citizenship, virtually if not legally.

Assessing other Englishes

This section turns to ESOL professionals who are struggling with the dilemma of teaching as a political practice (Kiwan, 2013) or even simply a caring practice, versus the expectation that they decide on someone's fate when assessing migrants' levels of English proficiency.

Fran is an experienced ESOL professional who explains the ESOL requirements thus:

> [I]f you are examining [immigrants] for a language exam, they can talk
> about anything they like. I've had refugees talk about torture, […] who
> can't use anything but the present tense, but, my God […] you
> understand *exactly* what they're saying. But if you're examining them
> on their language, you know, then the national curriculum says that
> Entry 1 you do present tenses and Entry 2 you can do simple tasks and
> going to futures and Entry 3 you've learned your tenses […] They've
> got the vocab, they've got an endless vocab, but not necessarily the
> grammar.

Fran is distinguishing between communication skills and grammatical skills, the latter being integral to the benchmarks for assessing progression between levels, which in turn was, prior to 2013, a necessary criterion for obtaining settlement or citizenship. If language were only about communicating, she argues, many applicants would be eligible for citizenship status. Her distinction is akin to distinguishing between listening like an ally and hearing like a state (to paraphrase Scott, 1998). What ESOL professionals are required to do is to hear like a state by *listening for* grammatical accuracy according to standardised English. For Fran and several other ESOL professionals I met, communication skills are trumped by the technologisation of standardised language as a measurable skill (c.f. Millar, 2014). And the stakes are very high.

With the English Language Teaching industry (ELT) having developed in colonial settings and contributed to the rise of English as a world language, when ELT 'comes back' to

Britain today, a different kind of disciplining takes place: subjects are not disciplined in terms of their *access* to the English language as much as they are disciplined in terms of their *knowledge* of it. Do they know it 'well enough' to integrate?

Which is not to say that it goes without contestation – Fran's critique is shared by most ESOL professionals I met, and ESOL pressure groups persistently challenge government policies around ESOL and citizenship requirements, among other issues. But in practice, ESOL teachers and examiners find themselves in very difficult positions, as Ali explains:

> this is not just the standard course […] it's a life changing course for them […] it's getting that stamp on the passport, and so, […] you know, we charge three hundred and fifty pound for an eight week course and it's like seven hundred quid if they've had to come on two blocks and they've failed and it's a horrible, horrible thing to do. […] I've never experienced being put under that sort of pressure. […] So it's, it's all a bit, it's not as enjoyable and I know a lot of tutors are really stressed out in ESOL now.

On the one hand, Ali is profiting from the citizenisation measures, as are many private schools that have filled the space left open by successive cuts in ESOL government funding. On the other hand, Ali and many other ESOL professionals also recognise the stakes involved in assessing their students. But what interests me here is how Ali's and other ESOL professionals' critiques are underpinned by a sense of loss of the pleasure of ESOL teaching. Several teachers contrasted the past joy of teaching when it was 'only' about language, which some see as a 'common ground' that both learners and teachers share. Citizenisation is understood as having created new inequalities and pressures for learners and teachers. However, ELT provision has always been complicit in the unequal spread of English in the world, and the 'common ground' was never a level playing field; the current regime is an extension of that history. What appears new to these professionals is that they are unwillingly conscripted in the transnational field of professionals charged with securitising the state and its national culture (Bigo, 2002) by being expected to hear and listen like a state and use language as a form of border control.

Conclusion

This article extends current sociological debates around language tests for citizenship acquisition beyond an endogenous analysis in favour of an understanding of the colonial linkages within contemporary citizenisation measures. Arguing that the birth of the modern nation and its national language were closely linked to empire, the article offers an understanding of current citizenisation measures in Britain that recognises both the colonial legacies and specificities of the contemporary moment in shaping current language requirements. I argue that the testing of immigrants' language skills is a willing of the nation in the face of fears of cohesion and national security, much like the standardisation of English as the national language took place in response to nineteenth-century imperial expansion.

Hierarchies between 'anglicised' colonials and 'the English' in former colonial regimes resonate in new hierarchies of belonging and entitlement between multilingual other-English speakers. Language, here, becomes the locus of a *regime of audibility* that finds its object in minute and arbitrary marks – good vocab versus good grammar – and which variously combines with racial *regimes of visibility*. When Jeremy speaks in what he qualifies as a good standard English, he is still seen as a foreigner though less of an outsider – an acceptable foreigner. Indeed, in our conversation he proudly recalls how on one occasion when we spoke to an audience of ceremony officials, he was applauded and praised for being 'the kind of citizen we want in this country'. Thus 'for post-colonial immigrants like [Jeremy] who bear the legacy of a colonial British education this constitutes [a] kind of anomaly' (Gunew, 2017: 26): he speaks British English and embraces all that it represents, but he is not *of* Britain, he is not English, even if he holds British citizenship. As Homi Bhabha would put it, he '*is almost the same, but not quite*' (1994: 123; emphasis original). Language and race combine, as subjects are both 'racialized by language, and languaged by race' (Chow, 2014: 9).

But we also learn from Bhabha and critics of linguistic imperialism that the spread of English produces other knowledges, other practices, and it is to these 'other'

languages (including other-Englishes) that this article attends to at a time when immigrants enter Britain bearing the aural traces of linguistic imperialism (past and present). The establishment of standardised English produced a split among English speakers within the nation as well as within the empire and Commonwealth – a split between the English and the 'anglicised'. Today, this split takes the form of assessing and judging English language skills in ways that devalue other Englishes as well as other languages. As Nicole puts it, 'the government is making us dumb saying that we do not speak English.' Meanwhile, ESOL professionals are caught between their professional ethics and their legal responsibility as they are reluctantly conscripted among the expanding range of professionals required to ensure national cohesion and national security.

The problem is not the encouragement and much needed support of individuals to acquire English in order to access services, institutions, the job market, or to better engage with their children's schools and schoolwork. Nor is individuals' desire for English to be read as enforced upon them. The problems that this article raises are twofold: first, the tethering of citizenship to language, which is conflated with national identity, belonging and entitlement. Second, the unspoken assumptions about English as a 'world' language, which erases the colonial legacies lining the language requirements in Britain. Recognising the effects of current language requirements, as well as understanding their development within a broader colonial history, sheds light on the forgotten multilingualism of the other: unlike the assumed deterritorialised 'worldliness' of English, when other languages 'are untethered from their supposed originating territory they become associated with non-assimilable alterity and danger' (Gunew, 2017: 17), as they are in postcolonial 'global' (Brexit) Britain. Furthermore, the denial of linguistic ownership to multilingual other-English speakers is also denying their claim to citizenship if not their rightful presence. As stated earlier, other languages and other Englishes are spoken *here* because English was *there*. As such, the multilingualism of the other speaks volumes *to* and *about* contemporary Britain.

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Anne-Marie Fortier is Professor of Sociology at Lancaster University. The overarching theme that connects her work concerns the relationship between mobility and immobility. She asks: How do governing processes of subject and identity formation function through and in response to migration? She has explored these processes in relation to migrant community formation; multiculturalism, cohesion and integration; queer diasporas; national genetic genealogies; and, currently, citizenisation measures and processes. In addition to numerous journal articles and book chapters, she is the author of *Migrant Belongings* and *Multicultural Horizons*, and co-editor (with Sara Ahmed, Claudia Castañeda and Mimi Sheller) of *Uprootings/Regroundings: Questions of Home and Migration*.

[1] E.g. Dearden (2016) and Lusher (2016).

[2] 'Citizeni*sation*' opens up the possibility for theorising citizenship as an ongoing process, not as a finite 'status' or something that one simply has (or not). See Fortier, 2017b.

[3] This phrase is a nod to Ien Ang's (2001) book *On Not Speaking Chinese*, where in the title essay she elaborates on the predicament of not speaking Chinese while 'looking' Chinese and how that affects her status in the diaspora. While I am not concerned with diasporic belongings here, I align myself with the spirit of Ang's argument against (racialised) assumptions about language and identity.

[4] English for Speakers of Other Languages.

[5] Other decolonial critics call for education and support of 'native languages' as a means of resisting the global spread of the English language (Ngũgĩ, 1987).

[6] Which Philipson (1998: 47) describes as the unequal division of power based on language.

[7] Local authorities offer two optional services for applicants: Settlement Checking Service (for foreign spouses) and Nationality Checking Service.

[8] Some were interviewed more than once.

[9] Australia, Brazil, Canada, Germany, India, Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, Pakistan, the Philippines, Thailand.

[10] I asked all participants 'what languages do you speak?', where 'speaking' was not qualified. Thus the answers provided are based on self-assessment. In addition to English, the languages listed by applicants were: Arabic, Austrian, Filipino, French, German, Greek, Gujarati, Hindi, Ilocano, Kurdish, Persian, Portuguese, Punjabi, Sorani, Spanish, Tagalog, Thai, Turkish, Urdu.

[11] The Home Office Guidance summarises the required standard as follows: 'A person at ESOL Entry 3 is able to follow straightforward spoken explanations and instructions and hold a conversation on a familiar topic' (Blackledge, 2005: 224).

[12] Where these interviewees located my accent is unknown.

[13] This was borne out when some participants hoped to get information from me about how to get 'the passport', the shorthand many applicants use to refer to British citizenship.

[14] It is beyond the scope of this article to expand on the complex relational politics at work in these encounters. My positionality in these encounters was more complex than oscillating between being 'foreigner' and/or 'British'. As a white French-Canadian, my interlocutors and I share a modicum of histories of encounters with (the) English and an appreciation of how this language has been imposed from without, albeit unevenly and with radically different social and political effects.