LANGUAGE ECOLOGY RE-ORIENTATION IN A CONTEMPORARY METROLINGUAL FRAMEWORK:
A CRITICAL PARADIGM SHIFT TO AN EXPANDED, COMMON STANDARD ALBANIAN

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Abstract

Given present emergent trans-local new media in de-territorialized and poly-lingual milieus, an approach to the current Unified Literary Albanian (ULA) that integrates elements of Gramscian-*esque* and Bakhtinian-*esque* optics on language would be more in sync with contemporary poly-glossic realities of numerous Albanian speech communities in 21ˢᵗ century linguistic marketplaces than the language's present standard. Such reforms could serve as partial remedies for current linguistic injustices and insecurities regarding various purported dysfluencies of marginalized and disenfranchised speakers of stigmatized Albanian varieties, thereby averting returning to past repressions. This alternative positioning allows younger generations of language learners to exercise their agency in arriving at "their own emergent orders of normativity" (Leppänen et al., 2009, p. 1080). Espousing this perspective encourages language guardians with ortholinguistic tendencies to refocus their energies from "deeply entrenched dogmas" (Del Valle, 2014, p. 370) of standard language ideology focusing on linguistic imposition and denigration, and exclusionary policies that neglected to integrate rich socio-historical realities of the languagers, to an inclusive linguistic regime that embraces the present linguistic diversity of polycentric sociolinguistic spaces. Instead of perpetuating outdated language policies involving inflexible linguistic intolerances of bygone eras that (still) attempt to hermetically seal language and prevent any leakage, cross-contamination, trans-languaging, or codemeshing from one variety (in)to another, mutual accommodation and communicability are advocated here. Given the diffusion of polycentric sociolects in various locales where Albanian is employed, "putting the toothpaste back in the tube" could be rather challenging and futile. Thus, various gatekeeping

pedagogies, including many current replacement and appropriateness paradigms, could be ineffectual given contemporary metrolingual realities of many Albanian languagers and learners. (Word count: 265)

1. Introduction

Throughout the past few decades, various language scholars have commented that in order for Unified Literary Albanian (ULA) to withstand the test of time, like other normative living languages, it must be "permitted" to undergo considerable reform. Changes could involve ULA incorporating various excluded elements (e.g., Gegisms) during the 1972 standardization process at the Congress of Orthography, thereby resulting in a more cultivated language. Such modifications would distance ULA from its homogeneous and monocentric pedigree and accentuatepoly-, context-, and interlocutor-centric linguistic practices (see Byron, 1976).

2. Standard Language Ideology, Polycentrism, and Heteroglossia in Light of ULA

As numerous scholars have observed, standard language ideology plays a considerable, but often implicit, role in how many languagers perceive language, especially standardization polices and planning, and thus (non-)standard(ized) forms (e.g., Ag & Jørgensen, 2012; Heller, 2008; Leeman, 2005; Milroy, 2001; Milroy & Milroy, 2012; Watts, 2010). Milroy (2001, p. 531) explains: "Standardization works by promoting invariance or uniformity in language structure…[and]…consists of the imposition of uniformity upon a class of objects...[T]his definition assumes that the objects concerned (including abstract objects, such as language) are, in the nature of things, *not* uniform but variable." This inherent variability is frequently made invariable when language policies are imposed. Standard language ideology often views languages as discrete, fixed objects, consisting of "stable synchronic finite-state idealization[s]" (Milroy, 2001, p. 540), while endorsing invariance, homogeneity[1], strict notions of correctness[2], proper use campaigns, post-hoc justifications of legitimacy[3], native speaker ownership, hegemony, modernist notions of "one nation/one (standard) national language" (Ricento, 2000, p. 198), language purity, and monoglot ideologies. Such agendas implicitly (and explicitly) discourage "incorrect" (e.g., non-standard) forms regularly regarded as immoral; often refuse to acknowledge (standard) (factual) variability; and endeavor to eliminate fragmentation within the standard. As Milroy (2001, p. 534) remarks, however, "There cannot be in practical use any such thing as a wholly standardized variety, as total uniformity of usage is never achieved in practice." For Milroy (2001), standardization involves "a process that is continuously in progress in those languages that undergo the process" (p. 534).[4] Moreover, speakers who fall prey to standard language ideology and culture often attribute elevated prestige to standard dialects.

Prestige, however, is a sociocultural construct not inherent to language[5] (Jørgensen, Karrebæk, Madsen, & Møller, 2011).

Standard language ideology discussions are of relevance to ULA. In 1972 at the Congress of Orthography ULA standardizers, alongside various language guardians and gatekeepers, advocated homogeneity, invariance, strict ortholinguistic adherence, proscribed form eradication, and linguistic purism at the cost of linguistic diversity in pluricentric alternatives, similar to what Gramsci envisioned across the Adriatic for Italian (see Carlucci, 2013; Ives, 2004), so as to codify the communicative practices that likely involved flexible (passive) reciprocal bilingualism and other accommodations concerning written and spoken (literary) Albanian varieties (see Byron, 1976). Gramsci advocated an inclusive, pluricentric language regime originating and resonating with the voices of the languagers of the various dialects (of Italian); such an approach allows languagers to more cogently articulate their thoughts than when limited to imposed monocentric (unitary) systems. Gramsci understood "the importance of working towards [linguistic] unification through a careful consideration of [linguistic] diversity – not through its denigration or coercive elimination" (Carlucci, 2013, p. 200); linguistic ecology was paramount.

Bakhtin's heteroglossia[6] (multispeechedness), inclusion of multiple voices so as to represent authentic language, is also pertinent to Albanian. Heteroglossic language practices[7] involve employing different languages and/or varieties, often within and/or between spoken and/or written utterances and strings of language. Bakhtin's heteroglossia is "governed by two opposing forces, the centripetal (toward the single 'center' implied in the notion of an 'official' or 'national' language), and the centrifugal (away from that 'center' in the direction of the regional dialect, as well as the 'languages' used by different classes, generations, and professions that comprise a community of speakers). Bakhtin's work tends to stress the centrifugal…" (Hayward, 2001). Heteroglossia[8] involves myriad (linguistic) components, beyond standard versus non-standard possibilities, e.g., their interweaving (e.g., Alb. *duke shku*(*e*), *tu*(*e/j*) *shkuar* '(while) going', cf. *duke shkuar* ULA/Tosk; tue/*tuj shku*(*e*) Geg); semantic plasticity (e.g., Alb. *mollatarta*, *patëllxhan i kuq* 'tomato', cf. *domate*; *dru, pemë* 'wood, tree, fruit'; *tamël* 'milk', cf. *qumësht*; *tylnë* 'butter', cf. *gjalpë*,); and morphological inhibitioneasing, including frequently stigmatized forms (e.g., Geg infinitive, Alb. *me shku*(*e*) 'to go'; cf. *të shkoj* '(that) I go'); among others. Actual language practices (e.g., sociolects of various speech communities in Tirana and Prishtina) are multifaceted, including societal and contextual elements[9] (Tjupa 2009), which play

pivotal roles in influencing which forms (e.g., standard, non-standard, formal, casual/informal) "real life languagers" (Jørgensen et al., 2011, p. 29) employ[10]. Heterglossia allows multiplicities of evolving, dynamic viewpoints to be conveyed through such authentic speech acts rooted in speech diversity (Dentith, 1994), especially concerning authentic expressions of style – and self. Often the case for ULA, however, "dominant political and ideological pressures…keep 'languages' [and varieties[11]] pure and separate" (Lemke, 2002, p. 85; Heller, 2007; Jørgensen et al., 2011). Languages – including varieties – are often "politically prevented" from mixing, meshing, and blending (Creese & Blackledge, 2010)[12]. Various ULA gatekeepers have attempted to hermetically seal and guard it from unsanctioned leakage (e.g., of non-standard Gegisms).

3. Present Dynamics of Language, Fluid Hybridity, and Linguistic Repertoires

Let's consider the various consequences of globalization, e.g., the migration of people and ideas, on current linguascapes (Blommaert & Rampton, 2011), including Albanian languagers. As Ag and Jørgensen (2012) explain, superdiversity involves the "diversification of diversity…in which populations become increasingly ethnically and linguistically heterogeneous…and the expanding transnational as well as transborder communication over the internet or other new technological phenomena contributes to the dismantling of the idea of simple and clear communications" (pp. 527–8). This superdiversity entails the emergence of rules and norms and their observance – and the appearance of alternative norms (Blommaert, 2013), e.g., in various linguistic landscapes in the Americas and Europe, including (previously) imposed ULA confines. Multiple forms of truncated multilingualism and linguistic repertoires participate (Blommaert, 2010; Kramsch, 2014), where "intrinsic polycentricity…characterizes sociolinguistic systems" (Blommaert, 2013, p. 11), as exhibited in many ULA users' linguistic practices. Varied linguistic elements enter into the discourse, where polylingualism[13]– involving "languagers employ[ing] whatever linguistic features at their disposal to achieve their communicative aims" (Ag & Jørgensen, 2012, p. 528) – and receptive multilingualism – when each interlocutor communicates in his/her mother tongue (in the case of Albanian, "native" variety) while comprehending the utterances of the other individual – may surface, including in virtual linguistic landscapes of new and emerging media (Blommaert, 2013, 2014) involving semiotic fluidity (Kramsch, 2014), which brings us to metrolingualism.

Metrolingualism highlights the intersections of linguistic structures, semiotics, identity, new media, local polycentric linguistic practices, multilingualism, among others, in linguascapes that celebrate diversity, multiplicity, and hybridity. Metrolingualism[14] embodies "ways in which people of different and mixed backgrounds use, play with and negotiate identities through language; it does not assume connections between language, culture, ethnicity, nationality or geography, but rather seeks to explore how such relations are produced, resisted, defied, or rearranged; its focus is not on language systems but on languages as emergent from contexts of interaction" (Otsuji & Pennycook, 2010, p. 246). When languagers blend often-divergent communicative repertoires in spoken and/or written utterances, codemeshing and translanguaging results; linguistic systems "leak" and "contaminate" others, thereby "undermining…ortholinguistic practices" (Otsuji & Pennycook, 2010, p. 245) and "challeng[ing] particular hierarchies and hegemonies" (Creese & Blackledge, 2010, p. 104). From the lens of metrolingualism[15], the languagers are not *bastardizing* the language(s) or dialect(s). These disruptions and destabilizations of dominant ideologies and (re)negotiations of identity are integral components of metrolingualism[16], which is "interested in the queering of ortholinguistic practices across time and space that may include urban and rural contexts, elite or minority communities, local or global implications" (Otsuji & Pennycook, 2010, p. 246). Germane to the emergent Albanian norm, this "hybridity-oriented pluralizing strategy" (p. 251) embraces "production[s] of new possibilities" (p. 247) of language as "an emergent property of various social practices" (p. 248), while rejecting rigid cultural fixity, e.g., ortholinguistic ideologies[17].

4. Considering Linguistic Regime Re-orientation for ULA

The current dynamics of Albanian involve codemeshing and translanguaging, among others, unsurprising given the diglossic[18] reality where ULA (and the Tosk variety) enjoys overt prestige compared to often-stigmatized Geg (sub) varieties. ULA is presently undergoing speaker-motivated change (from below), where varied sub-dialects have been in the process of "leaking" into it, where multiple linguistic structures merge with others (e.g., Alb. *duke shku*(*e*); *tuj shkuar* '(while) going'). Such dialect meshing (cross-dialectal/language transfer) of linguistic elements (e.g., lexical items and structural features) is well-known in dialect contact contexts, especially when the linguistic systems have been in (intense) contact situations (Lofi, 2007). ULA's current situation illustrates how, when the languagers are in the drivers' seats, language

can exhibit fluid and dynamic characteristics, particularly given speaker-driven pluricentric and heteroglossic practices, where urban, provincial, and archaic, (un) orthodox, and innovative features are woven into the linguistic repertoires[19]. Such multi-dialectal (multi/polylingual) and "transidiomatic practices" (Blommaert, 2013, p. 8), including dialect ideology spurts (Watts, 2010), exemplify language choices exhibiting metrolingual speaker agency.

Late modern mediascapes, metrolingual landscapes, amongst other contributing factors, have influenced and been shaped by a generation (or more) of languagers who attribute less saliency to national identity than to emerging translocal sets of shared (virtual) experiences, values, interests, and ways of life on and off the grid (Leppänen et al., 2009). Priorities are less oriented toward modernist nation-state notions than other langaugers with whom they share common understandings regarding similar notions of de-territoriality, hybrid communities, and hybrid communication practices largely navigated online. Instead of being identified by what some langaugers associate with affiliations of the modern state (e.g., rigid monocentric standard languages and monoglot ideologies), some prefer to be identified by (and identify themselves with) more dynamic and fluid (semiotic) metrics promoting perpetual malleability given the demands of the day allowing them to determine "their own emergent orders of normativity" (Leppänen et al., 2009, p. 1080), including regarding static standard languages.

Some may criticize such re-orientations for lacking rigid rules and fixity. Decisions involving which "rules" to follow, however, are up to the languagers – not a handful of academicians in a conference chamber or stone tower isolated from humans who use the language and possess communicative, translingual, and symbolic competence (see Kramsch, 2014). Such positioning de-emphasizes prescriptivism, not normativity, and reinforces diversity, rather than replacement and appropriateness paradigms, thereby permitting langaugers to redraw their "final horizon[s] to fit a global world of increased semiotic uncertainty and symbolic power struggles…as an adaptive practice that interacts with its cultural and technological mediations" (Kramsch, 2014, p. 306), while recognizing decentered knowledge sources and reflective, situated choices (p. 308).

5. Implications and Conclusions: A Critical Paradigm Shift

Less than five decades ago when ULA was approved by language authorities at the Congress of Orthography and had begun to be promulgated to the masses, Byron (1976, p. 120)

foresaw integrating alternative linguistic constructions, namely "[the] rejected alternates" (of the Geg variety), into the standard, thus reinforcing that "a standard in time becomes heterogeneous, and isolated from its initial state." She suggested such alternative elements "be relegated to stylistic functions" (p. 120), which would facilitate "at least a minor attempt to meet the demands of humane communication" (p. 120). Such progression constitutes a paradigm "shift of Albanian language planning from a policy to a cultivation approach to language" (p. 120). Byron's proposal is in sync with various Gramscian-*esque* and Bakhtinian-*esque* optics on language. Such re-orientations do not constitute corruptions, but (re)evolutions, generated by speakers as active agents and vectors in language change, where its social origins are also considered (Milroy, 2001; Blommaert, 2013). Genuine tolerance for this emergent, relaxed norm illuminates Haugen's (1966) "elaboration of function" (Milroy, 2001, p. 534), while also allowing languagers "*freedom to imagine*, not obligation to submit" (Blommaert, 2013, p. 10); and reinforcing that "systems change irreversibly" (Blommaert, 2013, p. 13). The old rules are "replaced by a default image of openness, dynamics, multifiliar and nonlinear development, unpredictability – what used to be considered deviant and abnormal has become, in this perspective, normal" (Blommaert, 2013, pp. 13–4). This approach encourages languagers to partake in critical examinations of past and current dominant language policies "to dispel myths about the degeneracy of modern day varieties" (Leeman, 2005, p. 40); languagers "must critically evaluate the dominant norms, determine who is being assimilated and who rejected through the establishment of these norms, and analyze the implications of this standardization process" (Sanchez qtd. in Leeman, 2005, p. 41). Embracing elements of the proposed framework allows for such critical awareness to transpire.

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[1] "'Homogeneism' [is] a fundamental non-acceptance of diversity" including where diversity is seen as a type of societal "pollution," often involving "intolerant and anti-pluralistic measures" (Blommaert & Verschueren, 1998, pp. i, 122, 125, 126).

[2] Jørgensen, Karrebæk, Madsen, and Møller (2011) explain: "[T]here is no such thing as inherently correct language. Correctness is social construction about the characteristics of specific linguistic features. Correctness has nothing to do with the linguistic characteristics of features – correctness is ascribed to the features by (some) speakers. The notion of 'correct language' may index specific features in (at least) two different ways… [like] native speakers…" (p. 30).

[3] Milroy (2001) remarks: "The standard form becomes the legitimate form, and other forms become, in the popular mind, illegitimate…Urban forms…although probably used by a majority of the population…were at the bottom of the pile…These were not 'dialects' at all: they were

seen…as vulgar and ignorant attempts to adopt or imitate the standard and were therefore illegitimate…" (p. 547).

[4] That is, for Milroy (2001) language standardization does not constitute a stolid, inert state.

[5] Jørgensen, Karrebæk, Madsen, and Møller (2011) clarify: "The insight of current sociolinguistics is then that 'languages' as neat packages of features that are closely connected and exclude other features, are sociocultural constructions that do not represent language use in the real world very well…Rather than being natural objects, comprising readily identifiable sets of features, 'dialects', 'sociolects', 'registers', 'varieties', etc. are sociocultural constructions exactly as 'languages' are" (p. 28). Milroy (2001, p. 532) remarks: "[P]restige…attributed by human beings to particular social groups and to inanimate objects, such as…language varieties…depends on the *values* attributed to such objects. The prestige attributed to the language varieties (by metonymy) is indexical and involved in the social life of speakers."

[6] Otsuji and Pennycook (2010, p. 252) write: "Heteroglossia, as Bailey (2007, p. 258) reminds us, 'encompasses both mono and multilingual forms' allowing a 'level of theorising about the social nature of language that is not possible within the confines of a focus on code-switching." Blommaert (2010) explains: "The intrinsic hybridity of utterances (something, of course, introduced by Bakhtin a long ago) is an effect of interactions within a much larger polycentric system" (p. 12). Hayward (2001) comments: "Postmodern appropriations of Bakhtin's work are too diverse to summarize briefly. In its implication that language carries within itself ideological orientations accreted from previous usage, but also that it can be modified in and by any new speech act, the concept of heteroglossia enables queer, feminist and post-colonial theories to interrogate dynamics of power without replicating them, and to elaborate the problems as well as the possibilities for subjects attempting to assert themselves ideologically and politically."

[7] Hayward (2001) comments: "Heteroglossia is a concept denoting the stratification of the different 'languages' practiced by the speakers of a single (official or national) language, and the dynamic produced by their intersection and interaction."

[8] Bailey remarks: "Heteroglossia can encompass socially meaningful forms in both bilingual and monolingual talk; it can account for the multiple meanings and readings of forms that are possible, depending on one's subject position; and it can connect historical power hierarchies to the meanings and valences of particular forms in the here-and-now" (qtd. in Creese & Blackledge, 2010, p. 106). Creese and Blackledge (2010) explain: "Bailey demonstrated that the perspective of heteroglossia allows one to distinguish between local functions of particular codeswitches and their functions in relation to their social, political, and historical contexts, in ways that formal codeswitching analysis does not. He convincingly argued that the perspective of heteroglossia 'explicitly bridges the linguistic and the sociohistorical, enriching analysis of human interaction' p. 269) and is 'fundamentally about intertextuality, the ways that talk in the here-and-now draws meanings from past instances of talk' (p. 272)" (in Creese and Blackledge 2010:106). Bahktin writes that "'language is something that is historically real, a process of heterglot development, a process teeming with future and former languages, with prim but moribund aristocratic-languages, with parvenu-languages and with countless pretenders to the status of language which are all more or less successful, depending on their degree of social scope and on the ideological area in which they are employed' (Baxtin 01943/35] 1981: 356–57)" (qtd. in Tjupa, 2009, p. 124).

[9] Tjupa (2009, p. 124) explains: "According to Ba[kh]tin's understanding of language use, a 'social person,' who is also a speaking person, operates not with language as an abstract

regulatory norm, but with a multitude of discourse practices that form in their totality a dynamic verbal culture belonging to the society concerned."

[10] Bahktin clarifies that "'language is something that is historically real, a process of heterglot development, a process teeming with future and former languages, with prim but moribund aristocratic-languages, with parvenu-languages and with countless pretenders to the status of language which are all more or less successful, depending on their degree of social scope and on the ideological area in which they are employed' (Baxtin 01943/35] 1981: 356–57)" (qtd. in Tjupa, 2009, p. 124).

[11] Jørgensen , Karrebæk, Madsen, and Møller (2011) point out: (2011) "Heller (2007: 1) explicitly argues 'against the notion that languages are objectively speaking whole, bounded, systems,' and…prefers to understand language use as the phenomenon that speakers 'draw on linguistic resources which are organized in ways that make sense under specific social circumstances" (pp. 27–8). They continue: "Blommaert (2010: 102) similarly refers to 'resources' as the level of analysis. He observes that '[s]hifting our focus from 'languages' (primarily an ideological and institutional construct) to resources (the actual and observable ways of using languages) has important implications for notions such as 'competence'' (p. 28).

[12] "[T]he teacher avoids, it is argued, cross-contamination, thus making it easier for the child to acquire a new linguistic system as he/she internalizes a given lesson…It was felt that the inappropriateness of the concurrent use [of two linguistic systems] was so self-evident that no research had to be conducted to prove this fact. (p. 4)" (Jacobson and Faltis 1990, qtd. in Creese & Blackledge, 2010, p. 104).

[13] Similarly, poly-languaging is "the use of features associated with different 'languages' even when speakers know only few features associated with (some of) these 'languages'" (Jørgensen, Karrebæk, Madsen, & Møller, 2011, pp. 33, 34).

[14] Otsuji and Pennycook (2010, pp. 245–6) write: "We do not, however, want to limit the notion of metrolingualism only to the urban…[W]e want to avoid an idealization of the urban metrolingual landscapes set against the assumed narrowness of rural living. This has tow corollaries: on the one hand, metrolingualism as a practice is not confined to the city; and on the other, it is intended as a broad, descriptive category for data analysis rather than a term of cosmopolitan idealism…[M]etrolingualism may be rural, mobile, local and fragile."

[15] Otsuji and Pennycook (2010) explain: "The focus in not so much on language systems as on languages as emergent from contexts of interaction…The notion of metrolingualism gives ways of moving beyond common frameworks of language, providing insights into contemporary, urban language practices, and accommodating both fixity and fluidity in its approach to language use" (p. 240).

[16] As Jaworski (2014, p. 139) remarks, metrolingualism is the "manifestation of linguistic performances," e.g., polycentric and heteroglossic practices, "in which self-consciously deployed linguistic forms index recurrent situations of use or specific social categories" such as gender and region, thereby "creating new indexical meanings and new symbolic values (Rampton, 2009a), where none may have been hearable before (Jonstone, 2009; Silverstein, 2003)." Such linguistic behaviors entail "the recontextualization…or transplantation and relocation of linguistic resources from one domain into another, frequently with artful overtones…[S]uch manipulation of the relatively fixed,…social categories is the cornerstone of metrolingual usage which aims to challenge and destabilize traditional and fixed identity ascriptions, 'ortholinguistic' ideologies and practices" (Jaworski, 2014, p. 139).

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[17] Such a situation is relevant for Albanian, especially considering the migration practices of Albanian speakers. Whereas one speaker grew up speaking Swiss German or standard French at school or work and ULA/Geg at home, another speaker was raised speaking a local variety of Arabic or Italian of the community and French, Albanian and/or English at a brick-and-mortar institution of learning, perhaps even later in life as an adult language learner.

[18] Ferguson defines diglossia as involving "the coexistence of two varieties of the same language, [where] a High variety (H)…describes the standardized form of the language, and a Low variety (L)…refers to its vernacular form" (Lotfi, 2007, p. 40). Contact-induced change environments tend to include the mechanisms of code-switching, code-alteration, and passive familiarity (i.e. Fasold's 'broad diglossia'; Lotfi, 2007, pp. 41—2, 47). When the level of competence in the other variety (or language) is extensive, the borrowing (and meshing) of elements, i.e. convergence, can result, including in regards to phonological and morphosyntactic structures, especially in cases of intense contact (see Lotfi, 2007, p. 47), where saliency (e.g., frequency of use) could play a role, as could be the case with a the meshing of high frequency non-standard constructions, e.g., the Geg infinitive (e.g., *dua me shku*(*e*) 'I want to go', where substratum structural borrowing which could also include a lexical component) and orthographic hypercorrections (e.g., with the schwa <ë> and the palatal stops, i.e. <q> and <gj> with the palatal-alveolar affricates <ç> and <xh>).

[19] Jørgensen, Karrebæk, Madsen, and Møller (2011) explain: "The notions of 'varieties', 'sociolects', 'dialects', 'registers', etc. may appear to be useful categories for linguists. They may indeed be strategic, ideological constructs for power holders, educators, and other gatekeepers (Jørgensen 2010, Heller 2007). However, what speakers actually use are linguistic features as semiotic resources, not languages, varieties, or lects (Jørgensen 2004, 2008). It is problematic if sociolinguistics habitually treats these constructs as unquestioned facts. Blommaert & Backus (2011) have proposed the term 'repertoires' for the set of resources which the individual commands or 'knows'…" (p. 29).

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