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L2 learning and togetherness through infrastructures of globalization: exploring the role of socio-technological platforms in conditions of asylum seeking

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Taking the sociolinguistics of superdiversity as its point of departure, the contribution investigates the sociolinguistic regimes present in the spaces of an asylum seeking centre in Flanders, the Dutch speaking part of Belgium. It looks at the spaces present in the centre as loci where ‘the guests’ who inhabit them are confronted with normative regimes of sociolinguistic behaviour. This snippet of entrenched normativity emerging from the centre’s daily sociolinguistic life, though, results to be in sharp opposition with the use that is being made of these very same spaces by the ‘guests’ once they have access to the web. There, in fact, these spaces become loci in which the intangible infrastructures of globalization – like the web, YouTube and its videos – allow for the construction of convivial fleeting encounters based on the use of pop-culture as the binding element that transcends ethnic, sociolinguistic and religious differences. The contribution concludes with some considerations on the validity of the concept of integration for asylum seekers in mainstream society dealing with whether and how conviviality through the resources that socio-technological platforms have to offer could work as a possible alternative to State-imposed sociolinguistic and sociocultural regimes of integration.

Keywords: second language acquisition, asylum seekers, YouTube, new speakers, language ideologies

1. Introduction

Globalization has brought about an intensification of the worldwide mobility of goods and information, but also of human beings. Asylum seeking is one of the by-products of this mobility and it links local happenings to (political) events occurring many miles away. The EU and the “floods of asylum seekers” that try to reach its soil are no exception to this. Yet, those who knock at the EU’s doors pose a problem to border control authorities. Migrants, drawing to Stuart Hall insight that are forerunner of the current interest in cultural studies around the global South, cannot anymore be conceptualized as

people engaged in a linear move “from de margins to de centre” (Hall 1996). Rather, these globalized migratory flows are at present one of the most tangible testimonies of superdiversity. That is, they embody what Vertovec terms a process in which diversity moves beyond ethnic minority group membership and boundaries and gives way to “an increased number of new, small and scattered, multiple-origin, transnationally connected, socio-economically differentiated and legally stratified immigrants” (Vertovec 2007: 124). It follows that present day globalization induced mobility and the consequent new flow of diversity calls for all sorts of urgent interventions that Europe, its member states and their institutions are trying to come to terms with. There is the question of border control at both European as well as nation-state level. Further, there is the question of nation-states confronted with obligations to their citizens in their asylum seeking policies and practices. Last, there is the question of securitization of borders that brings up issues of institutional framing of the identities of the newly arrived migrants within a regime of suspicion. In reaction to the above, the EU engages in deploying strenuous efforts and large sums of money to safeguard its maritime shores and territorial borders. Typical of these efforts are those measures that set up – to borrow Bigo’s terminology (2006) – a “ban-opticon”, that is, a means for channeling mobilities, modulating their intensities, speed, mode of movement and coagulation through measures of surveillance. From the above, two things appear to stand out clearly. An asylum seeking centre becomes the waiting room of globalization (see also Spotti 2018), that is, a place whose guests are the by-product of events happening many miles away and who are waiting for an institutional decision to take place. Furthermore, an asylum seeking centre becomes also a place made of (polycentric) spaces where institutional regimes of integration are present (cf. Spotti 2011). That is, these spaces are loci where the micro-fabrics of State, hence top-down, sociolinguistic regimes come to mingle with bottom-up negotiations of these regimes from the people who live in them. With this backdrop in mind, the present contribution focuses first on the current debates that characterize studies of L2 learning. From there, the contribution moves to subscribe to an understanding of space that is polycentric and thus other than a socio-cultural vacuum awaiting to be filled in by the agentive forces of its guests and institutionalized,

semi-institutionalized, and non-institutionalized personnel. Drawing then on linguistic ethnographic vignettes collected at the centre, very same spaces become *loci* in which – at specific times of the day – intangible infrastructures of globalization, i.e., the internet and its socio-technological platforms, allow for negotiation and resistance of the above mentioned regimes.

2. Engaging with L2 research: sociolinguistic norms and polycentric spaces of negotiation

While L2 research has typically drawn – and still does – on notions like learning, development, error and interference, focusing thus on the degree of fit – or lack thereof – between (taught) standard language norms and the mastering level of competence and performance of a given individual, linguistic ethnography and studies that avail themselves of a linguistic ethnographic methodology centered on L2 learning (cf. Rampton 2011) deal with social differentiation, identity projection, code-switching across socio-lectal forms of speech production and the use of non-standard conventions. In short, these studies focus on *languag-ing*, where the gerundive form of this verb shows the *in fieri* nature of language and the use human beings make of it in communicative interactions. Although I do not wish to step into teasing apart the products of the pop-up store like terminology that characterizes much of the present day sociolinguistics debate here, I am inclined to say that there still is a good doses of possible dialogue between SLA research on the one hand, and linguistic ethnographic work on the other. To this end, we have witnessed the emergence of studies whose epistemological shifting has gone to focus on speakers and how they navigate through the complex nature of *being a user of language X* deploying linguistic resources in dynamic social relationships. As Kramsch's (2009: 5) work dealing with the *Multilingual Subject* has it “imagined identities, projected selves, idealization or stereotypes of the other [...] seem to be central to the language learning experience”.

Where the above shows how, every stylistic move someone makes, whether it takes place in an L1 or L2, it is the result of an interpretation of the social world that language users come to face and

of the meanings attached to the linguistic elements within it. Elements that, in turn, contribute to the positioning of the language user with respect to the immediate world that surrounds his/her sociolinguistic doings and to the larger political and public debate on his/her need of civic integration through language. This social turn in studies of the sociolinguistic lives and doings of L2 learners has, more recently, being corroborated by the work of Pujolar and Gozalez (2013) who, armored with the concept of *new speaker*, have dealt with the exploration of the linguistic constitution of the L2 learner as a subject who, while learning a language other than his own, is going through a change of *muda* – a term derived from the Spanish reflexive verb *mudar-se* – stressing the fact that in specific biographical junctures of L2 learners, there are being enacted significant changes in learners' sociolinguistic repertoires according to the ideologies that inhabit the socio-cultural spaces in which language is learnt, written, uttered or more simply put, used. Ultimately, these studies tend to stress that L2 learning should be examined through the eye of the total linguistic fact, i.e., an understanding of the ultimate sociolinguistic datum that looks at language as product of four elements, these being form, usage, ideology and domain (Wortham 2008). It is on this last element, i.e., domain that can give us a further conceptual hunch on which to explore sociolinguistics regimes within the space at hand, that of an asylum seeking centre. Henry Lefebvre, in his incredible voyage, moves away from a Cartesian understanding of space and of its ideological ends. Rather he views space as a social product that masks the contradictions of its own production and deconstructs the illusion of transparency. Further, in an effort to link human agents and spatial domination, Bourdieu (1972) focuses on the spatialization of everyday behavior and how the socio-spatial order of behavior is translated into bodily experience and practices (at times) of repression (see also Blommaert and Huang 2010). Bourdieu proposes the concept of *habitus*, a generative and structuring principle of collective strategies and social practices that makes new history while being a product of history itself. Michel Foucault, in his seminal work on the prison (1977) and in a series of interviews and lectures on space (in Faubion 1994), examines the relationship of power and space by positing architecture and the use of space as a technology of the government that tries to regulate the bodies of those who are under

detention. The aim of such a technology is to create “a docile body” (Foucault 1977: 136), that is, an almost subjugated body due to enclosure and the organization of individuals in space. On the other hand, De Certeau (1984) sets out to show how people’s way of doing things make up for the means by which users re-appropriate space organized by techniques of socio-cultural production. These practices are articulated in the fine-grained details of everyday life and used by groups or individuals already caught in the nets of discipline, though in his work spatial practices elude the (implicit) planning of government control. Building again on De Certeau (1984), power in space is embedded through territory delimitation and boundaries in which the weapons of *the strong* are classification, delineation and division – the so called strategies of spatial domination – while *the weak* use furtive movements’ shortcuts and routes – also addressed as *tactics*. The latter is used to contest, negotiate or even subvert spatial domination and all that comes along with it that is the normativity of doing things as prescribed by the one in power. Understanding multilingualism and the deployment of sociolinguistic repertoires in the spaces of an asylum seeking centre requires therefore an understanding of the connections between spaces, the bodies who populate them and the sociolinguistic and socio-cognitive practice within an established set of orders of practices. As we will see, in the ethnographic vignettes that follow, what counts as perfectly sound and widely accepted display of someone’s sociolinguistic repertoire gained through his/her trajectory of migration as an asylum seeker, may either seem odd or a *non-language* at a time when there are other discursive and sociolinguistic regimes at play. What is performed as *successfully acquired* at a given time in a given space may thus be elected as disqualifying someone’s identity at another time of the day in the same place. Assessment of sociolinguistic practices and the outcomes for those who are involved and thus for their identities is the stake that is being bet here.

3. The centre and its guests

This study, part of a larger ethnographic interpretive inquiry entitled *Asylum 2.0* aimed at unravelling the implications of socio-

technological platforms in the lives of asylum seekers, builds on data collected through three rounds of fieldwork between 2012 and 2014 at a Red Cross asylum-seeking centre in Flanders, the Dutch speaking part of Belgium. The project, ethnographic in nature, combines insights, methods and epistemological as well as ontological stances stemming from linguistic ethnography (Creese and Coupland 2014) and socio-culturally rooted discourse analysis (Gee 1999). In both frameworks, there is the underlying assumption that the way individuals speak as well as speak about things reflects their culturally embedded understanding of human beings and their perception of the world. The data from which the ethnographic vignettes of the present contribution are drawn were collected in October 2013, during my first long term stay at the centre. My position there was that of a buffer zone between the assistants, i.e., staff members regularly employed by the Red Cross, voluntary workers, i.e., professionals on a pension who dedicate their spare time to the centre, and the guests, i.e., the asylum seekers who had filed an application for refugee status. When asked by the guests who I was and what I was doing there, I candidly explained to them that I was engaged in writing a book about what it means to be an asylum seeker and what asylum seeking implies, and that I was there to document myself about their daily lives. All the participants embraced my interest in them and, although they were given the opportunity to opt out, none of them did so. Rather, they reacted enthusiastically as they were made feel that their lives mattered and that there was somebody interested in them and their experiences. Living along with them, having breakfast with them, talking to them while drinking endless cups of sweetened Afghani tea, following their daily doings that ranged from Dutch language lessons to knitting lessons, to gym activities to simply hanging around on a centre bench kicking a ball about in the evenings. In other words, what I did there, was deep hanging out in the cultural ecology of this institutional space.

The centre, located in a formal catholic cloister, has big rooms assigned to families and smaller rooms assigned either to pairs of male or female residents, on a first come first served basis. Rather than using a nationality based criterion or an ethnic grouping criterion, the director of the centre had opted – where he and his team members felt it not to be a risk – to put together people of different ethnic,

linguistic and religious backgrounds. During this round of ethnographic fieldwork, the centre catered for 61 guests. Following the information gathered at the centre during intake talks, guests were from the following (often pre-supposed) national backgrounds: 13 from Afghanistan, 12 from the Russian Federation – mostly from Armenia and Chechnya – 9 from Guinea Conakry, 9 from Bangladesh, 7 from the Democratic Republic of Congo. Following the unofficial statistics kept at the centre, the remaining 11 guests originated from what had been categorized as “other” (*anders*). These were respectively 2 from Senegal, 1 from Somalia, 1 from Togo, 3 from China, 1 from Albania and 1 from Ukraine. 40 of these guests were male, 21 were female. 11 of them fell under the category of unaccompanied minors, though 3 of them still needed to give age proof through bone scans. Only 1 guest had entered the centre in 2010 while the rest had entered in 2011 or 2012. Only 2 guests had passed their 50s, confirming the trend – pointed out by the centre director – that seeking for asylum is mostly a practice for either unaccompanied minors or young (often male) applicants ranging from their early 20s to their late 30s. All names given in this case study are pseudonyms so to grant participants protection and privacy. Although video recording was not possible at times due to the resistance of some of the volunteers at the centre, audio recording always happened. If that had not been possible, I would have gone back to my informants when I felt that the talk I just had was particularly interesting and asked them whether they would have had any objections to being taped, else I would have relied on my field notes. As every Red Cross centre, the obligations toward the guests and their well-being were rather basic. The centre, in fact, had only the institutional obligation of providing them with a roof, a bed and food for their daily sustainment. Activities like those aimed at introducing the guests to the norms and values of mainstream Flemish society do not fall under the basic provision system offered by the centre. Notwithstanding this, the centre’s director and its personnel all saw the centre as the first opportunity for the guests to mingle within the local community. As a result, a number of activities had been set up among which the possibility to get sawing lessons, the chance to grow someone’s own vegetables and exchange them at the local market, as well as the chance to learn Dutch as L2 once a week for 1 and a half hours.

No explicit notice at the centre mentioned that Dutch had to be used as the only language of interaction among guests and assistants. Although the sociolinguistic landscape present on the centre's walls displayed an array of languages and scripts mastered, or at least familiar to the guests, it was a recurrent sociolinguistic practice to hear the sentence *in het Nederlands, alsjeblift* ('in Dutch please': MS). This sentence happened to be uttered mostly by the assistants when guests went to the office asking for something that could have ranged from information about their lawyer appointment to asking for food they had bought and that had been stored in the common fridge the centre had. Was the interaction to be too hard for the guests, then English first and French second and where possible Russian and Farsi would have been deployed during the verbal exchange.

4. The centre, its *guests* and its spaces

The two episodes that follow focus on two spaces I have singled out during my fieldwork in that relevant for understanding how people that fell under the straight omnipresent category "migrant in need of integration" came to be challenged. The first space is the activity room, a large space in which several voluntary based activities would take place, among which we find the non-regular Dutch as L2 classroom that is key to the first part of our story. The second place, instead, is what I have termed in my fieldwork notes as "the three steps", i.e., three steps at the end of a blind corridor on the ground floor of the centre. It is exactly by sitting on those three steps, in fact, that guests often could get access to the best Wi-Fi connection in the building.

4.1. Waarom naam voor vrouw mitz zu [uh] klein leter?

The teaching of Dutch as L2 at the centre was carried out by an elderly lady on a pension with a background in teaching who we will call Frida, it being a pseudonym to protect her privacy. Her commitment to the centre had been in place for more than 12 years by then and she claims to enjoy what she does, given that at her age

“there are people who like to drink coffee while I like people, so that’s why I do it” (Interview Frida 10102013:1). Once a week, Miss Frida teaches Dutch as L2 for one hour using the didactic resources that she sees most fitting to the needs of her students, these ranging from high to low literate and have varying degrees of mastering Dutch. The room in which she teaches has a number of desks and a white board where guests used to write up their thoughts or poems. The guests entering Miss Frida’s class are not compelled to attend. Rather, they can walk in and out freely at any time during class, making sure though that they are no bother to those who have been attending class from its start. In what follows, we focus on a classroom episode that deals with Frida teaching Dutch vocabulary. We then move onto Frida’s meta-pragmatic judgments about her students’ owned sociolinguistic repertoires and literacy skills. It is October 10th, 2013 and class should start at 13:00 sharp. At 13:03, the lesson opens as follows:

Armenian guy: if you find yourself [...] from my room an’

Frida: Niet, vandaag geen engelse les he’, vandaag nederlandse les hey?

Oke’, dus we starten op bladzijde zes. Iedereen heeft een kopie?

[No, today no English lesson, right? Today is Dutch lesson, right?

Okay so we start on page six, has everyone got a copy?]

After wiping off what had been written on the white board and preparing her worksheets for the day, at 13:06 Miss Frida starts reading each word from the worksheet that she is holding while standing on the right hand side of the whiteboard facing the whole class. The lesson unfolds with a reading of a string of words that Frida’s students have – as drawings – on their worksheets. As Frida starts, she reads these words slowly and loudly. While she does so, she is pointing at these words on the worksheet. She then comes to read out-loud the following line:

Frida: Haan [...] Jan [...] lam [...] tak [...] een boom [...]

[Hen [...] Jan [...] lamb [...] branch [...] one tree [...]]

Frida: Oke’ [...] hier is Nel, hier, hier, hier, hi[ii]er, hier is Nel. Nel is naam, naam voor vrouw, Fatima, Nel, Leen, naam voor vrouw.

[Okay, here we have Nel, here, here, here, h[ee]re is Nel. Nel is name, name for woman, Fatima, Nel, Leen, name for woman]

Armenian guy: Waarom naam voor vrouw mitz zu [uh] klein leter?

[*Why is name for woman with small cap?*]

Frida: Dat is basis Nederlands, BASIS [Frida onderstreep dit met een hardere toon: MS]. Eerst starten wij met de basis, wij lopen niet! Wij stappen [...] na stappen, wij stappen vlucht, daarna gaan wij lopen, dus nu stappen wij [...] maar dat is juist.

[*That is basic Dutch, BASIC [Frida stresses this with a higher tone of voice: MS]. First we start with the basics, we don't walk, we make steps, after making steps, we step faster, and then we get walking, so now we make steps [...] though, that is right.*]

Miss Frida, whose aim was to increase the vocabulary breadth and – later on – the vocabulary depth of her Dutch as L2 students, is reading aloud clusters of monosyllabic words for them to combine a word to a picture as the one reported on the worksheet. Interesting is the way in which Frida states that in this class there is no English lesson going on that day, de-legitimizing the use of English and stressing this boundary through the use of the tag ‘hey’ (01). In line (04), Frida further stimulates other learning channels to make her students understand what the locative pronoun ‘here’ (*hier*) means. She repeats the word, stressing the [r] at the end and the length of the word. She also points her finger right to place on the ground where she is standing. Interestingly enough though the lesson snapshot above sees one of her students (who is from Armenia) asking a question that, although posed with the intent to mock the teacher’s authority, it is also meant to show that he holds literacy skills. Frida’s reply is further very telling for two reasons. She first reiterates firmly how she sees the learning of Dutch through the metaphor of “we do not walk, we make steps, after making steps, we step faster, and then we get walking so now we make steps”. Further, through the adversative clause that ends her sentence in line (06) – “but that is correct” – she has to give up her native speaker authority admitting that the student’s observation was actually valid. In the retrospective interview carried out with her so to gather information on her professional life as well as in order to understand what she thought she was doing while she was teaching, Frida asserted:

‘Ja, als je gaat naar die landen eh, dat is alles met handen en voeten eh daar en hier is ook zo een beetje’

[Yes, if you go to those places, right, it is all hands and feet, right, and here is also a little bit like that: MS].

She then added:

‘Kijk, deze mensen hebben verschillende talen, echt mooi talen hoor, maar ze zijn eigenlijk geen talen, snap je wat ik bedoel?’

[Look these people have languages, really beautiful languages, but they are not languages really, if you know what I mean? MS].

In her answers, there is a conceptualization of her L2 students through the lens of the homogeneous *other* coming – through the use of the distancing pronoun ‘those places’ – from somewhere far like the places that she admitted to have visited once she went on holiday. Second, she translates the communication impediments that she has encountered there ‘by the other’ where she had to communicate through the use of both hands and feet to the situation that she experiences in her class, although many of her students have reported to hold – to different degrees of proficiency – an array of languages. Further, we encounter in her discourse practices, the disqualification of the languages of her students. To her, as she states, ‘these people’, i.e., her students, do have languages, entities that she qualifies as ‘really beautiful languages’. Though, as she adds through an adversative clause ‘but they are not languages’ followed by the adverb ‘really’. This sentence allows us to take a peak – into Frida’s own sociolinguistic awareness. The languages her students own, in fact, do not match the, albeit unvoiced, understanding of what a language is that she holds. This meta-pragmatic judgement on the languages of her students can have different explanations. Although speculative in that Frida did not go deeper into her rationale about ‘what a language is’ during the retrospective interview, it may be that Frida does not address the languages of her students as actual languages as these languages are no European languages. This though comes across as peculiar in that the vast majority of her students reported to be proficient in both English, German, Russian and French being these either reminiscences of the colonial past that has characterized their countries of origin or being these languages that they have encountered during their migration trajectory to Flanders. Another reason for her judgement could be a disqualification move of their

sociolinguistic repertoires, in that the languages that are present in her class are everything but Dutch.

4.2. Doing togetherness through YouTube

In this second ethnographic vignette, instead, we encounter two young men called respectively Urgesh and Wassif. While Urgesh is of Bengali origin and – as he reports – he is proficient in Bengali, Panjabi, some Hurdu as well as English and “beetje beetje Nederlands” (‘a bit bit Dutch’: MS), Wassif reports to be of Afghani origin. As he had worked for the Red Cross in Afghanistan, he is proficient in English. Though, he also reported to know and use Farsi, Arabic (in its classical variety) as well as some Dutch. The two of them had grown fond of me, during my residence at the centre. They had understood that I was not an institutional figure either interested in their application for permanent residency or that could scold them if they did not behave accordingly to the rules. Rather, in the evening, they would always insist to talk to me about their reasons for coming to Belgium, as well as for their expectations for their future lives there in Flanders. After having listened to their stories, one night during my fieldwork, they wished to show me the power of the steps, i.e., three steps on the ground floor of the asylum seeking centre that were so willed by everybody in that there was the best possible internet connection in the whole building. As it was a quiet night, once we had moved there, they asked me whether I liked music. While telling them that I did like jazz, they wished to show me their favorite genre, heavy metal. The dialogue unfolded as follows:

Urgesh: Look at this Sir, look at this.

Wassif: These are cool bruv, these are cool.

Urgesh: I have seen them on a gig.

Wassif: Yeah, yeah, look at that, power, broer Max, puur power.

(Asylum 2.0 fieldnotes 102013)

In the excerpt, these young men are convivially commenting the video using their own varieties of English – as the Bengali band broadcasted on their phone screen via YouTube – called Sultana Bibiana – plays a

cover from the American world famous band Metallica. In the above quote, several are the issues at play. First, as exemplified by the absence of Dutch in the exchange, except for the use of the colloquial expression *broer* ‘bruv’ and *puur* ‘pure’, we do not see any trace of centre implemented language policies being taken on board by the two language users. Second, as it emerged from their sociolinguistic repertoires, we see that the interaction at hand implies that the interlocutors are rather proficient language users of English. Last, we can also observe that they are proficient techno-literates in that they use the internet as a means for accessing pop-culture content (Spotti and Kurvers 2015). Although for space reasons I can only provide a glimpse of evidence leading to the construction of conviviality taking place at the centre, I believe that the vignette is worth some further considerations. Online streamed video music, and more precisely its heavy metal genre, is in fact the matter of the present conversation with me but, together with streamed online porn, it also had been a matter of many of the conversations I had overheard taking place through whichever language resource among the boys at the centre. Encounters around online sources of masculine popular culture taking place on the three steps had always one common characteristic. They did not have as their pivotal point *big* discourses taking place around the *heavy things* that characterize the lives of the guests at the centre. These being for instance, societal barriers encountered with native Flemish people or with the juridical system, their future in Flanders, the pressure to learn Dutch, or – as it had often been reason for confrontation – their differing ethno-religious backgrounds. Rather they were *light* moment of laddish aggregation. Although these insights should be taken with a pinch of linguistic ethnographic salt – as Rampton (2014) warns us – due to the risk of being blinded by addressing encounters like these as *a priori* convivial encounters, someone could advance that what these guests are doing on those steps gives way to a coagulation around a socio-technological platform which – as Goebel (2015) points out in his work on knowledge-ing and television representations – leads to moments of *doing togetherness*. More specifically, these two men are engaged in a moment in which the deep tangible differences among the two of them are shaded in the background and where the coagulating centre

of their encounter is a mobile phone, its screen, the YouTube channel being used and the music it plays (Arnaut et al. 2017).

5. Discussion and conclusions

A quick glance to the news feeding the public and political debate across Europe makes someone realize that European nation-states face a deep egoic crisis. In reaction to this crisis, nation-states come across as spastically engaged in authoring and authorizing discourses of integration and measures for implementing the learning of the official language and of the official norms and values belonging to a given national culture. They do so selling these two items as inseparable and as unique entry ticket for newly arrived migrants to integration. Yet again, there is escape to the fact that human beings – whether or not engaged in migratory movement like the guests at this centre – are and always have been mobile subjects. There is also no way to escape that group dynamics and the actual understanding of what a group means, both have gone through deep changes since the advent of the Internet and of globally networked transnational societies (Blommaert 2014; Castells 2010; Rigoni and Saitta 2012). Against this background, there is no easy way around the fact that, as Joshua Fishman pointed out in his seminal work on the sociology of language (Fishman 1969), the point of departure in the study of language in society is that language – in whichever form and through whichever channel – is constantly present in the daily lives of human beings and thus that the focus of the study of language and society is not language as such but the speaker who languages. The situation presented in the two vignettes here raises quite some issues worth considering with a view of shedding new light on whether individuals in conditions of migration, like those who were part of these vignettes, should fall into straightforward categories of belonging such as that of *guests*, of *other* or when referring to the official discourse authored and authorized by governmental bodies as “migrants in need of civic integration”.

First, as showed in the excerpt coming from the non-regular classroom held in the activity room by Miss Frida, Dutch language is offered through a catechistic approach that sees the guests as blank

slates to be filled in by the authority of the class teacher. In there, such authority does not only reiterate a much larger dichotomy between native vs. non-native speaker of the official language. Further, it looks at the learner of Dutch as a second language through a homogenous image of *the other*, whose languages although many and beautiful become disqualified as not being actual *languages*. On the other hand, instead, the study documents how other spaces within the centre become coagulated centres of interest that grant these very same guests the possibility to avoid officially imposed sociolinguistics regimes, when all this is done through the use of socio-technological platforms that trigger togetherness and through that conviviality. In the emergent literature on digital literacies, online socio-technological platforms and the construction of identities therein, there appears to be a need for re-conceptualizing the concept of group and for the present case for re-conceptualizing the category 'L2 learner'. As Baym (2015) points out, for studies of particular websites or communication channels, like the one presented here, when the researcher is interested in how people come together around shared activities and goals, the situation pictured in the second episode confronts us with a question: what role can top-down policies have in the life of these globally mobile highly networked people? And is it still tenable to construct the identities of the guests at the centre as L2 learners in need of integration alone? A possible answer here could be that if these people can do conviviality and manage to integrate with one another around a digitally mediated content thanks to a global infrastructure such as an online video broadcasted via YouTube reproducing a popular culture artefact, then we should rather wonder about the meaning that integration has and ultimately whether there is any room left for institutional top-down language and culture measures aimed at integration in contexts that are characterized by globalization led mobility and technology.

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