

LIVING LANGUAGE POLICY THROUGH STRATIFIED SPACE: A LINGUISTIC
ETHNOGRAPHY IN THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

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Abstract

This project explores the lived language policy experiences of a group of *foreign residents* (noncitizens with fixed-term visas) who live in Ras Al Khaimah, a small city in the United Arab Emirates. The primary set of participants are staff and students recruited from a private language school in the city but the project expands well beyond the school premises, following these individuals as they make their way through the complex policies and interactions that shape their everyday lives. As a critical ethnographic project, it draws on a range of empirical data including: monthly interviews with primary informants; single interviews with other residents of the city; observations of city spaces discussed in these interviews; national and institutional policy documents; physical documents for city spaces; and media reports and commentary. It also uses a broad set of theoretical tools to analyse this data, such as: Foucault's (1988; 2007; 2008) discussions of neoliberalism, governmentality and technologies of the self; sociospatial conceptualizations of scale; and conviviality. This analysis focuses on how subjectivities are produced or claimed within language policy apparatuses as well as how city space is constructed in ethnolinguistic terms. The project offers a discussion of language policy and practice from the perspectives of the under-researched foreign resident population of the UAE. These perspectives allowed for a rich picture of the ethnolinguistic and socioeconomic boundaries that define everyday interactions in Ras Al Khaimah and the country as a whole. The project also demonstrates the importance of sites of such as Ras Al Khaimah for language policy research. In this space of both high mobility and structured immobility, individuals from all over the world find themselves in regular contact with one another while at the same time often being spatially segregated along lines of race, class and/or gender. This is a city in which the flows of global capitalism are made visible and their implications for language policy can be explored.

In memory of my grandmother, Valerie McKay, who passed as a I penned these final words

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract	ii
Dedication	iii
Acknowledgments	iv
Table of Contents	v
 Chapter 1: Introduction	 1
Introduction	1
Project overview and goals	6
Organization	11
 Chapter 2: Conceptual orientations	 13
Introduction	13
Neoliberalism, governmentality and technologies of the self	13
Governmentality and technologies of the self in language policy research	22
Governmentality as a tool for research in the UAE	30
Conviviality	33
Convivial linguistic labour/work	38
Space, scale and language policy	42
Bringing these tools together in a critical ethnography of language policy	45
Language policy 1.0	45
Language policy 2.0	48
Critical ethnography and language policy	55
Critique and theoretical departures made in this project	59
Language policy in this project	61
Conclusion	64
 Chapter 3: Methodology and data analysis	 65
Introduction	65
Contact zones and my participants	65
My place in Ras Al Khaimah and my relationship to my participants	66
Finding people to talk to	68
Participant recruitment	72

Data collection tools and processes	74
Interviews.....	74
Transcripts.....	80
Ethnographic observation	81
Data coding and analysis	83
Conclusion.....	86
 Chapter 4: Background: Demographics, language and the Emirati population.....	87
Introduction	87
A note on terms: Foreign residents, expatriates, migrants and class.....	87
Demographics of the UAE	89
Ras Al Khaimah.....	93
Language	94
Governmentality and Emiratis	97
National identity.....	98
Emirati population growth	103
Economic integration	106
Conclusion.....	110
 Chapter 5: Institutional language policy	111
Introduction	111
International English policy	111
International pressure for English.....	111
University of Cambridge English policy	114
Government language policy texts	119
Arabic status planning.....	120
Public school policy.....	122
Private education policy.....	125
Higher education policy	128
Language signage, services and advertising policy	129
Conclusion.....	131
 Chapter 6: Participant profiles	132
Introduction	132
RAK English School	132

Anne	137
Maria	140
Mozart	142
Malak and Hope	144
Bradley	146
Jessica and John	148
Conclusion.....	152
 Chapter 7: Foreign resident subjectivities within institutional language policy.....	153
Introduction	153
Subjectivities within institutional Arabic language policy	153
Arabic language learners.....	155
Arabic language users	158
Subjectivities within institutional English language policy	162
Anne – Cambridge English policy advocate; ethical English language service provider ...	163
Maria and Mozart – RAK English School teacher subjectivities	169
Malak and Hope – Ambivalent learners; unwilling policy advocates	174
Bradley, Michelle and Alexa – Ambivalent English teachers	178
Mozart, Jessica and Hope – Parenthood through English language policy	184
Jessica and Maria – Prospective immigrants	190
Conclusion.....	192
 Chapter 8: Neoliberalism, subjectivities and language policy.....	193
Introduction	193
Foreign resident population management	193
Neoliberal belonging and language policy.....	200
Middle-class neoliberal belonging and language policy.....	201
From rags to entrepreneurs	210
Middle-class striving through English.....	211
Conclusion.....	215
 Chapter 9: Migration, segregation and spatialized language policy.....	216
Introduction	216
Migration and security policy through the <i>kafala</i> system	216

Urban planning: Gated residential space and community segregation	225
<i>De facto</i> socioeconomic segregation and self-segregation.....	229
Spatialized language policy.....	234
South Indian Market area – South Asian working-class space.....	236
Shopping malls – Middle-class space served by working-class residents.....	241
An upper-class community café – A place of explicit crossing and implicit exclusion	246
Non-commercial public space in Ras Al Khaimah.....	251
Conclusion.....	255
 Chapter 10: Border crossing: Convivial linguistic practices and language policy	256
Introduction	256
Convivial linguistic practices	257
Benevolent interpreters	257
The respectful Shibboleth	262
Language sharing.....	265
Managing linguistic inclusion.....	267
Language to soften socioeconomic divisions	269
Managing racism and sexism as a form of linguistic work.....	272
Maria	273
Mozart	274
Jon and Mike.....	277
Convivial linguistic labour and work in the private sector	278
Paid inclusivity.....	279
Maintaining the work environment through unpaid linguistic work	280
Convivial linguistic work by middle-class residents.....	282
Conclusion.....	283
 Chapter 11: Closing discussion and conclusions	285
Introduction	285
Language policy subjectivities	286
Language policy: Arabic.....	286
Language policy: English	289
Neoliberal subjectivity and language policy.....	291
Subjectivities in disciplined, spatialized language policy.....	295

Language policy in the UAE	297
Contributions to language policy research	303
Limitations and future research possibilities.....	307
References	309
Appendices.....	358
Appendix A	358
Appendix B	360

Chapter 1: Introduction

Introduction

The context for this project is Ras Al Khaimah, a small city in the north of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) – for maps of both the UAE and Ras Al Khaimah, see Appendix A. Because so much of this project is entangled with the context – what it means to live and use language in the Ras Al Khaimah – and I have no right to expect my readers to be familiar with this city at the tip of the Arabian Peninsula, I begin by providing some context to latch on to as I move forward. However, rather than dispensing some demographic data or general accounts of ethnolinguistic groups and neighbourhoods, which do not necessarily help one to visualise a place as a lived language experience, I want to begin with an account of one night that I recorded in my researcher journal. While it only offers a narrow slice of experience from my own perspective, I believe it serves as a useful introduction to the ongoing linguistic negotiation that occurs in the daily lives of the residents of Ras Al Khaimah and touches tangentially on forms of ethnolinguistic and socioeconomic stratification that shape the lives of people in the city – two major issues which will be discussed at length over the coming chapters.

When I first arrived in the city to begin my research, it was September, still summer and still hot. The city is a quiet place in the daytime generally and even more so in the summer. Traffic hums to and fro on moderately busy roads and shops are open but people are not out on the streets. Occasional cars with tinted windows pull up at shops or restaurants and call out orders from air-conditioned windows. The odd person nips across a dusty street from one shop to another. The malls are open but mostly empty as retail staff stand idly with little to do. Public beaches and cafés along the corniche (a waterfront area) are deserted. However, after the sun goes down and the streets cool, the city comes to life. As more and more people get off work,

different areas of the city start to bustle with activity. The malls start to fill up with shouting children and families amble between shops, restaurants and children's activity areas. People sit on the grass and stroll along the corniche. The South Asian market areas are packed on the weekend with men who have been bussed in from the labour camps in surrounding areas. Men stand and squat in circles by the side of the road to chat or sit at their regular cafés drinking tea. In the old part of town, cars pile up as they try to squeeze down narrow streets, creeping their way towards specific shops or simply driving slowly around the neighbourhood in what residents call "rounding" (Zacharias, 2012a).

It is one of these nights that I set out on a wander around the neighbourhoods near the corniche, towards "Old Ras Al Khaimah", to try to see things from my fresh-off-the-plane researcher perspective. I make my way between the cars lined up in traffic jams trying to edge their way into the old town area. I walk past men clustered in twos and threes around shop windows, chatting to staff or browsing and commenting on the products available. I stop for a moment to look and listen. What languages surround me? The signs are all English and Arabic on this street but I cannot hear either language at the moment. I hear Hindi and Urdu (distinguishable to me only by the clothing of the speakers rather than the words said). Next, I hear Malayalam as two South Indian men walk past, followed by Arabic coming out of the window of a car driving slowly in the opposite direction. As I continue to walk, a shopkeeper standing in the door of his shop nods with a casual "Hello" and motions towards the items stacked up against the walls inside. I respond with a "Hello" of my own but continue on – I am looking for a specific place.

My first stop is a herbal medicine shop managed by a Syrian man who once attended an English class I taught in Ras Al Khaimah almost ten years before. I enter the shop and extend the

obligatory Arabic greeting, “As-salamu alaykum” to which he replies, before looking up, “Wa-alaikum-as-salaam.” Then he blinks, stares for a moment and smiles, “My teacher!” I laugh, confirming that he remembers me. We chat in English about our respective families, the last time we saw each other and what has happened in our lives since. Arabic is unnecessary and anyway, my proficiency will not serve me well enough to carry on with more than a basic set of greetings and poorly-worded questions. While we talk, customers dip in and out. Since I have last seen him, he has hired a Pakistani man to help manage the shop in the evenings. His reasoning is twofold. First, now that he is a family man, he wants to have more evenings free for his wife and children. Second, he is happy to have someone on staff who can speak Urdu. His main clients are Emiratis, but Indians and Pakistanis also come sometimes and occasionally have some communication difficulties which his new colleague now helps resolve. As we talk, his assistant helps occasional customers in Arabic, Urdu and English, supported by comments from my friend. Eventually, an Emirati client comes and demands my friend’s full attention in dealing with a specific health ailment, so I say goodbye and move on.

I head away from the main road down a smaller lane which is unpaved and seems to shift demographically with fewer Emiratis and more South Asians in and around the shops. I walk slowly, making notes about shop signs and languages I hear, until I see a vegetable shop with what I guess is Bengali script in the window. I go into the shop to ask about the sign and find two men sitting and chatting. They stop and turn to look at me, a somewhat unusual customer. I start with my standard Arabic greeting and get some nods and the standard Arabic response, with a gesture to the vegetable shelves so that I can place my order. I ask if they speak English and one man replies, “No, little.” Arabic? He nods tentatively. I ask in my rough Arabic where they are from, “Wain enta?” and the same man replies with a smile, “Bangladesh”. I point to the sign and

ask in decreasingly comprehensible Arabic if the Bengali sign is indeed from Bangladesh, “Hatha Bengali?” I get a blank stare. I am not sure if it is that my question is unclear or that the ambiguous reason for my question that is giving him pause. I try to explain in Arabic that I am a researcher studying language but it is clear that our Arabic repertoires do not overlap enough to make this kind of conversation work. He holds up his hand as if to say, “wait a moment,” and goes through a door into the back of the shop. I hear him shout something and he soon comes back in with another man. This third man takes over communication with a practical English vocabulary, first asking, “Yes, you want vegetable?” I apologize and say that no, I am more interested in the sign in the window. “Is it Bengali?” / “Yes, from Bangladesh.” / “What does it say?” / “All vegetables from Bangladesh.” I ask why they put this sign up but no one seems to know when it was put up or why. He asks why I want to know about the sign and I again try to explain that I am a researcher studying language in Ras Al Khaimah. Again, our linguistic repertoires struggle to find common ground, but eventually I manage to convey that I am a student in a university studying language. He translates that explanation for the group in Bengali and everyone seems satisfied with my answer though still a bit puzzled about why I would be interested in their sign. In the end, I do decide to buy a few items that I need, now speaking only English with the third man. I thank them all and move on.

I head back towards the main road that divides this part of town from the corniche area and walk towards the neighbourhood on the other side of the road. Between the corniche waterfront and this road are some quiet lanes and villas with just a few small corner shops. I know from asking other people in the area that it is a mix of Emiratis and non-white foreign residents who live here, but the streets are mostly quiet. I pass some signs in Arabic and English advertising rentals. I stop to buy a bottle of water at a small convenience store with an Indian

man from Kerala behind the counter. We speak brief, transactional English – how much; one dirham; thank you. Four Arab boys sit outside the shop, resting on or beside their car looking bored. They stare into their phones and make occasional comments in Arabic. As I head back for the main road, I see a group of people talking together outside a villa, so I go over to say hi and ask about the neighbourhood. They are all working for a company nearby and live in this big villa together. They are from Bangladesh, Nepal and the Philippines but generally speak English when all together in a big group like this. One man has lived in Saudi Arabia and was taught Arabic by his boss. The others just learned a little bit by talking to people and practicing over time. Most of them learned English the same way but some had also studied in school. We talk a bit in English and they ask me about myself and my job. A few different people translate bits and pieces of the conversation for others who cannot follow everything.

Finally, I get back to the main road and stop at a cafeteria to get a drink before heading home. Most cafeterias in the city will make fresh fruit juice in almost any combination you can imagine. They also have extensive “cocktail” menus with glossy beverage photographs, each assigned an unusual name such as Burj Al Emarat, Titanic or Computer. I know what I want – a Thalayani cocktail. I make my order in Arabic but mispronounce Thalayani and get confused looks from the two men at the counter. They ask in English for me to repeat it, which I do, adding helpfully that it has chikoo fruit in it. They look at each other, neither one able to decipher my order. One of them shouts into the back in Malayalam and a third man comes over with a menu for me to point to what I want. I find Thalayani on the menu and tap it, saying “Thalayani?”, to which the first man says “Ah, Thalayani”, to my ear just a marginally different pronunciation. I ask what fruit is in it. He calls into the back in Malayalam to a fourth man, who is busy blending other orders, to pass on my order and ask what fruit it contains. The answer

comes back quickly and my interlocutor smiles, “Chikoo is there. Also, mango and some others.” As I sit down to wait, other customers come and go, ordering in Arabic and Hindi, while the staff in the back shout to each other in Malayalam over the noise of the kitchen. When my drink arrives, I say thank you in English and Arabic, not yet knowing the right words in Malayalam (the staff member rushing off to another customer before I think to ask), and set off for home.

Project overview and goals

This project, which involved many such nights as the one described above, began as I became interested in language policy texts that were coming out of the UAE promoting an Arabic-led “cultural renaissance” to “affirm the preeminent position of the Arabic Language in the United Arab Emirates” (Government of UAE, 2012). Policy documents such as *Vision 2021* and the *Arabic Language Charter* (Government of UAE, 2012; UAE Cabinet, 2010) were very much directed at the Emirati population of the country, promising an Arabic future. I wondered to myself, in a country where 90% of the residents are noncitizens with fixed-term visas (I will henceforth use the term “foreign residents” – see page 87 for further discussion of terminology), and the majority of them are not Arabic speakers, what do policy measures that generally neglect most of the population even mean? Furthermore, what other policy is *actually* shaping the language practices of the population in such a way that an Arabic “renaissance” is required in the first place? Many academic accounts of language in the UAE, including my own (Cook, 2017), have painted a picture of English as the *lingua franca* of the country and media discourses often suggest English has already taken over. However, as Piller (2018) points out, such blanket statements do not tell us much about what is actually going on in people’s everyday lives. What are the language choices and practices that make up the fabric of this *lingua franca* and is it even appropriate to apply such a broad label or does it reveal more about the experiences of those

making the proclamation than the reality of language use in the country?

Since its unification in 1971, the UAE has experienced tremendous growth. Wealth generated by the oil industry has helped the country rapidly develop all parts of the economy (Davidson 2013; Kanna, 2011). Though Arabic is the official national language (Government of UAE, 1971), English has become prominent in the domains of business and education (Burden-Leahy 2009), in part as a result of powerful *de facto* policy (Shohamy 2006) from the increasingly neoliberalized economy (Kanna, 2010; 2011). At the same time, as the government of the UAE struggles with the roles of Arabic and English, it has recently begun to develop its own set of official language policies. This includes two recent sets of initiatives: policies promoting English in public education and the formulation of the Arabic Language Charter mentioned above. However, Arabic and English are only two elements of the linguistic diversity of the country. In total, as of the last census, foreign residents constituted nearly 90% of the country's population (National Bureau of Statistics, 2010) but residents from India, Pakistan and Bangladesh alone make up over 50% of the population. Large groups of residents also hail from Egypt, Iran, Jordan, the Philippines, Syria, Sudan and Yemen (United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2017; Malit & Al Youha, 2013). There are no official figures but local media sources sometimes cite 200 nationalities speaking more than 140 languages (e.g. Abbas, 2018; Frem, Rajadhyaksha & Woetzel, 2018; Saseendran, 2014).

The stated language policy goals of official documents could perhaps be summarized as Arabic first; English second, with goals of English-led globalization often coming into direct conflict with commitments to the “preeminent position” of Arabic in the country. However, it is also important to note that despite the range of ethnic and linguistic backgrounds of the UAE's residents, language policy discussions in both official government documents and academic

research have tended to focus narrowly on this English-Arabic dichotomy as it relates to the perceived needs and experiences (economic and educational more than social) of the Emirati population. In general, researchers have had mainly an education focus, with particular attention to English as a medium of instruction in education (e.g. Ahmed, 2010; Al-Issa & Dahan, 2011; Clarke, 2007; Gallagher, 2011; Moore-Jones, 2015; Mouhanna, 2010; Troudi, 2009). There have been far fewer studies that investigate the broader societal implications of national language policy frameworks (Cook, 2017) or work guided by linguistic anthropology (Piller, 2018). Some researchers have examined the social impact of the spread of English in the country (e.g. Allaq, 2014; Badry, 2011; Hopkyns, 2014; 2015; 2017; Findlow, 2006) and the implications of recent official governmental policy frameworks such as the Arabic Language Charter (Cook, 2017) but there has been no exploration of how unofficial, *de facto* policy develops and affects language practices in society. Furthermore, much of the research is conducted in Dubai or Abu Dhabi, with less attention to the smaller northern emirates. This leaves two significant gaps in the literature. The first is Emirati language experiences with foreign residents that may not involve English or Arabic at all. The second is foreign resident language experiences in general. Some recent research has begun to investigate Emirati multilingual practices that go beyond the English-Arabic dichotomy (O'Neill, 2017a; 2017b; van den Hoven & Carroll, 2017) as well as foreign resident Arabic acquisition and language learning motivation (e.g. Calafato & Tang, 2019; Rashed, 2013). However, there is still a lack of research investigating the foreign resident population's language practices, contribution to *de facto* language policy, and impact on official language policy initiatives. These omissions reflect a larger (racialized) erasure of foreign residents from national narratives about the history of the UAE and what constitutes Emirati society and culture. Without such investigations, it is impossible to meaningfully discuss

language policy in the UAE and is thus also impossible to achieve meaningful language policy goals for any segment of the population.

As such, this project begins to address these research gaps by investigating language policy from an ethnographic perspective and focusing on the lived language policy experiences of foreign residents in Ras Al Khaimah. With little research available about language policy in the UAE and almost no language research at all based in Ras Al Khaimah, the goals of this project are exploratory and start with two general questions:

- 1) How is language policy negotiated in the city?
- 2) How does it come to shape language practices in the city?

To answer these questions, I took a private language school – pseudonymously called RAK English School – as a starting point and expanded outwards. I spoke to staff and students at the school and then followed them out beyond the school as they lived their daily lives in the city. The experiences shared by these individuals, as well as others who inhabit the spaces they visit, were used to build out a framework by which language policy in the city could be understood. From my participants' experiences in the school context, I hoped to understand how language policy was produced in and through a private language institution such as RAK English School. I wanted to get a sense of how administrators, teachers and students were involved in policy production and processes. From my participants' experiences in the wider community, I wanted to get a sense of how particular spaces in the city impacted the deployment of language practices. I wanted to know who had access to which kinds of spaces and what language practices could or could not be deployed in a particular space. Finally, by attending to national and international language policies, institutions and debates, I hoped to explore how these highly localized policies and practices are woven into structures of power that extend beyond the communities of the city

that I was investigating.

This project relies on ethnographic data collected from semi-structured interviews (with special attention to the elicitation of stories of language experience), observations of the school, and observations of public spaces visited and discussed by participants. In my investigation of these city spaces, I also interviewed regular inhabitants of these spaces in shorter single interviews, which were also used to provide an expanded account of language policy in the city. Additionally, I attended to governmental and institutional documents related to language, economic and social policy, including materials collected from the school, as well as media coverage of these policies in the country.

Although this project is designed as a work of language policy research, it is situated at a crossroads between socio- and applied linguistics, anthropology, cultural studies and human geography. As such, it draws on a range of theoretical tools. First, I draw on Foucault's (1988; 2007; 2008) discussions of governmentality, biopower, neoliberalism and technologies of the self to explore the ways that institutions and individuals manage their own language practices as well as those of others. I use this Foucauldian toolkit to build out a critical ethnographic approach to language policy research which connects micro language policy processes and lived policy experiences to broader policy contexts. Second, I make use of the sociospatial concept of scale, building on the way it has been deployed in sociolinguistics research by Blommaert (2007a; 2007b; 2010) and his co-authors (Blommaert, Collins, and Slembrouck, 2005a; 2005b), as a means of grappling with the enormous complexity of the *de facto* language policies in a multilingual context such as the UAE. Third, in exploring the crossing of ethnolinguistic borders and other forms of societal divisions, I take up discussions of conviviality (Gilroy, 2004; Noble, 2009; Wise, 2016; Wise & Noble, 2016).

The results of this project yield insight into the language pressures, challenges and aspirations of foreign residents of Ras Al Khaimah. They also offer insight into the language policy, both explicit and implicit, that people in the UAE grapple with on a daily basis. The project shows that foreign residents in the UAE are not passive policy recipients, but are active in navigating the tides of policy and indeed are policy creators as well in their own right. It charts the ethnolinguistic and socioeconomic boundaries that constitute this demographic and the ways in which border crossing and negotiation of difference is managed through language. Finally, although the project is highly contextually dependent, the implications of the discussions that follow stretch well beyond Ras Al Khaimah and the UAE. This context is a place where structures of power and inequality are highly visible (often drawn along national, racial or gender lines) and salient to the production of language policy and its effects. This makes it an important site in which global inequalities and (im)mobilities can be examined as they are navigated by individuals through everyday language practices.

Organization

In the next chapter, I discuss the theoretical toolkit outlined above in more detail, drawing on debates from different fields around the concepts that I pull into this project. Chapter 3 provides an exploration of the methodological choices made in the project. Chapter 4 provides background information on demographics and language in the UAE, including an extended discussion of the relationship between Emirati citizens and the government. Chapter 5 involves an overview of various sets of formal language policy in the UAE. Chapter 6 offers a series of short profiles that will help orient the reader to both the school and my core participants and chapter 7 takes up my participants' engagement with the formal policies outlined in chapter 5. While most formal language policy is not addressed to foreign residents, chapter 7 shows the

ways that my participants still situated themselves within these policy frameworks and found space (or lack thereof) to construct certain types of subjectivities in relation to them. Chapter 8 begins to explore *de facto* language policy that emerges from neoliberal economic policy and the kinds of neoliberal economic belonging that some of my participants expressed. Chapter 9 investigates both private and governmental migration and social policies which in turn produce their own sets *de facto* language policies. It focuses on mechanisms of segregation that produce particular spaces in Ras Al Khaimah which are accessible to particular kinds of residents. Chapter 10 takes up the concept of conviviality to explore the language practices that my participants deployed in their everyday negotiation of ethnolinguistic and socioeconomic difference. Chapter 11 offers a more general discussion of the previous four chapters, returning to the research questions to expand on any issues that have not been fully addressed. Following this discussion, it offers some concluding remarks including implications and areas for future research.

Chapter 2: Conceptual orientations

Introduction

This study builds on previous work in the fields of linguistic anthropology and language policy and planning (LPP). LPP researchers often work across disciplines, drawing on a wide range of theoretical concepts and debates to frame their work (Ricento, 2006). This project continues in this vein by engaging with theoretical tools from fields such as human geography, anthropology and sociology. This includes governmentality, neoliberalism, biopolitics and technologies of the self as formulated in the work of Foucault, emotional labour and emotion work, scale, and conviviality.

Neoliberalism, governmentality and technologies of the self

This section takes up some recent debates in applied linguistics about the nature of neoliberalism and how we should understand it in relation to language policy. Adding my voice to several other recent publications in my field (Haque, 2017; King, 2017; Luke, 2017; Martín Rojo, 2018; Martín Rojo & Del Percio, 2020), I suggest that the concept of governmentality provides an important tool for language policy researchers because it allows us to think about neoliberalism as something more than just smaller government and the expansion of markets in the commodification of the social world. Drawing on discussions of Foucault (1988; 2007; 2008), Dean (2010), Rose (1999), and Dardot and Laval (2014), I follow the latter's suggestion that neoliberalism should also be seen as a "normative framework" which "employs unprecedented techniques of power over conduct and subjectivities" (Dardot and Laval, 2014, p. 7). In this sense, neoliberalism is more than an ideology (Block, Gray & Holborow, 2012; Holborow, 2007; 2015) or a conspiracy amongst the most powerful (Phillipson, 2008; 2009), as it is often taken up in applied linguistics; it is a system of norms which extends the logic of the

market to the social world through more generalized notions of competition and entrepreneurship (Dardot & Laval, 2014). This section first provides an overview of some common approaches to neoliberalism in applied linguistics. It then offers a summary of the concept of governmentality and a discussion of what thinking about neoliberal governmentality can add to applied linguistics and language policy research.

Robert Phillipson's *Linguistic Imperialism* (1992) was an important intervention to politicize the field of applied linguistics in arguing vehemently that the dominance of English can be seen as part of a larger imperial project (originating in the U.S. and U.K. in particular) and as such must be opposed. He has since extended this discussion, linking it to what he calls the "neoliberal empire" (Phillipson, 2008; 2009). Though the argument is an important one, Phillipson's analysis of the interaction of language and the English language teaching industry with neoliberal government is limited, and he primarily focuses on explicit expansionist projects orchestrated by those in powerful positions. He conceives of neoliberalism as a plan "that was hatched by the likes of Cheney, Wolfowitz, and Rumsfeld in the late 20th century" (2008, p. 5) in which a kind of market "theology" of free economic competition is promoted (p. 24). At the same time, this is paired with the "imperial" concerns of national security and military strength (p. 35). The key players discussed by Phillipson conceive of a world run by the U.S. with English as a fundamental linking tool and vehicle for American values. He argues that the promotion of English as a world language plays a fundamental role in the expansion of consumerism, itself an element of the U.S. empire. The result is an "actively driven process of linguistic capital accumulation by dispossession" (p. 29), as English becomes the sole language of previously multilingual domains such as business and scholarship.

Block, Gray and Holborow (2012) suggest that Phillipson's *linguistic imperialism* is

“effectively a theory of economic neoliberalism and empire superimposed onto language” which is problematic in that it “materialise[s] language” (p. 27). They argue that a language should not be seen as a vehicle of imperialism or as a mode of production. First, they argue that a language in itself is not the oppressive force, citing examples of colonial languages being used for resistance. Second, they argue that a language in itself does not necessarily provide either linguistic or material capital, citing countries such as Nigeria or Ireland where the authors suggest English has not offered its speakers a productive advantage (pp. 27-28). They even suggest that to apply the concept of *capital* to language (or social attributes or humans themselves) is to accept the neoliberal logic that commodifies everything.

In line with Holborow’s other work (2007; 2015), Block, Gray and Holborow (2012) understand neoliberalism as ideology. They break the term *ideology* down into five key elements: “a one-sided representation; articulated from a particular social class but constructed as a world-view; part-believed and part-rejected; influenced by real world events; coextensive with language but distinct from it” (Block, Gray & Holborow, 2012, p. 29). Thus, neoliberalism can be understood as an ideology in that: there are “contradictions between what neoliberalism says and what actually happens” (p. 29); neoliberalism presents a market logic benefiting the dominant class as natural; individuals accept some elements of neoliberalism and reject others; neoliberalism is challenged by real world crises; neoliberalism is not reducible to language. Holborow’s discussions of neoliberalism as ideology tend to rely heavily on an understanding of neoliberalism as a system in which “commodification has expanded to every corner of social life” (Holborow, 2015, p. 14). She suggests that public services such as education and healthcare, human skills and knowledge, and even abstract human capacities such as creativity are seen as “simple commodities with a price tag” (p. 20). Language also fits into this model as Holborow

argues that the neoliberal “desire to compress language into the tight confines of commodification is part of a wider political project to naturalize commodification in the interests of maintaining existing social relations” (p. 24). She demonstrates that a careful examination of the workings of neoliberal ideology through language highlights how neoliberalism’s contradictions can become visible to speakers and thus contested (Holborow, 2007).

Monica Heller has also provided thorough investigations of language as a commodity. Heller (2011, p. 20) characterizes neoliberalism as “a return to a role [for the state] of facilitating the construction and maintenance of privileged markets run by and for the private sector.” An important outcome of this in Canada (much of Heller’s work focuses on French minority communities in Canada) is a shift “from rights to profits” (p. 116) in which concerns for language rights are displaced by a preoccupation with economic growth via linguistic community development. This occurs in the form of tourism, the production and sale of “authentic” French-Canadian products, and bilingual call centres. In late capitalism, Heller (2010) argues, linguistic abilities that were once markers of prestige have become directly exchangeable for wealth and at the same time, linguistic resources have come to displace other resources in their importance for the circulation of goods. She treats language commodification in two ways. In one sense, it can be understood as a “technical skill”, subject to management in the workplace. In another, it can be understood as “a sign of authenticity”, which serves as a distinguishing feature in markets that are saturated with standardized products (Heller, 2010, p. 102). Thus, the language industry “commodifies language as a product, not just as a mode of production” (Heller, 2011, p. 28). This is again problematic for Holborow (2015), who criticizes Heller (similarly to Phillipson) for slippage towards an acceptance of the neoliberal logic of commodification. Instead, Holborow argues that we must see the commodification of language as an element of neoliberal ideology

which “denies the reality of language in work situations” (p. 32) to give employers greater control of the linguistic resources of their employees.

Although Heller and Holborow diverge in their characterizations of language as commodity, both authors also work towards showing language is never *simply* a commodity. However, an underlying assumption in both of their arguments is that neoliberalism is indeed fundamentally based on an unrelenting commodification of the social world. In *The Birth of Biopolitics*, Foucault (2008, p. 147) argues that the neoliberal expansion of market logic to society emphasizes competition rather than the exchange of commodities, “that what is sought is not a society subject to the commodity-effect, but a society subject to the dynamic of competition. Not a supermarket society, but an enterprise society.” Dardot and Laval (2014) take up this argument in criticism of Marxist definitions of neoliberalism. They argue that in stressing the process of commodification, Marxist critics tend to make “the economy the sole dimension of neoliberalism” (p. 8), neglecting “the originality of neo-liberalism [which] is precisely its creation of a new set of rules defining not only a *different* ‘regime of accumulation’, but, more broadly, a *different* society” (p. 10, emphasis in original). This “neoliberal society” (p. 11) consists of a more generalized and habitualized competition and entrepreneurialism that stretches well beyond the economy.

For Holborow (2015), Foucault’s perspective neglects material reality (and thus attention to analyses of political-economy) and accords too much power to discourse, making it impossible to criticize neoliberalism. She suggests that in Foucault’s model, we are all trapped in a neoliberal regime of truth that has no “outside” from which an attack can be mounted – we are all inescapably neoliberal subjects in some capacity. She concludes that Foucault’s approach ultimately “[defers] to the truth of the market” (p. 88), ceding significant ground to neoliberal

ideology. However, her criticism appears to conflate a neoliberal understanding of a natural market *reality* with Foucault's understanding of *truth*. When Foucault refers to the market as a "site of truth" (2008, p. 30) which has enormous power in shaping the subject, he is not suggesting that the market is a fundamental and unchanging element of the world (real or discursive). Rather, he is showing how the market has become a central reference point in the way individuals understand the world and govern themselves. Indeed, scholars following Foucault's genealogical approach emphasize that it gains its "critical purchase" (Dean, 2010, p. 52) not in the unmasking of a blinding ideology, but rather in the analysis of how meanings are constructed and operate in regimes of government. This allows for problematization, enabling "an alternative visualization and representation of the problems to be addressed and [investing] the reform of these regimes with particular objectives" (p. 79). Dardot and Laval (2014) reverse Holborow's criticism, suggesting that an insistence on the ideological nature of neoliberalism "is in fact to mistake the enemy and condemn oneself to impotence" (p. 14). Because neoliberalism manifests itself as a system of norms "profoundly inscribed in government practices, institutional policies and managerial styles" (p. 14), what is required is not simply highlighting the discrepancies between ideology and "reality" to disperse the former. Instead, it is necessary to commit to dismantling the neoliberal normative framework of entrepreneurship and offering new forms of subjectivation to challenge it (p. 316).

Understanding neoliberalism as a normative framework has implications for how we should think about language in relation to neoliberalism. Instead of focusing on its relative status as a commodity in neoliberal market logic, we must consider how language fits into the neoliberal normative framework of competition and entrepreneurialism and how the generalization of this framework across social domains impacts language practices. Studies of

governmentality can assist in this task. While Dardot and Laval (2014) are perhaps a little overzealous in identifying the “enemy”, Dean (2010, p. 5) emphasizes the fact that what studies of governmentality offer is a way to “reject the posturing of grand and normative social theory and political philosophy” while still maintaining a critical perspective.

Foucault’s (2007) *Security, Territory, Population* lectures introduce the concepts of *biopower* and *governmentality*, which he uses to explore the naturalization of neoliberalism. He begins the lectures with a discussion of biopower, “the set of mechanisms through which the basic biological features of the human species became the object of a political strategy” (p. 16), but his main focus in the first several chapters is to outline the concept of *security*. He contrasts security with *discipline* and *sovereignty*, noting that they correlate approximately with power over populations, individuals and territories, respectively. These forms of power are not mutually exclusive and deal fundamentally with “multiplicities” (p. 26). First, apparatuses of security are concerned not with direct control (as with those of discipline) but rather management. Second, rather than an attention to objects, security focuses on circulations and probabilities. Security is about being the “architect of disciplined space” and also “the regulator of a milieu” (p. 40). At the same time, Foucault traces the history of the naturalization of market logic, showing the development of a *laissez-faire* economic system and the role that apparatuses of security play in fostering a population that accepts this logic. Connecting all of these prior points together, he defines governmentality as:

the ensemble formed by institutions, procedures, analyses and reflections, calculations, and tactics that allow the exercise of this very specific, albeit very complex, power that has the population as its target, political economy as its major form of knowledge, and apparatuses of security as its essential technical instrument” (p. 144).

In this “art of government”, the population becomes “the end and instrument of government...both aware of what it wants and unaware of what is being done to it” (p. 141).

In his later work, Foucault (1988, p.18) explored *technologies of the self* as another entry point to understanding (neoliberal) governmentality. He outlined four such “technologies”:

(1) technologies of production, which permit us to produce, transform, or manipulate things; (2) technologies of sign systems, which permit us to use signs, meanings, symbols, or signification; (3) technologies of power, which determine the conduct of individuals and submit them to certain ends or domination, an objectivizing of the subject; (4) technologies of the self, which permit individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality.

He stresses that these technologies do not operate separately but that each of them represents “a certain type of domination. Each implies certain modes of training and modification of individuals, not only in the obvious sense of acquiring certain skills but also in the sense of acquiring certain attitudes” (1988, p. 18). Foucault focused much of his attention on the latter two technologies, stating that *governmentality* could be understood as the contact between technologies of power and technologies of the self (1988, p.19). An exploration of technologies of the self then allows for an investigation how “neoliberal principles reach into the very grain of individuals” (Martín Rojo, 2020 p. 162, playing on the original quote in Foucault 1980, p. 39).

An important insight that an analytics of neoliberal governmentality offers is a way of understanding neoliberalism from the bottom up rather than the top down approach that comes with an emphasis on ideology. Rose (1999) repeatedly emphasizes the embeddedness of

neoliberal rationality in practical problems for which “new ways of governing were invented in a rather *ad hoc* way” (p. 27). Similarly, Dardot and Laval (2014, p. 9) insist:

There was no large-scale conspiracy, nor even a ready-fashioned doctrine...[neoliberal] normative logic that ended up being imposed was constructed through battles that were initially uncertain and policies that were frequently groping. The neo-liberal society we live in is the fruit of a historical process that was not fully programmed by its pioneers.

Most importantly to this dissertation, tracing how neoliberal rationality and its shifting regimes of truth developed in relation to practical problems of government perhaps provides a different way of thinking about language policy – or the “conduct of [linguistic] conduct”. The difference is apparent if we return to Heller’s (2011) discussions of commodification of language in Canada. She regularly comes back to the question of whether language is being treated as a commodity or not in a particular context and if it is, how this commodification manifests itself and to what effect. The question of exactly *who* commodifies language is not always entirely clear, but Heller frequently points to the government or private companies, suggesting an active role that both the public and private sector have in commodifying language or ethnolinguistic identity. This in turn “disconnects language from identity and therefore destabilizes the logic of ethnonationalist politics” (p. 150). However, if we instead understand neoliberalism as a system of norms developed over time in response to immediate problems of government (in generalized critique of the welfare state) and only later unified, then what appears as commodification is not the starting point but the result of this process. Certainly, Heller does show that public and private institutions play an active role in the commodification of language and community identity. However, what I propose here is that a useful alternate entry point to the discussion is to take the commodification of language and identity as a by-product of the other social changes

that are a part of the neoliberal normative framework described by Dardot and Laval (2014). A reorientation of society towards competition and entrepreneurship in multiple domains – not only direct government policy but also in the workplace, school, family, community – has implications for language practices that go unexplored when taking commodification as the starting point.

The implication of this for researchers of language policy is that language is often commodified in undirected and unpredictable ways through the production of neoliberal subjectivities. This is a point raised by researchers who have criticized an overemphasis on English as a language of neoliberalism and a support for plurilingual approaches to language as its salve. Flores (2013) and Kubota (2014), for example, raise concerns that the plurilingual turn in applied linguistics tacitly supports the neoliberal discursive construction of the entrepreneurial self, a maximally flexible individual in which breadth of linguistic knowledge serves as a competitive asset. Kubota (2014, p. 486) notes the challenge presented by the duality of this “neoliberal pluralism and neoliberal desire for English for economic purposes” but as discussed above, both can be seen as a direct result of the proliferation of the neoliberal self – an entrepreneurial, flexible, responsible and therefore competitive subject. Building on this discussion, Sharma and Phyak (2017, p. 252) show the problem of making “the sweeping claim that English serves as a common language in global-mobility contexts” in the case of Nepalese tourism, where commodification of language extends well beyond English, and flexible, multilingual repertoires are more highly valued. As I shall explore in later chapters, this latter statement is equally applicable to the UAE (a point also made briefly by Piller, 2018).

Governmentality and technologies of the self in language policy research

In this section, I provide a brief overview of how governmentality and technologies of the

self have been deployed by language policy researchers. The concept of governmentality has been underutilized in language policy research and applied linguistics generally (Martín Rojo, 2018; Martín Rojo & Del Percio, 2020; Rampton, 2014). Pennycook (2002a; 2002b; 2006) was an early advocate of using it as a core theoretical tool in language policy and applied linguistics research. He suggests that language policy researchers can benefit from these “postmodernist” perspectives in their understanding of both language and policy (Pennycook, 2006). He proposes that postmodern thought provides four elements to language policy discussions:

First, it raises important questions about how power operates in relationship to the nation-state, and in particular how governance is achieved through language; second, it urges us to rethink the ontology of language as a colonial/modernist construct; third, it raises questions about the grand narratives or sweeping epistemologies of imperialism, language rights, or language access; and fourth, it points toward local, situated, contextual, and contingent ways of understanding languages and language policies.

(Pennycook, 2006, p. 64)

Drawing on Rose (1996), Pennycook understands government not as a single actor driving policy through unified intentionality, but as an “assemblage of diverse forces...techniques...and devices” (Rose, 1996, p. 42). The macro-micro dichotomy becomes unnecessary because everything is viewed through a lens of micro power relations. Instead of structure and agency, language policy must grapple with “language governmentality”, which encompasses the way that decisions about languages and language forms across a diverse range of institutions (law, education, medicine, printing) and through a diverse range of instruments (books, regulations, exams, articles, corrections) regulate the language use, thought, and action of different people, groups, and organizations (Pennycook, 2006, p. 65).

In his own research, Pennycook (2002a; 2002b) uses this framework to analyse the attempts of the British colonial regimes in Hong Kong and Malaya to produce politically docile but productive subjects through both English and mother tongue language policy.

Other language policy researchers have expressed scepticism about the value of this approach. Johnson (2009; 2013a) dismisses the concept of governmentality as unhelpful in framing a discussion of agency for language policy research. He subsumes Pennycook's deployment of governmentality under other historical-structural critical approaches (e.g. Tollefson, 1991 and Phillipson, 1992) criticized for an overemphasis on structure and an inability to deal adequately with real-world, contextual agency. He argues that although Pennycook shifts from a macro to a micro level focus on government, he removes "state driven intentionality" and replaces it with the equally hegemonic "discourse" in which individuals "[perpetuate] their own subjugation by acting out larger power relationships over which they have no control" (Johnson, 2009, p. 140). Johnson is perhaps right to criticize Pennycook, but too quick to dismiss the concept of governmentality as just another inadequate critical theoretical tool.

There are two important points about Johnson's dismissal that must be addressed: first, that he oversimplifies the concept of governmentality and second, studying governmentality should not be conflated with historical-structural critical approaches. As to the first point, it is possible that part of the difficulty Johnson has with governmentality is due to his overreliance on Pennycook's (2002a; 2002b) somewhat problematic deployment of the concept. In his analysis, Pennycook engages primarily with political agents (government officials and policy documents) acting from centralized sources of authority in the creation and domination of the "docile bodies" of Hong Kong residents. There is little investigation of the complexity that surely must have be evident in the ways that the residents of Hong Kong interacted with colonial language policy. In

fairness to Johnson, several other authors who have taken up governmentality in relation to language policy (e.g. Flores, 2014; Manan, David & Dumanig, 2016; Milani, 2009) follow Pennycook over the edge of this “disciplinary” cliff, overemphasizing “limitations of individual agency” (Milani, 2009, p. 292) and the perpetuation of the existing system (Manan et al., 2016, p. 16). However, studies of governmentality allow us to go beyond the rigid bureaucracies analysed in Pennycook and also beyond Johnson’s positioning of agency merely as a form of resistance to policy “structure”. As Foucault (1988, p. 19) points out, governmentality sits at the nexus between technologies of power and technologies of the self. Johnson’s rejection of governmentality seems to be founded on a preoccupation with the former and a neglect of the latter. Studying governmentality means studying how people come to want what they want and act as they act, while exploring how policy is entwined with that process. Adding technologies of the self to our toolkit allows for an exploration of how individuals go through processes of both subjectification and objectification within policy and goes some way towards dealing with this agency “problem”. In this framework, discourse is not simply an echo of power relations but the process through which power relations are generated, maintained and challenged. Accepting that existing power relations affect what people want and how they act does not eliminate agency from the discussion and this point seems to be missing in Johnson’s (2009) brief summary.

Second, Dean (2010) provides an important explanation of how governmentality frameworks move beyond what is traditionally understood as a critical or historical-structural approach. Both can be considered critical in the sense that they are committed to a constant problematization of the status quo; however, a study of governmentality operates with a different understanding of truth. Dean (2010) argues that instead of seeking to unmask a blind, subjugating ideology and thus offering empowerment and emancipation through access to reality-

truth, studies of governmentality offer an analysis of how truth is constructed and operates in regimes of government. This allows for “a questioning and a shaking of the self-evidence of practices” (p. 86) which is what gives such an approach its “critical purchase” (p. 85). In that sense, studies of governmentality are more than critical or at least differently critical.

Martín Rojo and Del Percio (Del Percio, 2016; 2018; Martín Rojo, 2018; Martín Rojo & Del Percio, 2020 – an edited volume with many other chapter authors), Haque (2017), and Urciuoli and LaDousa (Urciuoli, 2008, 2020; Urciuoli & LaDousa, 2013) have been recent advocates of the addition of governmentality and technologies of the self to researcher toolkits. Much of this work focuses on languages as commodities or skills in a neoliberal economy. For example, Urciuoli’s (2008) and Urciuoli and LaDousa’s (2013) work grapples with what it means to understand language in terms of labour or skills in a neoliberal globalized economy. The authors define technologies of the self as “soft skills...ways to fashion subjectivity compatible with dominant practices, institutions, and beliefs” (Urciuoli, 2008, p. 215). Urciuoli and LaDousa (2013) take this discussion further, asking how language becomes (neoliberal) labour. If an individual is imagined as “an assemblage of commodifiable elements, i.e. a bundle of skills”, then language practices fall into this bundle along with everything else. The language work that follows from this conceptualization of a worker is then “objectified”, “monitor[ed]” and “assess[ed]”. Following Bourdieu (1986; 1991), the authors conceive of this as the conversion of cultural or linguistic capital into economic capital. Likewise, Del Percio (2016; 2018) offers a detailed discussion of the practices deployed by counsellors in guidance centres for incoming migrants to Italy. Del Percio shows how these centres facilitate intercultural communication training and the production of “commodifiable workers” (p. 239) for the Italian job market. Haque (2017) investigates a similar scenario in a Canadian context, examining

Canadian migrant language training policies. She argues that governmentality is a “productive method for examining the constitution of subjects through language policy” (p. 97), noting the essential insight Foucault offers the field, that “subjects of policy are never outside of policy even as they resist or implement policy” (p. 98). Haque goes on to demonstrate how the Canadian government promotes the emergence of both teachers and learners as particular types of “ideal neoliberal subjects” (p. 111) through language policies inflected by neoliberal economic policy. Within this policy framework, individuals take up such subjectivities in different ways but “are never outside of techniques of power even as they also bring their own understanding of how language training can be harnessed to their own desires and ideas of how to improve the lives of newcomers in Canada” (p. 111). This recognition that subjects produced within policy also act within other frames of reference as well as in relation to themselves and their own desires is a crucial element that is missing in much of the language policy research that draws on these Foucauldian tools. I will return to this point in a moment. Finally, Martín Rojo (2018) summarizes many of the language policy issues that emerge from attending to subjectivities produced through neoliberal discourses. She offers several areas for further exploration: policies of deregulation and flexibilization in language education; the introduction of market forces to state institutions of language policy and education; reduction of language diversity and its relationship to language commodification and multilingualism; the embedding of neoliberal discourses in discussions of language learning.

Much of this recent work focuses specifically on the relationship between neoliberal governmentality and language policies or practices. The authors (with the exception of Haque, 2017) have tended to approach technologies of the self as soft skills developed in service to neoliberal institutions. This has been productive, especially when considering institutionally

bound individuals such as the call centre workers (Urciuoli and LaDousa, 2013), participants in immigrant worker training programs (Del Percio, 2016; 2018), unemployment program participants (Del Percio & Wong, 2020), language students at university (Martín Rojo, 2020), and International Baccalaureate students (Sunyol & Codó, 2020). However, there are two issues with this approach that make it less applicable to my own project and raise some questions about how the authors have conceived of technologies of the self. The first concern, raised by Luke (2017), is that Urciuoli (and most of the other authors mentioned so far) seems to have subsumed technologies of the self into technologies of power as a somewhat less direct but no less dominating form of the latter. For example, Urciuoli (2008) refers to technologies of the self as “hegemonic” and later with LaDousa (2013, p. 179, citing Gershon, 2011, p. 540), focuses on “neoliberal agency, whereby one is beholden to oneself not as property, but as a business...The self can come to be the locus of such activity because selves are imagined to engage other selves as ‘autonomous market actors’”. For Urciuoli and LaDousa (2013), technologies of the self are understood as the ways that individuals shape themselves as ever-increasingly successful market actors in a neoliberal, globalized economy. Language practices become one of many skills mobilized to that end. Martín Rojo (2020, p. 180) goes as far as suggesting that technologies of power become technologies of the self:

what seems to be distinctive of neoliberal governmentality is that not only do power techniques become self exercised, as in the cases of self surveillance and self discipline, but also that the kind of technologies of power presented in these examples are in fact technologies of the self.

While this is an important insight for language policy researchers to take on board, it should be applied with caution. As Luke (2017) argues, for Foucault, and an increasing number of his

followers (e.g. Allen, 2011; Bevir, 1999; Davidson, 2011), understanding technologies of the self in this way significantly limits their agential potential. Rather than interpret technologies of the self as less direct forms of technologies of power, they should be the site at which we investigate the engagement of individuals with technologies of power. This may involve what Martín Rojo (2020) calls “self exercised” technologies of power, but should also extend well beyond that – a fact that Martín Rojo (2020) and Del Percio and Wong (2020) themselves allude to by advocating further research on how technologies of the self are mobilized in resistance.

To this end, I follow Luke (2017) in emphasizing the value of the concept of counter-conduct – “the sense of struggle against the procedures implemented for conducting others” (Foucault, 2007, p. 201, as cited in Davidson, 2011, p. 28). Davidson takes up this concept as both “wanting to be conducted differently” and also defining “an area in which each individual can conduct himself [sic], the domain of one’s own conduct or behavior” (Davidson, 2011, p. 27). This is not to suggest that counter-conduct is “in a position of exteriority with respect to power” (Davidson, 2011, p. 27); however, it does allow for greater nuance in exploring individuals’ relationships with technologies of power. Rather than promoting simplistic narratives of subjugation of individuals to technologies of power or of direct resistance, I hope to show that individuals’ engagement with technologies of power involves more subtle manoeuvring in which counter-conduct often features as a productive force.

A second aspect of Foucault’s discussions of technologies of the self that is generally neglected by the above authors is that of the self-care or ethical self-constitution, which preoccupied Foucault’s (1988; 1997) later years. I use the term “self-care” in a sense that extends beyond a reshaping of the self in the model of a neoliberal ideal, as it has tended to be used in the work cited thus far. For Foucault, the self is constantly being worked on and the ethical work that

a person applies to themselves is a fundamental dimension of technologies of the self. Again, this is not to suggest that these “ethical” stances or actions exist wholly outside of systems of domination, but they should not be understood to be entirely contained by them either. I hope to show that drawing on this ethical aspect of the technologies of the self will yield some benefits in analysis of language choices, practices and policies, as many individuals who participated in my project undertook forms of linguistic work on themselves and on others in the name of ethical obligation rather than with the goal of managing their self as a business in a neoliberal economy. This ethical language work has policy implications and effects that extend beyond neoliberal technologies of power.

Governmentality as a tool for research in the UAE

Analysing (neoliberal) governmentality in the context of the UAE requires some caution, in part because the government deploys different sets of policy for different segments of the population, divided both racially and socioeconomically. This means engaging with a range of “institutions, procedures, analyses and reflections, calculations, and tactics” (Foucault, 2007, p. 144) through which the government constructs various segments of the population and manages them. Some of the few researchers working with the concept of governmentality in the UAE (and other parts of the developing world) have tended to provide caveats for its application. Krause (2008), for example, argues governmentality may be quite different outside of the West and the term must be applied carefully in the context of the UAE. This is echoed by Joseph (2010), who suggests that without a liberal capitalist social base, governmentality techniques may be unsuccessful and as such, the concept of neoliberal governmentality cannot be uncritically deployed in non-Western research sites. Krause (2008) suggests that in the UAE, decentralization of responsibility is not a key stake. Instead, “the state bolsters its powers through

vertical encompassment [citing Ferguson & Gupta, 2002] of civil society actors, made possible largely through rentierism and authoritarian technologies of governmentality” (Krause, 2008, p. 49). Dean (2010, p. 170) describes *authoritarian governmentality* as the approach of a state which “does not rely on the choices, aspirations or capacities of the individual subject.” Krause (2008, p. 49) combines authoritarian governmentality with what she refers to as a “watered down” neoliberalism to generate the term *rentier governmentality*, which includes “strategies of co-optation, facilitated predominantly through rentierism, and also through coercion assisted by a limited and controlled form of ‘responsibilization’.” Trainer (2013) also takes an ambivalent stance about how one should approach governmentality in the UAE. She positions the UAE as a modern state in the making, with the government relying on policy approaches – in this case for public health – which are modelled on the rationalities of Western governments, fostering a population of individuals who self-regulate and monitor their health. At the same time, Trainer (2013, p. 158) points out that “the ‘knowledges and technologies’ that index modernity in public discussions of development in the UAE coexist with older networks [personal, family and tribal]”. She suggests that surveillance within these networks, as well as from the state itself, mean that disciplinary apparatuses are as or more important than “government at a distance”. However, Krause (2008) and Trainer (2013) deploy the concept of governmentality to very specific segments of the female Emirati population. For foreign residents, and indeed the Emirati population as a whole (which I will also discuss further in chapters 4, 5 and 8), thinking about government action in terms of neoliberal governmentality is still very much applicable.

Vora (2013) and Vora and Koch (2015) take up governmentality as a productive tool through which they explore the “multiple logics of governance” in Dubai that produce “differentiated subjects...citizens as well as noncitizens, belonging as well as exclusion” (Vora,

2013, pp. 12-13). Vora argues that this occurs partly through the division of the nation from the economy in official discourse. The state constructs the subject-position of *citizen* based on “autochthony, projects of heritage, and the erasure of precolonial and colonial cosmopolitanisms” (p. 13). Foreign residents are constructed as a necessary but undesirable product of their oil economy that constantly threaten the heritage of the country and are thus positioned solely in the economic domain, separated from national identity positions (Vora, 2013). Vora (2013) shows how the UAE has simultaneously constructed domains in which neoliberal logics operate while also defining certain groups as exceptions to neoliberalism and self-governing subjectivities. However, the divisions are not as clear-cut as official discourse suggests. These domains and groups are unstable as individuals produce and circulate their own logics of citizenship, belonging and exclusion – including “juridico-legal, religious, raced, classed, consumerist, ethnic, and settled versus nomadic” (Vora, 2013, p. 15). Thus, there are citizens and foreign residents who invoke both neoliberal values and traditional structures of patronage in their specific forms of citizenship (Vora, 2013; Vora & Koch, 2015). Although different segments of the population are constructed through government discourse in very different ways, as Vora and Koch (2015) argue, many of the features of this governance and the ways different groups in the UAE interact with it are not necessarily “exceptional”. That is to say, despite demographic differences, neoliberal governmentality in the UAE operates within many of the same discourses and through the same techniques of power as in other parts of the world which have received more attention from this body of research. In this project, I follow these authors and argue that understanding (neoliberal) governmentality in the UAE is central to understanding language policy in the country as well.

Conviviality

In recent years, the concept of conviviality has been explored by researchers interested in multilingual contexts. For example, Williams and Stroud (2013) take up the concept as a way of exploring linguistic citizenship in South Africa. *Multilingual Margins* issued a 2015 collection of articles titled “The importance of unimportant language”, with authors investigating connections between phatic language and conviviality (e.g. Goebel, 2015; Heil, 2015; Varis & Blommaert, 2015; Velghe, 2015). Pennycook and Otsuji (2015) take up the concept of conviviality in their book on “metrolingualism”. Such research has tended to make calls for greater attention to the language choices made in “mundane”, everyday interactions, noting that such interactions are an important dimension of convivial processes.

Most authors point to Gilroy (2004; 2006) and/or Noble (2009) for inspiration. Gilroy describes conviviality as “the processes of cohabitation and interaction that have made multicultural an ordinary feature of social life in Britain’s urban areas and in postcolonial cities elsewhere” (Gilroy, 2004, p. xi). For Gilroy, conviviality is a concept that provides a starting point for discussions that extend beyond the “break down” of multiculturalism. It does not artificially erase racism or impose the “triumph of tolerance” on analyses. Rather, conviviality is a way of talking about a possible “future in which black and brown Europeans stop being seen as migrants” and “in which ‘race’ is stripped of meaning” as a result of “a liberating sense of the banality of intermixture and the subversive ordinariness of this country’s convivial cultures” (Gilroy, 2004, pp. 165-6). Noble (2009) takes up the discussion using terms such as “everyday cosmopolitanism”, “banal cosmopolitanism” and “unpanicked multiculturalism” as a way of shifting the discussion away from a politics of identity and towards an “ethics of cohabitation” (p. 46). He calls for an investigation of “the practices through which attributes are habituated to

account for the dispositional nature of open-ness to others.” (p. 49). Such investigations do not idealize cosmopolitanism, nor do they evade the realities of “everyday racism”. Instead, they approach the production of ‘local liveability’ (Amin, 2002, p. 959, cited by Noble, 2009, p. 51) through the negotiation of difference in everyday, “ordinary” encounters.

Conviviality has also interested human geographers a great deal in recent years. Neal, Bennett, Cochrane and Mohan (2013) support an approach that favours Overing and Passes’s (2000, p. xiii) definition of conviviality more in terms of the Latin roots “*convivir*, to live together/to share the same life, and *convivencia*, a joint/shared life” over Illich’s (1973, p. 11) earlier, lighter definition, “autonomous and creative discourse among persons”. Neal et al. (2013) also note that unlike the term “community”, conviviality is

more open, less demanding, and defensive and more transient. It can be felt and experienced in the most momentary encounters as well as in more sustained social relations...It is the lighter-touch, ‘cooler’ qualities of conviviality that enable exchanges to happen through and across difference—and even conflict—without necessarily demanding any particular resolution. (p. 316)

Wessendorf (2014) follows a similar approach in her discussion of conviviality, taking up Sennet’s (2005, p. 1) definition of “civility” as something that is not merely good manners but rather “the capacity of people who differ to live together”. She argues that civility can be deployed both to “bridge differences *and* avoid tensions” (p. 398, emphasis in original). The latter dimension refers to the fact that people may be civil when wanting to “avoid further contact”, thus reinforcing boundaries of difference rather than bridging them, but at the same time this avoidance can be understood as a strategy for dealing with diversity and avoiding conflict. More extensive literature reviews of the origins and implications of the “convivial turn”

can be found in Nowicka and Vertovec (2014) and Wise and Noble (2016).

In socio- and applied linguistics, researchers have begun investigating the role language plays in shaping convivial interactions, relationships and societies. The loosest approaches to conviviality take up interactions amongst acquaintances and strangers in public, looking especially at economic transactions in businesses that operate in “superdiverse” neighbourhoods. The essence of this line of thought is captured by Blackledge and Creese (2017). Though only deploying the term in passing and not dwelling on conviviality as a theoretical concept, the authors make an interesting comment connecting convivial relations to translanguaging in day-to-day interactions in the local economy. They claim that “translanguaging was a means by which this [buying and selling] was successfully and convivially managed” (2017, p. 41). The argument that everyday multilingual economic transactions can be thought of in terms of conviviality is taken further by Pennycook and Otsuji (2015). They discuss interviews and interactions between shopkeepers and their customers and suppliers. In this context, the authors explain that a “light knowledge” of others’ languages is a component of the convivial “mix of sociality, compromise and negotiation that are part of everyday metrolingualism” (p. 93). Elsewhere, the authors also discuss “metrolingual conviviality” in which people “jokingly play with their language resources” as well as “celebrat[e] and light-heartedly challeng[e] the diverse environments in which they work” (Otsuji & Pennycook, 2016, pp. 201-2). Although the authors also explore issues of contestation, boundary-making and discrimination existing alongside or even embedded within this “convivial multilingualism”, their discussion of conviviality tends to focus on learning or sharing of words and phrases and is positioned in opposition to contestation. Like the rest of the book’s exploration of “metrolingualism”, this discussion tends not to dig too deeply into issues power or racism, which are foregrounded in this dissertation.

Taking a different approach to conviviality, other authors have looked more closely at specific convivial relationships built around everyday interactions and so-called “mundane” language. These authors understand conviviality through phatic language with “low-intensity social engagement, seemingly superficial but critical for, in fact, importantly assuring social cohesion, community belonging and social comfort” (Blommaert & Varis, 2015, p. 8). Goebel (2015), for example, looks at the role of “small response tokens, repetition and teasing” in the production of “convivial relations” in a group of Indonesian students living in Japan. Heil (2015) places conviviality alongside “coping”, to argue that truncated multilingualism and convivial phatic language can serve as a coping mechanism in the face of socioeconomic inequalities – a tactic not guaranteed to be successful.

Finally, some authors have also taken up conviviality at a larger scale. Williams and Stroud (2013) investigate racial and linguistic divisions in South Africa and explore how specific linguistic performances can be a part of the “interpersonal mechanics behind” Noble’s (2009) “unpanicked multiculturalism”. By looking at two popular culture performances, they attempt to “[understand] how multilingualism creates the conditions for everyday convivial acts of citizenship” (p. 306). Blommaert (2014) also discusses conviviality on a larger scale, investigating what he calls “oecumenical Dutch” and its convivial role in a “highly diversified” Belgian neighborhood as “a key infrastructure of superdiversity” (p. 449).

The recent interest in conviviality as a conceptual tool has also drawn some calls for caution. Valentine (2008) warns of a romanticized urban citizenship in which contact with difference directly leads to respect for difference. Valentine’s concern is that there is an absence of evidence in conviviality for what he calls “meaningful contact”, that is, “contact that actually changes values and translates beyond the specifics of the individual moment into a more general

positive respect for – rather than merely tolerance of – others.” (p. 325) Likewise, Rampton (2015, pp. 86-7) suggests taking care in deploying the term conviviality in language research, given that “there is nothing intrinsically convivial about ‘polylinguaging’ and the use of local languages you don’t really know” and that “you can never get at what people mean by language alone.” Rampton also argues that conviviality functions better as a “particular local ideology” than an “analytic characterization of everyday practice”. Conviviality as an “optimism-against-the-odds” ideology can then be framed in relation to other competing local ideologies and in some cases understood to disrupt routinized practices, but should not be mistaken for the routine itself. The primary goal of the ordinary people participating in most of these research projects, says Rampton, is to just “get on with their lives” not to promote an idealized multicultural world (p. 87). Rampton’s warning that we heed the ways that conviviality is embedded within the routinized structure of everyday practices is an important one. However, the treatment of conviviality as ideology rather than practice also problematically positions conviviality in dichotomous opposition to conflict. The challenge for researchers using conviviality as an analytic frame is to *include* conflict as an integral component of practices that produce “local liveability” (Amin, 2002, p. 959). Williams and Stroud (2013, p. 294), for example, explore the “creation of a local public that although convivial may not be free of tension and contradiction”.

In response to this concern, Wise and Noble (2016, p. 425) adopt a preference for the term *convivencia*, for its “[emphasis on] togetherness as lived negotiation, belonging as practice”. For the authors, neither a focus on “happy togetherness” nor a critical, but narrow, focus on the reproduction of power relations “captures the complexity and depth of coexistence” (p. 425). Wise and Noble (2016, p. 425) call for empirical “studies of the everyday” that capture both “everyday racism and everyday cosmopolitanism...as coexisting.” Such studies, they argue,

must focus on “the practices of inhabiting diversity” and would benefit from ethnographic methodologies that examine these situated practices over time.

This project deals with several dimensions of the above discussion. First, Wise and Noble’s (2016) definition of conviviality in terms of practices rather than outcomes is an important distinction to make. While most of the socio- and applied linguistics studies cited above do tend to focus on practices, there is frequent slippage between conviviality as practice and conviviality as outcome. Here, I deliberately take up conviviality as practice and not outcome with the hope of avoiding some of the pitfalls inherent in discussing the production of convivial relations, communities or societies, in which conviviality becomes a term that imposes static harmony and erases conflict. Second, I take seriously Valentine’s (2008) call for investigations of “meaningful contact” and explore how language choices, ordinary and extraordinary, are often made out of “general respect” for interlocutors rather than simply “getting on” as Rampton (2015) suggests. Third, in exploring the dimensions and limits of this “respect”, this project attempts to probe the entanglements of conviviality with conflict and exclusion. Finally, this project foregrounds issues of race/racism (and their relationship to language practices and policy) that are central to discussions of conviviality in other fields but have not generally made their way into work that deploys the concept in applied or sociolinguistics (with the exception of Williams & Stroud, 2013).

Convivial linguistic labour/work

Another conceptual tool emerges by bringing together the previous discussions about conviviality and language as labour. What I found I needed in my data analysis was something that provided convivial practices some economic weight as well as a way of expressing language work as something more than institutionally sanctioned and/or imposed language practices. As

such, I have cobbled together something I call *convivial linguistic labour/work* (a distinction I will explain shortly) out of what Wise (2016) calls “convivial labour” and what many applied and socio-linguists call “linguistic labour”.

A helpful starting point to this discussion is Piller’s (2011) analogy between “linguistic labour” and Hochschild’s (1983/2012) “emotional labor”, which I will extend here before returning to conviviality. Hochschild described this form of labour as: “the management of feeling to create a publicly observable facial and bodily display; emotional labor is sold for a wage and therefore has *exchange value*” (Hochschild, 2012, p. 7, emphasis in original). Hochschild coined the term in her notes about flight attendants providing service in which “the *emotional style of offering the service is part of the service itself*” (Hochschild, 2012, p. 5, emphasis in original). Hochschild also adopts a parallel term “emotion work” which refers to “these same acts done in a private context where they have *use value*.” (p. 7). In her preface, Hochschild explains that since her original work in the 70s and 80s, the number of jobs requiring emotional labour has increased dramatically alongside the expansion of the service economy. Piller (2011, p.88) expands this to argue that linguistic labour has also made a similar rise in recent years, noting that “where Hochschild’s US flight attendants of the 1970s and early 1980s ‘only’ had to be friendly in their native lingua-culture, many of today’s flight attendants have to be friendly in many languages”. If this emergent linguistic labour is often (though not always) linked to customer service, it becomes difficult to disentangle it completely from emotional labour. Urciuoli and LaDousa (2013) distinguish linguistic labour from other language practices in terms of speaker intent. That is, they suggest that language practices done as part of paid activity constitute linguistic labour. Furthermore, they suggest for language practices to be understood as labour within global capitalism, they are should be deployed as “part of a company

or entrepreneurial or investment structure” (p. 180). The authors go on to explore various manifestations of linguistic labour within companies, from relatively unstructured “expert” roles which involve specific registers and forms of collegial communication, to more structured, “Taylorist” roles in which language practices are highly standardized and monitored. However, language practices that are not paid for directly but nevertheless have economic effects are not discussed. In this project, such practices include language choice and accommodation (e.g. Callahan, 2006), active (unpaid) language learning for work, and unpaid interpretation services. As I shall explore in subsequent chapters, language practices that are simultaneously entangled with issues of neoliberalism, global capitalism, speaker subjectivity and conviviality are in fact fundamental to everyday life in the Ras Al Khaimah.

This final point is related to a semantic issue in both Piller’s (2011) and Urciuoli and LaDousa’s (2013) work which I attend to cautiously here. Somewhat confusingly, despite drawing on Hochschild, Piller (2011) suggests the term “language work” to refer to paid *labour* as Hochschild would call it. Similarly, Urciuoli and LaDousa (2013) appear to use “language work” and “linguistic labour” interchangeably. In this project, I follow Hothschild and reserve the term “labour” for language practices for which the speaker is paid in some way and the term “work” for more ambiguous cases. I do this not as a criticism of these authors, who are mainly concerned with individuals paid for their language resources anyway. Rather, I do so to maintain analytical clarity in my data, where there is a great deal of linguistic *work* which cannot necessarily be considered *labour*. I do this while also recognizing that distinguishing what specific practices are paid and unpaid can be problematic (Mirchandani, 2003).

For the second part of this discussion, I turn to Wise’s (2016) term *convivial labour*, which she describes as “the enacted, negotiated, practiced and cumulative (Noble 2011) labour

that goes into provisionally successful situations of lived difference.” Wise follows an approach to conviviality along the lines of the *convivencia* distinction made in the previous section, emphasizing “the lived practice and labour of living together” (Wise, 2016, p. 482) and “minimal consensus” (Heil, 2014, p. 317) rather than “happy togetherness” (Wise, 2016, p. 482). Wise investigates humour in the workplace as a part of a larger project that focuses on negotiated multiculturalism at work. As such, she is much more interested in the conviviality side than the labour side of this term. In her explanation of convivial labour, “labour” does not refer to the fact that the activity is paid (though her focus is on paid employment activities), but more to the fact that the activity is difficult and ongoing – it is laborious. Wise (2016) explains:

If ever a situation of lived togetherness in difference (Ang 2003) involves ‘work’, it is in sites of enforced ongoing encounter such as in schools and workplaces where, like it or not, we are required to achieve some level of minimal consensus (Heil 2014), in order to *get along* with our coworkers, if only during work hours. (p. 496, emphasis in original)

However, she stops short of exploring the implications of convivial labour as a form of emotional labour. In this project, I appropriate her terminology but infuse “labour” with the economic implications that Hochschild proposes. Thus, the term *convivial linguistic labour* constitutes language practices that are both paid and contribute in some way to negotiating difference and “living together”. Such practices also take an inflection of Hochschild’s emotional labour in that the individuals deploying them are paid to negotiate these differences, regardless of their own feelings. I also deploy the term *convivial linguistic work*, which refers to similar linguistic practices that are unpaid (but may still carry economic implications). Of course, the lines between the two are often fuzzy as precisely what someone is paid to do in their job and what actions go beyond their job description are rarely completely transparent. Nevertheless, I

use these two terms as a starting point for subsequent discussions.

Space, scale and language policy

This project also makes use of concepts such as space and scale from human geography. Sociolinguistics has often treated space more “as an empty stage on which sociolinguistic processes are enacted” (Britain, 2013, p. 471) than as an agentive element in language choice and interaction (Baynham, 2009 also makes this argument). However, recently, scholars have increasingly drawn on conceptualizations of space from human geography to address issues in sociolinguistics and linguistic anthropology. Blommaert (2007a; 2007b; 2010), Blommaert, Collins, and Slembrouck (2005a; 2005b), and Collins, Slembrouck and Baynham (2009) have been important advocates of a spatial turn in sociolinguistics, deploying concepts such as scale and mobility to explore relationships between language and globalization. Collins et al. (2009) propose that attention to scale and mobility is especially important for sociolinguistics in an era of globalization in which language practices are increasingly deterritorialized, no longer tied relatively stably to specific places. They argue that incorporating the concept of scale into sociolinguistic analyses removes the false global-local dichotomy that is often invoked in discourses of globalization. This dichotomy is replaced by a range of scales from global to local that are in turn hybridized in increasingly diverse social contexts. This means that linguists can no longer rely on analyses that treat context as a specific, local backdrop to the linguistic action, but must instead understand “how the [multi-scalar] world ‘out there’ is played upon and made to bear on the ‘here and now’ of communicative encounters” (Collins et al. 2009, p. 7).

Blommaert (2010) summarizes this current shift in sociolinguistics as one from a *sociolinguistics of distribution* to a *sociolinguistics of mobility*. What Blommaert means by these terms is a shift in how the relationship between space and language is understood. In the former

model, “movement of language resources is seen as movement in a horizontal and stable space and in chronological time” (p. 5), where the object of study is the language used in a single, fixed time and place (Blommaert calls it a “snapshot”). In this model, the researcher also tends to focus on language as a linguistically defined object for study. A sociolinguistics of mobility, however, investigates “language-in-motion”, in which various spatiotemporal frames interact with one another. Blommaert refers to these frames as scales and proposes that “language patterns must be understood as patterns that are organized on different, layered (i.e. vertical rather than horizontal) scale-levels” (p. 5). Instead of a focus on language as a unified object of linguistic study, this model attends to “concrete *resources*...actual language resources deployed in real sociocultural, historical and political contexts” (p. 5, emphasis in original). In short, he proposes a sociolinguistics of “mobile resources” rather than “immobile languages” (p. 43).

This new model demands a more sophisticated theoretical understanding of space, which Blommaert (along with his various co-authors) develops through three interconnected concepts: sociolinguistic scales, orders of indexicality and polycentricity. He summarizes the relationship between these three concepts and sociolinguistic research succinctly as follows: “sociolinguistic phenomena in a globalization context need to be understood as developing at several different scale-levels, where different orders of indexicality dominate, resulting in a polycentric ‘context’ where communicative behaviour is simultaneously pushed and pulled in various directions” (Blommaert, 2010, p. 42). While my project draws inspiration from Blommaert’s valuable contributions, it also challenges the way he conceives of the relationship between scale and language practices / language policy. This criticism builds on Pennycook’s (2011) review of Blommaert’s (2010) book, in which he suggests that Blommaert appears to use scale as a form of heavy-handed structuralism to explain language practices. I extend this critique and argue that

not only does Blommaert rely too heavily on scale as a causative factor determining language practices, he does not interrogate where conceptualizations of scale come from nor does he consider the impact of his reliance on hierarchically stratified scalar metaphors in his own work.

To explore the production of scale (as well as scaled language policies and orders of indexicality), I suggest Kaiser and Nikiforova's (2008) framework, which applies Butler's (1993; 1999) concept of performativity to scale. Like Blommaert (2010), Kaiser and Nikiforova (2008) adopt an idealist approach, with scale as an epistemological rather than ontological concept, but where epistemologies of scale still have important material consequences. However, they go well beyond Blommaert (2010) in their discussion how scalar epistemologies are produced. Drawing on Foucault, they suggest a need for a "*political genealogy of scale ontologies*" which entails "an historically contextualized study of the naturalizing and sedimenting production of scaled knowledge, in order to expose the power relationships lying behind the truth claims about scales and scalar hierarchies" (p. 538, emphasis in original). Rather than asking what scales are or are not, the authors seek to understand how scales have come to be understood "as real things in the world" (p. 538). They situate their study of the *performativity of scale* as one small part of this much larger project. This approach sees scale as a "category of practice" in which "scales are performed by sets of actors through the scalar stances they take within particular sociospatial contexts as they engage in the politics of everyday life" (p. 541). Attention is thus shifted from scales as central actors to "the enacted discourses through which scales become" (p. 541). To understand the production of scale they examine "the repetition of sets of citational practices that stabilize as well as challenge the boundary, fixity, and surface effects that materialize" (p. 542). Scales and scalar hierarchies are not considered socially constructed end products but are the site of continual "reiterative and citational practices by which discourse produces the effect" (p. 543,

citing Butler, 1993, p. 2).

Attention to the (re)production of space and scale is especially important for this project because many of the ethnolinguistic divisions in the UAE are produced through the management of space as well as who can inhabit specific spaces and in what capacity. Such a discussion brings in issues of race, class and power that have perhaps been underexplored in debates around how to deploy sociospatial concepts in applied and sociolinguistics. As I show at various points in this dissertation, the ways that racial and socioeconomic distinctions are intertwined with the (re)production of space and scale in the UAE have important implications for language practices and policies.

Bring these tools together in a critical ethnography of language policy

The following section ties all of these tools together to formulate a critical ethnography of language policy that guides both the theory and methodology that supports this project. It begins by situating critical ethnographic approaches within the historical development of language policy and planning as a field and then, using the toolkit outlined above, marks out the set of departures that this project takes from some of the debates in the field as I try define language policy in relation to this project.

Language policy 1.0

Ricento (2000) traces the history of the development of language policy and planning as a field, beginning with beliefs and practices just after the Second World War. He proposes that there are three key elements that have shaped language policy throughout the last 80 years: the macro sociopolitical, the epistemological, and the strategic. For Ricento, the twenty-year period following WWII marks the emergence of language policy and planning as an identifiable field. This period, he argues, was characterized by decolonization and state formation (macro

sociopolitical), the ascendancy of structuralism (epistemological), and the widespread belief that language problems could be defined and solved through public sector planning (strategic), all of which shaped how language policy was initially conceived. With decolonization, new nation-states formed across Africa and Asia, and linguists saw them as valuable sites for researching “group identity in general as well as...societal (governmental and other) impact on language-related behaviour and on language itself” (Fishman, 1968, p. 6). Linguists met the perceived linguistic needs of these new countries with models for top-down management of linguistic diversity and the construction or consolidation of a single national language. The ideal of a one-to-one mapping of language to state was prevalent and linguistic diversity was seen as an obstacle to national development (Ricento, 2000). Errington (2001) shows how this ideology extended from colonial contexts, where homogenization and standardization of unwritten languages provided a convenient means of mapping and establishing boundaries within colonized populations while simultaneously positioning these colonial languages as inferior to the more “developed” languages of the European empires. Early language policy academics perpetuated this belief by relying heavily on notions of “development”. They suggested that new nations had developing languages with particular problems in need of policy solutions (e.g. Neustupný, 1968) and ranked languages according to their capacity to meet the needs of national development (e.g. Kloss, 1968). The general consensus of language policy scholars in the 1960s (as summarized by Ricento, 2000) was that the goals of language planning were to promote national unity and modernization and that such planning processes were ideologically neutral.

Embedded in these early discussions of language policy are assumptions about both policy and language which would be challenged by later scholars. Early language policy scholars were working in a tradition of positivist policy research that spanned much of the social sciences.

In outlining the changes in policy research approaches, Webb and Gulson (2014) label positivist approaches to policy research, *policy scientificity 1.0* (with subsequent 2.0 and 3.0 shifts reflecting critical and post-qualitative turns respectively). They explain that policy scientificity 1.0 approaches seek to “manage” the public through rational problem solving. Such approaches are supported by the underlying assumption of an objective reality and a social world which is governed by discoverable laws just like the physical world. These laws allow for predictions about the effects of policy and therefore policy makers can “determine the technically best course of action to adopt in order to implement a decision or achieve a goal” (Fay, 1975, p. 14). Many early language policy scholars fall squarely within this 1.0 domain. For example, Rubin (1971, p. 206) defines language planning as the search for “solutions to language problems through decisions about alternative goals, means and outcomes to solve these problems,” while Haugen (1966, pp. 61-64) emphasizes the importance of *efficiency*, *adequacy*, and *acceptability* in language planning decisions. For authors working in this framework, language policy remained essentially a solution to “language problems” and there was a general “optimistic” belief in that such problems could be solved through appropriate planning (Wright, 2004, p. 9).

Corresponding positivistic assumptions about the nature of language went hand-in-hand with this approach to policy. Ricento (2006, pp. 14-15) outlines three common elements of the language ideology that go along with policy scientificity 1.0 outlined above: first, that language is “a finite, stable, standardized, rule-governed instrument for communication”; second that “monolingualism and cultural homogeneity [are] necessary requirements for social and economic progress, modernization, and national unity”; third that “language selection [is] a matter of ‘rational choice’ in which all options are equally available to everyone, or could be made equally available”. Like Ricento (2000) and Errington (2001), Shohamy (2006) connects the language

ideologies that underlie positivistic approaches to the rise of the nation-state and the emergence of descriptive linguists who set out to categorize and classify the languages of the colonies. She argues that the descriptions of languages produced by linguists, problematically based on the assumption that languages were objects to be studied, became incorporated into policy frameworks of emergent nations as both prescriptive grammars for these languages and also as definitions of who belonged to the nation. The resulting construction of the standard national language provided definite language boundaries and defined language systems as “closed” rather than “fluid” (Shohamy, 2006, p. 32). Thus, language policy became entwined with the process of nation formation in ways that continue to this day. Language policy and planning had obviously existed for decades or centuries – Wright (2004) argues that it has existed for as long as language has existed – so it is understandable that when language policy and planning became a studied phenomenon and coalesced as a definable field of research, it took on the assumptions and beliefs about language and policy that were common at the time. The unquestioned belief that there are objects called languages that can be identified and studied in a controlled and scientific way fit nicely with a similarly positivistic approach to policy “sciences”. If languages could be studied and controlled along with their speakers, then there were surely language policy solutions that could be planned effectively around language problems.

Language policy 2.0

In the 1980s and the 1990s, a significant shift occurred across the social sciences, which also pulled language policy in new directions. Researchers became concerned with positivist models of thinking about the social world. Critics argued that the physical and social worlds differed in two fundamental ways: the centrality of meaning-making in human experience and the importance of context to this meaning-making process (Yanow. 2007). This raised the

question of how social scientists, who depended on language and their own past experiences to create meaning, could detach themselves from their studies as objective observers. Many researchers concluded that, at least in the social sciences, objectivity was impossible and fundamental truths about the social world were undiscoverable because they did not exist. Lather (2006, p. 38) outlines two breaks that resulting critical paradigms made from positivism. First, critical researchers described reality as “subjective and constructed on the basis of issues of power.” Second, they proposed that “truth is many, and constitutes a system of socio-political power.” In questioning the existence of a single truth, critical researchers began asking *whose* truth was given preferential treatment in research and who benefited.

In policy research, the 1980s saw the emergence of what Webb and Gulson (2014) label policy scientificity 2.0 – approximately corresponding to critical policy studies and policy sociology. Researchers redefined policy as socially constructed, emphasized the importance of “power, politics and difference” and increasingly attended the specificity of policy contexts (Webb and Gulson, 2014, p. 5). Early policy researchers adopting a critical lens, such as Prunty (1985), lambasted the assumed “scientific precision” of policy science and neglect of “the issues of power, control, legitimacy, privilege, equity, justice and, above all, values” (p. 133). He advocated a shift towards policy research that “expose[s] the sources of domination, repression, and exploitation that are entrenched in, and legitimated by, educational policy” (p. 136) and seeks the “inclusion of oppressed groups in the policy process” (p. 137). Throughout the 1990s, policy researchers began to take a more nuanced view of policy, retaining a commitment to social justice but also emphasizing contextuality and complexity as essential to understanding policy (Taskoh, 2014). Policy was seen as a product of “compromises between competing interests” (Taylor, Rizvi, Lingard & Henry, 1997, p. 4). Researchers emphasized the discursive

context of policy making and began to theorize the relationship between text, context, and consequence (Taylor, 1997). Drawing on Foucault, Ball (1994; 2006) sought to understand policy as both text and discourse. He attempted to deemphasize authoritative (and authorial) intentionality in the policy process, suggesting that policy texts must be understood in terms of how they are interpreted and enacted and that researchers should not attend only to the text itself. At the same time, balancing agency and structure in his discussion, he insisted that researchers should not underestimate the power that policy has to set discursive limits on how policy is conceived and interpreted. Providing a unified “critical” definition of policy is impossible and perhaps undesirable – as Kincheloe and McLaren (2005, p. 89) suggest, “there are many critical theories not just one, the critical tradition is always changing and evolving, and critical theory attempts to avoid too much specificity since there is room for disagreement among critical theorists.” Still, a fundamental underlying claim is identifiable in critical definitions of policy: the understanding of policy as “a complex, *ongoing social practice* of normative cultural production constituted by diverse actors across diverse contexts” (Levinson, Sutton & Winstead, 2009, p. 770, emphasis added). Instead of viewing policy as a *tool* for managing social practice (as in policy scientificity 1.0), policy is understood as just another form of social practice. Once policy was viewed as social practice, policy analysis had to take seriously the complexity and contradictions of the social world and “critical” issues of power, inequality, discourse, social justice, and values could come to the fore as central to policy research.

Language policy research more or less followed a similar epistemological path, but with challenges coming against commonly held conceptions of both language and policy. Ricento (2000) explains that there was a shift from the study of languages to the study of speech communities. Rather than just looking at number of speakers or suitability of a language for

modernization, researchers began examining social and economic inequalities and power relations. Sociolinguists, increasingly adopting perspectives from critical theory, began to challenge conceptual mainstays of linguistics such as diglossia, the native speaker, and even language itself (e.g. Harris, 1981; 1990; Martin-Jones, 1988; Mülhäusler, 1990; 1996; Tollefson, 1991; Woolard & Schieffelin, 1994). Such conceptual criticisms have been increasingly incorporated into language policy research. Shohamy (2006, p. xv), for example, dismisses static, closed system approaches to the concept of language, describing it as “dynamic, personal, free and energetic, with no defined boundaries.” She takes an explicitly critical stance linking definitions of language to issues of ideology and power arguing that “there have always been those groups and individuals who want to control and manipulate it in order to promote political, social, economic and personal ideologies.” Similarly, Garcia (2009) deploys terms such as *dynamic bilingualism*, *(trans)linguaging*, and *transglossia* to try to describe these more fluid conceptions of language at the levels of both individual and community.

On the policy front, Ricento (2000) suggests that the dominant perspective of language planning as a form of resource management came under increasing criticism when the limits of “modernizing” national language policy and planning initiatives became more apparent in the 1970s and 80s, particularly in developing countries. Scholars began to argue that the activities carried out by “language planners, language policy makers, educators, legislators, and others involved in changing the status of language or language variety are not ideologically neutral” (Cobarrubias, 1983, p. 41) and that even language policy decisions made with the “best of intentions” would reflect the “ideologies of dominant group” (p. 81). Tollefson (1991) was an important early proponent of critical language policy and planning. Drawing heavily on Marxist scholarship, he questioned the assumed neutrality of language education and criticised second

language acquisition policy as a central mechanism for structuring and perpetuating social and economic inequality in society. He critiqued what he called a “neoclassical” (p. 27) approach to language policy and planning (aligned with policy scientificity 1.0) for its distinction between governmental and non-governmental activities and for its “belief in ahistorical, unconstrained action and choice” (p. 16). He suggested instead that researchers must examine the relationship that exists between the public and private sectors in policy formulation and also recognize that language choices are structurally and ideologically constrained. Adopting a critical definition of policy, he argued that language policy could be “analysed as the outcome of struggle as well as a component in it” (p. 14). From this perspective, language policies are more than just solutions to language problems, improved by increasingly accurate data collection and implementation methods. Language policy is “one mechanism for locating language within social structure so that language determines who has access to political power and economic resources” (p. 16). Armed with the understanding that language policy is often exploitative in that it disadvantages multilingual citizens and minority students in education systems, Tollefson encouraged language policy researchers to reject “neoclassical” assumptions about the “rational calculus of individuals” and focus on “the origins of constraints on planning, the sources of the costs and benefits of individuals’ choices, and the social, political, and economic factors which constrain or impel changes in language structure and language use.” (p. 31)

While Tollefson (1991) attacked the politics of national language education, Phillipson (1992) took on language politics at a global level, interpreting the spread of English as part of a larger imperial project (originating in the U.S. and U.K. in particular). His work was closely linked to that of scholars who were interested in connecting language loss to social, political and economic inequalities between language communities. The term *linguicism*, first coined by

Skutnabb-Kangas (1986), was developed as a way to understand how “ideologies, structures and practices that are used to legitimate, effectuate and reproduce an unequal division of power and resources (both material and immaterial) between groups that are defined on the basis of language” (Skutnabb-Kangas, 1988, p. 13). Working with this definition, Phillipson (1992) explains that English linguistic imperialism then refers to a particular form of global linguisticism.

A key criticism of Phillipson’s argument has come from scholars developing more nuanced approaches to language policy. Pennycook (2001) suggests that Phillipson’s approach is monolithic and deterministic, lacking attention to complexity and context (an echo of discussions from critical policy studies). While Phillipson provides an important account that draws attention to an international network of exploitation through the export of English from the centre to the periphery, Pennycook (2001, p. 62) notes that his model tends to reduce the linguistic and cultural realities at the periphery to simplistic relations of exploitation instead of grappling seriously with questions of “how English is taken up, how people use English, why people choose to use English.” Canagarajah (1999) offers a similar criticism, contending that people often appropriate what they need from English without completely accepting or rejecting it. He states that “to negotiate with the agencies of power for personal and collective empowerment... what is demanded is a ‘third way’ that avoids the traditional extremes of rejecting English outright for its linguistic imperialism or accepting it wholesale for its benefits” (pp. 173-4).

Over the past two decades, critical language policy researchers have made an effort to address such criticisms. Spolsky’s (2004) and Shohamy’s (2006) language policy frameworks, demonstrate how critical LPP scholars began to develop more nuanced approaches to language policy. Spolsky (2004) distinguishes three elements of language policy: *beliefs*, *practices* and *management*. Language beliefs correspond approximately to the language ideologies that

underlie language policy. These may include beliefs about the importance of language to national unity and the mapping of one language to one nation. Language practices refer to language as it is actually used in society, whether or not those practices align with official policy. Language management refers to actions aimed at managing or influencing language practices. For Spolsky, it is essential that language policy research examines practices as well as official policy documents or statements. He notes that the latter often have very limited connection to actual language practices, making language practices a better indicator of true language policy.

Shohamy (2006) expands this model, suggesting that Spolsky's treatment of the tension between beliefs and practices requires a more sophisticated discussion. She develops the concept of *de facto* language policies, which operate through *mechanisms* that exist somewhere between ideologies and practices. *De facto* policy is apparent, for example, in a situation where official policy pays lip service to societal multilingualism when in fact it is difficult for citizens to use language forms that deviate from the national standard. What actually "manages" peoples' language practices is not the official policy but rather policy that emerges from those peoples' beliefs about appropriate language use in particular contexts. One of Shohamy's examples of a mechanism that generates *de facto* policy would be the predominance of street signs in a particular language in a multilingual community. Hebrew-only street signs in an Israeli neighbourhood would signify Hebrew as the appropriate language to use in that community, even without any specific official policy declaring sole support for Hebrew in that domain.

While Shohamy's (2006) framework offers a more complex understanding of policy, it still relies heavily on a relatively underdeveloped treatment of ideology. Questions about where language ideologies come from, why people believe certain things about language, how those beliefs are implicated in the formation of *de facto* policy, and how those policies play out in relation to

everyday language practices could be more fully explored.

Critical ethnography and language policy

Critical ethnography has, in part, supplied the field with a way to address these concerns, but before attending to this debate, I will first provide a brief overview of critical ethnography as an approach to language policy. Davis (1999) defines critical ethnography by three criteria. First, it is *holistic* in the sense that it “allows for the inclusion of a range of analyses, theories, and methods in language policy and planning research and theory building” (p. 72). She draws on Watson-Gegeo to argue that ethnography is also holistic in that it includes “all relevant and theoretically salient micro and macro contextual influences that stand in a systematic relationship to the behavior or events one is attempting to explain” (Watson-Gegeo, 1992, p. 54, cited in Davis, 1999, p. 72). Second, drawing on Geertz (1973) and Erickson (1986), Davis proposes that critical ethnography is a “semiotic / emic approach”. This means that it is concerned with “immediate and local meanings of actions, as defined from the actors' point of view” (p. 72), which includes *thick descriptions* (a term adapted for ethnography by Geertz, 1973 from the work of Ryle, 1971) of real, local language policy processes. A thick description does not simply describe an event but rather involves “a stratified hierarchy of meaningful structures” (Geertz, 1973, p. 7) which are the product of extended engagement and interpretive work and provide an outsider with the means to understand the event. Third, critical ethnographers insist on and (as a result of the first two elements) are able to commit to policy research in close coordination with specific communities, addressing policy issues that are of immediate practical concern to the community involved. Hornberger and Johnson (2011, p. 276) also support this last point, noting that critical ethnography places special emphasis on “transformative, action-oriented methods.” Canagarajah (2006) adds a related fourth concern over the researcher-community relationship to

this list. He suggests that critical ethnographers attend to the ways that researcher-informant power relationships are negotiated, how the researcher's presence affects the community, as well as how the researcher's own perceptions and interpretations evolve as a result of their investment in the community. Rather than making its research impact through measures such as validity and reliability, Hornberger (2015, p. 17, emphasis in original) explains that, beyond the specific policy context, ethnography also offers "generalizability in terms of *transferability* and *particularity*." Ethnographic findings are transferable in the sense that their rich descriptions allow readers to gauge which findings may or may not be transferable to their own contexts.

Critical ethnography has not offered complete redefinitions of language or policy in the same way that occurred during the major paradigm shift from rational to critical approaches. Generally, the definitions of language and policy provided by historical-structural researchers such as Tollefson – concerning the way language and policy are intimately connected to power and inequality – would be accepted by critical ethnographers as valid but perhaps in need of some elaboration or expansion. For example, McCarty, Romero-Little and Zepeda (2008, p. 160) and McCarty (2004, p. 72) define language policy, with reference to Spolsky (2004), as a "complex sociocultural process" which involves "modes of human interaction, negotiation, and production mediated by relations of power." In later work, McCarty (2011) also follows Levinson et al.'s (2009) description of policy as dynamic social practice. Likewise, Heller's rejection of languages as "whole, bounded systems" that can be objectively studied (2007, p. 1) and her definition of language as "a situated social practice" (2011, p. 10) have been adopted by some critical ethnographers of language policy (e.g. Chimbutane, 2011), while others take more general stances to language and language ideologies in terms of societal power relations (e.g. Wedin, 2005). In this sense, critical ethnography rests comfortably in the policy scientificity 2.0

space that Webb and Gulson (2014) define. However, it has provided a shift in perspective, which is in many ways just as valuable, in which critical ethnographers place greater emphasis on contextuality, complexity and the importance of attending to the social practices that produce language policy in these specific contexts. Critical ethnographers have suggested that their methods address three key areas of concern in critical language policy research. First, critical ethnography provides more detailed analyses of policy in action across all levels from macro to micro in specific contexts. Second, as a result of the first point, it offers a more sophisticated account of power dynamics in language policy generally, particularly for the ways that actors at all levels exercise agency in the interpretation, appropriation and generation of policy. Third, it provides space for transformative change in the communities in which it is deployed.

On this first point, Davis (1999) offers a broad criticism of critical language policy and planning research, particularly work that relies heavily on some form of historical-structural approach. She suggests that while such approaches provide an important philosophical framework for studying policy, they are inadequate for investigating the specificity of current language plans or for providing tangible guidance to the community language planners they propose to empower. She suggests the level of detail, the *thick description*, and the close community ties that are a part of ethnography are an important element lacking in broader historical-structural language policy and planning discussions. Johnson and Ricento (2013) add that this level of detail is important in developing linkages between macro and micro language policy processes, across the layers of Ricento and Hornberger's (1996) metaphorical "language policy onion", connections that were lacking in earlier critical language policy research. Blommaert (2012, p. 18) also lends strength to this position, noting that macroscopic change often has a microscopic locus in that "large-scale change can be triggered by individual

contingencies or recurrences of seemingly insignificant deviations”. Finally, Canagarajah (2006) also notes that the level of detail inherent to an ethnographic approach can offer useful feedback to specific language planning contexts, by providing information before, during and after policy implementation. Though some of these authors at times appear to fall back on *rational* policy perspectives (with reference to top-down language planning and to “the policy process”), the underlying point is an important one. Ethnography adds a level of detail, guided by local community interests, that has been missing from past language policy research approaches.

On the second point, Johnson (2009; 2011; 2013a; 2013b) and Hornberger and Johnson (2011) make the case that critical ethnography can provide policy research the crucial balance, sought by Ball (2006), “between structure and agency, between a critical understanding of the hegemony of policy...and an ethnographic understanding of the power of language policy actors” (Johnson, 2013b, p. 2). Levinson et al. (2009, p. 788) develop this point in a slightly different way, but essentially to the same effect. They argue that because of critical ethnography’s close attention to specific policy contexts, it becomes possible to understand “the practice that goes into creating and sustaining the sedimented common sense of policy.” They propose that longitudinal, ethnographic studies that provide detailed accounts of lived policy experiences are particularly well-suited to studying the processes of appropriation and reification that go into producing policy, not just as formal text but as social practice. Critical ethnography enables examinations of how locally constituted power relations interact with the institutional power of “policy elites” (p. 787). With particular attention to language policy research and work with minority communities, Canagarajah (2006, p. 161) notes that “ethnography is well suited to uncovering these subtle strategies of negotiation, resistance, and reconfiguration, suggesting the need to provide legitimate spaces in education for minority codes and discourses.”

The third argument for critical ethnography, that it offers the potential for transformative in the communities with whom ethnographers work, can be broken down into two points. First, it disrupts traditional policy power structures and reinserts local concerns in debates around formal policy (Levinson et al., 2009, p. 778). Second, the critical ethnography research process opens up important spaces for resistance and empowerment. Hornberger and Johnson (2011) argue that critical ethnography not only retains the commitment of critical language policy research to issues of power and inequality, and the ongoing problematization of the conceptual categories of the field, but also is in a position to provide space for concrete change. They propose, with reference to Jaffe's (1999) work in Corsica, that "the ethnography of language policy can, itself, open up ideological spaces that allow for egalitarian dialogue, and discourses that promote social justice and sound educational practice" (Hornberger & Johnson, 2011, p. 283).

Critique and theoretical departures made in this project

Critical ethnography of language policy has yielded a great deal of important work and promising directions for scholars interested in the ways that localized actions constitute policy as well as for those searching for a means of concrete engagement with community struggles. However, there are several assumptions embedded in this burgeoning body of research that deserve more careful interrogation. The first is a question of scale and the prevalent use of a macro-micro dichotomy. Most researchers seem to rely heavily on a layered, hierarchical conception of language policy space, whether they define it in terms of a metaphorical onion or more generally in terms of micro, meso, and macro domains. Human geographers (e.g. Herod, 2010; Smith, 1992; Kaiser & Nikiforova, 2008) question such *a priori* assumptions about the nature of scale and ask us to consider more carefully how scale is produced as a body of knowledge or material category. The generally presumed connection between a larger area, a

higher scale and more powerful policy is most problematic. This is not to suggest that critical ethnographers of language policy must become human geographers, but we could likely benefit from Herod's (2010, pp. 45-56) advice about taking more care when selecting and defending a particular scalar metaphor – there are many, and they may lead in wildly different directions. How would our discussions of language policy change if we were to adopt rhizomic, spider web or even musical metaphors for scale? Although this project does not focus directly on scale, I may at times make reference to policies operating in different domains and at different scales (e.g. international English policies, nationwide language policies, family language policies), each with their own layered policy effects. I attempt to avoid reifying scalar hierarchies from macro to micro in my analysis and recognize that individuals engage with overlapping polycentric policy domains in unpredictable and unique ways. There are two general guidelines that I tried to keep in mind while analysing my data. First, policies operating at “larger” scales are not necessarily more important ones. Second, scale is not simply a factor to help explain language policies and practices; scale is also produced through language policies and practices.

My second departure revolves around the concept of agency. The theme of the agentic local actor that resists, challenges or appropriates hegemonic policy runs throughout this body of research and Johnson (2009; 2011; 2013a; 2013b) identifies this explicitly as a crucial element of critical ethnography. However, agency seems to be generally undertheorized in these discussions except as a kind of counterbalance to the structural force of large-scale language policy. Questions about how these policy actors come to want what they want for themselves and for others and how they come to see themselves as particular kinds of policy subjects are not generally posed. With reference back to the debates laid out in earlier sections, I would like to propose the injection of Foucault's concepts of *governmentality* and *technologies of the self* into

a critical ethnography of language policy as a more careful approach to the question of agency.

This is not to suggest that a governmentality framework is a definitive approach for language policy research either; however, as Li (2007) proposes, there is a productive dialogue to be had between governmentality and the critical ethnography. Scholars of governmentality have been criticized on the same grounds as the historical-structural scholars for a lack of engagement with lived policy realities and governmentality as it manifests itself in specific contexts. Li (2007, p. 279) argues that many researchers studying governmentality focus on the abstract rationalities and programs of government – “the goal to be accomplished together with the rationale that makes it thinkable and the associated strategies and techniques” – rather than the messy realities that make up policy in action. Foucault himself was resistant to ethnography. Rose (1999, p. 20, cited in Li, 2007) follows Foucault, arguing that to study government is not to start with “historical or sociological questions: what happened and why. It is to start by asking what authorities of various sorts wanted to happen, in relation to problems defined how, in pursuit of what objectives, through what strategies and techniques.” However, Li (2007) insists that we cannot simply separate these programs and rationalities from the messy realities that “[lie] in the details of what actually happens” (p. 279). Without offering a solution to this debate, I propose that drawing the concept of governmentality into a critical ethnography of language policy offers a fruitful entry point to more complex discussions around Spolsky’s (2004) three elements of language policy – language management, beliefs and practices.

Language policy in this project

Drawing all of these threads together, I will summarize how I understand language policy for the purposes of this project. To start, I situate this project firmly within the *critical* turn of language policy research. For me this means three things. First, it positions power and inequality

as a central concern of the project. The context in which I conducted my research is deeply stratified and divided in many ways. This means that many of the stories shared by my participants involve negotiation of difference and the power relations that run through it. Second, following Levinson et al. (2009, p. 770), I see policy “a complex, ongoing social practice of normative cultural production constituted by diverse actors across diverse contexts.” This means that policy does not necessarily begin with textual declarations “from above”; it can be negotiated and produced in every day practice. Third, I take a critical stance of my own position as a researcher in this context. I will expand on this further in the following chapter.

To unpack, with specificity, what actually constitutes language policy, I begin with Spolsky’s (2004) three elements of language policy (beliefs, practices and management) and Shohamy’s (2006) *de facto* policy. Together these make for a good foundation for a critical ethnographic approach to language policy by connecting policy text to lived practice and allowing for reflection on both text and practice, while also encouraging exploration of unwritten language policy. I expand this framework in a few ways, partly in response to the specific context and the experiences that my participants shared. First, as discussed earlier, the concept of *de facto* language policy can be extended beyond the institutional domains in which Shohamy tends to operate. I found during my data collection that in addition to more conventional mechanisms such as standardized tests, *de facto* language policy was being produced through mechanisms such as workplace demographics, neoliberal economic policy, repeated interactions between strangers with no common language, routinized negotiation of linguistic, racial, ethnic and gender differences (convivial practices), and processes of racial and socioeconomic segregation that produce different spaces in the city. This expanded view of language policy requires attention not only to how policy affects or becomes practice but also how practices

become policy. It is possible to think along the lines of Kaiser and Nikiforova (2008) here and investigate a performativity of scaled language policy. That is to say, how do repeated language practices become norms or expectations which can then be understood as policy and what impacts do they have in different spaces or at different scales? This can be approached in part through the lens of governmentality. I situate my individual participants at the heart of the policy equation, asking how they become subjects within language policy and objects of it – how they interact with technologies of power and how they utilize technologies of the self. From this perspective, everyone is a language policy agent, whether they see themselves as such or not.

This expanded view of what constitutes policy has its critics as well. Johnson (2013a), for example, raises concerns over language policy as an ever-expanding umbrella term, ultimately asking “What *isn't* language policy?” (pp. 9, 24 emphasis in original). When treating beliefs and practices as dimensions of policy, one has to be cautious not to generalize the term “language policy” too far. I respond to Johnson’s concern in two ways. First, I believe it is entirely reasonable to suggest that all language practices influence language policy to varying degrees in the broad sense outlined here. Second, we should not mistake all research on language practices for language policy research. Applying the term “language policy” to one’s research means orienting that research to language policy questions and implies a commitment to understanding ways that language practices are developed, fostered, managed or imposed, be it through an examination of explicit, formal policy documents or linguistic community norms and beliefs about language. In fact, this is a distinction that Johnson also makes later in his book (pp. 43-44) but he does not connect it directly back to the original problem of what language policy is. Thus, I propose a Foucauldian approach to language policy as both an expanded definition of language policy and a particular way of understanding and analysing language practices in terms of policy.

Conclusion

The theoretical concepts explored here are deployed at various points throughout the coming chapters, but are central to the second half of the dissertation (chapters 7 to 11). These chapters investigate specific dimensions of language policy in Ras Al Khaimah. Chapter 7 begins to trace my participants' subjectivities within formal policy apparatuses, connecting their localized experiences to the structures of power that extend beyond specific spaces of their urban routines. Chapter 8 draws on the Foucauldian toolkit to explore neoliberal subjectivity and its relationship to language practices and policies. Chapter 9 investigates the issue of space and scale, with emphasis on how processes of spatial and scalar production are tied to the production of language policy in different parts of the city. Chapter 10 utilizes the discussion of conviviality to understand how moments of ethnolinguistic and socioeconomic border crossing are managed through language practices. Finally, chapter 11 offers a concluding discussion that brings all of these pieces back together to outline a framework for understanding language practices and policy in Ras Al Khaimah.

Chapter 3: Methodology and data analysis

Introduction

This chapter gives a methodological overview to the project. In the previous chapters, I identified this as an ethnographic project and this chapter explains what that means in practical terms. It provides a description of the data collection procedures used, the kinds of data collected, how the data were analysed and how I see myself as a Ras Al Khaimah resident and researcher within the project.

Contact zones and my participants

Before explaining in detail how I came to talk to specific people in this project, I must outline in general terms the two groups of people that I spoke to and their relationship to each other. In a book that investigates colonial dimensions of imperialism through the lens of travel writing, Pratt (2008) introduces the term “contact zone”, a concept that I found quite useful in thinking about my participants’ interactions in Ras Al Khaimah. She describes the contact zone as “the space of imperial encounters, the space in which peoples geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations, usually involving conditions of coercion, radical inequality, and intractable conflict” (Pratt, 2008, p. 8). Pratt feels that the concept “foregrounds interactive, improvisational dimensions of imperial encounters” in a way that emphasizes the “co-presence” and co-constitution of the colonizers and the colonized, albeit through “asymmetrical relations of power” (p. 8). Many day-to-day interactions that I discuss in this project occur in what could be thought of as contact zones. These are social spaces (especially commercial spaces such as markets, malls or restaurants) in which individuals who are primarily segregated from each other in their private lives meet for a brief time and interact with one another. These interactions are characterized by asymmetric power relations shaped by

inequalities and societal divisions along lines of race, class, gender, nationality and language. Indeed, the process of recruiting some of the participants for this project involved my own navigation of contact zones, as I will explain shortly.

For the sake of coherent methodological description, I have divided my participants into two groups, which I refer to at various points for the rest of this dissertation. First, there are 7 individuals who I refer to as my core group. These were the first participants I recruited and I spoke to them at length, in most cases around six hours of interview time over the course of six monthly interviews. Second, there is a group of 33 individuals that I spoke to just once, usually for less than an hour. I refer to them as single-interview participants. These were individuals who also inhabited the city spaces that my core participants frequented and mentioned in their interviews with me (e.g. malls, markets, neighbourhoods). While my core group of participants are mainly middle-class residents, the single-interview group includes a much broader cross-section of Ras Al Khaimah society. Despite my positioning of this latter group on the methodological periphery, they make up an important part of this project and offer crucial perspectives from both sides of the many contact zones I visited. As I explain in the following sections, many of these individuals were essential in helping me explore issues faced by those on the “other” side of the contact zone from my core group of participants.

My place in Ras Al Khaimah and my relationship to my participants

I will start by telling the story of this project, how it was conceived, negotiated and carried out. I begin by highlighting my relationship with Ras Al Khaimah because it will help readers understand some of the motivations and other underlying features of the project.

In 1997, a few days before I turned twelve, I moved to the Ras Al Khaimah with my family after my father took a job at a local college. Before that time, I had lived in Canada most

of my life and had no conception of a geographical space called the United Arab Emirates and certainly had never heard of Ras Al Khaimah. I went to English-medium private schools paid for by my father's employer and as a result, integrated into a network of the children of middle-class foreign resident from all over the world, a number of whom are still my close friends to this day. I finished high school in the UAE and moved back to Canada for my undergraduate degree but returned to Ras Al Khaimah soon after graduating to work as a teacher. I worked first at a grade school and then at a private language school (RAK English School), which ended up being the starting point for this research project. After working in Ras Al Khaimah for a few years, I returned to Canada for graduate school. Many of the course papers and small-scale projects that I worked on returned to the context of the UAE and Ras Al Khaimah as I grappled with issues of language learning, identity and language policy for residents of the country (Cook, 2014; 2017). This laid the groundwork for this more substantial project which became my doctoral work.

This personal history has shaped several important parts of this project. It obviously inspired me to use the city and school as a context for my doctoral work. However, more importantly, it meant that my research experience was also a process of reflection on my personal trajectory through Ras Al Khaimah, and the UAE generally. Going into the project, I felt that I knew Ras Al Khaimah very well, having spent my teenage years there and also having worked in the city as an adult. Furthermore, my parents had lived there for the better part of 20 years, up until just before I began my project, so even during my time away from the city I had had a constant stream of news and feelings about what it was like living there. However, as I began my work as a researcher, this personal reference frame that shaped much of what I thought I knew about the city was significantly disrupted. In part, it was because the city had simply changed in the years that I had been away. It was bigger and busier, more focused on

international investment and business, more polluted and also more paranoid – an issue I touch on periodically throughout this dissertation when discussing surveillance and security. But it was also that, having been in graduate school for five years and having developed a detailed research proposal to study language policy in Ras Al Khaimah, I came back with a perspective that was detached from and also more critically aware of my personal experience and investment in the city. I grew up as a more or less monolingual English speaker in a highly multilingual context. I studied French in high school (Arabic was not an option) and learned bits and pieces of other languages, but while living in the city had never carefully explored my own language experiences. Now, coming back with all my knowledge as an ethnographic language policy researcher, I suddenly realized how much of Ras Al Khaimah had been beyond the domains of my habitual social experiences when I had lived there. The multiple forms of social and economic segregation that divide the city are also embedded within this project as a direct result of who undertook it – a white, middle-class, English-speaking man.

Finding people to talk to

To start to unpack my research questions, I needed to speak to some of the country's foreign residents for an extended period of time. I wanted to get a sense of their language routines and what guided their everyday language choices. I also felt initially that I needed people who I would be sure had some investment or interest in language change in the country, that is to say, people who were in some way involved with learning, teaching or managing language practices. I was not necessarily concerned with speaking to policymakers in a formal sense, but I preferred to at least start out by speaking to people who would likely have thought a great deal more than the average person about language in the UAE and their own language choices. Given that I already knew the director of a private language school in Ras Al Khaimah

(RAK English School), this seemed like a good place to start my investigations. I approached her about making her school a focal point for my research project and she agreed. In my proposal, I framed the project as an ethnography of lived language policy in Ras Al Khaimah. I would use the private language school as an investigative starting point and follow policy threads that my participants navigated in their daily lives at the school and in the city as a whole. This ended up being a good decision for several reasons. First, I was right in thinking that participants I recruited from the school would have a great deal to say about language in the country. Second, the school itself was a valuable policy focal point, connecting both public and private sector language policy interests in the country. Third, it gave some unity to my project, with everyone being connected back to single, clearly-defined policy space which then served as a lens through which my city ethnography could be understood.

I found that re-establishing connections with the school that agreed to host me was relatively straightforward. I knew the school director from working there several years before and the school was a small, friendly, welcoming space. This made it easy for me to come and go and eventually approach teachers about participating in the project. I spent a large part of my first two weeks in the school, helping out with occasional odd jobs to make myself useful and observing how the school functioned. Within that time, I had gotten to know a number of staff members and three of them had confirmed an interest in participating.

However, connecting with students was a much greater challenge. I had originally hoped to recruit at least one Emirati student from the school but found there were two main obstacles. First, many of the students at the school that expressed initial interest in participating were female and when they found out that they would have to speak to a male researcher one-on-one at length, they understandably balked at the prospect. Second, most of the male Emirati students

at the school were teenage boys who I did not have ethics approval to recruit. This left me with a very small pool of potential participants, none of whom seemed particularly interested in or available for the extended interviews I hoped for. I remembered the feeling of distance from the Emirati population as a kid and later as a working adult as well, but I also felt that this had perhaps become even more powerful in the years that had passed. Though quite happy to speak with me in the school in passing, any kind of extended interaction was neither expected nor desired. In the end, some students did gradually start to join the project over the first two months I was there. However, they were all other middle-class foreign residents who were keen to use the interviews as English practice, but who were also, I believe, more comfortable with speaking at length to me (just another foreigner) about their experiences in the country.

A second failed research goal was to speak to school support staff members (e.g. secretaries, cleaners, technicians). Though the school was a friendly space and the administration made my presence as comfortable as possible, I (a white, male, middle-class researcher) found it difficult to connect with working-class South Asian residents, who certainly did not seem to feel comfortable with the prospect of talking to me about their personal lives and experiences in Ras Al Khaimah. For most school staff that I approached, I got polite refusals or indefinite deferrals to future dates and I took the hint.

I became concerned that, in choosing to follow aspects of my personal history in formulating the project, I was unwittingly contributing to the erasure of multilingualism in the city and (re)producing a problematic English as a *lingua franca* narrative through my own research. By focusing on an English language school that I worked at and starting the research with attention to English language teaching and learning, was I then also limiting my participant pool to staff and students who more or less followed my own, mainly English, path through Ras

Ras Al Khaimah? Partly in response to these concerns, I significantly broadened my research plan, including interviews with individuals inhabiting the public spaces frequented by my core group of participants. This had the added benefit of helping me get a richer picture of some of these spaces as well, rather than just “observing” them. It meant that even if I mainly followed middle-class, English-speaking residents, I would still get some sense of how they interacted with other groups of residents and to a lesser extent, what those residents thought about it. These interviews provided some ethnographic snapshots of different domains and social groups in Ras Al Khaimah that would otherwise have had a less prominent presence in my project. These individuals allowed me to more carefully investigate the multilingual reality of everyday life in Ras Al Khaimah from a wider range of perspectives, and perhaps more importantly offered a significant expansion in the breadth of class perspectives for this project. Although the experiences of my core group of participants did end up being quite representative of the ethnolinguistic diversity of the city, this second group of participants was essential in opening up issues of class and racism that would have otherwise gone underexplored.

Nevertheless, the issue of researcher-participant “connection” is something that has significantly shaped the data collected for this project. In the end, all of my core participants, though covering a range of ethnolinguistic backgrounds, are middle-class expats living and working in Ras Al Khaimah, more or less like me and perceiving me in similar terms. Our intangible sense of connection was not always immediate but was easy to build over a series of interviews in which we shared experiences of life and language in Ras Al Khaimah from relatively similar social and economic frames of reference. This limited the scope of linguistic and social experience that I could explore with them but at the same time, I believe the sense of connection and comfort also allowed me access to much deeper and more personal reflections

than I would have had from individuals more socially distant.

Participant recruitment

Sticking with my original plan, my core participants were all recruited from the school. We would usually meet to talk in a café, though two participants also preferred to meet me in a space that was available to me at the Al Qasimi Foundation. The single-interview participants were recruited from different parts of Ras Al Khaimah which were mentioned or visited by my core group of participants. These included: commercial public spaces (shopping malls and shops inside them, restaurants, cafés, small independent shops, gas stations) and open outdoor public spaces (waterfront areas, parks). Before talking to anyone, I would generally spend some time on my own in these places, making notes about language use. Once I was familiar with them and I had decided they may be worth investigating further, I would attempt to recruit participants. In the case of small commercial spaces, I had often already built a relationship with the owner or staff. If that was the case, I would mention that I was working on a research project and that I would like to talk to them if possible. I offered my contact information and asked them to contact me in their free time if they were interested finding out more about the project and potentially participating. In many cases, however, especially with business owners or managers, they wanted to do the interview immediately and we would just sit down wherever it was convenient to talk. In the case of open outdoor public spaces and large commercial spaces like shopping malls, I was not speaking to staff or owners, just the people who regularly visited these places. I would first ask them if they were regular visitors. I would then tell them briefly about my project, offer my contact information and ask them to contact me if they might be interested in participating and would like to find out more. Again, in general, if they were interested, they just wanted to sit down somewhere and talk immediately.

This recruitment process was not without a few thorny ethical issues, however. I certainly had ethics approval for this process, but I still had to be cautious of who I approached. Most working-class staff were working under precarious contracts that could be cancelled on a whim. I was careful to observe commercial spaces first before approaching anyone and did my best to avoid inviting anyone to participate in front of their manager. In some cases, people told me they wanted to participate but only if their manager approved of it, which never seemed to be a concern – indeed, the people that wanted to ask their manager seemed to have good working relationships established where they felt comfortable enough to ask that kind of question in the first place. However, I also received many refusals. Many people I spoke to were keenly aware that they were being monitored constantly by security cameras. Indeed, some commercial spaces were almost comically over-monitored, with malls containing towers of cameras pointing in almost every direction – a living caricature of paranoid surveillance society. A few people I approached in malls barely responded to my request, simply shaking their heads and whispering, “camera” to me, as they willed me to leave them alone. Most smaller shops are also monitored with cameras by law and this served as a deterrence for a number of people I spoke to. One man whispered anxiously that he was constantly being watched and recorded. He told me that he was afraid that he would say something deemed politically subversive by whoever was listening and would lose his job. This also raised concerns for me that if for whatever reason my project was deemed politically problematic, many of my participants would be on camera speaking to me at some point. I left my contact details with everyone I spoke to and told them to reach out if they had any trouble. No one did and in my time in Ras Al Khaimah, no one seemed especially concerned about my presence or my project. It is, however, important to note that these security features of Ras Al Khaimah have become embedded in the recruitment process in that the more

strictly monitored an individual, the less likely they were to speak to me. While I discuss this issue at various points over the coming chapters, the voices of the most strictly monitored residents of the city are not generally present in this project.

In chapter 6, I provide more detailed profiles of the school and my participants. Appendix B also provides two tables that give a summary of some general information about the individuals I interviewed over the course of the project. Table 1 covers my core participants recruited from the school and Table 2 lists my single-interview participants. Some of the details in these tables are made deliberately vague for anonymity reasons.

Data collection tools and processes

Interviews

For my core participants, I arranged six interviews over the course of approximately six months. I structured the interviews in this way because it gave my participants and I a bit of time to get to know each other and also because it allowed my participants some space to reflect on their language use in Ras Al Khaimah before meeting with me again. When we met for our first interview, I gave them a small notebook and asked them to jot down places they went to and language-related experiences in Ras Al Khaimah that they would like to talk about. I left this latter topic relatively open but told them I was most interested in specific *stories* of experiences with language in specific places. If they asked me to give examples, I suggested they could make note of a time when they had to make a choice about what language to use or jot down situations where they had some kind of communication problem to solve. By the third interview, most of them were reliably bringing a variety of interesting experiences to discuss.

Each interview was about an hour and had a thematic structure. These themes were as follows: background information; language teaching and learning (covering two interviews);

language at home; sense of self in Ras Al Khaimah; language policy. Though each interview had a set of prepared questions, I did not follow them rigidly. They served more as a guide of topics I wanted to cover and prompts that might trigger stories of language use in Ras Al Khaimah if needed. Furthermore, as the interviews progressed, they became increasingly tailored to specific participants. I made notes during interviews and afterwards when relistening to them to add participant-specific questions that I felt would yield more interesting discussions than the general ones that I had prepared. This had an added benefit of making the interviews much more personal as we went along, not only because we were getting to know each other but also because I was able to ask increasingly specific questions based on what I already knew about my interviewees. It also served as a built-in member checking mechanism in that if I felt that I had misunderstood something I could always return to it in a subsequent interview. I also left space at the start of each interview for participants to discuss their monthly notebook-related stories and reflections. In some cases, we spent more time discussing these reflections than any of the questions I had prepared, a positive outcome because such accounts tended to be more specific and extended than anything produced in response to a prompt from me. This structure made the later interviews, which tended to focus on more personal topics, more casual and comfortable than the formality that characterized the first two “getting to know you” interviews. For the single-interview participants, I used a different set of questions that focused more on the space in which I met them, but also covered topics such as how they came the country, their work and who they spent their free time with. The interviews varied in length but averaged 45 minutes and were open-ended and conversational.

My goal for all the interviews was to encourage story-telling as much as possible. In this sense, the project relies on “narrative” data; however, I was less interested in studying narrative

structure or tracing life stories than I was in using stories as a way to encourage my participants to recount their daily experiences with language in detail – to get at the “concreteness of human experience” (De Fina and Georgakopoulou, 2012, p. 18). Further, rather than simply treating participants as “vehicles of information” (p. 18), narrative provides a means of exploring how individuals situate themselves in regimes of discourse (Tamboukou, 2013). My approach to stories here also follows Georgakopoulou’s (2015, p. 255) argument that narrative research does not have to rely solely on “long, relatively uninterrupted, teller-led accounts of past events or of one’s life story.” Although, I did gather life stories of my core participants, which I use in the profiles of chapter 6, this was not the research goal, but rather provides further context for their accounts of their (language) policy-ed selves.

For the most part, interviews were conducted in English. All of my core participants were proficient enough in English to talk at length about various issues in the interviews. Maria, Mozart, Anne and Bradley were fluent English speakers while Jessica, John and Malak preferred English (though I offered Arabic with an interpreter as an option) because they wanted to use the interviews as speaking practice. For the single-interview participants, most of the interviews (19 out of 26) were also conducted primarily in English but I also had interpreters to help with miscommunication or difficult language. Seven interviews were conducted primarily in another language but these also involved some English communication. Table 2 (Appendix B) lists the language(s) used for each interview, with the first language listed being the primary interview language. I hired three interpreters locally once I began planning interviews in specific Ras Al Khaimah spaces. We met once for a paid training session where I told them about the project and we went through the interview questions together. During that meeting, we also discussed how we would introduce the project to prospective interviewees, emphasizing the ethical concerns I

raised in the previous section. Once we were both happy that we were on the same page, we went to a few different locations together to try to recruit participants. If a person agreed to participate, and they preferred to speak English, I would conduct the interview with the interpreter acting in a support role. They stepped in if the interviewee did not understand the question or if they could not formulate something in English to their satisfaction. For the interviews in other languages, the interpreters took the lead in the interview but did abbreviated translations of what the interviewee said on the spot so that I could formulate follow-up questions if necessary. Despite the apparent formality of the process, most of the interviews took a comfortable, conversational tone, in large part thanks to the tact and talents of the interpreters I worked with.

That said, this interview process raises several issues that need further discussion. Talmy (2010) explains the importance of recognizing interviews as forms of “social practice”. He argues that from this perspective, the interview is no longer seen as simply a tool; it is a communicative event that represents “a topic for investigation itself” (p. 132). Data are “‘accounts’ of truths, facts, attitudes, beliefs, interior, mental states, etc., co-constructed between interviewer and interviewee” and in analysis, “data do not speak for themselves, [rather] analysis centers on how meaning is negotiated, knowledge is co-constructed, and the interview is locally accomplished” (p. 132). While, this project does not engage fully in an analysis of the interviews themselves, I believe it is important to take on board Talmy’s recommendation that we must consider the social context of the interview. This means thinking about my relationship to my participants and how these relationships affected the content of the interviews. As Foley (2012) explains, the insider/outsider or same/other problem of the interview dynamic is not a simple dichotomy. My interpreters and myself were insiders with our participants in some respects (e.g. foreign residents of Ras Al Khaimah, shared language, shared social spaces) and outsiders in

others (e.g. socioeconomic status, the spaces of our routine lives). The main point that I want to make here is not that interviewers should try to align as many of these variables as possible with those of their interviewees to get some kind of “optimal” data. It is simply that we need to be aware that an interview is a product of its social context and is thus produced in different ways, co-constructed by all of its participants. Below, I will provide a few examples of how different kinds of relationships produced different kinds of data.

For my core participants, I believe we generally thought of each other as peers. We had different nationalities and language backgrounds, but we nonetheless interacted in Ras Al Khaimah as middle-class, mobile residents that lived our lives in the UAE in many of the same spaces. This made for, in my opinion, relatively comfortable and conversational interviews in which we had a great deal of common ground to draw on in describing experiences and (for me) formulating follow-up questions. This, in turn, meant that the interviews were less structured by the interview questions and were more informant-guided. Maria, for example, commented at the end of our last interview that she probably would not have shared her experiences with racism in Ras Al Khaimah “if it was a different person [doing the interviews].” This was obviously not a statement about some kind of understanding I might have of what it means to be a Filipino woman in Ras Al Khaimah, but was more of a comment on the feeling that we had built a positive relationship over the course of the interviews and that I was at the very least a sympathetic listener. The context of the interviews also sometimes caused participants to hold things back. Anne mentioned in our last interview that she had at times “chosen her words carefully” if we ever drifted too close to certain “political” topics related to life in Ras Al Khaimah. This was not because she felt uncomfortable talking to *me* about these things but rather because she wanted to avoid certain topics *on record* while still living in Ras Al Khaimah.

For my single-interview participants, other issues emerged. First of all, my interpreters, also being middle-class Ras Al Khaimah residents, were not exactly “insiders” for some of my working-class participants. However, their presence did seem to put some of them at ease simply by being able to talk about these issues in their own language if necessary. I believe the fact that my participants volunteered themselves meant that despite social or economic differences that might divide us and our experiences in Ras Al Khaimah, they were generally quite happy to talk to me at length about their lives in the city. In a few cases, participants seemed (pleasantly) surprised that their opinions were of interest to someone like me. That is to say, they were not generally asked for their opinions about life and language in Ras Al Khaimah, especially not by white, middle-class researchers. In most cases, it felt as though having the interpreter there served as an immediate ice-breaker. People were curious about who the interpreters were and what kind of project would be interested in hearing from them in Malayalam (for example). The interpreters would chat for a few moments in their mutual language and then we would proceed with a (usually) comfortable interview. Nevertheless, the interview dynamic was a little bit different from those with my core participants for a few reasons. First, I had much less time to build a relationship with my participants. This meant that the interviews followed the prepared questions more closely and the extent to which the interviewee moved beyond generalities and factual information and towards more personal accounts of language use depended largely on the participant and how easily they fell into conversation with me and my interpreters (if they were present). In a few cases, interviewees never seemed entirely comfortable with sharing more than a few factual details about their lives. I had already told my interpreters not to push an issue if someone did not seem comfortable, so in those cases, we had short (20-30 minute) interviews and left. I have not made direct reference to any of these abbreviated interviews for my extended

discussions in subsequent chapters but I have left them in Table 2 (Appendix B) because I still drew on these interviews in thinking about different spaces in Ras Al Khaimah. Second, I had to spend much more time, proportionally, on simply understanding the contexts that many of these participants lived their lives in. Discussions of daily routines sometimes became quite extended as I tried to understand, for example, who was making housing decisions for whom and why in the case of ethnolinguistically segregated living arrangements. For others, it took quite a bit of time to unpack their work context – who talks to whom in what languages and why. Again, this sometimes meant fewer stories and more general accounts of daily life in these interviews. Third, my interpreters sometimes did more cultural than linguistic interpretation. For example, a discussion of the Tagalog term *kabayan*, which I discuss in chapter 10, came out of the opening chat my interpreter had with a participant (Dee). The interview proceeded in English but when we returned to this word that I had heard them use, the interpreter and Dee worked together to agree on their mutual understanding of what the word entailed.

Transcripts

Interviews were audio recorded and transcribed in full in a “standard orthographic” or “play-script” format (Hepburn & Bolden, 2017, p. 6). I transcribed most of the English interviews myself and my interpreters transcribed the interviews they were involved with. For interviews that were not entirely in English, my interpreters first transcribed the interview in the original language(s) and then went back and added their translations into English. The play-script format of all of these transcripts allowed me to read through them quickly and code during analysis, after which time I could return to any specific quotes that I intended to use in my discussions. I went back to relisten to the interviews and double-check any potential translation issues with my interpreters. Although I acknowledge the limitations of relying on standard

orthographic “verbatim” transcripts, which represent “highly consequential transformations of the original” (Hepburn & Bolden, p. 6) that “miss basic features of timing, overlap, intonation, emphasis, volume and many other features that interaction analysts now recognize as central to understanding ongoing activities in talk” (Hepburn & Bolden, p. 10), I have nevertheless used this format for two reasons. First, in focusing primarily on small stories and accounts of language experience, I am much more concerned with presenting readable quotes that focus on content rather than delivery. In assembling stories from interviews, I did not change any wording, but I was active in editing down quotes to make them shorter and more coherent. I did this in a way that was as faithful as possible to what my participant conveyed, mostly cutting down tangents and filler words. I have occasionally italicized words that were stressed by the interviewee if it was relevant to the story being told. At times, I have also added emotional indicators if the tone may be unclear to the reader. This involved simply noting that the interviewee laughed or frowned for example. Second, introducing more complex forms of transcription to interviews that were being translated seemed to introduce more problems than it solved. The issue of how to appropriately render a more complex transcription process consistently in Tagalog, Malayalam, Hindi and Urdu (and then converted to English) was a problem for which I had no answer and would probably have required professional transcribers for each language.

Ethnographic observation

While it was not practical for me to directly “observe” my participants as they went about their daily lives in Ras Al Khaimah, I did nevertheless engage in observations of numerous kinds throughout my stay in the city. I spent my first few weeks in the country regularly visiting RAK English School and observing day-to-day operations. I kept notes about language use, the kinds of discussions that staff and students had, languages on display on signs or posters and any

informal conversations that I had with anyone. I also collected documents that the school produced in advertisement of its courses. Additionally, I spent a good deal of time wandering around the neighbourhood of the school and talking to people nearby. All of this together helped me build a profile for the school that all of my participants were connected to in some way. It also helped me formulate specific questions that I needed to ask about their experiences at the school during our interviews together.

I also spent quite a lot of my time exploring different areas of the city, visiting and investigating specific spaces that my participants mentioned or told stories about. I would first relisten to what my participants had told me about their experiences in these places and then go and experience them for myself. I took notes about my own language use and how people in those spaces engaged with me. I also collected any kinds of physical documents that I could from these spaces (e.g. restaurant menus, fliers, notices, advertisements) that might give a fuller picture of language practices, hierarchies or policies relevant to the context. I would then use those experiences to guide future lines of discussion with my participants. This was a form of triangulation in the sense that I was confirming in some way the accounts that my participants had given me even though I was not observing them directly. For example, when Anne told me about a vegetable shop that she went to regularly, I could go and confirm that the people who manage it did not speak much English but seemed to speak at least five other languages and were quite happy to communicate with me by any means we could manage. In addition to following up on the experiences of my informants, I also kept an ethnographic journal of my own experiences with language and language policy in the city. I sometimes drew on these experiences in interviews when discussing different parts of the city with my participants and have included a few of my own small stories in later discussions.

Finally, I kept a close eye on government press releases and popular media reports during my time there and after leaving. I did this to make sure that I was engaged with major news or any issues that might relate to language policy in Ras Al Khaimah or the UAE. I draw on these discussions at various points, mainly to provide contextual information and illustrate the kinds of discursive reference points that may be relevant to issues being discussed in this project. I mainly rely on English media, partly because of my limited reading proficiency in other languages but also because these resources were more relevant to my core participants, all of whom were middle-class English-speaking foreign residents.

Data, coding and analysis

To organize the large amount of data I had been collecting, I first created separate folders for each of my core participants. These included their interview data along with a document that I created to track my own thoughts, questions and issues to follow up on as the interviews progressed. I also created a folder for the school itself, which contained my own ethnographic notes and observations as well as any physical materials I collected. As the project went on, I also began creating folders for each of the “spaces” that I had been exploring more fully. Ultimately, I chose to focus on four of these (a South Indian Market area, middle-class shopping mall space, an upmarket café and the corniche area) but I initially had about a dozen. I chose these four for two reasons. First, they were areas that had all generated a large enough set of experiences and reactions from all of my participants collectively that I felt I could discuss them. Second, they covered a good amount of thematic ground in that they enabled further discussion of socioeconomic and ethnolinguistic division in the city.

My early stages of data analysis took place during data collection as I tried to make notes in these folders of ongoing issues or themes that I felt were relevant to different individuals or

spaces – what Saldaña (2012, p. 41) would call “analytic memos”. After transcriptions were complete, I read them more closely and added to these notes when there were any thematic issues that needed to be added or edited. After creating these broad categories, I made large documents that served as profiles for each core participant. I began with a broad life-story summary, which I have used in chapter 6. I then reorganized transcript data into thematic sections in a form of “holistic coding” (Saldaña, 2012, p. 142) which focused on the issues that seemed most important to that individual’s experience in Ras Al Khaimah. Rather than a densely-coded analysis, I used codes to identify specific stories or reflections that would then potentially contribute to the themes I saw emerging across cases. I did this in part to retain the structure of the many short stories my participants told as well as their reflections on them. I also created similar profiles for different spaces which included participant experiences in and descriptions of them. Once I had these profiles, I was able to make connections across them to develop the thematic discussions that became chapters 7, 8, 9 and 10. This involved a further process of reducing transcript data into specific examples and short stories that helped explore subjectivities within, engagement with and production of different forms of language policy.

In looking at specific stories, I took an approach to narrative analysis that draws inspiration from what Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach & Zilber (1998) call *categorical-content* analysis as well as Tamboukou’s (2013) discussion of Foucauldian narrative. The categorical-content approach means that although participant backgrounds and life stories are relevant, they are not the central goal of data collection. Instead, my narrative analysis focused on stories that highlighted how the participants positioned themselves within policy frameworks or constructed the language policy of their contexts. I also draw on Tamboukou’s (2013) “Foucauldian narrative” in which the storyteller is decentred and the analyst’s attention is refocused on how

the narrator's subjectivity is constituted in discourse. Tamboukou sees narratives as technologies of power and technologies of the self. As technologies of power, narratives "determine the conduct of individuals and submit them to certain ends or domination, an objectivizing of the subject" (Foucault, 1988, p. 18, cited in Tamboukou, 2013, p. 93). As technologies of the self, narratives are "active practices of self-formation" (Tamboukou, 2013, p. 93). Narratives told about the self can be understood as part of a discursive regime in which the self is constituted through procedures of objectification and subjectification, which correspond to the ways in which the self is "categorized, distributed and manipulated" and the ways in which the individual "actively turns [themselves] into a subject" (Tamboukou, 2013, p. 93). Tamboukou explains that rather than attending primarily to the meaning of stories, she wanted to explore "their connections and interaction in the production of truth and knowledge about the female self in education" (p. 102). In the case of this study, I was primarily interested in the production of truth and knowledge about the language user, language learner, and language expert and in particular how these types of subjects became language policy actors and producers in different contexts.

Like the interview process, the analysis process was also a co-construction in which my own research goals, socio-political orientations and relationship to my participants contributed to how the data was assembled. Riessman (1993) notes the layers of interpretation that define the process of presenting a story in a research project – the original experience itself, the retelling, the transcription of the retelling, the organization and analysis of transcriptions, and the reader's interpretation of the researcher's presentation. As such, I do not seek to present these stories as representative truths teleported from the minds of my participants to this document. Rather, I have attempted to engage with my own position throughout this process, be it as middle-class Ras Al Khaimah resident, critical policy researcher, or story-teller in my own right.

Conclusion

This chapter outlined the data collection and analytical tools used in the project. The ethnographic tools deployed allowed for significant exploratory reach as they enabled me to investigate different spaces in Ras Al Khaimah both through the eyes of my participants and from my perspective as a researcher. The narrative emphasis embedded in the interview process allowed for a deep probing of how my participants presented themselves as subjects and objects of language policy both through their accounts of direct engagement with formal policy apparatuses and through their stories of daily life in the city.

Chapter 4: Background: Demographics, language and the Emirati population

Introduction

This chapter serves as an orientation to demographic and linguistic context of the project. I start by providing a justification for the terms “foreign residents” and “class”, which are used frequently in this dissertation. I then provide a demographic overview of the country as a whole and Ras Al Khaimah specifically. This is followed by a linguistic overview to give a general sense of Arabic, English and other languages I discuss in this project. In the final section of this chapter, I provide a detailed overview of how the Emirati population is constructed within social and economic policy in the country. While the project focuses mainly on foreign residents, it is also necessary to understand the Emirati population’s relationship with the government because this informs discussions in later chapters that explore policy that affects foreign residents. Unlike most language-related research in the UAE, this project takes the Emirati population as a kind of “background” to the experiences of foreign residents rather than the other way around.

A note on terms: Foreign residents, expatriates, migrants and class

Although official accounts of history (e.g. National Media Council, 2007; 2013) suggest the foreign population was limited to trade relations in the past and did not become a significant part of the country’s development until the post-oil era, in fact, semi-permanent Arab and South Asian residents date back hundreds of years (Markovitz, 1999; Onley, 2005; Vora, 2010; 2013). These communities were more than just stops on trade routes; they were fully integrated into Emirati society (Al-Sayegh, 1998; Onley, 2005). Thus, the state-imposed logic of citizenship, in which Emirati residents inherently “belong” while other residents are temporary labour, should be considered critically. Vora (2013) argues that this perspective omits the agency and multiple forms of extra-state citizenship claimed by non-Emirati residents and often even encouraged

indirectly by the government. To avoid a mere economic definition of non-Emirati residents and to emphasize the contributions they make to the construction of urban space in the UAE, Nagy (2006) uses the term “foreign residents”, a term that is also used throughout this dissertation. Although word “foreign” still imposes a lack of belonging on this population, it also opens up other forms of non-economic existence in the country and thus I use it for lack of a better term.

However, in discussing governmental policy and discursive regimes in the UAE, the economic definition imposed on foreign residents by the government must also be considered. In both official and popular discourse, the terms expatriate (or expat) and migrant have wide circulation. “Expatriate” generally refers to European, North American or, in some cases, Arab foreign residents who are employed in white-collar jobs and “migrant” generally refers to South Asian, Southeast Asian, North/East African, or more recently, West African foreign residents employed in manual labour or low-paid service industry positions. As Vora (2013) explains, this distinction is problematic as it relies heavily on racial divisions and obscures a range of other belongings claimed by foreign residents. First, there are a number of wealthy South Asian foreign residents who operate in expatriate and citizen circles. Second, there is a large population of middle- and working-class South Asian foreign residents, who fit neither with the wealthy “expatriate” community nor with the poor, “migrant” worker community. Nevertheless, the expatriate-migrant dichotomy is frequently deployed and will occasionally be used in this project as an entry point to an examination of government construction and management of these “recognized” subsets of the foreign resident population.

I also frequently use the term “class” in this dissertation, specifically working class, middle class and occasionally upper class. This is not a deployment in a Marxian sense but rather a way of distinguishing specific types of belonging that emerge in the UAE from migration

policy. In this project, I use the term middle class for residents who meet the minimum income threshold to be able to bring their families with them. The rules for this are complex but recent policy changes set a minimum for men sponsoring their families at 3000 AED per month including accommodation or 4000 AED without (UAE Cabinet, 2019; Webster, 2019). I use the term working class to refer to those who fall below that threshold. This obviously creates a very large income range for the middle class, along with a diverse set of experiences. Furthermore, many middle-class residents choose not to bring their families with them and many working-class residents have no families to bring. However, I retain this division in my own discourse because governmental and private policy tends to treat these two groups very differently, offering distinct forms of belonging to middle-class “highly skilled workers” and their families, who are seen as potential participants in the labour market as well (UAE Cabinet, 2019).

My core group of participants are foreign residents who would be classified as “expatriates” in most official and unofficial discourse in the country and who I consider to be middle class based on the criteria above. Many of the participants whom I spoke to in single interviews would be considered “migrants” or “workers” in these same discursive regimes and I use the term working class if invoking an economic distinction.

Demographics of the UAE

The UAE is a small wealthy nation in the southeast part of the Arabian Peninsula made up of seven emirates. The country is a federalist system of monarchies in which each emirate has its own ruling family and some political independence from the union. As a result, despite a number of similarities, each Emirate retains a distinct economy and social structure. While Dubai and the capital, Abu Dhabi, are the most well-known emirates, five other small northern emirates, including Ras Al Khaimah make up the rest of the country. The overall population is

only 10% Emirati, with the rest of the population consisting of foreign residents from all over the world. In 2010 (the time of the last census), the population of the UAE was approximately 8.2 million with 7.3 million foreign residents (National Bureau of Statistics, 2010), though more recent estimates have been made at 9.4 million and 7.8 million, respectively (Malit & Al Youha, 2013). The vast majority of the foreign resident population is South Asian, typically working in manual labour or low-paid service industry jobs. India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Egypt and the Philippines top the list of countries of origin (Malit & Al Youha, 2013; United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2017). European and North American residents tend to fill well-paid jobs in business and education. Arab residents from across Middle East and North Africa work in all industries. There are also an estimated 65,000 to 135,000 illegal residents who have either entered or remained in the country without valid visa (Malit & Al Youha, 2013). Finally, there are a number of stateless residents in the country. While official estimates suggest there are about 10,000 stateless residents (Zacharias, 2018), other estimates put the figure at a minimum of 20,000 (United Nations Human Rights Council, 2008), perhaps 100,000 (Ghazal, 2008).

Contrary to the popular imagination of this ethnic and linguistic diversity as a recent phenomenon that accompanied the modernization of the country (Vora, 2013), the UAE (and its prior constituent parts) has been a home for South Asian and North/East African short- and long-term residents for centuries (Chalcraft, 2012). However, it was not until the end of the colonial period that the country began to experience significant demographic change. Chalcraft (2012) explains that prior to the 1940s, most foreign residents in the Arabian Peninsula were from India; however, following the end of World War II and the breakup of the British Empire, migration from other Arab states significantly increased. This included a number of Palestinians, recently

dispossessed during the formation of Israel. By 1975, about a quarter of all foreign residents in the UAE were Arab, primarily Palestinian, Omani and Egyptian (Birks & Sinclair, 1980). The 1970s and 80s saw a dramatic shift in the originating countries of migrants to the Gulf, with Asians constituting 63 percent of the Gulf workforce by 1985 (Kapiszewski, 2006).

This was not simply an economic change, with labour from South Asia being much cheaper, but also a political one. Chalcraft (2012) argues that many accounts of the foreign population of the Gulf problematically treat it as mere manpower, “making the profoundly unequal and consequential control over *persons*, their livelihoods and social and political relations appear merely as the neutral and technocratic management of *things*” (p. 66, emphasis in original). The post-war Arab residents brought their politics with them to the region, resulting in both socialist and pan-Arabist movements. Chalcraft (2012, p. 75) explains that Asian foreign residents “were unlikely to make claims for citizenship...were alien and could continue to remain disenfranchised...more likely to be passive observers of political processes...than as potential activists or claimants on social services.” Refusals by the Palestinian Liberation Organization and Yemeni government to condemn Saddam Hussein during the 1990 invasion of Kuwait cemented this mistrust and led to the expulsion of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians and Yemenis across the Peninsula. This shift also led to new segregation measures for incoming foreign residents to minimize their political, cultural and social impact on the country. Isolated from urban centres, new spaces such as Jebel Ali in Dubai were established and combined with an all-encompassing contracting system, which “imported, fed, housed and then removed all of the labour required for particular projects” (Chalcraft, 2012, p.76). New legal and administrative processes were introduced to ensure “segregation and rotation” (Chalcraft, 2012 p. 76) and thus, exclusion from political activity. This included passport withholding and mandatory six-month

external waiting periods between jobs to avoid the problems that unemployed migrants might bring (Winckler, 2000). However, this is not to imply that the South Asian wave of migration has been politically docile. Indeed, worker strikes and protests regularly occur over pay and working conditions (Kanna, 2011; 2012; for recent examples, see Arsenault, 2013; Moukhallati, 2015). Nevertheless, such action is less politically threatening than socialist, Islamist, or Arab Spring movements imported from neighbouring countries. Along with the influx of Asian residents, Westerners began to move to the UAE in search of jobs in and around the oil industry and its resulting revenue. Currently, there are tens of thousands of American, South African and Canadian residents and over 100,000 British residents (BQ Staff, 2015; Gerardy, 2008; Government of Canada, 2018). As AlShehabi (2015) argues, these millions of foreign residents are more than mere manpower; they are “agents that animate the city” (p. 101) as “travellers, consumers, investors and indeed inhabitants of the urban space of the region” (p. 111).

As foreigners began to be positioned as a threat to cultural identity, workforce nationalization schemes emerged to reduce the “demographic imbalance” as it is described in official and media discourse (e.g. Forstenlechner & Rutledge, 2011; Habboush, 2009a; Kanna, 2011; Zeitoun, 2001). However, the fact remained that increased numbers of foreign residents contributed to a rapidly expanding economy, which in turn led to more benefits for citizens, and on the ground, foreigner numbers continued to soar (Herb, 2014). Between 2006 and 2010 the country experienced a 75% increase in the non-national population with a peak influx of nearly 2 million people between 2007 and 2008 (National Bureau of Statistics, 2010). Though the increases slowed when the global economic crisis hit the UAE in 2008, the foreign population continues to increase nonetheless (National Bureau of Statistics, 2010).

Ras Al Khaimah

The context of this study is Ras Al Khaimah, a city in an eponymous emirate at the northernmost tip of the country. With only around 400,000 residents (Emirate of Ras Al Khaimah, 2014), Ras Al Khaimah is much smaller than Dubai or Abu Dhabi. While it is similar to the rest of the country demographically and politically in many ways, it is often described by residents as “quieter” or “more local” than the rest of the bigger cities to the south. This latter description has some basis in fact, as Ras Al Khaimah is slightly “more Emirati” than the bigger cities; however, this difference has shrunk dramatically in recent years. According to the most recent estimates, while Dubai is less than 10% Emirati, the populations of Abu Dhabi and Ras Al Khaimah are approximately 19% and 24% Emirati, respectively (Dubai Statistics Centre, 2018; Emirate of Ras Al Khaimah, 2013; 2014; Statistics Centre – Abu Dhabi, 2017). Indeed, Ras Al Khaimah has experienced major demographic change since the early 2000s. Over approximately ten years, starting in 2005, the population more than doubled from 210,063 to 438,000 and the proportion of Emiratis almost halved from about 42% to 24% (Emirate of Ras Al Khaimah, 2013; 2014; Federal Competitiveness and Statistics Authority, 2005). By comparison, the percentage of Emiratis in the populations of Dubai and Abu Dhabi in 2005 were 10.4% and 25%, respectively – small declines up to present by comparison. It is also possible that the shift in Ras Al Khaimah has continued over the past five years, making it similar to Abu Dhabi, but there are no data available past 2013. If the data are accurate, this change in less than a decade is actually more dramatic than what the entire country went through from 1975 to 2005 (36% to 20%) and far more so than Dubai (27%) and Abu Dhabi (25%), which even in 1975 had mainly foreign resident populations (Federal Competitiveness and Statistics Authority, 2005).

Like the rest of the country, the city has a foreign resident population from all over the

world, with South Asians constituting a majority of this group. Though Ras Al Khaimah is semi-autonomous with its own royal family and emirate-level government, it is still governed by national policy formulated in the two major political and economic centres, Abu Dhabi and Dubai. Even for sectors that are not nationally organized, such as public education, major policy changes tend to begin in Abu Dhabi or Dubai and trickle down to the northern emirates. In the private sector, policy developments tend to spread faster. For example, Ras Al Khaimah has followed Dubai's neoliberal lead, which I will take up further in chapter 8, building tourist infrastructure such as beach resorts and shopping malls as well as developing free trade zones in which international companies can establish headquarters as tax havens. The city has also begun to serve as a commuter suburb for Dubai with cheaper rents and less traffic than Dubai (El Gazzar, 2014). As the city has grown, so have the number and size of English language grade schools as well as the demand for additional English language support from private facilities.

Language

There is no easy linguistic mapping for any of the segments of the population discussed so far and little research has been conducted on how language practices are distributed. Although the constitution of the UAE cites Arabic as the “official language” (Government of UAE, 1971), Arabic is not the language of the majority of the residents of the country, nor can Arabic be understood in simplistic terms as a single unified language – there are many forms of Arabic in the UAE. Researchers often describe Arabic as a diglossic language because there are many colloquial varieties that exist alongside Modern Standard Arabic (MSA), the written form.

Khaleeji (/xæ'li:dʒi/) Arabic is the dominant colloquial form in the UAE, which is positioned by linguists within a category called Gulf Arabic. However, the situation is far more complex than this simple diglossic structure, and perhaps terms such as *triglossic* (Carroll, Al Kahwaji & Litz,

2017) or *heteroglossic* (Bakhtin, 1981; O'Neill, 2017a) would be more appropriate. Colloquial Arabic from many different countries and Gulf Pidgin Arabic (Bakir, 2010; Cook, 2014; Næss, 2008; Smart, 1990) can be heard alongside *Khaleeji* Arabic, while Classical Arabic and MSA take more prominent roles in religious and formal domains respectively. With the Emiratis at just 10% of the total population, there are likely more non-Emirati Arabic speakers in the UAE than local *Khaleeji* Arabic speakers (United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2017). In spite of this, other forms of colloquial Arabic tend to occupy less powerful positions in society due to their domains of use (often shops, cafés, taxis and construction sites).

In this project, I rarely distinguish forms of Arabic except where my participants do so explicitly themselves. This is because it is often not clear from their own accounts what they mean when they say things like “I speak Arabic 80%” or “we spoke in Arabic”. It is not as straightforward as asking a person what they mean either, as shown by Ferguson (1990), who notes the ideological divisions that many speakers of Arabic produce. “Good” Arabic is often considered to be *fusha* (/ˈfʊshə/), which refers to either MSA or Qur’anic forms while colloquial forms are often considered “bad” or “lazy”. Furthermore, most speakers of Gulf Pidgin Arabic do not generally identify it as such – it is simply “Arabic”; however, my Arabic-speaking informants identify this as “broken” or “not pure” Arabic. Given that this project is more concerned with the social than the linguistic implications of these beliefs about language, I have tended to follow my participants’ descriptions of their own and others’ language use, rather than try to engage in detective work about what form of Arabic they “actually use”.

English also plays an important role in the country and is entangled with formal and informal neoliberal discourses in government and the private sector, which I will take up more in chapters 5, 7 and 8. Other authors studying language in the UAE note that the country’s

economic diversification away from oil into areas such as shipping, banking, real estate, tourism and education has entrenched English in society (Burden-Leahy, 2009; Ahmed, 2010) and that English is often required for Emiratis themselves to function effectively in their communities (e.g. Al Mansoori, 2001, cited in Troudi, 2009; van den Hoven & Carroll, 2017; Kennetz & Carroll, 2018). As I explore in the next chapter, formal policy has also privileged English, particularly in educational systems and institutions. As Piller (2018) notes, authors investigating English in the UAE have often focused on the characteristics of *lingua franca* English (e.g. Boyle, 2011; 2012; Hopkyns, Zoghbor, & Hassall, 2018). This body of research perhaps also overemphasizes the extent that English is actually used as a *lingua franca*. Hopkyns et al. (2018, p. 161), for example, note the “dominance of English” by commenting on its ubiquity in middle-class domains such as malls, bookstores and magazine publications, which is perhaps more reflective of the authors’ domains of experience than being representative of language use in the country. This is not to say that I dispute the power and utility of English in the UAE. Rather, I urge caution in overstating its domains of use amongst foreign residents.

The large number of foreign residents from all over the world also implies a great deal of linguistic diversity in various enclaves throughout the country as well as in cross-community interactions. There are no official data but local media sources sometimes cite figures such as 200 nationalities speaking more than 140 languages (e.g. Abbas, 2018; Frem, Rajadhyaksha & Woetzel, 2018; Saseendran, 2014). This is more than just a statistic, it is also a lived experience, with languages such as Urdu, Hindi, Malayalam, Tagalog, Bengali and Pashto (to name a few) as major languages heard in everyday life in the country. Urdu and Hindi, in particular, often play an important *lingua franca* role for South Asian communities even though many residents do not necessarily speak either language natively, a discussion I take up further in chapters 8, 9 and 10.

Governmentality and Emiratis

In this section, I discuss the Emirati population's relationship to government policy and discourse. Although this project focuses on the experiences of foreign residents, understanding the relationship between Emiratis and the government is helpful in framing language policy in the country. It is also important in tracing the discursive origins of many issues that affect how both Emiratis and governmental institutions interact with foreign residents. For now, I simply point to Vora's (2013) use of the term "graduated sovereignty" (Ong, 1999) to describe the fact that Emiratis and different classes and ethnicities of foreign residents are offered different forms of belonging and opportunities and are constructed as subjects through different rationalities of government. Moving forward, I will begin to unpack the ways that this "graduated sovereignty" shapes the lives and language practices of foreign residents. It can be difficult to disentangle policy targeting the economy, migration or national identity from issues of language policy, so I often discuss them together throughout this project. In subsequent chapters, I discuss explicit language policy, neoliberal economic policy and migration policy and develop the language policy implications of each in turn. However, this approach also has the effect of segregating the population in my own work, as different types of policy tend to target different socioeconomic and ethnolinguistic groups. Population categories should not be interpreted as rigid boundaries. I deploy them here as a way of orienting the reader to government discourse with the idea that these lines will be blurred as we move away from official discourse and into the practical realities of my participants. Nevertheless, Emiratis do not feature significantly in subsequent chapters and thus I provide a necessary discussion here before moving forward.

In its dealings with Emirati citizens, the government tends to focus on three main concerns: national identity, population growth, and economic integration. The first two concerns

highlight the tenuous balance struck between the need for the permanent presence of foreign residents to maintain economic growth and the fears of the population losing their country to foreigners. The third concern highlights the practical problem that the government has in supporting the increasing national population.

National identity

Regular editorial columns and cultural pieces in newspapers demonstrate the anxiety felt by many Emirati nationals when it comes to their place as a minority of the population. Many articles rely on the metaphor of living as “strangers in our own country”. For example, in an interview on political change and national identity in a *Gulf News* article, Dr. Al Suwaidi comments on experiencing isolation in a Dubai shopping mall, “I felt awkward as everybody there was staring at me as if I were from another planet. It was because I wore a kandoura [traditional dress]” (Al Mezel, 2007). Others emphasize the negative effects of widespread domestic help (the maids, cooks and drivers common in Emirati households), suggesting that it has resulted in an erosion of the Arabic language and Emirati identity (Zayed, 2013). Such racialized anxieties about the “flawed Arabic” and the negative linguistic effects of foreign domestic workers also make their way into academic discourse (e.g. Allaq, 2014, p. 6). These articles should not be dismissed as mere media sensationalism as they are inspired by genuine concerns regularly voiced by the Emirati population. A survey by YouGov Siraj found that sixty percent of Emiratis felt that the large number of expatriates in the UAE was diluting Emirati cultural identity (Richardson, 2008). This is certainly not a recent debate and the government has responded to it with significant investment in ongoing national identity projects.

One of the most significant of these projects is the construction of the “tradition” of camel racing. Khalaf (2000) traces the rise of this sport alongside the challenges of a rapidly

modernizing Emirati society. For centuries, camels were a crucial material and cultural reference point for nomadic society across the Arabian Peninsula. However, modernization sedentarized large numbers of Bedouin and decentred the camel from economic and cultural consciousness. Although camel races did occur in pre-oil society, they tended to be locally organized for community events and were relatively informal. It was not until the 1980s that camel racing began to be the site of significant “mobilization of labor, capital, and the integrated organization of many peoples, agencies, and institutions” (Khalaf, 2000, p. 247). In the 1990s, the ruling families of most Emirates became more involved, creating the Camel Racing Association, standardizing the rules and offering significant prizes to winners. Khalaf (2000) describes how modern camel races have become both a cultural connection to the past and a reinforcement of existing structures of power. The symbols deployed in the racing stadiums include both imagery of tents and old forts as well as large portraits of sheikhs. For the final race of the season, rulers from regional neighbours such as Qatar and Saudi Arabia are invited and provided special seating alongside the Emirati sheikhs in full view. Other seating is categorized hierarchically and socially, with near relatives of Emirate leaders accorded their own section and foreign residents seated separately from Emirati viewers. This performance both reinforces an institutionalized Emirati identity and demarcates the boundary between citizen and noncitizen. Contributions of foreign residents to camel racing are obscured while the roles of indigenous traditions, Emirati breeders and supportive national leaders are emphasized. The sport provides a space for citizens to feel in control while simultaneously serving to legitimize the position of the ruling families who are seen, through their contributions to the sport, as advocates for preservation of national identity. (Koch, 2015 also provides a similar discussion of the “heritage” sport of falconry.)

Such recent cultural constructions also include the activities of sword dancing and

falconry as well as the museums and archaeological projects that trace a continuous Emirati history back five thousand years (Vora, 2013). The latter define “Emirati national identity as homogenous, timeless, and implacable in the face of perceived foreign threat” (Vora, 2013, p. 52). Such a definition necessarily involves the erasure of the diversity and hybridity embedded in the history of the population. Missing from museum signs are references to the trade networks which allowed for the construction of traditional forts. Also omitted are the influences of South Asia on architecture, falconry and henna (Vora, 2013). Official historical accounts of the UAE tend to limit pre-oil foreign influence to trade relations and only acknowledges foreign influence on the development of the country in the post-oil era (e.g. National Media Council, 2007; 2013). The fact that 25% of the population was foreign-born in 1939 is omitted (Al-Sayegh, 1998).

The distinction between citizen and noncitizen in cultural practices is perhaps most pronounced in the use of national dress. The *dishdasha* or *kandoura* of Emirati men (long white robes with white headscarves secured with a black rope) and *abayas* and *sheilas* of Emirati women (long black robes with black headscarves covering hair) did not become a standard marker of national identity until the 1970s (Al-Qasimi, 2010; Onley, 2004 cited by Vora, 2013). Such modes of dress would have been incompatible with many of the jobs required by the pre-oil economy but have become markers of status and national identity only in the past twenty to thirty years. “Traditional” dress as a symbol of national identity has since been encouraged by the ruling families as an essential component of national identity (Vora, 2013). It has even sparked debates in the Federal National Council (a semi-elected assembly that debates policy issues and puts forward recommendations to the government), with some FNC members insisting on the need for policy that protects national dress to curtail a perceived preference for Western fashion in Emirati youth (Almazroui, 2014; Salem, 2014).

Vora (2013) argues that such cultural activities, historical projects and new traditions police the boundaries of citizen and noncitizen in a context where the politics of identity has material benefits at stake. Although naturalized Emirati citizens are not common, there are a number of Palestinian and Yemeni long-term residents who have managed to gain citizenship. However, the benefits of the welfare system are reserved for those with a national identity card, which is only granted with proof of Emirati lineage (Vora, 2013). Longva (2005) describes this system as an *ethnocracy* in which the ruling class is defined ethnically, and “the acquisition of the defining feature of the ruling ethnies [Emirati lineage in the case of the UAE] lies beyond the reach of the dominated groups” (Longva, 2005, p. 121). In such a system, the boundaries of ethnic definition become the site of struggle. While Western influences are officially named, identified and separated from national identity, the Indian diaspora and its impact on Emirati society are not so easily erased. Vora (2013) suggests that links between the UAE and South Asia are more intimate, including food, film, music, fashion, architecture, the influence of South Asian languages, the role of nannies for Emirati children, and the influence of the teachers, doctors, advisors, employees and student peers on each new generation of Emirati citizens. These are links that are difficult to acknowledge because they cannot be easily separated from “pure” Emirati identity and thus problematize a system of benefits and political relations based on such an illusion. It is also possible that the boundaries of citizenship will also be policed through DNA testing in the near future. The UAE aims to have a complete DNA database on its residents within the next ten years and one of the goals of this project is to determine lineage of potential citizens who are foreign-born and reside outside the country. These are typically applicants who were born abroad as children of Emirati men and foreign mothers (Lori, 2011).

Finally, discourses of tradition and national identity often align with those of patriotism

and national loyalty. National Day celebrations occur not over a single day but over the course of a month, with events building to December 2. Displays of patriotism are often synonymous with support for the ruling family and it is common to see cars decorated with their faces alongside the colours of the flag. This link is also nurtured directly through the education system with calls for better identity education (Salem, 2012) and policy documents emphasize the need to foster “loyal citizen[s], appreciative of UAE culture and heritage” (Abu Dhabi Education Council, 2015). References to loyalty are scattered throughout other documents, even in discussions only tangentially related to patriotism – e.g. the role of the Federal Demographic Council in “actively working to rebalance the UAE’s demographic structure while strengthening the loyalty of UAE citizens to their leadership and homeland” (National Media Council, 2013, p. 151). In recent years, as the UAE has become involved in post-Arab Spring conflicts in Bahrain, Libya and Yemen (with a number of casualties in the latter), national identity has increasingly been tied to military support. Pre-2010, National Day tended to involve emphasise elements of “traditional” identity described above; however, it has become increasingly militarized in recent years. This includes children in military fatigues rather than *kandoura*, displays of military power such as air shows and symbols incorporating soldiers holding the national flag. This has occurred alongside the emergence of a “martyrs” discourse which pays tribute to soldiers who have died in Yemen and has also involved the creation of a second national holiday, Commemoration Day / Martyr’s Day, on December 1, the day before National Day. It also involves more permanent fixtures such as billboards, posters and flags (Zacharias, 2017) as well as the renaming of roads (Gulf News, 2014) and schools such as Al Shaheed Tariq Al Shehhi Kindergarten (translated: The Martyr Tariq Al Shehhi Kindergarten) in Ras Al Khaimah emirate. It has also made its way into Friday sermons in the form of a regular prayer for “martyrs” in general and the occasional direct

reference to the war in Yemen (General Authority of Islamic Affairs and Endowments, 2017).

In this discussion, it is already clear that the governing approach of the Emirati leaders stretches beyond *authoritarian governmentality* (Dean, 2010; Krause, 2008). The choices that the Emirati citizenry make in their engagement with tradition, culture and the ruling family “matter”. The government is active in fostering particular choices that solidify particular ethnic and cultural boundaries, which simultaneously legitimize the current ruling structure as authentically and traditionally embedded in society. Biopower is deployed by the government in the form of standardized national dress, which performs a constructed division between citizens and noncitizens. The biology of individuals is also becoming politicized through the application of DNA tests as citizenship tests. Once implemented, the boundaries of citizenship will be based on the DNA of the current male population, with ethnicity redefined as “scientifically” testable.

Emirati population growth

The biopolitical management of the choices of the Emirati population is intensified in official discourse and policy on population growth. Anxiety over the demographic imbalance and the erosion of national identity are tied to initiatives to boost indigenous population growth since the turn of the century. In 2001, at a three-day conference devoted to increasing the Emirati birth rate, Sheikh Humaid commented that the conference theme was the most important solution to the demographic imbalance, “which bears social, economic, cultural and security consequences” (Zeitoun, 2001). In 2008, the president, Sheikh Khalifa, declared a “Year of National Identity”. This was quickly followed by commentary on demographic concerns, suggesting that decreasing birth rates and increasing divorce rates were compounding national identity erosion (Attwood, 2008) and that increasing the Emirati birth rate was the key to solving these problems (Hoath, 2008). It is difficult to determine exactly what birth rate goals the government has set in response

to these concerns but there are occasional hints in official documents. For example, in 2013, a Dubai Health Authority report stated: “The Total Fertility Rate (TFR) is the main driver for growth for any country. In 2013, TFR...was 5.2 per woman for nationals (*that correlates with the Emirate goals*) compared to 1.7 for non-national women” (Dubai Health Authority, 2013, p. 4, emphasis added). This has since declined (Zain, 2018), contributing to further anxiety about the demographic imbalance (Mohammed Bin Rashed School of Government, 2015).

It is also in this domain that a second form of citizenship differentiation, based on gender rather than ethnicity, takes shape. Citizenship in the UAE is patrilinear and this leads to a number of complex cases in which one parent is Emirati and the other is not. If an Emirati man marries a non-Emirati woman, she is not guaranteed citizenship and may be deported if the couple divorce. Children from a divorced couple may be acknowledged and supported by the father, thus gaining the benefits of citizenship, or may be deported with the mother. If an Emirati woman marries a foreign man, her children are unlikely to be able to claim citizenship at all let alone the welfare benefits that come with it (Dresch, 2005). This may be changing as a recent directive from the president, Sheikh Khalifa, granted citizenship to several thousand children born to Emirati mothers (The National, 2019a); however, it is still unclear if they will have access to benefits.

State institutions are involved in a number of projects to facilitate particular kinds of desirable family units. The most prominent of these is the Marriage Fund, established by Sheikh Zayed (the late ruler of Abu Dhabi, seen as the nation’s founder) in 1992 as a means to provide social benefits and foster Emirati marriages. Emirati couples can apply for a government funded marriage subsidy of up to 70,000 AED. The fund’s aim is to “to build and maintain a stable and consolidated Emirati family and to fortify the Emirati social and demographic structure, by encouraging Emirati men to marry Emirati women” (Government of UAE, 2019a). However, as

Dresch (2005) notes, this organization is more than a top-down social engineering scheme. The Marriage Fund also arranges workshops, seminars and counselling options at a local level for couples with marital problems. Still, while the marriage fund has been successful at uniting Emirati couples, it has been less successful at keeping them together, with rising divorce rates seen as an obstacle to national identity maintenance. In response, another initiative (partly funded by the government) was the Abu Dhabi Campaign for Social Cohesion. Under the slogan “We’re building a family... We’re building a nation”, the project set out to help with marital conflict and a reduction of the divorce rate (Constantine, 2009) but with the overarching goal of “[protecting] the identity of our society” (Galal, 2009). In addition to the Marriage Fund, the government also provides child allowances (Al Khoori, 2014a) and housing subsidies to families to help maintain a high national birth rate. Housing support comes in the form of either a grant or a loan depending on the financial status of the family (Sheikh Zayed Housing Programme, 2019).

Whether all of these financial initiatives are actually having an effect on the birth rate is debatable. It may be the case that such financial benefits do not significantly affect birth rates in a country like the UAE because the socioeconomic status is relatively high to begin with (Al Awad & Chartouni, 2010). Nevertheless, there are certainly significant impacts on the lives of Emirati women as a result of these multiple levels of Emirati family management. Krause (2008, p. 88) sums up the issue, arguing that “women’s well-being will be subordinated to the stability of the family because the family is the basic unit of the nation.” The biopolitics that surround the roles of women in modern Emirati society are observable through the contradictory economic and reproductive demands placed on them by state apparatuses. Media reports often offer commentary on this issue, connecting increased female workforce participation to declining birth rates (e.g. Croucher, 2011; Underwood, 2009). This conflict is distilled by Dr. al Sayegh, “The

decline in the number of nationals will impact on the whole of society...We want [women] to work but we want them at the same time to have more children” (Underwood, 2009). As a result of Emiratisation policies and free higher education, there are diverging incentives for a woman to get married (to another Emirati) and have as many children as possible and for her to become an educated, productive contributor to the economy. However, government discourse defines the ideal woman as one who does both.

Economic integration

This entanglement of demographic concerns with economic ones is at the heart of the conundrum that the Emirati government faces. Davidson (2013) suggests that the Emirati welfare system is nearing a breaking point. The evidence he provides for this claim is limited, as official expenditures are not transparent; however, his basic point is worth noting. Uncapped Emirati population growth may not be something the government can reasonably expect to support indefinitely within its current welfare structure, which consists of significant benefits and limited tax revenue to support them (though a 5% VAT tax was introduced in 2018). Indeed, the signs of Davidson’s argument are visible in a recent debate over an increase in the child allowance from Dh600 to Dh1000, which led the Minister of State for Financial Affairs to argue that such an increase was untenable because it could obstruct future development (Al Khoori, 2014b). The government needs both population growth – in the name of sustaining national identity and solving the so-called demographic crisis – and a system that provides significant welfare benefits to maintain its legitimacy with citizens, two potentially incompatible projects.

The government’s solution to this new problem appears to be the gradual economic integration of the Emirati population into the private sector and it is in this set of actions that the term *neoliberal governmentality* begins to seem most appropriate. Neoliberal policy initiatives

were always a part of the development of the private sector. The country (Dubai in particular) quickly established itself as a tax-free haven where companies could set up headquarters and run their organizations with minimal government interference (Kanna, 2010). Dubai emerged from the end of the 20th century as a “city-corporation” in which “non-interference by the state in the economy is the law for all aspects of life” (Abdulla, 2006, p. 15, cited in Kanna, 2010, p. 109). In a 2008 interview, Sheikh Mohammed referred to himself as not the ruler but the “CEO of the Dubai”, stating that he believed “the role of the government should be restricted to legislation and regulation, in addition to the continuous development of the infrastructure, thus making the private sector the engine of the development process” (Radcliffe, 2008).

The Emirati population’s engagement with the neoliberal policy of private sector is complex and far from uniform. Vora (2013, p. 13) suggests that the topic of national identity in official discourse divides the nation and the economy as it narrates “economic diversity and migrant labor as necessary evils of oil wealth that constantly threaten the longstanding cultural history of Gulf natives.” However, she notes, this division is less clear in practice where citizens have always both relied on the welfare system and participated in entrepreneurial projects. The *kafala* system of residency sponsorship demonstrates this point. In the UAE, a local sponsor is required for a number of activities, including establishing a business outside of a free-trade zone (requiring Emirati control of 51% of the company), getting an apartment, taking driving lessons, or changing jobs. Citizens rent their citizenship as silent business partners or by charging fees for bureaucratic services (Davidson, 2013; Vora, 2013). Some scholars have interpreted this as an extension of the patronage systems that were integral to the pre-oil economy (Ayubi, 1995); however, Vora (2013, p. 14) argues that the *kafala* system is a form of neoliberal privatization, suggesting that it is “synchronous with the privatization of migration regulation that theorists of

neoliberalism have connected with the rise of global capital.” Kanna (2010) unites these two perspectives under the term *flexible citizenship*, borrowed from Ong (1999), which he describes as a locally inflected form of neoliberalism. Because the citizen population is too small to run the economy, Kanna suggests that a “valuable” citizen is not defined in terms of their economic productivity but rather in terms of “national ethics and the modes of proper and authentic citizenship” (Kanna, 2010, p. 103). Flexible citizens straddle this discursive division, functioning both as “authentic” citizens and as neoliberal entrepreneurs in the UAE’s open economy.

Although Kanna (2010) notes that flexible citizens are a minority, recent government policy in the private sector and in their education systems suggests an attempt to foster neoliberal citizens. If Sheikh Mohammed is the CEO of Dubai, who runs the city through business models, then Kanna (2010) claims that residents also take on these subjectivities to fulfil roles in the corporation. The most apparent initiative towards an Emirati population integrated into the economy is the goal of “Emiratisation”. The initiative began in the 1990s, with the government recognizing unemployment as a key problem facing their citizen population. The primary goal at the time was to find jobs for a young growing population and included public and private sector initiatives (Al-Ali, 2008). Given that the government controlled the salaries and working conditions of the public sector, Emiratisation of this sector was largely successful. However, despite imposed employment quotas, private companies have struggled to fulfil requirements and Emirati participation in the private sector beyond the banking industry (which offers remuneration and conditions comparable to the public sector) remains low (Al-Ali, 2008). Following on more than a decade of largely unsuccessful attempts, the government has advocated approaches involving less “sticks” and more “carrots” (National Media Council, 2013, p. 160). In 2011, the government created the Dh440 million Khalifa Fund for Enabling

Emiratization. This was designed to provide companies with incentives for meeting quotas as well as subsidies that would allow them to provide more favourable salaries and working conditions (National Media Council, 2013). The goal outlined in Abu Dhabi's Vision 2030 is "the maximisation of National involvement in the economy" so that "all members of the National population share in the benefits of economic growth and diversification" (Government of Abu Dhabi, 2008, p. 130).

The strategies of neoliberal governmentality discussed here are not seen to conflict with the goal of preserving national identity. In fact, in discussing his Strategic Plan for 2015, Sheikh Mohammed of Dubai insisted that "adopting best global standards and practices is the only way to preserve national and cultural identity" (Khaleej Times, 2007). Vora (2013) suggests that Sheikh Mohammed resolves this seemingly contradictory claim by insisting the economy can remain open to noncitizens while the Emiratis remain resilient against foreign influence. The government invests in "heritage projects and protonationalist policies, closes off possibilities for foreign residents to naturalize or reside permanently in the country, and produces versions of Emirati identity and culture that are purified of foreign elements but also attractive to tourists and investors" (Vora, 2013, p. 44). At the same time, Emiratis are equipped with market-ready language skills and discursive frames of reference. Whether the population agrees with Sheikh Mohammed's interpretation remains to be seen. It offers a potential escape from the balancing act of maintaining traditions through Emirati population growth, providing welfare benefits to the population, and maintaining legitimacy in the absence of political representation. In the next chapter, I explore how English language and instruction, as in other parts of the world (Narkunas, 2005), becomes a part of the biopolitical framework through which the UAE can foster a new generation of productive citizens equipped to be competitive in a neoliberal

“knowledge economy”.

Conclusion

This chapter has provided an overview of both demographic data and discursive orientations that will be utilized at a number of points in the coming chapters. Demographic features and shifts, especially in Ras Al Khaimah, are highlighted by a number of my participants as they explore some of their decisions around language learning and use. The discursive exploration of the relationship between Emiratis and government institutions establishes several important discursive reference points – the production of the citizen-foreigner distinction, the demographic imbalance and neoliberal economic belonging – which I return to in subsequent chapters as foreign residents find themselves entangled in policy discourse.

Chapter 5: Institutional language policy

Introduction

This chapter discusses a number of sets of institutionally driven policies that specifically target language in some way (as opposed to economic or social policies, for example, which will be discussed in later chapters). Although I discuss a wide range of policies here, I mainly focus on those that are relevant to the experiences shared by my participants over the coming chapters. This includes both the governmental and private sector policies that impact language practices in the UAE. I have broken the chapter into two parts. First, I explore forms of international English language policy that come from both foreign governments and institutions such as the University of Cambridge. Second, I describe several nationally oriented policy apparatuses that target national language goals, education and public space. This chapter also serves as the first part of a broader discussion of my participants' experiences with language policy. In chapter 7, I discuss the kinds of subjectivities that my participants negotiate within these policy apparatuses.

International English policy

Before discussing language policy at the level of national and emirate government in the UAE, I must offer a brief overview of some important dimensions of international English language policy. Because this is a large topic, I limit the discussion to issues that have had a direct impact on UAE language policy and more specifically, that my informants raised in interviews with me. As such, I touch on two main issues: international pressure from English-speaking countries explicitly promoting English and University of Cambridge language policy.

International pressure for English

The status of English internationally (Crystal 1997), and specifically in the UAE (Suleiman 1999, p. 113), has been described as a product of colonial history. In most Arab

countries, colonial legacy determined the dominant foreign language and for the UAE, this was English. As English strengthened its position as a dominant global language, this only reinforced its status in the UAE. Burden-Leahy (2009) argues that post-independence, English was adopted as tool for the deployment of Western expertise in the expanding infrastructure and economy of the country. Drawing on Phillipson (1992), Karmani (2005a; 2005b) adopts a more critical stance to this discussion, arguing that English language dominance in the UAE was a part of a wider set of imperialist strategies of English-speaking nations to “struggle for greater control of the region’s vital energy reserves” (2005a, p. 96). He contends that the 1970s oil crisis expanded the ELT industry in the region as “English was widely becoming identified as a powerful tool in facilitating the region’s course to modernisation” (2005a, p. 92). Karmani describes a regional trend of “devastating military confrontation, followed by political compliance, economic liberalisation, oil-driven modernisation and finally—as one of the important spoils—an aggressive expansion of English language teaching” (2005a, p. 97). Karmani (2005a) argues that English is adopted in the name of modernisation and that this has become an increasingly important narrative post-9/11. He cites the “more English, less Islam” equation, expressed in the *Washington Post* (Glasser 2003, cited by Karmani, 2005a) to emphasize the way that Western nations have been active in reducing the influence of traditional religious authority and replacing it with “modern” institutions that they control, such as the ELT industry.

Such direct interventions from foreign governments are ongoing. For example, the American Embassy in the UAE states on its website, “U.S. Embassy Abu Dhabi actively encourages English language learning through a variety of programs and resources. The embassy also works directly with local institutions like AMIDEAST to promote English language learning in the UAE” (U.S. Embassy & Consulate in the United Arab Emirates, 2019). This occurs

through programs such as the English Access Microscholarship Program which “provides a foundation of English language skills to bright, economically disadvantaged students, primarily aged 13 to 20, in their home countries. Access programs give participants English skills that may lead to better jobs and educational prospects” (Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, 2019). This program is discussed in the mid-2000s (revealed by the WikiLeaks diplomatic cables release) by American officials as follows:

The inauguration of the English-language Microscholarship Program in the UAE has generated goodwill and a positive image for the US at a time when Emirati students are bombarded with negative images from press and television...The parents and government school students have been highly appreciative of the chance to participate in a special course with native English language teachers, especially since they have few opportunities to interact in English. Post urges continuation and expansion of this program...Comments from students: One girl told the Ambassador, "We feel important that the US government cares for us." (Embassy Abu Dhabi, 2005a)

Another cable suggests the development of the program was connected to the fact that Emirati students studying abroad tend to choose Canada or Australia over the US because they are perceived as “safer and more welcoming destinations” (Embassy Abu Dhabi, 2005b). Programs such as this one highlight Karmani’s concerns over explicit promotion of English in the country, with ELT serving as a vehicle for both economic interests and political propaganda. All this said, without undermining Karmani’s argument, I believe this direct international pressure is subsidiary to the overwhelming demand for English across all parts of the education system, public and private, as well as increasing demand for English by employers. This is in part a result of increasingly neoliberalized economic policy and a general lack of explicit language policy for

international companies operating in the UAE, issues which I explore more fully in subsequent sections and chapter 8.

University of Cambridge English policy

A second dimension of international English policy is the widescale use of University of Cambridge affiliated institutions as a resource for policy, teaching practices and assessment. Throughout this and subsequent chapters, I will refer to two of the University of Cambridge's subsidiary organizations that operate primarily outside of the core academic functions of the university: Cambridge University Press and Cambridge Assessment. Cambridge University Press acts primarily as a publisher, but also includes departments offering "education reform" services and English teaching and learning materials. Cambridge Assessment is the brand name of University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate (UCLES), a non-teaching department, classified as a charity (under University of Cambridge), which provides "education programmes and exams in over 170 countries, offering global recognition" (UCLES, 2019). In its statement of public benefit, the University of Cambridge explains that Cambridge Assessment "develops and delivers a range of widely used and respected examinations, benefiting the UK and world-wide community by offering internationally recognized qualifications, raising aspirations, and transforming lives" (Cambridge University Reporter, 2018, p. 212). Cambridge Assessment manages three further organizations called "exam boards". The first is Oxford Cambridge and RSA, which mainly provides examination services, including GCSEs and A-Levels, for high school students in the UK (OCR, 2019). The second is Cambridge Assessment International Education, which provides similar examinations outside of the UK as well as other services, including custom made national exams, consultancy services, and curriculum reform (Cambridge Assessment International Education, 2019a). The third is Cambridge Assessment English, which

develops and administers exams related to learning and teaching English, including IELTS, CELTA and DELTA, which I will discuss shortly (Cambridge Assessment English, 2019a). Each of these organizations and their subsidiary bodies has their own goals and policies but are unified under the Cambridge Assessment brand, itself linked to the international prestige of the University of Cambridge. In 2018, Cambridge Assessment and Cambridge University Press reported an income of almost £800 million (over £100 million surplus, not accounting for investment income) for Cambridge University, about two fifths of the university's total income. These two organizations are seen as “an important source of funds”, with a significant portion of the surpluses going back to the University of Cambridge in the same year to “support core academic activities” (Cambridge University Reporter, 2018, p. 209). Next, I will provide a brief overview of some of the entities managed by Cambridge Assessment, focusing only on the ones that are relevant to policy in the UAE and the experiences of my participants.

The first of these is the International English Language Testing System, generally known as IELTS. It is a non-profit organization jointly owned by Cambridge Assessment, IDP Connect and the British Council, with the latter two administering the majority of the tests. IELTS is internationally recognized and administers exams to more than 3 million test takers per year (IELTS, 2017). The test takes about 4 hours and involves separate reading, writing, listening and speaking tests. Much has been written about the test in its 30-year rise to become what Pearson (2019, p. 198) calls a “monolithic global gatekeeper”. IELTS was designed to fill a growing need for standardized assessment of English for the purposes of education, migration and employment and has since become the default test (often the *only* test) option in many contexts, including the UAE – 76 institutions of higher education in the UAE currently use IELTS in some capacity (Cambridge Assessment English, 2019b). With the global expansion of English in many

domains, IELTS has greatly profited from being recognized as a high-quality measure of an individual's competence in English. The test has both "General" and "Academic" versions, the former for "those who are going to English speaking countries for secondary education, work experience or training programs" and the latter for "higher education or professional registration" (IELTS, 2019). Critics argue that the test has come to be used for a number of questionable purposes, in particular as a prerequisite for employment and for migration applications, with little third-party oversight (Pearson, 2019). Defenders of the test shift the criticism of test misuse back to the institutions of higher education and governments inappropriately deploying the test (Green, 2019), but IELTS certainly capitalizes on these use-cases in marketing the test.

The Certificate of English Language Teaching to Adults (CELTA) is another offering from Cambridge Assessments English, which claims to deliver a standardized teaching qualification providing "the essential knowledge, hands-on teaching experience and classroom confidence to qualify as a teacher of English as a Second Language" (Cambridge Assessment English, 2019c). The program was originally developed, under a different name, by International House co-founder John Haycraft and his partner Brita Haycraft in an attempt to "get hold of reliable teachers more quickly" (1998, p. 193 cited by Pulverness, 2015, p. 11). The goal was to create a crash course in teaching methodology involving "pithy teaching formulas" without "traditional academic fat" (Haycraft, 1998, p. 194). The program became more standardized over the years as other institutions, such as the University of Cambridge, became involved (for a full history, see Pulverness, 2015). Despite further standardizing and bureaucratizing the course, the University of Cambridge retained the core elements that the Haycrafts began with. It is intended as a practical qualification which covers five main topics: awareness of teaching and learning context; language analysis and awareness; awareness of language skills; planning resources for

different contexts; developing teaching skills; and professionalism. The course trains teachers to provide ample opportunities for student-centred, “communicative” language practice, defined as activities that depend “on the learners listening to one another and processing what they hear” and that require learners “to negotiate and repair communication breakdowns, and adapt their own contributions in accordance with their partner’s” (Thornbury & Watkins, 2007, p. 39). CELTA also tends to avoid discourses of native or non-native English speakers, accepting any candidate that meets an IELTS 7.5 band level or equivalent and tending to refer to them as “proficient” or “expert” users of English (Johnson & Poulter, 2015, p. 184). Today, with more than 1500 courses running each year (Cambridge Assessment English, 2015), CELTA is one of the most common qualifications for new English teachers and is also often a prerequisite for employment at language schools around the world. There are 14 institutions that are formally listed by Cambridge Assessment English as providing or accepting CELTA qualifications in the UAE (Cambridge Assessment English, 2019d), but in reality, that number is far higher as most language schools in the country would accept it from prospective teachers.

Cambridge Assessment International Education also has a strong foothold in the UAE. Over 100 private grade schools, including several in Ras Al Khaimah, are affiliated with the organization, either through its international exams or direct curricular involvement following its “international education curriculum” (Cambridge Assessment International Education, 2019b). This curriculum emphasizes English as a first or second language, mathematics, science and Cambridge Global Perspectives, which promotes “critical thinking” on global issues (Cambridge Assessment International English, 2019c). Although the curriculum commits to multilingual education, it is also advertised as “an international standard and a truly global approach... [which] equips students whose first language is not English to function competently and

confidently in the English language – the principal language of international exchange and business” (Cambridge Assessment International Education, 2017). Such an affiliation with Cambridge allows schools to put the University of Cambridge logo on their website, advertising that they offer Cambridge approved services. This may be accompanied by a large fee increase, forcing parents to decide whether to pay for the prestige or take their children elsewhere.

Finally, I must briefly mention a recent 2017 Education Reform initiative led by Cambridge University Press in the UAE. Education Reform is “a dedicated education reform team whose goal is to help societies evolve and grow by improving education equity and quality, raising standards, and giving learners the knowledge, understanding and practical skills to succeed in the modern world” (Cambridge University Press, 2019a). This entity is involved in publishing, capacity development, teacher training, developing “communication plans”, and general consultancy services. In the UAE, Education Reform was awarded a contract for a project named “Bridge to Success”, which overhauled student and teacher English coursebooks and provided training for the Ministry of Education. Cambridge University Press was also contracted for a follow-up “suite of English resources for the advanced Science and Mathematics programme” (Cambridge University Press, 2019b). The project was cited as an important step towards the English language goals of Vision 2021 in a press release, claiming that it provides “a modern English curriculum that...embeds core 21st century competencies into the learning of English, equipping students with key skills for both their future studies, and their later careers (The Education World Forum, 2017). The Global Managing Director of Education at Cambridge University Press was also quoted stating, “Alongside the Ministry of Education, we recognise the central importance of English in any educational strategy, not only as a core 21st century competency, but also to underpin learning and skills across the curriculum, particularly in STEM

subjects” (The Education World Forum, 2017). The coursebooks themselves also echo these statements in their introduction which explains that “to meet the challenges of the future children need to develop facility with both conversational and academic English” (Pugliese, Curtis, Malki & Laird, 2017, p. 3). This national education policy shift towards English generally, and especially for STEM subjects, will be discussed further in subsequent sections.

As I explore in the coming sections and chapters, these international arms of the University of Cambridge stretch deeply into almost every educational institution in the UAE and have numerous direct and indirect policy effects. Although the university technically operates as a non-profit, it is clear from the above overview that it is a powerful advocate for international English, providing policy advice and services to further this aim. The financial returns are also significant, bringing in hundreds of millions of pounds every year, with profits directly feeding back into “capital expenditure” for the university. The Cambridge brand is used by institutions in the UAE as a symbol of prestige, which also contributes to increased profit for these institutions. Finally, private services offering support for the acquisition of Cambridge credentials in the form of grade school international exams or IELTS capitalize on the high demand for these qualifications. The net result is significant capital flow from residents in the UAE (and the rest of the world) to the University of Cambridge, its subsidiary and affiliated institutions, and the massive network of private services offering support in the acquisition of Cambridge credentials.

Government language policy texts

Most formal language policy initiatives laid out by the national government or by state institutions have mainly targeted Arabic and English as they relate to the Emirati population. However, as I shall explore in chapter 7, foreign residents nonetheless still find themselves engaging with these policies. As such, I provide an overview of some of the major language

policy texts and initiatives that have been produced in recent years.

Arabic status planning

At the level of national government, the constitution of the UAE states “The official language of the Union is Arabic,” (Government of UAE 1971). As described in chapter 4, the first decade of the 2000s marked the beginning of increased anxiety in media narratives about a “demographic imbalance” and this was increasingly tied to a loss of Arabic language and culture as the foreign resident population continued to grow. While the constitution provided official status for the language, many felt the practical reality of language use in the country was shifting away from Arabic. Towards the end of that decade and into the next, the national government along with other governmental institutions began to respond to these concerns. In 2008, Arabic was made the official language of government communication, partly in recognition of the need to protect the language. Quoted in the Gulf News, Ebtisam Al Kitbi – at the time a professor at UAEU in Al Ain – condemned the fact that “English is widely used in the government in the UAE” and called on local governments to follow suit (Al Baik 2008). A few years later, between 2010 and 2012, the national government laid out *Vision 2021* (UAE Cabinet, 2010) and the *Arabic Language Charter* (Government of UAE, 2012) to begin to chart some preliminary language policy goals for the coming decades. *Vision 2021* is a part of a large, ongoing initiative to meet multiple developmental targets that position the UAE “among the best countries in the world by the Golden Jubilee of the Union” (UAE Cabinet, 2010). This policy framework includes six general targets around environment and infrastructure, healthcare, education, a “competitive knowledge economy”, public safety and “fair” legal apparatuses, and “a cohesive society and preserved identity”. Housed within this last target is a call for Arabic to “re-emerge as a dynamic and vibrant language, expressed everywhere in speech and writing” (UAE Cabinet,

2010). The *Arabic Language Charter* expands this into a set of “principles” that target Arabic language support and development. It claims the overarching goal of “affirm[ing] the preeminent position of the Arabic Language in the United Arab Emirates” (Government of UAE, 2012, p. 1). The principles commit to Arabic as the national language and language of law and government; improvement of Arabic language education in public schools; support for Arabic language learning by non-Arabic speakers through private centres and universities; repositioning of Arabic as an “essential element” of higher education; development of technical and scientific terminology as well as the production and translation of scientific knowledge in Arabic; encouraging “cultural activities” that promote Arabic; provision of consumer information in “clear” Arabic and other languages; the production of media content, especial children’s programs, “in standard Arabic to promote proper use of the language”.

Other institutions such as the Arabic Language Protection Association (ALPA) and the Federal National Council (FNC) also contribute to official language policy discourse. Based in Sharjah and funded by the Sharjah royal family, the ALPA speaks out on issues such as children learning English and not speaking Arabic (Habboush, 2009a), the need to defend the purity of the Arabic language, the need for stricter legislation around Arabic signage and more emphasis on use of Arabic by foreigners (Shaaban, 2013). The FNC has been largely critical of the increasing dominance of English in the education system and society (which I will discuss further in a moment) and recently, the FNC proposed a law to protect Arabic in the UAE, with one member also raising the possibility of mandating Arabic as the language of all workplaces, public or private across the country (Al Kuttub, 2017a; Salama, 2017).

For the most part, these two policy texts are directed at the Emirati population. Much of the language refers to government services, public education (which mainly provides for Emirati

students) and cultural identity. Foreign residents are only part of two discussions: the provision of government services in languages other than Arabic “when required” and the “support” for Arabic instruction for non-Arabic speakers. However, this latter discussion contains two implicit exclusions: those who do not want or need to take courses and those cannot afford them. In establishing private language centres and university-based language services as the core of this provision, the government has signalled that Arabic instruction is available for those with the economic or social capital to afford it. It also positions Arabic language learning as a matter of personal motivation (those willing to invest time and capital) rather than a product of external incentives (those who genuinely need it in their daily lives). The *Charter* also emphasises “standard” Arabic and “proper use of the language” over colloquial Arabic, instituting further distance between residents’ everyday needs and the actual language being offered in classrooms.

Public school policy

In the domain of education policy, discourses become much less streamlined and much more entangled with economic policy. I begin with education policy texts and continue with a discussion of economic policy afterwards. The public school system has traditionally functioned in Arabic from grades 1-12 with a reliance on bridging programs to enable students from Arabic-medium public schools to enter tertiary programs in English (Burden-Leahy 2009). With a large selection of private English-medium institutions, and a population frequently wealthy enough to afford them, many Emirati families send their children to these schools as well. Nevertheless, public schools remain dominated by Emiratis, while private schools are mostly populated by children of foreign residents (Ridge, Kippels & ElAsad, 2017). This makes the public school system an important domain for policy initiatives targeting Emiratis. Ridge, Kippels and Farah (2017) provide an overview of the major curricular changes in the public school system from the

1950s onwards, but for the purposes of this overview, I will just highlight two issues related to language. First, beginning in the mid-1990s, English medium of instruction began to make its way into the school system, particularly for math and science. This strategy was strengthened between 2007 and 2015, with separate policy initiatives by the Abu Dhabi Education Council (recently renamed the Abu Dhabi Department of Education and Knowledge) and Ministry of Education (which oversaw public schools outside of Abu Dhabi). In both cases, English was pushed as the sole medium of instruction for science and math (for further discussion of this, see Cook, 2017; Ridge, Kippels and Farah, 2017) while English language classes were also given greater emphasis. Simultaneously, an emphasis on “bilingual” education, positioned English and Arabic as equal partners in grade school curriculums despite the apparent imbalance towards English in some subjects (Department of Education and Knowledge, n.d.). The plan was also accompanied by an initiative to ensure public school teachers meet a minimum language requirement. These initiatives have come under fire multiple times from the Federal National Council (Habboush, 2009b; Issa, 2013), which called compulsory English instruction “a clear violation of the country's constitution” with critics emphasizing the “need to understand that the Arabic language is not an obstacle to development” (Issa, 2013). Nevertheless, these curricular changes are the basis of the expanded “Emirati School Model”, which will eventually include all of the public schools in the UAE. It involves a “bi-literate bilingual approach” starting in KG1, with greater emphasis on English language education and English medium of instruction for subjects such as science and math (Al Nowais, 2017; Ministry of Education, 2017a).

The second language-related issue I wish to draw attention to here is the use of standardized English tests. In the early 2000s, the Common Educational Proficiency Assessment (CEPA) was given to students moving from public schools into English-medium tertiary

education to determine whether they required a foundation year (the test also included a math component). In 2017, this was replaced by the Emirates Standardized Test (EmSAT) which also included physics at first and has since expanded to include Arabic and chemistry on the compulsory exams (Ministry of Education, 2019). These tests are widely used as entrance criteria at major universities in the country (Coombe & Davidson, 2014; Ridge, Kippels & Farah, 2017) while IELTS is often used as a requirement for students to graduate from their bridging programs and enter their regular college programs (Freimuth, 2017; Gitsaki, Robby & Bourini, 2014). Teachers have also been increasingly caught up in English-focused policy overhauls, with IELTS used as part of a larger plan to standardize teaching qualifications. This initially entailed English language teachers and English medium of instruction teachers providing evidence of English proficiency through the exam, with teachers now needing between 5.5 and 6.5 on the test depending on their subject (Pennington, 2017; Government of UAE, 2017). These tests mark English as a measure of academic success for Emirati students entering the job market or programs of higher education, regardless of other stated goals for the value of Arabic. As students strive towards their academic and career goals through English, these tests produce *de facto* language policy (Shohamy, 2006) that promotes English as an appropriate language for work and higher education, a point that will be expounded upon further in subsequent sections.

As I outlined at the start, these significant changes to the public education system over the past 10 years are tied to economic goals that are often entangled with linguistic ones. Neoliberal discourses are apparent in most education policy documents. For example, the Ministry of Education's *Strategy 2010-2020* cites as its first objective, "ensur[ing] high quality curriculum is in place so that students are best prepared for the knowledge economy" (Ministry of Education, 2010, p. 2). The primary "implementation initiative" to achieve this objective is to

“Develop curricula and align with Higher Education and Job Market Requirements” (p. 3).

Similarly, the Abu Dhabi Education Council emphasized the “need to equip students with the skills to operate in a global competitive environment [and] therefore the need for English language proficiency” as well as the necessity of “instill[ing] strong work ethics and entrepreneurship” (2009, p. 10). Within these policy frameworks, English is positioned as essential to the economic integration of graduating students with the Abu Dhabi Education Council stating that students’ lack of English proficiency is “serious as it hampers the Emirate’s vision for socio-economic development” (Abu Dhabi Education Council, 2009, p. 9). Thus, English is described as “the language of knowledge” by the former Minister of Education and Research (Sinclair, 2013), a crucial resource that allows Emiratis to become both producers and consumers in the “knowledge economy” (see also Barnawi, 2018 for an extended discussion).

This educational trend towards English medium of instruction, and grassroots resistance to policies promoting it, is further entangled with anxieties about children’s acquisition of Modern Standard Arabic. Colloquial Arabic in the UAE is distant enough from MSA that without formal instruction throughout the curriculum students often have an inadequate grasp of formal Arabic when they enter tertiary institutions (Amin 2009; Ronesi 2011). These concerns about the proficiency of the general population in MSA (Al-Issa & Dahan 2011), compounded by fears about the relatively low spot the UAE has in PISA literacy tables (Freimuth, 2014), are further motivation for the government to double down on policy initiatives promoting “standard Arabic” as described in the previous section.

Private education policy

Private grade schools in the UAE are also an important site of segregation and language policy conflict within the middle and upper classes of the foreign resident population. Private

schools in the UAE fall under the jurisdiction of one of three governmental bodies: the Department of Education and Knowledge in Abu Dhabi, the Knowledge and Human Development Authority in Dubai, and the Ministry of Education for the rest of the country. Most private schools are either English or Arabic medium and offer curricula based on foreign models (e.g. UK, USA, India) or Ministry of Education curricula, respectively. Additionally, especially in Sharjah, Dubai and Abu Dhabi, there are a number of schools catering to specific foreign resident demographics and providing their national curriculums in the national language (e.g. French, Filipino, German, Japanese, Russian). The main target of the Arabic-medium Ministry curriculum schools are the children of Arab foreign residents. Given that Arabic public schools are an option for them, most Emiratis attending private schools are in either a British or American curriculum (Knowledge and Human Development Authority, 2019).

The only explicit language policy required of these schools is that they offer both English and Arabic lessons. Regular inspections by governmental bodies report on English and Arabic instruction and achievement. For schools that teach in other languages, student progress is also monitored. Despite this, private schools have a great deal of leeway in how they operate and a range of types of schools has sprung up to cater to the large and diverse market available. Private schools tend to think, and indeed are encouraged to think, in neoliberal terms of competition in which parents are consumers shopping for the right school for their child. The system adopts the following line of reasoning: if school reports are transparent and accessible to parents, schools become accountable to parents to improve education quality relative to other schools or else parents will take their children elsewhere. Competition and accountability, along with potential incentives for well-reviewed schools to increase fees or expand, allows market forces to improve the private school system without any direct governmental intervention (Thacker & Cuadra,

2014). The important race- and class-related implications of this are unpacked in Ridge, Kippels and Shami (2016) and Ridge, Shami and Kippels (2016). They show the stark differences in how much different socioeconomic groups (a highly racialized categorization) have to pay for their children's education. The crux of the problem is summarized by the CEO of GEMS private school network when he explains, "We adopted the airline model of economy, business, and first class to make top-notch education available based on what families could afford" (Rai, 2014 cited in Ridge, Kippels & Shami, 2016). Ridge, Kippels and Shami (2016) go on to argue that the for-profit private school industry that has sprung up to cater to the vast majority of the UAE's noncitizen residents (and an increasing number of Emirati's too), has resulted in a highly stratified education system which "exacerbate[s] existing inequalities" (p. 281).

Socioeconomic divisions that are produced along "quality" lines are also mirrored by linguistic ones. Even though Ministry-guided Arabic-medium schools have improved their standing in governmental school reports somewhat over the past few years, they still tend to receive lower ratings than British, American and Indian schools (Knowledge and Human Development Authority, 2019). They are generally criticized for poor performances in science, math and English due to inadequate teaching approaches, poor administrative planning and a lack of coordination at all levels. In contrast, many of the English-medium schools, especially British curriculum schools, have received "outstanding" reviews over the years, with strong performances in math, science and English, and highly interactive and engaging teaching approaches, despite generally poorer performances in Arabic and Islamic Studies (Knowledge and Human Development Authority, 2013; 2014; 2019). Furthermore, while a number of Indian curriculum schools are highly rated (though not as high overall as British schools), the handful of Iranian and Pakistani schools that fall under the Dubai School Inspection Bureau's purview slip

much further down the charts. Similar patterns appear in Abu Dhabi's school reports (Department of Education and Knowledge, 2018). This is not to suggest that these school inspection systems are necessarily skewed in favour of English, but school inspection reports, at least in Dubai and Abu Dhabi (information from the Ministry of Education is less accessible), do seem to demonstrate a clear division in school quality along linguistic lines. As I will explore in chapter 7, for foreign resident parents, school "choice" for their children often involves consideration of perceived school quality, cost and language, all of which are interconnected.

Private language schools have even less oversight and there are a number of pathways by which one can open a language school, including but likely not limited to registering as an educational institution, registering as a kind of training centre or registering through a free zone company. Each option has different requirements and restrictions, all of which change regularly. Standards, methodologies and student populations vary significantly from one institution to the next and are constantly changing. There are no available data which tracks this information. As such, I do not attempt to give an overview of private language institutions in general in the UAE, except to say that English courses are by far the most common offering, particularly standardized test preparatory courses. Arabic courses, along with other "international" languages such as Chinese, French, German, and Spanish, are more common in Dubai but rare in Ras Al Khaimah. Based on promotional materials for Arabic courses in the UAE, and my anecdotal experiences with them, the target demographic is mainly middle-class foreign (white) residents, also a reflection of where the demand for these courses lies.

Higher education policy

Higher education is skewed even further towards English, with the only three federal universities teaching almost exclusively English (Ridge, Kippels & ElAsad, 2017; Swan 2012)

and only UAEU retaining some connection to its original Arabic and Islamic curriculum and principles (Findlow 2008). However, as Mouhanna (2010) notes, even at UAEU, most courses are taught in English, science and math courses almost exclusively so. Even the study of the Arabic language is flagging at the tertiary level as Saif Al Mahrouqi despairs, “only 50 of 13,000 students at UAE University are studying Arabic, while many other universities do not even have an Arabic literature department” (Issa 2013). Higher education in English makes tests like EmSAT and IELTS even more important as institutional gatekeepers. Mouhanna (2016, p. 44) notes that even the Sharia Law course at the institution with which he worked required an IELTS band 5.0 “despite the reality that for the majority of their careers in the state court system, Arabic will be the predominant language of communication.” Given that only 20% of Emirati students obtained an adequate standardized English test score to enter university directly in 2013 (Gjovig & Lange, 2013, cited in Gitsaki et al., 2014), bridging or “foundation” programs at these institutions take a large volume of students who do not make the cut. However, at the end of these bridging programs students must still get specific EmSAT or IELTS scores to gain access to their fields of study. As noted in the first part of this chapter, such measures reinforce IELTS as a *de facto* language policy (mechanism) through which English is constructed as the appropriate language of higher education. It also produces direct demand for IELTS test taking and the related test preparation services that many of my participants engaged with.

Language signage, services and advertising policy

The last domain of language policy text that I will touch on briefly is signage and other forms of publicly sanctioned displayed or spoken language. For the most part, public and private signs are expected to contain Arabic and generally contain English as well, though not always (depending on the location, how old it is and its target audience). Other languages are also

visible, especially on private shops catering to specific ethnolinguistic groups in the country. In Ras Al Khaimah, during my research, I noted Hindi, Urdu, Malayalam, Bengali, Tagalog, Farsi and Russian, but in most cases these languages were on “unofficial” signs that were stuck on windows or doors of shops, below the officially sanctioned signage. In general, Arabic predominates, but not always. Piller (2017; 2018) also notes that signage in “Arabic” may include direct transliterations from English and vice versa and that certain industries (e.g. money transfer services) may be more visibly multilingual than others. Some of these patterns that one might notice when walking around are legislated and each emirate has their own department(s) in charge of signage for government services such as public transport or information as well as for managing commercial signage and advertising. Dubai’s *Universal Design Code* (Government of Dubai, 2017a), for example, serves as a standardization guide for “environment and transportation systems” (p. 14). It states that information signs are required to be in Arabic and English. The same guide explains that public transport information and announcements will be made in Arabic and English but if Arabic and English are printed on the same sign, “Arabic being the primary language texts shall be aligned to the right” (p. 236). There are also notes on Braille and provision of sign language. Apart from this, the only languages other than Arabic and English mentioned are the unnamed “several languages” in which ticketing machines for public transport will provide audio instructions and the “multi-language announcements” (p. 178) while onboard. Likewise, the Abu Dhabi Urban Planning Council subscribes to a “universal design” model with provisions for the city as a multilingual space, stating that “the Emirate of Abu Dhabi is made up of diverse nationalities and people reading and speaking many different languages; their ability to navigate the public realm should not be compromised” (Abu Dhabi Urban Planning Council, 2009). Commercial language use tends to be managed within a different set of

legislation, with free zones also sometimes operating with their own separate rules. General rules for commercial signage in Dubai state that the primary language should be Arabic, while English translations “may be used alongside” (Government of Dubai, 2017b). However, in a Dubai Multi Commodities Centre free zone guide, Arabic is no longer required but if it is included, it should predominate (DMCC, 2014). In Ras Al Khaimah, the Department of Economic Development (2019) provides similar guidelines for the predominance of Arabic. The department also charges three to four times more for English advertising permits than for Arabic ones.

Four of these domains of explicit language policy (status planning, public education, higher education, language in public space) are mainly directed at the Emirati population, either to promote the status of Arabic in the country or to directly affect which languages are learned by Emirati students. What is notably absent from most formal language policy are measures targeting the foreign resident majority. Private school policy can, at best, target the children of the middle- and upper-class foreign residents while working-class foreign residents are ignored entirely. For the most part, language policy affecting most of the population is driven by either explicit economic or migration policy which has *de facto* language policy effects or is simply left to market forces through which companies and people themselves produce language policy directly and indirectly in their daily lives. These are issues that I take up in chapters 8 and 9.

Conclusion

This chapter has outlined a number of formal policy apparatuses that were relevant to my participants, including: international English policies, governmental policies related to language and education, and policies related to signage. These policy apparatuses appear throughout the following chapters but are especially important to chapter 7, where I explore the subjectivities produced for and by my participants within them.

Chapter 6: Participant profiles

Introduction

This section offers a series of profiles of my core participants which help to contextualize the stories that I use in subsequent chapters. The school profile provided here gives a general sense of how the school was founded, how some of my participants interpret school culture and how the school is connected to the rest of the city. The participant profiles offer an overview of how the person came to the UAE and some general information about their reported language learning and use in Ras Al Khaimah. Appendix B provides two tables that give general summaries of basic information about all the participants in the project.

RAK English School

RAK English School is a small private language school housed in a villa in an old part of Ras Al Khaimah. It has four classrooms and about ten teachers, most of whom are not employed full time but use their work at the school as a supplemental income. Some of the teachers had young children, including one of my participants (Mozart), who explained that she valued the scheduling flexibility the job offered her. Another was a university student (Maria) and some had other jobs but took on occasional courses. The atmosphere of the school was relaxed and welcoming. Though I knew Anne, the school founder, before I arrived, I had never met any of the other teaching staff before. Nevertheless, several staff members were quick to welcome me, and I was almost immediately invited with my daughter to attend a small birthday party they were having at the school. Apart from occasional flurries of activity as students moved between classes, the central lobby and outer courtyard were mostly quiet, only interrupted by multilingual conversations between staff and students. The casual multilingualism I observed in the school felt very much like a reflection of daily life in Ras Al Khaimah. Though the main languages I

heard were English and Arabic, I also heard Hindi, Malayalam, Bengali, Sinhalese, German and French at various points between staff, repair men, students and parents. Exchanges about what this word or that word meant in different languages were common and this open sharing of linguistic knowledge, not only by teachers but also by administrative staff and students, contributed to a general sense of comfort and mutual respect in the school.

Anne explained that the founding of RAK English School was not her original goal, but was nevertheless a fortunate by-product of her initial plans to establish a teacher training consultancy company. To do that, she had to set up a business with the economic department in Ras Al Khaimah and she felt that since she had to rent premises as part of the process (she had originally hoped to work from home), she thought she might as well make it a language school. She rented a villa in an old part of the city as the initial location, which she called a “fortunate accident” (Anne, Int1) for a few reasons. First of all, the location in the city was not her first choice but ended up in a perfect location that many Emirati residents in the suburb of Al Dhait would pass on their way into town. Second, being in a villa really defined the school culture as a family-oriented, friendly space. She explained that people could just drive up and drop students right at the gate, which was important because it made women comfortable coming to classes and made parents willing to drop their children off. A more formal business space or a school in a tower somewhere would probably not have attracted the same clientele and she is not sure the school would have survived without a steady stream of Emirati families coming and going. The Emirati population quickly became the primary demographic that the school served, though many middle-class foreign residents also take courses there.

Anne and the other teachers I spoke to did not feel that the school was closely connected to the community that it is in. It is in an area that is home to a large number of working-class

foreign residents who do not have the financial resources to attend courses at the school and in that sense, links to the immediate municipal area are not strong. However, Anne noted that the location is still a part of the city that most people will visit regularly and as a result, is memorable for many of the city's residents. Even if they do not remember the name of the school, it is generally known in the city as "the English school in that part of town" (Anne, Int1). For example, she mentioned a brief encounter with a policeman on the other side of town, who despite having never been to the school and not remembering its name, was quick to tell her, "Thank you for having your business, we really need this kind of thing in RAK" (Anne, Int1).

Over the years, the school has offered different types of courses, ranging from true beginner basic literacy and kids' courses to courses for standardized tests such as IELTS. They also offer tutoring and, in the past, offered Arabic courses for a period of time (though the latter were phased out due to a lack of demand and the difficulty Anne had in finding adequate teachers). Anne explained that the general English courses offered have changed over time. They initially offered higher level courses but found, as more residents of the city discovered the school, that the real demand was in beginner level classes and classes that offered basic English literacy. She explained that there was a large number of teenage boys and young men (and some women too) who had "fallen through the cracks" (Anne, Int6) in grade school and never learned to read or write in English. Anne and the other teachers identified a few main patterns in the aspirations of the students in general English courses. First, English has become increasingly important in their everyday lives and Emiratis are finding it difficult to manage without at least some basic English. Second, there are parents joining the courses because they want to be able to help their children at school as English has become much more important to public school curricula in recent years. Third, people want English for their jobs, sometimes as a specific

requirement from their employer and other times simply because they want to build their confidence in using English at work. Finally, many students want to be able to travel comfortably and feel that they need English for that as well. There is also a high demand for IELTS courses for goals of higher education, jobs and immigration. Anne and the other teachers have noted a significant increase in the latter group (mainly non-Emiratis) in recent years, with more students preparing for the IELTS General exam to supplement immigration applications.

Anne explained that when the school was first established, there really were not any other similar options in Ras Al Khaimah for English courses and she still believes they are the best institution in the city despite some competitors popping up over the last few years. She attributes their survival in part to an “ethical” approach to doing business. She explained that:

We’re in a difficult position between business and education because education is our business. We want to make money of course to stay afloat but we also have a responsibility to provide the best language education that we can to our customers. And, sometimes getting the balance right can be a bit of challenge. (Anne, Int1)

She suggested that they accommodate students as much as they can but will not simply take money and give students whatever they ask for, as she suggests other institutions do. A specific example of this relates to IELTS courses which students often want to join despite being well below what Anne considers a reasonable level to begin studying for IELTS. They regularly turn away students from IELTS courses, encouraging them to try lower level general English first, while competitors may be keener to take their money for a course that they know students will struggle with. She also says they have clear refund policies and are upfront about what is expected from students. Furthermore, despite students often requesting “native English speakers”, she suggests that what they actually want is the “teaching approach” offered by the

school, a “communicative” and “learner-centred” approach guided by Cambridge’s teaching standards (Anne, Int1). She explained that it is an approach that is often totally new to the students, coming from an education system that is very much teacher-centred and based on memorization. This consistency in teaching approach and ethical standards has on occasion cost the school money in the short term when students cannot pay to enter whatever class they want, but Anne believes that it has helped the school build a good reputation over the long run, which is more valuable both on the economic side of the business and for her own conscience.

On the side of the teachers, Anne said that she has strived to foster a collaborative and open environment similar to what she experienced working in International House schools over the years. She wants teachers to feel comfortable supporting each other, working together and sharing ideas and materials. She explained that she needed to make her work space as comfortable as possible for everyone and described English teaching as “a broad church”:

[T]here is space for just about anyone. People can be eccentric, you don’t have to fit a particular mould...Okay, you have to moderate some things for your students of course and your colleagues but on the whole it’s kind of an open and friendly and accepting environment and that’s what I would hope [RAK English School] was and the staff and students were the same. (Anne, Int1)

It is fair to say, based on the teachers that I spoke to, that they generally felt she had been successful in fostering this open and friendly work environment. The two teachers that I recruited as participants were full of genuine praise for both Anne and the environment they were working in. They commented on having regular, small informal events together and feeling that they could generally speak honestly to each other or to Anne if they had any issues. They described collaborating together on course design and material development, feeling that

teachers generally supported each other. Anne and the two other teachers I interviewed were also on the same page policy-wise, fully committed to the communicative, learner-centred language teaching approach that is advocated by the CELTA program.

This last point is a reflection of the close ties that the school has to University of Cambridge policy generally. The school is a certified CELTA centre, meaning that trainers can offer CELTA courses there. It is also affiliated with the IELTS exam, enabling students to register for the test there (though they would take the test at a different location). Some of the staff are either examiners or invigilators for IELTS as well.

Anne

Anne is an Australian woman who has been living and working in Ras Al Khaimah for about 15 years. She is the founder and administrative director of RAK English School, having also taught at a college in the city for a few years before founding the school. She moved to the UAE initially because she “wanted to earn the kind of salary that would enable [her] to buy a property” (Anne, Int1). Once she had achieved her goal, she decided to open RAK English School as a way to get out of the college context and still stay in Ras Al Khaimah as a freelance teacher trainer. She retains her residency status in the country as a “partner” in the school.

Anne has been working as an ESL teacher, teacher trainer and/or administrator since the 1980s. She has worked in a number of countries around the world, spending significant periods of time in Eastern Europe and Turkey. This included teaching a range of courses, primarily for adults, working for International House and Cambridge in teacher training, and managing certificate programs such as CELTA. She has a Master’s degree and is also CELTA and DELTA certified, but she cites the latter two qualifications as much bigger influences on her thinking about second language teaching and learning. She felt that they helped teachers develop

“practical teaching skills, equipping people with what they need to walk into a classroom and teach a class” (Anne, Int5), something crucially missing from the graduate work she did. She sees CELTA as more of an approach that asks teachers to think about questions like “How do you engage the students? How do you make it interesting for them...actually getting them to communicate with each other?” (Anne, Int3). She argued that a student-centred, communicative approach is always more effective, interesting and engaging, whatever subject you are teaching.

Anne described herself as monolingual, speaking only “English and ‘Stralian” but she shared quite an extensive list of languages she has studied and used throughout her travels, including Turkish, Romanian, French, Russian, Hungarian, Greek, Farsi, Thai and Arabic. She does not consider herself multilingual because she feels she lacks fluency in these languages but for most of them feels she could still get by with basic things such as greetings or ordering in a restaurant. She explained that she felt “embarrassed” by her lack of progress in Arabic during her many years in the UAE (Anne, Int1). She initially committed to learning the language when she arrived, taking classes and making opportunities for herself to practice regularly in shops run by Arabic speakers and in “Arabic” neighbourhoods. However, she found that it did not provide much of a benefit in her daily life, that English with a few words and phrases of other languages, including Arabic, was enough to get by. Once she got started with RAK English School, she also found that she had significantly less time to commit to making those opportunities for herself to practice and more or less gave up on any kind of Arabic language acquisition goals that she previously had, without much regret.

Despite her perceived lack of success with Arabic, Anne seemed to be a very successful navigator of Ras Al Khaimah’s multilingual environment and saw herself as an atypical “expat” in this regard. She explained that she uses bits and pieces of a variety of languages without

thinking about it, and often does not know their exact origins or even what they would be in English. One example she provided was going to a small fruit and vegetable shop managed by two men from Kerala, India. She explained that she uses whatever words work to engage in conversation and select her produce. This includes English and Arabic, punctuated by words from other languages for specific items. This shop also exemplifies the way that Anne distances her from the term “expat”. She said that of all the countries she has lived in, she has never felt more like an expat than in the UAE. In other countries, she was much more integrated into everyday life alongside local people, in part because, as an English teacher, she did not have that much more money than anyone else in Eastern Europe or Turkey for example. In the UAE, however, she has always felt a very clear separation between “Westerners” and Emiratis. Nevertheless, Anne has always made an effort to not get sucked into what she sees as the predominantly Western expatriate places such as expensive hotel bars or restaurants, beach clubs, expensive European grocery stores, and brunches in Dubai. Instead, she frequents cheaper Indian-run stores and spends her limited free time in her neighbourhood or on the corniche.

Anne is a crucial policy navigator for the school. Some of the details of her applications, negotiations and interpretations shall not be discussed here for confidentiality reasons, but in general terms, she has spent a great deal of time and energy maintaining an appropriate business and educational status for the school. She claims to have simply been incredibly lucky at various points over the past ten years but has also clearly invested significantly in building the right relationships at various governmental institutions. Part of her success, she noted, is simply because Ras Al Khaimah is such a small and friendly place that people have time for you and when you make mistakes, they are quite happy to help you fix them. The other part of this seems to be her perseverance in making sure that she approaches her bureaucratic problems honestly

with full intentions of complying with whatever rules or sudden policy changes are thrust on her – an attitude which is not necessarily the norm. She is also a very successful stakeholder and advocate of Cambridge language policy, through both CELTA and IELTS. She has maintained a good relationship these institutions over the years, which has benefited her professionally and financially. She explained that these connections have undoubtedly helped establish the school as a “credible” language institution with a good reputation in the city (Anne, Int5).

Long term, she is uncertain of her plans, but intends to retire to Turkey eventually. Like my other participants, she feels a sense of impermanence in the UAE and every time she goes to renew her residency visa, she wonders if this is the time she will be rejected. In a country where 60 years old tends to be a cut off point for contract renewals, she expects to eventually face difficulties as she gets older despite not being reliant on an employer for her visa.

Maria

Maria is a Filipino woman who spent her teenage years in Ras Al Khaimah and has continued to live there as an adult after graduating from high school. At the time of the interviews, she was working at RAK English School as an English language teacher, managing a range of courses, including some for true beginners.

Her family, including her mother, sister and brother, moved to the city after her father had been working there for several years. The family did not want to be apart any longer and decided to move to the city. Maria joined an Indian curriculum, English-medium private school but her classmates and her core friend group were mainly Arabic speakers from Syria, Egypt and Somalia. Once she graduated from high school, she worked briefly as a teaching assistant in a grade school and then later took the CELTA program so that she would be able to teach English. The CELTA program was profoundly influential in how she thought about English and English

language teaching and she referred to it frequently, and generally positively, when we discussed these issues. She has used this work as a teacher to pay for a degree program in business at a university in the city. She continues to live at home with her family while she works and studies, but she plans to move away to teach and travel after she graduates.

Maria came to the UAE speaking Tagalog and English. Although many of her first friends spoke Arabic, they adopted an English-only policy to make sure she was included in their group. She also has a group of friends that speak mainly Hindi but who prefer to use English when she is around. As a result, she has learned some Arabic, though not as much as she would have liked, as well as some Hindi. She also studies Spanish in her free time because of its history of use in the Philippines and because it is a language that her parents studied when they were younger. Over the years, she feels she has lost touch with Tagalog and considers English to be her primary language. Although she uses Tagalog daily, she feels that she has lost some her ability to interact in nuanced ways with the language, with humour being a particular problem. At the same time, English had taken on a more significant role in her life, not only because she has become an English teacher, but also because her brother, the youngest child, does not speak Tagalog fluently, making English an important home language as well.

She described moving to the UAE as an event involving significant “culture shock” and used the term “third culture kid” to describe her sense of self that came out of the process of becoming used to living in the UAE (Maria, Int5). She does not feel that she “belongs” in the Philippines, but is also not totally at home in the UAE either. Her discomfort in the UAE is based primarily on the impermanence of her status as well as those of her (mainly expatriate) friends. She does not believe she can claim any kind of real permanence in the country and is confident that she will leave within the next few years.

Mozart

Mozart is a German-speaking EU citizen who has lived in Ras Al Khaimah with her family for almost 20 years and was a teacher at RAK English school during this project. She has worked at several different local businesses throughout her time in Ras Al Khaimah and also taught German at a private grade school. She eventually decided to take the CELTA program as a way to continue teaching professionally and felt that it had a hugely positive impact on the way she thought about teaching English. She now teaches mainly upper-level and IELTS preparation courses at the school.

Mozart originally moved to the city when she got married to her husband, who had been living there since the 1980s, running his own business. Her parents were immigrants to the EU from Pakistan and her husband is Pakistani but both sides of the family originate from different regions of Pakistan and speak different languages – Urdu on her side and Panjabi on her husband's. As a result, she considers German her “mother language”, but also speaks Urdu, English, French, some Panjabi and some Arabic. She feels that German-ness and the German language are fundamental aspects of her identity and she explained that she struggled a great deal in Ras Al Khaimah initially, without any German-speaking friends or easy access to German media. Throughout the interviews, and in her descriptions of daily life in Ras Al Khaimah, Mozart regularly defended her German-ness with confidence that masked the continual effort she was forced to make to do so:

It might sound weird to someone, I look like a Pakistani, I wear Pakistani clothes, I eat Pakistani food, but I'm very [home country national]. And that's part of me, that's part of my character and my personality and whenever I get tired of listening let's say to Urdu news, I just go upstairs, shut the door and sit down for a few moments and chat with my

friends in [German]. (Mozart, Int3)

In discussing language, she also expressed disappointment at the lack of Arabic that she had acquired over all these years in Ras Al Khaimah. She had clear language learning goals early on – to be able to talk to people and to read the Qur'an in Arabic – but struggled to find people to practice with and adequate classes to attend.

Over the years, Mozart has gradually assembled a set of German-speaking friends, including a colleague, who she meets regularly to converse with in German. She also explained that she has two other groups of friends, linguistically distinguished as the “Urdu group” and the “English group”. These linguistic divisions were not a part of any kind of conscious segregation effort; they simply reflect the different social circles that she is involved in as a European of Pakistani heritage who also speaks English. She further distinguishes the groups by “wavelength” suggesting that the English and German groups are more or less on the same wavelength, which is in turn different from that of the Pakistani group (Mozart, Int3). This is reflected in the kinds of conversations she will have with each, tending to focus more on work, politics and general interests with the former and family and religious issues with the latter.

As internet infrastructure has developed, Mozart has also gained more access to German media as well as to her German-speaking friends and family in her home country. This, along with her German friend group, has made her more comfortable in Ras Al Khaimah over the years. Even so, she is constantly on the lookout for opportunities to speak German and is quick to start up conversations with German-speaking strangers that she encounters in her daily life. While she expresses a desire to eventually return to her home country – indeed, she told me that if it were a simple matter of packing up and moving, she would do it tomorrow – she feels committed to Ras Al Khaimah while her children remain in school. This is not to say that she

dislikes living in Ras Al Khaimah. In fact, she explained that one thing that she really appreciated was being able to live and raise her children in a “Muslim society”. She explained that she underwent something of a religious transformation while living in the UAE, which led her to reflect more deeply on what it means to be Muslim and ultimately to begin wearing hijab.

Mozart has three children and also lives in a large house with extended family on her husband’s side. This makes her family environment highly multilingual, including Urdu, German, Panjabi and English as languages of everyday life. All of her children attend an English medium private school which follows a British curriculum. Mozart would have preferred to send her children to a German-medium school but the nearest option was in Sharjah, about an hour from Ras Al Khaimah and too far for her children to go to school every day, especially when they were young. As a result of her children studying in English and the general utility of English in Ras Al Khaimah, English is the language her children are most comfortable with, much to Mozart’s ongoing frustration. She makes an effort to use German and Urdu with them and suggests that they generally engage with her efforts positively. The family also frequently visits her home country in part to retain a connection to German, but Mozart laments that somehow they always fall back on English as the default language.

Malak and Hope

Malak and Hope are two Jordanian women working as teachers in the public school system in Ras Al Khaimah. Malak was considering joining an IELTS course at RAK English School when I met her. She was interested in participating in the project as a way to improve her spoken English but in the end was unable to complete the full set of interviews for personal reasons. I met Hope by chance in a café while talking to a different participant about the IELTS exam. She overheard us and asked if I could interview her as a way for her to practice for the

speaking test. She participated in just one interview, which initially just focused on her experience in the corniche area, a city space I had been investigating; however, we ended up spending quite a bit of time discussing her language experiences at work and her investment in preparing for the IELTS exam. These two teachers have been included here together because their experiences and concerns were remarkably similar. Hope also helps expand on some of the issues introduced by Malak but not fully discussed because of the shortened interview process.

Both women had come to Ras Al Khaimah less than a year before I spoke to them through recruitment agencies who were hiring on behalf of public schools in the UAE. At the time of the interviews, they were working in different schools but teaching the same STEM subject (which I leave ambiguous here for anonymity reasons). They were required to teach their courses exclusively in English despite resistance from their students and some ambivalent feelings of their own about the rigidity of the English policy imposed. Some English proficiency was required as a prerequisite for their jobs but this was determined through the interview process. However, retaining their positions at the end of their first year was also conditional on a specific IELTS score – either 6 for the academic version of the test or 6.5 for the general version. This requirement significantly affected their lives in the city and they devoted a great deal of time and effort to studying for the exam and seeking out opportunities to practice English, such as doing interviews for this project.

Malak and Hope both brought their families with them, getting family visas through their employer. Both came to the country speaking Arabic and English and although they are relatively comfortable communicating in English, they expressed surprise and frustration at the lack of utility that Arabic had in their day-to-day lives. They envisioned the UAE as fundamentally an “Arabic country” and were amazed at how little they used Arabic beyond their

immediate family and friends. Malak in particular was frustrated at feeling that she was constantly (mis)communicating as a second language speaker with other second language speakers, a reference to the fact that most shops, restaurants and services in general are managed by the multitude of non-Arab foreign residents that live and work in the country. In addition to feeling pressure to improve their own English, they expressed concern for their children. They did what they could to provide impromptu English lessons for them and sent them to schools where they would have the chance to practice English regularly.

Bradley

Bradley is an Afghan national who came to Ras Al Khaimah, after first spending a short time in Dubai, to take a technical job at a free zone company. At the time of the interviews he was both a network engineer and technical supervisor who managed contracted labour for various projects. I met him as a student at RAK English School, where he was taking an upper level English course.

Bradley initially came to the UAE as a way to support his mother and some of his siblings back home in Afghanistan. However, he had recently married an East Asian woman and was thus planning to relocate to her home country in the near future. When I met him, he had just managed to secure a very good job offer in her country from a large tech company. However, because it was a position that involved training new staff in English, it was conditional on obtaining CELTA certification within 6 months. Bradley was able to take the CELTA course part time in Ras Al Khaimah at RAK English School while he continued working at his regular job but was strongly advised to take an intermediate English course first before proceeding with the program. It was while he was attending this latter course that I first met him.

Bradley could be characterized as a gifted language learner. He had previously worked as

an interpreter in Afghanistan and he came to the UAE speaking Dari, Farsi, Pashto, Russian, French and English. While in the UAE, he learned to speak Urdu, some Arabic, a little Malayalam and was also beginning to learn some Chinese from his wife and her family. Bradley described an initial commitment to Arabic before he arrived in the country, explaining that he expected that Arabic would be “compulsory”. He took some Arabic language courses initially when he moved to the country but found them much too slow for him and not practical. He made an effort to go out and find Arabic speaking opportunities, but found that in general, Arabic speakers would refuse to talk to him in Arabic and would switch to English. Besides that, there simply were not that many Arabic speakers to interact with in his daily life anyway. Urdu, on the other hand, quickly became “compulsory” both in work and his daily life (Bradley, Int2).

Bradley’s company is one of many that provides technical support and parts replacement to mainly governmental agencies in the UAE. The company submits bids for open tenders and then hires labour on a contract basis, mainly from India and Pakistan, to complete any work they are awarded. The formal work of submitting bids for government contracts is mainly conducted in English, but the practical day-to-day operations in the office are mainly in Farsi because the other main supervisor also speaks that language. When working on specific contracts, it quickly became apparent to Bradley that they needed Urdu to communicate with the contract staff they employed. Because most of the staff had only basic proficiency in English or Arabic, these languages were an inadequate medium to convey specific instructions about safety issues and the need to handle delicate equipment appropriately. Within six months of daily Urdu use at work and conscious acquisition work through movies and general practice in his social life, Bradley claimed to be more or less fluent. Because it was such a useful language to have in his daily life in Ras Al Khaimah – to be able to communicate comfortably with shopkeepers, taxi drivers and so

on – he found that his proficiency quickly extended well beyond what he needed for work.

At the time of the interviews, he was also freelancing as an online instructor, teaching network engineering courses part time to students around the world. These courses were conducted primarily in English, though he felt that at times he was teaching English more than he was teaching the technical material of the courses. His students often struggled with the English technical terminology that was required to understand course content. He also began the CELTA program soon after I met him. This course took up much of his free time and he frequently worked on his assignments and lesson plans late into the night to keep up.

Bradley claimed not to have many friends in town but he nevertheless seemed remarkably adept at creating impromptu opportunities to interact with people around him, which in turn became lasting relationships, though he tended to avoid the word “friend”. For example, he became a frequent patron of two restaurants in town – Iranian and Afghan – in part because the food was good but also because he enjoyed talking to the owners who were there every day. He also played football with a regular group on weekends and described joking with them and going to cafés. Tourists were another opportunity to both practice his various language repertoires and socialize. Despite this wide network of acquaintances, Bradley’s sense of belonging in Ras Al Khaimah rested firmly with his work and any other business “opportunities” he could find. Despite plans to move to his wife’s home country, he was on a constant look out for new business ideas in Ras Al Khaimah. He had plans to return to the city again to set up a business tied to network engineering services and training, which he felt would be increasingly important in Ras Al Khaimah’s future.

Jessica and John

Jessica and John are Egyptian siblings who were interviewed together for this project.

Jessica has lived in Ras Al Khaimah with her family for about 10 years. She moved to the city initially because she married a man working there. Her husband had moved there for work several years earlier because his uncle had been living there for decades and provided some support early on. When we began the interviews, John, her brother, had recently moved to the city as well to live with her family while he looked for work in the UAE. I met them while John was exploring the possibility of taking English classes at RAK English School, where Jessica had taken an IELTS class a year earlier. They joined the project in part as a way to practice speaking English with me.

Jessica speaks Arabic, English and a bit of French. She had previously lived in Kuwait with her family as a teenager and studied English at school. After graduating, she returned to Egypt for university, where she completed a nursing degree, with much of the content also taught in English. At the time of the interviews, she had been working as a medical officer at a company in Dubai for several years, using both English and Arabic regularly at her job. As such, though she considers Arabic her primary language, she was generally comfortable speaking in English for the interviews. Because of her time in Kuwait and Ras Al Khaimah, she considers herself comfortable with both *Khaleeji* Arabic and Egyptian Arabic, as well as Gulf Pidgin Arabic, which she calls “Franco-Arabic” or “broken Arabic” (Jessica, Int1).

Jessica’s husband is also Egyptian and has worked for a number of years in the tourism and hospitality industry in Ras Al Khaimah. They have two children who attend private English schools in the city. The main language the family speaks together at home is Egyptian Arabic but Jessica is keen for her children to learn English as well. She takes great pains in monitoring their progress at school and has moved her eldest son several times to try to find a better school within their budget. At the same time, she worries about being left behind as they progress in English

and losing control of the cultural influences they take on as a result of consuming English media. In her daily life in Ras Al Khaimah, she considers both English and Gulf Pidgin Arabic very helpful in navigating communication with service staff in the city. Despite being comfortable communicating with the multinational residents of the UAE, she explained to me that she sometimes misses being in Egypt and feeling that “there is Arabic everywhere” (Jessica, Int6).

Her family (excluding John) hopes to immigrate to Canada in the next few years on the basis of her nursing qualifications and her potential to get a “good” IELTS score, 6.5 or better, but they are still working their way through the application process via a private organization in the UAE. At the time of the interviews, she was still trying to improve her English before taking the IELTS exam. Although she likes living in Ras Al Khaimah, she said that she would “move tomorrow” if she had the opportunity to immigrate (Jessica, Int1). She felt considerable pressure to do well on the IELTS exam as a central component to achieving this dream for the family.

John is an engineering graduate who had moved to Ras Al Khaimah just a few weeks before I started recruiting participants. He came to the city to live with his sister in the hope that he would find a job there or elsewhere in the UAE. Like Jessica, he studied English in grade school and also did his engineering degree mainly in English. He also spoke Egyptian Arabic but was not yet used to some of the differences in *Khaleeji* Arabic and found Gulf Pidgin Arabic particularly “strange” (John, Int1).

During the course of the research project, John spent much of his time job hunting, a process that mainly occurred in English. He often went to Dubai to visit companies, submit his English CV and attend interviews in English. After about 5 months, towards the end of the project, he managed to secure a job in Ras Al Khaimah and intended to stay for a few years at least. He felt that the UAE was a good place to develop his skills because he could meet lots of

people from different parts of the world and learn from them. He did not believe that he would have the same opportunities available in Egypt, where competition for jobs was much fiercer and he felt much more like just another engineering graduate, struggling for work. However, in the long term, he hoped that the UAE would be a stepping stone before moving on to Germany. He hoped to enter a graduate program there, after getting some experience in the UAE, and ultimately find a high-skill, high-paid job there too. He also felt a need to study English to achieve this goal because most programs that he had looked at required an IELTS score as a prerequisite. He said he would try to study German in the years leading up to his emigration; however, during the course of our interviews, he was mainly concerned with finding a job and practicing English.

Although John and Jessica were looking for more formal English courses, they were quite happy to have the opportunity to practice speaking with me at length about the wide variety of topics that we covered. When they had free time at home, they also would occasionally have English-only practice sessions, sometimes including Jessica's children. They also followed several social media accounts run by Egyptian English teachers with hundreds of thousands of followers. Even more than IELTS scores, they wanted to be able to speak English fluently and as such, they were both active in seeking out "foreigner friends" (Jessica, Int2) who they could practice speaking with. In the past, Jessica had some neighbours that she spoke to in English regularly but most had moved away over the years. Towards the end of our interviews together, they had also struck up a friendship with an English-speaking family at Jessica's children's football club. They hoped that this new relationship would fill the void they worried would be left once our interviews ended.

Conclusion

These profiles provide a starting point from which the reader can engage with the data presented in subsequent chapters. The more unified life stories offered here provide some context for the short stories that populate the following chapters. Moving forward, references to my core participants' life stories will also be embedded in discussions of their policy subjectivities and this chapter can serve as a narrative reference guide for subsequent discussions.

Chapter 7: Foreign resident subjectivities within institutional language policy

Introduction

Over the next few chapters, I examine a number of the policy threads I have discussed so far from the perspectives of my participants. Using my analytical toolkit, I explore the ways that my participants take up subjectivities within policy, both as subjects and objects of policy.

This chapter focuses on their interactions with many of the policy apparatuses from chapter 5. However, unlike the institutionally driven policy apparatuses discussed in that chapter, which can to some extent be isolated and discussed independently from one another, the subjectivities expressed by my participants are less easily categorised. They generally engage with multiple sets of policies that operate at different scales at the same time. Thus, while I attempt to locate specific subjectivities produced or claimed in relation to specific policies, the process is a messy one which draws on several sets of policy discourse simultaneously. As such, rather than attempting to isolate the effects of the specific sets of policies itemized in chapter 5, I have divided this chapter into two main parts. The first deals with multiple subjectivities formulated in relation to Arabic language policy. The second unpacks subjectivities produced through English language policy. Because English language policies tend to have a broader demographic reach amongst foreign residents than the Arabic language policies, the latter section is substantially longer. This is likely compounded by the fact that my core participant group is inclined to be engaged with English policies, given that I recruited them all from an English school. Nevertheless, both sections reveal a great deal of complexity in how foreign residents engage with formal language policy and take up positions within it.

Subjectivities within institutional Arabic language policy

Most of my participants were understandably either ambivalent or indifferent to official

government policy promoting Arabic. They were aware of the general idea that the UAE was concerned about promoting Arabic, and noted that it was largely because English was everywhere, but for the most part they did not have much awareness of specific initiatives such as the language goals of *Vision 2021* (some were aware of Vision 2021 in general) or the *Arabic Language Charter*. Of course, why would they? They were not the main target audience for these documents and had no significant investment in an Arabic “cultural renaissance”. However, as middle-class residents, potentially with the money and time to study Arabic in private institutions or universities, they were also the target population of a small aspect of these policy documents. These are the people the UAE hopes to encourage to learn and use Arabic. As I probed these issues further, I found that almost all of my participants incorporated discourses of both alienation and belonging related to Arabic language policy.

What I found most striking was that my four participants who did not consider themselves Arabic speakers (though all knew some Arabic), expressed a strong commitment to Arabic acquisition before arriving in the country or in their first few years there. That is to say, they presented themselves as Arabic *learners* but not Arabic *users*. Some had had clear images of the UAE as an “Arabic country” before they arrived – it was imagined as a country where, as Bradley (Int2) succinctly put it, “Arabic is compulsory”. Anne (Int3) explained that whenever she goes to a new country she tries to “learn a bit of the language of the people there”. That meant studying and practicing Arabic in her first few years in the UAE. Other participants, including some that I only spoke to in single interviews, expressed surprise at how unimportant Arabic was in their daily lives. Some adopted narratives of responsibility and respect to “local culture” (meaning Emiratis) in that they felt that learning and using basic Arabic demonstrated common courtesy to the country and its national population, their “hosts”. However, as my

participants recounted the obstacles they faced in learning Arabic, these kinds of commitments were also hedged with ambivalence about where the responsibility for Arabic acquisition lay. Despite their commitment to learn, they felt little space for Arabic user subjectivities.

Arabic language learners

The three main obstacles that my participants laid out consistently were a lack of good quality Arabic courses, a lack of a need for Arabic in their daily lives and the difficulty they had in finding people to practice with. The latter two I will take up in a moment (and at various points over subsequent chapters), but the first one relates directly to some of the provisions in the *Arabic Language Charter* – that the UAE is working towards “modernizing” Arabic as a second language courses in grade schools as well as starting university-led Arabic programs and “encouraging” private language centres targeting adult language learners. As stated in chapter 5, such an approach still excludes the working-class majority of the population, who have neither time nor money for privately offered Arabic language courses. For residents with more time and/or money, there appear to be some options in Dubai now that “expats” are taking advantage of (Clarke, 2018; Zakaria, 2017) but in Ras Al Khaimah, choices are limited. RAK English School even dabbled in Arabic offerings but Anne found that demand was limited and getting adequately trained teachers was problematic. Anne, Mozart, Bradley and Maria all joined Arabic classes at some point in their time in Ras Al Khaimah and all of them felt the courses were inadequate in some way or another. Bradley found his classes much too slow, with a focus on reading and writing that was much less important to him than speaking. Mozart (Int2) called the courses she took “a disaster” because they mainly involved memorizing whole sentences and grammatical structures without any communicative purpose or context, a common complaint amongst people I spoke to about Arabic courses in the UAE. She also noted that her children’s

second language Arabic courses at their private school were similarly unhelpful. She explained that the children did fine on the tests, having successfully memorized sentences, but that they were totally incapable of functioning in Arabic in the city. Likewise, Maria, whose main experience in a second language classroom came from her time at a private high school in Ras Al Khaimah, told me that she could not think of even one example of language that she learned in her class that was helpful later. She had mainly memorized and then immediately forgotten large chunks of totally inapplicable Modern Standard Arabic for her tests.

The policy emphasis placed on Arabic as a second language in private grade schools is interesting for a few reasons. To start, it implicitly recognizes that foreign families with children in school are committed to a relatively long tenure in the country, even while migration policy offers no explicit provision to these families or their children long term. Mozart expressed this sense of long-term non-belonging when she described her and her son's feelings about learning Arabic. In several interviews, she emphasized that while she might prefer to move back to Europe eventually, the family was more or less committed to staying in Ras Al Khaimah until her children finished school (at least ten more years). Ras Al Khaimah can never be "home", and will never feel like home for her, but it is a place that they can live relatively happily, long term. The family regularly returns to Mozart's home country, in part to see relatives but also to give her children a chance to learn and practice German. She explained that her son's motivation as a language learner was based on "necessity". Initially, he was quite resistant to learning German and said, "I'm here in the UAE, I use English at school, I can hear it everywhere...what's the point of learning German?" (Int4). However, as he got older, he began thinking about his options for university and realized that he might go to German-speaking Europe for both academic and financial reasons. Mozart said that with this realization, his perspective totally changed and he

has really thrown himself into practicing German and studying, especially when they return home in the summer. As for Arabic, “they don’t want to study [any more than they have to for school],” says Mozart, “they have too many other [academic] burdens already” (Int4). For her and her son, living in Ras Al Khaimah is not the long-term goal and this plays out in language learning motivations and choices. Maria also echoed this discussion in her reflections on her own high school Arabic learning experience, which she found completely useless. Like, Mozart, she feels a bit embarrassed at having lived in the UAE so long and having not learned much Arabic, but also like Mozart’s son, she has no long-term plan to stay in the UAE, in large part because she knows she cannot live in the country forever. This dual sense of a lack of utility and lack of belonging has always made Arabic a relatively low priority for her.

Feelings of impermanence in the country then tie back into the constitution of foreign residents as “customers” in the private language school network. As I outlined in chapter 5, the private school system is managed in part by parental perceptions of school quality. Market forces take effect as “good quality” schools get more business and “bad quality” schools struggle to stay open. This means that for schools to offer good quality Arabic instruction, parents and children have to already care about the quality of Arabic instruction. However, if, like the cases Mozart’s son and Maria, there is no sense of meaningful permanence for foreign residents in the country, who will care enough to make private schools offer more than the bare minimum Arabic instruction they are required to provide? Indeed, even in the Dubai’s school rating system, many “outstanding” schools had merely “acceptable” Arabic instruction (2 out of 5 on the ranking scale). Thus, the language policy apparatus in place tacitly recognizes the importance of middle-class children in the linguistic fabric of the country – they are a semi-permanent fixture in the demographics, and not a small one. However, there is no form of subjectivity available that

invites these students to consider themselves permanent residents with an investment in learning Arabic. Arabic becomes just another course they have to take in school, and one they might be quite happy to leave behind in favour of whatever language might be more useful for their academic future. In other words, the success of private school second language Arabic depends on a pre-existing investment in and commitment to Arabic on the behalf of the parents and children as private school “consumers”.

Arabic language users

Discussions that I had with my participants about whether they felt an obligation to learn Arabic and if so, how they understood their responsibility in that task, were fraught with ambivalence and contradictions. They often connected the lack of good-quality government-sponsored courses back to government policy and social norms that segregated them from Arabic speakers. While they were constructed as “responsible” Arabic language learners, they felt there was no space for them in society as Arabic language users.

Just as the *Arabic Language Charter* seems to shift responsibility on to foreign residents to seek out and pay for Arabic lessons, media reports often construct foreign residents as both problematically disinterested in Arabic acquisition and responsible for that acquisition (Al Kuttub, 2017b; Rizvi & Bell, 2015; Shams, 2017). Such public debates also sometimes draw attention to the economic value of Arabic, that expats owe it to themselves and their careers to learn (Debusmann Jr., 2017) or more directly, that they can “double their salary” (Billing, 2009). Others focus on the cultural obligation to learn the language of the country you live in (Shams, 2017), framing Emiratis as “hosts” and “expats” as “guests” (Rizvi & Bell, 2015). Many of my participants took these concerns seriously, particularly the issue of responsibility.

To return to Mozart, she explained that she really committed to learning Arabic after

having lived in the country for twelve years and “barely learning anything” (Int2). She said to herself, “enough is enough” (Int2), bought some books and enrolled in a course. Unfortunately, the course was “a disaster” (Int2), she still had no one to practice with and she felt she could never find enough time to properly study on her own, so she gave up on Arabic once again. However, she explained that she still frequently feels embarrassed about her lack of language, especially given her lengthy stay in the UAE. She reported students sometimes incredulously making (light-hearted) fun of her when they meet her for the first time in the classroom: “They will ask me ‘You’ve been here 20 years and you don’t know Arabic?’ and I’m like, ‘Sorry...’” (Int2). She also described frustration over simultaneous feelings of the obligation to learn Arabic and the apparent indifference of the government of the UAE or Emiratis in providing any resources or opportunities for this task. She compared the situation to her home country where the government would provide free German courses to new immigrants “who want to be integrated into the society” in contrast to the UAE where “they don’t want us to be integrated into the society” (Int5). Mozart felt that the anxiety over the foreign resident majority is a major factor in the segregation of foreigner enclaves from Emirati society (I discuss this further in chapter 9), which in turn has an effect on language learning and cultural integration:

If you look at Al Hamra, Mina Al Arab [wealthy, mainly Western expat areas], they are kind of excluded, they are not part of Ras Al Khaimah or the UAE society. You don’t even have a mosque over there because they consider that is not [necessary]. (Int5)

Even though she mainly lived in Emirati neighbourhoods, she still found a distinct lack of interaction and integration with her neighbours:

I wouldn’t say they are inhumane, but they wouldn’t interact [with me]...I mean I don’t know my neighbours. I’ve never seen them. I’ve literally never seen a woman come out of

there. Not even on the balcony. I mean they might have seen me in the morning doing my yoga but I've never seen someone, I don't even know if there are women! There must be obviously but... (Int5)

She felt frustrated at being both segregated from Emirati Arabic speakers and positioned as responsible for her own lack of Arabic acquisition and “integration”, concluding a lengthy discussion on the topic by suggesting that it was “the responsibility of the local people to integrate [us]” (Int5).

Mozart added similar complaints about her children’s options for Arabic at school. When her children first started school, she had hoped they could take Arabic as their second language course, so that they could eventually read the Qur’an. At the time, there was no formal policy enforcing second language Arabic for children in private schools and as a result, when she presented this idea to the school, they told her that she was “a non-Arab speaker” and her children would study French, the default for “non Arabs” (Int4). Later on, as national policy goals shifted, the school was forced to offer Arabic classes to all students, but only did the minimum to meet these policy targets, offering a basic third language class to “non-Arab” students. Mozart described it as “a joke...It's basic, it's nothing, it's just a few words in a term you learn by heart and that's about it. It's not the speaking and the practice is just not there” (Int4). She faced similar problems getting her children into Islamic Studies classes reserved for Arab children.

Bradley expressed a similar discontent with the assumption that he was primarily responsible for the country’s Arabic language aspirations. Like Mozart, citing European countries as examples, he argued that if the UAE wanted to have more widespread Arabic use, they needed to provide free language courses to newcomers to the country. He emphasized the

fact that these courses should be free, noting with a cynical laugh that “in UAE, everything is... you gotta pay” (Int6). He questioned the commitment of the government, explaining that without major, well-funded language initiatives for people like him, it was completely unreasonable to expect him to make all the steps to acquisition on his own – pay for courses, invest time studying and seek out people to practice with. Like Mozart, Bradley also tried learning Arabic for several months when he first arrived but complained that, apart from not finding a useful course, no one would speak to him in Arabic. He explained that he was originally willing to take on the responsibility of learning Arabic if it was in fact “compulsory” (Int2) as he had expected it to be. When he found out that it was not, unlike Mozart, he was much more comfortable absolving himself of responsibility for this lack of success with language acquisition. He did not find Arabic useful at work and could not find anyone to practice with in his personal life. He felt that he made a reasonable effort in the beginning but had no intrinsic commitment to the UAE or Arabic in general, so why worry about it? His argument was basically, if the UAE cares that much about Arabic, they could come to him. Part of the difference in perspective between Mozart and Bradley is certainly due to the fact that Mozart is very much a long-term resident and while Bradley was primarily following his work in which the Ras Al Khaimah was more of a stepping stone to other things. Both had feelings of impermanence, but Mozart felt that if she had been given the opportunity, she could have become much more “integrated” into some kind of Arabic-speaking community. As I will explore more fully in the next chapter, Bradley embraced the neoliberal subjectivity offered him and the practical orientations towards language choices that came with it.

Even my Arabic-speaking participants found themselves struggling to position themselves as “integrated” Arabic language users in the UAE. John and Jessica both explained that Arabic

was central to their personal lives but also told me that most of their interactions in Arabic were with other Egyptians, family and friends, rather than Emiratis. Beyond this more private domain, they tended to use English with other foreign residents, or sometimes, “Franco-Arabic” (a form of Pidgin Arabic that they identified as linguistically problematic but necessary). They also devoted a significant part of their free time to working towards English language goals and had little investment in any kind of Arabic future for the UAE. They emphasized that people “would never lose Arabic” (Int6) because it is the language of the Qur’an, but were also ambivalent about the value of Arabic for their future career trajectories, especially given that they were both committed to emigrating to either Europe or Canada. Likewise, Malak, who was much newer to the country and had a very limited social network, found that she hardly used Arabic outside of her home. Indeed, as a public school teacher who taught in English, rather than finding subject positions within Arabic language policy, she often found herself forced into English language policy advocacy work. I will take up this latter issue in more detail in the next section, but the point I wish to highlight here is that even for Arabic-speaking foreign residents in the UAE, there seems to be little space for subjectivities within Arabic language policy. Though they could have easily been included within national Arabic language policy goals, they were not. They did not feel a fundamental sense of belonging through which they might have acted as Arabic language policy advocates. Instead, they felt simultaneously excluded from the Emirati Arabic core of society and pushed mainly towards English in both language and economic policy.

Subjectivities within institutional English language policy

While institutional Arabic language policy generally emanates from government documents and grade school curriculums, English language policy is more multidimensional in both origins and effects. Governments, international organizations, school systems and private

institutions (both schools and companies) produce policy explicitly and implicitly, often together and just as often in contradictory ways. For some of my participants, dealing with explicit English language policy was a constant source of stress and anxiety. Others felt empowered as policy producers through the positions they took up within English language policy.

Anne – Cambridge English policy advocate; ethical English language service provider

Anne is an example of the latter. She explained that before speaking to me she had not considered herself a language policy agent; however, by the end of our many discussions about her role within language policy in Ras Al Khaimah, she had expressed in a number of different ways the impact she and RAK English School had had on language in the city. There are three main dimensions of her subjectivity as a language policy agent that I will list here and then discuss in turn. First, she understands herself as a language teaching standards moderator, both as the director of the school and through her role with Cambridge organizations. Second, she sees herself as a provider of essential language services not being currently met by governmental institutions. Third, she describes herself as an ethical agent, balancing the needs of her business against what she feels is “right” for the students and staff at the school.

On this first dimension, Anne frequently spoke about her experiences within International House and Cambridge institutions such as CELTA, DELTA and IELTS as foundational components of herself as a teacher and school administrator. From International House, she acquired an appreciation of a flexible and collaborative approach to school management and a student-centred, communicative style of language teaching. Through her experiences with various Cambridge qualifications and exams, she felt that she had acquired practical knowledge and expertise on both what it means to produce good quality English classes as well as how to train, manage and support other teachers to do the same. Anne often drew on these sets of

experiences and qualifications when situating herself in policy contexts and narrating her policy decisions. Within the school, she explained that she would only hire teachers who had CELTA or CELTA-equivalent qualifications, meaning that they had acquired the same kinds of practical skills offered by the CELTA course to deliver a communicative lesson. In some cases, she hired teachers from the CELTA courses that she taught herself in Ras Al Khaimah. She explained that she was not convinced that graduate degrees were a good indicator of readiness to teach, noting that, “on a daily basis, I don't care if the teachers know any theory, I want them to be able to go into class and teach an effective lesson to the students” (Int5). This commitment to Cambridge-type teaching standards made Anne something of a Cambridge English language policy advocate through her work in the school in the sense that she viewed all language instruction that went on in the school through this lens. General English courses taught by CELTA-trained teachers improved student English proficiency which led to better IELTS scores. As both a teacher trainer and a school director, she was active in both producing and managing English teachers within the particular set of standards that she (and the Cambridge institutions that she is affiliated with) values. Indeed, part of the trouble she had with finding suitable Arabic instructors was a direct result of her attempt to ensure that they were equipped with either qualifications or an openness to feedback from her that enabled them to provide what she understood to be communicative, student-centred Arabic classes. She also viewed the school's accreditation as a CELTA centre as an important endorsement of the quality of the school as a “very reputable organization” (Int5). Likewise, she felt that the school's responsibility for organizing IELTS tests gave the school “credibility”. This credibility and connection to the Cambridge brand together make the school an attractive place to study. Thus, her attention to and maintenance of these specific English language teaching standards have been good for the business overall as well.

Another aspect of her position as standards manager involves dispelling customer illusions about IELTS scores and English proficiency. She explained that IELTS is frequently required for entirely unreasonable purposes in the country (citing the example of law students who will study and practice solely in Arabic) and this unrelenting drive for IELTS creates more demand for scores than English itself. In the face of this, she feels she must continually counter common beliefs about the nature of the test and what is actually required to successfully reach whatever score a customer is after:

The English language itself is valued by some people. What a proven proficiency can give you is valued by some other people, and some people value both and I think we do have to separate those two things because they are not the same. Unfortunately, a lot of the people who come to us, I won't say everyone, they don't care two hoots about English and about knowing English, they just want that bit of paper to get them to something else that they want. I say "unfortunately", but on the other hand, if people are forced to do something which they wouldn't otherwise do, and which they don't see perhaps as valued, then you can't expect them to value it really. (Int6)

Anne takes on the unenviable position of mediating nationally driven language policy, IELTS language policy and customer expectations about the IELTS test. This often involves turning away customers insistent on joining an IELTS class when they have limited English.

The second dimension of Anne's policy agent subjectivity is that of essential service provider. In the school profile in chapter 6, I used her quotes to summarize some of the courses offered by the school as well as the aspirations of some of the students. I return to her statements now because they demonstrate Anne and the school's position as a provider of English language services within a policy framework that currently creates specific demands unmet by

governmental institutions. Anne explained that she saw the school as an important resource for teenagers and adults in their 20s who had “fallen through the cracks” (Int6) of the education system and still had little to no English towards the end of high school or even after graduating. She described developing more and more basic English courses to meet a surge in demand of students who had very limited English language skills, to the point that many could not read or write in English.

They were pushed through. I've asked them, “how did you manage to get there?” [How are there] kids in grade 12 that can't read and write? “Oh, three geniuses in our class, just copy!” What's going on in the schools, especially the boys' schools? It's appalling. I believe there are a huge number of kids out there in this category, in this situation, who really need some kind of intervention...And these are the people, now they've found out – oh, okay, there is somewhere we can go. We can actually learn English! (Int6)

She told me that the school runs these kinds of basic English courses almost continuously now. Thus, while governmental institutions and schools have produced specific English language targets, in many cases they are not being met (or have not been met over the course of the past 20 years). These individuals still face a variety of explicit and implicit English language demands in their daily lives – from work, higher education and simply daily life in the UAE – and find they cannot cope with the limited language they have acquired in governmental institutions. It was within this policy context that Anne created RAK English School, which came to take on the role of service provider in Ras Al Khaimah, meeting the language needs of individuals who have in some way not been adequately served by public institutions.

Within this understanding of herself as a valuable service provider, Anne expressed some ambivalence over the extent to which English has taken over a number of domains in the UAE.

On the one hand, she readily took up discourses of English as the “*lingua franca* for tourism” or the language of STEM subjects globally. On the other hand, she explained that she does not think that English is “better” for these roles than any other language, “it’s just as a practicality... Because of the nature of the world at the moment, English is important. And [that makes it important to] the UAE’s aspirations and RAK’s aspirations” (Int6). Anne also questioned the extensive promotion of English, problematizing its imposition on the education system in the UAE in particular:

I don’t agree with this idea that everyone should study in English. I think it’s wrong. They should be studying in Arabic, studying in their own language. Let people study, learn, take in ideas, debate, et cetera in their own language. But have English as a way to communicate outside the country or with other groups in your country that don’t speak Arabic. If the government was serious in their policy of promoting Arabic...the kids need Arabic first, they need to be educated in their first language and then have English on top or real bilingual education if that’s what you want...I really wonder whether Arabic is valued by its native speakers in this country...so while we try to help our customers, our clients, to achieve what they want through English, in this country, it’s not because of any belief I have myself that this is what they *should* be doing, it’s just dealing with the reality of the situation.

Despite these reservations, she felt the best she could do in her position was offer the best quality English support she could produce.

This discussion flows into the ethical dimension of Anne’s subjectivity as a policy agent. This ethical positioning combines both of the previous aspects discussed – the importance of the service provided and the standards maintained. In describing the vital role the school plays in

providing remedial language instruction that is lacking not only in the public school but in the private sector as well, she calls the courses they offer both “a product and a social service” (Int6). She attributes the school’s success in large part to the widespread demand for IELTS in the country and has capitalized on this demand as a business owner. At the same time, she feels that the school delivers a “social service”, providing students with the English language skills demanded of them from many different directions in UAE society, and she strives to maintain an ethical balance between the business and this service provision. Thus, she describes the school as an important institution at the intersection between the governmental language policy goals promoting English and the practical needs of residents in their daily lives in Ras Al Khaimah. That said, she does not believe that the government had private language schools in mind as core service providers when they formulated their English policy goals, nor had they in any way facilitated this ethical-entrepreneurial subject position within language policy discourse.

The discussion of ethics also extends into Anne’s maintenance of the set of standards discussed earlier. She explained that when faced with students attempting to enter an IELTS course that they are linguistically unprepared for, she feels an ethical obligation in deterring them. She will make an effort to explain that they will not be able to handle to the content of an IELTS course, suggesting that they would benefit more from joining a general English course:

Because I think we have a responsibility to tell them if their expectations are unrealistic. I mean, I don't think it's ethical if someone comes in and says, “I want a band 7” and I say, “Yes, yes, yes, join the course!” I feel I have to be honest with her. It's not that I want us to make more money by getting people to do general English courses, no! I honestly believe that this will benefit her.

Anne also explained that she does not take on this job alone. She discusses individual cases with

teachers and receptionists as way to confirm that she is making the right decision, especially with borderline students. She also established this overarching approach to the problem as unwritten school policy, involving the rest of the staff to ensure, that everyone is on the same page regarding this ongoing issue.

Maria and Mozart – RAK English School teacher subjectivities

Mozart and Maria described their subjectivities as teachers within RAK English School policy mainly as Cambridge-approved language teaching experts. However, these discussions also touched on racialized norms and expectations of what it means to be a non-white English teacher in Ras Al Khaimah, presenting divergent accounts of this experience.

Both Maria and Mozart cited the CELTA program as an important influence on their development as teachers. Both teachers also adopted similar discourses to Anne in describing the practical value of the program. Maria said that “it was a great way to learn because you instantly get to apply whatever theories you learn.” She described the first CELTA session she attended, in which the course director had modelled a Turkish language class, and explained that it was an important moment in her development as a teacher. She said that she often returned to that lesson as a reference for what it meant to provide student-centred, communicative language instruction, that offered “the right amount of practice [and] the right amount of knowledge in one lesson” (Int2). Mozart also described the CELTA program as “eye-opening” (Int2). For her, the program built her confidence as an English language expert through its structured approach to language analysis and also encouraged her to create a “comfortable environment” (Int2) that facilitated a communicative class. As noted briefly in chapter 5, despite being non-white, “non-native” English speakers, Maria and Mozart are nonetheless constructed as legitimate English language experts and teachers within the CELTA program, and they rightly saw themselves as such.

Mozart also commented on her interaction with IELTS as both a teacher and invigilator. She felt that her experience as an invigilator helped her prepare her students better for the exam because she was familiar with all of the procedures and the context in which the students would be taking it. Mozart saw herself as an important resource for students taking the exam and was proud of the role that she played, especially when she heard back from successful students who had attained their desired score after taking her course. Like Anne, she saw herself as an essential service provider, feeling that “we are contributing to the society a lot...Not only IELTS, it is also general English” (Mozart, Int6).

Both Maria and Mozart were hired by RAK English School following their completion of the CELTA program and Anne stands fully behind both of them as excellent, well-qualified English language teachers. Both the teachers and Anne described language policy within the school as flexible and guided by teacher judgement. Within the school grounds, Anne was supportive of multilingual communication between staff and students, noting with some pride the range of languages that you might hear in the school on a given day. Within classrooms, the teachers felt they had flexibility to decide when it might be appropriate to use other languages, especially Arabic but also Hindi, and each teacher had their own degree of language policy “strictness” that they applied in their classrooms. However, this flexible multilingualism and these relatively positive and unified teacher subjectivities became disrupted through the ways that the teachers and Anne perceived their relationships to the expectations of their customer base. The heart of the problem for Anne is that students (or their parents) are often determined that they should have “native speaker” teachers, while Anne, aligning herself with CELTA’s general approach to the issue, argues that being a native speaker is irrelevant to being a good language teacher. She described her solution to the problem as an occasional “white lie” about

teacher backgrounds to allay student anxieties when faced with non-white teachers:

If someone is European, and fair, they will be considered a native speaker whether they are or not. No questions asked. If the teacher is Asian, then we have to be more clear that this person is kind of native speaker-like so, you know, they were brought up in such and such a country, even if it may in some cases not be true. I don't like doing that but...and then once the students have those teachers, they are very happy with them and it's not an issue anymore...When we get a new teacher, we decide together, and we will check it with the teacher, what we will say. Because people do ask. So, [Maria], our Filipina teacher, who was brought up here and has this perfect, you know, American twang...And her English is perfect...So we just say, "okay, we have this teacher, she's very good, experienced, her parents from the Philippines, but she lived in the US." A little white lie...I don't like this but it's a reality of the business so if I have confidence [in the teacher] I will say what is necessary. (Int3)

Anne also justified this, in part, by arguing that despite students often requesting "native English speakers", what they actually want is the "teaching approach" offered by the school, a communicative and learner-centred approach guided by Cambridge teaching standards. She explained that it is an approach that is often totally new to the students, coming from an education system that is very much teacher-centred and based on memorization. Nevertheless, she also recognized that racism is an important factor in the demands of her client base, but one that she has to manage as best she can. By way of example, she recounted the recent story of a woman who had come to the school hoping to get help editing her doctoral dissertation. She came in for a trial lesson with Mozart, who Anne described as "very good at this stuff" (Int3), but decided that she did not want to come in for lessons, she just wanted editing, preferably from

a “British person”. When Anne told her that they did not offer that kind of service, the student decided to come back for lessons again but only if the school could find her a “British teacher”.

Anne discussed the options with her receptionist:

[The receptionist] said what about [Teacher A], the British[-Arab] one...firstly, [Teacher A] is not as "academic", you know, I don't think she's the right person to deal with this academic stuff, and secondly I don't think this woman would accept her. And the receptionist said, "Oh, blue eyes then." And I said, “Yes, exactly”, that's what I understand she wants. (Int3)

By chance, Anne had recently met a Scottish woman who was well-qualified and interested in doing some part-time work with the school. She noted that this woman had quite a strong accent which might give the student a bit of trouble but she was a white, blue-eyed “British” woman who would probably meet the student’s requirements. Anne explained:

So, occasionally we get people like this and it's a game, I take it as a game that...If I thought that [Teacher A] would have been the best teacher for this woman, then I would sell her. I don't actually think she is the right teacher, so I wouldn't do it for that reason. I think the other teacher [Mozart], the Pakistani heritage one, would do a very good job but this woman clearly has decided that that's not what she wants, so I can't be bothered trying to...Mm, and sometimes people want me – “British” that I am! – but I say no. Because I'm too busy. (Int3)

While both Mozart and Maria regularly have to deal with these types of issues, often via Anne, the problem of racialized native speaker-ness has played out rather differently for each of them.

Mozart felt strongly that being a native speaker was not especially helpful for prospective teachers, and could even be a hinderance. She explained that a good English teacher should

obviously know the language well but should also have a “teacher personality”, that is, someone who can “make another person understand something” (Int2). In her experience, native speakers may lack one or both of these traits, either not knowing the rules of their own language well or not being able to convey them effectively, making them somewhat inadequate language teachers. As such, Mozart has always been quite comfortable telling her students that she is not a native speaker. However, part of Mozart’s position of strength is that she is able to identify herself as European. She noted that when she tells students what country she is from, they either identify it as European and therefore acceptably “English” or they do not know exactly where it is and more or less accept the confidence with which she conveys herself as an English language teacher. This European aspect of her subjectivity also makes her comfortable speaking German or French in the school in front of staff or students.

Maria, on the other hand, despite also questioning the value of native speaker-ness and feeling that she is a legitimate, well-qualified language teacher, said that she had to actively hide her Filipino-ness. She explained that she would not use Tagalog in front of students (though was fine with speaking it in front of colleagues), and felt that most of her students would not be willing to take a course with an unambiguously Filipino teacher. She attributed this to the “racist view from Emiratis towards Filipinos” (Int5):

It has happened a couple of times when customers ask the receptionist where we are from or stuff like that and then kind of make a face or decide not to join a course because we're not from a Western country...It's also kind of like the treatment you get from students in class that would be affected if you embraced [your Filipino-ness]...It's both [racism and fear of having a non-native teacher], because I guess even outside work, when they hear someone speaking Tagalog, like overhear someone, or if they perceive you as Filipino,

they kind of like, mock the language or say the language to you in a non-friendly way.

But then outside of [RAK English School], I don't care, I just speak it anyway. So, it's not just wanting to have a native English speaker as a teacher, it's a kind of racism...[A lot of Emiratis speak some Tagalog but] not in a positive way [to me]. (Int5).

Maria's subjectivity as a teacher was framed within local forms of racism that target Filipino communities specifically, which in turn limited her linguistic freedom within the school and her ability to construct herself as a Filipino English teacher. Thus, Maria found herself positioned in an unwritten policy framework that allowed for both multilingual interactions throughout the school and also tacitly accepted racist attitudes brought into the school by customers, which in turn limited her spaces of linguistic comfort. In the staff room, with colleagues she was accepted as a legitimate English language expert and teacher, but with students, she had to be framed explicitly as a *native-speaking* English language expert to offset her non-whiteness. This was also a case in which, "international" Cambridge English policy could not trump localised forms of racism. (I take up issues of racism again in chapters 9 and 10.)

Malak and Hope – Ambivalent learners; unwilling policy advocates

As teachers in the public school system in Ras Al Khaimah, Malak and Hope also found themselves caught within multiple sets of English language policy apparatuses. In my interviews with them, they expressed two English language policy subjectivities that neither expected would be required of them when they took their jobs: English language learner/test taker and English language policy advocate.

The first of these is that of English language learner and IELTS examinee. Both were told by their employers soon after they started their jobs that they needed to get either band 6 in Academic IELTS or band 6.5 in General IELTS. The implication was that if they could not meet

this requirement by the end of their first contract (though they were a little bit unclear about specific deadlines), they would not be able to keep their jobs. Hope and Malak had been hired to teach in English. They had been interviewed in English and hired on the basis of that interview. Thus, they had not expected that further study of English or IELTS scores would be a condition of their continued employment. They told me that this requirement would initially be rolled out for English-medium instructors but would also include Arabic-medium instructors in subsequent years, perhaps with a lower IELTS band of 5 or 5.5. Referring to *Vision 2021*, Hope explained that the ministry wants “all the staff to speak in two languages and they need evidence”. As a result, Malak and Hope felt they had been forced to take on this additional position of IELTS examinee, which involved paying for not only the test itself but also for the courses and preparatory materials. On top of this, their preparations involved many hours of independent study, which in turn, also affected the way they interacted in Ras Al Khaimah. They both have families, so their limited free time was being eaten up by IELTS preparation, which partly involved seeking out opportunities for English speaking practice such as the interviews they had with me. Hope’s comment above highlights the objectivizing power of the language policy apparatus embedded in the public school system, in which she felt like “evidence” for policy success. With her job dependent on an IELTS score, her agency within this policy became quickly narrowed to her ability to generate spontaneous opportunities to prepare for the exam.

Malak also expressed a shift from intrinsic to extrinsic motivation and its negative effect on her feelings towards studying English:

I was enjoy [studying English], I love it before I came here. I just enjoy reading something in English, listening to the news in English, sometimes listen to a song in English...But when it's come here, everything is change...because everything is depend

on English...you have to learn English or you will never survive. Everything here, in airport, you cannot find anyone to speak in Arabic...Learning English is not difficult, if you practice and practice, you can do it...But the problem that they put deadline for you, you have to have IELTS by this day or you will leave. (Int2)

Not only had she been forced to make an English learning subjectivity central to her life but the nature of that subjectivity had shifted significantly from what it meant for her to study English while she was still in Jordan.

The second unexpected subject position that the two teachers found themselves in was that of English language policy advocate. They explained that many students struggled with the course material being taught in English and sometimes openly questioned the rationale of English medium of instruction. However, Malak told me that school policy explicitly forbade the teachers from using any Arabic “even for one word” in their classrooms and that they regularly underwent “surprise” observations to ensure English language policy, along with other teaching standards, was upheld. Malak explained:

Students must speak in English even they don't understand anything, but the teacher must simplify the language to them...Students always ask us to speak in Arabic, “Teacher you can speak Arabic, why you speak English?” I answered them that this is the vision of your ministry, so you became an economic country...I told them that Arabic is our language, we must keep talking in Arabic, but when it comes to learning, we must learn English instead...It is just something to tell your students, I don't believe that English is the only way to deliver learning. Arabic language can do that same thing easily. (Int3)

Caught between strict English language policy in their departments and student expectations of language use, both teachers appealed to larger policy frameworks, such as *Vision 2021*, to

support what they had been told to do in their classrooms. Malak explicitly linked English to the economic goals of the country and in turn, to classroom language practices. However, she also explained that she does not believe it, that it is really just a way to cope with the practical demands of the position she found herself in with her students – it was the only subject position within which she could provide justification of daily language practices to her students. She became a policy advocate through practical necessity rather than “buying in” to the overarching policy narrative. This position is made possible by exposing teachers to these overarching policy frameworks in a few different ways. First of all, both teachers were very aware of *Vision 2021* in part from orientation and departmental meetings but also from newspaper articles covering the IELTS score requirements for teachers. Second, Malak explained that a book written by Sheikh Mohammed (of Dubai) had been distributed for teachers to read. One of his books was also included in the grade 8 public school curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2017b).

Hope also explained that it has been difficult for many administrators to serve as English language policy advocates for their staffs because they lack the required English proficiency to run their departments in English. Both Hope and Malak told me that Arabic-speaking staff often ignored school English-only policy when speaking in the staff room. Hope noted that her manager would prefer that they spoke in Arabic because she is not proficient enough to function fully in English. She also told me about a principal in one of the boy’s schools who:

cannot understand English at all. He just understands “good morning”, “hello”, “how are you”...But the school is transformed to be ESP, then all the teachers are native English speakers and he cannot deal with anyone. And that’s a major problem...They bring a lead teacher and he can speak in Arabic and he just translating to the principal.

Altogether, the two teachers painted a picture of a large-scale shift in language policy

subjectivities within the school system which neither teachers nor administrative staff nor students were adequately prepared to deal with.

Bradley, Michelle and Alexa – Ambivalent English teachers

Several other participants also took on English teacher subjectivities outside of traditional school contexts. The first example of this is Bradley. Despite having no formal qualifications or experience as a language teacher, he was constructed as one within his technical field. The underlying premise of this construction was that because technical fields operate largely in English, to be a successful technical trainer, one also has to be an English teacher. Bradley explained that most companies that provide technical equipment and services internationally do not provide multilingual technical training and as a result, the businesses that use these tools and services must also operate in English to some extent. This was made absolutely clear when Bradley applied for a job in his wife's East Asian home country. He was interested in working for a public telecom company and went for several interviews and assessments of his skills. The company was very impressed and was prepared to hire Bradley as a senior network engineer and trainer for new staff; however, they told him that because he would be working and training in English, they required him to obtain an English teaching qualification, specifically CELTA, before they could offer him the job. He was given 6 months to find and complete a course, which he was fortunately able to do in Ras Al Khaimah, where he was working at the time. Bradley explained that his prospective employer operated primarily in local languages when providing customer service and working with clients, but they could not escape the need for their technical staff to operate primarily in English because there is simply not another option.

Even before applying for the job at this company, he had been aware that he was often positioned as an English teacher first and technical trainer second. As a network engineer, he

specialized in the hardware and software systems of a leading network systems company, which uses English as its primary language for all technical manuals, language and support. He had freelanced for a number of years as an online course director for this company, but explained that he provided these online classes to international, multilingual clients who often needed English instruction as much as technical training. He found that his students often struggled with English words or phrases that had both colloquial and technical meanings, so that he generally had to be prepared to teach hybrid courses that covered both technical systems and English. Thus, even before starting the CELTA course, Bradley had long considered himself an English teacher, and been constructed as such within corporate policy of international tech companies. Indeed, his experiences highlight the extent to which science education and research as well as tech industries generally around the world are dominated by English (see Ammon, 2006; Kaplan, 2001) and in turn produce *de facto* English language policy.

Although Bradley at times acknowledged the value of the skills provided by the CELTA course, and the value of being able to function as an English teacher in technical training classrooms, he was somewhat ambivalent about the role that Cambridge and RAK English School played. The CELTA brand is so powerful that his prospective employer gave him no other option but to obtain CELTA certification to get the job. This meant that he had to find a course as soon as possible. The course was offered at the school in Ras Al Khaimah, but after taking a placement test, Bradley was advised by the CELTA coordinator (Anne) to take a refresher intermediate level course at the school before entering the program. During the process of taking this course and at the beginning of the CELTA program, he also felt a great deal of pressure to make his pronunciation as “British” as possible. In the course of our interviews, he frequently asked me to help him adjust his pronunciation of particular words to align with what

he felt were the expectations of both the course coordinators and CELTA as a whole. Bradley did not feel that the general English course was necessary, and was not keen to pay money for it, but felt obligated to agree to ensure that the coordinator could see that he was “motivated” (Int6) to join the CELTA program. He explained that he did not feel that he had paid for the English course, but rather viewed it as an extra fee to join the CELTA program. He found the course slow and unhelpful, structured “as a business” (Int1), so that a course book is divided into many parts, allowing for maximum extraction of money from students. Likewise, for CELTA, he felt that it was ultimately “a business” (Int6), which was designed to make students pay for the “exclusivity” (Int6) of the Cambridge name on the certificate. This is not to say that he did not find the course useful. He saw CELTA as a “collection of teaching methods” (Int6) that could certainly be applied to his technical courses but also felt that this was at best worth 50% of the value he paid for the course. This, of course, is not surprising because the course is fundamentally a language teaching course, not a course for technical trainers, but it nevertheless highlights the substantial impact that Cambridge Assessment English has in producing policy and subjectivities within that policy well beyond the domains in which they claim to operate.

A second English teaching subjectivity was revealed to me by two Filipino women who spoke to me about recruiting and working as domestic workers in the UAE. The recruiter I spoke to, Michelle, works in one of the many offices that line a part of Ras Al Khaimah that some people refer to as “immigration row”. This area is the go-to place for anyone who wants to recruit working-class employees in Ras Al Khaimah and different offices specialize in different types of work and worker nationalities. The signs display keywords such as “manpower supply” and “services centre” alongside a list of nationalities that can be recruited from that office (this is discussed further in chapter 9). Michelle told me that in recent years, Filipino domestic workers

for Emirati households have been in increasingly high demand, in large part because of their perceived English proficiency. Emirati families are allegedly willing to pay a premium for someone who can speak regularly to the children, and the rest of the family, in English. Michelle described her primary job as “secretary” work for the recruitment agency, but as she expanded on her day-to-day responsibilities, it became clear that she did much more than just paperwork. Being Filipino, she was put in charge of managing new domestic workers who came to the country (this included not only Filipinos but also Indonesians and Ethiopians). This management involved: (1) helping them settle into a villa that they all lived in together before they found a placement; (2) making sure they understood the rules they were expected to follow; (3) making sure they found “good” placements with families that would treat them well; (4) teaching them English. Michelle served as a broker between domestic workers and prospective families:

Before I give the housemaid, I must have a conversation for the sponsor [the family]. If they allow everything, they give food, dress, telephone call twice a month and they must give high salary...If they not give the high salary, I will not give the housemaid.

For the domestic workers, she explained the rules:

Before they become the housemaid, I need to interview from here, from telephone. If they allow everything, the rules here, ok I will accept. But if you don't allow the rules, I will cancel. I'm tell the truth, what is the rules from here so I give you time to think if you want to come or no...you don't have a holiday...sometimes it's privilege for the sponsor if they give the telephone or no. Because the telephone is the big problem for the housemaid because sometimes if you have telephone, they got a boyfriend... Yes, then they want to run away. This is the big problem for the sponsor...Then the sponsor, they make action, they make black list [at the immigration department], who will be suffer?

The housemaid. And the other rule is you must wearing uniform and hijab, only this. When everyone agrees, the domestic worker can be placed with the family. Embedded within this process is also the expectation that they will speak English. Michelle explained that the first step is to see how much English they speak on the phone. If they answer questions in English, the candidate is a good prospect, but Michelle explained that she can still bring them to the UAE even without English, as long as they are “willing to learn”. Domestic workers who arrive with limited English proficiency, are taken under Michelle’s wing:

I teach them by myself. The normal one, the basics. Like what is your name, what you can do, like that...I teach specific things. What madams want, what madams [need you] to do...but no, never, [no one will teach them Arabic because] the sponsor, they want to speak for the kids only English. [They hope that the kids learn English from the maid].

Once they have acquired what Michelle deems to be an acceptable grasp of the basics required for the job – though it was unclear if this meant simply doing housework and errands in English or enough English to serve as an English resource – they can be placed with the family.

I also spoke to Alexa, a Filipino domestic worker (not connected to Michelle’s agency). She confirmed the importance of her English proficiency to the Emirati family that hired her and felt that it was an important source of power that partly protected her from mistreatment. She said that Arabic was not necessary to get the job, going as far as to say, “I don’t care, I don’t want to speak Arabic for them. They must follow me. They must learn from me English.” This was reinforced by her employer (the mother of the household) who emphasized that Alexa should not speak Arabic so that the children in the house would learn English from her. She also felt that even the mother of the family was dependent on her English instruction, noting that she would often ask Alexa to tell her “what’s the English for that?” throughout the day. Alexa

explained that although her job was hard, her family's financial situation was difficult and she needed to keep her position in the UAE. She told me that she had not had a holiday (apart from one day at Christmas) in four years working there and that she would sometimes argue with the mother of the family, who had once hit her. However, she also explained that she was generally "confident" in her ability to curb emotional and physical abuse before it started:

You must be confident in that home, because you heard from other housemaids some employer do this. But for me, one time my employer also do something for me, but I said, "Don't do for me that! Because you touch my body I will go to police!"... The police, I think are not fair [to housemaids]. But I'm just only scaring for them because you must be strong. Just a housemaid, they treat you very small.

However, far worse than the threat of the police for the family was the threat that Alexa might leave. She felt the combination of the "good work" she did and her English proficiency often placed her in a position of power. Both she and the family knew that it would be difficult for them to find a replacement who was both as reliable and as proficient in English as she was. That made it possible for Alexa to threaten to "go back to the Philippines" if she felt the family was treating her inappropriately, which in turn generally made them apologetic and conciliatory.

Both Michelle as an English teacher trainer and domestic workers, such as Alexa, as English teachers emerge from a policy landscape in which Emiratis and their children are pushed in various ways towards English. The discursive shift constructing Filipino domestic workers as linguistic assets is a major change from the 1990s and early 2000s, when it was not uncommon to read articles in newspapers about the urban myth (with some truth to it) of Emirati children speaking Tagalog, Tamil or Malayalam instead of Arabic because foreign domestic workers had become their primary caregivers (Dresch, 2005; Zayed, 2013; for other discussions of this related

to the effect of foreign domestic workers on Emirati culture see also Kanna, 2011, p. 125; Sabban, 2004). Anxiety over Emirati children speaking Tagalog has been replaced by a drive for Emirati children to speak English, even though the primary vehicle for both the anxiety and the aspiration – the Filipino domestic worker – has remained the same. Though what is outlined here is less structured than what Lorente (2018) calls “scripts of servitude” (for prospective Filipino domestic workers recruited for Singapore), particular forms of English are still embedded in the construction of Filipino domestic worker subjectivities in the UAE. The place of English in the construction of these subjectivities is also contradictory, acting as both a disciplinary mechanism in which domestic workers are manufactured with the right kinds of English for Emirati families and a source of power that women like Alexa can draw on to defend themselves from abuse.

Mozart, Jessica and Hope – Parenthood through English language policy

English language policy also has an impact on the construction of parent subjectivities for foreign residents, both as consumers of language services and as individuals who feel responsible for facilitating language acquisition for their children. Several of my participants described their experiences as parents, tying together national policies, private school policies and family language policies. They struggled to find a comfortable balance in their linguistic and cultural relationships with their children as they worked with and against English language policies.

For all of my participants with children, the act of choosing a school involved assessment of its academic reputation, tuition fees, language of instruction, and location, with no one ever feeling that they were satisfied with all four. As described in chapter 5, the private school system in the UAE fundamentally depends on parents acting as consumers on behalf of their children. Jessica, for example, described moving her eldest son twice to try to find the right balance of price and quality of English instruction. She initially placed her son in an Indian curriculum

school because it was affordable and instruction was in English. However, she found that he was struggling at times because teachers would often resort to Hindi when children did not understand something in English, but her son, not speaking Hindi, would still not understand after this second explanation. Next, she moved him to an American curriculum school in Dubai, but felt it was too far for him to go every day. Finally, when her younger son was ready to join grade school, she moved them both into the same school in Ras Al Khaimah, which followed a British curriculum – again, because it was affordable and she felt they would get a good English education. However, this school has recently become affiliated with Cambridge Assessment International Education, adopting their institutionally approved curriculum and displaying the University of Cambridge logo on their website. Jessica was a little unclear on how exactly the curriculum had changed as a result (though she was confident that it was all officially sanctioned by Cambridge), but told me that it had served as a good excuse to raise tuition fees, meaning that she was unsure if her children would be able to continue there until they finished school.

Mozart also described at length the arduous process of choosing the right school for her children. They first considered a German school in Sharjah, which would have been Mozart's first choice for linguistic reasons, but like Jessica, decided that the drive was too far. They also considered the Pakistani private schools in the city, feeling that the children would benefit from Urdu instruction, but found their academic reputations and resources lacking. Likewise, Arabic private schools did not meet their academic requirements. They briefly considered Indian schools as well but were not confident that their children would get an adequate Islamic education. This meant that the only choice was between the two main English private schools in the city, with their final choice being based on what they felt to be the higher academic standards at one of the schools. It is also worth noting here that there are several other English schools in Ras Al

Khaimah but what Mozart describes as the “main” schools are the ones with the best reputation and also the schools that most Western foreign residents or wealthy Emiratis would send their children too. These are the “first class” schools of Ras Al Khaimah, to appropriate the discourse of the GEMS school network founder. Jessica, though also middle-class, was selecting from a different set of schools in the family’s price range, which did not include these “main” schools.

Hope also felt language was an important factor in her choice of schools for her daughter. However, it is not as simple as picking the school with the best English education. She had initially wanted her daughter in a British or American school, “an environment that everybody is speaking English and she will be forced to speak”, but her daughter struggled with an English-only classroom. She was anxious about not understanding her teachers and the other students so she just kept quiet and did not speak to anyone. Hope had since moved her to a school with a bilingual curriculum, but her daughter was still struggling with the English-medium classes. Although I did not speak to any children in this project, they are also made subjects within language policy as they move between schools and try to cope with language demands from their parents, schools and the city that they live in. At the same time, they simultaneously take on and resist different aspects of these policies in their development as subjects within them.

The parents I spoke to described how their relationships to their children were shaped through language policy. In many cases, they struggled simultaneously with ensuring that their children had adequate access to opportunities for English acquisition and with the constant encroachment of English into specific spaces or domains that they had hoped to reserve for other languages. For Jessica, English medium of instruction was an important factor in choosing a school because she saw it as an essential skill that her children had to learn, like swimming:

Our life's like an ocean, so I must to try to teach them how to swim, to live with other

people who's swimming...Because English now it is a world language and I don't want [them] to fell in trouble with that they are not knowing English. (Int4)

To push her children to learn English, she encourages them to take opportunities at home and out in the city. She explained that they will occasionally have a spontaneous English-only policy as a family to help practice for a few hours. Often when they are out at restaurants, she will encourage her youngest son to ask the staff for what he wants directly in English rather than asking through his parents because, “I want him to be encouraged to speak with people. I can go to help him but I want him to speak English and to let him to deal with others” (Int2).

Jessica also explained that her linguistic aspirations for her children affected her own language learning goals. A primary motivation for continuing to study English herself is to maintain a healthy relationship with her children while managing the cultural impact of English. She wants to be able to maintain a supportive connection with them in the language:

I can try to learn more English because then, even if they want to ask me questions in English, I can reply. I don't want to be or say, “I don't know.” I refuse it! I don't like to be in this situation. (Int3)

At the same time, she worries about what cultural elements her children will pick up from English. She explained that as her children become more proficient, she does not want to be left behind. She wants to know what her children are talking about and does not want her children to be able to hide things from her in English. She highlighted this point by recounting a recent story about listening to an English song with her sons in the car:

One time, the song was very nice and the tune is very nice and I like this music and they are both singing the song [but] I found the song says, "I love your body" – the man is loving the female body! I was loving this song! It is not our culture to sing such as these

songs...They are still young and they maybe will not understand the meaning, so I said, "Stop listening for these songs." They said, "Why?" I said, "What is that, he is loving her body for what? I have body, do you love mommy's body?" They said, "No, mommy!" What if I don't know English and what if I didn't hear this song? What if? They will grow up with other culture mind! So, that's what I am worried for. I want them to be under my control until they will be more mature enough to leave their mother. (Int4)

Jessica qualified this by saying that she accepts they will adopt "English culture" because "this is the fashion for this century, to have English culture" (Int4). She also emphasized that she herself loves English culture because it is not fundamentally opposed "Islamic culture", that English culture "mostly follows our Islamic rules" (Int4). Her concern is her children may not recognize this compatibility and simply "copy the English culture, without understanding them, like animals or like monkeys acting something and he don't understand what they are doing" (Int4).

For Mozart, the primary concern is the dominance of English in her relationship with her children, which for her, would ideally be a German and Urdu domain. Mozart's day-to-day family life is highly multilingual and entwined with multiple layers of informal language policy. Because she lives in an extended family household which includes her husband and children as well as her husband's brother, his wife and their children, the unofficial language of the household is Urdu, which is a language everyone in the household will understand. Mozart explained that with her kids, although she tries to institute Urdu and German language policies at different times, "somehow it comes as English at the end" (Int4). She attributed this to the fact that the children are most comfortable in English, having studied at an English medium private school since they were three years old. This is especially true when the children are speaking amongst each other, as Mozart suggested they switch "unconsciously" (Int4) back to English

soon after committing to Urdu or German. The children also try Panjabi with their father's side of the family but still always seem to come back to English. Mozart said that she feels embarrassed in front of other family members when her children struggle with Urdu:

We went to [my home country] and because my brother and me, we speak German to each other, when sometimes he started speaking to [my son] in Urdu and he said something, I think it was the word "balloon" in Urdu, and my son was like, "what is that?" And I was embarrassed because my brother said, "Oh my God! You didn't teach them the language!" And I said, "See, it's not easy! Most of the time they are in school and English and French is the language they are interacting in." (Int4)

Mozart wants her children to be able to speak German as well and makes an effort to practice with them and take German-themed European holidays. When she and her children return to her home country for holidays, the children are enrolled in German courses together so that they can get a feel for the language that surrounds them. She explained that when she goes back to her home country, she suddenly switches to "German mode" and pushes her children to speak German as much as possible. Then, once they come back to the UAE:

everything gradually starts to become more English. I try, I resist and then it kind of falls apart because they go to school and then it's English and then [the youngest] comes back home and she starts speaking English and I'm like, "No, we were supposed to ahhhh..." Then they just talk in English and I talk in German. [They feel like they can't find the right words in German;] every word is a mistake. [And then I give up too.] (Int6)

Through Mozart, Hope and Jessica's ongoing struggles, we can see how language policy at a national level interacts with the private school system, affecting parent school choices. This in turn, causes shifts in family language policies as parents and children negotiate language(s) of

everyday communication. Of course, this is not a one-way system. Language acquisition goals that parents have for their children also work their way up through school choices that often privilege English and cause anxiety about the sustainability of Arabic at a national level.

Jessica and Maria – Prospective immigrants

Another subject position several of my participants took on was that of prospective immigrant. Such subjectivities entail an interaction with national policy frameworks as well as organizations such as Cambridge to acquire official statements of English proficiency. For Jessica, it also involved a private company based in Dubai which claimed to be able to facilitate Jessica's immigration process. Jessica and her family's dream of immigrating to Canada was kick-started by a cold call from an international company that claims to specialize in preparing Canadian immigration applications. She was unsure where the company obtained her contact details but they told her she had been identified as a good candidate for immigration because of her nursing qualifications. She was told that if she could get a good IELTS score – they claimed band 6 or better would be adequate – she would be a desirable applicant. They also requested that she make a preliminary payment to begin processing her file. The company has a Canadian office and appears to be doing what they say – that is, assembling paperwork and submitting documents for their customers – but they charge thousands of dollars to do so, for what is in fact minimal work at a cost of a few hundred dollars in application fees at most. The company has an online presence, which beyond their own website, is mostly made up of negative reviews on scam awareness websites. Jessica had started the process and made two payments about a year before she joined my project and the goal of an acceptable IELTS score was one of the primary drivers of her own English studies (though not the only one as discussed in the previous section).

As a prospective immigrant, she was discursively constructed as a valuable set of skills

for the Canadian labour market. She was strongly encouraged by the company, citing Canadian immigration guidelines, to study English and obtain a particular IELTS score, thus making her a subject within both Canadian national language policy and Cambridge policy. This led her to RAK English School, with yet another set of language policies within which Jessica joined other prospective IELTS candidates in their institutionally guided language goals. In our first three interviews, she had framed the company as a legitimate extension of the Canadian government, with which she was engaged in an active and self-directed immigration and language learning process. In fact, in the first few interviews, she only spoke about interactions with “the Canadian government”, filling out application forms and studying for the recommended IELTS score. It was only after she mentioned the initial phone call, just at the end of one of our interviews, that I suddenly understood the full context of her dream of immigrating to Canada. After discussing the problematic nature of the company she had been paying, she was understandably deflated, but felt that the best way to proceed would be to first obtain the IELTS score and then decide what to do next. She was active in constructing herself and her family as potential Canadians, taking on prescribed language policy discourses, explaining that as a family, they “should speak English fluently” (Int3). She felt that the only obstacle to the family dream was getting the right IELTS score, a responsibility she had to take on in order to deliver this family aspiration.

For Maria, immigration aspirations were less specific. She recognized that she could not live in the UAE forever but also felt uncomfortable with the prospect of returning to the Philippines, which she no longer thought of as “home”. Having grown up in Ras Al Khaimah, she identified herself as a “third-culture kid” (Int5), not feeling totally comfortable in the UAE or the Philippines. However, her English proficiency, attested by her CELTA qualifications, opened up a far broader range of prospective immigrant subjectivities. She adopted discourses of the

value of English as an international language and viewed her CELTA qualification as a ticket that would allow her to leave the UAE and travel as a teacher once she graduated from university. Maria's plans were not settled in any way but the range of subject-positions in which she could frame her future self were indicative of the agency she felt within immigration and language policy. She thought might go to Canada for graduate education after traveling for a few years and saving money or perhaps join an NGO and start out as a volunteer – generally, a narrative of cosmopolitan and international belonging, enabled by English proficiency.

Conclusion

The range of subjectivities described here emerged from my (mainly) middle-class participants' engagement with policy that explicitly targets language learning and language practices across an array of institutions operating at different scales. It is rarely possible to talk about just one set of policies as my participants are constantly and actively engaged with many sets as they work towards various goals and aspirations, linguistic or otherwise. This discussion highlights the complex interactions individuals in Ras Al Khaimah have with language policy even when they are not its direct targets – as in the case of much of the governmental language policy outlined in chapter 5. However, a focus only on explicitly language-related policies barely scratches the surface of the language learner, user, teacher and manager subjectivities that are produced in Ras Al Khaimah. These two chapters have also largely neglected languages other than Arabic and English, which have limited presence in institutional language policy frameworks. Over the next three chapters, I examine at other policy apparatuses that have language policy effects, namely economic and social policy. This allows for a broader exploration of the kinds of language policy subjectivities that my participants take on and also allows for a more nuanced discussion of their roles as language policy producers themselves.

Chapter 8: Neoliberalism, subjectivities and language policy

Introduction

This is the first of three chapters that moves beyond explicit language policy to discuss various forms of *de facto* language policy that emerge from formal and informal economic and social policy. This chapter explores the ways neoliberal subjectivities for foreign residents are produced through such policy apparatuses. It begins by outlining some of these policy structures before moving on to discuss specific experiences that my participants shared. These examples allow for a discussion of the relationship between neoliberal subjectivities and the production of *de facto* language policy in the Ras Al Khaimah.

Foreign resident population management

In dealing with middle- and upper-class foreign residents, the government articulates two main concerns which are balanced against each other: economic contribution and cultural impact. The government's interaction with wealthy foreign residents is characterized by attempts to foster economic engagement while limiting the cultural impact on the Emirati population.

As discussed in earlier chapters, the UAE has exhibited neoliberal logics of governance, particularly through the growth of Dubai's economy, almost since its unification. Kanna (2010) refers to these decades of neoliberal policy initiatives as "free market absolutism" (2010, p. 107). Though initially playing its role in global capitalism as an exporter of oil to and importer of manufactured products from advanced capitalist countries (Kanna, 2010), the UAE also constructed itself as a largely tax-free country with a number of free zones to lure foreign businesses and investors (Harrison, 2010). With oil revenues in Dubai decreasing to insignificant levels, these free zones expanded immensely over the last decade of the 20th century as central to Dubai's new economy. They allowed residents and companies to operate in the UAE with

minimal government interference, exempting them from certain laws around “employment and visa requirements, labour market nationalization policies or media infrastructure and censorship” and offering companies “full ownership and profit repatriation” (Kanna 2010, pp. 108-109).

The economic contribution of wealthy foreign residents is openly acknowledged in policy documents. Abu Dhabi’s Vision 2030 is littered with references to the importance of attracting foreign “expertise” and “international capital” in the name of continued economic growth (Government of Abu Dhabi, 2008). Vora (2013) argues that the government has long been engaged in facilitating semi-permanent economic belonging for foreign residents. This occurs in direct and indirect ways. A specific example of the government engaging directly with wealthy foreign residents was Dubai’s egovernment initiative, which was launched in 2001 (Zhao, 2010). The purpose of the service was in line with the Emirate’s ongoing vision to “ease the lives of people and businesses interacting with the government and contribute to establishing Dubai as a leading economic hub” (Government of Dubai, 2001). More recently, discourse has shifted towards “smart cities” as governmental institutions invest in data collection and analysis infrastructure. As usual, Dubai leads the way with these types of shifts, as it emphasizes its commitment to private sector collaboration and technological innovation as a pathway to both efficiency and happiness for residents and visitors:

Collaborating with private sector and government partners, Smart Dubai is the government office charged with facilitating Dubai’s citywide smart transformation, to empower, deliver and promote an efficient, seamless, safe and impactful city experience for residents and visitors. Smart Dubai is committed to a collaborative and agile approach to Dubai’s smart city transformation, empowering strategic partnerships with the public and private sector and academia to design and implement services and elevate citywide

thought leadership, in line with its mission to make Dubai the happiest city on earth through technology innovation. (Smart Dubai, 2019)

Vora (2013) emphasizes that this type of outreach is applicable to *particular* foreign residents in the interest of fostering particular forms of expatriate belonging (p. 43). The government does what it can to work directly with wealthy residents to ensure smooth flows of capital throughout the country. Ras Al Khaimah's own recent foray into the smart city narrative takes on a more dystopian tone in which the RAK Police are deploying an "advanced surveillance system...using [125,000 cameras and] massive databases that detect and analyse vehicles' number plates, faces and locations" (Shaaban, 2018). This expanded network of surveillance is tied to economic goals as the RAK Police explained in their hosting of an Economic Sustainability Forum, stating that "factors of success of the economic sustainability community...include knowledge, strategic partnership, and *security infrastructure*" (United Arab Emirates Ministry of Interior, 2017, emphasis added). The image of Ras Al Khaimah as a secure space for tourism and foreign investment (Shaaban, 2018) speaks directly to the wealthy expatriates and visitors to the Emirate, who are positioned as drivers of economic growth that need to be assured of their protection.

The government also deploys less direct measures to ensure that foreign residents can claim what Vora (2013) calls "neoliberal economic belonging". Through the use of free zones, the government has created spaces which appeal to both the financial and personal desires of the wealthy foreign population. Initially, free zones were established primarily for businesses. Jebel Ali, the first free zone, opened near Dubai in 1980 as a stopping point for ships between Asia, the Middle East and North Africa, making Dubai a "re-export" hub (Vora, 2013). Some benefits currently include: "100% foreign ownership, 0% corporate tax for 50 years (a concession that is renewable), no restriction on capital repatriation, 0% import or re-export duties, 0% personal

income tax” (Jebel Ali Free Zone, 2013). These perks led to a rapid expansion of Jebel Ali in the 1990s and this success encouraged the establishment of a number of other free zones throughout the country (Davidson, 2009) such as Ras Al Khaimah’s RAK Economic Zone. These newer free zones offered other benefits such as 99-year property leases as well as uncensored internet access and other relaxations of laws based on Islamic restrictions (Vora, 2013). The former allows foreign residents with enough money to effectively purchase their residency visa through land lease rather than depend on the tenuous residency status provided by a work visa. The latter provides these residents with a sense of belonging through access to particular freedoms they would have in their home countries. More recently, the government also announced a change in visa policies which opened up the possibility of long-term visas without the need for a sponsor for other categories of foreign residents such as investors, entrepreneurs and “persons with specialized talents” (Government of UAE, 2019b; The National, 2019b). Other changes also included easing restrictions on family visas to encourage “the active participation of their family member in the job market as an alternative to recruiting new workers from abroad” (UAE Cabinet, 2019). The facilitation of this “belonging” for foreign residents is less publicized by the government but is nevertheless integral to both the functioning of the economy and the image presented of the UAE as a global cosmopolitan haven. Obviously, this belonging benefits some foreign residents more than others. With salaries often linked to race or nationality, and geographical spaces of the country often segregated by race, it is the Western, white, upper- and middle-class residents who are provided the most privileged position in society (Longva, 2005).

In managing the cultural impact of wealthy foreign residents, governmental institutions also utilize both direct and indirect measures. The Emiratisation schemes mentioned in chapter 4 typically go hand-in-hand with discourses about reclaiming the country and rectifying the

demographic imbalance (e.g. National Media Council, 2013). More specific concerns are often addressed in Federal National Council debates. These include the need to protect national dress from the influence of foreign fashion (Al, Ameri, 2014) or the need to institute national identity lessons in private schools to ensure that Emirati children in the private system are not affected by their foreign peers (Salem, 2012). This also includes the loose application of laws to police moral and cultural transgressions, but generally only when a citizen lodges a complaint (Lori, 2011). However, the construction of wealthy foreign residents (in particular those from Europe or North America) as privileged outsiders to the nation and insiders to the economy also contributes to the cultural goals of the government. Vora (2013) shows how these positions produce a simultaneous segregation of Western influences and support for official definitions of Emirati culture. This occurs through the commodification of Emirati culture for foreign consumption in the form of a tourist industry that emphasizes a traditional and static identity free from foreign influence. In purchasing rugs from luxury souks, smoking shisha in Orientalized hotel cafés and going on camel desert safaris, tourists and foreign residents participate in the production and maintenance of an untainted national identity, experienced by foreigners but segregated from their influence.

It is also in this discussion that the middle-class, South Asian communities of the UAE find their place. Though racially excluded in many of the same ways as their working-class compatriots, and not explicitly part of the imagined present or future of the country, they are nevertheless offered opportunities for neoliberal belonging (Vora, 2013). The visas provided to the families of these foreign residents and the abundance of Indian and Pakistani private schools established for their children facilitate their claims of semi-permanent belonging. They claim a place as residents who serve as productive members of society that “built this country” (Vora, 2013, p. 176) and contribute their purchasing power to the economy. This claim of belonging is

often quiet explicitly stated, as exemplified by a side comment I heard a radio show host make on a popular Hindi/English radio station based in Dubai. While the hosts were discussing a current affairs issue and inviting listeners to call in, one host said, “[Right now,] this is a hot topic in India, but *because Dubai is an extension of India*, we want to know what you think.” As Vora (2008, pp. 390-1) explains, in the process of carving out a space of belonging, middle-class South Asians can also be complicit in the segregation of their working-class compatriots, distancing themselves and suggesting that “if only [the working-class Indians] practiced self-management and greater self-respect, the system might not be so discriminatory.” Vora explains that in many cases, her informants deployed neoliberal discourses of self-management and personal responsibility to explain their own middle-class positions as something earned and “were therefore able to deny their own participation in the boundary-making practices that uphold a racialized and classed social hierarchy in the UAE” (p. 389). On the other side of this divide, Kanna (2012) suggests, the aspirations of the working-class residents of the UAE are:

for lack of a better term, in significant part about a desire for a solid middle class life, a mixture of hopes for material stability, increased life chances, and a chance to participate in an ideal of the good life shaped in part by global commodities and images...Worker desires for mobility – class mobility and spatial mobility – and enactments of agency (even very modest ones) thus encounter local structures of governance organized by a discourse of immobility and essentialized images of the worker either as lacking in agency or...as vaguely threatening, a troublesome target of governmentality. (p. 158)

Indeed, as I shall explore in the next section, this middle-class striving opens up other forms of neoliberal subjectivity that run somewhat counter to what the UAE offers its foreign residents.

It is also in this discussion that the biopolitics which defines desirable and undesirable

foreign residents is most apparent. The government sorts and manages foreigners based on their economic contribution, their cultural impact and security concerns. Undesirable foreigners are screened out before entry through health checks, criminal record checks, and employability (within the *kafala* system). Once in the country, security apparatuses ensure that the desirable residents maintain their desirability. This occurs through the maintenance of health – individuals with HIV are deported for example (Human Rights Watch, 2009) – maintenance of employment status, and avoidance of cultural or political transgressions. The most desirable foreign residents contribute to the economy through large capital investments or the provision of needed expertise. Foreign resident elites are mobilized as productive members of society by being offered more permanent forms of belonging through long-term land leases, business ownership and family visas. In turn, they mobilize working-class foreign residents as the labour needed to make their businesses successful and drive the economy. On the other hand, when the economic role of working-class foreign residents is discussed in official documentation it tends to be negative – they are often positioned as an economic problem rather than as economic contributors. In Abu Dhabi's Vision 2030 document, the gendered dimension of demographic imbalance (skewed towards males) is attributed to the fact that a large percentage of foreign residents are men who cannot afford (and are not allowed) to bring their families with them to the UAE. The document goes on to suggest that Abu Dhabi's increased focus on "value-added industries" and the steps taken "to attract more high-skilled, high-income workers" will both shift the demographic profile of the country and generate a population with more purchasing power (Government of Abu Dhabi, 2008, p. 39). Abu Dhabi plans to strengthen its economy by the gradual replacement of undesirable, poor and unskilled foreign residents with desirable, rich and skilled ones – a shift in the foreign resident population composition from primarily "migrant" to primarily "expatriate".

This also runs parallel to the Federal National Council's call to put Emiratis back in the demographic majority and at 80 per cent of the population by 2030, by "cutting [visas for] marginal and low-skilled labourers" (Salama, 2011). That said, it remains unclear how the country would continue to function without anyone to fill unskilled labour positions.

Neoliberal belonging and language policy

The discussions I have laid out up to this point have mentioned neoliberal subjectivity or belonging and how this might produce *de facto* language policy. In this section, I will take up this discussion once again and demonstrate how it unfolds within the lives of my participants. Although English is an important aspect of this, I will argue that generalized linguistic flexibility is often a more important emergent policy than any specific commitments to English alone.

Most of my core group of middle-class participants expressed some sense of what Vora (2013) calls "neoliberal economic belonging". For some, this meant identifying their claim to belonging in the UAE as non-political economic agents, saving money for specific goals back in their home countries or elsewhere. For others, this involved more clearly defined narratives of entrepreneurialism, competition and the liberating free markets of the UAE. In a broader sense, all were entrepreneurs of the self, accumulating economic capital directly and also indirectly through acquisition of social and linguistic capital. This involved forms of self-management that included strategies of acquiring skills (linguistic and otherwise), explicit de-politicization, and management of valuable social connections. This is not to suggest that neoliberal belonging is the *only* way that they construct their place in the UAE; however, it is certainly a central aspect of middle-class foreign resident subjectivity with language policy implications requiring further discussion. Discourses of entrepreneurialism and competition appeared in discussions with many of my non-core working-class informants as well, many of whom saw themselves in similar

ways as my middle-class participants but perhaps with less flexibility or fewer opportunities to achieve their goals. I discuss their experiences in the final section of this chapter.

Middle-class neoliberal belonging and language policy

My middle-class participants expressed many features of neoliberal economic belonging that Vora (2013) identified in the accounts of her Indian informants in Dubai. They tended to construct themselves as economic, non-political agents, claiming subjectivities that were essential to the economy but avoiding any claims to a more permanent belonging. These subjectivities stress personal and economic freedom over collective or political freedom. Bradley, for example, often commented on the relative freedom he felt living in the Ras Al Khaimah, explaining “about Ras Al Khaimah, I am not a foreigner...Because in Ras Al Khaimah, everybody is on their own business, nobody is going to disturb someone else...You can drink, you can pray, whatever you like” (Int5). Mozart also described the UAE as “flexible” when it came to religious freedom, allowing space for her to practice Islam as she saw fit: “there's no pressure, there's no constraints and I'm someone who wants to have her own freedom, be it religion, be it anything” (Int5). The importance of personal religious freedom was echoed at other points by Christian informants who attend mass regularly at small churches catering to specific ethnic or national groups (mainly Filipino and Indian). Certain types of “freedom” are also balanced out by a lack of others. Anne, for example, explicitly stated that she felt she had to “leave her political self behind” (Int5) when coming to the UAE and most of my participants tended to approach topics with political implications cautiously – in many cases, people who did not want to participate cited their fear of political repercussions of talking to me “on the record”, being unsure of what taboo subjects I might ask them to discuss. Likewise, claims of economic freedom, which I will discuss more fully in a moment, were often undercut by what some of my

participants referred to as tax for foreigners or what Vora (2013) calls “indirect tax”. Moments after Bradley discussed his personal freedom, quoted above, he explained that he was still constructed as “a foreigner” through various payments he had to make as a foreign resident:

About the UAE, you got to pay a lot of money, you have to pay everything double. For example, if you are local here, you will pay the electricity very less, but if you are foreigner, you got to pay double. They will say there is no tax here very much but in fact they're, how to say, they're getting it from you in different ways. If you make a mistake, they are going to charge for local people it is 200 but for foreigner it is 400. And if you want to do some government services, if you are local you are 150 but for foreigner is 200, 300. Let me give you an example about my wife's visa. I cancelled my wife's visa a few days ago because she stayed six months out of the country but if someone is out of the country, you gotta pay 500 to cancel the visa. This is really weird. Why? Because even she is out of the country and the visa is automatically cancelled, [why] you got to pay 500 to cancel the visa again? (Int5)

I spoke to a number of people with visa fees as a result of unclear entry and exit rules and a general lack of information when arriving in the country. Even I myself had to pay a visa-related “foreigner tax” when I overstayed on a visit visa without realizing it, having been informed I had a longer stay available to me when I entered than what the system stated when I exited the country a month later. These sorts of fees tended to be constructed as an unfair intrusion on an otherwise relatively “free” market with which my participants engaged.

Bradley’s portrait of himself in Ras Al Khaimah was closest to the neoliberal, entrepreneurial archetype I have outlined so far. He described the UAE as a place with:

a lot of job opportunity to work for the people who really want to develop. It is a country

that will encourage you to show your talents, to prove to yourself who you are, for people who really want to achieve their goal...The UAE is like a bridge. It is not a host; it is bridge. That is what I am thinking. Host is from other countries, UAE is only a bridge to transfer something from here to another country, from another country to another country. In fact, all the business people who are establishing in the UAE, they are just acting as an interpreter, so someone is sending some goods over here and they interpret again the goods for another one. (Int6)

He felt that the UAE benefited from a geographical location that made it “accessible from all around the world” (Int1) and from a diverse population that offered a lot of opportunities for people trying to build businesses. He also emphasized the fact that despite this diversity, the country was “safe” (Int1), making it an ideal place to set up a business. For Bradley, working in the UAE first provided a decent income through which he could achieve other goals, namely supporting his family and ultimately relocating to his wife’s country. However, he was also constantly on the hunt for opportunities, looking at possible businesses he could open with his skills as a network engineer or technical trainer. The company that Bradley worked for in Ras Al Khaimah was also engaged in the kind of “interpretation” work he referred to above, with Bradley and other senior colleagues at the company required to respond flexibly to the contract work that they were constantly applying for. Thus, Bradley was in charge of securing contracts and then ordering equipment and hiring temporary staff for specific jobs.

This construction of Bradley as an entrepreneurial agent both in his regular job, constantly working towards generating and managing the next contract, and in his personal life, constantly searching for the next business opportunity, had linguistic implications. However, this did not necessarily mean *de facto* English. Bradley suggested that linguistic flexibility and

adaptability was much more important than commitment to any specific language. At work, when interacting with the government agencies from whom he obtained most of his company's contracts, he found that he had to use English more or less exclusively. Although governmental agencies should, in theory, be operating in Arabic (Al Baik, 2008), Bradley explained that they only submitted their proposals in English. He told me that they also could have submitted their proposals in Arabic, but that they would be taking on extra risk to do so. This was because most of the staff members working for the government agencies reviewing the proposals could not read in Arabic: "They are not going to throw it in the trash, but they will give chance first to the one they can read" (Int3). One agency even told them directly to submit their proposals in English because they simply had no staff that could review Arabic proposals. Furthermore, even with other agencies that may have been able to accept Arabic proposals, Bradley and his colleagues were concerned about technical language that they could not easily translate into Arabic and would take on legal risk if any words were translated incorrectly. In the end, they decided it was best to operate exclusively in English for legal, technical and practical reasons.

However, project management involved a different set of language decisions. Bradley explained that Urdu quickly became essential for the company when he and his colleagues struggled to manage their South Asian staff, most of whom did not speak English or Arabic. Furthermore, the staff was only hired on a contract basis for specific, short-term work, meaning that the individuals hired for later jobs would not necessarily be the same as those from previous jobs. Most of this contract work involved handling delicate and expensive equipment, for which the staff needed some brief training and an ability to follow specific instructions. For example, he described a situation of miscommunication in which a staff member damaged a piece of equipment, worth hundreds of thousands of dollars, by hammering nails through packing

material into the item itself. Bradley decided it would be better to communicate as much as possible in Urdu, a language that would be understood by the majority of his staff, rather than try to navigate the many pitfalls of English miscommunication as they had done early on. His other managing partner agreed and together they fell into enacting an informal Urdu language policy at work. Simultaneously, Bradley found that most of the clients he had contact with were Urdu speakers as well, being Pakistanis or Indians who were working on behalf of the governmental institutions that contracted his company. Though he submitted proposals in English, he found it helpful to have Urdu as a day-to-day language for these staff members as well. Bradley spoke no Urdu before arriving in Ras Al Khaimah but as a result of his daily use at work and in Ras Al Khaimah generally, as well as a conscious effort to watch Urdu movies, he was more or less fluent within six months and more than proficient enough for his purposes at work.

Both in his work for his company and in his other entrepreneurial endeavours, Bradley maintained a dual commitment to English and to multilingualism generally. He often told me, “if you know one language, you are one person; if you know two languages you are two people; and so on” (Int2). This was not a statement of identity, as I initially misunderstood it. Rather, what he meant, as he explained later, was that you can do the work of two people if you know two languages. You do not need to rely on anyone else to make your connections for you and you cannot be cut out of conversations in the languages you know. In other words, it was a statement of both self-reliance and flexibility. Bradley noted at various points the central role that English played, especially in a company such as his which relies on international trade to acquire the specialized equipment needed to complete a given contract. He felt that generally, at the level of international trade, other languages could be helpful, but English was essential and was used most of the time. However, he also told stories in which linguistic flexibility helped thwart a

competitor or served as an important icebreaker before a business discussion. For example, he described a competitor eavesdropping on a conversation he and his colleague were having before a meeting, taking notes on his phone. Bradley laughed, saying that they switched to Farsi so that the eavesdropper could not understand and threw down his phone frustrated (Int4). He explained that success in business depends on “this kind of strategy. If you are talking to someone about business that should be secret, knowing a lot of languages is very important” (Int4). He also told me that he used his limited Arabic as “a trick” to break the ice and make his interlocutor more comfortable (Int2). He would begin with extensive Arabic greetings and then as the conversation moved on to subjects that Bradley could not cope with in Arabic, he could switch to English. According to him, starting out in “bad” Arabic would make the person more willing to speak in “bad” English later, when the conversation moved beyond Bradley’s Arabic capabilities. The strategic offer of Arabic paved the way for business that could then be completed in English.

John also echoed many of Bradley’s sentiments, both about the UAE and language generally. Though he was not an entrepreneur in the way that Bradley was on the constant lookout for new businesses or deals, he was very much infused with an entrepreneurial spirit with which he went about his life in the UAE. He described the country as “a dream place”, explaining that unlike in Egypt, where he was just another Egyptian engineer trying to get a job along with a thousand others who may have better connections, in the UAE “people can appreciate me and appreciate my work” (Int5). He felt that, apart from a few jobs that were reserved for Emiratis, his CV rather than who he knew or where he was from, was what would get him a job. In other words, he felt that the labour market was much more of a meritocratic free market than back home, which would allow him to rise to the top. Like Bradley, John also saw his time in the UAE as a bridge to somewhere else. He felt that he benefited greatly from

working in the UAE alongside people from other countries with whom he could share skills and experience and that this would prepare him to move on to Germany, his ultimate goal.

John also expressed a dual commitment to English and multilingualism in general. He felt that English was an essential language to get ahead as an engineer in the UAE, and certainly for higher education, but also felt that more languages offered more flexibility in the future. Throughout his job search, he reported that most of his interactions were in English, not Arabic. He had to submit a CV in English and most of his interviews were conducted in English. He attributed this to the multinational staff at most companies, that human resources departments were made up of Filipinos and Indians who operated mainly in English. He also explained that certain “formal”, institutional situations required English as an unwritten policy, even if everyone spoke Arabic (Int2). For example, John described an event at his brother-in-law’s workplace. John had accompanied him to work mainly because he had had nothing else to do that day and was invited along. On that day, a hotel inspector was coming to see the premises and rate various facilities at the hotel. The inspector was Syrian and the other three men present were Egyptian. They began by chatting in Arabic but as soon as the inspection started, everyone switched to English. John noted that the questions provided by the Ministry of Tourism were in English, but maintained that it was also the fact that this was a “formal” business event that made it English. John also told me that his experiences with English in his career so far, brief as it was, meant that his advice to his younger brother (about to enter university in Egypt) was to study English “because I am engineer and the best thing in these days is my knowledge about language” (Int4). He felt that English opened more doors than any specialized degree could, arguing also that once you know English, “it is easy to [study] any course in English” (Int4). Without English you risk being excluded from both career opportunities in your field as well as

educational opportunities which are increasingly only offered in English. At the same time, John was committed to learning German and eventually maybe French, Italian or any other language that might help him in the future. He felt that knowing more languages would open doors career-wise and also help him negotiate other “cultures” tied to those languages (Int6).

The sentiment that English was the appropriate language for “formal” situations at a certain level in the corporate hierarchy, but that multilingualism was essential for day-to-day business, was supported by several other people I spoke to. Keith, an Indian financial manager at a company in Dubai, who I met on the Ras Al Khaimah corniche, told me that at work he would use English when talking with senior managers because they “are professionals” who need to be able to “communicate properly and use the right words, professional words.” He explained that this is partly because all senior staff have completed their higher education in English and thus have acquired most of their professional vocabulary in English; however, he often returned to the word “professional”, suggesting that it was simply expected that “professional” communication should be in English. This term “professional” also came up again several times when I pressed other people to explain why English was the appropriate language for meetings with senior managers, even when other common languages were available. This practice was so normalized that my probing “why” often caused confusion. It was simply what was done by “professionals”.

However, despite the dominance of English in the upper echelons of management, Keith’s office needed to function on a day-to-day basis with staff from all over India and Nepal. This meant that English, Hindi, Malayalam and Tamil were required to manage the range of operations that occurred there. Keith described this linguistic stratification in socioeconomic terms, explicitly referring to “the working class” who do not need to know English because they spend their days with other people who speak the same language. Furthermore, they have a

supervisor who can “speak that language but also knows English, so he can communicate with both upstairs and downstairs.” Keith also explained that knowledge of English could even potentially make someone a less competitive candidate for a job because people with good English often want to be paid “much much more”. According to Keith, a company might be happier to hire someone with the right technical skills and then teach them basic English for the job rather than pay the premium required to get someone with the skills *and* the English.

The experiences shared by Bradley, John and my other participants show to some extent the permeation of English through the corporate world. English often serves as the default language within *de facto* language policy that emerges from drives for greater efficiency. English is the choice of international trade for this reason but then serves as a mechanism of exclusion as one moves up the corporate ladder. Linguistic and social capital acquired through the English-medium education of “professionals” segregates the “upstairs” from the “downstairs”, as Keith put it. The entrepreneurial self, who strives to be as linguistically flexible as possible appears to contradict this push for market efficiency via English; however, both English dominance and linguistic flexibility are derived from the same underlying neoliberal logic in which everything competes with everything else. Just because English is the language of corporate power today does not mean it will be tomorrow, nor does it alone offer the flexibility required to maintain a competitive edge today. Indeed, as Keith explained, some managers seem to feel that English is overvalued by the market. Nevertheless, English still maintains significant power even as claims to neoliberal belonging in the UAE are also founded partly on multilingualism. The suggestion that English “is the *de facto* language of business” in the UAE (Cook, 2017, p. 389) both obscures socioeconomic and linguistic stratification in companies in the UAE and erases language practices that are at least as essential to the functioning of a company, if not more so.

From rags to entrepreneurs

In addition to the middle-class version of stable neoliberal belonging, a number of individuals I interviewed described themselves as either aspiring to this position or as having finally “made it”. I spoke to three men in the latter category: Jeff, Jaza and Khalid. Jeff, an Indian café manager, told me his life story which involved moving to Singapore as a teenager, making his way up through the ranks of a run-down corner of the city’s “Little India” neighbourhood, working as a barista in a chain café in Ras Al Khaimah and then ultimately being headhunted by an Emirati patron who wanted a skilled barista to run her new café. After securing the management job, he finally felt himself to be in a more secure position, able to bring his wife and child to live with him. Jaza, a café co-owner on the other side of town, also recounted his rise through the ranks of the working-class South Indian population in Ras Al Khaimah, first working in a small sportswear shop, then a jewellery store franchise and finally borrowing money from friends and family in India so that he could buy stake in a café. Finally, Khalid was the owner of a distribution business that served grocery stores throughout the country. He had taken over the business from his father who had come to the UAE 30 years before and started with just one small shop that he ultimately expanded into a much larger operation. While Khalid had more or less grown up middle-class thanks to his father’s success, he cited his father’s origin story as an indicator of his family’s entrepreneurial success.

All of these men emphasized a stratified multilingualism, similar to that expressed by Keith in the previous section, in which knowledge of multiple languages is essential to any entrepreneurial endeavour in the UAE but those languages serve different economic purposes. Khalid told me he spoke Malayalam, Hindi, Arabic, English and Tamil. For most of his business operations, he felt that Malayalam and Hindi were the most essential languages at his disposal

because most of his clients were other South Asian (mainly South Indian) shop owners who may not speak English or Arabic well but would certainly speak some Hindi. Furthermore, because most of his staff were from Kerala, internal company communication tended to be Malayalam. Nevertheless, he also felt that Arabic was essential for dealing with government agencies, building connections with Emirati-owned businesses and working with Emirati sponsors. He cited English as “important” but when pressed why, he admitted that he did not really need English and it was mainly a backup language that could be used when the others did not work.

Jaza defined his café as “the Malayali café” as opposed to the “Bengali café” and the “Arab café” down the road. He described the neighbourhood of the café as a kind of “Malayali area” which meant that Malayalam was the most important language for running the business. He had other customers and suppliers from other parts of India or Pakistani, making Hindi the second most important language in his repertoire. That said, he also explained that they had a handful of regular Arabic-speaking customers and his dealings with government agencies also made Arabic essential to the success of the business. Finally, he felt English was a useful language to fall back on, explaining that to be a successful manager in the UAE, you should know Arabic and English to be able to deal with any problems. Jeff described a similar commitment to linguistic flexibility as a core component of business management in the UAE, though his clientele was more skewed towards the Emirati population, making Arabic a more important language for his café.

Middle-class striving through English

Other participants described the kind of striving for a “solid middle-class life” that Kanna (2012, p. 158) identifies in his interviews with working-class residents. Jon and Mike, two Kenyan gas station attendants I spoke to, constructed themselves as middle-class-to-be. Jon was

a single dad, whose daughter lived with his sister while he was abroad, and Mike was supporting a wife and child as well. They described coming to the UAE as “an opportunity – whatever opportunity you get, just take it!” They suggested that this opportunity was offered to them partly because Africans generally and Kenyans specifically were better at providing “customer care” than other nationalities. They described their role as customer care specialists who worked to keep customers happy. This was not necessarily only for the company but also for themselves. They told me that they would sometimes get tips from customers for good service but emphasized that they also felt an ethical imperative to do their best for people. They memorized the vehicles of regular customers to recall what kind of fuel they preferred, cleaned windshields whenever they were able to and tried to be as friendly as possible. This was sometimes rewarded monetarily, but they also explained that they were happy just to receive a “thank you” from customers – a reaffirmation of their commitment in an often-thankless job. For Jon and Mike, language in the UAE was “for selling”. They explained that they had picked up some Arabic through work and were quite happy to deploy it to improve their customer service, something also advocated directly by the company:

Just communicate the best way you can. If a Filipino customer comes and wants to speak Filipino, just communicate. If an Emirati comes and wants to speak Arabic, just speak...As long as you are selling and you don't get any customer complaints, then you are good.

This imperative to “sell” through language was an appeal both on behalf of company profits and on behalf of Jon and Mike’s ability to generate tips (and perhaps keep their jobs, given the veiled threat about customer complaints). An investment in language was linguistic capital that was directly convertible to monetary capital for everyone involved. Although Jon and Mike did not

share any specific plans to start a business (though other people I spoke to did express vague plans about starting businesses “back home” when they had saved a certain amount of money), they were offered a subject position that invited them to think of themselves as entrepreneurs of the self, even in a job that was ostensibly quite menial with limited upward mobility. This in turn shaped the way they engaged with linguistic diversity in the UAE – it was an “opportunity”.

This is not to suggest that they were wholly positive about this “opportunity”. While many of the recently successful middle-class residents I spoke to commented on the UAE as a “free” place with opportunities for business, Jon and Mike felt that their mobility and thus the breadth of opportunities available to them in the country were severely limited. This is a point that I will take up more fully in the next chapter but other participants also found the opportunities they hoped for in the UAE significantly lacking. For example, Suraj was a Nepalese resident who I met working in a name-brand shop in a mall in Ras Al Khaimah. He had given up a good retail job in Mauritius to come to the UAE where he had been told by colleagues and recruiters that he would likely make more money. He told me that he felt he had been tricked by the lure of economic opportunity in the UAE, only to find it to be expensive and isolating. He had taken several different jobs but could not get the break he wanted and was talking to his ex-boss in Mauritius, thinking that he might go back unless he found something better in the UAE soon. He also felt that Mauritius was a better stepping stone to Europe – he had long-term plans for either the UK or France.

I spoke to other job-hoppers like Suraj, who were on a constant lookout for better opportunities and struggling to find them. This is a large group of residents in the UAE, often either single or with families back in their home countries, who have not quite pushed their way into the middle class, but who have nonetheless taken on similarly entrepreneurial, mobile and

flexible subjectivities. They tend to have degrees or diplomas from their home countries and are multilingual, learning and deploying language strategically to get ahead economically bit by bit. They use their social, linguistic and economic capital to find ways to escape the disciplinary apparatuses that target the working-class population in the country and gradually push their way up the socioeconomic ladder. In many cases, as Suraj explains, this may involve international mobility, with a willingness to leave the UAE for other countries as yet another card up their sleeve to get ahead. This last point has implications for language policy as well. Jon and Mike emphasized that while they were willing to deploy whatever language resources they had to, English reigned supreme internationally. If you wanted to “provide services to the world”, they told me, “you have to learn English.” Likewise, Suraj explained, “English is worldwide language, we have to learn English. If no English, we cannot get anything anywhere not only here. You have to learn. You have to know how to speak English.” Thus, while multilingual repertoires were valued by this group, just as they were for the newly middle class, English was constructed as the linguistic priority for breaking through and getting the right opportunity, in large part because the opportunity did not necessarily have to come from the UAE. This middle-class striving via international flexibility opened up an escape hatch from the disciplinary mechanisms that these individuals experienced as working-class residents in the UAE. It allowed them to appropriate neoliberal discourses in ways that ran counter to their positioning in institutional policy in the UAE. When Suraj described thinking about whether he would prefer to work in Mauritius, the UAE or somewhere else, he was producing himself as a consumer of labour markets. He was not bound to the UAE and would choose a different country if the UAE could not compete adequately for his labour. For these residents, neoliberal belonging is even more ephemeral than my more stably middle-class participants and their commitment to the

UAE lasts only as long as their current contract. This, in turn, also positioned English as a much more essential language for them than for other neoliberal subjects in the UAE because they saw themselves as internationally rather than locally oriented. The next “opportunity” could just as easily be in France or Mauritius as in the UAE and a competitive individual needed English more than any other language to maximize their international flexibility.

Conclusion

This chapter has provided an exploration of the relationship between neoliberal subjectivity and language policies and practices. Overall, the neoliberal belonging offered to participants in the more permanent middle class of the UAE did not necessarily predispose them to any particular language. They happily followed the market where it took them and adapted their linguistic repertoire to meet the needs of managing the business, building contacts, interacting with their particular client base, and working with governmental agencies. At the same time, those who were still on the lookout for the next opportunity, were less committed to the UAE and its linguistic profile, often viewing English as essential linguistic capital to get ahead. In both groups, the aspiration to become and perfect the entrepreneurial self involved the construction of language resources as commodities of different values; however, which languages took priority depended crucially on the role these languages had in the markets in which that individual saw themselves operating.

Chapter 9: Migration, segregation and spatialized language policy

Introduction

In the previous chapter, I discussed neoliberal policy subjectivities and their implications for language practices and policy. However, my participants also interact with other policy apparatuses which have *de facto* language policy effects. They are not wholly separable from the policy discussed in chapters 5, 7 and 8 (formal language policy or neoliberal economic policy), but still offer distinct subjectivities and language policy trajectories that require further exploration. In this chapter, I focus on public and private sector social policies, with special attention to those deployed in the management of the migration processes, which shape the lives of most of the UAE's foreign residents. These migration policy tools manage both the path to residence and many aspects of people's daily lives in the country, including what kinds of jobs they are offered, where they live, who they live with and what spaces they can access in which languages. I argue that these policy mechanisms produce spatialized language policy through ethnolinguistic and socioeconomic divisions. After touching on several aspects of relevant migration and population management policy, I explore the role these play in the construction of specific language policy spaces in Ras Al Khaimah and discuss how some of my informants acted as participants, co-constructors and critics of these spaces.

Migration and security policy through the *kafala* system

Several of the people I spoke to who had been residents of the UAE for more than 10 years suggested that there had been a noticeable decline in Arabic use in Ras Al Khaimah during the time they had been there – a feeling that I also had when reflecting on my experiences in Ras Al Khaimah in the late 1990s compared to 2017-18. Anecdotally, for example, Mozart explained that her father-in-law, who had moved to the UAE in the 80s, knew Arabic quite well because he

had to speak it. Likewise, several other individuals with family businesses dating back to the 80s or even earlier told me that at that time, to establish a business, make connections and just get on through the day, Arabic was essential. Mozart herself noted a significant shift in the amount of Arabic she heard in Ras Al Khaimah, compared to when she first arrived in the 1990s. She felt that even in the past two and a half years there had been a change now that more and more jobs, public sector included, have an English requirement (usually requested through a specific IELTS score). She cited government ministries in particular, suggesting that in the past she had often struggled a bit to communicate with people working in government, whereas more recently, she had noticed both a greater willingness and capacity to work in English. Maria and Anne noted a similar shift, mainly in their experiences in shops around the city. They felt that whereas in the past, some Arabic seemed to be expected and even necessary to conduct basic transactions in shops, now English could be more or less sufficient to get by (though both did still deploy their multilingual repertoires on a daily basis). Anne also suggested that she felt there may have been a decline in Arab-run shops since she arrived in the city but could not be sure that it was not simply her routines that had changed. I would add to that set of anecdotes that when I first arrived in the country in 1997, basic Arabic was more or less essential for taxi travel. This was not because most taxi drivers were from Arabic-speaking countries – at the time it seemed most were from Pakistan or Afghanistan. Rather, Arabic (or Gulf Pidgin Arabic) had simply been adopted as the *de facto* language of communication with non-South Asian passengers, likely because of its general utility. Going back in 2017 and 2018, it was much rarer to find a taxi driver who did not prefer to speak with me in English. Not only did they have the English proficiency for lengthy conversations in English, they actively rebuffed my Arabic openings, switching immediately to English. In the late 1990s, my limited Arabic conversational skills

were almost universally met with immediate enthusiasm and engagement.

Such stories are difficult to verify statistically but there does seem to be evidence of demographic shift in general migration trends over the past 25 years that could support them. Good quality demographic data are hard to come by but combining UN migration estimates (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2017) and the UAE's own demographic data (Federal Competitiveness and Statistics Authority, 2005; 2018; National Bureau of Statistics, 2010) indicates a significant decline in Emiratis and foreign residents from Arabic-speaking countries as a percentage of the total population from 1990 to 2017. With the caveat that the data sets cited above are likely not perfectly accurate or complete, the general pattern in the data suggested that almost half of the population would have been Arabic speakers (determined by country of origin) in the late 80s and early 90s, while that figure had dropped below 30% in 2017. This is the combined result of a substantial increase in the number of foreign residents overall and Arabic speakers constituting a steadily declining proportion of these residents. As I mentioned in chapter 4, this shift was likely even more dramatic in Ras Al Khaimah, due to the significant growth in the foreign resident population during the past 25 years compared to Dubai or Abu Dhabi. Although a number of other factors are at play, certainly such a large demographic shift away from Arabic speakers would have had an effect on day-to-day language use, as Arabic simply became statistically less useful for everyday communication.

Finding reasons for these changes in migration policy leads one down a path of vague policy statements by governmental institutions and opaque hiring goals and practices in the private sector. Political motivations for the shift in the recruitment of manual labour from Arab countries to South Asian ones (as outlined in chapter 4) undoubtedly play a role; however, apart from occasional government policies that limit the flows of foreign residents from particular

states, the most impactful migration policies originate from the *kafala* system – the sponsorship system through which most foreign residents obtain their work visas (also discussed in chapter 4). This system cedes much of the responsibility for migration processes to the private sector. The government itself is not generally engaged in employing migrant workers and thus through the *kafala* system, it places responsibility for the hiring and wellbeing of foreign residents largely in the hands of citizens or businesses run by the country's wealthy expatriate elites (Vora, 2010). These elites play the same role as citizens in the *kafala* system but do not claim to act as such, instead defining their relationship to the country solely in economic terms. The implication of this is a dual denial of responsibility: “By relegating governance over laborers to wealthy elites, the state abdicates its responsibility over their well-being; by narrating belonging in neoliberal economic terms instead of through politicization or nationalism, elite expatriates mask their own practices of citizenship and governance” (Vora, 2010, para 12). Many “exposé” accounts of Dubai's labour exploitation (e.g. Gill, 2011; Hari, 2009) imply that Dubai's problems are somehow uniquely derived from its massive growth and illegitimate, non-modern political structure (observable through the *kafala* system) rather than being an issue for global capitalism as a whole. However, as Vora (2013) argues, the system is much closer to a neoliberal privatization of migrant labour than a product of “illiberal” patronage networks.

Discursive divisions around desirable and undesirable foreign residents mirror the socioeconomic divisions that define the *kafala* system. As outlined in chapter 4, the government tends not to identify the cultural impact of working class (and especially South Asian) residents. Instead, the large population of working-class foreign residents is described as contributing to a number of social problems in UAE society, including rising crime rates, unemployment, drugs, human trafficking, prostitution and contagious diseases (Lori, 2011; Mansour, 2014). One

example of this discursive construction of “migrants” with specific policy implications was a 2012 ban on Bangladeshi work visas. This ban was in the process of being reversed while I was in the country, so I saw a few headlines about it (Ministry of Foreign Affairs & International Cooperation, 2018). The reversal, which mainly opened up domestic work positions, was clearly stated, but the origins of the ban were vague. Media reports, as well as people I spoke to informally, provided a number of rumours to explain its origins, most of which were not clearly identified in policy statements – there were major crimes committed by a group of Bangladeshis in Saudi and the UAE; Bangladeshis were responsible for a general increase in crime rate; they were engaged in passport fraud; Bangladesh did not support Dubai’s bid for World Expo 2020 (Al Jandaly, 2012; BDNews24, 2015). Thus, the key domains of direct governmental engagement with the working-class foreign resident population tend to rest on issues of security and economic problems that arise from a large population of unskilled, low-income residents. In turn, this means that the dominant official, discourse of governance of the migrant population is one of national security rather than one of productivity, wellbeing or belonging, while security and disciplinary apparatuses are central to the management of these residents.

The *kafala* system is also foundational to the state’s security apparatuses. If the ideal foreign resident is productive and politically docile, the *kafala* system goes a long way to achieving this on its own. Wealthier residents generally have no cause to step out of line and any poorer residents who do have reason to protest their conditions are generally held in check by the fact that their welfare in the country depends on their ability to produce for their employer. The few who protest can be contained by security apparatuses. The security and surveillance apparatuses of the UAE have been developed extensively since the 1990s, driven in part by post-9/11 fears of terrorism and US influence (Lori, 2011) but also more recently, as a result of

anxiety related to Arab Spring movements (Mansoor & Luksch, 2017). The impressive capacity of these apparatuses was on display in 2010 following the assassination of Mahmoud al Mabhouh, a Hamas founder, in his hotel room in Dubai (Issa, 2010). The police quickly released names, passport copies and footage that tracked the movements of the suspects in both private and public spaces (Lori, 2011). With foreigners often positioned as the main perpetrators of crimes in the UAE, national security discourses are often linked to discourses around the demographic imbalance – for example, the Federal National Council’s call for the fast-tracking of a Federal Demographic Council to deal with the “threat to national security” posed by the large population of foreign residents (Salama, 2010). As such, the network of security and surveillance apparatuses set up to track criminals are also deployed to manage the foreign resident population as their movement and residency status comes under increasing scrutiny. Foreign residents are also seen not only as perpetrators of social problems but also as a negative influence on Emirati youth. Lori (2011) shows how the Dubai Police Department has developed a set of “juvenile delinquency indicators” which includes such factors as exposure to a “multitude and conflict of cultures” and links domestic workers to problematic “early sexual experiences” (Lori, 2011, p. 323). Lori (2011) also quotes the Dubai Police Chief at length as he comments on the “criminal customs” brought into Gulf society by foreign residents. Again, security and surveillance apparatuses are deployed to manage the spread of social problems to the population of citizens (though as Mansoor & Luksch, 2017 discuss, these same apparatuses are increasingly used to manage citizens as well).

The heart of the new policing strategy that has developed around these issues is the management of heterogeneity, which occurs by breaking down the foreign resident community by nationality or race. This is achieved through increasingly strict identification requirements

imposed on foreign residents (Lori, 2011). The Emirates Identity Authority has created an extensive database that includes “the individual’s name, nationality, signature, fingerprints, eye-scan, birth date, gender, work visa status, labor card, health card, and occupation, as well as all health records, criminal records, and personal records from all of the UAE’s ministries” (Lori, 2011, p. 326). This apparatus is now supplemented in most parts of the country, including Ras Al Khaimah, by hundreds of thousands of security cameras, many of which are live streamed to police headquarters and analysed with facial recognition software. For administrative purposes and visa processing, individuals are grouped according to occupation, which also becomes in many ways a *de facto* grouping by nationality and race.

There are also an estimated 65,000 to 135,000 illegal foreign residents who have either entered or remained in the country without a valid visa (Malit & Al Youha, 2013). Attitudes towards illegal immigration have changed significantly since the 1960s. In the early days of Dubai’s development, after his advisors raised the topic, Sheikh Rashid supposedly declared, “What is the problem, so long as they are paying rent in Dubai?” (Davidson, 2008, p. 91). Now, illegal residents are seen as the source of social problems, though the specifics are rarely clearly articulated. In a press interview, Brigadier Al Rashidi was quoted saying, “the presence of such offenders in the society is unhealthy. They are the cause of many different crimes and can cause health risks as well” (Hoath, 2011). Legal administrative processes are in place to ensure a system of “segregation and rotation” (Chalcraft, 2012, p. 76). This includes the (now-illegal but often deployed) practice of passport-withholding (Human Rights Watch, 2014) as well as the security apparatuses of data collection such as iris scans, finger printing and a forthcoming DNA database (Lori, 2011). Anyone caught residing illegally in the country is arrested and deported.

On the other side of the *kafala* system are the private sector policies that manage

migration. Specific institutional policies are generally opaque but as a whole, they produce observable material and discursive effects. Much of the path that a foreign resident follows on their way to the UAE is handled by private organizations. In most cases, this will involve some kind of recruitment agency abroad and sometimes a second one in the UAE. Once the individual gets to the country, they are sponsored by either a company or directly by an Emirati in order to get their visa. There are other categories of residence for investors or company owners but most foreign residents working in the UAE will have gone through some version of the above process. The result of this system is a rigidly segregated labour market, in which certain nationalities are hired for specific types of jobs. This is produced both through market efficiencies – that it is simply easier and cheaper to recruit the people from the same place for the same job – and through the discursive construction of nationals of particular countries as “naturally” inclined to certain jobs. This point was made explicitly clear by Maryam, an Emirati café owner I spoke to, who told me that she only hired Filipino people as baristas:

For me, it was easier to hire one nationality because it would be easier to communicate with them. I had certain standard that I wanted to achieve and I can't find it easily with everyone [so] all of them are from the Philippines...For me Filipinos are more smiley people, they are more disciplined and basically you can control them in an easier way than basically dealing – I don't want to sound racist – but dealing with Indians...Indians are more systematic, they will do only what you tell them to do, they can fit a job that is basically an A-B-C and that's it. They won't be creative and I don't think they are smiley much...So, I thought I need someone who is more open with people, I need someone who is friendly, someone who can take the blame or risk because we have a lot of fussy customers and we need someone who knows how to respond and I think Filipinos are

basically the best in this now. [Recently], we have seen Africans doing well. I don't know how they get them; I'll get one.

She went on to provide an outline of which other nationalities “fit” which kinds of jobs and why:

We have that understanding that there are certain jobs that fit a certain nationality. Like even at home, the driver has to come from the same nationality, the maids who are responsible for cleaning have to come from the same nationality, the one responsible for cooking has to come from a certain nationality...If you have a systematic job then just give it to the Indians. Drivers, they'll be very well. Even jobs in finance and accounting and stuff. For us, in cleaning, we basically get Filipinos or Ethiopians because they are more hardworking. And then for cooking we have Sri Lankans; I don't think you can get anyone else than from that country because they are more focused on thinking and they do not focus on how to clean things. It is just the mind because I think everyone has their own capabilities for doing a certain job.

This belief is ingrained both socially and institutionally in that agencies “specialize” in providing particular nationalities to fill market demand. The “market forces” that commodify individuals as specialized labour were also highlighted by Maryam, who claimed that recently it had become difficult to find Filipino domestic workers as a result of Philippine national policy attempting to prevent its citizens from taking on exploitative contracts. This has meant Filipino domestic workers are now in high demand, with Emirati families “paying double” to hire one. Foreign residents also adopt such discourses in their descriptions of labour hierarchies in the country. For example, Bob, a European middle-class resident identified a scale with “unskilled” South Asians at the bottom, Filipinos “somewhere in the middle...but they're not as clever as they think they are”, and “Westerners” towards the top. Like many “Western” middle-class residents, Bob

adopts the hierarchy somewhat cynically and ambivalently (which will be more apparent as I return to Bob again subsequent sections), but still serves to discursively reinforce it in society.

Urban planning: Gated residential space and community segregation

The migration and security policies discussed above are closely tied to the management of urban space. Urban planning by the public and private sector produces the physical infrastructure through which the segregation effects of the migration system can be routinized. This involves the planning of urban space for both Emiratis and foreign residents. Residential space for Emiratis is generally publicly funded through programs such as the Sheikh Zayed Housing Programme (2019) at the national level and the Sheikh Saud Housing Program in Ras Al Khaimah (Government of Ras Al Khaimah, 2019), which provide housing either directly or via zero interest loans to Emirati families. Through these programs, various housing initiatives have produced a number of predominantly Emirati neighbourhoods and communities within or on the outskirts of major cities in the UAE. In Ras Al Khaimah, this has involved the expansion of areas such as Al Dhait and ongoing production of new communities such as Bateen Al Samar, both of which are located south of the main city of Ras Al Khaimah (MacLean, 2017; The National Staff, 2015; The Sheikh Saud bin Saqr Al Qasimi Foundation for Policy Research, 2015; Zacharias, 2012b). This process has also involved a gradual shift in the Emirati population from city neighbourhoods and rural communities to these newer developments (Al Jazeera, 2006; MacLean, 2017; The Sheikh Saud bin Saqr Al Qasimi Foundation for Policy Research, 2015; Zacharias, 2012b).

Officially, housing for foreign residents is provided primarily by the private sector (Government of Ras Al Khaimah, 2004, cited by The Sheikh Saud bin Saqr Al Qasimi Foundation for Policy Research, 2015). However, as Kathiravelu (2016) argues, Dubai's urban

planning has been profoundly shaped by its neoliberal economic policies which have entangled public sector development goals with the interests of foreign private capital (and I would extend this argument to Ras Al Khaimah as well). Furthermore, the fact that sheikhs and senior government officials often own or control significant stake in private development companies complicates this private-public division. It is this combination of private sector demand for expatriate housing and public investment in the segregation of foreign influence from Emirati communities/culture that has led to large-scale gated communities for both middle-class and working-class residents. For middle-class residents this means spaces in which the gates control who gets in (e.g. walled complexes, apartment buildings or larger semi-gated communities) while for working-class residents the gates control who gets out (e.g. labour camps, villas with security guards or forms of self-policing). Kathiravelu (2016) also notes that although these gated communities are private residential spaces, they operate more in the interest of the state than the residents themselves because they lack collective mechanisms of governance (e.g. community committees). Instead, state interests in foreign resident management flow through large real estate developers (in the case of middle-class residents) or the companies who sponsor and hire working-class residents and rent labour camp space.

Community segregation is also often reinforced by geographical location and other features of urban planning that promote or limit certain forms of mobility. In general terms, this means that middle-class gated communities tend to be mainly accessible by car and are positioned in desirable locations – on the beach, near major highways heading to Dubai, or close to shopping malls. On the other hand, working-class gated communities tend to be isolated on the outskirts of cities, near construction sites and away from major highways or more desirable locations, out of sight of the main routes taken by Emiratis or middle-class foreign residents.

Even though middle-class foreign residents in the UAE sometimes have a bit more freedom in where they live, the company they work for generally rents space in nice apartment buildings, gated communities or larger semi-gated neighbourhoods outside the city. For example, during my data collection in Ras Al Khaimah, I stayed in a building known to many people, including deliverymen and taxi drivers, as “teacher building” because it housed many teachers from a private school. When I was living in Ras Al Khaimah as a teenager, my parents and I lived in a large gated complex with a pool. The villa was provided by the college that my father worked at and the complex housed mostly other teachers and a few other white collar, mainly European or North American, employees at banks or other large institutions. (For extended discussions on gated communities see also Kathiravelu, 2016 on Dubai and Vora, 2015 on Qatar).

Such divisions are further bolstered by policies that privilege automobile use, neglect the development of public transit, limit pedestrian mobility and restrict access to (semi-)public space. In the case of Ras Al Khaimah, this is most obvious in the lack of public transportation beyond relatively expensive taxis (prices seemed to have increased significantly since I had last lived in the city). I was also surprised to see that the speed limit on the main road through the downtown Nakheel area had actually increased. Simultaneously, concrete road dividers had been erected and the number of pedestrian crosswalks had dramatically decreased. This made it rather difficult to get from one side of Nakheel to the other without either walking all the way around or attempting to vault the concrete barrier during breaks in high speed traffic. More direct disciplinary apparatuses are also deployed in specific public or “open” private spaces. For example, many luxury shopping malls, museums and parks often define themselves as family spaces and deny access to “bachelor” patrons – interpreted as working-class foreign residents – who might disrupt that atmosphere. Security personnel enforce these policies. Even in the public

spaces that do exist in the UAE, security apparatuses monitor and control who can enter these spaces and on what terms. Kanna (2014, p. 614) comments on the racialized tone of these security apparatuses, pointing to an article (Fattah, 2006) about the explicit segregation of South Asian “beach pests” from Dubai’s beaches:

Let us leave aside the obvious: the astonishingly insensitive, not to say blatantly racist, use of the term “pests” to describe South Asian men and the condescending tone of the entire piece, which seeks to “explain” South Asian men’s behavior by referring to their poverty and their “culture.” The more insidious and subtle racial structuring of space becomes clear when we begin to appreciate what is missing from this account: the gaze and behavioral patterns of middle-class and white men. Men who appear to be of this background can safely expect the space to reflect their assumptions. Specifically, they can expect not to be hauled into interrogation rooms in watchtowers, their cameraphones confiscated, their number of “strikes” kept in official records. It is working-class South Asian men’s behavior, their gaze, that is surveilled and intervened upon.

Together, these features have the effect of further isolating (generally pedestrian) working-class residents in their designated neighbourhoods and work-home routines.

In addition to the implicit racial segregations in the above discussion, my participants also described more active and small-scale forms of explicit segregation in the private sector. Even when different nationalities fill the same role in the same company, the company will often segregate them from each other. A number of respondents that I spoke to who worked for large companies such as supermarket chains or construction firms, described being housed in different labour camp buildings, villas, rooms or whole apartment floors with the same nationality. In some cases, people would be further subdivided along ethnolinguistic lines, as in the case of

South Indians from Kerala. Participants who described this policy offered a number of reasons and said they generally approved because it meant that they were living with people who spoke the same language, ate the same food and understood their “culture”. Such mechanisms of segregation invite belonging inflected by the ethnolinguistic hierarchies produced by the socioeconomic stratification that is built into them. Wealthy expats are offered a particular mode of existence completely removed from both Emirati citizens (and their respective neighbourhoods) and the working-class residents who are in turn segregated from each other by job or ethnicity or both.

***De facto* socioeconomic segregation and self-segregation**

Other forms of indirect segregation are also accomplished by the private sector. A foreign resident’s visa categorization and the kind of job they can hold in the country are connected to the material conditions of their everyday existence, which in turn serves the security goals of the country. This makes possible forms of segregation that occur through *de facto* exclusion from domains of the wealthier citizens and foreign residents. Foreign residents from South Asia regularly do the same work as an Emirati or a Western employee but under a different category, for a lower salary and fewer benefits (Vora, 2013). Kanna (2014) describes this form of segregation vividly as he asks a project manager at a major Dubai mall if he can drive up to the valet section in his “beat up Honda Civic”. The manager replies:

You can. But you’re probably not likely to and that’s the point. *You cannot label an area exclusive. You can only make it harder for the people you don’t want to be there. People who have nothing to do there.* If I’m driving a Honda Civic, I would go to (that part of the mall) and see an Armani shop and realize that there’s no way that I can afford anything there, so what am I doing there in the first place? (Kanna, 2014, p. 614,

emphasis in original).

Kanna (2005; 2014) briefly discusses the linguistic implications of this as well, as he maps the ethnolinguistic geography of Dubai, noting that city spaces, at the time of his research, became more Anglicized the further west he moved in the city:

[T]he discursive geography of shopping malls became more homogeneously English the further west (i.e., toward the more European-dominated neighborhoods) one went (Kanna, 2005). Thus, in the center of the city around the creek, where the open air markets are located, knowledge of Arabic, Persian, or Hindi was most useful and Western brand names were few and far between. By contrast, in the shopping malls of more prosperous Jumeirah and the districts further west (where, for example, the aforementioned ski slope—encompassing Mall of the Emirates is located), most of the signage was in English, and a large if not overwhelming proportion of the brand names were British, European, and North American. (Kanna, 2014, p. 610)

Neighbourhoods throughout the country tend to be segregated by race and class, and participation in particular public and private spaces is limited by economics as much as by explicit exclusion. This in turn has language policy effects such as those described briefly by Kanna (2014), which I will take up in more detail shortly.

Finally, the restrictions of many working-class residents' jobs serve as a mechanism of mobility limitation and segregation. For example, domestic workers get very little time off – Alexa, from in chapter 7, had just one day per year – and they may have limited access to phones or internet services which would help them make connections with other foreign residents. Similarly, individuals living in labour camps often have just one day off per week, and may be bussed into specific areas of the city, generally South Asian-majority neighbourhoods (certainly

not luxury shopping malls). Many other interviewees described simply having no time to do anything apart from work, cook and sleep. Even if they did have free time, many emphasized that they did not have enough money to do anything with it apart from stay in the areas in which they lived and worked. Together, these factors significantly limit the social and geographical scope of many working-class residents' interactions in Ras Al Khaimah.

In addition to governmental and private sector segregation, many of my participants reported forms of routinized self-segregation in their daily lives in the Ras Al Khaimah. This occurs in a few different ways. As in Kanna's (2014) account of self-exclusion from luxury shopping malls, when I asked Jon and Mike where they went in their free time, they explained that they did not feel comfortable in many parts of the city. For example, they described restaurants as "not for people like us", by which they meant they meant two things. First, they explained that they were in the country to save money so they would rather cook cheaply at home than spend money in restaurants. Second, they also felt that they were not really welcome in most public spaces. They elaborated on this further when I asked them who they regularly talk to in their neighbourhood (since they said they did not go anywhere else apart from work):

Actually, you don't stay out. You are not supposed to stay out because it is a family area. So, whenever you are staying out it might be a bad idea because you might be checking ladies. Actually, we cannot socialize with anyone. Even when we are selling [petrol to women], they won't open the glass. So, if that lady won't open the glass to you, how do you expect them to sit in a place and socialize with you?...Mainly Emiratis are the problem. They have that pride, it is their country and everything. We just keep our distance. [No one told us to do this.] You can see people doing the same as that; they try to evade because actually the ladies here are not like our country. Whatever they say, it's

right. So, if she says you looked at her bad, that's it, it won't favour you. [And also] you came here to earn, you don't want to socialize, so you try as much as possible to stay away from women. It's good you have friends at the business and chat but here, [near] families, we stay away. Home, work, home, work, home, work, go to the beach sometimes but rarely. That's the life. We don't have anywhere to go. Just finishing that boredom now, maybe just stay in the house for 2 or 3 days, you don't come out. Take a stroll, but away, not in the houses, to the beach...you don't walk around the houses.

Ken and Emmanuel, two Nigerian construction workers, also described a similarly cautious approach to free time in the UAE – avoiding women and socializing only with other single, male, working-class residents. They told me the “rules of the UAE” that had been shared with them by colleagues who had already been in the country for several years:

Don't look at women. Don't take alcohol. Calling women or staying with women is not allowed. [No] going without a shirt, so that they feel you are seducing their women. So, these are the rules that I got and we adhere to it.

Like Jon and Mike, their self-segregation was not something they were explicitly told to do, but was something they felt was a requirement of their life routine on arrival. This self-policing, and the sharing of knowledge of how to manage oneself in the UAE, is a common experience for single, male, working-class residents in the country and was echoed by several other participants who identified their immediate neighbourhood as the limit of their (cautious) social activity.

Other residents also described a deliberate attempt to live and socialize with only people from their own nationality for reasons of personal comfort. Waqar, a Pakistani man who I met in a small shop in the city, explained that he had previously lived with Bengali roommates. He told me that soon after moving in, he got into an argument with them. The argument began with the

Pakistanis in the apartment wanting to eat while the Bengalis were sleeping, a disagreement that he attributed to both linguistic and cultural misunderstanding. He explained that after the argument he moved in with a group of only Pakistanis and since then, he had had no problems: “If all of us are from Pakistan, everyone understands each other nicely. If we live with people who speak another language, then fights happen” (translated from Urdu). Other people I spoke to who worked or lived in more ethnolinguistically diverse spaces still said they tended to spend their free time with people from the same country/region who spoke the same language.

Self-segregation also occurs in wealthier foreign resident circles, for example “Western expats” – a group that contains North Americans, Europeans, South Africans and Australians. Kanna (2014) discusses the “imperial geography” of Dubai, which includes “British pubs”, gated communities, shopping malls and resorts – spaces of “escape” for Western expats. Likewise, Coles and Walsh (2010, p. 1322) trace the production of British “Self/Other boundaries” through British expat spaces that emerged pre-Federation and have evolved from nationally oriented organizations into private institutions. Such spaces, though technically open to anyone, are founded on economic and cultural barriers that serve to exclude most other residents of the UAE and “continue to enable, British expatriates to maintain familiar practices which were culturally inappropriate in Dubai, for instance drinking alcohol or walking around in swimming costumes” (p. 1323). These spaces serve as cultural oases for Westerners to escape the Otherness that surrounds them. My participants also identified similar spaces in Ras Al Khaimah as being oriented towards “expats”, such as the Golf Club, beach clubs in and around the city, hotel bars, and large European-style grocery stores or malls. Many also pointed to semi-gated communities outside of Ras Al Khaimah, such as Al Hamra and Mina al Arab, as spaces mainly catering to “Western expats”. I take up some examples of this in more detail in the next section.

Spatialized language policy

All of these mechanisms of segregation come together to produce areas of the Ras Al Khaimah that are dominated by one ethnolinguistic group. As Kanna (2014) points out, these spaces are still diverse; however, the distribution of who inhabits these spaces is significantly skewed racially and socioeconomically. These demographic patterns affect both the language choices of my participants and their perceptions of language utility in the city.

Working-class participants generally lived in company housing with compatriots, often in areas of the city dominated by residents with similar ethnolinguistic and socioeconomic profiles. When asked what language(s) they felt were essential for life in Ras Al Khaimah, most said Hindi/Urdu (if they spoke it) or English (if they did not speak Hindi/Urdu). Some also mentioned Arabic but tended to add qualifying comments such as “it is an Arabic country” or “it is useful for government”. Few working-class residents I spoke to were concerned about learning English and not one mentioned standardized tests such as IELTS. Some also mentioned their own languages, but generally felt that either Hindi/Urdu or English (rarely did participants describe both as essential) were much more important. On the other side of the socioeconomic divide, my middle-class participants generally chose where they lived in the city, within their budgetary constraints, and tended to reside in neighbourhoods that were more ethnolinguistically diverse with other middle-class residents of different backgrounds. They had access to the whole city and frequented both Anglocentric spaces such as malls and hotels and also small cafés and restaurants in more working-class areas. They were almost all either fluent English speakers or deeply concerned about improving their English, often via the IELTS test. They felt that English was the essential language to get by in the city though some mentioned Arabic for interactions with the government or as a backup repertoire for communication breakdowns.

What made these perceptions of language utility interesting was that there was so little overlap. Working-class Hindi/Urdu speakers routinely told me that English was not important for life in the UAE. On the other side, middle-class English and Arabic speakers regularly told me that Hindi/Urdu was not necessary. No one told me that Arabic was essential. All of my Arabic-speaking participants heavily downplayed the utility of Arabic and emphasized the importance of being able to speak English. Interestingly, my two core participants who spoke both Urdu and English more or less fluently (Bradley and Mozart) felt that Urdu and English were both essential to be able to fully access the city. For Mozart, this meant being sure that she could communicate with pretty much anyone if she had to. For Bradley, Urdu allowed him to socialize with the South Asians that dominated the area where he lived. These two participants were exceptions, however. Everyone else was quite comfortable and confident in choosing *either* English or Hindi/Urdu (never both) as an essential language, with Arabic and other languages filling helpful but non-essential roles. I did not set out to categorize and quantify my participants' language choices or perceptions, and do not wish to overstate the quantitative significance of this observation, but it highlights two important issues. First, race and class, via direct and indirect forms of segregation, directly impact both language practices and perceptions of language utility in the UAE. Second, points of contact between groups who not only do not share a language but also *do not even think each other's languages are useful* are important sites of linguistic negotiation and mediation.

I explore the latter issue more fully in chapter 10. For now, I wish to expand on this first point with some more detailed examples of spaces dominated by specific ethnolinguistic groups. In doing so, I will examine some of the ways in which these spaces construct and are constructed by their inhabitants as well as the language policy implications of these constructions.

South Indian Market area – South Asian working-class space

The first example I offer is the South Indian Market area of the city, as it was referred to by several participants, a reference to the (pseudonymous) name of a large supermarket on the main street that runs through this part of town. It is a small area on the eastern side of the downtown Nakheel district, which hosts a large number of small, South Asian-run retail shops and supermarkets. It includes a produce area with butchers and vegetable shops, fabric and ready-made clothing retailers, cheap South Asian restaurants and cafés, mobile phone retailers and services, building materials and a number of other small shops with various types of goods and services on offer. Most official signs are in English and Arabic, but many shops also have unofficial signs in South Asian languages stuck to the windows. Inside shops, there are often calendars, posters and other decorations displaying Malayalam, Hindi or Urdu. Although many Indians I spoke to described it as a Malayali area, I also met Bangladeshis, Pakistanis, Afghanis, and people from other parts of India living and working in the area. Hindi/Urdu and Malayalam are most common but I also heard Bengali, Pashto and Arabic. English is less common but many people speak enough English to provide the basic services of their shop and if they cannot, someone nearby will step in to help. During the week, a steady trickle of people moves around the area, in and out of shops. It gets gradually busier in the evening as more people get off work and chat in cafés or walk around browsing shops. On the weekend, Thursday and Friday evenings, it gets very busy as buses bring people into the area from labour camps near Ras Al Khaimah. The cafés and restaurants are full and large groups of people congregate on the side of the road talking and laughing in different languages. It is very much a male-dominated space, even more so on the weekend, and several women I spoke to said they would not go to that area in the evening, and certainly not on the weekend, because they did not feel comfortable. That

said, there are women shopping in the grocery stores in the morning or afternoon most days of the week.

I spoke to several people who worked in the area and they told me that they more or less did not leave that part of town. They worked long hours and lived in shared apartments or villas nearby. They could get groceries, haircuts and tea in the area, so they did not need to go anywhere else, except perhaps a rare visit to government offices. They generally lived with other people from the same country who spoke the same language and liked the same food, either as a result of company policy or by choice as in the case of Waqar above. This meant that the South Indians I spoke to said that at work they mainly used Malayalam or Hindi and after work they lived more or less completely in Malayalam. The same was true of Waqar who spoke mainly Urdu in his free time, but used Arabic with some customers at work. Abdul, a manager of a small vegetable shop, told me that Hindi was the most important language for life in Ras Al Khaimah:

Most of the people here speak Hindi, Arabs also know Hindi, even the policemen speak Hindi. When you are coming here for the first time from India, if you don't know how to speak Arabic there is no problem, if you speak English or Hindi that's enough.

(Translated from Malayalam)

His colleague, Basith, who co-ran the shop, explained that:

We don't have time to go out. We close this shop by 12 am, then we watch news for 10 or 15 minutes, and then we sleep...Ras Al Khaimah is a very silent place to live, not much traffic. But we don't get time to go and roam around and see places. If we get one or two hours, we have other work...washing our clothes, cooking. We work every day.

(Translated from Malayalam)

Thus, the working conditions and limited financial flexibility of the residents serves to segregate

them within this specific area of Ras Al Khaimah. At the same time, within this neighbourhood, individuals are segregated either through company policy or by choice along ethnolinguistic lines. Crossing these borders occurs mainly at work, generally mediated by Hindi/Urdu as a language that most people have some proficiency in. Commercially, the space serves mainly other South Asian residents of Ras Al Khaimah, many of whom are dropped off on company buses for a few hours at a time, further reinforcing it as a South Asian ethnolinguistic space.

However, spaces like this can also be thought of as “contact zones” (Pratt, 2008) in that some middle- or upper-class residents of the city also shop and eat in the restaurants of this neighbourhood. Anne, for example, told me the story of her border-crossing experiences in the area. She explained that she had discovered a small vegetable market with a friend while exploring Nakheel. The prices were very cheap compared to other European-style supermarkets in the city and they were happy to be able to use their own bags and choose their own vegetables. The South Indian shop managers were friendly and she described the experience of going to the area as a bit “like traveling” in that it involved some linguistic and cultural negotiation. She emphasized that she had “sound reasons” to go there – cheap, good quality produce; specific products – and was not going to the area “to be different or to slum it”. However, she also thought visiting the area was an important cultural experience that most Westerners do not see:

I have never actually seen an actual Westerner in the whole place. Hrm! Never! It’s like there’s a whole other world that happens just around the corner. And people, I would say, 95% of the Western expats just never, don’t even know it exists... Yet, these places are thronged – at the weekends, I don’t go! Thursday, Friday night I don’t go if I can avoid it because it is just packed. So, there is kind of a whole group of people in Ras Al Khaimah who do their shopping in these places and my guess is they never go to [malls or big

European grocery stores]. So, it's like parallel universes are going on. But I kind of feel sorry for the other people who never go there because it is like they are missing out on knowing about an aspect of life here that they might be interested in actually...As a kind of snob here, in my experience, a lot of Western expats have a very narrow...range of experiences here. They live in certain places, they shop in certain places, they go to certain places for entertainment and that's it. It's like, well what about all the rest? Don't you ever feel any interest to know about these things? (Int2)

Anne took some pride in her exploration of the less Anglo-centric foreign resident areas in Ras Al Khaimah but felt very much an outsider in Western resident circles for doing so. Despite her efforts, she also explained that of all the countries she has lived in, she has never felt more like an expat than in the UAE. In other countries, she was much more integrated into everyday life alongside local people, in part because, as an English teacher, she did not have that much more money than anyone else in Eastern Europe or Turkey. In the UAE, however, she has always felt a very clear separation between “Westerners”, Emiratis and working-class foreign residents and this has made her a somewhat unusual regular of the South Indian Market area.

As in the rest of Ras Al Khaimah, while a particular language tends to function as the *lingua franca* of a particular area (in this case Hindi), what is most important to any specific interaction is the dynamics of who is speaking to whom. As Basith explained, “With Malayalis, we speak Malayalam, with Bengalis and Pakistanis we speak Hindi, to customers from Sudan or Jordan we speak Arabic, to Filipinos in English and to customers from Sri Lanka we speak Tamil” (Translated from Malayalam). In many cases, this may involve a combination of vocabulary from multiple languages as well. Anne described her interactions in the shop in detail, commenting on the words she uses from Arabic, English and other languages to get by:

It is interesting, the vocab I use. Because when I know the word in Hindi or something, like *brinjal* [eggplant], I say that. If I know it in Arabic, I tend to say that. So, *koosa* [zucchini] and *jarjeer* [arugula], then the rest of them, I use English. So, it's a bit of a mishmash, but for the guys, they don't seem to care, like any language as long as they understand it is good enough. They will say, "you want *koosa* today?" So, it's like they kind of know *my* terms for the different things...[and] we still, "how are you", "fine", "busy?", "how's business" – this kind of basic stuff, all in English. (Int2)

Anne's descriptions highlight the power disparity that shapes language use in this contact zone. Anne is a mobile "traveller" and middle-class consumer in this space, rather than an immobile local or working-class service provider, the "travellee" (Pratt, 2008). As such, the shopkeepers offer services to Anne in her language. This not only means generally using English, but also remembering her specific terms for vegetables, not unlike Jon and Mike's memorization of license plates and gas station orders in the previous chapter. At the same time, Anne makes an effort to learn and deploy words in Hindi or other languages that she thinks the shopkeepers will be comfortable with, a form of convivial linguistic practice that I discuss in the next chapter. For now, the point I wish to make, following Pratt (2008), is that the linguistic negotiation in these contact zones is both defined by asymmetrical power relations and co-constructed through them.

This asymmetrical linguistic negotiation is an important part of everyday life in Ras Al Khaimah and follows a generalized language policy in which customers get whatever language they want to use. Bradley described the policy as follows:

I don't know if it is a language policy...if you call any call centre, they say if you want to talk in English press one, if you want to talk in Arabic press 2. But if you face a problem, they will ask you what kind of language you speak, and you say Urdu, they will forward

you to someone who speaks Urdu. You come over [to this café], one guy is from Africa and one is from the Philippines and one is from Pakistan and one is from India. If you speak to them in Indian, they will speak in Indian language. If you talk to them in African language, they will speak to you in African language. There is no language policy for this; any language you can speak and solve your issue, it is okay, most welcome. (Int6)

While Bradley questions whether one can call such language choices “policy”, it was quite clear from a number of my participants that large companies, small shops and individuals all adapted to their interlocutors’ linguistic needs as best they could. Sometimes this was a matter of explicit policy, as Jon and Mike described being told to “just communicate” by the gas company. For others, it was more of an ethical imperative, which I touch on more in the next chapter as well. However, as I explore in the next section, class divisions define this generalized policy more profoundly in other spaces, especially middle- and upper-class shopping malls and supermarkets. That is to say, the burden of “just communicating” falls unevenly.

Shopping malls – Middle-class space served by working-class residents

Middle-class residents, being more mobile, tend to frequent a more dispersed set of areas for both consumption habits and leisure time. A main feature of middle-class consumer culture in Ras Al Khaimah (and the rest of the UAE) are the shopping malls. Although it is Dubai that is most well-known for malls in the UAE, Ras Al Khaimah has several as well since first getting Manar Mall in 2000. Mall space is a focal point for the city’s middle-class residents. They are spaces that boast international brands and define themselves as havens of relaxed consumerism – for example, Manar Mall’s description of itself as “a beautiful waterfront setting where customers can enjoy restaurants and cafes” (Al Hamra Group, 2013). Large European-style, international grocery stores such as Spinneys or Carrefour often serve as centrepieces for these

malls and function as the primary supermarkets for many of Ras Al Khaimah's middle- and upper-class residents. Carrefour, for example, is a French multinational retailer that has a major presence in the UAE, including both smaller supermarkets and large "hypermarkets", such as the one in Manar Mall, which sell household items as well as groceries. The store imports European brand products and up-market products from other parts of the world, including the Middle East and South Asia. It also provides a wide range of products that target middle-class families, at only slightly more expensive prices than large supermarket alternatives. However, most products are still significantly more expensive than what is on offer in smaller shops in the South Indian Market area. Anne noted that produce in these stores is two to four times more expensive than at her regular vegetable shop despite being of similar quality. These malls also have cafés, restaurants and other typical mall retail shops, selling electronics, make-up, toys, jewellery and clothes. Most official signage includes English and Arabic, but unlike the South Indian Market area, unofficial signage in other languages is generally absent. Patrons cover the ethnolinguistic breadth of Ras Al Khaimah's population (and some smaller malls cater more to South Asian communities); however, generally larger malls are demographically skewed towards Emiratis and middle-class European or Arab residents than most other areas of the city. It is thus more common to hear English and Arabic in mall space than the range of South Asian languages in the South Indian Market area. The default language of the largest malls is English and you can find store staff who speak little to no Arabic. Still, Arabic is also common and many staff members are fluent Arabic speakers from other parts of the Arab world such as Egypt and Lebanon. Furthermore, if you needed service in Hindi or Tagalog, most shops and restaurants would have someone on hand to help you, but staff members told me this was less common for a number of reasons which I will touch on shortly. Overall, service staff is predominantly Filipino, while

cleaners and other staff that interact less with customers, such as shelf stockers and shopping cart retrievers tend to be South Asian. Similar to the South Indian Market area, during most of the week, malls have a steady but small flow of people which greatly expands in the evening and on weekends. Though still somewhat male-dominated, there is a much larger presence of families and women than in other parts of the city. There are also specific provisions of female or family-only seating areas in the food court. Almost all of my middle-class participants told me they shopped regularly at one of the large supermarkets such as Carrefour or Spinneys, even Anne, who resigned herself to going there to get a few specific items that she could not find elsewhere.

A number of factors come together to produce the mall as a primarily English space. The consumer-oriented, internationally branded nature of the space predisposes it to a reliance on English. The staff members that I spoke to told me that getting their jobs depended primarily on their English proficiency. Arabic and other languages were not a requirement. Filipino staff told me that companies preferred Filipinos for retail and service jobs because they speak English well. They generally told me that English was their default language of work and that they would only use Arabic (themselves if they could or via a volunteer interpreter) if a customer could not communicate in English. Furthermore, the exclusion of working-class South Asian “bachelors” also contributed to the construction of the mall as an English space. Finally, patrons themselves often perceive middle- and upper-class spaces in the UAE as English. Keith, a middle-class Indian I spoke to, described feeling that “posh” places were *de facto* English. He gave the example of going to an upmarket restaurant in Ras Al Khaimah and speaking to the waiter in English, even though they were both Indian and could have used Hindi. On the other hand, when going to a small, working-class Malayali restaurant, he would speak Malayalam directly.

The mall as an English space is also maintained by the avoidance of languages other than

English and Arabic by many inhabitants. Several people described the care they take in avoiding a language that nearby customers might not understand. Such practices are a combination of institutional policy and concern for jobs and status in the country. Dimple, a Filipino manager at a fast food restaurant in a mall food court described a bit of trouble she had with a customer:

We have the regular customer here, so we know they are coming [and we remember his usual order]. For example, “burger without tomato, without onions”, so when he come, we know the order. “Guys make the burger without tomato and onions.” So, when he come, it’s like we’re talking to each other and when he come, we laugh. So, he feel embarrassed. That’s why the company said don’t talk [Tagalog] and laugh in front of the customer. Actually, he make a complain, because really if you are in his side you will feel embarrassed...Actually, I was the one who handle also [the complaint]. I told him, “I’m so sorry sir, we did not laugh because [of anything bad], maybe that’s what you think. When you come, we know your order. We want your service to become fast so that when you reach, your food is already finished.” After that it was okay. So, he understand.

Dimple explained that after that incident, she was much more careful about ensuring that any staff near the service counter spoke only English to avoid any future misunderstandings.

Ostensibly, this policy is to make customers feel socially included in the environment in which they are shopping; however, English is not necessarily more inclusive than Tagalog for many mall-goers, nor would staff speaking Arabic rather than Tagalog be likely to face similar complaints. Rather, the maintenance of English mall space is founded crucially on the direct exclusion of other languages, which serves as a thinly veiled form of racism.

There is also a socioeconomic dimension to this exclusion, which was made clear to me through the accounts of interactions in mall space by Maria, a middle-class Filipino English

teacher, and Michelle, a working-class Filipino recruitment agent. Maria told me that she often uses Tagalog in malls, supermarkets and restaurants if the staff is Filipino. She explained that although she mainly does it as a way to feel connected to the Filipino community, she also often deploys Tagalog strategically because she gets “better treatment” from staff or even “free stuff” (Int3). Interestingly, Maria also described using English strategically to project power in situations where she is concerned about being the target of racism and being treated unfairly:

[English helps get better service] because I don't look like a native English speaker right, but then when I start speaking English, they start accommodating me better. For example, when I'm going to the store with my sister, they [might] perceive us as Filipinos [and] do the less accommodating thing. So, then when we start speaking to each other in English out loud, then they start paying attention to us... Yeah, because sometimes you are waiting in line and it's like another person of a different nationality cuts in front of you and they let it happen, so then sometimes just speaking English is enough. I don't know if my sister does it on purpose as well, but sometimes I do it and she just goes along with it. Maybe she thinks I'm just having a conversation with her [laughs] but sometimes I do it on purpose so that we get better treatment. (Int5)

It is also important to highlight that Maria and her sister are fully fluent in English and speak with what most people might think of as a mild American accent. This flexible deployment of English and Tagalog in Ras Al Khaimah mall space is in sharp contrast to Michelle's account of her language use. She told me that she usually only uses English in malls. I expressed surprise, noting the large number of Filipino staff members and also having already heard Maria's account of “better treatment” and “free stuff”. However, Michelle echoed Dimple's concerns, “Because if they have another person there, so maybe they're thinking you're talking about them. So, it's

better English to understand so that you not get any problem.” This once again highlights the salience of who is speaking to whom. Ethnolinguistic and socioeconomic factors intersect in particular spaces to produce norms and expectations about what constitutes acceptable language use. For Maria, her position of relative financial security (and her English proficiency) makes her comfortable speaking Tagalog freely in public (English/Arabic) space *and* deploying English in those same spaces to deter racially motivated mistreatment from staff and other customers. For Michelle, the precarity of her financial and employment status makes Tagalog use much riskier. She recognizes that two working-class Tagalog speakers are an easy target for mistreatment, making English the safe choice. This, in turn, reinforces the mall as an English-dominated space as speakers of other languages are unwilling to risk deportation over an opportunity for intra-group connection. However, Michelle also does not gain the same service benefits that Maria does because she speaks non-fluent, accented English, which makes her identifiably Filipino and thus, she would still receive the racially motivated mistreatment that Maria sometimes avoids.

Mall space is less linguistically diverse than the South Indian Market area. However, this is not because the inhabitants of the mall are less linguistically diverse – in fact, they might be more so given that you will often hear European languages that would be very rare in the South Indian Market area indeed. Rather it is a rigidly socioeconomically stratified place in which only a certain class of customers can be linguistically flexible. The generalized policy of “speak what your customers want to speak” still applies; however, it becomes a qualified policy that applies to middle-class customers but not staff or occasional working-class visitors like Michelle.

An upper-class community café – A place of explicit crossing and implicit exclusion

I have already discussed the “Western expat” enclaves of the UAE broadly, but I return to them here to discuss them as language spaces. There are several new upmarket communities that

have sprung up and expanded outside of Ras Al Khaimah city in recent years, including Mina Al Arab, Al Hamra and Marjan Island. While the residents and visitors of these spaces include Emiratis and foreign residents from all over the world, like the shopping malls in the previous section, socioeconomic exclusion and internationally oriented consumer culture produces them as mainly English spaces. According to Bob, a European who has lived in Ras Al Khaimah off and on for about ten years, these expat zones outside the city have drawn a lot of the Westerners out of the heart of Ras Al Khaimah. Whereas in the past, many lived in villas in some of the older parts of town, they have since tended to migrate to smaller, much more homogenous, wealthy expat areas. Bob described the atmosphere of these semi-gated communities:

People are looking for, they predominantly want to continue their European way of life. It's purely Western culture that you're gonna find there. The bars, the clubs, and all the rest of it, they're all there. It's no different to living in any major town anywhere in Europe...[The residents] expect everybody to be able to speak English.

Farawila, an American who moved to Ras Al Khaimah in the mid-1990s with his family, and has lived off and on in the country since, compared these newer communities to how he and his family lived in the 90s:

When I was growing up as a teenager, we lived in downtown Ras Al Khaimah, our neighbours, one of them was local [Emirati], one was a foreigner, one was from somewhere else. When someone would get sick, our local neighbours would bring over hot soup and stuff. In an Al Hamra-type village, it's kind like, people want their own space, they want to go to the mall. But also, when they go to the mall, or they go to the golf club...they want to be in their own little English-only community.

According to Bob and Farawila, as well as other longer-term residents I spoke to, Western

residents had gradually segregated themselves further over the past 20 years, something they personally felt uncomfortable with but also felt was a minority perspective.

Accessing one of these communities requires a car (or taxi) unless you want to walk alongside a long, hot dusty highway to get there. Though not fully gated, they generally contain at least one set of “guard” houses with automated rising arm barriers to let cars in and out. Once inside, you can find ample parking and easy access to the apartments, villas, cafés, restaurants and shopping areas (Al Hamra has a full shopping mall of its own). These consumer spaces target the wealthiest residents of the UAE with accommodation, food and services all multiple times the cost of other parts of Ras Al Khaimah. These areas also have waterfront views and private beach access. A friend of mine who lived in an Al Hamra apartment for a few months by some fortunate accident described it as “like living in a resort”. While linguistically diverse – similar to mall space, one can hear European languages along with Arabic and South Asian languages – the demographics of these spaces produced them as even more Anglo-centric.

Although many of my participants identified these areas as zones of Western foreign resident segregation (I do not have demographic figures but I was told by several residents that they are “90% expat” spaces), Emiratis increasingly live in and visit these places as well. Maryam, the café owner I introduced at the start of this chapter, explained that this presents an opportunity to establish upmarket cafés and restaurants that can attempt to “bridge” Emirati and expat communities. Maryam was a young Emirati professional, very much aligned with Kanna’s (2011) description of “flexible [Emirati] citizens”. She worked in a well-paid job in a semi-private company and also lived near and owned her café in one of these Western expat zones. She used the term “expat” frequently, as a stand-in for “wealthy, English-speaking foreign residents”, and explicitly identified a divide between “Arabic-Emirati” and “English-expat”

culture. In her opinion, a big part of the problem that divided Emiratis from expats was that there were not spaces in which these communities could mingle, talk openly and share their languages and cultures. She believed both groups were a bit intimidated by each other, feeling that the other side was stand-offish and unwilling to integrate, when in fact people in both communities were quite open to cultural and linguistic exchange when offered the opportunity. Thus, her café was conceived as a space for intercultural mingling and language sharing. Through social media accounts that post in Arabic and English, she publicizes various activities and events that might bring Emiratis and expats together. While she told me that the main language requirement for working in her café was English proficiency because it was the main language of the community the café served, she had also hired one Filipino staff member who could speak Arabic well enough to serve Emirati customers. Maryam described the café as “upmarket” in style but priced in a way that it could “attract everyone”. When I commented that it might be affordable for most people in this wealthy enclave of apartments and villas but was still well beyond the budget of most of the people who live in Ras Al Khaimah, she seemed puzzled. She explained that they might think it was out of their price range but if they would just come in, they would see it was quite affordable. She offered “student discounts” and had a number of menu items that she felt were quite reasonable. It was as if the working-class majority, many of whom live in labour camps not too far down the highway from this café (or even worked in the café itself!) were not only not a part of the clientele, they were wholly unimagined as residents of Ras Al Khaimah.

For Maryam, the English-speaking community had graduated from a negative influence to a linguistic and cultural resource that required mechanisms of integration. They had become a permanent fixture in her image of UAE society. Non-English foreign residents were not explicitly excluded (if they could afford the café’s prices) but were not provided a privileged

place of ethnolinguistic belonging either. The primary subject positions of South Asian and Filipino residents were defined by rigidly assigned job roles that fit their “natural” inclinations. Maryam’s only mention of language in the café apart from English and Arabic was Tagalog. She said that sometimes customers would come in and order in Tagalog, which she did not mind “as long as it didn’t affect anyone else”. Furthermore, staff were allowed to speak to each other in Tagalog as long as it was not loudly at the front counter where it might disturb customers or was deployed to exclude her in some way. She also noted that she wished she knew a little bit of Tagalog “to know what [my staff] are saying behind my back” but that in general they tried to stick to English when she was around. This last comment serves to justify the anxiety felt by Michelle and Dimple about their cautious avoidance of Tagalog in wealthy, public, English space in the UAE. Maryam also felt that Urdu would be a very useful language to know for running her café because contractors that she hired to do repairs often did not speak English or Arabic and she felt she had “spent a lot of money” unnecessarily and “been fooled” in the beginning because she could not communicate with them effectively or understand what they were saying. However, Urdu was not part of café space – it was a part of behind the scenes management, something that could support but was not fundamentally a part of the café atmosphere. Many young Emiratis such as Maryam are perhaps increasingly accepting the inclusion of English expats as part of the social fabric of the UAE, thus producing the country and many wealthy communities as bilingual Arabic-English spaces (despite the fact that English still dominates in practice). At the same time, other ethnolinguistic groups remain on the periphery, still temporary but necessary to support areas of privileged socioeconomic and linguistic segregation.

Non-commercial public space in Ras Al Khaimah

Thus far, I have focused on the ways that migration, security and urban planning policies produce ethnolinguistically and socioeconomically segregated spaces with their own *de facto* language policies. However, a brief exchange with a colleague at a talk I gave in Ras Al Khaimah also highlighted a further issue that compounded many of these effects: a lack of non-commercial public space (Brian J. Chung, personal communication, March 11, 2018), a point also made by Vora (2013) and Kathiravelu (2016) about Dubai. Compared to other parts the world that I have lived in and visited, the UAE has a relative paucity of public space. There are not many parks, beaches, playgrounds or other such areas that allow people to mingle on a more or less equal socioeconomic footing. Thus, a lack of public space tends to force social activities into “open”, but privately managed consumer spaces, which reinforce socioeconomic and ethnolinguistic segregation. This is not to say public space is a panacea to the issues raised so far. As discussed earlier in the chapter, public space is also managed by disciplinary apparatuses that target working-class, non-white residents. As such, I hesitate to exaggerate the democratizing effects of non-commercial public space, but I still believe the lack of it in the UAE contributes to socioeconomic and (related) ethnolinguistic segregation. I provide two examples here that serve to illustrate this problem: a playground near the apartment I lived in during my research and the corniche, a popular waterfront area.

In Ras Al Khaimah, there are a few small playgrounds in different neighbourhoods, some sand football pitches and several small public beaches or waterfront areas. The largest of these is a waterfront space called “the corniche” which I will describe shortly. However, just as in Kanna’s (2014) account of Dubai’s beaches, many of these spaces are walled or segregated in Ras Al Khaimah. Small parks and playgrounds are often designated as “family space” and

walled or fenced off to prevent unwanted “bachelors” from entering the area and bothering women or children. Areas that are not physically separated are still segregated by the “family” designation and are generally avoided by working-class single males, such as Jon and Mike, doing their best to avoid trouble.

The *de facto* language policy effects that this segregation have can be striking. When I was in the data collection phase of my research, I lived with my wife and daughter in an apartment building that housed a number of teachers from an English private school. Many of the teachers had children with few options available if they wanted to go outside to play, so the school agreed to build a large playground, field and barbeque area behind the building. It was to be maintained and monitored by the building’s on-site maintenance and security man but was intended as an open space for the whole row of apartment buildings nearby. These other buildings were not leased by the school and seemed to be home to mainly middle-class families from different parts of the Arab world and South Asia. I was told this had worked fine for quite some time and the children from neighbouring buildings played football in the park regularly. However, one day a man (it was unclear from the storyteller if he was related to one of the kids or not) joined the game and refused to leave when asked by the building maintenance man. The intruder got angry and punched the maintenance man, which understandably caused an uproar in the community, especially amongst the teachers of the school who felt that it was a violation of their space. It was decided that the area would be fenced off and locked with a key that was controlled by the maintenance man and only accessible to staff of the private school and their families. However, the primary effect of this new fence was to produce a generally under-used “English” playground, physically divided from the “Arabic” side street and walkway behind the apartments. This area between the apartments and the fence was constantly crowded with

children from the other buildings playing football wherever they could find space. When the park was being used for birthday parties, the segregation was even more striking as a sea of mainly white, English-speaking children ran around the playground and field while the non-white, Arabic-speaking children played football on the road. The space was also maintained by the rule that if you were in the playground with the key, you could only let in other people with legitimate access. Quite often visiting families would pass by the gate and ask to be let in, only to be denied by the key-holder if the visitors were not identifiable as school staff members. Indeed, when we first moved there, my wife and daughter were denied access to the park for not being recognized as school staff with playground access privileges, despite living in the “teacher building”. The woman who denied access to my wife and daughter proceeded to walk slowly around the playground, alone with her baby in a stroller, making no use of the play structures, field or other facilities. Once we became recognized as legitimate users of the space (my daughter and I went out most days), we were then recruited as guardians of the space and strictly told not to let in outsiders – a rule that I broke several times, feigning ignorance of who was or was not “legitimate”. Another “problem case” was an Arabic-speaking boy who was the son of a school staff member, but had befriended a number of Arab children in the building next door. He was thus allowed access on his own, but could not invite his friends from neighbouring buildings to play football, which meant that he spent most of his free time on the wrong side of the fence. Occasionally, he managed to sneak his way in with a few friends (once with my help) but they would generally get kicked out by the maintenance man or another resident if caught. The purpose of this story is not to demonize the school or its staff – indeed, simply making playgrounds a common feature of Ras Al Khaimah urban space would probably solve a lot of the problems here. Rather, I want to highlight the language policy effects of policing so-called

family space. Although, there were also speakers of other languages who had access to the park including Arab, Filipino and Indian staff (such as the boy I just mentioned), the overall effect of maintaining this physically segregated area was to produce what was essentially an English dominant space in a neighbourhood that was otherwise relatively linguistically diverse.

In Ras Al Khaimah, the corniche is the only major publicly funded space that is open to everyone who can get there (keeping in mind the lack of mobility described by the residents of the South Indian Market area, most of whom said they rarely went to the corniche). It is a large waterfront area with walking paths, trees and benches overlooking a lagoon that sits at the centre of Ras Al Khaimah. Though there are a number of shops, cafés and restaurants embedded within the space itself, it functions fundamentally as an open park area. In the evening, it is normal to see joggers, multinational (including Emirati) families walking or picnicking, kids playing football on the grass, and colleagues or friends of all socioeconomic and ethnolinguistic backgrounds sitting on the grass chatting. Unlike the playground described above, it is also too large to designate as “family space”, which means that working-class “bachelors” are much more comfortable walking there and sitting on the grass. These two factors make it one of the most ethnolinguistically and socioeconomically integrated areas of Ras Al Khaimah. Almost all of my middle-class participants mentioned visiting the corniche regularly and a number of working-class residents who lived close enough to access it reported going there as well. This is not to suggest that there is necessarily a great deal of communication across ethnolinguistic or socioeconomic borders but the mere presence of these groups alongside each other serves to normalize multilingualism and the presence of working-class residents, which in other parts of the city seem to cause more anxiety. Hope told me that everyone on the corniche spoke their own language as it was a relaxed area and a good place to escape from the “pressure of work”. Ken

and Emmanuel, two Nigerian construction workers, described feeling comfortable talking to each other in Igbo but were also happy to invite working-class, male strangers to join them where they usually sat. They said that generally South Asians or Egyptians would join them and chat in whatever language they could, even if it was just some basic friendly greetings in English or Arabic. This is not to say that the corniche is free of Anglicized commercial space, as the chain cafés and restaurants are often still akin to English mall space – one café I visited did not even have Arabic on the menus. However, taken as a whole, the fact that participation in commercial space is not the primary goal of most visitors to the corniche produces a much more comfortable and integrated multilingual atmosphere than in other parts of the city.

Conclusion

This chapter has explored some of the policy mechanisms that produce stratified space in Ras Al Khaimah. By exploring a handful of specific spaces, it has been able to investigate some of the relationships between the production of space, language policy and the language policy subjectivities expressed by my participants. While much of the chapter focuses on more disciplinary policy mechanisms, the closing discussion of the corniche area points to the ways that different spaces in Ras Al Khaimah also serve as contact zones in which border crossing is managed. In the following chapter, I continue to expand on these more “convivial” language practices that were also central to my participants’ language experiences in the city and I take up the implications of this discussion for language policy, space and scale in chapter 11.

Chapter 10: Border crossing: Convivial linguistic practices and language policy

Introduction

Piller (2018) explains that while the demographics of the UAE may be “superdiverse”, the networks that result tend not to cross ethnolinguistic boundaries. Despite this:

multilingual and intercultural interactions do take place in the workplace, in malls or in housing complexes. Many of these interactions may indeed be superficial and fleeting; what makes them “meaningful” from a sociolinguistic perspective is not so much how sustained they are but whether they reinforce or challenge existing linguistic and cultural stereotypes and hierarchies. (Piller, 2018, p. 91)

Kathiravelu (2012) comments that much of the research that has been done in Dubai focuses, quite reasonably, on analyses of social exclusion (e.g. Davis, 2007; Dresch, 2006; Elsheshtawy, 2004; Masad, 2008; Vora, 2008; 2013; Willoughby, 2006). However, as she argues, meaningful contact across networks does occur. The challenge is then to investigate how this contact bridges, reinforces or complexifies ethnolinguistic borders in the country.

Thus far, I have explored explicit language policy in the form of governmental policy texts and institutional language rules, *de facto* policy that emerges from neoliberal policy and subjectivities, and spatialized language policies that have developed through migration policy and mechanisms of segregation. However, there is one final set of language practices and experiences that are not easily accounted for but nonetheless also constitute a form of *de facto* language policy. These practices tend to occur in “contact zones”, sites of ethnolinguistic and socioeconomic border crossing, and were often constructed by my participants in ethical terms. I argue that this is the foundation for a generalized form of ethically defined language policy which has emerged in the absence of policy alternatives for a society that is both highly stratified

and highly multilingual. To get a theoretical handle on these practices, I draw on concepts such as conviviality and convivial labour, as outlined in chapter 2. I use these concepts to interpret specific language practices described by my participants as types of convivial practices. I begin by outlining some examples of what I have called “convivial linguistic practices” – types of language choices and deployments that appear to support or contribute to genuine respect for individuals across ethnolinguistic, socioeconomic or racialized boundaries. After outlining some of these examples, I also develop my earlier discussion of convivial linguistic labour and convivial linguistic work as a way to understand the socioeconomics that define these practices. In most cases, these practices are never simplistically “positive” and are entangled with the structural divisions that are omnipresent in these moments of crossing, which I will return to in the final section. Nevertheless, they illustrate some of the processes through which language choices contribute to respect and negotiated togetherness that reach across the multitude of borders and divisions that frame everyday life in Ras Al Khaimah.

Convivial linguistic practices

Benevolent interpreters

The first example of convivial linguistic practice I explore is what I call “benevolent interpretation”, essentially, the act of coming to the spontaneous linguistic aid of a fellow resident to mediate communication breakdowns or disputes. Within academic literature on translation and interpretation, this would be understood as a form of “non-professional interpretation” (Martínez-Gómez, 2015), a broad category that generally covers untrained, unpaid interpreters. In sociolinguistics research, a related term, “language brokering” is often used. Tse (1995, p.180) defines language brokers as “intermediaries between linguistically and culturally different parties...who...unlike formal translators, influence the contents and nature of

the messages they convey, and ultimately affect the perceptions and decisions of the agents for whom they act.” This latter term has come to be primarily associated with immigrant children’s interpretation work for their parents and families (Morales & Hanson, 2005), around which an extensive body of literature has been built. However, in this context, the benevolent interpreters of this project are aligned with Tse’s (1995) more general definition. The only addition I make here is the ethical imperative that many of the benevolent interpreters in my project described. This is not to suggest that they are necessarily objectively “good” actors, merely that they construct themselves and their work in ethical terms. The experience of offering or receiving help with interpretation is an extremely common part of everyday language activity in Ras Al Khaimah and almost all of my participants had at least one story to share along these lines.

The first example involves Bradley. He told me a story about helping a Russian tourist who was unable to communicate at a shop in a large Ras Al Khaimah shopping mall:

Well, you know, I went to [the mall and] there is one Russian lady [who] decided to buy from [Brand A shop] some make ups. [The] saleslady was not able to convince the Russian lady that this is a very good quality and price is like this. She was not able to give a brief explanation about the product, so that Russian lady was very upset and she just looking at her and not saying anything. Then I went there, I feel bad, I went there and said [in Russian], please tell me exactly what do you want. Then she replied to me, “Thanks god that you are here”, and then I solved their problem, and I said the product is this much, the price is this much, it is good quality, and if you want you can buy this original product, it is [Brand A]. Even if you want me to stay more with you, I can stay 40 minutes longer, it is no problem. As a humanity, I helped them without charge. (Int5)

Bradley’s final comment, “As a humanity, I helped them without charge,” is a reference to the

fact that he had once been a professional interpreter and thus was offering high value services for free, emphasizing the unpaid work he was doing. However, perhaps the more important keyword is actually “humanity”. In Ras Al Khaimah, communication difficulties are commonplace and one generous act that individuals regularly provide is interpretation service, particularly in situations of conflict. Indeed, a great deal of the convivial linguistic work in the city is done by individuals such as Bradley, who create temporary bridges across ethnolinguistic communities that are essential to the day-to-day functioning of the economy and society as a whole.

Experiences of strangers providing or receiving impromptu interpretation services were so common in the retail spaces that I investigated that it affected almost everyone I spoke to in at least a small way. It was also a common experience between colleagues as well. Communication breakdowns in workplaces between staff and customers are just a fact of everyday life that has to be managed. Occasionally, managers or owners try to ensure that there is enough linguistic diversity on hand to handle any situation, but in most cases, staff just do the best with what they have, often relying on strangers like Bradley for help. Staff also reported supporting each other whenever they could, often relying on key intermediaries to serve as interpreters between groups. Ken, for example, described being the primary interpreter for Nigerians at the construction company that employed him. He explained that he had been working in Ras Al Khaimah for almost two years and had made an effort to learn some Arabic along the way (itself a convivial linguistic practice that I will come back to shortly). This made him a crucial point of connection between work staff who spoke different languages because sometimes there were colleagues or low-level managers on the work site who could speak Arabic but not English. This meant that they could use Ken to relay a message or pass on instructions to the Nigerian crew. He also explained that when Pakistanis or Bengalis (who generally spoke a bit of Arabic themselves)

were together with Nigerians at work or on breaks, he was the person they would go to as an interpreter. Messages, greetings or jokes could be shared between groups, which according to Ken was crucial to avoid tensions that resulted from miscommunication on site. Ken stressed that he was not at all fluent in Arabic. In fact, he suggested that he was barely competent with some basic banter and general work-related language, but said it was enough for him to be able to break up arguments and maintain a generally collegial atmosphere for everyone nearby. He also noted that he was sometimes asked by his managers to act as an interpreter for colleagues from Cameroon who spoke neither English nor Arabic, despite the fact that Ken himself spoke no French (the only language he knew they spoke). He would simply use a few basic words and hand movements, whatever he could do to get the message across. Ken was not appointed to any particular work role as an interpreter, nor was he paid for it; he simply fell into it by being able to speak some Arabic and being “African”. However, he seemed to embrace this position as a way to help his “Nigerian brothers” and generally help everyone “stay calm” at work. There are many Kens in Ras Al Khaimah, generally unrecognized and unpaid for the interpretation work that they do but who are essential for the day-to-day management of their workplaces.

A third example, which brings some aspects of the first two together, is from an interview with Surya, a shopkeeper from Kerala. He was working as a supervisor in one of the many small convenience stores that serve neighbourhoods throughout the city. His first language is Malayalam but he learned to speak Hindi, English, Arabic and Tagalog from living in the UAE. He also speaks Tamil and has a limited repertoire of Thai and Chinese, which includes greetings and numbers. He described mediating a dispute between a customer and another staff member:

There was an elderly staff member here, he doesn't know Arabic. When people call for delivery, he has to go because I cannot go since I will be busy here at the counter. So, he

picked things from here as per an order, but by mistake he took the wrong things or missed something and when he went for delivery, those Arabs got angry at him. But he doesn't know their language so he didn't understand and I had to go there directly to solve the issues...I told them sorry, and told them he is a new staff member and he doesn't know Arabic. Then they asked, "Why are you keeping him in the job? If he doesn't know Arabic, why did you send him?" But that's because of the situation here. I cannot move from the counter...So, I have to send them for delivery. The Arabs don't understand, they want their products in the right way. (Translated from Malayalam)

Surya is partly obligated, as a supervisor for the shop, to mediate these kinds of disputes. He said that he was promoted to the role of manager of this relatively linguistically diverse and busy shop partly because of his linguistic knowledge. However, he was also working in this case to rescue his colleague from a situation which, depending on the customer, could have cost him his job. By explaining that the staff member was "new" and needed time to learn the language, Surya was smoothing over relations between customers and staff, but also in a broader sense was smoothing over relations between ethnolinguistic communities, the Arabs and the South Asians. This convivial linguistic work was not a part of his job description but is nevertheless central to his everyday linguistic experiences on the job. Many other shopkeepers and service staff I spoke to described similar experiences either as benevolent interpreters themselves or as recipients of linguistic aid from other staff or even customers, like Bradley, who mediated communication breakdowns and resulting arguments. Such convivial linguistic work is an important component of everyday negotiation of difference and conflict in Ras Al Khaimah. It is also often unacknowledged by employers or governmental initiatives which tend to privilege English or Arabic rather than multilingual repertoires.

It is also important to note here that just as Rampton (2015, p. 86) comments that “there is nothing intrinsically convivial about ‘polylinguaging’,” there is also nothing intrinsically “benevolent” or “convivial” about interpretation in Ras Al Khaimah. Bradley shared a second story that demonstrated this:

I have a very crazy example [of helping people communicate with each other]. There was one Punjabi and one Pashtun were just shouting, they were arguing and exchanging a lot of bad words. My friend was with me, I was sitting in the car, my colleague was parked. These two start arguing with each other but they did not know what each other were saying. Then I translate, this one said this and this one said that, then they start fighting with each other and then me and my colleague drove away. [laughs] (Int5).

Thus, while the interpretation work discussed by my participants generally took on a tone of ethically motivated mutual respect, it was not the practice itself but rather the way it was constructed in specific contexts that made it “convivial”.

The respectful Shibboleth

Another challenge my participants described as part of daily life in Ras Al Khaimah, without a clear *de facto* common language, was how to begin interactions with a stranger. One convivial linguistic practice developed by some of my participants was a form of “respectful” Shibboleth. The concept of the Shibboleth test is often cited by researchers in language testing (e.g. Davies, 1997; McNamara, 2005; 2012; Spolsky, 1995) and refers to a passage in the *Book of Judges* in which outsiders are identified by their inability to pronounce the word “Shibboleth” (see McNamara, 2005 for an extended discussion). McNamara (2012) highlights the ambivalence inherent in the concept in that a Shibboleth test may be both the site of inclusion and protection as well as exclusion and punishment. Here, I adopt the concept to further illustrate

the mechanics of linguistic identification in ethnolinguistically diverse societies such as Ras Al Khaimah and take up some of the ambivalences around how such a tool is convivially deployed.

One example of this was provided by Jessica. In her daily life, Jessica explained that she sometimes encounters individuals that she cannot identify in ethnolinguistic terms and is unsure in what language to begin the conversation. Thus, she has devised an Arabic Shibboleth test to find out whether she should proceed in Arabic or English:

You know once I was shopping on [a large European supermarket] and I went to cheese section and there was a man but he is looking like Indian, little bit dark skin with some moustache, like that. I feel that he is an Indian, so I started to speak with him in English. I went like that, “Excuse me...” He said, “Okay” and he start to speak like an Egyptian. And I said, “Oh you are Egyptian!”...If he don't know English and I start to speak with him English, I feel that he feels a little sad that he don't know or I will be more that I am very high and he is low education. I don't like that...but I was now avoiding this problem by saying “*As-salamu alaykum*.” If he replied, “*Wa laykum al-salaam*”, he is English. If he said, “*Wa ‘alaykum al-salaam*” with the ‘a [sound], ayn letter. English people, they say *ah*. Like Ali. It's A‘*ali*. If he said, “*Wa ‘alaykum al-salaam*” he is an Arabic. (Int4)

A second example of this came out of a discussion between my Tagalog-speaking interpreter, myself and a Filipino woman, Dee, as we introduced ourselves. Dee had asked my assistant, “*Kabayan?*” as we exchanged names. This word came up again in our interview as a “password” that allowed Dee to identify if someone could speak Tagalog or not. Dee and my interpreter explained that it means approximately, “are you from the same country?” but in practice, it is a way to inquire about whether it is fine to continue in Tagalog. Dee said that she often tries to guess whether someone is Filipino by their facial features but sometimes Indians

and Nepalis she meets in Ras Al Khaimah look like they could be Filipino. Furthermore, even if a person is Filipino, they might not be comfortable in Tagalog as there are some people who speak mainly Cebuano or one of the country's many other languages. Thus, the "password", *kabayan*, serves as a quick way to identify the language that is most comfortable for both parties.

A final example of this does not involve a specific Shibboleth, but further illustrates the mechanics of language user identification in Ras Al Khaimah, where most individuals have a number of linguistic repertoires at their disposal. Mozart described "assessing" and "observing like a teacher", looking for language features (as well as other visible clues) before deciding what language to proceed in:

I used to get confused as I told you before when I used to go to the supermarkets and I still do! I'm not sure will he understand Hindi? Is he a South Indian? Should I speak English? Would it be okay to speak Urdu? That would never happen in [my home country], see! Something like that would just not happen because you know it is German, you are not going to speak any other language with this guy, no matter where. But over here I have this problem when I go for shopping, especially if it's a new supermarket which I haven't been to and I don't know the staff. So, it's like assessing, you assess them first. Actually, you watch them speaking. What does he speak? What is his accent? Okay, does he sound like a South Indian? Then rather go for English. I actually actively observe them, like a teacher, you know. And there's this body language as well, the South Indians, they shake their head all the time so he must be a South Indian, so I have to go for English. (Int6)

While each of these examples shows small pieces of language being used to identify and categorize speakers of different languages, the goal of these Shibboleths is neither exclusion nor

inclusion, but rather maximizing communicative comfort and efficiency for all parties involved. I do not wish to imply that this negotiation is necessarily “meaningful” contact, as Valentine (2008) would put it. However, I would argue that the act of “getting on” (Rampton, 2015, p. 87) in whatever language you can involves more than simply practical considerations. In many cases, with speakers of multiple languages interacting, each speaker has their own unique set of “truncated multilingual repertoires” (Blommaert, 2010, p. 134) and there is not always a clear language choice that suits the competence and comfort of both speakers. Jessica’s explanation of how she proceeds clearly shows more care and respect than someone who just wants to get her cheese and go as quickly as possible. There is a deeper concern for her interlocutor’s wellbeing and her language choices are the domain in which such ethical concerns are navigated.

Language sharing

A third form of convivial linguistic practice that my participants described was teaching and learning words and phrases from each other’s languages. These acts of working towards a common language or set of shared linguistic resources often became a catalyst for positive interaction and “meaningful” border crossing.

My first example of this was shared by Bradley. He explained that he had few friends in the country when he first arrived but decided to play football on a pitch near his work with a regular group of men. Most of the players spoke either Malayalam or Arabic and Bradley spoke neither of these, but he quickly picked up some words and phrases:

When we are talking to each other, we are talking in English. But sometimes, when they are talking with themselves, they are using a kind of expression. Then, based on their action, I understand what they are saying to each other, and I’ll say okay, I will repeat when the same action is happening to me. [For example,] I will say “*putay putay*”, means

"leave it leave it."... Yeah, you know, I am just trying to use some kinds of their expressions, simple expressions. Because when I am saying that one, they feel happy and they are laughing and that is a kind of good feeling for me. After football, we are going to café, they are all Indian and Malayali people are working there. (Int4)

Bradley turned weekly acquaintances into friends by gradually building out a small repertoire in another language, successfully integrating himself into a South Indian group in Ras Al Khaimah. Bradley also shared several stories of what he called a “trick” (see chapter 8), which involved deploying a truncated set of language resources to put interlocutors at ease, smooth over business communication and build relationships. This kind ethnolinguistic border crossing is certainly not the norm in Ras Al Khaimah but it is nonetheless an example of the way that the acquisition and strategic deployment of truncated multilingual resources can produce “good feelings” between ethnolinguistic groups, which normalize into longer-lasting and more meaningful friendships.

Other participants I spoke to emphasized language sharing as a way to build relationships and produce positive social spaces, especially at work. Ken described both serving as a language teacher and a language learner on his construction site as a way to make his working life easier:

For the past 8 months I am working with a Pakistani. Actually, it was not easy because he did not understand English. But after working together, he was able to pick [up some English]. I taught him some things from those elementary parts of English [such as “how are you?” or “hammer”]. Now I can work with him comfortably. Even now, I can work with an Egyptian because he doesn’t speak English but I forced myself to learn Arabic. There is nothing he will say that I will not understand. So, now the work is easy and sweeter, unlike before... That language barrier is a very big problem, sometimes it causes a lot of catastrophes over the site. Maybe when a Bangladeshi talking with a Nigerian, the

Bangladeshi does not understand English and the Nigerian does not understand any other language, especially if he came new. So, sometimes, it causes a lot of friction because of that language barrier. Sometimes they get angry because they keep talking about one thing almost 10 times and we are not understand, and he will keep shouting and the Nigerian will not understand why this person is shouting...The solution is just if you want to talk to somebody, be calm because they don't know your language. Teach him. Because the Egyptian I work with was teaching me Arabic. So, he always try to make things easy and I always try to put that English in him so that he and I will understand. Bradley and Ken's accounts demonstrate how the simple act of exchanging language resources, a mutual investment in one another's languages can lead to friendships and produce "local liveability" (Amin, 2002, p. 959) in a work environment.

Managing linguistic inclusion

Another set of convivial linguistic practices revolves around managing the linguistic inclusivity of social interactions. Many of my participants shared stories about management of language choice to effect maximum inclusivity for everyone present in a social situation.

My first example of this is Maria's experience in high school. She had recently moved to Ras Al Khaimah and joined a high school class with mainly Arabic-speaking classmates. Rather than this linguistic barrier excluding Maria from pre-existing social groups in the school, she explained that a number of her fellow students actively switched their *de facto* language from Arabic to English. She remained a part of this friend group through high school and still sees some of them regularly. To this day, they maintain an English language policy when she is with them. She noted that there are still moments of exclusion, when some expressions are difficult to translate, or particular circumstances make it difficult to maintain English completely (e.g.

ordering at an restaurant with Arabic speaking staff; events or meet-ups that involve individuals who do not speak English) but in general, the policy of the group has been maintained. Such a policy also provided her friends an opportunity to practice English, something that Maria noted as a secondary motivator for them to enact it in the first place, but it seemed to her that the primary goal was simply to make her feel welcome in the class when she first arrived.

Mozart shared a number of similar examples, acting both as a manager of group linguistic inclusion and a recipient of others' managing practices. As a language manager, she described attending an event where she had to negotiate language use in a multinational group of women. She had gone to the event with three German-speaking friends and overheard a woman speaking Arabic next to her. She knew that the woman was Swiss-Egyptian (and also Canadian) and that she spoke French but was not sure if she would also speak English or German. When Mozart came to introduce herself, she tried to decide on the "appropriate" language to include her in a conversation with her friends. Ever on the lookout for German speaking opportunities, she tried German first, but the woman did not understand. After some negotiation and "confusion", they landed on English as the best "common language" for all five women (Int 4). Mozart also described being a beneficiary of language management when meeting with her Pakistani friends. She explained that because her Urdu is not as fluent as most of these women, they tend to use a bit more English around her and translate any vocabulary that goes beyond her lexical resources. Other participants shared similar experiences of negotiating an appropriate language or introducing informal language policies to ensure that a specific person could access a group that might otherwise have been linguistically closed to them. While such inclusive language management practices are not always possible, for my participants it was a social expectation, even an ethical obligation, to make an effort when they could.

Mozart also described a rare moment of not following this unwritten policy, when using German with a colleague at work during her breaks:

Yeah, [we speak German to relax], that's kind of my relaxation period, when I can talk in my language. I mean we try to avoid it if other people are in there who don't understand that language, it might feel a bit rude, but then sometimes it's just kind of, I'm not ignoring them, it's just between you and me and we are just speaking about something, so it just happens. [Speaking German with her] is the highlight of my day! (Int3).

Mozart explained that they will simultaneously apologize for the exclusion and stake a claim to their German speaking time, but the default rule is linguistic inclusion, with apologies made in cases where that expectation is not met.

Language to soften socioeconomic divisions

My final example of convivial linguistic practices involves use of language to soften socioeconomic divisions. This occurred most frequently when my middle-class participants were returning customers at various shops and small businesses around the city and interacting with working-class South Asians who worked in these spaces. In the following examples, my participants explicitly acknowledge the act of speaking a language preferred by their interlocutor as a way to reduce power disparities felt in these contact zones.

The first example involves Bob, a European expatriate who has lived and worked in Ras Al Khaimah for several years. He spoke at length about socioeconomic divisions in the city, emphasizing a racially inflected, socioeconomic hierarchy that he felt defined many interactions. He placed himself in the middle of this hierarchy, relatively frugal compared to extravagant European and Arab residents, but also enormously wealthy compared to the poorest South Asian residents, whose salaries he eclipses by five to ten times. Feeling both discomfort and guilt

about these disparities, he told me that he tips well and often tries to pay as much for certain services as he would in Europe, for example paying three to four times the listed price for a haircut to his regular barber. He also attempts to use language to soften these divisions, explicitly choosing to speak in the language of his interlocutor if he can, rather than English or Arabic:

It's not even just about learning Arabic, it's about learning basics in Urdu or Hindi or whatever...I want to make an effort just to be able to exchange pleasantries with people because it is a nice thing to do! Just to be able to when you get out of a taxi, say to the driver, "*Shukria*"...[I've learned] just basics, just numbers, or please, thank you, hello, how are you doing. I've got a little bit of Urdu, Hindi, and Bengali, numbers, Arabic numbers, just to try to make an effort. But that is just because who I am as a person, that you just want to engage people, you just want to not have them viewed as subservient to you almost, you know.

Later in the interview, Bob contrasted himself with other Western expats who "expect English everywhere". As Bob explained, small day-to-day interactions matter. Offering his interlocutors a linguistic respite became both a vehicle through which he managed his own ethical concerns about the racial and socioeconomic hierarchies that underlie all of his interactions in the country and also a way to question or momentarily subvert these disciplinary structures.

The second example involves Jessica once again. While her previous story described the process of discovering the best language for her interlocutor, this example elaborates on what she does with this kind of information when she has it. She told a story about speaking with a baker who she regularly visits because he makes the best cheese sandwiches in town:

We went to Al Nakheel, and have *labneh*, a tasty bakery sandwich. I think the baker is not Indian, he looks maybe Pakistani because he has red hair. They are famous for that.

But we speak in Arabic, not pure Arabic, broken Arabic...It must be mixed with English and Indian words to let him to understand what you are want to do. Some of this broken Arabic must be mixed with other languages, body language or hand language...[I use this language because] I think he knows that we are Arabic and I feel that if we spoke in English [or fluent Arabic], that maybe he will not understand and will make that these ladies are very arrogant. That's it. So, I feel like I don't like to be like this position. I know that all people don't know all language, so we can understand each other with our few words or our few languages. I don't want to let him to feel that he is small. (Int3)

Here, Jessica has at her disposal Arabic (both Egyptian and *Khaleeji*), English and a form of Pidgin Arabic, which for her is an assemblage of truncated multilingual repertoires. Although the choice is not the baker's language either, it is something he would have been more comfortable with and it avoids positioning Jessica as one of those people Bob describes as “expecting” a particular dominant language. Jessica acknowledges both of their linguistic limits and rejects the sense of ethnolinguistic superiority implicit in a more monolingual approach to the interaction. At the same time, Jessica takes on board certain discourses about what constitutes “broken” or “pure” language, an issue I will return to shortly.

To suggest that these small decisions about language choices are not “meaningful” would be to miss some fundamental dimension of how “local liveability” (Amin, 2002, p. 959) is produced through the everyday, habitual pathways followed by individuals living in the same area and interacting together. These contact zones are sites of interlocuter “co-presence” (Pratt, 2008) and thus co-construction, as power asymmetries are negotiated through the minutiae of everyday conversation. As Rampton (2015) suggests, we cannot ignore the structural realities that make Bob and Jessica feel the need to challenge the routinized positioning of their local

shopkeepers as “subservient” or “small”. However, it is equally important to investigate how disciplinary structures are questioned, reinterpreted and subverted through everyday language use. Bob and Jessica are conducted through policy apparatuses that produce them as subjects in positions of power relative to their interlocutors and encourage them to maintain that power through habits of consumption and self-segregation. However, the same habits of consumption that make class distinctions also involve contact zone interactions through which power relations can be incrementally (linguistically) renegotiated and subjects can engage in counter-conduct.

Managing racism and sexism as a form of linguistic work

In providing this discussion of convivial linguistic practices, I do not wish to suggest that these are dominant practices in Ras Al Khaimah. Racism, sexism and other forms of prejudice are pervasive and ongoing in the lives of many of my participants, disproportionately affecting women and non-white, working-class residents. Practices of co-existence often run parallel to and even in direct response to racist or sexist practices. At various points thus far, these issues have emerged in other discussions but I have not discussed them directly. I offer this discussion now as a way to begin thinking about the political economy and social structure within which these convivial linguistic practices are embedded. In this section, I follow authors such as Evans (2013), Jacobson & Smith (2013) and Wingfield (2010) in attending to the experience and management of racism as a form of emotion work. These authors examine the ways that their participants recognize and deal with racism in their daily lives, arguing that the practices they deploy to avoid, respond to or manage racism directed towards them constitutes a form of emotion work. I recognize that racism (and other forms of prejudice) and its effects on Ras Al Khaimah and my participants demand a fuller discussion; however, for the purposes of this dissertation, I must narrow the focus to *linguistic work*, the language practices my participants

described which were deployed as a way to deal with moments of racism. I hesitate to label such interactions as “convivial” because the “labour of living together” (Wise, 2016, p. 482) is entirely one-sided and it seems to me this is the point at which conviviality faces the limits of its analytical value. Nevertheless, I include this discussion here as a starting point from which we can move on to other practices that become gradually more identifiable as “convivial”.

Maria

I have already shared some of Maria’s experiences with racism in Ras Al Khaimah. At work, she described avoiding Tagalog in the lobby and in front of students or their parents so that she was not the target of racial discrimination. In her daily life, she also described deploying English with her sister in shops to limit the effects of racially motivated mistreatment. However, Maria described the racism she experienced in her daily life as “ongoing” and often directed at her through “Mock Tagalog” – analogous to Hill’s (1998) “Mock Spanish”. She described a “switch in how people interact” with her once they find out she is from the Philippines, especially when she is out with friends or at parties and meeting people for the first time:

Even outside work, when they hear someone speaking Tagalog, like overhear someone, or if they perceive you as Filipino, they kind of like, mock the language or say the language to you in a non-friendly way. There was this other time, one of my friends, university friends, was normal with me but then after finding out that I was from the Philippines, she would always like suddenly speak Tagalog in a mocking way in front of me. She would say, "Hey, check out my Filipino accent" and stuff like that and I was like okay, what's that for?...The tone of voice...it's not in a friendly way, like, I know people usually say, “Oh, you are from the Philippines?” and they say "how are you?" in Tagalog, but it's usually in a mocking way, they aren't really asking you how you are. It sounds

like they are making fun of how it's pronounced. But then with this friend, she wasn't actually saying Tagalog words but she was speaking in English with a Filipino accent. It's ongoing. (Int5).

In these examples, Maria is often “misrecognized” as a Western expat because of her fluent English. Only after the national and racial borders are drawn does language become a vehicle for racism. Thus, again we see how acquisition or deployment of shared linguistic resources is not “intrinsically convivial”. However, Maria also treats Tagalog as a vehicle through which she can resist this racism. As described in earlier chapters, she regularly speaks to Filipino staff in Tagalog and says that outside of work, “I don't care, I just speak it anyway” (Int5).

Mozart

Unlike Maria, Mozart did not feel that she was regularly the target of racism in Ras Al Khaimah. However, she attributed this to a few different factors that revealed an ongoing management of her subjectivity in relation to structures of racial and gender-based prejudice. First, she wore hijab in a style that would not generally identify her as Pakistani (this was not her goal, but a by-product of the style she chose). Second, she described using her European nationality at some points to escape from difficult situations. Finally, and most relevant to this discussion, she was an English speaker and explained that Arab and Pakistani men are “careful” once they understand that “she is not part of our society; she is an expat” who speaks English:

When they see I speak English, maybe they think, “Oh, she doesn't understand the way people live here” or “she doesn't have the knowledge.” So, maybe they are more lenient with you...For Arab or Pakistani women, it's like they should know how to be with men and know what their limits are and all of that. So, I think this is what makes a difference. Especially when you can speak English and your English is okay, so, “Oh, okay, she

definitely doesn't know how to deal with Arab men.” (Int5)

Like Maria, her use of English served to stem a lot of racism before it started. She illustrated this with a story of careful management of both her language and subjectivity to resolve a problem she had with a police officer. She had been driving to work with the windows down when she was pulled over by a police officer:

So, I parked the car, and he came out. I obviously was wearing the hijab and I think he assumed I am Arabic speaking, so he spoke Arabic. I said, “Sorry, I don't understand Arabic” and he asked me, “Did you throw out the tissue?” I said no. He said, “But you did, I saw your hand.” I said, “I don't do this because this is against my principles. If it happened, it must have been that, through the wind, it kind of got blown away but I am pretty sure it didn't because...there was nothing on the floor.” Then, “No you did!” And he asked for the license, so I gave him the license [with my EU nationality] and then his tone changed immediately. He was far more polite and he said, “Okay, be honest did you do that?” and I said, “No!” I said, “Okay, I don't have time for this, if you want to fine me, fine me, I have a class and I really need to go!” And then that was it, he let me go, and I thought why was he doing this to me? I think he was just trying to, realizing that this was a woman, and this is most probably an Egyptian or Iranian or Lebanese woman, and I can just you know do whatever I want. (Int4)

When I asked her why she did not respond in Arabic, since she could have made some basic greetings (as I might have done in that situation, as a white male hoping to get on a police officer's good side), she explained:

Well, I do try sometimes [to speak Arabic], but I wanted to make clear that there is no misunderstanding about...how much Arabic do I know...People's attitude changes with

language. Because I could speak English and with the nationality, when they see, “Okay, these are women who come from a different part of the world, I can't just do whatever I want.” So, I think that kind of made him understand that okay, you need to stop, you've got certain limitations, you might be a police officer but you might not always be right and you cannot just impose something on me – because he was trying to force this statement onto me that I threw that tissue paper out of the window...I think if it was someone who was Arabic-speaking, he might have gotten her [to pay a fine]. (Int4)

Mozart's management of her projected language repertoire, combined with her EU citizenship, constructed a powerful enough subject position for her to dismiss a police officer.

For Maria and Mozart, strategic deployment of language resources (or deliberate avoidance of others) serves to project a particular subjectivity relative to their prejudiced interlocutors. It is this ongoing “work” of subjectivity management through language practices that allows them to control to some degree the effects of racism and sexism on their daily lives. However, it is also worth noting that an appeal to English or some form of Western identity draws on other forms prejudice that simply operate at a different scale. That is to say, it repositions them in a place of relative power because of a pre-existing privilege provided to Western English-speaking “expats” in the UAE, which is in turn embedded in its own set of racist structures. I say this not in criticism of these women, of course. It is simply to emphasize that their manoeuvres are not an escape from power relations, merely a realignment of power within a specific interaction. Like Bob and Jessica's accounts of their interactions with shopkeepers, Maria and Mozart's stories highlight the importance of contact zones as sites in which power relations can be contested and renegotiated, in part through language choices. Contact zones are all the more important to this process because in many cases, interlocutors in

these sites are physically separated from each other except for these brief moments of contact.

Jon and Mike

For residents with less access to the linguistic or social capital from which to construct subject positions directly opposing the racism directed at them, linguistic work can still help evade or mitigate its effects. Jon and Mike, for example, described (in the previous chapter) completely avoiding social contact and mostly just spoke to each other. As working-class male residents, their social distance from most of the population is so great that no convivial practices can exist. This is a domain of both active and passive silence, where individuals explicitly avoid contact with other categories or classes of individuals and also fall into routines of such avoidance. There is no time or opportunity for convivial negotiation, for renegotiating ethnolinguistic or socioeconomic divisions. They do not have time or money for socializing and if they do, other barriers limit the scope of any social activity.

Jon and Mike also described other linguistic strategies they had for dealing with racism at work. They reported customers at the gas station often shouting at them for relatively inconsequential issues that were generally beyond their control. Though some of this racially inflected abuse also came from other non-Emirati foreign residents, they explained that many of these disputes would be framed by customers as a result of them being foreigners who could not speak Arabic. They told me that Emiratis would sometimes tell them, “You are in an Arabic country; you should learn Arabic.” Though they were happy to try to serve friendly customers in Arabic if they could, they also explained that customers would often be very rude, shouting and speaking Arabic quickly, making no effort to meet them halfway. In these situations, Jon and Mike said they would revert completely to English and refuse to serve the customer unless they spoke in English, telling them they did not know what they wanted. This was a useful strategy

for a few reasons. First, they had no obligation to speak Arabic under company policy and could not be blamed for not understanding what the customer wanted. Second, if the angry customer proceeded in English, they could be sure that they understood and would avoid any problems that resulted from completing an order incorrectly. Finally, it forced the customer to communicate on their terms. They told me that though they would not say this directly to a customer, they felt that “the world is changing, everyone speaks English. [We don’t need to learn Arabic;] you have to learn English, not only in the UAE, everyone should learn English.” Shifting the conversation to English was a way of putting themselves on more equal footing in global linguistic terms as a pre-condition to continuing to provide service. If a customer continued to resist this shift to English, Mike laughed, saying that he would speak back in Kikuyu to try to get across the point that if neither party makes an effort to communicate with each other, they cannot proceed.

As I suggested in the beginning, this linguistic work is not necessarily convivial given that it is more or less a one-sided endeavour; however, Mike seems to open up the convivial possibilities of linguistic work that resists racial discrimination as he describes trying to teach his customers what it means to communicate effectively across ethnolinguistic borders.

Convivial linguistic labour and work in the private sector

In addition to dealing with racism through linguistic work, my participants also described the linguistic labour involved in their jobs as well as linguistic work that went beyond what they were directly paid to do. Much of the paid labour described does not fall into what is traditionally thought of as linguistic labour (call centres for example) but is closer to emotional labour via language. That is to say, many of the working-class residents I spoke to in the service sector were not being paid directly for language skills (except perhaps English to some extent), but rather for their ability to accommodate a multilingual customer base effectively. The term

“language accommodation” is used here in the sense that Callahan (2006, p. 30) describes as negotiated language choice in “asymmetrical power dynamic in worker-customer interactions.” Language becomes another tool by which difficult customers can be pacified but, in the process, language use is also strictly monitored and regulated, placing further burden on staff. Language practices that move beyond explicitly paid labour were also described by my participants as additional responsibilities that maintain basic workplace operations. However, it is important to note that it is impossible to completely disentangle these forms of convivial linguistic work (as I have interpreted them) and explicitly paid labour in the workplace. Even in situations where linguistic practices go beyond explicitly stated paid responsibilities, my participants are not in a position to refuse. Their jobs depend partly on acceptance of ongoing, unpaid linguistic work.

Paid inclusivity

The convivial practice of “linguistic inclusivity” that I outlined earlier also takes on less benign forms in everyday life, especially for individuals working in the low-paid service industry in Ras Al Khaimah. As I highlighted in my discussion of mall space in the previous chapter, a number of people described the care they take in not speaking a language that nearby customers might not understand. Such practices are a combination of institutional policy and individuals’ concern for their jobs and status in the country. I discussed Dimple’s management of her fast food restaurant staff’s language practices to ensure that customers did not feel excluded from the language space of the restaurant. While ostensibly “convivial” – indeed, Dimple herself emphasized this point as she empathized with a customer who did not understand what her staff were laughing about – it is also partly driven by the businesses that service staff work for. Such linguistic labour is paid for to ensure customer satisfaction but is also produced as much out of a combination of racism and fear of repercussions than any particular desire for respectful or

meaningful interactions. The burden of the convivial labour is once again one-sided, though the staff are at least monetarily compensated for keeping customers happy. As seen through the story of Michelle avoiding Tagalog in her free time, these practices also continue as unpaid work once the staff leave their posts and interact in society. They stick to “safe” languages such as English to ensure that they do not cause any trouble for themselves or their working compatriots.

Collectively, these experiences also demonstrate the deeply embedded racialization of job categories in the country and the linguistic expectations tied to them. For Dimple and Michelle, Tagalog is monitored and controlled by the companies they work at and visit in their daily lives. They themselves also adopt internal mechanisms of language management to ensure that they present to the public as safe and accommodating members of society. Thus, they engage in both “linguistic labour” and “linguistic work” that is done under the banner of the convivial practice of inclusivity but bears more resemblance to the linguistic strategies of avoiding or mitigating racial discrimination that were described in the previous section.

Maintaining the work environment through unpaid linguistic work

A number of my working-class participants also described extensive responsibilities for unpaid linguistic work that functioned to maintain company operations. Earlier in this chapter, I discussed Ken’s language practices that contributed both to his own wellbeing and to the wellbeing of his colleagues. I read this as a form of convivial linguistic work because it was negotiated between his co-workers and he took it at least partly as an ethical responsibility. However, it is also important to emphasize that Ken’s work is essential for company operations. He was unofficially delegated as an interpreter because there was no other way the managers could communicate with their staff without one. Furthermore, if he refused to accept these responsibilities, his job would likely be threatened, thus pushing these practices into the realm of

linguistic labour as well.

A related set of responsibilities for service staff is in accommodating the multilingual repertoires of customers. Jon and Mike explain that they are happy to serve people who are willing to negotiate with them in Arabic. This linguistic work is simultaneously convivial and an essential component to the company's operations. Unpaid linguistic work that holds companies together is commonplace in Ras Al Khaimah and a more pessimistic reading would be to understand it as a mechanism of neoliberalism. This interpretation positions forms of unpaid work as an ever-expanding set of "responsibilities" that are expected of employees – *de facto* labour. However, I think such a reading still misses some of the ethical aspects of these practices which do not have their origins (wholly) in neoliberal discourse.

Another dimension of this convivial linguistic work is the temporary enlisting of non-company staff – benevolent interpreters – in unpaid linguistic work. I have provided a few examples of staff and other customers helping in this way; however, I also encountered examples of more routinized support from individuals who had no other ties to the company involved. One example was provided by Jessica when discussing her work as a medical officer for a company. She said that speaking Arabic and English allows her to communicate with most people who come in for treatment. However, sometimes she will receive South Asian staff members who need something and she cannot communicate with them well enough to treat their ailments. Fortunately, she told me, there is an Indian woman who works in a day care next door and is able to speak the language of this subset of employees that Jessica struggles with. Jessica explained that they are friends and she is happy to help, so whenever she has communication trouble, she will call on this woman to assist her. Again, this is unpaid linguistic work that supports the basic operations of a company, but it also takes on convivial and/or ethical dimensions. This woman is

simultaneously coming to help a friend (maintaining a relationship across ethnolinguistic lines) and helping working-class residents communicate their needs to their employer.

Convivial linguistic work by middle-class residents

At the start of this chapter, I explored five different types of convivial linguistic practices. I suggested that studying specific practices rather than trying to define convivial results, could illuminate how language is deployed to mediate difference, conflict or division in the city. These practices are often regular linguistic choices made by individuals, even as these choices are embedded within larger sets of divisive discourses or structural inequalities. Although these practices cross socioeconomic borders, I would suggest that they are largely practices of middle-class residents. The convivial linguistic work done by my working-class participants is very difficult to disentangle completely from the responsibilities that come with their paid work. They have little time or opportunity for convivial negotiation, for softening ethnolinguistic or socioeconomic divisions, outside of their working hours. On the other hand, my middle-class participants are more mobile and less constrained by mechanisms of segregation. This then produces a kind of one-way conviviality, where privileged groups in positions of relative social, cultural or economic power can “reach down” convivially as Bob and Jessica try to, but their interlocutors are not necessarily in a position to “reach up”. This echoes Ashby’s (2004) claim that conviviality is imposed by the majority on the minority, or alternately (given the unique demographics of the UAE), by those in relative positions of power on those who are not.

Some of the examples provided here would support this claim, particularly Bob and Jessica’s interactions. Bob takes it upon himself to attempt to reduce some of the negative effects that socioeconomic disparities have on his day-to-day interactions with foreign residents in less privileged positions. However, such convivial acts are produced in response to powerful

systemic divisions; they are not the normal pathway that linguistic interactions between European expatriates and South Indian service staff follow. Furthermore, the unidirectionality of these acts raises questions about their impact, that perhaps it is yet another form of conviviality for the powerful, assuaging guilt and thus making the status quo more “liveable” for particular groups at the expense of others. Likewise, the respectful Shibboleths, though deployed as convivial strategies, also reinforce in-group and out-group ethnolinguistic divisions in the city. The act of constantly looking for tools and strategies with which to categorize interlocutors quickly and efficiently reproduces and sediments “known” categories and divisions over time, potentially limiting the scope and scale of future cross-border interactions. Gulf Pidgin Arabic is also invoked ambivalently here. For Jessica, its deployment serves as a convivial act that she feels the baker will appreciate. At the same time, she describes it as “broken” or “not pure”, reinforcing the low social and cultural value ascribed to it. Lack of pureness carries a racialized inflection in that it is most often the “Indian words” that are highlighted as problematic, once again relegating South Asian linguistic repertoires, and the individuals that use them, as secondary to “pure” languages like Arabic (see Cook, 2014 for more on this issue). Other examples, however, seem to be more balanced linguistic negotiations. Bradley’s integration into a South Indian group of friends, in part through an investment in his own Malayalam repertoire, serves as an example of “meaningful contact”. Likewise, Mozart navigates several different ethnolinguistic social groups while both providing and benefiting from convivial linguistic work.

Conclusion

Taken together, I believe the set of examples discussed here lends support to Wise and Noble’s (2016) advocacy of the concept of conviviality as a useful entry point to understanding everyday “lived negotiation”. Neither a focus on “happy togetherness” nor on reproduction of

power relations will provide an analysis that draws out the complexity of everyday negotiation of difference. My participants have practical concerns in their daily lives that heavily impact their language choices, but these do not necessarily trump what they feel to be their ethical obligations to interlocutors. At the same time, these perceived ethical obligations are themselves embedded within structured inequalities and societal divisions. Attention to conviviality means attention to the ambivalence of everyday interactions and an analysis of language choices provides an important component of this discussion. It is through these small, but often routine, interactions that power relations are negotiated and difference is managed in and between communities.

Chapter 11: Closing discussion and conclusions

Introduction

At the outset of this dissertation, I began with two research questions. I was interested in how language policies were negotiated and how they shaped language practices in Ras Al Khaimah. To answer these questions, I had to cover a great deal of theoretical ground. This involved understanding how my participants were made subjects within policy (official and otherwise), how they managed themselves within policy and how they produced policy of their own. In addition to formal language policy, this involved explorations of other forms of policy that had *de facto* language policy effects. In chapters 5 and 7, I examined language policy texts and traced the ways my participants formulated language learner, teacher, manager and user subjectivities within these policy frameworks. Chapter 8 explored neoliberal economic belonging and its language policy implications. Chapter 9 discussed disciplinary mechanisms of segregation and self-regulation which produced language policy in specific spaces in Ras Al Khaimah. Finally, in chapter 10, I explored segregated space and the crossing of language borders, touching on how individuals understood themselves as ethical subjects in contact zones. Regular interviews with my informants, describing their routines and the spaces they inhabited, allowed for investigation of how policy shapes and is shaped by the people through which it flows. Language policy is rarely just about language. My participants' accounts also opened up discussions about racism, segregation (both spatial and discursive), and ethical self-management. I have not yet fully explored the implications of many of these issues for language policy in the UAE or as a field of research more generally. Thus, in this section, I take up some of these discussions in more detail.

Language policy subjectivities

I start with a summary of the language policy subjectivities my participants revealed and how they fit together in an understanding of language policy in Ras Al Khaimah as a whole. This requires a return to the concepts of *governmentality* and *technologies of the self*. As I have demonstrated over the previous six chapters, my participants were both constituted as particular kinds of foreign resident subjects within multiple sets of policy and also were active in managing those policy-ed subjectivities as they strove towards specific language goals or sought to produce themselves as ethical subjects. In this section, I will revisit these policy apparatuses to discuss the mechanisms of subject constitution and self-maintenance that my participants engaged with.

Language policy: Arabic

Since formal language policy in the UAE, both in government and other institutions, is primarily designed for Arabic or English goals, chapter 7 focused mainly on these two languages, describing subjectivities constructed or made available by the policies described in chapter 5. As I explained in these two chapters, foreign residents are rarely addressed directly in formal policy texts produced by the government and working-class residents are almost completely ignored. Nevertheless, these language policy apparatuses, in addition to those formulated by institutions such as the University of Cambridge, provided ample opportunity for a number of types of foreign resident subjectivities to be taken up within language policy.

Arabic language policy provided some space within which middle-class foreign residents could claim subjectivities as foreign language learners. There are an increasing number of private language centres in the country offering courses and the children of foreign residents are now required to take Arabic in school. However, responsibility for Arabic acquisition is pushed onto these individuals, who are expected to pay for courses themselves and choose schools that offer

good quality Arabic courses to their children (which is unlikely to be a priority for most parents). Furthermore, all of my non-Arabic-speaking participants felt a fundamental incompatibility of their responsabilized language learner subjectivities and their positioning as Arabic language users in society. Almost no one I spoke to actually worked in Arabic and very few people found that they needed it at all in their daily lives. Indeed, most found that making opportunities for themselves to practice Arabic was a lot more trouble than it was worth. This is partly a result of mechanisms of segregation that divide the population along socioeconomic and ethnolinguistic lines as well as the simple fact that the density of Arabic speakers in the UAE, and Ras Al Khaimah in particular, has steadily declined in the last two to three decades. Even foreign resident Arabic speakers struggled to find space beyond their homes and close friends where Arabic was essential and reported investing a great deal more time in English than Arabic.

One interesting revelation from the interviews with my non-Arabic-speaking participants was that most of them conceived of Arabic acquisition as their responsibility, at least initially; however, they did so for different reasons. Many, such as Bradley and other business managers or owners, felt that Arabic was a useful skill for some domains, such as dealing with government agencies or making business connections with Emiratis. As such, they took up Arabic language skills as a technology of the self in the way that Urciuoli (2008, p. 215) conceives of it: “soft skills...ways to fashion subjectivity compatible with dominant practices, institutions, and beliefs.” They took it upon themselves to learn Arabic as a form of self-improvement that made them and their businesses more competitive. This is a confluence of formal Arabic policy (maintaining the status of Arabic for government and Emiratis) and neoliberal economic policy (fostering competitive, entrepreneurial subjects). However, other participants, such as Maria, Mozart and Anne, felt that learning Arabic was more of an ethical responsibility. That is to say,

they reported feeling guilty or embarrassed about not knowing more Arabic despite being long-term residents. These feelings emerge from discourses of the UAE and Emiratis as “hosts” and middle-class foreign residents as “guests”. Guests show respect for their hosts by learning and using their language. At various points during their tenures in Ras Al Khaimah, they had acted on these feelings in attempts to resolve this issue by paying for courses or making conscious efforts to study and practice. Over time, as their subjectivities as Arabic language users and Arabic language learners developed in incompatible ways, they felt more and more frustrated with the conflicting subject positions in which they had been placed – both responsible for Arabic acquisition and segregated from other Arabic speakers.

Both of these approaches to Arabic – as soft skills and as ethical obligation – highlight the ways that individuals work with and against (but always within) language policy as they exercise their agency. In the case of the business owners, they follow the Urciuoli (2008) model of self-motivated language learning as a form of government at a distance. Language learning becomes a technology of the self which follows the policy flow, with the government aiming to foster Arabic use in specific domains. However, with my other participants, though they initially followed the responsabilizing government discourse that encourages self-motivated language learning, they later came to reject that framing. Though still expressing some feelings of embarrassment or guilt, after many years in the UAE living with incompatible Arabic learner and user subjectivities, they had largely given up on learning Arabic and were directly critical of the conflicting positions in which that had be placed. By actively choosing to no longer study Arabic or make special efforts to practice, though still framed within policy, they made space for themselves as non-Arabic-speaking long-term residents. This discussion highlights other ways of thinking about technologies of the self in language policy research. First, policy subjects often

look for space in which to be “conducted differently” (Davidson, 2011, p. 27) and second, this “counter-conduct” is often framed in ethical terms rather than economic ones.

Language policy: English

English language policy offered a wider range of subjectivities for my middle-class participants. Many of these follow conventional forms with foreign residents taking up positions as English teachers, managers, English policy advocates, language experts, language learners and test takers. However, the precise pathways to these subjectivities are laced with issues of racism and socioeconomic inequality which produce these subjectivities in less conventional shapes.

Individuals with less proficient English and those who were more likely to be targets of racism had less space to work towards being “conducted differently” within English language policy. John and Jessica, for example, followed well-trodden paths of English learners, studying for standardized English tests (IELTS) in the hope of entering higher education or immigration processes. For John, this was tied to a sense of neoliberal belonging as he strove to position himself competitively in both the Emirati and global economies. Jessica also readily adopted discourses of English as an essential global language for her and her children. This position of English was never questioned even as exposure to English media appeared to conflict with her “Islamic culture”. Likewise, Malak and Hope followed a similar path as they studied English to take the IELTS to keep their jobs. However, added to that was their position as English policy advocates relative to their mainly Emirati students. Even as Malak challenged the appropriacy of English language policy in the school system, she nevertheless found no space to act on these concerns except by venting in her interviews with me. She was monitored and corralled in disciplinary apparatuses which made her responsible for her self-directed English language study but cut off from opportunities for other types of ethical engagements with policy. For teachers at

RAK English School, despite being framed in deliberately non-racialized terms by the CELTA program, racism nevertheless played a role in the production of teacher subjectivities. This made Mozart feel more comfortable working on her subjectivity as a non-native English teacher while Maria actively avoided drawing attention to her Filipino-ness.

However, for some highly racialized subjects in Ras Al Khaimah, English policy has also opened up opportunities for counter-conduct. This was most apparent in the case of Alexa, the Filipino domestic worker become English teacher. English language policy targeting Emiratis has created significant demand for live-in domestic workers like Alexa who can speak English. However, this production of Alexa as an English teacher also opens up space for her to reshape her subjectivity as a domestic worker. She drew on this position to limit the worst possibilities for abuse by threatening to leave in situations of conflict over how she should be “conducted” by the family she worked for. In this case, her linguistic knowledge was a technology of the self through which she could (re)produce herself as an indispensable English expert: “They must be follow for me. They must learn from me English.” For other racialized, working-class residents, English also served as an escape mechanism through which they could (re)frame their relationship to the UAE. Instead of struggling on as a working-class migrant worker within the multitude of disciplinary apparatuses of the country, knowledge of English became a technology of the self by which Suraj could become an in-demand, mobile, skilled worker. In this reframing, the UAE competes against other countries for his services rather than the other way around. For Suraj and Alexa, international, national and corporate policy that produces an increasing demand for English both in the UAE and abroad opens up subject positions with opportunities to manoeuvre against local disciplinary apparatuses while still acting within other policy frames.

For foreign residents who are more proficient in English and less likely to be targets of

racism, further space for self-management in English language policy opens up. For example, while Anne's practices are still monitored and standardized by CELTA, she has been free to construct her own English policy subjectivity (within Cambridge standards) in the UAE. This meant that she was able to open a school modelled on the International House institutions that she enjoyed working for when she was younger. She has been able to foster the language policy of her school to reflect her own values and orientations towards language and language teaching. While she has the qualifications to back up her policy decisions, she is also white and recognized as a "native speaker" of English, meaning that these decisions are less likely to be questioned. The neoliberal belonging she is offered as a business owner and her privileged positions as a white English expert is balanced against a need to define herself and her business in ethical terms. Her school competes with other schools but it does so by providing essential "social services" currently lacking in the public education system and by treating their students ethically. These opportunities for the management of her ethical self within English language policy are open to her as a white, middle-class foreign resident in ways that they are not for others.

Neoliberal subjectivity and language policy

Another form of language policy subjectivity that I explored is built around the neoliberal economic belonging available to middle-class foreign residents through economic and migration policy. Authors examining neoliberalism and language have often focused on English as the language that has come to dominate as a global language of capitalism (e.g. Holborow, 2007; 2015; Luke, Luke & Graham, 2007; Phillipson, 1992; 2008; Piller & Cho, 2013). However, some authors have also increasingly begun to investigate the ways that other languages are adopted and commodified in the name of neoliberal discourses (Flores, 2013; Kubota; 2014; Sharma & Phyak, 2017). I have argued that taking the constitution of neoliberal subjectivities as the starting

point opens up the implications of these subjectivities for language practices, which include but are not limited to processes of language commodification. This also avoids an assumption of English as the natural neoliberal language of global capitalism. A neoliberal drive for maximum (linguistic) flexibility and competitiveness at an individual level can often overshadow the privileging of English in specific interactions and contexts. This is not to say that attention to English is unimportant, but it should not be mistaken as a primary target of neoliberal mechanisms in all contexts.

My middle-class participants generally supported Vora's (2013) detailed exploration of neoliberal economic belonging. That said, different individuals took up various aspects of this positioning and it was not the only way they defined themselves in the UAE. At minimum, it involved a construction of the self as a non-political, economic agent, saving money for specific goals. For those like Bradley, neoliberal subjectivity seemed to be their primary way of defining belonging to the UAE. I would suggest that we can trace three general forms of neoliberal belonging in the stories told by my participants, each with its own set of language implications.

First, there are those like Bradley, Jaza and Khalid, who are middle-class residents that embrace their subjectivities of competition and entrepreneurialism in the UAE's "free" labour market. These residents are most closely aligned to Vora's (2013) understanding of neoliberal economic belonging. They work in free zones, own businesses and are constantly on the lookout for new opportunities. They are deeply embedded in the neoliberal economic initiatives in the country even though, at an individual level, they may not necessarily be committed to the UAE for more than a few years. Interestingly, despite a high engagement with neoliberal discourses, I found perhaps the lowest commitment to English in these participants. They suggested that other languages were often more important to their locally oriented ventures, with Hindi/Urdu coming

out as *the* essential language; however, more generally, they described linguistic flexibility as a key to success. Bradley explained the numerous ways that his flexible approach to language made work more efficient, opened up business opportunities and made him and his company more competitive. In short, multilingual knowledge and ongoing language acquisition served as technologies of the self for managing his neoliberal place in the UAE. This lends support to the arguments of Flores (2013), Kubota (2014) and Sharma and Phyak (2017) who suggest that critiques of neoliberalism should consider cautiously how flexible multi/plurilingualism become another tool in producing the flexible, entrepreneurial, competitive self.

A second form of neoliberal belonging was articulated by those on the edges of the middle class. These people were working-class residents such as Suraj, Jon and Mike, who engaged with neoliberal discourses of competition and entrepreneurialism but did not have as stable a claim to belonging in the UAE as the middle-class residents discussed above. Instead they positioned themselves as internationally rather than nationally flexible, willing to move to another country if the right opportunity presented itself to allow them to continue progressing towards a “solid middle class life” (Kanna, 2012, p. 158). This middle-class striving as internationally mobile subjects offered a form of escape from the disciplinary apparatuses for working-class residents in the UAE. In a form of counter-conduct, they appropriated neoliberal discourses in ways that diverged from their positioning in institutional policy in the UAE. Their production of themselves as internationally oriented (rather than locally oriented) entrepreneurs of the self made knowledge and acquisition of English more important technologies of the self. Other languages could be picked up for specific labour markets but English was the key to international mobility and it was this mobility that was seen as the path out of the working class.

Finally, there are long-term residents who see themselves as such but also recognize that

they cannot claim permanent belonging – individuals like Anne, Maria and Mozart. For these residents, neoliberal belonging is merely accepted rather than embraced and is entangled with other forms of belonging. At the same time that they told stories of self-reliance, flexibility and investment in themselves, they also described their peer groups, family commitments and long-term personal investment in Ras Al Khaimah and the UAE. In their stories, these other types of belonging were often undercut by statements of non-permanence. For these residents, language commitments were not necessarily based on economic goals. Maria, Mozart and Anne were all at one point invested in learning Arabic as a matter of personal responsibility or respect for the UAE. However, these ambitions were frustrated by mechanisms of segregation and a lack of reciprocal investment in them. When confronted by this asymmetric investment, they returned to the fact that their legal status in the country is tied to their employment. In spite of other forms of belonging they might feel, they were ultimately in the UAE to work – an economic transaction, labour for money. Rather than producing a striving for any specific language acquisition or an explicit commodification of language, this flavour of neoliberal subjectivity seemed to create distance from language, namely Arabic. It is also possible that this detachment of neoliberal subjectivity from language was because these were fluent speakers of English who were working at an English language school. Thus, acquisition of other languages did not make them more competitive in their labour market and there was no need to strive for socioeconomic status through English. Nevertheless, I believe that the narratives from these long-term residents reveal complex relationships between economic and social belonging in the UAE, which in turn have implications for how they view themselves as language users. This is especially true of individuals like Maria (and myself) who grew up in the UAE and feel neither fully comfortable in the UAE nor in our “home” countries. The forms of belonging that foster an investment in

other languages in the country – namely Arabic but Maria also mentioned Hindi – are constantly undercut by the reproduction of (English-speaking) economic subjectivities that work to ethnolinguistically and socioeconomically segregate the population.

Subjectivities in disciplined, spatialized language policy

Both the government and the private sector in the UAE deploy extensive networks of disciplinary apparatuses in the management of the working-class foreign resident population. The private sector segregates the working-class population directly and indirectly along ethnolinguistic and socioeconomic lines. The government indirectly supports this through the *kafala* system and directly maintains segregation through urban planning policies that limit integration and mobility as well as security apparatuses that monitor and enforce mechanisms of segregation. These mechanisms in turn produce what I have referred to as spatialized language policies, involving the production of *de facto* language policy and language policy subjectivities in particular spaces.

For most of the working-class residents I spoke to, their subjectivities as language users were primarily defined by their working and living conditions, which themselves were primarily a product of private sector policies around hiring and migration. At one end of the mobility scale, there are residents who more or less live and work in one small neighbourhood. Though they may still deploy multilingual repertoires at work, they generally live, work and socialize (in their limited free time) with other people of the same ethnolinguistic background. If they have free time, borders are established through their lack of mobility and their general avoidance of public, middle-class space. Linguistic knowledge and language acquisition were presented less as technologies of the self and more as practical necessities to cope in the spaces they found themselves. Even the language practices that could be characterized as convivial, such as those

shared by Ken on the construction site, were embedded within the practical necessities of working life. In comparison to my middle-class participants, these individuals had much less time or space to negotiate the production of their subjectivities through language practices.

For those that worked in the service sector and dealt frequently with the middle-class public, language user subjectivities were still very much defined by their work spaces. Even though middle-class commercial space is ostensibly linguistically diverse, language accommodation dominated the practices and subjectivities of the people employed there. If a customer wants to speak English, you speak English; if a customer wants to speak Arabic, you accommodate them as best you can. However, this accommodation is also limited by socioeconomic and ethnolinguistic considerations. Tagalog and other languages can be accommodated as long as no one else is listening to take offence. The more precarious your employment status, the more cautious you should be with this rule. This is linguistic flexibility not as described by my middle-class residents – a kind of investment in the self. Rather, it is linguistic flexibility imposed from above and with certain limits, a hierarchical flexibility that privileges English and to a lesser extent Arabic. Some of the people I spoke to found space for counter-conduct, constructing themselves as flexible subjects of the *global* economy, striving for the middle class. They were able to partly redefine themselves relative to the disciplinary apparatuses that they felt limited their long-term goals. However, others did not seem to feel they had much space beyond discourses of language accommodation. Like the residents of the South Indian Market area, mall space employees also often described narrow work-home routines in which they accommodated customers at work and socialized in their native language with their compatriot roommates at home. Their plan was to maintain this routine, stay out of trouble and save money until they could go back to their home countries to see their families.

For my middle-class participants, crossing ethnolinguistic and socioeconomic borders was a matter of choice and such choices were infused with ethical concerns. These residents have the mobility, free time and socioeconomic stability which allows them to engage in convivial linguistic work around the city. Decisions to assist someone having communication trouble, negotiate the right language to use for maximum inclusivity, or deploy specific language resources to ameliorate power disparities all serve as technologies of the self that do ethical work for those that deploy them. This is not a cynical statement suggesting that my participants do these things simply to alleviate the guilt of living in an unequal society – my participants often engaged in this work in the name of “meaningful” interaction (Valentine, 2008) and with genuine respect for their interlocutors. Rather, it demonstrates the fact that technologies of the self and disciplinary apparatuses interact in uneven ways across society. More “disciplined” individuals are not less agentive but have less room in which to flex that agency or engage in counter-conduct. In turn, there is less space to make language choices beyond the disciplinary mechanisms that shape their everyday lives. Middle-class residents who are encouraged to take up forms of neoliberal belonging, to act “freely” in particular ways, then also find themselves with more space in which to define their language practices differently, at times in ethical terms.

Language policy in the UAE

What, then, does this project tell us about policy in the UAE as a whole? I answer this question by focusing on issues of race, space and power that have been omnipresent in this dissertation but not fully explored directly. The limited language policy research conducted in the UAE has mainly focused on the Emirati population. While this project has not attended to the experiences of this demographic, I would nevertheless like to start by making a contribution to this body of work. Much recent research has suggested that Emirati residents in the UAE have

felt a greater need for English in their daily lives and that English is gradually displacing Arabic as a *lingua franca* in many domains of Emirati life in the UAE (e.g. Boyle, 2011; Findlow, 2006; Kennetz & Carroll, 2018; Randall & Samimi, 2010; van den Hoven & Carroll, 2017). However, I would argue that this is at least partly a reflection of the spaces Emiratis increasingly inhabit rather than merely a result of an empirical language shift (though this is also certainly a major factor). That is to say, Emiratis are increasingly frequenting Anglocentric, middle-class spaces such as shopping malls and consuming products and services that are internationally rather than locally oriented. Anne, for example, noted that ten or more years ago, there were regular Emiratis at the small vegetable shop she described, but she rarely sees them there anymore. Before the arrival of malls and European hypermarkets to Ras Al Khaimah, the city's residents, including Emiratis, relied more heavily on smaller South Asian-run grocery stores such as the one described by Anne. These spaces are much more oriented to the local community and the staff had, by necessity, greater Arabic proficiency than what is offered by large shopping malls today. Indeed, many of the older South Asian residents I spoke to, who had lived in Ras Al Khaimah for decades, claimed to be fluent in Arabic, simply because they had to be 25 years ago. As middle-class services have become clustered in spaces such as shopping malls, English has increasingly dominated as the language of provision of these services. Ras Al Khaimah is perhaps an important location to examine this phenomenon more fully because demographic data as well as the anecdotal evidence provided by my participants would suggest that there has been a major demographic shift in the city in the past two and a half decades. Dubai has received much more attention but the comparable demographic changes that occurred there are much more distant history, while Ras Al Khaimah's transition to a Dubai-like state is still ongoing.

More importantly, this project contributes a fuller picture of how different dimensions of

language policy in the UAE can be pieced together around the more extensive work done with the Emirati population. By focusing on foreign residents, I have traced major policy apparatuses that have direct and indirect effects on language practices. What is perhaps most apparent when beginning to look at language policy in the UAE is the notable absence of references to foreign residents in language policy texts despite the demographic dominance of the foreign resident population. These texts are formal language policy that targets just 10% of the population. That said, some of my middle-class participants did seem to make space for themselves within this formal policy even though there was more space for English subjectivities than for Arabic ones. Instead of formal language policy, what governs the language practices of foreign residents are economic and social policies mainly produced in the private sector. Public policy allows the private sector to operate with a great deal of policy freedom in this regard. As a result, the *de facto* language policy that emerges is often characterized by the laissez-faire economic policy that produces it. However, this seemed to produce much more linguistic complexity than accounts of *lingua franca* English in the UAE suggest. English is instead constructed as one of many linguistic resources to draw on for a maximally flexible and competitive subject. Various types of private sector social policies also produce *de facto* language policy. This occurs through the mechanisms of segregation that produce different policy-ed spaces which are engaged with (or avoided) differently by different socioeconomic and ethnolinguistic groups. Finally, contact zones contain moments of crossing socioeconomic and ethnolinguistic boundaries. These are managed by *de facto* language policy that has emerged to govern the convivial linguistic labour/work required to make such crossings possible. For working-class residents, this generally takes the form of language accommodation that is imposed by corporate policy, racism or both at the same time. For middle-class residents, this work takes on a more clearly defined ethical

dimension as they try to manage the inequality and prejudice they see and experience in their everyday lives.

Central to this discussion is the production of racialized, socioeconomically-segregated spaces and the multi-scalar policies that populate them. By focusing on the production of space and scale, we can begin to pick apart the ways that this process is entangled with language policy and practices. How an interaction context is produced or imagined has implications for how language policy is tied to that space. This is something that is not often attended to in language policy research but its value is made apparent in the context of the UAE, where spaces are more visibly linked to race and language and where their boundaries are more vigilantly policed.

The issue of space and scale has been present throughout these chapters, but has not been discussed directly in relation to the experiences of my participants. Throughout this project, I have tried to avoid resorting to discussions of larger- or smaller-scaled policies and instead focused on specific spaces and the language policies produced by or for them. I have done this because my participants' experiences frequently problematized conventional models of hierarchical scale that trace policy from "global" to "national" to "local". First, it often became difficult to disentangle the effects of policies operating at different scales. Each has different implications (or lack thereof) for different individuals and patterns emerging across different socioeconomic or ethnolinguistic groups may not be obvious to casual observers. This is partly important because my participants often engaged with policy at different scales in different ways and what might be seen as important policy for one group of people can be largely irrelevant to another group regardless of its scalar orientation. For example, while I found that language policy emanating from the University of Cambridge and its subsidiary organizations – an ostensibly "large-scale" language policy apparatus operating at a global scale – was extremely

powerful for most of my middle-class participants, it was largely irrelevant to my working-class participants. Different sets of language policy at different scales open up different possible subjectivities for different individuals, all of which is entangled with issues of class and race. Jessica, for example, takes on English learner, user and manager subjectivities within different sets of policy at different scales. As a prospective immigrant to Canada, she engages with Cambridge policies and Canadian national language policies. As a mother of two children in school in the UAE, she takes on a language management subjectivity as she attempts to simultaneously provide adequate English language learning opportunities for her children and align their experiences with English culture with what she understands to be Islamic values. As a language user, she is engaged with the above policies as well as the everyday practical realities of living and working in the UAE, itself a tangled web of national, private sector and spatialized language policies. This involves complex daily language choices and ethical work.

Second, the relevance of specific scaled policies is highly dependent on exactly who is involved in a given interaction. Participants oriented themselves towards different sets of scaled policy depending on their interlocutors. Furthermore, policy at different scales offers benefits or restrictions that may be distributed unevenly along class or racial lines. Maria, for example, appeals to solidarity within an ambiguously scaled Tagalog-speaking diaspora when she visits shops with Filipino staff. However, if she perceives that she is being unfairly treated, she will switch to English, effectively “scaling up” her projected subjectivity in two ways. Within the UAE, she orients herself to the English-speaking middle class, a more powerful position than a working-class Filipino woman. This is in turn an orientation towards a more globally mobile, internationally oriented segment of the population. While Maria deploys some linguistic flexibility in Anglocentric consumer space, Michelle, a working-class Filipino woman, describes

deferring to *de facto* English in the same space. For her, English does not scale up in the way that it does for Maria, but is rather an alignment with language expectations at the scale of the Anglocentric mall. Likewise, for Mozart speaking to an Emirati police officer, deployment of Arabic would risk positioning her firmly at a local scale in a position with limited power. Deployment of English (and EU citizenship), however, reframes the interaction at a transnational scale in which Mozart has a considerably more powerful position. On the other hand, if I (as a white male) were in a similar situation, my race would have already oriented the interaction to a transnational level. If I were to then deploy Arabic, this might re-localize the interaction. It would position me as a powerful but also “local” resident deserving of respect and leniency.

Third, less conventional and unapparent scales are produced through assemblages of policies and practices, which in turn define *de facto* language policies. For example, policy apparatuses that produce English mall space (e.g. Anglocentric internationally oriented consumerism; socioeconomic segregation of foreign residents in the UAE; corporate policy that emphasizes English-skewed linguistic inclusivity) operate at a range of scales and affected my participants in different ways depending on their subjectivities relative to these sets of policies. Similarly, the South Indian Market area had its own *de facto* language policy, largely born out of mechanisms of segregation that shape the city. This is not policy that was structured from the top down, but which has emerged from an assemblage of other policies and practices. However, while language policy for the South Indian Market area was mapped quite closely to a specific, bordered geographic area – a more conventional “neighbourhood” scale – English mall space is much less geographically bound. Middle-class, Anglocentric consumer spaces are dispersed throughout the country but can still be thought of as constituting their own scale with its own *de facto* language policy. Western expat enclaves appeared to constitute another similarly dispersed

scale with an even stronger *de facto* English language policy orientation.

It is difficult to overstate the importance of race and class in the production of space, and therefore language policy, in the UAE. All experiences in the country, from where you work to where you live to who you socialize with and in what language, are tied in some way to race and class. Explicitly recognizing that specific spaces and scales are not simply backdrops or factors to explain language practices but are continually *(re)produced* forces us to attend to the mechanisms of that (re)production. The language policy apparent in the South India Market area is fundamentally tied to its production as a working-class, South Asian space through mechanisms of direct and indirect segregation. It is a space produced through the fact that busloads of South Asian construction workers are taken there on the weekends, that the people who work there have no time or money to socialize elsewhere, that it is the cheapest place to buy vegetables and so on. All of this coalesces into a space where Hindi, Urdu and Malayalam matter more than English or Arabic. Likewise, English mall space is produced through orientations to global consumerism, middle-class mobility, and (racialized) working-class immobility. At the edges (not always geographical edges) of these segregated spaces are also contact zones, spaces of asymmetrical power relations which mediate moments of border crossing. These zones both reinforce societal divisions and offer space to renegotiate or even directly challenge them; however, opportunities for the latter are also unevenly distributed, with middle-class “travellers” setting the tone for the “travellees” (Pratt, 2008) who inhabit the zone. The mechanisms of racism and socioeconomic stratification that produce all of these spaces are fundamental to understanding the language policies and practices that flow through them.

Contributions to language policy research

While this dissertation makes crucial contributions to language policy research in the

UAE, it also makes some important contributions to language policy research and applied linguistics as a whole. In fact, it is *because* the research was conducted in this context that it can offer some unique insights. The UAE is a place where structural inequality is laid bare, racism is normalized, and social divisions are rigid. The UAE itself is a contact zone for the world, a societal manifestation of global economic, racial and discursive divisions – North-South, developed-developing – a place where connections between race, power and language policy are made highly visible. The stark socioeconomic divisions discussed in this dissertation, and in particular their relationship to race and racism, are a fundamental aspect of global capitalism that is not always discussed in language policy research. Globally mobile but not necessarily locally mobile individuals such as Jon, Mike and Suraj, along with “flexible” entrepreneurs such as Bradley, are important to understanding both local and international language policies. As global labour continues to become increasingly mobile, the UAE may become less demographically exceptional. Indeed, as Vora and Koch (2015) argue, the UAE is not “exceptional” at all, but in many ways very representative of current patterns in global labour and migration. Discussions of mobility and language must also include investigations of how racism and socioeconomics shape migration trajectories and local policy realities. This project begins to unpack some of these issues and suggests that the UAE is likely a fruitful site for further research.

This project also makes a valuable theoretical contribution which can serve in exploring such issues. By drawing on conviviality research from the fields of cultural studies and human geography, it offers a way to start thinking about the management of language practices in contact zones produced from this increased global mobility. Understanding how individuals manage their own and each other’s language use within and through asymmetrical power relations must be a focus of 21st century language policy research. An emphasis on the linguistic

mechanics of “togetherness as lived negotiation” (Wise & Noble, 2016, p. 425) provides a way forward in this regard. As demonstrated in this project, conviviality also offers a way to think about the ethical dimensions of individuals’ engagement with the ethnolinguistic difference and socioeconomic disparity that often defines the contours of language policy. Furthermore, this project brings to the foreground issues of race/racism that are often fundamental to discussions of conviviality in other fields but have not been adequately addressed in work that utilizes the concept for applied and sociolinguistics research. In addition to bringing conviviality into language policy research, this project also makes a contribution to its originating fields of study by demonstrating what language researchers can offer. In investigating and documenting specific language choices and practices that can be understood as “convivial”, this project contributes to the growing body of work that investigates the production of “local liveability” (Amin, 2002, p. 959). Attention to convivial linguistic practices adds another useful tool for researchers hoping to better understand ethnolinguistic border crossing and the socioeconomic tensions that are embedded in everyday experiences of togetherness.

Tied to this discussion is also an exploration of language accommodation and its relationship to emotional labour or emotion work, which is largely absent from research in applied linguistics. My participants reported adjusting their language practices as a result of both corporate policy and *de facto* language policy demands in public space. The burden of this accommodation is not evenly distributed, with working-class (non-white, non-Emirati) residents bearing most of the responsibility for maintaining multilingual communication channels. Such practices deserve greater attention in language research, especially as corporations shift ever greater multilingual communication responsibilities onto their employees as part of basic company operations. Just as conviviality research offers insight into some of the mechanics of

lived togetherness through language, emotional labour and emotion work may prove to be important tools in understanding the individual cost of how that togetherness comes to be produced.

Tying a number of the above threads together is this project's treatment of space and scale. By focusing not only on how space and scale are brought into specific interactions but also on how space and scale is produced in the first place, this project has been able to explore how racial and socioeconomic stratification produces and interacts with specific types of language policy-ed spaces. Spatial stratification is not accidental and is continually (re)produced through structural racism and socioeconomic divisions. The entanglement of raced and classed mechanisms of spatial production with the language policies and practices tied to these spaces is an underexplored area of applied and sociolinguistics research. This project only begins to touch on some of these issues but demonstrates the importance of this discussion for future research.

In exploring accounts of language management practices, this project also adds to a slowly growing body of work which draws on poststructural approaches that take up expanded definitions of what constitutes language policy. I follow Luke (2017) in arguing for more careful attention to the ways that concepts such as governmentality and technologies of the self allow us to discuss forms of counter-conduct within language policy rather than being simply another explanatory tool for "domination...at a distance" (Luke, 2017, p. 305). Specifically, in this project, I have discussed how some of my participants sought to produce themselves as ethical agents working within and against language policies. For others, neoliberal discourses were subverted in ways that allowed for more powerful subjectivities in which countries competed for them rather than the other way around. This is not to say that mechanisms of domination were not important. Indeed, many of my participants felt trapped or conflicted in various ways within

language policy, but what these theoretical tools allow for is a deeper probing of mechanisms of resistance that go beyond simplistic accounts of being for or against policies.

Finally, the project also contributes to the growing body of literature advocating an ethnography of language policy (e.g. Davis, 1999; Johnson, 2013a; Johnson, 2013b; Johnson & Ricento, 2013; Luke, 2017; McCarty, 2011; McCarty, 2015). Ethnographic approaches to language policy allow researchers to get beyond the policy texts that the field tends to focus on and investigate the lived language policy that shapes people's everyday lives. In this particular project, it enabled an investigation of societal language policy that brought together a range of policy texts as well as other forms of social and economic policy, to try to understand what actually governs people's language practices and how they respond to this governance. This kind of work is essential to understand the full breadth Spolsky's (2004) definition of policy – beliefs, practices and management – in a given context. Researchers experiencing life within these policy apparatuses themselves, alongside their informants, can allow them to better chart the terrain of the policy that is embedded in everyday life.

Limitations and future research possibilities

As I emphasized from the outset, this project was intended to be exploratory. There is very little language research that attends to language policy and practices in the foreign resident population of the UAE and almost no language research of any kind has been done in Ras Al Khaimah. Thus, I structured the project as an open-ended ethnographic investigation to try to get a sense of what was out there before defining clearer boundaries. This is not to say that I did in fact get a *full* sense of what was out there either. My core participants had diverse national and linguistic backgrounds but were nonetheless all middle-class residents, as am I myself. Even though, I have attempted to engage with the language policy experiences of working-class

residents, I have mainly done so via the experiences of myself and my core middle-class participants. This middle-class perspective has profoundly shaped the focus of the project.

As such, while I begin to build a model of language policy for foreign residents in the UAE, this should be understood as tentative, a mere starting point from which further research can take some inspiration. Many aspects of language policy that I touch on here could serve as focal points for projects in their own right. Degrees of engagement by foreign residents with formal language policy, neoliberal subjectivity and language practices, disciplinary social policy, and convivial language practices could all be taken further in more focused studies than this project has been able to do on its own. I have also only just begun to touch on other important issues such as the relationship between foreign resident belonging and language practices, the importance of specific migration networks to the production of *de facto* language policy, or ways we can understand language practices as emotion work or emotional labour. I hope this project serves as a prologue to a larger discussion about language policy in the UAE because I believe it is an important context within which language policy researchers can engage with complex global issues such as migration, economic policy, belonging and the nature of language policy.

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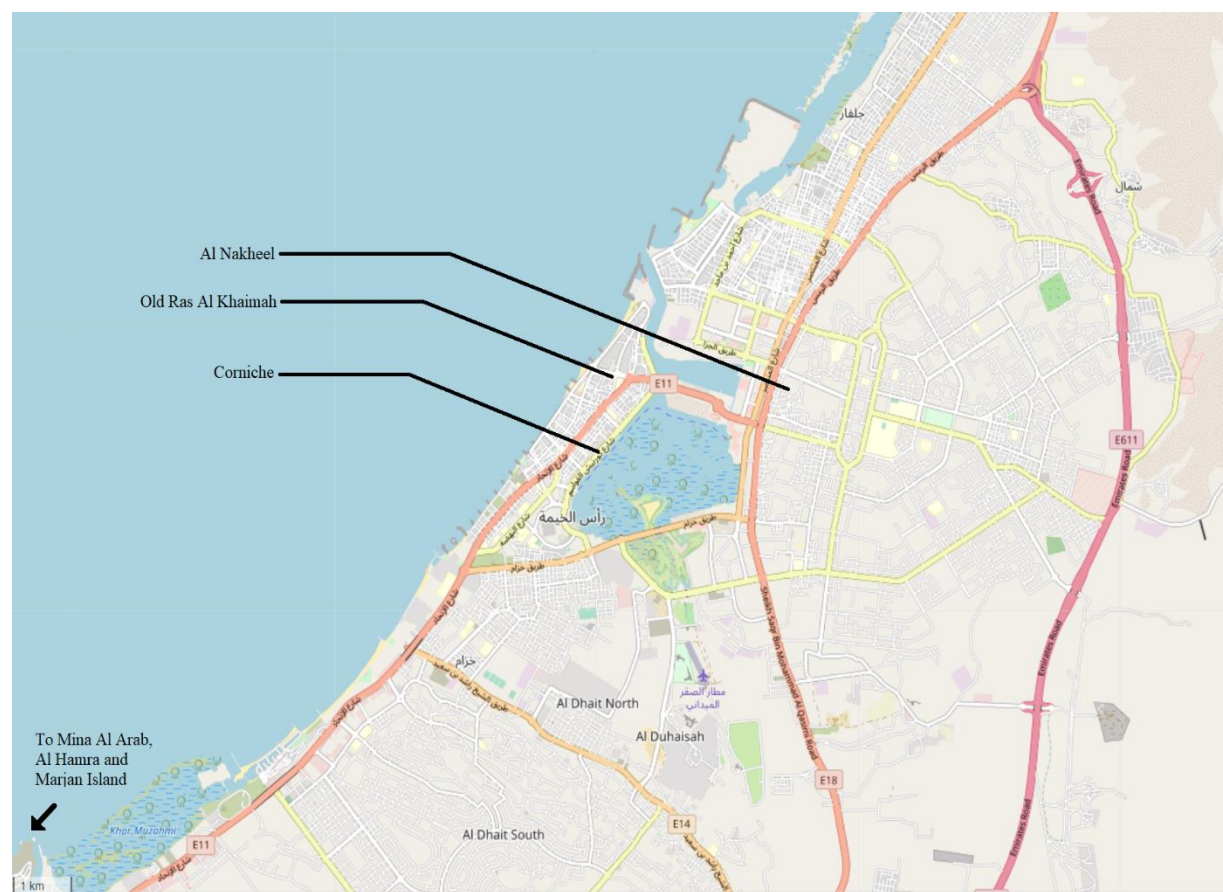
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Appendix A

Figure 1: UAE Regions Map (Ksamahi, 2011)



Figure 2: Ras Al Khaimah (OpenStreetMap contributors, n. d.)



Appendix B

Table 1: Core participants

Name	Gender	Nationality	Job	Years in UAE	Role in RAK English School	Language of Interview
Anne	F	Australian	School administrator	15+	Administrator	English
Bradley	M	Afghan-Russian	Network engineer	4	Student / CELTA Candidate	English
Jessica	F	Egyptian	Medical officer	10+	Student	English
John	M	Egyptian	Engineer	0.5	Prospective student	English
Malak	F	Jordanian	Public school teacher	0.5	Prospective student	English
Maria	F	Filipino	Private language school teacher	8	Teacher	English
Mozart	F	European	Private language school teacher	20	Teacher	English

Table 2: Single-interview participants

Name	Gender	Nationality	Job	Years in UAE	Language of Interview
Alexa	F	Filipino	Domestic worker	4	English / Tagalog
Ali and Manu	M / M	Indian	Cinema staff	20 / 18	English / Hindi
Basith and Abdul	M / M	Indian - Kerala	Vegetable shop staff	40	Malayalam / English
Bob and Farawila	M / M	German / American	Freelancer / Teacher	5 / 20	English
Dee and Leonardo	F / M	Filipino / Jordanian	Admin staff at semi-public company	< 5	English
Dimple	F	Filipino	Mall food court restaurant manager	16	English / Tagalog
Emma and Keith	F / M	Indian - Kerala	Office worker / Accountant	20 / 25	English
Hope	F	Jordanian	Public school teacher	0.5	English
Ibrahim	M	Indian – Kerala	Software technician	7	English
Jaza	M	Indian – Kerala	Café owner	10	English / Malayalam
Jeff	M	Indian	Café manager	9	English
Jon and Mike	M / M	Kenyan	Gas station attendants	1	English

Ken and Emmanuel	M / M	Nigerian	Construction workers	2 / 0.5	English
Khalid	M	Indian – Kerala	Distribution company manager	5	English
Manuel	M	Filipino	Café barista	1	Tagalog / English
Maryam	F	Emirati	Café owner	N/A	English
Michelle	F	Filipino	Recruitment agent and secretary	< 5	English / Tagalog
Mich	F	Filipino	Mall administrative staff	7	English / Tagalog
Nadeem	M	Pakistani	Taxi driver	30	Urdu / English
Salaam	M	Indian – Kerala	Grocery store baker	6	Malayalam / English
Steve	M	Syrian	Shop owner	20	English
Suraj	M	Nepalese	Mall retail staff	2	English / Hindi
Surya	M	Indian – Kerala	Small grocery store manager	8	Malayalam / English
Ummer	M	Indian – Kerala	Small grocery store cashier	8	Malayalam
Waqar	M	Pakistani	Store sales assistant	5	Urdu / English
Zaid	M	Iraqi	Doctor	20	English