

# Readings in Language and Identity



# Readings in Language and Identity:

*“I Am What I Say”*

Edited by

Hassen Zriba

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Readings in Language and Identity: "I Am What I Say"

Edited by Hassen Zriba

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## INTRODUCTION

This book is an edited collection of papers, originally presented at the Department of English, University of Gafsa, Tunisia. They were delivered by several Tunisian scholars, most of whom were young researchers. The event in question was a study day entitled “Language and Identity”. Honestly, the organization of the study day, along with the very selection of the topic, was not an easy task. The idea of this study day was hovering in the mind of a colleague in the Department. He suggested it to the Department meeting. Expectedly, the topic was not easily digested by the majority of the Department’s staff. Several colleagues had many reservations. They thought that the idea of “identity and language” is redundant; that the topic is overworked; and that it would be of no interest to the majority of researchers. However, other colleagues and I had the aim to prove that identity is a never-failing concept. We were aware that a huge load of literature was written on and about the concepts of language and identity and their possible relations. Nevertheless, I was keen to argue for the everlasting relevance of the concept of identity. After all, all human knowledge has been revolving around the idea of self-defining and defining what is around it. Hence, identity and identification constitute the very essence of humanity and its cultures. As far as no competent concept has replaced identity, identity remains relevant and useful. True, it is a “banal” concept; yet we cannot live without an identity. I conceive of it like water, which we take for granted, however; it is the source of our very survival.

The intricate and complex relationships between language and identity have been the focus of many academic researchers in virtually all fields of the humanities. Many narratives have been produced about this issue. The English Department at the Higher Institute of Applied Studies in Humanities at the University of Gafsa in Tunisia organized a study day on the topic of “Language and Identity”. Different scholars from different universities and disciplines shed light on some tricky aspects of the two concepts. They tackled them from linguistic, literary, and cultural perspectives and produced interesting contributions. The articles treated, among other issues, the problematic relationships between the articulations of identity in language and vice versa. Language and identity are related to discursive topics like culture, race, virtual spaces, political discourses,

universal linguistics, and language teaching. Bringing together contributions from different disciplines and theoretical traditions, this collection aims both to illuminate and to move forward debates about 'language and identity' and their meaning in contemporary social formations. The book broaches current, relevant debates, and equally, paves the way for future more compelling research endeavors in/about the possible relations and interactions between language and identity. This volume is a selection of peer-reviewed papers retained for publication.

The first part of the book includes two chapters that fall under the heading "Identity and the politics of control". The first is written by Dr. Hassen Zriba and entitled "Linguacultural Engineering in Contemporary Britain: The Management of Ethnic Identities", while the second is written by Dr. Hassen Rabhi and its title is "Reading Online Identity with Actor-Network Theory".

In the first article, Hassen Zriba examines the politics of multiculturalism in contemporary British society. Applying a critical, analytical perspective, Zriba shows how the various multicultural politics and language policies are no more than a decisive step in the process of the containment of British ethnic minorities. The cultural and linguistic plannings contributed to shaping the ethnic-cultural identities to fit into the mainstream meaningful explanatory contexts. Hence, documents such as *Integration Matters: A National Strategy for Refugee Integration* (Housing Associations' Charitable Trust, 2004), the White Paper *Secure Borders, Safe Haven* (2002), and the various political reports of 2001 and 2002<sup>1</sup> were concrete instances of the increasing politics of containment of ethnic mobilization. The article suggests that the current politics of social cohesion (in the British case community cohesion) represent the new rhetoric of governance that seems to reshuffle the rules of the racial game in Britain, yet it sustains a conservative vision of how the British identity is to be kept intact. Thus, the new politics of lingua-cultural management inaugurate a novel conceptualization of the nature and meaning of multiculturalism both as a political ideology and as a lived experience. This crucial new conceptualization can be captured by what came to be called the politics of "post-multiculturalism" (Kymlicka, 2010 and Vertovec, 2010).

In "Reading Online Identity with Actor-Network Theory", Hassen Rabhi investigates the various strategies of reading and controlling "online identity". Hence, identity performance has been conceptualized from widely differing perspectives. Based on the sociologist Erving Goffman's

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<sup>1</sup> The *Cantle Report*, the *Denham Report*, the *Ouseley Report*...

"impression management" (Goffman, 1959) and feminist philosopher Judith Butler's "performative identity" (Butler, 1990), Rabhi examines how identities are constructed on a web-mediated context. Insights from Actor-Network Theory (ANT) in general and Latour's (2005) *Reassembling the Social* in particular allowed Rabhi to scrutinize the various ways "real selves" are represented, framed and negotiated in interactive media. The medium of the weblog is selected as a representative case study. Based on a qualitative perspective, Hassen Rabhi analyses the traces of 39 A-list bloggers during the 2016 presidential race, which reveals the active role of weblog technology in shaping the identity of bloggers. Successfully, Rabhi reveals that online identities are rather the effects of negotiations forged among a network of entities/identities putting forward the active participation of the material aspect of the blogging practice and the relations weaved with that materiality.

Farah Tekaya's article falls under the second theme of this book: "Discursive identity constructions in American politics". Her article entitled "Transforming Identities in Trump's Declaration of Jerusalem as Israel's Capital City" traces the manners the American president Donald Trump followed in his discursive attempts to reshuffle the rules of the political game in the Middle East. Tekaya starts her article by defining the concept of identity from different perspectives, highlighting its multiple and complex dimensions. Yet, she opts for the linguistics-oriented discursive approach that considers language as paramount in shaping and manipulating different layers of meaning to negotiate and transform identities. Hence discursive formations are the ideological assumptions embedded in discourses. The article pursues a critical analysis of one instance of the political discourse of Trump to evince how his speech constructed new shifts in the identity of the parts concerned: the Americans, the Palestinians, and the Jews. Norman Fairclough's (2003) intra-textual analysis is selected to unveil how different participants' identities have been shaped and reshaped to suit the speaker's goals in Trump's speech where he declared Jerusalem as Israel's capital city. Quoting Escobar Almegica who writes that "a historical and socio-cultural structure which makes the ever-changing co-formations of relationships possible between the self and the world and that through discourse" (Alméciga, 2013, 50), Farah Tekaya ends by reaffirming the crucial roles that language often plays in shaping identities in different discursive contexts.

Building her paper on almost the same linguistic perspective (critical discourse analysis and Fairclough's model of analysis), Amel Hloumi,

argues that language is always a prime “representer” of the speaker’s identity. Hence language has never been ideology-free. Fairclough’s model of analysis suggests studying the three dimensions of discourse (texts, discursive practices, and social practices) to decipher the linguistic and lexical strategies that enabled the American president Donald Trump to market himself as a reliable political agent during the days of his presidential campaign. Hloumi’s article is entitled “Identity in Discourse” Investigating the self-representation “the notion of ‘I’ in discourse through the media: Donald Trump an example”. She selects ample linguistic corpus to investigate how self-identity is represented and entrenched in some of Trump’s political speeches. Focusing on the personal deixis of the speaker, Hloumi suggests that Trump’s notion of the “I” is considerably aggrandized and seems to erase the discursive presence of the “We” and, obviously, the “They”. A whole self-centered repertoire of the “I” and the “Me” is given a hegemonic distribution in the political speeches of Donald Trump. The ideological effect of such a discursive choice is, Hloumi argues, to indulge in the creation of a utopian image of a renewed “Great America” or what he called “making America Great Again” (MAGA).

“The Construction and Reconstruction of the Speaker’s Identity in the US Political Discourse: A Critical Study of the Objectives it Serves” is the title of the third article, contributed by Taher Ben Khalifa. Again, identity and American political experience loom large in this contribution. While Farah Tekeya and Amel Hloumi tackled the issue with a special focus on the political persona of Donald Trump, Ben Khalifa, treated several US presidential speeches ranging from George W. Bush through Barack Obama to Donald Trump. The comparative approach, adopted by Ben Khalifa, adds positively to the weight of his contribution. Postulating that the concept of identity is a flexible and elastic one, Ben Khalifa argues that the American presidents in question managed to create different discursive networks of ties that justified the political and ideological aims of their respective speeches. Hence, after a close critical analysis of relevant speeches of the targeted presidents/speakers, Ben Khalifa proved that the issue of identity formation is principally a process of conceptualizations used by speakers to push forwards their worldviews and strategies.

The last theme of this book is about the different manifestations of the relationship between language/linguistics and identity. Here, two chapters are contributed by Taieb Jebly and Wided Sassi. The first chapter is Jebly’s and is entitled “On the Identity of Language: Universal Linguistic Realities or Relative Linguistic Identities?” The second is Sassi’s article entitled “Tunisian EFL Learners’ Use of L1 and L2 in L3 Classes: A Socio-cultural Perspective”. The two contributions, though differed in

focus, examined the possible relations between language and identity from a linguistic perspective: Jebly from a general linguistic approach (Universal Grammar) while Sassi did the job from a pragmatic socio-cultural one. Jebly argues that the different approaches to language acquisition can be conceptualized as modes of understanding the nature of language, and hence, its identity. Thus, his article investigates two opposing approaches to language acquisition, those of rationalism and empiricism. The critical appraisal of these approaches proved that, though they produced divergent outcomes and methods of analysis, they contributed to the construction/revelation of specific identity-related aspects of the acquisition of language. Investigating the theoretical traditions of rationalism championed by Noam Chomsky and that of empiricism seconded by Geoffrey Sampson, Taieb Jebly managed to decipher the intricate conceptions and perspectives dealing with how language is processed, parsed and acquired. One paramount question that Jebly wants to answer is "what is language?" He suggests that, according to rationalists, the identity of language is the set of universal entities while empiricists or relativists consider it as the set relative identities that differ from one language to another. The language acquisition model is awash with attempts to define language and reveal its identity through understanding the ways of its acquisition.

Wided Sassi examines Tunisian EFL learners' use of L1 (Arabic) and L2 (French) in L3 (English) classes. She employs a socio-cultural perspective to churn out the different strategies used by such learners while integrating their prior experiences of L1 and L2 during their learning of L3. Sassi argues that the investigation of the social and cognitive functions of native and non-native languages on L3 development is remarkably scarce. Hence, to bridge this gap, Sassi's article aims at examining class-based peer-interaction with particular attention to the meditational roles of L1 and L2 in L3 learning. The socio-cultural identities of the learners play, unsurprisingly, pivotal roles in facilitating or hampering the process of learning. Such a "colourful" learning experience, where three different languages interact, generates not only a linguistic transfer but also a cultural one. In her study, Sassi explores Tunisian EFL learners' attitudes towards the use of L1 and L2 in an L3 classroom context. This research traces the importance of the subjective and sociocultural factors in shaping the present and future learning experiences. Sassi, moreover, endeavors to unravel the meditational functions of learners' L1 and L2 in the process of L3 learning.

In a word, the contributions of Taieb Jebly and Wided Sassi approached the issues of language acquisition and learning in both

native/first language acquisition and foreign/second language learning. In both chapters, the issue of the relation between language and identity is paramount.

All is said, I would like to affirm that the success of the “Language and Identity” study day was the felicitous result of teamwork. I would like to thank everybody who contributed to the proceedings of the study day, particularly Professor Bassem Hidouri and Professor Hassen Rabhi who helped substantially in its organization and smooth running. Also, our thanks go to Professor Mohamed Salah Bouomrani, the director of the Higher Institute of Applied Studies in Humanities of Gafsa, whose support enabled the study day to take place. For their valuable academic and scientific support, I would like to thank Professor Mounir Triki, Professor Paul Taylor, Professor Jason L. Powell, Professor Baliram N. Gaikwad, and Professor Muhamed Asif among others. They fruitfully contributed to the evaluation and proofreading of those contributions.

**Hassen Zriba**  
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**PART ONE:**

**IDENTITY AND THE POLITICS OF CONTROL**



## CHAPTER ONE

# LANGUACULTURAL ENGINEERING IN CONTEMPORARY BRITAIN: THE MANAGEMENT OF ETHNIC IDENTITIES

HASSEN ZRIBA

This article investigates the various strategies of assimilation that the contemporary British governments used in dealing with its ethnic minorities. It is suggested that the ideological and procedural “arsenal” of the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s politics of assimilationism was strategically substituted by a more comprehensive assimilatory approach of the 1980s and 1990s called “integrationist multiculturalism”. Culture/language planning played a paramount role in such a “piecemeal social engineering project” (to use Karl Popper’s phrase, 2001). Yet, arguably, what seemed to be an official progressive recognition of the British ethnic minorities and their rights, through the celebration of their cultural differences and diversities, is, in many respects, a firm process of cultural fossilization and stigmatization. Thus, the politics of multiculturalism are best understood as a strategy of socioeconomic and political containment of the increasing ethnic militancy of the 1970s and 1980s. The article critically appraises the role of cultural and linguistic planning in shaping the ethnic-cultural identities of the various British ethnic minorities, with a particular focus on integration-related political and cultural discourses. It also argues that the politics of language planning are based on an erroneous conception of cultural identity as a fixed essentialized subject position throughout the various models of accommodating ethnic and cultural differences.

I start with a brief account of the concept of cultural identity. This is because the concepts of identity and culture are paramount in the arguments pushed in this work. The second part treats the possible encounters between the concept of cultural identity and that of language and language planning. I investigate the political, cultural, and social outcomes resultant from such “cultural engineering” on minority socio-

cultural groups. The last section of this article scrutinizes the cultural and linguistic politics adopted by the various British governments as strategies of integrating their ethnic and cultural minorities. A special focus is laid on the role of English language learning in bestowing the British ethnic minorities with equal access to the British mainstream society and citizenship.

### **The elusive concept of cultural identity**

Cultural identity is a complex and elusive concept par excellence. The very stuff of defining the concept is demanding and precarious. Identity has been a very tricky and multi-semiotic concept. It seems that the way of defining the concept is constitutive of the concept itself. Virtually, the overuse of and over-research on this concept rendered it quite redundant. Arguably, it has become an all-inclusive concept that includes everything and excludes nothing. This over-generalist nature of the concept seems to destroy its very usefulness as an analytical concept. However, the concept of identity is closely related to that of culture. Identity is expressed in various cultural forms, and culture is in many respects, constitutive of identity. Cultural identity has come to the fore as vital for any social or political community. Hence, the concept of cultural identity has been approached from different perspectives.

The British cultural critic Stuart Hall has identified two central definitions of cultural identity. The first understanding believes that cultural identity is a shared collective culture. This definition stresses the commonality of the shared experiences of a given cultural or ethnic group. In this perspective, different groups share a common cultural identity that reflects the historical and cultural affinities within a certain ethnic group. Thus, despite the conspicuous differences and diversities that such a group generates, this common cultural identity is the ultimate source of unity: a hidden or latent unity. It represents the essence of such a cultural community that differentiates it from other groups. This is the meaning that seems hegemonic when we refer to, say, the British identity, American identity, or Indian identity. We construct a somewhat homogenous block or a framework of references that ultimately serves to entrench specific cultural traits related to a cultural group. Hall emphasizes that this conception of cultural identity has been cherished by those working within the postcolonial theory. Postcolonial writers tend to highlight the collective and shared character of cultural identity which guarantees an acceptable degree of group cohesion or unity. Postcolonial writers seem to search for such a “valuable” cultural identity to second their theses of

cultural unity and distinctiveness. Such a version of cultural identity, Hall contends, “continues to be a very powerful and creative force in emergent forms of representation amongst hitherto marginalized peoples” (Hall, 1989). Hall quotes the popular postcolonial cultural theorist Frantz Fanon about this version of cultural identity. Within postcolonial communities, the rediscovery or even the creation of identity is an object of:

“passionate research [...] directed by the secret hope of discovering beyond the misery of today, beyond self-contempt, resignation, and abjuration, some very beautiful and splendid era whose existence rehabilitates us both in regard to ourselves and in regard to others” (Fanon in Hall, 1989, 69).

Yet, the issue of the re-discovery of cultural identity is not that tenable. I believe that there are no constitutive essences of what an identity is or what it means. The process is best seen as one of an invention rather than discovery. Following the premises of the social constructivist perspective, we may safely argue that identity is a socio-cultural construction that meets the needs of a given social or cultural community. Just like Benedict Anderson (1983) who believed that nations are imagined communities, I consider cultural identities as imagined identities as well. This imaginedness allows the construction of different cultural identities by different social agents to serve different aims. It also stresses the fact that identity formation or identification is a dynamic rather than a static process. Thus, identity is a process, not an event or a pre-given entity. Hall elegantly commented on this transformative nature of cultural identity. He contended that:

Actually, identities are about questions of using the resources of history, language and culture in the process of becoming rather than being: not ‘who we are’ or ‘where we came from’, so much as what we might become, how we have been represented and how that bears on how we might represent ourselves (1996, 4).

What Hall and other social constructionists seem to emphasize is that cultural identity is a dynamic, not an essentialist process. This bestows the concept with considerable flexibility and adaptability; two aspects that every cultural community needs to create social and cultural coherence while preserving a constant mechanism of self-identification, and self-fashioning. In this vital process of cultural identity formation, language looms large as a major player in the field of the conceptualization of identity. I will explore the relationship between the concept of language and that of identity in more detail in the subsequent section. Now, it

suffices to evince that no identity is realizable without a system of communication and representation where the language is indispensable. The differential realization of identity and its multiple colors paves the way for the second understanding of the concept of cultural identity. I briefly explain it below.

The second conceptualization of identity is the most salient one within the postmodernist theory. It argues that identity is rather the cultural and ideological work of the discovery and creation of difference. Thus, identity is positional and situational since it is the end-product of historical as well as relational experiences. It is neither essentialist nor fixed; it is rather positional and strategic.

In this context, identity is governed by the rules of change and transformation that result from a continuous contrast with someone else's identity. It is the work of difference; the politics of difference. So, cultural identity is always a provisional and an unstable effect of marking differences. It is a negative rather than a positive construction. By negating, I mean that cultural identity is defined by what it is not more than being the outcome of what it is. Hall argues that "Identity is a structured representation which only achieves its positive through the narrow eye of the negative. It has to go through the eye of the needle of the other before it can construct itself" (1991, 21). Consequently, the "[O]ther" has a crucial part in the social and cultural construction of the "I". The project of construction is a bilateral one that succeeds only by the concerted efforts of both the insiders and the outsiders. This collective and reciprocal enactment of identity would result in the creation of a multiple, fractured, and multidimensional concept of cultural identity. Social agents perform different subject positions in their social structures. This depends on the different affiliations that they may privilege at different times and in different socio-cultural contexts. Being context-governed, people are identities' bearers. They do not have a single identity. Jay Lemke observes that:

We are always ourselves, but who we are, who we portray ourselves as being, who we are construed as being changes with interactants and settings, with age of life. Identities develop and change, they are at least multi-faceted if not plural. Their consistency and continuity are our constructions, mandated by our cultural notions of the kinds of selves that are normal and abnormal in our community, (2008, 19).

To recapitulate, cultural identities are positional and dynamic. They are equally multifaceted and socially constructed. Social identities are multiple and collective, and while individual identity is personal and



stresses sameness, social identity is rather the marker and marker of difference. As seen before, the socio-cultural identity is constructed against a real or imagined other. According to Bucholtz and Hall (2005):

Social grouping is a process, not merely of discovering or acknowledging a similarity that precedes and establishes identity but, more fundamentally, of inventing similarity by downplaying difference. [...] The perception of shared identity often requires as its foil a sense of alterity, of an Other who can be positioned against those socially constituted as the same. (371)

It is the aspect of the socially constructed and invented nature of the concept of cultural identity that allowed a considerable socio-cultural and political engineering. That engineering was initiated by various British academic and political circles under the umbrella of the politics of ethnic integration. Whether the preferred model of integration was assimilationist (monoculturalist) or pluralist (multiculturalist), different values and principles have been cast as constitutive of the British national identity. One fundamental aspect of Britishness has been the English language.

### **Cultural identity and the politics of language planning**

Even though a multicultural state attempts to create an egalitarian framework in which all cultures are treated equally, there is a tendency to prioritize one culture at the expense of others. The state may prohibit racial discrimination and race-related marginalization. Equally, it may avoid the establishment of an official religious system. However, multicultural states cannot be neutral when language-related matters are under consideration. The multicultural state will necessarily establish one specific language as the dominant means of communication in schooling and its delivery of public services. The linguistic preference, whether unintentional or intentional, would translate into cultural, political, and economic disequilibrium in the relations of power between the different cultures that constitute a given polity. After all, language is considered as a paradigmatic marker of culture. Moreover, language/cultural planning has a symbolic dimension. It is a symbolic organization of the social and cultural aspects of society. The culture or language that is projected as dominant empowers its speakers and holders and constrain others. A crucial question needs to be tackled whenever language or identity is under scrutiny. Here it is: Why is language so central to identity? A possible answer was forwarded by the British socio-linguist John Edwards in his masterpiece *Language and Identity* (2009). In the introduction of his book, Edwards commented that "identity is at the heart of the person, and

the group, and the connective tissue that links them. People need psychosocial 'anchors': it is as simple as that" (Edwards, 2009, 2). It seems that identity is the socio-cultural glue that gives any community its *raison d'être*. Thus, identity is an individual need; a need for belonging to a certain social and cultural community. But also, identity is a collective need when it is attached to culture. Edwards adds that it "is also clear that identities very rarely exist singly: on the contrary, we all possess several identities – or facets of one overarching identity if you prefer – the salience of which can be expected to wax and wane according to circumstance and context" (2009, 2). Identities are the product of various social and cultural subject positions and structures. The close relationship between identity and language urged social theorists like John Joseph (2004) to argue that no study of language is possible without the study of identity. Joseph (2004) observed that:

[A]ny study of language needs to take consideration of identity if it is to be full and rich and meaningful, because identity is itself at the very heart of what language is about, how it operates, why and how it came into existence and evolved as it did, how it is learned and how it is used, every day, by every user, every time it is used. (224)

I agree with Joseph on the centrality of language in understanding identity, but I add that no study of identity is complete without the consideration of language and culture. As I mentioned elsewhere, I consider culture and language identical given the integral relationship between the two concepts. I briefly consider the theoretical trajectories of both language and culture. The popular anthropologist Clifford Geertz (1973) defines culture as "a historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes towards life" (89). The same definition can be easily applied to the definition of the language itself. Thus, language is also a system of communication that is pregnant with symbols, knowledge, and worldviews. I perceive the relation between the two concepts as content (culture) and container (language). They are virtually inseparable. The relationship between language and culture has been the concern of numerous studies, both in anthropology; cultural studies, and language studies (Edwards, 2009 and Joseph, 2004). Language is the ultimate and the most crucial human invention. Robert Bunge (1992) notes that "language is not just another thing we do as humans - it is *the* thing we do. It is a total environment: we live in language as a fish lives in water" (376). Hence, language is vital to

cultural expressions and cultural formations. Language planning is also cultural planning that is intended to serve some social and political aims. This emanates, I think, from the close relations between language and culture. The representations, perceptions, and cultural values of any human society are encoded in the language itself. For Joshua A. Fishman (1991), language is always linked to a given ethno-culture, which makes such an alliance (culture and language) vital in formulating and expressing the worldviews of that culture. This intimate and intricate link, conceived between language and culture, implies that the ethnic identity is only expressible with/within a certain linguistic and cultural system of a given ethnic community. After all, humans are linguistic and cultural beings. Hence, the concept of “linguaculture” has gained a plausible currency in sociology, linguistics, anthropology, and cultural studies as a concept that encompasses the close relations between language and culture. (Agar, 1991 and Risager, 2005)

Language and culture are intricately related and interdependent. Language is constituted by culture, while culture is influenced by language. Understanding the nature of the possible relations between language and culture is vital in the process of learning another language and mastering another culture. As such, language is not a mere tool for the exchange of information, but it is a symbolic system with the discursive power to create and shape symbolic realities. These realities may include different values, perceptions, and above all identities. The process of identity creation is organized around the concept of discourse and the practice of discursive formation. Language, being the system of symbolic creation and representation of culture, is essential to cultural identity. People seem to live with and in languages. Thus, as far as minority groups are concerned, different ethnic and cultural communities, while integrating into the mainstream culture of the destination society, keep using their mother tongue. This linguistic choice is represented as an act of cultural identification and resistance of the cultural and linguistic hegemony of the host society. Also, national minorities such as aboriginal communities in countries like Canada and Australia or Kurds in Turkey, Iraq, and Iran, tend to preserve their native cultural system mainly via the use of their national languages. The language turns out to be an act of identity assertion in multicultural, multiethnic, and multinational societies. Moreover, linguistic differences are also often considered as the marker and maker of another culture. Ethnic and cultural communities shape their distinctive identities via the use of their specific languages within a multi-linguistic framework.

In their book *Raciolinguistics: How Language Shapes Our Ideas About Race*, the anthropologist Samy Alim et al (2016) investigate the intricate relationship between language, racial identity, and power distribution. In this book, Alim examines how language shaped the racial identity and vice versa. He took the example of ex-American President Barack Obama as a critical case study. According to his arguments, Obama was switching from one linguistic variety to another in his public political speech to meet the expectations of his diverse audiences. He tended to use a “black preacher style” when addressing black audiences while using normal standard English in his speech directed to the general American audiences. These multilayered strategies are the outcome of the specific cultural and racial nature of the ex-American president Barack Obama. Obama was caught between different sources of identifications which he needed to balance against each other so that to make his electorate feel comfortable as much as possible. He wanted to appear as a normal American citizen. Samy Alim thought that Obama “was caught between discriminatory discourses of race, language, citizenship, and religion, and he needed to navigate between them to avoid being seen as “the African, Muslim boogeyman” that the far-right made him out to be. Language and race work together here in very important ways” (2016).

This alliance between language and race has been approached in what came to be called Raciolinguistics; a new field of linguistic and racial studies that investigates the crucial intersections between race, language, identity, and power. From a Raciolinguistic perspective, American society, based on the case study of Barack Obama, was far from being post-racial. It was proved to be hyper-racial and hyper-racializing. Then, it follows that language plays a crucial role in the constitution of group consciousness and the symbolization of the collective cultural and ethnic identity. Obama then planned his speeches to meet some specific cultural and political aims. There was considerable linguistic and cultural planning in his linguistic performances.

Briefly, I account for the major components and processes, included in the discourses and politics of language/culture planning. Language planning policy is what a government does officially through legislation to determine how languages are used and which ones are to be hegemonic in the public political sphere. Thus, governments cultivate and promote the language skills needed to meet national priorities and mainstream cultural paradigms.

In general, language planning is a process designed to affect language use within a particular speech community. Language/ culture, planning is usually undertaken by the government and the relevant official agencies. A

central argument of this article is that the discursive construction of the cultural, ethnic identity is to be understood as part of language planning. Language and cultural planning is thus a process of identity management in which the presentation of cultural identity is filtered through the various mechanisms of representation and articulation.

Relevant research has outlined four varieties of planning. Those planning strategies include

1) Status planning: Where the government considers the environment in which language/culture is used, e.g. which language is the ‘official language’ of the polity; the status of the language. What is under focus is the place and functions of a given language.

2) Corpus planning: This is the most vital strategy where the process of modifying or imposing particular versions of linguistic and cultural views is actively pursued. Technically, the focus is on language structures such as morphological, syntactic, and semantic structures.

3) Acquisition planning: This is perhaps the most crucial step of the entire process of language/culture planning. It is the moment when the whole cultural, ideological, and political repertoires are put into action. Acquisition planning is thus concerned with language distribution, which can involve providing opportunities to use a particular language to increase the number of its users. Importantly, this process of a language promotion is often associated with a less visible one of demoting another. The acquisition planning controls language spreading and growth, which are two ideological operations par excellence.

4) Prestige planning: The acquisition planning step would automatically alter and/or promote the image of a language at the expense of others. There is an underway cultural, political, and social construction of a “prestige” of a language (Kaplan and Baldauf, 1997 and Spolsky, 2004). In the case of Britain, the English language seems to enjoy the hegemonic prestige with some differentiated extents according to the dominant integration paradigm of the day. For instance, the hegemony of the English language during the assimilationist era was absolute compared to its position during the multicultural period. I will refer to those varieties in my scrutiny of the relationship between language/culture planning and the various models of integration that post-war Britain has witnessed.

### **The political engineering of cultural identity: a case study of the British ethnic identities**

The British national identity, or Britishness, has been the organizing discursive formation and rhetoric of how the British polity is to treat its

ethnic and cultural minorities. The central aim was how to integrate the different cultural and ethnic structures into a unique and cohesive British socio-cultural fabric. Different approaches to integration have been applied to cope with the multi-ethnic character of post-war Britain. In this process of self-definition and other integration, the English language has played a pivotal decisive role. The former British Prime Minister Tony Blair expressed the need to consider the English language as constitutive of the meaning of the national identity, being a source of unity and cultural identification. In 2006, as part of his 'Our Nation's Future' speeches, the New Labour leader Blair firmly placed the English language at the very heart and essence of Britain's national identity. He declared that:

We should share a common language. Equal opportunity for all groups requires that they be conversant in that common language. It is a matter both of cohesion and of justice that we should set the use of English as a condition of citizenship. In addition, for those who wish to take up residence permanently in the UK, we will include a requirement to pass an English test before such permanent residency is granted (Blair, 2006).

Hence, it seems that language is a fundamental aspect of British national identity. It is equally a gatekeeper of citizenship rights and responsibilities. By no means was Blair unique in celebrating the English language as a prerequisite to obtain British citizenship and uphold the British identity. This type of discourse has always been ubiquitous either explicitly or implicitly in the various approaches of integrating the new immigrant and ethnic minorities.

Theoretically speaking, two major paradigms of integrating ethnic minorities into mainstream societies have been identified by different political scientists and cultural critics. Those different models are roughly categorized into a monocultural approach (the assimilationist model) and another multicultural approach (the pluralist model). However, my ethnographic analysis of the British race-related history could be methodologically divided into three major historical moments. The first era extended during the 1940s and the 1960s, which was largely dominated by what can be termed racial *laissez-faire* politics. We can call it the assimilationist era as well. The second period covered the 1970s, the 1980s, and the 1990s during which the politics of multiculturalism and ethnic pluralism were championed. The last one took shape during the 2000s until the 2010s. This last period can be named the integrationist model where an intricate balance of social cohesion and cultural diversity has been sought. Importantly, the politics of language and cultural planning has always been present with different paces and depths.