



## BIROn - Birkbeck Institutional Research Online

Zhu, Hua (2017) New orientations to identities in mobility. In: Canagarajah, S. (ed.) Routledge Handbook of Migration and Language. Routledge Handbooks in Applied Linguistics. London, UK: Routledge, pp. 117-132. ISBN 9781138801981.

Downloaded from: <https://eprints.bbk.ac.uk/id/eprint/17818/>

*Usage Guidelines:*

Please refer to usage guidelines at <https://eprints.bbk.ac.uk/policies.html>  
contact [lib-eprints@bbk.ac.uk](mailto:lib-eprints@bbk.ac.uk).

or alternatively

## Citation Information

Zhu Hua (2017). *New Orientations to identities in Mobility*. In S. Canagarajah (Ed.), *Routledge Handbook of Migration and Language* (pp.117-132). London: Routledge.

## **New Orientations to Identities in Mobility**

Zhu Hua

Birkbeck College, University of London, UK

### **Introduction**

Identities are a plural concept with rich, and sometimes contradictory, meanings. As defined by Tracy (2002: 17-8), identities are *“best thought of as stable features of persons that exist prior to any particular situation, and are dynamic and situated accomplishments, enacted through talk, changing from one occasion to the next. ... identities are social categories and are personal and unique.”*

Identities entail the juxtapositions between the self and the other, the personal and the social nature, stability and situated accomplishment, and product and process, all of which are well reflected in the trajectories of identity research. With the recognition that self cannot exist without “the other” (e.g. Hegel 1807/1977), the social nature of identities has gradually moved to centre stage in a number of disciplines, of which applied linguistics is one. There has been extensive sociolinguistic research exploring the social and collective nature of identities as embodied in a range of social, and relatively stable, variables and group categories such as social class, gender, ethnicity, and religion (e.g. language and ethnicity in Fought 2006; language and gender and religion in Edwards 2009). Recent years have seen a paradigm shift with many studies following a social constructivist perspective and conceptualising identity as a discursive performance, constructed and negotiated through interactions (e.g. Antaki and Widdicombe 1998; De Fina, Schiffrin and Bamberg 2006). What emerged from these studies is that identities

are multiple and multi-layered. There are master, interactional, relational and personal identities (Tracy 2002), imposed, assumed and negotiable identities (Pavlenko and Blackledge 2003), audible, visible and readable identities (Zhu Hua 2014), self-oriented or prescribed-by-others identities (Zhu Hua 2014) and hierarchy of identities (Omoniyi 2006). At the same time, identities require “management” from participants who can do a number of things with group memberships. They can ascribe membership to others, claim memberships of groups to which they do not normally belong (e.g. “crossing”, Rampton 1995, “passing”, Bucholtz 1995), or resist membership assigned by others (Day 1998).

In the last few years, there has been a new focus on *identities in mobility*, which places identities in the context of border crossing, transnational or translocal space. Such a new focus reveals the unprecedented level of complexity of identities and addresses a number of key questions in identity research: i.e. to what extent one’s membership, affiliation, and sense of belonging are affected by the process of change; how people take on the challenges of developing and creating new identities; and how different aspects of identities interact with each other? The new focus on identities in mobility also feeds into the wider debate on the notions of diaspora, transnational communities, and more recently, translocal communities (see Quayson and Daswani 2013), as researchers find terms such as migrants or minorities increasingly unsatisfactory.

The bulk of this chapter consists of a review of the main pursuits and contributions among studies on identities in mobility. It mainly addresses contemporary and seminal works carried out in the broad disciplinary area of applied linguistics and several other related areas such as anthropology, cultural studies and international education. It focuses on three inter-related themes (or key research questions as discussed above), i.e., complexity, doing/becoming identities and intersectionality. In the rest of the chapter, issues and on-going debate, implications for practice and policy and areas of further research are discussed. For the purpose of consistency with the cited articles, this chapter refers to those on the move as *migrants* or *transnationals* without orienting to the rubric of the nation-state often implied in the term of migrants.

## **Overview of the topic**

### *Complexity*

Studies of identities in mobility demonstrate the complexity of identities in an unprecedented way. There are numerous studies, and consequently a wealth of terms, which attempt to capture the impact of mobility on identity, in particular, how those involved deal with different sets of cultural values and social practices of home and the host. In some early literature in the 1990s, the term “marginality” was often used to describe feelings of confusion, loss of direction and internal conflict experienced by those who found themselves lodged between opposing host and heritage cultural values (Schaetti 1998). However, marginality could also entail opportunities and empowerment. Bennett (1993, 2008) differentiated encapsulated marginals from constructive marginals: the former being trapped by marginality, feel alienated, detached, frustrated with ambiguity, and lost in the margins between cultures and consequently fail to meet the competing requirement of each, whilst the latter feeling comfortable in negotiating and constructing cultural margins and in fact being empowered by a sense of agency as they choose which values and perspectives to act upon. Schaetti (1998) further expanded the notion of constructive marginality by proposing the term of liminality. According to her, liminality constitutes a psychological space between cultures, imbued with great promise and “emerging possibility,” as one lives “between the ending of what was and the beginning of what will be” (p. 35). Liminality “informs the both/and identity, the dancing in-between, the life lived ongoing on the threshold with a foot in each of multiple cultural traditions” (p. 36).

Hybridity is another term often invoked in describing the extent of mixture in one’s identities. Originated in biology, the term is used in post-colonial and cultural studies (e.g. Bhabha 1994) to describe the mix and plurality of identity that results from the phenomenon of “togetherness-in-difference”, borrowing Ang’s term (2001), in the context of an increasingly mobility and growing destabilisation of the cultural make-up of the nation- state. Ang (2001: 16) argues that “as a concept, hybridity belongs to the space of the frontier, the border, the contact zone. As such, hybridity always implies a blurring

or at least a problematizing of boundaries, and as a result, an unsettling of identity”. The “boundary blurring” effect on identity in mobility is echoed in a number of studies. For example, as a result of transnational connections and being exposed to social practices of more than one system, there is often a sense of “double belonging”, as manifested through everyday practices among migrants. They are often reported to share narratives of events and display material goods that come from both home and host countries as well as assess and critique the social practices in one country by referencing what they have experience in another place (Lam & Warriner, 2012). Another manifestation of hybridity is the “hyphenated” nature of identities, a term used controversially at the turn of the twentieth century (e.g. Higham 1955) and then later reclaimed to describe multiple identities second or third-generation of immigrants, in particular, need to coordinate (e.g. Indo-Trinidadian communities in Raghunandan 2012). Hybridity, double belonging, or hyphenatedness do not imply that there is a “harmonious fusion or synthesis of multiple identities” (Ang 2001: 195) or a simple blend of disparate cultural elements (Frello 2015: 197). Instead, they need to be conceptualised as displacement and therefore enable researchers to focus on “contestations of established power hierarchies, narratives and identities” (ibid). Recent years have seen some critique about the “celebratory” undertone in describing linguistic and cultural hybridity (phrased as “happy hybridity” in Otsuji and Pennycook 2010). Lorente & Tupas (2013) remind us of the hidden economic agendas underneath some discourse of hybridity.

The notions of marginality and hybridity are developed on the assumption that identities are territorial and therefore their construction involves dualistic positioning and comparative perspectives between here and there. However, the here and there division is challenged by increasing connectivity and changing migration patterns amongst transnationals on several fronts. Digital technology and communication tools have made it possible for people to remain connected on the move and to cross borders virtually at click of mouse or finger-swiping, and to build new communities as illustrated by several available transnational digital case studies (e.g. Lam 2008, 2013, 2014; Li and Juffermans 2011). In addition, flexible citizenship and reverse, circular and serial movement are on the increase (Duff, 2015). Some migrants maintain active patterns of returning to their home countries and then moving back to the host countries. In some

cases, migrants reach back to past times or places of origin through the practice of “heritaging” (e.g. De Fina and Perrino 2013; Blommaert 2013) and “traditionalisation” (e.g. Bauman 1992; Bucholtz and Hall 2005) whereby they construct practices or objects under the concern as authentic or invented tradition, borrowing Hobsbawm’s term (1983). De Fina (2013) shows how big corporations use heritagging, i.e. emphasising common cultural background and authentic customs and values, to commercialise their products and to sell to audience.

Central to the practice of heritagging or traditionalisation is the desirability of authenticity. In this sense, authenticity is no longer an analyst’s notion of what counts as pure and real, but a strategic position taken up by those who are involved. Shenk (2007) demonstrates that authenticity is not only a “negotiated accomplishment replete with ideology, social action, and identity” (p.214), but also highly representational and arbitrary. She reports how bilingual Mexican American students deploy “authenticating discourse” to construct themselves or others as more or less authentic. Yet what counts as Mexicanness among the students is represented, arbitrarily, by purity of bloodline, nationality and Spanish linguistic fluency. For example, one of her participants, Lalo, claims to be a pure-blooded Mexican by tracing his bloodline to “the Aztecs”, which ideologically represent archetype of Mexicanness for many Mexican Americans. However, it emerged later that Lalo’s parents were actually born in the Mexican states of Zacatecas and Jalisco, not part of the Aztec Empire at all. In another study (Lee 2009), the authentic logic which emerged in her subjects is aptly summarised as the title of the paper, “she is hungarious so she’s Mexican but she’s most likely Indian”. Hungarious is a made-up word by the girls who may have confused the term Hungarian with “Honduras”. For them, hungarious is a type of Mexican.

Authenticity is a matter of degree. Blommaert and Varis (2011) use “enoughness” to describe the heuristics of authenticity. “One has to ‘have’ enough of the emblematic features in order to be ratified as an authentic member of an identity category...” (p. 146). The issue is: one can have “not enough of X; or too much of x” (ibid). Cutler (2003) describes that in her study some white hip-hoppers who are not considered as a core member of the hip-hop community have to play the game of enoughness very carefully.

In order to gain enoughness, the peripheral white hip-hoppers use more overt speech styles associated with African American English (AAE) than core white hip-hoppers. But at the same time, they also need to respect ethnolinguistic differences: sounding too black might actually make one less "real" because one is trying to be something one is not. Although Cutler's works does not concern identities in mobility directly, it illustrates the intricacies of identity work people do in order to become a member of the desired community.

In a special issue, De Fina and Perrino (2013: 512) question the practice of describing identities in mobility in terms of binary dichotomies such as "the national and the transnational, the rooted and the routed, the territorial and the deterritorialized" (borrowing the terms from Jackson, Crang & Dwyer 2004: 2), due to "a variety of virtual and physical connections that allow them to be "here" and "there" at the same time. To add to the list, other frequently used but equally problematic dichotomies in the literature include: minority vs. majority, immigrant vs. local, outsider vs. insider. These dichotomies very often come with the logic that there is an antagonistic relationship between the two: the former is (expected to be) victimised by the latter. However, as Tsagarousianou (2004) argues, it is important to focus on the ability of those on the move to "construct and negotiate their identities, everyday life and transnational activities in ways that often overcome the ethnic identity versus assimilation dilemma" as well as "various creative possibilities" in both local and transnational contexts" (p.58).

Therefore, complexity of identities is not confined to marginality and hybridity, but lies in the need to resist the temptation to reification through the use of binary contrasts, to normalise contradictories and ambivalence in transnationals' identification and to see identities as situated and temporal as well as in its historicity. Jenkins' take on ethnicity (2008: 14) illustrates well how contradictory and dialectical identities such as ethnicity can be. Specifically, she states:

- Ethnicity is a matter of cultural differentiation ...[and] always involves a dialectical interplay between similarity and difference.

- Ethnicity is centrally a matter of shared meanings...produced and reproduced during interaction.
- Ethnicity is no more fixed or unchanging than the way of life of which it is an aspect, or the situations in which it is produced and reproduced.
- Ethnicity, as an identification, is collective and individual, externalized in social interaction and the categorization of others, and internalized in personal self-identification.

The complexity embedded in identities in mobility as discussed above is unprecedented in its scale, multiplicity, and inherent contradictions. The ever increasing connectivities among people on the move have made it a pre-requisite to see this level of complexity as the norm rather than an exception. As Blommaert (2013: 619) states, “complexity is not the absence of order, it is the presence of a complex, non-categorical and non-linear form of order.” We shall continue to examine different, but interrelated, aspects of complexity of identities in the next two sections: the section “From being to becoming and doing” focuses on how identities have become a matter of becoming and doing and the section “Intersectionality” looks into how different identities intersect with each other.

### ***From being to becoming and doing***

As mentioned in Introduction, studies of identity in recent years have argued that identities are not fixed. They are dynamic and emerge through interactions and discourse practices. The ‘identities in mobility’ perspective follows this line of argument and offers new insights, in particular, to the questions of whether or to what extent ‘fixed’ identities such as ethnicity which have been traditionally associated with nationalities and therefore fixed can be transported (Zimmerman 1998), imposed, assumed or negotiable (Pavlenko and Blackledge 2003) during the process of migration, in the context of increasing connectivities with home and the local as well as superdiversity in every corner of the world. It also contributes to the current research on identity by further developing established analytical notions and proposing new ones.

According to Harris and Rampton (2003), there are two broad conceptualisations about ethnicity: “roOts” vs “roUtes”. While the former takes the view of “ethnicity-as-a-fixed-and-formative-inheritance”, the latter believes that ethnicity depends on one’s “strategic” emphasis and choice. The strategic emphasis and choices include: “embracing and cultivating their ethno-cultural/linguistic legacy”, “trying to downplay and drop it as a category that is relevant to them”, “drawing attention to the different ethnicities of other people”, “taking on someone else’s ethnicity”, or “creating a new one and developing hybrid and new ethnicities” (p.5). They also state that developing new hybrid ethnicities is clearly a very complicated process and often provokes intense argument about “authenticity, entitlement and expropriation”, a point outlined in the previous section. There are a number of ways of resisting identities ascribed by others. Day (1998) uses the interactional examples in two Swedish factories with a large number of migrant workers. The examples illustrate how an ethnic group membership was ascribed and resisted sequentially through dismissing its relevance, minimizing the supposed differences, reconstituting essential features of the group so that one can be excluded or turning the table by ethnifying the ethnifier. A number of recently published edited volumes showcase a variety of approaches and mechanisms for doing and becoming identities, for example, Dervin and Risager’s collection on interculturality (2015); De Fina & Perrino’s special issue in *Applied Linguistics* (2013) and the 2015 issue of *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics* themed on identity.

*Imagination* plays a key role in doing and becoming identities. In his study of nationalism, Anderson (1983/1991) proposes the notion of “imagined communities” to describe how nations as political communities came to be imagined and live in the minds of each member “who will never know most of their fellow members, meet them, or even hear them” (1991, p.6). In the case of diasporas, Cohen (2008) argues that there are “imagined” homelands where the members of the diasporas have never been before and “imagined” transnational communities which “unite segments of people that live in territorially separated locations” (p.13). The very notion of imagination also affects language choices of those on the move. The Continental African immigrants and refugees in a high school in Ontario in Ibrahim’s study (1999) imagine themselves as “Black American” and thus choose to speak “*Black stylised English*” which they access through

rap and hip-hop. The differing multilingual experience, reported in Zhu Hua & Li Wei (in press), with regard to learning, maintaining and using languages, as evident in three transnational families from China living in Britain are tied to the families' and individuals' sense of belonging and imagination. The notion of imagination is also relevant to language classrooms where "language learners' actual and desired memberships in imagined communities affect their learning trajectories, influencing their agency, motivation, investment, and resistance in the learning of English" (Palvenko & Norton, 2007, p.669).

Diverse identification practice challenges the myths of "homogenous" communities. Transnational communities are often labelled as Chinese, Polish, Somali communities using their countries of origins or ethnicity, as if they are homogeneous entities. However, within communities, there are internal differences and complexities. Through investigating the use of address terms and "talk about social, cultural, and linguistic practice" in intergenerational talk in Chinese transnational families, Zhu Hua (2010) reveals that there are intergenerational differences in their sociocultural affiliation. The explicit and inexplicit discussion about appropriateness of linguistic, social and cultural practices serve as a direct means of socialising younger generations into the identities which parent generation holds onto. But new identities also emerge through agency of younger generation. Li Wei and Zhu Hua (2013) demonstrate how new identities are developed. A group of "Chinese" students in London universities with diverse linguistic and migrant backgrounds have opted to create a new, multilingual, transnational identity for themselves. They take control over positioning themselves flexibly, and develop new modes of communication through translanguaging practices and new language ideologies. While fully aware of differences among themselves, they are able to construct a transnational identity, free from the physical boundaries of the countries of origin, and focus on the here-and-now.

When identity becomes identification and doing, and is achieved through "strategic emphasis" (Harris and Rampton, 2003) or "strategic positioning" (De Fina & Perrino 2013), the underlying assumption is that participants are rational: they set goals, determine actions and mobilise resources to achieve the goal. While it is questionable

how applicable and generalisable this rational model is, a number of studies have confirmed the employment of “strategic essentialism” (a term proposed by Spivak 1985/1996) in migrants’ attempt to temporarily “essentialise” themselves in order to achieve certain goals. Eide (2010) discusses the media experience of individuals with a minority background in Norway. Some of them have to emphasise their ethnicity in order to obtain media attention. One of her subjects, Hamid, reported that as an elected leader of an organisation, he has tried to contact the press to voice a certain political initiative which has nothing to do with ethnicity, minority or religion. His effort was ignored until he presented himself as the first such leader from an ethnic minority background. In a discussion with one key participant as part of the research project of “Translation and Translanguaging: Investigating Linguistic and Cultural Transformations in Superdiverse Wards in Four UK Cities”, the key participant talked about her experience of applying for a casting role as an actress. As someone with Polish background and an East European appearance, she often gets a call from her agent when they are looking for a Polish or Russian nurse or cleaning lady. While she does not like it, she has to live with it and to work around it, since they seem to be the only roles she gets. Once she figures out the inner working of the “typecast”, she begins to introduce herself as a “Polish actress” half-jokingly when she meets other members of a cast (Zhu Hua, Li Wei and Lyons, tbc).

Seeing identity as something with which participants can do a number of things requires an understanding that identification is a process of negotiation (Canagarajah 2007, 2015; Zhu Hua 2014, 2015b). The negotiation is about differences and similarities, alignment between self-oriented identities and other-ascribed identities, power relations and voice. Zhu Hua (2014) illustrates the process through a model of (mis)alignment: alignment occurs when self-oriented identity matches the identity ascribed by others. However, when they do not match, there is a misalignment and participants can negotiate whether and to what extent they would accept identities assigned by others. In a conversation among a group of international students from VOICE corpus analysed in Zhu Hua (2015b), an Argentinian speaker resisted the Spanish identity assigned by another speaker by saying “yeah but actually we’re not Spanish” with a clear emphasis on “not being Spanish”. The first person plural pronoun “we” in his utterance was likely to refer to other Argentinian participants in the conversation and hence serves as an inclusive

marker for Argentinian participants, but exclusive marker for other non-Argentinian participants. In the rest of the conversation, his resistance was rejected by the first speaker who insisted on legitimacy of assuming one's ethnicity on the basis of the "language" they speak, as well as sympathised with or echoed to various degrees by other conversation participants. Although there was laughter between utterances, the conversation characterised with overlapping and latched utterances, collaborative completion of turns, fast turn-taking came through as an emotionally charged event.

Research on identities in mobility also contributes to the current research on identities by building on or triggering renewed interest in established analytical tools and concepts and developing new ones. Examples are given below.

*Membership categorization device* (MCD, Sacks 1972) explains how people order objects of the world into categories such as family, Londoner, Mexican, student, etc, according to some *conventional expectations* about what constitutes normative behaviour of a category (category-bound activities). MCD has proved to be conducive to the analysis of how some identities are made relevant or salient by speakers through drawing inferences on the choices of and changes in categories. Using MCD as its main analytical concept, Zhu Hua (2015a) examines intergenerational interactions among Chinese immigrant communities in the UK and demonstrates that assumed "cultural" memberships of speakers (be it Chinese, English, or Sino-British) are not relevant to interactions all the time. Instead, their relevance is contingent on the interplay of self-orientation and ascription-by-others. Other examples of the application of MCD can be found in Antaki & Widdicombe (1998) and Nguyen & Kasper (2009).

Participants in interactions rely on *indexicality* or indexical cues to evoke the relevance of particular category-bound features and activities associated with identities. Examples of indexical cues include accent, code-switching, address terms, cultural-specific terms, among other things. The link between linguistic form and identity is indirect in the first place but gradually becomes direct over time when these forms are used as strategic social actions (Ochs, 1992, 1993, 1996). Silverstein (2003) further develops a model which argues for multiple levels or "orders" of indexicality. Blommaert (2007) provides

an example of how orders of indexicality, along with the notion of polycentricity (i.e. multiple concurrent linguistic norms within a community), enable analysts to “connect microscopic instances of communicative practice to larger-scale political and sociological patterns and structures” (p.127).

*Stance*, as defined by Du Bois (2007: 163), is “a public act by a social actor, achieved through overt means, of evaluating an object, positioning the self, and aligning with other subjects in respect of any salient dimension of the stance field.” It is closely related to the notion of indexicality, as language along with other semiotic resources indexes one’s affective, epistemic or evaluative interactional stance. Bucholtz (2009) illustrates how the notions of stance and indexicality can be applied to interpret how Mexican immigrant youth take stance and index their gender, ethnicity, age or region through “fleeting” interactional moves. Baynham (2015) uses stance to analyse a narrative of a Moroccan talking about his early stages of migration in the UK in the 1970s.

Similar to stance, the notion of *positioning* is often used in identity research to differentiate how interactants make their choices of or orientation to a particular kind of identity. Harré & van Langenhove (1999) propose several kinds of positioning: first- and second positioning, performative and accountative positioning, moral and personal positioning, self and other positioning, and tacit and intentional positioning. Further contrasts have been proposed lately: formulaic and narrative positioning (Dailey-O’Cain and Liebscher 2009), direct vs. indirect positioning (Bucholtz and Hall, 2005) and explicit vs. implicit positioning (Liebscher and Dailey-O’Cain, 2013). Liebscher and Dailey-O’Cain (2013) provides examples of how the German migrants in Canada make use of multilingual tools as well as non-linguistic resources to position selves and others as German language experts, attriters (those who have lost their first languages), balanced bilinguals, or language learners.

In recent years, new notions have been incorporated into studies on identities in mobility. For example, Goebel (2013, 2014) uses the notion of *enregisterment*, defined by Agar (2007: 55) as a process “whereby diverse behavioural signs (whether linguistic, non-linguistic, or both) are functionally reanalysed as cultural models of action”, to analyse

social and language/semiotics dynamics. His studies show how a group of Indonesians do togetherness in a transnational setting located in Japan and how language, identity and social relationships play out in two areas in Indonesia where is characterised by linguistic and cultural diversity amid flow of population. Wortham and Rhodes (2012) explore how narratives of Mexican immigrants in an American town emerge and move across different *scales*, which, as an analytical notion, transcend the “micro-macro dialectic”, and become an important resource for their social identification.

### ***Intersectionality***

Anthias (2012: 102) argues that “transnational migration studies need to be framed within a contextual, dynamic and processual analysis that recognises the interconnectedness of different identities and hierarchical structures relating to, for example, gender, ethnicity, ‘race’ and class at different levels in society.” The heuristic device that equips researchers with the required analytical sensitivity is, as she proposes, the idea of intersectionality. The concept of intersectionality originated from feminist scholarship during the 1970s and 1980s (e.g. Crenshaw 1989) in their attempt to counter the trend in gender studies which often depart from “white middle-class heterosexual women’s experiences” (Lundström 2014: 16) and therefore failed to contest social inequality and power structure dividing women as well as between men and women (see a review, see Choo and Ferree 2010). By investigating multiple positions such as race, gender, class, sexuality, age, nationality, religion, etc, together and in a nonadditive way, intersectionality thus “complicates one-dimensional racial locations, gendered relations or class positions, and rejects the idea that categories can be neatly added to each other” (Lundström 2014: 16). Choo & Ferree (2010) further analyse three foci of intersectionality in practice, which are termed as group-, process- and system-centred. They argue that intersectionality moves “multiply-marginalized” groups and their perspectives from the periphery to the centre (group-centred focus); Seeing intersectionality as a process does not just add groups into the mix, but highlights the transformative effect of intersectional relations at multiple levels (process-centred focus); Viewing intersectionality as shaping the entire social system, not confined to a specific

institution, enables researchers to interpret social inequality in its situated and historical contexts (system-centred).

Recently, some studies on identities in mobility have adopted an intersectionality approach and draw attention to the interaction of race, ethnicity, gender, class or sexuality in the process of identification. In Lundström's multi-site ethnographic study of Swedish migrant women in the US, Singapore and Spain (2014), she examines the intersection of whiteness and gender in mobility and "how western privilege has to be re-located and re-negotiated in relation to local formations of race, class, gender, sexuality and age in different geopolitical spaces" (p.170). It offers a complex view of how transnational, national and regional racial logics of whiteness interplay with each other: Swedish women, who represented a modern colonial version of European whiteness, can pass as the local in the United States, but not in Spain; in Singapore, their natural, suntan-like whiteness is demoted due to the destabilisation of British colonial version of racial hierarchies and the local's paradoxical desire to appear visually white. In addition to these regional variations, Swedish women are often confronted with "lingering gender inequality" both in their (former) homes and in the host country. In Singapore, Swedish women and Philippian and Indonesian migrant women often come together as "mistresses" and "maids" in the former's domestic space, a contact zone of inequality and privilege. Tiers clearly exist in the transnational workforce and global restructuring (Parreñas 2001: 31). For the Swedish women, who often take a career break and are relocated to Singapore as housewives, hiring domestic workers serve as "cushion" for them in the new form of power structure where they put on hold their career, financial independence, gender equality and social equality.

Block (2015a) discusses that a "class-based" intersectional approach can be useful in highlighting the ways that "individuals are declassified and then reclassified in host societies" (p. 15). An example of such an approach can be found in Block and Corona (2014) which explores the experience of adolescent Latinos in Barcelona in terms of their social class, and racialized, ethnicised, and gendered positioning. All of them have the experience of being the object of racial profiling as they stand out with their South American appearance. They were frequently regarded as "danger" on the street. One informant

originally from the Dominican Republic reported that he felt compelled to wear baggy clothes as a rapper, because he was Black and it is what “adolescent males with his physical experience were expected to do” in the local discourse (p.37).

Intersectionality opens up a new line of investigation in researching identities in mobility. When used alongside the existing approaches in a balanced and coherent manner, intersectionality gives voices to “concerns about inequality based on misrecognition and misrepresentation (racism, sexism, homophobia, national hatred, etc.) and inequality based on the unequal distribution of economic resources” (Block and Corona 2014: 39). It has the potential to develop into one of exciting areas in research on identity in mobility in the future.

### **Issues and ongoing debates**

Within the research on identities on a whole, there has been a general shift away from an essentialist position on identity which sees identity as stable, fixed and pre-determined towards a dynamic, emergent account of identity which regards identity as a process rather than an end product. Although there has not been a full-scale replacement of essentialist views (Lytra, 2016), the emergent account has become a default position in applied linguistics (Block, 2015b). The question, however, remains: how far can we go when we talk about agency, fluidity and flexibility which come with social constructivism? Ultimately, this is a question about the relationship between structure and agency (for a review, see Block 2015a). As critiqued by May (2001) and Dervin (2012), in some studies following social constructivism approach, agency of participants in doing identity has been taken to an extreme to imply that all choices become possible and identity has become a “free-floating” concept. The above discussed issues of authenticity and enoughness surface frequently in studies of identities in mobility and remind us that while negotiation is the key to identification, there are limits to it due to social structure, power relationships and unequal access to resources. The ultimate test for becoming and doing identities can be found in Chun (2013), in which the author presents a case of a young Chinese American YouTube star constructing an “ironic blackness” identity

through embodying speech style typically regarded as “black” in the USA and making fun of hegemonic images of black and Asian masculinity. The viewers’ interpretations, as revealed in quotations, metalinguistic remarks and declaration of love in the comments, are mixed: some viewers problematized the star’s linguistic essentialism or inauthenticity and denied his blackness, while some viewers aligned with his experience of acting black.

Similar to authenticity, the issue of legitimacy is closely linked to political struggle over identity and belonging in terms of who is in and out and who is here first. Frello (2015) analyses how legitimacy of blended identities of two migrants living in Denmark was positioned differently by the programme hosts and their co-debaters on Danish television. Abraham Topcagic was introduced as a “typically Bosnian” in a debate about the Bosnian war alongside a “Serb” and a “Croat” participant. His mixed family background was brought up in the introduction as a basis for legitimacy and his (supposedly well-informed) insights. In contrast, Slavko Labovic, originally from Serbia and having spent most of his life in Denmark, was “squarely” treated as a “Serb” by the host in a debate about the Kosovo war. His attempt to utilise his co-Danishness in front of a Danish audience was rejected by other participants, due to the fact that he was speaking the politically unacceptable discourse of Serbian nationalism. The author further argues that “the legitimacy of hybridity could not be claimed. It could only be given.” (p.204). The author may be pessimistic when talking about the non-negotiability of legitimacy, but in the case of Labovic and many others, they are not in any position to negotiate.

## **Implications**

The unprecedented complexity of identities in global migration era calls for a different approach to identities in practice. In a paper with an intriguing title of “*You can’t put me in a box: superdiversity and the end of identity politics in Britain*” published by the Institute for Public Policy Research, a UK leading think tank, Simon Fanshawe and Dhananjayan Sriskandarajah (2010) made a case for reframing the “tick-box approach to identity” underpinning many policies towards promoting equality. The authors argue while the identity politics and social movements since the 1960s have given voice to

women or minorities who were marginalized, it is time to consider changes to this orthodox approach to identity and to think about new ways of political mobilisation. Putting people into a box or labelling them into one of boxes (gender, race, disability, sexuality, faith and belief, and age), which characterizes the current practice, are too simplistic and too blunt to effective remedies.

In the last few years, there are some imaginative grass-roots campaigns aimed to question the bias in people's thinking about race and ethnicity. "I, Too, Am Harvard" is such an example. Originated in Harvard University, the campaign uses a collection of photos of black students from Harvard University holding messages about their experience of being black and being misrepresented. The examples of messages include "Having an opinion does not make me an angry black woman"; "Can you read?"; or "you don't sound black. You sound smart." The campaign quickly spread to other universities including the University of Oxford, University of Cambridge, and McGill University and turned into an international campaign challenging stereotypes against visible minorities. Another example is the Drop-the-I-word campaign which started in the US in 2010. The campaign has led to the discontinued use of the adjective "illegal" in many countries when referring to immigrants who cross borders without authorization. The argument behind the campaign is that although the act is illegal, the person involved is not.

### **Future directions**

*Inequality agenda.* The issues of authenticity and legitimacy, practices of "fitting into a box", "strategic essentialism", and "heritagging" and intersubjective, contradictory, and dialectical aspects of identities discussed above prompt further research on the tension between structure and agency, power struggle between insiders and outsiders and mostly importantly, social, political and economic inequality in identification. As researchers, our task is to go beyond decoding the process of identification and to ask the questions of "why", "what consequences" and "who bear the consequences".

*Superdiversity agenda.* We have seen some impact of superdiversity on identities in mobility. The connectivities that take place virtually, physically or through imagination among people on the move challenge the validity of binary dichotomies we use in

everyday, such as minority vs. majority, immigrant vs. local, homeland vs. host. With superdiversity permeating every corner of the world, how does it continue to impact the way people go about identities or identification?

### **Summary**

To conclude, research on identities in mobility contributes to identity research by testing out many claims on identity in the context of change, contact and connectivity. It offers an opportunity to examine to what extent one's membership, affiliation, and sense of belonging to their place or culture of origin and new place of settlement are affected by the process of border crossing and how new identities and dynamics develop through the process. What has emerged through new orientations to identities in mobility is an unprecedented complexity, an emphasis on identification rather than identity and intersection of multiple identities such as race, ethnicity, gender, class or sexuality. There is a greater need to resist the temptation to reification embedded in existing labels and binary contrasts, to normalise contradictories and ambivalence in identification and to see identities as situated and temporal accomplishment as well as in its historicity.

### **Further Reading**

*Annual Review of Applied Linguistics* (2015, Volume 35) contains a number of review articles on identities including social class by Block, translanguaging and identity in educational setting by Creese & Blackledge, identity and a model of investment by Davin and Norton and transnationalism and multilingualism by Duff.

De Fina A. and Perrino, S. (eds) (2013) 'Transnational Identities'. A special issue of *Applied Linguistics* 34/5. 509-622.

(A collection of empirical research articles on the construction of transnational identities in different geographical areas and via different media.)

Dervin, F. and Risager, K. (eds) (2015) *Researching Identity and Interculturality*. New York: Routledge.

(A collection of chapters offering a multi-disciplinary overview on researching identity.)

Preece, S. (ed) (2016) *Handbook of Language and Identity*. New York: Routledge.

(A handbook providing a clear and comprehensive survey of the field of language and identity from an applied linguistics perspective.)

## References

- Agha, S. (2007) *Language and Social Relations*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Anderson, B. (1983/1991) *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*, London: Verso.
- Ang, I. (2001) *On Not Speaking Chinese. Living between Asia and the West*. London: Routledge.
- Antaki, C. and Widdicombe, S. (eds.). (1998) *Identities in Talk*. London: Sage.
- Anthias, F. (2012) 'Transnational mobilities, migration research and intersectionality. Towards a translocational frame', *Nordic Journal of Migration Research*. 2(2): 102-110
- Bauman, R. (1992) 'Contextualization, tradition, and the dialogue of genres: Icelandic legends of the *kraftask'ald*', in A. Duranti and C. Goodwin (eds) *Rethinking Context: Language as an Interactive Phenomenon* (pp. 125–145), Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press.
- Baynham, M. (2015) 'Identity brought about or along? Narrative as a privileged site for researching intercultural identities', in F. Dervin and K. Risager (eds) *Researching Identity and Interculturality* (pp.67-88), London: Routledge.
- Bennett, J. M. (1993) 'Cultural marginality: Identity issues in intercultural training', in R. M. Paige (ed), *Education for the Intercultural Experience* (pp. 109-135), Yarmouth, ME: Intercultural Press.
- Bennett, J. M. (2008) 'On becoming a global soul: A path to engagement during study abroad', in V. Savicki (ed), *Developing Intercultural Competence and Transformation* (pp. 13-31), Sterling, VA: Stylus.

- Bhabha, H. K. (1994). *The Location of Culture*, London: Routledge.
- Block, D. (2015a) 'The structure and agency dilemma in identity and intercultural communication research', in C. Jenks, J. Lou and Aditi Bhatia (eds), *The Discourse of Culture and Identity in National and Transnational Contexts* (pp.6-27), New York: Routledge.
- Block, D. (2015b) 'Social Class in Applied Linguistics', *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics* 35: 1–19.
- Block, D. and Corona, V. (2014) 'Exploring class-based intersectionality', *Language, Culture and Curriculum*, 27: 27–42.
- Blommaert, J. (2007) 'Sociolinguistics and discourse analysis: Orders of indexicality and polycentricity', *Journal of Multicultural Discourses* 2(2): 115-130.
- Blommaert, J. (2013) 'Complexity, Accent, and Conviviality: Concluding Comments', *Applied Linguistics* 34(5): 613–622.
- Blommaert, J. and Varis, P. (2011) 'Enough is enough: the heuristics of authenticity in superdiversity,' *Working Papers in Urban Language and Literacies*, paper 76 (London, Albany, Ghent, Tilburg).
- Bucholtz, M. (1995) 'From Mulatta to Mestiza: Language and the reshaping of ethnic identity', in K. Hall and M. Bucholtz (eds), *Gender Articulated: Language the Socially Constructed Self* (pp.351-374), New York: Routledge.
- Bucholtz, M. (2009) 'From stance to style: Gender, interaction, and indexicality in Mexican immigrant youth slang', in A. Jaffe (ed.) *Stance: Sociolinguistic Perspectives* (pp. 146–170), Oxford, U.K.: Oxford University Press.
- Bucholtz, M. and Hall, K. (2005) 'Identity and interaction: A sociocultural linguistic approach', *Discourse Studies* 7: 585–614.

- Canagarajah, S. (2007) Lingua Franca English, Multilingual Communities, and Language acquisition, *The Modern Language Journal* 91: 923-939.
- Canagarajah, S. (2015) 'Agency and power in intercultural communication: Negotiating English in translocal spaces', in C. Jenks, J. Lou and A. Bhatia (eds), *The Discourse of Culture and Identity in National and Transnational Contexts* (pp. 82-104), New York: Routledge.
- Choo, H. Y. and Ferree, M. M. (2010) 'Practicing intersectionality in sociological research: A critical analysis of inclusions and institutions in the study of inequalities', *Sociological Theory* 28(2): 129-149.
- Chun, E. (2013) 'Ironic Blackness as Masculine Cool: Asian American Language and Authenticity on YouTube', *Applied Linguistics* 34(5): 592-612.
- Cohen, R. (2008) *Global Diasporas* (2<sup>nd</sup> edition). London: Routledge.
- Crenshaw, K. (1989) 'Demarginalizing the intersection of race and sex: A black feminist critique of antidiscrimination doctrine, feminist theory, and antiracist politics', *The University of Chicago Legal Forum* 140:139-167.
- Cutler, C. (2003) "'Keeping it real": White hip-hoppers' discourses of language, race, and authenticity', *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology* 13(2): 211-233.
- Day, D. (1998) 'Being ascribed, and resisting. Membership of an ethnic group', in C. Antaki and S. Widdicombe (eds) *Identities in Talk* (pp. 151-170), London: Sage.
- Dailey-O'Cain, J. and Liebscher, G. (2006) 'Language learners' use of discourse markers as evidence for a mixed code', *International Journal of Bilingualism* 10(1): 89-109.
- De Fina, A. (2013) 'Top-down and bottom-up strategies of identity construction in ethnic media', *Applied Linguistics* 34(5): 554-573.

- De Fina, A. and Perrino, S. (2013) 'Transnational Identities', *Applied Linguistics* 34(5): 509–515.
- De Fina, A., Schiffrin, D. and Bamberg, M. (eds). (2006) *Discourse and Identity*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Dervin, F. (2012) 'Cultural identity, representation and othering', in J. Jackson (ed) *The Routledge Handbook of Language and Intercultural Communication* (pp. 181-194), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Dervin, F. and Risager, K. (eds) (2015) *Researching Identity and Interculturality*. New York: Routledge.
- Du Bois, J. (2007) 'The stance triangle', in R. Englebretson (ed) *Stance taking in Discourse: Subjectivity, Evaluation, Interaction* (pp.139-192). Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Duff, P. (2015) Transnationalism, Multilingualism, and Identity, *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics* 35: 57–80.
- Edwards, J. (2009). *Language and Identity*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Eide, E. (2010). 'Strategic Essentialism and Ethnification. Hand in Glove?' *Nordicom Review* 31(2): 63-78.
- Fanshawe, S. and Sriskandarajah, D. (2010) *You can't put me in a box. Super-diversity and the end of identity politics in Britain*, London: ippr.
- Fought, C. (2006) *Language and Ethnicity*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Frello, B. (2015) 'On legitimate and illegitimate blendings. Towards an analytics of hybridity', in F. Dervin and K. Risager (eds) *Researching identity and Interculturality* (pp. 193-210), New York: Routledge.
- Goebel, Z. (2013) 'Indonesians doing togetherness in Japan', *Tilburg Papers in Culture Studies*, paper 67 (Tilburg University).

- Goebel, Z. (2014) *Language, Migration, and Identity: Neighborhood Talk in Indonesia*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Harris, R. and Rampton, B. (2003) *The language, ethnicity and race reader*. London: Routledge.
- Harré, R. and van Langenhove, L. (1999) Introducing positioning theory. In R. Harré and L. van Langenhove (eds.) *Positioning theory* (pp.14-31). London: Sage.
- Hegel, G. W. F. (1807/1977) *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller, Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Higham, J. (1955) *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1860–1925*, New Brunswick: Rutgers, The State University.
- Hobsbawm, E. J. (1983) ‘Inventing traditions,’ in E. J. Hobsbawm and T. O. Ranger (eds) *The Invention of Tradition* (pp. 1–14), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Ibrahim, A. (1999). ‘Becoming black: Rap and hip-hop, race, gender, identity, and the politics of ESL learning’, *TESOL quarterly* 33(3): 349-369.
- Jackson, P., Crang, P. and Dwyer, C. (2004) ‘Introduction: The spaces of transnationality’, in P. Jackson, P. Crang and C. Dwyer (eds) *Transnational Spaces* (pp. 1–23), London: Routledge.
- Jenkins. R. (2008) *Rethinking Ethnicity. Arguments and Explorations*. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, London: Sage.
- Lam, W. S. E. (2008) ‘Language socialization in online communities’, in P. Duff and N. H. Hornberger (eds) *Encyclopedia of Language and Education: Vol. 8. Language Socialization* (pp. 301–311), New York, NY: Springer.
- Lam, W. S. E. (2013) ‘Multilingual practices in transnational digital contexts’, *TESOL Quarterly* 47(4): 820–825.

- Lam, W. S. E. (2014) 'Literacy and capital in immigrant youths' online networks across countries', *Learning, Media and Technology* 39(4): 488–506
- Lam, W. S. E. and Warriner, D. S. (2012) 'Transnationalism and literacy: Investigating the mobility of people, languages, texts, and practices in contexts of migration. A review of research', *Reading Research Quarterly* 47(2): 191–215.
- Lee, J-E. J. (2009) "'She's hungarious so she's Mexican but she's most likely Indian": Negotiating ethnic labels in a California junior high school', *Pragmatics* 19(1): 39-63
- Li, J. and Juffermans, K. (2011) *Multilingual Europe 2.0: Dutch-Chinese youth identities in the era of superdiversity* [Working Papers in Urban Language and Literacies 71]. <http://www.kcl.ac.uk/innovation/groups/ldc/publications/workingpapers/download.aspx>
- Li, Wei and Zhu Hua (2013) 'Diaspora: Multilingual and intercultural communication across time and space'. *AILA Review* 26: 42-56.
- Liebscher, G. and Dailey-O'Cain, J. (2013) *Language, Space and Identity in Migration*, London: Palgrave Macmillan
- Lorente, B. P. and Tupas, T. R. F. (2013) '(Un)emancipatory hybridity: Selling English in an unequal world', in R. Rubdy and L. Alsagoff (eds) *The Global-local Interface and Hybridity: Exploring Language and Identity* (pp. 66–82), Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- Lundström, C. (2014) *White Migrations. Gender Whiteness and Privilege in Transnational Migration*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Lytra, V. (2016) 'Language and ethnic identity', in S. Preece (ed) *Handbook of Language and Identity* (pp. 131-145). New York: Routledge.
- May, S. (2001) *Language and Minority Rights*. London: Longman.

- Nguyen, H. t. and Kasper, G. (eds) (2009) *Talk-in-Interaction: Multilingual perspectives*, Hawai'i: University of Hawai'i National Foreign Language Resource Center.
- Ochs, E. (1992) 'Indexing gender', in A. Duranti and C. Goodwin (eds) *Rethinking Context: Language as an Interactive Phenomenon* (pp. 335–358). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Ochs, E. (1993) 'Constructing social identity: A language socialization perspective', *Research on Language and Social Interaction* 26: 287–306.
- Ochs, E. (1996) 'Linguistic resources for socializing humanity', in J. Gumperz and S. Levinson (eds) *Rethinking Linguistic Relativity* (pp. 407–437), Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press.
- Omoniyi, T. (2006) 'Hierarchy of identities', in T. Omoniyi and G. White (eds) *Sociolinguistics of Identity* (pp.11-33). London: Continuum.
- Otsuji, E. and Pennycook, A. (2010) 'Metrolingualism: fixity, fluidity and language in flux', *International Journal of Multilingualism* 7, 240–54.
- Parreñas, R. S. (2001) 'Migrant Filipina domestic workers and the international division of reproductive labor', *Gender and Society*, 14(4): 560-580.
- Pavlenko, A. and Blackledge, A. (2003) 'Introduction: New theoretical approaches to the study of negotiation of identities in multilingual contexts', in A. Pavlenko and A. Blackledge (eds) *Negotiation of Identities in Multilingual Contexts* (pp. 1-33), Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- Pavlenko, A. and Norton, B. (2007) 'Imagined communities, identity, and English language learning', in J. Cummins and C. Davison (eds), *International Handbook of English Language Teaching* (pp. 669-680). Springer US.
- Quayson, A. and Daswani, G. (2013) 'Introduction –Diaspora and transnationalism. Scapes, scales and scopes', in A. Quayson and G. Daswani (eds) *A Companion to Diaspora and Transnationalism* (pp.1-26). Oxford: Wiley Blackwell.

- Raghunandan, K. (2012) 'Hyphenated Identities: Negotiating 'Indianness' and being Indo-Trinidadian', *CRGS*, no. 6, ed. Gabrielle Hosein and Lisa Outar, pp. 1-19.
- Rampton, B. (1995) '*Crossing: Language and Ethnicity among Adolescents*', New York: Longman.
- Sacks, H. (1972) 'On the analyzability of stories by children', in J. Gumperz and D. Hymes (eds) *Directions in Sociolinguistics* (pp. 325-345), New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston.
- Schaetti, B. F. (1998) *Global Nomad Identity: Hypothesizing a Developmental Model* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). The Graduate College of the Union Institute, Seattle, WA.
- Shenk, P. S. (2007) '“I'm Mexican, remember?” Constructing ethnic identities via authenticating discourse', *Journal of Sociolinguistics* 11(2): 194–220.
- Silverstein, M. (2003) 'Indexical order and the dialectics of sociolinguistic life', *Language and Communication* 23: 193–229.
- Spivak, G. C. (1985/1996) 'Subaltern Studies. Deconstructing Historiography', in D. Landry and G. MacLean (ed) (1996) *The Spivak Reader* (pp.203-236). London: Routledge.
- Tsagarousianou, R. (2004) 'Rethinking the concept of diaspora: Mobility, connectivity and communication in a globalized world', *Westminster Papers in Communication and Culture* 1(1): 52-65.
- Tracy, K. (2002) *Everyday Talk: Building and Reflecting Identities*. New York & London: The Guilford Press.
- Wortham, S. and Rhodes, C. (2012) 'The production of relevant scales: Social identification of migrants during rapid demographic change in one American town', *Applied Linguistics Review* 3(1): 75–99.

- Zhu Hua (2010) 'Language socialisation and interculturality: Address terms in intergenerational talk in Chinese diasporic families', *Language and Intercultural Communication* 10 (3): 189-205.
- Zhu Hua (2014) *Exploring Intercultural Communication: Language in Action*. London: Routledge.
- Zhu Hua (2015a) 'Interculturality: Reconceptualising cultural memberships and identities', in F. Dervin and K. Risager (eds.) *Researching Identity and Interculturality: Towards a more Reflexive and Critical Methodology* (pp.109-124), London: Routledge.
- Zhu Hua (2015b) Negotiation as the way of engagement in intercultural and lingua franca communication: Frames of reference and Interculturality. *Journal of English as Lingua Franca* 4(1): 63-90.
- Zhu Hua and Li Wei (2016). Transnational Experience, Aspiration and Family Language Policy. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*. DOI:10.1080/01434632.2015.1127928
- Zhu Hua, Li Wei & Lyons, A. (2016). Playful subversiveness and creativity: Doing a/n (Polish) artist in London. Working Papers in Translanguaging and Translation (WP. 16). Accessible at <http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/generic/tlang/documents/playful-subversiveness-and-creativity.pdf>
- Zimmerman, Don H. (1998) 'Identity, context and interaction', in C. Antaki and S. Widdicombe (eds) *Identities in Talk* (pp.87-106), London: Sage.

### **Biographical note**

Zhu Hua is Professor of Applied Linguistics and Communication and Head of Department in Birkbeck College, University of London. Her research interests are intercultural communication, multilingualism and child development. Her most recent publications include *Exploring Intercultural Communication: Language in Action* (2014, Routledge), *Crossing boundaries: Weaving Work, Life and Scholarship in Globalising Universities* (2016, Routledge) and *Research Methods in Intercultural Communication* (2016, Blackwell).