

# Migrant teachers and classroom encounters: Processes of intercultural learning

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## Abstract

Recent migration combined with strategies to diversify the teacher workforce has led to complexities in teacher diversity identified by the term 'superdiversity' (Vertovec, 2006). This article builds on recent work on the processes of convergence and superdiversity (Wessendorf, 2011) by focusing on meaningful encounters in the mathematics classroom. A sociolinguistics approach is used to discuss the performance of teacher identity, focusing on accent. An analysis of power shows tensions between Standard English and local vernaculars, involving microaggressions and opportunities for intercultural learning. The article concludes by discussing coping with microaggressions and the systemic implications for school policies and initial teacher training. It shows how microaggressions offer opportunities for intercultural learning and how classroom spaces can be developed that promote both this and the dispositions of an intercultural habitus.

**Keywords:** superdiversity; intercultural; microaggressions; encounters; initial teacher training (ITT)

## Introduction

Recent political and public concern over the numbers of migrants has led to the creation of a hostile environment for migration, and it has become increasingly difficult for all migrants (including those with skills) to gain employment in the United Kingdom (UK). Nonetheless, a combination of the advent of new migration since the end of the Cold War, subsidies for postgraduate certificate in education (PGCE) teacher training for which European Union (EU) citizens are eligible and staff shortages has led to a growth in the numbers of teachers with a migrant trajectory being shown in official government statistics (DfE, 2013a). Combined with the diversifying pupil population (DfE, 2013b) this heterogeneous and superdiverse (Vertovec, 2006) teacher population has led to the possibility of a new complexity of daily intercultural encounters for teachers and pupils alike, whether they have experienced migration or remained relatively immobile. Instead of focusing on the opportunities in academic subjects and extracurricular activities that a superdiverse school population offers, this article will discuss the informal curriculum of encounters in school classrooms where, as well as in their teaching of specific subjects, migrant teachers may be recognized (mixed with other identity categories and markers) by their accent and have to face, for example, the question 'Where are you from?' By considering classroom vignettes that describe such recognitions, an analysis drawing on linguistic ethnography (Rampton *et al.*, 2014) describes the evolution of classroom events and how the interchange of comments contributes to intercultural learning. This leads to a consideration of implications for

the training of teachers, including regarding mentoring and other school policies in the early years of their careers.

## Theoretical frames

The categories of superdiversity usefully draw attention to the complexity of diversity that may be unacknowledged, for example, in highlighting the complexities of visa restrictions within a single household. As pointed out by Varis (2017), this may contribute to the development of educational policy and school pastoral practices and extend to the daily classroom routine of teachers pronouncing names when calling the register. Yet, concerns have been raised about the definition of the categories and about the possibility of misleading essentialist assumptions (Deumert, 2014) and, with these, questions about the actual meaning of the term 'superdiversity': when does a population become superdiverse? In response to these limitations, Arnaut *et al.* (2017) have suggested three key research themes as central to a superdiversity perspective, including the study of convergence in areas of high migration and the emergence of cultural forms and practices. For example, as a result of her ethnography of everyday encounters in the London borough of Hackney, Wessendorf (2011) described a 'cornershop cosmopolitanism', outlining the practices of erasure and recognition that allowed people to develop dispositions of an intercultural habitus that enabled them to successfully go about their everyday lives in this superdiverse borough. This study builds upon the perspective of convergence and recognizes the professional purposes and values of schools and teachers by using Valentine's (2008: 325) notion of meaningful encounters: 'contact that actually changes values and translates beyond the specifics of the individual moment into a more general positive respect for – rather than merely tolerance of – others.'

What is important is the repeated professional performances of teachers and how their interaction with pupils generates 'positive respect' through intercultural learning, which Rizvi (2009: 265) describes as:

pedagogic tasks that help students explore the criss-crossing of transnational circuits of communication, the flows of global capital and the cross-cutting of local, translocal, and transnational social practices.

The limitation of this definition is that, in pointing to pedagogic tasks, Rizvi suggests that the formal curriculum may lead teachers in some areas, for example mathematics, to argue that opportunities for intercultural learning are limited. This article extends the processes of 'criss-crossing' to the hidden curriculum of intercultural learning during classroom encounters between migrant teachers and pupils, whatever the particular demands and opportunities of the academic subject.

These encounters will be discussed in this article by showing how language, considered as a communicative resource structured by repertoires (Blommaert, 2010), can be used to create on-the-spot meanings through the:

assumption of similarity and of difference, of authority and of peripherality, of rights and of obligations, and through the downgrading and erasure of alternatives and of difference as valuable. (Arnaut *et al.*, 2017: 11)

These local assemblages are informed by all aspects of embodied performance and show how discussions are sedimented by national policies and by their implementation in schools. The latter demonstrates how power constitutes and constrains (Youdell, 2006) the performance of migrant teachers and the dynamic of classroom encounters

with pupils. Moreover, the operation of whiteness and the embodied production and use of Standard English are of particular importance.

The operation of whiteness has been identified by Lander (2014: 100) as being important in the performance of difference and in processes of erasure:

an invisible component of how policy makers, policy interpreters and recipients work in both complicit and unknowing ways to advantage one group whilst disadvantaging others, namely those from BME [black and minority ethnic] groups.

This perspective is useful in terms of policy implementation and how the often tacit 'rules of the game' (Bourdieu, [1992] 2007) of any field or school are often unavailable to teachers who spent their school life learning the rules of classrooms in other countries. Whiteness also addresses the relative absence of race in Vertovec's discussion of superdiversity (Back *et al.*, 2018) and this article will show how recent migration from Eastern Europe challenges the boundaries and assumed privileges of whiteness.

The Teachers' Standards (2011) expect all teachers to employ 'the correct use of Standard English, whatever the teacher's specialist subject' (DfE, 2011), which confirms both the symbolic power of Standard English and its use as a marker of difference for multilingual teachers:

All linguistic practices are measured against the legitimate practices, i.e. the practices of those who are dominant. (Bourdieu, 1994: 53)

To chart the dynamic tensions of classroom encounters, this article will use Bakhtin's concept of heteroglossia (Blackledge and Creese, 2010) to distinguish between the centripetal force and legitimate power of Standard English, and the centrifugal forces of local vernacular and humour. To exemplify the effects of race and the symbolic power of Standard English for multilingual speakers, this microanalysis will also draw on the concept of microaggressions:

layered assaults, based on race and its intersections with gender, class, sexuality, language, immigration status, phenotype, accent, or surname [that can] can take a psychological, physiological, and academic toll. (Huber and Solórzano, 2015: 298)

The possibility of microaggressions and the simultaneous complexity of the personal and institutional dimension of meaningful encounters throughout a teacher's day is in contrast to the relative fluidities of 'commonplace diversity' described by Wessendorf (2011) as existing outside institutions. More apposite is Noble's (2009: 46) phrase 'labour of intercultural community', which emphasizes both the professional ethic and the personal resilience required for the development of intercultural learning: 'the concrete social encounters that bring differences together and the productive forms of communal labour that create local forms of liveability' (Noble, 2009: 60).

This article will discuss the development of 'local forms of liveability' that demonstrate the possibility of intercultural learning and the development of an 'intercultural habitus' (Wise and Velayutham, 2014) for both migrant teachers and their pupils.

## The study

The data is drawn from semi-structured interviews conducted during a retrospective longitudinal case study that enabled students to reflect upon their experiences at the

end of two separate school placements during a PGCE (Mathematics) course (or at certain points in their early teaching careers). I was the course tutor and the research was approved by the university's ethics committee. The sample was purposive and was designed to represent the diversity that existed among the course participants, including regarding age, gender, race, and migration trajectory. The vignettes used in this article are representative of the experience of the whole data set and they were chosen as good examples of the themes of microaggressions and intercultural learning that are the article's main *foci*.

**Table 1: Table of Participant Information**

Pseudonym	Age	Gender	Country of birth	Migration channel	Migration trajectory	Degree	UK work experience
Christophe	37	M	Cameroon	EU	Cam.– Ger.–UK**	BSc Economics	Warehouse Labourer
Dieter	31	M	Germany	EU	Germany– UK*	BSc Economics	Retail Manager
Osasune	37	F	Spain	EU	Spain– UK***	BSc Chemistry	Chemist/ Mother Admin jobs in Asian community/ Mother
Semye	28	F	India	Highly skilled	India–UK*	BSc Maths MSc Maths	

\* Migration to follow a loved one

\*\* Onward migration

\*\*\* Student migration

The interviews were conversational encounters, in acknowledgement both of the difficulties of speaking about race and migration identified by Puwar (2004) and the specific difficulties that the participants might experience when taking part in an interview in English. The dialogic flexibility of this structure allowed participants to follow 'their trails' (Riessman, 2008: 24) in order to develop their confidence and make public knowledge that is often hidden, and made to seem irrelevant, in the processes of migration and adaptation to the UK.

The analysis of the data began immediately after the interviews, through a process of noting important points (Braun and Clarke, 2013) in field notebooks, which were then explored further, in this case by reference to the literature on microaggressions. This recursive process of interpretation and analysis culminated in thematic coding, which resulted in the identification of the themes of accent and recognition referred to in this article.

## Findings

I will focus on classrooms because these are the main site of regular meaningful encounters with pupils where teachers 'bring off' (Maclure, 2003: 55) their identity. This focus on performance will permit a consideration of microaggressions through the effects of embodiment and the physical production of sounds (accent), as well as through language practices, including the use of names. It will show how language 'is a key form of educational racism and discrimination' (May, 2014: 130) as well as how intercultural learning, which may be unexpected and visceral, is an integral part of the classroom performances of migrant teachers, their pupils and their mentors.

## Accent and communication in academic teaching

The use of a teacher's voice is important, and the use of the word 'accent', or rather 'audible difference' (Miller, 2003), has come to be associated with Standard English in terms of the Teachers' Standards although, in the context of the global use of English, it might be better to refer to it as 'Standard British English' (Baratta, 2017: para. 8.3). The use of this one version of English suggests that local speech patterns that might 'lack aspects of the standard ... are thus "deficient"' (Baratta, 2017: para. 8.11) and does not take into account the fact that pupils, in their everyday lives (including their virtual lives on the internet), may be used to communicating with a range of audible differences. This is an important communicative resource that pupils bring to understanding spoken English in a multilingual classroom and it can be overlooked by those observing classes, especially if they are from outside the local area. Such an observer, in giving feedback to Christophe, showed how this might happen:

They [the pupils] could understand you before you even say it all; you really have a very good way of interacting with them – because they understood you. But I couldn't understand some of the words, or what you really meant in some of the things you were saying. To be very honest with you the children just understood you, everything you said they just got it right. ... I know he was talking about my accent. (Christophe)

Christophe's comment on the feedback suggests how accent can be used to mark difference and how the prestige associated with Standard English can become 'an invisible silent violence' (Bourdieu, 1994: 52). While it could be argued that Christophe offers pupils the opportunity to learn to listen to global Englishes (Kopperoinen, 2011) as part of the process of intercultural learning, it is clear that the observer's judgement did not initially take account either of this or of the pupils' experiences of audible difference, and hence the aural repertoires they acquire during their everyday encounters of commonplace diversity. Nonetheless, by consulting the pupils the observer prioritizes progress in learning and implicitly acknowledges that the notion of plural accents is more useful than that of a single accent, both to avoid stigmatization (Baratta, 2017) and to emphasize that: 'in the case that a teacher, or speaker, has a strong accent, it does not necessarily mean that the speaker is incomprehensible' (Ballard, 2013: 50).

Christophe is a mathematics teacher, and he communicated mathematics through a complex and effective multimodal performance that drew upon diagrams and gesture (de Freitas and Sinclair, 2012). This arguably resulted in learning through pupils watching and listening more attentively. In all events, this emphasizes the importance of developing, and naming, embodied communicative repertoires for multilingual teachers (with resultant benefits for all teachers).

## Everyday routines: pronunciation of names and use of the local vernacular

Teachers also have to carry out many routine tasks, such as calling the register, for which they cannot use their subject knowledge as a basis for authority and power in their encounters, relying instead on delegated authority and school expectations. The multilingual (L2) Christophe, who spoke French, German and English, could very quickly be subjected to belittling instability during registration (which can be an important element of all lessons), when pupils could, in a moment, challenge his authority:

'Sir my name is not Hedder, please. Stop calling my name Hedder!' You're like 'Excuse me, what is your name?' 'Sir' ... and I got her to sit in front of me and try to teach me how, because every other student got involved. (Christophe)

This episode shows how Christophe's mispronunciation of English names unintentionally challenged local practices of politeness, and, combined with the symbolic power of monolingualism, created a strong centrifugal force that he was unable to challenge. As 'every other student got involved', we can see how the participation framework of the encounter quickly changed, as bystanders, those originally watching, joined in and Christophe's authority was dissipated. Although it may be described as humour (or the carnivalesque), the psychological effect of this microaggression (which entailed a complete reversal of roles) is better interpreted as an effect of phenotype and stigmatized accent, which Puwar (2004: 60) has described as a form of racist belittling in which people 'are assumed to have reduced capacities'. Such explanations draw upon colonialist ideologies of English (and privileges of whiteness) and stereotypes that I shall discuss later, while also showing the importance of addressing specific challenges of accent modification and management for L2 teachers. At the same time, this encounter shows how power (and especially that of the 'native speaker') is involved in intercultural learning through accent modification and practices of politeness. During the course of the research, a girl of Lithuanian heritage reported that she was never called by her Lithuanian first name; instead, monolingual (L1) teachers always addressed her by her second name (with the addition of the moniker 'Miss'). If learning is to be intercultural, then the girl (and Christophe) should expect L1 speakers of English, especially staff, to reciprocate their efforts towards polite address by learning how to pronounce their names.

In contrast to this, L2 speakers can position themselves authoritatively by using phrases, in what Bakhtin refers to as a chain of speech communion (Bakhtin, [1986] 2007), commonly used by other teachers or from other parts of their speech repertoire. In this way, Osasune, who had previously worked in London and studied for a Master's degree in the UK, was able to confidently use local and professional communicative repertoires when she faced direct challenges in her classroom:

He was misbehaving again ... and again I asked him to be quiet and he said, 'What? What?' He confronted me but, 'I can't understand you', and he told me that and 'I know, can't you understand me? We are not having a conversation out here now? I won't argue with you any more. I won't mess with you any more. We'll just have one-to-one conversation in front of everybody.' (Osasune)

Here, Osasune did not avoid (in front of the whole class) the claim that a pupil could not understand her accent. Instead, her confident use of the local English vernacular phrase 'I won't mess with you' demonstrated a 'toughness of non-standard language forms' (Garrett, 2010: 14) that accentuated her authority as a teacher and effectively ended the challenge she faced. This demonstrates the complications of meaningful encounters and how (despite the variation in syntax evident in this and other quotes throughout the article) Osasune was able to achieve the right mix (Blommaert and Backus, 2011) and successfully use the ensuing flow of power to challenge a microaggression asserted by a male native (L1) speaker.

## Attributed identities: speaking from another place

The sound of speech not only affects claims about comprehension but also indicates that 'people speak from a place' (Blommaert, 2005: 223) and listeners can thereby attribute identities to speakers using local discourses. This gives rise to both a hierarchy of places and languages (using, for example, the metaphor of centre and periphery), and, since some places are better known than others, to a varying sense of erasure among migrant teachers. Such recognitions provide opportunities to address macrothemes in history and in discourses of race and gender, in contrast to the important microprocesses of intercultural learning that have already been discussed.

Although pupils were fascinated when Dieter spoke to a pupil in German – as this language often features in the modern language curriculum of secondary schools, doing this increased Dieter's authority – he experienced a more challenging historical positioning each time he started to teach a new class:

'Are you German, do you know Hitler?' That's really ... that's really classic ... and I say, 'Well I don't know Hitler in person but I know how he looked like.' If the question is, 'Do you like Hitler?' then I say 'No. I don't like Hitler' and I say 'I think it's a very hard thing to like Hitler because he did all these awful things you probably learned about in history' ... So I try to be as kind of like calmly and nicely about it as possible. (Dieter)

Dieter did not anticipate such questioning before becoming a teacher in England, although his use of the term 'really classic' suggests that this had become a frequent question that could not be sidestepped. He was able to draw upon his growing familiarity with such questions and his own experience of growing up in Germany to assemble on the spot (and in the middle of a maths lesson) a response that demonstrated intercultural awareness and learning. Not only did Dieter show he was not afraid to answer a potentially (and possibly deliberately) difficult question, but he modulated his answer with calm tones 'so that pupils would not think I was that sort of German' and linked it to the pupil's own learning of history. This utterance addressed not just an individual, but also the whole class (at least), and shows how an identity attributed through sound led to a frank authoritative discussion of significant historical events.

The fact that Dieter was able to refer to the school's history curriculum indicates how a discussion of Germany is part of Western modernity; however, the history of Western colonialism is not so well established in either school or university curricula in England. All people of colour in the sample could be positioned by colonialist explanations of difference based upon theories and practices of racialization (Wolfe, 2016) and the visible difference of phenotype. The discourse of race supported by the processes of whiteness in initial teacher training (ITT) (Lander, 2014; Bhopal, 2015) represents a significant matter of social justice that is not amenable to the strategies of fitting in represented by strategies of accent accommodation (Baratta, 2017):

Oh just my colour, I can't change my colour, but I can change my dress and hair care. I tried all sorts of things to get along with the kids, so that the kids can, you know, recognize me and they can approve me as their teacher so that they will come and approach as well. (Semye)

This demonstrates Semye's resilience in the face of microaggressions and her determined pursuit of becoming a teacher, to resume a career she had started in India before using the Highly Skilled Migrant Programme as a channel through which to join her husband in the UK. The changes she made to 'get along with the kids' show

the importance of considering the systemic implications of racism (Schmidt, 2010) in programmes for addressing teacher shortages through skilled migration, as well as the constraints that racism (and other stigmatizing forms of othering experienced by migrants from Eastern Europe, for example) place on the processes of intercultural learning.

A focus on the linguistic processes of encounter illustrates the ongoing reverberations of colonialism accentuated by migration, especially to the former seat of Empire, as illustrated by Christophe's experience:

My English at the start of it I thought it was here 'the Queen's language'. I was just speaking the English as the English, what my students would call the 'dictionary English'. They tell me that 'Sir, that's dictionary English' and I will tell them 'No, it's the Queen's language'. I say 'It's not Cockney' and they will start laughing. I said 'I don't speak Cockney, I speak the Queen's language'. They say like 'Yes Sir, because your language is too direct, too straight, it just ... you don't say anything that's not in the dictionary'.

Christophe's use of the Queen's English emphasizes the prestige of his English, which is associated with the highest strata of an empire that created local elites to rule colonies. This makes for complex links between performance and aspiration, where the 'imperial language is a sign of a black person's ability to rise to some of the heights of white civilisation' (Puwar, 2004: 108). Christophe, at last at the heart of Empire, selected from such repertoires and produced utterances with the simultaneous complexity of polycentricity (Blommaert, 2010) to address his audience of pupils in London, in the same way as he might have expected to speak as a teacher in Cameroon. His biography (as an embattled member of the English-speaking minority in French-speaking Cameroon) had created repertoires and language hierarchies that were not only shorn of symbolic power in the process of migration, but which also made him vulnerable to the complications of humour and the power shifts of heteroglossia. Even his claim that he did not speak Cockney (to emphasize, by contrasting it with a stigmatized form, the symbolic power of the Queen's English) became a source of amusement among his pupils.

The complicated and lengthy process of relocalizing (Pennycook, 2010) language led Christophe into a process of intercultural learning, from initial microaggressions to a process of decolonization that challenged the politeness of the imperial language:

I never thought I would say to somebody 'Are you all right?' 'Yes it's all right, why are you asking? Are you all right?' It's like 'Good afternoon', 'Good evening', 'Good afternoon, how are you?' It's not like 'Are you all right?' 'Yeah, I'm all right'. I had to learn that from them 'Are you all right?' 'Yes', coming down 'Are you all right?' 'I'm all right, thank you'. (Christophe)

Christophe's use of 'never thought' emphasizes the repeated practices of the imperial language and how they sediment the dispositions of the linguistic habitus in what Freire ([1970] 2001) refers to as colonization of the mind. Christophe's continued reference to the propriety of 'Good afternoon, how are you?' in contrast to 'Are you all right?' clearly shows both the emotional struggles of intercultural learning and change in the disposition of the linguistic habitus. It is nonetheless a dialogic process that Christophe could not engage in alone: he 'had to learn that from [the pupils]'. As well as illustrating the process of relocalization, this displays the limitations of the ideology of Standard English as a guide to local practice. Christophe had to relocalize his language resources in negotiation with pupils to develop speech



patterns 'considered "appropriate" – thus standard – for a given context' (Baratta, 2017: para. 8.34), and this contributed to his being able to teach the class. Similar negotiations that acknowledged the authority of L1 speakers were used by L2 teachers to ask pupils for help with pronouncing subject-specific words they found difficult. Significantly, this was a process, identified by Canagarajah (2016: 51) in a large study, which is often used by skilled migrants:

a 'two-way' process of mutual negotiation of language differences ... If such an accommodation happens in both directions it is possible that both parties will come out of their own varieties and co-construct new intersubjective norms for these translocal encounters.

Described as 'third spaces' in a study of classroom interactions by Abrahams and Ingram (2013), mutual negotiations were achieved in different ways by different teachers, which resulted in a combination of change and accommodation, suggested by Blommaert and Backus's (2011) phrase 'getting the right mix'. This phrase describes the sense of compromise in the face of powerful discourses, echoed sometimes in microaggressions, but also the reward of the pleasure of being a teacher. Such compromises attest to the difficulties of intercultural learning and to the emotional labour of managing the tension of the visibility and invisibility of microaggressions that was part of the experience of all participants in the study. Both the successes and failures of microaggressions were often dealt with, and enjoyed, alone, reflecting what Puwar (2004: 133) describes as 'the high degree of sensitivity associated with issues to do with race [which] makes it extremely difficult to speak out about the matter, even if it is on an anonymous basis.'

The layered model of microaggressions proposed by Huber and Solórzano shows how the organization and history of schools, as well as public beliefs and ideologies, affect the ways in which non-dominant groups such as migrant teachers are positioned. I shall now turn to an exploration of the implications of this study at all levels.

## Discussion and concluding remarks

This article has shown how the processes of institutional convergence (Arnaut et al., 2017) among superdiverse school populations can be evidenced by a focus on the performance of teacher identity in classrooms. It has shown this through a consideration of audible difference (Miller, 2003), mainly in terms of differences of sound and syntax that many teachers in the study referred to by the unitary term 'accent'. The vignettes, representative of those considered in the wider study, have shown how microaggressions are experienced by all migrant teachers. This analytical concept (which could be extended to other categories of identity) therefore offers a way in which individuals can break the isolation and tension of hidden events by sharing them with colleagues, thereby providing a useful avenue for developing institutional diversity policy and diversity training in ITT. The vignettes, by focusing on Valentine's (2008) notion of meaningful encounters in classrooms, have also highlighted how a hidden curriculum of intercultural learning may sediment an intercultural habitus (Wise and Velayutham, 2014) and support declared curriculum aims, ranging from local community cohesion to issues of global understanding.

According to the Teachers' Standards, teachers are expected to use Standard English, although there is no direct reference therein to matters of sound and accent and any act of comparison can stigmatize, especially in combination with assumptions of race, other global Englishes. This is especially the case when combined with the

power of L1 English speakers to exert the expert power of 'native' speakers. Although the study has shown that there are some issues of accent accommodation that L2 speakers could address, especially in the pronunciation of names, the study of language use pursued by sociolinguistics has much to offer in terms of understanding classroom encounters and, therefore, ITT. Blommaert's (2010) description of communicative repertoires indicates that spoken language is not a bounded system and therefore challenges the complete authority of L1 English speakers. Communicative repertoires can be used to identify the relative strengths of L2 teachers, particularly in the area of their subject expertise, and my study has shown how, in the case of Osasune, repertoires of the local vernacular allow L2 speakers to surprise, and effectively challenge the potential of stigmatized assumptions about their language use. Combined with the importance of multimodal semiosis offered by embodied gestures, diagrams and information and communications technology classroom support (de Freitas and Sinclair, 2012), this allows migrant teachers to develop their authority when participating in classroom encounters. I would therefore agree with May (2014) that the sociolinguistic perspective, which forms the basis of the linguistic ethnography approach (Rampton *et al.*, 2014) taken by this article, has much to offer the design of both ITT courses and later professional development for teachers.

The study has shown that repeated classroom encounters offer opportunities, through a combination of subject and intercultural learning, of developing a relational classroom space where: 'different identities, values, and practices co-exist, but [one where they] combine together to generate new identities, values, and practices' (Wei, 2011: 1223).

This shows the limitations of the apprentice model of teaching espoused by Gove (2010) and the importance of teacher values (Mockler, 2011) emphasized by Rizvi's (2009) depiction of intercultural education as a criss-crossing (instead of being restricted to the end of the class) and, in this study, by the respect that may be developed through regular meaningful classroom encounters. Despite this, in many instances teachers faced microaggressions alone, and I shall now turn to the implications of this for ITT and the policy base of individual institutions.

The concept of microaggressions and the analysis of the power of Standard English and of the assumed expertise of L1 'mother tongue' speakers offers a way of challenging 'complicit and unknowing ways to advantage one group' (Lander, 2014: 100), described by Lander as the operation of whiteness. By revealing how microaggressions are experienced by all migrant teachers regardless of phenotype (while at the same time acknowledging the importance of both phenotype and race, as described by Semye), this study has shown how the concept of whiteness can usefully be extended to match the needs of a superdiverse migrant population. Superdiversity draws attention to the complexities of policymaking and of practices of mentoring during both ITT and the early careers of migrant teachers when 'The management of ignorance itself becomes a substantive issue and *inequalities* in communicative resources have to be addressed, not just "intercultural differences"' (Blommaert and Rampton, 2011: 7; emphasis in original).

Acknowledging ignorance and the effects of language stigmatization and microaggressions presents a particular challenge in the mentoring of migrant teachers, as evidenced during the observation of Christophe outlined in this article. On that occasion, the observer adopted strategies to adjust his commentary, but it is clear that the management of ignorance means that mentors have to be able to address issues of accent accommodation as well as recognizing the importance of biographical aspects of multilingualism, as discussed in the way in which Christophe regulated his 'dictionary

English' to accommodate local language practices. This amounts to a training agenda for mentors and tutors in ITT that not only responds to the traditional demands of reflexivity, but aims to create a relational space, as described by Wei (2011), that allows for student teachers to confidently share their concerns and impressions in the criss-crossing of intercultural learning. Although superdiversity and microaggressions are an important perspective in the processes of mentoring, Lander's discussion of whiteness suggests that this should be combined with a systemic review of ITT processes and curricula, including selection procedures, student discussion of microaggressions during teacher training, and awareness of immigration procedures and processes among all staff.

The discussion of microaggressions in this article represents an approach to acknowledging the experience of migrant teachers in the classrooms in which they aspire to work. In doing so, it challenges the recent pronouncements of distinguished politicians that multicultural education is dead. On the contrary, the microethnography of this article shows that it is very much alive and is informed by discourse and practices of race and migration, and by the organization of the here and there that the power geometry of colonialism established, but which the new technologies of communication and travel have challenged. This article has shown how intercultural learning, disguised in repeated meaningful encounters, can sometimes, in the classrooms of Dieter and others, address such matters. The production of spaces that this study has shown can result from repeated opportunities, for such learning is not only turned towards the future, but leaves a trace by borrowing from the work of Bourdieu that has framed this study, developing the dispositions of an intercultural habitus, which involves 'habits, dispositions and speech practices of intercultural accommodation and connection' (Wise and Velayutham, 2014: 423). This remains an important outcome of education, of the act of going to school for pupils and for migrant teachers trying to establish themselves in the career of their choice.

## Notes on the contributor

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