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Defining the new speaker: theoretical perspectives and learner trajectories

Abstract: This article addresses the concept of the new speaker from both a theoretical/definitional perspective and from the standpoint of a situated, ethnographic analysis. The more general and theoretical focus addresses some of the presuppositions and entailments of the new speaker concept, both as an "on-the-ground" concept that gets operationalized by social actors and as an analytical category used by researchers. In particular, it considers how the new speaker concept elucidates criteria in relation to which minority language-speaking communities of practice are conceptualized and enacted. The ethnographic focus, on Corsican adult language classrooms, explores how new-speakerness is invoked implicitly in Corsica, where the term "new speaker" itself is not in circulation, but is a target of language planning strategies. This ethnographic research reveals complex identity and language ideological issues that are raised about the legitimacy, authority and authenticity of Corsican language learners in a sociolinguistic context in which both formal/institutional and informal/social use of the minority language is quite restricted.

Keywords: Corsica, adult language learning, legitimacy, authority, authenticity

1 Introduction

In Corsica, creating new speakers of Corsican is a clear language planning priority. Unlike many of the contexts described in this issue, however, the term "new speaker" has not appeared as an explicit category in language planning or everyday discourse. So at this point in the Corsican language planning trajectory, there are now enough new, as opposed to "traditional" adult speakers of Corsican to begin to raise definitional questions about speaker categories, but too few to make them a significant, named category. Grounded in this ethnographic

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context, this article takes two directions: one particularistic and the other, more general and theoretical. The particularistic focus uses the lens of the new speaker concept to explore some of the complex identity and language ideological issues that are raised about the legitimacy, authority and authenticity of Corsican language learners in a sociolinguistic context in which both formal/institutional and informal/social use of the minority language is quite restricted. The more general focus addresses some of the presuppositions and entailments of the new speaker concept, both as an "on-the-ground" category that gets operationalized by social actors and as an analytical category used by researchers. In particular, it considers how the new speaker concept elucidates criteria in relation to which minority language-speaking communities of practice are conceptualized and enacted.

The primary ethnographic data for this article consists of participant observation with adult learners attending Corsican language classes in a variety of educational settings, from informal once-weekly meetings in a village hall to intensive "immersion weekends" administered through the continuing education system. While the Corsican language association Scola Corsa has run volunteer, community-based Corsican classes on a small scale for 30 years in several locations on the island, the immersion courses were only recently launched and funded as part of a five-year language planning document adopted by the Corsican Regional Collectivity in 2007. They represent a new emphasis on the promotion of Corsican outside of schools and across generations. Unlike most schoolchildren who are placed in bilingual programs by their parents, these adult learners are actively choosing to learn the language. They thus have a more or less explicit orientation towards a potential new speaker status and reflexive consciousness of issues of language and identity. These potential new speakers include "heritage" learners: Corsicans who, while they do not use the language actively, have a wide variety of levels and types of active and passive linguistic competence but few ready opportunities to use and improve their skills. They also include non-Corsicans who live on the island and orient to the cultural and linguistic integration offered by learning Corsican. The heterogeneity of adult Corsican language student profiles, motivations and linguistic trajectories stories offer us nuanced pictures of what being or becoming a new speaker might mean in the current Corsican sociolinguistic context. In fact, we will see that whether or not these students claim or are ascribed new speaker status is contingent on a number of factors.

Shifting to a societal scale, my emphasis on potentiality relates to the point made above: that creating new speakers is a social project for Corsican society that is yet to be realized on a large scale. As a project for society, this minority language acquisition planning is both retrospective and prospective. Its retrospective character draws on the authority of familiar "sociolinguistic authenticities" (Coupland 2003) based on traditional, historical models of speakerhood and

cultural contexts of production and reproduction of the language. These are au-thenticities linked, in the sociolinguistic imagination, to a "pre-language shift" time. At the same time, the language revitalization processes that have taken place over the last three decades have created new forms of sociolinguistic au-thority and legitimacy (Jaffe 2011) connected with formal knowledge, written competence and mastery of "high" registers (artistic and academic). Corsican language planning is prospective in that it involves the imagination of new com-munities of practice of the minority language that will be created out of an amal-gam of "new" and "old" speakers and ways of speaking that Corsicans today can only imagine.

2 Models of minority language trajectories

The notion of the "new speaker" enters into a semantic domain concerning lan-guage shift and revitalization that is already populated with two terms that carry a great deal of ideological freight: namely, the "semi-speaker" and the "native speaker". Whether attested as an explicit category or an implicit or nascent cate-gory in discourses about language and language learners, the "new speaker" raises fundamental questions about what it means to be a speaker of a minority language at a particular moment in that language's social trajectory.

The term "semi-speaker" was introduced by Dorian in her work on East Sunderland Gaelic speakers (1977). It figures as an index of language shift and represents downward movement, or "decline" of the speech community and lin-guistic attrition/simplification/hybridization ("decay") of the minority code itself. The "semi-speaker" is a potential harbinger of "language death". Responding to the very same kind of sociolinguistic context, the figure of the "new speaker" is an inherently more hopeful reading: he or she evokes an upward movement away from language shift and loss rather than an inevitable downward slope. That is, both non- and semi-speakers are envisioned as potential new speakers. Figure 1 represents the temporal imaginaries embedded in these discourses.

But if the "new speaker" contrasts in a positive way with the "semi-speaker" on a downhill slope of language shift, he or she also contrasts with the "native speaker". Envisioned in the topographical timeline of "decline" and "ascent", the "native speaker" is the unmarked "old/traditional" and "authentic" speaker who exists both "up", in terms of competence, and "back", in terms of time. This raises questions about "nativeness" as a source of authority and as a target in the upward movement of language revitalization and the creation of new speakers. In the introduction to a recent edited volume on the native speaker concept, Doerr makes the further point that contexts of heritage language shift and revitalization
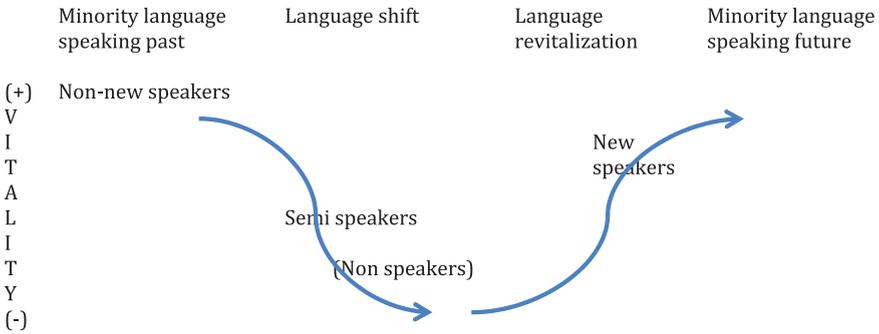
Fig. 1: Temporal imaginary of new speakers as progress

offer "a challenge to the belief in the automatic and complete competence of 'native speakers' in their 'native languages'" and show that "linguistic competence is a product of complex processes involving education, language and cultural policies in a given society" (Doerr 2009: 36). She also points out that "processes of language revitalization also challenge the notion of language as being homogenous" (2009: 36).

The discussion of "new" vs. "native" speakers draws our attention to socio-linguistic phenomena above the individual speaker level; in particular, the kinds of shifts in communities of practice that create the conditions for new speakers to become a salient sociolinguistic category. Figure 2 reconfigures the discourse represented in Figure 1, in which the endpoint (the second "top" of the hill) is a return to a place figured as equivalent to the point of departure (the past). This is of course an impossibility: a minority language speaking future is inevitably one in which communities of practice have been transformed; they are populated by people with different kinds of knowledge, acquired through different means than in the past and embedded in new regimes of value. Those shifts in users are also

Minority language speaking past	Language shift	Language revitalization	Minority language Speaking future
Non-new speakers	Non-new speakers Semi speakers (Non speakers)	Non-new speakers New speakers Semi speakers Non speakers	Non-new speakers New speakers Semi speakers Non speakers (?)
<---TIME--->			

Fig. 2: Shifting communities of practice

shifts in the nature of the code or codes being used. This table helps to frame the ethnographic questions that have guided my research: What configuration of linguistic and social components is imagined and legitimated in current practice? How is the new speaker positioned with respect to a minority language past and present, and how is he or she projected into a future under construction?

3 Definitional criteria

As mentioned above, "new speaker" can be an explicit/relatively established or an emergent/implicit emic category. It also has the potential to be used as an etic framework for categorizing profiles of speakers/learners that can then be compared and contrasted with "insider" social categorization practices. In all these cases, one of the fundamental sociolinguistic tasks is to identify the set of criteria being used to define self or others as new speakers. I would like to propose the following generic "menu" of criteria that may be mobilized (all or in part) in either popular or academic operationalizations of the term: (1) age of acquisition; (2) sequence and manner of acquisition; (3) type and level of linguistic and metalinguistic competence; (4) frequency and type of use; (5) self-identification and (6) social attribution. In the interests of space, I will be focusing here on the final three categories.

3.1 Types and levels of knowledge and competence

New speakers have been defined (see the Foreword to this issue) as adults who acquire a socially and communicatively consequential level of competence and practice in a minority language. The ethnographic and analytical task then becomes to identify what kinds, levels and "packages" of competence in the minority language "count" as sufficient; who does the evaluating, and what social or institutional forms of authority back up those evaluations. There are multiple categories and criteria that can be mobilized in the evaluation of competence. We can distinguish, for example, formal linguistic competence from communicative/pragmatic competence; academic competencies from those associated with colloquial registers. Standard language competence can similarly be differentiated from dialectal knowledge and we can speak about reading, writing, speaking and understanding as distinct types of competence. Finally, metalinguistic competence – the ability to talk reflexively about the language – is separable from competence in that language.

The point that I want to make is that in a given minority language context, they may not all be equally emphasized or valued, that there may not be social

coherence around priorities, and that all hierarchies of value are elements of the sociolinguistic field that are subject to modification. These criteria include objective, measurable linguistic competencies, but these are always evaluated within a social and ideological matrix that inflects the values attached to different kinds of linguistic competencies as well as the evaluative criteria used to define "success" or expertise within each category. Then there is the question of the relative value or weight given to the purely linguistic as opposed to the pragmatic, cultural, communicative or expressive functions of language. Judgments and rankings of competence may also be made with reference to the authority and authenticity of traditional or "old" forms, as they are contrasted with "new", academic or standardized ones (here, issues of minority language purism are implicated). "Old" and "new" forms often have multiple social indexicalities: they are mapped onto social identities and hierarchies, popular vs. elite forms of knowledge and contrasting (positive or negative) values of "modernity" vs. "pastness". These indexicalities are also subject to shift: that is, "learner" linguistic forms may stand out as "new speaker" indices at one point in a community's sociolinguistic trajectory, but may become the norm at some later date. There is also the extent to which becoming or being a speaker is associated with being able to use dialectal vs. standard forms (however these are defined); each category susceptible to being positively or negatively valued.

Metalinguistic knowledge is also a potentially socially valued form of capital that is connected with academic modes of acquisition and/or practice and is thus particularly salient in contexts like the Corsican one where most new speakers have formal educational experiences. Metalinguistic competence is also implicated in literacy practices, including new media practices in which writing is socially consequential, interactive, and often referred to by participants as "talking" to one another. Online contexts can also be vibrant communities of practice that require and motivate particular kinds of communicative competence that are candidates for inclusion under new speaker practices.

Competence is also a crucial element in social evaluations of "native speakerness", which involves socially and ideologically inflected judgments of competencies that have multiple components, from the linguistic to the pragmatic (see Doerr 2009; Frekko 2009; Makihara 2009). One question, then, with respect to the new speaker category, is the extent to which native speaker competencies (however defined) are targeted in minority language classes. Another question is whether or not new speakers aspire to be able to conceal their history of non-native acquisition – that is, to "pass" as native, or to "fullness" of competence defined with reference to new forms or types of speech functionality? Nativeness as a category also raises the question of the new speaker as an enduring identity: is one a new speaker forever, or do certain kinds of competence and use remove

the modifier "new"? Finally, both new and native speakerness for adult learners can be considered both stances that are susceptible to being performed/enacted and stance objects towards which individuals can align or disalign.

3.2 Usage

If we wish to define the new speaker as having a socially consequential level of usage, as compared to some normative understanding of minority language practice in a post-language shift world, we have to unpack both the norms and the types of usage that are indexed. This is particularly important given the fact that, both language shift and language revitalization may create domain-specific and often highly compartmentalized domains of usage and speakers whose domains of competence are also compartmentalized. For illustration, I refer the reader to the table of speaker profiles (Table 1) as an illustration of some of the potentials for compartmentalization and diversity of use. Anghjulina uses Corsican across multiple domains of her life: at work and at home, in speech and in writing. On the other end of the spectrum, Jeanne-Marie and Lucien use Corsican in almost no contexts outside the language classes they attend. Marie-Ange and Toussainte report fairly extensive practice of Corsican in informal social contexts but very little formal, professional or written experience. Monique has been taking a weekly class that places a great deal of emphasis on writing, which is one of her areas of strength, as is her knowledge of the lyrics to many songs by popular Corsican musical groups and the basic conversational knowledge she has acquired in her work with elderly patients. These diverse profiles raise questions such as whether or not being identified as a new speaker requires that the speaker have multiple domains of minority language use, and if so, whether some have more weight than others.

   With respect to the limited-extensive continuum, we can anticipate an interaction between the issue of domains and what will be taken as "greater than average" use. This often involves, in my experience, a privileging of informal social interaction. This has a relationship with ideas about "spontaneity" and "naturalness" as they are linked in both folk and some academic sociolinguistic frameworks with notions of "authentic speech" and its link to a "true" or primary self (Coupland 2003; Wolfson 1976). From an academic perspective, there is no necessary reason for some kinds or combinations of competence and practice to be given greater status as indices of newspeakerness than others. Our interest is in tracking how these priorities emerge and are expressed in particular contexts, how they affect minority language teaching and learning, and how these in turn

Table 1: Speaker profiles

Speaker	Profile
Anghjulina Marie-Ange	Late 40s; grew up in Corsican-speaking context. Education and early work experience on the French continent; attests little to no active use in last 20 years. High level of oral proficiency, but numerous lexical and some grammatical/formal gaps; little experience with writing. Currently in process of activating competence in order to be able to become a proficient narrator of Corsican legends/folktales in her current position as a docu-mentalist/librarian; wants to extend this work beyond the school context.
François	Mid-60s; retired doctor who quit medicine and returned to Corsica to pursue a solo acting/performance career ten years ago; early exposure to Corsican but little to no use before return to island. Knowledge of Italian, English. Strong high culture orientation (music, literature, theater, art); has adapted some of La Fontaine's fables in Corsican. Strong current commitment to speaking Corsican as much as possible, and to enriching his vocabulary and expression, both in writing and orally.
Sandrine	Late 20s; bilingual school teacher in third year of practice. Childhood spent on French continent, non-corsophone environment, no exposure to Corsican in school, no use of any kind until early twenties, coinciding with decision to become a teacher and live on Corsica. Learned Corsican by reading books, then by participating in online Corsican-language forum and by attending poetry events. Current partner is a slightly older "new speaker" with a similar profile who now participates as a poet in the *chjama è rispondi* (traditional poetic joust) circuit. Very committed to improving her competence; very aware of limits in her knowledge that have been pointed out to her by Corsican speakers.
Marina Raibaldi	40s; Romanian married to a Corsican. Weather presenter on FR3, the regional television station. The "face" of new speakerdom in Corsica in promotional material for the "Certificate of Corsican Language Competence" in CECR levels (A1–C2) offered by the Regional Collectivity. Presents weather in Corsican.
Toussainte	Early 50s; from Marseilles, married to a Corsican over 30 years, extensive exposure in village of residence among family and friends; level of oral competence; little formal or written knowledge. Attending Corsican language course with a Corsican-speaking colleague in her workplace, where they are both trying to promote greater use of Corsican among colleagues working in daycare/preschool contexts.
Jeanne-Marie	60s; born on Corsica, limited speaker in childhood and adolescence; married a non-Corsican and lived 40 years on the French continent, where she raised four boys. Negotiated return to island on retirement with husband, currently volunteers in the library at a prison where there are a few Corsican-speaking prisoners. Ability to communicate on a variety of topics through Corsican with recourse to French and Italian. Little knowledge of or orientation to writing.

Table 1 (cont.)

Speaker	Profile
Lucien	Late 20s; attended bilingual school through age 11 and took Corsican as a subject in secondary school. As late adolescent, became involved in musical group, singing in Corsican but not using Corsican in social contexts. Pursued a professional career path in audiovisual production. At age 24, decided to become a teacher, and realized that there were more opportunities and choices for bilingual teachers. With self-study and help from a family friend already teaching bilingually, studied for and passed the proficiency test for bilingual teaching. Currently in second year of practice.
Monique	Late 40s; not Corsican. Has lived on Corsica over 15 years and works as a home health worker in central Corsica; lots of contact with Corsican-speaking elderly patients, with whom she speaks Corsican. Long-term student in associative class. Good knowledge of writing conventions and local dialect features.
Alain	50s; one Corsican parent, from whom he is somewhat estranged. Grew up on the French continent and only recently returned to Corsica, where he has had a checkered work history, and where he does not live close to his family. This was also his first sustained exposure to spoken Corsican. When he joined an associative class in Fall of 2011, he was almost a complete beginner: understanding very little Corsican, and having no experience speaking or writing the language.

potentially reconfigure the packages of expected and valued competencies and uses.

3.3 Self- and other-attribution

Finally, new speakerness is a social status or identity that is the dynamic product of both self- and other-attributions and stances. Taking up an identity as a new speaker is often associated with a display of commitment. Table 1 illustrates that people have multiple forms and levels of identification and types of commitments that range from the political and professional to the more affective and social.

It is also pertinent to distinguish between levels of personal choice and agency as they relate to the kind of external pressures people experience – whether they are educational, familial, or professional. Similarly, heritage is a pole towards which a variety of potential new speakers can display different kinds and levels of orientation (some examples are also seen in Table 1).

Two additional points need to be made: the first is that self-identification is also conditioned by other-attribution; the second is that self- and other-attribution

are separable: not all self-attributions are ratified by others. We also need to take account of the fact that attributions of speaker identity have a variable relationship to speakers' displayed competence, depending on the evaluative framework in operation. Sometimes, relatively limited linguistic tokens are "taken as" indices of significant competence; on other occasions relatively substantial tokens are misrecognized or ignored. In contrast, some evaluations of new speakerness take place in regimented and consequential institutionalized regimes.

What is certain is that one cannot become a new speaker without being recognized as one by some other group, which is what makes the study of criteria, as mobilized in particular ethnographic and analytical contexts, so crucial.

4 In the adult Corsican-language classroom

In this section, I draw on data collected during 9 months of participation in four Corsican language classes in 2011–2012. Two were offered by the regional branch of the French adult continuing education network (GRETA). These classes were organized at the behest of the Corsican Territorial Collectivity (CTC) Corsican Language Service as part of the 5-year language planning agenda that was approved by the CTC in 2007. The class that I followed from January to May 2012 was billed as an "immersion weekend" course and met every two weeks in a major city in the South of the island for two hours on Friday and six to eight hours on Saturday. The 45 or so people who enrolled in this course were placed in three ability groups keyed to the testing level (in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages) that students were supposed to be able to achieve in Corsican at the end of the course. The top level being tested was "B1", characterized as "intermediate". I was in this class along with about 15 others with very varied linguistic profiles to be explored below. The majority of the students was over 45, with several retirees. Another GRETA class offered two evenings a week was organized in the small town near where I lived much later in 2012, and I attended this beginner-level ("A1") class from late March to mid-June somewhat more sporadically. Most of these students had no background in the language at all, and approximately half of those who started the class were not Corsican. The immersion weekends were taught by a cadre of five instructors, four of whom were Corsican language teachers at the middle/high school level and one who taught in elementary school. The beginner GRETA classes offered during the week were taught by elementary teachers in the local bilingual school.

The two other courses I participated in were run by volunteers. One was a long-running class that met once a week for 90 minutes and was organized by

Scola Corsa, the oldest association promoting Corsican language on the island. The other class also met once a week in the village where I lived and was offered by a Anghjulina, a former teacher in the village's bilingual school, now working in Corsican language administration (see Table 1). Compared to the B1 level immersion course, student experience and knowledge of Corsican in these classes was even more heterogenous. These classes were also less formal, involved a lower level of time commitment and were not at all oriented towards official recognition through testing.

4.1 Student experiences, goals and motivations

Discussion of goals and motivations for learning Corsican was (not surprisingly) an explicit focus of many of the first meetings of both immersion and associative classes; students' experiences as speakers or learners were also recurrent topics of discussion during regular sessions. The first general meeting of the immersion weekend course that began in January 2012 included introductions and short statements by all of the 45 people assembled. Approximately a third of the 45 or so people assembled were beginners of which a large percent was non-Corsican. Others ranged from novice to expert speakers

Among the non-Corsicans, there was a woman who said that she had been coming to Corsica for 40 years. "*J'adore ce pays*" 'I love this region/place', she said, and identified one of her motivations as being able to read the language and pronounce place names correctly. Another woman who self-identified as a beginner said that she had lived on Corsica for a long time, but never had the time or opportunity to learn the language. Now, she told us, her grandchildren made fun of her. The family "*trouve que c'est abbérant qu'elle y est depuis tant de temps sans le parler*" 'finds that it is inconceivable that she has been there for so long and doesn't speak it'. Another man alluded to a similar long-term history: he was not Corsican, but said he "understood more than he could speak" and noted that in his travels around the island, he had found that the individual speaker and the dialect region affected his comprehension. Yet another man in his early 60s told us that he had lived on the island for only two years, but was motivated to learn because of his four-month-old granddaughter, whose parents intended to enroll her in a bilingual preschool. He found it "normal" to want to learn Corsican on Corsica, even if he did not have a professional need to do so. Another man said he was from Marseille, but had some family roots in the Cap Corse; he had already learned some Corsican "as a form of adaptation" since moving to the island. A young preschool teacher who had moved to the island only four months earlier said, to murmur of approval, that she had quickly developed an "*envie person-*

nelle" 'personal desire' to learn. There were also two non-Corsican women (Dominique and Carol) who had married Corsican men over thirty years ago. Both spoke in Corsican, reporting having been around a lot of Corsican speakers and having fairly good comprehension skills but not being able to find occasions to practice speaking. They ended up being placed in the A2 (high novice) and B1 (intermediate) classes. As one of the non-Corsicans, I explained in Corsican that I had been coming to the island for over 20 years as a doctoral student and researcher and that I was interested in improving my spoken Corsican and understanding their experiences of the course

In the beginner immersion course that began in March 2012, a similar round of introductions was made. Of the 12 people who enrolled, all but two were non-Corsican. They included two people whose work environments were significantly Corsican-speaking: a pharmacist and supermarket cashier. The latter reported a work environment in which Corsican was used for solidarity functions between clients and staff and where her colleagues had asked her, "When are you going to learn to speak Corsican?" One woman was training in an agricultural field, and anticipated Corsican as being useful. Another woman in her late thirties was there to be able to support her young child, who was in a bilingual school. Several people cited the Corsican-speaking social environments in the villages where they lived as their motivations for joining the class. They included a couple (Armand and Véronique) in their late thirties who had moved to Corsica from the South of France as a deliberate lifestyle shift; he was not Corsican and she had very distant Corsican relations. On that first day of introductions, they evoked what emerged over the course of time as a very purposive agenda of social and cultural integration into network with many Corsican speakers in the village where they had settled. Finally, there was a policeman who reported that he had learned English and German in previous postings, recognized that Corsican "was its own separate language" and wanted to learn to understand it (in jest, someone asked if it was to do bilingual interrogations).

In the associative class I attended, three of the ten or so core members (including the association secretary) were not Corsican, and included Dominique, mentioned above, who interacted with a lot of older Corsican speakers in her work as a health aide. The other two had lived on the island for ten years or more.

Taken together, non-Corsicans' accounts of their language learning and motivations for language learning present a Corsica in which Corsican as a significant element of the culture that is connected to meaningful forms of participation in Corsican networks, despite the dominance of French in everyday life, and the fact that not all Corsicans speak the language. In the beginner immersion class, the administrator from the continuing education office who came to the first day of class commented that she was struck with the extent to which students in this

class, in contrast to the classes in the two bigger cities, were living in a Corsican "*bain linguistique*" 'linguistic bath' – immersed in the language. Some students, like Dominique and Carol, illustrated the linguistic skills one could acquire through long-term social participation. Others, like the man who mentioned traveling around the island, demonstrated metalinguistic knowledge about dialect variation. All participated in the classes because they projected future, increased participation in which knowing more Corsican would be a plus. What was less uniform and/or clearly defined in these accounts was the nature of their imagined future use of Corsican; in particular, whether or not they anticipated speaking the language extensively or, as we will discuss below, being accepted as speakers. For some, like Véronique, conversational competence was a clear goal that she described and embodied in her efforts to use Corsican in and out of class. In other cases, however, learners evoked more limited objectives that nevertheless could have important social integration functions: for example, pronouncing Corsican place names in an authentically Corsican rather than a French way or being able to relate to a grandchild's school curriculum. These goals did not necessarily involve extensive, active spoken competence. We will return to this issue below in discussion of the associative classes.

Turning to the Corsicans who joined the immersion classes, the theme of heritage and identity was a consistent substrate of student narratives about their motivations. In these narratives, Corsican always played a role in what we might call "identity completion": repair of sociolinguistic rupture in their personal trajectories. However, the nature of that rupture, and the sociolinguistic stances adopted by the students, varied considerably. In some cases, students spoke from a stance of relative linguistic security. Some knew how to speak, but were "filling in" knowledge of reading, writing and grammar. This was the case for Cécile, a retiree and a frequent class companion of mine on breaks and lunches. She characterized herself as bilingual in Corsican and French; she also had a good knowledge of English, which we sometimes spoke together. "*Parlu naturalemente*" 'I speak naturally', she told the class on the first day, explaining that she was mainly interested in learning more about Corsican linguistic structure and writing. Serge, who joined the class later in the term, was also a competent speaker with little to no knowledge of writing, but displayed little aptitude or interest in Corsican literacy. Marie-Ange (see Table 1) also spoke from a position of confidence about Corsican, although she not infrequently searched for words or expressions. She presented herself as reactivating knowledge she had once had and integrating a new kind of experience with Corsican into an established professional and creative profile as a storyteller.

Two other students with lesser oral fluency than Marie-Ange and Cécile presented Corsican as a language of heritage, but also as an extension of a pluri-

lingual self developed over the life course. These included Alice, a young professional who had learned some Italian and had also learned and spoken Spanish during some extensive travel in Spanish-speaking countries and François (see Table 1) who, like Marie-Ange, did not always know exactly how to say something in Corsican, but readily and confidently improvised using a plurilingual repertoire that also included some Italian and Spanish. Cristelle, who spoke fluently, reported that she and Toussainte had been making an effort to increase the use of Corsican by the daycare workers in the center where she was the director and she was looking to the immersion course to help her in the language activist agenda she already had underway. In all of these cases, Corsican enhanced/completed the linguistic repertoires of people with robust personal and/or professional identities and cultural competence and confidence. With respect to speaker categories, we can see that this category of student is neither completely "new" nor completely "native".

On the other end of the continuum of competence and confidence were students who told stories of linguistic and sometimes cultural insecurity. Jeanne-Marie's return to the island on retirement (Table 1), for example, had presented difficulties of re-integration. The Corsican she remembered was rusty and, in her view, a stigmatized variety. She did not feel that her efforts to use the language were met with acceptance by Corsican speakers; nor did she feel that the authentic cultural membership of Corsicans who had been "forced" to leave the island for work was sufficiently acknowledged. This was a source of pain and some bitterness. She also mentioned her daughter's experience of linguistic exclusion. A non-speaker, the daughter had returned from the French continent to teach in a Corsican secondary school. She felt that other colleagues used Corsican around her and used it as a litmus test of belonging. Antone, a man in his mid-fifties who attended the beginner immersion classes, reported a life spent in one of the two cities on the island and his genealogy as "Corsican grandparents and an Italian father". He currently lived in a small village surrounded by many Corsican-speaking cousins. While his comprehension was quite good, he often refrained from speaking because of lack of knowledge and/or insecurity about vocabulary or pronunciation. The subtext of his story was that a language learner identity was not a validated social position in this environment. We will return to issues of exclusion, below. Here, we can note the fragility of learner/potential new speaker status for some individuals.

Many students' reported motivations and experiences as learners or novice speakers fell in between the poles of linguistic and cultural confidence and insecurity described above. In the immersion weekend introductions, one woman in her late fifties told us about a recent and positive cultural apprenticeship: she had joined a singing class the previous year: "*Aghju amparatu à cantà in corsu è hè per*

questa ragione ch'è vogliu amparà à parlà" 'I learned how to sing in Corsican and it's for that reason that I want to learn to speak'. Two students, including Toussainte (mentioned in Table 1) evoked wanting to be able to speak to grandchildren who were going to be educated bilingually. Another two students mentioned grandparents: one older woman and a younger man who said with quite a bit of emotion that he was now learning Corsican "*in memoria di Babbone*" 'in his late grandfather's memory'. He had never been an active speaker and regretted "not having paid attention" to the Corsican classes he had to take in secondary school. Another man in his early thirties reported living for 17 years on the French continent, but was now working as a carpenter. "*Avà aghju un pocu di tempu per amparà*" 'Now I have some time to learn', he told us in Corsican and commented in French that being an artisan "could help to speak Corsican". Another young woman said that her cousins spoke Corsican with her but her workplace was not a corsophone one. At least four students said (some in French, some in Corsican) that they "understood but couldn't speak" and were assured by the teachers that it was normal for passive competence to be stronger than active competence. One of them mentioned that he could only speak when he was relaxed, and Toussainte joked that there would be an obligatory happy hour before class. In these accounts, Corsican is positively associated with heritage and identity, but it figures more as "added value" than as a core element of either identity or identity loss. As was the case for the non-Corsicans described above, anticipated future contexts of use of Corsican were often somewhat indeterminate and in some cases, fairly socially circumscribed.

4.2 Becoming/being a speaker

A recurrent theme in almost all student narratives was the difficulty of being or becoming a speaker – new or otherwise – of Corsican. These difficulties had diverse sources. One was the sociolinguistic context and the lack of "immersion" opportunities it offered to beginners and novices. Even for people who worked and lived in contexts where neighbors, friends and coworkers spoke Corsican, French remained the dominant language and often, the language used with people who were not considered "native" speakers of Corsican. Most of the students in the immersion class offered in the city said that they rarely heard the language or came in contact with a Corsican speaker: French saturated the airwaves of their daily routines and interactions. The space of the classrooms was thus for many one of the sole occasions in which they could be a part of a Corsican-speaking environment. Andria, a young man with considerable fluency in this class expressed this in saying that he was there "*per passà un mumentu à*

parlà corsu" 'to spend a bit of time speaking Corsican'. Thus many students in the classes had limited opportunities to practice what they had learned or already knew.

These conditions were addressed explicitly by Saveriu, one of the immersion weekend teachers. A young man in his early thirties, he taught Corsican in a local secondary school. Like all the other teachers in the immersion weekends, he presented himself as a "native" speaker and as a language activist. In our first session with him, he pointed out that the number of hours of class in the six months of the course added up to the equivalent of four days. Therefore, he told us, we needed to make the best of this very limited time together and try to speak as much as we could. Beyond that, he insisted, we needed to speak Corsican as much as possible outside of class; it had to be a commitment: "*U pocu chì si sà dì, ci vole à dilla, à i amici, à i vicini, à a famiglia*" 'However little you know how to say, you need to say it, to your friends, to your neighbors, to your family'. He told us that he had had some trepidations about his move from a more Corsican-speaking village to the city, but in fact was able to continue to do what he had always done: speak Corsican to people the whole day long. It was a conscious effort, but in his view, people were "waiting" to be addressed in Corsican. One of the women in the class commented, "*aveti a furtuna*" 'you're lucky', to which Saveriu immediately rejoined that it had nothing to do with good luck and everything to do with insistence. "*Quandu parlu, a ghjenti capisci è a majorità rispondi in corsu*" 'When I speak, people understand and the majority responds in Corsican'. He characterized himself as being an agent of sociolinguistic change: getting people to break the habit of treating French as the unmarked code. He told the story of his apartment building, where an English woman has lived for 20 years. She knows no Corsican because the neighbors, even though Corsican-speaking, have only ever spoken French to her; he on the other hand, used Corsican with all of them.

In this particular moment, and throughout the course, Saveriu addressed students as having both rights and obligations as sociolinguistic agents, both on their own behalf and on behalf of the society at large. He presented becoming a new speaker as an act of imposing one's will to create/activate the conditions in which one could learn. This involved violating sociolinguistic norms and forcing "native speakers" to become interlocutors. Francescu, another of the teachers, took the same position, but advocated a slightly less aggressive approach: "*Ci vole à pruvucà per parlà corsu*" 'You need to prompt people to be speak Corsican'. To a student in the class who reported that all her interactions with a possible interlocutor (an author of Corsican language books who she knew socially) were in French, he recommended asking him in Corsican, "*O Francè, chì tempu face?*"

'O Francis, how's the weather?'; he would more than likely respond in the language.

These recommendations about creating interlocutors were not just about changing habits of practice among "native speakers" but also, about changing the negative attitudes towards novice speaker efforts to use Corsican that we have glimpsed above, in the remarks of Antone and Marie-Ange. In their narratives – and in many others' in these classes – people were not waiting benignly to be addressed in Corsican, but rather, making fun of learner language. Saveriu acknowledged this in his comments about making the best of our time together in the class when he said "*Quì, nimu hà da ride*" 'Here, no one will laugh': the "here" is in implicit contrast with a known "elsewhere" where laughing is possible. Many students spoke about relatives and friends who either constantly corrected them when they tried to speak or made fun of them.[1] In the context of these discussions, the noun *vergogna* 'shame' was regularly evoked. It was represented as an internalized emotion associated with not being able to speak a language of heritage – the personal resonance of collective linguistic loss. For example, Andria commented, "*Emu più vergogna di sbagliassi in corsu chè in francese. Mi sbagliu in francese ... mi sbagliu. Ma in corsu ...*" 'We are more ashamed to make mistakes in Corsican than in French. If I make a mistake in French, well it's a mistake. But in Corsican ...'. But *vergogna* was also the outcome of specific acts of shaming or ridicule inflicted by Corsican native speakers. It also appeared as reflexive verb (*vergugnassi*) that described the act of allowing (or rejecting) feelings of shame or embarrassment to flourish in relation to using Corsican. These discursive practices reflect the complexity of individual and collective agency in the current sociolinguistic context. On the one hand, potential new speakers are cast – and cast themselves – as victims both of the collective shame of linguistic (and by extension, cultural) loss and as victims of native speakers' ridicule (or, less dramatically, failure to ratify them as legitimate speakers). On the other hand, the use of the reflexive verb form implies individual agency (of the kind that Saveriu promotes) to reject linguistic stigma.

Both Francescu and Saveriu implicitly orient to a category of "new speaker" whose bundle of experiences, competencies and practices is different in nature from those who learn Corsican as a first language and who are figured as target interlocutors in the teachers' discourses. At the same time, they propose a model

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1 These accounts of shame, minority language purism and the rejection of novice by "native" speakers resonate with research in many in many minority language contexts where both "school" or academic language and mixed (dominant-minority) codes may be stigmatized as inauthentic (see, for example, Ammorortu 2003; Ciriza 2012; Dorian 1994; Echeverria 2000; Hinton and Hale 2001; Jaffe 1999; McEwan-Fujita 2010; Trosset 1986; Urla 1987).

of a community of linguistic practice in which speakers of many different kinds ("native", "new", "novice", "expert") are ascribed legitimacy. Those who want to become speakers (in this case, more or less "new") are cast as having agency. The implication is that potential new speakers are not simply working on acquiring a set of linguistic competencies to be subject to "native" evaluation, but participating actively in defining the sociolinguistic landscape.

With respect to this complex dynamic, one of the roles that the community of students and teachers in these language classrooms played was to be a safe haven, reassuring the insecure. For example, when François proposed a light-hearted essay competition for the title of "Miss Essay", in an hour devoted to writing, one of the students got cold feet and said she "just couldn't write". He told her to just write "naturally" – however it came out – and not to worry about errors. We were "just among ourselves"; a group of six in which there was no need to be afraid. In response to Marie-Ange's angst over her abilities and negative reception by native speakers, Saveriu complimented her on her progress since the previous year (she was one of a handful of returning students) and characterized her as in the process of "rediscovering her voice" in Corsican. He told her that she had the motivation and "readiness" to be a speaker. "You make yourself understood", he told her; even more, "*si sente u core quandu parleti*" 'we can hear your heart when you speak'. Thus the adult language classroom was construed as a place where people could activate their potential as speakers and be accepted as having linguistic competencies as opposed to deficits.

5 Community: classroom and societal

The challenges of being recognized as a new speaker in native speaker circles helps to explain the strong emphasis on creating and maintaining community in all the Corsican classes I attended. The intimacies sought and constructed in these classes also mirrored, on a micro-level, the fact that on a societal level, while there are many contexts in which Corsican is desirable, there are very few obligatory contexts in which Corsican is required for purely pragmatic reasons.

The social focus was, not surprisingly, accentuated in the associative classes and was strongest in the long-running Scola Corsa class I attended. Our second meeting was a dinner out in a restaurant and there were two other meals in the course of the year. This commensality functioned to perpetuate existing ties among long-term attendees of the class as well as to incorporate new members into the social life of the group. There was a strong investment in the gestures and practices that showed a commitment to the social, convivial dimension of the class: we met and chatted in the foyer of the high school before class, starting late

more often than not. People who were absent were identified and the reasons they could not be there explained; long absences occasioned teasing upon the student's return. In fact, in this particular group, the meaning and value of attendance seemed just as much centered around participation over time as it was around language learning. This was indexed by recurrent interdiscursive and intertextual references by long-standing members of the class to lessons from years past, previously established knowledge, and even to having doubles of handouts received in class. In fact, many of the students brought with them immaculately kept, thick binders or notebooks that documented years of participation.

Community was also constructed in this particular class through joking personal references to lack of sustained language learning, failure to remember, the tendency to make the same mistakes repeatedly. For example one day, the word for eraser (*squassaghjolu*) was brought up. One of the beginners commented that she "wouldn't know how to spell it". "*Ne t'inquiètes pas*" 'Don't worry', said one of the seasoned participants, "*après ça ira mieux*" 'after a while it will get better'. "*Après combien de temps?*" 'After how long?' the beginner asked, which prompted the rejoinder: "*Après quatre ans!*" 'After 4 years!', followed by general laughter. The Corsican language appears here as something everyone would "like" to master but which is nevertheless out of reach. Here, individuals evoke shared (that is, community) experiences of sporadic, intermittent relationships with formal linguistic learning. Sustained, efficient formal learning practices (studying etc.) figured as stance objects towards which students invited negative alignments. In this class, we were thus recruited to shared subject positions as persistent learners and users. Our potential as future new speakers was left quite unspecified. In short, learning about Corsican was not necessarily a means to another end (fluency in Corsican and use of the language with "native" speakers), but a valued activity in and of itself that created and sustained ties to a group of people who shared a positive orientation to Corsican language and culture. The linguistic goals of most of the students in the class were realistically calibrated to both their own level of commitment to language learning given both the competing demands and priorities of their everyday lives and to the limited level of community support for their apprenticeship.

In the immersion weekend classes, there was also a strong emphasis on community, but it was oriented in a more purposeful way towards creating the conditions in which the students could collectively become new speakers. This involved individual pursuit of linguistic knowledge and study as well as a joint effort to use Corsican in both the formal class periods and informal interaction at lunch and on occasional field trips.

This joint effort to use Corsican made/defined a community of practice that was distinct from the surrounding society. This was palpable in the immersion

weekends. When we stepped outside the high school where we met, not speaking French was the object of concerted effort: teachers reminded us to "Speak Corsican at lunch" – or jokingly warned the other English- speaking student and me: "No English now!" On several occasions during field trips, the distinctness of the learner community was foregrounded. For example, when we visited an art museum, we had our own special Corsican-language guide and moved through the exhibit halls in a Corsican-speaking bubble that was the object of curiosity by other visitors. In other cases, the arrival of the class at a site created a new linguistic environment. This was the case during our visit to an essential oils producer. While he spoke Corsican well, he told us that it was his first time to explain his work in Corsican. Because of this, he experienced some lapses in fluency, and there were several discussions with the teachers about choices of phrasing and vocabulary and the possibility of the class working on a Corsican-language brochure for his business. Thus the visit brought together several kinds of speakers: the teachers ("expert"/ "native"); incipient new speakers and a "native" speaker with compartmentalized competence. This distributed expertise created an interesting space in which the businessman who hosted the class, in moving out of his linguistic comfort zone, joined the students in a shared space of new, collective and "prospective" practice.

Practices among students also acted upon the sociolinguistic context. On one lunch break a group of us faithfully spoke Corsican among ourselves and switched to French with our waiter, who addressed us in that language. Around the table on the restaurant terrace, our language practice was distinct from the other patrons', who were (as far as I could tell) all speaking French. Normally, in the city, groups of Corsican speakers are more likely to be older and male and to congregate in the interiors of cafés and restaurants. So our group of six middle-aged women and one young man expanded and modified some of the "old" spaces of Corsican language use. At another lunch (with a different group of people) three of my classmates took up Saveriu's challenge and persisted in speaking to the waitress in Corsican, despite the fact that she displayed little comprehension. They also identified themselves as learners as a justification for their unusual practice and lightheartedly "tested" the waitress's ability to recognize the names of the dishes on the menu in Corsican. In this instance, the group took up a new speaker stance and made the contrast between this stance and semi- or non-speaker identities socially salient.

6 Implications and conclusions

There are several implications that follow from the preceding discussion of community as social solidarity and communities of minority language speaking practice. The first relates to the sociolinguistic heterogeneity that is induced by language contact, shift and revitalization in minority language contexts like the Corsican one. In these contexts, the sociolinguistic field is by definition fragmented: there is often no unitary or stable set of social uses of the languages to use as a reference for "authentic" use or even "native" competence. Among speakers of Corsican, speakers who have equivalent competencies in Corsican and French across all registers and linguistic domains are in a minority. This in and of itself renders problematic the implicit goal of many minority language classrooms, which is to measure their success – and the success of individual learners – with reference to "authentic speakers" in the surrounding society still practicing sustained informal social use of the language. This perspective construes classrooms almost exclusively as means towards a clearly-defined linguistic end, which is interaction with native speakers outside an academic context. In contrast, what we have seen is that for many participants, language learning classes are themselves the social contexts (and sometimes the only ones) in which people have experiences as speakers. That is, those classes are not just transition points "on the way" to "real" social interactions and contexts; they are "real" social interactions and contexts in and of themselves (Jaffe 2010). Another point has to do with the relative importance of speaking proficiency in the experience of community as solidarity offered by taking language classes. The associative classes in particular illustrate the social and cultural value of sustained participation with other like-minded people in learning about Corsican, whether or not that process leads to any significant active conversational competence. Put another way, these classes are communities of practice in which Corsican plays a crucial role as an object of study and discussion rather than as a medium of communication. The currency of participation is thus just as metalinguistic as it is linguistic.

If we consider the interactions between students and speakers outside the educational context (both in organized field trips and in students' individual lives) we can also see that learner – "native" interactions can take several different forms. They also show the bidirectional influences and frames of sociolinguistic reference that are at play in the ongoing reconfiguration of communities of Corsican-speaking practice. On the one hand, learners and new speakers can be subject to linguistic evaluation by native speakers who take up ratified stances of linguistic authenticity and authority. This is a point of commonality with some of the other "new speaker" contexts described in this issue. On the other hand,

those learners and new speakers are also active agents in the refiguring of the sociolinguistic landscape. This agency takes place within the wider field of minority language policy and its varied effects on both practices and ideologies. As numerous scholars of revitalization contexts have pointed out, standardization and institutionalization of minority languages can create new forms of linguistic authority that devalue "traditional" or dialectal forms and speakers (Ciriza 2012; Echeverria 2000; Frekko 2009; Jaffe 1999; Handican 2005). These new forms of authority and authenticity do not replace traditional criteria but rather, exist alongside them, creating a multiple, complex ideological field. In short, it is the dynamic interplay and accumulation of interactions between different categories of speakers – "new", "old", "semi-", "non-" and the different sociolinguistic authenticities and authorities with which they are associated – that makes and reshapes the learner-society relationship (see Figure 2).

With these necessarily brief glimpses of classroom practice, student profiles, motivations and stances, I have hoped to highlight both diversity and complexity with respect to the "new speaker" as a sociolinguistic category and/or target for identification. It is impossible to claim a new speaker identity or to attribute one to others without reference to some elements of the menu of criteria that I have sketched in Section 2. Deciding who "counts" as a "new speaker" or assuming a new speaker identity is an act of sociolinguistic stancetaking that is embedded in ideological formations, social projects and imaginaries. These in turn are part of a larger process of defining and creating communities of minority language practice. Put another way, like all other pragmatic operationalizations of speaker categories (for social, academic or political/policy purposes), the term "new speaker" simultaneously describes and creates its objects: speakers, languages and contexts of use. In this respect, the adult language classes I have described are not simply creating new speakers but are part of an ongoing process of individual and collective exploration of what it means to speak a minority language in a society that has undergone and is undergoing linguistic and cultural change. In the current sociolinguistic moment, there are multiple models of authority and authenticity on which Corsicans draw: they include "old" communities of minority language practice as well as tentative, new, projected communities of Corsican language use and appreciation.

To conclude, the "new speaker" can be considered a sociolinguistic "shifter" (Silverstein 1980): It both presupposes and has to be interpreted within a particular historical, political and sociolinguistic context. It also works on that context by making salient a set of oppositions and contrasts (for example, with other categories of speakers and between different forms or uses of language). The focus of analysis thus belongs, as Doerr points out in her discussion of the "native speaker", on the effects of the ideologies associated with the notion of "new

speaker" in everyday life and "how individuals comply, utilize, counter and con-
test such an ideology in diverse institutional and sociocultural settings" (Doerr
2009: 15). In short, as a form of sociolinguistic indexicality, "new speakerness" is
also a stance, or subject position that becomes available to social actors. Thus it
is a vantage point from which we can capture, ethnographically, historically situ-
ated moments in the sociolinguistic trajectories of both individuals and collectiv-
ities in minority language contexts.

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