DOI: 10.1111/meta.12653

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

The practical ethics of linguistic integration: Three challenges

Yael Peled

Department of Socio-Cultural Diversity, Max Planck Institute for the Study of Religious and Ethnic Diversity, Göttingen, Germany

Correspondence
Yael Peled, Hermann-Föge-Weg 11, 37073 Göttingen, Germany,
Email: peled@mmg.mpg.de

Abstract
Public debates on linguistic integration as a socially desired outcome often share a prevailing sentiment that newcomers ought to "learn the language." But the intensity of that sentiment is rarely accompanied by an equally robust understanding of what, precisely, it means in practice. This results in a notion of linguistic integration with an inbuilt tension between a seemingly pragmatic and commonsensical appearance, on the one hand, and a minimal action-guidance capacity, on the other hand. This paper explores this intriguing tension, and it identifies three moral and practical challenges that this challenge presents to the normative theorizing of the practical ethics of linguistic integration: (1) a predicament of arbitrary treatment; (2) the interpersonal structure of social and linguistic learning; and (3) the affective dimension of linguistic integration.

KEYWORDS
acculturation, arbitrariness, linguistic integration, linguistic justice, relief

1 | INTRODUCTION

Public debates on linguistic integration as a socially desired outcome often share a prevailing sentiment that newcomers ought to "learn the language." But the intensity of that sentiment in the political sphere is rarely accompanied by an equally robust understanding of what, precisely, it means in practice. This rather mercurial nature of the notion of linguistic integration is attributable, at least in part, to the polysemous nature of the notion of integration itself, which is simultaneously under-specified in certain crucial ways and yet nonetheless has the

appearance of a commonsensical and practical concept, rooted in a causal logic and a moral order (Vertovec 2020, 255–56). As a result, this mercurial meaning allows—and enables—different political actors (such as government authorities, immigrant organizations, members of society, heterophobes, and xenophobes) each to make a logical appeal to a notion of "integration" for its own distinct ends and purposes (257).

In the more specific context of *linguistic* integration, similar dynamics often arise. For example, authorities may opt to highlight public spending on language classes. Civil-society organizations may point to instances of linguistic discrimination targeting newcomers who are new speakers. Members of society may feel ambivalent about rising costs of public spending on translation and interpretation, especially under financial austerity. And populists may view linguistic integration as an incontestable and conclusive measure of newcomers' commitment and loyalty to the new country. The supposedly logical and commonsensical appearance of the notion of linguistic integration thus seems to stand in odd tension with its strikingly minimal action-guidance capacity. What, exactly, *is* linguistic integration? Is it a mere aspiration or a set of concrete policies and outcomes? How is it pursued and achieved? What are its metrics? Who is a legitimate authority for the purpose of adjudicating on it? This minimal action guidance creates an impression that attaining the status of being linguistically integrated is, at least in part, a matter of an arbitrary judgment, which varies widely between different political actors and beliefs. That unprincipled state of affairs is further compounded due not only to "the arbitrary nature of language requirements and criteria: the levels demanded to pass such tests differ from country to country" (Printschitz 2017, 242) but also to the fact that "[f]or adults, there is no simple answer to the question of just how much language is necessary to be integrated, because circumstances of life, of professional success, of family situations, etc., are too complex and diverse" (Krumm 2012, 45).

Those I identify as "newcomer new speakers" (by which I mean newcomers who are also new speakers) themselves often embrace the notion of integration and acknowledge the validity of this demand.[1] This is especially so in the case of *linguistic* integration, given the clear significance of language for instrumental/pragmatic reasons (such as labor market integration) in addition to identity-related ones (Robichaud and De Schutter 2012; De Schutter and Robichaud 2015). The capacity for linguistic independence makes a strong claim to be conceived as a distinct category of basic functionings necessary for human well-being, as Wolff and De Shalit note (2007, 60–61).[2] In a similar vein, a growing body of normative literature on language and/in the capabilities approach has highlighted the central place that language occupies in the conceptions of justice and its proposed metrics.[3] This growing body of inquiry is a valuable addition to an expanding normative scholarship on linguistic justice and/in migration.[4] It directs its attention to not only the *why* but also the *how* of linguistic integration; that is, it explores not only the abstract moral question of the relative distribution of linguistic burdens and entitlements among the various parties involved in that particular integration process but also highlights the need for a much more nuanced and grounded understanding of their practicalities.[5]

[1]The categories of "newcomers" and "new speakers" are by no mean identical or interchangeable. I therefore purposefully use the notion of "newcomer new speakers" to capture the dual social/political and linguistic "newness" that makes the question of linguistic integration so complex in the first instance. I thank Helder De Schutter for the opportunity to clarify this choice of label.

[2]Wolff and De Shalit explicate linguistic independence as the "functioning of being able to communicate, including being able to speak the local language, or being verbally independent" (2007, 60). Note that this formulation, in conflating "language" and "speech," reflects an oralist bias that privileges spoken over signed modality. This is a common (and lamentable) attitude, including in mobility/ies research, which can greatly benefit from greater attunement to scholarship on D/deaf migrants (e.g., Emery and Iyer 2022; Moriarty and Kusters 2021).

[3]E.g., Lewis 2017; Shorten 2017; Brando and Morales-Gálvez 2023; Shorten 2022.

[4]E.g., von Busekist and Boudou 2018; Oakes and Peled 2018, chap. 4; Bonotti, Rowe, and Carlsson 2022; Hoesch 2023.

[5]For an important discussion on means and ends in the normative theorizing of language, see Brando and Morales-Gálvez 2023, 679.

My primary aim in this paper is to present—and defend—the argument that linguistic practicalities and their particularities ought to be viewed as constitutive of the broader debate on the ethics of linguistic integration, rather than some kind of low-level technical concern, whose significance is merely secondary to the primacy of the abstract theoretical question. In order for a normative account of the ethics of linguistic integration to be permissible, I contend, it ought to be attuned to the differentiated lived linguistic experience of individuals and groups of newcomer new speakers, and to be mindful of what precisely such accounts request—and indeed often require—them to do. The absence of such attunement, I suggest, has substantively adverse implications for the political legitimacy of language regimes in migration contexts. This is particularly so in democratic societies, faced with the need to reconcile core principles of liberty, equality, solidarity, inclusion, autonomy, and sovereignty—often conceived in monolingual or even nonlinguistic terms—with their own constitutive multilingual realities.

To this end, in the remainder of this paper I identify and explore three moral and practical challenges that stem from the tension between a seemingly commonsensical notion of linguistic integration, which nonetheless remains severely lacking in its action-guidance specificity, due to limited attunement to the linguistic lived experiences of newcomer new speakers: (1) a predicament of arbitrary treatment; (2) the interpersonal structure of social and linguistic learning; and (3) the affective dimension of linguistic integration.

2 | CHALLENGE I: ARBITRARY TREATMENT

Identifying arbitrary treatment as a key moral challenge in the context of the ethics of linguistic integration may seem counterintuitive. Indeed, the expressed sentiment that newcomer new speakers ought to learn the language of their host societies may appear, at first, as a very concrete and specific expectation. On that account, "Learn the language!" is rooted in a social norm that, by its own virtue as such, constitutes a concrete specification of a more general social value (for example, equality, recognition, sovereignty). The trouble with that perception, of course, lies in the fact that these norms are commonly premised on what linguistic majorities perceive, wish, or desire these norms to be, and on the basis of their own particular linguistic experiences, habits, convictions, and biases. These norms, needless to say, can be—and indeed often are—greatly detached from the lived linguistic experiences of newcomer new speakers, with regard to, for example, the retaining of a foreign accent (deliberately or not) or uneven/unbalanced bilingualism in one or more competencies (such as fluent reading but hesitant speaking).

And so, for newcomer new speakers, who are the primary target of that expectation, the demand to "learn the language" turns out to be a lot less clear and concrete than linguistic majorities often realize. This is a critical epistemic gap, with a significant ethical ramification: it is a supposedly commonsensical practical norm that is in fact not commonsensical at all and therefore offers little—if any—specific action guidance. What this demand, or expectation, often embodies is thus not so much a practical norm as an unreflective "outcomist" demand to achieve a specific *outcome*, often premised on a simplistic causal chain rooted in a very particular experience. On that understanding, being told to "learn the language" is much more akin to being told to "lose the weight" to treat obesity or to "cheer up" to overcome depression.

To people issuing these demands, rooted in their own particular experiences of achieving these goals, the demands often appear clear and straightforward (for example, exercise to lose weight, focus on the good things to dispel depression). For those on their receiving end, however, with a very different set of experiences, the demands can be seen, at best, as impractical (for example, exercising despite chronic fatigue, focusing on good things while experiencing self-loathing and existential guilt). At worst, they can be seen as downright moralistic,

targeting perceived virtues and especially the perceived failure to fulfill them (that is, to learn the language, lose the weight, cheer up) rather than offering practical support and encouragement that is attuned to someone's distinct experiences and practical realities. As Deutsch notes, "being able to afford not to learn" (Deutsch 1963, 111) is, in a sense, what having power over others means. For example, being able to afford not to learn that what host-society members perceive as a generic process of "learning the language," and what evidence of its success looks like, can vary drastically not only between native and new speakers but also among native speakers themselves.

What does it mean to be linguistically integrated? What concrete form does it take? What kind of proof is conclusive? Who is a legitimate authority to render that judgment? What happens when different judgments clash, and which one prevails? The problem facing newcomer new speakers is that different parties in the host societies—individual and institutional alike—will act upon very different understandings of what linguistic integration is, and what its (supposedly commonsensical) metrics. This means, in practice, that what newcomer new speakers are faced with is the need to satisfy not simply *individual* interpretations of what the metric of linguistic integration is, and whether or not they meet it, but rather an *aggregated* set, or range, of arbitrary judgments on what counts—and does not count—as being linguistically integrated. That aggregated set of arbitrary judgments can drastically vary from one interlocutor to another, often without any prior indication of what that metric might be.

For example, for government authorities, satisfying that demand might be the formal score of a language test at a particular benchmark (such as the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages [CEFR]). But such formal credentials may not satisfy members of society, who may deem a person not sufficiently linguistically integrated on account of some degree of a foreign accent. Other members of society may be indifferent toward a person's accent but nonetheless judge the person as insufficiently linguistically integrated due to lack of familiarity with certain idiomatic phrases. Others may perceive that person as insufficiently integrated due to particular language choices, such as the choice of the language(s) most spoken at home or the language(s) used in electronic and social media.

In a host society with a strong monolingual political culture, any deviation from the singular authority of the common language can—and often does—serve as potential grounds for established members of the host society to challenge newcomers' linguistic integration, as uncontested experts, and with little scope for appeal. Why some linguistic features but not others are singled out as the decisive shibboleth, by one person but not another, is very rarely justified to the new speaker interlocutor or even fully reasoned to the person rendering that effectively capricious judgment. This is reflective of a broader problem with the concept of integration itself, which, as Vertovec notes, "regularly fails to answer the question 'integration into what?' The term's vagueness means that—as many immigrants themselves have stressed—no matter what one does by way of education, employment, language competence, social interaction, and so on, it is ever possible that one can be deemed 'un-integrated' by a member or institution of the 'native/host' society" (Vertovec 2020, 252).

What makes *linguistic* integration particularly prone to the risk of being arbitrarily (mis)judged is the promptness and profound pre-reflective nature of linguistic judgments. For example, as Moyer notes with regard to foreign accent, "based on speech samples of just a few seconds or less, we can ascertain non-nativeness with great reliability—there are many layers of acoustic information to go on. But too often, sounding identifiably non-native has negative consequences insofar as it triggers assumptions in the listener's mind about other traits" (Moyer 2013, 85), such as intelligence, credibility, competence, and reliability—all clear linguistic instances of epistemic injustice.[6] Indeed, the phenomenon of accent offers a particu-

[6]Fricker 2007; see also Peled 2018; Peled and Bonotti 2019; Catala 2022.

larly illuminating example of how radically different a nonreflective language processing is from a reflective one: the former will tend to perceive foreign-accented interlocutors in largely negative terms, as mentioned above, while the latter will be more likely to accompany a realization that the interlocutors are acting well outside their linguistic comfort zone, and are willing to do so despite being aware of the greater vulnerability and potential risks that doing so may bring.

Applicable to the question of *linguistic* integration, a nonreflective perception of a foreign accent may judge foreign-accented interlocutors as insufficiently integrated. A reflective perception, by contrast, will acknowledge, and, more important, *validate* the substantive effort being made by the interlocutors, by regarding that linguistic feature not as a mark of a failure to integrate but rather as a living proof of the process being well under way. A more reflective perception of foreign accent, however, is more likely to occur when members of a host society themselves have some experience of linguistic integration, whether firsthand or through acquaintances. That experience will have shaped their own understanding of what linguistic integration is and what it entails, what its metrics are, and upon whose norms and convictions it is premised. For the newcomer new speakers themselves, of course, it is virtually impossible to know whether or not any interlocutors will possess a reflective or a nonreflective awareness of accent. Or whether any reflective awareness may or may not extend to other linguistic components. While the result of a formal language test may satisfy an immigration officer, it may nonetheless be of no consequence—and sometimes even be of increased doubt—for the person on the street, the job interviewer, the teller in the bank, the tax-authority phone agent, or the hospital administrator. All will deploy their own private metric to judge whether or not a person is linguistically integrated and will formulate their own private conclusion, with little room for justification to others or even to oneself.

To fully appreciate the scope of the challenge of this predicament, it is important to emphasize that it can very easily occur even when every single host-society interlocutor is well intentioned (or, at least, is not outright acting in bad faith). Even when no one deliberately intends, in their capacity as a private citizen or an office holder, to produce an arbitrary set of linguistic shibboleths for newcomer new speakers to meet, this predicament is very likely to ultimately be manifested nonetheless. The reason for this lies not simply in the arbitrary nature of the *private* linguistic judgments these interlocutors separately deploy but rather in their *aggregation*. If one interlocutor ties linguistic integration to accent retention, another to language choice at home, and another to competency asymmetry, the practical outcome of that *aggregation* for the newcomer is, for all intents and purposes, an arbitrary predicament, produced by the host society *as a collective agent* through the collective action of its members.[7] Worse, the predicament of being subjected to an undisclosed set of rules denies the subjected person any practical capacity to contest them, coupling the incontestable power of the arbitrary predicament with a sense of inevitability (Vredenburgh 2022, 212). In the absence of an explanation of what the demand "Learn the language!" actually means and entails, and how it is ultimately judged, there is very little scope for newcomer new speakers to successfully realize it in practical terms, and even less power to contest and (re)negotiate the terms of that demand.

The arbitrary nature of the demand that newcomer new speakers "learn the language" stems directly from the tension between the supposedly clear commonsensical nature of that demand in the eyes of those who issue it, on the one hand, and the limited practical action guidance that this demand offers for those whom it directly targets, on the other. The moral challenge of this arbitrariness highlights the crucial significance of a *right to explanation* (Vredenburgh 2022) in the ethics of linguistic integration, one that is rule based, normative,

[7]A similar mechanism is identified in Peled 2019.

and causal (Vredenburgh 2022, 210). The moral significance of the right to explanation further demonstrates that questions of practicalities—including practical action and practical reasoning—ought not to be viewed as some sort of secondary technical concern in accounts of social and political normative orders as related to migration and integration. Rather, these practicalities ought to directly inform host societies' public debates on the politics of language, and their political and linguistic cultures, by being attuned to the lived linguistic experience of those whose integration these societies seek, expect, and demand.

3 | CHALLENGE II: THE INTERPERSONAL STRUCTURE OF SOCIAL AND LINGUISTIC LEARNING

A core moral problem with the notion of linguistic integration, I proposed in the previous version, lies in the fact that an *aggregated* set of private perceptions of what counts—and does not count—as linguistic integration in the eyes of host-society members ultimately results in newcomer new speakers being faced with an arbitrary set of linguistic metrics and standards, which they are often powerless to either reason with, contest, or influence. My starting point in this section is that the risk of arbitrariness in linguistic integration is potentially even graver, because common unreflective notions of what constitutes "sincere" language-learning efforts, or "true" and "full" language knowledge, tend to focus, in a sense, on the wrong thing. They focus on how individual new speakers conform to the aggregated linguistic expectations of their host societies, rather than on the kind of political and linguistic culture, and relational foundations more broadly, that may best facilitate the process of linguistic integration.

On that account, "learning the language" is not simply a matter of an individual newcomer successfully internalizing a comprehensive grammar book of the target language and then simply deploying it in interactions with members of the host society. Rather, the point is that "such learning requires appropriate exposure to majority speakers and a great deal of practice, and the process will involve complex interactions among considerations of motivation, sense of identity, and specific linguistic experiences, all of which can influence each other" (Segalowitz 2010, quoted in Doucerain, Segalowitz, and Ryder 2017, 107). This raises the related concept of *acculturation*, especially linguistic acculturation.

Cautioning against simplistic measures of language in acculturation studies, Doucerain, Segalowitz, and Ryder (2017, 105) note:

> To become socially integrated into the mainstream cultural group—that is, to be able to enter into the world of the majority community—in a culturally appropriate manner—a person has to become familiar with the specific ways in which speakers formulate messages for various speech functions including requesting, persuading, apologizing, using humor, being polite, etc. This includes mastering the many fixed and idiomatic expressions and speech styles a community uses to convey subtleties of meaning, to achieve joint attention, to read social intentions, and to manage conversations. Thus, to "plug into" the majority community, a person needs to learn how to speak sufficiently like a member of that community in order to achieve certain social goals, and not just know how to speak in semantically and grammatically correct sentences.

While not intended to support a debate on political normativity, the paragraph quoted above is nonetheless valuable in highlighting the link between using language *in a particular way* and being able to achieve certain desired outcomes. What is interesting here is not merely the descriptive account of that link per se but rather its normative implications:

namely, that the more newcomers sound "like us," the more legitimate political agency they are likely to be granted in the various speech functions mentioned above. This is obviously important in cases of various speech functions that involve doing things *with* or *for* others (for example, using humor, apologizing). But it is particularly crucial when the speech functions entail doing things *to* others, as in the case of requesting and persuading. This is because these speech functions involve a far greater degree of power mobilization and exercising over others in compelling them, in some sense, to act in a way they may not have otherwise.[8]

The capacity to act as a political actor, in that sense, is strongly tied to interlocutors' perceptions of the degree to which a person uses language in a very specific way. In other words, the capacity, or skill, to use language in a certain manner impacts the perceived legitimacy of that person to engage in the accumulation, mobilization, and (re)distribution of power (for example, contesting a decision on tax owed, protesting a municipal ordinance, organizing as part of a union). An unreflective link in the mind of the host society between particular forms of linguistic agency, epistemic standing, and political legitimacy is much more indicative of the host society's own linguistic convictions and biases than of the actual level of linguistic integration of its newcomers. The significance of this input from linguistic acculturation, thus, lies not so much in what it shows about how newcomers act as in what it reveals about the normative reasoning of the host society and its own linguistic self-understanding as a key to how it understands others.

The upshot of the discussion above is that an amorphous and unreflective conception of linguistic integration is morally problematic, not merely because the practical outcome for those whom it targets is that of arbitrariness (as I suggested in the previous section) but rather because it is often unaware of the constitutive role that host-society members themselves play in supporting and facilitating (or, of course, hindering) this process. A host society whose political culture and linguistic culture place the burden of linguistic integration solely on individual newcomer new speakers is a society that is less aware of its own impact on the success of this process, and therefore more likely to ignore, dismiss, or abdicate that responsibility. A better and more principled way of conceptualizing linguistic integration lies, in other words, not in unreflective snap judgments on individual newcomers' linguistic "deviancy" or "deficiency" but rather in asking what kind of relationship between newcomers and host-society members may best support the kind of required learning—linguistic *and* social—outlined above.[9]

The precise nature of the relational dimension that is involved in the process of linguistic integration, as facilitated through a process of social learning, is a pivotal part of the overall puzzle. As McKowen and Borneman note (2020, 6), "Thin concepts of integration tend to explicitly or implicitly center on national membership and belonging …, at the expense of providing analytical attention to other affiliations and pathways—of friendship, neighborhood, city, occupation, trade union, political movement …—that also figure prominently in migrant and non-migrant experiences." Applied to *linguistic* integration, their point highlights the importance of challenging simplistic notions that perceive linguistic integration primarily in relation to the host-society standard language. A more nuanced notion of linguistic integration will therefore pay closer attention to a more complex set of linguistic "sockets" into which newcomers "plug," which is reflective of a more complex set of linguistic identities, affiliations, and attachments, stemming from the very mundane and perfectly normal realities of complex social identities.

[8]This conception of power in/over language is rooted in Dahl's definition "A has power over B to the extent that he can get B to do something that B would not otherwise do" (Dahl 1957, 202–3).

[9]For linguistic "deviancy" or "deficiency," see Kostakopoulou 2010, 946, quoted in Klarenbeek 2019, 3.

The shift from a focus on individual newcomer new speakers to the communicative norms of the host society as a whole reframes the debate on the ethics of linguistic integration, by focusing on deeper questions of political and linguistic culture. In so doing, it implies a learning process on the part of the host society, too, regarding its own linguistic self-understanding, the source of the authority over its communicative norms, and the changing dynamics of their legitimate forms as a result of human mobility. This learning process of linguistic self-understanding is critical for a better understanding of how then to incorporate newcomer new speakers—as linguistic actors with their own particular identities, repertoires, and practices—into that linguistic selfhood. The kind of mutual learning that is implied by this *relational* conceptualization of a "two-way integration," grounded in relational equality (Klarenbeek 2021), is neither identical nor symmetrical, with different parties involved in the process having different roles, resources, and normative responsibilities (Klarenbeek 2021, 915). What *is* shared, however, is taking part in the integration process, understood "as a configuration of social interactions that together constitute the structural (integration) context" (Klarenbeek 2021, 914).

This configuration is, understandably, very rarely free of ambiguities, tensions, and/or conflicts. This is particularly so in host societies outside the Anglophone world, such as Quebec, Catalonia, and Wales, with lingering political and historical legacies of linguistic domination and oppression requiring, in certain cases, safeguarding and even revitalization efforts. In such societies, the question of newcomers' linguistic integration is only one among several public debates on the politics of language, and on the ethics of its status, acquisition, and corpus planning. The particularities of the societies' own context-specific experiences, insecurities, anxieties, and hopes are normatively salient, too, and should inform—and keep in check—any general normative theories of linguistic integration, especially those originating in Anglophone settings.

A relational-based learning on the part of the host society, as part of the configurational work of linguistic integration, can prove valuable for host societies in ways that extend beyond the limited focus on newcomers' integration and touch upon deeper questions of language, identity, and belonging—for example, in unsettling prevailing linguistic convictions, myths, misconceptions, and biases, as reflected in the host society's dominant linguistic and political culture. One particularly important outcome of such reflection involves the contestation of a monolingual ideology, and greater awareness of the diverse linguistic realities that are *already* constitutive of the host society (for example, spoken and signed languages; standardized and nonstandardized varieties; indigenous, settler, and former-newcomer languages).

Furthermore, a host society that is more linguistically self-aware may also adopt a more inclusive understanding not only of its diversity of languages but also of the diverse forms of *linguistic agency* among its own existing members. Such linguistic self-learning may contribute to a linguistic culture that is more inclusive toward nonnormative types of communication (such as nonverbal autism) or in circumstances of linguistic disturbance stemming from trauma or mood disorders (such as depression). This particular form of linguistic difference is as important in challenging powerful prevailing linguistic ideologies (for example, standard language ideology, the monolingual mindset), contesting the seemingly "generic" appearance of highly exclusionary notions of what it means to be a "real" linguistic agent. The hope here is that a relational-centered process of linguistic self-learning, which guides a host society in its effort to receive and welcome linguistically diverse newcomers, will also positively influence the host society's relations with its own linguistically diverse existing members.

Improving relational equality among existing members of the host society, then, follows the same configurational logic of the relational equality that underlies the process of

linguistic integration. The two are likely to work together in a mutual rather than a parallel manner. This is because a host society that that overlooks, ignores, or dismisses its own nonofficial linguistic communities and nonnormative linguistic agents is likely to be less capable of recognizing such linguistic diversities among newcomers and acknowledging the moral and practical salience of these diversities in the process of linguistic integration. A host society whose linguistic culture is strongly premised on a monolingual ideology and the primacy of the standard is less likely to recognize—let alone value and respect—minoritized linguistic communities (for example, Indigenous peoples, Deaf communities) and nonnormative linguistic agents (such as nonverbal autists). Importantly, the reverse may also be true—a host society that is conscious of its own diverse linguistic constitution is likely to fare better in establishing the kind of relational basis that can better facilitate the process of linguistic integration. On that account, the kind of learning carried out by the host society, of examining its own linguistic and political culture in the process of making sense of itself to itself, may further contribute to reducing experiences of linguistic arbitrariness in the lived everyday realities of existing minoritized host-society members themselves.

A relational approach to the ethics of linguistic integration, finally, may also be better placed to respond to one possible outcome of a process that tends to be oddly overlooked in normative accounts of migration and integration. That process is a situation in which a newcomer indeed "learns the language" but is nonetheless unable to find a sense of acceptance, community, and belonging among members of the host society. Contrary to causal and teleological assumptions about the supposed operational logic of the integration process,[10] a newcomer's very act of learning the language does not in itself guarantee that anyone—especially host-society members—will in fact be interested in engaging with them in the first place. And the more passionate one is about the process, the more distressing that predicament and eventual realization might be. The profound loneliness of that experience is vividly captured by Miroslav Penkov in his short story "Buying Lenin" in *East of the West*:

> Every English word I knew, I had once written at least ten times in notebooks Grandpa brought from the Fatherland Front. Each page in these notebooks was a cliff face against which I shouted. The words flew back at me, smashed into the rock again, rushed back. By the end of high school I had filled with echoes so many notebooks they towered on each side of my desk.

But now in America, I was exposed to words I didn't know. And sometimes words I knew on their own made no sense collected together. What was a hotpocket? I wondered. Why was my roommate so excited to see two girls across the hallway making out? What were they making out? I felt estranged, often confused, until gradually, with time, the world around me seeped in through my eyes, ears, tongue. At last the words rose liberated. I was ecstatic, lexicon drunk. I talked so much my roommate eventually quit spending time in our room and returned only after I'd gone to bed. I cornered random professors during their office hours and asked them questions that required long-winded answers. I spoke with strangers on the street, knowing I was being a creep. Such knowledge couldn't stop me. My ears rang, my tongue swelled up. I went on for months, until one day I understood that nothing I said mattered to those around me. No one knew where I was from, or cared to know. I had nothing to say to this world. (Penkov 2011, 60)

[10]For insightful critiques of such assumptions see Vertovec 2020, 256, and McKowen and Borneman 2020, 3, 21.

4 | CHALLENGE III: THE AFFECTIVE DIMENSION OF LINGUISTIC INTEGRATION

The Penkov quote above, describing an experience of loneliness *despite* learning the host-society language, illuminates a third critical dimension to the challenge of the ethics of linguistic integration: the affective dimension. This is an aspect of the process of linguistic integration that tends to remain covert in comparison with more overt preoccupations, such as labor-market integration. This state of affairs, I contend, is an unfortunate one, partly because the demand and/or expectation to integrate is often articulated not only in economic terms but also in social ones. That is, newcomer new speakers are expected to contribute to society not merely by expanding its overall tax base but also in being open to new affiliations and associations with host-society members, such as exogenous friendships and especially marriage. The (supposedly) straightforward, commonsensical, pragmatic notion of linguistic integration can imply that learning the language is a process that operates along a straightforward, causal, and linear chain, with the assumption being that learning the language greatly enhances—if not outright guarantees—one's odds of developing a network of social attachments, including, possibly, intimate partners. But what happens when one learns the language and nevertheless still experience loneliness, despite considerable and sincere efforts?

My focus in this article, recall, is on the tension between a seemingly straightforward, commonsensical, and pragmatic notion of linguistic integration, on the one hand, and on the minimal action guidance it actually provides those whom it principally targets (that is, newcomer new speakers), on the other hand. More specifically, I have thus far identified two substantive challenges that arise from this tension, namely, the sense of arbitrariness that this tension yields (section 2) and the misperception of the kind of learning necessary for linguistic integration, supported by a particular type of relational basis (section 3). In this section, my aim is to focus on a third challenge, which pertains to the implications of this tension in terms of the inequitable distribution of cognitive and affective resources, between host society members, on the one hand, and newcomer new speakers, on the other hand. More specifically, what I wish to highlight here is that an unprincipled and unreflective notion of linguistic integration may exacerbate an already inequitable distribution of linguistic stress, distress, anxiety, and fatigue among newcomer new speakers, precisely because of its limited action guidance.

Being a newcomer new speaker in a new host society requires significant resources and/or forms of capital. These can be material (for example, cash) or symbolic (for example, cultural capital). But the process of integration also requires significant cognitive and affective resources to support and sufficiently "fuel" the required cognitive and affective labor. For example, settling into a new natural and built environment, and learning how to navigate new social and institutional organizational logic (for example, civil calendar, health care systems). In a similar vein, forming new social attachments in multiple social domains, such as neighborhood, the workplace, and place of worship. The cognitive and affective resources required for this purpose, like other types (such as material) are often limited and can deplete very quickly, with opportunities for regeneration in short supply.[11] Furthermore, these often covert types of resources can be called upon when demand is greater precisely when one is already in a process of decline due to age or illness, imposing an even greater burden on those already more vulnerable—such as in the case of imposing language tests on older newcomers.

The matter here is not simply that those already worse off (linguistically speaking) are being expected to achieve, so to speak, more (linguistic competency) with less (cognitive and affective resources). Any kind of linguistic inequity, or asymmetry, tends to place a greater

[11]On the politics of fatigue as a "political economy of energy" that constitutes "a social theory of limits," see Sterne 2021.

share of the communicative burden on minorities rather than majorities. What is noteworthy here, however, is that linguistic majorities, who perceive linguistic integration as a simple and straightforward process, are often largely oblivious to the considerable degree of stress, anxiety, and fatigue this process imposes on newcomer new speakers. Host-society members may view linguistic integration as a clear logical and rational process, based on their own private language-acquisition experience; but what this process actually entails for newcomer new speakers is often a prolonged experience of inequitable language anxiety, fatigue, and stress, with no practical identifiable finish line.

It is important to note that these experiences are not identical. "Language anxiety" (also "foreign-language anxiety") is a kind of apprehension triggered when language learners perceive their competence as communicators to be threatened, which leads to reticence, self-consciousness, fear, and even panic, with relevant factors including fear of negative evaluation, perfectionism, and low self-esteem (Maistrello and Dalziel 2020, 30). Whereas language anxiety is traditionally studied in traditional classroom settings, for immigrants the cognitive and emotional demands are not restricted to the classroom (31). "Language fatigue," by contrast, refers to the kind of mental sense of being overwhelmed that comes from the need to function in a second language for extended periods of time (e.g., Engstrom, Piedra, and Min 2009, 176; Snow 2016). Both, however, can be said to constitute major stressors in the process of linguistic integration and to be substantive consumers of the cognitive and affective resources it requires. This stress can be—and often is—exacerbated by the arbitrary nature of that integration process (see section 2), and the lack of awareness among members of the host society regarding the kind of social and linguistic learning it requires, or the relational basis that best supports it (see section 3).

The upshot of the discussion above is not to suggest that there can be an integration process that is entirely stress free. The reason for that is not limited specifically to newcomers' integration but rather emerges from the operational logic of any kind of language policy: prioritizing some languages over others almost unavoidably assigns to linguistic minorities a greater share not only of the communicative burden but also of the cognitive and affective load that comes with this greater burden. On that account, a distributive approach to language policy, especially *normative* language policy, can be said to further encompass cognitive and affective dimensions, and to highlight the corresponding existence of an *affective* interest in language, alongside the identity and instrumental functions/interests (De Schutter 2020 and 2022). Leading a life in a language regime where one cannot simply take for granted being understood entails a relentless everyday awareness of being on the weaker side of the linguistic power equilibrium. And it is from that sustained lived linguistic experience that the accompanying feelings of stress, anxiety, and fatigue arise, against a backdrop of a very real world of civic life and institutional design shaped by the linguistic habits, conveniences, and convictions of more powerful others (Peled 2021).

Yet the fact that no integration process—including linguistic integration—can be entirely stress free does not entail that this stress cannot be reduced and be better handled by the more powerful parties involved in the integration process: namely, host-society members, its institutional actors, and especially those who exercise control and authority over its linguistic and political cultures. The fact that *some* stress is inevitable does not entail that *all* stress is unavoidable. And so an important measure of a host society is the manner in which it handles this particular kind of stress, produced by the demand that newcomers "learn the language," in particular when that demand offers very little in terms of practical action guidance and is rooted in an unreflective notion of language and lived linguistic realities.[12] The power that public institutions exercise over newcomers, through their linguis-

[12]Commenting on the dominance of one-wayness thinking in conceptions of integration, Klarenbeek notes that "whereas integration outcomes may be *explained* by the institutions, attitudes, or conduct of the host society, it is not *measured* through these indicators. Integration thereby remains, essentially, a one-way process" (Klarenbeek 2019, 8; see also Klarenbeek 2021).

tic setup and bureaucratic logic, is pertinent here, of course—for example, in relation to equitable access to public services and especially emergency services. But the same also goes for the kind of more covert power that linguistic majorities exercise over their minoritized counterparts, which shapes their respective affective inequalities (Kolehmainen and Juvonen 2018), as applied to language, and by virtue of language's fundamental affective and relational nature.[13]

People in (di)stress seek relief. In the context of a language-related stress, what kind of language relief is available for newcomer new speakers? Seeking relief in the new language, for example through friendships with host-society members, may be risky, insofar as this option necessarily relies on sufficient validation and acceptance on the part of host-society members, which are by no means guaranteed. Seeking relief in one's main language can make for a quicker mental relief, in being able to "lean back" into the comforting reassurance of a familiar linguistic system, associated world of meanings and connotations, and the kind of habitual presence-to-oneself-and-others it provides. But it may also exacerbate one's sense of isolation, in highlighting the evident difference in the intersubjective and affective affordances between the languages.[14] More worryingly, looking for relief in the newcomer's main language may be misperceived, in the eyes of host-society members, as proof of their partial, lacking, or insincere commitment to the host society's language (and, implicitly, the host society itself).

This state of affairs can create a vicious circle, in which the more stressed newcomer new speakers may be by the demand to learn the language, the more they are likely to seek language relief in a way that will be negatively judged by the host society, therefore leading to even greater stress, which in turns results in greater need for relief. This kind of linguistic-integration catch-22 can be exhausting all by itself, producing not only anxiety but also *anticipatory* anxiety (that is, anxiety oriented toward a future experience of anxiety) and a sense of cognitive overload and affective isolation. Despite the causal and linear assumptions that tend to underlie conceptions of linguistic integration, the practical result of that relentless stressful experience is by no means guaranteed to lead to better linguistic integration. A likely outcome of that overwhelming stress may well be that of withdrawal and even self-silencing. An unreflective demand that one should "learn the language," well intentioned and made in good faith as it may be, may nonetheless ultimately lead, if excessively made and enforced, to the diminishing and even eventual loss of one's very linguistic agency.

Host societies have a legitimate interest in linguistic integration, which derives from principles such as linguistic sovereignty and self-determination. But whether or not the normative demand that newcomers learn the language *is* legitimate, is something that requires, in the first instance, a much more reflective understanding and systematic inquiry on what, precisely, it means and entails. The legitimate linguistic sovereignty of host societies does not—and cannot—nullify the principle of equal linguistic dignity, in instances when the practical outcome of linguistic sovereignty is the overwhelming of newcomers to such an extreme degree that they forgo their own linguistic agency.

In other words, while host societies are understandably preoccupied with linguistic difference *between* linguistic communities, they cannot lose sight of the existence of a more consequential difference, namely, between people who feel free and empowered to realize their linguistic agency, and those who do not, as a result of excessively strong external pressure to shape themselves

[13]Affective inequalities are "shaped in everyday affective encounters" (Kolehmainen and Juvonen 2018, 2) and constitute "subtle mechanisms of inequality which may easily go unnoticed, given that affects are often, ambivalent, mundane, ordinary and difficult to capture empirically" (1). Rooted in a "relational understanding of effect" (2), they constitute an "everyday flow of forces, charges, energies, moods and atmospheres [that] is crucial for developing our understandings of the fabric of different relationships, which cannot be grasped by employing conventional analyses of power" (2).

[14]On affordances in language see, e.g., Ayala 2016; Snoddon 2022.

completely in the linguistic image of others at the expense of their own self. The notion of relief, as I discussed above, may be seen as antithetical to the very logic that underlies linguistic integration; and yet, I contend, it constitutes a fundamental part of the conceptual core of any relational notion of integration and the intersubjective structure of its configurational logic. The moral salience of language relief is particularly crucial for liberal approaches to migration and integration, rooted not merely in their normative predominance but also in the inbuilt normative capacity of liberalism, as a social and political philosophy, to protect the individual from external social pressures and from the danger of their potentially overwhelming, debilitating impact.

5 | CONCLUSION

Public debates on immigration, as Miller notes in the introduction to his *Strangers in Our Midst: The Political Philosophy of Immigration*, tend to generate "much heat, but little light" (Miller 2016, 2). This dynamic is certainly reflected in many public debates on linguistic integration, which are rooted in host societies' complex set of linguistic conflicts, tensions, ambivalences, anxieties, and hopes, born of their own particular linguistic political histories. The unavoidability of "the language question" in migration contexts, and its moral and practical intricacies, entail that it ought to be viewed as a core policy dilemma that requires "hard choices" (Bauböck, Mourão Permoser, and Ruhs 2022, 427, 432), and that calls for "a multidisciplinary approach to the normative analysis of hard ethical dilemmas … in the spirit of an applied normative political theory that aims to be action guiding" (427, 436).

This very imperative underlies my analysis in this paper, in my exploration of three moral and practical challenges that arise from a notion of linguistic integration that, for all its commonsensical appearance, remains to date unhelpfully action guiding: (1) a predicament of arbitrary treatment; (2) the interpersonal structure of social and linguistic learning; and (3) the affective dimension of linguistic integration. Legitimate normative orders in language, as envisioned, enacted, and enforced by host societies, risk a substantive legitimacy challenge, when these normative orders are formulated in detachment from the lived linguistic experiences of those whom they primarily target. Addressing these challenges and developing normative accounts that acknowledge the moral salience of nonarbitrariness, a relational approach to social and linguistic learning, and a practical and accessible relief will, I hope, contribute to a more principled, nuanced, and grounded interdisciplinary framework for theorizing the practical ethics of linguistic integration.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

For their helpful comments and nuanced critiques, I am deeply grateful to Helder De Schutter, Seunghyun Song, and the participants of the workshops "Linguistic Justice and Migration" (KU Leuven 2021) and "Exclusion, Integration and Democracy" (UiT 2023). I am likewise grateful to Otto Bohlmann for his thorough editorial feedback and textual review. Open Access funding enabled and organized by Projekt DEAL.

REFERENCES

Ayala, Saray. 2016. "Speech Affordances: A Structural Take on How Much We Can Do with Our Words." *European Journal of Philosophy* 24, no. 4: 879–91.

Bauböck, Rainer, Julia Mourão Permoser, and Martin Ruhs. 2022. "The Ethics of Migration Policy Dilemmas." *Migration Studies* 10, no. 3: 427–41.

Bonotti, Matteo, Colin Rowe, and Nina Carlsson, eds. 2022. "Linguistic Rights and Duties of Migrants: Norms and Practices." Symposium section of *Nations and Nationalism* 28, no. 2: 373–730.

Brando, Nico, and Sergi Morales-Gálvez. 2023. "Capabilities and Linguistic Justice." *Political Studies* 71, no. 3: 676–94.

Catala, Amandine. 2022. "Academic Migration, Linguistic Justice, and Epistemic Injustice." *Journal of Political Philosophy* 30, no. 3: 324–46.

Dahl, Robert A. 1957. "The Concept of Power." *Behavioral Science* 2, no. 3: 201–15.

De Schutter, Helder, and David Robichaud. 2015. "Van Parijsian Linguistic Justice—Context, Analysis and Critiques." *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy* 18, no. 2: 87–112.
De Schutter, Helder. 2020. "Intralinguistic Justice." In *Language Ethics*, edited by Yael Peled and Daniel Weinstock, 146–77. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press.
De Schutter, Helder. 2022. "Linguistic Justice for Immigrants." *Nations and Nationalism* 28, no. 2: 418–34.
Deutsch, Karl W. 1963. *The Nerves of Government: Models of Political Communication and Control*. New York: Free Press of Glencoe.
Doucerain, Marina M., Norman Segalowitz, and Andrew G. Ryder. 2017. "Acculturation Measurement: From Simple Proxies to Sophisticated Toolkit." In *The Oxford Handbook of Acculturation and Health*, edited by Seth J. Schwartz and Julia Unger, 97–117. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Emery, Steven D., and Sanchayeeta Iyer. 2022. "Deaf Migration Through an Intersectionality Lens." *Disability and Society* 37, no. 1: 89–110.
Engstrom, David W., Lisette M. Piedra, and J. W. Min. 2009. "Bilingual Social Workers: Language and Service Complexities." *Administration in Social Work* 33, no. 2: 167–85.
Fricker, Miranda. 2007. *Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Hoesch, Matthias. 2023. "Do Immigrants Have a Moral Duty to Learn the Host Society's Language?" *Res Publica* 29, no. 1: 23–40.
Klarenbeek, Lea M. 2019. "Relational Integration: A Response to Willem Schinkel." *Comparative Migration Studies* 7, no. 20: 1–8.
Klarenbeek, Lea M. 2021. "Reconceptualising 'Integration as a Two-Way Process'." *Migration Studies* 9, no. 3: 902–21.
Kolehmainen, Marjo, and Tuula Juvonen. 2018. "Introduction: Thinking with and Through Affective Inequalities." In *Affective Inequalities in Intimate Relationships*, edited by Tuula Juvonen and Marjo Kolehmainen, 1–15. New York: Routledge.
Kostakopoulou, Dora. 2010. "The Anatomy of Civic Integration." *Modern Law Review* 73, no. 6: 933–58.
Krumm, Hans-Jürgen. 2012. "Multilingualism, Heterogeneity and the Monolingual Policies of the Linguistic Integration of Migrants." In *Migrations: Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, edited by Michi Messer, Renee Schroeder, and Ruth Wodak, 43–54. Vienna: Springer.
Lewis, Huw. 2017. "Realising Linguistic Justice: Resources Versus Capabilities." *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development* 38, no. 7: 595–606.
Maistrello, Veronica, and F. C. Dalziel. 2020. "Overcoming Anxiety in Adult Migrants' Language Learning by Means of Process Drama." *Global Education Review* 7, no. 4: 29–45.
McKowen, Kelly, and John Borneman. 2020. "Digesting Difference: Migrants, Refugees, and Incorporation in Europe." In *Digesting Difference: Migrant Incorporation and Mutual Belonging in Europe*, edited by Kelly McKowen and John Borneman, 1–27. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.
Miller, David. 2016. *Strangers in Our Midst: The Political Philosophy of Immigration*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.
Moriarty, Erin, and Annelies Kusters. 2021. "Deaf Cosmopolitanism: Calibrating as a Moral Process." *International Journal of Multilingualism* 18, no. 2: 285–302.
Moyer, Alene. 2013. *Foreign Accent: The Phenomenon of Non-Native Speech*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Oakes, Leigh, and Yael Peled. 2018. *Normative Language Policy: Ethics, Politics, Principles*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Peled, Yael. 2018. "Language Barriers and Epistemic Injustice in Healthcare Settings." *Bioethics* 32, no. 6: 360–67.
Peled, Yael. 2019. "The Ethics of Boycotting as Collective Anti-Normalisation." *Journal of Applied Philosophy* 36, no. 4: 527–42.
Peled, Yael. 2021. "The Linguistic Boundary Problem." *Citizenship Studies* 25, no. 6: 825–42.
Peled, Yael, and Matteo Bonotti. 2019. "Sound Reasoning: Why Accent Bias Matters for Democratic Theory." *Journal of Politics* 81, no. 2: 411–25.
Penkov, Misoslav. 2011. *East of the West: A Country in Stories*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.
Printschitz, Boris. 2017. "All a Question of the 'Right' Capital? Subjectification—The Hidden Mechanism Behind Language Tests for Residence Permit in Austria." In *The Linguistic Integration of Adult Migrants/L'intégration linguistique des migrants adultes*, edited by Jean-Claude Beacco, Hans-Jürgen Krumm, David Little, and Philia Thalgott, 241–48. Berlin: De Gruyter.
Robichaud, David, and Helder De Schutter. 2012. "Language is Just a Tool! On the Instrumentalist Approach to Language." In *The Cambridge Handbook of Language Policy*, edited by Bernard Spolsky, 124–45. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Segalowitz, Norman. 2010. *Cognitive Biases of Second Language Fluency*. New York: Routledge.
Shorten, Andrew. 2017. "Four Conceptions of Linguistic Disadvantage." *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development* 38, no. 7: 607–21.
Shorten, Andrew. 2022. "Immigration, Language and Disadvantage." *Nations and Nationalism* 28, no. 2: 435–48.
Snoddon, Kristin. 2022. "Writing as Being: On the Existential Primacy of Writing for a Deaf Scholar." *Qualitative Inquiry* 28, no. 6: 722–31.

Snow, Don. 2016. "Affective Factors and Interpretive Judgments in Intercultural Encounters." *Intercultural Communication Studies* 25, no. 3: 19–32.

Sterne, Jonathan. 2021. *Diminished Faculties: A Political Phenomenology of Impairment*. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press.

Vertovec, Steven. 2020. "Afterword: The Work of 'Integration'." In *Digesting Difference: Migrant Incorporation and Mutual Belonging in Europe*, edited by Kelly McKowen and John Borneman, 251–66. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.

von Busekist, Astrid, and Benjamin Boudou. 2018. "Language Proficiency and Migration: An Argument Against Testing." In *Language Policy and Linguistic Justice: Economic, Philosophical and Sociolinguistic Approaches*, edited by Michele Gazzola, Torsten Templin, and Bengt-Arne Wickström, 189–208. Cham: Springer.

Vredenburgh, Kate. 2022. "The Right to Explanation." *Journal of Political Philosophy* 30, no. 2: 209–29.

Wolff, Jonathan, and Avner De Shalit. 2007. *Disadvantage*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

Yael Peled is a language ethicist specializing in the moral, social, and political philosophy of language, and in the ethics, politics, and policy of linguistic diversity. Her highly interdisciplinary research program draws on philosophy, political science, linguistics, and medicine. Her published work has appeared in core (trans-) disciplinary journals, including the *Journal of Applied Philosophy*, *Bioethics*, *AMA Journal of Ethics*, the *American Political Science Review*, the *Journal of Politics*, *Citizenship Studies*, *Language Policy*, and *Science*.

How to cite this article: Peled, Yael. 2023. "The Practical Ethics of Linguistic Integration: Three Challenges." *Metaphilosophy* 00 (0): 1–15. https://doi.org/10.1111/meta.12653.