

Open Access

Alfonso Del Percio


New speakers on lost ground in the football stadium

Abstract: Football is a key site for local pride to be enacted by fans through the celebration of local dialects and local myths. At the same time, sport industries are currently undergoing major transformations and becoming global, professional and profit-oriented. Consequently, pride in a place is not solely the property of the given area or its inhabitants. Indeed, fandom is increasingly enacted by new groups who speak different languages and live in other places, and who thus cross borders to consume local fan practices and tokens of imagined local authenticity. Furthermore, football clubs are increasingly owned by multinational investors who employ international and multilingual football workers. Meanwhile, nostalgic adherents of so-called traditional football frequently interpret the emergence of these transnational actors as a corruption of this sport. The presence of such transnational actors raises questions regarding the challenges encountered by these new speakers when they produce and consume cultural resources that are widely perceived to be not only the commodities sold by the football industry but also tokens of local authenticity. Drawing on an ethnography conducted in the stadium of the FC Basel in Switzerland, I discuss the case of two transnational actors who are identified as new speakers of Basel's local dialect and of standard German, both codes being specifically associated with being a legitimate fan or coach of FC Basel. In discussing the challenges faced by these new speakers during their encounters with FC Basel as a commercial product, I examine how these individuals have constructed their legitimacy as members of FC Basel's imagined community and analyze how, why, and by whom this legitimacy is given or contested.

Keywords: new speakers, football, late capitalism

DOI 10.1515/applirev-2015-0013

Alfonso Del Percio, University of Oslo, Oslo, Norway, E-mail: a.d.percio@iln.uio.no

 © 2015, Percio. This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 3.0 License.

Brought to you by | University of Oslo Norway
Authenticated
Download Date | 8/15/17 4:39 PM

1 Introduction

Football is a traditional site of pride. Features of late capitalism, however, have transformed formerly site-specific football industries into global and profit-oriented businesses with transnational fan communities. Consequently, local pride in a football team is no longer only the property of a given municipality or of its legitimate inhabitants. Fandom is increasingly enacted by new groups who speak different languages and live in other places and who thus cross borders to consume local fan practices and the forms of authenticity these practices represent. In a similar vein, football clubs are increasingly owned by multinational investors who employ international and multilingual *football workers*, i.e. players, trainers and managers. Nostalgic adherents of so-called traditional football generally interpret the emergence of these transnational actors (owners, football workers and fans) as a corruption of the values football is supposed to represent.

For a scholarship investigating language and inequality under late capitalism the emergence of such transnational actors raises questions regarding the challenges encountered by these new speakers when they produce and consume cultural resources that are generally held to be not only the commodities sold by the football industry but also tokens of local identity and authenticity.

Drawing on an ethnography conducted in the stadium of the FC Basel, which is the major football club in Basel (an economic center of German-speaking Switzerland), I discuss the case of two transnational actors who are identified as new speakers of Basel's local dialect (*Baseldytsch*) and of standard German (which is the official language in Basel); both codes are specifically associated to being a legitimate fan or coach of the FC Basel:

The first new speaker is Marco,¹ who joined the local fan community to find friends. The second example is Miguel, currently the Portuguese coach of FC Basel. In discussing the challenges faced by these new speakers during their encounters with the commercial product "FC Basel," I inquire into how Marco and Miguel have been constructing their legitimacy as members of FC Basel's imagined community (i.e. those actors considered to be legitimate members of FC Basel's players, coaching and managerial staff, and fans) and analyze how, why, and by whom this legitimacy is given, contested, and challenged.

1 All personal names are pseudonyms.

2 New speakers, mobility, and commercial football

The accelerated liberalization of the markets, restructuring of national economies, and transnational mobility of capital, agents, and information that characterizes late capitalism (Harvey 2005) have all enabled a new economy to emerge: one that facilitates the transformation of cultural resources into commodities produced and consumed by mobile and multilingual actors (Duchêne and Heller 2012).

The rise of a global football industry in the 1990s is part of the economization of culture under late capitalism. Indeed, the football industry has been promotionally investing in semiotic resources that represent the forms of tradition a given football club is believed to represent with the aim of transforming football into a unique event of mass consumption (Morrow 2003). While football has historically been invested by working-class men to celebrate their masculinity and loyalty to a given team, football is increasingly consumed by new audiences who embody new desires, subjectivities, and aims (Del Percio and Duchêne 2011). This contributes to the rise of a new economy factoring hundreds of billions (Deloitte 2014).

The commercialization of football also affects the actors this new industry employs. Effectively, the deregulation of the European labor markets in the early 1990s enabled football workers to circulate across the European national football leagues. A successful transnationalization of the football economy (entailing football clubs, the sports media industry, sports equipment sector, sports betting industry, security, logistics and transport industry, and the restaurant and catering sector) requires a mobile and multilingual workforce able to serve the changing, continuously expanding, multilingual football markets (Frick 2009). This applies to the football laborer working in increasingly linguistically diverse spaces (Maguire 2004). This is also valid for the media that interact with these workers and that localize their transnationally circulating, multilingual discourses (Raney and Bryant 2006). Finally, this counts for the service providers commercializing football – and that deal with international and multilingual audiences (Fenton 2009).

If multilingualism and mobility represent a condition of commercial football, its consumption also requires a highly mobile and polyglot audience able to follow the teams and players across transnational trajectories, to consume the multilingual knowledge internationally circulating on this commodity, and to participate in the production of that knowledge in virtual/non-virtual spaces of debate (Onwumehili and Oloruntola 2014). Nevertheless, although mobility and multilingualism have become a major economic resource, the commercialization, transnationalization and the linguistic and cultural diversification of football does not remain uncontested. These processes have rather resulted in tensions surrounding

the authenticity of a team and of those individuals who produce and consume fan culture. It is in this context that the concept of the new speaker (and its tokens “Modefan”, “corrupted fan”, “new fan”) becomes a powerful category mobilized to point to the supposed non-authenticness of these individuals and as such to exclude the so-called newcomers from forms of visibility, recognition and capital. Indeed, while the concept of new speaker is often used by scholars as a conceptual tool to designate individuals learning and using language varieties other than their “mother tongues” (O’Rourke et al. 2015), in the following section I demonstrate that *new speaking* can also be considered as an emic category, i.e. a powerful tool ideologically invested within the football community of the FC Basel to hierarchize the newcomers along the lines of their supposed (in)capacity to enact the imagined habitus of the fan community of FC Basel (see Jaffe 2015 for similar claims).

This paper investigates how both FC Basel coach Miguel and new fan Marco are given or denied access to the resources commercialized football offers. It focuses on the new speakers’ strategies mobilized to position as legitimate members of FC Basel’s football community. It also discusses the practices of valuation of the new speakers’ habitus enacted by those individuals who consider themselves to be legitimate members of the FC Basel community.

My analysis draws on interactional data, semi-structured interviews, observations of fan practices, recordings of press conferences, press articles, and computer-mediated data collected during an ethnographic research conducted between 2007 and 2013 that investigated fan practices within and around the football stadium of FC Basel and questioned the ways in which fandom acts as a key site of manifestation of ideologies of locality and difference. This research involved the regular (several times per week) attendance of games (in Basel, or in other Swiss or European cities) with several group of fans who considered themselves to be particularly invested in the celebration of FC Basel. It also entailed regular meetings with these groups during the week when they assembled to produce choreographies, flags and banners. Furthermore, the project encompassed the attendance of events organized by the FC Basel fan community to either celebrate the team, the fan community or the city of Basel, or contest (sport)political decisions or police violence.

3 FC Basel

FC Basel was founded in 1893. Given the traditional lack of the international competitiveness of Swiss football, FC Basel has rarely enjoyed international visibility; since its foundation, the team has been perceived by Basel’s population as an object of local identity. Yet FC Basel’s potential to represent authenticity was not

exclusively related to its representation of the city. It was also related to the nature of football: a sport where a team, representing one city, competes against teams representing other cities. As such, football often emerges as the locus where the tensions between cities materialize. This latter aspect is particularly salient for Swiss teams because of Switzerland's federalist structure; the country is politically organized in autonomous cantons and tensions among these political entities have historically been prominent. The national rivalry is particularly pronounced at Basel, as its traditional sportive adversary is Zurich, the other economic hub in German-speaking Switzerland.

In the early 1990s, FC Basel experienced deep transformations: new investors began contributing to the professionalization of the club. These transformations concurred with the construction of a new stadium that conformed to the infrastructure regulations imposed by the UEFA, the body governing Europe's football, thereby enabling Basel to host European football matches. These changes laid the groundwork for a (ongoing) phase of sportive and economic success. Since the early 2000s, FC Basel has maintained its dominance in the major Swiss football league while gaining international visibility due to its presence in European competition. This then enabled the team's managers to acquire international trainers and players, thus transforming the FC Basel from a strongly locally anchored Swiss club into an international, multicultural, and multilingual team. Indeed, before the year 2000, the majority of players were from Switzerland, and in the season 1993/1994 – when the beginning of the professionalization process is usually dated – the team was made up of 11 Swiss, 2 Germans, 1 Norwegian, 1 Russian, and 2 Bosnians, and the coaches were German-speaking Swiss or Germans. By contrast, the 2014/2015 team is coached by a Portuguese (Miguel) and includes players from Argentina (2 x), Albania (2 x), Paraguay (1 x), Macedonia (1 x), Czech Republic (2 x), Chile (1 x), Italy (2 x), Ivorian Coast (2 x), Japan (1 x), Egypt (2 x), Iran (1 x), Kosovo (1 x), Bulgaria (1 x), Portugal (1 x), and Cameroon (1 x). Of the 25 players belonging to the team, only four are Swiss and only two are from Basel.

While FC Basel's professionalization has been celebrated by fans, the media and politicians because it has enabled the attraction of supplementary financial revenues, given visibility to the city, and transformed a traditional object of local pride into an international sports and organizational model, these changes have also been contested. Both the media and the fans criticize that some newly acquired investors are not congruous with the authentic values of FC Basel. The same criticism applies to the team's international character, which is believed to have cost the team its relationship to the city and its heritage.

These criticisms are also related to the fans' concerns of higher ticket prices and the scarcity of available tickets due to the presence of new fans from Basel, the rest of Switzerland, and neighboring France and Germany. (Basel is located

at the German and French borders). And for the local media, these transformations have given rise to new media actors competing for visibility in Basel's public discourse.

It is in this context that Miguel and Marco, the two new speakers whose cases will be discussed in the following sections, entered into contact with the FC Basel and began to negotiate their status as legitimate members of the FC Basel community.

4 You can't become an FC Basel fan; you have to be born one

"You can't become an FC Basel fan; you have to be born one" is the refrain of a song performed during matches by those fans who consider themselves to be particularly authentic. The song celebrates the authentic fan as unconditionally dedicated to FC Basel; it also stigmatizes the so-called "Modelfan" (fair-weather fans) who supposedly consume FC Basel's games as a commercial spectacle.

In this section, I tell the story of Marco, one of these new fans. Although Marco was born in Basel to a German mother and a Swiss father who spoke Baseldytsch, he spent part of his childhood in Germany with his grandparents. Despite his schooling in Basel, he never learned to speak Baseldytsch. This was due to his parents' divorce, which occurred at an early stage of his childhood; after the divorce, Marco lived with his German-speaking mother. It is also due to the stigmatization Marco experienced in kindergarten: according to his peers and teachers, Marco spoke Baseldytsch with some "odd" traces of standard German; consequently, Marco chose to stick to standard German rather than meet with disapproval.

When I met Marco in 2007, he had just returned from various professional experiences abroad. I met him for the first time at a football match, when he was introduced to me by his roommate, Johannes, one of the members of the clique I had joined to investigate FC Basel's fan community. Because this clique was a closed group that met to attend the matches and because new people were out of the ordinary, Marco quickly attracted my attention. He spoke standard German and claimed not to be a real fan of the FC Basel, which was rather unusual in the fan circles I was involved in: we identify ourselves as staunch supporters of the FC Basel, which entailed a constant presence at every game, the mastery of Baseldytsch, and a stigmatization of fans who occasionally go to games.

A few weeks after my first encounter with Marco, after having explained what my research was about, I asked him to recall his first encounter with our

clique and to discuss what it meant to him to be in FC Basel's stadium. This is how he described these moments:

at the beginning you enter [the stadium] and you start feeling like a stranger and then you have to sing but you can't because you don't know the songs they aren't written you just have to know them and you have to understand the commands from the capos but then you're always taking a chance and so I was afraid to speak because if I opened my mouth they would realize that I am not from Basel even though I am from Basel but since you can hear that I don't speak Baseldytsch since for the fans it's all about differentiating yourself from the competitors and you do that by highlighting who you are for example in the song IF YOU DON'T JUMP YOU'RE NOT FROM BASEL first because the text doesn't even ask whether for example someone from bern could also be a fcb fan and then because during the songs everybody links arms in order to build a chain and jumps when singing and when the only one doesn't jump the chain doesn't hold and you attract attention and i really felt weird because i knew i had to participate because if you don't you stand out and on the other hand I don't have the right to consider myself as being from basel as though I were pretending be something i'm not [author's translation from standard German]

Marco mobilizes his knowledge of the habitus of a legitimate fan: knowing the stadium and knowing where your fan group is seated; being able to decode the signs of the capos (the capos are fan representatives who coordinate fan support); knowing the songs; knowing the gestures accompanying the songs; speaking Baseldytsch; being from Basel.

The fan habitus Marco described is specific to a given sector of the stadium, the Muttenzerkurve, where the die-hard fans are traditionally located and where, in opposition to the other sectors, fan support is regimented and organized by a predefined song repertoire, slogans, and other forms of authentic speech performed at specific times during a game and enacted according to the directives of the capos.

Marco recognizes that not mastering the songs and the legitimate behavior of a FC Basel fan not only implies outing oneself as a non-regular fan. True to the logic of football's constantly pitting one team against another, not sharing the local habitus also means belonging to the economically corrupted "others" who come to the games only to consume a commercial spectacle. Or worse: it means belonging to the fans supporting the competing team. Finally, as Marco states, not acting appropriately is perceived as a corruption of the sector's fan support, which in turn endangers the authenticity of these practices and their effect on supporting the local team.

At that specific moment in Marco's life, what was really at stake was his access to a social network in the city in which he was born, but in which he had never been able to socially integrate. In the end, Marco decided to invest in acquiring the habitus that he believed would grant him access to legitimacy.

4.1 Acquiring the legitimate fan habitus

On one of the following weekends, Marco asked me (since he knew that I was interested in questions of language and legitimacy) and his roommate Johannes to teach him the songs performed in the *Muttengerkurve* so he could avoid criticism from other members of our clique. For Marco, this was a way to gain access to the songs' texts; for the members of our clique, who increasingly perceived him as a danger for the legitimacy of the clique – as the group had tolerated someone supposedly not sharing the same values and practices for weeks – his investment was welcomed.

So we started to teach him the songs that, in our experience, were important to know. The acquisition process did not just entail memorizing the texts and the gestures related to the songs, but also consisted in understanding a song's functionalities for fan support. Although Marco's knowledge of the myths related to Basel (all children in Basel encounter those stories at a certain point of their education) and his motivation to quickly learn them, correct pronunciation of the songs was difficult to achieve. Indeed, in his performances of the songs, traces of the German standard were discernable. He struggled particularly with a song called "s drämmlli vierzäh," [the tramway fourteen].

ich stieg ins draemmlli vierzaeh i/I get in tramway fourteen
und fahre zu mim joggeli/and go to my joggeli
mit fahne fackle megaphon/with flag and torch and megaphone
gang ich ins stadion/I go to the stadium

jetzt wo ich i dr kurve stand/now I am in the stands
als teil vom basler fuessball land/as part of Basel's football world
gspuehr ich dr geist von joggeli/I feel the spirit of the joggeli
und stimm in chor mit ih/and I add my voice to the chorus

dr rotblau wunsch dass mir huett gwinne/the red-blue wish that we win today
stigt fuehr und rauch in himmel/fire and smoke rise into the sky
foetzeli tanze durch dr wind/confetti dances through the wind
die ganzi kurve singt/the whole stand sings [author's translation from Baseldytsch]

This song is an emblematic token of the fan community's repertoire. Every strophe represents one phase in the social history of one specific football game: the way to the stadium; the constitution of the fan community as a homogenous whole; and the fan support practices themselves.

The song is considered to be particularly authentic since its text points to specific places, artifacts, and practices that are related to Basel and to FC Basel's fan community: the *drämmlli vierzäh* [tramway fourteen], which is used by the fans to get to the stadium; the *drämmlli* [tramway] itself, which is considered by

Basel's population to be an object of local identity; the *fahne*, *fackle*, and *megaphone* [the flags, torches and megaphones] being the main instruments of a football fan; *d'kurve*, the term used by the die-hard supporters for the Muttenserkerve; *dr geist vom joggeli* [the spirit of "joggeli" – the stadium's nickname], which either refers to the extraordinary ambience within the sector or to point to the so-called the supernatural forces creating the conditions for such as an ambience; the *chor* [choir] referring to the collective and coordinated singing in the Muttenserkerve; and finally, raising fire and smoke and the dancing confetti refers to the activities that are part of the fan support repertoire.

Despite his enthusiasm, Marco experienced some difficulties in pronouncing the open vowel /a/ of the words *drämmli vierzäh*, which he pronounced with the mid-open vowel /ɛ/. This was problematic because the open vowel /a/ has traditionally been imagined by people from Basel as one of those phonetic features differentiating Baseldytsch from the German standard. That is why we started to exercise his pronunciation of the words "drämmli" and "vierzäh." Although our efforts to train his articulation were mainly inspired by the consumption of alcohol – and as such not terribly serious – we were very aware of the importance that phonetic detail had for his legitimacy in the Muttenserkerve.

4.2 Language and social access

Marco never managed to correctly articulate the /a/ of *drämmli* and was never considered by the other members of our clique as a full member of the FC Basel fan community. Nonetheless, as long as his roommate Johannes took Marco to the games, the other members of our clique tolerated him.

The toleration of Marco's "deviance" ended when Johannes had to leave the city for professional reasons. The absence of the figure who, for months, was able to compensate Marco's illegitimacy through his own status within our clique created new tensions.

One Saturday when FC Basel was playing against FC Zurich – a confrontation that is frequently accompanied by violent altercations before and after the games – Marco was threatened by members of our own clique, which led him to stop going to the games. The problems began as follows:

After Zurich scored, the fans in the Muttenserkerve started to chant a series of songs, usually performed when their team was behind. They screamed the slogans *TOT UND HASS IM FCZ* [DEATH AND HATRED TO FC ZURICH] and sung *D'MUETTR VOM DA COSTA ISCH E HUERE* [DA COSTA'S MOTHER IS A WHORE], which are used to irritate the goalkeeper standing below the Muttenserkerve. The fans also performed a choreographed clapping sequence, which concludes

with the fans raising their hands and screaming SIEG [VICTORY]. Fans in the *Muttenserkerve* believe this performance – which clearly recalls the aestheticization of the masses under the Nazi regime – helps push their team toward victory.

While the majority of the fans consider these performances as necessary to express their support, there has always been a part of the *Muttenserkerve* that criticizes these practices as fascist. Because Marco identified these voices in the sector as a means to achieve legitimacy within the community, he decided to take the part of those arguing for an alternative fan culture and refused to chant the songs and to clap as prescribed.

While Marco wasn't the only supporter contesting these songs, his silence provoked a brusque reaction from Stephan, another member of our clique:

S: warum singsch nid/Why aren't you singing?

M: was soll das bringen können wir uns nicht fuer den FCB einsetzen ohne uns zu benehmen wie die glatzen/What good is that song? Can't we support our team without acting like skinheads?

S: wenn dir das zwill isch gang in family corner und zu de andere modefans/If it's too much, go sit with the families and your fellow fair-weather fans.

M: ich find's nur kindisch/I just think it's childish.

S: gang doch niemerds haltet di uff sitt wenn loend mir uns i dere kurve oeppis lo sage vo sonere schwob-schnurre sing jetzt oder verpiss di/Then go. Nobody is stopping you. And since when have we ever let a Schwab [pejorative term used in Basel to designate Germans] tell us what to do? F**k off. [author's translation from Baseldytsch]

When Marco identified the songs as childish and questioned their ability to push the team forward, and even challenged the rightwing positions represented by these texts, he discovered he was not sufficiently legitimate to overtly refuse to sing along – despite his investment in the fan community, the motivation he showed in learning the songs and acquiring the legitimate fan habitus, and despite the fact that he was not the only person who refused to sing.

To justify this delegitimation, Stephan mobilized two arguments: first he constructed Marco as a corrupted fan. In this regard, the reference to the family corner is important, since the sector is viewed as reserved for people who have received free tickets, distributed by FC Basel sponsors to their clients or employees.

Second, Stephan points out that Marco speaks standard German, thus calling into question Marco's right to take issue with fan practices in the *Muttenserkerve*. While criticism from someone viewed as illegitimate would have been bad enough, the fact that this challenge was issued by someone believed to be

German was insufferable. This is due to the status of German in Switzerland: despite its official nature, German is traditionally considered to be the language of the “others” (the Germans) from whom the Swiss and especially the Swiss from Basel (in close proximity to the German border) have aimed to distinguish themselves to legitimize their political autonomy. In addition, German-speaking Switzerland is currently experiencing an augmented influx of high-skilled German immigrants who are highly competitive in the labor market due to their proficiency in the official language of German-speaking Switzerland. This has caused standard German to reemerge as a salient site to legitimize the exclusion of Germans from resources that are considered Swiss. This explains why, although other fans in the sector also refused to go along with the chant, only Marco’s behavior was criticized. It also the reason why no “legitimate” fans criticizing the enacted songs were ready to support Marco: this would have posed a threat to their own position.

Marco’s short career as a FC Basel fan demonstrates how, despite his investment in the acquisition of the legitimate fan habitus, his standard German and supposed “bad” Baseldytsch constantly emerged as a site where Marco’s exclusion could be justified. As demonstrated in the next sections, however, the FC Basel community does not always consider standard German to be a stigma; under certain conditions, standard German can represent the conditionality of access to resources. Along the lines of Bourdieu’s theory of the linguistic market (1977), I will demonstrate that a speaker’s legitimacy does not exclusively depend on their effective linguistic skills in those languages considered to be the most valuable, nor does it hinge on their motivation to learn and their investment in that language. Rather, speakers are apportioned value in specific markets that are regimented by specific actors and institutions according to specific interests, logics, and agendas. These factors are responsible for conditioning the possibility for new speakers to gain access to resources.

5 The new coach from Portugal

The second case is the one of the coach Miguel Rodriguez, who was appointed in 2014 as a further measure in the professionalization of FC Basel. Management at FC Basel believed Miguel was an ideal candidate for this professionalization strategy due to his international experience and because he had been successful with the different teams he coached: Queens Park Rangers (England); Swansea City (Wales); Leicester City (England); Videoton (Hungary); and Maccabi Tel Aviv (Israel). His appeal was also due to the international reputation he had

acquired during his career as a player, during which he played for major European teams, even winning the UEFA Champions League, the most prestigious European championship.

Although FC Basel's announcement of hiring Miguel was received by the fans and the media with enthusiasm, Miguel's arrival provoked some anxieties. These were related to the many discontinuities in his coaching career: before arriving in Basel, Miguel had previously spent no more than one year coaching a club. Many feared this was a sign of Miguel's disloyalty towards the clubs he had worked for. Thus, part of the media criticized FC Basel's management for replacing a local coach – the coach Miguel replaced was from Basel – with a foreigner unfamiliar with the logics of Swiss football. Further, the media criticized Miguel for never learning German, despite his experience as a player at German clubs. The media cast this as proof of his lack of interest to integrate in Basel; due to FC Basel's strong identification with Basel, this could easily be perceived as problematic. While in Marco's case, Baseldytsch emerged as the condition to gain access to the fan community of the FC Basel, for Miguel, the question of dialect never emerged. This is in line with what happens in the case of other non German-speaking immigrants in Switzerland, who are requested to learn standard German in order to "integrate." As we will see later, the fact that immigrants are supposed to speak standard German and not dialect is a means to uphold the difference between them and the locals. This condition is exacerbated because German-speaking Swiss believe immigrants can never speak Swiss German dialect and the Swiss, who see themselves as proficient in both dialect and standard.

In the following section, I discuss how under this specific linguistic regime in German-speaking Switzerland – which prescribes a division of labor between dialect and standard language – and in a context characterized by the tension between the FC Basel's goal of international visibility and its wish to remain locally anchored, Miguel managed to construct his own legitimacy.

5.1 Becoming legitimate

On June 2, 2014, FC Basel's management organized a press conference presenting its new coach. Since commercialized football commodifies not only the matches but also capitalizes on interviews with football workers and clips of training sessions, the press conference was live-streamed via the online websites of the national press, and the TV and radio stations.

The press conference was structured in two parts: a first part introducing the new coach and a second part where media workers asked questions to the new coach and to the team's management.

Although press conferences are usually conducted in Swiss German, in this case, FC Basel's PR manger announced a change of the press conference's linguistic regime. While reporters could address the team's management in Swiss German or in standard German (for those not mastering the dialect), the new coach had to be addressed in English. While this announcement produced no reactions, the first question addressed to the new coach was: "Hi Mr. Rodriguez, how many languages do you speak and do you know any words in German yet". The new coach answered:

I don't speak fantastically Portuguese only more or less [he was joking, everybody laughed] and Italian Spanish French I understand everything and I could also have a communication [in these languages] and of course a little bit English for the German language some small words but it is only the beginning because I want to integrate myself into the culture and it's important to communicate to the people to understand people we make sure in the club to support myself my family my staff to learn the german so that we can communicate as soon as possible in german I promise

Miguel invests in his multilingual repertoire to position himself as a coach with international experience; in this framework we can observe what he did to ensure that the list of languages he was presenting would be not perceived as arrogant and, more importantly, how he managed to defuse the reporters question about his competence in German, which, after days of criticism, was clearly related Miguel's legitimacy to coach FC Basel. By starting his answer with a joke about his skills in his "native" language (Portuguese), he effectively took the heat out of the situation – and the reporters present started to laugh. Although he had to admit to his poor German, to do justice to the expectations that the Swiss society had towards foreign employees, and to demonstrate that he deserved to be a coach of FC Basel, he appropriated current discourses on language as a key to integration – note the use of the verb "to want" and the adjective "important" denoting his attitude toward the role of language for the social and professional integration of an individual – and he promised to quickly learn the language.

5.2 Precarious legitimacy

The coach's commitment to German seemed to be convincing, since the media celebrated Miguel as the person able to lead FC Basel to international success. This opinion was also shared by the local newspaper Lokale Zeitung (LZ),² which

² The newspaper name is a pseudonym.

is the most read periodical in the city (and especially by the fans of the FC Basel because of its extensive reporting on the local team) and which is held to wield major influence over FC Basel. Indeed, after the press conference the head of the paper's sports editorial office, Moritz Albrecht, gave an interview to a national TV station. He was asked if he believed the coach's multilingual competence was an advantage for the team; Albrecht gave the following answer:

that was one factor the FC Basel has many players with latin blood and everybody knows english that's good but I am curious to see whether Miguel will keep his promise and will soon conduct his first press conference in german he really promised it and then the link to the players would be established but the first impression is certainly promising [author's translation from standard German]

Albrecht valorizes Miguel's multilingual resources by referring to his ability to communicate with the Spanish, Portuguese, French, and Italian-speaking players. His skills in English ensure communication with the rest of the team.

However, the connector *aber* [but] diminishes the value of Miguel's multilingualism and points to the role of German as the language of interaction with the media and the team's players. This insistence on the importance of German in a football team like FC Basel, where just four of 25 players are German-speaking, could be explained by the status of the German-speaking players. Even in a team considered to be increasingly multicultural – the local press writes about FC Basel as the “multi-culti troop,” or as the FC Babel – local traditions and values are carefully maintained, and the German language is a part of the original culture. Indeed, the German-speaking players – who currently happen to be Swiss – stand for a form of “Baselness” that has to be protected. This explains why a local player is always named team captain; in the absence of someone from Basel, another Swiss player takes on the role.

I observe the recurrent mobilization of Miguel's trope promising to learn German as a binding agreement between the coach and the community of FC Basel. This pact lends Miguel at least a temporary legitimation, which would be further stabilized in the case of an actual acquisition of German. If, however, Miguel neglects to learn the language, this legitimation could be withdrawn. While the coach's promise to learn German echoes the increasingly common integration agreements between immigrants and the Swiss state, which obligate immigrants to learn the local language in an agreed time period, to gain a full understanding the value of Miguel's promise another dimension must be added. As already mentioned above, at the time of Miguel's appointment, his unsteady professional trajectory was constructed as evidence of his lack of loyalty and of his exclusive interest in the capital that a given employer could supply. By fulfilling his promise to learn German, however, Miguel would be perceived as

a genuine coach, interested in the good of the team (and not in his own profit), thus conforming to the imagined morals associated with Swiss football.

5.3 Decapitalizing the coach

After the first months of his career in Basel, initial tensions emerged between Miguel and part of the local media despite the team's leading position in the national league. Whereas media workers were previously granted unlimited access to the team's training sessions and to the players for interviews, the new coach imposed new rules regulating the team's contact to the media. He closed all training sessions to the public and designated two players per week for media encounters. These changes also entailed a new linguistic regime. While the interviews with non-German-speaking players were formerly mediated by a translator, the coach now imposed English or the "native" language of the interviewed players as the official language of communication. In addition, the local media workers were used to selecting interview partners according to their own interests and conducted interviews in German or in Swiss German. They were also accustomed to having direct contact to their favorite players and they reacted with irritation to this new regime, as they feared losing their privileges as representatives of the local media and worried about increasing competition with media from Switzerland and abroad.

While these tensions went on for some time, they never escalated into an open conflict. But that changed after a match, when the FC Basel loss against the Grasshoppers Club Zurich.

What seemed to have overheated the relations between Miguel and the media (and part of the fan community) was not so much FC Basel's loss to its rival from Zurich. The main source of irritation was the fact that, after Basel fell behind, Miguel replaced a local player, Meyer, who is celebrated in the Swiss media as a national talent. Miguel blamed Meyer for allowing Zurich to score. The replaced player did not accept his substitution and challenged the coach's decision with tears in his eyes in front of the cameras.

At the press conference following the match, Miguel was asked by a LZ journalist about the consequences this substitution could have on the young player. Miguel said such situations were normal in the career of every football player and that since Meyer was a "lovely boy," he would quickly digest this substitution. But Miguel's demeanor at the press conference was criticized: he was accused of treating Meyer's substitution with an indifference and sarcasm that the media felt did no justice to the young Swiss. Especially the term "lovely boy" was perceived as disrespectful – and not just of the player, but more

generally of the nation's young football players Meyer is held to represent. Representatives of the national media and some key figures of Swiss football believe that an entire generation was humiliated by Miguel's statements.

After these events Miguel's communicative competence reemerged at the center of criticisms. Especially his lack of German was perceived as a sign of disrespect for Swiss football, an attitude that was deemed confirmed by the perceived humiliation of Meyer.

In the following weeks, TV stations and the press, particularly LZ, initiated a violent media campaign against the new coach. One LZ's article in particular generated a great deal of attention. In the article, four Swiss coaches were cited as critical of Miguel's communicative attitude, provoking a tense debate on the newspaper's online blog.

To gain an understanding of the criticism circulating in LZ's blog, I will present one text posted by one of the most active participants in these online debates; this posting is emblematic for the criticism of Miguel:

It's strange to have a coach in our Swiss league who, in bad English, calls Meyer "a lovely boy." It is more than obvious that this coach doesn't go with Swiss football. What about Rahmen? Someone from Basel, who knows the region, Swiss football, and the mentality. Wouldn't it be the right time to give someone a chance who isn't arrogant and who is a hard worker? Hopefully someone will pay for a German class for Miguel so that communication works. I remember that Miguel promised to learn the language [author's translation from standard German]

This excerpt reverberated among many readers: it has been liked by more than 300 readers and generated many responses from blog participants agreeing with the points made.

The text contests Miguel's aptitude to coach a Swiss team because of his presumed lack of local qualities: humility, being a hard worker, having a Swiss mentality, knowing Swiss football, coming from the region, and communicating in German. By the same token, the reference to Miguel's lacking German skills and his yet-unkept promise to learn the language also places into question Miguel's ability to perform his job as a coach of an ostensibly German-speaking team. Finally, if for many months the coach's multilingualism acted as a capital compensating his lack of competence in German, this post stigmatizes Miguel's English – acquired during his international football career – and delegitimizes the coach's right to humiliate Meyer, who is viewed as national capital. Yet the discursive strategy of opposing the image of the lazy, incompetent, and arrogant foreign worker to the Swiss counterpart is not a specificity of this particular case; this strategy is consistently mobilized in public discourse to exclude foreign workers from prestigious positions in the Swiss job market. In a commercialized

Swiss football market, where Swiss players and coaches increasingly face the threat of international competition, the delegitimization of a foreigner coach's ability to ably coach a Swiss team is consequently a means to challenge their competitiveness in the job market – with the aim of favoring those football workers constructed as belonging to Switzerland.

While at this point nothing can be said about the impact of these criticisms on Miguel's long term status as a coach of FC Basel – he signed a three years contract with the FC Basel (until Summer 2017) that can not be unilaterally dissolved – what can be observed in the fan community and the media discourse is that the new coach seems to have lost his appeal, and that especially his communicative competence and his lack of German skills have repeatedly made him the object of controversial debate.

6 Language as a key to integration?

Despite the differences, the two new speakers in the FC Basel community seem to have experienced similar challenges:

- (1) In both cases, language is constructed as a resource: In the case of Marco, Baseldytsh is considered as a resource for successfully participating in fan activities and to maintain the purity of these fan practices and of the fan community more generally. In Miguel's case, the German standard was constructed as a tool granting access to an efficient communication with the football workers, media representatives, and fans, but also as a reflection of the Swissness and local character of the team.
- (2) Despite this conception of language as a key granting access, one could also observe how both in Marco's and Miguel's cases language was the site used to legitimize their exclusion. In Miguel's case, he has not yet been able to speak to his team and to the media in what was considered to be the language of football in Basel (and of a foreign worker more generally), namely German; in the case of Marco, he was excluded from the fan community due to his inability to adapt to the linguistic regime of the *Muttenzerkurve*. Access is thus not only dependent on the degree of motivation and investment enacted by those speakers aiming to get access; rather, it is regulated by those actors, interests, and logics that value the linguistic skills of a speaker and conditioned by the ideologies of difference mobilized to authorize this regulation. So, while language is believed to open doors, it also seems to create the conditions for closing them.
- (3) However, my investigation demonstrates that the struggles concerning authenticity and legitimacy are not truly linguistic in nature; the anxieties

surrounding these individual language skills seem to stand for something else. After all, in both cases, the new speakers are able to communicate with their environment: Miguel's multilingual repertoire allows him to speak with every player on his team. This is also the case for his dealings with the media. Similarly, language does not really seem to be the problem in Marco's case, either, as he mastered the song repertoire of FC Basel's fans and is able to participate in the legitimate fan habitus. The same counts for the use of dialect: in spite of his mispronunciation of the sound /a/, Marco uses the local dialect when he sings the songs and shouts the slogans.

7 Beyond the new speaker

If in times of accelerated mobility, the processes documented here are emblematic for the challenges encountered by new speakers in their linguistic, social, and economic integration, these processes are not exclusively related to current conditions, nor to the particular situation of new speakers. Indeed, critical scholarship on language in society has demonstrated that, during modernity, language has traditionally been mobilized as a key resource to legitimize difference (Bauman and Briggs 2003; Woolard 1998). It has also been demonstrated that this distinctive role of language has been used to authorize hierarchization within given communities themselves, independently from forms of mobility of the users of these languages (Gal and Irvine 2000).

This also counts for Switzerland and Basel more specifically where both the dialect and the standard German have been employed to legitimate social hierarchizations. Indeed, dialect acts as an axis to differentiate between the authentic residents of Basel and those individuals coming from the other side of the border, i.e. the Germans. It also is a tool to differentiate people from Basel from other Swiss from other German-speaking cities who speak another variety of Swiss German. This also holds true for standard German, which has been traditionally mobilized in Basel to differentiate between the local population's mastery of both Baseldytch and standard German, and the (non German-speaking) immigrants who are constructed as having a weaker (or no grasp) on the German language.

These axes of differentiations were all sustained by the so-called ideology of dialect (Watts 1999) which assumes that the native language of Swiss citizens is Swiss German and which prescribes mastery of a given city's variety of Swiss German to be recognized as a legitimate inhabitant of a given city. Not mastering what is constructed as the prestigious variety of the local language is justification for excluding people from resources. Since in Basel, the "pure" local variety

is regarded as the language spoken by the city's elites – that variety spoken by French protestants who arrived in Basel in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries after fleeing the repressive regime in Catholic France and who have dominated Basel's economy and politics since the city's industrialization in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries – the ideology of dialect has traditionally been a means to reproduce the city's social order.

Seen from that perspective, what is currently happening in the FC Basel community is just a new milestone in an old story. While the commodification of football holds the risk of destabilizing the relations of power within one specific token of Basel's imagined community (namely the FC Basel community) because it has generated a new desire to participate in the production, circulation, and consumption of the commodity "FC Basel," to exclude new actors from access to this resource, those considering themselves as the rightful owner of FC Basel invest in language: in Baseldytsch to maintain the hierarchies within the Muttenzerkurve; in the German standard to challenge the legitimacy of a foreign coach.

In short, the postmodern critique has constructed current conditions as the beginning of an era regimented by new ideological formations that are at odds with modernist values of purity, stability, and homogeneity. However, this paper demonstrated that although current conditions are increasingly characterized by the celebration of hybridity, blending, and diversity, language and culture continue to be mundane sites used to authorize the reproduction of inequality in society and to create the conditions for a naturalization of the prevailing socioeconomic order.

Funding: This work was partly supported by the Research Council of Norway through its Centres of Excellence funding scheme, project number 223265. This article has also benefitted from participation in the COST EU network IS1306 New Speakers in a Multilingual Europe: Opportunities and Challenges.

References

- Bauman, Richard & Charles Briggs. 2003. *Voices of modernity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. 1977. The economics of linguistic exchange. *Social Sciences Informations* 16(6). 645–668.
- Deloitte. 2014. *All to play for Football Money League*. London: Sports Business Group.
- Del Percio, Alfonso & Alexandre Duchêne. 2011. Commodification of pride and resistance to profit. In Alexandre Duchêne & Monica Heller (eds.), *Language in late capitalism*, 43–73. London: Routledge.
- Duchêne, Alexandre & Monica Heller 2012. *Language in late capitalism*. London: Routledge.
- Fenton, William. 2009. The global sponsorship market. *Journal of Sponsorship* 2(2). 120–130.

- Frick, Bernd. 2009. Globalization and factor mobility. *Journal of Sports Economics* 10. 88–106.
- Gal, Susan, and Judith Irvine. 2000. Language ideology and linguistic differentiation. In Paul Kroskrity (ed.), *Regimes of language*, 35–84. Santa Fe, NM: School of American Research Press.
- Jaffe, Alexandra. 2015. Defining the new speaker. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* 231(1). 21–41.
- Harvey, David. 2005. *A brief history of neoliberalism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Maguire, Joseph. 2004. Sport labour migration research revisited. *Journal of Sports and Social Issues* 28(4). 477–482.
- Morrow, Stephen. 2003. *The people's game?* New York: Palgrave.
- Onwumechili, Chuka & Sunday Oloruntola. 2014. Transnational communications, attitudes and fan identity. *Soccer and Society* 15(3). 389–410.
- O'Rourke, Bernadette, Pujolar, Joan & Fernando Ramallo. 2015. New speakers of minority languages: The challenging opportunity – Foreword. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* 231(1). 1–20.
- Raney, Arthur & Jennings Bryant. 2006. *Handbook of sport and media*. New York: Routledge.
- Watts, Richard. 1999. The ideology of dialect in Switzerland. In Jan Blommaert (ed.), *Language ideological debates*, 67–104. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Woolard, Kathryn. 1998. Language ideology as a field of inquiry. In Bambi Schieffelin, Kathryn Woolard & Paul Kroskrity (eds.), *Language ideologies*, 285–316. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Bionote

Alfonso Del Percio

Alfonso Del Percio, is a Post Doctoral Fellow at the *Center for Multilingualism in Society across the Lifespan* at the University of Oslo. He has been investigating the political economy of multilingualism; the interrelations between language, economy and the state; and the articulation between language, migration and social inequality.