

Tilburg Papers in Culture Studies

Paper **118**

The very sensitive question:

**Chronotopes, insecurities and Farsi heritage
language classrooms**

by

Martha Sif Karrebæk[©] & Narges Ghandchi[©]
(University of Copenhagen)

martha@hum.ku.dk | rsg225@hum.ku.dk

November 2014



This work is licensed under a
Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License.
To view a copy of this license, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>

The very sensitive question: Chronotopes, insecurities and Farsi heritage language classrooms

Martha Sif Karrebæk & Narges Ghandchi

Abstract

In this paper we engage with ideological difference, security discourse and language classrooms, on the basis of data from two Farsi heritage language classrooms, in Copenhagen, Denmark, and from the group of adult Iranian immigrants that was organized around these classrooms. The contemporary state of Iran, political and religious ideologies, and topics associated with this, were subject to taboo in class, but not so in other settings. Insecurity and surveillance gave meaning to the different time-spaces, or chronotopes (Bakhtin 1981), that were evoked, and to the understandings of community. We argue that this also partly motivates the structure and content of the classroom as the principal teacher tried to secure a neutral space for the children whose parents' backgrounds were very different, and possibly incompatible. This in return would both be a means to free the children from their parents' anxieties, and to secure the teacher's job in an atmosphere of mutual suspicion.

1 Introductionⁱ

Heritage language educationⁱⁱ is often described as an institution where specific and traditional interpretations of the cultural and linguistic resources associated with pupils' (ancestral) 'country of origin' are celebrated and taught (Curdt-Christiansen 2008; Fishman 2001), and where the classroom here-and-now presupposes more or less similar interpretations of cultural signs. It has been documented that this may lead to confrontations between pupils and teachers when pupils, raised far away from the 'country of origin', contest conservative and traditional understandings of relevance, appropriateness, and belonging (Blackledge & Creese 2009; Creese, Wu & Blackledge 2009; Li, Juffermans & Kroon 2012). In this article we engage with a different type of discrepancy in relation to heritage language classrooms, namely one that relates as much to the group of adult participants, that is, parents and teachers, as to the children who are pupils in the class. We focus on

issues of ideological difference and insecurity as they came up during fieldwork in two Farsi heritage language classroomsⁱⁱⁱ, in Copenhagen, Denmark. Our starting point is constituted by the observation that the classes were carried out as instruction in grammar, literacy and vocabulary, and that there was no talk about cultural issues with relation to present day Iran. In fact, the contemporary state of Iran, and political and religious ideologies associated with this, were unmentionables in the classrooms (Fleming & Lempert 2011). At the same time, this was not the case in all other settings. Nevertheless such ideologies seem to constitute a sensitive issue which affects the social processes and interactions among persons with Iranian background (Elling 2013; Karrebæk & Ghandchi Under review; Mobasher 2012).

From its early days the political leaders of the Islamic Republic of Iran (established 1979) used Islam and an anti-western stance to define the state's identity, principles and policies (Borjian 2013; Digard et al. 1996). This was a reaction to the secularizing part of the modernization project carried out by the prior leaders, the Pahlavi monarchy (1925-79). The governmental and ideological changes led to substantial emigration, and important emigration has continued since – for over 35 years – motivated not the least by the Iran-Iraq war (1980-1989), lack of educational or professional opportunities in Iran, or religious and political ideological incompatibilities with the political establishment. Exile Iranians often orient to other ideologies than those endorsed by the Iranian government, although this is by no means always the case, nor the case in all respects. Among our research participants the contemporary state of Iran and cultural signs associated with it generated mixed feelings and interpretations which naturally complicate the question of what a heritage language classroom is, can, and should be able to accomplish. In this paper we discuss the relation between the classrooms and the social community of Iranians that were organized around them, which is deeply connected to the issue of ideology and ideological differences within the community, and we will focus on the role of expressions of insecurity and surveillance, the way that such representations of a world were compared and, and the way they were used to invite expression of affiliation and disaffiliation with the contemporary Iranian establishment. Goldstein holds that “whereas other disciplines lack the tools to assess security and insecurity as situated lived experience, a critical, comparative anthropology of security can explore the multiple ways in which security is configured and deployed, not only by states and their official voices but by communities, groups, and individuals in their engagements with other local actors and with the state itself.” (Goldstein 2010: 128). These concerns are most relevant to us. We turn to Bakhtin's chronotopes (Bakhtin 1981) to account for the relations between the particular space-time of our ethnographic

observations, to larger social issues, and other space-time configurations. In addition, we argue that the Farsi classrooms were fundamentally affected by the adult participants' understanding of Iran's politics of securitization (Buzan & Wæver 2003; Emmers 2013) and by a prevalent fear of surveillance.

2 Language instruction and the context of political conflict

The relations between language classrooms and politically sensitive contexts have only rarely been treated within academia. Uhlmann (2010, 2012) describes how Arabic language in the Jewish educational system is taught as a 'dead' (i.e., not spoken), and how the teachers, mainly Hebrew speaking Jews, lack oral skills in Arabic. Ironically Israel has a large population of native Arabic speakers who are regarded as unsuitable as teachers. Among the reasons is the fact that the Israeli military dominates (parts of the) Arabic instruction, and according to them Arabs constitute a default security risk (See also Mendel 2013). Charalambous (2013; Charalambous & Rampton 2010) studied Turkish taught to Cypriot Greeks. In Cyprus Turks are regarded as the principal Other (Spyrou 2009) and a threat to the integrity of Greek-Cypriot society and education (Charalambous 2013: 323; Spyrou 2009: 102f), and perhaps in order to mitigate the negative associations the Turkish classes contain little reference to Turks or Turkish culture. The textbooks focus on second language learners talking to each other and not on Turks speaking Turkish to each other or to learners of Turkish (Charalambous & Charalambous 2014) In post-revolutionary Iran, English as a foreign language is a loaded area. During the first post-revolutionary years and the Iran-Iraq war, the political establishment tried to cleanse the 'West-toxicated' schools and universities. They employed pious teachers with Islamic revolutionary engagement, regardless of other qualifications, and textbooks were re-written and purified of references to Anglo-American culture. A unique focus on structural aspects of English was adopted as a result (Borjian 2013: 73). These three studies (and a few others, notably Khan 2014a, b) demonstrate the attempts at erasure of culture in foreign language classrooms where the language taught is considered to belong to an Other. In our case, the language (Farsi) was associated with the pupils' and parents' linguistic, cultural and ethnic background, and at the same time with political sensitivities and antagonistic feelings. Thereby the language indexed hostility and animosity, insecurity, fear and trouble *as well as* heritage and family relations.

3 Security, securitization and surveillance

In the Copenhagen School in security studies (Buzan, Wæver & Wilde 1998; Wæver 1995), the focus is put on a *speech act of securitization*. Security is a representation of an issue as a threat to some object of concern (Emmers 2013), at the same time as the representation is constitutive of the security concern. In the more philosophical approach to securitization (Balzacq 2011: 1) it is this discursive construction, rather than the material reality of threat, which is essential (Huysman 2011: 371). However, securitization is also an intersubjective process, embedded in the general identity and everyday projects that social actors have, and a more sociological approach emphasises the practices, contexts and power relations involved in the creation of threat (Balzacq 2011: 1, 3). Both approaches tie in with Goldstein's (2010a: 127) argument that security "like so much else that interests cultural anthropology, is not an objective fact but a socially constructed set of relationships and discourses." In other words, security is a question of individuals' interpretations of each other, themselves and the world, and when the concept of "security" is invoked, it both reflects a situation, creates a new, and influences future actions (Balzacq 2011: 13, 15).

The securitizing act suggests that we move from the standard political domain and into the domain of the exceptional, where measures that go beyond the ordinary norms of the political domain are put to use. Yet the exceptional may become routinized, an everyday matter, and permanent (Huysman 2011: 377), and it is an empirical question what, how and to what degree a specific activity is routine or exceptional. In our case security and surveillance seemed to be more or less routine discourses, regardless of whether they were also routine (or even material) activities. Surveillance is often understood as the opposite of democracy and as "a sinister force that threatens personal liberties" (Haggerty & Samatas 2010: 1), and for sure resistance to intensive or extreme surveillance may be mobilized around the concept of privacy (Lyon 2007: 7). It often evokes the understanding of policing and tracking by police agents (Lyon 2007: 36, 49), but in fact it refers to different forms of monitoring by different actors, typically with the goal to intervene, influence, or protect in some way (Haggerty & Samatas 2010: 2; Lyon 2007: 7). Also, it is worth remembering that although new technologies have increased the capacities of surveillance (Lyon 2007: 15), networks of informers constitutes a pre-internet surveillance technology with an impressive track record (Haggerty & Samatas 2010: 5).

Security and surveillance are central to our aims because we study the construction of understandings of 'watcher' and 'watched', of risk and trust, privacy and anonymity, and (in)security, as well as how all this influences people's life. For our participants the contemporary

Iranian state was often positioned as the ‘watcher’ and the securitising actor; Denmark constituted the setting in which the watching was *also* done; and our participants were transformed into objects of surveillance through (assumed) acts of securitization.

4 Chronotopes

Chronotopes refer to intrinsic configurations of time and space in representational universes (Bakhtin 1981:184) in which linguistic and other actions and signs are attributed with meaning and indexical sign value. The chronotope demonstrates (some degree of) consistency, coherence and unity and it invites certain understandings and inferences, cf. Silverstein (2005:6): “A chronotope constitutes a space-time envelope in the narrated universe of social space-time in which and through which, in emplotment, narrative characters move.” Of course, the chronotopic logics can be (more or less) general, local, individual, etc., and they can be accepted, negotiated, contested and contrasted with others (also Agha 2007: 324). When chronotopes are compared, this informs us of ideological understandings of social personae, self, appropriate behaviour and the world in general. It invites to alignment – or disalignment – with the ideologies and models represented in and through the chronotope, and representations of chronotopes link representations of time to those of locale, personhood and participation frameworks (Agha 2007: 321; Dick 2010; Riskedahl 2007).

We deploy the concept of chronotope to demonstrate how our participants represented themselves in relation to both Denmark and the state of Iran. Our adult participants regularly invoked specific chronotopes. The principal teacher was particularly responsible for two which we have labelled “The Chronotope of Neutrality” and “The Chronotope of (Political and Religious) Ideology”, a third recurrent one may be labelled “The Chronotope of Insecurity”, and this latter one was explicitly associated with “Iran”. Of course, all chronotopes involve ideological, moral and emotional evaluations, of time, social personae, space, and cultural practices (Agha 2007), but in the main teacher’s and certain participants’ representations of units of time, space and social personae, this was semiotically erased (Gal & Irvine 1995). We suggest that the Chronotope of Insecurity played a particularly significant role.

5 Methodology, data and settings

This study builds on a +1 year ethnographic fieldwork in two Farsi heritage classes in Copenhagen, primarily carried out by one of the authors (Ghandchi). Our data consist of fieldnotes, audio-recordings from the classrooms, a few home-recordings, 18 interviews with parents, grandparents,

organizers, two with the principal teacher and one with another Farsi teacher in Copenhagen. All data were analysed linguistically, with a focus on the details of the interaction as well as on larger social and societal issues. The over-all project is one in linguistic ethnography (Maybin & Tusting 2011; Rampton 2007).

Access to the classrooms was enabled through Ghandchi's position as a (volunteer) assistant teacher which she assumed prior to the project. Ghandchi is a native speaker of Farsi and of the same ethnic background as most of the focus participants. This certainly made our work easier in certain ways.

The classes were privately organized and each catered for approximately 10 pupils between 4 and 17. They were started by two groups of Iranian parents, along with the principal teacher of both, in 2002 where a general state funding for minority mother tongue tuition was withdrawn. One class was located in a (multi-)cultural center inside Copenhagen, the other at a public school in the Copenhagen metropolitan area. The principal teacher used the same curriculum and teaching methods in both, and he saw his main task as promoting literacy skills. He deployed conservative pedagogical methods with teacher initiated and guided interactions, in IRE structures (Mehan 1979), and teacher-pupil interaction was predominantly dyadic as the teachers went from pupil to pupil to offer individual instruction. There were almost no classroom discussion and the main teacher did not encourage group or pair work. This was partly motivated by the very different ages, levels of language fluency, and social, cultural, and ethnic background of the pupils who regardless of this were taught in the same classroom. However, we argue that there were also other, and ideological, motivations for the specific pedagogical approach. Most pupils were 2nd generation, a few 3rd generation, in Denmark, and despite the teacher's preference of Farsi in the classroom, they most often chose to speak Danish (or English, in the case of a few English speaking children) with each other, and to some extent with Ghandchi.

The principal teacher, anonymized as Mansour, was trained and had worked as (Farsi language) teacher in Iran in the (late) 1960's and 1970's, lived in Denmark since the early 1980's, and taught Farsi to children of Iranian background since 1989, both in the private and public sector. Mansour spoke the Tehrani dialect of Farsi, he had conversational skills in Danish, but he was most comfortable in Farsi. Mansour strongly opposed any introduction of political and religious issues in the classrooms. He shared the ideal of what he called an ideology free and a neutral classroom with at least some of the parents and the stakeholders. At the same time, at least some children demonstrated awareness of the 'here-and-now' socio-political situation of Iran which they revealed

in spontaneous comments and questions, usually formulated in Danish, and addressed primarily to classmates or to Ghandchi; not to Mansour, as far as we observed. This contrasted with their parents' reports that the children lacked exactly such awareness.

The parents had different migration histories. The majority of the interviewed parents (and the teacher) reported to have political reasons for their migration. Some had fled Iran to save their own and their families' lives because of engagement in political activities; some had escaped obligatory military services under the Iran-Iraq war (1980-88). A few parents were children of parents who left Iran after the Islamic Revolution (1978-79). The parents demonstrated different types of engagement with the current political and social situation in Iran. Some were active participants in political debates – but according to our observations only outside the classrooms and in the absence of the children.

6 Analyses

We begin with a fieldnote extract, from Ghandchi's diary, where the Chronotope of Insecurity and the theme of surveillance were introduced among the adult participants – and eventually got interactional consequences. The situation took place in a fun fair close to Copenhagen, during an annual excursion during the only activity that officially included parents, the teacher and the children. We joined a group of four parents who went to a café, while the children were enjoying the different attractions. The conversation was primarily carried out in Farsi. At some point, in response to one of the parents' enquiries about an absent mother, her husband ventured into a monologue which attracted the undivided attention of all the other present.

Example 1: “Somebody is watching us!”

“The father tells that his wife has been arrested in Tehran. She made a careless phone call to him, and subsequently her passport was confiscated. He says that he occasionally receives strange phone calls from people who appear to know many things, also from the inside of his house, and he talks about one of his friends, also a political activist, who experienced something similar. By using a small transistor radio he and his friend found 24 pieces of tiny surveillance microphones, similar to fish scales or watch batteries, hidden around the friend's house, behind curtains and under tables. At this point, the father adds: “I have nothing to hide” (*man čizi barâye penhân kardan nadâram*). Another father looks around with wide eyes and says, now in English “somebody is watching us”.”

The fieldnote describes a narrative, told by a father, which seems to have three key functions: to justify and explain why the father's wife is not present; to create the social group of exile Iranian parents; and to offer a personal account of the group's social and cultural identity (Coates & Thornborrow 2005: 7) – as individuals potentially under surveillance. According to Ghandchi's notes, the narrative consists of three cases, each situated within a time-space configuration where a protagonist is opposed by some force. The first case takes place in the present in Iran. The father's wife is threatened by constraints of her freedom, and the threatening force, represented as an implicit, textually erased, agent in passive constructions, is not explicitly mentioned but most probably the Iranian intelligence or police; who else has the power to imprison people and confiscate their passports? The narrator presents the wife's unfortunate situation as caused by her attempts at contacting him, and we infer that he is the real object of the police's attention. The second case is situated in Denmark, at an unspecified time, with the father as the protagonist. This case is strikingly similar to the previous, and the antagonists (the mysterious phone callers) are likely to be the same although the national setting has changed from Iran to Denmark where the Iranian intelligence does not have legitimate agency. The last case, also in Denmark, located at a specific moment and with the narrator's friend as the protagonist, contains details (the size of the microphones, where they were hidden), which increase the father's reliability; in order to know, he must have been there. The oppositional force remains unspecified, but again due to the similarities between the cases we may infer it to be similar to the previous. Overall the narrative introduces a chronotope of a compromised world, where privacy is not respected, and which originates in Iran, and the narrating father is a mediating figure between the narrative, in which he is an entextualized figure, and the here-and-now in the café – he is “a fulcrum through which the “beyond here” enters into the present” (Urban 1996: 71; quoted in Dick 2010: 276). As the father moves the threatening force closer and closer to the here-and-now, from Iran, to Denmark, it becomes difficult to ignore the potentially serious real-life consequences. One consequence is effectuated immediately as a change in the participation framework; the father jumps out of the narrated event, addressing an eavesdropper (Goffman 1981) when he loudly exclaims that he has nothing to hide. The eavesdropper is aligned with the agentive force behind the narrated bugging, an interpretation which gets confirmed by the other father who adds: “somebody is watching us”. This chronotopic representation is inhabited by the whole group (*us*), addressed also to non-speakers of Farsi (compare the shift into English), and represents the group of *us* as being overheard by somebody

else, referred to as *somebody*. All the parents are compared to and inserted into the compromised world through the father's narrative and his mediating participation, and through the other father's interpretation of the implications. The chronotope alignment informs the parents that they are all potentially under surveillance, regardless of whether their backgrounds are politically charged or not. The Iranian intelligence service does not respect national borders, and the mere talk about it creates real-life effects such as an alignment between the parents.

Our perception that there was a general sense of fear and insecurity among the Iranians connected to the classroom was confirmed in an interview, an extract of which is shown as example 2. Prior to this excerpt the father talked about differences within the Iranian immigrant community in terms of their reasons for migration to Denmark. This he claimed was an obstacle to the establishment of them as an efficient and coherent cultural community which could also engage in non-educational activities, such as festivals and the celebration of culturally significant events. The father also compared Iranians with Turks. The Turks were depicted as a homogeneous group constituted by individuals who had migrated for the same (employment) reasons^{iv}, and in contrast, Iranians were of widely different social and ideological backgrounds.

Example 2: “while riding the bus”

Interview; participants: NG (Ghandchi, author), father

- 14 Father: mâ čon az tabaqâte moxtalefi umadim (.) tars tu mâ hast
since we are from different (social) classes (.) fear exists inside us
- 15 NG: čedjur tarsi manzuretun hast (.) nesbat be hamdige
what sort of fear you mean (.) for each other
- 16 Father: âre (.) tars masalan (.) mâ tanhâ melli-yati hastim be nazare man (.)
yeah (.) fear for instance (.) we are the only nation I think (.)
- 17 vaqti tu utubus mišinim ye irâniyo mibinim inâ sedâmun ro miyârim pâyin (.)
that when we see an Iranian while riding the bus then we lower our voice
- 18 in čiye in č- man nemidunam (.) man djâme'ešenâs nistam
why wh- I don't know (.) I'm not a sociologist
- 19 nemidunam čerâ (.) čerâ mitarsim (0.2) xob
I don't know why (.) why we are afraid (0.2) well

- 20 NG: az âdamâye djadidam be hamin šekl
and we are afraid of new people as well
- 21 Father: âre (.) kolan mitarsim
yeah (.) we are afraid in general
- ...
- 26 FAT: man fekr mikonam hamaš mâ (.) ye zendegiye ârumi nadâštîm (0.2)
I think we never (.) we have never had a peaceful life (0.2)
- 27 yani yek (0.1) šarâyet va xxx ârummi nadâštîm (.) hamaš
means a (0.1) we have never had a peaceful situation and xxx (.) never
- 28 NG: bexâtere masâ'ele edjtemâ'yi [yâ] siyâsi tarbiyati hattâ?
because of the social [or] political (.) or even educative issues?
- 29 FAT: [masâ'ele] edjtemâ'yi s-
[social issues] or p-
- 30 tuye ye sennosâle pâyini az mamlekat umadim birun (.) hamaš dar hâle tanâqoz
when we quit Iran we were very young (.) ((we have)) always controversial experienced

The father's use of "we" throughout this excerpt implies a generic representation of a group of migrated people with the same country of origin, who, despite their differences, mentioned in the beginning, share the experience of a life without peace, full of intrinsic fear ("fear exists inside us", l. 14) which becomes a core characteristic of the Iranian immigrant community.). The fear is related to a mutual suspicion among them which is illustrated by his example that Iranians lower their voice if they see other Iranians in a public space like a bus (l. 17). The father's remarks imply that Iranian immigrants, as a default, regard other Iranians as a source of anxiety, a potential threat, or connected to a potential threat. Interestingly this is echoed by other exile Iranians, such as in the context of Iranians in Texas, an Iranian bus driver cited by Mobasher (2012: 58), Iranians "try to keep distance from other Iranians. They avoid speaking Persian in public stores, so they can hide their identity." The co-presence of other Iranians introduces an aspect of surveillance, and therefore Iranians act as if they wish to hide their identity and origin – even within the time-space of Denmark where no such surveillance is normally expected. In all, the father creates a striking contrast to the time-space 'Denmark today' where everybody is expected to speak openly even in public. He does not explain what the relations are between the diversity among the Iranians and

their fear for each other or what exactly it is that they fear. Yet, he argues that the feeling of mutual suspicion and fear of surveillance stems from the Iranian parents' backgrounds, connected to a former time in Iran. These backgrounds have led to an eternally insecure situation (l. 26), and to controversial experiences both in Iran and the host country. In this way, the source of the fear is being located in a different chronotope, the characteristics of which has influenced the present life in Denmark, for this generation of immigrants. The chronotope of security, in Denmark, and the chronotope of insecurity, in Iran, becomes impossible to separate entirely.

Examples 1 and 2 are atypical data for us. Our data come mostly from classrooms, and the classrooms were construed as inappropriate for the introduction of political matters. In the next example we illustrate how the principal teacher Mansour argued for the need of classrooms to be "ideology free" in order for the children to become scientifically minded, rather than politically charged, individuals. In this case he demonstrated his opinion through a representation of two different chronotopes: One associated with the state of Iran, the other with his classrooms in Denmark, one with ideology, the other with science. The discussion was occasioned by Ghandchi who had brought an article in Farsi from Wikipedia to use as teaching material. The text was about a historical garden and from our best understanding it contained no references to sensitive issues. However Mansour found the use of an authentic text transgressive in itself and he objected vehemently to it. In order to argue for his dispreference he jumped to a more general level of argumentation.

Example 3: 'what the Islamic Republic does'

Discussion; participants: NG (Ghandchi, author), MAU (Mansour, principal teacher); 13-09-2013

131 MAU: mese hâlâ tu Irân

like now in Iran

132 NG: doroste

I see

133 MAU: ketbhâ ro mibini çe çeqadr ↑zahre ideolozhik tuşe

can you see the books ho how much ↑poison of ideologies there is in them

134 NG: aha

...

- 142 MAU: (1) yani ye čizâyi nabâyad tu maqze bačehâ bere
(1) I mean there are some things that shouldn't enter children's brains
- 143 čon mohite âmuzeš bâýad dur az masâ'ele ideolozhik
because educational institutions must be ((removed)) far from ideological matters
- 144 va masâ'ele siyâsi bâshe
and political matters
- 145 NG: doroste
I see
- 146 MAU: †harčeqadr dur az in masâ'el bâše be 'elm nazdiktare
†*the further from such matters the closer to science*
- 147 va be bačehâ va be zehniyate šaffâfe bačehâ
and to children and their crystal clear mentalities
- 148 elmitar bâýad âdam barxord bokone (.) na siyâsitar na ideolozhiktar
one must approach anything more scientifically (.) not politically ideologically
- 149 čon djomhuri †eslâmi inkâro mikonan
because this is what the †Islamic Republic does
- 150 †tamâme ketâbaš indjure
†*all of their books are such*

Expressed in terms of chronotopes, Mansour sets up two: the Chronotope of Ideology and the Chronotope of Science and Neutrality. This use of ideology describes an understanding of the world which he disaligns with (Van Dijk 2006) but both chronotopes are, of course, highly ideological. Mansour locates the first explicitly “now” and “in Iran” (l. 131), that is, not here in Denmark; he characterizes it in negative terms, “poison of ideology”; and he points out the responsible agent “The Islamic Republic” (l. 149). The second chronotope is represented as its moral counterpart in a personal manifesto on education: “one must approach anything more scientifically (.) not politically ideologically”. We are invited to infer that this ideal pedagogical approach includes his own, and the classroom here-and-now, with its predominant focus on grammar and literacy. Mansour is thus part of the generic “one” (*âdam*; l. 148). Also, remember that Mansour responds to Ghandchi’s introduction of an unremarkable but authentic piece of text. We believe that he was afraid that the text could contain elements that would invite some of the unmentionables into class, and the excerpt thereby illustrates how sensitive Mansour was when he believed that he was not in full control, as

well as his metapragmatic arguments for this sensitivity, up-scaled and argued for in terms of ideological differences in pedagogical approaches.^v

The next example, from a classroom recording, exemplifies a very unusual situation. It was both the only time where security, and the Security Chronotope, was introduced in public in the classroom, and it was a rare, almost unique, occasion of shared attention. A (Danish background) father was showing pictures and telling, in broken Farsi, about the family's recent holiday in Iran, represented as full of adventures and encounters with friendly and hospitable people. As some of the children did not understand Farsi, Ghandchi (in the position as assistant teacher) occasionally translated into Danish, or asked the children clarifying questions. We enter the classroom setting just after Ghandchi had asked a pupil (Mehran, 9 years; boy) in Danish if he had been to Tehran. Two brothers Pouria (7 years) and Parsa (6 years) are central in what then followed. All of the following is in Danish.

Example 4: 'he'll be killed'

Classroom recording; participants: Pouria (pupil), Parsa (pupil), Mehran (pupil), NG (Ghandchi, author)

27 Pouria: hvis vi skal til Iran (.) så kommer far ikke med
if we travel to Iran (.) then dad won't be with us

28 NG: hvad siger du
what do you say

29 Pouria: hvis vi skal til Iran så kommer far ikke med
if we travel to Iran then Dad won't come with us

30 Parsa: shu:t dig
shu:t you

31 NG: nå nej (.) det er derfor ok
aha no that's why ok

32 Pouria: fordi(hihi) så bliver han slået ihjel
Beca(haha)use then he'll be killed

33 ((General laughter))

34 Parsa: å:h ne:j

- o:h no:*
- 35 Pouria: jo:
oh yes
- 36 Parsa: ne:j
no:
- 38 Mehran: hvorfor gør han det
why will he be killed
- 39 Parsa: jah (.) det spørger jeg faktisk også (1.0) bliver han slået ihjel
yeah (.) I have the same question (1.0) will he be killed
- 40 Pouria: fordi han har
because he has
- 41 Mehran: er han eftersøgt
is he wanted
- 42 Parsa: er han eftersøgt (.) ee bliver sl eller er det en gulerod der vil [gribe ham]
are they after him (.) ee 'll be ki or is it a carrot who wants [to catch him]
- 44 Pouria: [er du klar hvor
[do you realize how
- 45 mange](.) er du klar hvor mange i Iran der hver dag bliver henrettet for at
many] (.) do you realize how many in Iran are executed every day for
- 46 gå imod præsterne
opposing the priests

Prior to Pouria's outburst, two parallel participation frameworks were at work: a platform event where a father was doing a show-and-tell, and the teaching session where NG asked questions to particular children. Pouria's new focus created a third framework with himself as the dominant speaker, and the primary addressee as Mehran, signaled, e.g., by the deictic pronoun *du* 'you' (2nd prs.sg.) (l. 45), and Mehran's request for clarification (l. 38). By the same token Pouria cast everybody else present (Karrebæk, Ghandchi, two mothers, a father, Mansour and the other children) as overhearers. Ghandchi tried to interfere in order to embed Pouria's information in the teaching, but was unsuccessful. Pouria's interruption also introduced and projected a chronotope which contrasted strikingly with the one introduced by the father. Whereas the father represented Iran as a friendly place, full of touristic attractions, in Pouria's account Iran was a place where his

father would be killed. Whereas in the father's account, the family traveled together, in Pouria's case the family "we" that could travel, could not include the father. And whereas the father talked about a very recent past, Pouria created a potential, imagined, future situation, and a future situation which could only come true under certain conditions, as signaled by the *if... so* structure (l. 29, 32). Pouria proceeded from the highly personalized narrative into a general statement about the political situation in Iran: "are you aware how many in Iran are executed every day for opposing the priests" (l. 44-46). Although this was never put into so many words, it was a close inference that his father was among those who opposed the priests. This was why he could not go to Iran. Both Pouria and the father who was leading the show and tell session acted as mediators between the here-and-now event in the classroom and their significantly different chronotopic representations of Iran. Pouria's representation was a counter-example to the father's, and the overhearing audience had the choice between aligning with an explicitly ideological representation of Iran or with one with less overt ideological load.

The discrepancy between the serious information presented by Pouria and the way it was presented and received deserves a brief remark. Pouria's turns contained plenty of laughter tokens, and when he exclaimed that their father would be killed if he went to Iran, both adults and children laughed. This was probably occasioned by Pouria's own tokens of laughter, and Pouria may have laughed because the entire situation was uncomfortable; unmentionables (Fleming & Lempert 2011) were put into words, taboos were broken. Such situations are often alleviated through laughter. Also, Pouria's younger brother fooled around and added slightly irrelevant comments. He might not have known as much about the situation as his brother, or he may not have wished to talk about it. This however may have added to the situation's laughability. But a most significant discrepancy concerns the fact that the sequence was closed down right after the example, and it never became part of the official classroom talk, as ratified by teachers. It was never brought up either in any later encounter we had or overheard between the principal teacher, parents or children. Pouria and Mehran were left on their own with the difficult issues, Mehran to decide which chronotopic representation he preferred, and Pouria to find a way to consolidate the father's narrative with what he appeared to have heard at home. In any case the extract demonstrates that the Security Chronotope was part of the children's life, although it was not welcome in class. Pouria's alignment of his father with people who get killed in Iran certainly has consequences for how he can understand himself in relation to Iran as well as to the classroom. The other participants' alignment with his or the narrator-father's chronotope has consequences for their understandings,

too, of self, of Iran, of each other. Not to align with either is an attempt to ignore, or erase, the fact that there may be very large, maybe incommensurable differences, between them.

In example 4 we demonstrated that the Insecurity Chronotope was a part of the children's life and their image of Iran, just as it was part of some parents life, although it was not welcome and rarely presented in class. In this last example we turn again to the principal teacher. Example 5 presents some rare explicit expressions of Mansour's insecurity concerns. The example is drawn from a long conversation between Mansour and Ghandchi on a questionnaire we distributed among the parents for the purpose of collecting more comparable data. Prior to the excerpt, Mansour asked about some of the questions concerning the parents' occupation background, migration trajectories, and economical status. He was concerned that these data would reveal the identities of the participants.

Example 5: "The very sensitive question"

Classroom recording; MAU (Mansour, principal teacher), NG (Ghandchi, auhor & assistant teacher); 21-09-2013

- 01 MAU: (...) ba::d (1) so'âle (1) xeyli ↑hassâso (1)
(...) the::n (1) the very ↑sensitive and (1) question (1)
- 02 inâ ineke âyâ (.) in ete'lâ'ât hevz miše
is that (.) if these information will be safely kept
- 03 NG: ba:le
yes
- 04 MAU: hamino (.) Martha goft bale (.)
Martha answered yes (.)to the same ((question))
- 05 NG: aha
- 06 MAU: goftam (.) šomâ fekr nakardin ke djomhuriye eslâmi (1)
I said haven't you thought that the Islamic republic (1)
- 07 ↑hak kone čize šomâro xxx
could ↑hack into your thing ((i.e., server)) xxx

As soon as he received a thorough description of anonymization and the process of saving data, Mansour formulated a fear that the information we collected could fall into the hands of the Iranian

intelligence service (l. 02, 06, 07). By means of this he set up a chronotopic representation of insecurity in which it was a valid inference that the classroom was in danger of or already being compromised. Upon Ghandchi's reply he mentioned that Karrebæk had said something similar when she interviewed him (l. 04). He then expressed his anxieties or concerns about the database being hacked by the Iran's Intelligence in an indirect quotation of himself recalled from his interview. Hereby his negative interrogation (l. 07) connotes that either he knew more (or was wiser) than us with regard to such sensitive issues or he criticized us for having overstepped a privacy border. In any case he surely suggested that the information we had could be dangerous for the participants, and he pointed to the state of Iran as the one to protect them from. In our understanding we have little information of use to any serious intelligence service, but Mansour represented our handling of data and the cleverness of the Iranian intelligence service as threats. The question is, then, to whom and why this was threatening?

7 Conclusion

In this paper we have demonstrated how different time-space envelopes, or chronotopes, were construed discursively inside and outside two Farsi heritage classrooms. We have focused on how the participants' behaviour and in particular on how their construction of the chronotopes was influenced by ideological positions, and how they were used to create social groups and to demonstrate disalignment with the current Iranian establishment.

There were significant differences between the chronotopic representations that were ratified in different social settings. Parents could draw on and bring in the Chronotope of Insecurity and engage explicitly in discussions of politics and surveillance but only outside of the classroom or in an adult-only social setting within this. In the educational context this was not treated as socially acceptable to talk about, although the main teacher was very aware of it and occasionally made use of the Chronotope of Insecurity.

Some of the participants expressed an understanding of themselves or the others as objects of securitization measures and surveillance, and of the classroom and the entire community around the classroom as potentially dangerous. The lack of mutual trust and the fear of surveillance were culturally salient features, although of course they were regularly ignored and erased. Importantly we consider surveillance as referring to both systematic information gathering by an external actor such as the Iranian state, and to the trivial, everyday observations made by fellow

Iranians involved in the same classes. In fact, these two may not always have been distinguishable, as suggested by the statement (example 2) by a father: “when we see an Iranian while riding the bus then we lower our voice”, and as echoed by the Iranian bus driver cited by Mobasher (2012: 58). Mobasher’s interview took place in the aftermaths of 9-11 in the US, but its similarity to our study is not coincidental, we think. Many Iranians have been brought up in anything but a peaceful atmosphere, an atmosphere of fear and controversy, and their background becomes a burden. They become afraid of each other and probably for very many reasons which we cannot go into here. However, at the same time they wish for their children to be able to see themselves differently, and this may be one reason why several of our adult participants agreed that insecurity talk and ideological issues should be kept away from the younger generation. This demonstrates that the social meaning and significance of securitization and security talk not only depends on the speech act of securitization, as it may sometimes seem, but also on the circulation and potential uptake of “security speech and its appropriation or refusal by those who are addressed.” (Huysman 2011: 372).

Uhlmann argues that “[P]edagogical choices cannot be understood independently of their political context, even though they cannot be mechanically reduced to particular political positions” (2010: 306). This is both an encouragement to include the larger political dimension in classroom studies and a warning against mechanistic, teleological and simplistic explanations and direct correlations. The principal teacher we engaged with was found himself in a politically sensitive situation, and a personally difficult position. Many different people – stakeholders and audiences – with different and maybe incommensurable ideological persuasions were involved in the classroom and the teacher had to cater for them all. There were of course different ways he could respond to that. We suggest that his choice of pedagogical organization of the classroom, and of his strong adherence to what he saw as an ideologically neutral classroom, was meant to create a space where all families, regardless of political and religious persuasion could participate. His fear of the introduction of ideological contrasts may have strengthened his use of 1 to 1 encounters as a teaching method as he thereby gained control with the publically available classroom content. Ghandchi’s introduction of authentic materials unknown to Mansour was a threat as he felt unsure of the ideological questions it could raise. In fact, our entire study worried him as he suggested that we could attract the attention of the Iranian intelligence service and maybe even feed them with information.

Mansour’s insistence on prohibition, ignorance and erasure of topics and objects associated

with present day Iran not only affected the pedagogical organization but also the potential for the children's learning about issues related to Iran and Iranian culture and for their sharing of experiences as children of Iranian background, including the fears and anxieties associated with this. When the children occasionally introduced unmentionables, it was not treated pedagogically, and as he refused to accept the Chronotope of Insecurity in class, he also refused inferences and real life consequences based on this. Chronotope analysis involves both considerations of individuals' momentary expressions of understandings of their social world, and of how these understandings participated in formative processes of their social selves. When Mansour made the Chronotope of Insecurity unavailable as a basis for understandings of self and each other, he also refused to accept parts of these children's shared experiences. This was despite the fact that this was culturally significant within the community, and that it clearly played an important part in their parents' understandings. Language learning is not only a fact of school. It is dealing with past and future, with ways of presenting and imaging one-self, and with both pupils and other involved persons. In this particular case, some pasts were denied discursive existence and some future selves were also attempted to be avoided.

8 References

- Agha, A. 2007. Recombinant selves in mass mediated spacetime. *Language & Communication* 27: 320-335.
- Bakhtin, M.-M. 1981 *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays* (ed. M. Holquist). Austin, Tex.: University of Texas Press.
- Balzacq, T. 2011. A theory of securitization: origins, core assumptions and variants. In T. Balzacq (ed.), *Securitization theory: How security problems emerge and dissolve*. USA/ Canada: Routledge, pp. 1-30.
- Balzacq, T. 2011. Enquiries into methods: a new framework for securitization analysis. In T. Balzacq, (ed.), *Securitization theory: How security problems emerge and dissolve*. USA/ Canada: Routledge, pp. 31-53.
- Blackledge, A. & A. Creese. 2009. 'Because tumi Bengali': Inventing and disinventing the national in multilingual communities in the UK. *Ethnicities* 9 (4): 451-476.
- Borjian, M. 2013. *English in Post-Revolutionary Iran. From Indigenization to Internationalization*. UK: Multilingual Matters.

- Buzan, B., O. Wæver. 2003. *Regions and Power: The Structure of International Society*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Buzan, B., O. Wæver & J.d. Wilde. 1998. *Security: A new framework for analysis*. Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers.
- Charalambous, C. 2013. The 'burden' of emotions in language teaching: negotiating a troubled past in 'other'-language learning classrooms. *Language and Intercultural Communication* 13 (3): 310-329.
- Charalambous, C. & P. Charalambous. 2014. *Navigating precarious territory: Strategies for teaching Turkish in Greek-Cypriot classrooms*. Presentation, King's College London, March 2014.
- Charalambous, C. & B. Rampton. 2010. Other-language learning and intercultural communication in contexts of conflict. *Working Papers in Urban Language & Literacies* 60.
- Creese, A., C.-J. Wu & A. Blackledge. 2009. Folk stories and social identification in multilingual classrooms. *Linguistics and Education* 20: 350-365.
- Curdt-Christiansen, X.L. 2008. Reading the World Through Words: Cultural Themes in Heritage Chinese Language Textbooks. *Language and Education* 22 (2): 95-113.
- Dick, H.P. 2010. Imagined lives and modernist chronotopes in Mexican nonmigrant discourse. *American ethnologist* 37 (2): 275-290
- Digard, J.-P., B. Hourcade & Y. Richard. 1996. *L'Iran au XX^e siècle*. France: Fayard.
- Elling, R. 2013. *Minorities in Iran, nationalism and ethnicity after Khomeini*. NYC: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Emmers, R. 2013. Securitization. In A. Collins (ed.). *Contemporary security studies*. UK: Oxford University Press, pp. 131-143.
- Fishman, J.A. 2001. 300-plus years of heritage language education in the United States. J. Kreeft Peyton, S. McGinnis & D.A. Ranard (eds.), *Heritage languages in America: preserving a national resource*. USA: Delta Systems Inc.: 81-95.
- Fleming, L. & M. Lempert. 2011. Introduction: Bad words. *Anthropological Quarterly* 84 (1): 5-14. (Special issue: The unmentionable: Verbal taboo and the moral life of language).
- Gal, S. & J. Irvine. 1995. The Boundaries of Language and Disciplines: How Ideologies Construct Difference. *Social Research* 62 (4): 967-1001.
- Goldstein, D.M. 2010. Toward a Critical Anthropology of Security. *Current Anthropology*. 51 (4): 487-517.
- Haggerty, K.D. & M. Samatas. 2010. Introduction: Surveillance and democracy: an unsettled

- relationship. In K.D. Haggerty & M. Samatas (eds.), *Surveillance and democracy*. USA / Canada: Routledge, pp. 1-16.
- Huysman, J. 2011. What's in an act? On security speech acts and little security nothings. *Security Dialogue*, 42 (4-5). Pp. 371-383.
- Karrebæk, M.S. & N. Ghandchi. Ms. 'Pure' Farsi and Political Sensitivities: Language and Ideologies in Farsi Complementary Language Classrooms in Denmark. Under review.
- Khan, K. 2014a. Citizenship, securitization and suspicion in UK ESOL policy. *Working Papers in Urban Language & Literacies* 130.
- Khan, K. 2014b. Security, unease and the 'promise of English'. Presentation; King's College London, March 2014.
- Li, J., K. Juffermans & S. Kroon. 2012. Chineseness as a moving target. *Tilburg Working Papers in Culture Studies* 19. Tilburg University.
- Lyon, David. 2007. *Surveillance Studies: An Overview*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Mobasher, M. 2012. *Iranians in Texas: Migration, Politics, and Ethnic Identity*. USA: The University of Texas Press.
- Maybin, J. & K. Tusting. 2011. Linguistic ethnography. In J. Simpson (ed.), *The Routledge Handbook of Applied Linguistics*. London: Routledge, 515-528.
- Mehan, H. 1979. "What time is it Denise?": Asking known information question in classroom discourse. *Theory into Practice* 18 (4): 285-294.
- Mendel, Y. 2013. A Sentiment-Free Arabic: On the Creation of the Israeli Accelerated Arabic Language Studies Programme. *Middle Eastern Studies* 49 (3): 381-401.
- Mobasher, M. 2012. *Iranians in Texas: Migration, Politics, and Ethnic Identity*. USA: The University of Texas Press.
- Rampton, B. 2007. Neo-Hymesian linguistic ethnography in the United Kingdom. *Journal of Sociolinguistics* 11 (5): 584-607.
- Riskedahl, D. 2007. A sign of war: The strategic use of violent imagery in contemporary Lebanese political rhetoric. *Language & Communication* 27: 307-319.
- Silverstein, M. 2005. Axes of Evils: Token versus Type Interdiscursivity. *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology* 15 (1): 6-22.
- Spyrou, S. 2009. Constructing 'the Turk' as an Enemy: The Complexity of Stereotypes in Children's Everyday Worlds. *South European Society and Politics* 11 (1): 95-110.
- Thornborrow, J. & J. Coates. 2005. The sociolinguistics of narrative: Identity, performance and

culture. In J. Thornborrow & J. Coates (eds.), *The sociolinguistics of narrative*. Amsterdam / Philadelphia: John Benjamins, p. 1-16.

Uhlmann, A. 2010. Arabic instruction in Jewish schools and in universities in Israel; Contradictions, subversion and the politics of pedagogy. *International Middle Eastern Studies* 42: 291-309.

Uhlmann, A. 2012. Arabs and Arabic Grammar Instruction in Israeli Universities: Alterity, Alienation and Dislocation. *Middle East Critique*. 21 (1): 101-116.

Urban, G. 1996. *Metaphysical Community: The Interplay of the Sense and the Intellect*. Austin: University of Texas Press.

Van Dijk, T.A. 2006. Politics, Ideology, and Discourse. In *Encyclopaedia of Language and Linguistics*, vol. on Politics and Language (R. Wodak, ed.). Elsevier, pp 728-740.

Wæver, O. 1995. Securitization and desecuritization. In R.D. Lipschutz (ed.), *On Security*. New York: Columbia University Press, pp. 46–86.

ⁱ Previous versions of this paper has been presented at the seminar *Conflict, security and the politics of language learning* at King's College, March 14 2014, and at Asif Agha's Semiotics Workshop, University of Pennsylvania, May 1st 2014. The comments and discussions at these two occasions have made a great difference for our thinking.

ⁱⁱ In this paper we use the term heritage language to describe the particular type of education in order to emphasize the cultural side to it. Mother tongue education was the nationally most widespread term, although this was a misnomer in many ways – as well as theoretically highly contestable.

ⁱⁱⁱ Farsi and Persian are both used to refer to the language spoken in Iran. As Farsi is the term used in Danish educational documents, we use this label.

^{iv} Of course this is not really the case. For instance many Kurds had political reasons for leaving Turkey.

^v In fact, he suggested that Ghandchi showed him any new texts prior to the sessions, so that he could adjust them according to class requirements.