

### 3. Doing Belonging

Drawing on the considerations on belonging and identification from the previous chapter, I will argue that the concept of belonging is grounded in practice, specifically in the use of language. Belonging is accomplished through practice by speakers drawing on shared knowledge and displaying shared categories and positions using linguistic means in interaction. The analytical benefit of looking specifically at language when it comes to the description and analysis of practices lies in its key role in providing the social element of interaction (Berger & Luckmann, 1966) and to enable an account of its organization (Garfinkel, 1967; Sacks, 1995). By looking at how members of the community construe aspects of their belonging in interaction, we can “observ[e] the ways and methods people orient, invoke and negotiate social category based knowledge when engaged in social action” (Fitzgerald & Housley, 2015, 6). The first section 3.1 will outline the twofold relationship between belonging and language both as a symbolic means and as a way of expressing categories and positions of belonging. Second, in section 3.2, the practice approach in linguistics and social sciences will be introduced. This forms the basis for a praxeological approach to language as a practice of belonging (3.3) that will emphasize the situatedness and the role of interaction in belonging achievements. An approach to belonging as accomplished by language practice (such as narrating) is applicable for the analysis of my data in three ways: it recognizes people’s language use as shaping local contexts, it starts from the assumption that empirical evidence precedes theory, and it acknowledges speakers’ resources of meaning-making and their positioning in interaction. Finally, I introduce in section 3.4 communities of practice, a concept that defines a collective’s organization not based on shared categories, but shared (language) practices.

#### 3.1. Language and Belonging

The relationship between language and belonging is complex. Language is considered to be the “foundation of the human condition” (Tabouret-Keller, 1997, 324), as it allows human beings to interact with each other, to socialize, to include and exclude (Tabouret-Keller, 1997, 321). Thus far, a lot of research and theory has focused on the social aspects of speech acts as “acts of identity”. Speakers make conscious or unconscious attempts to define their belonging to a group based on a shared language (Le Page & Tabouret-Keller, 1985). The intriguing thing about language in its relation to belonging is that it has a double function: on

the one hand, it is a bearer of specific representations (Petitjean, 2009), stereotypes (Roth, 2005; Wodak, 2008) or associated boundaries (see contributions to Rosenberg et al., 2015), and hence, it functions as a *symbolic* and shared property of a speech community (Tabouret-Keller, 1997, 318). That is to say a language (variety) itself – or more accurately, its speakers – are attributed with certain features. For example, speaking K'iche' in the Guatemalan highlands is usually directly attributed with indigenoussness. On the other hand, language is a *means* of expressing belonging in its spatial, social and temporal dimensions. A speaker can use words in K'iche' to explicitly express that she is a member of the Ladino community.

I will examine each in turn, beginning with the symbolic function of language. Using language as “external behaviour” (Tabouret-Keller, 1997, 315) is a powerful symbolic means to be identified by others *as* somebody, *as* belonging to a specific social group. Identifying someone by looking at her language as a socially shared feature (Le Page & Tabouret-Keller, 1985, 2) is based on “external identification” (Jenkins 1994, see section 2.2) and is described by Tabouret-Keller (1997, 315) as a transitive process: As speaker X speaks the language L, it can be inferred by the hearer that she belongs to group Y, which is assumed to speak that language. This belonging to group Y, then, also carries representations, ascriptions and/or stereotypes related to that language variety, such as being rather “rural” or “urban”, living within boundaries of national or geographic territories and so on. Ascriptions and stereotypical “knowledge” about a language are then often transferred into evaluations and properties of the social groups in question. In this way, links between a community and a language may become reified (Tabouret-Keller, 1997, 321). The association between a language, a group of speakers and its associated properties can be “focused”, which means that their bond is rather strong and established amongst the speech community and its various outgroups. It can also be “diffused” if speech acts might only loosely be connected to acts of identity or be associated with very different aspects of identification (Le Page, 1986, 24). In the case of Le Page and Tabouret-Keller's (1985) study in the multilingual community of Belize, a decades-long process saw the use of the Creole variety emerge as a “focused” feature with the identifying potential of symbolizing “being Belizean”. If speech acts as acts of identity are “focused”, there is a strong bond of positioning and language use – between who we are (or want to be) and what or how we speak. It is quite obvious that choosing language as a means of identification, or as a means of symbolizing belonging, is a matter of the linguistic options available to the speaker. The more linguistic competence a speaker has, the more she can select from different norms available

(Coseriu, 1976), and hence constitute different and multiple speaker identities (“Sprecheridentitäten”, Kresić 2006). Even if the speaker does not have bi- or multilingual competence in another language, she can still vary on the level of style, dialect or register (Edwards, 2009, 27f.) to express divergence (diffusion) or convergence (focusing) (using the concepts of Giles & Powesland 1975 and Le Page & Tabouret-Keller 1985) with the alter in conversation. A second and closely connected dimension of language-based acts of identity is the identification *with* someone:

“the individual creates for himself the patterns of his linguistic behaviour so as to resemble those of the group or groups with which from time to time he wishes to be identified, or so as to be unlike those from whom he wishes to be distinguished” (Le Page & Tabouret-Keller, 1985, 181).

Linguistic behavior is a means for social identification, and at the same time a means for social differentiation. By speaking a certain language or using it in a certain way, the speaker can draw a boundary between herself and others and indicate nonbelonging – this is possible due to the symbolic inscriptions into languages and the reified links between languages and specific groups.

Le Page and Tabouret-Keller (1985) envision the social dimension in their study, and how language use is focused on social identification. However, spatial and temporal identification can also be envisioned in language use as a symbolic means. All three dimensions of identification fall under the banner of belonging (see chapter 2.6). As a symbol for certain behavioral associations related to its speakers, a language often is also associated symbolically with a specific geographic region. Therefore, language is not only a behavioral attribute of its speakers, but also indicates something about the potential spatial placement of the speaker. Concerning the temporal dimensions of belonging, the symbolic dimension is a little bit more difficult to conceptualize. Thinking of languages’ diachronic development and the changes that have occurred in a given language, it is hardly possible to associate a contemporary English speaker with that of a 15<sup>th</sup> century English speaker (maybe we could, if she is an actress in London’s Globe Theatre). However, sometimes a specific type of language use can be idiosyncratically related to a specific time, and hence the speaker’s temporal belonging can be inferred. This is especially relevant in times of transformation, when languages might change their symbolic content due to political and/or social changes. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, for instance, many native Russian speakers found themselves to be minorities overnight in (re)emerging nation states with a different national language (Pavlenko, 2008; Popova, 2016). Russian was all of a sudden linked to symbolizing a burdened past associated with its

speakers. Also, the temporal dimension is able to link belonging to a certain age group, as individual language develops during the course of one's life. As I have emphasized above, these spatial, temporal and social aspects are only representations related to language varieties, and therefore do not make the associations hearers and speakers have less "real" (Brubaker, 2002). A relationship between language and belonging can also be drawn within languages' second function as a means of expressing spatial, temporal or social associations to specific areas, time frames or groups. This implies:

"[...] seeing language primarily not in its communicative functions but as a vehicle – the major vehicle – through which we make acts of identity, project ourselves upon others, represent in words our positions in the universes we each create in our minds" (Le Page, 1986, 24).

Language not only works as a charged symbol, it is also the primary means of communication for explicitly or implicitly defining or expressing categories, experiences, imaginations etc. It helps us communicate where we belong, beyond the representations possibly associated with a language variety. This is especially important if language as a category for belonging is, in the words of Le Page and Tabouret-Keller (1985), rather diffused and not focused – if there is no clear-cut and established connection between the language spoken and the conceptualizations people have about belonging.<sup>35</sup> In the case of the community in question, the language spoken is the Guatemalan variety of Spanish, with its phonological, lexical, grammatical and pragmatic particularities.<sup>36</sup> However, the language itself has no symbolic meaning for the community. It might lead to the observation that community members form part of the Spanish speaking community, for skilled listeners, even to the speech community of western Guatemalans. But speaking this variety of Spanish is not related to the community members' own conceptualization of belonging, at least not the kind of belonging based on a community level (see 6.3). This is instead tied to the shared history and experiences as well as a strong spatial sense of being rooted *aquí*, 'here', on a specific *tierra*, 'land' (Vallentin, 2012a). As for the language they speak, the belonging to the Guatemalan Spanish speech community or – if the common perception of this Spanish variety is even more reified and bound to national borders – their

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35 For a striking example of the importance (or lack thereof) of heritage languages for identification and belonging among the community of Georgian Greeks see Höfler forthcoming.

36 See Pinkerton (1986) for alterations between *tu/vos* and Lipski (1994) for lexical and morphological characteristics of Guatemalan Spanish.

belonging to the nation of Guatemala, may be inferred by the listener. However, this relation is not made relevant in the data. When talking about belonging, all of the respondents shared ideas around the relevance of their local embeddedness, and did not attach their belonging to a nationally framed imagined community (Anderson, 1983).

The present data, thus, shows that language does not necessarily need to have a symbolic meaning for belonging that speakers make relevant in interaction. However, it emphasizes its function as a means to express other belonging categories and practices. Language, in this case, is a “vehicle” to transmit projections of the speaker’s own positioning within spaces, groups and times to others. As I have already indicated, this link can be explicit in speakers’ utterances, or it has to be found on a rather implicit level of linguistic realizations. How exactly this is done and how it can be analyzed will be shown in chapter 4.

The acts of identity theory can help us to conceptualize the symbolic and expressive means of language in its relationship to belonging. However, in Le Page and Tabouret-Keller’s (1985) study, speakers’ acts of identity seem to be rather unidirectional. Surely, the hearer plays a role in external identification processes by recognizing how the speaker expresses herself, subsequently allocating certain categories to her. However, speech acts as acts of identity seem to rely more on the linguistic competences of speakers and their more or less rational choices of wanting to belong. On the contrary, belonging expressed by the speaker in an explicit or implicit way needs to be recognized and acknowledged by the alter in conversation, as outlined above. It can be a matter of negotiation and alteration, whereas an “act” implies something firm and inalterable.

Speaking the same language (variety) is a shared practice within the group (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 1992a,b). This ensures not only commonality in terms of a categorical feature (we all speak language L), but also ensures possibilities of mutuality (we are able to interact with each other with the means of language L). Analyzing belonging as a concept which emphasizes commonality draws our attention to these shared practices, to how people do things and how they make use of spatial, temporal and social categories to speak about their belonging. One way members of the community routinely verbalize their belonging is, as my data shows, through narrating their story in a particular way and drawing on the shared resources of particular experiences. To conceive belonging as something people do in a habitual and routinized way in interaction, based on implicit knowledge and experience, we need to focus on language as a local and social practice in which belonging is negotiated and achieved.

### 3.2. The Practice Approach in Contemporary Linguistics and Social Sciences

In recent years, practices have gained more and more acclaim in thinking about the organization and fabrication (Knorr-Cetina, 1984) of the social world.<sup>37</sup> They have become a buzzword in social and cultural sciences, and run the risk of meeting the same fate of the identity concept in its heyday: namely, a decreasingly useful or meaningful definition, or conversely too many competing definitions. However, they enable a focus on repeated and collective conduct that is based on practical knowledge (Reckwitz, 2003, 289). It is a focus on how people do things in their everyday lives and within local contexts.

Around the turn of the millennium, the praxeological approach gained new ground in trying to bridge the theoretical abyss in sociology and other disciplines between agency and structure – between subjectivism and objectivism. Schatzki (2001, 10f.) defines practice as: “the primary generic social thing”, as “embodied, materially mediated arrays of human activity centrally organized around shared practical understanding”. Practices can be learned through “knowledge and experience” (Barnes, 2001, 29), involving becoming a competent member of a community of practice and hence, “done on the basis of what members learn from others” (Barnes, 2001, 27). Learning can also be based on mimicry, where new practitioners imitate more experienced ones in “situated learning” (Lave & Wenger, 1991). However, for some practices, the agents must hold specific positions (of power) to legitimize the practices enacted (as for example in religious or medical practices)<sup>38</sup>. Practices rely on routinized repeatability (“Iterabilität”, Schäfer 2016a), however, they are also open to innovation and adaptations to specific contexts (Reckwitz, 2003, 294f.). Agents draw on existing knowledge from specific practices to transfer and adapt it to new contexts or contact with new objects etc. In addition, most practice approaches focus on materiality; on the one hand the bodies which are needed to perform them, on the other hand

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37 An overview of different approaches to practice theory is to be found in Schatzki's (2001) “Introduction” to “The Practice Turn in Contemporary Theory”. The theoretical ambivalences in sociological approaches to practices are described in Reckwitz (2003). A recent sociological research program concerning practices is compiled in Schäfer (2016b).

38 Atkinson (1995) analyzes asymmetries in interaction for doctors on ward rounds. The right to talk is bound to clinical experience and status in the hospital hierarchy.

the objects people use to accomplish certain practices or which constitute certain practices at all (like books, scissors or mobile phones).<sup>39</sup>

Materiality in language use results from the use of the body, the speech apparatus and other “bodily articulations” (Hanks, 1996, 229), such as gestures, postures or positions, accompanying and shaping meaning-making. To sum up, most practice approaches, as incoherent as they may appear, roughly agree on practices being:

- embodied and/or bound to objects,
- routinized and recurrent, however still open for innovation,
- based on implicit knowledge and experience (know-how),
- crucial for constituting agents’ meaning making, and
- context dependent.

What is, if anything, implicitly represented in this list is the interactive character of practices. As a phenomenon that is routinized and based on socially shared implicit knowledge (Reckwitz, 2003, 289), practices emerge on the premise of mutual interaction. Even though they can be performed individually, practices are not a mere description of an aggregative phenomenon for what agents do individually in a habituated way<sup>40</sup>; they are, necessarily, a collective and social phenomenon. Barnes (2001) underlines the collective quality of practices with this example of riding in formation:

“Human beings can ride in formation, not because they are independent individuals who possess the same habits, but because they are interdependent social agents, linked by a profound mutual susceptibility, who constantly modify their habituated individual responses as they interact with others, in order to sustain a shared practice” (Barnes, 2001, 32).

Mutuality and ongoing interaction between agents are necessary for the emergence, routinization and renovation of certain practices shared by a community, for example in cultivating land, praying the Ave Maria in church or narrating the community’s story.

Language, as one of the key features for human interaction and in its relation to belonging, occupies a double function in the practice approach as well. Language use can be recognized as a practice in itself, and it is crucial in building, or at least accompanying other social practices (c.f. Deppermann et al. 2016).

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39 Amongst others in Hörning (2001), Knorr-Cetina (2001) and Latour (2008).

40 This approach is represented for example by Turner (1994).

A rather Bourdieuan account of language practices as “communicative practices” is provided by Hanks (1996). In sociology, Bourdieu (1977) proposes a solution of the structure-agency problem by theorizing practices as a relational category, and by looking at agency as incorporated and repeated structure, which is open to renovation. Hanks sees practice as a synthesis between a language’s formal structure, the communicative activity itself and the agent’s dispositions (ideologies) to both the language and the activity. He argues that within language structure there is a distinction between “schematic” and “emergent” aspects. Schemata are “relatively stable, prefabricated aspects of practice that actors have access to as they enter into engagement” (Hanks, 1996, 233). He here refers to something like a language’s grammatical features or lexicon. Emergent aspects of structure are the adaptation of schemata in specific contexts of use, within specific realms of “action”. The schemata rely on “routinization, habituation and commonsense typification” (Hanks, 1996, 233). By introducing a continuum between schematic and emergent language aspects, he promotes the possibility of “regularity and novelty, reproduction and production” (Hanks 1996: 233). In this approach, language is seen as a system with an underlying structure, which then can be modified, adapted or renewed in communicative use. The activity draws on language systems, and is what speakers do with language *in situ*. Hanks refers to structure because the activity still follows specific contextual conditions. However, it is only “half-structured” because these conditions can be transgressed by forms of activity, and renewed in their contextual effect. The third component of a practice according to Hanks is the speakers’ “judgment”, the “orientations, habitual patterns and schematic understanding of the agents themselves” (Hanks, 1996, 231). To understand what is meant by somebody saying something not only relies merely on the knowledge of a language’s structure, but also on knowledge about the social context of the interaction. Speakers and hearers apply:

“tacit knowledge of the interlocutor and setting with linguistic knowledge of the forms spoken, with metalinguistic knowledge of the routine frameworks in which such utterances should be heard” (Hanks, 1996, 235).

In other words, the participants need to know “what is going on here” (Hanks, 1996, 234) if they want to understand each other. These reflections on communicative practices combine a systemic perspective with the relationality of action to specific contexts and an agent-centered perspective. Hanks (1996, 231) bridges the gap between an either “formal or purely relational (language) description” by focusing on communicative action, the language structures playing a role in these actions and the agents’ habitual patterns evaluating these actions. He emphasizes that the “feasibility” of a communicative practice, i.e. its acceptability by

the audience within a specific context or social field is also connected to bodily articulations, such as “ways of looking, listening, touching, physical postures, movements, and other practices of the body” (Hanks, 1996, 229). Methodologically, he therefore calls for a multimodal approach in analyzing communicative practices.

Breaking a linguistic practice approach up even more, Pennycook (2010, 1) sees language as practice in a “stricter” praxeological sense. Language is the sedimented, repeated and relocalized “product” of practices: “languages are a product of the deeply social and cultural activities in which people engage”. It is sedimented because its structure is derived from its repeated use over time. Any repetition is a relocalization of language in space and time and carries the “illusion of systematicity” (Pennycook, 2010, 47). Pennycook breaks with common assumptions about languages as specific systems speakers draw on in specific contexts instead proposing that the apparent systematicity is the result of iterated and locally contextualized practices. The analytical attention in this approach focuses on the environment in which the practices take place, the spatial, temporal and social contexts of their production. While this ontological thought is appealing in its radical focus on the context of interaction, Pennycook leaves open how language practices might be described, what exactly a practice is and how we could grasp them methodologically. His methodological recommendations focus on the use of ethnography when it comes to the observation of language use in local contexts, which he exemplifies with his linguistic landscape study of the Melbourne graffiti scene (Pennycook, 2010, Chapter 4). It is the task of the researcher to describe locality in its spatial, temporal and social dimensions to understand the practices, also linguistic ones, which are product of the locality as they are the motor for its innovation.

A first systematic interrogation of the topic of language and communicative practices can be found in Deppermann et al. (2016). They argue for a holistic view on language as practice. First of all, language practices are bound to materiality and bodies involved in their realization. It is, for example, important how speakers are positioned in relation to each other in space (Jungbluth, 2005, 2011) to make certain practices, like the use of deictics, feasible. Second, they focus on the modality of language practices. Language cannot be detached from the circumstances of its production; thus face-to-face interaction or using a messenger with pictures and emoticons evoke different communicative practices. Third, they point to the specific participation frameworks of practices (Deppermann et al., 2016, 6). It is crucial to analyze who speaks to whom, and whether the agent of the practice needs to have a certain legitimization to execute a practice. In terms of social belonging, practices can have a symbolic function

if they index belonging to a group of practitioners: “Praktiken sind im hohem Maße domänenspezifisch für bestimmte Handlungsfelder und gesellschaftliche Gruppen bzw. oft noch spezifischer für lokale Gemeinschaften, die gemeinsame Routinen ausgebildet haben”<sup>41</sup> (Deppermann et al., 2016, 6, see also section 3.4). Fourth, practices are related to specific action contexts and make them ‘tangible’. It requires the agents’ implicit knowledge to execute practices in their appropriate context and interpret them accordingly. Practices are routinized and can be innovated depending on the changing context. However, their sedimentation makes it possible to relate certain practices to specific contexts or sustain certain identities (Deppermann et al., 2016, 9). Finally, the authors refer to the historical confinements due to, for example, medialization or the social structures they form, and they are embedded in. Language and communicative practices with the outlined qualities can be found at different levels of linguistic analysis (Deppermann et al., 2016, 12f.):

1. practices as super-structured and related to fields of action,
2. practices as a macro-structured theoretical concept of generic terms<sup>42</sup>, and
3. practices as a micro-structured concept of conversation analysis.

Deppermann et al. (2016, 12) describe the first concept as practices related to specific fields of action and agents’ different habitualized approaches and accesses to these fields. Examples are political rhetorical practices, literary practices or practices of academic writing. The second dimension understands practices as genre, a hypernym for everything people do, for example when writing a letter or telling a story. They rely on certain participant roles in the interaction and are more or less rigidly prestructured in their execution of telling and writing. Action *forms* practice in this conception. The last practice concept focuses on multimodal application of resources in conversation, which *result* in action (Deppermann et al., 2016, 13). An example given by the authors is the deployment of prosody or grammar to reach narrative climax. By explicating exactly what kind of practice level is referred to, or how they are intertwined with each other in the analysis, the researcher may prevent analytical vagueness.

Linguistic analysis focusing on conversation as social interaction (Sacks, 1995; Schegloff, 1997b; Bucholtz & Hall, 2005; De Fina & Georgakopoulou, 2008a,b)

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41 ‘To a high degree, practices are domain specific for certain fields of action and social groups, or often even more specific for local communities, which developed common routines’ (translation RV).

42 “Generic terms” refer to discourse or speech genres (Bakhtin 1986, Hanks 1996), to specific text types and text traditions (c.f. Schlieben-Lange 1983, Jungbluth 1996, 1–6).

is able to track the constitution of the social in real time (“Konstitution des Sozialen in Echtzeit”, Deppermann et al. 2016: 16) and is, hence, a crucial addition to ethnographic observation techniques proposed by most sociologists as a tool for practice analysis.

### 3.3. *Doing* Belonging

In this section I will show how the analysis of the concept of belonging as established in Chapter 2.7 benefits from a practice approach. Belonging is a relation of an individual or a group to a certain space, time and social group. It can be framed in terms of belonging *to* someone/some place, and belonging *with* someone/some place. People can perform different practices to make their belonging relevant in an explicit or implicit way. For example, agricultural practices, such as cultivating land in a certain way, can indicate belonging to and with a place. Another practice could be wearing specific garments such as the Mayan *huipil*, each having its very own design, and indicating belonging to and with a specific community (Schevill, 1993). Language has a double function here as we have seen in section 3.1. First, using language in a certain way and creating specific contexts can be a symbolic index of its speakers’ belonging (spatial, temporal and social). Second, speakers can give relevance to belonging by simply talking about it – by introducing local categories of belonging, by negotiating its meaning with their interlocutor(s).

The practice approach I propose for addressing *doing belonging* is fourfold. First of all, it looks at the everyday activities of people, and what they make relevant or foreground in context-dependent interactions (Bourdieu, 2005; Sacks, 1995; Schegloff, 1997b). During my research, I did not ask specifically about belonging when I interviewed members of the community, but it was a predominant issue that emerged when they talked about the past, the present and the future of the community. Belonging was also made relevant in other settings of interaction, such as in questions of social identification of the group towards outsiders (see chapter 6), and while negotiating regimes of belonging and boundary drawing within the group (see excursus 8.2). Hence, the object of analysis stems from a thorough analysis of the data and is problematized and negotiated by the speakers in varying contexts (Sacks 1995, Hausendorf 2000: 99).

Second, practices in their definition as macro-structured generic terms or “discourse genres” (Hanks, 1996, 242ff.) capture the patterns observable in the narrations of the community members. Hanks suggests that a praxeological approach to genre combines formalist approaches (in terms of organization of a specific type of text), ideological approaches (in terms of “metalinguistic ideologies” of

the speakers towards the text) and action approaches (taking texts as processual, open-ended and recipient-designed) (Hanks, 1996, 242). A more rigid praxeological approach – which would take the formal aspects of genre as sedimented repetition in practice – sees the concept as “a mode of action, a key part of our habitus (Bourdieu, 1977) that comprises the routine and repeated ways of acting and expressing particular orders of knowledge and experience” (De Fina & Georgakopoulou, 2008a, 383). The implicit “know-how” of practices (Reckwitz, 2003, 292) has to be complemented by a notion of “know-what”, a fact that my data reflects as in the context of narratives. Telling a story about the community and belonging within the community relies on collectively shared frames (Goffman, 1974), experiences, categories and positions. Narrating is as based on knowledge as are other practices, such as how to repair a truck or how to cultivate coffee. How to tell the story of your own belonging and what kind of categories or topics to include requires interpretative competence and persistent adaptation to different types of audiences, all the while not compromising the community’s “ways of speaking” (Hymes, 1989). Narrating is a common and shared practice within the Alianza community. Surely, interviews are not the most common setting for people to tell their story (of belonging); however, some of the informants are experienced practitioners, narrating on many occasions for tourists, representatives of NGOs or visiting volunteers. The variety of narrations from different contexts, with different (or sometimes the same) narrator(s) and different audiences show, on a comparative level, how the participants order their knowledge, their (shared) experiences and their categories of belonging. They also show that there are recurring patterns in this organization across different speakers of the community and across different contexts of narrating: “Practice captures habituality and regularity in discourse in the sense of recurrent evolving responses to given situations, while allowing for emergence and situational contingency” (De Fina & Georgakopoulou, 2008a, 382). In conclusion, I view narrating the community story as a communicative practice of belonging. It is a collective phenomenon based on observable patterns in the ways of telling, in forming a community specific genre. Practice is treated as a phenomenon on a meso-level, across individual instantiations of speakers and contexts. Analyzing narrative as practice takes events, action constellations, themes, participant structures and positioning into account, as is further explained in section 4.3. Its analysis combines ethnographic accounts with a conversation analytical approach. Thus, belonging is not only grounded in the things people say, where they make it explicit as category or position. Belonging with a community of practice (see 3.4) is also indexed by *doing* narration in a specific way.

Third, practices emphasize the relations between collectively shared habituations and individual realizations of language use. For the acts of identity, Le Page (1986, 23f.) still concludes that:

“The individual is the sole locus of the system; any greater abstraction in the direction of a norm for a community is simply that – our abstraction from the observable behaviour (spoken or written) of individuals, which has therefore to subsume or ignore individual differences, often in an arbitrary or accidental way”.

The advantage of a practice approach is that it does not have to ‘subsume’ individual behavior for the sake of communality. Instead, it allows the recognition of individual performance, of renewal and contextual adaptation of language practices. However, I still consider practices to be a “collective accomplishment” (Barnes, 2001, 32) in the sense that the habituality of the practice and the individual’s possibility of performing it is based on interaction and shared experiences – on the constant orientation of agents “to each other” (Barnes, 2001, 32). It is in interaction that speakers show their conceptualizations of belonging (Sacks, 1995), possibly co-construct them (Vallentin, 2018, and chapter 6) and make them accountable to the alter (Garfinkel, 1967).

Finally, looking at practices allows the possibility to analytically focus on the local level of interaction and draw connections to macro-levels of the spatial, temporal and social embeddedness of their implementation (Pennycook 2010, 124; De Fina 2008). The local and situated categories and positions in use index more global representations of, for example, general relations between ‘peasants’ (*campesinos*) and ‘landowners’ (*patronos*).

### 3.4. Communities of Practice

The concept of communities of practice conceives people as organizing not around social, ethnic, linguistic or other categories, but around collective *doing*.<sup>43</sup> In their monograph on situated learning and apprenticeship, Lave & Wenger (1991, 42) introduce the term as an “intuitive notion”, helpful in describing how people establish new practices by learning from experienced practitioners through “peripheral participation”. The term was quickly picked up by the field of sociolinguistics since it offered a practice-oriented alternative for the concept of speech communities (Gumperz, 1971, Chapter 7). Whereas speech communities were defined by shared norms, common interactional patterns and social

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43 An overview of different definitional approaches to communities of practice is found in Cox (2005).

networks of speakers, a look at a group defined as a community of practice focuses on how these norms and networks (“ways of doing things”) come into being:

“A community of practice is an aggregate of people who come together around mutual engagement in an endeavour. Ways of doing things, ways of talking, beliefs, values, power relations – in short, practices – emerge in the course of this mutual endeavour” (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 1992a, 464).

This view abandons the assumptions of pre-existing categories like gender or social status, but “roots each in the everyday social practices of particular local communities and sees them as jointly constructed in those practices” (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 1992a, 462). Hence, within communities of practice, the local constructions of global categories and what they actually mean in situational contexts can be grasped. By interacting on a regular basis, people develop specific linguistic behaviors or styles and draw boundaries between other communities of practice. This is why this concept is also conceived as a favorable locus of identity construction (Eckert, 2006, 685).

In the case of the community Nueva Alianza, a classical sociological community definition (“Gemeinschaft”, Tönnies 1972[1887], Simmel 1908) lines up with definitions of a community sharing certain endeavors and developing practices around it. The classical definition recognizes a community as bound by family ties, continuous face-to-face interaction, shared social values and common purposes (e.g. economic sustenance). The Alianza community consists of an array of interconnected families tied to each other by varying degrees of kinship. The small size of the community – spatially as well as in terms of inhabitant numbers – allows day-to-day interactions between community members. Before allocating pieces of land to individual families, the whole community worked collectively, providing equal shares of income from agriculture and the other projects to each family. The Alianza, hence, not only organizes around practice, but can be conceived as a community in the very “old-fashioned sense” in that it unites “the three elements of deictics – time, person and place” (Williams, 2004, 487). It is bound by a specific geographical space and a composition of related people who have inhabited this space for generations. Even though Williams alludes to the constructedness of concepts like “community” common among sociologists and linguists, the members of the Alianza make sense of themselves as part of the community in a similarly triangulated way, as will become clear in the analysis. They see their ancestry linked to an actual time in which they occupied the space, and social cohesion through the shared experienced of suffering and struggle as crucial to their belonging.

The narration of the community story, then, is a practice which evolves from these shared experiences and the categorizations of belonging in terms of space and time within the community. As a practice following specific patterns and themes of narration, it can only emerge within this community, and thus not anywhere else in the same way. Based on Haugen (1972), Pennycook (2010, 107) proposes a concept of ecologies of local language practices to better understand how these practices are interrelated with their surroundings.<sup>44</sup> This means that a narrative practice such as the one in the *Alianza* can only emerge within local histories, economies and discourses, and is involved in the constant recreation of the latter. This is why it is crucial for the researcher to focus on these surrounding “issues” and include them in the analysis of local language practices involved in the construction of belonging.

The terms “community” and “community of practice” imply a certain cohesion – a sameness in values and perceptions on how to do things. Generally, the term is positively connoted as “a ‘warm’ place, a cosy and comfortable place” (Bauman, 2001, 1). However, we must not forget that constant substantiation or redefinition of community boundaries need to be established by members of community-like forms of social organization. Furthermore, one must

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44 A rather “radical” conceptualization on ecologies of language(s), for example seeing language truly in terms of species, like Mufwene (2004), obscures the cultural and social dimensions of its use and language as human activity: “the enumeration, objectification and biologisation of languages renders them natural objects rather than cultural artefacts; linguistic diversity may be crucial to humans, but language diversity may not be its most important measure; and languages do not adapt to the world: they are part of human endeavours to create new worlds” (Pennycook, 2004, 232). Other approaches to linguistic ecosystems and preceding practice approaches to language seem more appealing. In his outline of a “Fundamental Ecosystem of Language”, Couto (2007, 87ff.) proposes an understanding of the relations between a language and its environment through manifold social, mental and natural links within and between a population (P), interacting by using a certain language (L) and living on a certain territory (T). Interaction as an “Ecology of Communicative Interaction” is the most important subsystem of the ecosystem of language (Couto, 2007, 109ff.), and can lead to the emergence of “collective strategies of communication”, sometimes eventually reified in grammars of pidgins and creoles (ibid.: 111). Similarly, language as a local practice (Pennycook, 2010) emphasizes language as (inter)dependent with (inter)actions of its speakers who move and interact in specific local contexts. However, a fundamental ecosystem of language operates with (in this case, theoretically necessary) abstractions of concepts like “population”, “territory” and “language”. A practice approach to language and the communities using it underscores its groundedness in interaction and its actual observability in local contexts.

acknowledge that boundaries can and do exist within the community, for example when it comes to defining the properties relevant for belonging or non-belonging (see excursus 8.2). As a community of practice, the different engagement into practices of belonging also needs to be mentioned: “Indeed it is the practices of the community and members’ differentiated participation in them that structures the community socially” (McConnell-Ginet, 2011, 100). Not all community members are equally skilled practitioners of narrating. There are those who narrate regularly and professionally in events for tourists. There are the ones narrating first-hand experiences from the times of struggle, and there are the ones re-narrating what they have learned from their elders (see chapter 7). Hence, the community of practice is subdivided, for example, along the temporal axis of age. Looking at the Nueva Alianza as a community of practice emphasizes its members’ “joint sense making” (Eckert, 2006, 684) of categories of belonging, and of positions towards others and other groups. By using a praxeological approach to social organization, we can look at the local situated interactions in which people *do* belonging by displaying it with different overt and implicit linguistic means. At the same time, this exact *doing* strengthens their link to the community because they are participants in a practice that is unique to the community.

### 3.5. Interim Conclusion

Following a praxeological approach, belonging as social, temporal and spatial identification is accomplished in interaction by means of linguistic practices. Using language speakers can display belonging to social groups, and can also be recognized by others as forming parts of groups. This can be accomplished explicitly through the use of certain language varieties as a symbolic means, and is commonly associated with certain groups of speakers (speaking Belizean Creole is associated with belonging to a specific social class in a specific geographical area). Language practices can also implicitly express categories and positions of belonging. This view conceptualizes spoken language not only as a tool for establishing belonging, but also as practices of achieving belonging. Viewing language as a practice emphasizes the recurrent, habitual and innovative character of doing belonging, and sheds light on the speakers’ individual means of establishing belonging (social, temporal and spatial categorizations/positioning), as well as on the collectively shared “ways” that belonging is achieved. Shared practices of constructing belonging, then, can define the community as a community of practice. In the specific case of the Nueva Alianza, narrating belonging is a salient practice where belonging is repeatedly expressed interactively and adapted to different audiences.