

## 2 Turning Up in Unexpected Places

This book is an exploration of language, locality and mobility through a series of narrative accounts that interweave family history, travel, language and culture. It explores questions of how we relate affectively to particular places and how travel, movement and mobility are essential for an understanding not only of the contemporary world but also of how our contemporary conditions came to be. It also looks at how we understand ourselves and others in relation to objects around us, what it means to ‘speak locally’, to be a resourceful speaker, and how ‘expecting the unexpected’, being ready to engage with the critical moments of the everyday, has to be part of our critical pedagogical toolkit. Central to much of this discussion is the idea of the unexpected, and how reflection on why languages, events, moments may be unexpected sheds light on the normative vision of the expected.

I have taken the term *unexpected places* from Monica Heller’s comment that ‘languages turn out to be floating around in unexpected places’ (Heller, 2007: 343). Writing on the limitations of the idea of ‘bilingualism’ to capture the ways in which languages turn up where least expected, she writes ‘As soon as we start looking closely at real people in real places, we see movement. We see languages turning up in unexpected places, and not turning up where we expect them to be. We also see them taking unexpected forms. Just moving to an idea of bilingualism is not enough containment for this movement and multiplicity, probably not under any circumstances, but certainly not under current ones’ (Heller, 2007: 343). These ideas of the unexpected, of people and movement, are central to many of the concerns I wish to explore here. The comment too that ideas such as ‘bilingualism’ cannot contain the mobility and dynamics of language use is also important, since in later chapters I will explore further some of the ways in which we need to open up ways of thinking about language in order to capture its unexpected ways.