

Translanguaging in mobility

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Introduction

In order to understand social life in the 21st century we need to understand mobility, and understanding mobility requires attention to the movement of linguistic and other semiotic resources. In this chapter we ask what we mean by ‘mobility’, and consider mobility as movement in and of geographical and historical locations. To give us purchase on the movement of people and linguistic and semiotic resources in time and space, we develop an understanding of translanguaging which views mobility in relation to trajectories of human emergence or ideological becoming. We can make such processes visible through attention to communicative repertoire and voice.

Overview

In this section we provide an overview of key concepts in relation to language, migration, and mobility. Globalization has compelled scholars to see sociolinguistic phenomena and processes as characterized by mobility. Blommaert (2010) argues that mobility is a central theoretical concern in the sociolinguistics of resources, as it describes the dislocation of language and language events from the fixed position in time and space attributed to them by a more traditional linguistics. An approach to language which concerns itself with mobility views human action in terms of temporal and spatial trajectories. A sociolinguistics of mobility focuses not on language-in-place but on language-in-motion, with various spatiotemporal frames interacting with one another. Furthermore, a sociolinguistics of mobility “is a sociolinguistics of speech, of actual language resources deployed in real sociocultural, historical, and political contexts” (Blommaert 2010: 5). Blommaert (2014) argues that adopting mobility as a central concept in a sociolinguistics of globalization has three major methodological effects: (1) it creates a degree of unpredictability in what we observe; (2) we can only solve this unpredictability by close ethnographic observation of the minutiae of what happens in communication; and (3) it keeps in mind the limitations of current methodological and theoretical vocabulary. In contexts of mobility, people appear to take any linguistic and communicative resources available to them and blend them into

complex linguistic and semiotic forms (Blommaert 2014). Old and established terms such as ‘code-switching’, and even ‘multilingualism’, exhaust the limits of their descriptive and explanatory adequacy in the face of such highly complex sets of resources. Taking mobility as a principle of sociolinguistic research requires us to challenge traditional notions of the static and unitary nature of language.

Changes in economic and technological infrastructure have affected what we understand by mobility (Blommaert 2010). People and their attributes move around, and they do so in new and unpredictable patterns of complexity we now call superdiversity (Kroon, Dong and Blommaert 2015). Whereas migration, especially migration to Europe, was previously viewed in terms of apparently homogeneous groups moving from one country to another, recent patterns have brought a change in the nature and profile of migration to Western societies. We are now seeing that the extreme linguistic diversification of neighbourhoods generates complex multilingual repertoires layering the same social space. In a globalizing world we need to consider language as a complex of mobile resources, shaped and developed both *because* of mobility, by people moving around, and *for* mobility, to enable people to move around. We will consider the implications of mobility for communicative practices.

A sociolinguistic system is a complex system characterized by internal and external forces of perpetual change, operating simultaneously and in unpredictable mutual relationships (Blommaert 2014). Canagarajah and Liyanage (2012) have noted that even so-called monolinguals shuttle between codes, registers, and discourses, and can therefore hardly be described as monolingual. Just as the traditional distinction between languages is no longer sustainable, so the distinction between ‘monolingual’, ‘bilingual’, and ‘multilingual’ speakers may no longer be sustainable. Blommaert (2012) argues for a recognition that the contemporary semiotics of culture and identity need to be captured in terms of complexity rather than in terms of *multiplicity* or *plurality*. Indeed he argues that

a vocabulary including ‘multi-lingual’, ‘multi-cultural’, or ‘pluri-’, ‘inter-’, ‘cross-’, and ‘trans-’ notions all suggest an a priori existence of separable units (language, culture, identity), and they suggest that the *encounter of such separable units produces peculiar new units*: ‘multilingual’ repertoires, ‘mixed’ or ‘hybrid’ identities and so forth.

(2012)

Blommaert argues that a perspective which focuses on ‘code-switching’ is emblematic of this view. Bailey (2012) engages with the limitations of an approach to linguistic analysis which emphasizes code-switching, arguing that a focus on linguistic features that are officially authorized codes or languages (e.g., ‘English’ or ‘Spanish’), can contribute to neglect of the diversity of socially indexical resources *within* languages. Bailey points out that if the starting point is social meanings, rather than the code or language in use, it is not crucial to ask whether a speaker is switching languages, alternating between a dialect and a national standard, register shifting, or speaking monolingually in a variety that highlights language contact. Language, whether monolingual or multilingual, carries social meanings through phonological, lexical, grammatical, and discourse level forms: “these forms index various aspects of individuals’ and communities’ social histories, circumstances, and identities” (Bailey 2012: 506).

We will review recent concepts and terms in relation to the mobility of communicative practices. Recently, a number of terms have emerged, as scholars have sought to describe and analyze linguistic practices in which meaning is made using signs flexibly. These include, among others: flexible bilingualism (Creese and Blackledge 2010); codemeshing

(Canagarajah 2011); polylingual languaging (Jørgensen, Karrebaek, Madsen, and Møller 2011); contemporary urban vernaculars (Rampton 2011); metrolingualism (Otsuji and Pennycook 2011); translanguaging practice (Canagarajah 2013); heteroglossia (Bailey 2012; Blackledge and Creese 2014); and translanguaging (García 2009; Creese and Blackledge 2011). The shared perspective represented in the use of these various terms considers that meaning-making is not confined to the use of ‘languages’ as discrete, enumerable, bounded sets of linguistic resources.

Canagarajah (2013) adopts the term ‘translingual practice’ to capture the common underlying processes and orientations of the mobility and complexity of communicative modes. In doing so he argues that communication transcends individual languages and involves diverse semiotic resources. He points out that languages in contact mutually influence each other, and so labelling them as separate entities is an ideological act. Multilingual speakers deploy repertoires rather than languages in communication, and do not have separate competences for separately labelled languages. Language is only one semiotic resource among many, and all semiotic resources work together to make meaning. Separating out ‘language’ from other semiotic resources distorts our understanding of communicative practice. Canagarajah (2013) points out that further research is needed to understand the complexity of communicative strategies that make up translanguaging practice, and to explore the implications for meaning construction, language acquisition, and social relations.

García uses the term ‘translanguaging’ to refer to the flexible use of linguistic resources by bilinguals as they make sense of their worlds. She proposes that in educational contexts translanguaging as pedagogy has the potential to liberate the voices of language minoritized students. For García (2009) a translanguaging approach to teaching and learning is not about code-switching, but rather about an arrangement that normalizes bilingualism without diglossic functional separation. She draws from Baker (2011: 288), who defines translanguaging as the process of “making meaning, shaping experiences, gaining understanding and knowledge through the use of two languages.” In the classroom, translanguaging approaches draw on all the linguistic resources of the child to maximize understanding and achievement. Thus, both or all languages are used in a dynamic and functionally integrated manner to organize and mediate understanding, speaking, literacy, and learning (Lewis, Jones, and Baker 2012). García argues that bilingual families and communities must translanguage in order to construct meaning. She further proposes that what makes translanguaging different from other fluid languaging practices is that it is transformative, with the potential to remove the hierarchy of languaging practices that deem some more valuable than others. Translanguaging, she argues, is about a new languaging reality, a new way of being, acting and languaging in a different social, cultural and political context, allowing fluid discourses to flow, and giving voice to new social realities (García 2009). Li Wei (2011: 1223) makes a similar argument, that the act of translanguaging “is transformative in nature; it creates a social space for the multilingual language user by bringing together different dimensions of their personal history, experience and environment.” Hornberger and Link (2012) apply such translanguaging constructs in educational contexts, proposing that educators recognise, value, and build on the multiple, mobile communicative repertoires of students and their families.

Thus translanguaging leads us away from a focus on ‘languages’ as distinct codes to a focus on the agency of individuals engaged in using, creating and interpreting signs for communication. Lewis et al. (2012) argue that the distinction between code-switching and translanguaging is ideological, in that code-switching has associations with language separation, while translanguaging approves the flexibility of learning through two or more languages.

García and Li Wei (2014) argue that the term translinguaging offers a way of analysing the complex practices of speakers' lives between different societal and semiotic contexts as they interact with a complex array of speakers. García and Li Wei (2014) extend the notion of translinguaging as an approach which views language practices in multilingual contexts not as autonomous language systems, but as one linguistic repertoire with features that have been societally constructed as belonging to separate languages. For García and Li Wei, the 'trans' prefix in 'translinguaging' refers to (1) a trans-system and trans-spaces, in which fluid practices go between and beyond socially constructed language systems, structures and practices; (2) the transformative nature of translinguaging, as new configurations of language practices are generated, and orders of discourses shift and different voices come to the forefront; and (3) the transdisciplinary consequences of languaging analysis, providing a means of understanding not only language practices but also human sociality, human cognition and learning, social relations and social structures. Translinguaging does not refer merely to two separate languages nor to a synthesis of different language practices, or to a hybrid mixture. Rather, translinguaging refers to new language practices that make visible the complexity of language exchanges among people with different histories. García (2009) sees translinguaging practices not as marked or unusual, but rather taken as the normal mode of communication that characterizes communities throughout the world. Thus translinguaging is commonplace and everyday.

Translinguaging also perceives the language system differently. García and Li Wei (2014) view translinguaging as not only going between different linguistic structures, systems, and modalities, but going beyond them. Going beyond language refers to transforming the present, to intervening by reinscribing our human, historical commonality in the act of languaging. Translinguaging "signals a trans-semiotic system with many meaning-making signs, primarily linguistic ones that combine to make up a person's semiotic repertoire" (2014: 42). García and Li Wei conclude that translinguaging enables us to imagine new ways of being so that we can begin to act differently upon the world. A translinguaging repertoire incorporates biographies and learning trajectories; it includes aspects of communication not always thought of as 'language', including gesture, dress, humour, posture, and so on; it is a record of mobility and experience; it includes constraints, gaps, and silences as well as potentialities; and it is responsive to the places in which, and the people with whom, semiotic resources may be deployed. As such it is responsive to the mobility of linguistic and other semiotic resources in time and space. In order to engage with semiotic resources in time and space we will consider the notion of *chronotope* (literally 'timespace').

Mobility implies not merely movement of people from one country to another to make a new life, but the mobility of linguistic and other semiotic resources in time and space. In considering language practices we need to account for both time and space – history and location. Human life is categorized by movement, whether through time or through space: we are always in motion (Pennycook 2010). In no other time has the coming together of time and space become more significant than in our own technological, global society (Wang 2009). Bakhtin (1981) borrowed the metaphor of the '*chronotope*' from Einstein's theory of relativity to describe the connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships. In the literary *chronotope*, "time, as it were, thickens, takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible; likewise, space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time, plot, and history" (Bakhtin 1981: 84). Analysis of *chronotopes* enables us to view synchronous social life historically. *Chronotopes* can be seen as "invokable chunks of history organizing the indexical order of discourse" (Blommaert 2015). Busch (2015: 14) summarises Bakhtin's notion of *chronotope* as "the co-presence of different spaces and times in speech," and argues that it can

be transferred to the linguistic repertoire, as we not only position ourselves in relation to what is immediately present, but we also implicitly position ourselves in relation to other spaces and times from which we take our bearings. Chronotopes, therefore, “encroach on the here-and-now.”

Pennycook (2012) argues for a focus on mobility as part of an inquiry into questions of movement in relation to time and space, and the ways in which places are produced by the flows and movements through them. Attention to mobility, he proposes, is essential for an understanding not only of the contemporary world but also of how our contemporary conditions came to be. Pennycook points out that place and locality are not so much defined by physical aspects of context as by the flows of people and languages through the landscape. We should therefore situate our investigations about language in questions of place and movement. Accordingly, Liebscher and Dailey-O’Cain (2013) distinguish between ‘place’ and ‘space’. Places have a physicality, and when people regularly carry out particular practices in particular places, those practices become emplaced in, or fundamentally associated with, those places. Thus a place can be a country, a city, a building, or a room. Space, on the other hand, does not have a geographic location or a material form. A space is constructed through the process of interaction between human beings who occupy it and make reference to it.

In developing our understanding of language in use, we need to consider the mobility of linguistic and other semiotic resources in time and space. In order to do so we will attend to the notion of *repertoire*. Blommaert (2013) proposes that the collective resources available to anyone at any point in time constitute a repertoire. In his definition repertoires are biographically emerging complexes of indexically ordered, and therefore functionally organized, resources. Repertoires include linguistic, semiotic, and sociocultural resources used in communication. Rymes (2014) adopts the term ‘communicative repertoire’ to refer to the collection of ways individuals use language and other means of communication to function effectively in the multiple communities in which they participate. Repertoire can include not only multiple languages, dialects, and registers in the institutionally defined sense, but also gesture, dress, posture, and even knowledge of communicative routines, familiarity with types of food or drink, and mass media references including phrases, dance moves, and recognizable intonation patterns that circulate via actors, musicians, and other superstars. A repertoire perspective recognizes that it is not possible to link types of communication with person-types. In fact, the more widely circulated a communicative element is, the more highly diverse the interactions with it. Rymes argues that not only do we change languages and ways of speaking from activity to activity, we use bits and pieces of languages and ways of speaking to shift the way we talk within a single conversation or even within a single sentence. People’s communicative repertoires are expanding by necessity. But this growing embrace of multiple languages may also provide us with a means of finding connection across difference and developing more participatory sources of knowledge and validation. In everyday encounters with diversity, individuals stretch their repertoires to find points of overlap.

Blommaert and Backus (2011) point out that repertoires in a superdiverse world are records of mobility: of movement of people, language resources, social arenas, technologies of learning, and learning environments. A relevant concept of repertoires needs to account for these patterns of mobility, for these patterns construct and constitute contemporary late-modern subjects. Repertoires enable us to document in great detail the trajectories followed by people throughout their lives: the opportunities, constraints, and inequalities they were facing; the learning environments they had access to (and those they did not have access to);

their movement across physical and social space; their potential for voice in particular social arenas. Repertoires are indexical biographies, and analyzing repertoires amounts to analyzing the social and cultural itineraries followed by people, how they manoeuvred and navigated them, and how they placed themselves into the various social arenas they inhabited or visited in their lives. Busch (2015) also takes a biographical orientation to repertoire. She understands repertoire not as something that an individual possesses but as something formed and deployed in intersubjective processes located on the border between the self and the other. She focuses on the biographical dimension of the linguistic repertoire to reconstruct how the repertoire develops and changes throughout life. Busch (2015) moves away from the idea that the repertoire is a set of competences, a kind of toolbox, from which we select the ‘right’ language, the ‘right code’ for each context or situation. The range of choices available to a speaking subject is not limited only by grammatical rules and knowledge of social conventions. Instead, particular languages or ways of speaking can have such strong emotional or linguistic-ideological connotations that they are unavailable or only partly available at particular moments.

Pennycook and Otsuji (2015) understand repertoire as available resources at a point in time and space, including, for example, songs, snippets of diverse languages and the wider semiotic surrounds. They propose that by taking this approach we can start to envisage an interaction between the resources brought to the table by individual trajectories (with all the social, historical, political, economic, and cultural effects this may entail) and the resources at play in a particular place. Pennycook and Otsuji (2015) expand the notion of repertoire in relation to the more extensive dynamics between language and urban space (‘spatial repertoires’), which links the repertoires formed through individual life trajectories to the particular places in which these linguistic resources are deployed. Spatial repertoires draw on individual as well as other available resources, while individual repertoires contribute to and draw from spatial repertoires. Pennycook and Otsuji focus on understanding practices in place, those sedimented or momentary language practices in particular places at particular times.

Blommaert (2010) points out that a sociolinguistics of globalization should not just look at the world and its languages, but also to the world and its registers, genres, repertoires, and styles, if it wants to have any empirical grounding. He argues that even notions such as repertoire have an intrinsic historical dimension. While we can observe repertoires only in their synchronic deployment, we know that what is there in the way of resources and skills was there prior to synchronic deployment, and we know that these resources and skills got there because of personal biographies and the histories of social systems. Abandoning a structural notion of language compels us to replace it with an ethnographic concept such as *voice*, which embodies the experiential and practical dimensions of language, and which refers to the ways in which people deploy their resources in communicative practice.

Issues and ongoing debates

In this section we argue that in developing our understanding of language in use we need to consider the mobility of linguistic and other semiotic resources in time and space, but also the mobility of linguistic and other semiotic resources in trajectories of emergence and becoming. Pennycook (2010: 140) proposes that we should understand space and language not only in terms of location but also in terms of emergence, subjects in process “performed rather than preformed – and thus becoming.” Bakhtin conceptualized language as a medium through which we participate in a historical flow of social relationships, struggles, and

meanings (Bailey 2012: 501). When we engage with the words of others in a “contact zone” (Bakhtin 1981: 345), we selectively assimilate these words. This process of assimilation is “the ideological becoming of a human being” (1981: 341). In the process of assimilation, the unique speech experience of each individual is shaped and developed in continuous and constant interaction with others’ individual utterances (Bakhtin 1986: 89). The discourse of the other no longer performs as information, directions, rules, and so on, “but strives rather to determine the very bases of our ideological interrelations with the world, the very basis of our behaviour” (1981: 342). That is, we become what we are, and never stop becoming what we are, by engaging in social relations with others. In his research on adolescents in England, Rampton summarised ideological becoming as “the dialogical processes by which people come to align with some voices, discourses and ways of being, and to distance themselves from others” (2014: 276). Our speech is filled with the words of others, which we re-accent and rework. Wortham (2001: 147) points out that to become a self one must speak, and “in speaking one must use words that have been used by others.” In ethnographic research in a South African township, Blommaert and Velghe (2014: 150) speak of the process of “learning voice” for a young woman in a marginalized community as she draws on the repertoires of others to achieve her social goals. As we acquire new knowledge we also acquire attitudes and beliefs constituted in discourses with which we come into contact (Malinowski and Kramsch 2014). These notions of voice, emergence, and becoming have great potential in conceptualizing new forms of linguistic diversity associated with the increased mobility of linguistic resources.

The process of ideological becoming is ever-present and ongoing. It is therefore empirically challenging, as analysis of discrete speech events offers limited purchase on change. Wortham and Reyes (2015) argue that in order to understand long-term processes such as ideological becoming we must uncover how people, signs, knowledge, and dispositions travel from one event to another and facilitate behaviour in subsequent events. For this reason Wortham and Reyes propose analysis of the pathways on which linguistic forms, utterances, cultural models, individuals, and groups travel across events. Blommaert (2013) argues that we are at any point of time always ‘experts’ in language as well as ‘apprentices’, depending on the specific forms of language we need to use. Wang (2009) suggests that in a global society emergence is made possible by encounters in which historical encounters – including both life history and social history – intersect with, or on some occasions are intensified by, intercultural encounters. Rather than pre-existing in people’s minds and then merely being referred to in interaction, people’s selves – and, through these, the social spaces that result from the convergence of several selves being positioned in the same way – emerge or ‘come into being’ in the first place through the part of the social realm that is most basic in interaction (Liebscher and Dailey-O’Cain (2013).

In order to illustrate these emerging concerns, we present an empirical example from ongoing research. The example is an audio recording of an interaction between a customer and market traders on a butcher’s stall in Birmingham, England, recorded in November 2014. The research was conducted as part of a four-year project funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council, ‘Translation and Translanguaging: Investigating Linguistic and Cultural Transformations in Superdiverse Wards in Four UK Cities’.¹ The aim of the project was to investigate how people communicate when they bring different histories, biographies, and trajectories to interaction.

In this part of the research Adrian Blackledge and bilingual researcher Rachel Hu were observing communicative interactions at a butcher’s stall in Birmingham Bull Ring market,

owned by a Chinese couple, Kang Chen (KC) and Meiyen Chew (MYC). Kang Chen said he was originally from Changle in Fujian, in the south of China. He had relatives in the UK, and had arrived in 2001. Meiyen Chew was from Furong, Malaysia.

In the example here, an African Caribbean woman (FC), a regular customer known to the stall-holders, is buying chicken from an English assistant butcher, Bradley (BJ), and has complained that the chicken pieces are ‘too skinny’.²

- 1 BJ they are the skinny ones blame the chicken not me they are on a diet
- 2 KC skinny one’s good fat one no good hehe skinny one more taste
- 3 FC come on I have to go home early
- 4 BJ all right stop shouting
- 5 KC haha no no no one’s happy today hello how are you? I am just so so
- 6 FC not too bad
- 7 KC hehe not too bad only so so (.) come on then another one OK just put it in the till twenty pounds skin off yea that’s it
- 8 BJ [to FC:] twenty pounds (.) [to KC:] yeah her roof broken all the water inside [to FC:] you choose yourself you never like the one I choose
- 9 FC come on I’ve only got half an hour
- 10 KC put it in the bag put it in the bag
- 11 [to MYC:] 她不喜欢因为鸡太瘦了!
< she doesn’t like it because it’s too skinny >
- 12 MYC 她要肥的, 汁多的, 像火鸡的那种。她今天听上去不开心, 好像 说是她家屋顶漏了。
< she wants the fat juicy one she wants those like turkeys (3) she doesn’t sound happy today it sounds like her roof is leaking >
- 13 KC 什么?
< what? >
- 14 MYC 她家屋顶漏了
< her roof is leaking >。
- 15 KC 我们家的也漏, 不过是楼顶的棉花把水吸走了。
< ours the same it’s leaking but it was absorbed by the cotton wool there >
- 16 KC [to BJ:] very angry today
- 17 BJ her roof’s broken (2) all the water inside
- 18 KC all the water inside [to FC:] you you you want some carry bag? you need some carry bag going home put all your money inside make sure it’s get wet hahaha put all money inside yea
- 19 FC [laughs] (xxxx)
- 20 KC it’s all right just turn on the heater that might get rid of the water [to BJ:] it’s all right twenty-five
- 21 BJ twenty-five is all right
- 22 FC I shall love you and leave you
- 23 BJ yes go for your chat and then love and leave them too
- 24 FC (xxxx) happy day I am a young girl
- 25 BJ oh happy birthday
- 26 FC eighty-seven
- 27 KC hello [wolf whistles] hello pretty lady you all right? hahaha
- 28 BJ you going to the pub tonight then?

- 29 FC no I don't drink
 30 BJ you can still have a lager shandy (.) lemonade
 31 FC water
 32 BJ yeah water cheap cheap I'll take you out if you want! hehe
 33 FC (xxxx) never mind (.) I don't smoke I don't like (xxxx) when he comes in ah just (xxxx)
 34 BJ I'll ask them to get it out of the tap even cheaper (3) you sure?
 35 KC you sure? it's still half an hour
 36 BJ yes fix your roof
 37 FC (xxxxx)
 38 BJ put on the heater (2) tell him don't ask him just tell him hehe
 39 FC (xxxx) all fish in my house
 40 BJ haha got everything?
 41 FC thank you bye bye see you next week
 42 BJ yes you will [FC leaves]
 43 KC [to BJ:] haha haha I only got half an hour
 44 BJ hehe I need to rush only got half an hour
 45 MYC 什么事这么好笑?
 < what's so funny? >
 46 KC hahaha fucking Jesus
 47 BJ I'm in a rush (.) half hour later
 48 KC I early go home early go home

In this interaction, the customer and Bradley initially engage in what appears to be mock irritation, as they negotiate over the quality of the chickens on offer. Bradley tries to make light of the woman's complaint, joking 'blame the chicken, not me, they are on a diet' (line 1). Kang Chen joins in with the topic, saying that skinny chickens have more taste than fat ones. When the woman displays mock (or possibly real, or perhaps both mock and real) irritation (line 5), Kang Chen metacomments 'no one's happy today.' As if to restart the sales interaction he says 'hello, how are you, I am just so so,' also introducing humour with the slightly off-key greeting. At this point (line 11) Kang Chen speaks to Meiyen Chew in Mandarin, seeking the private realm as a context in which he can (meta)comment on the woman's mood. Meiyen Chew tells him that the customer's roof is leaking, and Bradley corroborates this. Kang Chen's response, as we often saw, is to respond with a joke, loudly offering the woman a plastic carrier bag in which to keep her money dry at home. The woman seems amused, and Kang Chen offers her a discount on her purchase ('it's all right twenty five'). When the woman announces that it is her eighty-seventh birthday, Kang Chen performs a highly stylized mock flirtation, wolf-whistling and saying 'hello pretty lady you all right?' Bradley joins in with the mock flirtation, offering to take the woman out for the evening to celebrate. Rachel's field note of her observation of these events reads as follows:

all three of them were saying happy birthday to her, when she announced proudly that she's eighty-seven today. 'I'm still a young girl!' the woman took a step back, sticking her hip out and putting one hand on it as if posing for a photographer. KC wolf-whistled at her: 'hello, young lady!' and the four of them laughed loudly, chatting among themselves that they should take her out tonight for a celebration.

The customer is clearly a willing participant in the joke. What we can see in the field note, but not hear in the audio-recording, is the corporeal dimension of the convivial interaction, as the eighty-seven-year-old woman makes a stylized performance of a much younger woman. All of the participants appear to enjoy the deployment of this stereotype as a resource for humour and convivial entertainment. The woman takes her leave, saying she will see them next week. However, as soon as the customer leaves the stall both Kang Chen and Bradley represent her in stylized, evaluative metacommentary, parodying her voice, and making fun of her stated wish to get home in half an hour (lines 41–46).

Here several voices move not only across ‘languages’, but across genres and registers. Kang Chen and Meiyen Chew speak to each other in Mandarin in the main. The African Caribbean woman’s accent is both Jamaican and ‘Brummy’ (indexing the city of Birmingham); Bradley’s accent is decidedly Brummy; Kang Chen has a broad Fuzhounese accent when speaking English; and Meiyen Chew speaks English with an accent at once Chinese and Malaysian. But neither languages nor accents are the key dimensions of this interaction. Resources in play in the translanguaging event include convivial humour, market banter, metacommentary, stereotypes, performance, non-verbal signs, stylization, reported speech (voicing), narrative, and more besides. In considering this interaction we make visible dimensions of the ideological becoming of Kang Chen and (perhaps to a lesser extent) Meiyen Chew, as they explicitly appropriate the words of others, implicitly try out voices, and engage in evaluative metacommentary on other people’s words. In these ways they engage in dialogical processes by which they come to align with some voices, discourses, and ways of being, and distance themselves from others (Rampton 2014: 276). In these ongoing processes they find a voice. Kang Chen repeats the words of the customer (‘not too bad’; ‘still half an hour’), and of Bradley (‘all the water inside’; ‘you sure?’). Kang Chen’s deployment of ‘just so so’ and ‘only so so’ is a recontextualisation of this customer’s usual response to the greeting ‘how are you?’ The customer came to the stall every Tuesday morning, and ‘so so’ was her typical response to being asked how she was doing. Kang Chen takes her words and tries them out, prompting her to respond in typical fashion, and when she doesn’t do so (line 6) he both echoes her words in the present (‘not too bad’) and her words in the past (‘only so so’).

Kang Chen has learned the norms of market discourse, and is able to deploy humorous banter. In line 2 he quickly picks up Bradley’s joke and adds to it. As we saw on many other occasions, the two men bounce off each other like a comedy duo, picking up each other’s cues and elaborating on each other’s jokes. Normally Bradley is the straight man, and Kang Chen the clown. As soon as the eighty-seven-year old woman leaves the stall they both more or less collapse with laughter. Meiyen Chew doesn’t get the joke, asking Kang Chen, ‘What’s so funny?’ But for Kang Chen and Bradley it does not need explanation. Instead they jointly and simultaneously make a stylized representation of the customer, each of them mocking the fact that although she had said she had no time to chat, she nevertheless lingered at the stall. Each of them takes her words and recontextualises them, making a verbal evaluation of her words such that they are half hers and half theirs. Kang Chen takes the voice of the customer and creatively re-accent it, parodies it, and evaluates the customer’s verbal performance by creating an artistic representation of that performance. Like Bakhtin’s sly and ill-disposed polemicist (1981: 340), he takes his customers’ words and reframes them as comical. His parodistic voice clashes with the represented voice of the customer, and in the process he finds his voice.

Implications

What, then, are the implications of the ways in which repertoires are deployed as people encounter each other in superdiverse public spaces? One thing that becomes clear is that the most important question is not about which language is mainly in use, but rather about what signs are in use and action, and what these signs point to. A translanguaging analysis enables us to better understand how people communicate. There may be much to learn from adopting a translanguaging lens through which to examine language practices, to ensure that we bring into play, both in practice and in pedagogy, voices which index students' localities, social histories, circumstances, and identities. This interaction was one of many we observed which included movement across languages, but in which languages were by no means the most significant dimension of the translanguaging event. The translanguaging repertoire in play was a repertoire which incorporated biographies and learning trajectories; it included aspects of communication not always thought of as 'language', including performance, humour, mock flirtation, wolf whistling, and so on. The translanguaging event was a record of mobility and experience; it was responsive to the marketplace in which, and the people with whom, it occurred. In this and many other examples of translanguaging events we observed in Birmingham Bull Ring Indoor Market, spaces for communication were opened up, and people made meanings in whatever way possible. The market was a place where this could happen. This was a place where communicative resources could be tried out in translanguaging spaces. The market was a space where people made fun of each other, teased each other, and sometimes became irritated with each other. Fundamentally it was a space for buying and selling. And translanguaging was a means by which this was successfully and convivially managed.

Our empirical research leads us to conclude that emergence and becoming are never finished. However we assimilate the words of others, re-accent them, add our evaluative tone, creatively develop them, make them our own – still the becoming goes on. During our time observing in the market we took brief glimpses of many people in the often-crowded hall. Some of them we saw from week to week as they visited the Chinese butcher to buy chickens' feet, blood curd, or pigs' hearts. Most of them, however, we would never see again. Each of them was on their own journey of becoming, assimilating voices, developing a changing ideological view of the world. We were fortunate that we were allowed to observe the traders at the Chinese butchers' stall repeatedly and frequently. They gave us an insight into their journey, into their ideological becoming, that could not have been provided by other means. We observed speech events that were connected on pathways and trajectories that allowed us to make visible how they travelled from one to another and shaped not only subsequent events, but also ways of being. We were able to analyse discourse beyond the individual speech event and "capture the heterogeneity of relevant resources and study the contingent emergence of social actions" (Wortham and Reyes 2015: 182). We saw and heard in the butchers' interactions in the market their humour, mickey taking, teasing, sales patter, clowning around, complaining, mocking, and much more. We saw and heard them engage in complex language exchanges with people who brought different histories and backgrounds to the interaction. We saw and heard communication that went beyond 'languages', as people made meaning by whatever means possible. We also saw that communicative practices were not universally successful, as exchanges and encounters were situated in unequal structures of power. We saw that the journey for Kang Chen and Meiyen Chew was not just about movement from one temporal frame and geographical location to another; not just another timespace. It was also about a biographical trajectory of learning through encounters with

others, with their voices, and with their signs. It was about emergence and becoming, and about finding a voice.

Future directions

We should expand the study of language/mobility nexus beyond the traditional settings such as schools, reviewed earlier, to other everyday encounters. Markets are places where we encounter difference. More than any other city spaces, they define human engagement with difference, with different people, different clothes, different goods, and different ways of speaking (Pennycook and Otsuji 2015). The marketplace has historically been the centre of all that is unofficial, it remains with the people. In the marketplace “a special kind of speech was heard, almost a language of its own” (Bakhtin 1994: 213). Markets offer “an ideal setting to explore the relationship between economy and society, especially when we consider the ways that these markets reflect, but also shape, the nature and meaning of social and cultural diversity” (Hiebert, Rath and Vertovec 2015: 16). They entail encounters between people, frequently across lines of social and cultural difference. For some people street markets are the primary means by which they encounter people from other backgrounds. Hiebert et al. (2015) propose that the “spatial concentration of diversity” (p. 17) in a marketplace inevitably contributes to cosmopolitan attitudes and identities. They argue that diversity shapes markets, and markets shape diversity. Markets also contribute to the configuration of social life. They reflect the basic sociocultural and socio-economic diversity of local areas, bringing together people into a public arena who might otherwise remain apart. This happens, say Hiebert et al., in settings that are both relatively controlled through ‘rules of engagement’ and also highly adaptive and dynamic. Markets offer particularly rich seams for social research because they “exemplify the global process of space-time compression, juxtaposing people with backgrounds from distant places and distinct cultures together in the same place” (Hiebert et al. 2015: 17).

Duruz, Luckman, and Bishop (2011: 599) describe food markets as “significant spaces of intercultural exchange, everyday belonging, and citizenship.” They suggest that markets offer a particularly beguiling research landscape, representing cosmopolitanism in microcosm, with diversity a hallmark of their everyday interactions. Markets, they propose, are not purely economic settings, but are also distinctive cultural sites where different ethnic groups come into contact through everyday activity, and where complex, fluid relations may be found and encouraged.

Watson (2009a: 1577) argues that markets represent a much neglected public space and site of social connections and interaction in cities. In her review of existing studies, she finds that markets have been subject to surprisingly limited analysis to date. Watson (2009b) argues that the sociocultural context of markets warrants textured investigation to make sense of when, where, and how encounters across difference occur productively or antagonistically, or somewhere in between. In her study she explores the potentiality of markets as public space where multiple forms of sociality are enacted. Watson conducted research in eight UK markets (Watson 2006, 2009a), focusing on a multiplicity of lived encounters and connections, and found that markets represented a significant public and social space as a site for vibrant social encounters, for social inclusion and the care of others, for ‘rubbing along’ and for mediating differences. Watson shows that the social encounters and connections found in markets provide the possibility for the inclusion of marginalised groups and for the comingling of differences (2009b). Her research in the market sites revealed their significance as social space across four dimensions: ‘rubbing along’; social inclusion;

theatricality/performance; and mediating differences. Markets are found almost anywhere. As such they offer opportunity for research which provides important implications for our understanding of how people get along even when they may traverse perceived ‘difference’ in order to do so.

In the same AHRC-funded research project in which we observed the fine grain of commercial transactions in the market, we also conducted detailed linguistic ethnographic observations in the heritage sector, in community sport, and in legal settings. The concepts set out in this chapter were no less relevant in these settings than in the markets. For example, in a major public library, a meeting place for people with different histories and heritages, translation and translanguaging were often deployed as communicative means which transformed interactions between people whose trajectories were different from each other. In interactions in the library everyday translation and translanguaging were emblematic of a positive orientation to superdiversity, as linguistic, cultural, ethnic, and national differences were acknowledged, and deployed as resources for communication. The public library was a convivial place where a multitude of histories, trajectories, and expressions converged in overlapping and intersecting localities, and this practice of conviviality constituted a means to safeguard and preserve a positive orientation to superdiversity as a heritage for the future (Blackledge, Creese, and Hu 2016). The implications of translanguaging and mobility extend to other public spaces in the superdiverse city. The study of mobility and diversity should expand to such settings beyond the school or educational contexts where it has largely focused so far.

Summary

We began this chapter by saying that in order to understand social life in the 21st century we need to understand mobility. We also proposed that understanding mobility requires attention to the movement of linguistic and other semiotic resources. In the course of the chapter we have asked what we mean by ‘mobility’, and we considered mobility as movement in and of geographical and historical locations. We have also suggested that we should develop an understanding of translanguaging which views mobility in relation to trajectories of human emergence, or ideological becoming, or, put more simply, as a dimension of communicative repertoire and voice. We said that in order to develop our understanding of language in use we need to consider the mobility of linguistic and other semiotic resources in time and space, and in mobile trajectories of emergence and becoming. We further proposed that in order to do so we need to attend to notions of repertoire and voice.

Related topics

- Superdiversity and language
- New orientations to identity in mobility
- Complexity, mobility, migration

Further reading

Bakhtin, M. M. (1981). *The Dialogic Imagination. Four Essays*. Ed. M. Holquist. Austin: University of Texas Press.

In this text Bakhtin sets out his theoretical position on language as dialogue.

Bakhtin, M. M. (1994). *The Bakhtin Reader: Selected Writings of Bakhtin, Medvedev, Voloshinov*. Ed. P. Morris. London: Arnold.

Morris provides an accessible, annotated introduction to Bakhtin, and includes extracts from the seminal work.

Blommaert, J. (2010). *The Sociolinguistics of Globalization*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Blommaert formulates the consequences of globalization for the study of language in society.

García, O. and Li Wei (2014). *Translanguaging. Language, Bilingualism, and Education*. London: Palgrave.

This book sets out clearly and briefly new theoretical and practical approaches to translanguaging.

Pennycook, A. and Otsuji, E. (2015). *Metrolingualism. Language in the City*. London: Routledge.

Through detailed empirical research the authors explore the dynamic interrelationship between language practices and urban space.

Notes

- 1 AHRC: Translation and translanguaging: Investigating linguistic and cultural transformations in superdiverse wards in four UK cities. Angela Creese (Principal Investigator), Mike Baynam, Adrian Blackledge, Jessica Bradley, John Callaghan, Lisa Goodson, Ian Grosvenor, Amal Hallak, Jolana Hanusova, Rachel Hu, Agnieszka Knas, Bharat Malkani, Li Wei, Jenny Phillimore, Daria Pytel, Mike Robinson, Frances Rock, James Simpson, Caroline Tagg, Janice Thompson, Kiran Trehan, Piotr Wegorowski, and Zhu Hua.
- 2 Transcription conventions:

(xxxx)	unclear speech
!	animated tone or exclamation
(.)	a brief interval within an utterance
(2)	a brief interval within an utterance, in seconds
[word]	paralinguistic features and situational descriptions
< >	English translation of speech in Mandarin

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