Language in the Age of Globalization

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1 Introduction

In the late 1970s, multinational marketers, financial analysts, and social scientists began clamoring about the dawn of a new age, to be known as the age of globalization. In response, starting in the 1980s, multiple voices, particularly those of historians and political scientists, were raised to object to this characterization of late modernity and/or to critique its social importance. In particular, they pointed out that globalization was not an altogether new phenomenon, considering that the social, economic, and cultural flows that typify it have been shaping people's lives since imperial and colonial times (Kellner 1989). Although globalization is indeed a long-term historical evolution (Braudel 1996, Wallerstein 1974, 2004), it is undeniable that late modernity is experiencing globalization at an unprecedented scale and scope, mostly because of the high degree of space-time compression achieved by the increasing mobility of people, commodities, texts, and knowledge (Harvey 1989, Hannerz 1996, Clifford 1997, Tomlinson 2007). These movements do not happen against the background of a neutral space, but rather are shaped by relations of power and inequality conveyed through "global" languages that cross national boundaries and political allegiances (Blommaert 2009, Coupland 2010).

The novelty of the current wave of globalization is best understood as a development *within* globalization characterized by mobile, deterritorialized people and digital communication technologies playing the central role in organizing social life on a global scale (Appadurai 1996). As a result of these social and technological changes, we witness the growth of a novel, and generalized, global consciousness: people all over the world experience the speed and immediacy of global flows as significant factors in their ability to feel interconnected, to be part of a world where geographical, social, political, and linguistic entities seem to be losing their bounded nature.

As Appadurai (1996) conclusively established two decades ago, transnational migration and digital communication technologies are the two most important diacritics of postindustrial globalization, and where they intersect, we find novel communicative environments shaped by multiple languages transmitted over diverse, simultaneous communicative channels.

Globalization makes a significant impact on language in two ways. First, as people move, they learn new languages, often while maintaining previous ones. The movement of people across borders thus creates multilingual speakers. Second, the movement across borders of

resources – both material goods and intangible resources such as knowledge – increases the demand for people with multilingual capabilities. Globalization leads to multilingualism becoming more common and more valuable (Heller 2003).

In this light, contemporary studies of language and communication must address the progressive globalization of communicative practices and social formations that result from the increasing mobility of people, languages, and texts. Accelerating rates of migration around the world, accompanied by communication technologies that enable people to engage with others over multiple locations and channels, have inspired language scholars to study linguistic communities that are diffused and overlapping, in which groups of people, no longer territorially defined, think about themselves and communicate using an array of both face-to-face and long-distance media. As a corollary, these scholars are examining the ways social hierarchies and power asymmetries are reconfigured on a global scale (see Blommaert 2009, Rampton 1995, Fairclough 2002).

My own work is part of this movement in language scholarship and seeks to describe the communicative practices of networks of people exposed to deterritorialized flows and able to interact in different languages and semiotic codes using simultaneously a multiplicity of communicative channels, both near and distant. I use the term *transidioma* to describe these communicative practices at the intersection of mobile people and mobile texts.

After reviewing the literature on language and globalization and addressing critical and pressing issues in this field, this chapter will explore some of these transidiomas and will discuss how they will play an increasingly significant role in the communicative landscapes of the twenty-first century.

2 Historical Perspectives

Modern Western ideas about language originated during the Enlightenment, when the social world came to be seen as composed of bounded entities: clusters of people, confined within geographical and linguistic boundaries and structured by national imaginings of their social identity. These entities were seen as culturally, linguistically, and territorially uniform. Early modern philosophers of both the French Enlightenment (especially Condillac) and German Romanticism (especially Herder) identified a language with a people and a place and, consequently, understood peoplehood according to the criterion of linguistic and territorial unity.

Throughout the nineteenth and most of the twentieth centuries, the legacy of this linkage between territory, cultural tradition, and language pushed scholars interested in language to focus on the emergence of a national consciousness. A people came to be viewed as an "imagined community" held together by shared behavioral norms, beliefs, and values mediated by a common language spoken over a contiguous territory (Anderson 1983). According to Anderson, the creation of imagined communities became possible because of print capitalism. Capitalist entrepreneurs printed books and newspapers in the vernacular of the dominant classes (instead of using languages only preserved in writing, such as Latin) in order to maximize circulation. As a result, these vernaculars became the national language, allowing readers speaking various local varieties to understand each other. Anderson argued that the first nation-states were thus formed around their "national print-languages."

This modern national consciousness was an essential component of the social phenomenon that can be considered the antecedent of linguistic globalization: the imperial colonialism of the nineteenth century. During this period, colonizers' languages spread by means of economic and military conquest, by the emigration of colonists, by cultural influence (especially in regards to education), by the imposition of the "civilizing" influence of religion, and by the introduction of communication technologies (such as the telegraph) able to link distant lands and transmit

messages in a common language (Graddol 1996, Crowley 2005). At the same time, as Cohn (1996) argues, the study of native languages became a necessary condition for the colonial project of control and command. As a result of all these factors, colonial encounters led to the emergence of new languages, refashioned the existent local languages (i.e. through lexicography and grammar-writing), and transformed communicative patterns and language relations (Pennycook 1998, Errington 2007).

In the twentieth century, the colonial geography of social and communicative relations evolved into the tense interactions of Cold War international relations and postcolonial movements. This period was marked by the increasing interest of the United States in wielding its political and military power overseas and by the migration of former colonial populations to their European metropolitan centers. These two developments gave rise to two distinct approaches in language studies.

After World War II, the US government took several steps to raise its global influence: foreign service and development agency personnel were engaged in implementing the Marshall Plan, the US Agency for International Development was created, and the US Information Agency brought foreign visitors to the United States. These and other governmental organizations, over time, encouraged academic disciplines to focus their research on a global scale. One strand in the study of language and globalization evolved from research performed at the US Department of State's Foreign Service Institute between 1946 and 1956. During those years, the institute hired a cohort of linguists and anthropologists for the specific purpose of training American diplomats about to be sent abroad. In 1955, Edward T. Hall joined the Foreign Service Institute in Washington, DC, and created, with Ray L. Birdwhistell, George L. Trager, and others, training programs for foreign service officers that focused on the intersection of culture and communication in bilateral exchanges. They explored the effects of space, time, and other nonverbal behavior on human interaction and developed the process of experiential training in intercultural, international settings. In this vein, they studied relationships between American and Japanese businessmen and the reaction of German civilians to American soldiers. This research found its academic home within the emerging departments of communication studies (mostly founded in the 1960s and 1970s) and in the field of international intercultural communication (IIC). Unfortunately, over the years this strand of research lost its linguistic focus and intellectual precision, producing works with a strong applied perspective but for the most part lacking ethnographic and theoretical sophistication (Leeds-Hurwitz 1990).

Meanwhile in Europe, starting in the 1950s, former colonial powers such as Britain and France experienced steady waves of migrants coming from colonized areas in search of economic opportunities. When these opportunities failed to provide migrants with social mobility and integration, a cohort of language scholars became increasingly concerned with the linguistic competence of these low-skilled workers and with the problematic nature of their interactions with the native population.

Sociolinguists, especially those interested in the ethnography of communication (Gumperz and Hymes 1964, 1972), elected to study intercultural communication by focusing on how the "local" community strived to maintain internal boundaries – and to separate themselves from outsiders – through code-switching, linguistic awareness, and ideological patrolling (see in particular Gumperz 1964, Blom and Gumperz 1972). They examined not only linguistic forms but also the nexus of language, power, and interaction to explore how migrants' communicative practices departed from the communicative style of the host country – even when migrants spoke the local language. European locals, who usually occupied the dominant position in interactions with migrants, perceived the migrants' unexpected ways of speaking, structuring information, and producing social meanings as communicative breakdowns. Such setbacks, as

Gumperz suggested (1982), ultimately contributed to larger social problems such as ethnic stereotyping and unequal access to information and opportunities.

This sociolinguistic perspective offered both academics and policymakers not only a means of understanding the role of language in producing social inequality but also ways of identifying causes of miscommunication and strategies for improving communication. Gumperz, for instance, served as a consultant for an educational BBC documentary, *Crosstalk* (1979), which addressed the subtleties of intercultural communication in multicultural workplaces in London. In addition, his work inspired other scholars to share, with nonacademic audiences, sociolinguistic insights into intercultural dynamics.

The work of sociolinguists such as Gumperz and Hymes led most language scholars interested in the transnational nature of late modern communicative environments to focus on issues of multilingualism and its related practices, such as diglossia, code-switching, and code-mixing (Urciuoli 1991, Auer 1998, Woolard 2005, Blommaert 2010, Blommaert and Rampton 2011, Hall and Nilep forthcoming). These scholars have examined current multilingualism in the context of the postindustrial wave of migration, made up of transnational migrants (or "transmigrants") who sustain a multiplicity of involvements in both home and host countries, made possible by their networks of interpersonal relationships. Transmigrants develop a "triadic geography of belonging" (Vertovec 2007), composed of their relation to place of residence, their creation of myths of homeland, and their imagination of the diasporic community. Transmigrants thus develop multilingual practices that are necessarily fluid, mixed, and relatively unbounded.

Moreover, language scholars need to incorporate in language analysis the study of how people express themselves through communication technologies. Until recently, the study of electronic media had been neglected by language scholars, who left the subject to scholars in the fields of media/cultural studies (Gitlin 1983, Baudrillard 1984, Ang 1985, 1996, Morley 1986, 1992). Most of these media/cultural studies, however, disparaged fieldwork in favor of more abstract theoretical exercises, were overdependent on textual criticism, and suffered from inattention to linguistic detail. They neglected to analyze the indexical/pragmatic aspects of media communication and the global spread of media idioms (Murphy 1999). It was only in the first decade of the twenty-first century that, while media scholars finally acknowledged the need for an ethnographic perspective (Kraidy and Murphy 2004, Ginsburg et al. 2002), language scholars started using ethnographic methods to study how communication technologies (particularly computer-mediated communication) have provided speakers with distinct techniques and resources to generate speech and create meaning (Spitulnik 1996, Crystal 2000, Danet and Herring 2007).

3 Critical Issues and Topics

The study of communication in globalized settings has brought to the foreground a myriad of pressing issues. Within sociolinguistics, the following have been subject to particular scrutiny: 1) the discourse on language endangerment and creation; 2) the modern understanding of what constitutes a language, 3) the play between local and global scales, 4) the impact of media technologies on communicative practices, and 5) the political economy of linguistic globalization.

3.1 Language Endangerment and Creation

In studies of the link between language and globalization, we find two prominent and opposing strands, each built on the belief that diversity is desirable but differing in what *counts* as linguistic

diversity (Billings 2014, see also Jacquemet 2005). One strand is distinguished by its dystopic vision, in which the spread of English and other global languages is seen as a force that is wiping out linguistic diversity through linguistic imperialism, causing languages to become endangered, lost, or even extinct (Phillipson 1992, Crystal 2000, Nettle and Romaine 2000). The second strand of literature presents a more optimistic perspective and explores how global cultural flows have made linguistic and communicative resources available locally for the creation of communicative mutations. This strand generated all the "trans-" concepts mentioned earlier, in an attempt to address the progressive globalization of communicative practices and social formations resulting from the increasing mobility of people, languages, and texts. Notwithstanding their optimism about language change, most studies in this strand recognize the asymmetrical power relations engendered by global flows.

Language scholars in the first strand believe that globalization – and the increased contact and power asymmetry between languages that it entails – leads to a severe reduction of the number of languages spoken around the world. According to recent estimates, most of the approximately 6,000 languages "alive" today are in serious danger of disappearing. Only 600 languages are "safe" and expected to survive very long (Dorian 1989, Nettle and Romaine 2000, Thomason 2001). This fact has prompted more than one linguist to declare a state of emergency, urging governments and scholars alike to attend to the ongoing "catastrophic destruction of the linguistic world" (Krauss 1992:7).

In the 1990s, language scholars mobilized to promote the documentation and preservation of endangered languages through various agencies created for this purpose (such as the Linguistic Society of America's Committee on Endangered Languages and their Preservation, the Endangered Language Fund, and the International Clearing House for Endangered Languages) and pressure governmental bodies to take action against language death. This movement produced the 1996 Declaration of Universal Linguistic Rights, which sought to protect "the rights of language communities which are historically established in their own territory, the rights of language groups with different degrees of historicity and self-identification, and those of individuals living outside their community of origin" (from www.linguistic-declaration.org).

Today's ecolinguistic movement is "concerned about the future of the world's biological, cultural, and linguistic diversity" and believes that "unless action is taken to support and foster linguistic diversity, . . . perhaps 50 percent of the extant oral languages – conceivably as many as 90 percent – may become extinct, or doomed to extinction" (quotes from www.terralingua.org).

Globalization is understood by the ecolinguistic movement as a destructive force, causing the penetration of a few dominant languages into fragile linguistic areas and widespread loss of oral languages. Because of this perspective, I characterize this movement as the dystopic strand in the debate over globalization and culture.

Language deaths may be sad events, but whether they warrant the ecolinguists' call to arms is often questionable. When a language disappears because its speakers are killed or forced to adopt a new language, ecolinguists (and others) are indeed justified in mobilizing a political response to this violence. But laments over endangered languages – including the media coverage that language deaths often receive – often reveal naive assumptions about language, its evolution, and its diversity.

The claim that a language has disappeared or is disappearing is in itself a problematic one. When did Latin die? Did Hebrew die and was it later resuscitated or has it always lived? Behind every declaration of the "death" of a language lies the assumption that this language had a fixed, immutable, and formal denotational structure and system of pragmatic use. It was a "standard" language, in other words, that maintained a recognizable structure over time. This implies, as Silverstein argued, a horizon of linguistic purity, origin, and isolation, free of any evidence of

the "massive mutual interinfluencing of denotational codes under complex speech-community conditions even in precolonial, predocumentation eras." (1998:409). There is ample evidence – left by missionaries, traders, anthropologists, and linguists – that many "endangered" languages have in fact seen various phases of evolution in just the past four centuries, rendering problematic the choice of a particular moment for codification of the linguistic norms and rules that must be saved. The standardization and teaching of a synchronic slice of the "heritage" language could be as damaging to its speakers as its obsolescence.

Ecolinguists draw an analogy between languages and biological species. They have produced a discourse centered on loss of cultural diversity, arguing that with language loss a large part of a culture will vanish forever. As Thomason writes in an otherwise excellent review of the field of language contact: "Every loss of a language deprives us of a window into the human mind and the human spirit; every language that dies deprives us of a unique repository of human experience and thought." (2001:223)

This dystopic perspective reveals, as argued by Silverstein, a "most naive Whorfianism about culture and so-called 'world-view' " (1998:422).[1] The "language as a living museum" argument (see Nettle and Romaine 2000) assumes that the denotational code defines the world-view. This argument is at odds with contemporary research on the nexus of language and culture, which shows that the language people speak does not determine the way they think and behave (Levinson and Gumperz 1996). Moreover, this perspective is blind to the emergence of new linguistic formations in pidgins, creoles, and other mixed languages.

In sum, the ecolinguistic view is rooted in a fundamentally flawed understanding of the relationship between language and culture, since it essentializes what a "language" is and how it determines its "culture," strips local speakers of agency, opposes "good" to "bad" languages, disregards the way "foreign" linguistic materials can be used to form new languages, and sensationalizes linguistic loss as social catastrophe.

Rather than lamenting the homogenizing forces of globalization, the opposing strand of scholarship points out the creative potential for language mixing, hybridization, and creolization that English and other global languages bring to local communicative environments. Some of the resulting communicative mutations include South Asian hip-hop (Pennycook 2007), African grassroots literature (Blommaert 2008), South African performances of identity (Higgins 2009), and Tanzanian beauty contests (Billings 2014). Studies of these mutations have shown that groups of speakers exposed to deterritorialized communicative flows employ English and other "imperial" or "dominant" linguistic materials for interactional and symbolic effect. In this strand of scholarship, globalizing processes offer opportunities for creative and empowering communicative practices to flourish. English, for instance, can be seen as a major positive force behind the evolution of new languages, including known pidgins and creoles (where, according to Thomason, English is "by a large margin the most frequent lexifier language," 2001:164) and of new media idioms – such as global advertising, newscasts, religious tracts (Aravamudan 2001, 2006)[2], as well as netpidgins (such as "Euro-English").[3]

Another linguistic phenomenon associated with globalization is the emergence of new languages and new varieties of older ones. In the case of English, linguists have begun to talk about "Englishes" or "English languages" to acknowledge the emerging differences among the regions where English is the first or national language (Kachru 1982, 1986, Platt et al. 1984, Gorlach 1991, Smith and Forman 1997, Schneider 1997, McArthur 1998, Nero 2001).[4] Furthermore, in a recent review of contact languages, 507 "new" languages were listed, including 372 creoles and pidgins and 135 mixed languages. There is strong documentation of many functioning creoles and mixed languages, from the Berbice Dutch Creole of Guyana (Kouwenberg 1994) to Michif, one of the languages of the Métis of Canada, to the Media Lengua of Ecuador

(Muysken 1997). In some cases pidgins and creoles have become national languages, as in the rise of Bislama from pidgin to the national language of Vanuatu (Crowley 1989), or the evolution of Tok Pisin in Papua New Guinea (Roumaine 1992). However, most of these languages are still not recognized as such by a discipline straight-jacketed by formalist notions of what constitutes a language.

3.2 The Nature of Language

Although scholarship in language studies traditionally conceptualized interaction as taking place in a single language, a growing body of research in sociocultural linguistics views multilingual interaction as a norm instead of an exception. As a consequence, it has questioned the very core of the modern understanding of what constitutes a language and how to define the boundaries between languages.

As discussed earlier, the majority of scholars interested in language in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries conceived of languages as bounded entities corresponding to specific peoples and places. Because of this, they failed to investigate the linguistic mutations resulting from communicative practices in the multiple crevasses, open spaces, and networked ensembles of contact zones.[5]

This situation is now evolving. Recent scholarship, as Hall and Nilep (forthcoming) pointed out, "has focused on linguistic hybridity instead of uniformity, movement instead of stasis, and borders instead of interiors." This shift has two profound consequences. First, the experience of de- and reterritorialization and the sociolinguistic disorder it entails require a serious reconceptualization of the connection between communication and shared knowledge. Because of the multilingual and multicultural nature of an increasing number of contemporary settings, scholars can no longer assume that such shared knowledge exists to provide a common ground from which to negotiate conflicts and agendas. The identification and establishment of common ground itself must be understood as a major challenge in the process of communication (Rampton 1998, Gee 1999).

Second, deterritorialization forces us to look at the ideological process of making and patrolling the boundary of a social formation that is no longer territorially confined. Linguistic anthropology has investigated the ideological formation of social identity through shared knowledge (Gumperz 1982), national consciousness (Gal 1979, Woolard 1989), and political activism (Urban and Sherzer 1991) within geographically bounded languages, but it must now raise the question of how groups of people no longer territorially defined think about their multiple voices and recombinant identities.

With these issues in mind, scholars writing about the "superdiversity" of language in digital environments and metropolitan areas (e.g., Blommaert and Rampton 2011) tend to approach social mixture as the norm and treat multilingualism as the default mode for interaction in the new global economy. Their research focuses on the border-crossing communicative practices and speakers who were marginalized in previous generations of scholarship. As Blommaert points out, an individual speaker's national identity and ethnolinguistic identity often do not match, and his or her ethnolinguistic identity must be understood as shaped by the impact of "spatial trajectories" on language acquisition (2003:616). One of the consequences of globalization is that communicative practices and cultural knowledge, rather than marking an individual's point of origin, index an itinerary across linguistic communities, which can be traced through the speaker's linguistic mixtures and blends of accents, lexemes, speech styles, and genres.

This line of inquiry eventually calls into question the concept of language itself: in globalized environments, what counts is not what "language" one speaks but the capacity to make oneself

understood by others (based on translinguistic semiotic forms) and be seen as a normal social being (based on socioculturally shared norms and values). In this logic, the ideological formations constituting what is "proper" language give way to concerns over semiotic understandings and intercultural codes of communicative behavior, rather than over shared knowledge.

In this logic, the study of multilingualism in transnational communities has generated an impressive array of new terminology to try to explain the increasingly unbounded nature of communicative practices through which speakers not only engage with their immediate surroundings (by developing locally appropriate cultural and communicative competencies), but also activate wider flows (allowing them to stay in touch with distant social realities and alternative social imaginations). Just in the first decade of the twenty-first century, language scholars, never too shy to create new words, have introduced the following terms: codemeshing (arajah 2006), transidiomatic practices (Jacquemet 2005), truncated multilingualism (Blommaert et al. 2005), transnational heteroglossia (Bailey 2007), polylingualism (Jørgensen 2008), translanguaging (García 2009), plurilingualism (Canagarajah 2009), flexible bilingualism (Creese and Blackledge 2010), heterolingualism (Pratt et al. 2011), metrolingualism (Otsuji and Pennycook 2011), translingual practices (Canagarajah 2011), and transglossic language practices (Sultana et al. 2015). This impressive list of terms is evidence of a movement within language studies to develop new tools to analyze a transformed communicative landscape – tools that had never been needed in the traditional sociolinguistic studies which assumed that languages were bounded entities.

3.3 Local and Global Scales

As commodities, texts, people, and languages move through space and time, their significance and substance are reworked into locally based categories of meaning – in other words, global flows are reterritorialized according to local cultural practices. As Bollywood stories of arranged marriages and star-crossed lovers find a sympathetic audience with conservative Nigerian Muslims (Larkin 2008), or Hollywood romance movies are embraced by Nairobi's women as emblems of personal and financial independence (Spronk 2009), so the use of English and other global languages is recontextualized to reflect local ideologies, practices, and institutions. For instance, Pennycook (2007) traced how African-American hip-hop words mixed with local communicative practices in South Asia give birth to popular musical forms that both reference hip-hop roots and produce unmistakably local styles and performances. Similarly, Jacquemet (2005) illustrated how urban Albanian speakers utilized linguistic fragments from American pop music, Italian TV shows, and online advertising to produce linguistic mutations that index their cosmopolitanism and cultural self-fashionings (such as *don uorri*, a mutation out of the American syntagm "don't worry"). Along these same lines, Billings' study of Tanzanian beauty pageants (2014) shows how contestants use highly fragmented and nonstandard English speech as cultural capital to display their status and education.

The local adoption of transcultural communicative flows complexifies the relationship between these local practices and regional or global centers. Tanzanian beauty pageant speech or Albanian linguistic creations may have a very different reception in nonlocal settings, where they could be viewed as indexes of linguistic incompetence. This phenomenon reflects the tension between core and periphery: even in the periphery – in areas removed from centers of global power – values and standards for use of global languages are dictated by core, metropolitan desires to maintain class and race distinctions. The ability to speak a globally commodified language, such as English, in a way that is acceptable locally may indicate a "cosmopolitan" person in that peripheric setting, but that same manner of speaking may, in a global center, point

to the inferior status of this speaker: her marked, "unorthodox" communicative style becomes an index of her outsider, marginalized status. Not all settings are endowed with the same power to set standards and determine value. As linguistic resources move from one locale to another and from the periphery to global centers, their functions and meanings shift in accordance with the contextually dominant linguistic ideology: "the English spoken by a middle-class person in Nairobi may not be (and is unlikely to be) perceived as a middle-class attribute in London or New York" (Blommaert 2010:38).

In a world where the size and boundedness of social entities cannot be assumed to be fixed, *scale* becomes the best available spatial metaphor to understand the embedded nature and multiple planes of human interaction. Applied to the study of globalization, scale refers to the idea that a given human activity may have different meanings when viewed within contexts of varying geographic scope. Language use in a specific communicative event evokes multiple spatiotemporal scales, from the local to the national to the transnational, and participants in the event may evaluate communicative competence in very distinct, and at times opposing, ways, according to their scale of reference – as in the case mentioned above of the English spoken by a Nairobian. On the other hand, while a nonstandard variety of English developed and viewed positively in a given location (say, Nairobi) may be negatively indexed by dominant core groups, as we have discussed above, this same nonstandard variety may find a more sympathetic audience among people who have recently arrived in the metropole (for instance, other African migrants to London). Often, nonstandard speakers find social and political alliances and smoother lines of communication with other nonstandard speakers. A well-known fact about European Union meetings is that nonnative English speakers (Spaniards, Italians, Greeks, and so on) often happily and efficiently converse among themselves in an accented English that British native speakers find difficult to comprehend and interact with (EU interpreter/translator Diego Marani has written about this communicative situation in his blog *Europanto*, http://www.europanto.be/gram.en.html).

Scales are organized in fundamentally stratified ways. By investigating the hierarchical organization of scales, scholars can better understand power and inequality at the heart of sociolinguistic life (Blommaert, Collins, and Slembrouck 2005, Blommaert 2003, 2010, Collins 2009). A logical next step for language scholarship would be to understand how "scalar" communicative competence works: how particular communicative routines can be successful in one scale of reference and a failure in a different one, according to the hierarchically layered communicative regimes.

3.4 Communication Technologies

An understanding of scales is particularly relevant to the study of digital communication. These technologies can support communicative practices among people at multiple scalar levels. Digital communications can be produced by single individuals at home as well as by production teams spread over multiple continents. Likewise, the recipients of these communications can range from a neighborhood to a global market. Thanks to this multiscalar nature of digital communication technologies, people using these technologies confront expanded rules and resources for the construction of social identity and cultural belonging: "when the rapid, mass-mediated flow of images, scenarios, and emotions merges with the flow of deterritorialized audiences, the result is a recombination in the production of modern subjectivity" (Appadurai 1996: 39). When Moroccan families make videotapes of their weddings to send to relatives who migrated to Italy (Jacquemet 1996), when an international and diasporic community interacts simultaneously on Facebook and face-to-face (Jacquemet 2013), or when Pakistani taxi-drivers in Chicago listen

to sermons recorded in mosques in Kabul or Teheran (Appadurai 1996), we witness the deployment of mobile media practices over multiple scales, creating multiple zones of transnational interactions. In these zones, a new, deterritorialized social identity takes shape, light-years away from the corporate logic of the nation-state. This new identity coagulates around a sentiment of belonging that can no longer be identified with a purely territorial dimension, and finds its expression in the creolized, mixed idioms of the transidioma (more below on this concept).

Moreover, the sampling and recontextualizing of media content, a capability specific to digital technologies, are becoming basic communicative practices in media cultures characterized by linguistic bricolage and by the increasing tendency to incorporate conversational speech styles into public discourse. This phenomenon gives rise to "dense interpenetration of local performances with styles of speech that are reflexively designed, produced, and disseminated though mass mediated institutional and/or electronic communication systems" (Rampton 1998:423, 2006).

Digital communication technologies do much more than facilitate people's interactivity and mobility: they alter the very nature of this interactivity, transforming people's sense of place, belonging, and social relations. We are currently witnessing the emergence of digitally mediated communicative practices, occupying a space in the everyday flow of experience that is distinct yet integrated with face-to-face interactions of physical proximity. Digital communication technologies are transforming human experience in all its dimensions. These transformations can be observed in both social relations (now globalized and deterritorialized) and economic processes (with their shifting methods of production, delivery, and consumption). In addition, digital communication technologies produce not only new conveniences and entertainments, but also new anxieties – as in the discourse about information overload – and pathologies – as in the discourse about Internet addictions (Tomlinson 2007). In this context, few of the experiences with present-day electronic media have any historical counterparts beyond the last few decades.

Among these experiences, two phenomena in particular warrant further research: the layering of digital information over material environments (a phenomenon referred to as *augmented reality*) and the transformation of knowledge infrastructure as a result of digital automatisms for information storage, search, and retrieval. People nowadays are interfacing with digital devices in most current situations: to navigate in traffic, reach a destination, take a picture, seek out information, interact in a foreign language. In all these contexts, we witness the emergence of a new kind of machine–human interaction with its own linguistic rules, communicative modalities, and social norms. While this interaction has received some attention from social scientists (Boelstorff 2008), language scholars have yet to focus their analytical tools on the communicative aspects of these phenomena.

3.5 The Political Economy of Linguistic Globalization

One of the essential elements of globalization has been a transformation of the forms and processes of labor and their linguistic effects. Specifically, along with the movement toward globalization there has been a passage, especially salient in Western economies, from the hegemony of material, industrial labor to the hegemony of symbolic, postindustrial labor. The passage to a postindustrial system does not mean the disappearance of industrial production (which is now mostly concentrated in production centers in the global South characterized by extremely exploitative labor conditions). Instead, it marks a shift from labor-intensive production based on centralized coordination, requiring a single language easily understandable along a chain of command (Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) famous *order-words*), to a late capitalist regime where the value of production is substantially enhanced through the circulation of products (including semiotic products, from advertisements to social media content) on a global scale (Heller 2010).

In a globalized, postindustrial world where circulation plays a key economic role, the knowledge of multiple languages becomes not only a resource but also a global commodity.

Two strands of recent scholarship focus on language in the global economy. One strand looks at languages (and multilingualism) as essential commodities of the global economy. The production and manipulation of information and images, the necessity of communicating across languages and time-zones, and the need to be present in multiple markets provide communicative practices with added exchange value, turning them into commodities. The claim that communicative practices have become commodities is not just a metaphor: scholars can now trace the financial value of multilingual competence. For instance, in some Canadian call centers, the ability to speak both French and English is worth about a dollar an hour more pay than that received by monolingual English speakers (Heller 2010). Translators of written texts charge by the word. Consumers of "exotic" goods request performance of linguistic authenticity (as expressed, for instance, in the language on labels) as part of what they are buying (Cavanaugh and Shankar 2015).

The second strand looks at the role of language in the service economy. Language plays a crucial role in what has been termed "affective labor," that is, labor that forges interpersonal relationships through contact that can be direct (as in the service economy) or virtual (as in the production of entertainment). Health care workers, screenwriters, and flight attendants are examples of this affective labor. Their work results in a material product – such as a stitched wound, a script, or served food – but they also create affects, such as a sense of well-being in a patient, an emotional response in a viewer, or satisfaction in a traveler. In a global economy, affective labor is performed in densely multilingual environments where communicative competence needs to be based on intercultural knowledge. Expanding the global circulation of goods and people requires affective management based on effective communicative skills in mediation and transaction.

4 Current Contributions and Research

The transformed communicative landscape outlined above has important implications in at least two fields of sociolinguistic inquiry: literacy and mobility.

4.1 Studying Grassroots Literacy

In the world shaped by cultural globalization, developments in metropolitan cores have effects on their peripheries, but at the same time these peripheries play a role in complexifying normative understanding of this world. Grassroots literacy, i.e. the spontaneous emergence of written vernaculars not in conformity with nationally recognized standards, is a case in point, providing examples of ways that unorthodox codes, once inserted in global circulation through cell phones and internet, bring with them an added complexity to current understanding of language and communication.

Texts do not quickly or easily communicate the messages they contain: a text written in the margins of a nation-state using nonstandard spelling may be perfectly understandable at the local scale, but its meaning increasingly disappears in the widening gap between local practices and literacy orthodoxies at the national and international scales. As Blommaert notes, "What is perfectly appropriate writing in one place becomes a meaningless sign system in another. Texts may travel easily, but the system of use, value, and function in which they were produced usually does not travel with them" (2008:6). On the other hand, while nation-states (and their educational policymakers) worry about writing standards and the decline of literacy skills, we find a growing gap between their national ideologies and the textual practices of globalized writers.

Further, the intensive use of online and mobile communication technologies opens a vast opportunity for forms of informal learning, offering users access to vocabularies, registers, genres, and styles, as well as cultural templates for practices. In spite of moral panics and public anxieties (including critical views on the effects of texting on literacy), people active in the communicative environment shaped by digital technologies are reading and writing more than ever before. Text messaging, instant messaging, chatting, blogging, and tweeting – all constitute platforms of literacy and literacy acquisition, although research has shown that most people do not think of their electronic or digital communications as "real" writing or reading (see Lenhart et al. 2008).

The newly created field of grassroots literacy studies (Blommaert 2008) seeks to investigate the forms and norms of what constitutes a text in a globalized world. Literacy scholars are now confronted by written products that do not look at all like polished text: instead, they are composed of broken sentences, incorporating visual features (such as the infamous smileys), abbreviations, and multimedia links. Of particular significance is the incorporation into these texts of *vernacular language* – that is, graphic replicas of spoken forms, including code-switching, colloquialisms, or other "impurities."

Take, for instance, the text messages sent by a undocumented Tunisian migrant to his Italian friend (as they were recorded in Giulia Bondi's documentary *Harraguantanamo*, produced in 2011):

Tchawe Joulya.je suis arrive` a	Ciao Giulia.i arrived in Catania
Catania.je sais pas *ci en desson*	I don't know if we disembark
la` ou *en pass* a Napoli.je vais te	here or we go to Naples. i'm going to
parle` *ci il a* de nouveau. *Tchawe*	tell you if there's something new. Ciao
bella. :-★	bella.:-★
6:55 04/04/2011	6:55 am 4/4/2011

In this text we found many features of grassroots literacy (in italics): graphic replicas of spoken words ("tchawe" for the Italian greeting "ciao," "desson" for the French third person singular present form of the verb descendre "descend," "ci il a" for the French construct "s'il y a"), lack of punctuation and proper spacing, and graphic signs (the emoticon). Two more text messages from the same corpus can further illustrate these features:

Senuit 21personnes *on feui*	Tonight 21 people escaped
La police *ouvrire* le feu sur*1*	The police opened fire against one of them
01:21 10/04/2011	1:21 am 4/10/2011

Hay ma belle, les personnes	Hey my beautiful, the people
qui'ils ont fewi ils ont rontres	who escaped came back
aujourdhui.me la police *rufise*	today. But the police is refusing
ses rentres o sontre. Ah ((je te	to let them in or out. Well ((I'm
monque.et oui))	teasing you. oh yes))
10:14 10/04/2011	10:14 am 4/10/2011

Of particular note in these two messages is their unstable morphology (feui/fewi), making it extremely difficult to analyze them and to reach conclusions on what constitutes their "language."

4.2 For a Sociolinguistics of Mobility: Superdiversity and Transidioma

Sophisticated technologies for rapid human mobility and electronic global communication – such as high-capacity airplanes, television cable lines and satellite link-ups, fixed and mobile

telephony, and the Internet – are producing communicative environments where multiple languages and channels of interaction are simultaneously evoked by transnational speakers no longer anchored in clearly identifiable national languages (De Swaan 2001; Jacquemet 2005; Danet and Herring 2007; Pennycook 2007).

European language scholars working on this cluster of mobile people and mobile media are increasingly evoking the paradigm of "superdiversity" to refer to the vastly increased range of linguistic, religious, ethnic, and cultural resources characterizing late modern societies. The term was coined by Steve Vertovec in a review of demographic and socioeconomic changes in post-Cold War Britain: "Super-diversity underscores the fact that the new conjunctions and interactions of variables that have arisen over the past decade surpass the ways – in public discourse, policy debates and academic literature – that we usually understand diversity in Britain." (2007:1–2)

As Blommaert and Rampton 2011 pointed out, superdiversity should be understood as *diversification of diversity* due to changes in migration patterns in Europe and elsewhere. This diversity cannot be understood in terms of multiculturalism (the presence of multiple cultures in one society) alone. At the basis of this shift are the changing patterns and itineraries of migration into Europe and the continued migration by the same people inside Europe: "More people are now moving from more places, through more places, to more places" (Vertovec 2010:86). In effect, people bring with them ever more varied resources and experiences from different places in their everyday interactions and encounters with others and institutions.

The term "superdiversity" does have numerous limitations and a growing list of critics who object to its imprecise theoretical fuzziness, a lack of engagement with political theory, a metropolitan Eurocentric bias, and a neoliberal euphoric thrust, exemplified by the prefix "super."[6] Nevertheless, this concept evokes the mutated reality of contemporary metropolitan life. The world is now full of settings where deterritorialized speakers use a mixture of languages in interacting with family, friends, and co-workers; read English and other "global" languages on their computer screens; watch local, regional, or global broadcasts; and access popular culture in a variety of languages. Such settings will become ever more widespread in the future and superdiversity will become the standard modality.

The usefulness of the concept of superdiversity is particularly evident if we extend its reach to the analysis of the communicative mutations resulting not only from complex migration flows but also from developments in the field of communication technologies The contemporary complexity of migration depends on, and is enabled by, communicative technologies that have made digital media accessible to everyone, via mobile phones and linked computers, producing an epochal transformation in access to knowledge infrastructure (just think of Google) and in long-distance interactions. Transcontinental travels, transnational moves, chain migrations, and diasporic networks have been greatly facilitated by these new technologies. In turn, migration and technological innovations result in mutated communicative repertoires and more complex forms of communication. Language scholars, however, have been slow to examine the intersection of mobile people and mobile texts. In the last decade, we find solid work on migration and language and also heightened attention to the linguistic analysis of electronic technologies, but there has been very little research that combines these two fields. Blommaert (2011) is a notable exception, as is Jørgensen et al. (2011).

In order to examine not only migrants' linguistic practices but also their (and others') digital interactions, I developed the concept of "transidioma/transidiomatic practices" (Jacquemet 2005, 2015). Through the concept of "transidioma" I seek to investigate the communicative practices of groups of people, no longer territorially defined, who use an array of both face-to-face and long-distance media, thus combining multilingual and multimedia digital communication.

Transidiomas are found in environments that are characterized by the co-presence of multilingual talk and digital media. No longer solely contained in areas of colonial and postcolonial contact, transidiomas flow through the multiple channels of electronic communication over the entire world, from contact zones, borderlands, and diasporic nets of relationships to the most remote and apparently isolated areas of the globe. Globalized settings are clearly transidiomatic. For instance, in Indian calling centers we find phone operators talking in English(es) with their long-distance customers, using the local language(s) to interact with management and co-workers, reading English and other "global" languages on their computer screens, and at times listening to American pop music. Other obviously transidiomatic settings include videoconferences by the personnel of multinational companies, multilingual social media, or the command centers of international military forces. In addition, I would argue that today most settings (from living rooms to hospital operating rooms to political meetings) experience a localized multilingualism, interacting with the digital technologies of contemporary communication.

Transidiomatic practices are most often employed by people with the linguistic and cognitive skills to operate in multiple, overlapping communicative frames. The codes they use to communicate depend on the contextual nature of their multisite interactions, but are necessarily mixed, translated, creolized. Transidiomatic practices are often the products of linguistic innovations grafted onto an English structure, but any number of other languages could be involved in these recombinations. The social world is increasingly composed of settings where speakers use a mixture of languages in interacting face-to-face with known and unknown people; these settings become "transidiomatic" when the participants *habitually* read English and/or other global languages on their computer screens, watch local, regional, or global broadcasts, listen to pop music in various languages, and interact via cellular phones with nonpresent contacts. In these environments, speakers use mobile, real-time communication devices (from laptops to cell phones to wi-fi enabled tablets) to enhance everyday social interactions, producing a massively fluid, layered communicative style that relies on access to multiple communicative channels to achieve its shape.

The focus here is on *habitus*: I do not claim that all multilingual settings are now transidiomatic, but for analytical purposes I want to flag the increasing number of communicative environments where we find that the co-mingling of localized, multilingual interactions and digitally mediated, distant communication is producing linguistic habits and communicative mutations that are redefining the entire field of language and communication studies.

The concept of transidioma challenges researchers to look at multiple linguistic forms, indexicalities, and power relations in mobile and media-saturated contexts, where different repertoires from various languages may be simultaneously activated, over a range of multiple channels, depending on the social desires and linguistic ideologies at play in a particular environment. These transidiomatic practices have been developing for a while, but they have become much more prevalent and pervasive due to recent developments in communication technology, making them the main force shaping communicative patterns in the early part of the twenty-first century.

Future Directions

Globalization today requires language scholars not only to conceptualize a "linguistics of contact" resulting from the "randomness and disorder of the flows of people, knowledge, texts and objects across social and geographical space, in the boundaries of inclusion and exclusion, and in fragmentation, indeterminacy and ambivalence" (Rampton 1998:125, see also Pratt 1987, 1991), but also, more importantly, to examine communicative practices based on disorderly

<mark>recombinations and language mixings occurring simultaneously in local and distant environments. In other words, it is time to conceptualize a linguistics of xenoglossic becoming, transidiomatic mixing, and communicative recombinations.</mark>

Finally, language and culture scholars need to focus on power-saturated environments, such as asylum hearings, multilingual communication in war operations, long-distance medical interpreting, and business teleconferences. In all these environments we find deep asymmetries among participants based on the intersectionality of status, role, multilinguistic communicative competence, and technological facility. <mark>This is the world that is awaiting our sociolinguistic analysis, a world where indexicalities and ideologies can no longer be solely embedded in national languages and international codes, but must also be found in the multiple transidiomatic practices of de/reterritorialized speakers. This paradigmatic shift should shape the analysis of cultural becoming, social mutations, and recombinant identities, and allow language scholars to begin to understand communication as the tactical deployment of transidiomatic practices by social formations able to imagine themselves, interact, and mutate while tossed about in a whirlpool of electronic, communicative turbulence.</mark>

Related Topics

6 Being in the Cloud (LeBlanc-Wories); **18** New and Emergent Languages (Riley); **20** Language, Immigration, and the Nation-State (Pujolar); **23** The Emergence of Creoles and Language Change (Mufwene); **28** Language Maintenance and Revitalization (Cowell); **30** The Politics of Language Endangerment (Meek);

Notes

1   A single quote will suffice: "When one or more languages are chosen for mega-communication, the small communication zones wither away, resulting in loss of culture." (Pattanayak 1996:145)
2   "Far more practically efficacious than the productions of South Asia's admittedly talented Anglophone authors, guru English is the most globalized of South Asian cosmopolitanism, delivering neo-Orientalist wisdom in modernized idiom." (Aravamundan 2001:27)
3   "Flipping through the Nettime reader, I noticed again and again, kinds of 'Euro-English', at once charming and strange. It's a temptation, as a native speaker, to think these usages are 'wrong'. But I think there's a better way of seeing it. What I think the net makes possible is the circulation of the very wide range of forms of English as a second language that have existed for some time, and which are, via the net, coming more and more in contact with each other. (. . .) When non-English language speakers start writing in English, elements of their native grammar and style come into English. This enriches English immeasurably, I think, so long as the way in which English is being used in a given non-native context is reasonably coherent. (. . .) A fantastic hybrid of ways of becoming in language. A wacky sidebar to the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis." (McKenzie Ward 1996, www.nettime.org/nettime.w3archive)
4   These varieties have also a great influence on "standard" English. For instance, as Holborow (1999:191) noted, "the new words contributed not only by the media and the trading floor but also by the black slang which buzzes between Brooklyn, Trenchtown, Brixton, and Soweto."
5   For a critical reading of this tradition, see Woolard 1999.

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Further Reading

Blommaert, J. (2010) *The Sociolinguistics of Globalization*. Cambridge University Press.
In this book Jan Blommaert, one of the leading scholars in the field of language and globalization, explores how the world has become a complex web of villages, towns, neighborhoods and settlements connected by material and symbolic ties in often unpredictable ways. Through a study of locality, repertoires, competence, history and sociolinguistic inequality Blommaert constructs a theory of changing language in a changing society.

Coupland, N. (ed.) (2010) *Handbook of Language and Globalization*. London: Routledge.
This edited volume has a broad scope and covers the main areas of the intersection between language and globalization: global multilingualism, world languages and language systems; global discourse in key domains and genres; and

language, values and markets under globalization. It does so by exploring an impressive breadth of topics including tourism, language teaching, social networking, terrorism, and religion.

Pennycook, A. (2006) *Global Englishes and Transcultural Flows.* London: Routledge.
This book explores the relationship between global Englishes (the spread and use of diverse forms of English within processes of globalization) and transcultural flows (the movements, changes and reuses of cultural forms in disparate contexts). Drawing on sociolinguistic and performative theory, this wide-ranging study focuses on the ways English is embedded in other linguistic contexts, including those of East Asia, Australia, West Africa, and the Pacific Islands.

Fairclough, N. 2006. *Language and Globalization.* London: Routledge.
In this book, Fairclough combines critical discourse analysis with cultural political economy to study the relationship between discourse and other dimensions of globalization. Using examples from a variety of countries such as the USA, Britain, Romania, Hungary, and Thailand, this work *shows how the analysis of texts can be coherently integrated within political economic analysis. Fairclough incorporates topical issues such as the war on terror and the impact of the media on globalization into his discussion.*

Crystal, D. 1997. *English as a Global Language.* Cambridge University Press.
This by now classic introduction to the world of global languages considers the history, present status, and future of English, focusing on its role as the leading international language. Aided by engaging facts and compelling figures, Crystal explores the international success of the English language and its 1500 million speakers.