

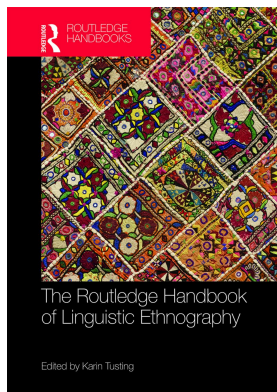
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Heteroglossia

Adrian Blackledge and Angela Creese

Introduction

In this chapter we propose an approach to the investigation of social life which acknowledges and engages with the changing nature of superdiverse societies. We will argue that linguistic ethnography is particularly well equipped to contribute to the generation of knowledge about social diversity when it is deployed in conjunction with the notion of 'heteroglossia'. Heteroglossia, a term developed from the work of Russian literary scholar and language philosopher Mikhail Bakhtin, refers to the simultaneous use of different kinds of forms or signs, and the tensions and conflicts among those signs (Bailey, 2012). As we will see, Bakhtin's notion of heteroglossia also gives us analytical purchase on the notions of 'indexicality'. Following this brief introduction we will review historical movement in thinking about linguistic diversity, summarising recent scholarship on 'translanguaging' and 'heteroglossia'. We will situate these terms in relation to emergent thought which refers to language and 'superdiversity'. We will illustrate key points in the discussion with reference to an example from a multi-site linguistic ethnography conducted across four cities in the UK. We will suggest some implications of a focus on heteroglossia in our investigations of complex societies, and we will propose future directions in this research programme.

Historical perspectives

During the last three decades or so there has been a burgeoning interest in multilingualism and multilingual literacies, and also in the ways in which multilingualism is represented in the media and in public discourse (Martin-Jones et al., 2012). Even more recently there has been increasing interest in multilingual practices in social media and other online and digital communication. This sociolinguistic approach to multilingualism has been characterised by studies of communication across languages in, inter alia, educational settings, work places, civic institutions, religious gatherings, domestic environments and neighbourhoods. Many of these studies adopted a linguistic ethnography approach to data collection, analysis and knowledge generation, developing an interpretive approach to study the local and immediate

actions of actors from their point of view, and considering how these interactions are embedded in wider social contexts and structures (Copland & Creese, 2015).

Heller (2007, p. 1) argues for an approach to researching multilingualism that moves away from an ideologised view of co-existing linguistic systems to a more critical approach that situates language practices in social and political contexts, and “privileges language as social practice, speakers as social actors, and boundaries as products of social action”. Heller and Duchêne (2007, p. 11) argue that rather than accepting ideological positions in which there is competition over languages, “perhaps we should be asking instead who benefits and who loses from understanding languages the way we do, and what is at stake for whom, and how and why language serves as a terrain for competition”.

Sociolinguistic study of multilingualism has moved away from a view of languages as separate, bounded entities, to a view of communication in which language users employ whatever linguistic features are at their disposal to achieve their communicative aims as best they can (Jørgensen et al., 2011). Makoni and Pennycook argue for an understanding of the relationships between what people believe about their language (or other people’s languages), the situated forms of talk they deploy and the material effects – social, economic, environmental – of such views and use (2007, p. 22). Meaning-making is not confined to the use of ‘languages’ as discrete, enumerable, bounded sets of linguistic resources. Rather, signs are available in communicative repertoires (Rymes, 2010) which extend across ‘languages’ and varieties which have hitherto been associated with particular national, territorial and social groups. Thus, language is a social resource without clear boundaries, which places the speaker at the heart of the interaction.

Blommaert and Varis (2012) argue 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. That is, whereas a plurality perspective retains the borders between socially constructed categories such as languages and cultures, and examines them in contact, a complexity perspective views the unfinished and evolving, tentative, non-linear aspects of social and cultural life not as peripheral and exceptional, but as normal features of life (Blommaert, 2013). Bailey (2012) engages with the limitations of an approach to analysis of linguistic diversity which emphasises code-switching, arguing that a focus on linguistic features that are officially authorised 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 central 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, p. 506). Canagarajah and Liyanage (2012) have noted that even so-called ‘monolinguals’ shuttle between codes, registers and discourses, and therefore monolingual seems hardly to be an adequate description. Just as the traditional distinction between languages is no longer sustainable, so the distinction between ‘monolingual’, ‘bilingual’ and ‘multilingual’ speakers may no longer be so.

Critical issues and debates

The ways people use language to communicate are changing. This has prompted a rethinking of the traditional concepts and methodologies of sociolinguistics (De Fina et al., 2017).

Recently sociolinguists have turned to Bakhtin's term 'heteroglossia' to better understand the diversity of linguistic practice in late modern societies (Blackledge & Creese, 2014). Madsen (2014) notes that as a cover term for linguistic diversity, heteroglossia "describes how language use involves various socio-ideological languages, codes, and voices". Bakhtin was concerned to explain how language varieties and nonstandard dialects are shaped by social, historical and political influences, and he developed the notion of 'heteroglossia' to describe and theorise the existence of and relationship between different language varieties.

Heteroglossia as a theoretical term reflects the mobility and flux which is often said to be characteristic of the late modern age. Bakhtin argued that language in use and in action represents "specific points of view on the world, forms for conceptualizing the world in words, specific world views, each characterized by its own objects, meanings and values" (1981, p. 291). That is, language points to, or 'indexes' a certain point of view, ideology, social class, profession or other social position. Bakhtin saw that

language is stratified not only into linguistic dialects in the strictest sense of the word, but also – and for us this is the essential point – into languages that are socio-ideological: languages of social groups, 'professional' and 'generic' languages, languages of generations and so forth.

(1981, p. 271)

For Bakhtin (1986), stratification and diversity within a language derive from its social nature, reflecting the social and ideological differentiation in society. Bakhtin is less interested in how different language-forms (languages and dialects) vary according to their linguistic features than in the stratification of a common language (Lähteenmaki, 2010). Heteroglossia is not only – in fact not principally – about the simultaneous use of 'languages', but rather refers to the co-existence of different competing ideological points of view, whether constituted in a single national 'language' (as Bakhtin proposed), or within the complex communicative repertoires in play in superdiverse, late modern societies.

The use of certain words in a certain way indexes some social position(s) because these words are characteristically used by members of a certain group: "A voice is a social position from the stratified world, as presupposed by stratified language" (Wortham, 2001, p. 50). In this way, speakers inevitably position themselves with respect to others, making indexical associations and meta-level evaluations. Bakhtin noticed that whole utterances and individual words may repeat the words of others in a way that re-accent and changes them, "ironically, indignantly, reverently, and so forth", and, in particular, "intonation is especially sensitive and always points beyond the context" (1986, p. 91). By re-accenting others' voices, narrators and ordinary speakers establish positions for themselves (Wortham, 2001). Analytic attention to each type of dialogic speech has a role in understanding language in use and in action in late modern societies.

For Bakhtin, language is "a process teeming with future and former languages" (1981, pp. 356–7). Not the least of aspects of the historical context of languages and varieties are their hierarchisation and indexical/ideological associations. Bakhtin pointed to the dialogic nature of the word, which "lies on the borderline between oneself and the other. The word in language is half someone else's" (1981, p. 293). Hall et al. (2005, p. 2) argue that for Bakhtin the utterance is always a two-sided act: "In the moment of its use, at one and the same time, it responds to what precedes it and anticipates what is to come." Bakhtin referred to dialogic discourse as the meaning-making process by which the historical, the present and the future come together in an utterance.

In summary, the application of Bakhtin's literary theory to linguistic ethnographic research reminds us to take as our focus not 'languages', but speakers as social actors in the social world. Bakhtin's theory also

encourages us to interpret the meanings of talk in terms of the social worlds, past and present, of which words are part-and-parcel, rather than in terms of formal systems, such as 'languages', that can veil actual speakers, uses, and contexts.

(Bailey, 2012, p. 502)

We propose an analytic perspective which takes linguistic diversity to be constitutive of, and constituted by, social diversity.

Current and recent research

In recent times social and linguistic diversity in Europe (and elsewhere) has increased. Global change has meant that there has been a considerable increase in the categories of migrants arriving in European cities in particular, not only in terms of nationality, ethnicity and language, but also in relation to patterns of migration, social mobility, educational qualifications, employment histories and so on (Blommaert & Rampton, 2016). In addition, we have seen the rapid development of new media and technologies of information circulation. Technological advancement and global connectedness have contributed to diversity as they intensify contact and exchange between peoples who are often spatially distant and culturally distinct from one another, such that contact and interaction (physical and virtual) between diverse peoples, languages, cultural models, media and practices are the norm (De Fina et al., 2017).

Our cities have become more complex as people (and their resources) have become more mobile, and less predictable. We propose that a 'superdiversity' focus enables researchers to engage with, and better understand, the complexity and mobility of social life. A superdiversity lens explicitly acknowledges the heterogeneity of the biographies and trajectories in play as people come into contact in everyday encounters. This poststructuralist approach also pays close attention to structures and categories which may be the site of discriminatory discourses and practices. Changes in the scale, pace and scope of mobility have inevitably changed the way we communicate, and the way we understand communication (Karrebæk et al., 2016). Rather than thinking about speakers communicating in 'languages' which are indelibly linked to 'nations', we observe that they 'translanguage' (García & Wei, 2014), making the best of the available semiotic resources in their communicative repertoires. Translanguaging is thus a creative process, and has the potential to be a transformative process, as the nature of an interaction may change through the deployment of genres, registers and communicative resources which enable civility towards diversity (Lofland, 1998) and conviviality (Gilroy, 2006).

Blommaert and Rampton (2016, p. 24) point out that there has been a relatively recent shift in the way scholars think about languages, language groups and communication. Rather than assuming homogeneity, stability and boundedness of languages, mobility, mixing, political dynamics and historical embedding are central concerns. Blommaert and Rampton (2016) propose two tracks for the study of language and superdiversity, one that adds linguistic ethnography as a supplementary perspective to other kinds of study, and another that takes language and communication as central topics. They point to the importance of keeping in view the 'total linguistic fact', which Silverstein (1985, p. 220) summarises as

“an unstable mutual interaction of meaningful sign forms, contextualised to situations of interested human use and mediated by the fact of cultural ideology”. (See also Rampton, this volume.) Blommaert and Rampton (2016, p. 37) add that attention to the total linguistic fact is grounded in “a basic commitment to ethnographic description of the who, what, where, when, how, and why of semiotic practice”. Despite the need to situate complex elements of communicative practice in wider scales and hierarchies of social diversity, understanding communication in superdiverse spaces “still requires close ethnographic observation to understand how the elements are related and sustained” (Blommaert & Rampton, 2016, p. 39).

Our approach to linguistic ethnography investigates the construction and robustness of social categories, as far as possible moving away from reifications and essentialisations about languages, dialects, ethnicities and cultures in investigating communication in social life (Copland & Creese, 2015). Linguistic ethnographers pay attention to the linguistic sign in order to link historical, social, political and cultural structures. Such an approach returns us to Bakhtin’s thinking about heteroglossia, and the indexical, dialogic nature of language. Bakhtin, like the linguistic ethnographer, was concerned with the interpretation of the sign (in Bakhtin’s terms, the ‘word’) in its social (or literary) context, to understand its relevance in ongoing communicative activity and situated social action. In the next section we look at a short empirical example of communicative activity, and consider how Bakhtin’s analysis may amplify our understanding of its relevance to the social world.

An example from research

In this section we present an example of a ‘zone of encounter’ which is one of hundreds examined in a large, multi-site research project, *Translation and Translanguaging. Investigating Linguistic and Cultural Transformations in Superdiverse Wards in Four UK Cities* (AHRC AH/L007096/1). The linguistic ethnography investigated how people communicate when they bring into interaction different histories, biographies and repertoires. The research ran simultaneously across four cities in the UK: Birmingham, Cardiff, Leeds and London. In this chapter we present a single example from the research conducted in Birmingham.

The research project was a multi-site linguistic ethnography. Over the four-year project the research team identified 16 research sites, four in each city, for detailed investigation. Through linguistic ethnography the research sought to make explicit what people often take for granted, making accessible new ways of understanding. The research developed a linguistic ethnography approach which relied on learning from key participants, with whom the researchers were closely involved. The research team set out not to inform, but rather to forge a “partnership of equals” (Blommaert, 2010, p. 5). This was earned through the researchers’ investment and involvement in the field. Hymes (1980, p. 105) proposed that ethnography is the “most open, the most compatible with a democratic way of life, the least likely to produce a world in which experts control knowledge at the expense of those who are studied”. Blommaert (2010, p. 5) argues that ethnographers attempt to counter and transform existing social orders through flattening the relationship between researcher and researched. He suggests that there is a reward to be gained from being a good agent, “an agent of improvement, not of continued or exacerbated oppression and exclusion” (Blommaert, 2010, p. 5). This was the approach developed by the research team.

In the *Translation and Translanguaging* project a team of researchers in each of the four cities identified research sites for linguistic ethnographic study. They were interested in meeting-places where communicative practice was observable. The research sites were situated in ‘superdiverse’ wards, and were selected as public points where people came into

contact with each other. Across the four cities research sites were united thematically. That is, in order to ensure a coherence to the overall design of the research, and also to ensure a diverse spread of ethnographic research locations, the research team worked simultaneously across sites which were thematically related. In the first four-month block of ethnographic investigation ‘business’ settings were selected; in the second block ‘heritage’ sites; in the third, community sport settings; and in the final period of four months, legal advice and welfare advocacy sites. Overall the 16 research settings included market stalls and corner shops, libraries and community centres, capoeira, karate and football clubs, and legal and welfare benefits advice centres.

The research team was interested in all forms of communication in these sites. However, linguistic ethnography in superdiverse settings is dependent on the research team having at its disposal the linguistic resources to interpret and translate the communicative repertoires of key participants. The 2011 Census (ONS 2012) asked UK residents to name their most commonly spoken language other than English. The results of the Census thus revealed the languages reportedly spoken most widely in city wards. This information led to decisions about the selection of key participants. In London speakers of varieties of Polish were selected as key participants in each phase of the research; in Cardiff speakers of varieties of Arabic; in Leeds speakers of varieties of Czech, Slovak, Romani and Portuguese; and in Birmingham speakers of varieties of Chinese languages including Mandarin, Cantonese, Fujianese, Hokkien and Hakka. In each city researchers whose linguistic resources enabled them to participate, interpret and translate in these linguistic settings were recruited as field workers and analysts.

In each of the research sites researchers conducted close and repeated observations of communicative practices over a period of four months. In each case at least two researchers were involved. They wrote field notes of their observations, audio-recorded and video-recorded key participants, collected social media and other online and digital communication, interviewed stakeholders, took photographs, gathered relevant documentary material and asked key participants to audio-record themselves in domestic and/or leisure settings. The example we present here is one interaction among many observed in the Birmingham research. The first phase of the Birmingham-based research was done in the Bull Ring Indoor Market, focussing on a butcher’s stall. The key participants were stall-holders Kang Chen and his partner in life as well as business, Meiyen Chew.

In this interaction Kang Chen (KC) and the proprietor of a neighbouring fish stall (FM) engage in conversation about the fact that they are both currently short of staff. The fishmonger told us that his parents had migrated from Pakistan to the UK over 40 years ago. He spoke with a pronounced Birmingham accent. One of the assistant butchers at the butcher’s stall (‘Mike’, a white British employee from Birmingham) had recently left his position as Kang Chen’s employee. Also present are the long-standing assistant butcher at the butcher’s stall, Bradley (BJ) and Meiyen Chew (MC). As we join them Kang Chen and the fishmonger are engaging in market-place banter, shouting to each other from their positions on their stalls.

- 1 KC say say say now you no staff mate
- 2 FM where’d all your staff go?
- 3 KC they want
- 4 FM you sacked am ain’t you? he sacked em he said I’m don’t worry I take them on I
- 5 sack them as well
- 6 KC no he sack me no I’m sack him
- 7 FM [to BJ:] what happened to him?

- 8 BJ what, Mike? He got another job
 9 FM have they?
 10 KC yea he just want do properly English meat butcher, you know, he don't want do
 11 like intestine YAA YAA
 12 FM what d'you mean fuckin (xxx) butcher? I do butcher mate you do everything you
 13 do fuckin intestines whatever come you have to do it
 14 KC yea
 15 FM see [pointing to BJ:] he's a he is a different white man
 16 MC he's an Asian man
 17 KC hehehe
 18 FM he's a bit of Chinese bit of Asian everything he don't mind
 19 KC he don't mind hehehe
 20 BJ (xxx) as long as I put a smile on your face

Each participant enters the social interaction carrying an already established biography of prior dealings with the other participants (Goffman 1963, 1983). The participants already know each other, and they also know the linguistic repertoire of the workspace of the market hall (Pennycook & Otsuji, 2015). Teasing and banter are *de rigueur*, the vernacular is frequently deployed, and also in play are norms, regularities and expectations which will be commented upon if they are transgressed. Kang Chen points out to his neighbour the fishmonger that he has no staff at the moment. He addresses his colleague as 'mate', creating a convivial access ritual which introduces the interaction. The fishmonger responds reciprocally, repeating the sense of Kang Chen's comment but turning it into a question. In so doing he ratifies the 'state of talk' (Goffman, 1967, p. 34) – that is, both men declare themselves open to one another for purposes of spoken communication, and guarantee to maintain a flow of words. Both participants speak in raised tones, indexing ironic teasing. They are *au fait* with the discourse of stall-holders in the market-place. Both men expect the interaction to proceed through mockery and banter. Such perfunctory, brief 'contact rituals' (Goffman, 1983, p. 10) occur frequently in the market.

Kang Chen attempts to respond to the fishmonger (l. 3) but is interrupted by the trader's louder voice. The fishmonger gets into his stride now, teasing Kang Chen for being the kind of employer who mercilessly sacks his work force. In doing so the fishmonger adopts three discursive strategies in quick succession: a direct question ("you sacked em ain't you?"), a statement to no one in particular, but in the hearing of Meiyen Chew and Bradley ("he sacked em"), and a small story which deploys reported speech ("he said I'm don't worry I take them on I sack them as well"). In an "artistic representation" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 347) of Kang Chen's supposed discourse, the fishmonger ventriloquates the voice of the butcher in a fictionalised account of the events that led to Kang Chen losing his assistant. He attributes direct speech to the butcher, all the time maintaining his smiling, teasing voice.

The fishmonger deploys double-voiced discourse. Bakhtin (1984) stated that double-voiced discourse was the chief subject of his investigation of language, its chief hero. Double-voiced discourse is directed both to the referential object of speech and towards another's discourse, towards someone else's speech. It includes all types of discourse that speak with more than one voice: irony, satire, parody, mockery, stylisation and so on. Here the fishmonger gently mocks the butcher, apparently critical of Kang Chen's skills in personnel management, while at the same time creating a context for humour. Volosinov (1973, p. 119) demonstrated that the context in which speech is reported is key to an understanding of reported speech, and proposed that "between the reported speech and the reporting context, dynamic relations of

high complexity and tension are in force". That is, the context in which the story is narrated is as important as the narrated story in shaping the narrative. In the case here, the speech reported by the fishmonger and attributed to Kang Chen ("don't worry I take them on I sack them as well") is shaped by the normative orders of discourse of the market hall. Teasing, banter and mock-hostility belong to the spatial repertoire of the market. Volosinov (1973, p. 119) suggests that a failure to take into account the relations between the reported speech and the reporting context makes it impossible to understand any form of reported speech.

At line 6 Kang Chen responds with banter of his own, saying "no he sack me no I'm sack him", defending his position while also entering into the convivial sport. He argues that he did not sack the staff member, who left of his own accord. The fishmonger turns to the butcher's other assistant, Bradley, for confirmation (l. 7). Bradley is a local man from Birmingham, and he confirms Kang Chen's story. Kang Chen picks up the story once Bradley has ratified his account, saying "he just want do properly English meat butcher, you know, he don't want do like intestine YAA YAA". Kang Chen represents the voice of the departed assistant butcher indirectly, reporting what he wanted from the job, and what he did not want. Here 'intestine' is an indexical: on a number of occasions in our observations, and in the butchers' narratives, it was clear that the pig's intestine was particularly associated with Chinese and other South Asian customers, and their presupposed tastes. Indeed it had become a niche product for these stall-holders when they initially set up their business, and had become contested when they were told by health officials that they were no longer allowed to sell one type of pig's intestine, except as dog food. Kang Chen adds to his narrative the directly reported voice of his former assistant: "YAA YAA". This direct speech is voiced in a louder, more stylised tone than the indirectly represented voice. It is generalised, and almost certainly an inaccurate representation of the assistant butcher (whom we observed at the stall on a number of occasions, and, although he frequently sang, we did not hear him give voice in the way represented by Kang Chen). Kang Chen's re-accented ventriloquation of the butcher's voice, "YAA YAA", is a symbolic representation of negative complaining, and of closed-mindedness. It is the voice of the 'English meat butcher'.

The fishmonger immediately picks up Kang Chen's argument and elaborates upon it, offering negative evaluation of the resigned assistant as he does so (ll. 12–13). No longer teasing, he shifts register to an emphatic statement of his expectations of a butcher in the market, deploying the vernacular to emphasise his point. For this fishmonger there is no place on the market-stall for workers who refuse to "do fuckin intestines", picking up Kang Chen's reference to the emblematic offal. In supporting Kang Chen's point the fishmonger overlaps with him, and inhabits the same ground (Rymes, 2014). Stepping outside of his initial foray into the comedic genre, the fishmonger is no less convivial for that. In a serious moment he supports the argument of his colleague, even though he frequently disagrees with him in moments of non-serious discourse.

At line 15 the fishmonger repositions his role as comic, but pursues the argument that butchers should not be fussy about which parts of the animal they are required to handle, pointing to the long-standing assistant butcher, Bradley, and citing him as a model example: "he is a different white man." For the fishmonger Bradley is the opposite of the assistant who could not handle the intestines. He is different from the departed Mike, but also different from other white men. Meiyen Chew, listening all this time, expands the fishmonger's point: "he's an Asian man." As Kang Chen laughs loudly the fishmonger reciprocates, and amplifies, saying, "he's a bit of Chinese, bit of Asian, everything, he don't mind". The three interactants attribute to Bradley an ethnicity (and, perhaps, race and nationality) which are based on his behaviour at work. Undoubtedly 'a white man' in appearance, Bradley becomes

an honorary Chinese and Asian in this moment. Although a joke, this also appears to be a compliment, coming from a Chinese Malaysian woman and a British Asian man (in the UK the term ‘Asian’ typically refers to people with family heritage in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh, rather than China, Malaysia, etc.). How do we read the group’s invocation of the social categories ‘white’, ‘Asian’ and ‘Chinese’ here? They are stereotypes, certainly, deployed as resources (Reyes, 2004, 2006) for both social commentary and convivial communication. But they are stereotypes filled with tension, indexical of cultural practices, at one with assumptions about social categorisation and at the same time critical of such assumptions. Just as the iteration of social categories shores up their borders, so the second voice-within-the-voice blows the borders apart. Now it appears to be possible to be ‘white’ in different ways; possible to be ‘Chinese’ through practice rather than through race, ethnicity or national belonging; and possible to be ‘white’, ‘Asian’ and ‘Chinese’ at the same time. In this everyday interaction in a city centre market hall the big categories with which social structures are often organised begin to dissolve.

Kang Chen, still laughing at the entertainment provided by his neighbour and his wife, repeats the fishmonger’s phrase, “he don’t mind”. Kang Chen frequently repeated the words of those who joked with him, perhaps as a way of allowing him to join in with the banter without the need to contribute anything original, and perhaps as a communicative overlap with his interlocutor. In the narrated event the phrase “he don’t mind” compliments Bradley on his willingness to handle the pig’s intestine. But it does more than this. In the narrating event (Wortham & Reyes, 2015) both participants’ deployment of “he don’t mind” carries more weight, indexing an openness to difference (in taste, cuisine and history) which is held up as a symbol, and “problems often assumed to be inevitable features of a clash of civilisations, cultures and outlooks melt away in the face of a sense of human sameness” (Gilroy, 2006). Bradley, both the butt of the joke and the hero of the story, is slightly abashed, and makes a stock response which closes the interaction: “as long as I put a smile on your face”. Blommaert and Backus (2011) refer to ‘superdiverse subjectivities’ – the subjectivities of people whose membership of social categories is dynamic, changeable and negotiable, and whose membership is at any time always a membership-by-degree and ratified by the judgements of others. In the example here it is unlikely that Bradley comes to view himself as ‘Chinese’, or ‘Asian’. However, the joke points to the changeable and negotiable nature of social categories and to the ways in which such categories may be deployed convivially.

In exchanges between stall-holders and other workers in the market hall a system of practices, conventions and procedural rules comes into play which functions as a means of guiding and organising the flow of messages (Goffman, 1967, 1971). Ritual interaction between stall-holders on the whole enabled people to work together in close proximity. However, it would be wrong to say that what we saw in Birmingham market was always rosy. In fact both Meiyen Chew and Kang Chen spoke of the discrimination to which they had been subject in the process of trying to set up their business. Meiyen Chew complained that they had been bullied by other traders when they set up their stall, and this had resulted in a violent incident between Kang Chen and one of the other stall-holders. Interaction in the market hall was at times, quite literally, on a knife-edge.

Implications

What are the implications of taking a heteroglossic lens to understanding language and social diversity? First, it becomes clear that the important questions in relation to heteroglossic language practice are not about which language is mainly in use, but rather about what signs

are in use and action, what ideological positions these signs point to, and what tensions are in play in a communicative exchange. A heteroglossic analysis enables us to better understand the tensions and conflicts within, among, and between those signs. It also allows us to make visible the affordances gained through the deployment of specific signs at particular times in certain places. Furthermore, such an analysis asks how multiple voices are represented. The linguistic diversity of these signs, and of these voices, indexes social diversity. There may be much to learn from adopting a heteroglossic lens through which to examine language practices, to ensure that we bring into play voices which index speakers' localities, social histories, circumstances and identities. A heteroglossic orientation to communicative practice extends our knowledge of linguistic diversity, and as a consequence expands our understanding of social diversity.

Future directions

One of the future directions of travel in research into communicative practices in socially diverse settings is towards online and digital communication. This has already begun, but studies which adopt an explicitly heteroglossic perspective on digital communication are still relatively scarce (although see Androutsopoulos, 2011; Tagg, 2016). The internet can be seen as a major mechanism in globalisation processes and in the creation of superdiversity (Varis & Wang, 2011). It opens up new channels of communication, generating new linguistic and cultural forms, new ways of forming and maintaining contacts, networks and groups, and new opportunities for identity-making. Blommaert and Rampton (2016, p. 28) point out that as people communicate more and more in varying combinations of oral, written, pictorial and 'design' modes (Facebook, Twitter, WeChat, WhatsApp, online games, SMS, Snapchat, Instagram and so on), "multimodal analysis is an inevitable empirical adjustment to contemporary conditions, and we are forced to move from 'language' in the strict sense towards *semiosis* as our focus of inquiry". An analysis which focusses on the simultaneous use of different kinds of forms or signs, and the tensions and conflicts among those signs, will be productive in making sense of the proliferation of signs in virtual worlds.

A second direction of travel in the deployment of a heteroglossic lens to investigation of language in social life should attend closely to multimodal dimensions of communication. We have seen shifts in conceptual understandings of language use, which have resulted in the development of analytical means to examine the complexity and mobility of communicative practices in everyday life (Blackledge & Creese, 2014). But recent research which has attended to multilingual communication has paid little attention to multimodality, while scholars looking at multimodal communication have not attended significantly to multilingual communication (Kusters et al., 2017). An approach to research which includes the full repertoire of resources in play in a communicative encounter will extend our understanding of the relationship between modalities, and amplify the processes of meaning construction in communication beyond the boundaries of separate 'modalities' and 'languages'.

Further reading

- Arnaut, K., Blommaert, J., Rampton, B., & Spotti, M. (2016). *Language and superdiversity*. New York: Routledge. (This book brings together some of the work developed in a network of sociolinguistic research groups under the broad heading 'language and superdiversity'.)
- Blackledge, A., & Creese, A. (Eds.) (2014). *Heteroglossia as practice and pedagogy*. London: Springer. (The authors of the chapters in this volume are leading experts in the study of language in social life, and their empirical studies offer state-of-the-art insight into heteroglossia as a research lens.)

- Copland, F., & Creese, A. (2015). *Linguistic ethnography. Collecting, analysing, and presenting data*. London: Sage. (This book introduces the processes of doing linguistic ethnography through four in-depth case study narratives written by experienced linguistic ethnographers working within the disciplines of health, law and education.)
- Creese, A., & Blackledge, A. (Eds.) (2018). *The Routledge handbook of language and superdiversity. Interdisciplinary perspectives*. London: Routledge. (This volume illustrates the interdisciplinary potential of research in language and superdiversity through empirical accounts from a range of global settings.)

Related topics

Interactional sociolinguistics; Sociolinguistic ethnographies of globalisation; Micro-analysis of spoken interaction.

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