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Transnational work, translingual practices, and interactional sociolinguistics

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Abstract

This introductory article explains the need for interactional
analyses of workplace communication, which is increasingly multilingual and multimodal in expansive spatiotemporal contexts and layered frames. It provides an overview
of how neoliberal economic conditions have impacted
workplace communication, generating new task structures
and communicative practices. Arguing that there is a need
to situate localized workplace interactions in changing
frames and task structures, the article demonstrates how
interactional sociolinguistics might serve this purpose. It
goes on to review theoretical developments on the materiality of language to revisit traditional concerns about social
structure and communicative interactions, develop a more
expansive orientation to repertoires, and demonstrate how
interactional analysis might adopt suitable units and categories of analysis. It then describes how this framework
explains the different outcomes for language diversity in the
contributing articles—ranging from inequality to solidarity,
marginalization to inclusivity, and misunderstandings to intelligibility—in workplace interactions.

KEYWORDS

interactional analysis, translingual practice, transnational work

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要旨

特集号の導入として、本稿では階層化された拡張時空間コンテクストおよびフレームによってますますマルチリンガル化・マルチモーダル化されている職場コミュニケーションの相互行為分析の必要性について説明する。新自由主義の経済状況が職場のコミュニケーションにどのような影響を与え、新しいタスク構造とコミュニケーションの実践を生み出したかについて概説する。職場における相互行為を変容するフレームとタスク構造に位置付ける必要があると主張して、相互行為の社会言語学がこの目的にどのように寄与するかを示す。さらに、言語の物質性に関する理論的発展の再考を通じて、社会構造とコミュニケーションの相互行為に関する従来の懸念を再検討し、レパートリーのより拡張的な解釈を発展させ、相互行為分析における適切な分析単位とカテゴリーについて論証する。また、この枠組みを用いて、寄稿論文で扱われている職場の相互行為における言語多様性の多岐にわたる帰結（不平等と連帯、周縁化と包摂性、誤解と明瞭性）をどのように説明するかについても論じる。

1 | INTRODUCTION

If globalization and neoliberal market conditions have made work more deterritorialized, diversified, and distributed, the COVID-19 pandemic is making these developments even more expansive. As work has moved online for many more professionals, they are navigating 'physical distancing' to merge spatial domains. As it allows for asynchronous participation, workers are merging diverse time zones and temporal domains. And as they multitask with home schooling and family life in their domestic confines, they are merging different social relationships and identities with their professional life. These changes have far-reaching ramifications for communication and work. News reports suggest that many institutions are addressing them in ways that follow the neoliberal logic. Workers are becoming easily replaceable, as the gig economy is touted as more advantageous to everyone. They are encouraged to constantly 'reskill' themselves to be functional in such work contexts. Businesses are advised to treat these changes as an opportunity and become enterprising with new products and services. There is greater focus on the 'soft skills' of communication for distraught clients. Workplaces are also compelled to address the affective life of workers, acknowledging that efficiency and productivity require managing the stresses from unpredictability, multitasking, and isolation. There are calls for entrenching a division of labor that favors automation for production and human capital for creative symbolic work. Some institutions talk about normalizing these changes beyond the pandemic on the argument that these work practices are more efficient and economical. However, these developments do not favor everyone. Opportunities and protections for workers are declining. Inequalities in workforce are rising, based on new vectors of production and marketing. And it is debatable whether transnational cosmopolitanism or nationalist exceptionalism and racial discrimination are getting strengthened.

It is important, therefore, to revisit the sociolinguistics of work. Work relationships and interactions have always been a focus of sociolinguistics. Workplaces are an important site of language socialization, identity construction, and material outcomes, comparable to other institutions like the family and school. They feature 'key situations' (Gumperz & Cook-Gumperz, 1982) which determine people's economic status, health care, civic participation, and basic needs. Given these critical life implications, sociolinguists have merged the description of interactional practices with advocacy for inclusive policies and pedagogies.

The five studies in this Thematic Issue (TI) feature work in diverse locations, languages, and configurations to provide a close analysis of changing practices and outcomes. We label work 'transnational' because professional relations involve employers and employees, or service providers and clients, from different languages and communities across national boundaries. Work is also shaped by multilateral flows of capital, labor, and information (Appadurai, 1996) across localities, with competing linguistic markets determining value. Layering nation-state interests, there are local community and expansive neoliberal agendas. The first article (by Vickers) is a dyadic encounter between an Anglo-American medical professional and a Mexican diabetic patient in a clinic in the border of U.S.A and Mexico. It is transnational in that the clinic adopts an explicit policy of linguacultural inclusivity to accommodate migrant patients. Despite the bilingualism of the professional, other structural conditions lead to the patient's perspectives being excluded. The second article (Sharma) features another dyadic encounter between a Nepali tour guide and an American tourist in the Himalayas. The guide's work is literally mobile, as both keep walking to different villages. He packages local culture in a lingua franca. The article analyzes how he reasserts control over the talk when his English proficiency comes into question. The third and fourth articles provide a close look at skilled migration, which neoliberal economic policies tout as a win/win proposition for sending and receiving countries. Mori and Shima analyze how Japanese care workers in a geriatric center recontextualize the Japanese text to their Indonesian colleagues to facilitate intelligibility. Multimodal resources help them contravene nation-state and professional policies that legislate Japanese and printed texts. The fourth article (Kimura and Canagarajah) also shows how American microbiologists collaborate with their Korean colleague by adopting multimodal resources and recontextualizing grammatical norms for professional communication, contravening restrictive native speaker norms enforced through gatekeeping tests and remedial programs for foreign scientists in the United States. The final article (Higgins and Furukawa) features advocacy and training, when the authors are invited by a multinational communication company to help call center workers in Dominica converse with creole-speaking clients in Hawai'i. It examines the possibilities for the upgrading of creole as a lingua franca, although it also favors neoliberal marketization.

How do we explain the different outcomes for language diversity in these workplace interactions – ranging from inequality to solidarity, marginalization to inclusivity, and misunderstandings to intelligibility? Restrictive nation-state and neoliberal market ideologies are renegotiated by participants adopting more expansive semiotic resources for local interests in the final three articles. Such outcomes depend on the interplay of broader structural conditions and situated negotiation strategies, and pose significant methodological challenges for studying diversity in professional interactions. These concerns call for a close interactional analysis to unveil the different framing structures, negotiation strategies, and material outcomes that shape contemporary work.

Though there is a respectable body of sociolinguistic studies on workplace communication, some scholars observe that they largely focus on dominant languages (such as English) within nation-state frameworks (see Kingsley, 2013). They call for more studies on multilingual interactions situated in transnational workspaces (Gonçalves & Schluter, 2017; Holmes & Marra, 2009; Kingsley, 2013). Wodak et al. (2012) make a case for their interactional analysis on the need to 'challenge the dichotomy that is often stated in the literature between "distinctly monolingual" and "distinctly multilingual" language practices and policies' (158; see also Angouri, 2013; Duchêne et al., 2013; Ladegaard & Jenks, 2015). While addressing how broader social structures and ideologies constrain communication, interactional analyses reveal the dexterity of professionals as they adopt creative conversational strategies, discourse conventions, and semiotic repertoires to deal with diversity in workplace. They provide insights into the 'structuration' (Giddens, 1984) of emerging patterns of work and communication. In contexts where increasing numbers of migrants and 'host country' professionals are prepared to work together, these findings can inform more nuanced training and professionalization. In a state-of-the-art on socialization in workplace communication, Roberts (2010) notes that what

professionalization 'will consist of in terms of language mix, switch, and shift within multimodal practices remains still relatively uncharted research territory. Future research will need to map this territory, with micro-analysis of the local contexts of production' (223).

In this TI, we treat interactional sociolinguistics (IS) as offering possibilities for such a micro-analysis. IS has been adopted for the study of workplace communication from its inception. Gordon and Kraut (2018), in a state-of-the-art of IS in professional communication, observe that 'Workplace discourse has constituted a privileged analytic site since the genesis of IS' (6). Furthermore, IS was adopted to explain professional interactions in contexts of mobility and diversity, thus sensitive to transnational considerations. Auer and Roberts (2011) claim, and Rampton (2017) concurs, that "Gumperz was the first to develop a kind of 'social linguistics' which is able to deal with the challenges of language in late modernity, in an age of 'globalisation' whose 'superdiversity'… has been on the agenda for him for many decades" (390).

What justifies such claims is that IS problematizes interpretation. IS was formulated to explore how interlocutors negotiate meanings where shared norms should not be assumed. Its theoretical openness and methodological eclecticism also makes IS suitable for our project. In the context of geopolitical and epistemological changes, IS is elastic in accommodating new analytical considerations. It is remarkably eclectic in adopting insights from diverse sociolinguistic orientations, such as conversation analysis (CA), ethnographies of communication, and (critical) discourse analysis. IS is considered an 'eclectic toolbox' (Bailey, 2015:839). Though IS 'lacks the theoretical elegance and austerity of conversation analysis or the single-minded determinism of critical discourse analysis' (Bailey, 2015:839; see also Rampton, 2017; Gordon & Kraut, 2018), it is open to expansion in order to accommodate the changes in structural conditions, workplace communication, and theoretical orientations. What is of additional interest is that IS merges analytical considerations with pedagogical and policy intervention. Gumperz and collaborators have treated interactional analysis as explicating subtle assumptions, inferences, and cues that can help train workers for more effective interactions and counter the 'linguistic penalty' (Roberts & Campbell, 2006) for nondominant language groups. In this sense, IS favors the social justice concerns of sociolinguists (as pointed by Heller, 2014). Therefore, we revisit IS in the spirit of 'continuity and renewal' (Heller, 2018:3).

The questions motivating this TI are the following:

1. How is communication negotiated in transnational work? How do participants interact with diverse languages, expansive semiotic resources, and conflicting policies?
2. What are the methodological challenges in analyzing transnational workplace interactions characterized by layered structures, diversified participation, and unequal outcomes in incommensurate markets?

In order to contextualize the first question, I briefly review the ways work and workplace communication are structured in the emerging geopolitical configurations. In the light of these changes, I then discuss workplace studies and IS constructs to theorize the methodological challenges that impinge on a sociolinguistics of work. First, however, a word on terminology.

2 | DEFINITIONS

Recent sociolinguistic studies label workplace communication 'transnational' (see Duchêne et al., 2013; Hazel, 2015; Kingsley, 2013; Räisänen, 2018; Sherman & Strubell, 2013; Wodak et al., 2012; Yanaprasart, 2016), or related terms such as 'cosmopolitan' (Mondada, 2012) and 'superdiverse'

(Blackledge & Creese, 2017). These work settings are 'transnational' in that they involve people, resources, and interactions that transcend nation-state borders and space/time boundaries. Of interest to sociolinguists is the ways of negotiating competing languages, discourse conventions, and language ideologies in order for institutions to serve their clients, collaborate with their employees, and manage services and products across borders. This is not to claim that work is not constrained by geographical and political boundaries. Nor is the claim that such mobile work practices are new. The fluidity of work spaces and mobility of workers are simply more expansive and intensive now. What the term 'transnational' offers is a different lens to look at work. It is an epistemological, not an ontological, shift to analyze how interactions work when we consider workers and work as not bound by the immediate geographical and political conditions. From this perspective, all work sites are transnational. No place is merely local. As I demonstrate later, framing labor as transnational generates different insights into communicative practices.

Some geographers have adopted *transnational social space* (Faist et al., 2013) to theorize the liminality of transnational relationships and conditions. They thus distinguish between *place* and *space*. While these two terms have been treated differently by scholars (see Higgins, 2017 for a review), I follow de Certeau's treatment that 'space is a practiced place' (1984:117). That is, *place* is a primordial geographical construct, regulated by physical and political boundaries; *space* is socially and affectively constructed. From this perspective, one does not have to leave one's usual habitation (i.e. traditional homeland, city, or workplace) to adopt a transnational positioning. What is critical is the imagined and virtual affiliations people form beyond their place to connect with others and treat their relationships, investments, and experiences as occurring in transnational space. This distinction is important as transnationality does not require that all of us become migrants. Even those who are relatively sedentary can inhabit a transnational social space. They can interact with people and practices beyond their own place through digital media, information flows, and economic/production relationships.

The notion of space also helps us grapple with the porous contemporary workplace. Scholars increasingly recognize that work is not defined in terms of a place but activity (Sarangi & Roberts, 1999). In this sense, work might not be a physical domain separated from other social locations such as home or school. Work is made up by spaces where one's professional role becomes salient, whether inside or outside institutions defined as professional. One might work from home and treat a room as the work space. Work sites might be mobile (Mondada, 2016). Guides walking with tourists are at work (Sharma, this issue). We might consider the work site a liminal space that transcends boundaries. Therefore, some scholars adopt the term 'work space' rather than workplace, as in Räisänen's (2018) formulation in her study.

Changes in work practices are also diversifying workplace communication. Transnational interactions are conducted in so many languages that Duchêne et al. (2013) argue: 'multilingualism and the knowledge of more than one language have become almost a requirement' (2). Communication technology is generating other changes. As digital media and computers mediate work, talk is framed by diverse modalities of communication, especially writing, and have constructed a more 'textualized workplace' (Iedema & Scheeres, 2003:336). Communication happens also in multiple channels, as people multitask by reading texts, emailing others, typing reports, and seeing and talking to distant others through the same computer. Such task structures enable participants to switch and mesh languages fluidly in their interactions (see Räisänen, 2018; Wodak et al., 2012). Communication goes beyond separately labeled languages in other ways. Participants might use their 'fragmented multilingualism' (Blommaert, 2010:9), constituting partial competence in multiple languages, for limited transactional purposes; or use their 'receptive multilingualism' to understand production in diverse languages and respond in one language as in 'polyglot dialog' (see Gonçalves & Schluter, 2017; Ludi,

2013). For all these reasons, some sociolinguists find it inadequate to call these interactions as simply 'multilingual' (i.e. a collection of separately structured national languages). Many workplace studies use terms such as 'translingual' (Blackledge & Creese, 2017; Kingsley, 2013; Räisänen, 2018), 'plurilingual' (Angouri, 2013; Gonçalves & Schluter, 2017), or 'translinguistic' (Dalmau et al., 2017) to characterize contemporary work site communication. We adopt the term *translingual* as an extension of the IS construct of 'repertoires' (Gumperz, 1964) to move beyond labeled national languages but also critically examine new structures of linguistic inequality and power.

3 | CHANGES IN WORK ORDER

To understand how language diversity is negotiated in workplace interactions in our articles, we must keep in mind structural changes in economy and production. Sociolinguists have attempted to explain the changes emerging in what many call 'the new work order' (Gee et al., 1996) from different perspectives. They have variably attributed the changes to technology and globalization (as in Ladegaard & Jenks, 2015; Räisänen, 2018), mobility (Angouri, 2013; Duchêne et al., 2013), or economic conditions in late capitalism (as in Canagarajah, 2017; Heller & Duchêne, 2012; Roberts, 2010). I explain the changes in work, technology, and mobility in terms of neoliberal market pressures.

The deterritorialization of work is a response to market saturation in the development of capitalism. With more supply than demand within a given national border, there is a need to search for new markets, cheaper labor, and profitable resources beyond borders. Neoliberalism is the marketization of everything for profit purposes, characterized by expanding the market's reach wider beyond nation-states and deeper into people's thinking and identities (i.e. theorized as 'biopolitics'). This expansion distinguishes it from the traditional form of capitalism. The invisible hand of the market now reaches outside individual countries and is not limited to material products alone, marking the 'emergence of the trope of "profit" as legitimizing in and of itself' (Heller & Duchêne, 2012:6).

This trope has led to the tertiarization of production, with great significance for language. While the primary sector in industrialization focused on raw materials, and secondary on material products, the tertiary sector focuses on information, services, and symbolic goods. There is increasing emphasis on packaging commodities in attractive ways, developing novel upgrades for existing products, and marketing them through more effective strategies. Of relevance to this TI, tertiarization gives importance to language. In the service industry, communication is valued as a resource for interacting with clients and buyers from different language and cultural backgrounds. Communication is also treated as a resource for generating novel products, and therefore conversations across professionals is encouraged for creativity. A strategy to deal with market saturation is to demonstrate value added. Niche marketing to the needs and values of particular communities is one way to add value. For this purpose, communication has to be diversified to reach those communities in their own languages. From these perspectives, language competence, symbolic resources, and communication media gain tremendous importance. Tertiarization explains the increasing significance of 'language workers' (Boutet, 2012) – that is, those who engage in producing symbolic products. Language is not just a means of work and production, as in the Fordist economy. It *is* the work – as we see with call center workers in Higgins and Furukawa. And it *is* the product – like the guides who package local culture for tourist consumption in Sharma's contribution.

Deterritorialization is also spurred by *flexibilization* (Gee et al., 1996). Being flexible in shifting to new products and new markets, moving production to more strategic locations, and seeking cheaper raw materials and labor, all in attunement with changing economic conditions is critical for profit maximization. The product might involve workers, materials, markets, and production sites that

transcend national borders. We can understand how technology and mobility are both a cause and an effect of such deterritorialized economic and production relationships. Technology facilitates communication, travel, and portability of resources across borders. Such compression of space and time is valuable for efficient and speedy production, marketing, and professional relationships. Mobility has diversified the workforce and markets everywhere. Within a single national border, it is now possible to find multiple ethnic markets. Also, skilled professionals from the global south are attracted to work sites beyond their countries (as we see in the contributions by Moria and Shima, and Kimura and Canagarajah), with their mobility made easy by governments on both sides for mutual benefit.

In such changing production practices and work relationships, neoliberal economy structures communication differently. Boutet (2012) compares work in Fordist production facilities where talk was proscribed. There, physical work was valued over language work. Talk was treated as distracting workers from material production. However talk is encouraged now to facilitate collaboration, distributed practice, and synergetic innovation. Furthermore, while Fordist production featured a hierarchy of white- and blue-collar workers, those differences are blunted as 'new language and literacy demands [...] affect even the low-paid worker' (Roberts, 2010:216). Work with diverse communication media and digital technologies is pervasive now, and the post-Fordist production has transformed everyone into 'knowledge workers'. The activity of planning, designing, and executing involves using texts, computers, and digital media at diverse levels of work. This has led to the 'textualization' of work – as we will see in contributions by Sharma, Mori and Shima, and Kimura and Canagarajah. Such communicative changes are indexed by the term 'new word order' (Farrell, 2001; Roberts, 2010) to parallel the professional changes in the 'new work order'.

We can understand, therefore, how 'communications has become the most demanded competence in an increasingly competence-driven world' (Roberts, 2010:212). Competence in multiple languages, registers, and media is important so that professionals can undertake different kinds of work as demanded by market changes and mobility across work sites. Workers are expected to constantly 'upgrade' or 'reskill' their repertoires to be relevant to the changing economy. They are also expected to adopt 'soft skills' in genres such as small talk (Allan, 2013; Kingsley, 2013) or affective strategies (Higgins and Furukawa, this issue). Adapting to the rapidly changing professional discourses involves worksite language socialization (Roberts, 2010), as workers must work and learn its talk simultaneously – as demonstrated in the contributions by Mori and Shima, and Kimura and Cangarajah, with care workers and science professionals respectively.

4 | CHANGES IN WORD ORDER

As the work order has become more deterritorialized and distributed, there is also a diversification of participation frameworks, semiotic resources, and interpretive frames in communication. Recent studies on workplace communication demonstrate how translingual practices are becoming resourceful to manage the new task structures. Though there is increasing diversity and unpredictability, posing challenges in intelligibility, there are also creative affordances for negotiation. In fact, the workspace might feature inclusive communication, renegotiating restrictive nation-state and corporate policies. Consider the practices emerging from recent studies:

- Professionals might adopt a lingua franca, such as English, for general communication, and multiple local languages for group-specific or informal interactions (Kingsley, 2013). Using officially sanctioned languages for formal interactions and adopting ethnic or national languages to index in-group solidarity is common (see Ladegaard & Jenks, 2015; Virkkula-Räisänen, 2010).

- Choice of languages can be activity specific (Angouri, 2013; Kingsley, 2013; Yanaprasart, 2016). There is a sliding scale to facilitate global to localized participation: that is, formal written reports are solely in English; emailed correspondence, oral presentations, and face-to-face meetings are largely in English but mixed with other languages; and telephone calls and small talk are in local languages.

- There are complex practices of multitasking: 'English was frequently used as the language of slides and another language was used to orally present depending on the audience present on the day' (Kingsley (2013:537).

- Interlocutors focus on functionality rather than formal correctness (Firth, 1996), disregarding grammatical deviations (through the 'let it pass' strategy) and co-constructing the indexicality of nonnormative features ('make it normal').

- They adopt diverse multimodal repertoires to achieve intelligibility. International scientific professionals use computer screens, chalk boards, gestures, writing, and visuals to communicate with multilingual participants in research group meetings (Canagarajah, 2018). Body is used to negotiate affect in multilingual sales encounters (Blackledge & Creese, 2017; Mondada, 2016).

- Participation frameworks can help manage the choice of languages. Räisänen (2018) demonstrates how a Finnish engineer shifts between English (for a Chinese coworker online), Finnish (for fellow national in office), and German (for the researcher). He has parallel conversations with all of them, signaling relevant participation frameworks based on language choice.

- Diversified discourse functions can be accomplished through multifaceted choice of languages in the same interaction. Wodak et al. (2012) account for the switches they record in the EU Parliament as indexing shifts in topic, genre, language ideology, power, and identity. See also Mondada (2012) for a similarly layered description of switches in a Swiss bank.

These sociolinguistic studies differ from some early IS studies on problems in language diversity. Gumperz (1982) highlighted the miscommunication that might occur, as in his well-known 'gravy' study where the falling intonation of the South Asian cafeteria worker was treated as unfriendly by her British colleagues. This spawned a genre of workplace studies on the 'linguistic penalty' for multilingual workers who violated dominant language norms (see, e.g. Holmes, 2006; Roberts & Campbell, 2006). The more optimistic recent studies can be explained in many ways. To begin with, the task structure and frames of communication have changed. Transnational work *requires* translingualism to some degree. Workers are themselves bringing a different frame to these interactions, adopting different language ideologies during talk. Moving beyond the nation-state framework and adopting a transnational lens, workers might be open to seeing nonnormative language interactions as resourceful. Workers increasingly treat translingualism as a fact of life in contemporary work, as reminded by their diversity. In fact, neoliberalism structures a positive valuation of diversity for productivity. The new resources offered by technology, such as multimodality and networked interactions, allow for expansive participation frameworks and interactional strategies to manage languages. Translingualism is also encouraged by the increasingly more collaborative interactions where distributed practice calls for accommodating the repertoires each worker brings for task accomplishment.

However, the fact that economic motivations and market conditions sponsor these translingual practices should give us pause. We should be cautious not to isolate work floor interactions from broader structures that mediate communication. CA has traditionally analyzed how languages structure conversation at the local level and facilitate intelligibility interpersonally, but omitted wider structural forces and ethnographic data. When we situate workspace interactions in more expansive framing, we realize that the creativity in languages and modalities might serve exploitative and profit-making purposes. Heller and Duchêne (2012) demonstrate that local languages might serve 'pride'

in the authentically local for marketization. Translingualism might mask unequal repertoires constituting it, with variable valuation from different linguistic markets (Park & Wee, 2012). English is often a privileged lingua franca, helping it become commodified as a valued capital for workers worldwide. Wodak et al. (2012) suggest how a select group of languages (English, French, German) gains more currency in EU parliament, despite the policy of equal status for all 23 languages. The authors label this as 'hegemonic multilingualism'. There are also incommensurate outcomes in interactions. That workers adopt an inclusive orientation to the diverse languages in their workplace and achieve intelligibility may not mean an egalitarian workplace. Their communicative efficiency could be exploited for profit-making objectives of the company (see Higgins and Furukawa, this issue), and sustained by inequalities in management, decision-making, pay, and material outcomes. These inconsistent outcomes in workspace communication raise complex methodological challenges. How do we study face-to-face interactions in the context of such layered structural conditions and unequal outcomes?

5 | THEORIZING SOCIOLINGUISTIC INTERACTIONS

To address how workspace interactions relate to larger frames, markets, and ideologies, we have to return to what Heller (2013) calls the 'the classic problem of understanding the relationship between structure and agency' (395). In relation to IS, Heller (2014) reflects on 'what role interactions play in social structuration' (196). Giddens's notion of 'structuration' as a process suggests that we should move beyond treating interactions and structure as dichotomous. Among other things, sociolinguists now consider the local and global, or micro and macro, as intertwined. There are also diverse layered structures that mediate these poles. Gumperz's own work opened up possibilities for seeing how interactions and structures facilitate each other. Gal (2014) credits Gumperz for theorizing 'that linguistic forms did not simply reflect but also constituted social boundaries' (119).

The question about interactions and social structure is compounded by the status of language in this dynamic. The realization that language is commodified, and that it is both a process and a product in neoliberal work raises questions about the material status of language and its place in structuration. Traditionally, language and representational resources were treated as consciousness and located in the superstructure, adopting certain Marxist formulations. Gal (1989) critiques: "most classical analyses had relegated language, along with other mental phenomena such as world-view, or ideology, to the realm of mere 'superstructure', little more than a distorted reflection of the more important and determining political and especially economic processes of the 'base'" (348). Recent theorization treats language and semiotic resources as material, thus playing a more significant role in navigating the structural and interactional domains. Discussing the Marxist criticism that language cannot be a commodity (as it does not enter production relations), Heller and Duchêne (2016) argue how language as a resource and skill acquires material value (though they reserve the ontological question whether language has a life of its own). The materiality of language is explained in other ways to explain its capacity to travel, affect power relationships, and be marketed. Bucholtz and Hall (2016) theorize that language becomes sedimented with values through its history of usage, thus embodying them. They call this material status 'indexical iconization' (180).

Despite these developments, the dominant paradigm in our field has been *social constructionist*, which posits that natural and social life are understood and regulated through interpretive paradigms that we construct collectively through language. In this perspective, material life is acted upon by human, cognitive, and linguistic agency. However, it overlooks that material 'actants' participate in constructing the social, enjoying agency, as theorized by new materialism (Coole & Frost, 2010). This theoretical development expands our perspectives on interactions as follows: material actants,

such as objects and bodies, are agentive and shape interactions; they are equally semiotic, challenging the traditional logocentric bias; they work together as an assemblage rather than communicating separately; and their relationships and progression in interactions are nonlinear or rhizomatic, defying cause/effect mapping and closure (see further Canagarajah, 2018). Along those lines, Raley (2004) has theorized how communication media (constituting technologies, genres, ideologies, and preferred languages) functions as a structuring apparatus, a *dispositif*, in expanding the reach and productive role of capital in our times.

These developments explain how sociolinguistic interactions are both implicated in economic and geopolitical structures and also resourceful to renegotiate these structures for different outcomes. If there are new possibilities for domination, there are also new possibilities for structuration through creative and strategic language use in interactions. As structures are understood as diverse, conflicting, and porous, the Althusserian notion of *relative autonomy* helps explain how meanings and significance according to certain structures may not fully determine talk. For these reasons, our contributors refrain from imposing social inequalities into the workspace interactions, as in traditional sociolinguistic analyses which sometimes presented talk as overdetermined by structures of political economy. We treat workspace as a liminal site where a range of structures play out, sometimes changing in the course of the talk. Our articles demonstrate how layered and contending structures are invoked as framing devices during talk for variable outcomes. I argue below that the IS construct of 'frame' might be a better term to interpret 'structures', as it enables us to untangle the structures participants dynamically negotiate in their interactions.

6 | DOING INTERACTIONAL SOCIOLINGUISTICS

How to read such variable meanings, values, and outcomes from layered structures in interactional data is an ongoing methodological question raised in relation to IS by sociolinguists (Heller, 2014). Gal (2014) wonders 'how to connect the attractive empirical focus of sociolinguistics with the pressing social realities of injustice, exploitation, and domination' (122). Duchêne et al. (2013) challenge workplace studies to demonstrate how 'spatial, temporal and physical environments rework and reconnect social actors and their talk and text' (6).

There are many features in IS that facilitate undertaking a layered interactional analysis of transnational and translingual work. Gumperz conceived of social interactions as a middle layer of analytical unit between the local conversational sequences of CA and broader cultural contexts of ethnography: 'IS seeks to bridge the gap between these two approaches by focusing on communicative practice as the everyday-world site where societal and interactive forces merge' (2015:312). Gumperz's orientation to *frames* (developed also by Bateson, 1972 and Goffman, 1974) helps us address the expanding layers and scales of context. Frames are collaboratively constructed by participants in order to signal and establish the relevant context for semiotic resources. Gumperz treated language and frames, or interactions and contexts, as constitutive in working together. For example, Gumperz's 'performative' understanding of language (Gal, 2014:119) helped demonstrate how strategic 'metaphorical' switches can shift the frame for different meanings.

Frames thus provide valuable insights into what interlocutors perceive as structuring their talk. Frames can range from discoursal, cultural, institutional, national, geopolitical, and ideological, to relevant scales of space and time. The articles in this issue draw particular attention to task structure, cultural practices, discourse conventions, and language ideologies as significant frames that emerge in our analysis. Though it is difficult to disentangle such layered and relational frames out of context, researchers can gain more clarity in situated interactions to consider which frames are indexed by the

talk, whether explicitly or indirectly. Ethnography helps us by situating the interaction in the relevant multiple structures. Our articles demonstrate that sequential analysis cannot be isolated from an expansive ethnography to unveil the structuring frames.

Gumperz's *contextualization cues* enable us to empirically observe how frames are invoked, renegotiated, or established. Contextualization cues are material resources that signal the way semiotic repertoires 'point to' relevant meanings and frames. Rather than being an isolated word in a single occurrence, it takes social processes, such as a trajectory of production and uptake in situated interactions, for these cues to index frames. It is because people are usually socialized into these cues that intercultural encounters produced miscommunication when interlocutors interpreted the frames according to indexicalities familiar to them (as Gumperz demonstrated). However, contextualization cues can also be resourceful in transnational encounters if interlocutors are open to co-constructing the relevant frames. It is possible for interlocutors with a dispreferred language to renegotiate the framing in their favor. They might cue alternate framings that are more inclusive for negotiating diversity on equal footing (see Kimura and Canagarajah, this issue). Contextualization cues also help us trace how the framing might change fluidly in the course of a single interaction.

We have gained more insight into how such cues and frames work together through the notions of *recontextualization* (i.e. 'the process of how discourse points to (indexes) the context which seems to frame it') and *entextualization* (i.e. 'the process of coming to textual formedness' – Silverstein, 2019:56) in indexicality studies. Rather than cues working unilaterally to frame talk, they are entextualized by the frames as well. Also, both cues and frames might be recontextualized dynamically in subsequent utterances and changing ecological considerations. Recontextualization and entextualization are not completely in the hands of interlocutors. They are also an impersonal 'process' (to use Silverstein's phrasing). There is a materiality to these processes. Changing configurations of participants, settings, and semiotic resources might reframe talk regardless of the interlocutor's intentions. In research with international science professionals, the contribution by Kimura and Canagarajah demonstrates that their interactions in laboratories are framed as a 'community of practice' enjoying solidarity, countering exclusionary 'native speaker' norms that operate outside. Researchers are socialized into these frames through material/spatial cues in the laboratory. Therefore, we have to treat contextualization cues as not only 'verbal' and 'oral forms' (Gumperz, 2015:316). Though interlocutors do not have to cue them explicitly on each occasion, it is wise not to assume their shared status. This TI features other studies where the egalitarian frames (as established by policies in those institutions) were broken by certain interlocutors who wished to impose their status in an interaction (see Vickers), and restrictive frames were recontextualized to accommodate dispreferred resources (Mori and Shima). Though frames might be contested, this is risky business as they have to gain uptake.

We have to also expand Gumperz's construct of *repertoires* in line with the epistemological and ontological changes reviewed earlier. The construct opens the way to acknowledging the indexical possibilities in diverse translingual resources. Gumperz defined verbal repertoire as containing 'all the accepted ways of formulating messages' (1964:137–138), being 'the totality of linguistic forms regularly employed within the community in the course of socially significant interaction' (1971:182). Sociolinguists have moved along in their understanding of what constitutes these repertoires and where they are located. Rymes's (2010) notion of 'communicative repertoire' includes multimodal resources beyond just languages (528; see also Blommaert & Backus, 2013). Others have demonstrated how objects, such as machines, computers, projection devices, and tools index meanings (Canagarajah, 2018; Kleifgen, 2013). Mondada (2016) has urged that we go beyond treating only gestures as facilitating embodiment, and consider the whole body as shaping communication. She demonstrates how spatial positioning, movement, and posture are indexical. Mondada and others (Kusters et al., 2017) have also argued for including sensory resources (touch, smell) and affect in our analysis of meanings. While

some of these features were earlier studied as multimodality, they were treated as secondary and supplementary to language, and organized into separate systems with their own meanings. However, in line with new materialism, we give agency to these resources as they mediate language and speakers.

While Gumperz located repertoires 'within the community', others have expanded the locus of communicative resources. Blommaert and Backus (2013), Busch (2012), and Rymes (2010) focus on the repertoires of individual speakers. They treat these repertoires as evolving from people's life histories. For example, Blommaert and Backus (2013) define repertoire as 'individual, biographically organized complexes of resources' (8). Detaching a speaker's repertoires from that of the community is well motivated in the context of mobility. One's life trajectory might play a big role in what communicative activities have been relevant and what resources were acquired for accomplishing them (see Räisänen, 2018 for the mobile professional trajectory and resulting unique translingual repertoire of her focal participant).

Going beyond the community and the person, other sociolinguists treat repertoires as emplaced in particular settings. Goodwin's (2013) notion of 'substrate' suggests that interlocutors draw from resources that are embedded in a setting in order to accomplish relevant communicative activities: 'an immediately present semiotic landscape with quite diverse resources that has been given its current shape through the transformative sequences of action' (11). In Goodwin's study, disabled Chil uses these resources effectively for his communication, although he has only three words in his personal corpus. We might treat such resources as constituting a 'spatial repertoire' (Canagarajah, 2018; Pennycook & Otsuji, 2015). These resources are spatial in the sense that they are embedded in the physical contexts (or places) in which the communicative activity occurs.

In interactional analysis, therefore, we should be sensitive to how the repertoires of a community, participants, and setting might shape communication. Kusters et al. (2017) include all of them in their analysis and adopt the label 'semiotic repertoires' for such a consideration. Räisänen (2018) uses such an orientation productively in her research on a multinational engineering firm in Finland. She adopts 'translingual' as the umbrella term for how all three types of communicative repertoire work together. We follow that practice in this TI. These developments help us unpack translingualism by providing insights into the different repertoires that make it up and their different loci. Note, however, that our focus is not on the repertoires themselves but on their indexicality, with different possibilities for domination and resistance. These repertoires have to be interpreted in relation to framing structures for their unequal values and outcomes.

Despite the useful expansion of IS constructs, we must not think of meanings as visible in cues, frames, and repertoires. Rampton (2017) observes: 'although the analysis of real-time processing in the here and now is vital in Gumperzian analysis, it is never enough. Beyond the understandings articulated by co-present individuals, there are historically-shaped and potentially discrepant communicative sensibilities operating unnoticed in the background' (10; see also Gordon & Kraut, 2018). Gumperz (2015) would agree. His *conversational inference* is 'the interpretive procedure by means of which interactants assess what is communicatively intended at any one point in an exchange, and on which they rely to plan and produce their responses. [...] to assess what is intended, listeners must go beyond surface meaning to fill in what is left unsaid' (313). Going beyond the 'surface' and 'unsaid' involves treating interactions as an avowedly interpretive activity for the participants.

It is so for researchers as well. Gal (2014) observes that *inference* progressed from being an 'investigative method' to 'the subject of his research' in a 'strong reflexive move' for Gumperz (125). Hence the significance of frames in explaining differences in the findings of sociolinguists. For example, should misunderstandings be attributed to cultural differences or power inequalities in workplace communication? It depends to some extent on the ideological frames sociolinguists themselves bring to the analysis. Compare the frame of *difference* Gumperz brought from liberal/relativistic

ethnography with the frame of *dominance* which critical sociolinguists might adopt (Heller, 2014). Was the Indian worker's falling intonation in 'gravy?' misunderstood because the British workers were unfamiliar with the intonation pattern or whether they were biased? Was it because they assumed their higher and normative status as 'native speakers' and became judgmental rather than collaborative? In fact, interlocutors who can change their footing to accommodate each other have been shown to successfully renegotiate frames and collaborate in achieving intelligibility (see Firth, 1996). Refusal to change one's footing or insisting on others accommodating to one's own norms is an exercise of power. Similarly, the nation-state frame would motivate some scholars to treat territorialized norms and ideologies as the scale of consideration, while a transnational and translingual framing would open sociolinguists to deterritorialized interpretations. Frames can thus have implications for sequential analysis. We demonstrate how a move considered a side sequence or dispreferred response in CA will be treated as relevant from a more expansive spatiotemporal frame – see Kimura and Canagarajah, this issue.

These considerations of face-to-face interactions being situated in shifting frames and unequal structures pose challenges for arriving at a suitable *unit of analysis*. As it is evident, the sociolinguistic interaction is never merely about the here and now. Though we do have professionals communicating in situated environments with semiotic resources that are materially embodied, the interaction is embedded in diverse space/time scales and layered cultural, institutional, and geopolitical structures. To accommodate these considerations, we have to treat the unit of analysis as the whole 'activity' (suggested also by Gumperz's term 'practice' above). Interactional analysis, complemented by contextualization cues, will help us unveil which frames are invoked by the interlocutors for their activity as relevant to the task structure. However, to map the shifting and layered frames influencing talk, we find scalar metaphors useful. Developed in geography and political science (see Flowers, 2020 in this journal, and Canagarajah & De Costa, 2016, for a theoretical introduction), scalar analysis enables us to see an interaction as not meaningful in itself but gaining significance from the scale adopted by the participants and analysts to frame it. It offers us metaphors such as rescaling (upscaling and downscaling) and layering (as ladder or nested) to address how frames might change mid talk to index alternate meanings. The value and significance of interactions will be scaled differently in relation to the institutional, national, regional, or geopolitical frames of consideration. To arrive at a relevant unit of analysis, we triangulate frames between a 'category of practice' (i.e. invoked and negotiated by interlocutors) and a 'category of analysis' (i.e. adopted by researchers for their analytical purposes) – see Lempert, 2012. Researchers consider how the structures they assume relate to the frames invoked by the participants to scale an interaction. Therefore, what our contributors treat as the unit of analysis varies according to the frames of the participants, prompted by their contextualization cues. The frames shaping the interpretation of semiotic repertoires and their indexicality would be expansive or localized in terms of the activity under consideration. Though all contributors are committed to doing interactional analysis situated in rich ethnographic data, they adopt tools from CA, Membership Category Analysis, or multimodal discourse analysis, in keeping with the toolbox approach of IS. Similarly, the extent to which verbal or multimodal resources are analyzed is determined by the task structure of the work activity.

7 | CONTRIBUTIONS

In Vickers' opening article, the status of English, the privileged language of the nation-state, is qualified by the transnational location, mission, and policy of the medical clinic. Even though the bilingual professional brings a favorable disposition toward the status of the patient, things go wrong in the interaction. The patient is silenced and marginalized. This is an ironic outcome where liberal policies

and attitudes are not enough to guarantee inclusivity. We have to therefore include in the interpretation how other frames structure this interaction, rescaling the semiotic resources for different meanings. Some of the tensions in the interaction bring to our attention culture and profession as contending frames. The patient resists the professional's prescription for depression, as her culture stigmatizes such diagnosis. However, the medical discourse of the professional (which aspires to transcending cultures in favor of scientific expertise) does not let her accommodate the patient's concerns. In this context of inequality, the well-intentioned translingual resources of the professional are rescaled to convey exclusion. Her playful Spanish mixing, addressed to an elderly woman to cue accommodation, indexes condescension to the interlocutor. We find how 'fragmented multilingualism', which provides voice and creativity in other contexts, works differently here. Furthermore, the participation frameworks that involve the daughter as the translator in triadic interactions also structures inequality. The professional and daughter converse in English about the mother, recontextualizing her previous diagnoses and prescriptions in a manner that excludes the monolingual mother's perspective.

Culture and translation are even more salient in Sharma's second article, as culture is the product marketed by the tour guide's talk. In the dyadic service encounter between the Nepali guide and the American tourist, nation-state language ideologies are suspended. The transnational market and professional framing become important, as the guide's value derives from his ability to sell the 'authentic' local culture for tourist consumption in a lingua franca. However, it is in the interest of the tourist to subvert the guide's exoticizing touristic frames to elicit greater authenticity, perhaps to maximize *her* profit. This becomes evident from her probing questions during the tour. She expresses dissatisfaction with the guide's abbreviated translation of responses from local people. The guide maintains his authority by translating only the information he considers useful for consumption. However, there are more affordances to resolve these tensions in this interaction, compared to the previous one. It is in the interest of both parties to collaborate in facilitating each other's roles and maintaining the participation framework for this activity – that is, guide has to allow for the tourist being an engaged participant; and the tourist has to depend on the guide who is contracted to provide her access to the local. The interaction faces turbulence in translating the local when the tourist uses English lexical items that index her uptake of local practices – such as 'felting' for the weaving of the local hat. As this is not part of his personal repertoire, the guide faces a challenge to his professionalism. Embodied spatial repertoires come to his rescue. By pointing to objects and his gestures, he is able to let pass the verbal trouble, avoid breakdown of the interaction, and maintain his authority. He resists a disempowering frame – that is, the linguistic frame of English native speaker normativity – upscaling the interaction unfairly.

Native speaker expectations and nation-state ideologies are more influential in the third article on the talk between Japanese and Indonesian care workers in the geriatric facility in Japan. Japanese is the preferred language, which all foreign care workers have to pass in order to maintain their contract. Professional policies also structure this work. They favor written versions of shift handover routines, demonstrating a prioritization of verbal and literate modalities, perhaps to 'technicize and standardize' communication (Heller & Duchêne, 2012:10). In this case, however, the care workers subvert the dominant frames and make the interaction more inclusive to facilitate more diversified translingual repertoires. In favor of accomplishing the objectives of their collaborative task structure, the participants use even more translingual repertoires than in the previous two studies. The Japanese care workers use gestures and body positioning to communicate the care needed for the patients. The printed text itself is recontextualized and entextualized as suitable for their purpose. The Japanese care workers carefully choose only the words that are important (systematically excluding others), mediated by spatial repertoires. That the translingual text features English for technical terms (i.e. OP for operation) and diverse scripts (*kanji, hiragana*, *katakana* used for loanwords, Roman alphabets used for acronyms, and Arabic numerals) also helps selective use. What is subversive about this interaction

is that these handover routines are designed to facilitate the learning of Japanese by foreign care workers, the reason for being paired with locals. The care workers however favor multimodal resources as suitable for their work, as they more effectively entextualize the care needed. Their practice resists professional and nation-state policies.

In the fourth article involving scientists in the United States, the professional practice again deviates from nation-state language ideologies, which privilege normative English in gate keeping skilled migrants. In favor of accomplishing their collaborative task structure efficiently, the scientists prefer a more expansive semiotic repertoire, featuring embodied spatial repertoires. Ironically, though their labor is focused on producing a publishable article (which privileges normative English), they find useful more multimodal resources, with nonnormative English grammar upscaled as functional, with locally established indexicalities. Besides addressing the contending nation-state and transnational/ professional frames, Kimura and Canagarajah also see the need to attend to more expansive spatiotemporal frames to resolve a major analytical dilemma. When authors privilege the face-to-face context of the here and now, some sequences seem to indicate communicative trouble, which the interlocutors do not seem to address. The authors find that they have to analyze how the here and now is nested by the 'there and then' (i.e. experimental activity outside the meeting in the laboratory, and needs of the journal and reviewers in the projected publication). The sequence of talk is rescaled by the wider spatiotemporal frames for relevant indexicality.

It is understandable that the latter two studies are more open to expansive semiotic resources because their indexicality is sedimented through the ongoing routinized activity of the participants. This could be difficult in service encounters (as in the studies by Vickers and Sharma) between unfamiliar participants who have to negotiate the repertoires and frames on their feet. Furthermore, the inequalities are negotiable in the interactions of the care workers and scientists because their participation framework calls for collaboration, unlike the (potentially) agonistic footing in the previous two dyads. In the final article, we move on to consider sociolinguists doing advocacy and training in the light of such realizations. The multinational communication company realizes that local creole would be profitable for call center workers in Dominica to interact with clients in Hawai'i. Bear in mind that standardized English is preferred for institutional contexts in terms of nation-state policies in both communities. However, transnational work and neoliberal marketing conditions rescale the indexicality of the marginalized creoles. Therefore, though the company had adopted accent-neutralized English as the norm for global service encounters, it now adopted a policy of recreolizing call center discourse to accommodate the norms of local customers. The strategy is also favored by the task structure. The interactions are between service providers and clients who both come from communities which view their local creole repertoires favorably. Ironically, in this case, the favored repertoire for a transnational interaction is a local vernacular rather than a global lingua franca. However, the dilemma for the sociolinguists is whether both parties must speak the same language. Having call center workers use Hawai'ian Pidgin is not preferred as Hawai'ians are suspicious of outsiders adopting their repertoire. It indexes condescension to them. Therefore, the scholars train the workers in receptive proficiency to understand Hawai'ian contextualization cues for affect, and reciprocate at the pragmatic level with their own creole. This training strategy is eminently translingual as the scholars and workers recognize that intelligibility does not rely on adopting a shared and homogeneous language. Embodied practices, such as reciprocal pragmatic conventions and affective strategies, facilitate 'polyglot dialog'.

This study raises thorny political questions about whose interests are served by achieving communicative success. The outcomes are layered. It is certainly empowering for both the workers and clients to be able to adopt their vernaculars instead of the privileged and nationally sanctioned languages. However, it is the multinational company that profits out of this inclusivity. This is not surprising in the context of neoliberal marketization of everything, including stigmatized vernaculars. Similarly,

in the case of the care workers in Japan and scientists in the United States, their local construction of translingual repertoires might allow the monolingual norms of nation-state policies go unchallenged. Privileged social groups might entrench their exclusionary policies while having professionals accomplish intelligibility and productivity through their own (and unrewarded) efforts.

However, Higgins and Furukawa value the critical language awareness generated in the workers they are training. There are transformative possibilities in creoles being upscaled as a lingua franca for certain service encounters. The awareness that their creoles are not deficient and could perform transnational functions has potential for the structuration of policy changes. The other studies might also persuade professional institutions and national governments to acknowledge that communication and work can be even more productive if they formalize the creative practices of professionals. Mori and Shima convincingly argue that adopting digitized and multimodal handover records, where photographs can be embedded, would be more efficient than printed texts. Similarly, developed countries in the global North should understand that remedial courses and assessment regimes for skilled migration, based on normative grammar, are misdirected. These costly enterprises might generate profit for some, but limit transnational scientific knowledge production.

As geopolitical conditions diversify structures to enhance production and profit, we realize that they also create new spaces and resources for renegotiation. Workers and clients are negotiating competing structural frames strategically for intelligibility and inclusivity, demonstrating an intuitive awareness of the value of nonnormative repertoires for professional success. How these new repertoires and communicative practices are materializing inclusive structures and policies is a longitudinal inquiry beyond the purview of interactional sociolinguistics. Ethnographic studies demonstrate that inclusive interactional practices are motivating less restrictive workspace policies. Some multinational companies are adopting 'strategic ambiguity' as their official policy (Angouri, 2013:577), allowing for plurality, because normative language policies can be ineffective. Japanese companies are adopting 'fragmented multilingualism' over linguae francae and monolingualism for their Chinese factories (Kubota, 2013). The contribution of this TI is to unveil through close analysis changes at the level of situated practices, which renegotiate the power of dominant policies, norms, and institutions, demonstrating the structuration of more diversified institutional communication. Workspace becomes a liminal site where contending frames, structures, and ideologies play out, intimating emergent structuration. We envision a role for sociolinguists to study and develop these negotiation practices; raise critical language awareness among professionals; and advocate for more inclusive policies, language ideologies, and communicative structures for work. Hence the value of a sociolinguistics of work in these fraught times.

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