

'Critical Language Research: Applied Linguistic and Anthropological Approaches'
Centre for Latin American and Caribbean Studies (CLACS) / School of Modern Languages

Newcastle University

Friday 25 October 2019

Abstracts

Key note: Translanguaging in the City

Adrian Blackledge and Angela Creese, University of Stirling

This presentation reports outcomes of a research project which investigates everyday communicative practice in a superdiverse UK city. The Arts and Humanities Research Council-funded project, *Translation and Translanguaging. Investigating Cultural and Linguistic Transformations in Superdiverse Wards in Four UK Cities* generates new knowledge about how people communicate in changing urban spaces. The research team conducted detailed linguistic ethnographic studies in sixteen public settings across four cities, and built up a comprehensive account of the means by which people make meaning in migration and post-migration contexts.

Research sites included a busy city market, cosmopolitan corner shops, public libraries, community centres, advice and advocacy offices, and sports clubs. Researchers wrote field notes, audio-recorded and video-recorded participants in interaction, took photographs, collected digital and online posts, conducted interviews, and made recordings in domestic and social settings. Analysis of data demonstrated that when people bring into interaction different biographies, histories, and trajectories, they often 'translanguage'. That is, they deploy whatever resources are available to them in that time and space, making the most of their communicative repertoires.

In this presentation examples of encounters between people in post-migration urban settings illustrate and exemplify translanguaging in practice. In these encounters people learn to live with difference and change, making social and linguistic diversity a resource for learning.

Key note: Linguistic Natures as a Challenge for Critical Language Research: Insights and Questions from the Indigenous Americas

Jan David Hauck, London School of Economics

Guilherme Orlandini Heurich, University College London

Critical research on language and communication has long been troubled by the concept of language. Against the implied boundedness and homogeneity of languages, our agenda has been to celebrate hybridity, heteroglossia and multimodality, and to call for either the expansion of what we take "language" to be or the abandonment of the notion altogether – in favor of concepts such as discourse, performance, semiosis, communication, or languaging and related constructs. However, we have not yet allowed other conceptions of language and languageness to disrupt our implicit and explicit understandings. As Bauman and Briggs have pointed out, the ways in which inequalities are embedded in language has its roots in the making of language as autonomous domain in the Western intellectual tradition. Drawing on Latour's work on the modern constitution they show that that making of language was intimately tied to the its mediating role in the separation of nature/nonhumans and society/culture/humanity. Could we learn from other intellectual traditions that do not draw such a rigid divide or draw it differently? Ethnographies from the indigenous Americas provide evidence of alternative ontologies (*sensu* Viveiros de Castro) as well as discourse practices that defy the privileging of symbolic, denotational, or referential aspects of discourse, challenging its separation from the realms of practice, the body, the nonhuman, and the material, and the

universality of an all-encompassing “nature of language” underlying variation. In this keynote we ask what we may learn from such understandings for critical language research and pedagogy.

Collaboration as decolonisation? Toward a collaborative anthropology of language in Amazonia

Casey High, University of Edinburgh

As fieldwork-based disciplines, anthropology and documentary linguistics have long since grappled with questions of collaboration. Whether in recording videos of people telling stories, eliciting specific linguistic data from informants, or conducting interviews about kinship relations, linguists and anthropologists working in Amazonia and elsewhere depend on relationships that are often characterized by inequality and divergent interests in the purposes of research. In this paper I explore how indigenous Waorani people in Amazonian Ecuador collaborate as language consultants and videographers in a multidisciplinary project to document their language. In addition to analysing the new problems and possibilities this collaboration brings about for everyone involved, I consider how Waorani concepts of the power of speaking relate to ideas of language as “culture” in language documentation research and language policy in Ecuador. I examine what the Waorani language (wao-terero) is coming to mean to Waorani language consultants as they become skilled researchers embedded in a broader cultural politics of which anthropology and linguistics are part. To what extent does the process of making language a visual cultural object through collaborative video recordings present an opportunity to decolonise linguistic and anthropological research? Or does this process merely conform to dominant culturalist discourses that underly the broader politics of recognition in South America and beyond? I draw on my ongoing ethnographic fieldwork with Waorani language researchers to consider what they find to be at stake in this work. In this way, I approach collaborative language documentation as a complex ethnographic context through which we can hope to better understand novel conceptual horizons emerging in Amazonia and elsewhere.

Language revitalisation and community resistance: The case of the Kariri-Xocó of Brazil

Diane Nelson and Thea Pitman, School of Languages, Cultures and Societies, University of Leeds

The Kariri-Xocó Indigenous community (pop. ~3300) live in Alagoas state, eastern Brazil, and represent the fusion of remnant tribal groups following three centuries of Jesuit missionary activity and forced relocation to villages. Their language, Dzubukuá Kipeá, has no native speakers and is classified as extinct on linguistic databases. However, since 1989 as part of a broader cultural reawakening, the Kariri-Xocó have initiated a revitalisation of their sleeping language; after consulting historical archives, they are now drawing on their community memories of the Dzubukuá Kipeá language through songs and stories, and gradually filling gaps in vocabulary by communicating with ancestral guides in the tribal spirit world. Graphic icons are created for each word, paired with a Portuguese translation, and disseminated by WhatsApp to Kariri-Xocó young people and adults. Language teachers run twice-weekly language lessons for children and a WhatsApp group for youth and adults. Under the Bolsonaro presidency, funding to support Indigenous communities has been cut drastically, as has funding for Higher Education and for NGOs. In the postcolonial context of the Kariri-Xocó, the revitalisation of their language is nothing less than an act of resistance, yet one carried out through a bilingual Portuguese context. The revitalisation of Dzubukuá Kipeá thus provides an important opportunity for exploring the nature of language in a sociocultural and political context and to consider the ways that UK-based researchers can support Indigenous language pedagogy as a key component in the process of decolonisation. In doing so we hope to learn from the unique approach of this community-led initiative where native spiritual traditions, digital technology, and Indigenous activism have come together to transform the linguistic and cultural landscape.

From resistance to resilience: communities of practice, hyper-communication and language policies in Mesoamerican languages.

Karla Janiré Avilés González, Labex EFL Paris 7, France

This paper will focus on Mesoamerican world at the digital era, especially on Nahuatl matters, forms and contents applied (or not) in language policies. Through a series of examples coming from different places, I will first question the concepts of *local* and *global* in the cyber-space (virtual communities) and in the “geographical” communities where speakers live. Which are the cultural and language’s changes mediated by hyper-communication? The notion of “global village”, as understood by Marshall McLuhan in 1967 [1985], seems to be not as uniform as he has predicted. Communities of (virtual) practice (Wenger 1998; Eckert & Wenger 2005), and the ethnographic studies, show the diversity of styles, norms, orthographies and social functions that speakers implement going beyond the “official” paradigm of neocolonialism and its paternalist policies, and contributing to the so-called “Nation-State” debates (Joseph & Nugent 1994) *from outside*. I will then question if these practices are transforming our representations (natives or academics) of what is a “traditional” or a “modern” culture, but also our conceptions of what is a “language”, what is a “standard form” and its “deviations”. Linguistic anthropology, sociolinguistics, modern dialectology and language planners have been dealing with these last issues sometimes only taking in mind the western ontologies, dictating for example what speakers have to do to “save” their languages (Haugen 1972; Silverstein; 1996; Solé 2001; Léonard & Fulcrand 2018). Finally, this invite us to tackle the challenges to articulate both levels (practices and transformations) to apply them in a national context where linguistic rights are recognized, but intercultural bilingual education is still a dream (Avilés González 2017; Barriga 2018).

Repertoires of language activism in Oaxaca, Mexico

Haley De Korne, University of Oslo

The recognition of linguistic rights, within the broader framework of universal human rights, has largely failed to counter inequalities experienced by marginalized language communities around the world (Stroud and Heugh 2004; Lim, Stroud, and Wee 2018). This paper contributes to scholarship on the crucial roles that local actors play in appropriating recognition policies and discourses in order to change ideological and institutional spaces (Hornberger et al. 2018). In Mexico, the establishment of the 2003 ‘Law on the Linguistic Rights of Indigenous People’ has yet to shift the limited social opportunities that Indigenous communities experience in relation to their communication practices. In the southern state of Oaxaca where Isthmus Zapotec is spoken, exclusion of Indigenous languages remains the norm despite increased national recognition. There are a range of social actors who are engaged in reversing this exclusionary legacy via strategies at the local or regional level, however. Drawing on an ethnographic study of Isthmus Zapotec education initiatives conducted over 25 months (2013-2018), I analyze the repertoires of language activism that are present in this context, considering the diversity of social actors, strategic actions, goals, timescales, and visibility scales which characterize these advocacy strategies. While some strategies fit within a problem-solving or teleological framework of social change, many local advocates describe their strategies within a ‘grain of sand’ framework, as part of a slow-forming, amorphous future change. In a context where instability—from socio-economic to tectonic—is the norm, I argue that such resilient local strategies are crucial to understanding and engaging in potential social change.

Method and Media in the Revitalization of Lowland Ecuadorian Kichwa

Georgia Ennis, Junior Fellow, Penn State University, Center for Humanities and Information

In Ecuador, language planning and revitalization have largely focused on the “unification” of a number of diverse regional varieties into a written standard known as Kichwa Unificado or Unified Kichwa. For a number of reasons, Unified Kichwa is now treated as the de-facto code of public speech, frequently serving as both an oral

and written standard. Speakers of regional varieties like Upper Napo Kichwa, however, often experience linguistic unification as a serious imposition on their own practices. They thus worry that their children are adopting “another” Kichwa, in contrast to the language their “elders left behind.” At stake in many of the debates surrounding linguistic unification, then, are often very different understandings of what languages are, as well as how they are appropriately transmitted. For many parents in Napo, the Unified variety taught in schools is simply not ‘our own spoken Kichwa.’

In this talk, I focus on the use of grassroots and community radio to sustain and revitalize regional linguistic and cultural practices in the context of Spanish-language domination and the well-intentioned, institutional use of Unified Kichwa in the Ecuadorian Amazon. Community broadcast media, in contrast to standardized texts, allow a wide range of voices and styles of speaking to come to life on the air. While some speak in “another” unified voice, many also maintain the regional cadences and particularities of Upper Napo Kichwa, creating a multivocal public sphere. Moreover, these radio programs draw upon significant local ontologies and ideologies of language, transposing them into new contexts of transmission. Ultimately, local radio programs emerge as powerful resources in ongoing efforts to sustain and revitalize language as a multi-dimensional code, as well as the contexts of use where that code has had meaning for Kichwa speakers in the Upper Amazon.

You are what you speak? Talking with the *huacas* in Huarochirí (Peru)

Sarah Bennison, University of St Andrews

How central is language to a value system? How central is language to identity? This paper explores these questions in relation to the non-indigenous, Spanish-speaking province of Huarochirí in the highlands of Lima (Peru). Here, like elsewhere in the Andes, the landscape is understood to be animate and home to ancestral landscape beings known as *huacas*. This Andean ontological perspective has been attributed to Quechua speakers (Mannheim and Salas 2014), yet Huarochiranos (ostensibly) do not speak Quechua. If indigenous languages are no longer spoken in Huarochirí, its communities are not indigenous in the eyes of the State. Moreover, locals do not tend to define themselves as indigenous. Nevertheless, the province is home to the so-called Huarochirí Manuscript (c.1608), an anonymous Quechua document describing local traditions during the early colonial era. This text was written by an indigenous person and it provides unique insights into the pre-Hispanic Andean past. Today, Huarochiranos practice many of the traditions mentioned in the Huarochirí Manuscript, including rituals geared at pacifying the animate landscape.

In order to explore the nexus between language and ontology, I draw on ethnographic material to illuminate language use ‘on the ground’; exploring ritual parlance in the village of Casta. I focus on a Quechua word used today to implore the *huacas* to ask them for rain. In so doing, I consider the role of the animate landscape in promoting linguistic continuity, arguing that only a Quechua word can trigger the conditions for the *huacas* to bestow the rainfall required for agropastoral production. Furthermore, I draw on local texts from a period of intensive infrastructural development in order to consider the role of nation-building processes on language shift during the last century in the history of the province.

Alícia Fuentes-Calle

Department of Sociology (Language and Social Interaction) University of York, GELA (Grup d’Estudi de Llengües Amençades), Membre de Linguapax

Language and communication ideologies via “spiritual practice” in urban linguistic diversity.

The premise of this call, that applied and mainstream theoretical linguistics remain in good measure impermeable to advances in critical research has resonated vividly in several directions related to my experience in organisations and to my research inclinations. We can find that phenomenon expressed in some parallel levels: a) The way in which Western based international organisations devoted to the promotion of diversity rarely let themselves be transformed by the understanding of alternative linguistic ideologies that are often part

of their very network and advisory boards. Those organisations keep working under the notions of language and linguistic diversity as invented in their own cultural context (broadly speaking: a logocentric notion of communication/ a referential centred approach to language); b) The former is just a reflection of what happens in the wider society (Robbins, 2001: 909) while c) mainstream academia comes across as equally indolent for the most part. Little attention is paid to what counts as *languages* for the communities themselves, to what counts for them as linguistic revitalisation, and little attention as well to the actual communication *ethoi* (Khubchandani) prevalent in the cultural environments where languages thrive or die. There is a fossilized assumption at work that ignores the questioning about the bounded nature of language, certainly (and its consequences: quantification and naming of discrete, invented entities -- Makoni among many others in their quest to disinvent "languages"), and also about referentiality (and its extreme caricaturesque consequences: languages as codes, postvernacular emblems, brands, etc). Other crucial claims which do not make it into the applied domain, among others: interaction as the crucible for language use and change, and the proto-aesthetic dimension of communication. This proposal presents two actions undertaken by the author in 2018 (in the context of Linguapax) that reflect on the above in the spirit of this call: The organisation of a residency including verbal arts and critical linguistics agents and researchers (Faber, Olot), and a series of seminars on linguistic diversity and spiritual traditions (2017-2018) in Barcelona. The main focus will be placed on the second: how linguistic diversity in our *globalised* cities include, unseen and ignored, alternative ways to conceive of and experience language and communication as encoded and performed in diverse manifestations of so-called "spiritual practice". What is at stake in "spiritual practice", it is argued, are actually diverse ways in which language and semiotic ideologies, interactional poetics and the construal of personhood interact.

Language and discourses of "well-being" in the Andean nations

Catherine J. Allen, George Washington University

Indigenous notions of well-being figure prominently in contemporary political discourse of the Andean nations of Bolivia, Ecuador and Peru. The Quechua terms *sumak kawsay* and Aymara *suma qamaña* (rendered in Spanish as *buen vivir*, or *vivir bien* ('living well')) provide rallying points for a growing critique of neoliberal development paradigms. In a remarkable development, Ecuador and Bolivia have enshrined *sumak kawsay* and *suma qamaña* in their national constitutions. How does this political discourse relate to indigenous notions of well-being experienced in the socio-culturally diverse communities of the Andean region? I address this question using concepts of *equivocation* and *frame of reference* to guide my analysis. Using *frame of reference* to refer to principles that coordinate cognition, language and physical movement, Mannheim contrasts the egocentric frames of English and Spanish, which are anchored in the participants in the action, with the *allocentric* frames of Quechua speakers, which are anchored in action outside the speakers.

I explore notions of well-being through vocabulary drawn from Southern Peruvian Quechua, drawing on my ethnographic fieldwork in a rural community in southern Peru. These include *allin kawsay* (well-being), *pacha* (world), *ayllu* (community), *ayni* (reciprocity), *uyway* (nurturance), *hucha* (sin) and *animu* (individuating energy). Consistent with an allocentric frame of reference, the mindset underlying this vocabulary prioritizes relationships over individual agency; this entails connections among a multitude of human as well as other-than-human persons and necessitates collective work in which everything contributes to keeping the collectivity in a precarious balance.

Translating across frames of reference is inherently problematic. The discourse of *buen vivir*, as reflected in the Bolivian and Ecuadorean constitutions, is a good example of what Viveiros de Castro's calls *equivocation* (communicative disjuncture that occurs when parties try to understand each other using terms that overlap but are not equivalent). In the Ecuadorean constitution, for example, *pacha* is elided with *Nature*, although the two

are ontologically incommensurable. The dominant legal/political discourse inevitably prevails, yet it may be transformed in the process.

The Bolivian invention of 'Vivir bien' as an indigenous concept (*Suma qamaña* in Aymara and *Sumaq kawsay* in Quechua).

Denise Y. Arnold, Instituto de Lengua y Cultura Aymara (ILCA) and Instituto de Investigaciones Antropológicas y Arqueológicas (IIAA), Universidad Mayor de San Andrés, La Paz, Bolivia.

There has been a great deal of debate about the concept of *Vivir Bien* ('living well') in Bolivia and the rest of Latin America. Based on a series of interviews with persons familiar with these debates (Fernando Huanacuni, Simon Yampara, Xavier Albó, Javier Medina and others), I examine the origins of the concept, its pattern of development, the interests behind its programme of dissemination, and the impact of these ideas in the current politics of the country. Three major conjunctures are identified, through which a phrase used in intimate family contexts becomes a wider political idea: first in an indigenous answer to the 1992 "discovery of America" celebrations, second, as a proposal for alternative forms of development, and finally as a political slogan of the MAS party. In each conjuncture, different social actors and distinct factors at play influence the modalities of its dissemination. I ask finally if the concept is authentically Andean, as it is usually supposed.