
The Routledge Handbook of Migration and Language

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Diaspora and language

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Introduction

This chapter illustrates how poststructuralist approaches to the analysis of language, diaspora, and migration can critically reframe understandings of linguistic practices and social identities. Rather than taking diasporas for granted as naturally occurring phenomena, we point to institutional frameworks, cultural ideologies, and politico-economic structures that organize processes of diasporization. Such an analysis of diasporization makes it possible to understand how particular languages and populations are recognized as diasporic or domestic – foreign or indigenous – in ways that often erase their histories in a given context. Thus, for example, English language use is not typically interpreted as a sign of diaspora in the United States despite its anchoring in histories of migration and displacement in this settler colonial context. In contrast, although Spanish language use predates English language use in the United States, it is often framed as a “foreign” language and its users are seen as (im)migrant, transnational, and diasporic regardless of whether they were born and raised within the fifty states or other US territories. Moreover, indigenous languages and their users occupy a precarious status vis-à-vis histories of colonialism and ongoing reconfigurations thereof that organize conceptions of the legitimacy of particular populations and practices within a given political context. These fraught dynamics illustrate the importance of carefully tracking the uneven ways in which processes of diasporization organize language hierarchies and societal inclusion and exclusion.

A focus on language ideologies and practices as they pertain to processes of diasporization shows how diasporas can be viewed not as static objects but rather as dynamic phenomena. This involves a consideration of the semiotics of sociolinguistic differentiation (Irvine and Gal 2000), namely the reproduction and transformation of boundaries demarcating linguistic forms and social identities. We deploy this semiotic approach by focusing on language ideologies in the production of signs of “elsewhere” associated with diasporic experiences. We denaturalize notions of homeland and related presumptions about authenticity by emphasizing the perspectival nature of signs of diasporic continuity and change. We interrogate ideologies of temporality associated with diasporization by showing how diasporic continuity can be produced through shifting sociolinguistic practices on the one hand, and how diasporic

change can be produced through the maintenance of sociolinguistic practices on the other. Building from these insights, we propose conceptualizations of intra-diasporic relations not only in terms of emergent migration paths, technologies, and social categories, but also long-standing place-making practices, situations of linguistic and broader cultural contact, and forms of transnationalism. We analyze the ways that language ideologies and linguistic practices shape and are shaped by ethnoracial (e.g., Mexican, Chinese), religious (e.g., Muslim, Hindu), and other such cultural diasporas (e.g., hip hop, queer), as well as the potential for the emergence of linguistic diasporas in which language itself is understood as the central characteristic connecting people across time and space. Collectively, this range of diasporic phenomena illuminates the powerful role that language practices and ideologies play in shaping processes and experiences of migration and vice versa.

Overview of the topic

How have scholars approached questions about the role of language in producing diasporic populations and practices? Research on the emergence of diasporic categories often presumes upon naturalized relationships between a fixed geographical homeland, a migrant community leaving that place and ending up elsewhere, and the cultural practices associated with these populations and contexts. Diasporas were once primarily conceptualized in relation to issues of homeland and return, but as Canagarajah and Silberstein point out, it is important “to ask whether it was ever true that all diaspora subjects always held a return to their homeland as their ultimate goal” (2012: 81). Thus, work on language and returned migrants, such as Zentella’s (1990) analysis of Puerto Ricans who return to Puerto Rico from the mainland United States, emphasizes the need to rethink conceptions of language based on the expectation of a singular migration path of exile or return. More recently, scholars have analyzed language and diasporic processes by focusing on migrants from a given territory who introduce linguistic and cultural difference to a new territory. For example, we see this thinking in the recent proliferation of work on language and “superdiversity,” which posits increasingly “diverse” modes of linguistic practice associated with new migration patterns and settlement (Blommaert and Rampton 2011). Rather than approaching these various diasporic phenomena “as bounded, territorialized, static, and homogeneous,” attention to language can reveal their dynamic, context-specific, and ideological nature (Canagarajah and Silberstein 2012: 82). Further, as Makoni, Smitherman, Ball, and Spears (2003) demonstrate in their analysis of Black language practices from a transatlantic perspective, interrogations of the historical conditions in which “diversity” is perceived and constituted can enable reconsiderations of the power relations and contestations thereof that shape the production of diasporic populations and modes of communication. These insights suggest the importance of raciolinguistic ideologies (Flores and Rosa 2015), which interrogate the historical and contemporary co-naturalization of language and race, in the joint analysis of populations and language practices that might otherwise be approached separately as “diasporic,” “domestic,” or “foreign.”

Examinations of language and the production of long-standing and emergent diasporic phenomena alike are sharpened when viewed through the theoretical lens of language ideologies (Silverstein 1979; Schieffelin, Woolard, and Kroskrity 1998). Wortham describes language ideologies as “models that link types of linguistic forms with the types of people who stereotypically use them” (Wortham 2008: 43). Dick suggests that analyses of diasporization must take into account “the influential role language ideologies and practices play in the processes of transnational people-making among migrants” (2011: 228). By

bringing attention to the joint production of linguistic and social categories, language ideologies perspectives can contribute greatly to efforts toward denaturalizing assumptions about diasporic practices, places, and populations. Such assumptions are frequently anchored in what linguistic anthropologists have described as a Herderian language ideology of “one nation—one language—one people” (Bauman and Briggs 2003; Irvine 2006), which was historically tied to the emergence of modern nation-states. Studies focusing on continuity and change of language and diasporic identities are often closely related to Herderian stereotypes that associate particular linguistic practices, places, and populations with one another. Even widely embraced scholarly analyses of the creation of nation-states, such as Anderson’s *Imagined Communities* (1991), position shared language practices as naturally occurring phenomena that are precursors rather than dialectic counterparts to the imagination of national identities; in fact, these language practices are every bit as imagined as the national communities to which given languages are understood to correspond (Silverstein 2000; Pennycook 2010). Thus, Herderian language ideologies reproduce and transform boundaries delimiting linguistic forms and social categories, thereby naturalizing stereotypical connections between a homeland, a particular population, and the languages they use.

Language is a crucial component of the processes through which populations, and diasporas by extension, come to be naturalized, because “language lies at the center of imagined and contested pasts and futures, mediating desire and identity” (Brown and Silberstein 2012: 2). With language at the center of imagined, ideological notions of diasporic identity formation, processes of sociolinguistic differentiation show how social and linguistic differences reproduce, transform, and maintain diasporic boundaries. These differences are rooted in institutional frameworks, cultural ideologies, and larger historical and politico-economic structures. In the discussions following in this section, we examine conceptualizations of the dynamic semiotic processes through which diasporas coalesce, as well as various populations that have come to be viewed as diasporic. We focus specifically on language as it pertains to political legitimation and recognition, and transnational practices of communication and consumption.

Legitimizing, denaturalizing, and recognizing linguistic and diasporic identities

Ideologies of language and diaspora frequently focus on questions about the legitimacy of particular transnational or (im)migrant populations and practices within a given political context. These ideologies are reflected in contested conceptions of linguistic standardization, purity, authenticity, and heritage. Das’s (2011) research on the Montreal Tamil diaspora examines how Sri Lankan and Indian Tamil groups engage in a diasporic and ethnolinguistic division of labor through the development of competing notions of authenticity and modernity associated with written and spoken Tamil. This division of labor differentiates Sri Lankan Tamils, who are conventionally imagined as using “classical” written Tamil, from Indian Tamils, who are often imagined as using “modern” spoken Tamil. Whereas Brahmin Tamils from India, who are of a higher caste yet stereotypically associated with a less pure form of Tamil, have difficulties proving their sociocultural and linguistic authenticity, Sri Lankan Tamils, who are less affluent yet stereotypically associated with a more classical form of Tamil, have trouble proving their caste and class legitimacy. Through their language practices and ideologies, these “groups justify their elite status on the basis of differentiated values of authenticity and modernity” (Das 2011: 779). Das argues that “these ethnonational subgroups are thus able to inhabit distinct ethnolinguistic identities by emphasizing historicized contrasts in their

habitual use of colloquial and literary styles of Tamil” (2011: 779). This example illustrates the complexity of a linguistic diaspora in which not just language, but, crucially, *linguistic differentiation* (Irvine and Gal 2000) is the anchoring process connecting groups across time and space. The dynamic relationship between differentiations of language, ethnicity, caste, and class participate in the (re)production and (trans)formation of Tamil diasporic identities in Montreal.

In a related analysis of the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora in Canada, Britain, and the United States, Canagarajah (2012) challenges ideas about ethnicity and heritage language by examining how particular youth engage in “self-styling” to assert their diasporic identities. These self-styling practices are particularly important for diasporic populations for whom “community membership has to be constructed anew all the time” (Canagarajah 2012: 134). Whereas Rampton’s (1999) notion of “crossing” emphasizes out-group uses of particular linguistic tokens, Canagarajah’s theorization of self-styling denaturalizes the relationship between linguistic tokens and ethnoracial identities. Thus, Canagarajah emphasizes the importance of attending to the assertion of particular identities and the recognition thereof rather than tracking the presence of forms presumed to correspond to one identity or another. For example, he shows how receptive bilingual practices constitute important components of the self-styling of diasporic Tamil repertoires consisting of familiarity with English and Tamil forms. However, the forms themselves are not the primary focus. Instead, Canagarajah persuasively suggests that “we have to consider identification practices in a more process-oriented and practice-based manner, moving self-styling beyond product-oriented considerations” (2012: 131).

In his study of the emergence of a Latino diaspora among families of Latin American labor migrants in Israel, Paz (2015) makes the complementary point that “the complex interplay between language structure, use (or practice), and ideology requires multiple methodologies to better capture what happens to language in diasporic and transnational contexts” (2015: 163). In this particular context, Paz shows how Israeli-born Latino youth reproduce the Latin American cultural value of “educación,” or politeness, while speaking Hebrew despite the popular conception that these two practices are contradictory or mutually exclusive. Paz suggests that such interactional accomplishments reflect the ways that “Latinos could perceive or produce a split between the language as denotational code and the interpersonal pragmatics” (2015: 152). For Paz, these practices reflect the diasporic deterritorialization and reterritorialization of language and identity.

Rosa (2015) also examines processes of diasporic deterritorialization and reterritorialization in his analysis of the ways that US-based Mexicans and Puerto Ricans reterritorialize spatial borders through the creation of “Mexican Chicago” and “Puerto Rican Chicago” on the one hand, and linguistic borders through the creation of hybrid Spanglish forms on the other. He draws on theories of enregisterment to track the joint creation of linguistic and social categories (Silverstein 2003a; Agha 2005). Agha defines enregisterment as “processes whereby distinct forms of speech come to be socially recognized (or enregistered) as indexical of speaker attributes by a population of language users” (Agha 2005: 38). In the case of “MexiRican” Chicago, components of the English and Spanish languages are enregistered as emblems of diasporic US Latino identities. Rosa shows how these processes of enregisterment, or “self-styling” to use Canagarajah’s term, allow US Latinas/os to meet competing demands of speaking what is ideologically constructed as “unaccented” English while also signaling intimate familiarity with Spanish. Similar to the analyses of Paz and Canagarajah, these bilingual repertoires combine forms in novel ways to create emergent pragmatic effects. Such effects, as Cashman (2015) shows in her analysis of trajectories of language

use and identity formation among queer US Latinas/os, challenge naturalized relationships between language and identity. Taken together, these studies demonstrate the importance of denaturalizing the relationship between linguistic forms and social identities, attending to efforts toward the linguistic legitimation of diasporic identities, and tracking the perspectival ways in which these identities are recognized (Silverstein 2003b).

Media and home-making

With the increased mobility of particular populations and forms of communication through emergent technologies, (im)migrant groups can build local diasporic identities rooted in transnational affiliations (Jacquemet 2005). To apprehend the role of technology in mediating these transformations of language and identity, we must carefully investigate “the intersection between mobile people and mobile texts – an intersection no longer located in a definable territory, but in the deterritorialized world of late modern communication” (Jacquemet 2005:5). In studies of language and diaspora, this involves reexamining assumptions about the communicative channels and practices associated with (im)migrant populations and distant homelands. Scholars have sought to do so by analyzing the role of media and mediatization in the production of diaspora and other identities (Spitulnik 1996; Shankar 2004, 2008; Eisenlohr 2007, 2011; Agha 2011). Mediatization, which Agha defines as “institutional practices that reflexively link processes of communication to processes of commoditization” (2011: 163), can both facilitate and constrain community bonds as well as relations with diasporic homelands and linked contexts. Emergent forms of media have the capacity to shape and produce sociocultural processes through platforms such as audiovisual technology, print, and digital platforms, a sentiment echoed by Eisenlohr (2011) regarding scholarly engagement with the “mediality” of language. For Eisenlohr, the interplay between media and phenomena such as diasporization can be illuminated through “the systematic comparison of language as a medium of sociocultural processes with the ways various contemporary media technologies are recognized to similarly mediate and shape such processes” (2011: 266).

In her analysis of the significance of media in contemporary processes of diasporic identity formation, Shankar notes that “topics of intertextuality, indexicality, bivalency, and more broadly, identity formation have been sociolinguistically examined in the lives of youth, but seldom with explicit attention to the pervasive role of media in shaping language practices” (2004: 317). She suggests that Bollywood, one such influential source of media consumption, functions “simultaneously as visual culture, a social institution, as well as a linguistic resource for many diasporic youth” (2004: 318). South Asian diasporic youth incorporate various aspects of Bollywood films into their communicative repertoires, such as film-specific speech genres, dialogue, and songs, indexing “how distinct voices and registers are deployed in various speech settings” (Shankar 2004: 318). Issues of voicing and intertextuality figure centrally in this analysis of the ways in which media discourses provide resources for the creation of diasporic identities (Bakhtin 1981; Bauman and Briggs 1992; Hill 1995; Agha 2005). By intertextually referencing popular media and drawing on the voices of figures in such media, diasporic populations are able to produce deterritorialized identities rooted in modern communication and technology.

In an autoethnographic account of the development of a “post-diasporic” Korean-American identity, Choi (2012) draws on related Bakhtinian themes of multivocality and dialogism to analyze her experiences of shifting language practices and modes of identification in the context of viewing Korean serial dramas. Seeking to challenge dichotomized conceptualizations of language and identity, Choi builds on Kramsch’s observation that diasporic

populations “tend to either idealise or demonise their country of origin” in homogenizing ways that overlook the complexity of experiences in diasporas and homelands alike (Kramsch 2006: 116). In an illustration of this point, Wortham and Rhodes (2013) show how particular language learning experiences are viewed as signs of diaspora through various forms of erasure. Their analysis involves a student whose family interprets her embrace of mainstream literacy practices as a sign of her diasporic identity as a US Mexican, thereby erasing both the affinity for similar literacy practices in Mexico and the rejection of such practices among many long-standing US-based persons. In a related study, Koven (2013) explores how the perceived influence of French on Portuguese language use among Luso-descendants in France can be simultaneously interpreted through diasporic and transnational models. Whereas the diasporic model stigmatizes such practices as the problematic abandonment of Portuguese identity, the transnational model valorizes these practices as the legitimate reflection of repertoires developed across borders. In her analysis of similar forms of diasporic and transnational simultaneity, Choi argues “that speakers of multiple languages are not different people in different languages but speakers who are complexly entangled in multiple languages and voices” (2012: 110).

Understanding the roles of language and media technologies in diasporic formations also involves a consideration of transidiomatic practices, which Jacquemet formulates as “the communicative practices of transnational groups that interact using different languages and communicative codes simultaneously present in a range of communicative channels, both local and distant” (2005: 264–265). Transidiomatic practices illuminate “how new discourses and modes of representation are reterritorialized within the local environment, and as such must be taken into account in any assessment of the impact of globalization on languages” (Jacquemet 2005: 267). Such transidiomatic practices are evident in Eisenlohr’s analysis of Muslims in Mauritius, for whom particular communicative channels, such as sound reproduction technologies, “have become part of devotional performances” that are central to the creation and reproduction of their religiously oriented diasporic identities (Eisenlohr 2011: 268). Eisenlohr shows how, for diasporic Mauritian Muslims, technologies such as audio cassettes, CDs, and digital MP3 files are integral to the circulation of *n’at*, a locally inflected genre of praise poetry, which involves using particular communicative practices that need to be recited by an authoritative source. Such diasporic phenomena require an examination of how particular linguistic practices, ideologies, and technologies are incorporated into local environments. These sound technologies “support what one could describe as the ‘vanishing’ aspects of the linguistic medium” in diasporic contexts, as part of broader “discursive regimes of authenticity” (2011: 272). Analyzing *n’at* as a transidiomatic practice of Mauritian Muslims demonstrates the need for a consideration of the role of media technologies and language as platforms for locally situated diasporic identity formation.

Corona (2012) is similarly concerned with the ways that media consumption and vernacular language use combine to contribute to the creation of diasporic identities among Latino youth in Barcelona. He shows how reggaeton, a musical genre with Latin American and Caribbean roots, ties to hip hop and reggae, and predominantly Spanish lyrics, becomes a template for the creation of diasporic identities among young Latin American migrant men who are racialized as non-white Latinos in the European context. Corona analyzes the ways in which these youth seek to embody Latino authenticity by adopting the language, clothing, and broader style of popular reggaeton performers. Corona’s research is tied to related work on language and hip hop as a diasporic phenomenon (Alim, Ibrahim, and Pennycook 2009). This work demonstrates how the circulation of media through contemporary technologies not only participates in the reproduction of existing diasporic identities, but also

creates possibilities for emergent diasporas rooted in cultural practices and geographical imaginaries that are not strictly anchored in ethnicity or relations between nations. Thus, as Eisenlohr points out, it is neither the case that “diasporic identifications . . . always stand in tension with national belonging” (2006: 395), nor that they are even primarily oriented toward nations in the conventional sense. The following section builds from these insights to analyze how scholars have been critically rethinking forms of diasporic “diversity.”

Issues and ongoing debates

A central contemporary debate in research on language and diaspora involves the framing of globalization as an emergent process despite centuries of mobility among populations and practices. This section considers the ways that scholars have analyzed language, globalization, and diaspora through the development of concepts such as superdiversity. It also points to thinkers who have challenged these conceptualizations and offered alternative approaches that call into question perspectives from which particular populations and practices are positioned as diverse or superdiverse while others are left unmarked altogether.

In the last several decades, the concept of globalization, or the movement of people, commodities, culture, and knowledge across space and time, has become a prime topic of scholarly interest. To the extent that globalization is inextricably linked to relations sustained across trajectories of migration, diasporic phenomena are central to the study of such global processes. In efforts to conceptualize transformations in the range of identities and practices produced through globalization, some scholars have suggested that we must shift from thinking in terms of stable multiculturalisms associated with familiar populations in earlier eras to the contemporary condition of “super-diversity” (Vertovec 2007, 2010). For Blommaert and Rampton,

super-diversity is characterized by a tremendous increase in the categories of migrants, not only in terms of nationality, ethnicity, language, and religion, but also in terms of motives, patterns and itineraries of migration, processes of insertion into the labour and housing markets of the host societies, and so on.

(Blommaert and Rampton 2011: 1)

This framework is based on the premise that we are witnessing a proliferation of “categories of migrants” and distinctive linguistic repertoires dramatically superseding that of previous historical moments.

In contrast, Reyes suggests that “this speaker focus neglects a thorough conceptualization and interrogation of the listening subject: how change may not in fact begin with speaking subjects (migrants) but may be brought into being by listening subjects (those authorized to speak about migrants) and whatever anxieties and desires motivate the circulation of representations of speakers” (2014: 368). For Reyes, it is crucial to interrogate ideologies of race, ethnicity, and language that inform perceived gradations of diversity, which position some populations as unmarked and others as diverse or superdiverse. Reyes argues that we must locate the production of linguistic superdiversity in the politics of positionality that structures perceptions of “Otherness” rather than in the empirical linguistic practices of migrant populations within a globalizing world. This is related to broader critiques of the ways discourses of linguistic diversity are linked to forms of neoliberal population management (Urciuoli 2010; Gal 2012; Shankar 2015). Other scholars warn that “if we approach globalization naively . . . we overlook the fact that words like ‘global’ and ‘globalization’ in their most current use were first broadcast

most aggressively by marketing agents and marketing schools” (Trouillot 2001: 128). Thus, in our examination of language and diaspora, we must carefully consider the commodification of linguistic and cultural difference (Dávila 2001; Comaroff and Comaroff 2009; Duchêne and Heller 2012; Cavanaugh and Shankar 2014). From this perspective, superdiversity is part of a broader set of narratives about globalization that “not only silence histories of the world but also veil our understanding of the present” (Trouillot 2001: 128).

Language is of particular concern in narratives about globalization and diaspora because of its emblematic status as a sign of identity and difference not only within the popular imagination but also in scholarly analyses. By combining homogenizing ideologies of “a people” and “a language,”

linguistic scholarship itself played a major role in the development of the European nation-state as well as in the expansion and organization of empires . . . and the factuality of named languages continues to be taken for granted in a great deal of contemporary institutional policy and practice.

(Blommaert and Rampton 2011: 4)

These paradigms become consequential for diasporic populations whose identities and practices do not correspond to hegemonic models of language and culture. Extending theorizations of diaspora by Hall (1990), Clifford (1994), and Appadurai (1996), Flores (2009) critiques hegemonic models of language and culture by suggesting that “in much thinking about diaspora, undue emphasis tends to be placed . . . either on continuity and tradition or on change and disjuncture” (2009: 17). He argues that these problematic tendencies can be avoided by “thinking diaspora from below”:

The grassroots, vernacular, “from below” approach helps to point up the many diaspora experiences that diverge from those of the relatively privileged, entrepreneurial or professional transnational connections that have tended to carry the greatest appeal in scholarly and journalistic coverage. That approach, guided by a concern for subaltern and everyday life struggles of poor and disenfranchised people, also allows for special insights into ongoing issues of racial identity and gender inequalities that are so often ignored or minimized in the grand narratives of transnational hegemony.

(Flores 2009: 25)

Rosa (2014) uses this “thinking diaspora from below” approach to analyze language ideologies that inform the diasporic socialization of US-based Mexican and Puerto Rican youth. He shows how these youth learn to contest borders delimiting languages, nations, and ethnoracial categories in their production of diasporic identities. By “thinking diaspora from below,” it becomes possible to track the dynamic, situated processes through which diasporic identities are constructed, enacted, and transformed. Ndhlovu (2014) demonstrates a similar approach in his examination of language and the construction of African diasporic identities in Australia, which defy conventional assumptions linking linguistic practices, populations, and territories. Such analyses of local, context-specific claims about and performances of linguistic subjectivities contribute to broader efforts toward reimagining and reconstituting boundaries that problematically circumscribe languages and identities (Canagarajah 2005; Makoni and Pennycook 2007; Pennycook 2010). The following section considers the implications of moving beyond these problematic approaches to diaspora and mobility.

Implications

Interrelations between language and diaspora are consequential not only for scholarly analyses of communication and identity in a globalized and globalizing world, but also within a range of institutional settings that profoundly impact everyday life. This section explores the implications of language and diaspora in particular institutional contexts and processes, specifically focusing on schools and language learning on the one hand, and designations of political status and access to citizenship on the other.

Language, diaspora, and education

Schools are key sites for tracking language and diasporization because they are often charged with the interrelated tasks of facilitating language socialization and reproducing national identities (Rosa 2014). Nationalist ideologies inform many educational language policies that position particular language varieties as legitimate and others as unfit for institutionally sanctioned use. In mainstream school settings, language policies are frequently informed by “monoglossic ideologies” (García and Torres-Guevara 2010) that promote socialization to the language that “ideally express[es] the spirit of [the] nation and the territory it occupies” (Gal 2006: 163). These ideologies are associated with processes of assimilation that stigmatize diasporic populations’ multilingual communicative repertoires (Santa Ana 2004). This is particularly consequential for diasporic populations whose identities are specifically constructed as ethnolinguistic or raciolinguistic categories (Zentella 2007; Flores and Rosa 2015). While this marginalization through educational language policies can result in the assimilation of some diasporic populations, it can also produce diasporic sensibilities by targeting groups based on their perceived differences. Jaspers (2005) investigates the emergence of such diasporic sensibilities by analyzing how Moroccan students in Belgium engage in language styling to respond to the hegemonic structures that marginalize them. These students creatively use their supposed linguistic incompetence to disrupt classroom activities. In the US context, ideologies of linguistic incompetence stigmatize some diasporic students by perpetually designating them as “long-term English learners” regardless of whether they effectively use the English language across a range of contexts (Flores, Kleyn, and Menken 2015). Thus, it is important to analyze the ways educational language policies can stigmatize diasporic students, as well as how these students respond to and contest this stigmatization.

Schools are also central sites of language standardization and the cultivation of diasporic identities for heritage language users and learners (Das 2011). Fader (2009) analyzes the ways that heritage language learning is a central component of socializing diasporic Hasidic Jewish identities. She shows how Hasidic Jewish girls who learn English and Yiddish in school and various community settings develop complex multilingual repertoires that shift throughout the life span in relation to gender hierarchies and norms. The result is a distinction between Hasidic Yiddish and Hasidic English as “two emerging gendered varieties of Jewish languages” (2009: 32). The stigmatization of such repertoires is the focus of heritage language learning studies that interrogate and problematize the distinction between categories such as “native speaker” and “heritage learner” (Bonfiglio 2010; Flores and Rosa 2015). Kramsch (2012) analyzes the ways that such distinctions produce “feelings of imposture” among multilingual subjects whose language practices are viewed as inauthentic or illegitimate. However, Kramsch also argues that to the extent that it “forc[es] us to face the historically contingent nature of our categories and boundaries, the notion of imposture might help us understand the political promise offered by a poststructuralist approach to applied linguistics” (2012: 499).

Such a poststructuralist approach can challenge the ways in which diasporic students face linguistic marginalization in schools by contributing to the creation of educational language policies and curricula that embrace rather than stigmatize their identities.

Language, diaspora, and political status

Language requirements are often components of national policies that distinguish between and classify people as citizens and various kinds of non-citizens. This can have important consequences for diasporic populations classified as asylum seekers and refugees, whose linguistic repertoires might not correspond to expectations about the language use that indexes one's origins in a given geographical locale. Blommaert's (2009) analysis of the experiences of Joseph, a Rwandan refugee, calls attention to the institutions, cultural ideologies, and politico-economic structures that portray his sociolinguistic profile in such a way that his asylum application to the UK is denied. The Home Office in the UK questioned Joseph's Rwandan legitimacy because of his perceived sociolinguistic "abnormality," which was anchored in presumptions about linguistic authenticity and "monoglot" language ideologies (Silverstein 1996). Joseph spoke multiple of languages including Kinyarwanda, French, and English, but his sociolinguistic practices were not consistent with the imagined Rwandan repertoire. Blommaert suggests that the "repertoire displayed by Joseph is indicative of *time*, not just of *space*: it connects to the *history* of a region in the past two decades, not just to the region" (2009: 416). Reflecting on the ways that the institutionalization of monoglot language ideologies privilege particular language varieties and stigmatize others, Blommaert notes that "it is remarkable to see how powerful the nation-state is for people whose lives defy the salience of national units" (2009: 425). In a related analysis of asylum proceedings, Jacquemet is similarly concerned with the ways "national ideologies of monolingualism are increasingly difficult to be implemented as mobility (human, cultural, and semiotic) increases" (2011: 478). He points to the systematic "communicative breakdowns" that take place in asylum proceedings, which involve "the asymmetrically distributed ability to tiptoe through the different frames of an increasingly hybridized institutional talk" (2011: 494).

Scholars have also challenged the ways that language is used in citizenship tests. McNamara and Shohamy argue that applied linguists who participate in the creation of such tests must "identify and articulate the underlying assumptions and goals of the policies requiring tests" (2008: 93). They suggest that "not granting citizenship on the grounds of language is a violation of basic human/personal rights to welfare, education, and other social benefits" (2008: 93). These exclusions highlight some of the ways in which language contributes to forms of "dis-citizenship" (Ramanathan 2013). While language can play a key role in denying access to citizenship for diasporic populations, Paz (2016) shows how particular non-citizen diasporic youth are positioned as undeportable in relation to language ideologies through which they are perceived as speaking like citizens. Thus, it is important to critically examine the ways that diasporic groups can be positioned as different kinds of political subjects through a range of language policies, tests, and institutional procedures. Moreover, we must rethink the ways that language scholars are recruited to participate in and contribute to these political processes.

Future directions

Emergent directions in language and diaspora research build on existing efforts toward rethinking how populations and communicative practices come to be experienced and recognized as diasporic, as well as how these experiences and modes of recognition are

(re)produced and (trans)formed. This section points to some potential paths forward in language and diaspora research, focusing specifically on perspectives that locate diasporization in relation to processes of ethnicization and racialization, and analyses linking space, time, and trajectories of diasporic identity formation.

Rethinking ethnicization, racialization, and diasporization

The ethnicization and racialization of language is a central, yet often understudied, way in which diasporic identities emerge. In her analysis of racialization and language, Urciuoli notes that “language differences are routinely attributed to origin differences and in the United States origin differences are framed as race and ethnicity” (1996: 15). Relatedly, Dick argues that “dominant U.S. indexical orders position migrants as outsiders primarily by racializing them” (Dick 2011: 229). These insights are relevant for the analysis of language and diasporic populations across nation-state contexts. Indeed, for Dick, “the exploration of racial indexicality is a primary thread that ties together language-based research on transnational migration with the broader ethnographic exploration of this subject” (2011: 229). To the extent that language and diaspora research is concerned with understanding how language practices, populations, and geographies come to be naturalized in relation to one another, it is closely linked to what Chun and Lo term “research on linguistic racialization, or the sociocultural processes through which race – as an ideological dimension of human differentiation – comes to be imagined, produced, and reified through language practices” (2016: 220). Importantly, a consideration of ethnicization and racialization is part of a broader effort toward incorporating intersectional approaches into the analysis of language and identity in general, and language and diaspora specifically (Block and Corona 2016). In their promotion of an intersectional approach, Canagarajah and Silberstein note that “as people shuttle between communities, they hold in tension their diaspora identities with other locally relevant identities” (2012: 82). Processes of ethnicization and racialization are central to constituting these various identities.

In an analysis of “raciolinguistic ideologies,” Flores and Rosa (2015) show how attending to language ideologies and processes of racialization can help to draw connections between the experiences of groups that might be approached separately as racial minorities or diasporic populations. Such an analysis can help to show how particular language practices are disparately associated with transnational migrants, citizens, and various minoritized groups. These differentiations are related to processes of naturalization that are central to linguistic analyses of ethnicization and racialization. From this perspective, no group or linguistic practice is inherently diasporic or non-diasporic; they only come to be positioned as such through language ideologies and processes of naturalization. Future research on diasporic language ideologies will benefit from an analysis of the ways that ethnicization and racialization organize how particular language forms and populations come to embody a domestic “here” or a foreign “elsewhere.”

Rethinking diasporic temporalities, spatialities, and teleologies

Recent analyses of the diasporic deterritorialization and reterritorialization of language have drawn on the Bakhtinian notion of “chronotope” in efforts to understand how space-time scales organize the perceived movement of populations and language forms (Eisenlohr 2007; Blommaert 2015; Paz 2015; Rosa 2016). Reiter and Rojo note that a focus on spatial and temporal frames is helpful in that it provides us with “a window from which to observe the

changes in practices and ideologies in diaspora” (Reiter and Rojo 2015: 6). For Blommaert, if we are to conceptualize the configurations of power built in the processes of diasporic identity formation, “we should keep track of the strong definitional monoglot effect of the modern state – of the way in which time and space are made (literally) ‘static’ (i.e., a feature of the state) in relation to language – and part of any postmodern phenomenology of language and culture should be devoted to understanding the very non-postmodern ideologies and practices that shoot through postmodern, globalized realities” (Blommaert 2009: 12). Mendoza-Denton (2008) shows how diasporic actors engage and contest the power relations that are central to these spatial and temporal systems. In a process she terms “hemispheric localism,” her diasporic research participants recast “Global North” and “Global South” politics onto language practices, local geographies, social groups, and expressive styles. These spatial ideologies are also tied to temporal ideologies that associate some practices with a “there” and “then” of the past or future and other practices with a “here” and “now” of the present.

Emergent work on language and diaspora interrogates these spatial and temporal scales by reconsidering diasporic teleologies that presume upon particular trajectories of movement, linguistic practice, and social identity formation. Dick’s analysis of Mexican non-migrants productively redirects attention to ways that not only diasporic populations “live contrapuntally,” with a focus on “lives inhabitable in some other space and time” (2013: 413). She shows how “the effort to circumnavigate barriers to socioeconomic mobility in Mexico through physical mobility to the United States only recreates diaspora at home for all but a handful of migrants and their families” (2013: 423). Thus, research on language and diaspora must focus on how diasporic experiences take shape among those who leave but also those who stay, in receiving locales and homelands alike. Similarly, teleologies of language and identity must be reconsidered, as various studies have demonstrated that language use and modes of identification among diasporic populations shift in different directions across the lifespan (Bailey 2007; Fader 2009; Choi 2012; Han 2012). Efforts towards denaturalizing diasporic spatialities, temporalities, and teleologies coincide with the insight that “diaspora has to be treated as a ‘community’ that embodies difference, not similarity” (Canagarajah and Silberstein 2012: 82).

Summary

This chapter has identified some of the ways that poststructural approaches to the analysis of language and diaspora can contribute powerfully to broader efforts toward denaturalizing stereotypes that equate linguistic patterns, social categories, and geographical contexts. Such poststructural approaches play a crucial role in sharpening understandings of relations among long-standing and emergent modes of migration and communication, as well as critically rethinking the conditions that structure the mobility of populations and practices. Just as language ideologies perspectives shed new light on how diasporic connections and fissures take shape, a focus on processes of diasporization illuminates the ways that linguistic practices become associated with particular people, times, and places.

As we have sought to demonstrate throughout this chapter, conceptualizations of language and diaspora have far-reaching implications within academic circles and wider publics. In these various settings, notions of belonging and signs of difference structure experiences of societal inclusion and exclusion for populations positioned as unmarked insiders and various marginalized ‘others’. As these fraught dynamics unfold, analyses of the interplay between language and processes of diasporization not only document the intertwining of

inequalities and diasporic identities, but also point to the everyday ways in which conceptions of homeland and displacement are contested and reconfigured.

Related topics

Translanguaging in mobility
Nation-state, transnationalism, and language
New orientations to identity in mobility
Space, place, and language
A rhizomatic account of heritage language

Further reading

Alim, H. S., Ibrahim, A. and Pennycook, A., eds. (2009). *Global Linguistic Flows: Hip Hop Cultures, Youth Identities, and the Politics of Language*. New York: Routledge.

This volume analyzes the role of language in the production of diasporic hip hop cultures. Bringing together analyses of the linguistic mediation of diasporic identities through emergent communicative and sonic channels on a global scale, the book powerfully demonstrates the need to refine conceptualizations of diaspora by attending to the politics of contemporary popular cultural practices.

Canagarajah, S. and Silberstein, B., eds. (2012). Special Issue: Diaspora identities and language. *Journal of Language, Identity, and Education*, 11(2), 81–149.

This special issue takes a poststructural approach to language and diasporic identities. It presents an overview of contemporary conceptualizations of diaspora, as well as a set of case studies that emphasize the often fraught, situational production of diasporic identities through language and vice versa.

Eisenlohr, P. (2007). *Little India: Diaspora, Time, and Ethnolinguistic Belonging in Hindu Mauritius*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Eisenlohr's semiotic approach to language and diaspora emphasizes the ideologies that organize orientations to place, time, and identity within the predominantly Indian context of Mauritius. Importantly, Eisenlohr shows how different languages can function as powerful emblems of diasporic identities regardless of the extent to which they are primary channels of everyday communication.

Mendoza-Denton, N. (2008). *Homegirls: Language and Cultural Practice among Latina Youth Gangs*. Malden: Blackwell.

Mendoza-Denton analyzes processes of diasporic and broader social category-making among Latina youth in relation to semiotic repertoires including language use and various forms of embodiment. She shows how language use allows students to invoke, remap, and transform political dynamics within school and community contexts. For Mendoza-Denton, these practices reflect a form of "hemispheric localism" through which Latina youth enact local diasporic identities linked to "Global North" and "Global South" imaginaries.

Reiter, R. M. and Rojo, L. M. (2015). *A Sociolinguistics of Diaspora: Latino Practices, Identities, and Ideologies*. New York: Routledge.

This volume synthesizes work on the role of language in the experiences of long-standing Latin American origin populations in North American settings and emergent Latin American (im)migrant groups in contexts such as Europe and the Middle East. By focusing on language ideologies, the various entries demonstrate that, far from a straightforward unifier among Latinos across time and space, the Spanish language functions as a cultural practice around which to simultaneously produce diasporic continuity and difference.

Shankar, S. (2006). *Desi Land: Teen Culture, Class, and Success in Silicon Valley*. Durham: Duke University Press

Shankar presents an account of diasporic language socialization among US-based South Asian youth. She explores the language ideologies and practices of consumption through which Desi youth construct diasporic identities that are differentiated along lines such as class statuses, (im)migrant generation cohorts, and ethnoracial categories. Crucially, she interrogates the socialization of diasporic Desi identities from in-group as well as out-group perspectives, attending carefully to the broader political, economic, and historical dynamics that shape notions of diasporic belonging and otherness.

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