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Studying Transnational and Translingual Professional Communication

Suresh Canagarajah

Pennsylvania State University, *Pennsylvania, USA*
✉ Asc16@psu.edu

Abstract. In the modern world of globalization, there is a need to establish a multilingual communication environment in the work process of transnational corporations for more efficient execution of tasks and organization of negotiations. As a result, a completely new polylingual space appears with its own internal dynamics of linguistic phenomena, the study of which requires the formation of new approaches to research. In this paper, the processes that arise as a result of the transition of business to a transnational space are analyzed from the point of view of Interactive Sociolinguistics. The influence of global processes and technologies on communication and interaction between participants in work and contractual processes within corporations and between them is considered. The formation of a multilingual communication system due to the participation of users of different languages in communication is studied. The factors that result in the establishment of a particular multilingual system in the workspace are identified, and its manifestations are considered. The internal dynamics of this system are studied as it develops. The work is based on theoretical and practical researches by authoritative authors in the field of sociolinguistics, such as J.J. Gumperz, R. Wodak, J. Blommaert, and others. The study analyzes the effectiveness of the application of the Interactive Sociolinguistics approach to describing the work process in the context of the need to establish multilingual communication in transnational business.

Key words: Interactive Sociolinguistics, interaction, language diversity, globalization, multilingualism, discourse analysis

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Изучение транснациональной и транслингвальной профессиональной коммуникации

Суреш Канагараджа

Пенсильванский национальный университет, *Пенсильвания, США*
✉ Asc16@psu.edu

Аннотация. В современном мире глобализации возникает необходимость установления мультилингвальной среды коммуникации в рабочем процессе транснациональных корпораций для более эффективного выполнения задач и организации переговоров. В результате появляется совершенно новое полиязыковое пространство со своей внутренней динамикой лингвистических явлений, для исследования которого требуется формировать новые подходы к изучению. В данной работе производится анализ процессов, возникающих в результате перехода бизнеса в транснациональное пространство с точки зрения интерактивной социолингвистики. Рассмотрено влияние глобальных процессов и технологий на коммуникацию и интеракцию между участниками рабочих и договорных процессов внутри корпораций и между ними. Исследовано формирование мультилингвальной системы общения вследствие участия в коммуникации пользователей разных языков. Выявлены факторы, в результате которых устанавливается та или иная мультилингвальная система в рабочем пространстве, а также изучены её проявления. Рассматрена внутренняя динамика данной системы по мере её развития. Работа опирается на теоретические и практические исследования авторитетных ученых в области социолингвистики, таких как Дж.Дж. Гамперц, Р. Водак, Я. Бломмарт и др. Проведён анализ эффективности в применении подхода интерактивной социолингвистики при описании рабочего процесса в условиях необходимости установления мультилингвальной коммуникации в транснациональном бизнесе.

Ключевые слова: интерактивная социолингвистика, интеракция, языковое разнообразие, глобализация, мультилингвальность, анализ дискурса

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Introduction

In this article, I address the changes and challenges in developing a sociolinguistics of transnational work. Professional interactions are becoming more transnational and, for that reason, more translingual. These changes are facilitated by neoliberal marketization, in addition to technology and mobility. The changes in patterns of work are leading to new challenges in negotiating language diversity. However, the existing workplace studies also suggest that professionals are adopting creative strategies to negotiate meanings. In an effort to motivate close analysis of workplace interactions, this paper makes a case for Interactional Sociolinguistics as a suitable method.

Context

Developments in technology, economy, and mobility facilitate professional relations that 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 media [1] across localities, with competing linguistic markets determining value. Many recent sociolinguistic studies have started to refer to such workplace communication as "transnational" (see [2–8]). 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 need to negotiate diverse languages, discourse conventions, and language ideologies in order for institutions to serve their clients, collaborate with their employees, and manage services across borders. The complex global flow of labor, capital, and products, and the way it shapes the uptake of diverse semiotic resources in variable spatiotemporal contexts, merit closer sociolinguistic analysis.

Influenced by such changes in work practices, workplace communication is also changing. The interactions between workers, and with employers and clients, are conducted in multiple languages that Duchene et al. argue: "multilingualism and the knowledge of more than one language have become almost a requirement" [2. P. 2]. Communication technology is generating other changes. As digital media and computers mediate work, talk is shaped by diverse other modalities of communication, especially writing, that they have constructed a more "textualised workplace" [9. P. 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. These resources enable participants to switch languages very fluidly to the extent that it is difficult to say which is the matrix language of a given interaction (see [5; 7]). Communication goes beyond separately labeled languages in other ways. Participants might use their "fragmented multilingualism" [10. P. 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 [11; 12]). For all these reasons, some sociolinguists find it inadequate to capture these interactions as simply "multilingual" (i.e., a collection of separately labeled languages). Many scholars use "translingual" (see [13; 4; 5]) to characterize contemporary work site communication.

Beyond the challenges for intelligibility in contexts of language diversity, interactions in these settings have to contend with restrictive language policies. Among them are nation-state ideologies informed by language ownership, purity, and territoriality. Neoliberal ideologies, on the other hand, might favor multilingualism and diversity, though in the service of profit-making objectives. Such

objectives might lead to "technicize and standardize" communication [14. P. 10], where creativity, negotiation, and voice might be restricted. While speakers of less privileged languages might be disadvantaged in such work contexts, everyone confronts challenges for inclusive participation, identity representation, and equitable social and material outcomes.

These recent developments in work site communication pull in opposite directions. Sociolinguistic studies from policy, ethnographic, and critical perspectives have characterized these tensions through constructs such as the following:

– *fixity and fluidity* [15]: a dialectical shuttling between communicative norms that are relatively more creative or restrictive;

– *profit and pride* [14]; while pride in the local might resist objectification for profit making purposes, sometimes local pride adds value towards marketization;

– *public and private* [2]: while public institutions enforce national languages, private enterprises favor multilingualism;

– *policy and practice* [16]: the greater scope for diversity and creativity in local practices, and restrictive policies at the institutional, national, or global contexts;

– *institutional order and interactional order* [17]: institutional policies regulate languages narrowly, while the communicative practices emerging in interactions at the everyday level could be diverse;

– *competing linguistic markets* [18]: value for languages are not consistently or uniformly structured, but changes under different economic considerations in diverse places.

Though these somewhat binary ways of characterizing the tensions is helpful as a broad framework, interaction patterns can be variable and unpredictable in actual work interactions. In fact, policy and practice considerations will shape each other in complex ways, rather than remaining separate or distinct. We need closer analysis of how these tensions are negotiated by participants for different outcomes, according to changing activities, genres, and configurations of participants. Wodak et al. make a case for their interactional study of "the intricacies of the increasingly complex phenomenon of multilingualism in transnational-organizational spaces" [7. P. 157] pointing to a need to 'challenge the dichotomy that is often stated in the literature between "distinctly monolingual" and "distinctly multilingual" language practices and policies' [7. P. 158] (see also [16; 2; 19]). An interactional analysis will show how conflicting language ideologies and policies are negotiated interpersonally according to different conditions in situated work site communication. While appreciating how broader social structures and ideologies constrain local interactions, we can also appreciate the creativity of professionals as they devise new interactional strategies, genres of communication, and semiotic repertoires to deal with multilingualism. We will thus gain insights into the "structuration" (in Giddens' terms) of emerging patterns of work and communication. Such a perspective will provide constructive suggestions for policy formulation,

as there is a search for more effective work regulations in the context of geopolitical changes. The findings can also help pedagogical intervention. In contexts where increasing number of migrants and "host country" professionals are being prepared to work together, these findings can inform more nuanced training and professionalization.

There are therefore calls for more interactional studies on transnational and translingual workplace communication. In a state-of-the-art essay on socialization in workplace communication, Roberts 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" [20. P. 223]. Though there is a respectable body of sociolinguistic studies on workplace communication emerging, some scholars observe that they focus on dominant languages (such as English) within nation-state frameworks (see [4]). They call for more studies on multilingual interactions situated in transnational work spaces [11; 4]. After an extensive review of studies on workplace communication, Holmes and Marra argue, "To date, workplace research has been dominated by a focus on organisations in which English is spoken. Increasingly, however, interest is developing in multilingual business settings and in workplace talk expressed in languages other than English" [21. P. 123].

In this paper I discuss how Interactional Sociolinguistics (IS) might help us in understanding changing work site communication practices. IS has been adopted for the study of workplace communication from its inception, continuing to be used in ongoing research on professional communication by many other sociolinguists. Gordon and Kraut, in a state-of-the-art review of IS in professional communication, observe that "Workplace discourse has constituted a privileged analytic site since the genesis of IS" [22. P. 6]. Furthermore, IS was adopted to explain professional interactions in contexts of mobility and diversity, thus sensitive to the transnational considerations in this thematic issue. Auer and Roberts claim 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. It is hardly imaginable that a sociolinguistics of globalisation should be possible in the future without relying on his insights" [23. P. 390]. Rampton concurs with that claim [24]. What merits such expectations is that Gumperz problematizes meaning-making in communication, rather than treating language structure, speech community, or discourse conventions as homogeneous and shared. IS was therefore formulated to explore how interlocutors negotiate meanings in situated interactions where shared norms may not be available. What makes it even more suitable for this project is its theoretical openness and methodological eclecticism. In the context of changing geopolitical and philosophical contexts, IS is elastic to accommodate

new analytical considerations. To begin with, it is remarkably eclectic in adopting competing sociolinguistic orientations, such as conversational analysis (CA), ethnographies of communication, and (critical) discourse analysis (CDA). As IS is already an "eclectic toolbox" [25. P. 839], and has been complemented by other methods in workplace communication studies, we don't expect the treatment is this issue to be unnecessarily restrictive. Though IS "lacks the theoretical elegance and austerity of conversation analysis or the single-minded determinism of critical discourse analysis" [25. P. 839] (see also [24; 22]), it is open to further expansion in order to accommodate the changes in workplace communication and academic inquiry. Of additional interest is that IS merges analytical considerations with pedagogical and policy intervention. Gumperz and collaborators always treated interactional analysis as explicating subtle assumptions, practices, and cues that can help train workers for more effective interactions and counter the "linguistic penalty" [26] imposed on those from less privileged language groups.

I first review what studies on transnational work reveal about translingualism. I then discuss how IS can help us study these interactions more closely. A word on definitions first. In the context of the geopolitical and technological changes that shape work, it is becoming difficult to define what we mean by a "workplace." Scholars increasingly recognize that work is not defined in terms of a place but an activity (see [17]). 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. We might consider the work site a liminal space that transcends place boundaries. One might work from home and treat a room as the work site. In the US, the IRS allows for one's room at home to be treated as a workplace if it meets certain conditions. The workplace can also occupy liminal transnational spaces, and not bound by a single country. Workplace may also not be situated; it might be mobile. Tour guides walking with tourists are at work. Consider the following description of work by Ladegaard and Jenks: "Work is no longer confined to a single [place]. It now requires people to travel over great geographical distances, communicate with cultural 'others' located in different time zones, relocate to different regions or countries and, not least, conduct business in virtual teams and other online settings" [19. P. 2]. Therefore, some scholars adopt the term work "space" rather than "place," as in Räisänen's use of "transnational work space" in her study [5].

For these reasons, most researchers adopt "a broad and inclusive perspective on what qualifies as professional communication" [21. P. 112]. For example, Gunnarsson (2009) uses "professional" as a synonym for "paid-work-related," including skilled and unskilled employees. For her, professional communication contrasts with "private discourse" [27. P. 6]. The term covers text and talk "in professional contexts and for professional purposes" [27. P. 5], including talk between

professionals and with lay people. She identifies a number of distinguishing features, including the fact that workplace discourse entails domain-specific knowledge and skills, and is goal-oriented. However, Roberts goes a bit further in arguing that some forms of personal and informal discourse are becoming important for networking and for the professional presentation of self under neoliberalism [20]. Campbell and Roberts describe the complex weaving of the personal and professional often required of interviewees in contemporary professions: "They must conceal any divisions between work and personal life through the effective synthesization of institutional and personal discourses. Those who fail to effectively synthesize these discourses, but rather present a hybridized juxtaposition of styles and identities are 'divided from others' by being constructed as 'non-belongers' to the organization and failing the interview" [26. P. 266]. For similar reasons, many researchers also don't adopt the traditional distinction of business discourse, institutional discourse, and professional discourse (formulated by Sarangi and Roberts [17]), as "there is little agreement on what exactly is included and excluded from each of these terms. Indeed some researchers use all three interchangeably" [21. P. 112]. We are open to fluid genres, languages, and discourses in work site communication, depending on how they are framed as relevant to the professional activity under consideration.

Emerging Configurations of Translingual Work Communication

The changes in work and professional practices are of considerable significance to sociolinguists. What we learn about the implications for language practices and proficiency are the following:

- Language is central to contemporary work. It is not only the process for professional and industrial outcomes; it is often the end product. Heller and Duchene assert the "new centrality of language in late capitalism" [14. P. 19].
- There is increasing multilingualism in work sites as interactions involve diverse language groups across nation-state boundaries or within the same physical location.
- Communication is increasingly multimodal, shaped by the digitized and textualized work space.
- Work-related genres and modalities of communication are rapidly changing. Technological developments have a bearing on this. Consider the possibilities in virtual conferences. Such developments are also making possible multiple channels of simultaneous communication. Workers could be reading a report on the screen, viewing images, emailing someone, and discussing something virtually (either in talk or in writing) in a single communicative event. In addition to new genres of communication, earlier genres are also changing. As I illustrated earlier, there are new expectations of self-presentation in job interviews.

• Communicative competencies required of workers are also changing. Rather than being restricted to particular isolated roles, what is appreciated are repertoires. Repertoires are becoming more expansive, diverse, and challenging, requiring constant learning and upgrading of proficiencies. They could range from a knowledge of globally valued lingua francae to national languages in places of work; formal registers for high-stakes interactions and "soft skills" for self-presentation; and social media for informal interactions and professional genres valued in work.

• All this makes sociolinguistics critical for an understanding of transnational work space communication and emerging patterns of professional interaction. There are important contributions to be made in defining new genres, mapping competencies, formulating revised language policies, raising awareness about inequalities and unfair exclusions, and intervening in training and professional development.

Despite the diversity, unpredictability, and complexity in the repertoires, the constant changes in genres and modalities, and the sometimes restrictive institutional language policies, sociolinguistic studies in transnational work spaces show that professionals are negotiating these challenges creatively among themselves and with their clients and other stakeholders. Though not all the following studies are interactional — i.e., some adopt interviews, surveys, or ethnographic observations — it is useful to review these studies for emerging patterns of interaction.

The picture that emerges is as follows:

• Professionals might adopt a lingua franca, such as English, for general communication, and multiple local languages for group-specific or informal interactions. Kingsley in a questionnaire survey of three international banks in Luxembourg observes: "An analysis of employees' broad frequency patterns indicates that English is the language most frequently used alongside others. A number of languages are flexibly used in meetings, informal communication and more hybrid genres (emails and presentations). The ethnolinguistic composition of employees and transactional/relational functions of language are the two most important bottom-up pressures on language choices. However, above all, English emerges as an essential lingua franca for involving and including all employees in these contexts" [4. P. 533]. Yanaprasart finds variable practices in the 12 international banks she studies in Switzerland. She describes the dominant patterns as follows: lingua franca English as the sole corporate language; one language as the official language, and 4 other languages as supplementary; two administrative languages; American English as the corporate language and three national languages as supplementary; and three official cor-porate languages with English as supplementary [8]. Wodak et al. label as "hegemonic multilingualism" the practice in European Union (EU) administrative offices where a few working languages (such as English, French, or German) become salient over the plurality of the 23 languages of EU [7].

• The choice of languages is genre-specific in some contexts. KINGSLEY learns from her survey of international banks in Luxembourg that there is a sliding

scale from solely English to using diverse other languages as employees move from formal written reports (solely in English); and emailed correspondence, oral presentations, and face to face meetings (largely in English, but mixed with other languages); to telephone calls and small talk (in local languages) [4].

• Different languages might be chosen as befitting the nature of the activity. Certain tasks require greater precision or more widespread comprehension. Other tasks that are low-stakes or orally conducted can accommodate greater diversity. There is space for a greater range of languages, or deviations from the norm, for certain low-stakes conversational interactions. Similarly, more formal interactions, such as interactions with employers in interviews and consultations, require more formal and privileged codes. Using a widely shared language for formal interactions, and adopting ethnic or national languages to index in-group solidarity is very common (see [28; 19]). There are also creative practices of multitasking. Kingsley observes of presentations by Luxembourg bankers that they "combine elements of both spoken and written communication, since employees both orally present and used their written slides. In banks, employees often reported using two languages together in this hybrid genre of presentations. For example, 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" [4. P. 537].

• Professionals are largely accommodative of the divergent proficiencies of their colleagues. In accommodating the concerns of collaboration and efficiency, professionals focus on functionality rather than formal correctness. Firth in an early study showed how interlocutors might ignore incorrectness and wait patiently for more clues to understanding (which strategy he called "let it pass") and sometimes redefine the indexicality of a nonnormative feature ("make it normal") [29]. Such examples also suggest that interlocutors adopt diverse discourse and sociolinguistic strategies to achieve intelligibility, going beyond a reliance on grammatical correctness or formal proficiency. This could include practices such as truncated multilingualism, receptive multilingualism, and polyglot dialog — which Gonçalves and Schluter find among Spanish-speaking and Brazilian workers in a Portuguese-owned cleaning business in the United States [11].

• Nonverbal resources also help interlocutors mediate multilingualism. International professionals in the field of STEM (i.e., science, technology, engineering, mathematics) use computer screens, chalk boards, writing and visuals to communicate with multilingual participants in research group meetings, though they acknowledge their limited proficiency in English grammar (see [30]).They also use gestures to overcome communication breakdown. Body is used to negotiate affect in sales encounters — as in the faux haggling of a Chinese butcher with his East European customer in a Birmingham market [13] or the sale of cheese in Switzerland [31].

• Diversity in language is not always resolved in favor of a shared code. Often, differences serve as resources for communication. They serve affective purposes such as humor or mitigation. Someone could choose a dispreferred language for such purposes. Moody shows how English in a Japanese workplace contextualizes playful talk. The American employee David plays the "foreigner" identity in his switches into English with his Japanese co-workers [32] (see also [33]). Sometimes switches into marked codes are rhetorical, as they help convey messages with force or persuasion. Wodak et al. account for the switches of an argumentative member in a meeting of the European Council, in which English is the lingua franca, as follows: "First, for politeness, [the speaker] accommodates the Polish chair; he continues in English, due to the previous speaker and the other [members of Parliament] whom he attacks; he then shifts into his native language of Spanish. However, in the argument, he remains in English throughout until the conflict is resolved" [7. P.179]. Higgins shows from her research in newsrooms in Tanzania how English might mitigate traditional status hierarchies which are maintained in the native Swahili language interactions [34]. Language switches could thus activate different identities. By choosing the institutionally marked or unmarked languages, someone could bring into focus work or personal relationships, respectively.

• The choice of languages can help manage participation frameworks. Räisänen demonstrates how a Finnish engineer Oskari shifts between English (for a Chinese co-worker), Finnish (for a fellow national), and German (for researcher) [5]. He has parallel conversations with all of them, signaling relevant participation frameworks based on language choice. He would also read international emailed correspondence in English while talking to co-workers in other languages, indexing the reading and speaking activities as distinct channels of communication.

• Mediators and language brokers, often self-chosen, facilitate communication between workers with diverse languages by translating or assisting in the conversation. Virkkula-Räisänen shows how a manager serves as a "mediator" in meetings [28]. This doesn't necessarily mean translating every utterance, but facilitating intelligibility when specific contributions are critical. She also shows that this is a self-chosen role, for practical reasons. The manager is not professionally trained, linguistically proficient, or formally assigned this role. Furthermore, he has to switch roles adroitly between a manager and a translator. We thus see participants in professional interactions stepping into roles as interpreters, brokers, or mediators as situations demand (see also [35]).

• All such considerations can come together in a multifaceted choice of languages, based on different considerations. Wodak et al. provide the following summary as the rationale for the switches they see in the European Union Parliament from a year-long fieldwork:

- CO-TEXT RELATED FACTORS, such as the specific topic and technical jargon, the language of the preceding speaker, and politeness phenomena;
- GENRE-RELATED FACTORS, such as the macro-structure of the respective meetings and their official manifest functions;
- LANGUAGE-IDEOLOGY RELATED FACTORS, such as language choice due to the perceived prestige of a language;
- POWER-RELATED FACTORS, such as the intention to win an argument, attempts to control the debate, gain the floor, set the agenda, and so forth;
- PERSONALITY- AND RELATIONSHIP-ORIENTED FACTORS, such as preferred language choice, modes of self-presentation (on front stage and back stage), group dynamics, and traditions of a community of practice. [7. P. 180]

Mondada accounts for the switches in a single meeting in France in the following manner:

- A change of linguistic regime, from a monolingual regime (English Lingua Franca only) to a bilingual regime (French and English).
- A change of activity, from lecture to discussion, implying also a change from prepared topics presented on PowerPoint to topics constructed online within the discussion.
- A change of participation framework, from the focus on a speaker lecturing in front of an audience, to a focus on the participants scattered around the room, and finally on a participant among the others becoming the main speaker.
- A change in the interactional space, from an activity oriented towards the front row, where the speaker and the PowerPoint presentation projected on the wall are located, to an activity focused on the back row of the room.
- A change of participants' categories, concerning their medical-institutional expertise and their linguistic competences.
- A change of categories related to the management of interaction: at the beginning, the organizational work of the CHAIRMAN is central; progressively, the work of another figure, acting as a MEDIATOR or as a FACILITATOR, becomes crucial. [35. P. 229]

• Interlocutors might adopt a complex "decision-making algorithm" [16] to choose a language for interaction in the midst of such diversity and unpredictability. Angouri outlines these considerations as operating beyond the language choice imposed by the official policy. They are: "common sense," motivated by teams sharing the same language or teams that tacitly agreed on their choice earlier; "safest bet", where a compromise is made for groups with a large range of languages; and "explicit and negotiated", where choice has to be discussed before every interaction [16. P. 577].

• Language choices are not always democratic or inclusive. Power can play a role in the lack of negotiation of multilingualism. Hazel points out that in certain relationships the dispreferred language will be subtly flagged as inappropriate, providing a marginalized identity or role for that speaker [3]. Yanaprasart describes the challenge for Swiss international banks as balancing and managing "the need for divergence (complexity, diversity, differences) and convergence (cohesion, uniformity, standardization)" [8. P. 91]. Standardization can be unfair sometimes, and lead to "linguistic penalty" [26] for those who fail to conform. In this sense, language is resourceful for establishing hierarchies, exclusion, and norms as well.

Whether interlocutors choose to accommodate or control communicative diversity in work settings will be motivated by situated interactional considerations. This explains the significance of sociolinguistic approaches such as IS.

The Relevance of Interactional Sociolinguistics

There are many features in IS that are suitable for undertaking an interactional analysis of transnational and translingual work space communication. In his original formulation, Gumperz was explicit about adopting a focus that went beyond what he has called "structuralist abstractions that are notoriously difficult to operationalize" [36. P. 309]. In this way, he went beyond treating a shared grammar as helping ensure intelligibility and comprehension. As he demonstrated from his research in India and Norway, even within the same speech community there is considerable diversity in norms and conventions that violate the grammatical structure of separated languages. For the same reason, he was also not fully satisfied with Conversational Analysis (CA) as it was traditionally conceived. He noted that CA focused on the structure of conversation, disregarding meanings. This was because CA treated conversations as taking place between interlocutors with shared norms. As it assumed homogeneity, CA did not problematize meaning making. CA also excluded wider social, cultural, and ideological contexts that mediated conversations, preferring focus on the sequential. Gumperz observed that "sequential analysis cannot by itself account for situated interpretation. It describes just one of the many indexical processes that affect inferencing" [36. P. 312].

At the other end of the interactional continuum, Gumperz was sensitive to how broader cultural values shape talk. He was open to drawing information from approaches such as ethnography of communication to consider diversity and inequality in communication. He situated interactions as happening among interlocutors bringing different norms and values, thus requiring that meaning-making be problematized. He brought an orientation to communication as *practice*, and broadened the unit of analysis to "activity" or "event," beyond the grammatical or sequential. However, he also found the approaches of ethnography of communication or discourse analysis too broad for operationalization. Therefore, he treated

the interactional as a middle level of consideration that can bring together the larger sociocultural considerations and micro-level sequential, grammatical, and interpersonal considerations. He claimed, "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" [36. P. 312]. In this way, IS allows us to draw on information from beyond the immediate, such as historical, cultural, social, and ideological considerations. At the same time, IS also brings a CA-influenced close analysis to interactions. I introduce three constructs of IS — i.e., conversational inference, contextualization cues, and repertoires — to demonstrate how they might help us orientate to the type of diversity typical of transnational and translingual work site communication.

Through *conversational inference*, IS problematizes interpretive practices by participants in an interaction. The construct is defined by Gumperz as: "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. Sequential positioning of turns at speaking is clearly an important input to conversational inference, but many other, analytically prior factors are also involved. Furthermore, it is also true that individuals engaged in conversation do not just react to literal meaning — if there is such a thing — in the linguist's sense of the term. At issue is communicative intent; to assess what is intended, listeners must go beyond surface meaning to fill in what is left unsaid" [36. P. 313]. Rather than treating meaning as shared or guaranteed by language norms, IS treats it as negotiated. In fact, inferences are a reciprocal activity. The parties in an interaction have to interpret the verbal cues of the others appropriately, and also respond with suitable cues to demonstrate their understanding and frame their contributions to continue the interaction. Thus IS brings a focus on the "procedure" behind planning, producing, and exchanging signs. Bailey explains, 'Interlocutors rely not on "rules" that lead unambiguously to one meaning, but rather on "strategies" that guide interpretations of their speech and help make sense of the interactions in which they are engaged' [25. P. 2]. Furthermore, IS is supple enough to allow for a range of macro level details to explain the interpretations made by participants. In order to understand the communicative action performed, we have to go beyond the "literal," "surface," and "unsaid" — as Gumperz states above.

What allows participants to signal the types of information they are assuming in framing their contribution is Gumperz's second construct, *contextualization cues*. If inference is too broad a construct, contextualization cues enable us to focus on the range of background information invoked in situated interactions. It is a useful construct for researchers, as it will help them figure out how the interaction is framed and meanings constructed by the participants, when researchers don't share their backgrounds. Gumperz defines contextualization cues as: "any verbal sign

which, when processed in co-occurence with symbolic grammatical and lexical signs, serves to construct the contextual ground for situated interpretation and thereby affects how constituent messages are understood" [36. P. 315]. What is useful about this construct is that it helps us approach communication ground up. Rather than assuming shared values and norms to shape interactions, we can analyze how the "contextual ground" is collaboratively constructed by participants. This perspective is especially valuable in interactional contexts of diversity when language or discourse norms are not shared. In fact these subtle cues, which might be taken for granted or habituated in in-group communication, are the ones that might pass under the radar in inter-community interactions. Gumperz's early studies in workplaces, such as the "gravy study" in UK, showed how the lack of attention to such contextual cues led to conflict and penalty. Note, however, that Gumeperz considered contextualization cues as "verbal sign" above, or "oral forms ... in talk" [36. P. 316]. We may have to broaden it to include nonverbal cues, such as objects, texts, and gestures, which are often strategically used in transnational and translingual work space interactions.

The third construct is the notion of *repertoires*. This helps us to go beyond structuralist grammar and homogeneous speech community assumed in traditional analysis. Gumperz defined verbal repertoire as containing "all the accepted ways of formulating messages" [37. P. 137–138], being "the totality of linguistic forms regularly employed within the community in the course of socially significant interaction" [38. P. 182]. This construct is open to different varieties and dialects of a language, such as world Englishes, giving all of them equal importance. A community's repertoires might be different from another's even in the "same language." It is also open to language change. Furthermore, it captures how features from diverse languages can form a community's repertoire, as in Gumperz's studies on code switching. The notion is open to the diversification of a community's repertoire through language contact.

Despite the promising constructs offered by IS for a study of interactions in transnational work spaces, the manner in which work and communication have been changing in the context of recent technological, economic, and geopolitical changes call for further expansions. To add to these developments, disciplinary discourses in humanities and social sciences have been changing to motivate new modes of inquiry. We might consider these as further developments beyond the structuralism that Gumperz was critical of. In sociolinguistics, paradigms such as embodiment [39], spatiality [40], and mobility [41] have introduced new analytical perspectives to address transnational interactions. In some cases, scholars have directly critiqued IS for its inability to address emerging questions and considerations. After reviewing these developments, I outline ways in which the constructs of IS can be expanded to accommodate the emerging concerns.

To begin with, several critics point out that not all information that shapes communication can be recovered from talk or contextualization cues in sequential analysis. There are many layers of context that might hover in the background of talk and shape the interaction. Though they might not be directly invoked in the talk, the interlocutors are mindful of those types of information in shaping their interpretations. As they may not be indexed in language, they might not be visible to researchers. Rampton argues, "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" [24. P.10] (see also [22]). Although Gumperz is open to interpretive strategies going beyond the visible and verbal in conversational inference, it is not clear how researchers can choose from the layers of possible contexts as relevant for a given interaction.

Along with such macro-level influences, critics also point to a lack of attention to power. There is sometimes an ambiguity in addressing communication breakdown and misunderstanding as attributable whether to cultural differences or power inequalities. Bailey observes that IS "mistakes power differentials for cultural differences and sociopolitical conflicts for linguistic-interactional problems" [25. P. 836]. So, for example, did the Indian worker's falling intonation in "gravy?" get misunderstood because the British workers were unfamiliar with the intonation pattern or whether they were biased? Furthermore, did the miscommunication result because they assumed their higher status as "native speakers" and became judgmental rather than collaborate? In fact, interlocutors who can change their footing to accommodate each other have been shown to successfully renegotiate norms and collaborate in achieving intelligibility (see [29], for example). Refusal to change one's footing or insisting on others accommodating to one's own norms is often an exercise of power. It is also a reflection of privilege. While those from dominant languages or social groups have the luxury of treating their norms as universally shared, those from minority communities are compelled to accommodate. Attributing miscommunication to cultural difference will also misunderstand resistance or voice. Those from non-dominant groups may refuse to accommodate to dominant norms in favor of their voice and identity, and not because they are unaware of the contextualization cues or norms of the interlocutor (see examples in [42]). Why and for whom is diversity a problem rather than a resource?

The traditional focus of IS on talk and verbal resources has also been pointed to as limiting its usefulness for contemporary communication. As we saw above, communication involves multiple modes and semiotic resources simultaneously. While IS has been traditionally applied to a single channel of communication, typically face to face conversation, including professional genres such as interviews and meetings, we now know that talk, writing, video conferencing, and reading

reports might all occur simultaneously. In fact, the other resources such as texts and computer screens might mediate talk in deep and pervasive ways that it will be difficult to focus on talk or words alone. After an extensive review of the way IS has been employed in studying workplace communication, Gordon and Kraut state: "How workplace communication occurs via (now seemingly omnipresent) digital communication media, including and beyond email, is […] an important future research direction" [22. P. 11].

There is also a rethinking of the construct *context*. Sociolinguists have urged us to problematize and unpack context for a long time. Goffman (1964), in "The neglected situation," cautioned that "The social situation gets treated in the most happy-go-lucky way, in an opportunistic fashion ... social situations do not have properties and a structure of their own but merely mark, as it were, the geometric intersection of actors making talk and actors bearing particular social attributes ... your social situation is not your country cousin" [43. P. 134]. What we now realize is that there are many layers of time and place that shape talk; contexts are relational in that they will scale meaning and interactions in different ways based on what considerations are made relevant for that activity; they are layered in that different levels of social, spatial, and temporal considerations might shape communication rather than being discrete and monolithic; and they are deeply involved in "entextualizing" communication rather than remaining separate in the background. Sociolinguists now adopt the term "layered simultaneity" [44] to consider how relative and multiple contextual considerations are implicated in communication. Such developments will do justice to the diverse contexts for transnational communication, deriving from the multiple channels and participants in work interactions. Duchêne et al. observe that workplaces "are permeable and constantly influenced by other events, institutions, discourses and groups which flow across each other ... In contrast to studying a set of workplace or institutional interactions as relatively autonomous events with some background context added, [we must] attempt to make linkages across sites, activities and social actors, examining some of the ways in which discourses circulate and are recontextualized ... and spatial, temporal and physical environments rework and reconnect social actors and their talk and text" [2. P. 6].

The concern now is not about adding a few more considerations to IS as it is operationalized in interactional analysis. The philosophical paradigms mentioned earlier, such as embodiment and spatiality, motivate us to consider sociolinguistic analysis in a different way. For example, embodiment, as recently articulated by many sociolinguists [39; 31], expands our perspectives on interactions in the following ways: material resources such as objects and bodies are agentive and shape meaning-making, thinking, and human agency; material resources are equally semiotic, challenging the traditional bias on language as the superior medium of communication (i.e., labeled as "logocentricism"); and all resources work together as an assemblage rather than communicating separately.

In response to these considerations, I revise the central constructs in IS for our analytical purposes. As we might recollect, Gumperz defined repertoires as constituting verbal resources and located them in the speech community. However, the construct has been going through redefinition in keeping with changing analytical needs. Sociolinguists have moved further in their understanding of what constitutes these repertoires and where they are located. Rymes's notion of "communicative repertoire" includes multimodal resources beyond just languages. She defined it as: "the collection of ways individuals use language and literacy and other means of communication (gestures, dress, posture, or accessories) to function effectively in the multiple communities in which they participate" [45. P. 528]. Note that artifacts such as dress and accessories are treated as communicating meanings. Others have demonstrated how objects, such as machines, computers, projection devices, and tools shape meaning [46; 30]. Similarly, Blommaert and Backus explain that 'A repertoire is composed of a myriad of different communicative tools, with different degrees of functional specialization. No single resource is a communicative panacea; none is useless' [47. P. 25]. Mondada 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 contribute to meaning making [31]. Mondada and others [48] have also argued for including sensory resources (touch, smell) and affect in our analysis of meanings.

We have also moved beyond treating the speech community as the locus of these communicative resources. Scholars like Blommaert and Backus, Busch, and Rymes focus on the repertoires of individual speakers [47; 49; 45]. They treat these repertoires as evolving from people's life histories. For example, Blommaert and Backus define repertoire as "individual, biographically organized complexes of resources" [47. P. 8]. Detaching a speaker's repertoires from that of the community is well motivated. As we know, an individual's repertoire may not correspond to a community's one. One may not be proficient in all the resources that constitute a community's repertoire. Nor is proficiency limited to the norms of a single community. In the context of mobility, one's life trajectory might play a big role in what communicative activities have been relevant and what resources have mattered for accomplishing them. Räisänen demonstrates how a Finnish engineer's repertoire changes in keeping with his designation and transnational interactions over a period of 13 years [5]. The participant first works as a factory intern in Germany, then as a project engineer and project manager in Finland, and later as an operations manager in China. His register changes from technical to business oriented, while he acquires additional proficiency in German and English, becoming more translingual.

Going beyond the community and the person, other sociolinguists treat repertoires as situational. Goodwin's notion of "substrate" suggests that interlocutors

draw from resources that are embedded in a setting in order to accomplish relevant communicative activities. He defines substrate as: "an immediately present semiotic landscape with quite diverse resources that has been given its current shape through the transformative sequences of action that culminate, at this moment, in the current action [50]. The current substrate organizes coherence by gathering together a limited, but uniquely appropriate, collection of resources implicated in the organization of the specific actions now in progress" [50. P. 11]. We might treat such resources as constituting a "spatial repertoire" [30; 51]. These resources are spatial in the sense that they are situated in the physical contexts (or places) in which the communicative activity occurs. That is, these are the semiotic resources used by previous interlocutors for that activity in that setting. They become sedimented to shape similar communicative activities associated with that place. Other interlocutors draw from them for their own purposes. Consider the typical layout of a classroom, with the configuration of board, screen, podium, and chairs set up in particular relation to each other, and which instructors creatively use for their teaching purposes. In studies of international scientific professionals, we find that though they may bring limited resources in English, they engage with the spatial repertoires in labs and classrooms effectively for successful communication.

In our analysis, therefore, we should be sensitive to how the repertoires of a community, participants, and those available in that setting might shape communication. For migrant professionals, it is not only the language of the profession (community repertoire) or the verbal and nonverbal resources they bring with them (personal repertoire) that matter, but the spatial repertoires in the places they work. Kusters et al. include all of them in their analysis and adopt the label "semiotic repertoires" for such a consideration [48]. Räisänen uses such an orientation productively in her research on a transnational work space in a multinational engineering firm in Finland [5]. She adopts "translingual" as the umbrella term for how all three sources of communicative repertoire work together.

Despite professional communication and sociolinguistic analyses expanding in ways not addressed in early IS studies, I consider Gumperz's constructs as flexible enough to accommodate emerging considerations. Though contexts are broad and diverse, arguably not always indexed in words, Gumperz's notion of conversational inference allows us to invoke them in our analysis. This construct reminds us that meaning making and analysis are an interpretive process and cannot be reduced to the literal, present, and verbal. Gumperz is open to drawing from forms of knowledge that emerge as important for explaining the strategies, reception, and production of participants. Contexualization cues can still help us keep track of how layered contexts are invoked and made relevant when necessary. For this, we have to broaden the construct to include other nonverbal resources as also facilitating contextualization and generating meanings, as in the expanded orientation to semiotic repertoires above. In cases of miscommunication, we can ask how contextualization

cues might help participants to signal the relevant contexts to their interlocutors and facilitate interpretation. We should also be open to supplementing IS with analytical tools from CA, ethnography, or CDA to address other considerations that can explain the interaction. The eclecticism of IS enables us to accommodate emerging theoretical, analytical, and geopolitical considerations in transnational work space interactions.

Conclusion

In my own current research, I am studying how professional interactions in skilled migration, particularly in scientific/research interactions, might reveal how multiple languages and modalities are negotiated effectively by multinational participants to suit diverse interests. I find how international scholars who claim limited grammatical proficiency in native speaker varieties of English are still able to communicate successfully because they draw from diverse translingual repertoires. Their Anglo American colleagues are able to engage with them in distributed practice because their work is framed as a collaborative activity for mutual professional benefits. However, I am also able to show that in professional interactions framed in more agonistic and judgmental terms, as in interviews, conference presentations, or teaching, their translingual repertoires can index lack of proficiency and lead to unequal outcomes. Transnational and translingual professional interactions are a rich site for empirical studies on how neoliberal market pressures can be negotiated by multilinguals for more inclusive and ethical outcomes.

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Bio note:

Suresh Canagarajah is the Evan Pugh University Professor of Applied Linguistics, English, and Asian Studies, Pennsylvania State University, 201 Old Main University Park, PA 16802, USA. ORCID: 0000-0002-1292-2366. E-mail: asc16@psu.edu

Сведения об авторе:

Канагараджа Суреш — профессор прикладной лингвистики, английского языка и востоковедения Университета Эвана Пью в Пенсильвании, Pennsylvania State University, 201 Old Main University Park, PA 16802, США. ORCID: 0000-0002-1292-2366. E-mail: asc16@psu.edu