

## Unsettling Boundaries: Taking Stock of Trans- Perspectives in Sociolinguistics

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This panel will showcase different approaches to the study of linguistic and cultural phenomena that transcend conventional boundaries. The prefix *trans-* is found in many current buzzwords in sociolinguistics. Chief among them is translanguaging, which has stimulated a growing body of literature that not only highlights the fluid and dynamic nature of multilingual users' discursive practices, but also challenges the boundaries between conventionally named languages and between linguistic and other semiotic modes (García & Li 2014). Yet interest in trans- phenomena is not exactly new, nor is it limited to sociolinguistics. To reveal the workings of heteronormativity, researchers (e.g., Hall 2003) have studied the linguistic practices of transgender people and others who do not fit neatly into the gender binary. Focusing on the relationship between transcultural flows and the global spread of languages, applied linguists (e.g., Pennycook 2007) have examined the ways in which hip-hop culture and the English language have been altered, reinterpreted, and reclaimed in different parts of the world. Further afield, linguistic anthropologists have long explored the transposition of texts across multiple languages and modalities (e.g., Inoue 2018). Translation, in particular, has captured renewed attention from both cultural and linguistic anthropologists (e.g., Dominguez 2019; Gal 2015; Silverstein 2003).

Through this panel, we hope to initiate a dialogue among researchers in different subfields who work on a broad variety of trans- phenomena. What is new about the trans- phenomena that sociolinguists currently study? What fresh insights do they offer? Does the study of these phenomena require the use of new conceptual tools and analytical methods? Together, the papers in this panel will demonstrate how current research on trans- phenomena can help us better understand linguistic creativity, the socially constructed nature of categories, and the ways in which power and resistance operate at different social locations.

**Keywords:** trans- phenomena, hybridity, language ideologies

## 1. Translanguaging: Language Borderless or Embordered?

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In this paper I present a "maximalist" approach to translanguaging (c Baynham & Lee 2019). Underpinning this discussion is the persistent difficulty noted since Whorf onwards in conceiving language as languaging i.e. dynamically, when the metalanguage is a language like English with its preference for "thingification". This approach to translanguaging can be termed maximalist in that it extends the construct beyond its initial focus on the deployment of two or more languages in the repertoire (interlingual translanguaging) to consider the deployment of registers (intralingual translanguaging) and other semiotic orders (intersemiotic translanguaging), inspired by Jakobson's seminal work on translation (Jakobson 1959). While the interlingual and intralingual dimensions would still be quite recognizable to Jakobson, the intersemiotic focus has expanded exponentially over the last three decades, due to work in the visual/verbal/gestural/embodied in multimodal communication (cf Adami 2017) and in linguistic ethnography and ethnomethodology by such as Charles Goodwin (cf Goodwin 2001). I propose two other types of translanguaging that go beyond Jakobson's framework, interdiscursive translanguaging (in which what is being mediated in the repertoire are discourses rather than languages, registers or modes) and, going beyond a simple focus on gesture, to consider translanguaging at the language/body interface, informed by the recent work of Judith Butler (Butler 2015). I will conclude by discussing how this approach to translanguaging connects in interesting ways to other theoretical constructs such as the notion of spatial repertoire and assemblage/agencement. In addition this approach to translanguaging has interesting implications for how we understand the currently vexed question of borders and emborderment which I will discuss in relation to Mary Louise Pratt's contact zones and Mezzadra and Neilson's *Border as Method*. I will show how a maximalist approach to translanguaging enables productive thinking about the current tensions between the linguistic dimensions of borderlessness (aka globalization) and emborderment.

**Keywords:** *translanguaging, repertoire, assemblage/agencement, contact zone, embordering*

## 2. Exploring Translanguaging Through the Lens of Transliteration

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*Translanguaging is increasingly seen as a crucial concept for understanding multilinguals' discursive practices. Multilinguals, as previous research has shown, often produce linguistic forms that defy the conventional boundaries of languages. Yet translanguaging is not only about the production but also about the interpretation of signs. Analyzing data from print and social media, this study examines how Hongkongers draw on their multilingual and multimodal repertoires to interpret and evaluate Xiqu Centre as the English name of the newly inaugurated center for traditional Chinese theater in their city. The Chinese name of the center, 戲曲中心, comes across as rather banal: It consists of two disyllabic compounds and can be translated as "center for traditional Chinese theater." By contrast, the English name ignited a vociferous debate because Xiqu was chosen over translations (e.g., "Chinese opera") that many deem easier to understand and because this transliteration represents the Putonghua rather than the Cantonese pronunciation of the Chinese word for traditional Chinese theater.*

*The analysis reveals that perception of Xiqu partly hinges upon the binary opposition against the backdrop of which the transliterated name is evaluated. Supporters and detractors contrast xiqu with its equivalents in English and Cantonese respectively, thereby producing diametrically opposed interpretations of the term. Challenging the idea of languages as autonomous entities, many detractors produce ludic and sometimes crude interpretations of Xiqu by superimposing Cantonese on this Putonghua name. Just as importantly, however, other detractors who draw on their multilingual knowledge to critique the name appeal to notions of linguistic purity and actually end up reinforcing linguistic boundaries. To develop a better understanding of multilinguals' production and interpretation of signs, we need to explore the full spectrum of their communicative practices, including not only those that highlight the fluidity of linguistic forms but also those that do not.*

**Keywords:** *translanguaging, transliteration, Cantonese, Putonghua, Hong Kong*

### **3. Toward an Anthropology of Trans-Creativity: An Ethnographic Study of Dubbing Professionals Who Trans-Create the Filmic Soundscape**

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Linguistic choices as such frequently affect and, at times, determine, the sensory experience of the viewing audience and the sale of the commercial media products. In today's globalized world, attention to language is especially crucial, commercially and politically, for transnational entertainment companies that wish to localize their media products for wider distribution. Successful localization requires collaboration between translators, script adapters, voice actors, directors, sound engineers, and distributors, all of whom possess their own beliefs about language representation. This paper focuses on one such localization practice known as dubbing in the context of Taiwan and examines the translational and creative efforts invested in the dubbing production. Translation studies understand dubbing conventionally as audiovisual translation and recently as transcreation. While transcreation does highlight the multiparty efforts invested in the dubbing production, it continues to focus on audiovisual comprehensibility and equivalent effect between the original and translated texts. This paper reconsiders transcreation and proposes trans-creativity as an alternative intervention that concerns not only the audiovisual commensurability but more so the creative processes and creativity itself. The data come from the 24-month fieldwork with nearly 90 dubbing professionals across various studios in Taiwan. Grounding on linguistic anthropology, I trace the unfolding events where dubbing professionals negotiate and play with auditory aesthetics and sociolinguistic variations to create a soundscape that best fits the visuality of the original work in the target context. Script adapters and voice actors invest less on perfecting dialogue translation; instead, along with sound engineers, they concentrate on recreating the auditory ambience and sociolinguistic authenticities and editing out disturbances from the newly audiovisual pleasantness. By highlighting the unfolding creative processes of dubbing production, trans-creativity offers translation studies a productive means to analyze the often-neglected and made-unseen sociopsychological and ideological aspects of translators.

**Keywords:** *language ideologies, variation, creative industries, trans-creativity, dubbing*

#### 4. Between Transmission and Diffusion: Change in Sentence-Final Adverbials in Singapore English

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In study of language variation and linguistic change, Labov (2007: 344) explains 'transmission' to be linguistic change within a speech community characterized by incrementation within a faithfully reproduced pattern of the family tree model. Relatedly, 'diffusion' is a phenomenon that weakens the original pattern of linguistic characteristics due to a contact with a different speech community. These ideas are well-discussed in traditional dialectology, which assumes monolingual communities. Britain (2016: 218) criticizes this view, stating that notions such as transmission and diffusion as linguistic variations are inherent to the idea of hegemonic sedentary norm which idealizes fixity of speech communities.

Drawing on Britain (2016), this paper investigates linguistic change in Singapore English (SE), which does not belong to a conventional family tree model. Using a corpus-based data from 1990s and 2010s, we presents examples of sentence-final adverbs (SFAs) *already* and *only*. Findings indicate an increase in SFAs over the course of 20 years: *already* (68.4% vs. 77.17%) and *only* (15.7% vs. 22.18%).

The results posit the continuing influence of Sinitic substrates on SE, given that over 70% of Singaporeans are Chinese, and that Sinitic counterparts for sentence-final *already* (e.g. Mandarin *le*, Hokkien *liao*, Cantonese *zo*) and *only* (e.g. Mandarin *eryi*, Hokkien *nia*) exist. Further, *le*, *liao* and *nia* are borrowed into SE as sentence-final particles, thereby reinforcing the use of SFAs. Provided that SE speakers in the databases had an access to a language that uses SFAs as part of its grammatical system, the idea of transmission becomes awkward.

We claim that SFAs took place in SE due to bilingual speakers who had access to English and a local Sinitic substrate language. The example of incremental change, seen in SFAs *already* and *only* in SE, involving cross-linguistic transfer within a multilingual community further problematizes Labov's distinction between transmission and diffusion.

**Keywords:** *transmission, diffusion, Singapore English, Sentence final adverbs, corpus linguistics*

## 5. Performing the Global Borderlands: Transperipheral Projections from "the Heart of the Amazon"

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An established body of research argues that the local incorporation of globally-circulating semioses favors creative resignifications, involving the overlapping and intersection of scales and indexical orders (Blommaert, 2015). Here we contribute to this endeavour by focusing on how movement between two peripheral spaces is scaled from a marginalized artistic positionality originating in the Amazonian region of Brazil to the periphery of the megacity São Paulo. Specifically, we focus on how Jaloo, an Amazonian artist, enacts his artistic/discursive performance transperipherally by following the recontextualizations of his performances ethnographically online/offline in videos, in promotional material, in interviews to the local press as well as through interviews conducted with his Amazonian fans. We rely on the indexical divergences and incongruencies between Jaloo's performances in the Amazon as a peripheral space, his self-construction as an artist through globalized online flows, and his positionality as an outsider and queer artist in the periphery of São Paulo, where he lives and performs. In so-doing, we argue that Jaloo re-scales his trajectory and the spaces through which he circulates. Such efforts rely on a receptive audience that identifies with his work and shares his queer sensibilities. This is largely constituted through online networks and the independent music industry and media, concentrated in the urban southeast. As a consequence, somewhat paradoxically, the condition for Jaloo's success as an Amazonian artist is moving away from the region to a more receptive and privileged, but nevertheless peripheral space. One effect of this move, we argue, is that his reception in the Amazonian region is mediated not by local contacts, but by online resources, as well as by nationally-organized networks of politically-engaged youth. This particular transperipheral projection helps to explain Jaloo's appearance in the Amazonian set in *Rock in Rio 2019*, one of the largest world's music festivals.

**Keywords:** *globalization, sociolinguistic scales, indexicality, identity, hybridity*

## 6. "I Want My Child to Develop Confidence and Self-Esteem!": Parentocracy and Class Aspiration in Singapore

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The present study examines the increasingly prevalent future-readiness discourse observed in the context of parentocracy and trans-class aspiration in Singapore. Future-readiness is promoted by the state in-order to prepare individuals, often students, to be better-equipped for their future endeavors. Parentocracy is an ideology wherein parents invest resources to optimize their children's life opportunities and outcomes. Thus, parents enroll their children in a wide variety of enrichment programmes in-order to secure their children's future and afford opportunities for upward social mobility. In particular, this study investigates how future readiness discourse is employed in texts targeted towards parents of preschoolers.

The data come from an online survey administered to parents of preschool aged children. Based on the following criteria: monthly household income, education, occupation and housing type, three class-based categories, namely, upper (Class-index 1), middle (Class-index 2) and lower (Class-index 3) emerge. Participants across categories display a common top goal for their children, the desire for their child to develop confidence and self-esteem. However, the second most important goal differs between participants in class-index 1 (improving children's career prospects) and class-index 3 (preparing children for school level examinations). This class-based difference suggests that participants in class-index 1 possess long term goals related to children's employment prospects and work towards them from as early as preschool years. In contrast, participants from class-index 3 are more focused on immediately attainable and concrete goals such as school examination preparations. The different goals manifest in the choices for children's enrichment programs: arts-based activities such as painting and music for class-index 1 and school-subject oriented ones like Math and English for class-index 3. Thus, class-index 3 participants see their children's future-readiness to be centered around their success in school examinations. For this group, trans-class aspiration for their children's future-readiness is limited to pragmatic and short-term goals.

**Keywords:** *parentocracy, pre-school enrichment, future readiness, trans-class, social reproduction*