Immigration

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In linguistic anthropology, immigration does not represent a field of study in itself – and with good reason. As numerous scholars have pointed out, "immigration" is a term that reinscribes the perspective of the nation-state. With its prefix, it imposes an image of unidirectional movement, from the outside in, that smuggles in a host of hard-to-shake assimilationist narratives. The prefix does not just blot out the complexity and unpredictability that can mark individual trajectories. Its image of geographic mobility invites conflation with socioeconomic mobility; it evokes narratives of both individual language learning and collective language shift as progressions toward full competence in the standard (see Standard Language(s)). Implicit in all these linearities, of course, is the idea that personal and group allegiances will concomitantly and happily reorient. Thus, a simple metaphor of movement powerfully organizes and unites a whole series of chronotopic assumptions. As a key term englobing an entire social imaginary, "immigration" itself polices the boundaries of the nation-state, positing human movement as a source of difference to be mastered into the polity's overarching frame (see Nation and Nationalism).

All this is by no means to say that linguistic anthropologists have neglected the social issues and dynamics that arise either from the fact of human mobility or from this particular hegemonic vision of it. Indeed, the subdiscipline has honed a powerful toolkit for taking apart "immigration" both ethnographically and conceptually. This entry sketches the strengths and shortcomings of this toolkit as it took shape historically, before reviewing the implications of current research for broader understandings of citizenship, sovereignty, and borders today.

On the one hand, linguistic anthropology resituates immigration within a much wider empirical range of phenomena, from classic colonial situations of language contact and their contemporary transformations (see Language, Globalization, and Colonialism), to migrations within national boundaries, to languages minoritized by redrawn borders (see Minority Languages). "Diaspora" is a major rubric running opposite to immigration, in that it deals with social relations and imaginaries of emigration, a fanning out instead of a funneling in. The nation-state, as recent work on scale foregrounds, is not the only frame for organizing thought on human mobility; many other scales can be at play as actors draw on and reshape them in context, and indeed the nation-state itself has always depended on weaving different scales together complementarily. Thus, a great deal of work that is indispensable for understanding dynamics of immigration from a linguistic anthropological perspective is not about populations characterizable as "immigrant." For instance, a substantial part of the literature on code-switching has focused on Puerto Ricans in the continental United States (e.g. Urciuoli 1996); many of the school-based studies that are likewise standard

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references deal with youths whose parents or even grandparents are the immigrants, not themselves (e.g. Rampton [1995] 2005); and some of the foundational work in the folklore tradition was on Mexican-Americans in south Texas, whose hyphenated status arose not from any geographic movement of theirs, but from colonial conquest (e.g. Paredes 1968).

On the other hand, the subdiscipline has been fiercely dedicated to its part in one of modern anthropology's most foundational projects: to unbundle the conceptual package of the nation-state, in which racial, cultural, and linguistic essences are mapped onto normatively homogeneous populations and their ostensibly proper territories. This conceptual package has doubtless evolved, spawning such apparently contrastive values as multiculturalism and diversity. However, it is perhaps the public preoccupation with, precisely, immigration in so many countries today that speaks loudest to the persistence of the basic model. Thus, anthropology's overall critical project, and the subdiscipline's contribution to it, remains undiminished in urgency.

At present, the analytic toolkit that linguistic anthropology brings to the study of immigration is more robust than ever. Yet the process of interrogation has impressed some of the characteristics of its object onto the conceptual apparatus. Thinking has been unduly patterned by the paradigmatic case of labor migration to the Global North; in particular, an overwhelming ethnographic focus on the United States has made this country's racialized sociolinguistic regime into a general model for grappling with the production of social difference as it relates to histories of transnational movement. Indeed, even the emphasis on social difference is perhaps a product of this lens, for difference is not a natural byproduct of the movement of individuals and populations. A brief review of historical developments in the subdiscipline will help point up some of the conceptual limitations that have derived from this patterning, as well as the emergence of an apparatus capable of moving beyond them.

Historical developments

Linguistic anthropology's toolkit for approaching immigration has its roots in early studies of language contact (e.g. Haugen 1953; see Language Contact; Language Change). These studies revolved around questions inherited from dialectology; they saw in immigrant language practices a window onto processes of linguistic convergence, in contrast to the processes of divergence that dominated the field. Even as they strove to destigmatize immigrant language, they reinstated ideals of linguistic purity based on the idea of codes as abstract systems in the individual's mind, that might be kept separate through exceptional talent and virtue. Nonetheless, they brought to the table the conviction that what were called then "extra-linguistic" factors were of inescapable importance; thus, they began to tune investigation to questions of context and use and of the contrastive "prestige" of linguistic varieties. These were early intimations of the focus on indexicality that has become the bedrock of linguistic anthropological research today: how different linguistic elements, or even "languages" conceived of by speakers as independent wholes, can non-referentially bring different kinds of social meaning into play in situated interaction.

The next major step came with the emergence of variationist sociolinguistics (see Sociolinguistics). At this point, code-switching (see Code-mixing and Code-switching; see also Bilingualism and Multilingualism) moved into the limelight of language-centered questions around migration, where it remained until quite recently. The political energies of the nascent field focused ever more intensely on redeeming these highly stigmatized practices; from early on, scholars argued against what Rosa (2018) has recently identified as ideologies of *languagelessness*, in which speakers who use more than one linguistic code are typed as really mastering none. Early studies of code-switching strove to show that it in fact involves superior linguistic and communicative competence (see Competence, Communicative and Linguistic), and that its regularities as well as the fluidity with which switches can be made mean it should be considered a mode of discourse in itself. By taking race as an independent variable rather than examining how linguistic practice helps constitute it, however, this political tack overlooked the very issues of structural inequality that it sought to address; ultimately, it failed to impact policy or public discourse. Moreover, it worked by idealizing particular forms of bilingual behavior: phenomena like the "interference" of features from one code while speaking another remained marginalized as aberrant, and thus unstudied until decades later.

Paradoxically, then, early work on code-switching helped consolidate, rather than controvert, an overriding sense that a distinctive dialect is a sine qua non for the linguistic performance of ethnic identity. This tendency is not surprising in light of Euro-American ideologies of language and identity; it is not surprising either in the more specific context of the importance to sociolinguistics of work on African American Vernacular English (see African American Languages (AAV, AAEV, Ebonics); note the dignifying – but also reifying – effect of the capitalized proper name). Ironically, this US-inflected lens led to a gaping void in work on just those groups whose spectacular stigmatization was the founding block of US immigration policy. The gap in work on Asian American linguistic practices, which eschew varietal distinctiveness, only began to be filled in in the last decade or so.

Even as the focus on distinctive dialects acted as a blinder, the study of language in interaction was giving rise to more supple analytic possibilities. Blom and Gumperz's (1972) article on code-switching in Norway represented a major step forward in situating non-referential meaning as key; their study brought attention to how, in tandem with other cues like posture or intonation, changes of code could be used to introduce into interaction all kinds of subtleties and momentary shifts of stance. At the same time, they showed, these possibilities remained intimately tied to the larger story of the political economic marginalization of rural Norway. Following on these insights, the 1980s were marked by a flurry of studies that took code-switching decisively out of the realm of variationist sociolinguistics and beyond dialectology-centered questions of language maintenance and shift. This wave of research moved the discussion onto firmly anthropological terrain, where questions about the relation between language use and political economy came to the fore. Though the bulk of it did not focus on immigrant populations, this research remains part of the essential scaffolding through which linguistic anthropologists approach dynamics of immigration.

At this point, the issue of distinctive dialects became first and foremost an issue of indexicality: how stereotypes can link language and ethnicity, turning what speakers understand as separate codes into resources for shaping their relational identities and positions in interaction. In this process, ethnic and linguistic boundaries are constantly refigured. Hybridity is not a given in zones of contact; instead, new purisms may well arise. Questions of etiquette and of accommodation to interlocutors' preferences become key; "prestige" breaks down into a much wider range of possible evaluations of this or that linguistic feature, which must be examined ethnographically. Different dimensions of value may conflict, complicating how we as analysts, just like other participants to interaction, weigh and interpret the linguistic choices we hear or see around us. Finally, all these issues must be understood in light of the particular histories that have shaped groups' political-economic possibilities not just within nation-states but also within international and global configurations of domination and dependency.

Out of this foundational push, then, grew a tremendous and varied field of research that, in tandem with the increasing importance of ethnographic methods for research on language, probed linguistic practice as a key site where people could be observed (re)negotiating their positions in large-scale regimes of social inequality. Urciuoli's (1996) study of Puerto Ricans in New York is emblematic of this trend; it was crucial too for putting racialization front and center. Her account emphasizes the experience of grinding oppression and how it came down, often, to her interlocutors' lack of control over the metacommunicative frame in their encounters with powerful others. On the whole, though, the stronger accent has been on the creativity of people's responses to their structural predicament and their ability to contest the ideological straitjackets imposed on them. In this conversation, ethnographies of the United States rose again to prominence – echoing, perchance, with national predilections for narratives of ingenuity. The staple of much linguistic anthropological work on minority language use – and perhaps especially that of groups branded as "immigrant" – remains the everyday practices that performatively refigure intertwined borders of language, race, ethnicity, class, and national belonging.

Slowly, code-switching emerged as a fertile site for deconstructing the premises borne in its very name. The entire idea of distinct codes became more and more evidently an ideological and institutional project requiring massive upkeep, and the study of "switching" increasingly came to focus on areas of overlap, such as the observance of grammatical rules in both codes at once, or segments of speech that, strategically, cannot be assigned exclusively to just one code. In parallel, Rampton's ([1995] 2005) study of "crossing" (which was important in establishing the emphasis on creativity) focused on how youths draw on linguistic forms marked as corresponding to ethnic groups not their own; as Shankar (2008) underlines, people can feel at home with a tremendous range of out-group linguistic resources, and the identities they index cannot be reduced to any self-evident binary. Thus, to grasp multiple boundaries as they shift moment to moment, and to deduce their implications for large-scale sociopolitical formations, has implied a long-term labor of breaking down and complicating the indexicalities involved in what is often delicately layered and deliberately ambiguous linguistic practice.

One of the most influential contributions here has been Hill's (1998) work on Mock Spanish in the United States (see Language and Race/Ethnicity). She demonstrates not only the variability in what such forms index to different audiences but their dual indexicality, projecting at once desirable qualities onto the Anglos who deploy them and profoundly negative qualities onto Spanish speakers. The forms' racist meanings remain covert, not just unacknowledged by members of the dominant group but by and large unrecognizable to them. This kind of inquiry into how the indexical use of language differentially and relationally places and binds distinct social types has culminated in widespread interest in the broader organization of "indexical orders."

Dick (2011) offers the term as a way of conceptualizing the fact that the social personae indexed in language use are differently valorized and, indeed, hierarchically interrelated. In her usage, indexical orders are regimes of indexicality organized at different scales – for instance, that of the nation-state. Her proposal, though, is indebted to Silverstein's (2003) original and rather different coinage. Probing how situated interaction sustains or shifts large-scale social regimes, Silverstein highlights the importance of ideologically informed metapragmatic negotiations of what the interaction at hand is and what roles are involved in it. Without attending to the metapragmatic shaping of indexical meanings, he argues, descriptions that remain focused on first-order indexicalities (for instance, an accent that indicates a foreign origin) end up reifying the macro-social order that is, in fact, at play and at stake in interaction. Indexical order thus breaks apart any naturalized confidence in the existence of distinctive dialects, and shines the spotlight instead on the complex social process by which they are regimented into recognizability and interactional efficacy along with the social activities and personae they index – themselves always relationally imbricated in a wider sociological imaginary.

Complementing indexical order (in both senses), the concept of enregisterment has also been enormously influential. The original discussion was over the formation of registers out of disparate linguistic elements that, through their co-occurrence, come to be understood as forming a set. Increasingly, though, linguistic anthropologists are approaching enregisterment in broader semiotic terms; it provides a more precise view of phenomena like the "conflation" of race, class, and language (Urciuoli 1996). Indeed, processes of enregisterment are responsible for the alignments not just of elements of phenotype with those of language as complementary indexes of a racialized persona, but of an infinite range of such elements, including attire, grooming, food, or whatever other signs can be marshaled under the banner of a living stereotype. Recent scholarly interest in materiality has enriched this approach. With semiotic enregisterment, the transition is complete from simply arguing against the ideological bundle of the nation-state to unpacking how the bundling of features occurs in practice. This level of conceptual generality offers new possibilities for linking and contrasting the linguistic regimentation of transborder mobilities around the globe.

As concepts, indexical order and enregisterment help clearly situate "immigration" as part of the uneven and ongoing circulatory spread of the nation-state as a modular form. Contra a strong trend in migration studies, a semiotic approach does not assume there is anything inherently contestatory about human mobility; after all, global regimes and nation-states themselves marshal and depend on the constant territorial

reshuffling of populations. Instead, a more tightly focused ethnographic lens locates the rub in the problem of how semiotic sets form or do not form that can sustain the kinds of indexical orders implicit in an imaginary of immigration. "Commensuration" (Carruthers 2017) is an emerging rubric for discussing the production of similarity and difference within such orders. In the United States, racial indexicality has been the main mechanism for othering immigrants – but ideologies of ethnic commonality with migrants, as in the case of Indonesians in Malaysia, do not mean a full-blown crisis discourse on "illegal immigration," along with its attendant growth in border policing, cannot take root there too. Such discourses and institutional programs spread globally thanks in great part to US efforts to recruit and pressure other countries into conformity with its own model of border enforcement. How such changes play out in situ, however, can vary tremendously.

The US-dominated tradition of thought on indexical orders can travel fairly well when the case at hand also involves labor migrations across borders that, like the United States', emblematize and consolidate racial, linguistic, and economic contrasts. These contrasts may be more or less stark, more or less heavily ideologized, but much of their interest derives precisely from the careful specification of each case's historical and contextual particularity. Just so, the boom of interest in "superdiversity," though originally presented as an orientation to emerging social forms spurred by massive increases in global mobility, is perhaps better grasped as an effect (and policy-directed shaper) of a reconfiguration at a regional, European scale of older politico-linguistic ideologies and regimes. Indexical orders thus begin to appear much more various than the US paradigm may lead us to imagine, even as they remain related through historical processes of circulation. As the range of recognized relations between linguistic practice and geopolitical borders expands, questions emerge that begin to move beyond indexicality as tethered to negotiations of identity.

In the tendency to treat indexicality more in terms of self-declaration than interested action, US identity politics may again be an influence. Dick (2018) herself is perhaps most explicit in reminding us that linguistic practice is not just about social positionalities, but fundamentally involves *doing* things with words. Once attention turns to the ricochets of response to first-order indexes as people notice them, react to them, and manipulate their own production of them, questions of identity can appear only as embroiled in projects of varying scope, whether personal, institutional, or public. These are old insights, if we return to the efforts of the 1980s to bring the study of language and of political economy together. It seems, though, once again worth asking, emphatically, how the tools with which we ethnographically parse linguistic and, now, semiotic practice can transform understandings of such objects of general theoretical and social interest as sovereignty, citizenship, and geopolitical borders today.

Current directions

Linguistic anthropologists are taking on this challenge in a variety of ways. Das's (2016) plaited tale of Canadian Tamil linguistic projects, caught up in Anglo-Franco rivalries

that date back to colonial times, makes clear that empire is a scalar force not to be forgotten; her expanded lens also helps bring into focus the capitalist commodification of linguistic forms, thus decentering the duality between state-sponsored visions and minority contestations. Chávez (2017) draws on scholarly traditions around performance and expressive culture to hone in on how musical practice can build an embodied critique of alienation and belonging in both Mexico and the United States. Dick (2018) too turns to Mexico to argue that migration to the United States has been integral to nation-building, as a way of stratifying citizenship and denying full recognition and rights to the vast majority of the population. By showing how migration shapes life imaginaries for non-migrants, Dick flips the questions usually asked about immigration on their head. Her argument lays out the ineluctably chronotopic imaginaries (see Chronotope) that, embedded in everyday talk, shape and reshape people's literal and projected movements back and forth across international borders. Mobility emerges not as a blunt fact of going from one place to another, but as an immensely complex semiotic phenomenon, to which linguistic practice is key. Thus, the chronotopic dynamics of discourse reframe our grasp of geopolitical borders and their role in regimenting and articulating indexical orders of different sorts.

Writing of Latinos in Israel, Paz (2018) takes as his starting point discussions of graduated sovereignty and differentiated citizenship in sociocultural anthropology in order to show how these hinge on the interplay of Israeli and Latino voices. Publicness, in Paz's argument, is indispensable to grasping sovereignty and citizenship in practice. The intimate process of becoming a non-citizen in Israel – indeed, of becoming a deportable subject – is unavoidably mediated by a contradictory relation to the voices of Israeli publicness, which seep into Latinos' speech and transform it from the inside out. Such uncanny and ambivalent exchange constitutes, finally, not just the non-citizen, but the citizen as well.

In linguistic anthropological thinking on "immigration," ambivalence has been a recurrent theme, from the ambiguity of specific segments of discourse as belonging to one code or another, to the multiple indexicalities that can inhere in a single speech act, to the racial ambiguities different groups have found themselves caught up in. Though the idea of racial ambiguity was developed in relation to Asian Americans, Rosa's (2018) work on Latinxs in the United States suggests it may be of broader relevance. Rosa shows Latinxs walking a tightrope between mainstream media's wildly contradictory representations of them: at one moment an up-and-coming demographic full of promise; the next, an ominous source of chaos and degradation. This undecidability runs straight back to basic tensions of inclusion and exclusion in liberal frameworks for belonging and governance – tensions intimately tied to the ambivalent absoluteness through which sovereignty has been defined, as a mix of violence and reason, arbitrarily setting up and then demolishing its own limits. Some of the most far-reaching implications of the toolkit linguistic anthropology has built for thinking through "immigration" may come from the potential to redefine citizenship, sovereignty, and even inequality more broadly in terms of the ambivalences through which they take shape on the ground.

Already, linguistic anthropology has forced a rethinking of geopolitical borders by building a methodology and an analytic for seeing how the social boundaries they monumentalize actually come to be at stake in a huge range of sites, from mass media discourse to personal narratives, from schools to service encounters, from casual conversation to storefront signage. The subdiscipline, however, has had less to say about state practices of gatekeeping in themselves (the main exception is the Europe-based discussion on asylum procedures). These state rituals authoritatively brand individuals as immigrants "legal" or "illegal"; their role is crucial in concatenating wider processes of social differentiation, and they deserve closer attention from linguistic anthropologists. Even so, it is clear that any consideration of checkpoint encounters, sea or desert passages, bureaucratic *via crucis*, deportation hearings, and so forth must be situated within the extensive and multifaceted grasp the subdiscipline has built around how "the immigrant" as a category is formed and lived. Linguistic anthropology demonstrates just how pervasive and insidiously subtle gatekeeping can be when differences are naturalized and boundary-policing is taken up as a social mandate; it shows the far-reaching effects and the dialogic layering of response for those caught within the category as for the societies that have made them what they are. This is the great strength of linguistic anthropology's contribution to interdisciplinary debates on "immigration," and it calls for an equally performative project to undo and remake our contemporary political orders as we build them out of the most elementary practices of human communication.

SEE ALSO: Bilingualism and Multilingualism; Chronotope; Code-mixing and Code-switching; Language Change; Language Contact; Language, Globalization, and Colonialism; Language and Race/Ethnicity; Minority Languages; Nation and Nationalism; Sociolinguistics; Standard Language(s)

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