1 Introduction

Historically, issues of migration have not featured centrally in anthropology or linguistic anthropology. The discipline was orientated towards studying eminently stable human groups as settled in specific territories. Some early anthropologists developed lengthy and sophisticated descriptions of their communities that sometimes obviated the fact that they were significantly affected by migration. The example of Margaret Mead is widely quoted as she silenced the significance of migration from the Papua-New Guinean groups she researched, even when it affected about half of the adult male population (see Brettell 2003). This state of affairs significantly changed, however, during the last decades of the twentieth century where issues of mobility and displacement, migration flows, and diasporic communities have attracted interest across the social sciences and the humanities. Interest in issues of migration has correspondingly increased, and sociolinguistic and linguistic anthropological research on migration has become an important area of the field, one that is seen as central to understand the role of languages, and linguistic ideologies, in contemporary social change.

In this chapter, I shall not provide a general overview of the field of language and migration but touch upon one dimension that I believe is central to it, which is the nation-state. Taken both as administrative apparatus and as the imagined community, the nation-state provides the means to examine both the experience and social conditions of immigrant communities, as well as the very perspective from which migration phenomena have been studied. To put it in another way, it is the nation-state that defines particular people as immigrants but also the angle from which they are supposed to be observed. This is, of course, problematic, and worth reflecting about. I will begin section 2 by briefly defining the scope of this chapter, which focuses on immigration and not on migration processes more generally. After this, I will present three key concepts of the field: community, integration, and linguistic capital. In section 3 I will provide examples of studies on immigration that exemplify the significance of these concepts in present-day immigration contexts. And in section 4 I will seek to bring all threads together into a reflection on how research on language and immigration is presently transforming the traditional fundamental principles of sociolinguistics and linguistic anthropology, particularly through the debates on multiliteracies and superdiversity.
2 Definitions

2.1 Migration, Emigration, Immigration

In the social sciences “migration” refers generally to the process of people moving in search for work or specific resources, such as arable land, animals to hunt or, more recently, employment. It generally involves a change of residence to a new place seen as “away from home.” The concepts of “emigration” and “immigration” are directly connected to it; but are different in a substantial and important way, basically as they pivot not on the persons but on the territories: “emigration” is the phenomenon as seen from the territories that migrants leave, “immigration” from those they settle in. Although these terms are not used in regular and consistent ways, each of the three tends to express slightly different orientations. “Migration” is more generic and is often applied to studies that take up the perspective of the people who move, and often while the moving is in progress or very recent. “Emigration” and “immigration,” on the contrary, lean towards how migrants affect communities or how they are perceived or treated by their communities of origin or arrival.

So we may enter migration research with substantially different interests in mind that will determine the questions we ask. For example, we may wish to understand how displacement is experienced by particular groups, how they develop strategies to adjust and adapt to a new environment while struggling to maintain a sense of continuity with their former livelihoods and cultural practices. This is to adopt centrally the perspective of the migrant as she deals with new contexts where people have different ideologies, social hierarchies, allegiances, and social relations at all levels. This is very much about what it means to live between (or over) two worlds (or more). Alternatively, we may have an interest in understanding how migration is experienced and organized in the specific communities where people decide to leave, whether it is seasonal, temporal, or permanent as seen from the local perspective, and what investments the local community develops upon those who leave: do they expect remittances? Do they try to control migrants morally or economically? Do they endeavor to keep in contact? Do migrants play a role in local politics and cultural practices? And finally, receiving societies normally worry about the “impact” of incoming migrants on the multiple aspects of social and institutional life that they may allegedly unsettle, from how urban spaces are occupied or social services are used by immigrants, to what implications the new population has in the definition of citizenship and national identity. The keyword “integration” is commonly recruited to cover the full range of these possible “issues” connected with immigration. “Integration” generally carries an assumption that immigrants should somehow align themselves with the ways of the locals, such that it contributes to significantly steering research and political agendas in ways that are much more predefined, fixed, often biased than in the two previous perspectives.

2.2 Migration in Linguistic Anthropology

The linguistic anthropological perspective on migration basically focuses on the linguistic and sociolinguistic aspects of the process. It can therefore explore how the linguistic repertoire of migrants develops and changes as they move or after settling, and also how their experience is discursively constructed in different contexts and in relation to different issues. For example, Zentella’s (1997) seminal work on Puerto Ricans in New York might be counted as a good example of a study where the perspective of the migrant community occupies center-stage. Although it may be classified as “immigration” research, in the sense that it focuses on a well-established migrant community, it is very much organized in terms of how New York Puerto
Ricans use different varieties of Spanish and English (including so-called Spanglish, when the two are highly hybridized), how they value their complex repertoire and how they use it as they adjust or react to a social and institutional environment characterized by racism, economic exploitation and urban/spatial segregation. On the other hand, Hill and Hill’s (1986) classical ethnography of Nahuatl, communities in Mexico can be regarded as a good example of a study of a community affected by emigration, that is, by the classical processes of urbanization that attract the young to rapidly expanding cities across the globe. As has been the case with many linguistic minorities, for the Nahuatl emigration became associated with the adoption of the dominant language, Spanish, which was inextricably tied to the appropriation of new “modern” or “urban” ways of life. In this context, Nahuatl-Spanish bilingualism was founded on an unequal hierarchy in which Nahuatl ways of speaking became progressively obsolete as the younger generations were less fluent and less acquainted with the genres and grammatical structures associated with former Nahuatl social relations.

Immigration research is often particularly sensitive to the specific orientation of each researcher and the ways in which immigration issues are connected with their life trajectories. Researchers may come from migrant families themselves, or from places that have experienced social and political contentions around “immigration.” Not that there is anything wrong with this, but it is important for researchers to be aware of the conditions that bring them to study immigration in specific ways. More often than not, these research interests are not strictly personal but social and institutional: “immigration” may be an established topic of interest for their government, their research institutions, specific professional groups, or society at large. And this political interest may even lie behind the grant that is funding the research in the first place, and may significantly inform the specific issues addressed and the research questions.

The linguistic dimension of immigration is overwhelmingly associated with issues of ethnicity, nationality, and citizenship; hence the stress on the “nation-state” in this chapter. When immigrants settle in a given place in (what are perceived to be) significant numbers, different social actors and institutions begin to comment and pose questions as to how the incomers should be “managed,” and by doing so they refer implicitly or explicitly to ideas of what constitutes a community and how language is connected with community belonging. Not that this community must necessarily refer to the nation-state (see below for a comment on the notion of “community” in linguistic anthropology). But although the state is not the sole dimension of belonging, as we shall see, it represents the ultimate “older brother” that is often expected to “set things straight” in the neighborhood. And this usually involves policies through which nation-states can deeply affect the lives of immigrants: citizenship policies (work and residence permits), social services and healthcare, education, and so on. So for the time being, let us note this: linguistic anthropological research on immigration can basically be presented as a long contention on the ways in which language does or should constitute community belonging and the consequences thereof for all parties, and that this contention most often takes place in the public spaces and institutions that project the national community and its state institutions in multiple forms.

2.3 Keywords in the Sociolinguistics of Immigration: Community, Integration, and Linguistic Capital

Sociologist John Urry (2000) has pointed out that sociology often “parasites” its issues and concepts from social movements and contentions. One consequence of this is that sociologists cannot claim full control over many of their objects and concepts and must learn to live with their fuzzy boundaries, displacements, and the specific political investments of their own actors.
Pierre Bourdieu (1991) also provides pointed reflections on how the meaning of politically “hot” terms (such as “popular”) follows the logic of the very contentions in which these terms are brought about. Raymond Williams (1985) argued that following the semantic variations of “keywords” provided a good perspective to understand social struggles and change. It follows from this that some of the terms and concepts we use to understand social problems are problematic themselves because they are precisely part of the social problem we intend to address and the object of contention amongst the social actors we intend to examine. In relation to immigration research, “community” and “integration” often constitute the focal point of this contradiction.

The concept of “community,” i.e. “speech community,” has a long history in sociolinguistics and linguistic anthropology. The concept was adopted and adapted from linguistics by redefining the object of study from “language” (as an abstract repertoire of lexicogrammatical resources) to “speech” (the actual practices of everyday communication). At first it was assumed that “speech communities” would be groups displaying the same forms of linguistic behavior. But the evidence of diversity found in the contexts studied led to widen the scope to those who somehow shared the same evaluations of language behavior even when their actual language use was not the same. In the long run, however, researchers increasingly found further difficulties in operationalizing the concept, as contentions on language norms and values (i.e. linguistic ideological struggles) are also common. Later, the notion of “community of practice” (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 1992) was gradually regarded more favorably, not because the term “practices” is clearer than “speech,” but basically because it gives researchers more flexibility to work out contextually, often together with the subjects, what constitutes the community under study (see Duranti 1997, Morgan 2004, and McElhinny 2012 for more detailed discussions of this idea’s trajectory).

The heart of the matter is not so much to arrive at the “correct” definition of communities in the abstract or of any community in particular; but rather address the issue of how communities are brought into existence, how membership is defined, and what social actors and/or institutions have the power to decide what counts for the community; and, of course, what role language plays in all these processes.

“Integration” is a closely related notion that steers our gaze towards the social problems associated with community belonging. It brings up the fundamental issue that, in some contexts and moments, belonging or not belonging to a particular community may have important implications for specific actors, such as providing or denying access to resources and social relations. In the context of immigration research, “integration” refers to the multiple ramifications involved in belonging to the national community in whose territory immigrants have come to live. As a consequence, immigration and integration are by definition matters of state, namely the nation-state, the sovereign political unit that (re)presents itself as an expression of the nation and, at the same time, brings the nation into being by ruling it and by managing it. Immigration affects the very definition of the community that legitimizes the existence of the state. And given that, as Michel Foucault (1991) has argued, the prime mission of the state is to manage its population, it follows that immigration becomes a key object of governmentality, that is, the art of managing populations according to principles of rationality. So whenever we talk about integration, what we are actually doing is referring to the multiple interconnections between how members of a nation (and specially the social groups that identify with it) imagine themselves to be, and the ways in which the nation-state seeks to sustain its own sense of coherence by incorporating, or not, immigrant populations as subjects and objects of rule, as well as members of the national body. Most importantly, this means that “integration” cannot be treated as a simple technical concept, no matter how officially established its meaning might be for local institutions. Rather, it will typically be a central object of debate and struggle in immigration contexts.
Now language is almost invariably implicated in these contentions over national belonging, and we shall provide an array of examples below of what this means in practice. It is important to stress that issues of integration, despite their connections with national consciousness and state policy, do not just implicate national institutions and administrations. What makes integration an important issue is the fact that it pops up in multiple shapes and at multiple levels in the form of tensions in human relationships that visibly involve persons as members of specific ethnic or racial categories: exclusion, confrontation, ridicule, misunderstandings, segregation, marginalization, distrust, and hate can arise at the level of families, neighborhoods, youth cliques, school mates, workplaces, social services, commercial relations, private dealings, media representations, state legislation, police and judicial procedures, and so on. What is interesting, and sometimes deeply troubling, is to learn how nationalist and nation-state ideologies (with their linguistic components) hover like an omniscient big brother in the remotest corners of a city and the subtlest details of social relations and communicative practices of the contemporary citizen. If we contribute to understanding why and how this happens, we shall certainly do a big service for our fellow students and fellow humans.

Finally, the notion of “linguistic capital” needs to be explained in order to follow the explanations and interpretations of examples in the next section. The concept is borrowed from Bourdieu (1991), who devised a theoretical model that has become commonplace in much sociolinguistic research. It has allowed researchers to leave behind functionalist perspectives, whereby specific social practices were seen as simply contributing to specific forms of social organization, or behavioral perspectives whereby practices were seen as the expression of inner states (such as attitudes) that provided reactions to external stimuli. Bourdieu sees social actors basically as pursuing the accumulation of economic and cultural capital through social exchanges. From this perspective, any social artifact or social practice can be regarded as possessing a value that is open to negotiation in social fields operating in similar ways to markets. Seen from a linguistic viewpoint, language forms and linguistic practices have a value that depends in complex ways on the categories of speakers and social practices by which and in which they can be mobilized to conduct social exchanges. Thus, a standard register of a language used by the wealthier social classes in their social and professional lives acquires a higher social value than a “dialect” used by people connected to a rural economy. This means that societies have by definition a linguistic hierarchy, and hence we can begin to appreciate that immigrants, as they settle, characteristically enter a “socioeconomically charged” linguistic space. When they settle in a new context, the linguistic capital they possessed in their place of origin is, to put it in this way, reevaluated according to local hierarchies, most often devaluated, such that immigrants must somehow endeavor to acquire the linguistic capital that is locally needed to access symbolic and economic goods. This linguistic capital is supposed to play an important role in people’s forms of socialization, so that it may determine their opportunities of access to specific social spaces, employment, and categories of people. As we shall see, the “nation-state” is again an important actor in the creation of the “market conditions” for the evaluation (and devaluation) of linguistic capital and hence provide a key element to understanding the linguistic challenges faced by immigrants.

3 The Linguistic Articulation of Immigration in Social Life

I am going to provide three examples of how anthropological research throws light on the ways in which nation-state linguistic ideologies constitute social practices at various levels affecting immigrants: 1) in Madrid schools (Spain), how teachers claim the right to monitor the language choices of Moroccan and Chinese students; 2) in New York, how the bilingual speech of
Latinos is constructed as problematic; and 3) amongst Filipino domestic workers in Singapore, whose English proficiency is constructed as an international commodity, both by the state of the Philippines and the Singaporean recruiting agencies.

3.1 Spanish as “Respeto”

The school is by far the most popular research context where issues of immigration are examined. Whether they are public or private, schools have a very direct link with state institutions that provide national curricula and hence project officially sanctioned ideas about how children become citizens, including the way in which citizenship is associated with the (national) legitimate language. Schools are also the context where the young population (i.e., that in which cultural reproduction is supposed to happen) is most accessible, that is, open to observation and evaluation in ways that are not unlike the routine observation and evaluation already carried out by teachers, inspectors, and other institutions. And finally, precisely because of these reasons, states themselves provide ample means for teacher training and research centers to continuously monitor and improve the conduct of education.

Linguistic anthropologist Luisa Martín Rojo (2013) has for many years conducted ethno-graphic observations in Madrid schools, particularly in classrooms with significant numbers of children whose parents have recently moved to Spain from all over the world. In the example provided, the main groups of newcomers were from Morocco and China, and respectively spoke popular Arabic or Amazigh and Mandarin or other Chinese languages. Transcript 1 will be used to illustrate one of the ways in which a teacher can act as agent of articulation of a specific linguistic regime connected with nation-state ideologies. In the segment, Lucia, the teacher, intervened to regulate the use of languages in the classroom, basically to prevent Moroccan students from speaking any of their home languages:

Transcript 1

Lucía: si aquí en clase yo les digo que no hablen en árabe porque · · porqueeee claro · · but here in class I tell them not to talk in Arabic because · · because of course · · SiQing nooo · lo entiende · y es de mala educación SiQing /the Chinese student/ doesn’t understand · and it’s rude.

Nadya: [es que profe · mira [but teacher · look

Lucía: & claro & of course

Researcher: & a ver & let’s see

Nadya: & nosotras QUEREMOS↑ [hablamos español We WANT↑ [we talk in Spanish

Student 1: &no

Student 2: [hablamos español we talk in Spanish

Fatima: =pero =but
Nadya: & un tiempo / no me acuerdo de esa palabra y hablo con ella {a Fátima} árabe & once / I don’t remember that word and I talk to her {pointing at Fátima} in Arabic

Lucía: =pero es que- / pues NO lo dices o lo dices de otra manera- porque insistooo por =but the thing is- / DON’T say it or say it otherwise because, I insist, for respeto a SiQuing respect towards SiQuing

Fátima: )))((TÚ NO PUEDES)) ((YOU CAN’T))

Lucía: =no pue- / pues os estáis [calladas] =you can’t- / well then stay [quiet]

Fátima: )))((vamos))) / a respetamos todos [profe] ((let’s)) all respect each other [teacher]

Lucía: [por re-] pues por [respeto] [for re-] / well for [respect]

Nadya: [no solo] yoooo= [not just] meee=

Lucía: &no no / pero por respeto a SiQuing no debéis hablar en árabe= &no no / but for respect for SiQing you mustn’t talk in Arabic=

Fátima: =sí yes

Lucía: =& EN CLASE [cuando] & IN CLASS [when]

Nadya: [sí y] TÚ también profe {se oyen risas} [yes and] YOU too teacher {laughter is heard}

Nadya: NO/NO / TÚ también tienes que RESPETAR profe NO/NO / YOU too must show RESPECT teacher

Lucía: pero si YO os respeto! but I DO respect you.

Nadya: no solo YO profe not just ME teacher

Lucía: yo os RESPECTO / pero si estás aquí para aprender español // pues os tendré I do RESPECT you / but if you are here to learn Spanish// [then I’ve got que decir que habléis español] to tell you to speak Spanish]

Nadya: { [كأتعصبني، كاتطلع لي في راسي ، ها هي بات، أيها هو بات] } {[ay, now I’m starting to get fed up / it’s driving me mad]}

Lucía: Eeh / ves? {risas} Eeh / you see? {laughter}
As we can appreciate, the event consisted of a metapragmatic discussion about what language it is appropriate to use in the classroom context. Moroccan student Nadya argued that she preferred to resort to Arabic at specific moments to get assistance from her Moroccan school mates. The teacher Lucía strongly opposed this idea, arguing that this excluded Chinese students; Fatima and Nadya disagreed.

When encountering circumstances like this it is important to appreciate that a high degree of ambivalence is very common. Although it is perfectly possible for a teacher to scold a class for using languages other than Spanish on the grounds that “this is Spain” (with which direct reference to the nation-state dimension would be made), such an argument is, rather, usually reached through a complex evaluation of different, more ambivalent events across many contexts. Thus, in another extract from the same context, Martín Rojo observes that the teacher also censured Moroccan girls because they grouped together in the playground and spoke Arabic. In this case, the problem was, reportedly, that they were not using opportunities to practice Spanish with Spanish-speaking school mates. When different arguments are brought out in different contexts there is a case for suspecting more unspoken, implicit motivations, often those of which the subjects involved are not fully aware. Martín Rojo further observes that the school operated with the logic of systematically displacing or hiding “other” languages from public view, such that the specific linguistic and cultural skills that foreign students brought in were never made collectively visible. Thus, while pedagogical principles generally encourage building on the children’s experience to construct learning, in that context foreign children were required to shield from view all aspects of their linguistic and cultural background that was perceived as a threat to a public space operating in Spanish.

This is one of the many ways in which the value of linguistic capital is negotiated in ambivalent and nuanced ways. The argument explicitly offered by the teacher was expressed as a question of “respect,” namely a matter of politeness referring to the need to leave the communication channel open for bystanders to participate. The same argument was often used by Spanish nationalists in Catalonia in the late 1970s to prevent people from using the local language, Catalan, in public spaces. There is evidence, however, that such linguistic regimentation is also applied to speakers of Latin American varieties of Spanish, which, as Corona et al. (2012) showed, were also treated as inappropriate for use in student exercises. In all cases, what we see is a negotiation about the specific linguistic resources that can eventually be mobilized in specific situations, which is one way of expressing how a given linguistic variety is evaluated in a given context. In this sense, Martin Rojo also points out in her work that the ideologies that support nation-state hegemony were much more generally accepted in the past, while now they are being increasingly contested, such that we find different types of linguistic capital in competition in different contexts. She considers that the disagreement expressed (albeit in backstage comments in Arabic) by Moroccan girls in this extract is an example of such contentions.

### 3.2 Spanish as Stigma: Growing up Bilingual in New York City

Ana-Celia Zentella’s (1997) seminal work on the Spanish-speaking communities in the United States, and particularly on the Puerto Rican community in New York City, provides an
excellent illustration of the linguistic challenges often faced by immigrants. Her research has three major strengths: 1) it is based on an extensive and intensive ethnography that focuses on people’s daily lives across different contexts from the home to the neighborhood; 2) it has an unusual temporal dimension as she sustained her relationship with her research subjects over many years; and 3) it provides a wealth of description of bilingual talk that can then be analyzed in an adequately contextualized form.

Zentella’s study basically focused on 20 families that lived in a small area of the city that she called “El Bloque,” and complemented her participant observation with the audio and video recording of everyday talk. The main thrust of her research has to do with confronting the stigmatization suffered by Nuyoricans, a term NY Puerto Ricans used, half ironically, to refer to themselves; and she focuses in particular on the stigmatization of the speech of this community. This discredited linguistic reputation occurred at many levels and had important consequences: basically, it contributed to reinforcing racial stereotypes that portrayed Puerto Ricans as a community whose members generally failed to learn “proper” English, acquire educational qualifications, and, overall, integrate culturally and economically with American social life.

The linguistic stigmatization of Nuyoricans illustrates the multiple ways in which language in contemporary societies can be treated with discriminatory effects though not necessarily with discriminatory intentions. At the heart of the matter lie attitudes towards hybridity, that is, the fact that bilinguals use in a routine fashion resources connected with two languages and in ways that are unexpected from the point of view of monolinguals. Thus the speech of NY Puerto Ricans, Zentella observes, could be depicted as a faulty Spanish when their pronunciation or vocabulary did not coincide with that of Standard Peninsular Spanish, when they used “Barbarisms” (e.g. mainly expressions taken from English) or simply switched between Spanish and English for reasons of politeness or expressiveness. And their speech was also regarded as problematic when their English displayed traces of Spanish pronunciation or grammar. “Code-switching,” or “Spanglish,” as the community refers to it, is for Zentella the linguistic practice that best represents both the ways in which Puerto Ricans lived between and within the two linguistic spaces (Spanish and English) and also the ways in which this bilingualism was used to stigmatize them. Code-switching refers to the combination in speech of linguistic resources associated with different varieties. Zentella observes that all the bilingual features of Nuyoricans’ speech were often taken by educators, authorities, and people in general as evidence that they did not properly master either of the two languages. Bilingual practices expressed from this viewpoint a “linguistic deficit,” which was then used to justify or explain away the poor socioeconomic conditions in which members of this community lived.

She counter-argues this stigma and the stereotypes by showing via her data that code-switching was overwhelmingly used as an expressive resource to produce conversational effects, negotiate speaker roles, produce changes of footing and generally signal a sense of belonging to “both worlds,” i.e. to the Spanish- and English-speaking community. Transcripts 2 and 3 provide extracts from Zentella’s analysis: with a sizable corpus of code-switching instances, she documented and classified them in different expressive functions, in these cases, “topic shift” and “quotations.”

Transcript 2

Topic shift (n=73, 9%): The speaker marks a shift in topic with a shift in language, with no consistent link between topic and language.

Example:  
`vamo |h| a preguntar’e / it’s raining!`  
let’s go ask her
Transcript 3

Quotations, direct and indirect (n=70, 9%): The speaker recalls speech and reports it directly or indirectly, not necessarily in the language used by the person quoted.

Example: él me dijo / call the police / pero yo dije no voy a llamar a la policía na(-da).
he told me       but I said I am not going to call the pólice nothin

Zentella (1997: 94)

She also provides examples of future functions such as “Declarative/question shift,” “Future referent check and/or bracket,” “Checking,” “Role shift,” “Rhetorical ask and answer,” and “Narrative frame break – evaluation or coda.”

In short, NY Puerto Ricans spontaneously develop a bilingual repertoire that serves multiple and subtle expressive purposes but is regarded as problematic by official institutions around them and becomes generally stigmatized in the country. The ongoing debates on “Spanglish” – one of the ways to name and often disparage such bilingual registers – illustrates the fact that Puerto Ricans in the US confront a profoundly rooted monolingual ideology that regards the boundaries between languages as sacred and hence considers linguistic hybridity a kind of social malaise. In her study, Zentella documents the multiple experiences of Puerto Ricans at school and in social life, where they face these attitudes even when, in most cases, English is clearly their predominant everyday language and they speak it as fluently as anyone else. Their stigmatization affects their performance at school, and often in bilingual programs too because these are also inspired by a monolingual ideology that forces students to keep languages separate. A telling case was provided by a girl diagnosed with a speech disorder in which common features of Nuyoricans’ bilingual style were taken as evidence of her problematic condition.

Zentella does not explicitly engage in a critique of the nation-state and the ideologies it constitutes, as such, but her work is sufficiently rich to bring it into this discussion. First, there is the obvious, though often invisible, problem of who gets categorized as an immigrant. As she pointedly documents, the Puerto Rican community is relatively old in New York, dating from the beginning of the twentieth century. The flow has never stopped for extended periods of time, which means that the community is characterized by the coexistence of longer-standing and more recent immigrants, who often roughly correspond with higher use of English or of Spanish. In any case, the scene begs the question of how long, or through how many generations, one’s status as “immigrant” or member of an “immigrant-related” community endures socially, even when citizenship status is the same as those classified as “locals,” given Puerto Rico’s status as a US territory. The same question can of course be expanded to the wider Hispanic community in the United States, which includes people from very diverse backgrounds: Cuban exiles; local Chicanos; Spanish-speaking, native-born Americans in Texas and California; and new immigrants from Mexico and other Latin American countries. The term “Hispanic” itself thus provides not so much a description of a given human group, but actually a range of racial and cultural categories connected to people and practices that rest uneasily within the hegemonic images of what constitutes (US) American national identity. Indeed, as Zentella (2003) points out in later works, it is this culturally hegemonic (White) America that generally develops and disseminates stereotypes about Spanish speakers, their languages and the social and linguistic criteria by which they are to be judged. This is another way of saying that it is White America that is in control of the national linguistic economy and thus determines the value of the different forms of linguistic capital present in the territory. And the criteria of evaluation basically rely on the monolingual ideology that has been constitutive of the modern capitalist state, whereby national communities were homologous to language communities,
speakers were monolingual, and languages were bounded structures and repertoires that suffered if “foreign” linguistic material “entered” their space.

3.3 Workers between States

Beatriz Lorente’s (2007, 2012) study of the market in domestic workers in Singapore will allow us to exemplify added layers of complexity to the sociolinguistics of migration. First, in the increasingly globalized logics of markets and politics, states retain powerful means to act, despite having lost some degree of control. Second, immigration studies have traditionally been very “NATO-centered,” but powerful migration flows take place outside these areas that require studying too. Third, a gender perspective on migration is also essential to understand how inequalities on a global scale operate in terms that connect access to wealth, race and gender, in complex ways.

Lorente (2007) studied the experiences in Singapore of foreign domestic workers (FDWs) from the Philippines, i.e. women working as house maids, or child or elderly carers. In Singapore, as in many industrialized countries, the fact that women have gone into paid employment has created a big demand for household assistants or “domestic workers,” that is, workers that take up the types of (formerly unpaid) work that women used to perform in families. A local industry of “maid agencies” has developed in Singapore to act as brokers between the immigrants and their prospective employers. These agencies basically conduct standardized routines to screen candidates (commonly young Filipino or Indonesian women), establish wage levels and work conditions, publicize offers, liaise with employers, and manage visa procedures. An important characteristic of this arrangement is that most domestic workers get hired before they leave their homes. The Singaporean recruitment agencies in fact liaise with Philippine agencies, who, for profit, assist local Filipino workers to find employment abroad.

Language plays an important role in this process, as knowledge of English is used to establish the “value” of the domestic worker, which translates in turn into differences in wage level. Lorente (2007) observed that, in the context she studied, competence in English is not so much individualized as generalized to national groups, with Filipino women assumed to be most skilled. Correspondingly, Filipino women in principle earn slightly more than Indonesian or Sri Lankan women. Maid agencies construct these “nationality-based levels of English proficiency” based on stereotypes, and these linguistic stereotypes are commonly matched with other values related to modernity. Filipino FDWs are often marketed as ideal to work as tutors for children, and their association with English provides the grounds for additional positive stereotypes, such as their “quick ability to learn,” being “competent, meticulous, more initiative, and hygienic,” though accompanied by the drawbacks of a modern ethos: “bold and streetwise” (p. 133).

Lorente describes how this market-bound stereotyping is embodied in specific events that she calls “scripts of servitude.” These scripts consist of videorecorded messages that act as a proxy for a job interview (and are actually often called “interviews”), in which the prospective worker (still living at home) addresses the prospective employer and displays her suitability, as shown in the transcript of the video below:

Transcript 4

Detsie: good afternoon / sir / madam // this is Detsie de Vera / 22 years old / single and came from the province of Union // I am one of the members of the iglesia ni kristo // we are four in the family // I have two brothers and one sister // my brother is already married and my little sister is still studying for her college // I have finished my bachelor of
secondary education / last 2002 / major in mathematics // though I don’t have experience in going abroad / I can assure you that I can be a good maid / an honest / hardworking housemaid and babysitter of yours // I have experience or I was used to take care of my nephews and nieces especially when their parents are busy working because they are both working // so I need to prepare for their food / prepare for their clothes // that’s why I can assure you that I can do anything though I am so small / I am just four feet and ten inches in height / I can do what other people can do // ma’am if you will choose me as one of your maids / I promise to do my very best just to serve you with all my heart // thank you

Lorente (2007: 145)

Lorente identifies the key features of these highly scripted events: They begin with a) a greeting in which terms of address are used expressing politeness and willingness to submit to hierarchy. This is followed by a self-descriptive section stating b) a list of personal details such as age, marital status, education, religion, origin, and so on, and c) former experience in matters connected with the work. Finally, d) a “service guarantee” is issued in the form of an assurance of willingness and capacity to serve before the closing formulas are delivered. The key issue, however, is not necessarily one of format but of process, i.e. the fact that these scripts are designed by maid agencies and imposed on both workers and employers as the terms under which the selection process is conducted, which in turn determines to a great extent how the labor relation is established. Additional important elements in this accord are the conditions that the worker would not engage in any form of sexual relationship, could not marry a local, had to undergo a pregnancy test every six months, had the right to little or no free time, no right to apply for citizenship in Singapore, and was often bound to the agency for many months as she had to pay a fee for the recruitment service (in the form of a loan).

The plight of FDWs in Singapore exemplifies the increasing complexity of immigration processes in the context of globalization, and its linguistic components. On the one hand, we see the emergence of an industry (e.g. maid agencies) devoted to the management of immigrant labor and even charged with control of the sexual practices of immigrants; here one might be tempted to argue that this exemplifies the ways in which neoliberal states withdraw from intervening in such spheres. Lorente, however, provides evidence to the contrary, that is, the increasing concern of nation-states to regulate and profit from such procedures. In this case, what we have are very active roles played by the states of both the Philippines and Singapore in developing the socioeconomic conditions that enable specific forms of labor relations and immigrant control to emerge. In the case of the Philippines, we have a decades-old process of steering national education, economic strategies, and foreign relations towards the production of a migrant workforce that can compete in specific contexts where cheap labor is in demand, so that the state can sustain itself via their remittances (Lorente 2012). In the case of Singapore, it is not just the fact that state regulations provide the framework in which “maid agencies” operate so that its own skilled women can enter paid employment. It also establishes the regulatory means that discriminates between different types of migrant workers, thus making “foreign maids” temporary “guestworkers” who are supposed to go back home when the contract expires, while it encourages more skilled workers to settle in the country and acquire regular work permits.

Moreover, although it can be argued that the position of English as an employment asset can be attributed to the international standing of this language, it is worth bearing in mind the multiple ways in which nation-states may also intervene in local linguistic economies. There is, first, the highly conscious policy developed by different Philippine governments over the years to promote the learning of English amongst the lower classes so that they can be more easily directed to find employment outside the country. Additionally, the Philippine state intervenes
by forcing local agencies to require a minimum wage in employment contracts. Although such regulations can arguably be bypassed, they do have an impact on how Filipino women are marketed. On the other hand, the government of Singapore has also been very active for years promoting English as an official and public language to create cohesion in an eminently multiethnic country, at the same time that English helps the nation to participate in the global economy. So both the offer and demand for English in the market for domestic workers are very much state-driven and the whole picture provides a good example of how nation-states continue to intervene in linguistic markets, even in the context of globalization.

4 Immigrants, the State, and Social Inequalities

What these three examples demonstrate is not so much that nation-states fully determine the social standing of immigrant communities in their linguistic repertoires, but rather that they play a pivotal role in the production of the symbolic and economic conditions immigrants have to face. The first element is, obviously, by providing the fundamental ideological framework on the basis of which “immigrant” becomes a relevant category. The second is by virtue of the means that states usually have to bear directly on the living conditions of immigrants, typically through visas, residence and work permits, education, social and security services, and so on. The third is more indirectly through the conduct of actors, human or corporate, not necessarily bound to the state organically but who nevertheless act upon and contribute to reproduce the (official or unofficial) linguistic, cultural, social, racial, and sexual hierarchies that feature in that given context and have complex connections with the state, the most obvious being that the state’s ruling classes commonly possess the most valued forms of economic, cultural, and linguistic capital, the official/hegemonic currency against which all other currencies are measured.

The situations shown have exemplified some of these hierarchies as they are projected in state institutions such as the school, in social life more generally, or in the service industry. It is worth pointing out, however, some of the dimensions that in many ways transcend local logics, such as racial difference and the sexual division of labor. Thus a language like Spanish may be dominant in one (state) context and a stigma in another; but in both Spain and the US linguistic dominance appears as a way to assert racial dominance. Additionally, the Filipino maids also remind us that migration is structured in terms of gender, with the paradox that female immigrant labor is mobilized to enable the more sexually “liberated” ways of life in industrialized societies, thus producing new forms of gender division of reproductive labor on a global scale, in which the English language plays a central role.

The examples presented also display the productivity of methodological diversity: while the three studies contain different degrees excerpts of naturally occurring interaction, it is substantially different to carry out ethnography in a public space such as a school, or in private homes, or in work-related contexts. And it requires different interpretative modes to work with recordings of spontaneous interaction, with interviews, or scripted videos, and also with the kind of documentation enabling connection of the concrete experience of people with a wider framework of state policies at the sending and receiving end of migration, as Lorente does. It is, in any case, this methodological diversity that allows the progressive building of the wider picture of how migration contributes to structuring relationships of inequality in contemporary societies.

5 Directions in Immigration Research

Immigration research, sociolinguistic and otherwise, has undergone profound transformations in recent decades. In the 1980s the so-called “assimilation paradigm” was dominant, that is, the
assumption that immigrants “naturally” assimilated to the host society in three generations, the third having largely forgotten or simply not learned the original family language. As sociologists (see for instance Urry 2000) and anthropologists (see Clifford 1997) became increasingly aware of the momentous social changes that were taking place due to increasing mobility, political and economic internationalization, the improvement of transport and the development of digital technologies, views on immigration have greatly changed. These changes have also been gradually taken up in the development of a critical sociolinguistics through the works of Cazden et al. (2011), Heller (2011), or Blommaert (2010), all of them deeply engaged in research where immigration features centrally. From this perspective, an article by Steven Vertovec (2001) is often quoted as symbolically representing this change of perspective whereby immigrants are increasingly capable of leading “transnational” lives, that is, sustaining networks of meaningful social participation both in the countries where they settle but also in their countries of origin or in previous contexts of residence. Cultural hybridity becomes, from this perspective, the expected pattern, not assimilation. Vertovec (2007) is also responsible for another seminal article that caused a lively debate in the sociolinguistics of the late 2000s. In this article, he posits the concept of “superdiversity” to argue that current research on immigration must cease to revolve around issues of ethnicity and take up its increasing complexity as immigrant communities are also themselves characterized by diversity: according to country of origin, channel of migration, legal status, cultural capital, access to employment, transnationalism, coexistence with other groups, local policies and service providers, and so on. Although this article was primarily focused on the British context and its traditional policies of multiculturalism, it has led to further theoretical and epistemological debates (see Blommaert and Rampton 2011) that hail a new sociolinguistics centrally concerned with change, mobility, and linguistic hybridity.

Related Topics

Readers interested in issues of immigration may also consider studying how the topic is constructed in the media – see 25 Racism in the Press (Van Dijk). The notion of Language Ideologies (7 Kroskrity) is conceptually central to the topic too. Chapters 12–15 on intersectionalities, gender, race, and ethnicity are also directly relevant. Chapter 19 on Language and Political Economy (McElhinny) provides fundamental principles that elaborate the succinct theoretical overview provided here. Chapters 21 on Language and Nationalism (Haque), 22 on Language in the Age of Globalization (Jacquemet), and 24 on Discrimination via Discourse (Wodak) also touch on aspects that affect immigrants directly.

Notes

1 Transcription conventions (those of different authors have been adapted):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symbol</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arnaldo:</td>
<td>Interactional participant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Right (italics)</td>
<td>Speech and data not in English in the original</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>{}</td>
<td>Comments made by the transcriber</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&amp;</td>
<td>Turn latched to previous turn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>=</td>
<td>Maintaining of a participant’s turn in an overlap</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[]</td>
<td>Turn overlapping with similarly marked turn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-</td>
<td>Te-starts and self-interruptions without any pause</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/</td>
<td>Short pause (0’5” seconds)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>//</td>
<td>Long pause (0’5–1’5” seconds)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
↑ Rising intonation
↓ Falling intonation
→ Intonation of suspension
RIGHT (all capital letters) Loud talking
(() Incomprehensible speech
pa’l Syntactical phonetic phenomena between words
aa (doubled vowels) Vowel lengthening
ss (doubled consonants) Consonant lengthening
? Questions
(Also used for tag questions such as ‘right?’, ‘eh?’, ‘you know?’)
! Exclamations

References


