

Spatiotemporal scales and the study of mobility

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1. Introduction

The development and application of scales theory in sociolinguistics in recent years marks an important but not uncontested approach to questions of language and social inequalities, including those that effect migrants and their relationships. Scales theory suggests that language-evaluation processes - what people make of what others say and write, moment by moment - are shaped by the social effects of power, hierarchy and status and that in contemporary globalised times these processes are ultimately effects of a capitalist world system operating across socially layered spaces on a global scale. In other words, scales theory aims to contribute to a sociolinguistics in the contemporary period of so-called globalization by developing a set of conceptual resources and arguments for examining the way power relations on a global scale shape the use and relative prestige of varying language resources in specific contexts, as well as across geographical and social spaces. This theoretical orientation can be seen as a resource of direct relevance to researchers of language, migration and transnational and translocal mobility because it offers an explanation and a theoretical resource for making sense of the way people's language resources get discredited or valorised as they move across continents, countries and regions, as well as various other spaces of social activity. Scales theory in sociolinguistics draws on social geography and, in particular on the World Systems Analysis (WSA) arguments of Immanuel Wallerstein. Wallerstein's core thesis has been that there is a systemic division of the world, resulting from historical factors to do with how the global system originally expanded into core, peripheral and semi-peripheral regions. This systemic view of structured socio-economic inequality on a global level is merged in scales theory with perspectives on language dynamics of scholars such as Pierre Bourdieu, Mikhail Bakhtin, John Gumperz, Dell Hymes and Michael Silverstein. Scales theory in sociolinguistics, most notably in the work of Jan Blommaert and his colleagues, asks how analysis might account for the effects on language interactions of both large-scale or structural dimensions of social life, as well as those more localised social routines, habits, practices and interactions that arise in specific contexts. Scales theory offers the argument that sociolinguistic and discursive phenomena (incidents of talk and/or writing, but including other kinds of semiosis) are

“essentially *layered*, even if they appear to be one-time, purely synchronic and unique events” (Blommaert, 2007, 3). This layering is a result of the fact that the immediacy of interaction and expression is performed by people by way of linguistic resources that bring a history and a socially loaded impetus to that event, and contribute to its shaping, so that unique instances of communication simultaneously point towards social and cultural norms, genres, traditions, expectations — “phenomena of a higher scale-level” (Blommaert 2007, 4). Scales theory offers an explanation of how persons can sometimes appear inarticulate, silent, deficient or powerless when they move from a space in which their linguistic resources are valued and recognized to a space where they are not. As Blommaert, Collins and Slembrouk (2005, 198) explain this scalar perspective:

multilingualism is not what individuals have and don't have, but what the environment, as structured determinations and interactional emergence, enables and disables. Consequently, multilingualism often occurs as truncated competence, which, depending on scalar judgments, may be declared 'valued assets' or dismissed as 'having no language'.

From the perspective of scales theory, linguistic repertoires operate in specific social and spatial domains, they are layered and stratified and they operate at scale levels, such that some are effective globally (some varieties of English); some regionally (varieties of kiSwahili across East Africa) and some only locally (including languages restricted to small numbers of speakers in local communities as well as locally specific varieties of 'bigger' languages). In this view, in multilingual settings every variety of language can be used on one or a number of scales, no language dominates all scales and there isn't a single variety that can be used in every situation with all people in that setting. What counts as appropriate, high status or inferior language is a situated, placed or localised judgement, because language norms are ecological or contextual and they operate on scale-levels. The structural or systemic impetus for scale-setting is an effect of global capitalism operating as a world system. Language dynamics are shaped by this structural dynamic, such that when people move across physical and social space “their language practices undergo re-evaluation at every step of the trajectory and the functions of their repertoire are redefined” (Blommaert, 2002, 1).

As an example, Deng and Blommaert (2009, 9) describe how a child of migrants to Beijing from a rural location in China encountered loud, humiliating laughter from her classmates the first time she spoke at school (with marked Sichuan dialect for example “ ‘by using ‘*wazi*’ instead of the Putonghua form ‘*haizi*’”). The authors comment that “people with marked regional accents are positioned in spaces that rank their accents low through a scaling process: their language variety only has limited, local validity” (p 11).

In a somewhat different illustration of scales in practice, in a European setting, Blommaert's (2007, 6) describes a student discussing the outline of her essay with her tutor:

S: I'll start my dissertation with a chapter reporting on my fieldwork.

The tutor in response says:

T: We start our dissertations with a literature review chapter here.

Blommaert's analysis is that the tutor performs a scale-jump here, articulated through a shift from personal to impersonal (from 'I' and 'my' to 'we', 'our', 'here') where the student's individual plan is countered by an invocation of general rules. Blommaert sees this as a power move within a stratified, hierarchically layered system. The point here is that, whether she is an actual migrant or not, the student has nonetheless entered a centralised social space (the university) where her language resources and practices are ranked as those of a marginal outsider (or a novice), compared to those of her lecturer who is an authority in this domain of power. So, for migrants, 'unskilled' migrants in particular, as well as other less powerful people, it is more than simply accents or having access to high status language resources, it is also about having or acquiring the knowhow to use those resources in situated ways that do not mark one as an outsider or a person from or on the periphery.

As Deng and Blommaert (2009, 4) explain it,

the notion of 'scale' introduces a *vertical* spatial metaphor: an image of a continuum on which spaces are hierarchically stratified and ordered from local to global with intermediary levels between the two poles. The vertical move from one scale to another (e.g. from local to translocal, from momentary to timeless, from specific to general) involves and presupposes access to particular resources, and such access is often subject to inequality. Thus, a move across scales is also a power move. The notion of scale is developed as a critical extension of traditional concepts of 'trajectories', 'networks' and 'flows', in the way that scale is value-laden and emphasises indexical meaning and semiotic resources, in an attempt to address sociolinguistic issues in the context of globalisation and diaspora.

This chapter goes on to critically elaborate on and examine this perspective on sociolinguistics in scales theory. It starts with an examination of the sources of these ideas in contemporary views on space as an active aspect of social organisation and complexity.

Overview of the topic

The spatial turn

In the late 20th century, social scientists began to understand space as a qualitative context situating different behaviours and contending actions. (Lefebvre, 1991; Massey, 2005; Shields, 2006). Moving on from preliminary understandings of space as an empty grid of mutually exclusive points, human geographers have argued that there is a spatial order to the world, this spatiality had previously been neglected in contemporary social theory and the concept of scale has been the object of sustained theoretical reflection in recent decades (Leitner and Miller, 2007). The emergence of scales theory in sociolinguistics reflects this wider theoretical context, sometimes called 'the spatial turn' in social theory, or the turn to the concept of 'spacetime', that involves ideas about space and time as inextricably interconnected. Drawing on this turn in social theory, sociolinguists have started to see space not just as a neutral background but as agentive in sociolinguistic processes where "knowledge of language is rooted in situation and dynamically distributed across individuals as they engage in practices" (Blommaert, Collins and Slembrouk, 2005, 205; Dong and Blommaert, 2011). As Blommaert (2010, 80) describes it

Languages and discourses move around, but they do so between spaces that are full of rules, norms, customs and conventions, and they get adapted to the rules, norms, customs and conventions of such places before moving further on their trajectories. This dynamic of localization, delocalization and relocalization is essential for our understanding of sociolinguistic globalization processes.

A major influence from outside linguistics in the theorisation of scale in sociolinguistics has come from Immanuel Wallerstein's world-systems theory, or world-systems analysis, as it is widely known.

World-systems analysis

World-systems analysis (WSA) was originally driven by a recognition in Wallerstein's work since the 1970s that the state was not the ultimately meaningful unit of analysis, and this at a time when most social science still uncritically equated the state with society. Currently, when the idea has become established of a global economy that drives the most important social dynamics of even those regions that are peripheral to that economy, WSA arguments first made by Wallerstein in the 1970s would seem to have been prescient in their understanding of the world as the appropriate unit of analysis for understanding economics, politics and, for our purposes, language ideologies. World systems theory (WSA) as first developed by Wallerstein (1974), drew on Gunder Frank's (1966) already available analysis of dependency relations between ex-colonial and core states. Frank's 'dependencia' theory argued that the

underdevelopment of the poorer regions of the world was tied directly to the development of the core capitalist regions in that their wealth was based on an extractive relationship with the peripheral regions. From Frank, Wallerstein developed the notion of capitalism as profit-driven economic activity, based on a division of labour at the global level (thus revising the more familiar Marxist emphasis on capital-wage labour relations at the point of production as the defining feature). A second major influence in Wallerstein's development of WSA was the writings of the historian Fernand Braudel, most notably his study of *The Mediterranean* (1996 first published 1949) and his three volumes on *Civilization and Capitalism, 15th-18th Century* (1981-4). Across this work, Braudel developed a perspective, firstly, on everyday socio-economic life, secondly, on market relations regarding agriculture trade and finance relations, and, in the third volume of *Civilization and Capitalism* on multiple "world-economies", their geographical and temporal dimensions. Braudel's construct of multiple time-spans and their effects has been of considerable influence, emphasising the importance of broad social structures spanning long periods of history and their impact upon everyday life. He identified, in particular, three broad times or 'durations', that of the *longue durée* (a history of long-term, slow change with recurring cycles that represented for Wallerstein the systemic structures of long-term human history); secondly, the *histoire sociale* or '*histoire conjoncturelle*,' a time of "slow but perceptible rhythms . . . one could call it social history, the history of groups and groupings" (Braudel, 1984, I, 20; Ethington, 2007, 468); and thirdly, the '*histoire e've'ne'mentielle*,' or episodic history, the short time span or history of events in the daily lives of individuals and places. Braudel identified the first as pivotal for research because it offered a long enough time frame and a big enough spatial dimension to make large-scale transformations visible. (But while he identified these three as important Braudel also referred to dozens more, each of them attached to a particular history - see Ethington, 2007). Wallerstein (2004, 18) identified *the longue durée* as "the duration of a particular historical system" and drew on this concept of history and social structure to develop a perspective where social structural processes happen at this level of almost timeless rhythms of large-scale motion and change. Along these lines, Wallerstein (1974) argued that there have only been three core types of social systems in human history, that of relatively self-contained hunting and gathering, pastoral and simple horticultural societies, operating as relatively self-contained economic units; secondly, that of 'world-empires', maintained through military dominance and with an economy based on the extraction of surplus goods from outlying sectors; and thirdly, that of the capitalist world-system, which began in Europe in the 1500s, expanded under the spur of the accumulation of capital in Europe through expanded trade with the East from the 17th century, aided by superior means of transportation and military strength, and expanded further over the next few centuries to cover the entire globe. The processes of this expansion included the entrenchment of a division of labour with capital intensive production happening in the core Western countries while peripheral areas provided low-skill labour and raw

materials. Nation-states could influence these processes through their efforts, while no state could fully dominate a world economy in which all were bound to compete. That said, particular core states have become hegemonic at specific conjunctures in the development of the world-system which has evolved through long cycles termed *hegemonic cycles* (Taylor, 1996, 25) including the Netherlands in the 17th century, later, England and then the USA in the 20th century. WSA identifies a persisting division in the modern world-economy between core states that appropriate most of the surplus of their own as well as from elsewhere; such core states are sites of high skill and capital-intensive production; and are militarily strong or allied to strong military powers. In contrast, peripheral states and regions are characterised by low-skill, labour-intensive production and extraction of raw materials, while semi-peripheral states have more diversified economies than peripheral ones, as well as stronger national states. At the turn of the last century, the core comprised the wealthy industrialised countries, including Japan; the semi-periphery included many long-independent states outside the west while the periphery was mainly made up of relatively recently independent colonies. In the 21st century Wallerstein sees a period of transition, with growing internal contradictions, the absence of new markets to exploit, along with unameliorated and rising social inequalities within and between states (Wallerstein, 2004; Featherstone, 2006). In conclusion of this brief diversion into WSA, Wallerstein drew on Braudel's focus for research of a time frame and a global scale long enough and big enough to make large-scale transformations visible as well as providing an understanding of how detail was shaped by these broader dynamics. It is somewhat ironic, however, that Braudel, who described himself as, "by temperament a structuralist" (quoted in Hexter, 1979, 10) described WSA as stimulating but "a little too systematic, perhaps" (Braudel, 1984, 70). I will return to this point when I consider critiques of WSA and scales theory.

Scales in WSA

The concept of scales in cartography refers, of course, simply to map resolution. Cartographic scale expresses the mathematical relationship between a map and the Earth or part thereof, and is usually denoted as a representative fraction. Large-scale (or large-fraction) maps show less space but typically more detail, and small-scale maps show more space, but with less detail. 'Best resolution' in terms of the choice of cartographic scale depends on the problem at hand and the focus of attention. As used in WSA, in human geography disciplinary studies influenced by WSA, and within scales approaches in sociolinguistics that rely on WSA, scale comes to relate, metaphorically, to a view that social processes are hierarchically distributed through the world along scalar lines, depending on how far they reach. Such social processes can operate at multiple scales at once and intersect with other processes operating at a different scale. In Taylor's (1991) scales of political geography, reflecting Braudel's spacetime categories and drawing on WSA, the local scale is labelled the scale of experience and is the everyday setting,

reflecting the importance of place, in which events occur and where life is experienced; the nation-state scale is the scale of ideology, and the global scale is the scale of reality, to reflect the structural emphasis of world-systems theory. Gregory et al (2009, 665) suggest a more detailed cascade of hierarchical levels to include the human body; households; the neighbourhood; city or district; metropolitan area or region; province or state; nation-state; continent; and globe.

The driver of social dynamics in WSA is the socio-economic and-political world operating at the level of an integrated and interlinked system, thus operating at different scales of activity. These scales are both scales of time and space, or spacetime. (Because all matter is in motion, so all space is dynamic. "The only sensible term for this environment is 'spacetime,'" Ethington, 2007, 472). Lower level processes operate in specific spaces in shorter time-spans, by way of 'events' or episodes in the daily lives of individuals and places, whereas these in turn are shaped by the longer rhythms of particular social or institutional histories, the placed or situated dynamics of cultural practices which are in turn shaped by, respond to and have effect on the almost timeless processes of the *longue durée*, the long-term cycles of human history.

Scales in scales theory in sociolinguistics

Blommaert (2015, 11) suggests that scale in sociolinguistics was developed and presented

as a concept that might do exactly what Braudel and Wallerstein used it for: to make fine stratigraphic distinctions between "levels" of sociolinguistic activity, thus enabling distinctions as to power, agency, authority and validity that were hard to make without a concept that suggested vertical – hierarchical – orders in meaning making..

Scales theory in sociolinguistics follows Bourdieu (1991) in thinking about language (and other semiotic modalities) as embodying social capital in distinct ways within specific social economies, with language hierarchies that are socio-culturally shaped, spatially distributed and systemically structured. It is offered as a response to globalization phenomena, addressing "language diversity and interaction in their situated co-occurrence as well as language hierarchy and systemic processes holding across situations and transcending localities" (Blommaert et al, 2005, 198).

Following the 'spatial turn' described earlier, people's location, or the space where they are, is seen to shape the way they connect with each other, by ascribing identities to one another in performing social and linguistic interactions. While people might maintain their linguistic (and social) competence when they move across spaces, and even add to their linguistic repertoires, they can nonetheless appear incapacitated, inarticulate and 'out of place' when they cross spaces (Dong and Blommaert, 2009, 5). Scale is the term which explains such disparities as

being a consequence of the way sociolinguistic and social spaces are hierarchically stratified and ordered. In scales theory, the centre-periphery model of WSA is expressed through, for example, 'central accents' such as British and American English accents being associated with status and identity, in contrast to Indian or Nigerian English, whereas peripheral accents project peripheral identities. These scaling processes operate at a world level, but also at all the other levels below that. A move from rural to urban areas, for instance, is thus also a move to a centre from the periphery, even within a peripheral region. Dong and Blommaert (2009) thus suggest that these concepts of space and scale allows us to study migration "from a fresh perspective, as migration offers an enormously rich research potential of movements across spaces and scales, both in real terms and symbolically". The scales model suggests that each context (local, regional, national, global) has its own "orders of indexicality" which assign meanings, values and statuses to diverse codes. These values or indexicalities are organised hierarchically at a global level in a world that is systemically organised in terms of scales that run from the global to various local contexts. Blommaert (2010, 36) argues that local scales are momentary, situated and restricted, while the codes and literacies of dominant groupings are valued at a translocal level because they are resilient, highly mobile and dominant groups can "jump scales", that is they can shift from using locally available ways of communicating to higher level or elite registers, that serve to put others 'in their place', to silence them, or to assert superiority over them (as happened in the case of the lecturer, described earlier, in conversation with her student).

Scales theory thus outlines a route to theorizing and analysing the way language resources retain or lose social value depending on where they are placed along spatiotemporal lines within social contexts, where power relations shape the uptake of language resources. A sociolinguistics of globalisation (Blommaert, 2010) working with this model of the social as a world system pays attention to language hierarchy and processes that are seen as holding across situations and transcending localities. This analysis aims to account for large scale features of language and literacy, particular, for example on institutional, national, and transnational levels, as well as their impact on the dynamics of face to face interaction (Blommaert, 2010, 2007; Collins and Slembrouk, 2013). Interaction between different scales is a crucial feature for understanding the socio-linguistic dimensions of such events and processes, because language and literacy practices are subject to social processes of hierarchical ordering. The importance of the term *indexicality* in scales theory as used earlier in this paragraph requires us to take a closer look at the concept and the work it does here.

Indexicality

Underlying the concept of indexicality as it is used in scales theory is the view that language, along with other communicative resources (gesture, image, etc.) is never an instrument of pure

reference, because speech and writing always occur within networks of activity, in social contexts which are never neutral or ahistorical, because language is a social phenomenon - "social through its entire range and in each and every of its factors, from the sound image to the furthest reaches of abstract meaning" (Bakhtin 1981, 259). The unpredictable character of situated interactions as well as variations in the larger social patterns that provide resources for such interactions mean that linguistic resources do not carry stable and context-free referential meanings from one setting to the next. As a result, it is claimed by various sociolinguists studying interaction that the meaning of any linguistic sign in use cannot be determined by decontextualized rules, whether linguistic or social (Hymes, 1966; Gumperz, 1982; Silverstein, 2004; Wortham, 2008). Language in use is shaped by the interests and intentions of situated actors who bend their meanings to suit their activities. The language people use (along with other communicative resources) is always a social language (Gee, 1996) as regards its forms, its use, language ideologies that effect it and also with regard to the social domain of its use. These interlinked dimensions makeup what Silverstein identified as 'the total linguistic fact'

"[t]he total linguistic fact, the datum for a science of language is irreducibly dialectic in nature. It is an unstable mutual interaction of meaningful sign forms, contextualized to situations of interested human use and mediated by the fact of cultural ideology" (1985,220).

Indexicality, then, refers to this process: where language in use is invested with socio-political and cultural interests which are identifiable in the recognisable, often routinized and ritualised, ways that speakers and writers 'express themselves' as recognisably certain kinds of people engaged in identifiable socially-situated actions and activities. To be understood and to communicate meaningfully they draw on salient models for how particular kinds of meaning get made along with communicating particular identity or identification characteristics of their own, and these models for language use are always both restrictive or regimental, as well as enabling. Silverstein's (2004, 193) claim is that 'indexical order' is the concept necessary for identifying those salient models that people draw on in their communicative activities and for showing us "how to relate the micro-social to the macro-social frames of analysis of any sociolinguistic phenomenon". Blommaert (2006, 4) explains this point as flows:

language occurs both as an individual, one-time and unique phenomenon and, simultaneously, as a collective and relatively stable phenomenon. Indexicality refers to the ways in which unique instances of communication can be seen, as 'framed', understandable communication, as pointing towards socially and culturally ordered norms, genres, traditions, expectations.

The concept of indexicality goes beyond the general idea that people draw on broad models or genres in their situated communication. It also address variability, unpredictability and change

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in language pragmatics. For Silverstein, the micro-order is that of language-based interaction, while the macro-order is that of the speech community. The dialectical relationship that Silverstein identifies between these two orders indicates that the macro-order is not autonomous, in that social regularity is only always performed or enacted, dependant on the conditions of enactment, and so does not have fully predictable effects on actions and meanings. Silverstein refers to first-order, second-order and n-level construals of meaning to show that indexical order is one of ongoing interplay between specific acts and available ideologically framed resources. One example of first order construal is that of the view of the standard register in a language community as ideologically indexing the neutral mean for all variability around it, “sweeping up people of different groups and categories into an anxiety before standard” (Silverstein, 2003, 219) when hegemonic ideologies privilege language registers that are associated with powerful groups in society, with the consequence that their language use is perceived to be accentless and ideal for effective communication. Divergences from the standard — whether associated with class, ethnicity/race, or region — are considered marked and less desirable. In this case, second-order indexicality is shown by persons from outside the ‘neutral centre’ who attempt to approximate stylistically or phonetically to the standard in an effort to index an aspirant or high-status identity for themselves, a process which Silverstein describes as depending “on a folk- or ethno-metapragmatics of standard register and its potential gradient availability” (219). As one example, the normative status of English in Jamaica leads on occasion to variably unsuccessful attempts by Jamaican creole speakers to speak the standard register at particular moments, which get labelled derisively by others as ‘Speaky Spoky’ (Bohmann, 2016). Vigouroux (2011, 62) describes a similar though contrasting dynamic regarding the advertising flyers of African migrants in Paris who work as *marabouts* (clairvoyants/spiritualists or spirit-mediums):

Marabouts’ advertisements share not only common themes (love, professional success, achievements in different domains such as sports, luck games, increase of sexual prowess, fertility, healing of sickness etc.) but also linguistic features that can be summarized as follows: spelling mistakes, typos, lack of agreement, misuse of prepositions, cross-register transfers, misuse of diacritics, misuse of written conventions.

While French readers of their flyers comment and joke at length about the deviant literacy, language and layout of these flyers, Vigouroux argues that marabouts, indeed, choose to use such non-standard registers so as to conform to the widely held, exoticised and stereotypical view of themselves in urban France. To not do so would raise questions as to whether they were genuine marabouts or imposters. Their survival as practitioners depends on their ‘recognizability’” and this recognisability is tied up with marabouts’ advertisements as a genre, or generic form, along with their syntactical, lexical and orthographic “errors”, because these are markers that are indexical of their exoticised (racialized and ‘othered’) status in these

settings. (Their conscious use of this marabout register, however, as Vigouroux describes it, introduces a reflexive element into these dynamics that is not always visible in analyses that draw on scales theory, as I discuss below.)

Switching (code-switching) across identifiable languages and registers by migrants or others in multilingual contexts can be seen as examples of second-order indexicality, or as forms of skilled or less skilled performance. Such switching can communicate, or be intended to communicate, specific social and pragmatic meanings, where language forms are used as culturalised resources to index particular meanings that are situated, constructed and might be shifting, in that they arise from a history, however long or short, of usage by speakers/writers in particular social circumstances. Through recurrent connections between a context and a linguistic form, indexical meanings are constituted (Bailey, 2007) and because of the interactive, reflective or heteroglossic nature of these connections, multiple orders of indexicality are possible. As Collins and Slembrouk (2004; 9) discuss in the context of multilingual (and multimodal) shop window displays in a European town, there is a 'face-value' or first order meaning to interpret as to what the sign says. In addition, there are, "in principle multiple 'n-level' indexical-ideological construals" available:

Might this shop sign be taken as a joke? An indication of amicable or tense relations between autochthone and allochthone populations? As indicating the origins and low education of the migrants who use the two languages?

Collins and Slembrouk's analysis emphasises that meaning is contextual and processual, while contexts are various and yet orderable and ordered. Bailey (2007, 263) points out that indexicality can encompass a very large range of phenomena because indexical forms are highly varied. They range from phonetic features, to word choice, to visual features, to other stylistic dimensions of talk, while the distance across space and time of the indexical form and its object can also vary greatly.

Scales theory and indexicality

For Silverstein (2004, 201-2) the 'macro-social' as far as language is concerned refers to the speech community, along with its differentiating deployment of categories of "age, gender, social and socioeconomic class, profession, and other aspects of what we term institutional/positional social identity". These categories would seem to refer to class and status categories operating on a national level, though Silverstein is not specific on this point. Scales theorists, however, while drawing strongly on Silverstein's theorisation of indexicality, distance themselves from the construct of speech community, regarding it as an essentialist notion, invoking static notions of ethnolinguistic identities of peoples within unitary nation-states. While Silverstein prefers to distinguish between the concept of *language community* as

designating this over-broad sense, and *speech community* as referring to a more transient, performed and less static concept, Rampton (1998) and Blommaert and Rampton (2011, 6) reject the concept of speech community outright, preferring the notion of linguistic repertoire, which they see as more appropriate in contexts of “linguistic diversity, mixed language and multilingualism”, because it

refers to individuals very variable (and often rather fragmentary) grasp of a plurality of differentially shared styles, registers and genres, which are picked up (and maybe then partially forgotten) within biographical trajectories that develop in actual histories and topographies.

World Systems Analysis does not feature in Silverstein’s work but is a central feature of scales theory as it has developed in the work of Jan Blommaert and the various colleagues he has worked with or who draw on his work, so we need to describe some particularities that it takes on in recent theorisations of scales theory. Most notably, when the concept of language indexicalities operates at the level of the world –system, it can be used to identify language ideological dynamics that work on a transnational scale in particular ways. Blommaert (2010, 34) followed this direction to define scales according to space and time in the following way:

	Lower scale	Higher scale
Time	momentary	timeless
Space	local, situated	translocal, widespread

As Dong and Blommaert (2009, 6) explain,

(t)he notion of ‘scale’ introduces a *vertical* spatial metaphor: an image of a continuum on which spaces are hierarchically stratified and ordered from local to global with intermediary levels between the two poles. The vertical move from one scale to another (e.g. from local to translocal, from momentary to timeless, from specific to general) involves and presupposes access to particular resources, and such access is often subject to inequality.

We can see in this model the confluence of Braudel’s time-scales or *duree* and Wallerstein’s world-systems model, such that the lower scales of language use in the social periphery correspond to Braudel’s notion of the momentary, situated, passing episodic events in situated daily lives, whereas the higher scale corresponds to that of the *long duree* of slow structural time where global languages are seen to lie, along with the language resources of elite groups at any point along the various continua from periphery to core. Lower scale is associated with “diversity, variation” and higher scale with “uniformity, homogeneity” (Blommaert, 2010, 35). Because scales are hierarchically stratified, there is a restricted set of universally accepted

norms at the higher scale level. There is also the implication, following WSA that these higher scale resources are powerful because they operate at the level of 'the real', or at a systemically important level.

Issues and debates

Scales theory amongst geographers and sociologists is increasingly contested terrain and it is probably appropriate that scales theory in sociolinguistics should also be subject to disputes and challenges, and that the challenges in sociolinguistics might overlap with those in other fields. Amongst geographers and sociologists, the status of WSA as a totalising theory of spacetime and social causation has been criticised. In particular, the systemic bird's eye approach to situated specificity has been questioned. In one telling example, Agnew (2011) examined the debate over Braudel's view of the Mediterranean as a space of exchange, trade, diffusion and connectivity and contrasted what he calls Braudel's "geometric or locational view" with the more "holistic, topographical and phenomenological" of more recent work which views the Mediterranean historically as a disorderly jumble of micro-ecologies or places separated by distinctive social practices (Agnew, 2011, 317). Agnew's concern is that scalar perspectives emphasise spatial relations and de-emphasize place, along with situated specificity and complexity. Scalar perspectives in sociolinguistics might be said, in similar vein to emphasize spatial relations in language hierarchies that are products of relations between centres and peripheries, and thus risk deemphasizing local or placed linguistic specificity and complexities. The emphasis on hierarchical scalar relations at the level of a world system that determines specificity can be seen as a view which implies that place is anachronistic and is replaced by space and scale as the determinant spatial dynamics of globalisation. Thus, for example, in the sociolinguistic theory of scales, social and linguistic inequalities are not produced in situated and interactive or placed ways in the first instance, they are the outcomes of power working hierarchically and systemically as a function of the world system.

Blommaert et al (2006: 399) argued, in a discussion of how scale determines language inequalities:

Inequality occurs on the boundaries between scales, the points of transition from strict locality to translocality, from a level defined by the rules and codes of one place to a level defined by the rules and norms of different places... At such points of transition, the issue is the mobility offered by semiotic resources such as language skills: some skills offer a very low degree of mobility while others offer a considerably larger degree of mobility and transferability across social and spatial domains.

This argument relies on a strong notion of scalar processes, as we have discussed them, in a process of vertical differentiation where social relations are embedded in "a hierarchical

scaffolding of nested territorial units stretching from the global, the supranational, and the national downwards to the regional, the metropolitan, the urban, the local, and the body” (Marston et al, 2005, 416). As Marston, Jones and Woodward point out however, such a view of scales is countered by others, where global, national and local scales are seen as intuitive fictions rather than existing, as such; along with suggestions that scale be best used as an epistemological rather than an ontological structure which ‘exists’, summarised by Thrift’s (1995, quoted in Marston et al, 416) conclusion that there “is no such thing as a scale”.

Disagreements with and rejections of the strong scalar perspective frequently draw on anti-systemic network theoretical perspectives from Actor-Network Theory (Latour, 1991) to talk about trans-space dynamics. That perspective stresses the contingency in networks of people and things that are constructed across space and time and rejects the systemic view of the global that is the premise of WSA. There is no system, global order or network, Law (2004, 10) argues. Instead “there are local complexities and local globalities, and the relations between them are uncertain.” In this view, the global is situated, specific, and materially constructed in the practices included in each specificity. Marston (2000, 221) similarly identified a constructionist shift in theorists of scale in geography and the rejection of scale as an ontologically given category. She argued against the view that scales are unilinearly ordered and rejected the assumption that the global is theoretically and empirically superior to the local. Marston et al (2005) take this direction of criticism of hierarchical scales in WSA further, arguing that scale as an epistemology that is tied to a global-to-local continuum diverts attention from the concrete details of people’s action and interactions in the spaces where they reside and act. They proposed, instead a flat ontology that resists conceptualizing processes as operating at scales that hover above these sites. Featherstone (2006, 370) similarly questioned the model of the global as a closed system, arguing that “in the space of the ‘global’, heterogeneous things combine in ways that are hard to pin down with diagnostic resources which stress a global logic”. He referred to such phenomena as major imbalances between cause and effect, unpredictable outcomes, and self-organizing, emergent structures as features of globalisation. He suggested that “the management of uncertainty, task predictability and orderly performances were much easier to facilitate in the ‘relatively complex’ organizations of modern industrial societies”. A global society, on the other hand, he wrote, “entails a different form of complexity: one emanating more from microstructural arrangements that institute self-organizing principles and patterns”. Shields (2006) thought that the centre-periphery distinctions in WSA and scales theory might be Eurocentric and technocratic – just because something is happening ‘over there’ doesn’t mean it is taking place at a different scale. Shields’s point is that space and spacings are best seen as accomplishments, often contested ones, rather than systemic effects. Agnew (2011, 22) in an effort to reconfirm the specificity of place in spatial theorising argues that places tend to have permeable rather than fixed boundaries and are internally diverse rather than homogenous with respect to their social and other

attributes, even as they express a certain communality of experience and performance. Massey (2005) offers a conceptualisation where both local and global are grounded and real, but dispersed within politics of connectivity that both construct places and connect them to others sites in a dynamic where spaces are both concrete and imagined, as well as differentiated. Massey offers a conceptualization of the local and global that is highly pertinent to theories of scale. She insists that just as the local is grounded, concrete and real, so too is the global. She builds her argument around a reconceptualization of the local as dispersed in its sources and repercussions. The local's relationship to the global is premised on a politics of connectivity – 'power geometries' – that recognizes and exploits webs of relations and practices that construct places, but also connect them to other sites. Massey's political project is about recapturing agency so as to better address the impacts of globalization as they affect connected places. Against the view of space as representationally fixed, Massey presents three clear counter-propositions:

First, that we recognise space as the product of interrelations, as constituted through interactions, from the immensity of the global to the intimately tiny. Second, that we understand space as the sphere of the possibility of the existence of multiplicity in the sense of contemporaneous plurality; as the sphere in which distinct trajectories coexist; as the sphere therefore of coexisting heterogeneity. Third, that we recognise space as always under construction. Precisely because space on this reading is a product of relations-between, relations that are necessarily embedded material practices which have to be carried out, it is always in the process of being made. It is never finished; never closed (Massey, 2005, 9).

How does this discussion of critical aspects of scales theory relate to questions of sociolinguistic analysis and migration? I suggest that a scaled perspective can encourage a bird's eye-view on situated mediated social encounters, offering an explanation that privileges a 'top down' view on interactive dynamics and on social history, sometimes implying that such moments automatically configure forms of social uniformity. We can sidestep this difficulty by seeing that social, linguistic and literacy events and processes unfold through social-semiotic encounters of diverse kinds, only some of which are amenable to a scales theoretical perspective that stresses hierarchical dynamics between centres and peripheries. In our analyses we can strive to follow a context-sensitive approach to the diverse flows of engagement, knowledge, power and desire recognising these in terms of micro-flows, as well as top-down dynamics.

This point is illustrated in the recent response by Canagarajah (2015) to Blommaert et al's (2006) analysis of linguistic inequalities in a schooling context in the Western Cape, South Africa. In a study carried out with students and colleagues from the University of the Western Cape at a Cape Town township school, Blommaert et al (2006) identified students' writing as featuring grammatical, spelling and other deviations and found the same features in teachers' writing, evidence of new, but low status, norms that were being developed. They categorised

such writing as characteristic of what Blommaert (2004; 2008) had described as 'grassroots literacy', a literacy that he saw as featuring in societies on the global periphery or in ones marked by deep inequality and identified by the use of graphic symbols in ways that defy orthographic norms: words spelled in different ways, often reflecting the way they are pronounced in spoken vernacular varieties rather than following conventional orthographic norms or prestige language forms.

Canagarajah (2015) carried out a study of his own in a similarly poorly resourced Western Cape township school setting to that of Blommaert and colleagues and he disagreed with aspects of Blommaert's analysis, specifically with Blommaert's treatment of literacy regimes as somewhat autonomous and separate, with their own logic, cut off from others. While neither study drew attention to the migrant aspects of the students they studied, it is relevant for our purposes here to point out that these students were internal migrants from the rural Eastern Cape or children of first, second or third generations of migrants most of whom would maintain transcontextual links with an Eastern Cape home and a heritage cultural and linguistic identity; also, that they live in an environment where the everyday language is a version of isiXhosa, for both teachers and students, whereas the prescribed language of instruction and testing was 'standard English'. This clearly reflects a kind of language dynamic similar for migrants in many other settings, as well. Blommaert et al (2006) emphasise the idea of 'peripheral normativity' as characterising the linguistic rules, norms and opportunities characteristic of the peripheral context of their study. These norms appear as inferior examples of language and writing at the centre, however, pointing to the low status of these persons, on a larger stage". In contrast, Canagarajah draws attention to variability and diversity in a similar setting, rather than uniformity, arguing that while particular communities might display characteristic writing forms, they are not necessarily 'stuck' or 'locked' into using only these forms in the way Blommaert et al suggested. Canagarajah's study found in the texts of the students he studied a *recognition* of different norms carrying more or less status across the different social contexts across which the students operated. In their writings on a school Facebook site, for example, students' use of non-standard spelling and orthography was evident in their mixing of English and isiXhosa, abbreviations and icons. He identifies their writing there as a hybrid form of literacy activity, combining diverse resources and languages. In their classroom written work, however, students didn't mix codes in the same way and Canagarajah suggested that they had shifted to a translocal norm, approximating to 'Standard Written English' and with an emerging sense of the genre requirements of school essay writing. While student writing displayed the types of grammatical problems that Blommaert identified, Canagarajah saw teachers as selectively correcting these as they moved students towards developing their translocal English-language writing resources, albeit from a constrained starting point. He argued that it might be more productive to see social spaces as *contact zones* rather than as structurally separated ones, with diverse language and literacy resources in the same social space. Much depended,

he pointed out, on how people negotiate these mobile resources. Canagarajah's argument here reflects Thrifts (1999) claim that the particularities of any situation cannot be read off from the predictions of a totalising theory. Instead, places are specific time-space configurations made up of the intersection of many encounters between people and things that reflect actual goings-on rather than the working out of a conceptual pre-given reality.

As regards migrants, Massey's reference to co-existing heterogeneity above is perhaps a useful point to start in contrast to a scalar perspective which assumes that inequalities are primarily about relations between scales. As Saxena (1994, 2000) showed in relation to Punjabi speakers in the UK, migrants' attitudes to language choice and script choice and maintenance are not simply a response to where they find themselves but are also a response to where they are from, and in particular to their sometimes enduring transnational ties to the places where they are from. Warriner (2009) and Lam and Warriner (2013) make a similarly strong case for a focus on features of transnationality. Transnationalism refers to the ways that many migrants are simultaneously embedded in more than one setting, with characteristically high intensity of exchanges that often included new practices of transacting and interacting, varying language and literacy practices, identities and relationships and activities that sometimes require cross-border travel and contacts on a sustainable basis, or translocal digital communications of various kinds. From this perspective, space and language are, as Massey described it, a product of relations-between, but relations that are necessarily embedded material practices which have to be carried out and are never finished.

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