

THEORETICAL ESSAY

FROM SPEAKING TO SEMIOSIS: IN SEARCH OF THE **TOTAL** **LINGUISTIC FACT**

Alastair PENNYCOOK  

University of Technology Sydney (UTS)

ABSTRACT

This paper explores the quest for an account of the ‘total linguistic fact’. Speech act theory, sociolinguistics, linguistic anthropology and social semiotics have all attempted, in various ways and at various times, to find a way to describe as much as possible that is going on around any speech event. While this search for the total linguistic fact will always be a chimerical goal, this paper proposes a framework based on the acronym SEMIOSIS as one way of grasping the complexity of what is at play, comprising social relations, emotional and sensorial engagement, mobility, Iterative activity, objects and assemblages, socio- and translingual practices, interactivity, and spatial repertoires. Looking at data from a small Bangladeshi-run store in Tokyo, the paper shows how bringing in this wider set of concerns at least allows for a more comprehensive account of sociolinguistic moments.

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RESUMO

Este artigo explora a busca por uma explicação do "fato linguístico total". A teoria dos atos de fala, a sociolinguística, a antropologia linguística e a semiótica social têm tentado, de múltiplas formas e em vários momentos, encontrar uma maneira de descrever o máximo possível o que está acontecendo em torno de qualquer evento de fala. Embora essa busca pelo fato linguístico total seja sempre um objetivo quimérico, este artigo propõe um framework baseado na sigla SEMIOSIS como uma forma de apreender a complexidade do que está em jogo, levando em conta relações sociais, envolvimento emocional e sensorial, mobilidade,

atividade interativa, objetos e montagens, práticas sócio e translinguais, interatividade e repertórios espaciais. Considerando os dados de uma pequena loja administrada por Bangladesh em Tóquio, o artigo mostra como trazer esse conjunto mais amplo de preocupações permite ao menos uma descrição mais abrangente de momentos sociolinguísticos.

KEYWORDS

Semiosis; Assemblage; Total Linguistic Fact.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

Semiose; Agenciamento; Fato Linguístico Total.

FROM SPEECH ACTS TO SEMIOTIC ASSEMBLAGES

As part of his framework for the ethnography of speaking, Hymes' (1974) proposed his SPEAKING acronym, referring to the different components of interaction: setting/ scene, participants, ends, acts sequence, key, instrumentalities, norms, and genre. This was part of the argument to develop an understanding of sociolinguistic interaction beyond the limited framework that other forms of linguistics suggested: An argument that to speak appropriately involved communicative competence rather than grammatical correctness (as narrowly defined by notions such as linguistic competence). This was to have a major influence on the ethnography of communication (as developed by Saville-Troike, 1982, and others), arguably a precursor to more recent work in linguistic ethnography (Copland Creese, 2015), as well as communicative language teaching, when it was taken up by

Canale and Swain (1980 and others). The *setting or scene* referred to the time, place and physical surrounds (the context); *participants* were the speaker or audience; the *ends* described the purposes, goals, and outcomes of the speech event; the *acts sequence* pointed to the importance of the order of speech acts within the event; *key* was a term used to refer to the tone (or manner) of the interaction; *instrumentalities* referred broadly to the forms and styles of language used (speaking writing, dialect, register and so on); *norms* were the social rules that governed participants and their interactions; and *genre* described the kind of speech act involved.

This proved a useful and fairly resilient model that gave a way of accounting for the complexity of sociolinguistic interaction and what communication involved (even if it was reduced to 'sociolinguistic competence' within the communicative competence of language education). It was an attempt, one might say, to get at 'the total linguistic fact', all that is going on when people interact with language. This has been a long-term goal of sociolinguists, linguistic anthropologists and language philosophers. Austin (1962, p.52), for example, in search of an understanding of what made an utterance effective, spoke of the "total speech situation." There has never been, however, as Butler (1997, p.3) points out, any easy way "to decide how best to delimit that totality." Butler's concern is with questions of time and iterative practice: the illocutionary act "performs its deed *at the moment* of the

1 I am very aware of the problems associated with Dell Hymes' widely-attested history of sexual harassment. There has been much discussion of whether he should be 'cancelled' (as some have put it), whether his work should be ignored, or whether these can be separated. I take the view that it is hard for us to ignore his work, given its significance in sociolinguistics, but that it is equally impossible to overlook his personal history. I have therefore decided, as an uncomfortable compromise, to continue to refer to his work but to always include a note such as this drawing attention to his inexcusable past.

<https://www.thedp.com/article/2018/04/gse-getup-sexual-harassment-dell-hymes-portrait-removal-upenn-penn-philadelphia>

utterance, and yet to the extent that the moment is ritualized, it is never merely a single moment” (1997, p3 italics in original). For Butler, the concern is that “the temporality of linguistic convention, considered as ritual, exceeds the instance of its utterance” (1997, p3). And yet, this question of time is only one of many expansions one might be tempted to make - social, cultural, spatial, political - for which Austin’s total speech situation cannot do justice to all that is at play.

The idea of trying to grasp this totality nonetheless gained some traction through Silverstein’s (1985) interest in “the total linguistic fact,” referring to the “unstable mutual interaction of meaningful sign forms, contextualised to situations of interested human use and mediated by the fact of cultural ideology” (1985, p220). Silverstein’s focus, which would be important for other linguistic anthropologists such as Blommaert (2015), was on the relations among forms of language, their use, and the ways they are understood ideologically, each affecting each other. Others have added to this framework (or suggested that such ideas were already there), Wortham (2008), for example pointing to the importance of *domain* alongside the other three elements, to refer, following Agha (2007) to “the set of people who recognize the indexical link between a type of sign and the relevant ideology” (2008, p4). In other words, we need to take into account not just the form, use and ideology, but also the ways participants recognize or enregister them. This three- or four-way account still left open the question of what might be included within signs and contexts.

In search of the *total sociolinguistic fact*, Karimzad (2021, p.26) makes a case for a better understanding of *chronotopes*, so that we can pay more attention to different levels of contexts that are relevant for any interaction and thus provide “more precise and coherent understandings of experience, memory, imagination, and ideology and their impact on situated practices.” For Blommaert, at stake was the “multimodal total semiotic fact” (2015, p21), encompassing a wider set of signs than the linguistic, narrowly defined. In order to understand this “total linguistic/ semiotic fact” in relation to “cultural ideology” and “sociolinguistic stratification” (Blommaert, 2017, p.58), we have to account for the multiplicity of factors that come together around people and place: “These dense and complex objects are the ‘stuff’ of the study of language in society” (2017, p.59). In the concluding chapter of her overview of the third wave of sociolinguistics, Eckert (2018) turns to the *semiotic landscape* or what we might call (though this is not Eckert’s point) the 4th wave of sociolinguistics, the move by sociolinguists - or sociocultural linguists (Bucholtz and Hall, 2008) where sociolinguistics and anthropological linguists come together - to engage with a broader set of semiotic artefacts than before. For Eckert, this is about the “production of locality” (2018, p186), about the ways in which locally encountered resources are combined with more distantly encountered resources to produce a ‘here’ and ‘there’.

This trend towards a broader semiotic whole can be observed in a number of domains of socio- and applied linguistics. The field of *linguistic landscapes*, for example, has

expanded from an earlier focus on languages on signs in the public space to a broad understanding of the social semiotics of space, from signs as signage to signs as semiotics (Pennycook, 2019), to include “images, photos, sounds (soundscapes), movements, music, smells (smellscapes), graffiti, clothes, food, buildings, history, as well as people who are immersed and absorbed in spaces” (Shohamy, 2015, pp. 153-154). And while a lot of the focus on the translinguistic turn in sociolinguistics has been on its challenge to linguistic orthodoxies around bilingualism, code-switching and the ontology of named languages – the idea that “communication transcends individual languages” – a secondary focus has been on the ways that “communication transcends words and involves diverse semiotic resources and ecological affordances” (Canagarajah, 2013, p.6). This broad multilingual, multimodal and multisensorial focus (Zhu Hua, Otsuji & Pennycook, 2017)) has been taken up through an interest in semiotic assemblages (Pennycook, 2017) or entanglements (Pennycook, 2020). Demuro and Gurney (2021) argue that this move towards assemblages represents an ontological shift from a prior account of languages as systems, and a subsequent interest in languages as social practices, to a view of language as an emergent conjuncture of different components.

In line with this assemblage-oriented way of thinking, it may be useful to reorient the earlier SPEAKING framework towards a broader understanding of SEMIOSIS. While the search for the total linguistic fact will always be a chimerical goal – indeed, these versions of the ‘total linguistic fact’ have never seriously claimed to cover everything – this framework suggests a context for language that responds to the recent broadening of sociolinguistics towards a wider semiotics. It is made up of the following elements: Social relations between the participants, with particular relation to questions of class, ethnicity, gender, race and religion; Emotional and sensorial engagement refers to the affective and somatic domains; Mobility draws our attention to the need to account for the ways in which people and their resources are rarely static; Iterative activity locates language within an understanding of social practices; Objects and assemblages help us see how these social interactions are always part of a network of artefactual relations; Socio and translingual practices refer to the different linguistic resources at play; Interactivity looks at the ways people interact though posture, gesture, and language; and Spatial repertoires is used to address the importance of place and the semiotic resources available. In the rest of this paper, I shall draw on various examples from the ten-year (2010-2020) metrolingualism project (Pennycook and Otsuji, 2015a) using linguistic ethnography to study language complexities in urban settings, to illustrate the work that this framework can do.

SEMIOSIS	
Social relations	Social background (class, ethnicity, gender, race, religion etc)
Emotional and sensorial engagement	Affective and somatic domains
Mobility	Accounting for movement of people and language
Iterative activity	Language as social practice
Objects and assemblages	Networks of artefactual relations
Socio and translangual practices	Different linguistic resources at play
Interactivity	Posture, gesture, and interaction
Spatial repertoires	Place and available semiotic resources

1. CORNER STORES AND SEMIOTIC ENCOUNTERS

We have found corner stores to be particularly productive sites for the study of complex social interactions (Zhu Hua, Otsuji & Pennycook, 2017): Commonly run as migrant small businesses (Panayiotopoulos, 2010) they are key sites of everyday economic, intercultural and linguistic exchange. Following the notion of *multiculturalism from below*, or *everyday multiculturalism* – understood as “a grounded approach to looking at the everyday practice and lived experience of diversity in specific situations and spaces of encounter” (Wise and Velayutham 2009, 3) – a focus on the role of small shops from a localised, ethnographic perspective draws attention to the ways in which multilingual cities operate at a local level. This brings together a focus on the sociolinguistics of globalisation (Blommaert 2010), grassroots multilingualism (Han, 2013), and an understanding of the interconnectedness of intercultural communication, economic transaction, and social interaction as “contemporary corner shop cosmopolitanism and everyday diversity unfold” (Karrabæk, 2017, p469). In this paper, intended as a research overview, I draw mainly on one example (for purposes of space) that has been discussed elsewhere (Pennycook and Otsuji, 2019), while drawing on other examples to develop certain aspects of the framework.

2. SOCIAL RELATIONS

This might equally have been termed social background, though this phrasing can usefully highlight the relational aspects of social identity (cf Agha, 2007): Being of Bangladeshi or Pakistani or Nepalese background does not matter in itself so much as it matters in relational terms. Such identity markers matter in Tokyo (often along racial lines) but take on a different status in a shop where the staff are all of Bangladeshi background themselves. The Bangladeshi-owned corner shop we have focused on in a number of papers, is located in *Isuramu Yokochō* (Islamic alley) in *Hyakunin-chō* in Shinjuku (Tokyo). People who shop there are both diverse (in terms of linguistic and ethnic backgrounds) and dispersed (travelling from different parts of Tokyo to stock up on food and various products). In the

data I will use to flesh out the SEMIOSIS framework, it is early evening during Ramadan and two shop assistants (SA1, SA2) and the shop manager are taking turns to attend to customers. A short time before this excerpt, SA1 has been answering a regular customer's questions about SIM cards while simultaneously browsing his mobile phone to find the live stream match between Bangladesh and New Zealand at the 2017 International Cricket Council Champions Trophy in England and Wales, which he then proceeds to watch while serving customers (being from Bangladesh, with its postcolonial ties, matters).


In the particular example we are using here, the customer is of West African origin, with implications for the languages used and the items bought (he is trying to find the right kind of dried fish). In a different example from this data set (Pennycook and Otsuji, in press), we have focused on three young men of Uzbek background who are not sure who runs this shop, asking amongst themselves (in Uzbek) “Bu qorachalar kim? Hintlar ekanu” (Who are these darker people? Seem like Indians). Their Japanese and English is limited but they point to an Uzbek 500 sōm banknote on the counter – both their presence and that of this note reflecting recent migratory trends and working visa changes in Japan – and explain (in Japanese) “Kore wa watashi tachi no (this is ours)” which is met with “Uzbekisutan desho (Uzbekistan, right?)” from the shop assistant. These social relations – religion, class, ethnicity, gender, race – matter in these interactions. They do not determine them or the language used – language produces as much as it reflects social relations – but they are an important part of the complex set of relations that are brought into play. A raciolinguistic perspective, as Oostendorp (2021, p.17) argues, has to be brought into conversation with work on semiotic repertoires: “Not only do semiotic repertoires construct bodies; semiotic repertoires are also partially determined by the bodies that come with them.” These are relational attributes, different when young Uzbeki men puzzle over who runs the shop from when a customer of West African background deals with the same shop assistants.


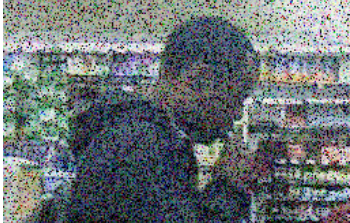
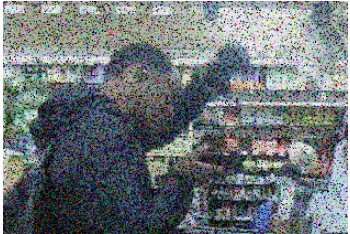
3. EMOTIONAL AND SENSORIAL ENGAGEMENT

Emotional (affective) and sensorial relations is a broad category of concerns, reflecting two of the ‘turns’ that have influenced the social sciences over the past decades. Both address the concern that sociolinguistics has drawn too heavily on the cognitive-rationalist dimensions of linguistic inquiry – the *intra-cranial* view of language in Joseph’s (2020) terms – that have tended to make the literate mind in the head of the individual the assumed locus of language (Finnegan, 2015), thereby overlooking bodies, emotions and senses other than seeing and hearing (Pennycook, 2018a). Sociolinguistic research needs to engage “the material world of stuff, objects, and things and, concomitantly, the immaterial world of affect, emotions, and feelings.” (Thurlow, 2016, p15). The ‘affective turn’ (Clough and Halley,

2007; McElhinny, 2010.) draws our attention to the importance of emotional life in any social interaction. A response to the over-reliance on rationality as the core driver of human interaction, this also suggests a re-orientation of sociological work (categories such as structure and agency, for example) as well as a recognition that “brains and bodies are in the same mind-enabling soup” (Damasio, 2018, p.240). The sensorial turn meanwhile takes up those aspects of embodiment – particularly smell, taste and touch – that have often been left out of the sociolinguistic picture. These senses, as Howes and Classen (2014, pp 88-9) make clear are deeply social: Odour, for example, is often associated with “ethnic identify and physical hygiene,” a site of racial, ethnic and class assumptions about others and the ways they live.

Smellscapes are an important part of the social semiotic domain (Pennycook and Otsuji, 2015b). The Bangladeshi shops we have researched almost always sell dried fish, as well as spices, giving a rich background aroma. In their call for “an embodied sociocultural linguistics” (174) Bucholz and Hall stress the importance of making more salient bodily aspects of communication from voice to style and ways in which the body is “imbricated in complex arrangements that include nonhuman as well as human participants, whether animals, epidemics, objects, or technologies” (Bucholz and Hall 2016, p.186). We shall return to the role of gesture (interactivity) and complex arrangements (assemblages) below. Smell and touch are an important part of the shopping experience in corner stores. While supermarkets tend to remove such elements (packaging and controlled sensory environments remove this engagement with food and other items), they are often central in small shops. In the interaction under discussion here, there is also frustration that this long search for the right kind of dried fish is taking so long: The shop assistant puts one leg on the stool behind the counter, and fiddles with the handle of the basket between them, and when the customer discovers the latest offering is not the right one, his gentle laughter while explaining “not this one...no not this one” (Excerpt 1, line 9) appears to be a way of softening the frustration on both sides. All this matters – the smells, touches, sounds, the quiet flipping back and forth of the handle of the basket – as the interaction unfolds, and we need research methods that can incorporate this wider diversity of factors (Pink, 2008; Thurlow, 2016).

<p>1. C: ah no. not this one. she said not this one [C returns the fish] [SA1 makes a phone call from his mobile phone on speaker mode to SA3]</p> <p>2. SA1 to SA2: oije boroda lon taile. smoked fish boroda den. (give that big one in that case. give me the bigger smoked fish.) oije boroda ano. boroda ano. (Bring the big one. Bring the big one.)</p> <p>3. C: <i>allo</i>. OK [to the phone and keeps the line on hold] [SA1's call was picked up by SA3]</p> <p>4. SA3: hello:: SA1 [to the phone]: ak case American loya ahen toh. (bring one case of American___)</p>	 <p>[pic 1]</p>
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<p>5. SA3: a:achha (okay) [SA1 finishes the phone conversation] SA1 to C: may be this one better not small fish. [SA2 brings the dried smoked fish, SA1 point to the fish: pic 1]</p> <p>6. C: [goes back to the phone] <i>ah? allo? il faut regarder ton portable. On dirait ça, c'est ce qu'il vient de me montrer là. attends je prends un photo. je vais t'envoyer.</i> don't worry. da da da da. (hello? you have to look at your phone. it seems like it, that's what he has just shown me. hang on I'll take a photo. I'll send it to you. don't worry da da da da da). [C takes a photo of the smoked fish: pic 2]</p> <p>7. C: [into phone : pic 3] <i>qu'est-ce qu'il a fait, hein? ...il faut regarder.</i> [unclear] <i>en haut.</i> (What did he do, eh? ... you have to look. [unclear] at the top) [waiting for his partner's response]</p> <p>8. C: <i>allo? c'est pas ça? ah.</i> OK. (Hello? It's not that? Oh, OK.) [SA1 turns around and takes plastic bags from the wall behind him]</p> <p>9. C: not this one [to SA1] [laughs] no not this one</p> <p>10. SA1: [pointing behind customer] easy to [the rustling sounds from opening the plastic bag overlaps with the word here] dry fish. [C looks behind]</p> <p>11. C: [to SA2] No. not this one. [to phone] OK. <i>je suis désolé alors. désolé. bye.</i> (Ok. well then I'm sorry. sorry.) [C finishes the phone call and removes the ear phones: pic 4] [SA1 continues packing three packs of skin-on frozen goat meat and semolina powder]</p>	 <p>[pic 2]</p>  <p>[pic 3]</p>  <p>[pic 4]</p>
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Excerpt 1. SA1: Shop assistant 1, a younger brother; SA2: Shop assistant 2, an older brother; C: Customer, SA3: a shop assistant.

Bangla: **Bold**; English: Plain; French: *Italics*; unknown: **Bold Italics** (translation in brackets)

4. MOBILITY

A focus on mobility is more than just an observation about diversity in a world in which people can (or are obliged to) move around more. It is a broader challenge to what has been seen as the static sociolinguistic emphasis on language in place. “Mobility is the great challenge: it is the dislocation of language and language events from the fixed position in time and space attributed to them by a more traditional linguistics and sociolinguistics” (Blommaert, 2010, p21). As suggested in the brief discussion of social relations above, the people who come to this shop in Tokyo are of many backgrounds – people of South Asian background looking for familiar foods, Muslims in search of Halal meat, people from the Maghreb in search of lentils and chick peas, West Africans after particular kinds of fish, or

Japanese customers who like to cook Asian food – and have often travelled a long way in terms of their wider trajectories as well as a longer trek across Tokyo to stock up on supplies (it is quite common for people to arrive with an empty suitcase). These mobilities have evident implications for the social relations and linguistic resources at play in the shop at any moment.

We have also become interested in the ways that mobile phones also now contribute to what goes on in this space. Besides being a sales product neatly displayed in the glass showcase behind the counter, the presence of mobile phones is conspicuous in the shop: they are used for shopping lists, as a source of music and videos (through headphones), for timekeeping, and as a communicative or information-gathering tool. They also enable people to connect with other social spaces. In Excerpt 1, not only do we see the mobility that has brought this customer and his desire for certain fish to this shop, but also his use of a mobile phone to check the fish (a photo, a discussion) with someone else elsewhere. This enables an expanded and interlocking spatiotemporal dimension produced by the use of mobile technologies within the daily activities of shopping, with an emphasis particularly on the simultaneity of entangled activities. In their paper on interactions in a “Polish Shop” in London, Zhu Hua, Li Wei and Lyons (2017) describe an interaction between the shop assistant, who is looking at her mobile phone, and a customer, in terms of a “face-to-face communicative zone at the counter and the other digital communicative zone to which the mobile serves as a gateway” (p. 426). Drawing on these insights, we prefer to look at this not so much in terms of two interlocking communicative zones but rather as one semiotic assemblage, an issue to which we return below. The use of mobile phones – often for shopping lists but also as we see here for taking images of products and discussing with others elsewhere – are becoming part of a new set of sociolinguistic practices.

5. ITERATIVE ACTIVITY

This term points to one of the significant aspects of daily practice: repeated social action that forms into practice. This is to take a practice-based orientation to language seriously – not just as something we do but as a sociological category. Like the affective and sensorial turns discussed above, the practice turn (Schatzki, 2001; 2002) in the social sciences emphasizes the ways in which social life is organized in terms of things we do: cooking practices, banking practices, recreation practices, religious practices, shopping practices, and so on. To look at language practices in this way is to do more than emphasize the activity of using language – a focus that has also arisen with the emphasis on ‘linguaging’ and ‘translinguaging’ within the translinguistic movement (Garcia and Li Wei, 2014) – but rather to turn the tables on common ways of framing language use. Van Leeuwen (2008)

points out that while practice – a focus on ‘what people do’ – has been seen as a foundational category in sociology and anthropology, in linguistics by contrast, “things have generally been the other way around, with systems (grammars, paradigms) generating processes (syntagms), rather than processes (practices) generating systems (institutions and objectified forms of knowledge)” (p.5). As this observation makes clear, the point in looking at language practices is to reverse the ways in which language studies have generally privileged language structure over social activity.

Language, as Canagarajah (2007) observes, “does not exist as a system out there. It is constantly brought into being in each context of communication” (p.91): Language cannot be understood “outside the realm of practice” (p.94). This shift from system to practice suggests an ontological shift in what language is (Demuro and Gurney; 2021). To look at language as iterative activity – something we do repeatedly that forms into established practices – makes central the doing of language as a material part of social and cultural life rather than the idea of language as an abstract entity. As Bourdieu (1977) reminds us, practices are actions with a history, suggesting that when we think in terms of language practices, we need to account for both time and space, history and location. Considering Extract 1, shopping practices (using shopping lists, choosing items, paying for them at the counter and so on) are central. These are closely connected to related linguistic practices (writing a shopping list, looking at food labels, interactions between customers and shoppers). We have analysed these processes elsewhere (Otsuji and Pennycook, 2021; Pennycook and Otsuji, in press), suggesting that there is a multifaceted interplay among shopping and language practices, shopping lists and items bought, items on the shelves and language used while shopping. It is the way language is embedded in these repeated social practices that matters.

6. OBJECTS AND ASSEMBLAGES

As we have argued elsewhere (Pennycook & Otsuji, 2017), Bangladeshi-run stores in different parts of the world may contain similar goods, from imported riverine fish (Sen, 2016), spice and rice to locally grown (and slightly different) vegetables (onions and bitter melon), as well as items such as phone and SIM cards. The fondness for certain river fish unites people from parts of South Asia across nationalities, ethnicities and religions. Such fish serve as *boundary objects* through their “ability to mediate across geographies, environments, culinary traditions, and histories” (Sen, 2016, p. 71). Yet when these objects encounter the variable affordances of these different shops, they enter into new and momentary sets of relationships that we have termed *semiotic assemblages* (Pennycook, 2017, Pennycook & Otsuji, 2017). The notion of assemblages as “ad hoc groupings of

diverse elements, of vibrant materials of all sorts” (Bennett, 2010, p. 23) allows for an understanding of how different trajectories of people, semiotic resources and objects meet at particular moments and places. This understanding of the vibrancy of matter, the importance of things (goat meat, phone and SIM cards) and the significance of place in the entanglement of physical, social and economic processes, enables us to appreciate the importance of things in social life and to see how they play a role within more complex assemblages (Tsing, 2015).

In the example In Excerpt 1 it matters that the customer (C) is looking to buy a particular type of dried fish (and other products). The excerpt starts when SA1 urges SA2 to bring another type of dried, smoked fish from the back of the shop (two other types of dried fish, one from Japan and the other from Africa, had already been rejected so this time he tries smoked fish). SA1 shows him all the possible fish he could think of (including Japanese semi-dried *Sukimi tara*, a type of cod) and SA2 goes back and forth between the counter and the back corner where the dried fish is stocked. There are considerable resources – linguistic, artefactual, spatial, technological, personal – at play here as they try to find a suitable fish. Meanwhile, in a parallel space, C’s interlocutor remains connected to the shop while C talks with the shop assistants, takes a photo, and waits for SA2 to bring the “Smoked fish **boroda den** (bigger smoked fish)”. In this excerpt we see an early-evening assemblage of people (a customer of West African background, Bangladeshi shop assistants) objects (mobile phones, fish, plastic bags), an expanded spatial repertoire made possible by the use of the mobile phone, various sensory effects (sounds, smells) and the particular linguistic resources made possible by the simultaneity of these everyday activities.

7. SOCIO- AND TRANSLINGUAL PRACTICES

This brings us to the linguistic resources at play. Our point as sociolinguists is not to downplay the importance of linguistic resources but rather to understand how they are intertwined with this broader set of semiotic resources. Not surprisingly, given the social relations and mobilities already outlined, it is common in this store for a wide range of linguistic resources to be deployed. Customer C uses English to the shop assistant, a practice that is not particularly marked (in the example above with the Uzbek customers, the shop assistant uses English and then settles on Japanese) but nor is it necessarily the obvious choice. A large signboard displayed outside the shop states at the top in English ‘100% Halal food’ above the Japanese ‘香辛料専門店’ (spice speciality shop). Pictures of Nepalese, Bangladeshi, Sri Lankan, Indian, Pakistani, Ghanaian and Nigerian flags, as well as images of various foods (fish and meat), spices and phone cards are scattered round the sign, alongside the name of the shop written in Roman, Bangla, Hindi, and Burmese scripts.

In response to a question about languages commonly used, the shop manager listed Bangla (as seen in the example, the common working language of the shop), Urdu, English, Hindi and Nepalese. This linguistic repertoire was further extended by a shop assistant – “Arabi mo chotto” (a bit of Arabic too) – using the Bangla word for Arabic and speaking in Japanese (a language missing from the inventory above).

Beyond this inventory of commonly used languages, customers bring their own linguistic resources (Uzbek being but one example among many). In the example here, it is the mobile phone that also brings in the use of French as the customer checks whether the fish is right: *il faut regarder ton portable. On dirait ça, c'est ce qu'il vient de me montrer là. attends je prends un photo. je vais t'envoyer.* (hello? you have to look at your phone. it seems like it, that's what he has just shown me. hang on I'll take a photo. I'll send it to you.) We use the term translinguistic to tie these observations about language to the broader sociolinguistic insights about translinguistic practices, namely that linguistic boundaries are “the result of ideological invention and sedimentation” that “do not guide communication in everyday contexts” and that such communication is “not limited to ‘language’ insofar as interlocutors draw on a range of semiotic and spatial repertoires” (Lee and Dovchin, 2020, p1). Our central interest therefore is not on linguistic systems and how they may intersect (codeswitching) but on how different linguistic resources are mobilised as part of larger semiotic assemblages.

8. INTERACTIVITY

Interaction has always been central to many (though by no means all) approaches to sociolinguistics. From the point of view we are developing here, our interest is in the multiple layers of interactivity, a perspective that can also be seen in Goodwin's (2000; 2013) interests in action, co-operation, co-construction, multimodality, gesture and objects in collaborative communication. The interaction at the counter while buying goods is central here, though it is complicated by the use of the phone: in what is perhaps becoming a more common scenario in contemporary life, the customer and shopkeeper stand face to face while one of them is talking to somebody else. The social interactivity in this shop also tends towards simultaneous activity: While Zhu Hua, Li Wei and Lyons (2017) note the use of mobile phones within the *communicative zones* of service encounters in a Polish shop in London, they also note the linearity of the interactions, as customers line up to be served one by one at the counter. In this shop, by contrast, it is common for multiple interactions to be going on at the same time, with the shop assistants moving back and forth and customers (particularly non-Japanese customers) interacting with various assistants in different ways. In the example above, the shop assistant interacts not only with the other shop assistant in

order to find appropriate fish for the customer, but also with another assistant on the phone. In the earlier scene referred to (the cricket match), he similarly interacts with the live-streamed game while serving a customer (with some confusion since his focus is very much on the cricket) (Pennycook and Otsuji, 2019).

Interaction happens at levels other than the sociolinguistic (narrowly understood). As suggested in the discussion of affect and sensoriality above, an important aspect of this is the gestural or nonverbal dynamics of interaction. While a substantial literature has developed focusing on gesture and nonverbal communication more broadly (Kendon 2004), there is still a tendency in sociolinguistics to see the body as “secondary to language rather than as the *sine qua non* of language” (Bucholz and Hall 2016, 174). The work that aspects of nonverbal communication do, however – communicating iconically, synchronising with speech, indicating affect and so on – is central to communicative activity. Moving the handle back and forth on the basket, the postures of the two participants in Pic 1, the shrug of resignation and apology that accompanies the ‘no not this one’ when the customer realises this is not the right kind of fish, are all crucial parts of the action. And as recent work questioning the sign language/ gesture dichotomy has started to suggest, we need to rethink in broader ways how we understand these roles (Kusters and Sahasrabudhe. 2018). Beyond such bodily interaction, we also want to see objects as part of dynamic and interactive assemblages: Once we start to appreciate the vibrancy of objects within larger entanglements of people and places, we can start to see that the fish, the basket, the plastic bags, the counter and so on are part of an interactive whole.

9. SPATIAL REPERTOIRES

We turn finally to the idea of spatial repertoires. We and others (Canagarajah, 2018; Pennycook and Otsuji, 2015a) have been using this term to capture the ways that available semiotic resources are connected to social space. The term emerged in an attempt to take further the growing interest in the idea of repertoires to account for the ways in which people draw on various linguistic resources. The notion of repertoire goes back to the early years of sociolinguistics, understood as “the totality of linguistic forms regularly employed in the course of socially significant interaction” (Gumperz 1964: 137). A tension emerged, however, as to whether the term referred to the totality of forms available to a speech community (an idea that itself came under pressure) or to an individual, a distinction captured in Bernstein’s (2000, p158) *reservoir* (community) and *repertoire* (individual). Sociolinguistics would generally follow the path of the individual (Pennycook, 2018b) and while repertoires in recent studies have been understood socially and historically – the interest was in people’s linguistic trajectories as they moved through life – they became tied

to individual patterns of language use, each person bringing their own repertoire to the table: “Repertoires are individual, biographically organized complexes of resources, and they follow the rhythms of actual human lives.” (Blommaert and Backus, 2013: 15).

It seemed important in our studies of shops and markets, by contrast, to focus on particular social spaces in which interaction occurred, thus avoiding the reification of the speech community or the reduction to the individual and allowing for an understanding of what may be available to people in this place at this time. A similar point can be made about multilingual families: it is more useful to think in terms of a ‘translingual family repertoire’ as the shared resources within a family than to look at individual family members as repositories of linguistic resources (Hiratsuka and Pennycook, 2019). For Canagarajah (2018, p5) spatial repertoires are not brought “to the activity by the individual but assembled *in situ*, and in collaboration with others, in the manner of distributed practice.” In the context of this shop, the notion of a spatial repertoire enables us to think in terms of the totality of linguistic or semiotic resources available, including the languages in use at any given time, the labels on the food, and a range of other semiotic resources. This makes it possible to move away from the methodological individualism that has crept into sociolinguistics once other categories, such as speech communities, appeared too unstable to maintain, while also allowing for a broader semiotics than the idea of a linguistic repertoire.

10. CONCLUSION: PITFALLS AND POSSIBILITIES

The search for a means to account for the total linguistic or semiotic fact will always fall short: We can never get at everything. We should be wary of taking such claims too seriously or seeking to constantly broaden our sociolinguistic scope. Attempts to get closer to this totality run the risk of including more and more at the expense of greater analytic depth (a thin horizontal collection of details rather than a vertical depth of interpretation). While this gives us more layered involvement of place, people artefacts and semiosis, and thus more possible purchase on the chimerical total linguistic fact, it may also be at the expense of capturing little more than a momentary instance of complexity. Such attempts can nonetheless be useful since they offer “a route past premature reifications, celebrations and exclusions” (Rampton, 2016, p.472) and allow us to reflect on the reasons why we may or may not want borders around what we hope to include. Why not bodies, things, emotions and so on? “Our sorties into other semiotic worlds remain very ‘textual’, with little attention to embodied, intuitive, affective ways of doing and knowing” (Thurlow, 2016, p23). We need to have adequate grounds to reject those aspects of the total semiotic fact that we may not consider important.

It would not be hard to add to the list suggested by a SEMIOSIS framework, and I by no means want to claim exhaustive or exclusive coverage. It has been useful, however, to have an updated acronym to think about what is at stake when we analyse social contexts in which language is involved. It is also important to acknowledge that many others, from Goodwin (2013) to Blommaert (2017), have sought to account for similar levels of complexity, while others have arrived at similar understandings of all that is going on in markets and shops (Blackledge and Creese, 2020; Zhu Hua, Li Wei and Lyons, 2017). The idea of assemblages, however, which may be seen as central (though not essential) to this expanded sociolinguistics, allows for a breadth of understanding that allows both a wide set of sociolinguistic artefacts and a means to understand political and economic relations that do not render sociolinguistics secondary to other forms of analysis. Assemblages, as Tsing (2015, p23) reminds us, “are sites for watching how political economy works. If capitalism has no teleology, we need to see what comes together—not just by prefabrication, but also by juxtaposition.” The different parts of the SEMIOSIS framework clearly overlap (this was also true of the SPEAKING model) and do not suggest neatly defined domains. The framework does, however, offer us a way of asking what may be at stake in any social interaction involving language.

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