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Introduction: reimagining language and belonging in the diaspora

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Editorial

Introduction: Reimagining language and belonging in the diaspora

Abstract

This introductory piece outlines the lens adopted in this special issue, which foregrounds the examination of language and semiotics as a means of revisiting the concept of diaspora. Guided by posthumanist applied linguistics, the papers here envision human experiences as more complex than critical social theory may suggest; moreover, grassroots agency – a focus that may be inadvertently overlooked in work that adopts a solely critical perspective – represents an important area of attention. Such an approach is grounded in the diversity of human realities that emerge from differential interfaces between structures and individuals who, themselves, possess the capacity to recognize these structures and respond to them in unique ways. Together, the diverse pictures of inventive, creative, and, in some cases, dynamic constructions of diasporic identity presented here supplement, broaden, and challenge common conceptualizations of diasporic positionality.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In as far as the diasporic experience can be a minoritized one, then sociolinguistics draws on critical social theory (Horkheimer, 1982) to help identify, elucidate, and address inequalities that characterize the diasporic experience. Dating back to the pioneering linguistic anthropological work of Hymes (1962, 1972), social criticism has been a foundation of sociolinguistics, in large part motivated by unequal power relations between different languages and their speakers that manifest through, inter alia, immigration and resettlement. This focus is indeed warranted. The broad gamut of potential sociolinguistic challenges and repercussions of being a linguistic minority are indispensable fodder for the sociolinguistic enterprise. By way of example, complex identity constructions of individuals that are vexed by minority and majority group affiliations have become a core thematic focus (Bucholtz and Hall, 2004). This focus orients work such as the semiotics of code-switching in sites of language contact (Milroy and Muysken, 1995), heritage language shift as a consequence of immigration, and the concept of a language ecology (Fishman, 1990, 1993; Haugen, 1972). The marginalization of migrants through nationalist, racialized and/or purist discourses has called on our field to examine the politicization of linguistic difference, including language attitudes and discrimination against those whose speech differs from the (idealized) standard (Garrett, 2010; Lippi-Green, 1994; Woolard, 1992). We have become justifiably concerned with the educational achievement of migrant language-speaking children and their linguistic rights (Hornberger, 1998; Lewis, 1981; May, 2005). Related foci also include investigations into the workings of language policy to regulate diversity through political, cultural or societal authority at different levels of society (Shohamy and Spolsky, 2000; Spolsky, 2004).

These concerns are united by a critical epistemological starting point. This lens sees diasporas as prone to marginalization and suppression whereby dominant societies threaten to take something from diasporas that we sociolinguists hold dear, whether that be a heritage language, ethnic identity, or the right to promote a language. Such concerns are, of course, noble, but, as Toolan (1997) notes, they also carry with them “an excessive amount of preliminary ‘complaint’ discourse” (p. 86). Stemming from Marxist and Bourdieusian traditions that emphasize the powerlessness of the individual to assert free will over the forces of reproduction (Block, 2012), this perspective considers structure as the principal force that defines and guides agency (Carter and Sealey, 2000).

Moreover, the links between hegemony, oppression, and structure espoused by a critical social theoretical view of language tends, with its bias toward the social scientific tradition, to reinforce this position.

Rather than accepting structure as the ultimate determinant of sociolinguistic reality, we support, in this issue, a vision of human experiences as necessarily more complex than critical social theory suggests they may be; moreover, we purposely draw attention to grassroots agency that a solely critical lens may inadvertently overlook. For language in the diaspora, our view aligns with post-structuralist and phenomenological sociolinguistics which has directed attention beyond power structures to also examine bottom-up sociolinguistic creativity and dynamism that arise in contexts of diversity (Swann and Deumert, 2018). Indeed, agency, creativity, and heterogeneity feature prominently in the articles that appear in this special issue.

This perspective reflects recent epistemological developments. For example, many in the field have embraced *translanguaging* and its cognates (Cf. Fowler and Hodges, 2011; Jørgensen, 2008; Li Wei, 2011). This concept describes complex and creative communication, typically amongst migrants and between ethnic groups, unencumbered by prescriptivist boundaries between languages, to instead focus less on matters of power and more on practical meaning making. The field has also embraced disruptions to the centralization of language authority. Language policy is no longer seen solely as an activity of governments, but also as a grassroots process that, through agency, can replicate and endorse as well as challenge and refute traditional power relations (Hornberger and Johnson, 2007; Johnson and Johnson, 2015; King et al., 2008; Piller and Cho, 2013) based on explicitly or implicitly formulated parameters (Shohamy, 2009). That is to say, whereas social structures may marginalize languages and their speakers, communities and individuals can commit, in their own ways, to disrupting these structures. Such disruptions include, for the purposes of this issue, the (re) construction of diasporic identities, of which language often represents a central component (Mills, 2005).

1.1. Conceptualizing diaspora

Our approach is in line with both the theoretical foregrounding in sociolinguistics and also the now expanded notion of *diaspora* in the sociology literature. Accordingly, we understand the origins of this concept as a reference to the subjects of forced migration, especially Jews and Armenians in exile (Safran, 1991). Displacement and nostalgic longing for a homeland to which one could not return helped to shape the diasporic experience of many in these populations. Accordingly, these themes feature prominently in earlier work that addresses the diaspora positionality. This understanding envisions diasporas largely as peripheral entities that are permanently oriented toward their communities of origin, not necessarily toward the host society. As analyses of diasporic communities have progressed, conceptualizations of diaspora group membership have widened to also include groups that have left their homeland by choice (Cohen, 1997). This more inclusive vision has coincided with a careful epistemological shift in sociology, which constructs diasporas as inherently transnational (Appadurai, 1996) and, as such, the sites of deeply established cross-cultural ties (Faist, 2010). Out of this positionality, a social psychology shaped by dual orientations to both the homeland and host society has been widely recognized in the literature (Cf. Kalra et al., 2005; Lavie and Swedenburg, 1996). A recent attempt to synthesize the most common characteristics of diaspora that have appeared in the literature from recent decades has resulted in one comprehensive definition of this concept: “a trans-national community whose members (or ancestors) emigrated/were dispersed from their original homeland but remain oriented to this homeland and preserve a group identity” (Grossman, 2019: 5).

Despite the widespread acceptance of these fundamental aspects of diaspora, up-close attention to the situation on the ground points to the need for a more nuanced understanding of this concept. This is certainly the case given the realities of enhanced, country-specific entry restrictions for migrants. In some cases, intended transit countries become unintentional destination countries (Cf. Üstübcü, 2019 for a comprehensive discussion of Turkey as a transit country). In other cases, prolonged periods of residence in between communities of origin and eventual resettlement result in attachments to the cultures and populations of the transit countries. This blurring of transit and destination countries illustrates just one of various reasons for expanding conceptualizations of diasporic orientations – with their presupposition that individuals feel simultaneously pulled by influential structures tied to the homeland and host society – beyond this dichotomy (Faist, 2008). Moreover, as the following section will outline, a focus on individuals' diasporic experiences has the potential to uncover additional positionalities for which generalized notions of diaspora do not account. A posthumanist approach guides this inquiry.

2. A POSTHUMANIST VISION

Posthumanist applied linguistics (Pennycook, 2018) has provided a guiding vision for this special issue in terms of its epistemological starting points. Rather than accepting a priori that structures which harbor oppressive ideologies and discourses necessarily have oppressive results, posthumanism allows us to refocus our attention on the broader diversity of the experience of being human, including the ways in which human interactions with environments – laden with considerable potential for creativity, resourcefulness, and agency – inform sociolinguistic realities. Posthumanist applied linguistics is, as such, liberated from the default ‘complaint discourse’ of critical inquiry. Whereas critical inquiry is primarily concerned with weaving structure and power relations together to create a social fabric, posthumanist applied linguistics offers an epistemological focus on the individual. Such a perspective is grounded in the diversity of human realities that emerge from differential interfaces between structures and individuals who, themselves, possess the capacity to recognize these structures and respond to them in unique ways. As Pennycook explains, “some areas of applied linguistics had become off-limits to those steeped in critical and social theory: cognition was something of a dirty word, since it was so linked to notions of the individual and thought-internal processes that there seemed no possibility of redeeming the idea for a more socially and critically oriented approach to thought” (ibid. p. 9). A posthumanist applied linguistic approach, therefore, encourages us to examine the ways in which language situations are guided and realised by the broad gamut and nature of human dependencies with the surrounding world

rather than with respect to existing hegemonies per se. Based on this premise, we endorse a posthumanist applied linguistic perspective to diasporas in order to examine a range of human diasporic sociolinguistic experiences through a multidisciplinary approach.

Case study research provides fertile ground to realize these aims, making it possible, for example, to examine individuals' "distinctive sense of self themselves and their identity as oriented toward the cultural present [which may or may not be oriented toward] some lost or 'true' homeland" (Gabriel, 2011, 342) together with the concomitant implications of communicational concerns. Importantly, this type of research can address complex human experiences and affordances – both material and immaterial – that give form to communicational considerations beyond matters of diasporic power relations, increasing our understanding of the mechanisms that shape affiliations and add layers of complexity to the discussion. On the one hand, diasporas may retain close ties with communities in their homeland and transit communities through enhanced access to digital spaces (cf. Androutsopoulos, 2006; Bernal, 2006; Helland, 2007; Palviainen, 2020). On the other hand, post-modern diaspora theory calls on us to "recognize the salience of new identities that have emerged as diaspora communities seek connections with the 'new' homeland on their own terms" (Gabriel, 2011, pp. 344–345). Contextualized no doubt by socio-political dynamics of the host society, homeland, and places in between, diaspora communities might view themselves as linguistically independent from their homeland whereby their sociolinguistic behaviors and preferences reflect that they care less about cultural and ethnolinguistic heritage than classic diaspora theory may suggest (cf. Senayon, 2016). In line with posthumanism, therefore, this conceptualization of diaspora recognizes the agentive, transformative potential of diasporic individuals within their local contexts with respect to local affordances.

A posthumanist framing of the concept of diaspora can also incorporate the hybrid language practices that, drawing on the literary concept of the third space (Bhabha, 1994), allow migrant group members to appropriate space that is distinct from home, host, and transit societies (Bhatt, 2008) through their material and immaterial interdependences. Li Wei (2011) has already brought this concept firmly into the field of sociolinguistics with his notion of trans-space, in which "multilingual practice has its own transformative power" (pg 1223). This, as we see it, is possible by way of material and immaterial affordances that make possible or facilitate this space. Therefore, we place importance on the flexibility and human context of individual diasporic positionality, the construction of which is "an on-going, lifelong process" (pg. 1223). Indeed, the application of such a perspective to diaspora studies has given rise to the notion of diasporization, a focus that captures the dynamic character of this process (Canagarajah and Silberstein, 2012; Rosa and Trivedi, 2017), which is featured in some of the studies that appear in the pages that follow.

These considerations gain particular relevance under the contemporary conditions of neoliberalism and hyperdiversity that have contributed to more diverse ownership of capital (Sabatè i Dalmau, 2013). Within this context, we are called to envision diasporas as "internally diverse and multi-dimensional, shaped by individual biographies and characterised by different levels of hybridity and interaction with other groups" (Deumert and Mabandla, 2013: 46). It is, therefore, fitting that Li Wei (2018) refers to "creative potential" as an intrinsic characteristic of the diasporic experience (p. 7). Furthermore, with regard to the other groups with whom diaspora group members may interact and/or co-exist, it is also important to remain aware of diasporic individuals' potential to influence and transform members of other groups within the host community, including those from the dominant population (Blommaert et al., 2005). Out of this picture of complexity, diasporas challenge essentialist views of language and identity and remain instrumental to theoretical advancements in sociolinguistics.

3. CONTRIBUTIONS TO DIASPORIC SOCIOLINGUISTICS

The contributions to this special issue explore, from the bottom-up, a range of voices from diaspora communities situated in Qatar, New Zealand, Canada, South Africa, Australia, Malaysia, Italy, and the United States. These analyses of language and belonging are grounded in a joint effort to examine unique, human linguistic experiences in the diaspora that do not rely on generalizable definitions of diasporas nor on a priori assumptions about the impact of power relations. The emic approach of the contributions in this issue furthers our objective of deconstructing individually conceptualized understandings of linguistic belonging within diasporas. As detailed below, the studies that have emerged from this line of inquiry fall into three thematic sub-categories: 1.) the (extra)linguistic construction of diasporic identity, which includes work by Irene Theodoropoulou and Melanie Revis; 2.) the (extra)linguistic construction and expression of split allegiances, which features three studies: a sociophonetic analysis of Haitian-Canadian identity by Veronique Lacoste; an exploration of language and identity among Taiwanese-Australian parents of sojourning children by Susana Eisenclas, Andrea Schalley, Grace Yue Qi, and Pei-Shu Tsai; and the shifting cultural allegiances of young Congolese-origin Cape Town residents by Jaclisse Mayoma and Quentin Williams; and 3.) challenging and redefining diasporic orientations, in which papers by Nathan Albury, Lucija Šimičić and Ivana Škeven Rajko (co-authors), and Anne Schluter appear.

3.1. The (extra)linguistic construction of diasporic identity

A shared language can index the common cultural origins/heritage of speakers and maintain a migrant group's conceptualization of itself as an interconnected diaspora (Cf. Mills, 2005). Data that support this language-diasporic orientation link, while also expanding it to extralinguistic realms, appear in the contributions by Irene Theodoropoulou and Melanie Revis, the first two articles of this special issue. Grounded in an understanding of identity as emergent during social interaction (Cf. Bucholtz and Hall, 2005), these analyses foreground the ever-evolving nature of diasporization, a process which defies simplistic, structure-based categorizations. The authors' inclusion of multimodal and semiotic aspects to complement linguistic data, together with their accounting for individualized, context-specific practices, effectively provides snapshots of agentive constructions of diasporic identity.

A focus on agency acknowledges its deep entanglements with structure (Ahearn, 2001; Block, 2012; Bucholtz and Hall, 2005). The juxtaposition of state-recognized refugees in the midst of resettlement (in Revis) vs. contract-based overseas workers who lack any

prospects of permanent resettlement in the host country (in Theodoropoulou) presents a case in point: these papers provide portraits of two groups' highly divergent impetuses for migration, potential to integrate into the receiving culture, and visions of return to the homeland, three frequently cited factors for diasporic trajectories and orientations (Faist, 2010). Together, these studies draw attention to the continued relevance of structure in the form of differential levels of assimilationist pressures exerted on members of the two groups. The valuation of linguistic purism among members of on-line forums devoted to Greek culture in Qatar (in Theodoropoulou) and recognition of Colombian as the most authentic of possible Spanish-language varieties by Colombian refugees in New Zealand (in Revis) demonstrate the relevance of ideologies and their deep ties to prevailing power structures (DeCosta, 2010). Engagement and resistance to such linguistic structures provide the template for emic prescriptions of diasporic identity more broadly.

At the same time, the research presented in these two articles also suggests that, following Kinefuchi (2010) and Gabriel (2011), a perspective that emphasizes structure cannot fully predict diasporic positionality. Discursive and semiotic analyses from these two studies help to highlight this finding. From the perspective of discourse, the authors point to individuals' capacity to craft a full spectrum of diasporic self-conceptualizations, some of which evade structurally based predictions that a purely critical approach would take for granted. By analyzing their participants' discursive constructions of diasporic belonging, Theodoropoulou and Revis reflect on the material that shapes perceptions of the diaspora groups as cohesive units. Akin to fostering belonging within an imagined community (Anderson, 1983), the array of semiotic materials and multimodal configurations employed to express this belonging in Theodoropoulou's work – representative of only a limited sample of possible assemblages – underlines the enormous potential to personalize such conceptualizations of community in a variety of ways that do not conform to structure-prioritizing analyses. This evidence suggests a diminished role for structural constraints like marginalization and nationalism relative to their outsized influence in more classical examinations into diasporic identity (Faist, 2010; Kinefuchi, 2010).

3.2. *The (extra) linguistic construction and expression of split allegiances*

Within the full spectrum of diasporic self-conceptualizations raised by the preceding section's articles, there is space for in-between positionalities in which the novel mixture of group members' intentional straddling of two (or more) societies through linguistic or extra-linguistic means stimulates new understandings of group belonging. The participants profiled in the work of Veronique Lacoste, Susana Eisenclas et al., and Jacisse Mayoma and Quentin Williams that appear in this section operate within this *Third Space* (Bhabha, 1994). Focusing on salient phonetic features of English that are perceived as indexical of cultural attachments, Lacoste's paper finds various combinations of hybrid Anglophone Canadian, African-Canadian, and Haitian articulations of cultural affiliation among members of her Haitian-Canadian sample. Similarly, Eisenclas et al.'s analysis of Taiwanese mothers' family language policies that center on immersing their Australian-resident children in a Taiwanese educational setting through summertime sojourns contributes to the children's selection of various identity labels that fall somewhere in between Australian and Taiwanese and, therefore, between two social, linguistic and educational structures. While the Congolese youth of Cape Town profiled in Mayoma and Williams may – unlike the children featured in Eisenclas et al. – express desire for full membership within heritage peer groups, they would, nevertheless, reject an identity label based exclusively on their Congolese roots for its failure to capture their uniquely hybrid cross-cultural orientations. Each of these examples underlines the “various creative possibilities” (Tsagarousianou, 2004 in Li Wei, 2018: 10) of diaspora members' Third Space positionalities as they navigate unique alignments of trans-national and local constraints together with the “hope and new beginnings” (Brah, 1996: 193 in Li Wei, 2018: 9) that characterize the diasporic experience.

These unique alignments infuse diasporic positionalities with diversity whereby the diaspora itself prizes – and, in some cases, even demands – this complex infusion. As emphasized in Lacoste's paper, diversity applies to different scales and configurations, including on both intra- and inter-speaker levels. Each of the three pieces of this section showcases within-group diversity. Pointing to the absence of any discernable Haitian ethnolect in Toronto, Lacoste draws attention to the lack of phonologically expressed diaspora group cohesion, a phenomenon that distinguishes it from some of Toronto's other diasporas. Moreover, a closer look at the production of salient features of African American English and French-accented English suggests a strong affiliation with speakers of Black Canadian English on the one hand, but widely varying degrees of orientation to speakers of French-accented English on the other hand. In the context of Eisenclas et al.'s work, the Taiwanese mothers' decision to enroll their children in Taiwanese summer schools illustrates a shared approach to inculcating Taiwanese cultural belonging among their children; however, the uptake of this attempt at Taiwanization changes according to the individual child, bringing diversity with respect to group allegiances. In Mayoma and Williams's examination of Congolese-origin youths' fit within their Congolese peer groups in Cape Town, French-language proficiency serves as a marker of authenticity. Accordingly, participants' differing abilities to approximate the target variety suggest to their peers a range of attachments to Congolese-centric orientations. Through each of these examples of within-group diversity, this body of work supports a vision of diasporas as “heterogeneous in many aspects, not the least because of differences in social-political history, languages, allegiance and identity within each diasporic community (Li Wei and Hua, 2013: 54).” The picture of diversity that emerges from these three articles' focus on within-group variation intensifies with a look at points of linguistic divergence within individuals.

Building off of an understanding of diasporization as an ever-evolving process, diversity also characterizes individuals' constructions of their identities, which change to suit the given audience and setting. Lacoste's and Mayoma and Williams's papers in this issue provide evidence of alternating projections of diasporic belonging within a single individual with reference to external factors and dependencies rooted in the human experience. These authors showcase the stylized performances of speakers, effectively highlighting instances of “opt [ing] in and opt[ing] out, [...] perform[ing] or play[ing] with linguistic signs of group belonging, and [...] develop [ing] particular trajectories of group identification throughout their lives” (Blommaert and Rampton, 2011: 5 in Lacoste). In addition to the intra-group diversity highlighted in the preceding paragraphs, the data presented in these papers point to intra-individual variation as a potential outcome of diasporic positionality.

In parallel with the generational split within diasporas noted elsewhere (Cf. Kinefuchi, 2010), these acts of opting-in and opting-out, if perceived as gradients of adaptability, tend to encompass a generational or age dimension. This observation includes the older members of the Haitian diaspora, featured in Lacoste's article, who diverge from their younger counterparts with respect to their desire to retain their connections to Francophone – rather than Anglophone – communities. Similarly, this fixation on the heritage language and culture among the older generation also features in Eisenclas et al.'s presentation of the uniformly Taiwan-centric orientations of the mothers of sojourners, which contrast their children's array of cultural affiliations. While Mayoma and Williams's paper does not compare the practices of younger and older members of the Cape Town-resident Congolese diaspora, its exclusive focus on youth builds on an a priori understanding of this demographic's greater potential for hybridity. In these ways, this section's three papers bring generational differences to the fore, representing one piece of the diverse spectrum of possible orientations available to diasporic individuals and groups.

3.3. Challenging and redefining diasporic orientations

The emic perspective adopted in this special issue is particularly prominent in the three pieces that appear in the third section, which devotes less attention to the pendulum of allegiances discussed in the previous sections and more with the ways in which such allegiances – if we see them as established structures – are challenged, refuted or even abandoned. That is to say, these articles show divergence from the etically grounded classifications of diaspora groups through which the dominant group may frame them, whereby divergences in the framework of sociolinguistics are facilitated or prompted by broader material (economic, geographic) and immaterial (cultural, political) affordances and opportunities. Discursively constructed by ethno-nationalist, government voices as deeply attached to the nation-state of their heritage, the Indian and Chinese populations of Malaysia (discussed in Albury) and the Molise Croatian population of Italy (discussed in Šimičić and Škeven Rajko) provide evidence that a politically prescribed attachment to a perceived homeland may, contrary to dominant discourses, carry little resonance within the target group. Although the state's framing of diaspora groups does not factor into Schluter's analysis of Honduran and Ecuadorian migrants' orientations within their U.S. setting, insights from this article complement those of Albury and Šimičić and Škeven Rajko through its presentation of migrants whose diasporic self-conceptualizations vary considerably from those assigned to them by members of the out-group. Together, the Malaysian, Italian, and U.S. contexts offer very different pictures of diasporic positionalities whereby these positionalities are 'new' in the sense that they fall outside the traditional scope of diasporic allegiances. They may not even assume diasporic orientations in that local material and immaterial affordances, agency, creativity, and activism shift or (un)knowingly refute the ties typically associated with diaspora group membership. The resulting mismatch between the out-group's discursive framing and in-group members' perspectives illustrates a way in which diaspora groups' "identities and practices [may] not correspond to hegemonic models of language and culture" (Rosa and Trivedi, 2017: 337 quoted in Šimičić and Škeven Rajko). Importantly, challenges to these models are not necessarily a challenge to hegemony, but they are evidenced by perceived factors in the human experience that – while arguably the result of hegemony – do not intrinsically harbor power relations. Specifically, the participants position their hybrid language practices as evidence of non-diasporic positionality and make this hybridity a material affordance, parallel to or instead of arguing against policy or discourse per se.

In place of strong connections to the homeland, local and national structures play highly influential roles in these contributions. The participants profiled in these three pieces may be creative and agentive in crafting their identities, but, ultimately, their positionalities emerge in conjunction with existing hierarchies within their larger communities of residence. Considering their language practices as indexical of Malaysia's quintessentially multi-ethnic character, the Indian and Chinese youth in Albury's work demand a place for themselves within the confines of Malaysian conceptualizations of citizenship. Importantly, they do so by offering linguistic justification for their perspectives, thereby rejecting the ongoing internalization of Malaysian nationalist discourses that hierarchize language and ethnicity. In the case of Molise Croatians, participants' visions of themselves as ethnically Italian indicates – similarly to the participants profiled in Albury – their perceived rootedness within their generations-long territory of settlement in which group history serves as an (im)material affordance to anchor such discourse. In this context, language variety is also indexical: despite sharing linguistic origins with residents of Croatia, differences between the present-day Croatian national variety and their Italian-infused, relatively archaic dialect serve as salient reminders of their divergence from Croatian conceptualizations of cultural belonging. Within the context of Italy, their unique language variety grants them a special minority status, allowing them to construct themselves as a distinct speech community of Italy through their use of language to draw boundaries between themselves and other local groups who do not share their history.

Providing an example of *horizontal assimilation* (Prashad, 2001), the Ecuadorian and Honduran participants in Schluter's article sever their connections to members of their own migrant communities in favor of participation in the locally prominent Portuguese-centric diaspora. This participation entails investment in Portuguese, shedding light on the functions of capital and pro-Portuguese ideologies – both of which work in tandem with local structures – to raise the status of another diaspora group within the local community. In each of the ways discussed here, the articles in this section emphasize "the everyday" activities of "getting on with neighbors, handling diversity or difference, and [participants'] finding a good fit for themselves in what is happening around them" (Williams and Stroud, 2015 p. 407 in Albury) that far supersede trans-national allegiances to a perceived or actual country of origin.

In juxtaposition to the numerous conceptualizations of diasporic positionality that foreground discussions about "multi-locale attachments" (Clifford, 1994: 306 in Šimičić and Škeven Rajko) and "tensions between home and abroad" (Kalra et al., 2005: 3) as intrinsic aspects of diaspora group membership, the sum of the work that appears in this section highlights the homeland's potential irrelevance to some diasporic contexts. Accordingly, these pieces also provide counter-evidence to predictions grounded in such understandings of diaspora as those that emerge in Clifford (1994) and Kalra et al. (2005), including those which point to the strengthening of these attachments through the heightened opportunities for sustained contact with the homeland in digital spaces (Palviainen, 2020). Clearly, pre-

dictions such as those raised in Palviainen, as illustrated succinctly in Theodoropoulou's paper, represent highly pertinent considerations to some diasporic contexts; however, the three examples of deviation presented in this section suggest that they do not apply to all diaspora members across all contexts. In this way, the articles in this section suggest that trans-nationalism and its accompanying attachments are not intrinsic to diaspora group membership (as shown in Albury and Šimičić and Škeven Rajko). Furthermore, in the cases in which these features are present, diasporic individuals' territorial origins may not beckon as homelands. Instead, these individuals may establish orientations to the homeland of a different locally prominent diaspora group for whom they hold a strong affinity (as in Schluter).

4. POSTHUMANIST CONTRIBUTIONS TO A SOCIOLINGUISTIC RECONCEPTUALIZATION OF DIASPORIC BELONGING

The contributions outlined here provide substantial linguistic and semiotic material from inside diasporic contexts to re-examine some of the commonly accepted core criteria of this positionality by showing some ways in which communication is mediated by material and immaterial affordances in human lives. This observation may or may not have a critical dimension. While a clear place for critical theory in sociolinguistics remains, the sum of these papers suggests that understanding sociolinguistic realities – in this case as expressed through (extra-)linguistic belonging – can be informed by a larger spectrum of real-life influences than power alone. In turn, this liberated view provides evidence to support the expansion and, in the case of the papers that appear in the final section of this issue, the modification of our understanding of diasporic belonging to one that is informed by complexity within human experiences. In the cases of Theodoropoulou's and Revis's papers, digital discourses and semiotics (in Theodoropoulou) as well as essentialist notions of authenticity (in Revis) demonstrate the salience of participants' ties to their homelands, a characteristic of diasporic group membership that has received considerable attention in the literature. The numerous forms through which these attachments take shape, however, illustrate the uniqueness of individual expression that are dependent on local affordances, suggesting that homeland-oriented structures exert highly variable levels of influence. Thus, while the construction of these diasporic identities aligns with classic conceptualizations of diaspora through the involvement of structure, diaspora group members' capacity to deploy their resources to convey, refrain from conveying, interpret, or, in some cases, provide ironic commentary on their anchoring in the homeland simultaneously underlines greater individual control over communicative action than many widely accepted understandings of diaspora suggest.

The various means through which participants index their attachments to the homeland give way to a larger picture of diversity among diaspora group members themselves in the second section, which includes contributions by Lacoste, Eisenclas et al., and Mayoma and Williams. In these papers, dual allegiances to the homeland and the community of resettlement exist for many of the participants, but this dual perspective, which has been described in much of the diaspora literature, falls short of capturing the intra-group and intra-individual heterogeneity that exists. Indeed, the portraits of individuals – especially those from younger generations – who linguistically affiliate and dissociate themselves with different cultures in dynamic, unpredictable, and, often, performative ways defy generalizations about diasporic positionality. In doing so, these cases tap into the creativity and resourcefulness espoused by the posthumanist approach.

Complementing the evidence that supports expanding conceptualizations of diaspora to allow for greater individual agency and creativity presented in the first two sections of the special issue, the third section, which comprises papers written by Albury, Šimičić and Škeven, and Schluter, presents cases that directly challenge some theoretical constructions of diaspora. In contrast to prevailing definitions that emphasize trans-national orientations that emerge from continued attachments to homelands from which diaspora group members or their ancestors originate (Grossman, 2019: 5), these pieces provide examples of diasporic belonging that are firmly grounded in locally formulated ideologies. In doing so, this work furthers the aim of promoting a posthumanist approach to diasporic belonging by highlighting the unique, ever-changing nature of individuals, which, in turn, allows for a flexible understanding of diaspora that may or may not include ties to the homeland. From the vantage point of diaspora, therefore, a posthumanist approach invites contemplation of individuals' and communities' perceptions of their linguistic selves, which, mediated by their material and immaterial environments, are as relative and complex as the social psychology of identity more broadly.

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