LANGUAGE AWARENESS IN MULTILINGUAL AND MULTICULTURAL ORGANISATIONS

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1. INTRODUCTION

Cultural and linguistic heterogeneity is the defining trait of contemporary organisations. The sharpening of worldwide inequalities together with the development of affordable means of transportation and the influence of media-saturated transnational imaginations (Appadurai, 1996) have spurred mobility across regional and continental borders. Migration rates have increased over the last decades, but now, unlike previously, movements are not just from the global South to the global North but also within the global South (Han, 2013). Labour migration does, however, not exhaust contemporary forms of mobility nor are all forms of mobility for reasons of work related to the improvement of workers' socioeconomic circumstances. In fact, individuals move for a variety of reasons beyond or in addition to labour (e.g., love, leisure, education, religious persecution, global warming, etc.). This results in *superdiverse* urban centres (Vertovec, 2006), where disparate kinds of people coming from various socioeconomic, religious and geographical backgrounds, with different legal statuses, and possessing distinct linguistic, cultural and educational capitals come to live together and interact on a daily basis. In this context of hyper-heterogeneity, organisations –whether local businesses, universities, non-profit agencies or transnational corporations– have become more global

than ever. Complexity, uncertainty and ambiguity define the working environments of the 21st century (Mughan and O'Shea, 2010).

The mass increase in forms of intercultural contact owes a great deal not just to physical mobility but also to the development of the new information and communication technologies (ICTs). ICTs have in fact been instrumental in enabling the transformation of capitalist systems from industrial to post-industrial. The development of flexible capitalism has spurred the unimpeded global circulation of financial resources, which has accelerated the process of de-industrialisation of the global North. Industrial manufacturing, for example, has been outsourced to developing countries, with lower production costs and laxer environmental and work regulations, giving rise to distributed forms of economic production (Harvey, 2005). However, "global outsourcing" is often not just restricted to manufacturing, as the extensive research on call centres has amply illustrated (e.g., Morgan and Ramanathan, 2009), not is the distributed nature of work only attributable to the outsourcing of manufacturing. In many economic sectors, teams are constituted globally (Zoels and Silbermayr, 2010), as customers, suppliers, contractors and professional experts may be located in different parts of the world. This has become not only habitual but necessary (Lønsmann, 2014).

Forms of production, but also forms of consumption, have become globally networked (Castells, 2000) in increasingly informatised systems. In the knowledge-based, tertiarised economy, communication is thus essential. Language is *the* form of economic production in key sectors such as education, tourism and customer service provision, and a form of human capital to be cashed in (Heller and Duchêne, 2012). The central role of language in the economy goes hand-in-hand with a drive for language regulation, standardisation and hygienisation (Cameron, 2000). The opposite trend is also true, as multilingual competences emerge as key skills for certain types of flexible workers

(although with important differences in valuation depending on job type). In sum, while language is central to individuals' participation in the global economy, it is also the basis on which forms of organisational control and inequality are built. What seems clear is that issues of language and of language awareness are fundamental to the workings of contemporary organisations; it is to the exploration of these issues that this chapter is devoted.

In what follows, a brief description of the chapter's organisation is presented. Section 2 maps out the research conducted on language issues in multilingual and multicultural organisations from a diversity of theoretical traditions, as this is a highly interdisciplinary field of research.[1] The review presented cannot possibly be exhaustive; it only aims to point readers towards relevant paradigms and areas of study. In section 3 the key concepts which have structured research and debate in the relevant fields are discussed. In section 4, lines for future development and areas of cross-fertilisation of the different approaches are suggested. In section 5, the relevance and contributions of three key readings in this area are discussed.

2. THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL APPROACHES TO THE TOPIC

2.1. Intercultural communication

From very early on, issues of diversity in multicultural and multilingual organisations were addressed from an intercultural communication perspective. This is an incredibly large field of research, an overview of which is unrealistic to attempt here. The aim of this section is, therefore, to provide a brief discussion of some of the most prominent lines

of investigation with emphasis on how the role of language and awareness of language issues have been tackled.

The origins of research on intercultural communication (IC) are closely related to the world of business organisations, following what Mughan and O'Shea (2010) call an "expat model" (p. 109). In this line we find the pioneer work of Edward T. Hall (1959) and Geert Hofstede (2001). Hofstede's work (2001) has been (and still is) extremely influential in schools of management and organisational studies, especially in the US. These early studies, which drew on findings from mass survey data, placed a great deal of emphasis on thought patterns and cultural value orientations (long-term vs short-term orientations, for example), and little (or no) attention was paid to the details of language and interaction. Additionally, even though the goal was to improve intergroup communication in corporate environments, the communicative life of organisations was generally not investigated. One exception was the work undertaken in Australia by Michael Clyne and his associates (Clyne 1994; Bowe and Martin, 2007) focusing on intercultural communication involving migrant workers. Clyne attempted to ground Hofstede's work both linguistically and empirically, while simultaneously drawing on a variety of socio-pragmatic approaches to language and discourse, such as Brown and Levinson's politeness theory, conversation analysis, and Grice's maxims. He analysed audio-taped workplace data (which basically included spontaneous dyadic interactions and formal meetings) collected in a number of companies (mostly manufacturing industries but also one service-sector business) as well as in two governmental organisations and a parents' group in a high school.

Workers were characterised on the basis of a mixture of national, sub-national ethnolinguistic groups (e.g., Cambodian-Chinese) and language criteria (e.g., Spanish-speaking Latin Americans). He identified three types of communicative styles (A, B and

C) which corresponded to three broad cultural areas (European, South Asian and South-east Asian). The cultural grounding for the disparity in politeness and conversational patterns observed was based on Hofstede's national/cultural values system, studies in cross-cultural pragmatics and Weber's insights on the cultural impact of religion (e.g., Catholic "otherworldliness" vs Protestant/Calvinist "worldliness"). Within each area, national groups were classified as "central" or "peripheral" depending on whether they deployed all the features of one communicative style or only some, or combined features from various styles. According to Clyne, peripheral groups are better intercultural communicators because "their discourse patterns are more open" (p. 204).

The training suggested focused on raising employees' awareness of the "hidden" cultural dimensions of language use. Clyne advised the use of real empirical data in problem-solving activities to make both Anglo-Celtic Australians and members of ethnolinguistic minorities aware of the existence of different discursive/communicative styles. He recommended the viewing of situations of communicative breakdowns as a way of getting trainees to work on the joint resolution of communication difficulties. Clyne was concerned with issues of justice and social access, and in that sense, one of his closing arguments refers to the need to give migrant workers the chance to participate in "advanced" intercultural training beyond traditional ESL survival English classes because, as he says, "the need for sensitivity to inter-cultural communication is as urgent in the professions as on the factory floor" (p. 212).

To Clyne's credit it must be said that he acknowledged the role of individual factors, power relations, work arrangements, workplace ethos, and the nature of the work undertaken in shaping communication. He tried to complexify the relationship between language and culture by positing that differences should be placed on a cultural continuum rather than conceptualised as absolute contrasts and by delinking the relationship between

language and culture through the construct of cultural areas (speakers of the same pluricentric language may follow different value systems, while speakers of different languages may follow the same). In spite of these improvements with regard to Hofstede's framework, Clyne's work comes across as fairly essentialising and falls short of addressing the linguistic complexities of communicating professionally in a lingua franca and the resulting processes of social inequality.

Studies in the second "stage" of IC, or Intercultural Communication 2.0 in Piller's words (2009, 2011), strived to go beyond the one culture-one language-one nation approach which inspired Hofstede. Methodologically, survey research was replaced by interpretivist methodologies, and reified views of culture were abandoned in favour of ethnographic and social constructionist agendas. The work of scholars such as Street (1993) and Holliday (1999) became inspirational for this line of thinking. Rather than an entity pre-existing any form of social interaction, culture was construed either as "a verb" (in Street's terms), that is, as being done in action, or as a social force binding together different kinds of social groupings (or "small cultures", in Holliday's terms). The focus of study of IC 2.0 was the transnational workplace, this time understood not as a medium to characterise national cultures but as an organisation where decisions about how linguistic diversity is handled may lead to processes of social inclusion/exclusion. Inspired by the extensive work carried out on the sociolinguistics of multilingualism during the 1990s and early 2000s, the emphasis of most IC research 2.0. shifted from cultural values to language aspects. Issues of language choice, language proficiency and multilingual practice were brought to fore, mostly in relation to institutional language policy decisions. Most studies focused on problematizing the idea of a corporate language as enhancing communication and underlined the many inequalities undergirding such decisions. The findings of those studies, the details of which are reported in the section

on workplace studies (2.2), served to redress an earlier imbalance on cultural aspects, be they in the form of national values or in the form of culturally-shaped communicative styles.

More recent research on IC (Piller's IC 3.0) has pursued the critical turn of earlier work and has gone more deeply into the intertwining of language and contemporary economic and labour processes. One key concept in this field has been that of the commodification of language (Heller, 2010), that is, the inscription of language and communication more generally into the logics of the market. This perspective has branched out into different lines of inquiry. Some scholars, such as Cameron (2000) or Boutet (2012) have delved into processes of standardisation of communication and the "industrialisation" of discourse in language-intensive work sectors, like call centres, in order to enhance employee productivity and cope with high turnover rates. In this context, linguistic variability is treated as in need of hygienisation and regulation. Others, like Duchêne (2009, 2011) have looked at the opposite trend, where multilingual competences are embraced by organisations. Yet, rather than considering the multilingualisation of institutional spaces as a positive development or individual multilingual abilities as commodities *per se*, analysts like Heller (2010) have argued for the need to inquire into the ways in which language policies are inscribed into business strategies with what effects for what kinds of employee profiles. For example, Duchêne (2011) revealed the structured value of multilingualism at a Swiss airport. He observed how the language policy of this organisation was inscribed into managerial considerations of flexibility and efficiency. He showed that while multilingualism was a valuable means for the company to deliver effective services, the workers investigated, in this case, all low-qualified and occupying precarious job positions, never took advantage of their commodified multilingualism. The "neoliberalism of linguistic diversity", in Duchêne's words (2011,

p. 82), compels researchers to investigate the intersecting organisational and material constraints which operate on the possibilities of valorisation of multilingualism for individual workers. So, in this more recent approach to IC, issues of multilingual competence continue to be the focus of attention, but understanding how multilingualism is tied to social inequality requires the understanding of the complex ways in which language is inextricable from economic production. In other words, raising awareness of language issues requires questioning the "exploitation of linguistic resources and of speakers" (Duchêne, 2011).

2.2. Workplace studies

Although there is many points of contact between IC research and workplace studies, the principal objective of the latter is to comprehend how different aspects of communication and language use have an impact on the workings of organisations. Given the multiple facets of this field, I shall limit myself to discussing those pieces of research that have focused on trying to raise awareness of the role of language in structuring social relations in the workplace.

Research in this area has tended to organise itself along the distinction between "internal" and "external communication". External communication studies have analysed how organisations communicate with various groups of stakeholders and the general public. Cross-cultural differences in advertising strategies, sales letters, email messages and websites –among other discursive spaces– have been scrutinised (see Yli-Jokipii, 2010, for a comprehensive review). These studies have generally focused on degrees of formality, directness, power and status, and their links to politeness marking. Organisational websites have also been inspected to understand whether there are culturally-identifiable differences in corporate self-presentation across countries (see e.g.,

Isaksson and Jørgensen, 2010). A second line of inquiry within external communication is international business negotiations. Two aspects have drawn the attention of researchers: (1) point-making style, (2) and the framing and management of negotiations within an international context. Cross-cultural differences have been identified with regard to the ways in which interactants perceive the goal of business negotiations to be (e.g., competition vs cooperation; closing deals vs. constructing harmonious social relationships, etc.) and how conflict is managed and eventually resolved. One such study is Giménez (2001), where culturally different ways of going about negotiating selling prices were examined.

As for studies on "internal communication", most research has centred on understanding language issues in transnational corporations (TNCs), either by focusing on "vertical" communication policies and practices, that is, between the company headquarters and subsidiaries located in different national contexts, or by examining "horizontal" communication, that is, within subsidiaries. One productive analytical strand has investigated the adoption of corporate language policies. For some reason, a great deal of this kind of research has been conducted in the Scandinavian region. A number of studies have concentrated on the analysis of processes of organisational internationalisation, such as cross-border mergings of two companies or the setting up of subsidiaries in different countries. Language issues have been brought to the fore, in particular in relation to corporate language policy decisions and with regard to strategies for managing linguistic diversity. The idea is to challenge the notion of the "unproblematic" common corporate language.

In this tradition the focus is not so much on simply understanding the causes of (possible) communicative disruption, as in the case of e.g., business English as a lingua franca (BELF) research (explained below), but on spelling out (1) the discrepancies

between official language policy and real language practices on the ground (which are often much more translingual and hybrid than acknowledged); and (2) the ways in which multilingual language (in)competence and corporate language policies are linked to processes of social inequality within organisations. In other words, the focus is on identifying who the losers and who the winners are of specific language practices and language policy decisions. One such study was published by Charles and Marschan-Piekkari (2002), who investigated the tensions existing at the Finnish multinational KONE Elevators thirty years after the establishment of English as a corporate lingua franca (there were in fact a series of studies published on this company, but for reasons of space only one is reported here). The study revealed that, despite the advantages of having a common corporate language, i.e., English, lack of language proficiency caused difficulties in communication, as did the diversity of Englishes employed within the company. Some of the less linguistically competent employees, for example, reported feelings of isolation and of professional inadequacy due to their limited expressive abilities in the corporate language. In another case study, Vaara et al. (2005) looked at the (dis)empowering effects that the adoption of English as a corporate language had on Finnish managers in the context of the merger between a Swedish and a Finnish bank. More recently, Lønsmann (2014) investigated the role and use of English and Danish at the Copenhaguen headquarters of a Danish pharmaceutical TNS that had English as a corporate language. The author revealed how lack of proficiency in English was a source of exclusion for certain types of employees (typically low-skilled employees with little English competence), but perhaps more surprisingly, how lack of Danish was also a source of inequality for international high-skilled employees, not just for socialising purposes but also for knowledge-sharing and career advancement possibilities. A (nationalist) language ideological framework was brought to bear to explain the key role

of Danish. All these studies foreground the need to raise awareness of language issues in multilingual organisations. They show how the adoption of a common corporate language tends to obscure the existence of *de facto* language policies (e.g., the importance of mastering the local language(s) of the parent company for increasing employees' chances of promotion), or undermine the expressive possibilities of employees depending on their level of command of the official corporate language. Being aware of all these issues is beneficial not only for individual employees but also for companies. They may not be aware of how language-based discriminatory practices on the ground may be affecting their productivity or their medium-term ability to retain international talent.

The detailed investigation of communication in lingua franca contexts, such as that of the pharmaceutical company just discussed, has been undertaken by scholars of international business English (IBE) or of business English as a lingua franca (BELF). The difference between the two terms is that the former is broader than the latter, as it also includes interaction between native speakers (NSs) and non-native speakers (NNSs) of English and not just among NNSs. Gerritsen and Nickerson (2009) identify four major research foci of interest for BELF research although they themselves acknowledge that most aspects are also relevant to IBE: (1) understanding the factors that enhance or diminish comprehensibility; (2) comprehending the impact of culture on BELF communication; (3) investigating the role played by attitudes towards BELF speakers with specific accents; and (4) discerning the relative importance of different reasons for communicative breakdowns (e.g., lexically- vs culturally-motivated miscommunication) for interpersonal relations. Recommendations for improving BELF communication centre on raising self- and other-awareness of the different varieties of English employed in workplace communication as well as of the impact of cultural aspects on BELF encounters. One aspect that is often underlined is for awareness-raising courses and

language training to be aimed not only at NNSs but, crucially, also at NSs, and for training materials to focus on those areas that research has found to be the most problematic in business lingua franca encounters. Following in the wake of the work on English as a lingua franca (ELF) by scholars such as Seidlhofer and Jenkins (2003), these studies defend the legitimacy of BELF as a variety in its own terms, hence the need to teach NSs how to communicate efficiently with BELF speakers. Many investigations combine different methodologies (surveys, corpus-based research qualitative interviews, ethnographic observations and even experimental research) to gain a wider understanding of BELF in corporate contexts.

2.3. Gatekeeping research

Raising awareness of the role of language in constructing inequality in multicultural (or "multi-ethnic") organisations was the prime goal of John Gumperz back in the late 1970s. His BBC programme "Crosstalk" became seminal in bringing to the fore the importance of language (and not just of socioeconomic, ideological or material factors) in constructing social inequality and effecting social discrimination. Unlike in the approaches surveyed above, the emphasis of this paradigm, which continues up to these days, as we shall see later, and which is based on a fined-grained examination of social interaction, is not so much the understanding of communicative processes *within* organisations but the examination of what happens interactively in the encounters which grant access *to* these organisations or to the resources distributed therein (e.g., a place on a training scheme, social benefits, appropriate health provision, etc.). Also, quite distinctively, imbalances of power feature as a major factor structuring talk and social relations in these interactions.

Issues of language awareness initially focused on the divergent inferential procedures that interactants would deploy given their different ways of encoding contextualising information, through e.g., prosody, intonation and language choice (*contextualisation cues*), and the communicative breakdown/discomfort that ensued. The notion of contextualisation was later extended to schemata and interpretive frames, sequential organisation and role relationships (Roberts and Sayers, 1987; Gumperz and Roberts, 1991). Over the last fifteen years or so, work in this area has focused on the investigation of how the (in)ability by foreign candidates to blend different modes of talk (i.e., personal, institutional and professional) in oral performance situations (most notably, interviews and oral examinations) affect their chances of being successful (Sarangi and Roberts, 1999; Roberts, 2013). This lack of appropriate discursive skills is termed the "linguistic penalty" by Roberts (2013). She investigated job selection processes for low-skilled positions in the UK. The interviews followed the competency framework, and required candidates to activate hybrid modes of talk which gradually moved from initial experiential narratives to analytical renderings of these narratives' main points that emphasise the worker's development of certain key skills for the contemporary workplace. The paradox lay in the fact that the discursive requirements of these interviews were far greater than those of the job positions they were aimed for. Roberts argues that while language (understood as competence) tends to be overused as an explanation for migrants' failure to find work, language (understood as discursive ability) is under recognised. In the competency-based job selection process, as in the many other institutional domains investigated by these researchers, language is taken to be a transparent means to arrive at professional skills, attitude or character, and thus, in need of problematisation. Therefore, raising awareness of language entails, first, making gatekeepers and institutions aware of the complex discursive requirements made on

interviewees; second, making these requirements more explicit; and third, training interviewees to become discursively competent in producing the hybrid modes of talk that the contemporary job interview requires.

While the importance of purely linguistic competence has been largely downplayed within this paradigm and emphasis has been generally placed on the "invisible" aspects of miscommunication (i.e., blending of discourse types, rhetorical style, ways of structuring information, style of self-presentation, etc.), the role of linguistic issues has been reinstated in some of their late papers. For example, in an article addressed at the medical profession, Roberts et al. (2005) dissect the effect of the "language barrier" on London inner city medical consultations involving local GPs and multilingual patients. They show how purely linguistic issues, such as faulty grammar; inadequate pronoun use; and non-standard pronunciation of single sounds, word stress and intonation patterns affect GPs' understanding of patient talk. Of course, the effect of these aspects, all related to language ability, is put side-by-side with patients' culturally-distinct styles of communication, which include well-researched aspects, such as the appropriateness of interruptions or the meaning of overlapping talk, and more novel ones such as topic overload. This study aims to make recommendations for the training of medical professionals, and thus, insists on the need to raise awareness among GPs of the ways in which language ability restricts the capacity of patients to function adequately in these consultations. The article also questions the general communication training that medical doctors receive, which falls short of providing them with the specific skills they need to identify, manage and repair misunderstandings in such a diverse work environment (20% of all consultations were with low-English proficiency speakers or speakers of outer circle varieties of English). This kind of training seems to be the rule rather than the exception, as very similar types of advice (i.e., to show respect towards

clients and make sure they listened attentively) was given to officers working at the front desk of an immigration agency I investigated in Barcelona (Codó 2008). For these reasons, Roberts et al. (2005) argue for more "linguistically sensitive and culturally flexible" educational programmes in spite of the "many recommendations relating to working in an ethnically diverse society" (p. 474).

Having provided a fairly wide picture of how the study of issues of communication, language policy and language use within and around culturally/linguistically heterogeneous organisations have been addressed, I shall now turn to the discussion of four fundamental concepts that cross-cut research in this interdisciplinary area: culture, miscommunication, diversity management and training. They are presented in what follows as a series of chained concepts.

3. CROSS-CUTTING CONCEPTS

3.1. Culture

The concept of culture pervades all research on diversity in organisational contexts, no matter the theoretical position. This is because most studies still subscribe to some version of the notion of *languaculture* posited by Agar a couple of decades ago (1996), that is, the idea that languages and cultures cannot and should not be separated. While there is undoubtedly some validity in this concept, cultural anthropologists and critical sociolinguists like Ingrid Piller (2011), have warned against the pervasiveness of culturalist understandings of human behaviour. Piller exposes the underpinnings of contemporary ideas of culture, which actually work to sustain the ideological apparatus of the nation-state. She advocates an empirical approach to culture which, rather than taking the relevance of the notion at face value, enquires into when, how and for what

purposes culture is drawn upon as an explanatory concept for communicative difficulties and with what (material) consequences for whom. Along similar lines, Keating, Guilherme and Hoppe (2010) argue that the foregrounding of the notion of culture often serves to background and even erase forms of socio-political, racial, class or gender domination. These authors' stance assumes multiculturalism –rather than monoculturalism– as ordinary, where "stable meanings and fixed positions run the risk of being dissociated and destabilised" (p. 172), and where feelings of exclusion and unease are the norm rather than the exception.

From an interactivist perspective, the structuring role of culture in communication across social group boundaries has also been challenged. As early as 1994, Srikant Sarangi warned against the assumption that all instances of intergroup communication should be taken as occasions of intercultural communication. He advocated more fine-tuned investigations of such encounters to understand what factors underlay moments of lack of intersubjectivity. In particular, he urged scholars to take into account situational power asymmetries and interactants' diverging agendas in shaping talk and apprehending moments of communicative discomfort. In that seminal paper, Sarangi emphasised the need for more linguistically-sensitive research to illuminate the role of pragmatic ambiguity, language register and institutional modes of talk, among other situational discursive elements, in causing interactional havoc. This line of research was subsequently developed by scholars concerned with the culturalist picture that emerged from many studies of intergroup contact in which culture was understood as a totalising and static element preceding human interaction rather than a sense-making resource that may (or may not) be drawn upon in situated communication. Along these lines, in the collection of papers contained in Bührig and ten Thije (2006), authors take an empirical stance towards the relevance of culture. While Hartog (2006) shows how prior

stereotypical assumptions about the behaviour of certain ethnic groups may trigger an otherwise unwarranted cultural reading of these speakers' contributions in institutional communication (genetic counselling sessions in this case), Bubel demonstrates that cultural differences should not be reified or assumed to cause conflict in international business communication, as there is more interpersonal adjustment and accommodation than usually assumed.

3.2. Miscommunication

Both academic and lay thinking about linguistic and cultural heterogeneity is populated by images of interactive unease, personal discomfort and even conflict. This is because, traditionally, research on diversity in organisational contexts has centred on trying to identify and remedy communication difficulties, whether to boost corporate competitiveness and individual efficiency or to facilitate the insertion of migrant populations into a specific labour market (Clyne, 1994). Without denying the reality of miscommunication, the effect of such insistence on interactive breakdowns has been the negative stereotyping of "intercultural" encounters in the collective imaginary (Codó, 2012). Often, studies that have foregrounded instances of communicative mismatch have done so without contextualising the frequency of occurrence of such phenomena within a larger data corpus.

Wagner and Firth (1997) were among the first scholars to question the take-for-granted problematic nature of intergroup interactions. They analysed a corpus of international business negotiations that developed in lingua franca English and came to the conclusion that cooperation rather than conflict defined these interactions. They observed that overt cases of miscommunication were infrequent, unlike previously assumed, and that interlocutors strove to imbue their talk with a sense of normality rather than exceptionality. Talk was constructed as *ordinary* (Firth, 1996) in a consensus-

seeking interactional environment. Ordinariness was achieved by overlooking issues of linguistic (in)competence and backgrounding the status of communicators as L2 learners (Firth, 2009). These studies started to problematise the real-life validity of so much scientific emphasis on disfluency in contexts of organisational diversity and compelled scholars to shift analytical perspectives (from external to internal, or in conversation analytical terms, from *etic* to *emic* perspective).

3.3. Diversity management

As we have seen above, the analytical insistence on miscommunication (despite being derived from understandable practical concerns) has construed diversity as a problem to be "fixed" through the implementation of a series of strategies that have often received the label of "diversity management". Keating, Guilherme and Hoppe (2010) urge for the need to ideologically desconstruct both concepts, that is, to understand what assumptions underlie ideas of "diversity" and "management" and whose assumptions they are. The authors emphasize the socially-embedded nature of these constructs in specific power-laden historical, economic, sociocultural and political orders. They claim that the very same notion of "management" is framed, and in turn frames, objectifying processes that separate the managers from those that are managed, that is, the "non-diverse" from the "diverse". These binary distinctions must be critically understood as emerging from spaces of hierarchy and power, where specific ways of doing are ideologically constructed as more "efficient" or "adequate", ideas that are then naturalised in discourse and circulated. For Keating et al. (2010), thus, managing diversity should be, first and foremost, a space of reflection and dialogue about one's own stereotypes and assumptions about alterity, that is, a process of denaturalisation of commonsensical representations of the Other. In their thinking, multiculturalism and interculturality are seen as "contested spaces where partial and fragmented representations were [are] being negotiated" (p.

170). The goal of diversity management programmes ought, then, to be the creation of *spaces of intercultural subjectivity* where tolerance for ambiguity, partiality of meaning and interpersonal uncertainty is developed. Raising awareness of the key role of language/discourse in creating boundaries and imposing hegemonic ways of thinking about individual identity and professional performance is fundamental to this approach, but also raising awareness of the power of language as a space of dialogical understanding and self- and other-reflexivity.

3.4. Training

Closely linked to the construct of "diversity management" is the idea of training as a way of "handling" diversity-caused relational and communicative difficulties. Despite the usual rhetoric of diversity as a source of richness for organisations, the truth of the matter is that it is frequently offered as a way to prevent organisational financial losses or legal actions. Training tends to be framed in the context of staff development and as a response to what is perceived as a "skills shortage" situation. Intercultural training is often constructed as one more competence to be added to employee CVs. One key issue in relation to training is the acontextual and unreflexive definition of the goals of communicative "efficiency", "adequacy" or "success". Most training proposals (see e.g., Pérez Cañado and Méndez García, 2010) build upon a mixture of the taxonomies of non-verbal communication developed by Hall (1959), the cultural dimensions posited by Hofstede (2001), work on communicative/discursive styles (Clyne, 1994; Scollon, Scollon and Jones, 2012) and Byram's (1997) intercultural *savoirs* (knowledge, ability to be, interpret, learn and engage).

On the critical front, Phipps (2010) views intercultural training as is currently shaped as one more area of capitalist appropriation. Following the metaphors of purity,

pollution and danger from Douglas (1966), she argues that training is too often constructed as a technical process of removing "dirt" and restoring "purity", that is, of hygienising messy social realities.

> When workers are managed as if they are machines, and cultures as if they are homogeneous and static, then the models of training created by those imaging human beings –individually and culturally– in this way are bound to be models that permit no deviation, no place for critique, no space for divergence or difference. (2010, p. 62)

For Phipps, what is needed is transformative education which places internal *discernment* (rather than external "solutions") centre stage. Discernment is first and foremost a process of self-reflection, as there can only be real change if there is embodied self-critique. Along similar lines, Guilherme, Keating and Hoppe (2010) put forward the concept of reciprocal *intercultural responsibility* understood as an empowering ethics of conscious and reciprocal respect among colleagues in heterogeneous professional spaces. Language, and more specifically, lingua franca communication is viewed as an inhabited space of "struggle and stamina, honour and honesty" (2010: 82) where complicity and solidarity among interacting co-workers can be fostered.

Training proposals for working in "global" or "international" contexts have not generally focused on questions of language performance, ease of expression, language competence or speaker legitimacy and attached power issues. Some of the most elaborate thinking on the importance of understanding the linguistic dynamics of communication in the multicultural workplace comes from the field of BELF, as I discussed earlier, but most training proposals are still in the elaboration stage and have not yet been fully developed or implemented.

4. DIRECTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Some of the areas in which further research on the role of language awareness in multilingual and multicultural organisations could/should be pursued are the following.

(1) **Governmental agencies and non-profit organisations.** We still know very little about the nature of diversity in these two kinds of organisations, in sharp contrast with the abundance of studies on corporate contexts. In recent years, a great deal of ethnographic research has focused on understanding communication in government agencies dealing with migrant populations (see e.g., Codó, 2008; Jacquemet 2011; Maryns, 2015) but not on the internal heterogeneity of these organisations, that is, on employee diversity and its adjoining linguistic/cultural/ideological implications. Similar considerations can be made with regard to non-governmental organisations (NGOs). Recent research on agent-client encounters in NGOs has brought to the fore the naturalisation of certain ideologies of language that reinforce the linguistic regime of the nation-state. One such study is Codó and Garrido (2010), where it was shown that the organisational disregard for language issues had the effect of naturalising Spanish as the lingua franca of communication, which in turned worked as a mechanism of exclusion for many potential non-Spanish speaking migrant clients. The case was made for raising awareness of the need to give language its due institutional importance and reflecting about the real-life effects of (explicit or *de facto*) language policies and practices. Yet, like in the case of governmental units, little research has been carried out on the internal linguistic diversity of these organisations and how it is constructed, especially taking into account that many of them are transnational organisations where the circulation of workers is one of their defining features.

(2) Small businesses. Although some authors (e.g. Lønsmann, 2014) claim that the heterogeneity which defines contemporary work in transnational corporations is still fairly under researched, the truth of the matter is that we know more about language policies and practices in large organisations than in small companies. Despite the hyperdiversity of urban spaces, which reaches all spheres of socio-economic life (including e.g., all sorts of "local" businesses), diversity has tended to be constructed as confined to large corporations. There is a lot to be said about the apprehension and organisation of cultural and linguistic plurality in small or medium-size businesses.

(3) Lingua franca communication. Gerritsen and Nickerson (2009) point out that we need a deeper and wider understanding of the nature of English as a lingua franca in different corporate contexts, as well as to develop more appropriate methods for identifying the dimensions of communication which cause communication disfluency. I would extend this plea not just to other organisational contexts, but also to the use of other languages apart from English as *linguae francae* of international communication.

(4) Combining methods. Ethnographic approaches often fall short of capturing the fine-grained details of situated interactions or shy away from systematising the main interactional and linguistic features of intergroup communication. Yet this systematisation is essential if we want to design relevant materials for language awareness schemes which build on research findings and use audio- or video-recorded authentic data. A good example of this is the study by Roberts et al. (2005) on medical encounters discussed in section 2.3, where readers can get a fairly precise idea of the main linguistic and communicative issues that may hinder communication in such a multicultural setting. So, encouraging more fine-

grained analyses of situated interactions in different professional contexts is necessary. As flip side of the same coin, many studies of BELF focus on describing the nature of BELF interactions without taking into consideration a "thick" understanding of the socio-institutional orders in which these interactions are embedded. In this case, then, more contextualised understandings of interactional data would be desirable to understand interlocutors' stances and communicative strategies.

5. KEY READINGS IN THIS AREA

1. Angouri, J. (Ed.) (2014) *Multilingua*, 33 (1-2). Special issue "Multilingualism at Work", 256 pp.

   This special issue includes a wide collection of situated studies on multilingual policy and practice in different types of workplaces, from higher education to the meat industry to elderly care to transnational corporations. Data is analysed from a variety of state contexts (both northern and southern European and one case study from Australia). The issue also includes a state-of-the-art article on the study of multilingualism in European work environments that may be useful for researchers trying to understand the role of language awareness in devising inclusionary policies for a diverse workforce.

2. Duchêne, A., Moyer, M., & Roberts, C. (2013). *Language, Migration and Social* Inequalities: A Critical Sociolinguistic Perspective on Institutions and Work. Bristol: Multilingual Matters, 282 pp.

   This publication analyses the changing nature of language and communication in institutions dealing with or providing services to migrants under late capitalism. It

offers an understanding of institutions as sites of control, selection and resistance, and organises book chapters according to the analytical prevalence of each dimension. The introduction builds on the sociological, anthropological and sociolinguistic literature on institutions, but takes the conceptualisation of institutions a step further, as it tries to theorise their changing mission, role and nature under conditions of heightened globalisation and neoliberalism.

3. Guilherme, M., Glaser, E., & Méndez-García, M.C. (2010). The Intercultural Dynamics of Multicultural Working. Bristol. Multilingual Matters, 245 pp.

This book brings together the results of the European ICOPROMO project (Intercultural Competence for Professional Mobility). It combines theoretical contributions with hands-on training proposals to foster intercultural competence and with chapters written by professionals working in multicultural and multilingual environments. This publication might be very useful for researchers looking for an applied dimension to issues of language awareness in contemporary organisations.

6. RELATED TOPICS

- Institutional talk in transnational spaces.

- Language policy and practice in late capitalist institutions.

- Language commodification, labour mobility and the political economy of language.

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