

The impact of transnational migration and global mobilities on language ideologies and language practices: examples from the Spanish-speaking world

Professor Clare Mar-Molinero | University of Southampton

In this talk I will seek to explore how transnational migration influences attitudes to and impacts on language use, as well as how it might influence language policy. I will investigate the linguistic capital that transnational migrants bring with them (consciously or unconsciously) and how it affects them, for example, in job opportunities, the workplace, at school, etc. The case studies and data I will use to illustrate the discussion are taken from research on returnee Mexican migrants from the US, and Latino migrants in London especially.

I will begin with a brief overview of the main theoretical concepts that underpin this discussion, in particular the relationship between transnational migration and language use. I will focus then on this phenomenon in two particular contexts: its role in the modern (often global) city, and, secondly, the impact of returnee migrants' language practices when they arrive 'home'. Recent discussions about language and (transnational) migration have developed new ways of describing the linguistic practices and use of linguistic resources evident among such migrants, in an environment of so-called linguistic superdiversity (e.g, Blommaert, 2013). I will therefore make brief reference to these concepts in understanding contemporary multilingualism produced by transnational migration.

In the current era of globalisation, migration is pulled towards (often urban) environments that are complex, transnational and superdiverse. Many migrants cross more than one national and linguistic border in their migrant trajectory, and others return making this trajectory cyclical. This constant, intense and complex movement of peoples has destabilised many of the conventional labels that in the past have been considered permanent. Identities and networks shift and adapt to their surroundings, recognising power structures, ideologies and the value of varied cultural and social capital of the context they find themselves in. A significant label that I argue shifts and adapts in transnational migration is that of 'language', particularly discrete standard national languages. Just as migrant identities merge and shift during a transnational journey, so too do languages and linguistic practices. These can be positive, creative resources that enable social contact and advancement, or they may be negative contestations within linguistic ideological hierarchies.

In the Spanish-speaking transnational migration situations that I examine two global languages are in competition, Spanish and English. This is less common given that in the majority of transnational migration it is much more likely that the migrants' linguistic capital is heavily undervalued compared to the dominant host environment's language or languages. Nonetheless, in all these situations, whether

it is two global languages that compete (or collaborate) for their space, or whether a more unequal hierarchy is quickly established, patterns of mixing, translanguaging (Garcia and Li Wei, 2014), and complex multilingualism occur.