POST-DIGITAL LINGUISTIC ETHNOGRAPHY: THE EMERGENCE OF THE SEMIOTIC REPERTOIRE

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OUTLINE

- Research context: TLANG/ethnography

- Context: the ubiquitous digital/mobile messaging

- Communicative/semiotic repertoire

TLANG

- 'Translation and Translanguaging: investigating linguistic and cultural transformations in superdiverse wards in four UK cities (TLANG)' (www.tlang.org.uk) (2014 to 2018), led by Professor Angela Creese

- aimed to understand how people communicate across diverse languages and cultures, and across face-to-face encounters and online interactions at work, at home, and in other social spaces

- how people draw on partially overlapping linguistic repertoires to negotiate difference and sameness

- Here: mobile messaging

LINGUISTIC ETHNOGRAPHY

- a qualitative method where researchers observe and/or interact with participants in their real-life environment

- participants as co-researchers

POST-DIGITAL LINGUISTIC ETHNOGRAPHY

- Why mobile messaging?

NETWORKED INDIVIDUAL

- Private contexts: one-to-one interactions and closed groups

- Allows to explore ways in which individuals exploit contexts, affordances and resources across multiple offline and digitally mediated spaces

- Interactions often unfold whilst interactants are engaged in other physical activities and on the move

- Resources from across semiotic repertoires reflect individual migration histories, respond to interlocutors' subjectivities and are shaped by the affordances of the digital space

MOBILE MESSAGING

- Relative privacy

- Between individuals or in closed networks (less scholarly attention)

- Insights into role that language and technology play in people's personal, social and economic lives

- Mobility/portability → perceived intimacy

- Users often make physical context relevant in online settings (eg Lyons & Ounoughi 2020)

ORDINARY

- focus on older, harder-to-reach demographic groups

- contemporary societies are marked by mobility and 'commonplace diversity' is experienced as a normal part of life (Wessendorf 2014)

- participants' use of mobile messaging deeply embedded in their everyday routine practices

- mobile interactions likely resonate with other users in similar contexts

COMMUNICATIVE REPERTOIRE

- communicative (semiotic) repertoire - the range of linguistic and other semiotic resources which we have available to us as individuals and which we draw upon in communication with others.

- 'bits of language' which individuals 'pick up' as they move through varied contexts and navigate interpersonal networks, a range of other acquired semiotic resources (Rymes, 2014, p. 303; cf Blackledge & Creese, 2018; Kusters et al., 2017)

- has enabled a fluid understanding of how people make meaning across multiple language varieties and semiotic modes in everyday interaction

- repertoires increasingly include signs used in digital media

- digital media themselves constitute elements of an individual's semiotic repertoire (Tagg & Lyons, 2021)

POLYMEDIA NEST (P-DEMS MODEL)
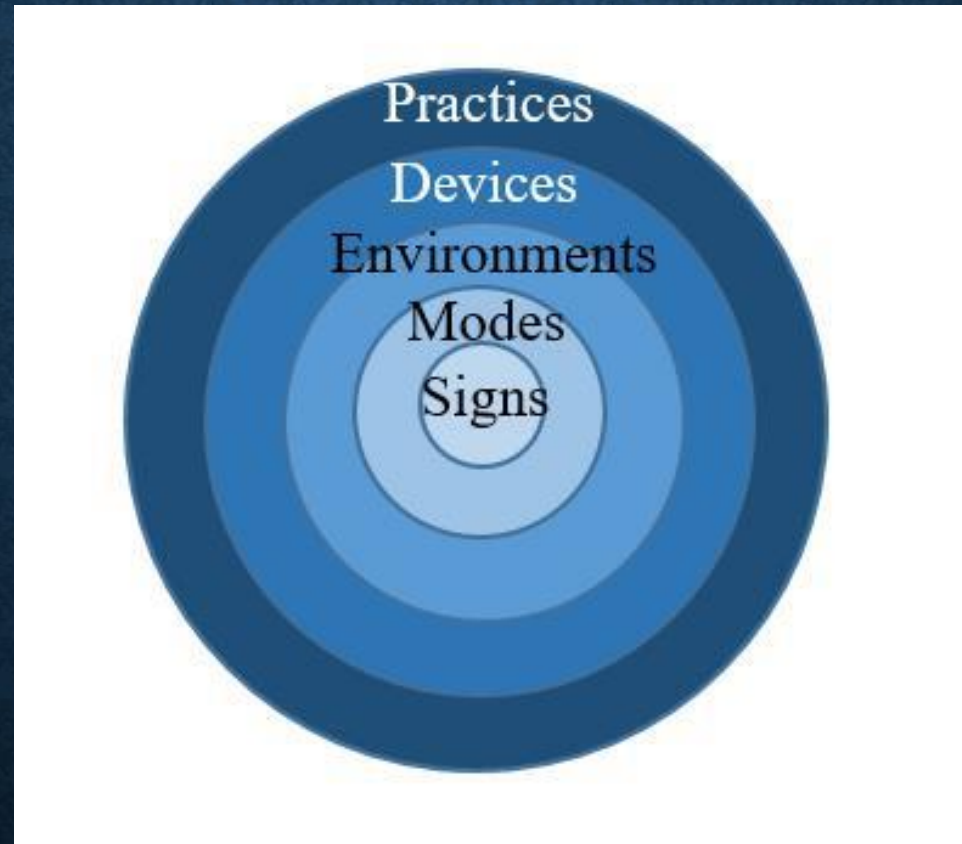
(Tagg & Lyons 2021)

- How to understand the implications of this reconceptualisation of repertoire for individuals?

- Human agency in exploiting the available technologies

MARTA

K: It's 20 minutes from Acton

M: [location sent]

K: [muscle]

282 now Marta

M: I'll be at east[cat] in 15min

M: Marek only just read your scathing comment

M: About Białystok

M: No bison must have ever dragged you through the wilderness, boy

M: and here is a photo dictionary:

MC: *Awkward*

M: [photo of a pamphlet titled 'Klaster Marek Turystycznych' (a collection of tourist brands)]

KD: What?!

M: Yes- "KLASTER"

M: A beautiful Polish word

M: So *update* your…

M: So *update* your brains

M: *lol*

KD: Is that supposed to be the author's surname?

M: No!

M: *English: cluster*

M: Ha ha

KD: But how can there be *cluster* Marek?

MC: Jahah

M: A Pole of English origin perhaps…

M: A Pole of English origin perhaps…

MC: I also thought it's a surname

M: Good night then

MC: [tears of joy emoji]

M: so *gutnajt*]

KD: *Gudnnajt* Martus, the first one is a surname

[tears of joy emoji x3]

M: Come on Klara – it's not a surname

[woman holding hands to head emoji]

M: [woman holding hands to head emoji]
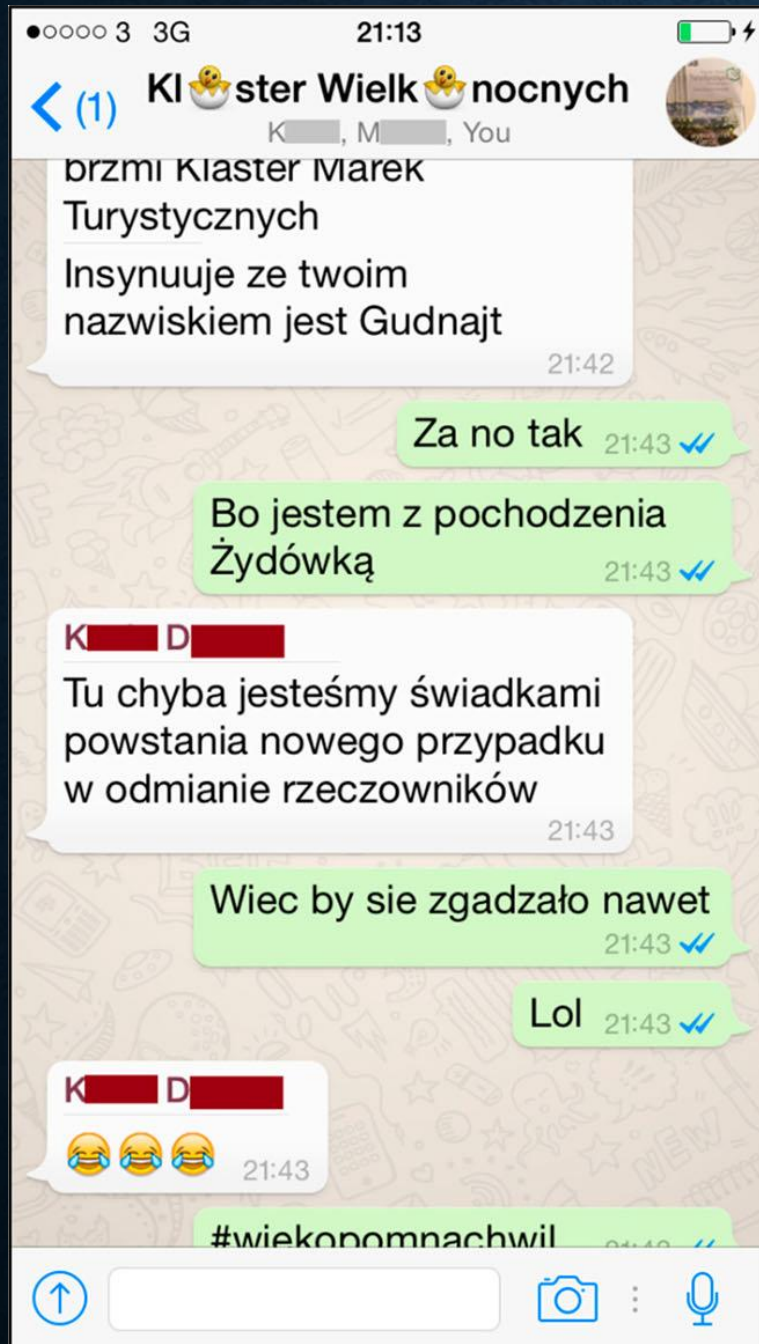
KD: I'm taking the mickey

MC: Ahahah

M: Phew

MC: You're such nitwits

M: I took it to heart that you're contesting new lexixal additions

MC: What are tourist brands

KD: In general Klaster Marek Turystycznych sounds great in Polish

[message continued]

It implies that your surname is Gudnajt

M: Ah yes

M: Because I have Jewish origins

KD: It seems we are witnessing the emergence of a new case in the declination of nouns here

M: That would work

M: *Lol*

KD: [tears of joy emoji x 3]

M: #historicmoment

- Klara's faux case as a semiotic resource

(Wed 15 Apr)

(You changed this group's icon)

M: We have a new *group pic* kids

MC: Cool

KD: Lol!!! [literally 'smiech na sali', 'laughter in the room']

KD: We should *zapdejtowac* the name *az lel…*

M: Yes

M: The name to "klaster wielkanocny"

KD: I'm changing it right now

(KD changed the subject to Kl[emoji]ster Wielk[emoji]nocny")

KD: I'm changing it right now

(KD Changed the subject to "Kl[emoji]ster Wielk[emoji]nocny")

M: Lol

M: Ha ha

M: I'm dying from laghing

(KD changed the subject to "Kl[emoji] Wielkanocnych")

KD: *Sorry*, I forgot about the new case in declination, *apdejt* made…

CONCLUSIONS

- Our post-digital linguistic ethnographic approach allows us to situate instances of repertoire assemblage within the wider picture of participants' post-migration lives, social networks and identity projects.

- The negotiation and jostling of resources in the context of a micro-level interaction feeds into macro-level changes in a migrant's repertoire as they adapt to the dominant language of their host country and negotiate their own post-migration identities.