

Linguistic Anthropology

Linguistic Anthropology in 2013: Super-New-Big

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ABSTRACT In this essay, I discuss how linguistic anthropological scholarship in 2013 has been increasingly confronted by the concepts of “superdiversity,” “new media,” and “big data.” As the “super-new-big” purports to identify a contemporary moment in which we are witnessing unprecedented change, I interrogate the degree to which these concepts rely on assumptions about “reality” as natural state versus ideological production. I consider how the super-new-big invites us to scrutinize various reconceptualizations of diversity (is it super?), media (is it new?), and data (is it big?), leaving us to inevitably contemplate each concept’s implicitly invoked opposite: “regular diversity,” “old media,” and “small data.” In the section on “diversity,” I explore linguistic anthropological scholarship that examines how notions of difference continue to be entangled in projects of the nation-state, the market economy, and social inequality. In the sections on “media” and “data,” I consider how questions about what constitutes linguistic anthropological data and methodology are being raised and addressed by research that analyzes new and old technologies, ethnographic material, semiotic forms, scale, and ontology. I conclude by questioning the extent to which it is the super-new-big itself or the contemplation about the super-new-big that produces perceived change in the world. [*linguistic anthropology, superdiversity, new media, big data, technology, semiotics, ontology*]

RESUMEN En este ensayo, discuto cómo el conocimiento en antropología lingüística en el 2013 ha sido crecientemente confrontado por los conceptos de “superdiversidad” “medios nuevos” y “bases de datos grandes.” En la medida en que los “super-nuevos-grandes” pretenden identificar un momento contemporáneo en el cual estamos presenciando un cambio sin precedentes, interrogo el grado al cual estos conceptos dependen de asunciones sobre “realidad” como un estado natural versus una producción ideológica. Considero cómo los super-nuevos-grandes nos invitan a escudriñar varias reconceptualizaciones de diversidad (¿es super?), medios (¿son nuevos), y bases de datos (¿son grandes?) permitiéndonos contemplar inevitablemente el opuesto invocado implícitamente en cada concepto: “diversidad regular,” “medios antiguos,” “bases de datos pequeñas.” En la sección de diversidad, exploro el conocimiento lingüístico antropológico que examina cómo nociones de diferencia continúan siendo involucradas en proyectos del estado-nación, la economía de mercado y la desigualdad social. En las secciones sobre “medios” y “datos,” considero cómo cuestiones sobre lo que constituye información y metodología antropológica lingüística están siendo planteadas y abordadas por investigación que analiza nuevas y viejas tecnologías, material etnográfico, formas semióticas, escala y ontología. Concluyo cuestionando en qué medida son los super-nuevos-grandes en sí mismos o la contemplación sobre los super-nuevos-grandes lo que produce el cambio percibido en el mundo. [*antropología lingüística, superdiversidad, nuevos medios, grandes bases de datos, tecnología, semiótica, ontología*]

Superdiversity. *New media*. *Big data*. Each buzzword is about the perception of large-scale changes in the contemporary moment. Taken together, they describe radical transformations in the most outsized extremes, which might inspire terror if not for the cheery optimism with which they are often framed (super! new! big!). These concepts have emerged not solely from “us” as scholars (i.e., our own intellectual developments or from the worlds we study) but also from academic institutions and capitalist industries that set the conditions under which we are expected—or allowed—to study those worlds.

To variable degrees, notions of superdiversity, new media, and big data have drawn attention from several academic disciplines—anthropology, of course, as well as sociolinguistics, sociology, psychology, media studies, economics, computer science, and so on. In scholarly discourses, *superdiversity* proposes that recent shifts in immigration and technology alter how people communicate, move, are; *new media* refers to rapid technological advances that purportedly restructure digital forms and the ways in which people engage with them; and *big data* harnesses developments in mobile technologies to produce seemingly more accurate findings based on wide-scale behavioral patterns, all “like never before.”

In addition to being topics mulled over by academics, superdiversity, new media, and big data can be tantalizing objects of governmental and commercial interest. For example, big data enables more surveillance—to better serve you! By tracking mobile devices to monitor how people move and consume through time and space, corporate marketers can more easily trace and create desire and then develop products to fulfill that desire. They can deliver more targeted advertising to sell that desire by utilizing advances in new media technology that appeal to moral and liberal conceptions of superdiversity. Nation-states and educational institutions also incorporate these concepts in the marketing of “culture” in higher education (Urciuoli 2009), in the management of students into quantifiable selves (Singer 2013), and in the expansion of surveillance capacities in the name of national security.

Common to all of these various projects—from consumer capitalism to governmental surveillance to academic research (including linguistic anthropology)—is that knowledge is generated based on ideas about people: beliefs, for example, that people are now über diverse, that people engage with media in innovative ways, that people are more knowable because we can better track, store, and quantify behavior.

Of course, ideas about people function within the domain of ideology. To what extent are we talking about “actual” change in people versus “ideas about” change in people? The term *superdiversity*, for example, was coined to capture how 1990s Britain began witnessing unprecedented categories of migrants—more numbers of more kinds from more places (Vertovec 2007). But why is this latest migration shift more “super” than prior ones? A long history of

influxes and invasions (e.g., Germanic tribes in the fifth century, Normans in the eleventh) has brought about complex interminglings of peoples and languages such that one could argue that the British region has long been “superdiverse” (Silverstein 2013a). This is not to say that we cannot be diverse in “new” ways. Yet the change we may be tracing may not be in terms of “speaking subjects” as much as in “listening subjects” (Inoue 2006): that is, change in ideology, change involving “us”—the perceiver, the overhearer-now-reporter, the knowledge producer. As we move about the world, we may not see new things as much as see things anew—which is certainly something but an entirely different something.

To be sure, not all linguistic anthropological research is directly engaged with superdiversity, new media, and big data. But as trendy terms—or even “keywords” (Ahearn 2013) (note mine above!)—that circulate in and around our discipline, they nonetheless influence the contemporary scholarly landscape in which we find our work embedded. In this spirit, I interrogate in this essay how linguistic anthropology in 2013 has been increasingly confronted by the “super-new-big”—requiring us to scrutinize various reconceptualizations of diversity (is it super?), media (is it new?), and data (is it big?). In addition, I ask how we inevitably contend with each concept’s implicitly invoked opposite: “regular diversity,” “old media,” and “small data.” I do my best to broadly conceive of these areas, but I recognize that this review will inevitably miss much important scholarship that falls outside of these domains.

DIVERSITY: SUPER AND REGULAR

One could argue that linguistic anthropologists have long been concerned with at least some notion of “diversity.” Understandings of diversity are built on conceptualizations of difference: cultural, ethnic, linguistic, and so on. Our discipline has contemplated the ways in which difference should be conceived: Is it there in the world? Is it made to be there by participants, by researchers? That is, are diversity and difference “real” things, “ideological” productions, both, neither? Over the past several decades, linguistic anthropologists working on a range of concepts—from “metapragmatics” (Silverstein 1976) to “linguistic reflexivity” (Lucy 1993) to “language ideology” (Schieffelin et al. 1998) to “enregisterment” (Agha 2003) to the “listening subject” (Inoue 2006)—insist that we look to how language users and language forms draw attention to how language is functioning. For many linguistic anthropologists, this is the “reality” we seek to uncover, not some natural state that exists before it is made to.

In many respects, the newly emerged field of language and superdiversity is aligned with this perspective. It rightly insists on a shift in theoretical focus—from bounded languages and stable speakers to linguistic resources and speaker repertoires—in order to unhinge problematic conceptualizations of the “native speaker,” “mother tongue,” and “ethnolinguistic group” (Blommaert and Rampton 2011). Yet the notion of superdiversity is also built on two broad

assumptions: that people have changed and that technology has changed (Blommaert 2013). That is, it attempts to trace how shifts in transnational mobility and developments in new technology result in new kinds of migrants and more complex forms of communication (Arnaut et al. 2012; Blommaert et al. 2012). In this sense, its fundamental premise claims that superdiversity is “there,” happening, and ready to be described by “us,” the researcher.

Thus, superdiversity is a theory built on what is understood as an empirical change in migrants, which has caused “us” to identify them as newly unpredictable and the societal conditions they alter as superdiverse. This speaker focus neglects a thorough conceptualization and interrogation of the listening subject: how change may not in fact begin with speaking subjects (migrants) but may be brought into being by listening subjects (those authorized to speak about migrants) and whatever anxieties and desires motivate the circulation of representations of speakers. Over the past year, this and other issues have brought out many supporters and critics—sometimes one and the same—who try to make sense of how “super” this all really is (e.g., Makoni 2012; Moore et al. 2013; Orman 2012; Silverstein 2013a). Who, in fact, perceives the world as superdiverse? Who experiences it as superdiverse? If it is superdiverse now, how was it diverse to some “regular” degree before?

Whether in line with, in response to, or in disregard of superdiversity, a steady stream of scholarship in 2013 has continued to contemplate issues of language and diversity (Black 2013a). Thus, this section of the essay not only debates the significance of superdiversity but also considers research for which notions of difference remain meaningful in ways that are not displaced by superdiversity. Two recent examples of such scholarship are the edited collections *Multilingualism and the Periphery* (Pietikäinen and Kelly-Holmes 2013) and *Transnational Identities* (De Fina and Perrino 2013). Both volumes investigate conceptions of people and language that are informed by perceptions of difference, whether along core-peripheral sites or across nation-state boundaries. In the sections that follow, I group various strands of language and diversity scholarship into three categories: nation, politics, and identity; labor and commodification; and marginality and racialization.

Nation, Politics, and Identity

Much work in 2013 explores ideas about nation and diversity, particularly as languages are understood to expand and contract their social domains. In their introduction to a theme issue of the *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism* (Frekko and Woolard 2013), Kathryn A. Woolard and Susan E. Frekko (2013) discuss how public discourses that commonly perceive Catalan and Castilian as distinct languages and identities belie the actual use of language by speakers of varying social, ethnic, and linguistic backgrounds. In this sense, the ideologies and practices that shape the social domains of language stand in tension. In her study of language endangerment, maintenance, and revital-

ization, M. Eleanor Nevins (2013b) examines the differing evaluations of language loss on the Native American reservation at Fort Apache. Her study moves beyond a confined view of language documentation to attend to shifting notions of linguistic and social identity in an indigenous community. Also focused on issues of language shift, Shaylih Muehlmann (2013) documents how a loss of language can result in a loss of rights. Among the Cucapá people, most of whom no longer speak the indigenous language, Muehlmann examines how government restrictions in northwest Mexico claim the Cucapá are now not sufficiently “indigenous” to warrant preferred fishing rights.

Another set of work focuses on questions of politics and diversity by examining language in relation to citizenship and activism. Monica Heller (2013a), for example, examines the concept of “dis-citizenship” in Canada in which access to resources is framed within hegemonic ideologies about linguistic and social order. Jennifer Jackson (2013) explores political change and the reshaping of democracy by focusing on the rhetorical practices of public orators and political cartoonists in Madagascar. In his study of how literacy activism is understood to transform Tamil villagers in South India into citizens, Francis Cody (2013) examines how such movements both emancipate and subjugate the very people they seek to enlighten. While female activists are the central focus in Cody’s study, other research in South Asia also looks at issues relating to women, particularly the role of language in producing and resisting gender ideologies (Siddiqui 2013).

There has also been work that examines language and diversity in relation to transnational identities. For example, an *Annual Review of Anthropology* piece by Cecile B. Vigouroux (2013) focuses on la Francophonie as a community united by French but dispersed across nation-state boundaries. She discusses how la Francophonie is shifting from a group focused on economic partnership to a political organization that defends cultural diversity. In her study of Portuguese emigrants in France, Michele Koven (2013) finds that Luso descendants understand themselves in relation to two competing models of personhood: “diasporic” (willful abandonment of Portuguese identity) and “transnational” (legitimate integration into French culture). Stanton Wortham and Catherine Rhodes (2013) also explore transnational processes in the emergence of a “good reader” identity for a young Mexican migrant girl in the United States. They illustrate how a trajectory of identification is established through the solidification of relevant heterogeneous resources, including discourses about family, education, and modernity that circulate in the United States and in Mexico. Elaine W. Chun (2013) explores YouTube as a transnational space in which a Chinese American performer embodies linguistic signs that are understood as indexical of symbolic blackness by some but not by others. She discusses how stereotypes about black hypermasculinity may be left unchallenged while stereotypes of Asian masculinity are reshaped through collaborative interpretations of the performance. Finally, Lian Malai Madsen (2013) finds that, among adolescents in Copenhagen,

linguistic signs that used to be associated with ethnic minority migration are now associated with status. She argues that this remapping is due to a notion of conservative standardness that carries across national language boundaries.

Labor and Commodification

This past year also witnessed a steady stream of linguistic anthropological scholarship on labor and commodification in relation to notions of diversity. In their *Annual Review of Anthropology* piece, Bonnie Urciuoli and Chaise LaDousa (2013) explore what it means when language is conceptualized as labor. Because capitalist regimes interpret certain kinds of diversity as skills that can be used to index authenticity, Urciuoli and LaDousa argue that linguistic labor reimagines the person as a bundle of commodifiable elements. These ideas are explored in several other works, including the edited collection *Language, Migration and Social (In)equalities: A Critical Sociolinguistic Perspective on Institutions and Work* (Duchêne et al. 2013), which examines how neoliberal economic practices affect migrants in the workplace and other institutional contexts. In addition, studies in Canada (Heller 2013b), Corsica (Jaffe and Oliva 2013), and South Korea (Park 2013) critique capitalist discourses that commodify diversity and multilingualism as assets while rationalizing and justifying inequalities of the new economy.

A productive line of inquiry into issues of labor and commodification has focused squarely on gender. In her study of Japanese corporate practices to address gender inequality in the early 1990s, Miyako Inoue (2013) discusses how “neoliberal speech acts” position female workers as subjects of neoliberalism—wherein they are conceptualized as free, rational, and able to communicate what they want. For if women are treated as autonomous subjects, then they themselves (not the workplace or labor policies) are responsible for failing to reach their full potential as professionals. Also focused on East Asia, Jie Yang (2013a, 2013b) explores in two articles how women workers are used to advance market economies in China. In both pieces, she examines how female labor is simultaneously devalued and exploited: whether in the field of psychological care (2013a) or in relation to the displacement of class tensions onto the laboring migrant woman (2013b). In addition, Susanne Cohen (2013) focuses on language that surrounds the image of the female secretary in a St. Petersburg secretarial school. She argues that the ways in which this image becomes the object of metapragmatic discourse sheds light on postsocialist negotiations with neoliberal capitalism.

Finally, work on brand—its vulnerabilities and multiplicities—investigates the diversification of commodity forms and values. In two recent pieces, Constantine V. Nakassis (2012, 2013) examines the excesses of brand by tracing how it is performed and cited, particularly in unauthorized forms such as brand counterfeits. Considering neoliberal economic reforms that reshape how brand is mediated, Nakassis argues that ethnography is necessary to investigate how the brand displaces itself with a surplus of material

forms and social meanings. Angela Reyes (2013) offers such an ethnographic portrait by exploring how brands become personified when Asian American youth take them on as nicknames. She examines how brands and corporate nicknaming practices produce several meanings—some fleeting, some stable, some resurrected—that guide the restructuring of interactional practices as persons get read as commodity forms.

Marginality and Racialization

In this final subsection on language and diversity, I group together linguistic anthropological scholarship in 2013 that examines how conceptualizations of difference can lead to the marginalization of groups. Much of this work has looked at how racism is implicitly produced. Paul V. Kroskrity (2013), for example, explores how “narrative difference” is created through the derogatory ways in which anthropologists and linguists characterize the narratives of Yokuts and Western Mono of Central California. Barbra A. Meek (2013) also traces a type of covert racism in jokes featuring American Indian characters that reinscribe tropes of conquest and the contours of an exclusive citizenship. In their study of narratives by female former colonizers of the Belgian Congo, Dorien Van De Mierop and Mathias Pagnier (2013) find racializing ideologies that continue to legitimize colonization through the infantilization of indigenous peoples. Finally, Andrea L. Smith and Anna Eisenstein (2013) analyze how ethnic labels can index both race and class in the production of “ethnic difference” in descriptions of “Syrian Town,” a former neighborhood in Pennsylvania.

Research this past year has also focused on responses to racializing discourses from the communities they target. In their study of Brazilian black activists, Jennifer Roth-Gordon and Antonio José B. da Silva (2013) discuss how racial consciousness is produced by juxtaposing racist and antiracist voices in everyday language. Benjamin Bailey and Sunny Lie (2013) examine how Chinese Indonesians take on names that combine a Western first name with a Chinese surname that is reconfigured to “sound Indonesian” in order to resist discriminatory assimilation policies in Indonesia. In his research on an AIDS activist Zulu choir in South Africa, Steven P. Black (2013b) explores how choir members engage in various discursive strategies, such as the use of scientific medical terminology, to counter the language of stigma.

Finally, work over the past year has looked at direct strategies for intervening in discourses that reproduce racism. In her close analysis of talk about immigrants in Italy, Valentina Pagliai (2012) examines how speakers establish footings of nonalignment to disengage from racializing discourses. At a wider scale, the Language and Social Justice Committee of the Society for Linguistic Anthropology has been actively engaged in disrupting a racializing discourse in the United States in which undocumented immigrants are labeled “illegal.” In spring of 2013, the “Drop the I-Word” campaign (Rosa 2012) was successful in convincing the Associated Press and other media outlets to terminate the use of *illegal* when characterizing the authorization status of

migrants. Scholars such as Jonathan Rosa increased the public profile of linguistic anthropology by granting several interviews to journalists, appearing on news television programs such as MSNBC's *Melissa Harris-Perry*, and being cited in many news articles.

Throughout the studies above, researchers examine the ideological and discursive mechanisms through which groups, languages, and material forms become understood as distinct and hierarchically organized. Regardless of whether these research contexts are understood to be diverse to some "super" or "regular" degree, linguistic anthropologists continue to explore how notions of difference become entangled in projects of the nation-state, the market economy, and social inequality. In these next two sections, I continue to review "what" linguistic anthropologists study but do so within debates about "how" we study it. That is, I turn to a discussion of how questions about our data and methods are being raised and addressed, particularly in the era of new media and big data.

MEDIA: NEW AND OLD

The roots of linguistic anthropology lie in traditional ethnographic methodology: longitudinal fieldwork, living in or frequently visiting a field site, recording language with fieldnotes and, later, audio and video devices. Because of various theoretical, methodological, and technological developments over the years, our discipline continually revises what its data can be. Recently, questions about the use of "new media" data have been raised. *New media* often refers to digital forms of communication that are densely networked in real time. New media technologies include the Internet, social media, and mobile devices. If new media involves signs in digital space—offered up for construal in some virtual form of interaction—old media might be traditional face-to-face ethnography. But this raises questions about where "old" new media fit—that is, predigital media technologies such as the printing press, newspaper, radio, film, and so on.

In 2013, linguistic anthropologists have been contemplating this turn toward media data. In an April of 2013 interview with Bonnie Urciuoli that was excerpted in *Anthropology News*, Paul Kroskrity, incoming president of the Society for Linguistic Anthropology, remarked: "I am concerned that younger anthropologists who do close analyses of media may be moving away from the face-to-face ethnographic heart of linguistic anthropology that makes our subfield distinctive" (Urciuoli 2013). This sentiment is somewhat echoed by Susan Philips: "If one is trying to understand the nature of the relationship between language and culture, then methodologically it makes sense to give priority to data that comes from communication in socially occurring face-to-face interaction because that is the locus of the constitution of social processes" (2013:93). The concern here is that the growing interest in media might come at the expense of face-to-face ethnography.

Indeed, 2013 has witnessed many linguistic anthropological studies that focus on media data. But this is due

not only to the influence of new media but also to the recent theoretical work on "mediatization" (Agha 2011) and to the general "historical turn" in linguistic anthropology in which "old media" text artifacts become primary objects of analysis. Some studies have looked almost exclusively at media data while others have combined media with face-to-face ethnography. Still others have explored the interaction between new and old media forms. For example, Anna De Fina and Sabina Perrino (2013) discuss how both new media (e.g., online communication) and old media (e.g., radio, political speeches) are promising sites for exploring different aspects of transnational community formation. Moreover, many in our discipline operate outside of a strict "language" focus to examine other forms of semiosis and to trace intricate sign processes. These overall concerns about how the old and new relate are also found in work that pays tribute to major figures in our field.

I divide this section into three areas of scholarship that focus on how ideas about old and new technologies and media interact: digital and analog forms; semiotic technologies; and voices of legacy.

Digital and Analog Forms

Several linguistic anthropological studies in 2013 focus almost exclusively on media, particularly new digital technologies. Alexandra Saemmer (2013), for example, explores the iconicity of digital textuality through which the movement and manipulability of text (e.g., hyperlinks) can be understood as traces and anticipations of reading practices. Paul Manning and Ilana Gershon (2013) examine the ways in which performance and animation can serve as tropes for people who engage with two types of new media: virtual worlds and social media. Focusing on a video game used by a Serbian student resistance movement to train activists in nonviolent revolution, Jessica Greenberg (2012) analyzes how game programming cannot easily incorporate the semiotic indeterminacy that makes the discursive practices of the resistance movement so successful. Considering how notions of authenticity and intention frame the genre of reality television, Rebecca Pardo (2013) examines how various editing strategies—for example, how shots are sequenced and how sounds are mixed—reinscribe a distinction between conceptions of what one sincerely feels versus what one falsely performs in the interpretation of discourse as racist.

At the same time, many studies over the past year examine a range of old technologies. Ayala Fader (2013) considers the audiocassette, on which inspirational lectures by and for nonliberal Jewish women in Brooklyn circulate in response to secular modernities that are understood to weaken gendered faith. Focusing on advertisements in Spanish-language newspapers in New York City, Nicholas Limerick (2012) explores how ideas about difference are constructed through strategies of textual organization that constitute audiences and their others. Paja Faudree (2013a) examines textual organization as well but in a much older text: the *Requerimiento*, the Spanish declaration of sovereignty over the

Americas written in 1513. She focuses on the performativity of the text—how social hierarchies are presupposed through the establishment of participant roles. Considering text of even earlier times, a study of Mayan hieroglyphics (Law et al. 2013) circa C.E. 250–900 explores how the use of first- and second-person deictics can establish and maintain indexical links through anchoring devices such as quotative phrases and accompanying images. The authors explore what it means to read context into text when the processes of production and interpretation are vastly separated in time.

But none of this is to say that work on media cannot bring the analog and digital together or incorporate face-to-face ethnography. Here I focus on two recent studies that exemplify the effectiveness of looking across many data types. Exploring ideologies about Magyar and German, Susan Gal (2013) brings together two texts differentiated by time, space, and modality: explicit metapragmatic discourse in a magazine article from the 1880s and implicit poetic discourse in a spoken narrative from the 1990s. For the former, Gal analyzes how a popular Hungarian journalist linked Magyar language to qualities such as “calmness,” “order,” and “simplicity” (in contrast to those linked to German and Italian) and instructed readers on how to find these qualities elsewhere, such as in contrasting house types. Gal brings this text into conversation with a narrative she collected in the 1990s in which contrasts in food types—“fancy” *palacsinta* (Magyar pancake) and “dense” *pfannakucha* (German pancake)—are mapped onto contrasts in language and personae. Barbara Johnstone (2013) also draws on different kinds of data as she examines the histories, ideologies, and uses of Pittsburghese dialect. Like Gal, Johnstone brings together historical material with face-to-face data, but she also considers new media forms, particularly those that contribute to the increased visibility of Pittsburghese over the past half-century.

Semiotic Technologies

Each study in the above section takes a decidedly semiotic approach to both digital and analog forms. The more enamored linguistic anthropologists become with (Peircean) semiotics, the more we may bear witness to an increasingly cohesive “semiotic anthropology” (Mertz 2007). Peircean semiotics insists on the importance of a missing element in Saussurean semiology, that of the “interpretant” as mediating the relationship between “sign” (signifier) and “object” (signified). Over the years, Peirce’s triadic model has served as somewhat of a theoretical playground for many linguistic anthropologists, who find inspiration in his classification of sign types, most notably icon-index-symbol. In 2013, much work has continued to further theorize Peircean concepts, such as “qualia” (Chumley and Harkness 2013), “rhematization” (Gal 2013), “interpretant” (Kockelman 2013c), and “indexicality” and “iconicity” (Silverstein 2013b). In fact, 2013 witnessed the establishment of two new semiotics journals with linguistic anthropologists—working in the Peircean tradition—featured prominently in their editorial boards and inaugural issues: *Signs and Society*, edited by Richard

Parmentier and Paig-Ki Kim, and *Semiotic Review* (formerly *The Semiotic Review of Books*), edited by Paul Manning and Kane X. Faucher. Moreover, the significance of semiotic approaches was recognized by the Society for Linguistic Anthropology 2013 Edward Sapir Book Prize, which was awarded to Paul Manning’s (2012) *Semiotics of Drink and Drinking*.

In addition, a few books in 2013 explore semiotic modalities of language, particularly singing. In her study of an ethnic revival in Oaxaca, Mexico, Paja Faudree (2013b) examines the inclusion of singing in debates about indigenous orality and literacy. She notes how songs in Maztec indigenous language play a significant role in increasing indigenous literacy and in creating enduring indigenous texts. Nicholas Harkness (2013) also explores singing within an expansive notion of “voice.” Noting how European-style classical singing serves as a model for Christians in South Korea, Harkness examines how cultivating a “clean” voice—as a matter of both aesthetics and ethics—exhibits not only an idealized vocal quality but also an idealized person quality. Such qualities also extend to a national vision whereby vocalization can stand for a Christian progress that transforms South Korea from an “unenlightened” past to an “enlightened” future.

Voices of Legacy

I end this section on old and new media by reviewing a few volumes in 2013 that pay homage to influential figures in linguistic anthropology. In many ways, these volumes are about old and new: bringing together different generations of scholars and highlighting the ways in which pioneering ideas continue to inspire current scholarship.

In 2013, Jane Hill’s influence on the field of linguistic anthropology was recognized in the edited volume, *The Persistence of Language: Constructing and Confronting the Past and Present in the Voices of Jane Hill* (Bischoff et al. 2013). It begins with a beautifully crafted portrait of Hill—both intimate and inspiring—by Kenneth C. Hill (2013). The editors organize the volume around scholarly areas that Hill has profoundly shaped through her research and mentorship. This is evident in the numerous contributions by colleagues and former students that present original research directly influenced by the work of Hill. The book is divided into two main sections: the first section features research on indigenous languages in the Americas; the second section features work on voice and ideology, with chapters on language shift and racist discourse, several of which were discussed earlier in this essay.

Dell Hymes’s pioneering work on ethnopoetics is revisited in a triple theme issue of *Journal of Folklore Research* (Kroskrity and Webster 2013). In their introduction, Anthony K. Webster and Paul V. Kroskrity (2013) argue that Hymes’s work on ethnopoetics—and related areas, such as verbal art, voice, and narrative inequality—continues to have profound significance on current scholarship across several disciplines, including linguistic anthropology. Dividing

eight articles into two sections that end with commentaries by Richard Bauman (2013) and Charles L. Briggs (2013), the editors include pieces that seek to extend Hymesian modes of research. Robert Moore (2013), for example, offers new methods for transcription and analysis that consider the shifting multilingual environments in which narratives emerge. M. Eleanor Nevins (2013a) considers how Hymes's work on genre and addressivity elucidates a contemporary analysis of two accounts of Apache lives in which speakers draw on an oratorical genre that positions their "own" group in opposition to that of addressed "others."

In addition, Dell Hymes's concept of communicative competence is the focus of a theme issue of *Language and Communication* (Kataoka et al. 2013). Each piece reconsiders the notion of communicative competence in a wide range of cultural contexts. For example, Alexandra Jaffe (2013b) explores the complexity of communicative competence in relation to idealized communities of practice in the Corsican adult language-learning classroom. Drawing on data from a second-hand marketplace and a beauty pageant in Tonga, Niko Besnier (2013) considers how shifting global and local dynamics reconfigure notions of communicative competence in which linguistic practices map onto new and old patterns of societal inequality. Other pieces continue to expand the scope of communicative competence, whether in contexts of schooling and media in Indonesia (Goebel 2013) or in contexts that are defined by heterogeneous and shifting ways of speaking in a Rapa Nui bilingual community (Makihara 2013).

DATA: BIG AND SMALL

Just as we contemplate what counts as "data" (ethnographic, new media, old media, sign processes), so do we contemplate what counts as "science," particularly against the rise of "big data." *Big data* refers to the massive amounts of data that new technologies have been able to generate and store at escalating degrees (Mayer-Schönberger and Cukier 2013). Big data is often used by corporations and governments to identify patterns of behavior and make correlations and predictive assessments—to serve and protect at best, to spy and abuse at worst. Privileging quantitative research as the site of knowledge, big data asks us to rest our faith in the immensity of large-scale design as a way to truly "know" something. To know a "person," for example, is to trust in the "quantified self": an algorithm of an individual's social networks, interactions, activities, purchases, and whereabouts. That the quantified self is framed as a grassroots movement is hegemony defined: people actively participating in the tracking of their own data, which are offered up to others to accumulate and analyze (and whatever else).

Questions about what constitutes science and knowledge in the era of big data are increasingly present in academia. For example, big data has given rise to the "digital humanities" (Schreibman et al. 2004), a field that has been met with both enthusiasm and repulsion by humanities scholars. Anthropology, of course, has long been engaged

in questions about science, including the 2010 controversy over the American Anthropological Association dropping the word *science* from its long-range plan, which was then revised in 2011. This dispute was framed as a rift between the so-called "scientific" subfields (physical, archaeological) and the so-called "nonscientific" subfields (linguistic, cultural), though the location of linguistic anthropology within this problematic dichotomy has long been ambiguous. That a "hard science," such as big data, enjoys epistemological authority is nothing new. But big data can only heighten the intensity around which anthropology—particularly linguistic and cultural anthropology—is allowed to see itself as legitimate scientific inquiry, especially given the perceived link between linguistic anthropology and "small data": small-scale, ethnographic inquiry.

As I allude to above, this question about science is also a question about methodology. If big data is large sets of small data, then big data analysts would question not the type of data we gather but, rather, the amount of data we gather (not to mention our interpretive processes for assigning meaning to data). Yet there have been increasing efforts to bend the ethnographic method so that it encompasses a broader scope. Two examples of promising developments in this area are work on the lifespan (Woolard 2013) and intermediate scales (Wortham 2012). Both lines problematize the tired "micro-macro" (or "small-big") dichotomy, revealing that, rather than two levels, there are many intervening layers built from regimentations of small-scale trajectories. Ethnographic methods prove to be immensely productive in exploring these interstitial processes.

In this section, I explore how linguistic anthropological work in 2013 addresses ideas about big data, small data, and the methodologies on which they are based. I group work under the following headings: scale, ontologies, and methodologies and handbooks.

Scale

The concept of scale can intervene in this conversation about big and small data, given its concern with how social processes become understood as situated at various sizes, levels, sites, and other scalar dimensions. In recent years, scale has received much scholarly attention. This work has been critical of perspectives that treat scale as a given dimension of objects of analysis (Lemke 2000). Instead, scale—if and when it is made to matter—becomes itself an object of analysis. Research in this area asks how phenomena become constituted through various types of scaling routines that specify relationships among time, space, event, category, and so on (Lempert 2012; Reyes 2013). At the 2013 American Anthropological Association annual meeting, scale was the theme of a double panel entitled "Pragmatics of Scale" and the theme of several presented papers, including Adrienne Lo's (2013) historical examination of how Asian Americans are understood to speak through "mediatized scaling projects" that align readers with the British colonial and U.S. imperial gaze.

Two major books in 2013 illustrate an aspect of these theoretical concerns of scale: how the supposed smallness of social interaction can be scaled in relation to the supposed bigness of social order. In *Fast-Forward Family: Home, Work, and Relationships in Middle-Class America*, Elinor Ochs and Tamar Kremer-Sadlik (2013) present research based on 1,500 video-recorded hours of 32 families over a four-year period. This project can, indeed, be scaled—as the editors acknowledge—to the documentary, *An American Family* (1973) (and its hilarious spoof, *Real Life* [1979] by Albert Brooks), both of which take the middle-class California family as their (and “America’s”) object of fascination. On the opposite coast, William Labov’s (2013) *The Language of Life and Death: The Transformation of Experience in Oral Narrative* brings together dozens of narratives (selected from thousands), several of which are drawn from his extensive fieldwork in the eastern United States. Incorporating narrative genres from historical texts as well, Labov draws connections across narratives to highlight tools for analysis and to foster a deeper understanding of humanity. Both books invite us to “upscale” (Blommaert 2007) the minute details of interaction as they are collected over long periods of time and across a wide range of settings.

Ontologies

The question about how things such as scale are made to matter is also a question about ontology. *Ontology* has been a fashionable word in anthropology these past few years and, perhaps predictably, has been loosely discussed and defined. Most fundamentally, however, *ontology* refers to understandings of the nature of being and of the existence of “things.” One’s ontology is one’s set of assumptions about what exists and how it exists, whether such things are understood to be “real” facts in the world or conceptual fictions created by people. The so-called “ontological turn” in anthropology was the subject of an invited panel by the AAA Executive Committee at the 2013 American Anthropological Association Annual Meeting: “The Ontological Turn in French Philosophical Anthropology,” featuring Bruno Latour and Philippe Descola, among several other notable scholars. For Latour—who discussed a range of ideas drawn from his earlier work and his most recent book (Latour 2013)—the ontological turn is about dismantling the ontological distinction between “reality” and “perception” that produces the faulty bifurcations of object–subject and nature–culture through which people see themselves as separate from the world (that they study).

This past year, ontology has been the focus of work in linguistic anthropology (e.g., Kockelman 2013a, 2013b; Nakassis 2012), as well as other anthropological subfields (e.g., Blaser 2013; Goslinga 2012). In linguistic anthropology, ontology—of “brand” (Nakassis 2012) or “spam” (junk mail) (Kockelman 2013b), for example—refers to understandings that things (such as “brand” and “spam”) exist and that they have particular features (that can be identified, policed, etc.). Yet for Kockelman, the term *ontology* itself is not

what matters; it is the definition of terms that is important (he acknowledges that he could have used instead *culture*, *ideology*, *imaginary*, etc.). His theory of ontology relies on four components: index (any perceivable sign), kind (some category that can be indicated by that sign), agent (perceiver), and individual (something that displays that sign). Taking Kockelman’s example of a passage from *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* in which Huck tries to pass as a girl but Mrs. Loftus explains why she is not fooled, Huck is the individual, Mrs. Loftus is the agent, the categories of “boy” and “girl” are the kinds in question, and certain acts—such as differences in throwing, catching, and threading needles—are the indices. For Kockelman, this passage exposes Mrs. Loftus’s ontology: “the assumptions an agent has as to the indices, kinds, and individuals that constitute a particular world” (2013b:42). In this sense, ontology is a set of assumptions that motivates interpretations. But Kockelman is also interested in how interpretations can change ontologies—how shifts in the various components of his model can lead to ontological transformation.

In addition to ontology, other concepts used to investigate the basis of knowledge are revisited in linguistic anthropological scholarship in 2013. Joel Kuipers (2013), for example, examines the interplay between “evidence” and “authority”—the focus of Jane H. Hill and Judith T. Irvine’s (1993) influential volume. Kuipers finds that these concepts do not compete with one another as much as combine in communicative practice to establish beliefs about the world. “Intersubjectivity”—a concept at the center of Mary Bucholtz and Kira Hall’s (2005) “tactics of intersubjectivity” model—also continues to be an area of interest. As the focus of a theme issue of *Language and Communication* (Danziger and Rumsey 2013), the notion of intersubjectivity is used to further conceptualize the sharedness of knowledge states as interactional process. Relatedly, Kira Hall (2013) argues that an account of “subjectivity” in other disciplines (in this case, queer theory) would benefit from a linguistic anthropological focus on interactional and indexical processes.

Methodologies and Handbooks

Related to these theoretical inquiries into “how we know what we know,” several publications in 2013 address linguistic anthropological methodology. For example, the *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology* inaugurated a new forum for essays and commentaries on “Methods and Analysis in Linguistic Anthropology.” This decision was prompted by the successful Society for Linguistic Anthropology Presidential Panel, “Frontiers in Methodology in Linguistic Anthropology,” at the American Anthropological Association annual meeting in 2012. The first piece to appear in this new forum is the work of Susan Philips (2013), which details a type of methodological rigor that involves “small” data (face-to-face interactional units) in “big” formats (entering comparative units of interaction into databases). But if big data is about quantitative measures that correlate decontextualized units, Philips’s method argues for the absolute centrality of

ethnography and the intimate knowledge of local context that comes with longitudinal fieldwork.

In addition, chapters on linguistic anthropology appeared in several handbooks and methodological guides this past year, which may indicate a desire (or need) to identify and solidify our methods. In the field of sociolinguistics, *The Oxford Handbook of Sociolinguistics* (Bayley et al. 2013) and *Research Methods in Sociolinguistics* (Holmes and Hazen 2013) include chapters specifically devoted to linguistic anthropological approaches (Jaffe 2013a; Shibamoto-Smith and Chand 2013). In the field of discourse analysis, *The Routledge Handbook of Discourse Analysis* (Gee and Handford 2012) and *The Handbook of Conversation Analysis* (Sidnell and Stivers 2013) feature pieces that highlight linguistic anthropological perspectives on methods of analysis (Clemente 2013; Richland 2012). Conversation analysis is also the subject of another edited volume, which is squarely focused on the topic of “conversational repair”—how problems in social interaction are identified, addressed, and corrected by participants (Hayashi et al. 2013).

CONCLUSION

The super-new-big purports to identify a contemporary moment in which we are witnessing unprecedented change. Linguistic anthropology in 2013 finds itself confronted by reconsiderations of diversity, media, and data, prompting us to question what is super and regular (about diversity), what is new and old (about media), and what is big and small (about data). In this essay, I have situated linguistic anthropological scholarship over the past year in relation to these concerns. Yet these issues have also stretched into other anthropological subfields in 2013. For example, in his work on African Hebrew Israelites, John L. Jackson Jr. (2013) touches on all three super-new-big dimensions: exploring the movements of people and ideas that complicate notions of diversity; tracing the creative uses of old and new media; and contemplating the self-aware participant who twists the ethnographic method, forcing us to rethink what constitutes data and data collection and analysis.

Perhaps one certainty in academia is its seemingly boundless capacity to generate “new” terms for “new” ideas. So, we can ask if there is anything new about labeling superdiversity, new media, and big data as “new.” The answer is of course not. But we can also ask: Why these terms now? I propose that what draws the super-new-big together is technology—and the excitement, anxiety, and grumpiness it can inspire. Certainly, questions about technology have been debated for centuries. In many ways, then, the super-new-big is same-old-same-old: technological change raises human anxiety. Yet it is not just that we have new technological forms to contemplate but also that we contemplate how these new forms do new things: change people in new ways, change the world in new ways. But our work as linguistic anthropologists requires us to scrutinize the extent to which it is this contemplation that produces change versus the forms themselves under contemplation.

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NOTES

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