

Looking back – Looking ahead

It has been five years since we became editors of *Language in Society* and we have recently agreed to do another term of three years upon encouragement from the people we have worked with at Cambridge University Press. When we initially applied for the positions of co-editors of the journal, we said that we wanted to continue to cultivate the theoretical and methodological breadth that has characterized *Language in Society* since its inception by publishing articles that span the breadth of sociolinguistic inquiry—work within areas as diverse as variationist theory, critical discourse analysis, conversation analysis, and linguistic anthropology. At the same time, we felt that there were particular topics that were underrepresented in the journal and needed to be promoted—topics such as multimodality, raciolinguistics, language and affect, posthumanism, and the political economy of multilingualism, among others. We were also strongly committed to widening the geopolitical range of articles published in *Language in Society* such that there would be a greater representation of scholars and research material / contexts from the Global South. Indeed, we think that the articles published in this issue of the journal exemplify much (or at least some) of what we wanted to accomplish when we began as co-editors five years ago. There are a variety of methodological approaches represented (e.g., variationist analysis, conversation analysis, multimodal analysis, critical discourse analysis and ethnography), a broad range of geopolitical contexts and research participants/sites under investigation (e.g., Palestinian youth within Israel, Kurdish restaurant owners within Turkish-dominant settings in Turkey, male rappers within the hip hop community of Beijing, linguistic landscapes in Gothenburg, Sweden) and topics that are at the forefront of contemporary work within sociolinguistics and linguistic anthropology (e.g., raciolinguistics, semiotic landscapes, enregisterment, linguistic citizenship and decolonial modes of resistance, the political economy of minority languages).

Such a breadth of approaches and contexts can also be seen in the special issue we published at the end of 2024, entitled *Sociolinguistics of Hope*, guest-edited by Daniel N. Silva and Rodrigo Borba (Silva and Borba 2024). This issue not only showcases contributions from a variety of geopolitical, social and cultural locations (from Brazilian favelas to East Jerusalem to the Village of Tewa in the Hopi Nation) based on a wide array of discursive data (from Brazilian mothers' narratives to a Palestinian activist's political speeches to jazz sound and music about slavery and apartheid), but also offers a fresh theorization of hope, which we hope (pun intended) will generate a productive discussion in the study of language and social practices. Indeed, hope is an important concept for both academic inquiry and activist practice at this specific historical juncture when we are witnessing a



consolidation of overtly fascist authoritarian politics, which brings with it a concomitant change in “discursive regimes” (Butler 1997) across the globe. We strongly believe that scholars of language in society are well-suited to studying such discursive shifts (see also Krzyżanowski 2020) and we hope to continue to publish this kind of critical work over the next three years such that the sharp critical edge of our field will never be dulled to suit larger political interests.


Beyond the particular kind of scholarly work we have sought out and published over the last five years, there are other steps that we have taken to achieve our goal of broadening and diversifying the international footprint of the journal. We have, for example, greatly expanded the geopolitical breadth of the Editorial Board with the hope that such breadth will increase the number of submissions from countries traditionally underrepresented in the journal. Of course, we are not naïve to believe that this kind of increase can be achieved solely through the expansion of the editorial board. As the contributors to a special issue edited by Alfonso del Percio & Cécile Vigouroux (2023) have cogently argued, we cannot understand “the manufacturing of academic knowledge” without taking into account the broader political economic system of academic publishing “shaped by the capitalist logic of standardization, exploitation, and hierarchization” (p. 159). Ultimately, the issue is not just about who *can* or *will* submit an article to *Language in Society*, but also about who has access to and can read our journal (and other journals) and engage with its scholarship (see also Vigouroux & Del Percio 2024). In this regard, we are very pleased to announce that, beginning in 2026, all research articles published in *Language in Society* will be open access, meaning that institutional status and financial resources will no longer be a determining factor in who can or cannot gain access to the articles. Moreover, this open access option will be available to every author of a research article as the costs of open access will either be covered by agreements between Cambridge University Press and the author’s institution, or else waived completely. There is much research to suggest that open access journals expand the disciplinary reach of audiences, increase citations and augment public engagement with journal content. Thus, these upcoming changes to *Language in Society*’s open access policy will no doubt help to further our goal of diversifying the readership of the journal.

REFERENCES

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