Editorial

This is a collection of linguistic trivia, picked from the mundaneness of everyday speech. However, as each of the papers so well documents, the trivia is far from trivial and the seemingly marginal linguistic phenomena studied here are full of significance, not least from the vantage point of the margins. The papers provide detailed analyses of how 'small talk' regularly contributes to the emergence of meaning and interpersonal understanding; items that get repeated across turns and speakers, for example, help interlocutors stake out joint coordinates in relation to the flow of conversation, scaffolding what a speaker may be taken to be referencing—or intending to reference—and allowing them to mutually work towards a shared stance on 'what a word might mean'.

One's thoughts turn here to Tabouret-Keller and Le Page's (1985) notion of *focusing*, the process whereby shared normative orders of language emerge out of situations of multilingual contact. Might not the small talk detailed here underlie the linguistic regimes that grow out of meetings of difference? Small talk would then be the stuff out of which meaning emerges—the reptilian stem out of which grows the cortex of propositional language.

However, these unimportant bits of language do not only transform fleeting moments of encounter into the sustained social engagement that is 'language'. In another context (Williams and Stroud, 2013), we have suggested that convivial routines such as these are the bedrock of new forms of *citizenship*. This is, of course, not a citizenship of nation states, but 'citizenship' performed through what Isin calls 'acts of citizenship.

These are 'acts through which citizens, strangers, outsiders and aliens emerge not as beings already defined but as beings acting and reacting with others' (2008:39).

It is a citizenship of postnational affiliations, one of, in Blommaert and Varis' words, a 'community beyond Durkheimian-Parsonian imaginations of homogeneity and sharedness', forged out of 'light and flexible social bonds' (Blommaert and Varis, p. 8).

Again, the relevance for the margins is clear, especially, in a context such as the South African, where historically very different people are seeking more ethical forms of co-existence, Chipkin suggests that 'citizenship could be defined by feelings of friendship and solidarity reproduced through interactions of democratic practice' (2007). Rose speaks of 'minor practices of citizenship formation that are linked to a 'politics of cramped spaces of action of the here-and-now" (2000: 100). The unimportant bits of language that link people across disjunctive events help create the space, out of which new possibilities for mutualities among strangers can emerge. We see examples of this in Velghe's paper which details the important social support role that affiliative networks constructed through unimportant language fulfill in the impoverished communities of Wesbank outside of Cape Town. We see this also in Tilman's piece on the Camancais migrants from Africa

In their introduction to this issue, Blommaert and Varis, citing Goffman, note how "many of our vital relationships are built on seemingly unimportant interactions" and go on to remark on how 'small talk' and restricted displays of information … secure the persistence of

'big' social structure (p. 43). However, not only do these forms of language create, sustain and amend social structures, but they are also what translates these larger than life social dynamics into peoples' 'vernacularized and everyday experienced reality' (Blommaert and Varis, this issue, p. 6). This is the essence of the idea of 'linguistic citizenship, understood as the linguistic mediation of agency in cramped spaces, where larger circuits of power are mediated through linguistic engagements with the everydayness of the local (Williams and Stroud, 2013: 293). Thus, it is out of the almost imperceptible small bits of language, the repetitions of fragments across many turns, and the shifting meanings these take on as they travel across contexts and speakers, that the stuff of social life is made. And herein lies the significance of marginal and unimportant language for the multilingual margins.

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