Sociolinguistics of hope: Language between the no-more and the not-yet

D A N I E L   N .   S I L V A [a] A N D   R O D R I G O   B O R B A [b]

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A B S T R A C T

Sociolinguistics has recently turned its attention to the production of hope in language. Although hope is dismissed in several everyday and academic discourses as escapism or cruel optimism, if investigated ethnographically, the affect and practice of hope emerge contextually as both practical reason and semiotic ideology with important political implications. The articles in this special issue variously engage with hope as situated action whereby individuals and communities struggle for material resources, reorient temporality, recalibrate registers, create alliances, and reflexively engage with social practice to build forms of life that in many ways resist despair and paralysis. While the collection of articles gathered here does not share a single view of hope, a common thread is that hope in different ways coheres with the Brazilian Portuguese *esperançar*—that is, hope not as sheer or passive waiting but as pragmatic and reflexive action. (Sociolinguistics of hope, affect, practical reason, language ideology, ethnography)

I N T R O D U C T I O N :   R E O R I E N T I N G   A N D   R E I M A G I N I N G

> I am hopeful, not out of stubbornness,
> but out of an existential, concrete imperative.
> Paulo Freire

> Hope is a muscle that allows us to connect.
> Björk

Grappling with the re-encroachment of neoliberal capitalism, forced displacement, climate catastrophes, sanitary crises, and various renewed forms of material and symbolic dispossession, since the turn of the twenty-first-century social scientists have turned to hope as a category of both experience and analysis (see, for instance, Capranzano 2003; Miyazaki 2004; Muñoz 2009; Mattingly 2010; Castells 2015; Mahmood 2018). Contra commonsensical views of hope as immaterial, a kind of passive waiting, and a reflection of humans' inherently limited agency, this literature has by and large been inspired by Ernst Bloch's (1986) foundational Marxist materialist understanding of hope not as an incapacity for action, but, rather, as

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its source. In this view, hope is a crucial affective dimension (and one of the driving forces) of human agency.

In *The Principle of Hope*, his magnum opus, Bloch (1986) does not exactly try to locate hope within particular political formations. Instead, he looks at hope as a principle of philosophical explication. Rather than a form of individual, idle waiting for a better world to come despite current predicaments, Bloch frames hope as a 'participating, co-operative process attitude' (Bloch 1986:46). In this vein, he argues that hope makes people expand rather than contract: 'The emotion of hope goes out of itself, makes people broad instead of confining them' (Bloch 1986:3). Bloch thus sees hope both as an affect—that is, a mode of being affected or touched by the Other, by ourselves, and by the world and its events—and as a form of practical reason, that is, a 'directing act of a cognitive kind' (1986:12).

Bloch's (1986) pioneering suggestion that hope is both an affect and a form of practical reasoning resonates with central concerns in sociolinguistics. For instance, he assigns importance to the habituated, regimented, and pedagogical quality of hope, which is in line with sociolinguists' attention to the embodiment and ideological regimentation of communicative practices. In this sense, hope is not innate; as much as we 'learn (to) fear', hope requires a pedagogy to be learned: 'It is a question of learning hope. … Hope, superior to fear, is neither passive like the latter, nor locked into nothingness' (1986:3). Bloch pays special attention to *docta spes*, or 'educated hope' (see Levitas 1990)—an expression that captures the pedagogical sense of educating oneself and others to hope, which pervades both Bloch's philosophy and the reimaginations of language that the articles in this special issue entertain.

This approach to hope as a 'teachable affect' aligns with the sociolinguistic interest in reflexive language, especially the growing work on the affective dimensions of reflexivity. Indeed, whether drawing from Bloch or other authors in a now broad social sciences scholarship on hope, sociolinguistics has recently turned its attention to the production of hope in language. For example, Monica Heller & Bonnie McElhinny (2017) tell with great nuance and empirical detail a critical history of the production of inequality in capitalism alongside the emergence of ideas about language and the very discipline of sociolinguistics in this unequal terrain. They begin and end the book by discussing hope as a practical mode of action. Thinking together with Indigenous peoples, artists, and activists, Heller & McElhinny (2017:228–29) look critically at the colonial legacy of the political economy of language to 'reimagine… time, space and personhood… in order to help us inhabit the world differently'.

We believe that this attention to the political and semiotic potential of hope in sociolinguistics is not simply a trend. Juan Eduardo Bonnin (2021), for instance, suggests an epistemic reorientation for the sociolinguistic field based on his engagement with hope as a form of reimagination. To illustrate his point, he revisits his ethnographic study with workers in the Buenos Aires subway union. In an interview, Ana, a subway worker, provides him with a humorous response about her role in building the union. Instead of focusing on the oppression felt by the workers

or the strenuous and degrading working conditions, Ana gave an example of how the employees made fun of 'supervisors and rulebooks alike' (2021:70). Among the ironic forms of action that the employees developed was their defying the rule that subway workers could only drink the traditional *mate* tea with a *bombilla*, or 'straw'. When the supervisor approached, they would conceal the *bombilla*. Bonnin cites Ana: 'When we saw him coming, we would hide it. He would say "you're drinking *mate*," and we'd reply, "but without a *bombilla*!" (laughs)' (2021:69). Resembling Hirokazu Miyazaki's (2004:130) suggestion that 'hope lies in the reorientation of knowledge', the key for Ana and other union workers was to reorient, reimagine, and repurpose semiotic resources—in this case, creativity, collective work, and humor —so as to defy intolerable rules. Bonnin's point (2021:75) is that our concern as sociolinguists with 'denounci[ng] linguistic inequality, … dominant ideologies, … racism, [and] sexist discourses' should not eclipse our interlocutors' (re)imaginative work. In other words, we should not obfuscate the fact that subjects very often navigate layers of oppression and precarity by building cooperation, reimagining semiotic resources, and fathoming livable forms of life against the grain of debilitating conditions. Such a view is reminiscent of Judith Butler's (1990) understanding that oppressive contexts provide the means for their own contestation—that is, agency and resistance are forged within (rather than outside) situations of dispossession and inequality. Bonnin's (2021:75) conclusion is crisp: 'If we only privilege the analysis of practices of social control, ideological domination, discursive hegemony, sociolinguistic orders or dominant ideologies, we block our perception, and even our own imagination, to those voices that act for change' and to change itself, we add.

The point for Bonnin and the contributors of this special issue, of course, is not to ignore the operation, harm, and insidiousness of dominant ideologies, inequality, and colonialism but to avoid eclipsing the search on the ground for ethical ways of acting and feeling that are not reduced to the violence of domination and the romance of resistance. In a study that bridges medical anthropology and narrative theory, Cheryl Mattingly's (2010) account of hope among Black caregivers of children diagnosed with severe life-threatening illnesses offers additional nuance to Bonnin's insight. Her account of 'narrative emplotment'—which Branca Fabrício & Rodrigo Borba (this issue) unpack in their ethnography of hope among poor Brazilian mothers of babies born with a Zika-related syndrome—yields an interesting conclusion about the complex interplay of structure and agency. She finds that building an academic narrative about the hospital that exclusively singles out 'dominant structural activities' (Mattingly 2010:39) could muzzle co-occurring plots of possibility, community, and agency. Mattingly aptly summarizes that '[r]eality needs to be exposed as a space of possibility and not only of imprisonment or structural reproduction. Despite the immense power of oppressive social structures, reality is not summed up by their existence' (2010:39). Otherwise stated, within devastating conditions, one frequently finds shimmering crevices through which life insists on percolating.

In short, recent calls for a sociolinguistics of hope (e.g. Heller & McElhinny 2017; Borba 2019; Perez-Milan & Guo 2020, Bonnin 2021; Silva & Lee 2021, 2024; Fabrício 2022; Pennycook 2022; Carneiro & Silva 2023) variously draw attention to the importance of combining the focus on domination, reproduction, and violence with a scrutiny of subjects' semiotic construction of what Joel Robbins (2013) called an 'anthropology of the good'. In Robbins's historical sketch, by the mid-1990s, anthropology had increasingly shifted its focus of attention—from the radical others living in traditional societies, an epistemic trend known as 'the savage slot', to the suffering subjects, many of whom living in the same societies as the anthropologists. While acknowledging the importance of the 'suffering slot' in the discipline, he notes that 'it is also possible to spot a number of lines of inquiry that… may be poised to come together in a new focus on how people living in different societies strive to create the good in their lives' (Robbins 2013:457). Obviously, Robbins is not suggesting a universal vision of what is morally good for the subjects studied by anthropology, much less that if anthropologists themselves were able to identify what the good is, then the research subjects might go in search of it. Rather, focusing on how our interlocutors seek the good involves placing emphasis on 'the way people orient to and act in a world that outstrips the one most concretely present to them' (Robbins 2013:457).

In our view, Robbins stresses the importance of the sociolinguistic work of reorienting knowledge and other semiotic resources in the face of suffering and other conditions that could be otherwise paralyzing. Of course, hope is not the only communicative practice and affective disposition that might help subjects achieve the good in their lives—Robbins (2013:457) also lists research topics such as 'value, morality, imagination, well-being, empathy, care, the gift … time and change'. As if responding to Robbins's suggestion, Paul Kroskrity, in this special issue, intentionally avoids dwelling on the Arizona Tewa's 'suffering and distress' caused by two colonizing powers (Spain and the United States), climate change, and the Covid-19 pandemic; instead, he gauges in this Indigenous group's reclamation of language and temporality 'the linkage between hope… and the morally good'. Other articles in this special issue, including Ana Deumert's and Fabrício & Borba's, also stress the relevance of other affects such as anger in current moral calls for change by minorities. Yet at its core the mutual effort of the articles gathered here is to debate hope, this affect that Aristotle is said to have defined as a 'waking dream' (Crapanzano 2003:26), as a crucial imaginative and practical sociolinguistic resource in the current world.

We are aware of the fact that hope, as an affect and a form of pragmatic reasoning, is radically contextual. As such, it may be deployed for diverse purposes. While the articles in this special issue are particularly concerned with how communities who tackle the intersections of racism, sexism, and capitalist precarisation forge creative ways whereby they reimagine a present that can be no more, hope may also be instrumentalized for spurious ends, including for disenfranchising those who disproportionately suffer the legacies of colonialism. Far-right, anti-semitic,

Islamophobic, misogynistic, and LGBT+ phobic parties also mobilise hope. A recent case in point is the way Donald Trump capitalised on an attempted murder against him, instrumentalising the image of his bloody face with a winning fist against the US flag. Circulating globally, this image and his exhortation for his followers to 'fight, fight, fight' may well be understood as a reorientation of embodied action and language use that encapsulates the work of hope this special issue describes. Yet, showing himself as a beacon of hope to his acolytes and performing hope in his victory contains in itself a contradiction in terms as it embodies decades of gun-ownership deregulation of which Trump is an avid supporter and that facilitated the violence against him. Of course, to his 'base', the scene is a powerful sign of hope. In line with the ethnographic and contextual engagement with hope this special issue advances, we must be attentive to the fact that there is nothing inherently positive or emancipatory in hope; we need to ethnographically document and historicize the backgrounds of uncertainty and precarity against which subjects mobilize signs of hope.

At this juncture, this special issue responds to (and takes issue with) recent calls for a sociolinguistics of hope with a view to wielding theoretical and empirical nuance to understandings of how social actors mobilize semio-linguistic-affective resources to deal with jarring realities that can be no more while embedding in the present the future they envisage for themselves and the communities they belong to—a future that is not yet fully-blown but is inserted in the nooks and crannies of people's daily doings. While sociolinguistics has only recently attended to hope's analytical possibilities and political potential, the literature on hope is vast and offers useful insights for the study of language as a means by which individuals grapple with and intervene in otherwise debilitating circumstances. In the next section, we identify some lines of inquiry in the broader scholarship on hope that, to different extents, underlie the studies in this special issue.

HOPE AS NAÏVE OPTIMISM VS. HOPE WITHOUT OPTIMISM

Nauja Kleist & Stef Jansen (2016) note that the social scientific scholarship on hope tends to follow two distinct trends. First, hopefulness is located against and despite all odds. According to this view, hope is not simply desirable. It is an imperative to which people in the most jarring circumstances must resort if there ought to be any alternative to the current state of affairs. Following this principle, scholars position themselves, often implicitly, 'against fatalistic convictions that there are no alternatives to the current order; against pessimistic diagnosis of the present political moment as preventing any meaningful emancipatory intervention' (Kleist & Jansen 2016:378). Such a perspective tends to overlook the fact that injunctions to be hopeful have deleterious effects akin to those spawning from mandates to be happy. In fact, one can extend Sara Ahmed's (2010:2) poignant argument that in neoliberal societies 'happiness is used to justify oppression [and] to redescribe

social norms as social goods' to uncritical views of hopefulness as the overcoming of harsh and unequal realities.

Instantiations of hope as an optimist stance in spite of real constraints may be identified in myriad discourses, including the scientific discourse on language. For example, in a study on the prevalence of positive over negative words in place names in the United States, Michael Kelly (2000) extends his findings from English to other languages. He suggests that positive words are more frequent than negative words in the world's languages because there would be an 'optimistic view of life' spread throughout the world, independent of 'measures of material wealth' (Kelly 2000:4–5). According to Kelly, the 'happiness imperative' (Berardi 2009) is at the heart of human speech: '[a]lthough few of our days are brimming with joy, we still may spend most of our time cruising on the happy side… Hence we say "beautiful" more than "ugly" because beauty is, happily, more common' (2000:5). While Kelly seems to adhere to naïve optimism, other social fields yield not-so-ingenuous models of optimism. An example of the latter is the proliferation of life coaching in digital capitalism. Coaching is largely based on the happiness imperative, often harnessing the vagueness and performativity of language (Cesarino 2021) to propel a neoliberal model of subjectivity whereby subjects think of themselves in individualistic terms as people who ought to strive and be happy (Western 2017). Coaching as an entrepreneurial and individualistic discourse of soul guiding is a perfect example of what Lauren Berlant's (2011:94) calls 'cruel optimism', which she defines as 'a relation of attachment to compromised conditions of possibility whose realization is discovered either to be impossible, sheer fantasy, or too possible, and toxic'.

Various sources of empirical evidence and theoretical propositions complicate the view that hope can be cultivated as a sort of categorical imperative that ignores both real conditions of oppression and the examination of reality. For instance, in this special issue, Ana Deumert problematizes current notions of hope, in particular Jonathan Lear's (2006) suggestion that hope as an affect allows for survival in contexts of ontological and political destruction (see below). Further, Deumert suggests that hope, especially as compared to affects such as anger, is a socially sanctioned political affect. In her words, 'discourses on hope… can move, all too quickly, into forms of "cruel optimism"', that is, into idealizations that may be detrimental to one's (political community's) wellbeing. While we recognize that discourses of hope may be easily coopted by escapist normative frameworks, a possible counterpoint here is that hope as practical reason can do without optimism. In this special issue, such a stance is illustrated by the contributions of Daniel Silva, Letizia Mariani, & Jerry Won Lee, and Paul Kroskrity who show that hope is better viewed as a local practice that emerges within situated conditions that might otherwise lead to despair and paralysis. This is Terry Eagleton's (2015) point in his essay *Hope without optimism*. For him, hope is not teleological, meaning that being practically hopeful does not entail expecting a successful end. Also building from Lear's (2006) account of radical hope among the Crow and the trajectories of

tragic characters in fiction, Eagleton goes on to suggest that survival in the context of (political and artistic) tragedy is the exemplary case of hope. In his pragmatic account, hope 'is what survives the general ruin' (Eagleton 2015:115).

The second distinct trend, more aligned with the remit of this special issue, encompasses studies investigating specific social formations, metadiscourses, and temporal reasoning conducive to and constitutive of hope. Drawing from the premise that 'we hope in a great variety of ways' (Blöser 2019:212), scholars in this second line of inquiry locate hope empirically in situated political and communicative practices. Instead of defining what hope is, this approach is more interested in what hope does, what its empirical contours are, and how it responds to and takes issue with immediate circumstances of violence, dispossession, and disenfranchisement. A case in point is Lear's (2006) analysis of how the Crow people, an Indigenous group of nomads in the US Midwest, resisted the cultural devastation that followed their confinement to a reservation at the end of the nineteenth century. Lear describes how the Crow refused to surrender to despair by imagining and practicing 'a kind of radical hope'. Through the realization of loss and the working out of pragmatic resources such as collective interpretation of dreams, writing with literate collaborators, and imaginations of alternative futures, Plenty Coups, one of the Crow's leaders, managed to transform the 'destruction of a telos into a teleological suspension of the ethical' (Lear 2006:146). Instead of short-circuiting reality in his dream visions, Plenty Coups engaged with reality in practical ways.

This pragmatic drive to oppose despair, inequality, and violence by repurposing past harms, present disjunctions, and future alternatives is also captured by Mattingly's (2010) ethnography of African American families whose children have been diagnosed with severe chronic diseases. Narrating the intense hospital routine of these families and their intimate life at home, Mattingly zooms in on the practical reasonings that underlie these families' impetus to recalibrate the burden of the past when a diagnosis changed the families' lives, the present trying circumstances, and the future they envisage for their children. She refers to this conundrum as the 'paradox of hope'. Such a paradox is constituted by cultivating a hopeful instance geared to navigating hospital bureaucracies, healthcare disparities, and family life amidst disappointment and bleak prognosis. In her discussion of the hospital as a clinical borderland where race, class, and chronic disease intersect, Mattingly (2010:6) shows how these families harness hope from 'highly situated practices … of creating, or trying to create, lives worth living, even in the midst of suffering, even when no happy ending is in sight'. More than an emotion, hope is described as a practice (and indeed a collaborative, communal, and emergent one) that forges new communities of care, aiding these families to navigate the hardships of hospital life.

Both Lear and Mattingly show how individuals affectively wrest a particular form of agency from a catastrophic reality. As a situated practice and a driving force of agency, hope is perhaps best viewed as a 'radical reorientation of knowledge' (Miyazaki 2004:5) and, as Rodrigo Borba (2019) puts it, of situated action.

Such a reorientation spawns from pragmatic and metapragmatic engagements with social realities that can be no more and alternatives that are not yet. In this line of inquiry, an important theoretical example of a general disposition geared to resignifying the past so as to transform the future objectively is Bloch's Marxist approach to hope. Bloch's anti-Platonism, in particular his refusal of the principle that all knowing is *anamnesis*—that is, 'A RE-REMEMBERING OF SOMETHING SEEN BEFORE'—is fundamentally invested in locating the temporality of hope in 'Not-Yet-Being' (Bloch 1986:140, original emphasis). His reversal of Plato may also be read as a replacement of ontology for the temporality of hope, a type of futurity that lies in the 'Not-Yet', in the New that is given in objective (material) conditions, but not restricted to them. Crucially for Bloch, whatever the essence of being is, it resides not in ontology, but in the temporal mode of hope: 'Essential being is not Been-ness; on the contrary: the essential being of the world lies itself on the front' (Bloch 1986:18).

While Bloch's practical utopia is an important source of inspiration for a general orientation towards the not-yet of hope, we are aware that, ethnographically, the temporality of hope must be investigated rather than presupposed. In other words, although we agree with Bloch that, in temporal terms, hope is likely to be located 'in the horizon of the future' (Bloch 1986:131), a number of empirical contexts may complexify the future as the 'telos' of hope. This is precisely the case of Eleonor Antelius's (2007) ethnography of therapists and patients at a Swedish rehabilitation clinic for people diagnosed with major brain damage. The medical diagnosis of these patients gave them no hope of improving their motor condition. Yet Antelius (2007) still noticed a method of hope at work in this clinic. Grounded on a variety of semiotic and communicative practices, including daily physical therapy and discursive strategies such as pursuing immediate accomplishments (i.e. 'carrots'), professionals and patients located their hope not on a promising future but on the present. The reason for this reorientation towards the present was that although patients would not improve their physical condition in the future, it could worsen if motor and metadiscursive work were not done in the present. In this ethnographic site, hope was not TRANSFORMATIVE, but CONSERVATIVE. In other words, instead of a transformation in the future, the therapeutic and metadiscursive work in the clinic aimed at preserving a physical condition that could otherwise decline. Antelius's study, thus, provides a compelling illustration of how the not-yet may fruitfully percolate the no-more.

In Brazil, the political movement of mourning for the Black councilwoman Marielle Franco, who was brutally murdered in 2018, is another interesting empirical case of hope located in the present (see Silva & Lee 2021). In 2024, following years of obstruction of justice and political interference, the investigation finally uncovered those who planned the crime: two brothers active in institutional politics, Chiquinho Brazão and Domingos Brazão, and the chief of the Rio de Janeiro police, Rivaldo Barbosa. The solution to this crime only became possible because of a movement that has had important effects on contemporary politics. Anielle Franco, Marielle's sister, is one of the authoritative figures in this

movement. She is now Minister of Racial Equality in Lula's government. Sympto-matically, in her inauguration speech, Anielle adjusted portions of her talk to a so-ciolinguistic register whose persona embodies a combination of anger and hope—the *papo reto* activist register (Silva 2022)—whilst expressing that the time has come to *ter uma conversa franca e honesta* 'having a frank and honest conversa-tion' about the mass incarceration of the Black youth (Franco 2023). For the Min-ister, *já passou da hora de pararmos de repetir as fórmulas fracassadas* 'it's past the time to stop repeating the failed formulas of the past' (Franco 2023). Change must be effected now, in the present, which accumulates the past demands of Anielle's Black ancestry. As much as Marielle remains spectrally present in Brazil's current politics, the phantasmatic hope of those who have suffered for cen-turies from the effects of colonialism does not long for change in the future; rather, the change must come here and now.

In short, an empirical, pragmatic, and ethnographic orientation to hope may be identified in this second approach, which looks at hope as practical reason instead of an escapist imperative. A similar theoretical and analytical disposition animates this special issue, concerned with investigating rather than presupposing the language, temporality, and practice of hope. Next, we outline the special issue's general outlook and critically engage with the five articles that collectively work towards a sociolinguistics of hope.

THE SOCIOLINGUISTICS OF HOPE: FROM *ESPERAR* TO *ESPERANÇAR*

Hope's action-orientedness is wittily captured by the neological Brazilian Portuguese verb *esperançar*.[1] In Portuguese, the term for hope (*esperança*) shares the same root with the verb for waiting (*esperar*). In this etymological sense, to have *esperança* implies passively waiting (*esperar*) for a better future. In his *Pedagogy of Hope*, Paulo Freire (2017), to whom the coinage of *esperançar* is attributed, disputes this meaning. For him, 'human existence, and the struggle needed to improve it' demand 'hope and dream' (Freire 2017:2). In the Brazilian edition of *Pedagogia da Esperança*, Freire (1992:15) plays with the word *espera* 'waiting', which morpho-logically shares the same root with *esperança*, so as to posit that '*não há esperança na pura espera, nem tampouco se alcança o que se espera na espera pura, que vira, assim, espera vã,*' which we translate as 'there is no hope in *espera pura* "sheer waiting", much less is it possible to achieve what is hoped for in *espera pura*, which thus becomes *espera vã* "idle waiting"'. In the Freirean perspective, hope is 'an ontological need [that] demands an anchoring in practice … in order to become historical concreteness' (Freire 2017:2). And he cogently argues that

> the exercise of will, of decision, of resistance, of choice, the role of emotions, of feelings, of desires, of limits, the importance of historic awareness, of an ethical human presence in the world, and the understanding of history as possibility and never as determination [are] substantively hopeful and, for this very reason, produce hope. (Freire 2016:24)

The articles in this special issue provide empirical examples of how *esperançar* is made possible by language use. While the collection of articles we present here does not share a single view of hope, a common thread in the various approaches is that hope in different ways coheres with *esperançar*—with hope as situated and pragmatic action. For Jayne Waterworth (2004:15), pragmatically and phenomenologically, 'hope is a human doing which modifies perception and action.' Waterworth goes on to say that 'acting with hope concerns not only WHAT objectives are set but also HOW one approaches or approximates the objectives' (2004:15, original emphasis). Along similar lines, philosophers Claudia Blöser and Titus Stahl (2019:6–7) draw on the premise that 'hope… is essentially tied to action [predisposing] the person to act on her hope and mak[ing] her resistant from giving up her projects connected to this hope'. In this vein, the empirical accounts provided in this issue investigate how 'hope tends to come into existence through action' (Lempert 2018:204).

Providing the warp and weft that interweave the articles in this special issue, three central dimensions of hope can be glimpsed from the pragmatic view that we collectively advance. First, whereas hope is typically viewed as inaction (a result of our limited agency as humans who need to resort to more powerful entities when in dire circumstances), the accounts of hope gathered in this issue stress its action-orientedness. Second, situated acts of hope embed in the here-and-now of extenuating circumstances alternatives that are not yet but reconfigure the horizon of possibilities—hope's temporality is non-linear, forward-looking, and disruptive, commingling past, present, and future. Third, the articles gathered here situate the reflexivity of actors and the temporal and spatial significance of the data in the struggle for semiotic resources in contexts of hopeful action—or in contexts where hope is rejected. In short, the fundamental task here is to avoid prefiguring hope in social formations or subjective experiences.

ESPERANÇANDO: LANGUAGE BETWEEN THE NO-MORE AND THE NOT-YET

The social scientific scholarship on hope we reviewed above and its recent sociolinguist rendition leads to understandings of hope not as passive waiting (i.e. *esperar*); rather, it is better viewed as a pragmatic and metapragmatic drive to oppose despair, inequality, and violence by repurposing past harms, present disjunctions, and future alternatives through semio-linguistic-affective resources (i.e. the Freirean *esperançar*). As such, language use is pivotal in grappling with otherwise debilitating conditions of vulnerability for it is through language and other semiotic resources that individuals are able to fathom alternatives that are not yet to situations they can stand no more. As Daniel Silva & Jerry Lee (2024) explain, language is not merely a means to express hope, but is in and of itself the grounds on which social actors forge acts of hope against the grain of a bleak present. However, the contributors to this special issue are not under the illusion

that the individuals they study see white doves flying overhead while facing strenuous conditions of violence, destitution, and inequality. Instead, it is precisely such conditions of deprivation that offer the means whereby they can be contested and reversed. Hope, thus, helps people tell their stories otherwise. To this end, the three analytical dimensions for a sociolinguistics of hope we outlined above (i.e. its action-orientedness, its non-linear temporality, and its emically reflexive character) interweave the studies gathered in this special issue.

In the opening article, Daniel N. Silva, Letizia Mariani, & Jerry Won Lee illustrate with vivid ethnographic detail how hope is collectively and rhetorically designed as a local practice through which individuals, rather than surrendering to despair and inaction, create strategies that reinvent and reframe an otherwise paralyzing event. To do so, they zoom in on an online class of Faveladoc, a grassroots documentary-making workshop for residents of Complexo do Alemão in Rio de Janeiro. While attending to their business of producing a documentary about the Complexo do Alemão's elders, the class was suddenly interrupted by the noise of gunfire. The authors attend to how the students and their teachers mobilized communicative strategies and reflexive semiotic models to make sense of the incident, assess the participants' security, and decide whether the meeting should continue. In their collaborative interactive work, the Faveladoc participants developed discursive and listening genres whereby they evaluated the severity of the shootout and assessed everyone's security. Central to this task was the need to locate the precise origin of the shootout—this was particularly important since one of the students was outdoors while attending the class on his phone. To do so, the students and their teachers collaboratively devised referential deictic strategies to determine how close the shootout was. Interspersed with these communicative and pragmatic tools was the metapragmatics of humour, which was used by the participants in ways that reframed the shootout not as an extraordinary event but as an everyday happening with which they were acquainted and against which they had already developed affective and embodied resources. Silva, Mariani, & Lee thus show how the shootout, instead of leading to paralysis or despair, reoriented the participants' generic resources, pragmatic strategies, and metapragmatic moves in ways that locally produced hope as a modality of action whereby they managed to forge collective modes of survival against the grain of daily violence. In such a way, a reality that can be no more (i.e. the crossfire in Rio's favelas) was percolated by a future that is not yet (i.e. the documentary about the Complexo do Alemão's elders) but is currently in the making.

Survival is, hence, an outcome of hope. Hope's action-orientedness and temporal nonlinearity are pivotal in its production. At this juncture, Paul Kroskrity's contribution to the special issue investigates the tenacity of Tewa speakers against various threats to their language, territory, and, indeed, their very existence. Amongst these threats are language shift to English, climate change, and the Covid-19 pandemic—all of which, to various extents, threaten the very subsistence of their language and Indigenous modes of life. More pointedly, Kroskrity scrutinises how traditional linguistic practices and language ideologies are

recontextualized in ways that aid Tewa speakers in reorienting knowledge about their language, ancestry, and territory and devise action towards language renewal and the survival of their ways of being and living. The author draws upon the premise that Tewa discursive and linguistic expressions of hope are more direct and agentive than their English counterparts. For instance, the Tewa verb -yeet'an while roughly translated as 'hope' (i.e. *Óyyó na-mu-mí-na'a-di deh-yeet'an,* 'I'm hoping for something good') also means 'aiming at/for'. The grammar and semantics of Tewa hope do not imply waiting (as is also implied in the Portuguese *esperar*), but, rather, entail an agentive, proactive instance towards an end (it is *esperançar* through and through). One of the ends Kroskrity investigates is the Tewa hope for Indigenous language revitalization through the collective production of a dictionary (in which the author actively participates) and the retraditionalization of a chaotic and rapidly changing world with a view to keeping their language and their very existence alive. Exploring hope's linguistic and cultural variability allows Kroskrity to argue that, for the Tewa, hope is not merely an affect, but constitutes a moral call for action whereby they embed narratives of a glorious past and a better future within a debilitating present.

The Tewa provide a conspicuous case in point of how hope undergirds the renarration and repurposing of hegemonic narratives (i.e. colonialism, capitalism, urbanisation, etc.). Hope, thus, encompasses narrative reversals and plot twists through which individuals may take hold of their own stories and tell them otherwise (in their own voices). This is the entry point for Branca Falabella Fabrício & Rodrigo Borba's analysis of small stories told by Brazilian mothers of Zika-stricken babies. In the early 2010s, Brazil was devastated by a Zika epidemic, which mostly affected the Black poor population living on the outskirts of the country. While the mainstream media portrayed these women as victims of an ineffective State and as dutiful mothers, alternative stories emerged in which they show themselves as highly agentive actors who refuse the bureaucratic and biomedical scripts handed down to them by the State and the mainstream media. Examining a corpus of media reports covering the health emergency and ethnographic interviews with members of the NGO *União das Mães de Anjo* (UMA, 'United Mothers of Angels'), Fabrício and Borba show how these mothers deal with the sanitary crisis through the in-situ management of its affective dimension. Bucking their portrayal as either passive victims or dutiful mothers, their stories are geared towards twisting painful scripts through a nuanced moral stance whereby they reimagine their kids' future (as well as theirs) in the present. Such an exercise of reimagination is achieved through what the authors call reverse stories and scalar reversals. The former capitalizes on how these women plot hope in the narratives they tell about their day-to-day lives with their sick kids. The polysemy of the word plot is relevant here. Plot refers both to the development of the story's theme (events, characters, place, time, actions, etc.) and to the ways this theme conspires (i.e. plots) against a jarring reality. The latter (i.e. scalar reversals) has to do with the repurposing and recalibration of State bureaucracies and their language in ways that render

them intelligible to other mothers of Zika and help facilitate the circulation of their rights and communicative strategies they may use to pursue them. While these mothers deal with the real possibility of an unhappy ending, they muster the strength to press on against scripts that curtail their agency. Their narrative acts of hope, however, reverse this plot and open up present-future possibilities of a society better equipped to deal with their kids' embodied differences.

Hope against the grain of a bleak prognosis serves as a glue that joins these women together in a political struggle towards a better future for themselves and their children. One could even argue that hope is the warp and weft of politics (broadly defined as relations, assumptions, and conflicts pertaining to power). In this special issue, this stance is ethnographically demonstrated by Chaim Noy's examination of short political speeches delivered by Mr. Saleh Diab, a Palestinian resident of and activist in the Sheik Jarrah neighbourhood in East Jerusalem. Since the Israeli occupation, East Jerusalem Palestinian populations have been isolated from the rest of the Occupied Territories. Since 2009, weekly demonstrations in the Sheik Jarrah neighbourhood have been protesting against the ever more violent and accelerated removal of Palestinian residents from East Jerusalem. Running for over ten years now, these weekly demonstrations gather local and foreign activists against the manhandling of the Palestinian population by the Israeli state. In this context, Mr. Saleh delivers daily speeches to a small audience in which he forecasts the end of the Israeli occupation and other corrupt regimes. These short speeches, which mix Hebrew, Arabic, and English, are Noy's focus. From a pragmatic and narrative approach, the author zeroes in on future-facing utterances that index links between actions performed here-and-now with their future narrative ramifications. For Noy, such utterances prefigure (or precontextualise) a future that is yet-to-become from/within a narrative present that can be no more. As a reorientation of knowledge and action, hope emerges from these short speeches not as an a priori category but as constitutive of Mr. Saleh's narrative action, which recalibrates the Israeli colonizers as liars and the Palestinians as the righteous ones to whom the future (and the territory) pertain(s). At this junction, Mr. Saleh's speeches navigate unhinged temporalities in the context of the long-standing Palestinian tragedy. The speeches are situated within the collective and conflictual narration of the not-yet, on the one hand, and the duration that stretches since that which has-already-come or transpired (the 1948 Nakba and the 1967 Naksa), on the other hand. This is a challenging narratival abyss to inhabit, an uneasy location from which to attain voice and project hope unto an attainable future. Hope, in this context, may be seen as an affordance to create in the present something that would last into a future that is perhaps still unfathomable but can be glimpsed from Mr. Saleh's precontextualisation work.

Closing the special issue, Ana Deumert offers an important counterpoint to the idea of hope as an affect and practical reason oriented towards the not-yet. She critiques the use of hope in the political sphere, especially the strong tendency of normative frameworks to encourage hope as a desirable political affect. Anger, in

contrast, tends to be discouraged, particularly when voiced by minorities (see, in this sense, Milani 2021). In Brazil, for example, historian Pamella Passos (2023) warns that *raiva* 'anger' is often a political accusation used against Black women in a white-and-male-oriented public space. Beyond Brazil, Deumert points out that 'being "too angry" or "sounding angry" is a charge that is frequently levelled against minoritized groups, and their anger is dismissed'. Like Kroskrity, Deumert disagrees with Lear's (2006) rendition of the kind of radical hope that would have oriented the Crow survival through colonial devastation. Yet she puns on Lear's (2006) engagement with a 'philosophical anthropology' to name her analytic exercise as a 'philosophical sociolinguistics'. Deumert thus advances a dialectics of anger and hope. Instead of thinking of the dialectics between these two affects as a linear Hegelian succession of thesis-antithesis-synthesis, she invests in the 'cracks that disrupt such linearity'. This nonlinear vision allows for a significant critical thrust. For example, while recognizing that the sociolinguistic expression of affects is enregistered—that is, affects historically become legible in communicative practices that semiotically crystallize and project certain images of person, space, and social time—Deumert also pinpoints blind spots in the scholarly activity of defining certain register (and speech act) formations. She goes on to say that '[o]ne such blindspot is a focus on seeking to provide accounts of how things happen (i.e. how registers emerge and how speech acts work), creating—through scholarly publications—a social reality that might appear more ordered and structured than it actually is'. In this special issue, Deumert's critique of a politics of visibility that overlooks such blind spots is in line with her recent rebuke of the (naïve) metaphysics of empirical data (Deumert 2022)—that is, the idea that the regime of visibility we create by selecting sociolinguistic elements offers conclusive data about a given reality. This regime of visibility, which 'risks reif[ying…] what we take [it] to refer to', is often erected at the expense of aspects that we render invisible. In this special issue and in her sociolinguistics of the spectre, Deumert aims to give visibility, nuance, and vigour to nonlinear dimensions of experience such as the poetics and sensibility of sound and music. By scrutinising contexts where 'experience outstrips language' (Stuhr 2023:4), the affective dialectics of hope and anger outlined by Deumert finds an important ground in the musical experience of Abbey Lincoln and Max Roach—a sensory dimension that 'transcend[s] the symbolic order in which denotational language is located'.

Circling back to the epigraphs that open this introduction, the articles gathered in this special issue illustrate the fact that hope is indeed an existential need—as Freire (2017) highlights, the struggle needed to improve human existence cannot be thought of apart from hope and dream. Such a view is, however, taken with a grain of salt by all authors. While they view hope as necessary, the authors seriously consider the material constraints their research participants tackle in their daily dealings with circumstances that can be no more. Language, of course, plays an important role in this regard. More than a means by which we can express hope (I hope…), language is the very ground on which individuals collectively devise

a future that is yet to become and embed it in the here-and-now of jarring realities. But as Freire (2017:2) himself noted, hope is not enough, 'alone, it does not win'. As an affective dimension of agency (and one of the springboards for action), hope is a muscle that connects us, but anger is the blood running through our veins.

N O T E

[1]Although it is believed the neologism *esperançar* was coined by Paulo Freire, we found no instance of the word in his published work. However, the transformation of a noun (*esperança*) into a verb (*esperançar*) reflects Freire's view of hope as an action rather than an essence.

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