



**BOOK REVIEW: Language, Migration and Social Inequalities. A Critical Sociolinguistic Perspective on Institutions and Work, Edited by Alexandre Duchêne, Melissa Moyer and Celia Roberts**

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## REVIEWS

A. Duchêne, M. Moyer and C. Roberts (eds): LANGUAGE, MIGRATION AND SOCIAL INEQUALITIES: A CRITICAL SOCIOLINGUISTIC PERSPECTIVE ON INSTITUTIONS AND WORK. Multilingual Matters, 2013.

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*Language, Migration and Social Inequalities: A Critical Sociolinguistic Perspective on Institutions and Work* is a collection of articles that brings together ethnographic research from around the world to explore language as a distinctive resource in the regimentation of migrants in a neoliberal political economy. The book deepens our understanding of linguistic inequality and its (re)production in different institutional and workplace contexts. In contrast with other studies, which typically focus on the educational sector, this timely publication foregrounds research in workplaces. It re-examines 'migration' as a social process of mobility, proposing a wider and more global political and socio-economic understanding of the concept.

The 10 contributions are grouped within three main themes: *Sites of Control*, *Sites of Selection*, and *Sites of Resistance*. The editors introduce these themes in the opening chapter, *Recasting Institutions and Work in Multilingual and Transnational Spaces*, which provides the theoretical and methodological framework for the critical sociolinguistic perspective of the book. It draws on Gumperz's and Hymes' pioneering work on language and social injustice, Bourdieu's forms of capital, and well-established studies on linguistic ideology (Silverstein 1979; Kroskrity 2000) and discourse analysis (Fairclough 1992; Wodak 1996).

The first thematic section, *Sites of Control*, contains two articles. Eva Codó's *Trade Unions and NGOs under Neoliberalism: Between Regimenting Migrants and Subverting the State* uses ethnographic data from Catalonia to analyse how NGOs and trade unions shape and control migrants' personal and labour trajectories. In her comprehensive analysis of migrants' daily communication with institutions, Codó observes three dimensions of regulating them: bureaucratic, moral, and linguistic. She shows a number of interesting and contradictory practices; for example, although NGOs and trade unions strive to benefit immigrants by providing information about legal loopholes that the state would not normally supply, they also have a subsidiary role in relation to the state.

Kori Allan's *Skilling the Self: The Communicability of Immigrants as Flexible Labour* investigates English language classes offered to professional migrants in Canada. With reference to Briggs' *communicability* (2005), Allan explains how ideologies of language and communication produce 'good' citizen-workers' subjectivities. Her study provides convincing evidence of how policy makers conflate lack of language skills with lack of appropriate cultural and behavioural attributes. Thus, she turns our attention to the 'dangerous

terrain of governmental intervention and behavioural adjustment' of migrants (p. 73).

The second section, *Sites of Selection*, features four articles. *The Gatekeeping of Babel: Job Interviews and the Linguistic Penalty*, by Celia Roberts, analyses ethnographic data from interviews for low-paid jobs in Great Britain. Roberts demonstrates how institutions make use in selection interviews of knowledge which they take for granted but which penalizes candidates born abroad. One of Roberts' major findings is that language is used as a catch-all term to exclude migrants because they are unable to produce bureaucratically processible talk and a social performance that aligns them with the gatekeepers.

Piller and Takashi's *Language Work Aboard the Low-cost Airline* is a compelling story about the still 'glamorous' discourse of working as a flight attendant. To our dismay, the authors describe how English proficiency becomes a code for 'race', and reveal how Japanese flight attendants suffer daily exclusions because of their English.

Rojo's *(De)capitalizing Students Through Linguistic Practices. A Comparative Analysis of New Educational Programmes in a Global Era* compares two educational programmes for descendants of non-Spanish immigrants and concludes that depriving students of home languages as learning tools has 'a decapitalizing effect' (p. 136) on their identities. Rojo indicates that monolingual learning practices reinforce a social stratification in which migrants' children retain a subordinate social status.

Vally Lytra's *From Kebapci to Professional: The Commodification of Language and Social Mobility in Turkish Complementary Schools in the UK* is an illuminating study about the added value of standard Turkish created by the members of the Turkish speaking élites in the UK. In her thorough examination of the Turkish and Kurdish diaspora in the UK, she effectively demonstrates how Turkish-Cypriot and Kurdish descendants suffer exclusion and an under-valuation of their existing linguistic resources.

The third thematic section, *Sites of Resistance*, consists of four articles. Werner Holly and Ulrika Hanna Meinhof's '*Integration hatten wir letztes Jahr*'. *Official discourses of Integration and Their Uptake by Migrants in Germany* draws on data from a provincial town in Germany, where, according to the authors, foreigners are more visible, and thus subject to isolation and prejudice. Holly and Meinhof introduce the term *discursive resistance* (p. 172) to explain how individuals use language to reassert their own agency whenever 'othering' occurs.

In *Language as a Resource: Migrant Agency, Positioning and Resistance in a Health Care Clinic*, Melissa Moyer explores the health care sector in Barcelona and focuses on the migrant patients' agency, positioning, and modes of resistance. Her study reveals how patients' linguistic resources shape the structure of the interactional order (Goffman 1981); she concludes that a shared language provides patients with more agency, reducing discordant relationships, and having a therapeutic effect (p. 211).

Vigouroux's *Informal Economy and Language Practice in the Context of Migrations* discusses the relationship between language practice and labour in South Africa in order to explore what competences and forms of social as well as cultural capital are relevant in an informal economy. Through a remarkably extensive ethnography, Vigouroux argues that the relation between the migrants' integration into the socio-economic structures of the host countries and their competence in the language of the dominant economies is highly complex. To sustain a living in an adverse socio-economic environment, the migrants need a variety of skills that differ considerably from skills required in a 'formal' Western economy.

The last article in Section 3, *Fighting Exclusion from the Margins: Locutorious as Sites of Social Agency and Resistance for Migrants* by Maria Sabaté i Dalmau, draws on network ethnography from Spain to support the claim that the Spanish state regulates migrants' access to communication technologies as a way of gatekeeping citizenship. Sabaté i Dalmau investigates the bottom-up empowerment of migrants at 'locutorious' – small local shops offering personal assistance with internet and cabin calls. These 'locutorious' allow migrants to survive transnationally by providing them with the vital 'technoliteracy capital' (p. 264) which the government denies them.

*Postscript* by Mike Baynham deserves the reader's attention, as it points back to the introduction discussing the developments in sociolinguistics in a neo-liberal political and socio-economic context. Baynham emphasizes the fact that nowadays both linguistics and sociolinguistics draw frequently on politics, economy, and macro-sociology, thus creating impact on both scholarly work and society in general. By focusing on globalization and neoliberalism as broader societal and economic processes, Baynham claims that sociolinguistic research has experienced a shift 'towards an understanding of the co-productive and constitutive relationship of language and the social' (p. 276). He praises the collection for its novel approach to critical analysis, in that it illustrates how the large-scale social can be brought into the interactional, rather than the other way round as in the more usual approaches.

Most significantly, *Language, Migration and Social Inequalities: A Critical Sociolinguistic Perspective on Institutions and Work* provides time and space to practices of resistance (Section 3). Although much has been written about control, selection and gatekeeping through language, the central connection between cultural capital, agency and resistance has so far not been explicitly conceptualized, so it is worth emphasizing that the contributors examine the interrelationship between these three phenomena. Moreover, the well-framed contexts and the extensive ethnography on which each study draws, shed light on the complex structures that shape migrant experiences with language. It is therefore surprising that ethnography as a theory and a method is barely mentioned in the book. The reader might also wonder why four out of 10 articles present cases from Spain and why other geographic areas (e.g. Scandinavia, where a series of similar studies have been conducted) are not included. To highlight such omissions, however, is to nitpick, because the book

is an engaging, intriguing, and important contribution to a new perspective on (macro) sociolinguistics. The impressive variety of subjects and contexts offers a remarkably coherent argument. Each of the 10 articles reinforces the fundamental idea of the whole book: however much multilingualism is valued in contemporary capitalism (at least on the surface), in practice knowing a language is not necessarily an added value. Zygmunt Bauman's famous juxtaposition of the free, powerful tourist, with the 'right' social, economic, and cultural capital, and the restricted, powerless vagabond with the 'wrong' kind of capital (Bauman 1996), seems more relevant than ever.

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R. H. Jones: HEALTH AND RISK COMMUNICATION: AN APPLIED LINGUISTIC PERSPECTIVE. Routledge, 2013.

Risk is an important issue in contemporary society that has been differently conceptualized in various disciplines, including mathematics, natural sciences, psychology, economics, sociology, cultural studies, philosophy, health, and linguistics (Pawelczyk 2011; Roeser *et al.* 2012). To extend this scholarship, as explained on the cover of the book under review, it is from the perspective of applied linguistics that Rodney Jones aims to 'provide a critical and comprehensive overview of the core issues surrounding health and risk communication'. This volume is in part a contribution to care communication, which aims to inform and encourage groups to work jointly to reach an informed decision on risk management or mitigation (McMakin and Lundgren 2013).