

Book Review

Dick Smakman and Patrick Heinrich, editors. *Globalising sociolinguistics: challenging and expanding theory.* London & New York: Routledge, 2015.

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Dick Smakman and Patrick Heinrich's volume aims to challenge dominant theories in sociolinguistics and to address concerns raised by researchers about the incompatibility of Western theories with non-Western linguistic contexts (p. xvi). Taking this incompatibility as a starting point, contributing authors were asked to focus on "one or more well-known theories or models that ill fit in the culture they are studying" (p. xvi).

The book is divided into 19 chapters, including two introductory chapters, and four parts consisting of four to five chapters each. Part I (Chapters 3–6) is entitled "Developing countries"; Part II (Chapters 7–10) focuses on "Less developed countries" while Part III (Chapters 11–14) is concerned with "Developed countries"; Part IV (Chapters 15–19) is entitled "Unstable multilingual countries". Twenty seven authors from across the globe have contributed to this volume and comment on "the issue of theoretical mismatches" (p. xvi).

Two introductory chapters open the volume. Chapter 1 "Things change, all things change" is authored by Miriam Meyerhoff and James N. Stanford, and focuses on the emerging "shift in the practice of sociolinguistics" (p. 1). According to the authors, globalizing sociolinguistics requires abandoning "the WEIRD subjects that dominate social science research" (p. 3). The WEIRD concept, taken from Heinrich et al. (2010), stands for Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich and Democratic, and has had "a disproportionately strong influence on sociolinguistics" (p. 3). Meyerhoff and Stanford identify five themes that are central to the issues raised in this book: multilingual reality; standards, norms and local vernaculars; "native speakers" and inclusion/exclusion; the waves of sociolinguistics; and cross-cultural collaboration (p. 3). The authors suggest that when addressing these issues scholars should build on "knowledge from prior theories" and complement those ideas with the "new perspectives gained from a global approach" (p. 13). Such an approach challenges researchers "conceptually and methodology" but is rewarding when building "a truly globalised sociolinguistics" (p. 13).

The second introductory chapter “The westernising mechanisms in sociolinguistics” is authored by Dick Smakman, one of the editors, and introduces the reader to the bias towards Western theory-making in sociolinguistics (p. 17). Smakman provides a first discussion of the terms “West” and “non-West” (p. 18) according to which the “West” is associated with Europe and countries that, as a result of colonialism, have a large European-descent population, e. g. the United States (Thompson and Hickey 2005). The “non-West” refers to countries that do not fall in this category. Smakman aims to challenge this dichotomy by positing that the high degree of “variation within the West and the non-West” makes “any tenable opposition between these two” inapplicable (p. 17). His analysis of influential introductory books and journals illustrates that, despite wide access to such resources and a breadth of languages and regions covered, there is an “over-representation of researchers from the West” (p. 31) contributing to these resources. To counter this over-representation, Smakman suggests stronger collaboration between developed and developing countries to globalize authorship, the establishment of free-access journals, and greater emphasis on general theory. These adjustments would allow scholars “to combine findings from different areas into a common theory” (p. 33).

Part I focuses on African and Southeast Asian countries, which are similar in that they all have a colonial past and are characterized by complex (socio-) linguistic settings. Knowledge of indigenous traditions of sociolinguistic research is scarce and has resulted in local approaches being ignored or in “uncritically reproduced ideologically loaded research findings” (p. 37). In Chapter 3 “Ala! Kumbé? ‘Oh my! Is it so?’: multilingualism controversies in East Africa”, Sandra Nekese Barasa investigates the discrepancy between language policy and practice, and the applicability of notions like “standard language” and “code-switching” to the linguistic context in East Africa. The theoretical framework of “ethnolinguistic vitality” by Giles et al. (1977) is the starting point for this analysis. For this framework to be applicable to the East African context, factors like language contact and societal practice need to be included as these go beyond language status, demographics, and institutional support (p. 42). Barasa shows how languages that enjoy strong institutional support can score low in popularity because East African governments lack appropriate measures for implementation (p. 43). Furthermore, the author challenges traditional definitions of a standard language (e.g., Finegan 2007) “as a language variety used by a group of people as a lingua franca in their public discourse” (p. 46). In East Africa, the “high linguistic diversity and impressive multilingual repertoires” defy a simple identification of a “so-called standard language” (p. 46) and code-switching is often used to fulfill the function of a standard language. To account for this situation, Barasa proposes the adoption

of Lafon and Webb's (2007) definition of a standard language which states that a standard language is "accepted by the community for use in high-function formal contexts [...]; taught in school [...] known to literate people; [and has] a strong link with written language" (p. 48). This definition, while not fully including a code-switched variety, is deemed more appropriate in the multilingual settings found in East Africa.

Chapter 4 by Jemima Asabea Anderson and Gladys Nyarko Ansah is entitled "A sociolinguistic mosaic of West Africa: challenges and prospects" and discusses multilingualism, language shift, code-switching, pidgins and creoles, New Englishes and politeness. By quoting a variety of case studies, the authors show how the sociolinguistic settings in West Africa are characterized by an interplay of local languages and former colonial languages (French or English), as well as by intricate relationships between local languages (p. 58). Anderson and Ansah demonstrate that Western theories fail to capture the complexity of these local contexts. This is further exemplified with regard to politeness, where acts that are deemed face threatening in the West are not perceived as such by African communities. The authors thus call for an expansion of theories to "adequately account for sociolinguistic phenomena in linguistically highly diversified communities" (p. 62).

The fifth chapter – "Southeastern Asia: diglossia and politeness in a multilingual context" – provides a critical assessment of Brown and Levinson's politeness theory (1987), Hudson's (2002) approach to diglossia, and Steffensen and Fill's (2014) concept of "symbolic ecology". Van Engelenhoven and Naerssen argue that Western concepts of politeness disregard the implicit nature of utterances in Southeast Asian contexts (p. 69), as these are motivated by values of "indirectness, humility, accommodation and politeness", and considerations to "preserve social harmony" (p. 69). High multilingualism in Southeast Asian countries further complicates the application of Brown and Levinson's theory as it fosters the emergence of particular diglossic settings where a classification into "high variant" and "low variant", as described by Hudson (2002), is not straightforward. The situation in Timor-Leste and the Philippines illustrates how languages without a written tradition – Tetum and Tagalog, respectively – have been chosen as H variant since they function as "neutral" languages that do not belong to a specific (ethnic) group (p. 75). Finally, in diglossic settings, the H variant may usurp traditional L domains and thus endanger local languages. This kind of language ecology defined as a "symbolic ecology" by Steffensen and Fill (2014), leads to a novel coping strategy, "language concealment" (p. 73), whereby speakers of minority languages decide to hide their language and only use the majority language in the community (p. 73). This strategy serves as "an attempt of [sic] cultural

knowledge conservation” and as a means to protect a language from detrimental outside influences.

The final chapter of Part I, authored by Rajend Mesthrie, is entitled “Towards a distributed sociolinguistics of postcolonial multilingual societies: the case of Southern Africa”. In his paper Mesthrie addresses four areas which conflict with dominant theories. These pertain to (1) standardization, (2) dominant languages, (3) sociolinguistic variation, and (4) multilingual norms and code-switching (p. 81). Drawing on Trudgill’s (1986) model of social and dialect variation, and Labov’s (1972) hierarchical model of structured heterogeneity, Mesthrie illustrates how, in the South African context, prestige varieties are associated with urbanization and are considered non-standard (p. 83). He further discusses how a degree of “social (and ideological) differentiation” (p. 87) is brought about when English loanwords are treated “in the phonology of the indigenous language” rather than in the phonology of the “colonial language” (p. 87). According to Mesthrie, different strands of power orient towards different varieties of English, responding to either inner circle varieties, or, as in the case of a more Africanist strand, drawing on “multilingualism that includes a noticeably African variety of English” (p. 85). Finally, Myers-Scotton’s (1992, 1993) work on motivations for code-switching is applied to the South African context, and Mesthrie finds that in situations where an African language and a prestige language are involved “the solidarity code always preceded the H [...] code” (p. 88). Myers-Scotton’s rights and obligations model thus “determined the degree of switching” (p. 88) but cannot account for instances where speakers were reluctant to switch (p. 88). Mesthrie concludes by pointing to the distribution of “aspects of power, prestige and solidity [...] across speakers’ repertoires” (p. 89) and to the importance of a careful consideration of “domains of use, needs and intentions of speakers, their degrees of ‘involvement’ (versus alienation) in the society, and the prevailing rights and obligations associated with languages or combinations of languages” (p. 89).

Part II of this volume is concerned with less developed regions, countries which, in the words of the editors, “are sociolinguistically highly transitional” (p. 93). It opens with Daming Xu’s chapter on “Speech community and linguistic urbanization: sociolinguistic theories developed in China”. He introduces two Chinese-based theories that seek to integrate Labov’s (1966) model on sociolinguistic stratification and Gumperz’s (1982, 2003) model on sociolinguistic interaction into one theoretical framework (p. 95). Furthermore, Xu believes that the two theories add a slightly different approach to issues of indexicality (Eckert 2008). Chinese sociolinguists have proposed the Theory of Speech Community (TSC) and the Theory of Linguistic Urbanization (TLU) to explain the emerging linguistic settings (p. 96) resulting from rapid industrialization and

urbanization, and the introduction of a market economy. TSC takes the concept of the speech community as its starting point. Xu claims that a language is always connected to a specific speech community (p. 97) and that tracing the evolution of a speech community can “explain why the society is the way it is due to its linguistic conditions” (p. 101). Processes of urbanization along with changes in linguistic realities are the focus of TLU, which aims to explain how speech communities are not homogeneous, but structured in an “ordered heterogeneity” (Weinreich et al. 1968) and how different linguistic codes vary in degree of use (p. 102). In combination, TSC and TLU shed light on how “changes in language are artefacts of adaptations of speech community to changes in society”. Xu concludes that the “structure and structuring of the speech community” constitute its range of indexicality, which is reflected in and affected by the formation of the community and linguistic urbanization (p. 104).

In Chapter 8 – “Language variation and change: the Indian experience” – Shobha Satyanath addresses issues of “style shift” and “linguistic choice” in India. Drawing on models of style shift (Labov 1966, 1972, 2001) and audience design (Bell 1984, 2001) Satyanath shows how speakers shift between oral and written codes and that “no strong social meanings [are] attached to variants in terms of standard and vernacular” (p. 116). In addition, the observed “lack of style shift” is related to the “non-vertical nature” (p. 118) that seems present among different social groups. Where variability exists in clan-based societies, it needs “to be understood as an outcome of clan and exogamy” (p. 119). Overall, the various case studies suggest that western-based theories of style shift and audience design have “little evidential basis in the Indian context” (p. 118).

Chapter 9 “Gender in a North African setting: a sociolinguistic overview” is by Reem Bassiouney, and tackles issues of gender and linguistic variation. According to mainstream sociolinguistic theories, lower-middle-class women use prestigious standard forms more frequently to compensate for their lower social position (p. 125). In North Africa, urbanization has led to “a distinction between prestige and standard dialect” (p. 125), and when women have a choice between a rural, urban, or standard variety, they adopt the prestigious urban variety to affirm their identity (p. 129). Bassiouney also investigates the relation between gender and politeness, and between politeness, status and power (p. 128). In certain contexts (e. g. bargaining exchanges) where men use positive politeness to establish solidarity, women are less polite and assert “their status by appealing to their social rank” (p. 128). This manifestation of power relations and politeness also points to an intimate connection between “politeness as communicative resource” and independent variables like ethnicity or social class (p. 128). A careful analysis of the connection between social variables and linguistic variation thus includes the consideration of “ideological and

political components of codes” as these reflect “undergoing socio-political changes” in North Africa (p. 133).

Hubert Devonish concludes Part 2 with his chapter on “The creole-speaking Caribbean: the architecture of language variation”. This chapter constitutes a critical discussion of the concepts of diglossia (Ferguson 1964 [1959]; Hudson 2002) and the dialect continuum (Reinecke 1969 [1935]). By applying these concepts to sociolinguistic settings in Haiti and Jamaica, Devonish shows how diglossia and the dialect continuum coexist and overlap. Linguistic variants signaling English or the creole language (p. 146), respectively, interact and produce “clauses with mixed features” (p. 148). Despite this interaction, clauses can be identified as belonging to either English or the creole variety (p. 148). To reconcile the two concepts Devonish proposes a “linguistic bridge” (p. 147) which requires “two ends that are apart, the H and the L, as highlighted by diglossia” and “structured, intermediate elements along a continuum” which connect the two extremes (148).

Developed countries like Japan or Spain, are the focus of Part III and relevant research areas include the role of “former colonial lingua francas” (p. 151), and ideologies pertaining to links between language, identity, territory, and politics (p. 151). In “Class in the social labyrinth of South America”, Elisa Battisti and João Ignacio Pires Lucas describe how social class can be slippery to define in non-Western countries. Establishing a social hierarchy that is supported by Labovian sociolinguistics (Labov 2001) proves difficult, and South American researchers of social class compose “socioeconomic indexes based on the characteristics of the speech community” under investigation (p. 157) to confront this issue. The case studies in this chapter demonstrate how variation is influenced by factors such as urban orientation (p. 158) or identification with local neighborhoods (p. 159). Despite the complexities in defining social class, Battisti and Lucas still deem the concept valuable, and argue that revealing results can be obtained through its application (p. 161).

Marc L. Greenberg’s chapter on “The Slavic area: trajectories, borders, centers and peripheries in the second world” sheds light on sociolinguistic developments in post-Soviet and ex-Yugoslavian spaces. In the post-Soviet context, the author investigates how the changing status of the ex-colonial language Russian from dominant to dominated can be traced back to shifts in power and to language policies implemented during the imperial era (p. 168). With regard to ex-Yugoslavian countries, Greenberg analyses the Yugoslav project which aimed to establish a compromise language – based on two standard vernaculars – for all South Slavic speakers, yet led to standardized forms of Croatian and Serbian (pp. 170–171). The author examines both cases by taking a *longue durée* (Blommaert 1999) perspective which allows for a diachronic investigation of the

interplay between politics, religion, ideology, and language (p. 174). He concludes that in both cases “sociolinguistic systems come into play both as a reflection of group formation and as motivating factors for them” (p. 174).

Ideologies about language, gender and politeness are the foci of “The study of politeness and women’s language in Japan” by Patrick Heinrich. Indigenous approaches to sociolinguistics dominate linguistic research in Japan, yet often employ methodologies designed in the West (p. 189). Heinrich uses studies on women’s language and politeness to illustrate how the local ideology “of a classless, monolingual and homogeneous Japanese society” (p. 180) is intimately linked with the creation of gendered language codes during processes of modernization, and to caution researchers against the application of politeness theory (Brown and Levinson 1987) to a collectivist society like Japan. Heinrich identifies four patterns that are relevant to sociolinguistic studies in Japan: (1) while Japanese scholars adopt Western methodology and theory, epistemology is based on local frameworks and indigenous traditions; (2) Western sociolinguistics helps reinforce the dominant language ideology about Japanese society; (3) local ideology is not challenged by sociolinguistics, but by neighbouring fields such as sociology or legal studies; (4) non-Japanese scholars of women’s language and politeness often do not have access to Japanese-language resources that challenge the dominant ideology; such ideologies are thus unconsciously reproduced (p. 189). Heinrich concludes that the current approach to sociolinguistic studies in Japan “does not only stagnate the development of theories” but serves to further “exotifications of Japanese and downplays heterogeneity in Japanese society” (p. 190).

Chapter 14 – “Positive politeness in the European Mediterranean: sociolinguistic notions” – concludes Part 3. Irene Cenni outlines some problematic concepts of Brown and Levinson’s (1978, 1987) politeness theory and challenges the notion of “universal” as regards concepts such as face and face-threatening acts (p. 196). Investigating politeness in Spain, Italy, and Greece, the author finds a preference for positive politeness in all contexts which is not necessarily motivated by a want to mitigate face-threatening acts (p. 198). Rather, interruptions or speech overlaps are perceived as creating closeness and collaboration (p. 198). Cenni cautions the reader not to neglect specific socio-cultural settings and calls for a more detailed investigation of politeness in the Mediterranean.

The final part of this volume is concerned with “Multilingual and/or diglossic communities” (p. 207) in which an indigenous language suffers from pressure of a prestige language and is threatened by language shift. In the Nvikh community investigated in Chapter 15 – “Nvikh writing practices: literacy and vitality in an endangered language” – literacy is a key factor in maintaining the language’s vitality. Hidetoshi Shiraishi and Bert Botma’s chapter sheds light on

the role of literacy for a language that faces declining numbers of speakers and a shift to Russian. Shiraishi and Botma reveal that, while vernacular publications can still be produced in a “severely endangered language”, literacy cannot be interpreted as a “reliable indicator of language vitality” (p. 218). To successfully increase literacy to promote language revitalization in the Nvikh community, a bottom-up approach encouraging community involvement is needed (p. 218).

Chapter 16 entitled “The Jamaican language situations: a process not a type” is also concerned with the concept of diglossia described by Hudson (2002). Furthermore, the authors draw on the (post-)creole continuum (Reinecke 1969 [1935]; DeCamp 1971) to describe the coexistence of Jamaican Creole (JC) and Standard Jamaican English (SJE). Political developments in the 1960s strengthened the role of JC and, according to Huber Devonish and Kadian Walters, firmly established the language as a “symbol of national identity” (p. 231). Following this recognition of JC, a diglossic setting emerged with English predominantly being used in formal and official settings, and JC in private and informal domains (p. 230). Despite this dichotomy, the authors argue that the two languages are tightly intertwined and used across all social scales (p. 228), and that the pride in JC paves the way for the local vernacular to be accepted as a co-official variety (p. 231).

Theresa Arvegaq John is the author of Chapter 17 “Nutemllaq Yugtun in Alaska: our very own way of speaking Yugtun in Alaska”. John illustrates how Yugtun – a specific way of speaking a Yup’ik language – is successfully maintained in the community, as “strong community leadership, geographic isolation and a strong parental pedagogy” foster its transmission across generations (p. 235). Contrary to Western definitions of a “speaker” (McArthur 1992; Saville-Troike 2007), which focus on the age of language acquisition, in Yup’ik a “speaker” is defined as “a person who has the ability to carry a conversation with an elder” (p. 236). Collaboration between generations thus emerges as a key aspect in processes of language revitalization (p. 237). This teaching of the heritage language is often in conflict with ideologies of English educational institutions, an issue that the community aims to overcome by “bridging Yugtun and Western knowledge systems” (p. 240). In conclusion, the author states that the teaching of cultural traditions is of paramount importance to the survival of the Yugtun language and that authentic descriptions of such practices will “help advance theories on the intricate connection between language and culture” (p. 240).

In Chapter 18, Ante Aikio, Laura Arola and Niina Kunnas discuss sociolinguistic “Variation in North Saami”. The North Saami community is divided between Norway, Sweden, and Finland and is undergoing language shift (p. 243). The geographical dispersion of the community leads to a

“sociolinguistically unusual context” in which “different parts of the speech community are strongly influenced by three different majority languages” (p. 244). In these contexts, the dialectal configuration of North Saami is affected by speakers’ bilingualism and multilingualism (p. 246), and strong contact situations have “resulted in a two-dimensional pattern of dialect variation” (p. 252). This pattern allows for the classification of modern dialects and idiolects of North Saami “on the basis of [...] traditional regional features and the type of majority-language induced contact influence” (p. 252). According to the authors, these changes differ significantly from those observed in mainstream theories (e. g. dialect leveling or situational variation), and can thus serve to challenge “Eurocentric” viewpoints of dominant theories (p. 253).

The concluding chapter of this volume “Gaelic Scotland and Ireland: issues of class and diglossia in an evolving social landscape” is by Cassie Smith-Christmas and Tadh Ó hlfernáin. In Ireland and Scotland, speakers of Gaelic are bilingual and communicative competence in Gaelic varies considerably (p. 257). The authors describe the Gaelic communities as “more or less socially homogeneous” and illustrate that the construct of “social class” (Labov 1966) “lacks importance when discussing variation *within* Gaelic language use” (p. 250, emphasis in original). With regard to diglossia (Ferguson 1964 [1959]; Fishman 1967), the authors show that, in Scotland, revitalization projects introduced Gaelic to domains that are usually associated with the H variety, e.g., parliament (p. 262). In Ireland, on the other hand, attempts to re-establish Gaelic in H domains have been relatively unsuccessful (p. 264). Smith-Christmas and Ó hlfernáin conclude that the concepts of class and in particular diglossia are not applicable to Gaelic communities, as definitions of H and L variants cannot readily be transferred to bilingual speech communities (p. 266).

The main strength of this book is the description of a wide range of regional settings that are often overlooked in mainstream sociolinguistics. I also liked the editors’ attempt at structuring global regions “according to [the] classification on the Human Development Index” (HDI) (p. xvii) as this shows the editors’ intention to prevent a categorization according to Western interpretations (p. xvii). As the HDI is calculated not only based on economic growth, but also includes health and education, the indices provide a somewhat more fine-grained assessment of development. This, I think, is echoed by the authors’ belief that social development is also a “key factor in shaping distinct types of society” and specific sociolinguistic situations (p. xvii). A second positive aspect is the focus on local theories and methodologies, which demonstrates how truly global sociolinguistics is while cautioning the reader against an uncritical adoption of mainstream theories.

Unfortunately, it seems that in many chapters, the authors fall back into old patterns as many adopt the traditional notions of “West” and “non-West” without

critically discussing what those terms refer to and why they should be challenged. Most chapters fall short in illustrating how the West ill fits the respective situation under investigation and a definition remains implied, at best. Additionally, while pointing out how “‘region’ lumps together very different polities, languages and types of communities” (p. xvii), the individual chapters show a strong focus on fixed regions and nation-state models. Another shortcoming for me was that only a few concepts – diglossia, code-switching, and politeness – are taken up and discussed. Paralleling the various regions included, I would have expected a wider range of theoretical concepts to be addressed. Moreover, many theories discussed in this volume have already been challenged and refined, which is why I found it striking that only the original models or theories were considered and that more recent insights were generally not included. Finally, individual chapters address up to seven theoretical problems, which, at times, results in a rather superficial discussion and in chapters varying considerably in quality. Considering that this book is intended for advanced students of sociolinguistics, a more systematic approach to the analysis of discrepancies between Western theories and non-Western concepts should have been adopted. One wonders if fewer, but longer, chapters would have allowed for a more in-depth discussion of the important issues covered throughout the book.

Despite these shortcomings, *Globalising sociolinguistics* offers a first attempt at a more inclusive globalized sociolinguistics by focusing on a variety of world regions and their place in theory making. While the overall set up of the book takes a more etic approach in categorizing the settings covered in this book, individual chapters call for the careful consideration of emic perspectives on sociolinguistic issues and highlight how local contexts influence the applicability of a theory. The book thus constitutes an important stepping-stone towards fostering the expansion, refinement, and challenge of mainstream theories.

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