


BOOK REVIEW

Language in Society (2024)
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CAROLYN MCKINNEY, PINKY MAKOE, & VIRGINIA ZAVALA (eds.), *The Routledge handbook of multilingualism* 2nd edn. Abingdon: Routledge, 2024. Pp. 528. Hb. £172.

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In this book review, the shoaling metaphor reveals the intricate and fluid nature of multilingualism, providing a robust framework to examine both the sociolinguistic strengths and limitations found within the *Routledge handbook of multilingualism*. Shoaling draws inspiration from the geological formations of shoals, which are shallow areas in the ocean requiring ships to adapt to their velocity and direction. Shoals disrupt conventional norms, prompting a reevaluation of current academic frameworks and perspectives. Tiffany Lethabo King (2019) posits the shoaling metaphor as a disruption in Western disciplinary formations, challenging and re-fashioning established narratives of time-space. King's interpretation underscores the transformative potential of these disruptions. Shoaling as a practice means bringing together unexpected assemblages, forcing us to rethink conventional logics (like the shoal that defies reliable mapping). By using this metaphor, I aim to challenge conventional academic boundaries and facilitate a radical study that reconsiders and redefines our understanding of multilingualism.

Part 1 of the book is titled 'Coloniality and multilingualism'. In their chapter, Sinfree Makoni & Alastair Pennycook argue for the decolonization of language ideologies and advocate for the recognition of diverse language ontologies and multilingualism(s) in the Global South. They argue that understanding multilingualism from this perspective requires overcoming monolingual assumptions and decolonizing colonized language ideologies and policies. In addition, they argue that forcing European languages as the medium of education in postcolonial countries reinforces power imbalances, and perpetuates hierarchy and marginalization. In a related chapter, Indika Liyanage & Suresh Canagarajah challenge the very notion of multilingualism by highlighting the translanguaging traditions of pre-colonial and post-colonial South Asia. They emphasize language as a social practice with an emergent, hybrid, and multimodal grammar, thereby countering the marginalization and repression caused by European colonial languages.

The shoaling metaphor, with its disruption of conventional paths and reevaluation of established frameworks, aligns with the call to decolonize language

ideologies. However, Part 1 critiques Western disciplinary formations regarding language ideologies and colonial legacies but falls short of fully embracing disruptive and radical potential, as it remains entrenched within Western frameworks. To embody the transformative potential of shoaling, one could incorporate non-Western epistemologies such as African ubuntu languaging and Indigenous storytelling traditions. These epistemologies serve as ‘course-changing’ shoals because they fundamentally challenge the hierarchical and linear narratives imposed by colonial languages. Ubuntu languaging, with its emphasis on community and relationality, refashions discourse by prioritizing collective meaning-making over individualistic interpretations. Indigenous storytelling traditions, with their rich oral histories and cyclical conceptions of time, disrupt the linear, progress-oriented perspectives of Western frameworks. These practices offer radical reconfigurations of multilingualism.

Part 2 is titled ‘Concepts and theories in multilingualism’. Catherine Kell & Gabrielle Budach posit that language should be understood as a material practice embedded in history, power structures, and physical presence, as opposed to traditional views of language as separate from the material world. By focusing on the materiality of language, Kell & Budach provide a new perspective on multilingualism by decentering the human and exploring the interplay between language, human agency, and the material world. In chapter 9, Stephen May argues that Indigenous language rights are crucial for the preservation of cultural identity and self-determination for Indigenous peoples, particularly in the context of historical colonization and ongoing challenges. Chapter 10 by Christopher Stroud covers the concept of linguistic citizenship (LC) as a transformative approach to language use and recognition in challenging colonial legacies and promoting inclusive language practices. LC emphasizes the importance of language in fostering community, agency, and recognition for marginalized voices, disrupting systems of inequity, and promoting diverse languages and voices to be acknowledged and supported. It seeks to reimagine language as a tool for empowerment, collective action, and building a more equitable and just society.

Indigenous language rights align with the imperative of preserving cultural identity and self-determination. However, applying the shoaling metaphor reveals gaps in analysis concerning broader structural issues. While language rights are crucial, they intersect with larger struggles for land rights, sovereignty, and economic justice. The metaphor prompts reflection on how language revitalization efforts can be integrated into broader movements for Indigenous rights and decolonization. For instance, Kell & Budach could extend their analysis by linking language materiality with ecological practices such as language from a water perspective. Through the shoaling metaphor, we could extend May’s argument of language revitalization by linking it to economic justice and sovereignty. Stroud’s concept of LC could integrate land rights and sovereignty to broaden the framework for Indigenous self-determination thus situating language and land rights within environmental justice.

Part 4 is titled 'Multilingualism in Social and Cultural Change'. In chapter 19, Luisa Martín Rojo argues that language, in the context of neoliberal governance and the new economy, has become essential for individuals to succeed in the job market. Language skills are viewed as assets that enhance competitiveness, leading to the commodification of language within post-industrial capitalism. In chapter 20, Ben Rampton, Daniel N. Silva, & Constadina Charalambous argue that (in)security, characterized by the use of fear and threats to govern populations outside the norms of liberal democracies, should be a central theme in sociolinguistic analysis. In addition, (in)securitization operates in various contexts, such as Rio de Janeiro and Cyprus, influencing language and governance practices. They emphasize the colonial roots of (in)securitization, its connection to necro-power, and its impact on language standardization. In chapter 21, Mary Jane Curry, Theresa Lillis, Adel Alsheri, Onesmo Mushi, & Xiatinghan Xu emphasize the importance and value of multilingualism in global academic research and communication practices. The chapter challenges the dominance of English as the global academic lingua franca and highlights the diverse linguistic landscapes present in academic knowledge production. In chapter 22, Quentin Williams posits that multilingual hip-hop culture plays a significant role in society by reflecting the dynamics of individual and societal multilingual practices. The chapter highlights the importance of representing marginalized voices through the mainstreaming of previously marginalized languages, particularly in the context of resistance and the need for hip-hop artists to represent their communities' speech practices in South Africa.

Part 5 is titled 'Multilingualism in Public Life'. In chapter 24, Kamilla Kraft & Mi-Cha Flubacher explore multilingualism in the workplace. They challenge traditional notions of work and language, emphasizing the interconnectedness of language work with economic structures and issues of exploitation. They also critique the idea of language learning as solely the responsibility of workers and call for a focus on workplace transformation processes. In chapter 26, Katrijn Maryns, Laura Smith-Khan, & Marie Jacobs argue that the management of multilingualism in asylum and migration procedures is crucial for ensuring effective communication and protecting the rights of asylum seekers. The authors highlight the challenges and implications of linguistic diversity in these contexts, emphasizing the importance of language choice, interpretation, and legal counsel in the asylum process. They argue that language selection impacts the credibility of asylum claims, identity construction, and access to legal assistance.

In chapter 27, Philipp Angermeyer argues that translation plays a crucial role in the social life of individuals in multilingual societies, yet it is frequently overlooked in research on multilingualism. The chapter surveys studies in various disciplines that explore translation in spoken and written contexts, highlighting its relevance in understanding power dynamics, social identity, and language change. The author emphasizes the need to examine who translates, what is translated, and how, as these factors shape interactions and relationships between languages and

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speakers. Felix Banda & Gabriel Simungala argue in chapter 28 that linguistic landscapes play a significant role in representing language diversity and power dynamics in public spaces.

The handbook involves recognizing the continuous and dynamic presence of diverse perspectives and voices, particularly those from the Global South. Just as the shoal disrupts the colonial-settler imagination, the inclusion of epistemologies from scholars worldwide challenges monoglossic conceptions of multilingualism. The shoaling metaphor is particularly relevant when considering the chapters by Makoni & Pennycook and Liyanage & Canagarajah on the theme of 'Coloniality and multilingualism'. Makoni & Pennycook's argument for the decolonization of language ideologies resonates with the concept of shoaling, as it emphasizes the need to shift from fixed to fluid language conceptions. This fluidity is akin to the ever-changing shape of a shoal, challenging Eurocentric perspectives and incorporating southern epistemologies. The shoaling metaphor unveils the multifaceted and dynamic nature of multilingualism, emphasizing the importance of recognizing diverse linguistic ontologies and challenging monolingual assumptions. Finally, including a chapter on multilingualism from a gender and sexuality perspective in the handbook would enrich its scope by acknowledging marginalized voices. Understanding how gender and sexuality intersect with language diversity can challenge normative conceptions of multilingualism.

REFERENCE

King, Tiffany Lethabo (2019). *The Black shoals: Offshore formations of Black and Native studies*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

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