

Negotiation of Identities in Multilingual Contexts

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This excellent volume addresses ways in which identities are negotiated in multilingual contexts, illuminating the relationship between language and identity in a variety of multilingual contexts. The twelve substantial chapters elaborate on the field of negotiation of identities in multilingual contexts by proposing a theoretical framework which distinguishes between non-negotiated, negotiated, and non-negotiable identities. The volume extends discussion of methodological approaches in the investigation of negotiation of identities in multilingual contexts, the wide scope of the various chapters representing a diversity of linguistic, geographical, cultural and political contexts where negotiation of identities occurs. The studies collected in the volume span multilingual situations in Africa, North America, Australia, Europe and Asia. The volume explicitly situates the construction and negotiation of identities in language practices in the context of relations of power.

The various chapters argue that linguistic interactions are always subject to societal power relations, which include gender, class, race, ethnicity, (dis)ability, age and sexuality. The volume makes a significant contribution to the development of theory in understanding identity negotiation and social justice in multilingual contexts. Pavlenko and Blackledge introduce the volume, locating the thirteen individual contributions in a coherent theoretical framework. The editors impressively develop the introduction thematically, providing a very informative account of the theoretical background, including a cogent exposition of the poststructuralist position and its links to multilingual identities. The

introduction emphasises the importance of considering multilingual identities in terms of their social, cultural and historical context, and in terms of power relations in society, and explores the relationship between language ideologies and the negotiation of identities in multilingual societies. Aneta Pavlenko's individual chapter traces the impact of changes in US language and immigration policies on ways in which incoming immigrants position themselves and view their own language learning and use. An illuminating and rigorous analysis of a corpus of 50 immigrant autobiographies published in the US between 1900 and 2000 demonstrates that autobiographies written in the last quarter of the 20th century often portray language as central to the process of assimilation. In contrast, autobiographies published between 1900 and 1975 discuss language learning only in passing if at all, depict it as an unproblematic process of acquisition of new knowledge, and do not discuss links between language and identity. Adrian Blackledge adopts critical discourse analysis to explore the discursive construction of national identity in multilingual Britain. A dominant ideology of monolingualism in multilingual societies raises questions of social justice, as such an ideology potentially constructs the nation-state as one which is monolingual, and which excludes and discriminates against those who are either unable or unwilling to fit the monoglot standard. Meredith Doran's excellent chapter examines a particular linguistic phenomenon in contemporary France called *Verlan*, or 'the language of the projects.' Associated primarily with multi-ethnic youth populations in low-income housing communities surrounding Paris – referred to collectively as *la cite* – this 'street talk' serves as an alternative to the standard language for youths who stand both literally and figuratively at the margins of mainstream Parisian society. In a fascinating contribution to the field, Melissa James and Bencie Woll explore some of the life experiences of a group of Black Deaf individuals and the influences affecting their identity development. This research explores in-depth the experiences of Black Deaf people living in England through 21 extended interviews. Jean Mills explores the link between the metaphor "mother tongue" and the reality of mothering for ten mothers and their

children in the UK who are bilingual and Muslim. Frances Giampapa examines how four Italian Canadian youth self-identify and position themselves with respect to what it means to be/become Italian Canadian in Toronto. An integral part of this discussion is to explore the discourses present within the Italian Canadian community with regard to who is defined as "Italian"/"Italian Canadian", who has access to resources and capital, and the way people shift identities in order to challenge or align with the social norms and dominant representations of Italianità. Celeste Kinginger investigates the construction, negotiation and reconstruction of identity in the foreign language learning experience of a young American woman from a working class background. "Alice" successfully overcomes significant personal, social and economic obstacles to her experience of foreign language education both in college and through study abroad in France. Benedicta Egbo's chapter draws on evidence from research among literate and non-literate rural women in Nigeria and Sub-Saharan Africa to show that literacy leads to individual empowerment. Ethnographic research provides a promising approach to this kind of inquiry. Suresh Canagarajah's chapter on multilingual writers and the struggle for voice brings out an important dimension of multilingual identities in innovative and intriguing ways, and examines the strategies employed by novice and multilingual writers in writing academic prose. Jenny Miller cogently provides an in-depth discussion of language ideologies and identities in an Australian ESL setting. The chapter opens with a theoretical exposition of the sociocultural perspective of language acquisition and use. Analysis of empirical data demonstrates ways in which immigrant students in Australia negotiate transitions from an ESL setting into a mainstream high school. Yasuko Kanno examines a Japanese public school's attempt to educate language minority children, and finds that the same teachers who support multilingualism and multiculturalism also attribute language minority students' low literacy in Japanese to their speaking their L1 at home. Kanno argues that schools are never simply entirely oppressive or entirely empowering. Rather, schools constitute a socially, culturally, and politically complex milieu in which both teachers and students hold

contradictory orientations to language and identity, without necessarily being aware of these contradictions.

To list the content of this volume, impressive as it is, does not do justice to the whole. This is a highly relevant, ambitious and substantial addition to the field. More than this, it shapes the field in new ways, developing a poststructuralist analysis across multilingual contexts in five continents. At the same time the volume keeps firmly in view a commitment to social justice wherever there are asymmetrical relations of power for linguistic minority speakers. I highly recommend the volume to practitioners, students, and academics everywhere. This may well become a seminal volume in our understanding of multilingualism in society.

Angela Creese