

Zsófia Fülöp:

Giuditta Caliendo, Rudi Janssens, Stef Slembrouck & Piet Van Avermaet (eds.): *Urban Multilingualism in Europe. Bridging the Gap between Language Policies and Language Practices*

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Debreceni Egyetemi Kiadó

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Recenzió

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**Giuditta Caliendo, Rudi Janssens, Stef Slembrouck &
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Urban Multilingualism in Europe. Bridging the Gap
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Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter Mouton, 2019, 228 p.

This volume is the 110th part in a series originally founded and published under the supervision of Joshua Fishman, “a scholar of unfathomable influence” (Hornberger 2017: 17), whose contribution to the field of language policy and planning is invaluable. Since its inception in 1971, ‘Contributions to the Sociology of Language’ has been at the forefront of scholarly discourse, pushing and shaping the boundaries of the field. The series evolved into a platform that presents cutting-edge research from leading voices in linguistics worldwide, such as the editors of this book: Giuditta Caliendo, Rudi Janssens, Stef Slembrouck, and Piet Van Avermaet.

The uniqueness of this volume is manifested in the in-depth discussion of the dual orientation that aims to bridge the gap between language policies and language practices, and the tension that it causes both at the micro and mezzo levels, exclusively focusing on multilingual domains of the European Union. This dual orientation was the core of the ‘Urban Multilingualism in Europe: Bridging the Gap between Language Policies and Language Practices’ symposium held at the Royal Flemish Academy of Belgium for Science and the Arts of Brussels in 2014, which resulted in this edited volume, bearing the same title. The titles and topics, together with the well-known contributors of the volume, promise an information-rich source for the reader, and it is, indeed, a comprehensive book that approaches multilingualism and language policy from different disciplinary angles. However, after taking a closer look at the theories, terminologies, and frameworks referred to in the book, it becomes clear that it mainly uses the classic distinction between top-down language policy and bottom-up language practices while ignoring the otherwise widely used tripartite model of language policy (management, practices, ideologies) developed by Spolsky (2004, 2019). In his model, language policy is an umbrella term, and the top-down processes are summarized by language management, which, according to him, better captures “the complexity of the many tasks and people involved in modifying social linguistic processes” (Spolsky 2018: 306).

The authors of the book evaluate the complexities of contemporary multilingualism and its numerous aspects with a particular focus on the dynamics and the tension that it carries between language policy and communicative practices. Since the establishment of the European Union,

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researchers have been provided with a prosperous ground for studying this immense interaction, because people with various linguistic backgrounds have come into contact on a daily basis, providing an ideal environment from which to explore and draw conclusions.

The volume primarily deals with the challenges of linguistic diversity, with a close focus on the complex linguistic landscape of urban areas that are present in the EU society, since the increased rate of immigration and fluidity of information due to globalisation and technical developments together led to connecting the world in many ways. Cultural consequences of such a mobile and fluid world include what Vertovec (2007) calls superdiversity, which has become a central topic in sociolinguistics in the last decade (see, for instance, Arnaut et al. 2016; Creese & Blackledge 2018).

Part 1 of this book discusses topics on the tensions between language policies and practices, while Parts 2 and 3 deal with how various wider social, as well as narrower domains (families) respond to multilingual challenges. Finally, Part 4 introduces new ways of mapping multilingual societies. All four parts consist of two articles written by scholars from various academic backgrounds, highlighting the efforts propped by this volume of looking at multilingualism from an interdisciplinary approach.

In Part 1, Rudi Janssens evaluates the conflict between language policy and practice in Belgium, calling attention to the outdated nature of the Belgian pacification model, which was initially designed to balance the interests of Flemish and Walloon communities before 1960. Since the 1960s, migration waves have continuously been challenging the validity of this model, as revealed by Janssens's survey research. Through his study, Janssens emphasises the concept of "mobility" first described by Urry (2000), which, in fact, replaces the traditional notion of migration with a focus on the increasing number of people who move multiple times throughout their lives for various reasons including education, employment, retirement, leisure, tourism, family reunification and international marriages, all of them leading to frequent language contact situations. Tensions arise when language policies clash with everyday practices, especially in linguistically mixed neighbourhoods, leading to serious political debates over educational system discrepancies between teaching and home languages. Consequently, as confirmed by Janssens's study, increasing linguistic diversity requires reconsidering linguistic dimensions and addressing the issue at both sociolinguistic and political levels.

The next chapter (written by Paola Catenaccio and Giuliana Garzone) examines the challenges of Italy's educational system, focusing on possible strategies for immigrant students to achieve their potential within a multilingual context. The research, based on statistical data and teacher interviews, highlights issues of integration and inclusion, revealing legislative reluctance to recognize multilingualism's validity in everyday practice despite the rising immigrant population, and concludes that it can easily result in framing inclusion and exclusion as endpoints on a spectrum. The authors emphasize the need for pedagogical methods that support bilingual children, advocating for approaches like Cenoz's translanguaging (2022). While the study shows educators' dedication to integration and academic success, it lacks data from the primary agents—students—and only provides insights from the mezzo level's ambiguous point of view.

Investigating social domains provides researchers with data on how people with diverse linguistic backgrounds can interact on a daily basis, as detailed in the chapters of Part 2. Health centres, local authorities, and schools are crucial domains of creating social cohesion and are meticulously explored in the third paper by Stef Slembrouck through case studies. Research on urban multilingualism helps scholars understand linguistic phenomena and develop new

methodologies that can be applied in everyday practices, not only at professional, but at personal levels as well. Slembrouck goes as far as to suggest making implicit decision logic explicit to improve policy-making, and calls attention to the lack of professionals who understand and seek consistency in language support strategies. He substantiates his claim by pinpointing the significance of temporal and spatial scales in understanding the distribution of linguistic resources in professional interactions. He emphasizes the benefits of scale-sensitive approaches to local multilingualism and illustrates their value through empirical studies addressing real-life challenges in two case studies.

The following paper by Jordens et al., however, takes a more project-based measure to challenge the view in Flemish education that, as it is for now, claims that submersion is the only viable option for bilingual pupils, revealing that students in Dutch-only policy schools frequently use their mother tongue for socio-cognitive functions during tasks as opposed to previous restrictions. The study contradicts the perception that the mother tongue does not contribute to learning, confirming its significance in the discussion of content and task management. The same concept has been confirmed by several empirical studies in the field of multilingual education and second language acquisition (SLA) on the beneficial role of mother tongue instruction (see, for example, Ganuza and Hedman 2019); however, none of these results are mentioned in the chapter. The inclusion of these results could have placed the study in a broader context to explain the need to address the issue of L1 use in the multilingual classroom.

The third part of the volume explores cultural responses to multilingual challenges within the family context, emphasizing the importance of the dynamically emerging field of Family Language Policy (FLP). Elizabeth Lanza brings Norway's bilingual environment to the forefront by presenting the country's supportive language policies, research infrastructure, and its socio-cultural context as an exemplary domain for FLP research. Luk Van Mensel, on the other hand, presents an empirical study that examines communicative language practices by analysing speech data from two pairs of parents with different linguistic backgrounds in Brussels. His analysis reveals that participants engage in translanguaging to navigate their bilingual worlds (García 2009). He also argues that policymakers should move away from language-based categorizations and recognize multilingual features in everyday practices, urging the reconsideration of outdated linguistic ideologies, echoing Slembrouck's findings from the previous chapter.

Part 4 delves into the exploration of the complex cultural tapestry of the urban environment, with the explicit aim of promoting social cohesion and appreciation for cross-cultural diversity by developing multilingual proficiency. The two papers in this part underscore the profound impact multilingualism has on shaping both individual and collective identities. Through meticulous examination, Giuditta Caliendo and Annarita Magliacane, in the first paper, investigate the acquisition of sociopragmatic competence and second language skills in the context of studying abroad. The study particularly focuses on how student mobility influences the usage of discourse markers in a second language, highlighting crucial elements that facilitate effective communication based on various research instruments. Finally, Patrizia Giuliano's research scrutinizes textual coherence by analysing the narratives of bilingual children, shedding light on the intricacies of linguistic cohesion in multilingual settings. The comprehensive insights attained from such rigorous studies led not only to understanding but also to help maintain the cultural heritage of marginalized linguistic communities, amplifying their voices and hearing their narratives.

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Such in-depth exploration and understanding of the language needs of urban populations presented in this volume can lead to the development of more effective language policies, the advancement of linguistic rights, and ensuring access to public services for all their residents. Schools and educational institutions can benefit from understanding the main features of language learning and bilingual education while overcoming the challenges faced by the multilingual members of their communities. Understanding is the key to the development of progressive language education programmes.

This book can easily serve as a basis for policy development in dynamically changing multilingual contexts, offering valuable insights that address the complexities of language use in diverse settings. As illustrated throughout the chapters, each multilingual situation within the European Union is unique, underscoring the need for tailored approaches rather than a “one size fits all” solution to manage linguistic diversity effectively.

In conclusion, this book promotes diversity, cultural understanding, and fostering social cohesion while highlighting the influence and the constant hardships of the ever-changing language policies that, more often than not, create tension between the expected policies and real-life practices. The volume is highly beneficial for all researchers, linguists, policymakers, or even for curious readers within and outside of the EU since, similarly to all of the previous volumes, it is captivating, timely and inspiring.

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