

## BOOK REVIEWS

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JAN BLOMMAERT, *The sociolinguistics of globalization*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010. Pp. xvi, 213. Hb. \$91.49. Pb. \$32.72.

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*The sociolinguistics of globalization* looks at globalization from the perspective of sociolinguistics, but deliberately departs from the established paradigm. Categorizing the old paradigm as the “sociolinguistics of distribution,” the author gives his paradigm a new label—the SOCIOLINGUISTICS OF MOBILITY—and proposes a new vocabulary, including *mobility*, *resources*, *scales*, *orders of indexicality*, *polycentricity*, and *history*. This set of conceptual tools provides a descriptive frame for sociolinguistic phenomena in the era of globalization: resources (bits of language) occur at different scale-levels, and their mobility across these different scales involves important shifts in function, structure, and meaning. These shifts involve the reordering of normativity. That is, linguistic resources move through different orders of indexicality, and every move involves a different set of indexical potentials for the resources. Moreover, orders of indexicality are seen as organized in polycentric systems, in which different centers (evaluating authorities) co-occur in complex simultaneous relationships.

The proposed new paradigm is explained, illustrated, and justified in the first six chapters, and reflected in the last one, Ch. 7. Ch. 1, “A critical sociolinguistics of globalization,” starts with the challenge for sociolinguistics. Established sociolinguistics, the study object of which is seen as remaining a stable “snapshot,” is challenged by the complexity of globalization, and hence by the linguistic diversity of connected “villages in the world.” Here is shown the need for “sociolinguistics to unthink its classic distinctions and biases” (1). In addition, by reviewing literature from discourse analysis and literacy studies that addresses language and globalization, Blommaert also convinces readers that a sociolinguistics of mobility is long overdue, the essence of which he sketches in the remaining pages of Ch. 1.

Ch. 2, “A messy new marketplace,” begins with an analysis of a sign in a chocolate shop in central Tokyo. In the context of a Tokyo department store, the sign did not function linguistically, but rather emblematically. The analysis leads to an elaboration of three key concepts: sociolinguistic scales, orders of indexicality, and polycentricity. By “scale” Blommaert means that things are of a different order and

“are hierarchically ranked and stratified” (33), and that the spatial images that the metaphor of scale suggests are vertical rather than horizontal, and stratified and power-invested. Different scales organize different patterns of normativity, which is a form of organization and order. To look at this complex form, Blommaert uses the conceptual tool of ORDERS OF INDEXICALITY. In his illustration, speaking or writing in a certain register involves inserting oneself in recognizable (normative) repertoires of “voices”: one then speaks as a man, as a lawyer, and so on. If done appropriately, one will be perceived as speaking as such (37). This indexical order has long and complex histories of becoming, and produces social categories, recognizable semiotic emblems for groups and individuals. What should be noticed here, as is made salient on p. 38, is that the indexical order works within the confines of a stratified set of general repertoires in which particular indexical orders relate to others in relations of mutual valuation, such as higher or lower, better or worse. Inspired by Foucault’s order of discourse, the author submits “order of indexicality” to explain the movement of linguistic resources. Linguistic resources do not just move across space, they move across different orders of indexicality, and this results in differences in value for different modes of semiosis. For the evaluating authority, Blommaert gives the term “center,” and POLYCENTRICITY is suggested for the study of the complex of globalization where difference is quickly turned into inequality.

To illustrate such a sociolinguistics of mobile resources, Blommaert uses examples he experienced in many different parts of the world. Apart from the sign in the chocolate shop, he examines in Ch. 3, “Locality, the periphery and images of the world,” a globalized Tanzanian novel and the teaching of English in a peripheral township in South Africa. The point Blommaert makes with these illustrations is that locality and mobility co-exist, and while global influences do bring about changes in place, local criteria and norms define the processes of the change. In Ch. 4, through an illustration of the genre of fraud email messages informing readers that they are about to receive large sums of money, Blommaert addresses issues of “resources and competence.” He finds in many of these messages a very highly developed technological competence, a moderately developed cultural competence, and a weakly developed linguistic competence. These differences between specific forms of competence, he argues, reveal different degrees of accessibility of communicative resources, which further reveals inequality.

In Ch. 5, “Language, globalization and history,” Blommaert discusses two similar images of golf, one an advertisement in a Belgian magazine in 2006 (141), the other a poster in a street in Central Beijing in 2007 (142). The same images and semiotic materials are used in both examples—for instance, elite membership, English, and the golf jargon—but different histories of being are instantiated in the two examples, and different forces are at work. In other words, the actual resources had their own histories of arriving there. With this illustration the author highlights the historical aspect of globalization, which is important for a sociolinguistics of mobility. Mobility has spatial as well as temporal features,

and the local histories that global resources enter can be fundamentally different and thus create very different effects, meanings, and functions.

All of the examples illustrate the new paradigm in one way or another, and lead to the issue of inequality, the theme of Ch. 6, "Old and new inequality." Analyzing an asylum application case in the UK by a man from Rwanda, Blommaert finds that the persistent use of frames derived from the modern nation state to address transnational, displaced migrants is a feature of inequality. In his words, the state "formulated a very 'modern' response to the very 'post-modern' phenomenon of super-diversity" (26).

In this book, globalization is viewed as a complex of processes: in historical framing there is geopolitical as well as geocultural globalization, the latter being another phase of development within the former; and in spatial framing there is development at and across different scale-levels. In looking at this complex of processes, Blommaert focuses more on the effects of global influence than on the influence itself. He observes the checkered competence of fraud email authors, the unfinished products in communication, the deviation of English in an African school, the commercial selling of the American accent, and the inequality of accessibility to resources. By so doing Blommaert emphasizes the role of local histories in constructing the meaning of mobile signs, which further leads to the consideration of the issue of inequality in the age of globalization.

To develop his sociolinguistics of globalization, Blommaert critically reviews three books on the topic from the field of language study (14–20), including *Language and globalization* (Fairclough 2006), which has received criticism (e.g. Blommaert 2008, Shi-xu 2009) as well as positive comments (e.g. Tian 2010). In the 2008 review and in this book, Blommaert was not happy with Fairclough's work on globalism (which Fairclough defines as the dominant discourse in the process of globalization) and on the spatial dimension of globalization. His critical review, so to speak, forms the basis for his development of the historical dimension of globalization in this book. But I do see some coincidence between Blommaert's and Fairclough's works, and Blommaert himself (2008) noticed an exception to what he criticizes in his above mentioned review, namely, Fairclough's discussion of "globalization from below." We can see, for example, when "grassroots literacy becomes not only a practical code, a code for expression, but also an *evaluative* and hence *normative* code" (94) in Blommaert's case of learning English in a township school in South Africa. In Fairclough's analysis of Romanian higher-education reform, it is by virtue of successful strategies of "internal" social agencies and agents in Romania that "external entities" like EU neo-liberal discourse are recontextualized, relocated and appropriated and then "carried" into the new scale of Romanian higher education (see Tian 2010). Different as the vocabularies and technical terms are, the point highlighted by both Fairclough and Blommaert is that there is, in Blommaert's words, "an influence from the global and, to be sure, places do change, but the local is quite resilient as well and local criteria and norms define the processes of change" (23).

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VAIDEHI RAMANATHAN, *Bodies and language: Health, ailments, disabilities*. Bristol, UK: Multilingual Matters, 2010. Pp. ix, 136. Pb. \$29.95.

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Each of the seven chapters in this short, quietly explosive book leads the reader further away from the details of constructions of identity, illness, and disability and into a thicket of new and disturbing questions about social and linguistic constructions of ailments and disabilities in general, particularly those that are not physically apparent. The book interweaves critical theories about time, memory, and the phenomenology of the body with accounts of and by persons with bodily ailments in order to ground a discussion of what we might mean when we say “disabled” or “abnormal.” I would like to see seminars across the disciplines, as well as in applied linguistics or sociolinguistics, using this text as a starting point for the kinds of reflective discussions of language that Ramanathan calls for.

Our linguistic constructs of “norm” and “normal,” which Ramanathan in Ch. 1 traces to the scientific rationalism of the mid 1800s, are maintained, for example, by formal policies around health insurance dictating coverage and funding for access such as wheelchair ramps, which in turn give rise to informal attitudes and ideologies about what is normal (4–5). What, then, is disabled? What are the differences between being a DISABLED PERSON and a PERSON WITH DISABILITIES? There may be better questions to ask, given Ramanathan’s trenchant comment that “viewing illness/disability in individualized ways runs the risk of framing it as personal bad luck, a risk that leans towards an orientation of charity” (6). Instead, looking at “societal views about ‘normalcy’” allows us to examine notions of equality and inclusion incorporated in “notions of ‘normal’ bodies” (6).

The next four chapters examine language used to construct cancer, diabetes, autism, partial hearing, and dementia. Ch. 2, on breast cancer, examines