

Book Review:
**Speaking Subjects in
Multilingualism Research:
Biographical and Speaker-centred
Approaches, edited by Judith
Purkarthofer and Mia-Cha
Flubacher**

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Speaking Subjects in Multilingualism Research: Biographical and Speaker-centred Approaches, edited by Purkarthofer and Mia-Cha Flubacher, consists of eighteen chapters, divided into three parts, which provide insights on the utilization of biographical approaches and why they are crucial for multilingualism research. This book presents an informative methodological and theoretical diversity and can be valuable for researchers looking to explore biographical methods of research and engage with the sociopolitical lives of language users. It takes the reader through an investigation of different groups of language users' lived experiences and language-related inequalities and opportunities, and encourages a critical rethinking about the existing knowledge of speakers and their languages.

Part 1 of the book comprises four chapters, which provide theoretical and methodological frameworks for biographical research. Chapter 1, written by the editors, introduces language biographical research and focusses on the speaking sub-

ject. A brief discussion of Brigitta Busch's widely used language portrait and its usefulness in gaining access to lived language experiences is provided. Touching on power and inequality, often highlighted in the book, and making a case for the multilingual reality of research, Purkarthofer and Mia-Cha Flubacher admit that English is the first language of only two of the contributors of the book, which is written entirely in English.

Drawing on Busch's work on the embodied and affective dimensions of language experience, Purkarthofer, in chapter 2, discusses how biographical approaches conceptualise speaking subjects (both children and adults) and their experiences, and how their narrations are their views on a world defined by their own experience. While doing so, Purkarthofer puts forth some methodological reflections for the co-construction of meaning by speaker and audience. Further, Purkarthofer highlights how negative or traumatic experiences may become non-narratable to the speaker, for

example, when language use is impeded by emotions, such as fear or shame, or when specific languages are linked to traumatic experiences. Following Foucault (1977), McNamara, in Chapter 3, centres his discussion on the agency and positioning of the subject through a poststructuralist lens, highlighting how discourses shape the subject. McNamara delves into autobiographical work of philosopher, Jacques Derrida, and his essay on the work of poet, Paul Celan, to explore the nuanced role of agency in multilingual situations. McNamara looks at the extent to which conceptions of agency within subjectivity in post-structuralism are reflected in other applied linguistics work on autobiographical narratives by multilingual subjects. In chapter 4, Mia-Cha Flubacher reflects on ethnography as a speaker-centred approach and its methodological contribution. Foregrounding epistemological similarities and differences between ethnographic and biographical approaches and using examples from her own ethnographic research, Mia-Cha Flubacher illustrates how a combination of the two is valuable for multilingualism research.

Part two of the book comprises most of contributions, which are divided into themes. Chapters 5, 6, and 7 demonstrate the use of language portraits to visually represent multilingual practices and identities. Using results from a mixed-methods approach to data collection, Anthonissen looks at the linguistic repertoires of young adults at a tertiary institution in Johannesburg, South Africa. Her study conjoins traditional conceptions of bi-and-multilingualism and provides insight regarding the influence of human mobility on language. Meulder and Kusters reports on data from two studies to illustrate how deaf and hearing multilingual signers experience *linguaging* in different modalities. They argue that multimodal languaging is represented more clearly on language portraits when modalities (signed, spoken, written) are separated. Their data highlights the distinct role of body parts in signed languages and the importance of multimodality in the construction and analysis of language portraits. Singer showcases the value of arts-based biographical methods in tandem with ethnographic work in research on language in Indigenous communities that is often overlooked. Singer determines the relation-

ships between indigenous language and other indigenous culture and identity expressions in Australia (body paint, dance, etc.), and emphasises how the approach used is well-suited to examining the multilingual practices and ideologies that promote linguistic diversity.

Chapters 8, 9, 10, and 11 provide insight into various speaker-centred approaches in the search for understanding linguistic repertoires and language learning. Challenging a monoglossic and Eurocentric education system, Guzula provides a concrete illustration of how a translanguaging third space (Garcia & Li 2014:133) - *Stars of Today Literacy Club* - was created to inspire South African children to utilise their full linguistic repertoires. Guzula's analysis of linguistic ethnographic data shows how this space paved way for exploring multilingual repertoires and fostering an awareness that resist dominant ideas of language. Using Busch's (2012) poststructural view of the linguistic repertoire, Mashazi and Oostendorp looks at embodied experiences of language, space, and belonging at Stellenbosch University in South Africa. Reporting on data gathered from language portraits with students and participatory photo interviews (Kolb 2008) with students and staff, they reveal how different customs in different spaces influence the use and perceptions of speakers' linguistic repertoires. They make discerning claims and recommendations regarding linguistic vulnerabilities, how to address it, and how it is influenced by inclusionary and exclusionary spaces.

Choi discusses the practicality of a novel method for research and for teaching and learning. Choi used a "language trajectory grid" (pg 165) whereon Chinese students learning English chronologically mapped their learning experiences, feelings, and motivation levels, along with narratives based on these mappings. She found it to be particularly advantageous for stimulating "co-learning through reflection, reflexivity and dialog" (pg 170), and for raising speakers' awareness of their multilingual and multimodal strategies for learning, leading to more conscious and purposeful use of their skills and knowledge. Sedlaczek takes us through a pilot project investigating adult German students and teachers in rural Austria's multilingual media use in media diaries. Sedlaczek com-

bines the concepts of linguistic repertoires, and media repertoires to understand how different media are used to engage with speakers' linguistic repertoires and how multilingual media repertoires are used for language learning, revealing an intricate relationship between these two concepts.

The last three chapters making up part 2 of this book focus on ways in which speakers and researchers address traumatic life events. Taking up Bakhtin's (1981) notion of the chronotype as a model of agency through a phenomenological lens, Sonnleitner investigates how agency is created in contradictory narratives of apartheid South Africa by a post-apartheid generation. She presents arguments suggesting that the chronotype is promising for the analysis of embodied elements of subjectivity in narratives of the past. Psychotherapist, Raschidy, presents a case study of an Afghan migrant woman's recollection of traumatic experiences, demonstrating the significance of mother-tongue therapy in accessing emotions and experiences, and articulating them comfortably. Through this, Raschidy elucidates the role of language as "an emotional, social, and interactive process" (pg 209). Also addressing the topic of trauma, Dabić focusses on the communicative situation of interpreting in psychotherapy. Dabić reports on data from in-depth interviews conducted with clients, psychotherapists, and interpreters for Russian and Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian-speaking war and torture survivors accessing psychotherapy in Austria. Her results shed light on the complicated communicative interaction between psychotherapists, their clients, and interpreters, making fruitful suggestions for language interpretation in therapeutic settings.

Part 3 of this book comprises the last 4 chapters, which provide further perspectives regarding biographical research, while pointing out some considerations, and theoretical and methodological recommendations. Through a decolonial analysis of recorded dialogues with multilingual speakers, Deumert, Kupe, and Mabandla discuss how speakers view and experience language and linguistic practices. They present interesting findings on self-naming practices and the complexity of language in the dialogues, and give grounds for taking a vernacular theoretical lens to better understand how people "language in the mo-

ment" and "talk-about-talk", with the aim of unsettling Anglocentric traditions in sociolinguistic research (pg 236). Spitzmüller provide a discussion of ideologies of communication, arguing that they connect communicative means with actors and practices. A model of *metapragmatic stance-taking* is proposed to examine narrative positioning and make clear the social connections between actors, practices, and signs, arguing for language-biographical analyses to include all involved actors' stance-taking practices and ideologies.

Drawing on language learning interview data with migrants in Switzerland, Zeiter interrogates the explicit focus on language in such interviews and makes a case for less-restrictive views regarding language competency and skills. Zeiter illuminates the role of reflexively focussing on social practices in enabling learners to fully demonstrate their abilities and their language repertoires as international and multilingual citizens. Closing the book with the last chapter, Busch looks into key issues highlighted in the chapters and thematizes them. She provides her perspectives on the contributions, while stressing the significance of autobiographical narratives. She discusses the book's emphasis on why sociolinguistic research requires subjects' perspectives and a comprehensive exploration of lived experience, and looks into new routes for biographical research and the opportunities they present.

In line with its mission, the book tenaciously exhibits the value of biographical and speaker-centred approaches in contributing to a greater understanding of linguistic diversity. It comprises contributions which all share insight taken from Busch's work, and exhibit examinations of several linguistic minority communities done from various disciplinary perspectives. Contributors' data are accessibly and thoroughly presented with concrete illustrative examples. As an early academic, I believe that the integration of the various methodological approaches and theoretical lenses coming together in biographical and speaker-centred multilingualism research may be beneficial for both early and more senior researchers, and are mostly written in a lucid writing style, forming a thematically cohesive thread throughout the book. Overall, it was a pleasant read and left me with theoretically creative ideas to think about.