Book Review


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Kerfoot and Hyltenstam’s edited volume grew out of a symposium in honour of Christopher Stroud on his 60th birthday. The symposium, and later the volume, focused on Stroud’s work on the formation of mobilities as they arise through, the entanglements of identities, histories, languages, and literacies in variously complex societal contexts. Most chapters in the book extended the presentations from the conference. Others focus on notions of entangled discourses, orders of visibility, and the South-North dimensions of power and knowledge. The work hopes to add to the development of a sociolinguistics of the South and the sociolinguistics of multilingualism. The volume further aims to comprehend the North in the South, and the South in the North by exploring the evolving discourses from excluded, silenced, and marginalized populations such as refugees, immigrants, and ethnic minorities. The interaction of North-South perspectives across contexts opens up opportunities for new dominant theories. The book’s contribution lies in the understanding of North-South realities, as well as the challenges arising from the configurations of identity, race, class, ethnicity, and gender. The book also focuses on linguistic diversity as managed in northern and southern education, health care and other settings.

The authors divide the book into four sections. The first section ‘Southern perspective’ consists of three chapters that explore language, race and ethnicity in southern contexts. Toke’s chapter (Chapter One), examines medical encounters in Wallis, in the South Pacific. It illustrates ways in which the State constructs sociolinguistic orders of visibility in a postcolonial context, by reducing patients’ voices to silences or irrational discourses. In Chapter Two by Kerfoot and Tatah, a Black immigrant learner, Aline, who lives in South Africa, is the subject. In tracing Aline’s trajectory across social and educational spaces, they explore the disjuncture between her visibility and invisibility and its impact. The authors discuss and develop an argument that explores the effect of race as a key marker of privilege affecting her life. Bock’s Chapter Three, importantly, examines discourses embedded in the narratives of South African youth as they responded to questions relating to apartheid.

Part Two of the volume examines ‘North-South Entanglements’ and consists of two chapters. The work of Cabral and Martin-Jones (Chapter Four) provides insight into language and other semiotic resources in the trajectories of East Timorese migrants to the United Kingdom. By focusing on a particular transnational population’s movement from the south to the north and west, they contribute to a new sociolinguistics of multilingualism and mobility.

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Chapter Five, Juffermans and Tavares examine two conceptual tools in the sociolinguistics of globalization: trajectories and repertoires. The work presents three studies, which illuminate the mobile inequalities between cosmopolitan citizens and involuntary immobile subjects.

Part Three, has three chapters that focus on ‘Northern Perspectives’. Chapter Six, by Lindberg and Sandwall, hones in on the experiences of adults taking second language classes for immigrants in Sweden. The authors find several conflicting agendas playing out in the incongruous views of the program that they encountered. In Chapter Seven, Wee’s focus is on parallel language ideology in Sweden. The author explores effects of the policy discourses pertaining to parallel language and educational provision. In Chapter Eight, Hanell and Salö, critically evaluate discourse and knowledge as it is evident in an online discussion thread. The authors focus on power and knowledge, and the issue of ethics in a discussion thread for parents expecting children is highlighted.

Part Four ‘North–South dynamics in Research and Knowledge Production’ consists of three chapters and a postscript. Milani (Chapter 9, The Politics of the Margins), views the concept of margins as a lens through which to interrogate the forms of political emancipation experienced by marginalised individuals through voice and visibility. The work, through its focus on the disruption caused by black women at a Johannesburg Pride march, reminds readers how voice and the visibility of the margins take on shapes that are not theorized using narrow conceptions of language. De Souza (Chapter Ten) explores indigenous educational policy in Brazil. The policy grants indigenous citizens full autonomy to define their own school curricula inclusive of indigenous language and knowledge. However, the author argues that bilingual and intercultural education are not only policy, but are also epistemic issues. Heugh, in the final chapter focuses on an emerging southern challenge, and a revisiting of northern–held narratives. She illustrates that changes, which recognize diversities, in particular linguistic diversity, are an important part of any de–colonial project.

Stroud’s Afterword provides a postscript to core notions that underpin the volume: entanglement and orders of visibility in relation to race, class, and gender.

To locate the volume in a strand of scholarship, I find the work a welcome addition to North–South discussions of sociolinguistics. In its intention to add to the development of the sociolinguistics of multilingualism, the volume has succeeded. The volume adds to existing comprehensions of discourses in the form of excluded, silenced and marginalized populations such as refugees, immigrants and ethnic minorities. Its contribution also lies in an understanding of North–South realities, as well as the challenges arising from configurations of identity, race, class, ethnicity, gender, and linguistic diversity. Potential readership includes scholars, academics, researchers, and anyone with an interest in sociolinguistics.

Reviewed by

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