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BOOK REVIEW

Linguistic genocide or superdiversity: new and old language diversities, edited by Reetta Toivanen and Janne Saarikivi, Bristol, Multilingual Matters, 2016, 376 pp., £99.95 (hardback), ISBN 9781783096053

As Reetta Toivanen and Janne Saarikivi argue in the book's introduction, in the last decades we have witnessed social, political, economic, and demographic changes that have shaped a dynamic and ever-changing linguistic reality. This new situation brings additional queries, one of them concerning the new and old types of language diversity.

Traditionally, language diversity has been perceived as monolithic, precise, and clearly defined; however, reality has consistently shown how language diversity is neither monolithic nor precise, and it is not clearly defined. In fact, one of the general aims of the book is reporting on the complex reality and its outcomes, which can contribute either to language revitalization or language genocide. In this sense, a situation of language contact with the presence of endangered languages can open new horizons for language revitalization, as new varieties are shaped with the support of new speakers and language uses, leading to a redefinition of language identity. However, in other contexts, opposite situations and trends can also be spotted, where language persistence is not favoured although it is being (theoretically) supported by political or ideological initiatives.

Once we have presented the main topic and the goals of the book, we refer to the three parts that comprise the volume.

The first one entitled *Language Communities or Networks of Communication? Old and New Linguistic Diversity*, comprises four chapters. In the first one, *Fragmentation of the Karelian Language and Its Community: Growing Variation at the Threshold of Language Shift*, Niko Partanen and Janne Saarikivi analyse the pace of language shift, language attitudes, ethnic stereotypes and social networks of language transmission in a Karelian village (Tuusula). This chapter stresses how language decline may coexist with the rise of new language varieties, social usages, and the re-interpretation of language identity.

In the second chapter, *What's Up Helsinki? Linguistic Diversity Among Suburban Adolescents*, Heini Lehtonen studies the language biographies of young migrants in two junior high schools in Helsinki where 20 languages coexist. Considering the situation of the 19th and 20th centuries, Lehtonen suggests that, although language diversity has persevered throughout Finnish history, the current language superdiversity is clearly different, as young migrants have transnational language practices, with an unprecedented access to information, and they use their linguistic repertoire in the negotiation of their feelings of belonging. This situation leads to the re-formulation of the meaning of Finland and being Finnish (Finnishness).

In the third chapter, *Varieties of Erzya–Russian Code-Switching in Radio Vaygel Broadcasts*, Boglárka Janurik delves into the role of Vaygel Radio in the persistence and transmission of Erzya (and Moksha). It should be noticed that the audience of Vaygel includes mainly young listeners, and it is an online radio (although with some shortcomings); however, language forms vary in the contents of Vaygel Radio, ranging from more purist varieties of Erzya (or Moksha) to Russian, with examples of Erzya-

Russian mixed variants. Janurik concludes that the future of these languages cannot be foreseen, since it is linked to the socioeconomic situation and the power relations in the area. However, the potentialities of language substitution can be recognised, as new identities have emerged together with language and cultural communities that interpret the meaning of the languages.

In the fourth chapter, *Udmurt on Social Network Sites: A Comparison with the Welsh Case* Christian Pischlöger approaches the relevance of Social Network Sites (SNS) regarding language revitalization and persistence. When comparing the situation of Udmurt (the official language of the Udmurt Republic, together with Russian) with the Welsh, it can be claimed that language revitalization is taking place, probably because of the initiatives promoted by language activists, which are set to increase the visibility of Udmurt, enhance its prestige, encourage its written use, and create new language forms.

The second part of the book, entitled *Standardising Languages and Ethnicities: Mission Impossible?* starts with the fifth chapter, *A Tale of a City and Its Two Languages: A History of Bilingual Practices in the City of Bilbao*, written by Hanna Lantto. The analysis of the contact between Basque and Spanish, and the language practices in the city of Bilbao underlines the relevance of social elements, such as power relations and language ideologies. The chapter claims that code-switching and multilingual approaches are not recent, but they have evolved and changed throughout time. There has been a shift from a clearly diglossic situation, where the use of Basque was not necessarily related to a feeling of national belonging, to the current scenario,

where both languages have many registers and varieties, and their use in specific contexts is linked to the expression of identities.

In the sixth chapter, *Nationalising Fluid and Ambiguous Identities: Russia, Western Ukraine and Their Ukrainian and Russian Minorities, Diasporas and “Compatriots Abroad”*, Oksana Myshlovska focuses on the transformation of ethnic and linguistic identity suffered in the last two decades by the Ukrainian minority in Russia and the Russian minority in Western Ukraine. Contrary to the promotion of a linguistic and ethnic homogeneity promoted by the nations, Myshlovska underlines the existing ethnic and linguistic diversity of Ukrainian citizens living in Russia and proposes a reinterpretation of the identitarian feelings of the Russian group living in Ukraine.

In the seventh chapter, *Emergent Sámi Identities: From Assimilation Towards Revitalisation*, Erika Katjaana Sarivaara addresses the ethnic identity and the linguistic rights of Sámi people. The examination of Sámi descendants' narrative unveils how the definition of Sámi in the Sámi Act has created the status of “genuine Sámi” and “non-Sámi”. This process entails relevant implications for the identity of Sámi descendants, who consider this is an artificial concept, and the revitalization of their language, as “non-Sámi” citizens learning the language might feel discriminated by their non-genuine status.

The eighth chapter, *Localising the Global in the Superdiverse Municipalities of the Arctic: The Case of Inari*, written by Reetta Toivanen complements the previous one, and analyses the revitalization of Sámi languages in the city of Inari. The chapter

stresses that minority protection policies and the “institutionalisation” of identities may neglect the existing diversity within minority groups. In the multicultural and multilingual scenario described in the chapter, where three Sámi languages coexist with Finnish, political and ideological tensions have promoted the construction of “truth” and “fake” Sámi. This is, indeed, a hurdle for language revitalization, as the spotlight is on who is a “pure speaker” of the language rather on the appreciation of linguistic identities.

The third part of the book is entitled *Language Revitalisation: Protection Standards or Tolerance for Variation*. In the ninth chapter, *Russia’s Minority Education and the European Language Charter*, Konstantin Zamyatin scrutinizes the current state of minority languages in the Russian educational system. The chapter reviews the European Charter for Regional for Minority Languages and claims that the current situation has important shortcomings despite the commitment to adjust minority languages protection policies to the standards of the Charter. This has a negative impact on language revitalization, and contributes to the unequal protection of languages depending on the economic and political power of the former Russian territories.

The tenth chapter, *Metadiversity, or the Uniqueness of the Lambs*, written by Johanna Laakso, addresses the interdependence between linguistic diversity, multilingualism, and metadiversity (diversity of diversities). Taking growth on the study of the situation of Finno-Ugric minorities, Laakso concludes that utilizing the concept of language diversity and multilingualism for all situations and processes of language contact may not be accurate, as contexts vary enormously. This means that the measures intended to promote the protection and revitalization of minority / minoritized

languages do not always render the expected outcomes. Therefore, the concept of language diversity should be revisited.

In chapter eleventh, *Division of Responsibility in Karelian and Veps Language Revitalisation Discourse*, Ulriikka Puura and Outi Tánčzos compare media texts and sociolinguistic interviews in Karelian and Vesp language communities. The chapter relies on the assumption that the approach, interpretation and responsibilities of the agents in charge of the promotion and revitalization of endangered languages do not always concur. On the one hand, the speakers of the language bear the highest responsibility for language persistence (while other agents, such as ethnic groups, or the authorities of the Republic, do not have any responsibility). On the other hand, the responsibility of the state is diluted in media texts, contributing to the normalization of a discourse of indifference with no commitment to language revitalization.

Finally, in chapter twelve, *Standard Language Ideology and Minority Languages: The Case of the Permian Language*, Svetlana Edygarova highlights how the standard variety of a language is usually considered as legitimate by the power, neglecting or even stigmatizing other variants. However, this fact is not only related to majority languages, but also to minority ones such as Permian languages. This tendency clearly hampers language revitalization, as language varieties (or non-standard variants) are usually ignored.

This book revisits Vertovec's (2007) concept of Super-diversity and adapts it to the linguistic scope; in doing so, the volume shows how "(linguistic) diversity of diversities" renders diversified outputs in language persistence. Furthermore, the

chapters of the book present accurate analyses of the current reality, underlining that language revitalization or linguistic genocide can only be understood when they are analysed in the society and the context where they take place. This is one of the most relevant conclusions to be drawn from the book: transferring language revitalization and promotion policies from one society to another does not lead to success unless context is considered.

Without a question, this volume is a relevant contribution to the debate on language diversity (or super-diversity) and its consequences as regards language revitalization. Moreover, the book offers a multilevel approach to language diversity and is of interest to any scholar working in the field.

References

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