

A book review on Montanari and Quay's (eds.) Multidisciplinary Perspective on Multilingualism: the Fundamentals

Feisal Aziez

University of Pannonia
feiaziez@gmail.com

Received:
4-3-2020

Final Revision:
17-3-2020

Published:
19-04-2020

Corresponding
Author:
Feisal Aziez
feiaziez@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

The volume provides a comprehensive and multidimensional discussion of multilingualism from a broader framework i.e. sociolinguistic perspective, to a more individual i.e. psycholinguistic perspective, and eventually to a more detailed point of view i.e. neurolinguistics perspective. The chapters in the volume is categorized thematically into four separate parts which make it easier for readers to navigate through the general idea of the volume. The recent and relevant issues in the volume makes it a valuable reading for practitioners and especially researchers wanting to reflect on the practices of multilingualism and use it as a reference for future studies. This volume is also an essential resource for graduate students interested in the field. Nevertheless, another volume following the current one is something to look forward to in order to fill the gaps in terms of updates on the practices of multilingualism especially in the countries or regions not included in this volume. At the moment, on the whole, this volume is a rich and comprehensive resource especially for those interested in the topic of multilingualism.

Bilingualism and multilingualism nowadays [have](#) become the norm in modern society mainly because of their advantages in many dimensions in life including social, political, and economic dimensions. In fact, in today's world, it is believed that there are bilingual and multilingual people representing more than half of the world's population in comparison to monolingual people (Tucker, 1999). Its presence across the globe is undeniable among individuals and communities from all walks of life. Its benefits and importance have even been recognized recently by some communities that have attempted to implement multilingualism as their educational goals. In such a system, multiple languages present in the community are usually recognized and used in educational activities in order to cultivate multilingualism and multiliteracy (Cenoz, 2013). However, despite its obvious presence, multilingualism had been seen and studied as a variant of bilingualism instead of being perceived as an independent entity. Amid the never-ending debates on the definition of bilingualism and multilingualism, Quay and Montanari (2019: 560) take a stance by arguing that multilingualism should be 'studied in its own right as further evidence of human potential and capacity for language'.

That compelling statement from the editors,

Simona Montanari and Suzanne Quay, lays a foundation for the volume, entitled "Multidisciplinary Perspective on Multilingualism: The Fundamentals". The volume, edited by Simona Montanari and Suzanne Quay, offers empirical evidence of the issues of multilingualism through multidisciplinary perspectives presented through underlying works by eclectic contributors from across the globe. It presents essential expositions regarding the linguistic and non-linguistic dimensions of multilingualism.

Navigating through the volume is easy with the well-organized content page. An introductory remark from the editors in the beginning further clarifies what to expect. Sixteen chapters in the volume itself is divided into four major parts sandwiched between the introduction and overview to the volume (Chapter 1), and conclusion and directions for future research in multilingualism (Chapter 18) from the editors. The first part of the volume discusses societal multilingualism from historical, political and educational perspectives in different parts of the world. The second part reviews language use in multilingual communities. The third part focuses on individual multilingualism covering its development as well as its loss. Then, the final part concludes the volume with papers in the framework of the differences between bilingualism and multilingual-

ism.

As mentioned earlier, the first part presents the contexts in which multilingualism is practiced. The first chapter of the part, Ech-Chafi (Chapter 2) gives a description on multilingualism, language varieties and ideologies in North Africa while Ng and Cavallaro (Chapter 3) presents multilingualism in Southeast Asia, especially in Hong Kong, Malaysia, and Singapore. Bartelheimer, Hufeisen, and Montanari (Chapter 4) then follows up with an overview of multilingualism in Europe especially in the northwestern part of the continent. The part is closed with a chapter from Wright and Chan (Chapter 5) discussing multilingualism in North America, specifically in the United States and Canada. The volume does not necessarily provide the settings from all regions of the world, but it gives a general overview of some representatives of different parts of the globe in which multilingualism is generally practiced. This first part also provides a more general perspective of multilingualism as well as creates a setting for the following chapters.

A chapter from Maher (Chapter 6) begins the second part of the volume, discussing the use more than two languages in diglossic domains, specifically in Ireland, Finland, India, and Japan which also widen the perspective from what the first part has provided. While Maher discusses diglossia in multilingual communities, Stavans and Porat (Chapter 7) helps understand the practice of code switching in multilingual society as well as how multilingual people process the languages while code switching. Gooskens (Chapter 8) then follows with a discussion on receptive multilingualism in the context of Scandinavian countries and other parts of Europe, particularly in communities that share mutually intelligible languages. The final chapter of this part is written by Pichler, Reynolds, and Palmer (Chapter 9) which centers on multilinguals who use both signed and spoken languages. This interesting topic is scarcely studied and therefore gives a significant insight to the community.

After the discussion on multilingualism in the context of communities, the next part focuses on what happens on multiple languages within individuals. The chapters in this third part discusses multilingualism in individuals starting from how it is fostered in its early development as discussed by Quay and Chevalier (Chapter 10). The next chapter from Lanza and Lexander (Chapter 11) enriches the conversation on the topic with the discussion on multilingual practices in transcultural family. Wang (Chapter 12) added with the effect of schooling on multilingualism. This part concludes with a discussion by Jessner and Megens (Chapter 13) on the concern regarding the changes in language dominance, profi-

ciencies, and skills in multilinguals which may result in the loss in proficiency in one of the languages in an individual.

The final part of the volume emphasizes the elements which differentiate multilingualism from bilingualism. Montanari (Chapter 14) discusses the idea on how the previously acquired languages facilitate language learning in multilinguals. This idea is supported by the discussion by Allgauer-Hackl and Jessner (Chapter 15) on cross-linguistic interaction in multilinguals' mind and how they are equipped with what they call as multilingual awareness. Another chapter discussing the advantages of being multilingual is presented by Segal, Kave, Goral, and Gollan (Chapter 16). Their paper delivers the issue of cognitive benefits in multilinguals in regards to their differences in term of language backgrounds, education, and experiences. Another interesting insight into language processing in multilinguals is delivered by Strangmann, Chen, and Obler (Chapter 17) using neuroimaging techniques to look deep into multilinguals' brain. The editors lastly conclude with a summary of what have been conversed in the volume, that the complexity and variability of multilingualism exceeds that are of bilingualism. Therefore, they argued that multilingualism should be studied in its own rights. In the concluding chapter, they also provides new insights and trends of future research in the field of multilingualism.

In general, the volume provides a comprehensive and multidimensional discussion of multilingualism from a broader framework i.e. sociolinguistic perspective, to a more individual i.e. psycholinguistic perspective, and eventually to a more detailed point of view i.e. neurolinguistics perspective. The chapters in the volume is categorized thematically into four separate parts which make it easier for readers to navigate through the general idea of the volume. The recent and relevant issues in the volume makes it a valuable reading for practitioners and especially researchers wanting to reflect on the practices of multilingualism and use it as a reference for future studies. This volume is also an essential resource for graduate students interested in the field. Nevertheless, another volume following the current one is something to look forward to in order to fill the gaps in terms of updates on the practices of multilingualism especially in the countries or regions not included in this volume. At the moment, on the whole, this volume is a rich and comprehensive resource especially for those interested in the topic of multilingualism.

References

Cenoz, J. (2013). Bilingual and multilingual edu-

cation: overview. In Chapelle, C. A. (Eds.), *The encyclopedia of applied linguistics*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.

Montanari, S., & Quay, S. (Eds). (2019). *Multidisciplinary perspectives on multilingualism*. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter Inc.

Tucker R. (1999). *A Global Perspective on Bilingualism and Bilingual Education*. www.cal.org. Retrieved 29 February 2020.