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Book review: Bernd Meyer and Birgit Apfelbaum (eds), *Multilingualism at Work: From Policies to Practices in Public, Medical and Business Settings*

Mariana Lazzaro-Salazar

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What is This?

Book reviews

Bernd Meyer and Birgit Apfelbaum (eds), *Multilingualism at Work: From Policies to Practices in Public, Medical and Business Settings*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2010, v + 275 pp., £75.00 (hbk), ISBN 9789027219299.

Reviewed by: Mariana Lazzaro-Salazar, *School of Linguistics and Applied Language Studies, Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand*

In a laudable effort to address various issues arising from the emerging societal multilingualism which influences workplace interactions in Europe, South Africa and North America, Meyer and Apfelbaum have brought together a number of studies that portray the current linguistic and communicative realities of bilingual and multilingual workplaces. Attesting to the growing interest in multilingual workplace communication and language policies, this volume offers a wide variety of contexts of workplace interaction in which it is recognized that multilingual issues need to be addressed with appropriate language policies and training.

The book contains 11 chapters that, apart from the introduction, are grouped into three sections: workplace interactions in the public, medical and business sectors. The introductory chapter offers a review of the heterogeneous linguistic reality of multilingual workplaces as well as the aims of the volume. The editors identify two main driving research interests: 'how the social and linguistic organization of work is adapted to the necessity of using different languages' and 'how multilingualism impinges on the communicative outcome of different types of discourse or genres' (p. 6). Great emphasis is also placed on exploring authentic data and on employing an array of scientific approaches to the study of multilingual practices with the aim of further 'refining' the methods used in researching workplace interaction. Each chapter then deals with matters concerning how multilingual communication is 'managed, flexibly adjusted to, acquired, and/or improved in [workplace interaction] that often calls for particular explicit or implicit language policies' (p. 6).

In the first chapter on the public sector, House and Lévy-Tödter offer an enriching comparison between the researchers' interpretation and the participants' perception of 'the way professional identity of the advisors is affected [when] their linguistic competence is noticeably lower than the [advisees]' in German universities (p. 13). In the next chapter, Apfelbaum looks into the communicative practices of surviving inmates and

their descendants, memorial employees and interpreters in the annual ceremony 'Days of Encounter' at a German Nazi camp memorial. Interactional practices are discussed in terms of the memorial's regulations for multilingual encounters, primarily focusing on the characteristics of interpreter-mediated interaction. This discussion is very appropriately followed by Gentil, Birgas and O'Connor's chapter on the importance of language training in promoting bilingualism in Canadian federal public workplaces, which presents an interesting up-to-date discussion of the status quo of English and French in Canadian public workplaces.

The second section is dedicated to the health sector. In its first chapter, Anthonissen illustrates the rich linguistic diversity of South Africa and the complex interactional context of state-run HIV clinics in the West Cape. The chapter discusses 'the mismatch between language policy and practice' (p. 136) in these clinics. This is followed by an interesting study by Baraldi and Gavioli in which they highlight the role of interpreters as talk coordinators and responders who allow or reject the emergence of new interactional organizations. The final chapter is contributed by Meyer, Bührig, Kliche and Pawlack and builds on the previous chapter by investigating the structure and functions of briefings for informed consent in interpreter-mediated doctor–patient interaction. This research is guided by the goal of designing contextually relevant material for interpreter training courses.

The third section is devoted to the study of multilingual workplaces in the business sector. DuBord opens this section with a study which looks at how convergent and divergent linguistic practices play a role in the construction of solidarity, co-membership and rapport between employer and (possible) employee in job interviews. Given the longitudinal nature of the research, this is a valuable study in that it shows how, by becoming part of the community, the researcher can gain greater insight into the social norms of this community. The second chapter of this section, by Lüdi, Höchle and Yanaprasart, explores plurilingual practices as a resource for improving the quality of work and maintaining good rapport in relation to the linguistic policies of the workplace. This is followed by Amelina's detailed account of the linguistic repertoires and realities of multilingual workers for whom English may not be the most important language in their career development. In the last chapter of this section, Bührig and Böttger investigate 'how the One-Voice-Policy is performed in multilingual business writing' in corporate organizations, focusing on linguistically sensitive elements in the document's translation (p. 253).

Though the research objectives of some chapters are not clearly distinguished, this volume combines a wide and enriching variety of theoretical, such as in the case of the chapter by Gentil et al., and methodological frameworks which are put to great use in the study of multilingualism in the workplace. An example of the latter is the multiplicity of data collection and analysis methods generally used, such as participant observation, ethnographic interviews, case studies, conversation analysis and discourse analysis, all of which are put to good use in showing valid interpretations of multilingual workplace interaction. The book also considers many different uses and possible reasons for the use of multiple languages at work. Very often the excellent choice of examples to illustrate multilingual workplace interaction and its match (or mismatch) to language policies further accounts for the book's contribution in this field of research.

While the relationship between language policies and multilingual practices is not always clear, and significant differences between bilingual and multilingual workplace contexts are sometimes underplayed, overall this volume makes an important contribution by exploring many widespread concerns of multilingual workplace communication. This book is certainly worthwhile reading for researchers interested in intercultural workplace communication as well as language policy and multilingualism. Finally, several of the research projects explored in some of these chapters will certainly inspire future research in, for instance, the importance of relevant interpreter training that addresses cultural- and activity-specific issues of particular contexts of workplace interaction.

Jack Sidnell, *Conversation Analysis: An Introduction*. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010, x + 283 pp., US$33.39 (pbk).

Reviewed by: Daria Dayter, *English Linguistics, University of Bayreuth, Germany*

This is an undergraduate level guide to the field in which the author presents the main concepts, methods and findings of conversation analysis (CA) by summarizing classic papers in an accessible manner as well as drawing extensively on his own research in the area. It is not a coincidence that this introduction is aimed at a student readership not only from the field of linguistics, but also sociology and anthropology: the close relationship among these sister disciplines and their relevance to the study of language emerges as the reader proceeds through the book. Through English examples and case studies the student is provided with answers to the most basic questions of CA: How is talk organized? How do conversationalists know when to talk and when to listen? How can interactional behaviour be analysed? The stated aim of the author is 'to convey at least some of the immediacy of conversation analysis' and 'to make a point about the way that conversational practices fit together in highly intricate ways' (p. 1). The book consists of 13 chapters, which order the otherwise 'fundamentally interconnected' material into chunks suitable for classwork and home reading.

Chapter 1 immediately entices students into the field with an engaging analysis of a fragment of talk. Then it proceeds to describe the development of CA out of 'the study of practical reasoning (a la Garfinkel) applied to the special and particular topic of social interaction (a la Goffman)' (p. 9), thus placing it into historical and scholarly context. In recounting the gist of Sacks's first lectures on conversation, important concepts such as *intersubjectivity* and *units of talk* are presented to the reader.

Chapter 2 provides essential information on CA methodology: gathering data, analysing it and creating data collections. Unfortunately, the section title 'Transcribing and Making Observations' is misleading since it does not actually serve as a guide to doing transcription. Rather, the author relates the considerations of Gail Jefferson during the creation of the transcription system in the early years of CA. Quite surprisingly, the first part of the conclusion reproduces the conclusion of Chapter 1 almost verbatim; however, there is a clear continuity between the two chapters, and the reiteration of main points does not seem out of place.