

Comptes rendus • Reviews

Karen Risager. 2006. *Language and culture: Global flows and local complexity*. Clevedon, UK: Multilingual Matters. 212 pp.

Reviewed by Ulf Schuetze, University of Victoria

Reading Karen Risager's book is an exciting enterprise. Her ideas provide us with a new understanding of the relationship between language and culture. This does not come as a surprise as Risager, a professor at the Department of Language and Culture at Denmark's Roskilde University, has carried out research and published in this field for some thirty years. The book is published as part of the *Languages for intercultural communication and education* series edited by Michael Byram and Alison Phipps.

In order to describe her ideas, Risager introduces two concepts. One is the concept of flow; the other is the concept of a "languaculture". In chapter 1, Risager briefly touches on these concepts by linking them to foreign- and second-language teaching. Before she gets into any detail, she provides an overview of different approaches to culture, starting with anthropological approaches (chapter 3), i.e. Boas, and continuing to literary approaches (chapter 4), i.e. Herder.

Risager takes time to develop her ideas. In chapters 5, 6 and 7, she develops the concept of "flow". Thereby, she draws on the work by Swedish anthropologist Ulf Hannerz (1992) which attempts to explain social relationships. Risager then looks at the idea of relationships, social organization and flow from a sociolinguistic perspective. Talking about linguistic flows, Risager argues that in foreign language teaching there is always at least one other language present. Therefore, there are linguistic flows from L1 to L2 and vice versa.

In chapters 8, 9, 10 and 11, Risager elaborates on the concept of a "languaculture". Risager acknowledges that the term was already used by Agar (1994) to explain that language is more than just words and sentences—it is about meaning and discourse. Within the framework of meaning and discourse, a foreign language learner collects "rich points", which are seen as points of opportunity when speakers misunderstand each other. It is an opportunity to learn and to glimpse into the world of another culture. Risager takes up this idea: "The way the individual uses the language, the meanings that are placed in linguistic practice in the various situations, are idiolectal and characterized by the individual and social experiences of the person involved" (p. 124). The second language learner constantly adjusts his or her "languaculture" assigning new meaning, discourse and content to the target language.

The heart of the book is chapters 12 and 13, in which Risager brings the concepts of flow and languaculture together. In addition to linguistic flows,

there are discursive and cultural flows. About discourse, Risager writes: “discourses spread across linguistic communities, so an important feature of discursive flows is the transformations they undergo when translated and subject to other looser forms of adjustment: adaptation, retelling, etc.” (p. 177). In other words, it is important to look at where and under what circumstances the language learning takes place. This is a point Kramsch (1993) made in her landmark book on language and culture but has been forgotten since. Risager takes up this point and places emphasis on increased mobility. On the one hand, the foreign language learner can change his location by migrating, on the other hand, the language can come to him: “The link between language and culture is created in each new communicative event and can change drastically simply because one of the participants, for example, gets a telephone call from a friend elsewhere in the world” (p. 188).

The application of the two concepts to foreign- or second-language teaching is very well done by Risager, by using many examples from her homeland, Denmark. One important distinction she makes is between Danish and Denmark. Danish is a global network: “Danish-language users thus form what one could describe as a global network of Danish speakers. This network is borne by physical individuals and made possible by growing transnational mobility” (p. 98). Denmark, on the other hand, is a place of local complexity where many linguistic networks meet, that is, many languages in various forms are spoken.

In addition to the many examples, Risager illustrates her points by analyzing a unit taught in German in class 10 at a Danish school in Denmark. The unit was on the *Tour de France*. It is a thread throughout the book that started in chapter 2. Thus Risager opens our eyes to the practice of foreign language teaching, e.g. teaching a class in German about the French *Tour de France* in a Danish classroom with students who do not all speak Danish as a first language. It becomes evident that research on multilingual classrooms is much needed.

In summary, Risager uses the concept of “flow” and the concept of “linguaculture” to develop a network in which she distinguishes between linguistic practice, linguistic resources and the linguistic system. Linguistic resources are usually looked at from a psycholinguistic point of view. They develop over time in a “generic sense”. For example, an ESL learner will eventually learn the rules of the present perfect progressive. Linguistic practice, according to Risager, is different. It has to be looked at from a sociolinguistic point of view. It also develops over time but in a “differential sense”. The way an ESL learner will use the present perfect progressive will depend on the social situation he or she is in. That situation is different from learner to learner.

The network, Risager develops, is particularly interesting in view of studies on linguistic relativity. These studies (e.g. Bowerman and Levinson, 2001; Gumperz and Levinson, 1996) claim that language and culture cannot be

separated. In chapter 14, Risager acknowledges this from a psycholinguistic point of view. However, from a sociolinguistic point of view, she argues that in foreign language acquisition, two structurally defined languacultures are at work, as the learner assigns new meaning, new discourse, and new context/content to the new language. This allows the learner to separate language from culture as the cultural references and representations vary.

Although I have focused on aspects of foreign language acquisition, Risager's book is much more. She gives an extensive literature review of concepts on language, culture, and nation. She outlines various theories on these concepts, critiques them, defines her own terms, and thus lays the foundation for her network. In order to understand this network, it is essential to read this book. The fourteen chapters are not only well organized but build on each other. Any book review can only offer a glimpse into this complex study that opens a new chapter into research on language and culture.

References

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R.W. Fasold and J. Connor-Linton (eds.). 2006. *An introduction to language and linguistics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. xvi + 540 pp.

Reviewed by Robert Dole, Université du Québec à Chicoutimi

The work under review is an introductory textbook in linguistics intended for American university undergraduates, presumably those contemplating majoring in linguistics. There is every reason to expect that it will become a standard resource for years to come. Each of its fourteen chapters begins with a chapter review, a list of its key terms and a statement of its goals. The text is clearly divided into pertinent sections, with numerous graphs, pictures and maps. The main terms are printed in blue bold type. Every chapter concludes with a chapter summary, exercises and suggestions for further reading. The book concludes with a glossary, a bibliography and an index. There is also a web site

with answers to the exercises, recordings (for example, samples of different American dialects), and other exercises.

The Introduction was written by the two editors. Chapter 1, by Elizabeth Zsiga, is about the sounds of language (phonetics and phonology). Chapter 2, by Donna Lardiere, deals with words and their parts (morphology). Chapter 3, by David Lightfoot and Ralph Fasold, is entitled “The structure of sentences” and introduces Chomsky’s approach to syntax. Chapter 4, by Paul Portner, is about meaning (semantics). Chapter 5, by Deborah Schiffrin, is dedicated to discourse. Chapter 6, by Kendall A. King, is about child language acquisition. Chapter 7, by Michael T. Ullman, is about language and the brain. Chapter 8, by Shaligram Shukla and Jeff Connor-Linton, discusses language change. Chapter 9, about dialect variation, was written by Natalie Schilling-Estes. Chapter 10, dealing with language and culture, was authored by Deborah Tannen. Ralph Fasold wrote chapter 11, dealing with the politics of language. Jeff Connor-Linton is the author of chapter 12, entitled “Writing.” Chapter 13, about second language acquisition, is by Alison Mackey. The last chapter, 14, is about computational linguistics and was written by Inderjeet Mani.

All the chapters are written in easily accessible language and are presented in such a way as to gain the reader’s interest without making too many demands on memorizing complex terms. If the reader is bewildered by what he or she is reading, it is easy to regain orientation by referring to the glossary. There are even a few instances of humor, for example, on page 254, in the chapter on language and the brain: “If you’ve ever wanted to use a remote control to modify the behavior of your family and friends, Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation may be the technique for you.”

The book cover boasts that “each chapter is written by an expert and experienced teacher on the topic”. This might very well be the truth. What the book fails to mention, however, is that every one of the book’s fourteen contributors teaches at Georgetown University, a fact that is readily available by consulting their biographies on the internet. Georgetown has for a long time had the reputation of housing one of the most prestigious departments of linguistics in the world, and, no doubt, this excellent textbook will enhance it. The only problem is the mystery caused by the book’s failing to mention such an important fact, as though it might have had greater credibility if the contributors had come from different universities or even different countries.

This brings up the question of the book’s national identity. Seeing the name of Cambridge University Press might make one think that there should be something British in the volume. On the contrary, it is written exclusively in American English and refers continually to American cultural phenomena. It is true that many different languages and cultures are discussed, but it is always from the point of view of an American looking at foreign lands. Being typical of so many books coming out of the United States, it makes it seem that Canada

just does not exist. The worst is on page 322, with a figure showing “dialect areas of the United States”, in which Canada is described as constituting its own dialect area of the United States. The very interesting chapter on the politics of language makes no mention at all of Québec’s French Language Charter, which is probably the most important and the most successful example of language planning in world history. Another omission of Canada’s contribution to the linguistic world is the failure to include Lightbown and Spada’s incomparable *How languages are learned* in its “suggestions for further readings” at the end of the chapter about second language acquisition.

The editors are to be complimented for their assiduous proof reading. There are practically no typographical errors (writing “Key” for “Kay” on page 115 is the exception that proves the rule). Since these chapters were all written by university professors of linguistics, it would be presumptuous to question their use of English grammar. One can simply observe that modern American English grammar has evolved from traditional British English grammar and now allows “like” instead of “as” before verbs, “than” instead of “from” after “different,” “nor” after “not” instead of “or”, and “that” instead of “which” as a relative pronoun in a non-restrictive relative clause (e.g. page 113: “Universal Grammar, that they have inherited.”)

The editors, however, have not been so successful in correcting errors in foreign languages. On page 81, the Polish word *kochają* ‘they love’ is written with the wrong diacritic on the last vowel. It is given a tilde when actually a Polish hook is required: *kochają*. On page 89, the Italian word *volentieri* is misspelt as *voluntieri*. On page 220, we are told that *¿Dónde durmió?* literally means ‘where sleep’, whereas it is actually the only correct way in Spanish to say ‘Where did he or she sleep?’ On page 292, it is claimed that the Russian *oddal* means ‘to give back’, when it actually means ‘he or she gave back’. The infinitive ‘to give back’ is *otdat*.

This book is highly recommended as an introductory textbook for undergraduates in English-speaking universities who are beginning their studies of linguistics. It would be less appropriate for courses in Canada’s French-speaking universities, although even there it should be suggested as a reliable reference work. It can also be of valuable assistance to those linguistics professors who completed their studies in the previous century and who would like to know more about what is currently happening in fields of linguistics with which they are less familiar than in their own specialty. If you are not altogether certain about the meaning of any of the following basic terms, then this book has something new to offer you: abjad, acetylcholine, epenthesis, haplology, lenition, pinna, proxemics, rebus, rhotic, sulcus.

Dalila Ayoun (ed.). 2007. *French applied linguistics*. In the series *Language learning and language teaching* 16. Amsterdam: Benjamins. xvi + 560 pp.

Reviewed by Doug Walker, University of Calgary

This major volume is intended to provide an up-to-date survey of major issues in the acquisition of French as a second language (FSL) and, in complementary fashion, of the contribution of studies of French to the development of applied linguistics broadly interpreted. It succeeds.

The book is organized in the following way. After a brief Preface and notes on the contributors,¹ the editor's useful introductory chapter provides historical information concerning the development of applied linguistics in francophone contexts, including sketches of a few key figures (Abbé de l'Épée, Braille, Broca and Hécaen, Saussure, Guillaume and others), followed by comments on the phonological, syntactico-semantic, morpho-syntactic, pragmatic and sociolinguistic "state of play", as viewed by the diverse contributors, in the acquisition of FSL. This, in turn, is succeeded, again with reference to the subsequent chapters, by indications of the input from French language studies to the evolution of major components of applied linguistics in general: language ideology and pedagogy, affective variables, lexical creativity, electronic corpora, French sign language, the situation in West Africa, and Creole studies. This list in itself is indicative of the immense range and relevance of FSL studies thanks, in large part, to the history, distribution and status of the language itself and to the significant amount of scholarly attention it has garnered. This chapter concludes, again constructively, by surveying suggestions from the contributors regarding directions (and needs) for future research, suggestions expanded in some detail in each subsequent chapter. In order to provide an appropriate context for the discussions to follow, the concluding chapter in the introductory section is a review by Anthony Lodge of the history of French from a sophisticated sociolinguistic perspective, including comments on dialectalization, the development of norms, the elaboration of functions, codification, diffusion, variation, and so on. This sets the stage for Part Two: Core aspects of the second language acquisition of French.

Part Two contains six chapters ranging from phonology (Hannahs) through the syntax-semantics interface in English-French interlanguage (Deykdtspotter, Anderson and Sprouse), functional categories in FSL (Herschensohn), the acquisition of grammatical gender and agreement (Ayoun) and interlanguage pragmatics (Warga) to the acquisition of sociolinguistic competence (Dewaele). Each chapter surveys, from a theoretically sophisticated point of view, the strides made in understanding the acquisition of FSL through the exploitation of recent developments in phonological, syntactic, pragmatic and/or sociolinguistic theory. Noteworthy in each chapter is the attention paid to the empirical basis of the claims being made and to much recent experimental work that has

confronted and contributed to proposals regarding just how the complexities of the second language acquisition process are overcome by learners. Part Two concentrates on the core components of linguistic structure and amply demonstrates how our understanding of FSL has been enriched by current research.

Part Three, moving beyond the central descriptive domains, addresses questions to which a knowledge of the functioning of French can broaden our understanding of the general role of applied linguistics and of the place of language in society. Its seven chapters cover language ideology and foreign language pedagogy (Train); affective variables, attitude and personality (MacIntyre, Clément and Noels); lexical creativity and natural language generation (Lessard and Levison); French sign language (Tuller, Blondel and Niederberger); electronic corpora in SLA research (Myles); Creole studies (Mather); French applied linguistics in West Africa (Sonaiya); with a concluding Epilogue on French in Louisiana (Caldas). The volume closes with a French-English glossary, name and subject indices, and a particularly extensive and useful bibliography (some 1500 entries on 62 pages).

If one were to quibble, the absence (for a Canadian audience, at least) of a contribution dealing specifically and at some length with French immersion is to be regretted. The editor herself notes this gap, while at the same time pointing out that discussion of the phenomenon does appear, at least peripherally, in a number of places (Chapters 8, 10, 11 and the Epilogue). Further, a survey in Part One devoted to the increasingly important role of the lexicon in FSL would have been welcome, although large parts of the computationally oriented chapter by Lessard and Levison (Chapter 11) can serve as a welcome starting point. These minor criticisms aside, nothing should detract from the great value of this work, the individual chapters and the compilation both, in providing an admirable survey of the current state of French applied linguistics in the broadest sense, and in providing inspiration for future work in this most important of domains.

Note

- ¹ Twenty-two different authors contribute to the volume's fifteen chapters and Epilogue. Notes on Muriel Warga from the Institut für Romanistik of the University of Graz are missing from this section.
